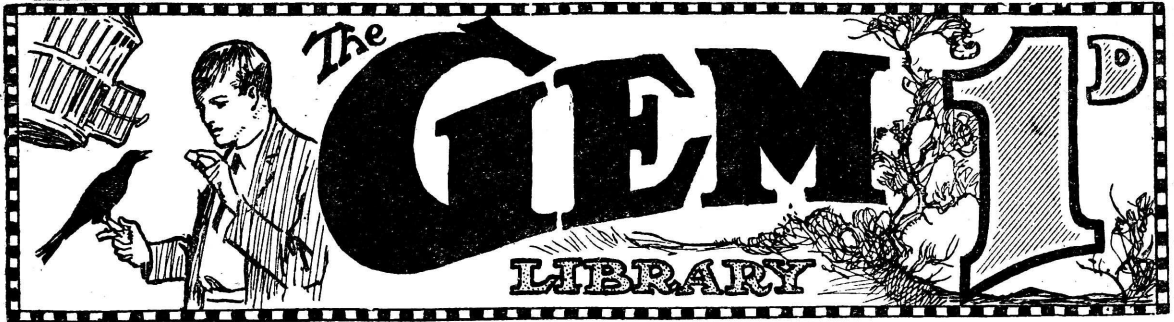


NEXT THURSDAY'S
SPECIAL STORY:

"The Boy From Nowhere!"

Every

Thursday



Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem!

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]



The Stowaway of St. Jim's.

A Splendid, New, Long,
Complete School Tale of
TOM MERRY & CO.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Bad News.

"POSTMAN!"
"Hurray!"

Six or seven juniors of St. Jim's, crowded in the doorway of the School House, shouted "hurray," as Blagg, the postman from Rylcombe, was seen toiling across the quad in the hot July sunshine.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther and Manners were leaning up against the door, apparently too tired by the hot weather to stand without assistance. Jack Blake and Herries and Digby were sitting on the stone balustrade outside. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form, stood in the middle of the doorway, in a most elegant attitude. Hot as the weather was, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not, apparently, need any support—he stood quite erect, with his eyeglass screwed into his eye, watching the old quad.

It was a half-holiday, and the weather was blazing. Cricket practice, by common consent, had been postponed till the sun was a little lower; and there happened to be no special match on that afternoon. It was just the weather, as Blake of the Fourth, had suggested, for a run up the river.

But alas! Funds, which were always in a fluctuating state in the junior forms at St. Jim's, were "down" now—very down. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—were stony. The chums of the Fourth were almost in the same hapless condition. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was able to scrape up a few odd half-crowns. It was just

the afternoon for a nice little excursion, and tea at a river-side inn—but the funds were wanting. There was one hope—the afternoon's post.

The juniors of the School House—like most juniors at school—lived always in hopes of a remittance arriving. They had their regular allowances of pocket-money. But they had, as a rule, affectionate uncles and aunts, or elderly cousins, or even grandfathers, who sent them extra tips. And besides the regular relations, so to speak, there was always a possibility of a stray uncle or aunt turning up and sending a little reminder in a financial shape. And the School House juniors had agreed to wait till the afternoon's post came in, to ascertain whether a remittance might arrive. Nobody was expecting one, as a matter of fact. But, as Monty Lowther pointed out, it was the unexpected that always happened; and there was a chance that the unexpected might happen that afternoon.

D'Arcy's "governor," in particular, might send even a fiver—and even five shillings, let alone five pounds, would have been very welcome to the stony juniors. They waited for the postman—and the postman was late. Perhaps Blagg found his bag heavy to carry through the dusty lanes on that blazing afternoon. Perhaps he paused at certain wayside places of refreshment. At all events, he was late, and the juniors were growing impatient. It was too hot to be angry, or they might even have lost their tempers.

The sight of the postman toiling in was a welcome relief to all. Never had the squat figure of Blagg seemed so pleasing to the eye.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scanned the postman through his

Next Thursday:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

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eyeglass, and then turned that gleaming adornment upon the chums of the School House.

"I've got a wippin' suggestion to make, you chaps," he remarked.

Blake yawned.

"Wait till the cool weather comes," he said. "We can stand it better then."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's have it in the autumn," said Monty Lowther, with a nod, "or, better still, in the winter. Or perhaps you could make it while you're at home in the vac., and we needn't be bothered at all."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Blessed if Blaggy isn't crawling like a blessed caterpillar," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we go and meet him."

"Too hot!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! He may not have a lettah for any of us, and then it would be so much trouble wasted."

"Quite right," said Monty Lowther, with a yawn.

"I was goin' to suggest that if there is a wemittance for any of us, we should agwee beforehand to share it out all alike, all wound," said Arthur Augustus. "If we make the awwangement in advance, it will be as faih for one as for another."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "Jolly good idea! I'm willing!"

"Same here," said Digby. "I'm not expecting anything, so really it will be a ripping idea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wergad it as a good ideah, you know!" said Arthur Augustus modestly. "You see, I may get a fivah fwom my governah—he's wathah a decent old sort, you know, though he has his little ways—"

"Lord Eastwood is a ripping old sort, and he hasn't any little ways," said Jack Blake. "I decline to allow you to speak disrespectfully of my esteemed friend, Lord Eastwood."

"You uttah ass!"

"Blagg!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Blagg! Come hither, come hither, my little Blaggy, and do not linger so."

"It's quite poss. that I may get a fivah fwom my governah," said Arthur Augustus, after bestowing a withering glare upon Blake, who bore it quite serenely. "And I may get a wemittance, too, fwom my eldah bwothah, Lord Conway. Conway is wathah an ass, but he's all wight!"

"I should think there ought to be a letter for one of us," said Herries thoughtfully. "My pater might be sending me something. I told him in my last letter that I wanted a new collar for Towser."

"Blagg! Blagg! Hurry up!"

The postman looked up at the juniors, and grinned through the perspiration that was clinging to his red face.

"Ere I am, young gents."

"Anything for us?"

"One letter for Master D'Arcy, sir!"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake slapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the back.

"Gussy, your idea 'waz simply ripping!" he exclaimed.

"We'll all share alike—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy cheerfully. "I stand by the awwangement, of course. Whatever is in the letter, you chaps share in it."

"Done!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Pway hand it ovah, Blaggay, deah boy; and there's a tannah for you."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

"Buck up with the letter, Blaggy!"

"Hurry up!"

"Quick!"

The postman grinned, and with a leisurely hand sorted out the letter for D'Arcy. It was too hot for hurry.

Blake took the letter from the Rylcombe postman's hand, and tossed it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"There you are, Gussy!"

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Blagg shouldered his bag again, and went round the side of the house. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced at the letter.

"Oh! It's not fwom my governah!"

"Don't say it's only a tailor's bill," groaned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy. It's fwom my majah, Conway—and I shouldn't wondah if there is somethin' in it."

"Open it and see!" shouted Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus inserted a penknife in the envelope, and slit it open. He drew out the letter from within. The juniors watched him eagerly; there was no enclosure—merely the letter, and nothing more.

Jack Blake gave a snort.

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"THE BULLY'S BROTHER"

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"I'm rather inclined to agree with you, Gussy—Conway is rather an ass!"

Arthur Augustus nodded as he unfolded the letter. He glanced at it, and his look became fixed.

A strange, startled look came over his face, and the colour ebbed from his cheeks, leaving his face deadly white. His eyeglass dropped from his eye, and swung at the end of its cord.

"Oh! Good heavens!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy muttered the words in a low, choking voice, and staggered back. Jack Blake caught him as he staggered.

CHAPTER 2.

A Strange Mystery.

"GUSSY!"

"What is it?"

"What's the matter, Gussy, old man?"

"Bad news?"

"Bai Jove!"

Jack Blake clapped D'Arcy on the shoulder. All the fun was gone out of his face. His chum was in trouble; he could see that.

"What is it, Gussy? Is it bad news from home?"

"Oh! Yaas, wathah! Poor old Conway!"

"Not—ill?"

"Ill! No."

"Not—" Blake could not speak the word.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Dead?—no—he's all wight—oh, deah! Poor old Conway! The idiots!"

"Eh!"

"The uttah asses!"

"What!"

"I—I—I'm sowwy," said Arthur Augustus. "I—I can't show you the lettah, deah boys. I—I can't tell you what's in it."

"Can't we help you, Gussy?"

The swell of St. Jim's shook his head miserably.

"No, deah boy. It's imposs."

"Lord Conway is in trouble?"

"Yes; howwible twouble!"

"We won't ask you any questions, Gussy, if you don't want to answer them," said Tom Merry quietly. "But if we could advise you—"

"I'm afwaid you can't, Tom Mewwy, old son. You—you'll hear all about it soon, I suppose—fwom the papahs."

The juniors stared at him.

"From the papers!" exclaimed Digby.

"Yaas!"

"Good heavens!" said Tom Merry. "What is it—an accident?"

"No!"

"Then what— But I won't ask you. If we could do anything, Gussy, you'd tell us; mind, we're ready all the time."

"I—I know that, deah boy. I—I think I will wetime now. I—I've had wathah a shock! It's thwown me into quite a fluttah! Poor old Conway!"

Arthur Augustus thrust the letter into his jacket pocket, and moved away towards the staircase. The others did not follow. They knew that the swell of the School House wanted to be alone.

They remained in the doorway, staring at one another. Levison, of the Fourth, came by, with a quick, inquisitive expression on his face. Levison had caught a few words, and he was very curious.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Mind your own bizney," said Blake gruffly.

The cad of the Fourth turned to Tom Merry.

"Anything wrong with Gussy?"

"Find out!"

"Oh, all right, I will!"

Levison turned towards the stairs. Tom Merry stepped after him, and laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't bother Gussy now, Levison; he's had some bad news from home, and he doesn't want to be worried."

"I suppose I can speak to a chap if I like," said Levison defiantly.

"No, you can't."

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"If you put a foot on the stairs, Levison, I'll sling you down them head first," said Tom Merry, in low, quiet tones.

Levison gave him a savage look; but he did not go upstairs. He swung away, and went out into the quadrangle.

"I wonder what the matter can be?" Blake said, in a low voice. "It must be something pretty bad, to cut Gussy up like this."

"Yes; it's rotten!"

"I don't think I'll go out this afternoon," Blake said. "You fellows can buzz along if you like."

"I don't feel much inclined to go out," said Tom Merry.

"Same here!"

"I think the same."

The juniors were all of the same mind. Many a time they made fun of their elegant friend, but in a time of trouble, there was only friendship and honest concern in their hearts. What was the matter? They could not tell; but they were too deeply concerned for D'Arcy to think of a holiday that afternoon.

They hung restlessly about the doorway of the School House. Arthur Augustus had gone up to his study; and he did not come down again. After a time, Jack Blake went upstairs to the Fourth Form passage.

He paused outside Study No. 6. The door was closed. Blake listened for a moment; he did not want to disturb D'Arcy.

There was a long, deep quivering breath in the room—almost like a sob. The swell of St. Jim's was there.

"Oh, deah! Poor old Conway! It's feahful! Whatever shall I do? Oh, deah!"

Jack Blake passed on with a clouded brow. He could not force the confidence of his chum; but his heart ached for D'Arcy at that moment, and he wished that the lad would tell him what was the matter.

CHAPTER 3.

The Man in Hiding.

SLACKERS!" said D'Arcy minor—more generally known in the Third Form as Wally.

The Third Form junior paused in the doorway of the School House, and directed his remark to Tom Merry & Co. The chums of the School House did not usually "slack," but certainly they looked as if they were slacking at the present moment.

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther.

"Slackers!" repeated D'Arcy minor. "What do you mean by hanging about the house on a sunny afternoon like this?"

"More rats!"

"Still, it's just as well," said Wally. "I've come to look for you. I want you."

"What's on?"

"Blessed if I know," said D'Arcy minor. "But it's rather mysterious. I suppose you know the old barn in the Wood Field?"

"Yes, rather!"

"There's somebody there."

"Eh!"

"There's somebody there," repeated Wally; "and it's jolly mysterious! I thought I'd come and fetch some of the fellows to have him out."

The juniors stared at D'Arcy minor. They did not quite understand what he was driving at.

"Look here, are you pulling our leg?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Not at all."

"Why shouldn't there be somebody in the Wood Field barn? Tramps often go to sleep there. Who is there—a tramp?"

"I don't know. This is the how of it," said D'Arcy minor.

"I dropped into the barn—"

"You'd been climbing on the roof?"

"No, ass. I mean it happened in—I've been over to Wayland, and I passed the barn on my way back. I had Pongo with me, and Pongo ran into the barn. Of course, I thought he had gone after a rabbit, and I followed him. A rabbit would have come in all right for tea in the Third Form-room," explained Wally.

"You poaching young rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild! It's not my fault, I suppose, if Pongo goes for rabbits," said Wally warmly. "Well, I followed Pongo into the barn, and I heard somebody scuttle up the ladder into the loft as I went in."

"He wanted to get away from Pongo, I suppose."

"Oh, rats! It wasn't a rabbit—or if it was, he had the feet of a man, and a very decent pair of boots on," said Wally. "That was all I saw. The trapdoor slammed down, and when I went up the ladder it was tight, and I couldn't open it."

"What did you go up the ladder for?"

"I wanted to look into the loft."

Monty Lowther shook a warning finger at the scamp of the Third.

"Curiosity, my son, is a serious vice—" he began. But the hero of the Third Form interrupted him without ceremony.

"Oh, bosh! Don't play the giddy ox! I came here to get some fellows to have the chap out, whoever he is," said

Wally. "Jameson and Gibson have gone over to Rylcombe, like a pair of silly asses, so I'll take you kids, if you like."

The Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows looked speechlessly at Wally. To be called kids by a fag of the Third Form was a little too much.

"You cheeky young ass—" began Manners wrathfully.

"Oh, cheese it! Where's Gus?"

"In the study," said Blake.

Wally snorted.

"What on earth is he doing in the study on a blazing day like this?" he demanded. "Got an impot.?"

"No."

"What's the row, then?"

The juniors were silent. Wally was D'Arcy's younger brother, and perhaps entitled to know that there was bad news from home. But after all it was the business of Arthur Augustus to tell him, if he was to be told.

"Better ask him," said Blake, after a long pause.

Wally looked from one to another in surprise.

"What's on?" he demanded. "I can see that there's something up. Anything the matter with old Gus?"

"Ask him; he's in the study."

"My only Aunt Jane! What's all the blessed mystery about?" demanded Wally. "Well, I'll ask him, if you like."

The fag tramped into the house and upstairs. He stopped at Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, and kicked at the door, and then turned the handle. The door did not open; it was locked.

Wally kicked again on the lower panels, and augmented his summons by hammering upon the upper ones with his fist.

"Gussy!" he roared.

"Hallo! Is that you, Wally, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather! Let me in."

"I—I don't want to be disturbed just now?"

"My only Aunt Jane! Are you beginning to take a nap in the afternoon, you blessed old fogey?" shouted Wally, through the keyhole.

"Weally, Wally—"

"I want you to come out."

"Imposs."

"I've got something on," said Wally. "Look here—"

"I have to go out and keep an appointment in about half an hour, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, without opening the door. "Pway excuse me."

Wally grunted.

"Oh, I suppose it will take you all that time to get dressed, then," he said. "All serene, you blessed old duffer."

"Weally, Wally—"

But Wally was gone, and his piercing whistle died away down the passage. He descended the stairs by sliding down the banisters, and joined the juniors at the door of the School House.

"Gussy coming out?" asked Blake eagerly.

Wally shook his head.

"No. He says he's got to keep an appointment in half an hour. Look here, will you fellows come? My view is that there's something up."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you remember there were a blessed lot of footpads hanging round this neighbourhood last week," said Wally. "A couple of silly duffers were robbed—"

"I was one of them," said Blake, frowning.

"Yes; I said duffers," said Wally cheerfully. "Well, some of them have been arrested, but not all. I shouldn't wonder if that chap hiding in the barn was one of the gang. He may have nipped in there to keep out of the way of the police. Anyway, he's up to no good, or why should he slither off into the loft, and fasten down the trapdoor when he heard somebody come into the barn? The barn is jolly lonely; and it's pretty clear to me that he's sneaked in there for no good."

Tom Merry nodded slowly.

"I shouldn't wonder," he said. "But it's a good quarter of an hour's walk from here; and I should think he would be gone before he got there."

"Not if he's one of that gang. He wouldn't dare to cross the fields in the daylight. The police are still looking for them, and all the keepers on the estates round here have been warned to look out."

"Might as well go," said Digby. "If Gussy is going out to keep an appointment, he won't want us; and it's no good hanging about doing nothing."

"Quite right!"

"I'll take you there," said Wally loftily. "If it's a footpad in hiding, it will be a feather in our cap to bag him, and it will make the New House chaps simply green with envy. Figgins & Co. will be simply wild."

That was enough to decide the School House juniors. They had nothing to do; and a chance of scoring over the New House was not to be neglected.

"We're on," said Tom Merry.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE BOY FROM NOWHERE"

"Yes, rather!"

"Buck up, then, and come on."

And, with Wally in the lead, the School House juniors crossed to the gates in the westerling sun. Wally gave a shrill whistle, and Pongo bounded up. Herries paused.

"Might as well fetch Towser," he remarked. "If there's a dangerous character in the barn, Towser's the dog to tackle him."

"Oh, rats! He'll fight with Pongo," said Wally.

"You can carry that mongrel."

"That's all very well, but—"

"I'll catch you up," said Herries, and without any further argument he hurried off to the kennels behind the School House for Towser, the bulldog.

Herries overtook the others at the stile in the lane. Towser was with him; and Towser made a straight line for Pongo. Wally caught his shaggy favourite up in his arms just in time to save him from being pinned.

"Look here," roared Wally, "you keep your beastly brute off my dog!"

"You keep your beastly dog out of his reach," retorted Herries. "Not that there's really much danger of Towser touching him. Towser's rather particular what he bites."

Wally glowered, and marched along with Pongo in his arms. In the westerling sunlight, the juniors reached the old barn. With a growl Towser ran into the barn—he had evidently smelt the presence of a stranger. There was a sound of a loud and ringing bang.

"That's the trapdoor," said Wally.

The juniors rushed into the barn. It was empty, save for Towser, who stood in the middle of the stone floor, growling as in disappointment.

CHAPTER 4. The Wrcng Man.

TOM MERRY & Co. looked about them in wonder. The stranger, whoever he was, whose presence D'Arcy minor had discovered in the barn, was evidently still there. It was equally evident that he had descended from the loft after Wally's departure. Doubtless the loft was a stuffy place to stay in for any length of time, especially in the hot weather. But the sight of the bulldog had scared the stranger to his place of refuge again. The trapdoor at the top of the steps had banged down before the juniors could get up into the building.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Monty Lowther. "Either it's one of the footpad gang, as Wally says, or else it's some humorous joker playing Box and Cox with us."

"We'll soon see."

Tom Merry ascended the ladder, and tried the trapdoor above. It was closed, and seemed to be fastened, for it did not move under the steady pressure of his hand.

"It's locked or bolted," said Digby.

"Can't be," said Monty Lowther. "I've been up in that loft before. There's no lock or bolt, or fastening of any kind, on that trapdoor."

"It seems jolly tight," said Tom Merry.

"Then he's standing on it."

"My hat! He must be!"

Tom Merry put his shoulder to the level door, and braced himself upon the ladder. He exerted all his strength to force the door up. It shifted ever so little, and the ladder under Tom Merry's feet strained and creaked.

Tom Merry ceased to press, with a gasp. The task was beyond his strength.

"Call out to the bounder," said Wally.

Tom Merry rapped on the under side of the trapdoor with his knuckles.

"Hallo, there!" he shouted.

"Are you there?" bawled Monty Lowther. "Ring off!"

Rap, rap, rap!

There was no reply.

That the stranger was there, was certain; but he did not answer, and the trapdoor was not released from above.

"Who are you?" shouted Blake.

No reply.

"Look here, if you care to show yourself, we sha'n't do you any harm," Tom Merry called through the trapdoor.

"We suspect you of being one of the footpads, and we're going to make sure. Savvy?"

Silence!

"It can't be an honest man, or he'd answer," said Manners. "I'm jolly certain it's somebody in hiding."

"Might be one of the Grammar School chaps, japing us," Herries suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be that—he wouldn't have remained here all this time. He couldn't guess that Wally would come back with a crowd of us."

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"No, that's so!"

"It's one of the Nobbler's gang, for certain. Look here, you chaps get on the ladder beside me, and brace yourselves under the trapdoor, and we'll give a big shove," said Tom Merry.

"Right you are!"

The juniors crowded upon the ladder. Four of them succeeded in getting their shoulders under the trapdoor, with their feet firmly planted on the rungs of the ladder.

"Now then, all together!" shouted Tom Merry.

And the juniors gave a simultaneous heave.

Creak—crash!

But it was not the trapdoor that gave way—it was the ladder! The old, rotten wood did not stand the strain, and the ladder cracked across and broke.

"Look out!" yelled Manners.

Bump! Crash! Bump!

Four juniors sprawled on the floor of the barn with wild yells.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Yah!"

"My hat!"

The rotten ladder was falling in pieces. Tom Merry & Co. sat up and groaned. They were not really hurt—only very considerably bumped. Above them, the trapdoor remained sealed as fast as ever.

"Well, of all the asses—" said Wally.

"You young cheeky fathead—"

"Oh, pick yourselves up and sort yourselves out!" said Wally, with a sniff. "Blessed if I know how we're going to get up to the loft now."

