

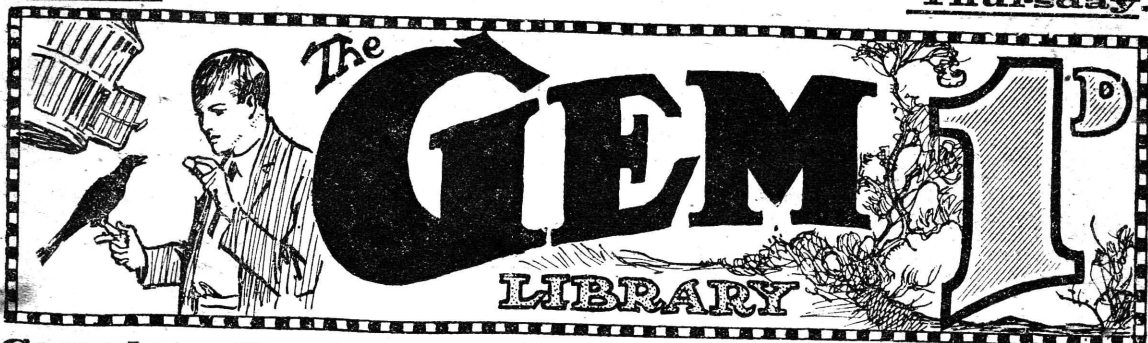
NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Thursday.



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A Splendid New, Long Complete School
Tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's by
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER 1.

The Order of the Chuck.

"YOUNG shaver!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was standing in the gateway of the old school, looking out into the road, when that remark fell upon his ears.

That the remark was addressed to him there could be no doubt.

The dusty, sunburnt man, whom he had noticed tramping up the road from the direction of Rylcombe village, had stopped directly opposite D'Arcy, and he had his keen black eyes fixed upon the swell of St. Jim's as he spoke. There was no one else in sight, either upon the road, or in the shadowy old gateway. It was therefore quite evident that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who was addressed. And as D'Arcy did not reply, the stranger repeated his remark.

"Young shaver!"

Still D'Arcy did not speak. His gaze remained fixed upon the leafless trees across the road, as if he were totally unaware of the sunburnt man's existence, and quite unconscious of the gaze of the keen black eyes. If Arthur Augustus had condescended to speak, he might have explained that he was not accustomed to being addressed in such disrespectful terms. But he did not condescend to speak.

"Deaf?" inquired the stranger pleasantly.

Arthur Augustus flicked a speck of dust from the sleeve of his immaculate Eton jacket, but gave no other sign of life.

"Are you deaf, you young swab, or only silly?" asked the sunburnt man.

No reply.

A large, sinewy brown hand dropped upon Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy's shoulder, and the man shook him to attract attention.

Then the swell of St. Jim's woke to life.

He raised his eyeglass, jammed it into his right eye, and took a survey by degrees to his shabby boots. Then it ascended again, and progressed over the stranger's person, from his shabby boots to his old slouch hat. Then the swell of St. Jim's spoke.

"Pway take your hand ffrom my shouldah!"

"Look here—"

"Will you kindly wemove your hand ffrom my shouldah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great politeness. "You are wumplin' my jacket, and pewwaps soilin' the cloth. I shall take it as a favah if you will kindly wemove your hand. Othahwise I shall have no wresource but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

The man stared at him, and burst into a laugh. He was amused; but it was a laugh that was not wholly pleasant to hear. But he removed his hand from the Fourth-Former's shoulder, and D'Arcy gently dusted the place he had touched with a cambric handkerchief.

"Look here!" began the man.

"Were you addressin' me?"

"I reckon so."

"Then, if you wish to address me again, pway do so in more wespuctful terms," said the swell of St. Jim's in his most stately way. "I am not used to bein' chawactewised as a young shavah."

The man laughed again.

"Is this St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, good! I was afraid I had missed the rotten place," said the stranger. "This is St. Jim's, hey—St. James's Collegiate School—and the headmaster is Dr. Holmes, hey?"

Next Thursday:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL!" AND "DEEP SEA GOLD!"

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"Yaas."

"Good! Much obliged, young shaver."

And the man entered the old gateway. Arthur Augustus looked at him in stately surprise.

"Twamps are not admitted here," he said, with emphasis. "What?"

"If you come on a message from one of the tradesmen you must go to the side entrance," D'Arcy explained. "If you are—as I presume—a twamp, you had better cleah out."

"You cheeky young cub!"

D'Arcy's eye glittered behind his eyeglass.

"I am sowwy to have to administrah a thwashin' to a perfect stwangah," he said, pushing back his cuffs. "But undah the circs, I have no othah wesource. I wegard you as a wude beast! Put up your hands, you wascal!"

And Arthur Augustus advanced upon the sunburnt man, savoring the air with a pair of delicately-gloved fists. The stranger stared at him, and backed away. He was a short, fliicket man, not much taller than the slim junior, but evidently very much stronger. His thick, compact figure looked as if it had the strength of a bull.

"You silly young swab—" he began.

"Put up your hands, you wottah," said Arthur Augustus, pushing his silk hat a little further back on his head, and letting his eyeglass drop to the end of its cord. "I am goin' to thwash you!"

"Hallo! Gussy—Gussy!"

It was a shout from the quadrangle, as two juniors came dashing up. One of them was Tom Merry of the Shell, and the other was Jack Blake of the Fourth. They ran between Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the sunburnt man.

"Hold on, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder. "What on earth are you going to fight with a tramp for, Gussy?"

"I am sowwy to have to soil my hands upon such a person, Tom Mewwy, but he has tweated me with the gwossett disrespect. He—"

"Hold on, Gussy! You'd better get out of here, my man," said Tom Merry, turning to the dusty stranger.

The man laughed unpleasantly.

"I reckon I'm coming in," he said. "I'm on a visit to your headmaster, Dr. Holmes."

Tom Merry laughed. A more unlikely visitor for the reverend Head of St. Jim's could not be imagined.

"You'd better buzz off!" he said.

"I reckon not."

"Pwaw stand aside, deah boys, while I thwow this wottah out," said D'Arcy.

"Look here, Gussy!"

"Wats! I am goin' to thwow him out!"

"But look here—"

Arthur Augustus was not listening. He eluded his friends, and made a rush at the man in the gateway. This time the stranger did not back away. He stood waiting for the swell of St. Jim's with a peculiar grin on his dark face. Arthur Augustus laid hands upon him, and swung him round to the road.

"Out you go, you boundah!"

The man seemed to stiffen up in D'Arcy's hands. He returned grip for grip, and the swell of St. Jim's suddenly found himself in a grasp of iron. He was held perfectly helpless, and the dark face grinned into his.

"Not so fast, young shaver!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy struggled violently. The sunburnt man grinned, and swept him off his feet. Arthur Augustus was swung into the air as if he had been a baby, and tossed like a sack through the gateway into the dusty road.

Bump!

The swell of St. Jim's landed sprawling in the road.

His silk hat went in one direction, and his eyeglass in another, and the elegant junior rolled in the dust, to the great damage of his elegant jacket and his beautiful trousers.

"Ow! Yow! Gwool!"

The sunburnt man gave him one glance, and laughed, and tramped away into the quadrangle towards the School House of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus sat up in the dust, and groped wildly for his eyeglass, and gasped.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake stared after the stranger, and then looked at the dusty junior. Arthur Augustus seemed bewildered. He blinked at the two juniors, and rubbed the dust out of his eyes, evidently in a state of great bewilderment.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"Weally, Blake, deah boy—"

Jack Blake ran out into the road, and helped his chum to

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NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE:

rise. Arthur Augustus found his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye.

"Bai Jove! Was—was that an—an earthquake?" he stammered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is that howwid wuffian?"

"He's gone in!" chuckled Tom Merry. "I suppose he has really come to see the Head, after all! You weré a little bit too previous, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, I'll give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gathered up his silk hat, and without even waiting to dust his clothes, he rushed into the quadrangle after the sunburnt stranger. The latter had already reached the door of the School House.

CHAPTER 2.

A Strange Visitor!

WHAT do you want here?" Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, asked that question in a very abrupt tone, as the sunburnt, dusty man came into the wide, oak-panelled hall of the old School House of St. Jim's. Kildare had just come out of his study, and he was considerably surprised to see the dusty stranger in the house.

The man did not seem at all taken aback by the abrupt address of the St. Jim's captain. He looked at Kildare with perfect coolness.

"I reckon I want to see your headmaster," he said.

"What?"

"Don't I speak plainly?" said the sunburnt man, with irritating calmness. "I reckon I want to see Dr. Holmes."

Kildare looked at him very suspiciously.

"You can send your name in by the page, if you like," he said.

The man nodded.

"Yes, I suppose I can, and without asking your permission, either, young shaver," he replied coolly.

Kildare's eyes gleamed.

"You had better not give me any impertinence," he said. "I do not believe for a moment that you have any business with our headmaster. But I will take your name in."

"I reckon I'll go in myself."

Kildare stepped in the man's path.

"You won't," he said grimly.

"Who'll stop me?"

"I will."

The sunburnt man looked at the stalwart captain of St. Jim's, and noted his steady, strong, well-set figure, and paused. Kildare was a tougher opponent to tackle than the elegant Fourth-Former had been.

"I reckon you can take in my name," he said.

"Very well. What is it?"

"I'll write it down," said the man coolly. "It isn't for you to see."

"You can do as you like."

"I reckon I can."

The man drew a stump of pencil and a fragment of paper from his pocket, and wrote a few words, and folded the paper. Then he looked at Kildare.

"Can you give me an envelope?" he asked.

The Sixth-Former stared at him.

"What do you want an envelope for?"

"To put the paper in."

"Why?"

"So that the name cannot be read?"

"It cannot be read, as you have folded the paper, if there is any need for secrecy."

The man grinned.

"Papers are easily unfolded," he remarked.

Kildare flushed crimson.

"Do you think I should unfold it?" he asked angrily, taking a step towards the sunburnt man.

The latter looked at him steadily.

"Well, no. I reckon you wouldn't," he said. "Take the paper as it is."

Kildare took the paper without another word, and strode away in the direction of the Head's study. He was very much puzzled. The man, tattered and dusty as he was, had about him the air of one who had seen better days. He seemed to have perfect confidence, too, that the Head of St. Jim's would see him on demand. That he was not merely a tramp with an unusual gift of impudence Kildare felt sure. It was possible that he was someone whom the Head had known in better times, and who was now in need of assistance. That seemed to the captain of St. Jim's the likeliest theory.