It was rather a question. The decayed ladder was in fragments, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not have put it together again, as in the celebrated case of Humpty-Dumpty. The trapdoor of the loft was far above the juniors' heads, and there was no possible means of reaching it.

"We might climb on one another's shoulders," Blake suggested vaguely.

"Rats! We couldn't open the trap that way!"

"No; but—"

"But the chap can't get down, either, I should think," Digby remarked. "Look here, I've got an idea." He sank his voice to a whisper. "Let's get out—"

"Bosh!" said Monty Lowther, rubbing his bruises. "I'm not getting out till we've collared that rotter, whoever he is."

"Ass! I don't mean go away for good. Let's get out, and leave Towser here on guard," Digby whispered, "then the chap, if he wants to bolt, will have to drop out of the window of the loft. He won't care to tackle Towser in the dark, I should think."

"Not much," said Herries.

"Well, then, we can make a pretence of going away, and we can watch in the bush close by the barn, and collar him as he gets out. He won't stay here all night, you can be sure of that, after what's happened, he'll know we shall spread the news that he's here."

Digby's idea seemed a good one. The only objection to it was, that it was getting dark, and that at dark the gates of St. Jim's were locked by Taggles, the porter. The juniors would have to miss calling-over.

"And that means lines," remarked Manners.

"Who cares?" said Digby.

"Well, I do, for one," Blake remarked; "but I think that if we explained to the Head that we stayed out to collar one of the footpads who attacked him the other night, it would be all serene."

"I should think so."

"We'll risk it," said Tom Merry.

"Right you are!"

Herries stationed Towser on the floor of the barn, under the trapdoor. He pointed to the trapdoor, and Towser understood perfectly.

"Watch him!" said Herries. "Seize him, Towsy!"

And Towser showed his teeth with a gleam in the dusk of the barn. Towser was an unreliable dog in some respects, but he could be relied upon in this.

"Watch him, Towser!"

The words could be clearly heard by the man above, in the loft, and he knew that he was being watched by a bulldog. And it would have required a very bold man to jump down from the loft into the very teeth of Towser, in the dark.

The juniors crowded out of the barn. It was getting dusk in the fields, and Rylcombe Wood was a blur. Far away through the evening haze the grey tower of St. Jim's soared skyward over the trees.

The juniors stood chatting outside the barn, till the dusk was thick enough to hide their movements. Then they

tramped away, still talking loudly for the man in the barn to hear.

Behind a thicket at some distance they halted.

"Take care now," said Tom Merry, "this is where Boy Scouting comes in useful. We've got to get back to that bush beside the barn without being seen."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors crept back towards the barn through the thick dusk. In a few minutes they were under cover of the flowering bush, within six yards of the barn, on the side where the side of the loft was pierced by a window.

Within the barn, Towser was patiently watching the trap-door. Outside, the juniors were watching, less patiently but quite as vigilantly, the only window to the loft. There was no escape for the man hidden there.

Whichever way he attempted to leave the loft, he was certain to be seen. And if he remained there, it was only a question of sending for the police—for the juniors were firmly convinced that this man was a member of Nobbler's gang of footpads.

They waited, while the darkness thickened over the fields and the woods.

Suddenly Tom Merry held up his hand.

From the darkness had come a sound—the sound of a footstep. But it did not come from the direction of the barn. It came from the distant road—someone was crossing the field from the road to the barn.

"Hist!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Hist yourself!" said Blake.

"Quiet!"

"Rats!"

"Someone's coming," murmured Tom Merry. "It's somebody coming to the barn. Look here, the place must be a rendezvous, and that's another of the gang coming."

"Sure as a gun," agreed Monty Lowther. "Let's collar him! Hark!"

A sharp, clear whistle rang out from the gloom—twice in succession. It was answered by a whistle from the barn.

"It's a signal!"

"My word!"

Tom Merry made a sign to the juniors. The footsteps came right on, and as a dark form loomed up in the darkness, the juniors of St. Jim's made a rush. In a moment they were round the newcomer, and had seized him.

There was a startled gasp from the stranger. He struggled in the grasp of the juniors, but they had him down on the ground in a twinkling.

"Careful!" gasped Blake. "Hold his hand, he may have a revolver."

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 5. A Sudden Surprise.

"BAI JOVE!" That sudden exclamation from the stranger they had seized stupefied the juniors.

They let him go as if he had suddenly become red-hot.

Blake gasped.

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!" murmured Tom Merry, dazed.

"Arthur Augustus!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors released the swell of St. Jim's—for it was really he! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet, and groped for his displaced eyeglass. He was breathing very hard.

"You—you uttah asses!" he gasped.

"Gussy!"

"You feahful, fwabjous chumps!"

"D'Arcy!"

"You burblin' fatheads—"

"Gussy, old man—"

"You have wumpled all my clothes, and simply wuined my necktie," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What are you doing here?"

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "It's a mistake. But what are you doing here? Did you know we were here?"

"Wathah not!"

"Then you didn't come to join us?"

"Certainly not, you ass!"

"Then what are you here for?" demanded half a dozen voices at once.

D'Arcy smoothed down his rumpled trousers without replying.

"We took you for one of the gang going to join the chap in the barn," explained Tom Merry.

D'Arcy gave a start.

"Chap in the barn!" he murmured.

"Yes; there's a chap hiding in the loft over the barn, and we're going to have him out," Tom Merry explained. "We

suspect him of being a member of the gang of footpads who attacked the doctor the other night, and robbed you and Blake."

"Ass!"

"Eh?"

"Fathead!"

"Look here——"

"The man isn't a footpad, you uttah ass!"

"How do you know?" Blake demanded.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Gussy knows something about him," said Digby. "He was signalling to him as he came up; they whistled to each other."

"My hat; so they did!" exclaimed Manners. "What does it mean, Gussy?"

"Weally, Mannahs——"

"What do you know about this chap in the barn?"

"Weally, you see——"

"The young ass!" said Lowther. "He might have been going into danger, you know, with this scoundrel in the barn."

"You uttah ass, how dare you call my bwothah a scoundrel?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Monty Lowther staggered in surprise.

"Your brother!" he ejaculated.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Your brother's here!" said Blake, pulling Wally forward.

"Here I am, Gussy!" said Wally cheerfully. "What on earth put it into your head that I was in the barn?"

Arthur Augustus coloured.

"I—I—I——" he stammered.

"Oh, you're off your rocker!" said Wally.

"Weally, Wally——"

"Well, now you're here, you can join us," said Blake.

"That chap in the barn must have heard us, I suppose; but it doesn't matter. We're going to watch for him."

"Weally, Blake——"

"We know he's a bad egg, whoever he is," Blake explained. "Towser's watching for him in the barn, under the trap-door, and we're going to watch here. If he doesn't come out soon, it would be a good idea for one of us to cut off to the police-station in Rylcombe and fetch a bobby."

"Bai Jove!"

"Good egg!" said Digby. "I'll go, if you like."

"Well, we can't wait here all night," Tom Merry said thoughtfully; "and now that the man has heard us, we can't expect to take him by surprise. It would be better to fetch a policeman."

"I—I considah——"

"But suppose it's only one of the Grammar cads playing a jape on us?" Lowther suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"One of the Grammar chaps wouldn't stay out after calling-over like this for a jape," he replied.

"Well, who's going for the bobby? We can give him a tip if he's not wanted, after all. He would do the walk any time for a bob."

"Quite so!"

"Buzz off, Dig, and buck up."

"Right you are!" said Digby.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy caught the junior by the arm.

"Hold on, Dig, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

The Fourth-Former stared at him.

"What for?" he asked. "The sooner we get it over the better. There will be a row if we don't get back to the school pretty soon."

"Yaas, but——"

"Blessed if I can understand you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, in perplexity. "You whistled when you came up. Does that mean that you were signalling to someone in the barn?"

D'Arcy was silent.

"Do you know who it is?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy, at last.

"Who is it, then?"

No answer.

"You're not pulling our leg?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Blake abruptly. "Do you mean to say, Gussy, that this was the appointment you had—you were coming here to meet this chap in the barn?"

D'Arcy flushed in the dark.

"Yaas," he said.

Wally chuckled.

"Then we've been on the wrong track," he said. "I suppose it's a lady all the time."

"Weally, Wally——"

"If she was a lady, she has jolly big feet, that's all," said Wally. "But perhaps Gussy prefers them big."

"You diswespectful young ass——"

"Look here, Gussy, explain yourself!" Blake exclaimed.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

"Who is this chap in the barn, and what have you got to do with him?"

"I can't explain, deah boys."

"You don't mean to say that you're getting mixed up with Lumley-Lumley's old friends, and Levison's friends, the bookmakers?"

"I wegard that question as an insult."

"Then what are you making all this giddy mystery about?" Blake demanded, exasperated. "If you know the chap in the barn, who is it?"

"You—you see—"

"Explain yourself, you ass!"

"Undah the circs—"

"Hark!" shouted Herries. "He's coming, and Towser's got him!"

Gr-r-r-r-r-rh!

It was the voice of Towser from the shadowy barn, growling, yapping, snarling. The juniors rushed towards the doorway. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed after them.

"Call him off!" he shrieked. "Hewwies, call him off!"

"Rats!" said Herries.

D'Arcy grasped his arm.

"Hewwies, old man, call the bwute off; he's my bwothah!"

"Towser's your brother!" exclaimed Herries, in astonishment.

"No, you ass; the man in the barn."

"But Wally's here!"

"My eldah bwothah, you ass—Conway!"

"Great Scott! Lord Conway?"

"Yaas, yaas!"

"My hat!" Herries rushed into the barn. "Towser! Towser! Towser, come off! Towser! Towser!"

Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r!

CHAPTER 6.

Shoulder to Shoulder.

TOWSER was growling furiously.

The interior of the barn was dark as pitch. Tom Merry struck a vesta, and held it up. The light flickered through the shadows of the barn.

The juniors expected to see a man struggling with the bulldog, with Towser's jaws fastened upon him somewhere.

But no man was visible. Towser was standing under the trapdoor, growling fiercely, and the trapdoor was closed. What had happened was pretty clear. The man had made an attempt to descend, and had found the bulldog ready, and had retreated into the loft again, and closed the trap door.

Herries patted Towser's head.

"Good old Towsy!" he murmured. "Isn't he a ripping dog, you chaps?"

"A little too ripping, if he had started ripping Lord Conway's bags with his teeth," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry struck another match, and held it up so that he could see the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was pale and worn-looking.

"Is it true, Gussy?" Tom Merry demanded.

"Is what true, deah boy?"

"That it is Lord Conway in the loft?"

"Yaas."

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "What on earth is old Conway playing hide and seek here for? Look here, you're gammoning, Gus."

"Weally, Wally—"

"If it was Conway, what did he want to bolt into the loft for?" demanded Wally. "He must have known Pongo when Pong smelt him out. It's all rot!"

"I—I can't explain—"

"You'll have to. The fellows will all chuckle over this. They'll think there's insanity in the family, I should say," said Wally. "What on earth—"

"You mustn't tell the fellows."

"Why not?"

"You'll see it all in the papahs to-morrow, I expect," groaned the swell of St. Jim's.

Wally looked startled. The match went out, and from the darkness came Wally's voice, sounding strangely husky.

"What is it, Gussy? Is there trouble at home?"

"Yaas, Wally, deah boy."

"Bad trouble?"

"Howwid."

"What's happened?"

"I suppose you must all know now," groaned Arthur Augustus. "Conway told me to keep it a secwet that he was here, and I was comin' to meet him secwetly. I hadn't the faintest ideah that you chaps were here, of course."

A voice came from above. The man in the loft had heard all that was said. The juniors heard the trapdoor open.

"If you will keep that bulldog quiet, I will come down."

"Towser's all right, sir," said Herries. He recognised the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 178.

voice of Lord Conway, the eldest son of the Earl of Eastwood, at once.

"Very well."

Herries grasped Towser's collar with a firm hand. Tom Merry struck a match, and a handsome athletic form swung itself out of the trapdoor, and dropped into the barn below.

It was Lord Conway!

He looked pale, worn, almost haggard now—travel-stained, torn; but it was the young man they knew well—the man who had been always a kind brother to Arthur Augustus, and a kind friend to all the juniors.

Only lately he had taken Tom Merry & Co. on a cruise in his yacht in the South Seas, and in that voyage the juniors of St. Jim's had learned to like and respect the viscount more than ever.

The match went out; darkness swallowed up the viscount and the juniors. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice was heard.

"I'm awfully sowwy, Conway, old boy. I kept the secwet all wight. These chaps came here quite by chance. I know it's wotten for you. But you can rely upon them to keep the secwet. They'll be all wight."

"You can certainly rely upon us, Lord Conway," said Tom Merry. "I don't understand in the least what's the matter, or why you should want to keep your visit here a secret, but if you do, we'll keep the secret right enough."

"Yes, rather!" said all the juniors together.

There was a short silence. The juniors waited for Lord Conway to speak.

The viscount spoke at last. His voice was strained and husky.

"Thank you, my lads," he said. "Since you have seen me, I had better explain. You will see it all in the papers to-morrow, in any case, as Arthur says."

"Yaas, wathah!" groaned the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am suspected of a crime—"

"What, sir?"

"I think you fellows know me well enough to make it needless for me to say that I am innocent," said the viscount proudly.

"We know that, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But suspicion has fallen upon me. It is partly my own fault—I cannot tell you exactly how. I hope that in a few days it will all be cleared up—but I cannot tell. But now the police are in search of me."

"The police!" said Tom Merry, in a horrified whisper.

"Yes."

"To arrest you?"

"Yes."

"You—you don't mean to say that there is a warrant out for your arrest, sir?" muttered Monty Lowther.

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

"I wrote to Arthur, and told him to meet me here," said Lord Conway quietly. "I knew this old barn, and I thought I should be safe here till I could see him. It is necessary for me to hide for a few days, and F thought of the old tower at St. Jim's, and the secret passages in the School House. I meant to ask Arthur to help me—"

"Of course I'd do anything," old man," said D'Arcy brokenly.

"Now you are all in it—"

"We'll all stand by you, sir," said Tom Merry firmly.

"Blessed if I care whether it's lawful or not. We know you're true blue, and that's enough."

"That's vewy kind of you, Tom Mewwy."

"We all say the same!" exclaimed Blake.

"Thank you," said the viscount softly. "It will turn out all right; I am sure of that. My dear boys, I would not ask this of you, but—but I have no choice. You will help to hide me, then? Somewhere in St. Jim's I should think I could be stowed away in safety, and you could bring me food when it is safe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll do it with pleasure, sir," said Tom Merry. "We haven't forgotten how kind you have been to us many a time."

"Rather not, sir!"

"We'll stand by you to the finish," Monty Lowther exclaimed.

"Thank you again. There must not be a word said on the subject of my being here," said the viscount. "I will remain here till later, and then you can let me into the School House. I think I remember you telling me, Blake, that the secret passage opened from a panel in your study."

"Yes, sir. It's been screwed up now, but I've no doubt we could get the screws out again," said Blake.

"Good!"

"It's a wippin' ideah," said D'Arcy, "and if the police should come, they will nevah think of a secwet passage."



Lord Conway tore himself from the inspector's grasp, brushed aside the policeman, and leaped out into the road. "Stop him!" yelled Inspector Pix.

But, of course, they'll nevah suspect that you are in hidin' at St. Jim's."

"I hope not," said Lord Conway. "Leave me now. I will remain here—"

"Come to the school at half-past ten, sir," said Tom Merry. "We will help you in over the wall, and get you into the School House. You will be safe here until then."

"Good!" said Blake. "That will be after lights out. We can sneak down from the dorm. and let you in, sir."

"It's a shame," the viscount muttered—"it's a shame to drag you into this!"

"Rubbish, sir!"

"Well, you had better be gone now," said Lord Conway. "You will be late for calling-over, as it is."

"Yaas, wathah! You'll be all wight here, Con, old son."

"Yes, yes."

And the juniors shook hands with Lord Conway and left the barn. The man who was hiding from the police remained alone in the darkness.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

CHAPTER 7.

Levison Discovers.

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, met the juniors as they came in. He jerked his thumb towards Mr. Railton's study door.

"That's your way," he said.

"Vewy well, Kildare, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully!

And the juniors went in to see the House-master of the School House, and received an imposition apiece for missing call-over without saying a word in their defence, excepting that they were very sorry to be late—which was true enough.

"Never mind the blessed lines," said Tom Merry, as they left the House-master's study. "We can do them. Lucky Railton never asked too many questions."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll get up to the study now, and look at those screws in the panels," said Jack Blake. "Better to have them out ready. I'll do that while you others are at prep."

"Good egg!"

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The Terrible Three went to their study in the Shell passage to do their belated prep., and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy went to No. 6.

Levison, of the Fourth, met them outside the study. The cad of the Fourth was very curious. He had not forgotten the incident of the letter in the afternoon. His keen green-grey eyes scanned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face very sharply.

"I hope it's all right now," he remarked.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"I fail to undahstand you, Levison," he said frigidly.

"Your bad news from home, I mean."

"Weally, Levison—"

"I hope it's nobody ill—"

"It is not."

"Anything gone wrong at Eastwood?"

"Pway mind your own bizney, Levison."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that the special D'Arcy brand of politeness?" he asked sneeringly. "Where have you fellows been all the time? I noticed you missed call-over."

"Find out!"

And the chums of the Fourth went into their study, and Blake slammed the door with considerable emphasis in Levison's inquisitive face.

The cad of the Fourth stood silent in the passage, an expression of wonder and spite on his thin, keen face. "What on earth's up?" he muttered. "What does it mean? There's something jolly wrong, and they're all mixed up in it—Tom Merry, too, as he was out with them. I'm jolly well going to get to the bottom of it."

Jack Blake gave a snort as he lighted the gas in the study.

"Blessed if I can stand that chap!" he exclaimed. "He gets on my nerves. What does a chap want to inquire into other chaps' bizney for?"

"Because he's a howlin' cad, deah boy."

"You get on with your prep.," said Blake. "I'll find a screw-driver and begin on these screws. It will be a long job."

"We'll take it in turns, deah boy."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

Blake, who was an amateur carpenter in his spare time, had a box of tools in his study. He selected a screw-driver, and examined the secret panel. The Fourth Form passage in the School House was one of the oldest parts of the school. The partitions between the studies were modern, but the wall that ran along the back of them was of oaken panels, and was part of the original building. It was in this wall that the secret panel was placed, which had been discovered by accident some time before. By the Head's orders it had been screwed up to prevent juniors from exploring the dangerous recesses of the secret passages.

The screws were many and strong, and had been driven in tightly. It was likely to be a task of some hours—and a tiring task—to get them all out again. Blake started work with steady patience.

The study door suddenly opened, and Levison came in without knocking.

"Excuse me, you fellows—"

He stopped, staring at Blake. Blake took the screw-driver hastily away from the screw he was manipulating, and turned crimson. He gave the cad of the Fourth a furious look.

"You rotter!" he shouted. "What do you want?"

Levison grinned.

"I just looked in to borrow a Latin dictionary—"

"You lying cad!" said Blake. "You came in to spy."

"Yaas, wathah! You are a spyin' hound, Levison!"

Levison gave a shrug.

"I didn't know you were trying to open the secret panel," he said. "How should I know? What the dickens do you want to open it for?"

Herries rose from the table. He did not speak a word, but he seized hold of Levison and swung him round.

"Ow!" roared Levison. "Ow! Leggo!"

Herries let go, but not till he had planted his heavy boot fairly behind the cad of the Fourth.

Levison flew through the doorway as if he had been a shell projected from a powerful gun.

"Yaroo!"

He bumped against the opposite wall, and rolled on the linoleum. Herries stood in the doorway, pushing back his cuffs.

"Now come in again, if you like!" he said.

Apparently Levison did not like. He crawled up, and limped away down the passage, muttering furiously to himself.

Herries closed the study door.

CHAPTER 8.

Reilly Obliges.

LIGHTS out in the junior dormitories! The Fourth Form—the School House portion of the Form, at all events—were all in bed as Kildare, of the Sixth, turned out the lights.

"Good-night, kids!"

"Good-night, Kildare!"

The dormitory door closed. The juniors chatted with one another from bed to bed, and one by one the voices died away.

But there were some who did not sleep. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were to meet the Terrible Three in the Shell passage at a quarter-past ten. And there was another who did not close his eyes. It was Levison. Levison had his suspicions, and Levison meant to stay awake to ascertain whether there was anything in them.

He knew that Blake had unscrewed the panel of the secret passage in Study No. 6. He intended to know what it was to be used for. If any fellow left the Fourth Form dormitory that night, Levison intended to know all about it.

Ten o'clock struck, and most of the juniors were asleep. Ten minutes later Blake sat up in bed, and quietly slipped out and took his clothes. He drew on a pair of rubber shoes. Digby and Herries and Arthur Augustus followed his example.

"Quiet!" said Blake.

"I wondah if all the fellows are asleep?" muttered Arthur Augustus.

"I think so."

"You asleep, you fellows?"

"Faith, and I'm not," came a voice from Reilly's bed.

"What are you chaps up to?"

"It's all right, Reilly. We're going out, that's all."

"You spalpeens! Go back to bed."

"Oh, rats!"

Blake & Co. moved silently towards the door. They knew they could depend upon the boy from Belfast. There was a sound in the dormitory, and Reilly called out again as Blake opened the door.

"Blake, darling!"

"What is it, you ass?"

"How many are there of you?"

"Four, ass!"

"Faith, and there's five, thin," said Reilly. "Who's the other chap who's just got out of bed?"