The sunburnt man remained kicking his heels in the wall. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking round him



When the last of the wooden boxes was opened, it was found to be packed with pebbles, on the top of which a note was lying. "Where's the cake?" roared the juniors. "Blessed if I know!" gasped Tom Merry. "Listen to this, "Thanks! With Figgins & Co.'s compliments!" (See Chapter 5.)

with cool inquisitiveness. Several fellows came by, and they all looked at him, and wondered to see him there. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in, followed by Blake and Tom Merry, and D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass as he saw the stranger. He came up to him directly.

"You wuffian!"

The man chuckled softly.

Tom Merry and Blake both caught hold of the swell of St. Jim's, and dragged him away from the stranger.

"Don't be an ass, Gussy," advised Blake. "You can't tackle him here, you know. You mustn't kick up a row in the house."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You're not two yards from Mr. Railton's door," urged Tom Merry. "Don't play the giddy goat, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"Come up in the study."

"I wefuse—"

"Oh, rats! Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus, still expostulating, was marched upstairs between the two juniors.

The sunburnt man looked after them, and grinned. Monty Lowther and Manners, of the Shell, came into the House, and stopped as they saw him.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther. "What do you do, my man?"

The man looked at him.

"I reckon that's no business of yours!" he answered.

Monty Lowther flushed.

"What I mean is, you look to me like a tramp, and you'd better get out!" he exclaimed. "We don't allow your sort in here!"

"Perhaps you can put me out?" suggested the man.

"I dare say I could," said Lowther, "only you'd make my clothes dirty if I touched you! Shall we pitch him out, Manners?"

"Certainly!" said Manners.

The man backed away a little. Between them, the two Shell fellows would certainly have given him plenty to do to defend himself.

"I reckon you'd better go slow," he remarked. "I'm here to see the headmaster, and I've just sent my name in to him."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"Old friend of Dr. Holmes's, I suppose?" he inquired sarcastically.

"Exactly!"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH!"

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"Blessed check!" said Manners. "He's a tramp, of course! I'll tell you what—Herries has got his bulldog out in the quad, and Towser is death on tramps! Let's whistle Towser in, and he'll see whether the chap's a tramp or not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners went to the doorway. Herries, of the Fourth, was taking Towser for a run, and he was just passing the door. Manners called to him.

"Herries! This way!"

Herries looked round.

"Hallo!"

"Bring Towser in! There's a tramp here!"

"Good egg!" said Herries. "Come on, Towser! This way, Towsy, old boy! Tramps, Towsy—tramps!"

And Herries came in, with Towser on a chain. The sunburnt man backed away in alarm. He was not afraid of the schoolboys, but he was evidently afraid of the bulldog. And Towser's teeth looked formidable enough to make anybody feel afraid when the bulldog opened his wide jaws and growled.

"Blessed cheek of a tramp to come in here!" said Herries. "Seize him, Towser!"

Gr-r-r!

"Keep that dog off!" yelled the sunburnt man. "Do you hear?"

"Get out, then!"

"I've got business here."

"Rats!"

"I'm waiting to see the Head——"

"Bosh! Buzz out!"

The sunburnt man's hand went to the back of his belt, and it swung into view again with something in it that gleamed and glistened. A glimmering tube was levelled at Towser, as the bulldog cautiously advanced upon the tramp. It was a revolver.

"My hat!" gasped Manners.

"Call that dog off, or I'll lay it dead on the floor!" said the sunburnt man savagely.

"Towser! Towser!"

Gr-r-r!

Kildare came back down the passage. He stared in amazement at the sight of the deadly weapon, and frowned.

"Herries, take that dog away!"

"Ye-es, Kildare!"

"Take it away at once!"

"Oh, all right!"

"And you'd better put that pistol away, you ruffian!" said Kildare sternly. "You could be arrested for having it in your possession! Put it away at once!"

The sunburnt man gave him a savage look, and then slid the revolver back into his pocket.

"The Head will see you," said Kildare. "Follow me!"

"Sereno!"

The sunburnt man followed the captain of St. Jim's. The juniors in the hall stared at one another in blank amazement.

"The horrid ruffian!" muttered Manners.

"And the Head's going to see him—a desperado who carries a revolver with him!" said Monty Lowther. "My hat! I wonder what it means?"

"Something jolly odd about it; I know that!"

"Yes, rather!"

They looked after the man. Kildare had tapped at the door of the Head's study, and shown the tramp—if tramp he was—into the presence of the Head of St. Jim's. And the chums of the Shell went their way, amazed.

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CHAPTER 3.

Bad News.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was standing in his study.

He had the dirty fragment of paper in his hand, which the man had sent in to him by Kildare.

There was a strange expression upon the kind old face of the doctor.

His brows were wrinkled in a slight frown, and his cheeks seemed a little paler than usual. Kildare had noticed that he changed colour when he read the message, and he had wondered. Dr. Holmes looked steadily at the sunburnt man as he came in. Kildare followed him into the study.

"This is the man, sir," he said.

"Very well, Kildare."

"I think I should tell you, sir, that this man is armed," said Kildare. "I have seen a revolver in his hand!"

The Head started.

"Thank you, Kildare! But you may go."

"Yes, sir."

The St. Jim's captain withdrew, and closed the study door. The sunburnt man had taken off his shabby slouch hat. In spite of his cool impudence, he seemed to be somewhat impressed and abashed by the grave dignity of the Head of St. Jim's.

"You sent in this note to me, my man?" said Dr. Holmes.

"I reckon!"

The Head glanced at the dirty, pencilled fragment of paper. The words scrawled upon it ran: "I have a message from your brother, who is sick, and needs assistance." That was all.

"You come from—someone else?" asked the Head.