Blake started.

He closed the door again, and turned back into the gloomy dormitory. There was a grim expression upon his face in the gloom.

"So somebody else has got out of bed, eh?" he said.

"Thanks, Reilly, old man. I think I can guess who it is."

He groped his way to Levison's bed. It was empty.

"I thought so—Levison!"

"Well," said Levison's voice from the darkness—concealment of his intention was impossible now—"well, what's the matter?"

"What have you got up for?"

"Because I choose."

"You were going to spy on us."

"You uttah wottah!"

"I suppose I can get out of bed if I choose," said Levison coolly. "You've not taken out a patent for this sort of thing, have you?"

"You're not going to follow us," said Blake.

"I'm going to do just as I like."

"Faith, and it's a mean spalpeen ye are, Levison. Sure if I was Blake I'd land ye a punch on the jaw," said Reilly.

"Will you do me a favour, Reilly?" asked Blake.

"Sure, fifty, if ye like, Blake darling."

"Will you see that this cad doesn't follow us from the dorm?"

"Faith, and I will, intirely."

Reilly jumped out of bed, and stumbled towards Levison in the dark. The cad of the Fourth backed out of his way.

"Let me alone!" he said savagely.

"Faith, you are staying in the dorm," said Reilly, with a chuckle.

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"I am not."

"Your mistake," said the Belfast boy cheerfully. "Haven't I said that I will oblige Blake. Get into bed?"

"I won't."

"Faith, then you'll get into mine, and I'll get in, too," said Reilly. "You're not going out of my sight."

Levison dodged round his bed, but the Irish junior was quicker. He grasped the cad of the Fourth, and Levison panted furiously.

"Let me go!" he hissed.

"Sure and I've got ye, and I love ye too much to let ye go, intirely."

"I'll wake the whole dorm.!"

"Wake away!"

Levison panted.

"Look here, you'll let me go, or I'll yell out and wake the prefects!" he exclaimed.

Reilly's grasp tightened upon him.

"You can do that if you like," he said, "but if you begin to yell I begin to hit hard, and we'll see who gets tired first."

Levison did not yell. He knew by experience how hard the Irish junior could hit, and he did not want any samples.

"You've got him all right, Reilly?" Blake asked.

"Sure and I have."

"You'll see he doesn't get out?"

"Yes, rather, Blake darling."

"Thanks awfully!"

"Yaas, wathah! Thanks awfl'y, deah boy!"

"Not at all!" grinned Reilly. "Buzz off, and leave this rotter to me. I'll comb his hair for him."

The chums of the Fourth quitted the dormitory. Levison made an effort to wrench himself away from the Irish junior; but Reilly's grasp was like iron.

The cad of the Fourth would have given a great deal to yell out for the prefects. But dread of Reilly's hard and heavy fists restrained him. He could certainly have spoiled Blake's little plan, whatever it was; but he would have gone about in a painful state for days afterwards.

"And will ye get into bed, plaze?" asked Reilly, in his sweetest tone.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"No, I won't."

"Then I shall have to help you."

"Let me alone, you Irish beast!"

"Faith, I've promised to look after ye, and I'm going to do it. Get in!"

"Ow!"

There was a chuckle from some of the beds. The altercation had awakened a good many of the juniors.

"What's the row there?" asked the voice of Lumley-Lumley, from the shadows.

"Only Blake's gone out on a little expedition, and Levison wants to spy after him," said Reilly cheerfully. "I'm stopping him."

"Good! I guess I'll help you if you want it."

"Sure I think I can manage."

Reilly tossed Levison into bed as if he had been a bundle of hay. Then he fastened a cricket-belt to his own wrist and Levison's.

"That's in case I go to sleep," he remarked. "Mind, if you try to get away, somebody will be hurt—one of us two, and it won't be me."

"Beast!"

"Quiet, now; ye're kapin' the fellows awake!"

"Rotter!"

"Is it a thick ear ye're looking for?" asked Reilly. "If ye open ye're mouth again, Levison, that's what ye'll get, intirely."

Levison did not open his mouth again.

He lay palpitating with rage and spite, while the Irish junior went to sleep. There was no sleep for Levison. He could not get away without awakening Reilly, and Reilly, awakened, would have stopped him.

Levison had to remain where he was—tormented by rage and chagrin, and an intense curiosity as to what the chums of the Fourth were doing. But he could only wonder on the subject; there was no means of finding out.

Reilly slept like a top, and Levison lay gritting his teeth, his greenish eyes gleaming like a cat's in the darkness, as the minutes rolled slowly by.

CHAPTER 9.

Wally is not Left Out.

"**B**AI Jove, that's weally wippin' of Weilly," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the four juniors crept down the dormitory passage.

"Yes, rather," said Blake. "He's jolly decent—as decent as Levison is the other thing. He won't let the cad get loose, that's one comfort. Here we are, Tom Merry!"

"Are you there?" muttered Digby.

Three forms loomed up dimly in the gloom.

"Here we are," said Tom Merry's voice.

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've been waiting five minutes for you," said Manners.

"Sorry. Couldn't be helped. That cad Levison tried to follow us."

Tom Merry started.

"What have you done with him? He mustn't know."

"Reilly is keeping him in the dorm."

"Oh, good! Let's get to the box-room now. Hush!"

The juniors remained silent and still as a faint footfall was heard in the gloom.

They listened with bated breath.

If it should be a master or a prefect on his rounds, they had a very good chance of being discovered, and sent back to their dormitories, and in that case, what would happen to Lord Conway, waiting outside the school wall?"

The footfall came nearer.

"It's not a master!" muttered Tom Merry. "It's somebody creeping, and a master wouldn't creep."

"It might be Knox, the prefect."

"Quite poss., deah boy."

"Listen!"

The footfalls ceased.

In the darkness of the Shell passage, someone was standing within a few paces of the chums, but they caught only a dim shadow.

Who was it?

Not a master, not a prefect, creeping about in the dark in this mysterious way, careful not to let his footfalls be heard.

Could it be a burglar?

The juniors thrilled, and clenched their fists hard, at the thought. Or was it Levison, out of Reilly's clutches after all?

A voice came softly from the shadows.

"Are you duffers there?"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Wally!"

There was a faint chuckle.

"So you're there?" said the scamp of the Third.

"Yes, you young ass. You startled us."

"Frightened you, you mean?" chuckled Wally.

"Weally, Wally—"

"What on earth are you doing here?" demanded Blake.

"Why ain't you in bed in the Third Form dorm.?"

"Why ain't you in bed in the Fourth Form dorm.?" demanded Wally, in his turn.

"We're out to help Lord Conway."

"Well, so am I."

"You young ass!"

"Yaas, wathah; I certainly agree with Blake, Wally. You are a fwabjous young ass. The best thing you can do is to go stwaight back to bed."

To which Wally's reply was monosyllabic and disrespectful.

"Rats!"

"You cheeky young beggah!"

"I've got a suggestion to make," said Wally. "You can go back to bed, if you like, and leave the whole matter to me. Or I'll come with you. There isn't any third course."

Tom Merry laughed slightly.

"I suppose we'd better take the cheeky young rascal with us," he said. "You can come, Wally, but don't make a row."

"Rats!"

"This way to the box-room," said Tom Merry; and he led the way, to save further argument. There was evidently no getting rid of the scamp of the Third, whether he was of any use in the party or not.

The juniors ascended the box-room stairs, and went into the room, feeling their way in the dark. Outside the box-room was a flat lead of a lower roof, and from that the juniors had more than once reached the ground by means of a rain-pipe. A rain-pipe, however, might not be sufficient for Lord Conway, and on this occasion Tom Merry had provided a long and strong rope, knotted at intervals through its length.

He drew the rope out of the empty box in which it had been concealed already, and stepped out of the window upon the leads.

One end of the rope was secured to a chimney-stack, and the other allowed to slide down into the darkness below.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and peered down into the darkness.

"Bai Jove! That looks a long dwop!" he remarked.

"Let me help you down," said Monty Lowther. "I could tie the end of the rope round your neck, just under the chin, and—"

"Pway don't be a silly ass!"

"No need for us all to go down," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to go in a crowd and attract attention."

"Wathah not!"

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"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

"You Fourth Form chaps had better remain here, and

"Wats!"

"You see—"

"You Shell fellows can stick here," said Blake, "and

"Now, don't be a silly chump!"

"Oh, dry up, all of you!" said Tom Merry. "Four of us will go and meet Lord Conway—the others stay here. I'm leader, so—"

"Ahem! You've made a delightful mistake," said Blake.

"You see, I'm leader—"

"Rats!" said Wally. "As the chap here who has most

hoss sense, I think—"

"Weally, you know—"

"We're not getting on very fast, are we?" Tom Merry remarked. "And Lord Conway will be waiting by this time. Let's leave it to Gussy, as he's the party most directly concerned in the matter."

"Jollay good ideah!"

"Well, all right; we'll leave it to you, Gussy," said Blake.

"Then I make it hearts," said D'Arcy. "I—I mean, I'll settle it! Tom Mewwy and Blake and Wally come with me, and the west wemain here!"

"What an utterly rotten idea!" said Lowther.

"Silly, in my opinion!" said Manners.

"Just like Gussy, though!" said Digby.

"Oh, very like!" said Herries.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

And he swung himself down the rope.

D'Arcy and Wally and Blake followed, and the rest of the juniors remained on the leads of the outbuilding, waiting for them to return.

With cautious steps the juniors made their way round the School House, and cut off towards the school wall.

From many windows in the School House lights were still shining—the masters were up, and most of the Sixth.

But the quadrangle was dark and silent.

The juniors reached the school wall, and Tom Merry climbed the slanting oak, and climbed on top of the wall.

He looked up and down the road outside.

The night was dark, only a star or two gleaming in the dusky sky. Tom Merry gave a low whistle.

It was answered from the deep shadow of the wall. A tall figure stepped out into view.

"Is that you, sir?"

"Yes, Tom."

"This way, then."

A minute more, and Lord Conway was helped over the school wall, and stood within the grounds of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10.

The Secret Passage.

THE juniors were trembling with excitement.

The first part of the scheme had worked successfully; they had quitted the House in secrecy, and Lord Conway had been admitted to the quad. The next step was to get him into the School House.

Tom Merry took hold of the young man's sleeve.

"This way, sir!" he said.

"Yes, Tom."

"Come on, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah! Are you all wight, Conway, old boy?"

"Yes, Arthur."

"No dangah since we left you in that wotten old barn?"

"None."

"You got here without bein' seen?"

"I think so; in fact, I am certain!"

"Jollay good!"

"Quiet!" whispered Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hush! Hush! Somebody's coming!"

They stood stockstill in the darkness. A dim figure loomed up and passed them as they stood in the black shadow of the elms.

Someone was crossing from the School House towards the wall on the road.

The shadow passed; the faint sound of footfalls died away in the deep night.

It was gone!

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"That was a narrow shave."

"Who was it?" muttered Lord Conway. "Is there any suspicion—is someone on the watch?"

"No; it was Knox, the prefect."

"Knox—a prefect!"

"I think so; I believe I know his outline. He's going to

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break bounds, and go down to the Green Man in Rylcombe! It's a little way he has!"

"Oh!"

"He didn't see us; and he won't be back for an hour or two at least. Come on!"

Tom Merry led the way round to the back of the School House.

Lord Conway followed him, and the juniors with beating hearts. Tom Merry groped along the ivied wall for the rope. He found it, and gave it a jerk as a signal to the juniors on the leads of the outbuilding.

There was a faint whisper from above.

"All serene!"

"Will you climb first, sir?" asked Tom Merry. "There are knots all along the rope."

"Quite easy, I think."

Lord Conway went up the knotted rope with perfect ease. The juniors followed him, and they stood in the gloom on the leads.

"Get the rope in, Blake!" said Tom Merry, as he led the way to the window of the box-room.

"Right-ho!"

Blake coiled the rope over his arm, and was the last in. The rope was stowed away in the box it had been taken from, and Monty Lowther closed the window softly.

"Where now?" muttered Lord Conway.

"To Study No. 6, sir. You know it well, don't you?"

The viscount laughed softly.

"Yes; I've had tea with you there—for the last time, just before we went on our voyage to the South Seas," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This way, sir!"

The juniors trod away carefully from the box-room. They reached the Fourth Form passage, and Blake opened the door of Study No. 6. The juniors crowded in, and Blake closed the door carefully.

"We shall have to have a light," he muttered. "See if the blind is down, Tom Merry! I put it carefully down before I went to bed."

"Yes; that's all right."

"Good!"

Blake struck a match softly. A mere glimmer of gas was turned on, merely sufficient to show the way round the study. The juniors stood with pale, excited faces and beating hearts, while Jack Blake felt over the panelled wall.

The traces where the screws had been were visible enough, but Blake had filled up the holes with putty, and so the fact that the screws had been taken out was not immediately perceptible.

Unless the panels were looked at carefully, no one was likely to notice that the screws were missing.

Blake was feeling for the spring.

There was a faint click in the darkness.

A wide panel shot open, and a dark aperture behind was revealed.

Lord Conway stared into it with wide eyes. The opening did not seem inviting, but it meant safety to him!

"There you are, sir!" said Blake.

"Thank you, my lad! Is not this secret panel known in the school?"

"Oh, yes; most of the fellows know about it!"

"Then if the police should come—"

"They'd hardly think of looking here, sir."

"But if they did," said Tom Merry, "there's a way out—a secret trapdoor giving on the roof, and you could get out that way, and down the ivy into the quad. Of course, that would be only as a last resource."

Lord Conway looked reflective.

"Once when I came here," he said, "you had a show on—amateur theatricals. You had disguises of all sorts—beards and moustaches and grease-paint."

"We've got them now, sir."

"Then I think I will borrow some," said Lord Conway.

"I have done something in the amateur theatrical line myself, and I think I could get up a disguise which might save me, if I am driven from this retreat."

"Bai Jove! What a wippin' ideah!"

"Ripping!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "Suppose we disguise you now, sir, before you go into the passage, in case it should be needed?"

Lord Conway hesitated.

"I don't like keeping you out of bed," he said. "I—"

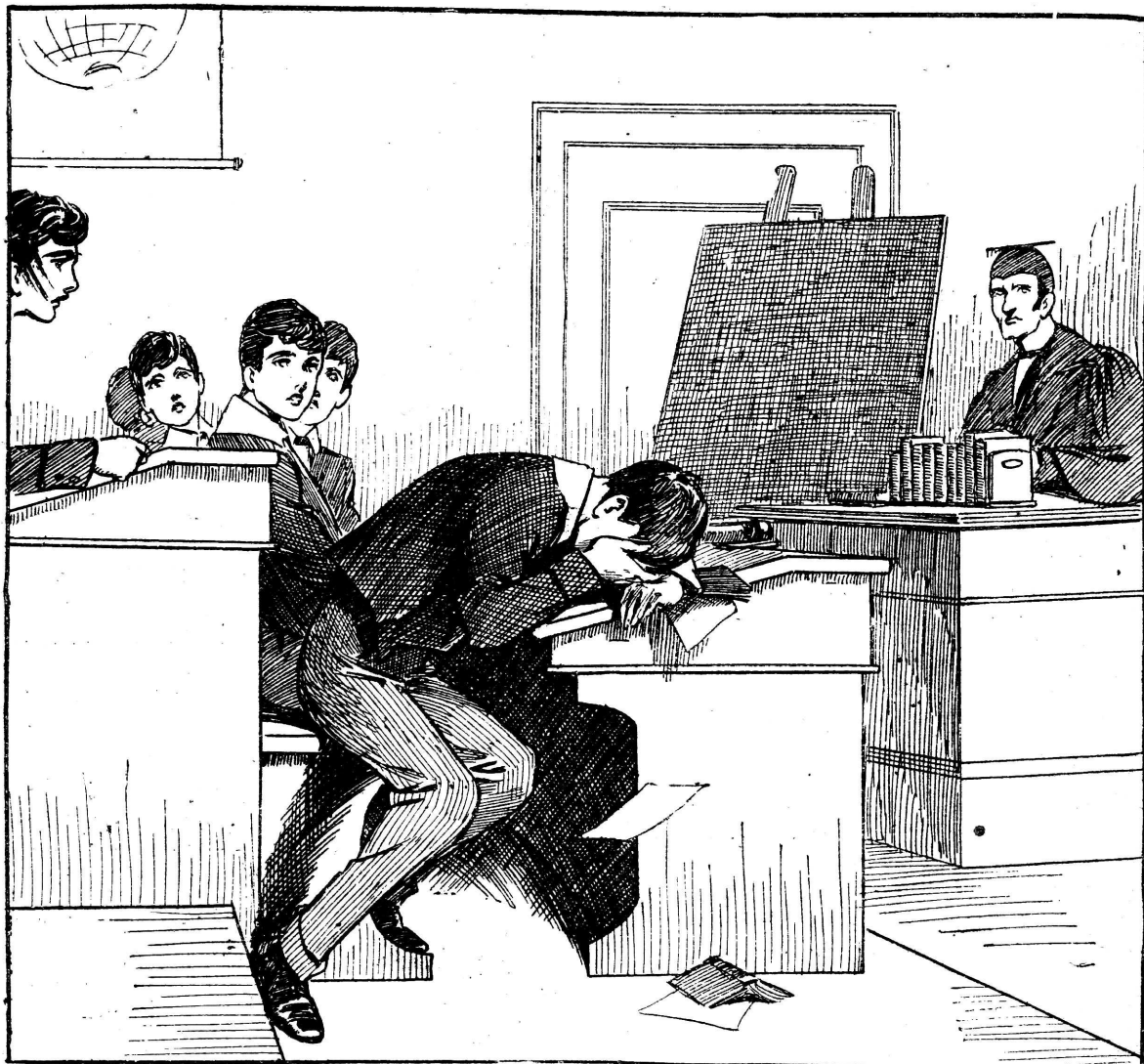
"Oh, rot, sir!" said Tom Merry. "We want to help you!"

"Very well, then."

"The things are all in this study," said Tom Merry. "We can give you a change of clothes, and any disguise you like."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors lost no time.



Bulstrode tried to construe, but his voice broke, and, laying down his book, he covered his face with his hands and burst into tears. (An incident in the long, complete school story entitled, "The Bully's Brother," by Frank Richards, contained in this week's "Magnet Library." Now on sa'e. Price One Penny.)

CHAPTER 11. Stowed Away.

LORD CONWAY waited while Blake dragged out the chest under the cupboard which contained the clothes used by the juniors in their theatrical performances, and Tom Merry opened the case of grease-paints and powders. Digby sorted out a variety of wigs and moustaches—most of them of the most impossible description.

The viscount smiled as he looked at them. He did not want to disguise himself as Rip Van Winkle or Captain Kidd or one of the Pirates of Penzance.

"Here's some clothes that would do, I think," said Blake. He sorted out a shabby black suit of clothes. It was a man's size, and had been worn in some play by a manservant. In their little shows the juniors sometimes impressed a gardener into the service for parts a boy could not take. The suit was shabby and respectable, and very different from the viscount's own clothes. Lord Conway seemed to shiver a little as he looked at the things, but he nodded his head.

"Bai Jove! I don't think anybody would recognise Conway in those feahful clothes!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"Ha, ha! Rather not!"

"Don't make a row!" said Wally severely.

"Cheeky young beggar!"

"Will you put them on, sir?" Tom Merry asked.

"At once."

Lord Conway changed his clothes. The difference in his appearance was startling when he was clad in the suit of shabby black.

"Bai Jove, what a difference!"

"Now some smudges on the face," said Blake, "and a ginger moustache—"

"Ugh!"

"It's a jolly good idea."

"It's wathah wotten to weah, a moustache," said Arthur Augustus dubiously. "Moustaches have gone out of fashion yeahs and yeahs ago. Of course, Conway must be disguised; but I don't see why he should disguise himself as a man of bad taste."

Lord Conway smiled.

"Never mind that, Arthur, so long as I'm not recognised," he said.

"Well, I suppose that's weally the most important point," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Yes, I imagine so," Monty Lowther said sarcastically.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Try these moustaches, sir," said Tom Merry.

Moustache after moustache was dabbed on Lord Conway's upper lip, till a suitable one was found. Then his eyebrows

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were roughened up and touched with charcoal, and a dab of red was smudged on his nose.

In the dilapidated-looking man of middle age now represented, few would have dreamed of recognising the handsome young viscount.

"Bai Jove, it's wonderful!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"A 1," said Wally.

"That is a wathah vulgah expression, Wally——"

"Br-r-r-r."

"Weally, you young wascal——"

"Now we'd better get you some bedclothes, sir," said Tom Merry. "You will want to go to sleep in the secret passage."

Lord Conway shook his head.

"I have been accustomed to roughing it in the Yeomanry," he said. "I can sleep on a hard floor very well."

"But we can get the things, and——"

"If the passages were searched, they would be found here, and it would be a proof of my presence, and of complicity on the part of someone in the school."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"I suppose you're right, sir," said Tom Merry slowly; "but it will be horridly uncomfy for you to sleep on the floor."

"That is little."

"Luckily, the nights are very warm this time of year,"

Blake said. "You won't be cold. But——"

"I shall be all right."

"As for grub, you can nip out into the study and get it," said Blake. "We've got a lot in the cupboard here ready, and I've packed this little bag with sandwiches and cake, and a bottle of ginger-beer. You can hang it on your shoulder."

"Thank you, that was very thoughtful. I shall certainly get hungry."

"Now, we'll show you how to get out of the passage if you have to."

"Good!"