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"James Holmes."

"Where is he now?"

"In the village."

"He wishes to see me?"

"I reckon so."

"He is ill?"

"Yes."

"What is his complaint?"

The sunburnt man grinned.

"Same old complaint," he said—"too much to drink and too little to eat!"

The Head's face did not relax.

"You seem to know something of my younger brother," he said; "but I do not accept your word in any way. You do not look to me a reputable person. What is your name?"

The sunburnt man shrugged his shoulders.

"Carson," he said. "That is near enough, at all events. I may have had other names at other times."

"I know the name," said the Head. "My brother has written to me from America, and he mentioned that name as that of an unscrupulous sharper with whom he had come into contact!"

Carson grinned.

"We are good friends now," he said.

"I shall not believe that without proof!" said the doctor coldly. "If my brother is in England again now, and in need of assistance, why does he not come to me himself, or write?"

"He cannot come, and he will not write. He wishes you to see him—if you are willing to help him. If not, you can say so."

"I shall always be willing to help him," said the Head, "even if he has taken once more to the evil paths I hoped he had abandoned for ever. But I shall not take the word of a man of your character. You certainly appear to know something of my brother, but I have no proof that he is with you, or that he is in England at all. In fact, I have the best of reasons for supposing that he is in Canada at the present moment."

"And you had better allow that supposition still to exist," said the sunburnt man, with a grin.

"Why?" asked the Head sharply.

"Because if it were known that he is in England, he would not be safe."

"Not safe! Why not?"

"The police!"

Dr. Holmes turned pale.

"Do you mean to say——" he began.

"I reckon he was innocent, of course," said Carson, with a grin; "we all are! But you can hear the story from his own lips, if you care to see him. I don't expect you to part with money till you've seen him—naturally, you want proof."

"Most decidedly!"

"I reckon you can see him as soon as you like."

"I shall do so."

"Come this evening, then," said Carson. "Jim—excuse me calling him Jim—Jim is sick, and badly in need of help. I've been looking after him ever since we landed in England, but I'm pretty well at the end of my tether, I guess. Will you see him to-night?"

"Yes."

"Serenely, then!"

"Where can I see him?"

"He doesn't want anybody to know exactly where he is, for the best of reasons," said the sunburnt man, with a grin; "but he will be glad to see you. I will take you there. I will wait for you in the road this evening, at any hour you please."

"Very well," said the Head. "I will leave the school gates at nine o'clock precisely. But I warn you that if this is a trick to obtain money from me, you will not succeed! Unless I actually see my brother, I shall not part with a shilling!"

"That's a bargain!"

"Very well. Kindly go now!"

The sunburnt man left the study.

Dr. Holmes sank into his chair.

The grave calmness he had maintained while the sunburnt man was in the study seemed to desert him now that he was alone.

The kind old face was pale and lined, the brow deeply wrinkled. An old trouble, which the Head of St. Jim's had believed to be over for ever, had risen again to confront him. Was it to haunt him until the end of his days? It seemed so. The younger brother—handsome, happy-go-lucky Jim Holmes—had always been a trouble to him, yet the doctor's affection had never wavered. He had borne all the trials and troubles the scapegrace had brought upon him with cheerful fortitude. And at last it seemed that Jim had determined to lead a steady life—with years wisdom had seemed to come. He had started in Canada, and had written home reports of his progress which gave great satisfaction to the old doctor. Was it all over now? Had he fallen into his old ways, and fallen lower than of old? If he was now hiding near the school—sick, penniless and wanted by the police—it was a terrible ending to all the doctor's hopes for him.

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Railton came in.

Dr. Holmes straightened up.

But the House-master of the School House could not help seeing the signs of distress in his face, and he paused.

"You do not wish to be disturbed, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, yes; come in!"

Mr. Railton closed the door.

"I have had bad news," said the Head. "But—but I hope it will not turn out to be so bad as has been reported to me. But I shall dismiss the matter from my mind now, until this evening, when I am to know more for certain. You have the examination papers there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; let us get to work!"

And the two masters were soon busy, and the Head, with an effort, drove the thought of the troubling communication he had received from his mind. But in spite of himself his brow remained wrinkled with care and the usual colour did not return to his face.

CHAPTER 4.

Kerr Takes the Cake.

"BAI Jove!"

"Hallo, Gussy! What's the trouble now?"

"There goes that feaful wottah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing at the window of Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage in the School House—the study he shared with Blake and Herries and Digby, of the Fourth. The chums of Study No. 6 were getting tea—at all events, Blake and Herries and Digby were. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still feeling considerably ruffled by his encounter with the sunburnt man, and he could not devote himself to commonplace tasks. As he looked from the study window he saw the sunburnt man crossing the quadrangle towards the gates, walking with an easy and careless saunter. It was easy to see that the man was satisfied with the result of his visit to the school.

Blake joined D'Arcy at the window, and looked out.

"He's seen the Head, I suppose," he remarked.

"It is vewy remarkable that the Head should consent to see such an extremely disreputable wottah!"

"Yes, it's queer! Mind how you fry those sassingers, Dig."

"Oh, rats!" said Digby. "Do you think I can't fry sossingers?"

"Sausages, deah boy!"

"Sossingers!" said Digby, turning a ruddy face from the fire, which was very large and blazing. "Sossingers!"

"Pway don't use such vulgah expressions, Dig, deah boy! I am always twyin' to impress upon my young bwotah Wally the necessity of usin' good English, and he picks up those wotten slang expressions frowm you."