The juniors entered the secret passage. Blake closed the panel after the last of them had entered.

Before the juniors lay the mysterious recesses of the ancient building; haunts where in the olden time monks had hidden from their persecutors, and where—if old tales were true—many a secret orgy had been celebrated by the brethren of the cowl and the sandal.

Black passages, tenanted by spiders in myriads, with great webs stretched across in the darkness; stone steps, rotting with age and mould; grim, dark walls of stone!

Blake paused, lamp in hand, at the foot of a stair that wound upward in the thickness of a great stone wall.

"Here we are!" he said.

"Where does that lead?" asked Lord Conway.

"To the roof of the School House—the oldest part of the place."

"Lead on, then."

Blake ascended the spiral stair. It was narrow and choking. The air was misty and heavy. At the top of the stair the junior halted, the lamp gleamed upon solid stone round him, with no trace of an outlet.

Lord Conway looked puzzled.

"It looks to me like the end of a blind alley," he said.

Blake nodded.

"It looks like it, but it isn't," he said. "Look here!"

He pressed upon the corner of a huge square stone.

It turned as on a pivot, and a breath of fresh air came through. Lord Conway looked out of the opening.

It was just large enough for a man to squeeze himself through. Outside, a star twinkled from the black heavens.

Below the opening was a leaded roof.

"You can get out on the roof," said Blake. "In the corner—yonder by the chimney-stack—there's thick ivy to climb down on, and under the ivy are hidden points of stone for the hands to take hold of. It was all arranged, five hundred years ago or more, by the chaps who used to dig here."

"It's wonderful," said Lord Conway.

"Jolly lucky for us, now," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake closed the stone, and they descended. Ten minutes later they stood by the secret panel in the wall of Study No. 6.

"Will you sleep in the study, Con, old boy, and we retire into the secret passage in the mornin'?" D'Arcy asked, "it would be more comfy."

Lord Conway shook his head.

"No—I will be on the safe side—accidents might happen."

"Vewy well."

"And now, good-night!" said the young man, in a moved voice, "I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently for what you have done for me."

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"THE BULLY'S BROTHER"

is the Title of the Splendid Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.

"Oh, rot, sir!" said Tom Merry. "It's nothing."

"Wathah not?"

"Well, good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, Con, old boy! Wely on us."

The secret panel clicked shut. Lord Conway was left in darkness and solitude. The juniors left the study silently.

"It's rotten hard on your major, Gussy," Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's heavily.

"Beastly," said Wally.

"Good-night, you chaps!"

The juniors separated. Wally going back to the Third-Form dormitory, the Terrible Three to the Shell quarters, and Blake & Co. to the Fourth-Form dorm. Blake remembered Levison as he went in. In the excitement of the events of the night, he had completely forgotten the cad of the Fourth.

He closed the door, and called out softly:

"Reilly!"

Levison's voice came savagely from the darkness.

"Oh, so you've come back?"

Blake chuckled.

"Yes, here I am. Have you been asleep?"

"No, hang you!"

"Stayed awake to watch for us?" asked Digby. "How kind of you!"

"Hang you!"

"Weally, Levison——"

"Hallo!" said Reilly, waking up. "You thrying to get away, you thafe of the worrold. Lie quiet, or——"

"It's all right, Reilly, we're here."

"Faith, and I think I've been asleep!" said Reilly.

"Ha, ha! I think you have. Most obliged to you for keeping that cad here."

"Oh, not at all, Blake, darling!"

Reilly released the belt that held Levison's wrist to his, and the cad of the Fourth skipped back to his own bed. He plunged into it in a sullen, savage temper. But the chums of the Fourth cared little for his temper. They turned in, and slept all the sounder for their unusually late hours.

CHAPTER 12.

D'Arcy's Reply.

ST. JIM'S was astounded the next morning!

Astounded is hardly the word—they were amazed, stunned, electrified!

The news got out by degrees.

The Head himself was the first who knew—it was in "The Times" that he perused over his breakfast.

Some of the masters learned it next—and then the seniors—and finally, the juniors got on to the matter, and the whole school knew.

They knew—and stared.

That it was true there was no doubt—for it was in the papers. All the papers had it that morning. The evening papers of the night before had had it; but evening papers never found their way to St. Jim's.

After second lesson, the school buzzed with the amazing news.

Fellows collected in little groups and discussed it, with bated breath.

They read, and talked, and marvelled on only one subject.

Fellows met one another, and the first remark of each was: "Have you heard that about D'Arcy's brother?"

To which each invariably replied: "Yes."

For all had heard it by this time.

Some fellows spoke to D'Arcy about it. Most of them were too delicate to mention it to the swell of St. Jim's. They knew that it must be an awkward and unpleasant subject for him.

But others were hardier.

Levison, in especial, questioned the swell of the Fourth when that Form came out after morning lessons.

He walked up to D'Arcy before a crowd of fellows and spoke loudly. D'Arcy was looking very pale and troubled. It was clear that he knew all about the black news, as well as anybody else did.

"I say, D'Arcy," Levison exclaimed, "have you heard?"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and turned a freezing glance upon Levison.

"Heard what?" he demanded.

"About your brother, Conway?"

"Weally——"

"He's robbed a diamond merchant of ten thousand pounds—ow!"

D'Arcy's fists shot out in a flash, and Levison went down upon his back, with a bump that made the passage ring.

D'Arcy stood over him, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing behind his eyeglass.

"You uttah cad and liah!" he panted. "You uttah wottah!"

Levison sat up dazedly.

"Ow!" he groaned.

"You lyin' cad! Wepeat those words, and I will wipe up the floor with you!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"It's in the papers," groaned Levison.

"It may be in the papahs," said D'Arcy, "but no one will say to me that my bwothah is a thief, without gettin' it stwaight fwom the shouldah."

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish, of the Fourth. "I suppose we're not called upon to believe that the police are all wrong, just because Lord Conway is your brother."

"You may hold what opinion you like, I suppose, so long as you do not state it in my pwesence," said D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Quite right," chimed in Tom Merry, "and we'll back you up, Gussy, all along the line."

"Yes, rather!"

"Thank you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

Lefevre, of the Fifth, came up. He was looking very curious. Lefevre wasn't a bad sort of fellow, by any means, but he had a touch of inquisitiveness, and inquisitiveness had been given out to him in greater quantities than discretion. He gave Arthur Augustus a patronising nod.

"Bad news about your brother, D'Arcy," he said.

"Yaas."

"How did he come to do it?" said Lefevre. "That's what I say."

"He didn't do it."

"Oh, he did it right enough! It's quite clear—"

Biff!

"Yaroo!"

Lefevre, of the Fifth, sat down with remarkable suddenness.

There was a buzz in the passage. It was almost unprecedented for a Fourth-Former to knock down a fellow in the Fifth.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's blood was up, and at that moment he would probably have knocked down a Form-master, if the latter had cast any aspersion upon the honour of his brother.

Lefevre sat up dazedly.

"Yow!" he mumbled. "W-what was that? That's what I say. Ow! Why, you cheeky young hound, I'll smash you!"

He sprang up and rushed at D'Arcy.

But Tom Merry & Co. closed round the swell of St. Jim's at once, and the captain of the Fifth was pushed back.

"Hands off!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"I'll smash him!" roared Lefevre. "He's bunged me on the nose! That's what I say! I'll smash him!"

"Rats!"

"Get out of the way! I—"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "You had no right to speak about D'Arcy's brother as you did."

"None at all," said Blake.

"What! His brother is a thief—"

Biff!

"Yoop!"

Lefevre sat down again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Reilly. "Faith, and it's like a jack-in-the-box intirely."

Lefevre staggered up. The juniors closed in a solid phalanx round the flushed, excited swell of St. Jim's, and Lefevre had no chance of executing vengeance upon him. The Fifth-Former rubbed his nose, and glared at the juniors, and finally walked away.

The juniors turned out into the sunny quad. Knox, the prefect, was standing in the doorway, and he made a motion of guarding his pockets as D'Arcy came by.

"Look out!" he exclaimed.

And there was a laugh from some fellows lounging by the door. Arthur Augustus halted, and turned a blazing eye upon the Sixth-Former.

"What do you mean by that, Knox?" he exclaimed.

Knox laughed a sneering laugh.

"Oh, I was afraid it might run in the family, that's all," he said. "It seems that your elder brother's a thief—Oh!"

Crash!

Knox, the prefect, caught D'Arcy's fist on the point of his chin, and went flying through the doorway as if he had been shot from a gun.

"Oh! Ow!"

Right down the School House steps he went rolling, to land at the bottom dusty and dishevelled, and aching all over.

It was amazing that the elegant junior of the Fourth could have thrown so much force in that terrible blow.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "I shouldn't like to be a punching-ball when Gussy is going it strong."

"Ha, ha! No."

Knox staggered up. He had never been respected by the juniors; he did not deserve respect. Once he had been very near losing his prefectship for his conduct towards them. But to be knocked down by a fellow in the Fourth Form was a very new experience for him. He charged up the steps at D'Arcy with a murderous look.

"Stop!"

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, rapped out the word.

Knox paused. Furious as he was, he dared not disobey the House-master.

"What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly.

Knox was trembling with rage, and he could hardly speak distinctly.

"He knocked me down," he exclaimed—"knocked me down the steps—D'Arcy did—I, a prefect. I—I—I!"

"D'Arcy!"

"He called my bwothah a thief, sir," said Arthur Augustus, in a shaking voice. "I'll do the same again, sir, if he repeats his words."

"You had no right to do anything of the sort, Knox."

"It's true," yelled Knox. "It's in the papers."

"The papers are often mistaken."

"The police are looking for him."

"The police are often mistaken, too."

"But—but—"

"And even if it were perfectly true, which I do not for one moment believe, it would be utterly caddish and ungenerous to cast it up at D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton. "If you applied such a term to his brother, I cannot be surprised that he struck you. It is very wrong for a junior to strike a prefect, but in this case the provocation was very great, and I excuse D'Arcy."

"Thank you, sir."

Knox was in such a rage that he dared not speak, or he would have said words that would have caused trouble for him. He turned away in bitter silence.

D'Arcy approached the House-master timidly.

"Mr. Waiton, you said that you don't believe the charge against my bwothah," he muttered.

Mr. Railton looked down at him with a kindly smile.

"Not for a moment, D'Arcy. I know Lord Conway well, and I believe him to be as true and honourable as you are yourself. It is some terrible mistake."

"Thank you, deah sir, thank you!"

"You must try to bear this patiently, D'Arcy," said the House-master, in his deep, kind voice. "Try to be patient, and to keep your temper. I am sure it will be found out to be nothing but a mistake."

"You are vewy kind, sir, and—and I will keep my tempah if I can, sir," faltered Arthur Augustus.

CHAPTER 13.

Under Suspicion.

THE story was a strange one, yet there did not seem to be room for a mistake.

The diamonds, to the value of ten thousand pounds, were missing, and it was supposed to be Lord Conway who had taken them.

The papers published the whole story, with a photograph of the jeweller's shop in Hatton Garden, photographs of the jeweller himself, his wife, and his little girl and her favourite kitten. They would have published photographs of the coal-cellar and the coal therein, if they could have obtained them. There were photographs of Lord Conway and Lord Conway's father, the earl, and a view of Eastwood House, where Lord Eastwood lived, and another view of St. Jim's, the public school where Lord Conway's brothers were educated.

There was a reprint of Lord Conway's maiden speech in Parliament, and there was a sketch of the steam-yacht which had lately been wrecked in the South Seas. In short, there were all the particulars, important and unimportant, with which the reporters are accustomed to feed the unhealthy curiosity of a portion of the public. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groaned in spirit as he saw his family name and his family affairs dragged into that dreadful publicity.

But the worst of it all was the charge against Lord Conway. Mr. Sheinstein, the Hatton Garden jeweller, had sent those diamonds to Lord Conway's rooms, on the request of his lordship, written on his lordship's own paper.

There the viscount was to select a diamond tiara, which he intended to give as a wedding present to a lady of his family who was about to be married.

As Lord Conway's position was unquestioned, the jeweller's messenger had, of course, had no hesitation in leaving the diamonds there, Lord Conway not yet being out of bed when they arrived.

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE"

The diamonds were called for later.

They were gone!

What was more startling was that Lord Conway was gone, too.

Mr. Scheinstein had been unable to believe his cars at first. A noble viscount "bolt" with his diamonds! Lord Eastwood's eldest son, heir to an earldom, steal!

It seemed impossible!

But ten thousand pounds was not to be lightly lost, and Mr. Scheinstein remembered how young men get into debt, even those with the best prospects, and are driven to desperation in their efforts to raise money.

Telegrams flew—to Eastwood House, to every known resort of Lord Conway. He was not to be heard of, and the diamonds had disappeared.

Mr. Scheinstein went to the police.

The Scotland Yard detectives, of course, knew all about it as soon as they were told.

Lord Conway was in debt—he had had the diamond ornaments sent him on approval in order to make a coup before he bolted—and he was gone, and Mr. Scheinstein's diamonds were gone with him.

And Scotland Yard put detectives on the track at once. The well-known Inspector Fix was placed in charge of it, and search was made for the missing viscount up and down and round about.

The country was ringing with it.

It came out that a friend of Lord Conway's had been staying with him overnight at his rooms—a Mr. Raby.

The police looked for Raby to get information respecting the viscount, and found that Raby had disappeared too.

Then the theory seemed inevitable that they had fled together with their loot.

It was discovered that Raby was an old friend of the viscount, that they had been at school together, and that they had always been great chums, in all parts of the world. And it came out that George Raby had saved Lord Conway from the jaws of a bear in the Rocky Mountains, narrowly escaping death himself in doing it. Raby had almost lost the use of his left arm from a bite of the grizzly, and by that injury he could be known at once, and tracked.

"Poor old Waby!" Arthur Augustus remarked, almost tearfully. "He was an ass, you know, old Waby, but a vewy good-natured ass. You wemembah him at our place in the cricket week last season?"

"I remember," said Tom Merry.

"He was weak, and always gettin' into twouble, and Conway was always gettin' him out," said D'Arcy. "But, of course, he wasn't a thief. That's impos."

"It's a vewy odd case," Tom Merry remarked. "It seems clear that the jewels were sent to your brother's rooms, and never came back."

"Yaas, that's cleah enough."

"Someone must have taken them."

"Yaas, that's extwemely pwob."

"Why doesn't Raby come forward?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Pewwaps he's fwightened; he may be afwaid of bein' suspected," the swell of St. Jim's remarked thoughtfully.

"More likely to get suspected if he bolts than if he doesn't."

"Yaas, that's so, too."

"And Lord Conway," said Blake, with a puzzled look.

"What on earth has he bolted for?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"He is in hiding, stowed away at the school," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "But why? When he is suspected, why doesn't he own up?"

"Blessed if I know."

"The proper thing for a suspected man to do is surely to face the music, and prove his innocence," said Digby.

"Yaas, but—"

"But what?"

"But I dare say he has his weasons"

"I suppose he must have, or he wouldn't be in hiding," said Herries. "But, I must say, that it's jolly odd."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Herries.

"I twust that doesn't mean you suspect my bwouthah of stealin' the beastly diamonds, Hewwies," he said.

Herries snorted.

"Of course I don't, ass!"

"All wight, then."

"But I said it was jolly odd, and it is jolly odd!" said Herries. "Blessed if I can make head or tail of it. A suspected man ought to face his accusers—I mean, unless he's got jolly good reasons for not doing it."

"In this case, then, I should say that he had jollay good weasons," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat stiffly.

"Yes, I suppose so—but—"

"Not much good jawing it over, that I can see," Tom Merry remarked. "Anyway, we know that Lord Conway is innocent, and that settles that."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"Yaas, I should wathah say so!"

But all the juniors, including D'Arcy himself, were vewy much puzzled and disquieted.

Lord Conway was innocent! Of that they did not allow a doubt to enter their minds. But why did he hide from the police—why had he fled, when he must know that his flight, and his remaining in hiding, must expose him to the blackest suspicions?

It was a question they could not answer.

"We shall have to give it up," said Monty Lowther. "Let's go and have a row with the New House chaps, and forget all about it."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What's the matter?"

"Look!"

Tom Merry's hand rose to point to the gates.

A man with a square, powerful figure, in an inspector's uniform, had entered, with two constables at his heels.

The two policemen belonged to Rycombe; the other man was a stranger. The juniors looked at them, and the same thought entered all their minds at once.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"The police!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"The police!" said Tom Merry quietly. "And they've come to search the school!"

CHAPTER 14.

The Search!

INSPECTOR FIX and his two companions were shown into the Head's house. But they had been seen by half St. Jim's, and the whole school was in a buzz with the news.

Two policemen, and a Scotland Yard inspector!

The meaning of the visit was clear.

St. Jim's was to be searched!

The authorities suspected that the missing viscount had come to St. Jim's. He had two brothers at school there, and the old place was full of nooks and crannies, where a fugitive might be stowed away, and what could be more natural?

The suspicion was quite natural, under the circumstances, but most of the fellows laughed at the idea.

"The asses!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell, "as if the chap could be here."

"Yes, awful rot, isn't it?" said Clifton Dane. "But you never know what the police may or may not think."

"I suppose they're going to search the school," Gore remarked. "I wish them luck."

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The six boys marked with a X on the photographs published on the back page of No. 172 of the "GEM" Library, having sent in their applications, have duly received the "GEM" Free Hampers. The names and addresses of the lucky winners who attend The Boroughmuir Higher Grade School, Edinburgh, and Parkinson Lane School, Halifax, are as follows:

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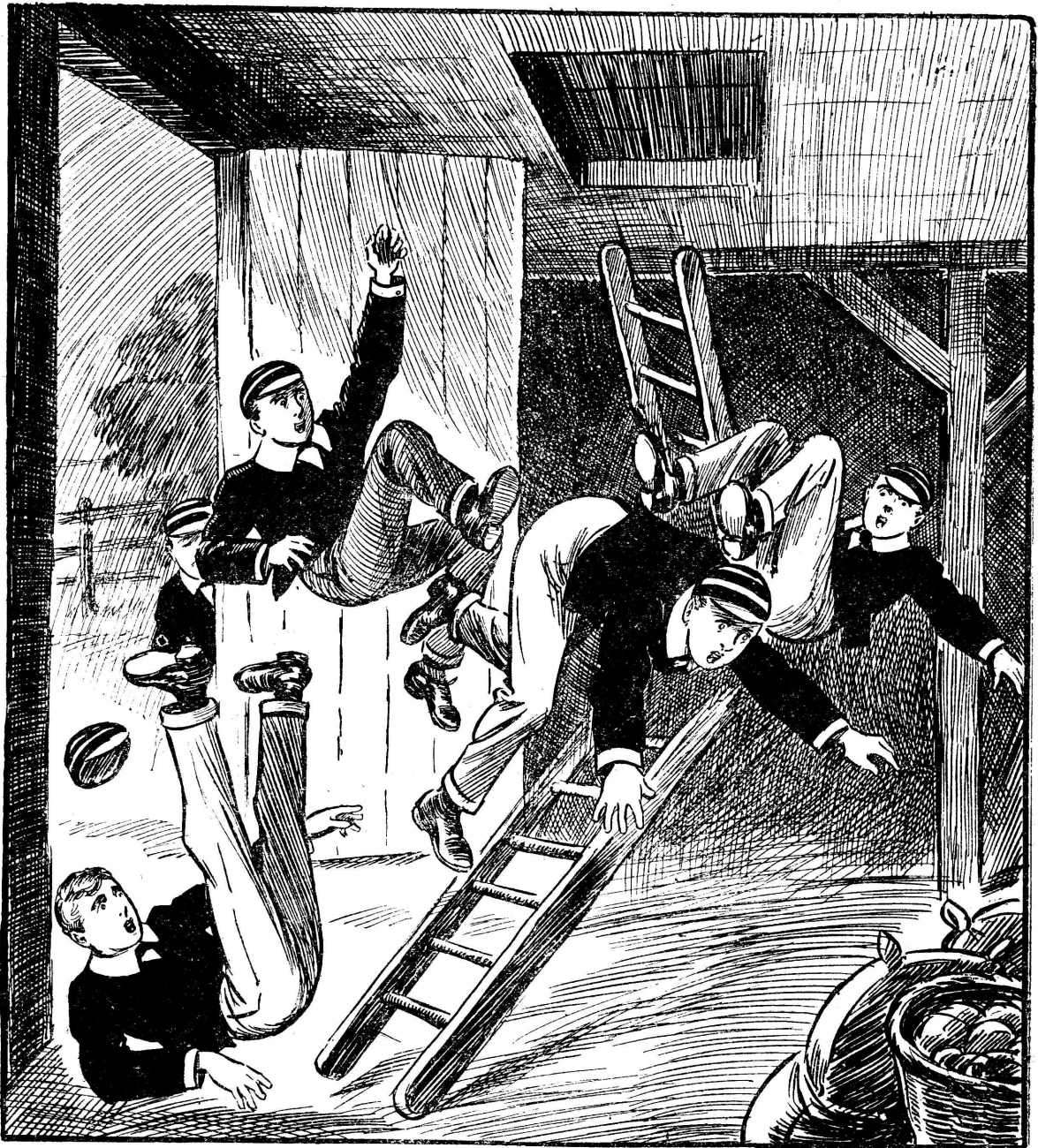
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MASTER D. CHINNERY, 28, Warley Street, Halifax.



"Now then, all together!" shouted Tom Merry. The juniors crowded on the ladder gave a simultaneous heave. Crash! Crash! But it was not the trap-door that gave way—it was the ladder, and the four juniors bumped to the floor of the barn with wild yells.

"Yes, rather!"

"The duffers!"

"Awful asses, aren't they, Tom Merry?" said Bernard Glyn.

"I dare say they are," assented Tom Merry.

"Do you think Lord Conway came in this direction?"

"He's often been in this direction, hasn't he?"

"I mean, since he bolted."

"That's for the police to find out, isn't it?" said Tom Merry.

"If he's here, I dare say they'll find him."

"Let's ask D'Arcy if he's seen him," said Hancock, of the Fourth.

"Oh, let D'Arcy alone," replied Tom Merry.

"But we might ask—"

"Let him alone. I say—what's the good of jawing to him about it? Can't you see he's sick about it already?"

"Well, perhaps you're right."

Several fellows, however, asked D'Arcy whether his brother had come to see him since he had bolted. To each and all of them D'Arcy made the invariable reply:

"Oh, wats! Don't bothah!"

Levison did not ask him. But there was a peculiar green gleam in Levison's eyes. Levison was thinking of the peculiar incidents of the previous night; and it seemed to Levison that at last some light was being let in upon the mystery.

Levison was, in consequence, keeping his eyes and ears open. Inspector Fix and his two companions were shut up with the Head of St. Jim's for about ten minutes.

Then Dr. Holmes sent for Mr. Railton.

The Head, looking very disturbed and distressed, explained the matter to the master of the School House.

"Inspector Fix suspects that Lord Conway may have come here to conceal himself, Mr. Railton," said the Head.

"Most unlikely," said the House-master.

"You have seen nothing of him?"

"Nothing."

"And heard nothing?"

"Not at all."

"The inspector wishes to search the college."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"No objection to that, that I can see," he remarked. "In fact, it will be really more satisfactory, under the circumstances."

"Very good," said Inspector Fix, in his dry voice. "First, however, I should like to see the brother of Lord Conway—he has a brother or brothers here, I understand."

"Yes—two—one in the Fourth Form, and the other, a mere lad, in the Third."

"Let me see the elder, then, if you please."

"I will send for him."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was summoned to the Head's study. Toby, the page, came for him, and found him with Tom Merry & Co. The chums of the School House had been expecting it.

"Master D'Arcy wanted in the 'Ead's study," said Toby.

"Very good, Tobay," said D'Arcy.

And Toby went his way. The swell of St. Jim's looked at his comrades in great distress.

"That means that the police boundahs are goin' to question me," he remarked.

"It looks like it, old fellow."

"It will be a doocid awkward posish for me," said D'Arcy slowly. "Of course, I cannot tell them any cwammahs, and I cannot tell them that old Conway is here. What an I do?"

"Better say nothing," said Digby.

"But that would look suspicious, too," said Blake. "If Conway wasn't here, of course you'd say so at once. If you don't say so, it's equal to admitting that he's here."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what's to be done?" said Dig.

"Blessed if I know."

"I shall have to be guided by circs, I suppose," said D'Arcy. "Anyway, I have to go to the Head's study, I suppose."

"I suppose so."

Arthur Augustus made his way slowly to the apartment where the inspector from Scotland Yard was waiting for him.

Mr. Fix looked at him very keenly.

"This is Master D'Arcy," said the Head.

Inspector Fix nodded.

"You are the brother of Lord Conway?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You are aware that Lord Conway has fled from his rooms in London, and cannot be found?" the inspector queried.

"Yaas."

"Do you know where he is?"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass frigidly upon the inspector.

"I do not regard that question as cwicket," he said. "I wegard it as wotten to ask a chap to give away a chap he knows."

"D'Arcy!" said the Head warningly.

Mr. Fix coughed behind his hand.

"I sympathise with the young gentleman," he said. "But I am here to do my duty, in the King's name! Have you seen your brother to-day, Master D'Arcy?"

"No."

"Did you see him yesterday?"

"I decline to ansawah that question."

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the Head.

"I am sowwy, sir," he said. "But I must decline to ansawah that question. The chap has no wight to ask it."

Inspector Fix coughed again.

"Has your brother come to this school to seek concealment?" he asked.

D'Arcy did not reply.

"Do you not wish to answer, young sir?"

"I have nothin' to say."

"Nothing?" asked the inspector, with a smile.

"Nothin' whatevah!"

"Very well; I am satisfied," said Inspector Fix, good-temperedly. "I quite understand your feelings, and sympathise with them. I will now proceed to search the school, with your permission, Dr. Holmes."

"Certainly, sir!" said the Head.

And Arthur Augustus realised, miserably enough, that his replies had had just the effect he had dreaded—the effect of assuring the inspector that he had, in reality, seen his brother since the latter's "bolt" from London.

"You may go, D'Arcy," said the Head gently.

And the swell of St. Jim's went.

Then the search began.

Inspector Fix had left two constables at the gates of the school, and there were three more posted about the place where they could keep watch for any possible fugitive endeavouring to break away from the buildings.

Two constables accompanied the inspector in his search.

They went up and down, and through and round the School House in the most thorough manner.

The New House was left till later—as both Conway's brothers were School House boys, he was, of course, more likely to have sought refuge in that House. The School House, too, was an old, rambling building, full of nooks and crannies, and the New House was modern and compact, and it would have been difficult to conceal a stowaway there.

Crowds of fellows followed the police in their search, at a distance.

Every nook and corner of the old building was ransacked.

Even the empty boxes in the box-rooms were examined, and the wide, old chimneys, and the wardrobes, and the cupboards in the studies. The searchers looked under the beds in the dormitories, and under tables and sofas.

They looked everywhere—but in vain!

The police at the gate had orders to allow no one to pass out—no one whatever. But no one attempted to go.

For a whole hour the search went on untiringly.

Then Inspector Fix called a halt.

He was still as suspicious as ever that Lord Conway was in the school. D'Arcy's manner of answering him in the study had convinced him of it.

But if Lord Conway was there, he was not to be betrayed, and there did not seem to be any means of finding him.

The inspector paused, baffled, in the Form-room passage, and consulted with his two followers. It was then that Levison of the Fourth came up, with an expression of righteous determination upon his face.

"Have you finished, sir?" he asked.

"Don't ask questions!" snapped Mr. Fix, somewhat crossly.

"I mean, I could suggest—"

"Oh!" The inspector's manner altered at once. "What could you suggest, my boy?"

"If you haven't searched the secret passages, sir—"

Mr. Fix's eyes gleamed.

"Secret passages! So there are secret passages here!"

"Yes, sir. I think it is my duty to tell you, and assist justice, if I can," said Levison, in a very virtuous way.

The inspector did not express any opinion upon that point.

"Where are the secret passages?" he asked.

"There's one that opens through a panel in D'Arcy's study," said Levison.

Mr. Fix gave a start.

"D'Arcy's study!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take me there at once."

"That panel has been securely screwed up, long ago," said Mr. Railton, who had heard what Levison said, not with a favourable ear.

"Oh!" said the inspector.

"It was unscrewed yesterday, sir," said Levison.

"Oh, are you sure?"

"I saw Blake unscrewing it, sir. D'Arcy was present. I wondered at the time what they were doing it for."

The inspector's eyes glittered.

"Take me to the room," he said concisely.

"Yes, sir. Follow me, please!"

And in two minutes Inspector Fix and his followers were in Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage in the School House.

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CHAPTER 15.

No Success!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation as the inspector entered the study.

The chums of the Fourth were there, and so were the Terrible Three. The study had been already searched, and then the chums had gathered there, with the idea of keeping as near the secret panel as possible. They were uneasy about it. It might be remembered at any time by some fellow who might injudiciously blurt out the facts in the hearing of the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

The panel certainly looked innocent enough. Blake had leaned an easel against it, and there was a chair backed against the wall, as if that were a spot no one ever had any need to approach.

The inspector's keen eye noted the chair and the easel at once, as he entered the study for the second time, and he smiled.

That smile struck the chums of the School House like a cold chill.

"Do you want anything here, sir?" asked Jack Blake, as calmly and politely as he could.

"Yes, I want to search the study."

"Bai Jove! You have searched it once, my dear sir."

"Yes, and now I want to search it again."

"Are we to turn out our pockets, sir?" asked Monty Lowther, with polite sarcasm. "I've suspected Gussy more than once of concealing criminals in his watch-case, sir."

Mr. Fix laughed.

"No, you need not trouble about your watch-cases or pockets," he said. "I shall be satisfied if you open the secret panel."

The juniors stared at him in dismay.

The thrust was so sudden that they could make no attempt to conceal their feelings. Arthur Augustus's jaw dropped.

"The—the secret panel!" he murmured.

"Certainly!"

"My hat!"

"Please open it at once," said Mr. Fix politely, but firmly.

"Secret panel," said Blake reflectively. "Did you say a secret panel, sir?"

"Yes, I did."

"If you think there is a secret panel here, sir, perhaps you had better look for it," said Blake. "Are you sure you haven't been reading a newspaper serial story, sir, and that it hasn't got into your head?"

The inspector smiled.

"Will you kindly show me the panel?" he asked.

"Weally, Mr. Fix—"

"Then I will ask Mr. Railton."

"Weally—"

The inspector stepped to the door. The House-master was in the passage, and he stepped into the study as Mr. Fix spoke to him.

"I should be glad if you would show me the secret panel, sir," said Mr. Fix.

"Certainly!"

Mr. Railton stepped to the panelled wall, and removed the easel and the chair. The inspector smiled again. Mr. Railton glanced over the wall, and then looked at Blake.

"This panel was screwed up by order of the Head, Blake," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"The screws have now been removed."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Who removed them?"

"I did, sir."

"We all took a hand in it, sir," said Digby.

"Why?"

"We—we wanted to open the panel, sir."

Mr. Railton asked no more questions. He pressed the spring, and the panel flew open, disclosing the dark aperture beyond. Jack Blake lurched against the mantelpiece, and knocked off a large jug, which fell upon the fender with a terrific crash, and was smashed to atoms.

The House-master looked at him quickly.

"Blake!"

"Very good," said the inspector quietly. "That is enough."

He stepped into the opening.

"Get lanterns—quick!" he said to his men.

The constables had been using lanterns in searching the cellars and lower recesses of the School House. The lanterns were quickly brought and lighted, and the three men passed into the secret passage.

Mr. Railton remained behind, looking sternly at the juniors.

"Blake," he exclaimed, "I can only take it that Lord Conway has come here, and that you have concealed him in

the secret passage. You knocked down that jug to alarm him, and warn him that the police were here."

Jack Blake hung his head, and did not reply.

The House-master was about to speak again, but he checked himself, and followed the constables into the secret passage.

Mr. Fix was pressing on quickly.

It was clear that the inspector believed that he was upon the track of the fugitive already, and that the capture of the viscount was only a question of time.

The chums of the School House looked at one another miserably.

"Bai Jove, it's all up now!" groaned D'Arcy.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"There's a chance," he said. "It will take a good hour for them to search all the passages behind the walls. In that time—"

"Lord Conway will know they're after him, and he'll get out by way of the spiral stair," said Manners, in a low voice. "But he can't stay on the roof. It's overlooked by several upper windows, and he might be seen there."

"He can get down into the quad, without being seen."

"Every outlet from the school is guarded," said Blake.

"But there is the disguise."

"Yaas; that's the last chance."

"Let's get out," said Tom Merry restlessly. "We may find him in the quad, if he has gone down already, or we may be able to help him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was no sign of the police returning from the secret passage yet. The chums of the School House quitted Study No. 6, and went out into the sunny afternoon. Figgins & Co. of the New House came over to speak to them.

"Jolly exciting, ain't it?" said Figgins.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose, as a matter of fact, Lord Conway is here," Figgins remarked. "Is there anything we can do?"

"Nothing—except keep mum," said Tom Merry.

"We'll do that."

"Of course, we don't believe a word against old Conway, Gussy," said Kerr and Wynn—the Co. together.

"Thank you, dear boys," said D'Arcy. "Of course, it's all a wotten mistake."

"Oh, we know it is."

"This way," said Tom Merry.

They strolled round the School House. In a secluded corner, shadowed by buildings, was a thickly-ivied wall, and under the ivy were concealed the stone projections by means of which it was easy to climb to and from the roof.

A man had just dropped from the ivy.

Figgins & Co. stared at him in astonishment. He was a man with dark, rough eyebrows, a sandy-coloured moustache, rusty black clothes, and a generally tired and dusty and dilapidated appearance.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "That's not a detective, surely."

The stranger laughed softly.

"No," he said. "You know my voice, I think, Figgins."

Figgins jumped.

"Lord Conway!"

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Bunn's Young Man.

LORD CONWAY was breathing hard after his exertions.

But he was quite himself. He was perfectly cool, in spite of his narrow escape and the danger that still surrounded him.

"You got out of the passage all right, then, Con?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes," said the viscount. "I heard a crash in your study, and was on my guard at once. I closed the stone behind me at the top of the stair, and came down this way from the roof. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn will say nothing, I am sure."

"No fear!" said Figgins & Co. together.

"The gate's guarded, sir," said Tom Merry uneasily, "and—and a fellow might come round the corner here any minute."

"Where can he hide?" muttered D'Arcy.

"It can't be done. It will have to be faced out," said Tom Merry, after a moment's thought. "That inspector chap is jolly keen, and if he found a stranger hiding about he would guess a disguise at once. Lord Conway had better not be seen talking to us, or it will throw suspicion on him at once. I've got an idea. He can wait in Taggles' lodge."

"Taggles' lodge."

"Yes; he can be Mr. Jones, the young man from Bunn's come about the bill we owe him."

"Bai Jove!"

"Figgins can take him there, and explain to Taggles." Figgins whistled.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll do my best."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

"Bettah give Taggles a tip."

"That's all right. I'm in funds now."

"Jolly lucky," said Tom Merry, "because we're not."

"All serene. Will you come with me, sir?"

"Certainly," said Lord Conway. "It's a bold game; but it's the only chance, so far as I can see."

And he walked away with Figgins.

Tom Merry felt in his pocket. He had an old bill from Mr. Bunn, for confectionery supplied. He ran after the disguised viscount, and thrust it into his hand.

"That's the bill," he said.

Lord Conway laughed.

"Thank you, Tom; you think of everything."

The disguised viscount walked across the quadrangle with Figgins. The policeman at the gate eyed him as he went into the school-porter's lodge, but not with any particular interest. He had Lord Conway's photograph and description; but neither was in the least like the rusty, shabby man who was going into Taggles' lodge with Figgins, of the New House.

Taggles looked up with a grunt as they came in. He eyed the stranger in his suspicious way. He eyed Figgins more suspiciously still.

"Wot is it?" he asked. Taggles had been a victim of junior japes many a time, and Taggles was generally on his guard when dealing with fellows in the Fourth and the Shell.

"Do you mind if Mr. Bunn's man waits here a bit, Taggles?" asked Figgins, showing a half-crown's milled edge between his finger and thumb.

Taggles was all politeness at once.

He had glanced at the bill in the young man's hands, and saw Mr. Bunn's name upon it, and he had no suspicion of the facts.

"Suttingly, sir," said Taggles. "He can wait 'ere, suttingly. Sit down, sir."

"Thank you," said Mr. Bunn's supposed young man, in a cracky voice, very unlike Lord Conway's usual deep, clear tones, "I will. It is hot weather this afternoon, sir—very hot, even for July."

"It are," said Taggles—"it are! Very tiring and very thirsty weather, it are."

And Mr. Bunn's young man sat down.

Figgins slipped the half-crown deftly into Taggles's horny hand. He drew the porter aside and spoke in a low voice.

"You understand, Taggy," he murmured. "The chap is not to be allowed to get in with that little bill."

Taggles grinned.

"Yes, sir."

"If he asks for Tom Merry, tell him he must wait a little longer, and keep him quiet," said Figgins. "Tom Merry doesn't want to get that little bill—not till after the afternoon's post gets in. You savvy?"

"Master Merry's expecting a remittance, by afternoon post, I 'spose, sir?"

Figgins did not reply to the question, but he winked.

"If you can keep him here till after afternoon post, Taggy, it will be worth another half-crown to you," he whispered.

"I'll manage it if I can, sir," said Taggles, with a wink in reply to Figgins's wink. "You rely on me, Master Figgins. I hunderstand."

It was very doubtful if Taggles did understand; but Figgins was quite willing to let it go at that.

"All right," he whispered. "I rely on you."

He turned back to Mr. Bunn's young man, who was sitting bolt upright, with his back to the window.

"You don't mind waiting 'ere a bit, Mr. Jones?" he said.

"No, sir," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice, "but how long am I to wait? I have the bill here."

"Yes, yes, that's all right."

"Perhaps you will take it to Master Merry yourself, and tell him I am waiting here for the money?" Mr. Bunn's young man suggested.

"Ahem!" said Figgins. "I—I'll mention to him that you're here, Mr. Jones, certainly. Perhaps you'd better keep the bill till you see him."

"But—"

"If you don't mind waiting a bit—"

"I ain't going without the money," said Mr. Bunn's young man acidly.

"Oh, the money's all right, of course!"

"I 'ope it is," said Mr. Bunn's young man darkly.

Figgins winked again at Taggles, and quitted the porter's lodge. The school porter was all civility to his guest. A half-crown was a big tip, and the prospect of another half-crown in an hour's time was very gratifying to Taggles. He knew that Figgins was a fellow of his word. Taggles meant to earn that other half-crown if he could—he did not guess how easy it would be.

"Like to read the paper, sir?" he said courteously.

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"Thank you!" said Mr. Bunn's young man, in a high-pitched voice. "Is there any news in it of the Googoo Islands Peculiar Brethren Mission?"

"Oh, you're that sort, are you?" murmured Taggles. "No," he went on aloud, with deep sarcasm, "it's the 'Ead's Times,' sir, and 'The Times' don't print noos of the Googoo Islands Missions. There's the latest winners, sir."

Mr. Bunn's young man made a gesture of horror.

"Not that I hever reads sporting noos myself, hany more than I touches a drop of licker," said Taggles hypocritically.

"I am glad to learn that you do not touch the accursed spirit," said Mr. Bunn's young man.

"Not a bit, sir; I've been a strict teetotaller for—" If Taggles had stated the exact facts, he would have said "for half an hour," but Taggles was not given to stating exact fact. "For twenty years, sir."

"I am truly glad to hear it, sir," said Mr. Bunn's young man.

"I takes no credit to myself, sir," said Taggles, "I does it—I feels it's my dooty, and I does it. But I don't remember seein' you about Mr. Bunn's before, sir. Perhaps you are a noo young man?"

"I have never worked for Mr. Bunn before," said the guest.

"Ha, I thort I'd have known if you 'ad, sir!" said Taggles. "I 'ope your chair is cumferable," he added, as Mr. Bunn's young man shifted.

"Yes, yes, quite, thank you; but perhaps I ought to see Master Merry—"

"I shouldn't 'urry—"

"But I have this bill—"

"It will keep, sir. Could I get you anything to drink?" suggested Taggles.

"Perhaps a little milk and water—not too strong," said Mr. Bunn's young man.

"Suttingly, sir."

Mr. Bunn's young man gave a little start as a shadow crossed the open doorway, and darkened the sunlight that fell into the lodge.

The shadow came to a point at the top—the spiked helmet of a policeman!

Mr. Bunn's young man raised the paper and looked at it seriously.

The policeman stopped in.

"Anything wanted?" said Taggles.

"Yes, we want to search the lodge," said Mr. Fix, following the constable in. "We have the authority of Dr. Holmes."

Taggles sniffed.

"If you think I've got any thieves 'id about 'ere, you can search and welcome," he said. "I'm sure me and Mr. Jones don't mind."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice.

The search in the secret passages of the School House had evidently ended.

There was now a trace of irritation in the usually calm and placid countenance of Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard.

On the discovery of the secret passage opening from Study No. 6, he had felt certain of the capture of the stowaway of St. Jim's.

But the passages, in all their winding recesses, had been searched in vain.

There was no trace of the missing man.

The inspector had asked Mr. Railton if there was any other exit from the passages, save that into Study No. 6.

There were two, and Mr. Railton had pointed them out to him. One was by means of a panel into the Head's study; but the Head was there, and it was certain that that had not been used by the fugitive. The other was by the stone door at the top of the spiral stair, giving access to the roof. By the latter, Mr. Fix at once made up his mind, the stowaway had gone.

Mr. Fix had searched the roof, and had discovered in the ivy traces of a rapid descent. His last doubt that the fugitive was on the premises vanished. But where was he? How had he vanished in the open sunlight, in the middle of the day? He could not have left the spot where he had climbed down from the roof, without appearing in full view of a hundred windows, and hundreds of pairs of eyes. Yet Mr. Fix questioned right and left without obtaining any satisfaction.

Either all St. Jim's was in a conspiracy to defeat him, or else the viscount had vanished into thin air—or else—what else there was to think, Mr. Fix could not guess.

And so Mr. Fix was growing what the juniors of St. Jim's would have described as "ratty."

The inspector glanced at Mr. Bunn's young man, very crossly, and took no further notice of him.

The policeman searched the lodge through carefully, Taggles looking on with expressive sniffs.

"THE BULLY'S BROTHER" is the title of the Splendid Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.

The search occupied a quarter of an hour. Then Mr. Fix and his myrmidons left the lodge, leaving Taggles and Mr. Bunn's young man together. "Dear me!" said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice. "Dear me! Whom are they searching for, Mr. Taggles?" "Feller named Lord Conway, who's stole a 'eap of diamonds," said Taggles. "They won't find 'im 'ere." "No, I hope not," said Mr. Bunn's young man. "Dear me! The time is getting on. Perhaps it would be better for me to go and look for Master Merry." "I'd wait a little longer, if I was you, sir," said Taggles. And Mr. Bunn's young man waited.