"Rats! These sossingers will be prime!" said Digby deliberately.

"Weally, Digby——"

"Are you going to open the sardines, Gussy?"

"No, Hewwies, I am not goin' to open the sardines. The last time I opened the sardines I had a stain of beastly oil on my cuff. Blake can open the sardines."

"What about my cuffs?" howled Blake.

"Oh, pway don't argue, deah boy! I was thinkin' that, undah the cires., I ought to pwoceed to follow that wottah and give him a feaful thwashin'. He has treated me with gwoss diswespect. What do you think, Blake? I should like you fellows to advise me."

"I think you had better open the sardines."

"Weally, Blake! What do you think, Hewwies?"

"Same as Blake."

"Ass! What do you think, Dig?"

"I think those sosses will be ripping."

"Sausages, deah boy!"

"Sosses!" replied Digby.

"Sausages!"

"Sosses!"

"Weally, Dig——"

"Why the dickens doesn't Tom Merry come?" exclaimed Blake, looking at his watch. "Those three fatheads are coming to tea, and they're late. Tom Merry's going to bring a cake."

Bang!

The impact of a heavy boot sent the study door flying open, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three, of the Shell—marched in. Tom Merry carried a large paper package in his hands.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed cheerfully.

"That the cake?"

"Yes."

"Good!" said Blake, with satisfaction. "It's a jolly big one."

"I bargained with Dame Taggles for the biggest she had," said Tom Merry. "We came jolly near losing it."

"How's that?"

"Figgins & Co. spotted me bringing it in," Tom Merry explained. "They made a rush for it, but I dodged into the House just in time."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah! It would have been wotten if Figgins & Co. had succeeded in waidin' the cake," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "By the way, Tom Mewwy, I want to ask your advice."

"Go it, my son!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Always ready to give advice to kids."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"What's the trouble?" asked Monty Lowther. "Have you decided to remonstrate with the Head about the kind of visitors he receives, or are you going to get married?"

"I wefuse to weply to such ridiculous wemarks, Lowthah. I am wondewin' whethah I weally ought to follow that wuffian and give him a feaful thwashin'!"

"Quite essential," said Lowther. "The only question is, how are you going to do it? Will you insist upon his keeping his hands in his pockets while you thrash him?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I don't see how you would manage it otherwise," grinned Tom Merry.

"Weally, you ass——"

Clink!

A pebble rattled on the window of the study. Blake crossed to it and looked out. Three figures were dimly visible in the gloom of the quadrangle. Blake recognised Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the heroes of the New House.

"Hallo, you New House bounders!" said Blake. "What do you want? Has Fatty Wynn got his eye on our cake?"

Figgins grinned.

"Oh, it's your cake, is it?" he said.

"We've got it," said Blake. "It's a nice big cake, full of plums—a ripping cake, and weighs three pounds. Doesn't that make your mouth water, Fatty?"

"Oh!" said Fatty.

"Is Herries there?" said Figgins.

"Yes."

Herries had just opened the sardines. He came to the window.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

"It's about Towser."

"Towser!"

"Yes. I suppose it's all right?"

"All right!" exclaimed Herries, in alarm. "What's all right? Is anybody meddling with my bulldog? I'll——"

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"Then you didn't tell them he was to be killed?" asked Figgins, in astonishment.

"Killed!" roared Herries. "My dog! My—my hat! Killed! Why, I—"

Herries said no more. He paused only to catch up a cricket-stump, and rushed from the study. Figgins & Co. melted away into the gloom.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Of course, I suppose there isn't anybody in the House, except Herries, who wouldn't be glad to see the last of Towser. But—"

"But this is rather thick," said Blake. "I know Knox has threatened to have it shot a lot of times."

"Yes, I suppose it's Knox; and if Herries goes for a prefect—"

"We'd better back him up!" said Blake.

"The sossingers are done!" said Digby.

"Sausages, deah boy!"

"Sosses!"

"Sausages!"

"I'm going to back up Herries," said Blake. "Towser is a beast, but Herries would be frightfully cut up if he were hurt. Come on, you chaps! Tea will wait."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake ran out of the study, and the other fellows followed him. Towser had been in danger of death on more than one occasion. When he got loose, he had playful ways which were appreciated by no one but Herries. In Herries' eyes Towser, like the monarch in the British Constitution, could do no wrong. But Knox, the prefect, and Levison, of the Fourth, and several other fellows owed long grudges against Towser. But even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who frequently complained that Towser had no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers, was willing to back up Herries in defending his favourite.

In a minute or less the study was empty.

Two minutes later the door was cautiously opened, and Kerr, the canny Scottish member of Figgins & Co., put his head in.

He grinned as he saw that the room was empty, and stepped in quietly. Kerr had a packet under his arm exactly resembling in shape and size the wrapped-up cake that Tom Merry had just purchased at the tuckshop.

The cake was still lying on the table where Tom Merry had placed it, not yet unwrapped. To pick up Tom Merry's cake, and substitute his own parcel for it, occupied Kerr but a second. Then he quitted the study.

CHAPTER 5.

With the Compliments of Figgins & Co.

"TOWSER! Towser!"

Herries shouted the name of his favourite as he reached the kennels. A whine from Towser's kennel answered him. Herries stopped breathlessly. He had run without a pause from the School House, stump in hand, ready to do battle in Towser's defence, even if the enemy were a prefect. He paused in amazement as Towser whined in reply. The place was in dusk, and quite deserted. No one was there, and it was evident that Towser was not in danger. Tom Merry & Co. came racing up after Herries, and arrived in a breathless crowd.