CHAPTER 17.

Mr. Fix is Pleased.

TOM MERRY & Co. had watched Mr. Fix and the constables enter the porter's lodge. Their hearts were in their mouths. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy leaned against one of the old elms, and his face was the picture of misery.

"Buck up, old man!" said Tom Merry comfortingly, as comfortingly as he could. "Keep your pecker up, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy heavily. But he did not look as if he were keeping his pecker up. He breathed a deep sigh of relief when the constables emerged from the lodge, and he saw that the disguised viscount was not with them. Figgins's eyes danced. "My hat!" he exclaimed, in a subdued voice. "They've missed him!"

"Bai Jove!" "They haven't seen through the disguise," Tom Merry said, "and if Taggles lets him wait in the lodge till they're gone—"

Figgins chuckled. "Taggy will keep him there if he can," he said. "There's a half-crown for Taggy if he does."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Thank goodness!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Old Conway's got through that all wight. But it must have been a fearful time for him."

Inspector Fix came over towards the juniors. There was a deep wrinkle in Mr. Fix's brow.

"Found him, sir?" asked Monty Lowther cheerfully. Mr. Fix frowned darkly.

"No," he said, "I haven't found him?" "Would you like to look in the kennels, sir, or in the drinking fountain? There's the letter-box in the School House, too—"

"Shut up, Monty!" murmured Tom Merry. "Rats! I'm only trying to help Mr. Fix with suggestions, and to make easy the path of law and order, and justice and things."

Mr. Fix smiled sourly. "You don't care to tell me where Lord Conway is," he said. "Well, I'm having the place carefully watched, and I know he is here. I shall have him soon. He was seen leaving the train at Wayland yesterday, and I know he came here."

"Weally, my deah sir—"

"Keep your secret if you like, it's only a matter of time. I don't leave this school till I've seen him."

And the inspector walked crabably away. The constables entered the New House, evidently with the intention of searching that building.

"My hat!" said Digby. "He's sticking to it!" "Confound him!" muttered D'Arcy. "Why can't the chap be satisfied, and go away?"

"He feels pretty certain that Lord Conway is here." The bell rang, and the juniors went in to classes. Needless to say, their thoughts were very little upon their work that afternoon. But most of the masters made allowances for the excitement in the school, and dealt easily with them.

Afternoon lessons seemed an eternity to Tom Merry & Co. It seemed to them that the hour of dismissal would never come.

It came at last, and the juniors poured out of the Form-rooms into the quad., eager to know what had happened during the afternoon.

They felt pretty certain that the stowaway of St. Jim's had not been captured; they would have heard of it, even in the class-room.

But what had happened? Tom Merry caught sight of a policeman the moment he put his head out of the house. The constable was resting against the stone balustrade by the side of the School House steps. Another could be seen in the distance by the gateway.

The school was still being watched. "Better have a look in Taggy's lodge, Figgy," Tom Merry suggested.

"Yaas, wathah!" "Right you are," said the New House junior.

Figgins strolled round to the porter's lodge. Taggles was not there; his duties had called him away. But Mr. Bunn's young man was still in the little sitting-room. He looked up eagerly at Figgins.

"You've been here all the time, sir?" muttered Figgins. "Yes—more than two hours."

"And Taggy—"

"He does not suspect anything; he's only been trying to keep me here. But he must begin to wonder," said the young man. "The police have not gone yet?"

"No, sir; they're not going till they've found you, Mr. Fix says."

"If Mr. Fix sees me here a second time, he will suspect," said Lord Conway quietly. "I had better make an effort to leave the school."

Figgins nodded. "I suppose so, sir."

"Tell Arthur that I will be in the old barn to-night at ten; until then I shall hide in the wood, if I can get so far," said the young man.

"Very well, sir."

Figgins left the lodge. He joined the juniors outside the School House, and communicated what Lord Conway had said to him.

"It will be wiskey twyin' to pass the officah at the gate," said Arthur Augustus doubtfully.

"More risky to remain," said Tom Merry. "Yaas, I suppose so."

"The police don't intend to go—and if they stay, Lord Conway can't."

"You're wight, deah boy."

"And I don't see why the man at the gate should stop him; after all, he's only Mr. Bunn's young man."

"Quite twue."

The juniors strolled down to the fountain in the quad., from which they could obtain an easy view of the gate. A few minutes later, the rusty, black figure of Mr. Bunn's young man emerged from the porter's lodge.

D'Arcy drew a deep breath. "There he goes, deah boys."

"Good-luck to him!" "Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Bunn's young man went to the gateway with a jerky walk. The policeman on duty there stepped into his path.

"Are you going out, sir?" he asked. "Yes, officer," said Mr. Bunn's young man, in his cracked voice.

"Sorry, sir, but I've orders to stop you."

"Stop me, officer!" said Mr. Bunn's young man, in tones of great surprise.

"Yes, sir; inspector's orders."

"But I have waited in the porter's lodge for over two hours, and I cannot see Master Merry," expostulated Mr. Bunn's young man. "Mr. Bunn may be getting anxious about me."

The policeman grinned. "I can't let you pass, sir, without askin' the inspector," he said.

"Goodness gracious!" "Ere's Mr. Fix, sir, I'll call to him. If you please, sir—"

Inspector Fix came up. He was looking heated and irritable. In spite of his firm conviction that Lord Conway was at St. Jim's, stowed away somewhere in the old school, a doubt had crept into Inspector Fix's mind. Was it possible that he was on the wrong track after all—that he was wasting time at St. Jim's? It was not a pleasant reflection for the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

"Well, well, what is it?" exclaimed Mr. Fix sharply.

"Am I to let this gentleman pass, sir?"

Mr. Fix looked sharply at the young man from Mr. Bunn's.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Mr. Bunn's young man, if you please, sir."

"Ah, I saw you in the porter's lodge, I think!"

"Yes, sir. But Master Merry has not come to see me, and I shall take the bill away with me, sir. I cannot wait here any longer, sir."

A peculiar expression dawned upon Mr. Fix's face. In the porter's lodge, it had not been so easy to scan Mr. Bunn's young man's face closely. In the sunlight it was a different

ANSWERS

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

matter; and Mr. Fix's eyes were trained to detect signs of make-up.

He reached out his hand, and grasped the young man by the shoulder.

"Very well done," he said—"very well done; and I never guessed it till now! But you can't go yet, Lord Conway!"

With the spring of a tiger, Lord Conway tore himself from the inspector's grasp, brushed aside the policeman, and leaped out into the road.

Mr. Fix staggered back against the gate.

"Stop him!" he yelled.

CHAPTER 18.

Good News.

"STOP him!"

The inspector's voice rose to a shriek. Lord Conway bounded into the road; and as he did so, two stalwart forms in blue bore down upon him, and he was seized.

He struggled for a moment—but only for a moment. He realised that he had no chance, and he dropped his hands.

"Very well," he said quietly. "You have me—I shall not resist."

"Better not, sir."

The constables drew him back into the gateway. Lord Conway stood between them. The moustache had been brushed from his lip.

"Well, inspector," he said, with a rueful smile; "so you have found me."

Mr. Fix laughed.

All his good-humour had been restored by his success, and by the knowledge that he had been right all along—that the man he sought was at St. Jim's.

"Exactly, my dear sir," he said; "I have you! A nice little game of hide-and-seek, sir; quite a nice little game. And now—"

"Conway, old boy!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice. The swell of St. Jim's ran into the gateway, his eyes burning.

"Con, old man, we'll back you up; we'll—"

Lord Conway shook his head.

"The game's up, Arthur. Don't lose your head."

"Weally, you know—"

"You must not resist the law."

"But—"

"Quiet, old fellow," said Lord Conway, laying a calming hand upon the excited swell of St. Jim's. "Quiet!"

"But—but—you're not goin' to be awwested, Con!" gasped D'Arcy.

"That depends entirely upon Lord Conway," said the inspector quietly. "If he likes to tell us where the diamond-thief is, he's as free as air. Otherwise—"

"What!"

"Where is Mr. Raby?" asked the inspector.

Lord Conway set his lips.

"Where is he, Lord Conway?"

"I have only this to say. Mr. Scheinstein will be paid if the diamonds are not recovered."

"Then I am afraid we must take you into custody, sir," said the inspector.

"Oh, Conway!"

The inspector turned to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with quite a benevolent smile. It was surprising to see the effect of success upon Mr. Fix.

"You need not be worried about your brother, Master D'Arcy," he said. "If he chooses to tell us where the thief is, all will be well; if he does not, he must be content to lie under the suspicion of being a confederate. Mr. Raby was in your brother's rooms, and he bolted with the diamonds—"

"My governah would pay for them, I know that," said D'Arcy.

Mr. Fix smiled again.

"Yes, but he would not pay for the rest of Mr. Raby's little misdeeds—forged cheques, and other little things," he said. "We want Mr. Raby, and we're going to have him. Lord Conway expected to draw the whole pursuit upon himself by bolting suddenly; and certainly he proved himself guilty to the reporters. When the case was put into my hands, I knew what was what. We want Mr. Raby; and I don't think Mr. Raby will find it easy to get out of England."

"I trust that he will," said Lord Conway quietly. "Raby was led into this by designing rascals; he was more sinned against than sinning. He saved my life, and I was bound to stand by him."

Inspector Fix shook his head.

"It won't do, my dear sir—it won't do," he said. "I shall have to ask you to come with us."

"I am ready."

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"THE BULLY'S BROTHER"

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"Perhaps Dr. Holmes will lend us a conveyance."

Five minutes later Inspector Fix was driving away with his prisoner in the Head's trap. But that explanation had left the juniors of St. Jim's relieved at heart; and it chased the clouds from D'Arcy's face. As for Wally, he yelled with delight when he heard how the matter really was.

"Isn't it just like old Con?" he exclaimed. "Isn't it just like him? Of course, he was sticking up for somebody else, and he was bound to, as the chap saved his life. It's just like my old duffer of a brother. I can just see Gussy doing it, too, if one of you chaps came a mucker."

"I twust I should always stand by my fwriends," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "But I know that one of my fwriends would nevah do anythin' so howwible as stealin'. I am afwaid Conway has been vewy careless in his selection of his fwriends, and I shall talk to him sewiously on the subject when this affaih has blown over."

"Dr. 'Olmes wants to see Master D'Arcy in his study," announced Toby.

"Bai Jove! Now for a waggin'," said D'Arcy.

But, contrary to expectation, a ragging did not await the swell of the Fourth. Dr. Holmes questioned him as to what had happened, and Arthur Augustus told the whole story.

"I do not say that I either approve or disapprove," said the Head when he had heard everything. "I only say I am glad that matters have turned out so well. You must not do anything of this sort again, D'Arcy."

"Vewy well, sir," said D'Arcy meekly.

He could say that safely; the circumstances were peculiar, and were certainly never likely to arise again.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy quitted the Head's study feeling perfectly well satisfied with the Head and with himself.

But the chums of St. Jim's awaited further news with great anxiety.

Lord Conway had placed himself in a very peculiar and dangerous position by his chivalrous, not to say quixotic, notion of standing by a friend who had gone to the dogs.

But on the morrow came good news.

The news of Lord Conway's arrest had been telegraphed all over the country; and the next day came fresh news—that Mr. Raby had given himself up.

The astute inspector had reckoned upon that.

It showed that there was good in the man. True, Raby had had no real chance of escape; Lord Conway's effort to gain time for him might have turned out well, but the watch was too close for him to have much chance of getting out of the country. But as soon as he heard that Lord Conway was suspected and arrested, Raby walked to the nearest police-station and surrendered himself.

"So you see the chap wasn't an uttah wottah, aftah all," D'Arcy remarked. "All the same, he ought to be sent to pwison. Chap who steals ought to go to pwison; in fact, I watah think he ought to have somethin' lingewin', with boilin' oil in it."

Raby did go to prison—and Lord Conway was released. His innocence was made as clear as Raby's guilt.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the recipient of endless congratulations from the other fellows at St. Jim's.

The quixotic chivalry of Lord Conway appealed to their boyish imaginations, and they voted him a hero; and a great deal of his glory was reflected upon the swell of the School House.

It had come out that Levison was the fellow who betrayed the secret passage to the searchers of the School House; but in the joy of the good news, Arthur Augustus felt that he could forgive him.

"You are an uttah wottah, Levison," said D'Arcy, wagging a contemptuous finger at the cad of the Fourth. "In fact, I cannot help wegardin' you as a weptile."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"But undah the cires, as things have turned out all wight, I think we had better let the wottah off," said D'Arcy. "Give him one kick, Hewwies; you have the biggest feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Herries gave Levison one kick, which helped him to quite a considerable distance.

And Levison looked as if he had a pain somewhere when he walked away afterwards.

"Now, you fellows, come to the tuckshop," said Arthur Augustus. "I've just had a fivah ffrom my governah; and every chap who's glad to hear the good news about old Conway can come and feed."

And, to judge by the number of fellows who followed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to the tuckshop, about half the Lower School was rejoicing in the good news.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled: "The Boy from Nowhere," by Martin Clifford. Order your GEM LIBRARY in advance. Price one penny.)

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AN AMAZING TALE OF MODERN ADVENTURE.



By **ROBERT W. COMRADE.**

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, a manservant, and a lad named Tim.

The latest crime to be added to the Brotherhood's record is the theft of the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London, but thanks to the timely interference of Kingston and Carson Gray, the jewels are recovered without the required ransom having to be paid. The case concluded, Kingston and Gray, disguised as carmen, are leaving Scotland Yard very late at night in a taxi, when the cab gives a lurch, and they discover it is driverless. With no hand to control it, the taxi dashes on at breakneck speed across Oxford Circus, making straight for an iron-shuttered shop front. Just as it is mounting the curb, however, a big touring car swings swiftly round the corner, and collides with the runaway taxi with a deafening crash.

(Now go on with the story.)

From the Jaws of Death.

Nobody knew what happened exactly, least of all Kingston and Gray.

All the spectators saw was the two vehicles strike and merge into a mass of wreckage against the shop-front, which was battered about considerably. A crowd gathered in that peculiar way crowds have, dozens of people seeming to appear from absolutely nowhere.

On the pavement lay a mass of broken woodwork, twisted iron, and hissing machinery. The touring-car had struck the taxi in such a fashion that the latter simply crashed over to its side, to receive, a second later, the full weight of the larger car against its forepart.

"By jingo, what a fearful crash!" exclaimed a voice from the interior of the overturned taxi. "I say, Gray, you're not dead, are you?"

"Very nearly, I think," replied another voice, this one half a groan. "Great powers, I'm bruised in fifty places, and I'm positive this right leg's in half a dozen separate parts."

The door opened, and the crowd drew back as a face emerged which was covered with blood. It was Carson

Gray, who had come off worst, although he considered himself lucky that he'd come out alive at all.

"I thought we were done for that time," he exclaimed, after a little while, feeling himself all over to make sure that the cut on the face was the only material damage. Bruises did not count. Frank Kingston stood looking on quite calmly, apparently unhurt. He himself was the only one who knew the size of a gash in his left thigh. It was paining him tremendously, but he had no desire to be taken to the hospital, so he set his teeth, and assured the constables that he was unhurt.

"How about the other fellow," he asked suddenly—"the man who was on the large car? Is he very seriously hurt?"

"Not very," replied the inspector, who had been secretly informed by Gray who they were. "He's in charge of a couple of constables now, unconscious, but he'll come round soon, if I know anything about it. It strikes me you all came off mighty luckily. A case like this often means a death."

"It takes a lot to kill us," put in Carson Gray, with a screwed-up smile. The crowd was pressing round uncomfortably. "I say, inspector, no need to mention names, you know. We don't want this to be in the papers."

"No, of course not, sir. I suppose you'll see to the matter in the morning, and right matters with the gentleman who was in the touring-car?"

"Yes, of course," replied Kingston. "He wasn't to blame in any way—in fact, he saved us from almost certain death by appearing at that precise moment—there's no doubt on that point."

Five minutes later Frank Kingston and Carson Gray walked away from the scene of the accident, the former walking with an absolutely firm step, in spite of the agony in his left leg. Both were congratulating themselves on the manner in which they had escaped serious injury.

"It was that idea of yours that saved us," declared the detective, as they turned into Great Portland Street. "If we hadn't jammed ourselves between the seats we should have had our necks broken for certain. But I say, Kingston, what a brute of a scheme! I suppose it was the Brotherhood's work?"

"Sure thing," replied Kingston. "Depend upon it, we were tracked by spies to Scotland Yard, and they made the arrangement while waiting for us to appear. Knowing what we had done, they took it upon themselves to attempt the murder. If it hadn't been for a slice of luck they would have succeeded—What's the matter?"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE BOY FROM NOWHERE."

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Carson Gray had suddenly stopped, and thrust one fist into his open palm.

"The lorry came here," he exclaimed, "and stopped outside my door. If the Brotherhood's spics kept us in view all the while they must now be aware that I have had a hand in this pie."

"By Jove, that point quite slipped my mind, Gray! I'm afraid I've let you in for something over this affair."

The Council Meeting and its Result.

Carson Gray and his companion looked at one another for a moment in silence; then Kingston moved forward.

"Come," he said, "we had better discuss this affair in your rooms."

"There's no chance of a spy being about now, I suppose?"

"Hardly. Having been here once it would be foolish to risk discovery and come a second time. Probably they—if there was more than one—followed the motor-van by cycle. Here you are! Fetch that key out!"

They were standing outside the detective's lodgings, and already the dawn had begun to break, causing the lamplights to lose some of their brilliance. Very soon the pair were in Carson Gray's bed-room, and the detective was amazed when he saw Kingston's wound, for it was a wound, and of no small dimensions.

"You'll have to stop in bed for a week, at least," declared Gray.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! I shall be as right as anything in a couple of days' time. At the Cyril I have got some special ointment of my own manufacture, which I discovered while I was on the Iron Island, and I'll warrant it beats anything on the market. But about your being seen to enter this house. I've been thinking, and as it happens you can be made to appear as though you'd had nothing to do with to-night's work."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, to begin with, you were disguised, so they could not recognise you. Secondly, you can fake up an alibi in some way or other and cause it to be published in the papers. Although the men may suspect, there was no proof whatever as to who you were. Finally, it is fortunate that Sir Henry Kenning took up his quarters in this house. That fact will be made known publicly, so that Mount-Fannell, when he receives the common-members' report, will not unnaturally think that the two men in charge of the lorry were police-officers. He will merely think that Sir Henry Kenning placed himself in this house so as to be under your care."

"I am not so sure about that," replied Gray, with a shake of the head. "In any case, Kingston, I should like you to find out, if possible, whether I am in danger or not. I don't want to go through another experience like that last."

"And I don't suppose you'll have to, my dear chap. Now, as this leg is giving me above a little pain, I think I'll give it a rest. I give you warning now that I sha'n't be up until ten o'clock. It's an unusual hour for me, but in this case the circumstances are unusual."

Lord Mount-Fannell was raving up and down his library like a man possessed. All his quiet assurance and calmness had vanished; his eyes gleamed with impotent fury that made him appear very terrible. He strode up and down muttering to himself, waving his arms about in the air as though anxious for a fight.

"It's awful!" he muttered distractedly. "Everything seems to go wrong—everything! All the cases the Brotherhood have been engaged in for the last few months have proceeded on oiled wheels until the last moment; then disaster has come—disaster swift and sure. Who can this man be? It is he who is doing it all—it must be—there is no room for doubt. News was brought of his death in the Atlantic, but that was another trick. He is as much alive to-day as he ever was, hang him! A million pounds in our hands wrenched away at the very moment of success! Good Heavens!"

Lord Mount-Fannell had indeed good cause to be perturbed. The time was barely eight, and already the news had come through of what had happened during the night; the news that the lorry had fallen into the hands of the police, in spite of all the precautions, and that the Crown Jewels were at Scotland Yard. Already special editions of the papers were announcing this fact far and wide.

"But how can it be?" the Chief demanded, wild with fury, and addressing himself to the empty air. "The case containing the Crown Jewels was at Wroxham last night, and it's absolutely impossible for it to have been fetched away. Had anything happened we should have heard from Nicholas Barton to that effect. It must be some ruse of the

police to gull the public into thinking that they have recovered the Crown Jewels. Why doesn't Milverton return? He ought to have been here hours before this!"

Even as he muttered these words the door flung open and the figure of James Milverton, attired in a long motor-coat smothered with dust, entered the library. His face was pale and agitated.

"Well?" demanded the Chief tensely.

"The case is not there!" replied Milverton bluntly.

"We arrived soon after midnight, and found the Crown Jewels missing, Old Nick absolutely unconscious, and Sir Henry Kenning vanished! There's been some underhand work here, Chief, and—"

"I knew it! I was sure, in spite of what I deluded myself to think, that we had lost the game!" cried Mount-Fannell, seating himself in a chair with a hollow laugh.

"Great Powers, Milverton, I am beginning to think that this enemy is too much for us!"

"But he is dead!"

"Dead be hanged—he's no more dead than you are! The fact is self-evident. Think of it, Milverton, think of it! A million pounds, which we fondly imagined to be in our hands, torn away at the last moment! And the worst of it is that we are still in the dark; this man moves about as though he were a phantom, unknown, intangible, and all-powerful!"

"What of Claydon—has he appeared yet?"