"All over?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Nobody's here!" growled Herries. "Towser's all right! Ain't you, Towsy?"

And he patted Towser's huge head, as the bulldog rubbed it against his leg.

"Bai Jove!"

"We've been done!"

"We've had a run for nothing," said Tom Merry. "Figgy was pulling your leg, you duffer!"

"The uttah wottah! He said—"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"He didn't say Towser was being hurt," he exclaimed. "He simply asked Herries if he had told anybody Towser was to be killed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The bouncer!" said Blake, laughing, too. "We've been fooled! It was a little joke to give us a run round here for nothing. He knew that Herries would rush off without stopping to think, like a silly ass—"

"Look here, Blake—"

"And that we should rush after him to prevent him from committing manslaughter," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's all right," said Herries, in great relief. "They'd better touch my bulldog, that's all! Yah!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Let's get back," said Digby. "The sossingers ought to be eaten while they're hot."

"Sausages, deah boy!"

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NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE!

"Sossingers!"

"Oh, come on!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors, breathing hard after their rapid run, returned to the School House. There was no sign of Figgins & Co. in the quadrangle, which was just as well for the New House juniors, as they would certainly have been bumped, and bumped hard, if Tom Merry & Co. had fallen in with them just then.

Tom Merry & Co. crowded into Study No. 6. All looked as they had left it, and Digby lifted the dish of broiled sausages out of the fender. The tea-table certainly looked very inviting. Tom Merry & Co. and the Fourth-Formers had pooled resources on this occasion for an extra good feed, and it certainly looked very successful. The big cake was large enough for seven juniors to make a meal of, or a dozen of them, for that matter.

"Pass the sosses, Dig!" said Blake.

"Sausages, Blake!"

"Oh, rats! They're ripping, and no mistake! You can unwrap the cake, Gussy."

"I am wathah busy at the present moment!"

"All right! Unwrap it, Herries!"

"How can I unwrap cakes when I'm eating sosses?"

"Sausages, deah boy!"

"Sosses!"

"Sausages!"

"Sosses or sausages, they're jolly good!" said Tom Merry. "They're cooked as well as Fatty Wynn himself could have cooked them."

"Yaas, wathah! But I object to the expression—"

"Pass the bread and butter, Gussy."

"Certainly! But I object—"

"Have another soss, Gussy?"

"I will twy another sausage, deah boy."

And the sausages were disposed of to the general satisfaction, and the sardines followed them, and then Tom Merry cut the string of the large packet on the table.

He unrolled the paper, with all eyes fixed upon him. Mrs. Taggles's three-pound cakes cost half-a-crown each, and naturally they were not very frequently found in junior studies. It was a special treat, and the juniors were anticipating it keenly.

Tom Merry took off the wrapping of brown paper, and then looked puzzled. He expected to find a wrapping of white paper inside, and inside that the cake, but instead of that he found a second layer of brown paper.

"Blessed if I remember seeing Mrs. Taggles put a double paper round it!" he exclaimed.

He unwrapped the second paper.

A cardboard box was disclosed.

Tom Merry gazed at it in astonishment.

"My only hat!"

"What's the matter?" asked Blake.

"Look at that box!"

"Well, Mrs. Taggles sometimes puts the cakes into cardboard boxes, doesn't she? What's the matter with it?"

"This cake wasn't put into a box."

"It's in one now."

Tom Merry looked utterly bewildered.

"Blessed if I can understand it at all!" he exclaimed. "I watched Dame Taggles wrapping that cake up, and I'd swear there was no box."

"Oh, wats!" said D'Arcy. "There must have been a box, or it wouldn't be here now. Pway take the cake out, deah boy!"

Tom Merry cut the string that was tied round the cardboard box, and took off the lid. Inside was a parcel wrapped in brown paper, and tied.

The juniors were all on their feet now, and gazing at the mysterious packet in great surprise. It was evident that there was something decidedly wrong with the parcel. The fresh packet disclosed inside the box was not large enough to contain one of Dame Taggles's three-pound cakes. Where was the cake?

"It must be vewy much smallah than usual, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Tom, Mewwy has brougth a two-pound cake by mistake."

"I didn't!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Then you have brought the wrong parcel from the shop."

"I haven't! It's just as Mrs. Taggles handed it to me."

"Oh, rats! You've been dreaming!"

Tom Merry cut the new string, and unfolded the paper. Inside the smaller parcel a fresh cardboard box of a smaller size was disclosed. The juniors gazed at it in blank amazement.

"Gweat Scott! Where is the cake?"

"I—I can't understand it!"

"You've got the wrong parcel," said Digby.

"I haven't, I tell you!"

"Then where is the cake?"

"Goodness knows!"



Mr. Sillifax listened with a critical air while Coker declaimed his lines behind the scenes. He interrupted frequently, without the slightest regard for the growing rage of the amateur actor. "More free action, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Sillifax. "You don't want to recite like a horse! Don't waste your hand, it's ungraceful! And speak up!"

(An amusing incident taken from the grand, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH," which is contained in this week's number of our companion paper "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale at all newsagents. Price One Penny.)

"Open that blessed thing, and see what's inside it, anyway!" exclaimed Blake.

The thing was opened. Inside was a small wooden box, and when that was opened it was found to be closely packed with pebbles, which gave weight to the parcel. On the pebbles was lying a note.

Tom Merry picked it up dazedly.

"My hat!"

"Wead it out, deah boy!"

"The—the rotters!"

"What is it?" shouted Manners.

"Look!"

Tom Merry held up the note. It was written in a large and sprawling hand, easily recognised as that of Figgins of the Fourth. And it ran:

"Thanks! With Figgins & Co.'s compliments!"

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 6.

A Bad Catch.

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly at the note.

For some minutes they could not understand it.

That their old rivals of the New House had japed them was certain, but they could not imagine how Figgins & Co. had done it.

"You ass!" said Blake, at last, breaking the silence. "You've let Figgins & Co. raid the cake after all!"

"But—but—but how have they done it?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther suddenly. "That was why they sent us on a wild-goose chase after that rotten bulldog—"

"That what?" demanded Herries.

"Rotten bulldog!" said Monty Lowther innocently.

"Look here, you fathead—"

"But I don't see—" began Blake.

"They saw Tommy bringing the cake in, and they got up a parcel to look like it, and they must have slipped in here while we were out—"

"And changed them! My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And now we're done!" said Digby. "All through—"

"Towser!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries crossly.

"I wogard this as wathah wotten of Figgins & Co.," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It does not mattah so much about losin' the cake, but we have been done. I think we ought to go ovah to the New House and give them a feahful thwashin'."

"Hear, hear!"

"Lucky they didn't take the sosses," said Digby.

"Sausages, deah boy."

"Sosses—"

"Let's go over and see Figgins," said Blake, with a very

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"THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH!" 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.

warlike look. "If they're eating the cake we shall catch them—"

"They'll be on the look-out," said Tom Merry doubtfully. "Oh, come on!"

The School House juniors streamed out. They had little hope of recovering the cake, but there might be a chance of bumping Figgins & Co., which would make matters even. There was a bright light streaming from the window of Figgins's study in the New House, and three figures could be seen there, seated in a row in the window. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

"Hallo!" sang out Figgins, as the juniors came into the radius of light from the New House windows.

Tom Merry & Co. halted.

"Give us our cake!" roared Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters—"

"We're eating the cake," said Figgins, looking down upon the School House juniors with a sweet smile. "It's ripping!"

"Splendid!" said Kerr.

"Jolly good cake!" said Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full.

"Did you find Towser all right, Herries, old man?"

And the three New House juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, you wottahs—"

"You can come in if you like," said Figgins: "we're ready for you. You can come upstairs, and we'll roll you down again. Come in!"

"You—you—you—"

"Hear us smile!" said Figgins. "Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"We are! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let's get away!" said Blake crossly. "We can't get at the bounders now, but they'll be coming out presently for their evening sprint," he added, sinking his voice.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House juniors returned. It was the invariable custom of Figgins & Co. to take a sprint round the quadrangle before bed unless they were very busily occupied, and Tom Merry & Co. determined to be on the watch for them.

At a quarter to nine the heroes of the School House quietly slipped out into the quadrangle, and took up their position near the fountain, which Figgins & Co. would pass if they took their usual path.

It was intensely dark in the quadrangle, and hardly a star glimmered in the black sky.

The juniors waited and listened for footsteps. Nobody else was likely to cross the quad. at that time of night, and there was little danger of making a mistake. But, as a matter of fact, the juniors were too keen upon bumping Figgins & Co. to think of the possibility of a mistake.

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, in a suppressed voice.

The gravel on the path was grinding under a boot.

"Go for them!"

The School House juniors made a rush.

They bumped into a dark form, and bumped it over, and rolled on it, and there was a gasping cry.

"Bless my soul!"

The juniors jumped away from the fallen form as if it had become suddenly red hot.

For they knew the voice.

It was the Head!

"B-b-bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Bless my soul! Who is that—what is it? Boys! Dear me!"

"Oh, sir!"

"We're sorry, sir!"

Tom Merry and Manners lent a hand to the Head to rise. Dr. Holmes gained his feet. Blake found his hat, and handed it to him. The Head was in coat and gloves, evidently going out. He gasped painfully for breath.

"Boys, what are you doing out of your House at this hour? I—I— Why did you attack me in that way?"

"We—we thought it was Figgins, sir," stammered Tom Merry. "We're awfully sorry, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"Go into your House at once, and take fifty lines each," said the Head.

"Ye-es, sir."

The juniors moved off disconsolately to the School House. Dr. Holmes, breathing very hard, walked on to the side

gate and let himself out with a key. Tom Merry & Co. entered the School House in dismay.

"Bai Jove, that was wotten!" muttered Arthur Augustus. "What the dickens is the Head going out for at this time of night?" said Monty Lowther crossly. "It wasn't our fault."

"Can't be helped now, anyway," said Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. have got off. But I hope we didn't hurt the doctor."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the School House juniors went into the common-room, giving up, for that evening, at least, further thoughts of reprisals against Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 7.

Caught in the Trap.

DR. HOLMES closed the little gate behind him, and the lock clicked shut. It was very dark in the lane, and all the darker from the shadow of the high school wall and the overhanging trees inside. The Head walked along slowly to the great gates, and at the sound of his footsteps a shadowy figure seemed to detach itself, as it were, from the wall. From the clock-tower of St. Jim's the hour boomed out.

"Is that you, sir?" came a voice the Head knew. All he could see was a patch of thicker blackness against the darkness of the night. But it was the voice of Carson.

"Yes," replied the doctor steadily.

"Good! You are on time."