"No," replied the Chief. "There has been no sign of him so far. Why he doesn't come is a mystery, but he probably saw that the Brotherhood's men were not in charge of the van, and so sheered off to save his skin. In all probability he will be along presently."

"I am going home now!" exclaimed Milverton, "and as his rooms are on my way I will call in and tell him to come here immediately."

"Good! Do the same to all the other councillors who are in town. We must hold a meeting immediately. Be back not later than ten o'clock, for something must be decided without delay. All our strength must be put forth in one effort to track this mysterious enemy."

"It's my opinion there are several," replied Milverton, "and any day we may look for discovery."

"No, I do not believe that," replied the Chief. "It is my opinion that one man is at the bottom of the whole trouble, and if he were got rid of we should be safe. But be off and do as I ask."

The Chief was left to himself again. He remained seated in his chair fingering the arms agitatedly. Then he rose to his feet and savagely bit the end from a cigar.

"We have been too half-hearted about it," he told himself bitterly. "Had we devoted all our attention to ridding ourselves of this man when he first commenced his operations, we should have been thousands of pounds the richer by now, to say nothing of retaining our full Council. The havoc he has wrought is incalculable!"

He lit the cigar unevenly, and paced the room puffing at it with erratic jerks.

"But there's an end to all things," he continued musingly. "We have got thousands of members, and everything else shall be put aside to the fulfilment of this one object. He must die—he shall die, and before we embark on any fresh objective."

He sat down again, took the cigar from his mouth, and flung it with a curse into the grate. Milverton had told himself that the Chief would be calmed down by ten o'clock, but such was not the case. Mount-Fannell had been thinking over this fresh disaster, and his rage had, if anything, increased.

By ten-fifteen he and nine Inner Councillors—nearly the whole of the remaining number—were seated in the Council Chamber. Every one of them was vastly agitated, and arguing and talking incessantly. They all were to have received a liberal slice of that million pounds, and this sudden collapse of the scheme had angered every one of them.

"Claydon was not at his rooms," said Milverton to the Chief. "I went there, and he has not been seen since last night. To my mind it looks very suspicious."

"Why?"

"Because I obtained the housekeeper's key and inspected Claydon's flat myself. The whole place was ransacked, Chief, and not a single private paper remained. There is absolutely no room for doubt that Claydon has cleared off. I did the thing thoroughly, and on my way here called at his bankers. He called there this morning, as soon as they opened, and closed his account, withdrawing all the balance. What could be clearer?"

"What could be clearer?" repeated the Chief, freshly agitated. "What could be more muddled, you mean! What earthly reason has Claydon got for acting in this

manner? Why should he desert in this fashion? There's no explanation of his conduct!"

"If you will think a moment, Mount-Fannell, you will see that there is. I have thought the matter out fully, and have come to the conclusion that Claydon did board the lorry as intended. He then came face to face with this unknown person. I don't pretend to know what occurred, but most probably he allowed Claydon to go, after extracting a promise from him that he'd clear out of the country. Everything points to it, for Claydon would never have deserted us under any other circumstances."

"We shall have the whole Council disorganised at this rate, Milverton," snarled the Chief. "Let us discuss the matter in all its aspects. It's not the slightest use mincing matters."

my mind that Kenning should have taken refuge under the same roof as the detective in Great Portland Street."

"Exactly," cried the Chief. "That is the clue we must follow up. It is too obvious to ignore. Remember, the lorry called there and fetched the Crown Jewels away. Of course, they may have been placed there by the police for safety's sake, leaving Carson Gray in ignorance of everything; but that, I consider, is unlikely. Again, it is more than probable that the detective is in the confidence of our special enemy. If that is the case, we can force him to reveal his identity."

"You mean to kidnap him, then?"

"Yes; that will be the starting-point," cried Mount-Fannell. "It shall be done this very day, and I myself will interview him and force him to speak. This is no time for gentle measures, and in any case as soon as we have the



"Now!" exclaimed Lord Mount-Fannell. Two of the crew grasped the bound forms of Frank Kingston and Carson Gray, and swung them over the rail. Splash! The inert bodies of the two helpless victims plunged into the still water, and sank like lead to the bottom of the dock. (See page 28.)

Lord Mount-Fannell tapped the table impatiently, and the councillors ceased their respective discussions and looked up. Without delay the Chief put the whole matter before them in clear, straightforward language, and a long confabulation ensued.

"We seem to have been treated as though we were mere novices the whole time," concluded the Chief, his voice quivering with suppressed anger. "In some mysterious fashion we managed to get hold of the wrong man, and it was not Sir Henry Kenning at all who was imprisoned on the wherry at Wroxham."

"The thing's a mystery," exclaimed Chambers. "We were all under the impression that this man was dead. Don't you think it probable that he is, and that somebody else is acting in his place? Carson Gray for instance? You remember that affair some months ago, when he was concerned with the downfall of Anderson. It seems very suspicious to

information we shall put Gray out of the way. It will be the safest method."

"Most decidedly," agreed Milverton, as though they had been discussing the fate of a dog. "Gray is off his guard now, and it will be a very easy task to kidnap him. At night Great Portland Street is very quiet."

They discussed the manner in which the detective should be kidnapped, and decided that the best way would be to repeat a very old method, but one which was pretty certain of success.

"Meanwhile," exclaimed the Chief at last, "orders must be given to every man in London who belongs to the Brotherhood that he is to hold himself in readiness for any unexpected order. I tell you, gentlemen, there shall be no half measures this time. Until both Carson Gray and this other man are dead all other work will be suspended. I am even expecting Capelli this afternoon to discuss an extremely

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urgent matter. I don't know what it is, but he would not come to England unless his object was a very important one."

Capelli was the name of the chief agent for a large foreign Power, which was at the time on no very intimate terms with Britain on account of some discussion concerning a portion of the African territory. Mount-Fannell was expecting something big to come of the chief agent's visit, but, important as it was, it now had to take second place.

The immediate objective of the Brotherhood was to kidnap Carson Gray, force him to tell everything, and then—murder him!

Carson Gray Finds Himself in Exceedingly Hot Water.

"My dear sir, I cannot say enough," cried Sir Henry Kenning, wringing Carson Gray's hand as though it had been a pump-handle. "I never dreamed that you were the man who helped me to escape from that terrible house in Putney!"

"You owe almost everything to my friend here," replied Gray, indicating Kingston, who was seated in an easy chair, disguised a little. "He has done everything, with the exception of a trifling amount of assistance from myself."

"But you say you won't tell me your name," said the Lieutenant of the Tower, turning to the Avenger. "I am very sorry for that, because it would give me great pleasure to know who you are, and to—"

"I am sorry, Sir Henry, but at present it is quite impossible," smiled Kingston. "In a month or two, however, I shall be in a position to tell you the whole story. In fact, you will most likely learn it from the newspapers."

"You puzzle me exceedingly, but I will wait in patience, and comply with your request, and say nothing of your connection with this matter. I understand, Mr. Gray, that you do not wish your name to appear?"

"It is the very last thing I desire."
"Strange—strange, especially after such a glorious success," murmured Sir Henry. "Well, gentlemen, I will bother you no more, but take my leave. Needless to say, I can never repay you for all you have done, and shall await eagerly the time when I may be put in possession of this gentleman's name."

A few minutes later Gray saw the Lieutenant's tall and erect form make its way down the street. Kingston was still seated.

"How's the leg?" asked Carson Gray, turning suddenly. "Not nearly so bad as I first imagined, Gray. It is only a flesh wound, the bone not even having been bruised. It pains me most when I rise after resting for a time, but with this ointment applied the ache is gradually disappearing. I must congratulate you on the way in which you have bound it up."

Kingston rose to his feet suddenly, and walked across the room as though he had not been hurt at all. In reality his leg was causing him great pain. Carson Gray, too, was feeling the effect of the numerous bruises he had received the night before.

"By Jove," exclaimed the detective suddenly, "I'll warrant the excellent Lord Mount-Fannell is in a bit of a stew—eh? By this time he must know everything, and will consequently be tearing his hair."

Suddenly Frank Kingston's face altered its expression of complacency, and he thumped the table vigorously.

"Gray," he exclaimed quietly, "I've been a fool!"

"Eh?"
"I've been a fool—nothing more than a hopeless idiot, as a matter of fact!"

Carson Gray looked at Kingston in surprise. "I must say you're very complimentary to yourself," he exclaimed. "What is your reason for referring to yourself by those gentle names?"

"Why, now I come to think of it, I should never have come here with that lorry. I was aware that the Brotherhood's spies were about everywhere, and yet I came here and simply showed them that you were connected with the matter. It's no use trying to get out of it, for the mischief's done."

"But my dear fellow, you said last night—"
"I've been thinking it over, and have realised that if I have no sense, Mount-Fannell has. He will put two and two together immediately. You can call me just what you like, Gray, and I won't answer you back. In fact, I feel as though I deserve to be kicked!"

"It's not so bad as that," laughed Carson Gray. "Perhaps it was rather unwise to act as we did, but I was with you, and was every bit as much to blame as you yourself were. No man is perfect."

"Great Scott, no!" replied Kingston savagely. "It's the first time I've made a bad slip, Gray, and I'm mightily wild with myself. I can foresee you having to remain indoors again—"

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"THE BULLY'S BROTHER"

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"No, by Jove, I won't do that!"

"Then you'll have to let me disguise you as somebody else, while Carson Gray disappears. Let me see, the time is now two o'clock. I'm now going to the Cyril to ascertain whether Miss O'Brien has arrived. If so, I shall have a lot to tell her. I should like to pay a visit to the club, too; but, anyhow, I will be here again this evening. You must promise me not to go out."

"Not a bit of it. I'm not going to be frightened out of my life because the Brotherhood have intentions on it. I think you're making too much of it, Kingston. Still, I will respect your wishes, and if I do go out I'll disguise myself."

"Good! Then I'll get off."

Having removed his disguise, Kingston set out for the Cyril, but found on arrival that Dolores had not yet arrived. The rest of the day passed quickly enough for him, but to Carson Gray it was rather irksome. Towards nine o'clock in the evening, just as darkness had fallen, he stood by the window, looking out at the lowering sky.

"There's a storm brewing," he told himself confidently, "and it'll be a pretty heavy one by the look of it."

At that moment the telephone-bell rang sharply, and Gray crossed over and placed the receiver to his ear.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Who is that, please?"

"Are you Mr. Carson Gray?" a voice asked, in reply.

"Yes"—then Gray bit his lip, for, remembering Kingston's injunction, he had intended to be "out," but the mischief was done now. "Who is that speaking?"

"I'm the manager of Peter Robinson's," replied the voice. "Can you run round for a moment Mr. Gray? There is something I particularly want to consult you upon."

"I'm sorry," replied Gray, "but I'm afraid it's impossible."

"Please don't say that. The matter upon which I wish to speak is very urgent, and really I sha'n't keep you more than a few minutes. You will find me in my private office—my name is Mr. Snelling."

"Yes, I know, but—"

"Thanks very much. I shall expect you in a quarter of an hour."

"Confound the fellow!" muttered Gray, as he hung the receiver up. "I didn't say I'd go at all, yet he took it for granted. Still, I don't suppose I shall come to any harm just walking down the street. It's raining, too, and with my collar turned up and a false moustache on my lip, it's very improbable that I shall be recognised by any stray spy. At any rate, I'll take my chance."

Carson Gray assured himself that there was practically no danger in going out, and he was rather curious to see what the manager of Peter Robinson's required. So soon afterwards he emerged into the rain, wearing a voluminous macintosh turned up to his ears.

Great Portland Street was very quiet, only one or two pedestrians being about. Down near Oxford Street end, where the omnibuses could be seen passing to and fro, a taxi stood against the kerb. Carson Gray puffed easily at his cigarette, and walked on.

"Could you give me a light, sir?"

"Certainly," replied Gray courteously, handing his box of vestas to the smartly-dressed young man who had addressed him. The stranger lit a cigarette and passed the box back.

"Thank you," he said. "Good-night."

"Good-night," replied Gray, and passed on without another thought. Had he glanced behind him, however, he would have seen the young gentleman with the cigarette grinning triumphantly, and waving his hand to somebody further down the street.

Carson Gray walked on unsuspectingly.

Then, just as he drew opposite to the taxi-cab, several forms seemed to appear from nowhere, and follow closely behind him. The next incident happened in the space of five seconds. The taxi-cab and another man suddenly confronted Gray. In a moment he realised something of what was about to happen, and was just going to land out when he was grasped from behind and literally flung headlong into the cab. As it happened he struck a very tender bruise on his shin full against the seat, and lay for a moment unable to move owing to the pain, which was ten times greater on account of the bruise being an old one.

Nevertheless, he struggled gamely to rise, but in his present state could do nothing to prevent the chloroform pad being pressed over his mouth and nostrils. Just as consciousness was fleeing, he felt the taxi give a jerk and move forward.

Several people had noticed the commotion, but the affair had happened in so short a time that nobody saw more than the tail end of it, which consisted merely of seeing a few rough-looking men collected round the door of a taxi-cab. When the latter started off in quite an orderly manner.

and the men vanished in different directions, the incident was forgotten.

Carson Gray was hardly to blame for having allowed himself to be trapped—he had never guessed that the spies would have the audacity to capture him in the open roadway—in full sight of Oxford Street. The telephone-message had been a fraud, and the man who pretended to be Mr. Snelling had purposely broken off the conversation at a point which practically compelled the detective to make the visit.

The young man asking for a light was a part of the plan—he had performed that action for the express purpose of ascertaining whether the man in the macintosh was really Carson Gray.

The cab hastened through the streets, and the detective lay back utterly unconscious. This was the second time within twenty-four hours that the Brotherhood had made use of a motor-cab to further their ends, but on this occasion, instead of Kingston being Gray's companion, it was Mr. James Milverton, K.C.

The Inner Councillor was disguised, of course, and he chuckled now as he looked at his companion's inert form.

"You were hardly to be blamed, Gray, but I'm really afraid this is your last taxi-cab ride. You slipped through our fingers before, but it was the first and last time. Now that we have got you we mean to get all we can from you, and then—Well then you will cease to take an interest in this world!"

Milverton chuckled again as these thoughts passed through his mind.

"Mount-Fannell will be waiting at the other end—By gad, that was a flash, and no mistake!"

He glanced out of the window as a heavy peal of thunder roared out overhead, which had been preceded by a vivid flash of lightning. The rain was coming down by the ton, and the skies simply seemed to be emptying themselves with all the speed possible. Milverton could even hear the rain beating with a loud hiss upon the top of the cab.

The district they were passing through now was not a very salubrious one—Limehouse. It was very evident that the taxi was making for the docks, where the Unicorn lay moored. The storm was at its height as the vehicle passed down a very dark and dimly-illuminated roadway, which led directly to the wharf.

An extra loud crash of thunder seemed to rouse Gray somewhat, and Milverton, who was looking out of the opposite window, noticed nothing. In a moment the detective, who was reviving with great rapidity, realised that he had a momentary chance of escaping. His moustache had fallen off. He was still half-muddled, but was in possession of his faculties enough to dash his shoulder against the window close to him. He intended shouting for help, and the glass shattered with a splitting crack.

In a second Gray's head was outside, in spite of the muttered curse behind him, and Milverton's tugging grip.

"Help!" cried Gray loudly into the pitchy darkness, which was at that moment made as light as day by an extra vivid flash of lightning. For the space of one second the detective's pale face was clearly visible to anyone who might have been outside, but Gray groaned as he saw only the water-soaked road and the deserted pavement.

His struggles were useless, for at the expiration of ten seconds the chloroform-pad had again been applied, and he sank down again senseless.

"Hang it!" muttered the barrister savagely. "I very nearly spoil the whole game then by not attending to my business. I don't think anybody saw, for in this downpour nobody would think of venturing out. Thank goodness we're nearly there. Go on, man," he added, shouting to the driver, who was looking over his shoulder with scared face. "It's only a glass broken."

On they went, Milverton congratulating himself that no harm had come of the incident. But there he was wrong—very sadly wrong, for Carson Gray's sudden action was to bring about certain happenings which neither he nor Milverton dreamed of. Indeed, the sequel to Gray's cry for help seemed almost providential.

For although the road had appeared deserted, it was not actually so. Under an overhanging coping crouched a small form, sheltering itself from the rain. From the road the boy could scarcely be seen, and certainly not without a good look, which Carson Gray had been denied owing to the briefness of the lightning flash.

But with the youngster it was different. He had been watching the slowly-moving cab as it proceeded on its way down the narrow roadway, and when it came opposite he started as he heard the crash of breaking glass. The following second the scene was as light as day, and Carson Gray's pale face was extraordinarily distinct. For some reason the sight had a remarkable effect on the boy, for he cried out in

amazement, and ran into the roadway, and the drenching rain.

"Love a duck!" he ejaculated incredulously. "I'll lay a half-quad to a brass farden that that chap was Mr. Carson Gray."

The lad was none other than Tim Curtis!

Frank Kingston to the Rescue.

Tim was a shrewd lad, and had his wits about him; when the necessity arose he came to a conclusion with surprising swiftness, and acted straight away. It was so in this instance.

He was stunned for a moment when he saw Carson Gray's face by that brilliant flash of lightning—stunned by sheer amazement. He stood there in the roadway, watching the tail-lamp of the taxi as if fascinated, caring nothing for the violence of the downpour. But only for a couple of seconds was he motionless.

"E's been nabbed," he told himself swiftly, "nabbed by the Brother'ood, an' they're takin' 'im to some place where they'll murder him, like as not! Lummy, 't looks pretty serious!"

He made up his mind immediately, and just as the red light of the cab was disappearing round a corner he started forward, swift as a dart, on its trail. He meant to find out, if possible, its destination. Fortunately the taxi-driver—a man put on the job specially for the night—did not know his way about, and was, therefore, compelled to drive very slowly. The storm, too, muddled him.

This helped Tim a lot, for when he turned the corner he saw that he had gained considerable ground. He was running swiftly, and determined to catch the taxi up and hang on behind.

But why was he here, and how had it happened that he should be in this part of London at such an opportune moment? At first sight it would seem to be more than a coincidence, but in reality it was nothing to be wondered at. The reader will readily realise this when he knows that the Unicorn was moored in the same dock as the Coronet—within a couple of hundred yards, in fact. The latter vessel had only been in port a few hours, so it was nothing extraordinary for Tim to be making his way westward when the taxi-cab appeared on the scene.

His task of catching the vehicle up was brought to a sudden termination by the taxi suddenly coming to a standstill. Immediately Tim crouched in the doorway of a neighbouring warehouse, and watched proceedings through the hissing rain. He could just distinguish by the lights that they were very near the quay-side, and opposite a vessel.

"The blessed Unicorn, for certain!" murmured Tim to himself.

The door of the cab opened, and as another blinding flash of lightning crackled out Tim saw Milverton and the chauffeur helping out the unconscious form of the detective. They carried him in such a way that it looked as though Gray were conscious, but very weak.

"You'll be all right in a minute, old chap," cried Milverton, as though talking to the "invalid"—he did this just as a precaution, in case anyone was watching the proceedings. "It's beastly unlucky this rain should come now, but it can't be helped. Once you're aboard you'll be quite comfortable."

"Swank!" muttered Tim to himself shrewdly. "Comfortable, eh! I reckon as soon as they git Mr. Gray down below they'll do 'im in. Lummy, I can't do nothin' by myself, that's very certain, so I'd better rush straight off an' find the gov'nor!"

Tim remained just long enough to make certain that the detective was in reality being taken aboard the Unicorn. Then, as the taxi was turned round and the driver clambered into his seat, an idea suddenly struck him.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked himself. "It'll be quicker, an' I can't come to no hurt, even if I'm found."

So when the vehicle passed him in the darkness he ran forward, and in a moment was clutching on behind. His position was by no means comfortable, but the youngster didn't mind that a bit. It was a quick way of getting to his destination, and that was all he wanted. He was able to remain there until the cab had almost reached the Strand, then he was forced to relinquish his hold owing to the taxi suddenly changing its direction.

"That was a bit o' luck," thought Tim, highly elated, as he clambered up the steps of a motor-bus. "Mr. Kingston's pretty sure to be at Great Portland Street, where 'e's been stayin', so I'll go there first. I shouldn't think they'd finish off Mr. Gray immediate, but there's no time for monkeyin' about!"

Fast as the 'bus went, Tim tapped his foot impatiently on the boards as it came to a standstill every three hundred yards or so. But at last it arrived at Oxford Circus. Tim

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hastened and broke into a sprint when he turned into Great Portland Street. Just at that time—about ten-thirty—the street seemed singularly deserted, for the theatres had not yet disgorged their audiences. Tim met hardly anybody as he hurried along, to at last reach Carson Gray's address.

He was just about to ring the bell violently when the door opened in front of his face, and the tall form of Frank Kingston stood before him.

"My word, sir!" gasped Tim breathlessly. "I was just a-lookin' for you!"

"Well, you've found me, young 'un, so what's the trouble?" smiled Kingston. "Stay, you'd better run upstairs with me, so that we can talk in private."

Kingston turned and made his way up the staircase. He had arrived a few minutes before, and was exceedingly puzzled when he found that Carson Gray was not there. It worried him a little, for he knew that the Brotherhood would not stick at murder for half a minute.

"Well, Tim, let me hear what you have to say. From your manner I should guess that something unusual has occurred."

"Rather, sir," exclaimed Tim excitedly. "They've nabbed 'im, sir—nabbed 'im again—"

"Nabbed him, Tim? 'What do you mean?"

"Mr. Gray, sir! The Brotherhood's kidnapped 'im and taken 'im aboard the Unicorn. I saw it with me own eyes."

Kingston's surmise had come to pass after all, then. He remained quite cool, and obtained from Tim a full account of what he had seen and heard.

"You've done well, my lad—very well indeed," he said finally, tapping the flushed-faced youngster on the shoulder. "That was a smart move of yours to ride back behind the taxi, and your action in noting what became of Gray probably means the saving of his life. You are absolutely certain it was he?"

"Abso-blessed-lutely, sir!" replied Tim quickly. "That flash o' lightnin' 'appened to be a very bright one, and I could see Mr. Gray's face as plain as I can see yours. Besides, sir, seein' as Mr. Gray ain't 'ere, and the boat was the Unicorn, it's fairly obvious, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes, I think so, Tim," laughed Kingston. "As you say, it is fairly obvious. Well, I'm going off straight away, and you had better go direct to the Cyril and tell Fraser—that is, if he has arrived—that I shall not be there until to-morrow."

"Right, sir. But are you goin' down to the docks to rescue—"

"Yes, my lad," answered Kingston quietly, "and you must not be surprised if you see in to-morrow's paper that Mr. Gray and myself have had a mishap."

Tim's eyes opened wide.

"You don't mean to say, sir," he whispered, "that you might be copped by the Brotherhood, an' done in—"

"I don't mean to say anything, Tim; but I assure you everything will be all right. Don't worry in the least. I think you know me well enough to understand that I should not allow myself to be done to death. I don't even know myself where this matter will end, so I can say nothing definite."

Tim looked at his master wistfully.

"I don't suppose I could be any good, sir," he asked tentatively.

"I'm afraid not, young 'un. You've done your share of this business, and done it exceedingly well. I shall not run my head into any noose, so you may set your mind easy. Now come along, the time is limited, and there is no object to be gained by standing here talking."

"Ain't you goin' to disguise yerself, sir?"

"No, Tim," he answered. "I really see no necessity for such a thing. Besides, there is no time."

Without further ado the twain descended the stairs and emerged into the street. The sky was clearing now, and here and there a few twinkling stars could be seen. The rain had ceased to descend some time previously.

"Good luck, sir!" said Tim, a little tremulously. "I hopes you git Mr. Gray outter the 'ole without lettin' yerself in!"

They parted at Oxford Circus. Kingston jumped into a taxi-cab, directing the driver to make for the London Docks. On the Avenger's face was an expression of quiet determination and confidence; he fully realised the danger into which he was running, but the thought caused a thrill of exultation to run through him.

"They've kidnapped Gray because they suspect he had a hand in the Crown Jewels affair," he told himself. "and probably enough Mount-Fannell has guessed that I—to him a very mysterious personage—have been up to my tricks again. Reasoning in this way, the Chief would naturally get hold of Gray and force him to reveal my identity. That is what has happened now, but I will wager a hundred pounds Carson Gray will leave them unsatisfied. He is not the sort of man to betray a comrade to save his own skin."

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The time was getting on, however, and immediately Kingston had dismissed the cab he buttoned his coat up and broke into a fast trot. He took care to approach the wharf opposite to that which held the Unicorn, which he recognised immediately. Hardly a soul was to be seen, and Kingston, when he arrived at a dark spot opposite the Unicorn, quietly walked to the edge of the quay, and slipped into the water.

A couple of hundred yards away a small boat was cutting through the water, but its occupants saw no sign of the swimmer. The water was delightfully cool, in spite of its murkiness, and Kingston really enjoyed the swim. He grabbed hold of a rope which was hanging overside from the Unicorn, and held to it for a moment with his head just out of the water. He was listening intently, and shook his head as he distinguished the sound of men talking in low tones on the deck.

"No chance of getting aboard," he thought, "and if I'm not careful I shall be discovered. But even if I have to fight every inch of the way I mean to find out what has become of Gray!"

He looked about him, along the great steel plates of the vessel, and a gleam entered his eyes as he saw one of the large portholes partially open, emitting a bright light on to the rippling water. This meant that the cabin was occupied, and what was more probable than that it should contain the detective?

"There is no harm in making certain, anyhow," Kingston informed himself, as he released his hold of the rope and struck out noiselessly to the right. In a moment he was immediately under the open port. It was a foot or two above his head, so to see or hear anything was quite impossible.

"I shall have to risk it and jump."

To think with Kingston was to act, and without considering further he gave a peculiarly noiseless spring and grasped the edge of the ironwork against the porthole. He hung there for a full twenty seconds, then cautiously raised himself up and peered into the cabin.

And as he did so, he caught his breath sharply through his teeth.

What Happened to Carson Gray.

As before stated, Tom Curtis left the docks as Carson Gray's unconscious form was being carried aboard the Unicorn. That second dose of chloroform had done its work, and the detective could not be expected to regain his senses for half an hour.

He was immediately conveyed below, to a cabin which had already been prepared for his reception. The room was well-lighted, and a slim, short man smiled triumphantly as Gray was placed in a large chair.

"It came off all right, then?" he exclaimed questioningly to Milverton. "No mishaps, I suppose?"

"Nothing to speak of, Chief," replied the barrister, and he told Lord Mount-Fannell how Gray had smashed the glass during the storm. "Happily, there was nobody there," he concluded, "so no harm came of it."

"I don't like it," said the Chief, "but, of course, now it's over we can do nothing. I suppose it will be all right."

"It couldn't be otherwise, man. Both the taxi-cab and myself know the road was deserted, and, anyhow, Gray's face was only at the window for a fraction of a second. He ought to be round in half an hour. Until then I think I'll go to the captain's state-room, and have a drink."

Leaving a man on guard, with instructions to inform them the instant Gray came to himself, Lord Mount-Fannell and his lieutenant left the cabin and proceeded to the captain's quarters. Now that Formby had gone Browne, the first officer, having obtained his master's ticket, had been promoted to captain of the Brotherhood's vessel.

"You're going to put him through it to-night, I suppose, sir?" he asked, as the Chief and Milverton entered.

"Yes, of course, Browne!" replied the former. "At present, however, he is still unconscious, so we must wait until he revives. That will be in about half an hour."

But Lord Mount-Fannell was wrong; and Milverton was also wrong. When he had given Gray that second dose of chloroform he had done it so hurriedly that he hardly knew how long he had kept the pad over the detective's mouth and nostrils. As a result, it was rather a near thing for Gray, and he did not recover consciousness until a full hour had passed.

A jug of cold water thrown over his head and face soon livened him up, and when he became fully aware of his surroundings, he saw and felt that he was bound in an extremely uncomfortable position to the chair on which he was sitting. Immediately above his head a large spray of electric bulbs brilliantly illuminated the cabin—and the three

sneeringly, smiling faces of the two Inner Councillors and the captain.

Being disguised, the Chief and Milverton were quite unknown to Gray, and Browne he had never before seen in his life. After one glance round he grasped the situation, and recovered his composure with a rapidity, which Kingston himself could hardly have surpassed.

"Well," he said coolly, "I seem to have got the worst of it for once. May I inquire who you gentlemen happen to be? You all seem to be very satisfied with yourselves over something—presumably my capture?"

Lord Mount-Fannell stepped forward.

"Mr. Carson Gray," he exclaimed harshly, "at the present moment you seem to be very self-reliant and composed, but, I give you my word, we are not going to deal with you lightly. There is to be no beating about the bush, and I tell you straight out, at once, that we are aware of your hostility towards the Brotherhood of Iron."

For a second a flash of surprise appeared in Carson Gray's eyes, then they assumed an expression of inquiry. But that flash had been enough; it told the Chief that he had hit the bullseye.

"Brotherhood of Iron?" repeated Gray, with an admirable affectation of innocence. "I'm afraid I do not quite understand your—"

"Enough of that!" snapped the Chief. "It is quite useless for you to affect that innocent air. I am not walking in the dark, but absolutely know that you are in the confidence of a man who is doing all he can to wreck the organisation. We have not been to the trouble of kidnaping you and bringing you here for nothing, I can assure you. If you will reveal to us everything we want to know—and that is simply the name and address of this unknown—we will instantly release you, and let you go your own way."

Carson Gray laughed amusedly.

"You evidently take me for a fool," he replied, "if you think I will believe that. It is quite natural, is it not, that you should let me go about sharing your secrets? Oh, no, my friends, it is no use trying to deceive me. I know quite well that, as soon as you have learnt all you can from me, it is your amiable intention to drop me into the river with a stone round my neck!"

"Well, if you will have it, that is so! We do mean to kill you. But before you die we shall obtain from you, by force if necessary, all we want to know."

"Very well, then, obtain away!" murmured Gray pleasantly.

As before stated, he did not delude himself with regard to the seriousness of his position, and, being by nature calm and cheerful, he saw no reason why he should affect an air of sullen obstinacy.

"To put it plainly, you finally refuse to say a word?" interposed Milverton.

"Precisely."

"It is useless parleying with him," cried Mount-Fannell. "Therefore, since words are useless, we will try what a little persuasion can do!"

"By Jove!" murmured Frank Kingston, who had drawn himself up to the outside of the porthole in time to hear the last part of this conversation. "I never realised until this moment what a splendid fellow Gray was. He knows how helpless he is, yet he apparently means to keep his mouth shut. I shudder to think of what might happen were I not here to give him my assistance. It must have been Providence which caused that lightning flash to reveal to Tim the face in the taxi-cab!"

He peered into the cabin with renewed interest, the strain on his arms never seeming to worry him. Indeed, had it not been for his marvellous strength he could never have held on as he was doing. Inside the cabin he could see everything that was being enacted.

"You, Browne, take the fellow's right boot off," ordered Mount-Fannell sharply. "Milverton, give the order outside to have the iron ready, and afterwards tie a scarf carefully over Gray's mouth!"

"There is no necessity for that," put in Gray quietly. "You can take it from me that I shall make no outcry, whatever vile and barbarous methods you may employ to force me to speak."

"We do not mean to take the risk, anyhow. Ah, that looks like business!" added the Chief, as Carson Gray's bare foot was revealed. "Now, Milverton, the scarf."

In a moment a thick and heavy muffler was bound round the detective's mouth, and Kingston, as he looked on, could hardly prevent himself bursting in then and there, and teaching these callous brutes a lesson by treating them to a sound trouncing.

"When you have had enough, and feel yourself at liberty to do what we ask," exclaimed No. 1, "you have merely to nod your head. Now, I will give you one last chance—shall I use force or not?"

Gray could not reply, but the look of unutterable loathing and scorn in his eyes plainly told the others that it was useless appealing to him. Taking all things together, Carson Gray was behaving as very few men would have done under similar circumstances—he was proving himself to be a hero.

"Ah, Browne, now we can get to business!"

The captain of the Unicorn, pale-faced and startled, had entered, carrying with him a heavy rod of iron, the end of which was white hot with intense heat. Involuntarily Gray closed his eyes, and, strange as it may seem, a thought came to him at that moment that Kingston might turn up in time to rescue him. But the next second it was dismissed, and he faced the music like a man.

"Now then, Browne, lay the iron across the sole of his foot," ordered the Chief swiftly. "I'll warrant he'll talk quickly enough then!"

Browne hung back.

"I—I— Good heavens, Chief, it's too awful!" he burst out.

"You squeamish dog, you shall pay for this!" cried Mount-Fannell, snatching the iron away from him. "I'll soon show you whether I'm a man to be played about with!"

His face at that moment was more like a devil's than a man's, and as he held the iron in his hand and advanced towards Gray, Milverton, and Browne could not repress a shudder, callous as they both were. This smooth-tongued little man's fiendishness was almost inhuman.

"Now, Mr. Gray, you will oblige me by revealing the name of this secret enemy. You have seen by this time that I mean to take no half measures, and unless you do as I want instantly, you know what to expect. The name!"

Carson Gray retained utter silence, and although his face had gone pale and clammy, his eyes still wore that same expression as before. He closed them a second later, as Lord Mount-Fannell bent down and held the now red-hot iron close against his foot.

"Hold on!"

The words cut through the air like a knife, and the Chief straightened his back as though actuated by a spring. Standing, crouched into the aperture of the port, was the dripping figure of a man, and on his face was an expression which caused Mount-Fannell to feel a creepy sensation go down his spine. With one bound Frank Kingston was on the floor, had grasped the Chief's arm, wrenched the iron out of his hand, and flung it to the far side of the cabin, where it fell with a dull thud.

"I am the answer to your question," he exclaimed sharply. "I have heard the whole of your conversation, and rather than let Mr. Gray suffer your vile torture, I have revealed myself—"

"Frank Kingston!" gasped Mount-Fannell, in utter amazement.

"Not at your service," replied the Avenger coldly.

Flung to Their Doom.

For a full twenty seconds not a sound broke the silence in the cabin save the gentle splash of the water outside, and the quick, sharp breathing of the men within. Frank Kingston's advent had fallen like a bombshell.

He stood there, in the centre of the cabin, looking at Lord Mount-Fannell with a terribly stern expression in his eyes. The Chief, Milverton, and Browne all wore expressions of the most profound and stupefied amazement. And as for Carson Gray, his mind was in a whirl. Only a minute before the absurd thought had crossed his mind that Kingston might turn up and save him. And here he was!

But that he should come undisguised, in his own personality, and calmly reveal the identity he had so long kept a secret to Mount-Fannell himself, was startling. Gray could scarcely believe his own eyes and ears.

But he need not have been alarmed—Kingston knew exactly what he was doing, and had thought the situation out thoroughly. Circumstances had caused him to hasten matters a little.

At last the Chief found his voice.

"What does it mean?" he demanded, in a hoarse undertone, "you are Frank Kingston, the rich young man who—"

"Whom you always thought to be a fool—eh?" concluded Kingston, looking from one to the other of the occupants of the cabin. "Well, Lord Mount-Fannell—you see, your disguise does not prevent me from seeing who you are—I have enjoyed my campaign against the Brotherhood of Iron, and am quite convinced that had I not revealed my identity now, you would have been in ignorance of it until the end."

"You, the man who—who—" began the Chief.

"Who settled with Lowenwirth, Anderson, Haverfield, Zeetman, and the rest of them? Exactly. And before long, Lord Mount-Fannell, I shall settle with you. In spite of all

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you may do to avert the disaster, it will, nevertheless, come. The exhibition I have witnessed to-night has enabled me to gain a truer insight into your brutal character, and I tell you now that it is with the greatest difficulty I restrain myself from taking off my coat and giving you the thrashing you deserve. Thrashing, I say? It would be too easy a punishment if you were stripped to the waist and given a hundred lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails!"

"Words can do no harm," cried the Chief, in a voice full of suppressed fury. "You are absolutely in our hands, Frank Kingston, and nothing in this world can now save you from punishment. You only came in the nick of time to save your friend from torture, but it makes scarcely any difference, for before morning you will both be stiff and cold in death!"

"That may be," replied Kingston quietly. "I quite understand that I have let myself into a trap, and am prepared to take the consequences. When I came here it was with the intention of rescuing Carson Gray; but I very soon found that such a thing was impossible. Then, when I found out what your dastardly intentions were, I had no option but to give myself away. I know that I have lost the game, and that it would be quite useless to make a fight!"

The furious expression left Mount-Fannell's face as he heard these words, and one of triumphant gloating took its place. He had gained the upper hand—at last! As for Carson Gray, he could scarcely believe the evidence of his own ears. Kingston, the man who never admitted himself beaten, speaking in this way! It was incredible.

The next moment, however, the detective was angry with himself for being so easily gulled. Kingston had turned, apparently to glance out of the open port, but Gray did not miss the faintest flicker of his left eyelid as he looked at the detective.

"Now that we have got you," exclaimed the Chief, "we do not mean to keep you a prisoner, and so give you an opportunity of escaping. Before half an hour has elapsed you and your friend Gray will be dead!"

Kingston did not answer for a moment, but to those watching him it seemed as though the words had for the moment stunned him. Needless to say, this was just a little bit of make-belief on his part.

"Very well," he exclaimed quietly, "I am not the man to make a fuss, so you can proceed with your foul work as early as you like. But before doing so, however, I have just a few words to say. To begin with, take a good look at me, all of you, and see if you recognise in me someone you know."

The Chief and Milverton were somewhat surprised, and they turned a searching glance towards the prisoner. Carson Gray, during this time, had been practically forgotten. He guessed what Kingston was about to reveal.

"What do you mean?" demanded the Chief harshly. "We know you to be Frank Kingston, but beyond that our acquaintance with you ends.

"That is where you are wrong. Frank Kingston is nothing but an assumed name; my real identity has been lost for ever. Perhaps you will remember a young man of the name of Philip Graydon, whom you marooned for life on a tiny rock in the Pacific, known as Iron Island?"

"Yes, of course," replied the Chief. "He was a traitor, and deserved all he got. What has that got to do with—Great heavens!"

Mount-Fannell took a step forward and peered closely into Kingston's face. Then he stepped back, an expression on his face of amazed incredulity.

"No," he cried, "it's impossible! It can't be! Yet—" "Yet it is the truth. I am Philip Graydon, and perhaps that information will explain to you how it is I am so versed with the doings of the Brotherhood, and why I set myself the task of exterminating it. I met Carson Gray by accident, and finding him to be an honourable gentleman, as well as an exceedingly astute detective, I took him into my confidence."

"It's absolutely incredible," cried Milverton. "We were all under the impression that Philip Graydon was dead. Yet we might have guessed that the secret enemy had at one time been a member of the Brotherhood. And all these months we have been losing councillors one by one by the hand of this man. It is high time that he were dead, so that he can no longer wreak his vengeance on the men who were at one time his fellow councillors."

"Vengeance?" repeated Kingston. "It was not altogether that which caused me to act as I have done. The Brotherhood of Iron is a blight on civilisation, and I was serving my country by bringing it to ruin. Nearly nine years ago I as a member of the Brotherhood, but before I had been in that position long I discovered its true character. Like a fool I stated my intentions openly, and

as a result was kidnapped and exiled on the Iron Island—alone. I lived there for eight years, then fortune smiled on me, and I gained my liberty, changing, at the same time, my name, and returning to England. I swore that my sole object in life should be to exterminate the Inner Council, one by one, finishing up with the Chief himself."

"And in your eagerness to carry out your plans, you overstepped the mark," put in Mount-Fannell, with a grim laugh. "I am glad you have told us this, for it has explained much that was mysterious."

"And now you had better get on with the business," exclaimed Kingston calmly. "I shall not struggle, for I recognise the futility of such a thing. In short, I surrender."

"There is no other course for you to pursue. Now, Browne, I mean to waste no time, so you had better fetch some of that strong twine down."

"To bind them up with, sir?"

"Exactly—to bind them up with," replied the Chief, in a hard tone. "It is my intention to tie the pair of them together, and quietly drop them overboard. With gags in their mouths they will be utterly unable to do a thing, and will simply sink to the bottom without even a struggle. It is the safest and surest way, for when their bodies are recovered there will be not the slightest clue to tell from whence they came."

As Browne left the cabin Kingston sat down on a chair and buried his face in his hands, Gray looking on with mingled felings. To him the situation seemed hopeless, but it was quite certain Kingston had something up his sleeve, otherwise he would never have acted in this fashion.

Besides, the detective plainly saw that his friend was anxious for the end to come, when both of them would sink to the bottom of the dock bound and helpless. Was there someone outside, ready to help? Fraser, or Crawford? Carson Gray thought so.

The reader knows, however, that such was not the case. Those two were absolutely alone among their enemies, and Kingston, although he was taking the situation in a calm and dignified manner, did not deceive Carson Gray.

Gray didn't show what he felt, however. As his boot and stocking were being replaced—for to have them aboard would be damning evidence—his expression was one of fury, intermixed with fear. Both the prisoners were acting now. But when the twine was brought, and the Inner Councillors commenced binding it with awful tightness round and round Kingston and Carson Gray, the latter began to have certain misgivings.

They were placed back to back, and bound together as securely as though they were one person. From ankle to neck the bindings went, to be finally completed with a huge muffler, which completely stopped any sounds escaping the prisoner's lips. Mount-Fannell surveyed them with a smile of satisfaction. In spite of the fact that he was committing double murder, he was not in the least nervous. He was practically devoid of humane feelings, so he valued human life at a minimum.

"That will do splendidly," he announced. "Now, let me see, the time is close upon midnight, so nobody is likely to be about. Nevertheless, Browne, you had better go on deck and see that the coast is clear before we venture to drop our captives into the water."

The skipper hurried out, his face still pale and twitching. He was a scoundrel, but hesitated at deliberate, cold-blooded murder. But, being only a common member, he could not utter any protest.

"Well," exclaimed the Chief triumphantly, "your last hour on earth has arrived, my friends, so you had better say your prayers. At last, after months, I have got you both in my hands, and the Brotherhood will now be rid of your unwelcome attentions once and for all."

The captives could not, of course, reply, and five minutes later they were standing on deck, several of the crew surrounding them. Mount-Fannell was also on deck with the captain, seeing that the coast was absolutely clear. He gave one last glance round at the deserted docks, and then gave the order.

"Now!" he exclaimed in a low voice.

Two of the crew grasped the bound forms of Frank Kingston and Carson Gray, and lifted them clear of the rail. Then, at a word, they swung them outboard and released their grip.

Splash!

For a second those on the Unicorn saw a fleeting vision of the two bound men touch the water. Then came the splash, to be followed immediately by a slight commotion, as the victims sank. The crew of the Unicorn watched silently.

But not a ripple now stirred the surface of the water!

(Another splendid instalment of this thrilling serial in next Thursday's GEM Library.)