"I am punctual," said the Head. "Pray lead the way, and let us lose no time."

Carson chuckled softly.

"Very well. Come on!" he said.

The Head followed him.

All the country round St. Jim's was very well known to the Head. He expected to be led to the village of Rylcombe, but before the village was reached the man stepped off into a path that led through the wood. The wood was dark and lonely; the trees, stripped of their leaves by the cold winter wind, groaned and creaked with their bare branches. Among the thickets there was still visible a gleam of snow, from the late fall.

The Head stopped in the path.

"Where are we going?" he asked abruptly.

"To Jim Holmes."

"I understood that he was in the village."

"It wouldn't have been safe for him to go there," said Carson.

"Then where is he?"

"In a cottage on the river—by the Wayland Road."

"Very well."

No more was said as the almost invisible guide led the way. Dr. Holmes followed him without a word. They passed through Rylcombe Wood by the footpath, and came out on the edge of the Wayland Moor. From the darkness came a glimmer of water, and a sound of bubbling among the reeds. Where the wood joined the moor the River Ryll ran between steep banks, and there was a glimmer of light from a cottage window. The little two-storey building was very lonely, with no other habitation, probably, within a mile. Dr. Holmes knew the cottage. It had stood untenanted for a very long time, and a better place could not have been chosen by his brother, if it were really necessary for him to keep in hiding. It was called Moor Cottage, and the lonely moor, with its deserted quarries, stretched round it, and behind was the wood.

The guide made directly for the glimmering light, which had evidently been left burning in the window as a sign. They reached the cottage, and Carson opened the gate of the unkempt, wild garden, overgrown with weeds and bushes. He knocked at the cottage door, and whistled in a peculiar way.

The Head of St. Jim's gave him a quick look of suspicion.

"Why that signal?" he exclaimed.

"It's to let my pal know who's here."

"Is there anyone in the cottage beside my brother?"

"Yes; the man who's looking after him—my pal, the Beetle."

An expression of strong disgust came into the kind, scholarly face of the doctor. It seemed as if his quiet, grave nature had been brought suddenly in contact with the vulgarity and coarseness of the criminal classes, and he shrank from it. Dearly he would have liked to turn his back upon the cottage, upon Carson and his "pal, the Beetle," and return to St. Jim's. But he thought of his brother. If Jim, the scapegrace younger brother, lay sick in that desolate place, it was his duty to succor him; and whatever wretched scrape Jim Holmes might have fallen into, surely it was a brother's duty to stand by him and help him!

ANSWERS

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NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL." By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

"The door was opened, and a dim light glimmered out. A tall, thin man in shabby clothes, with a cap on the back of his head, peered out at the two forms in the doorway.

"That you, Pete?"

"Yes," replied Carson.

"Good!"

The Beetle retreated, to allow Carson and his companion to enter. He closed the door again, and a key grated in the lock. The Head looked round quickly.

"Nothin' like makin' sure, sir," said the Beetle, apologetically.

Dr. Holmes nodded without speaking.

"This way," said Carson.

The door opened directly into a room which was evidently the kitchen of the cottage. At the back of the room a rickety wooden stair led up to the bed-rooms. There were two of them, and the staircase gave directly into one, without any door. Dr. Holmes stooped his head as he went on. In the first room a feeble light was burning from a guttering candle stuck in the neck of a bottle. The surroundings were all wretched, sordid, and dirty. Dr. Holmes shuddered as he entered. Had his brother come to this?

A bed was in one corner of the room, half in shadow. In the bed a young man lay, with a pale face, only dimly seen in the light.

"Is that you?" whispered the sick man.

"It's me, old pal."

"And my brother?"

"He's come."

"I am here, James," said the Head of St. Jim's, advancing towards the bed.

"Thank you for coming!" came the whispering voice.

"James! Is it really you?"

"Do you doubt it, Henry?"

"Let me look at you," said the Head firmly. "My brother James is supposed to be in Canada. I have not heard from him for some time, but he was going West, probably past postal facilities, and that may account for it. I shall not easily believe that he has fallen into crime and disgrace, in spite of his reckless early years. I must be satisfied that you are my brother."

"Do you not know my face, Henry?"

The Head bent a searching look upon him.

The face he saw was very pale, and somewhat handsome, and so far as could be seen in the dim, glimmering light of the candle, it was that of James Holmes.

But the Head of St. Jim's, quiet and scholarly and retiring as his nature was, was no fool. It was not easy to impose upon him.

He picked up the candle and bent over the sick man, and scanned his features closely. The man bore the scrutiny well.

"Well?" he said, at last.

"I suppose you have told the truth," said the Head. "If you are not my brother, you are very like him."

"I am your brother!"

The Head sat down by the bedside.

"How did you come to this?" he asked.

The young man made a feeble gesture.

"I have been a fool," he said—"the same old tale!"

"And your promises to me?"

"I have no excuse to offer, Henry."

"And you are ill?"

"Do I not look it?"

"You do," said the Head quietly, steadily scanning the face of the sick man in the dim light of the candle—"you do, James. But answer me one question. What did you do with the two hundred pounds you received in Quebec?"

"It went like the rest."

"All of it?"

"Every penny!"

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet. His eyes, burning with indignation, turned upon Pete Carson.

"Kindly allow me to pass," he said, as Carson drew between him and the stairs.

The feeble voice came from the bed.

"Henry! Do you desert me, then?"

"I do not desert you," said the Head; "I give you two hours to throw up this rascally pretence, and escape from the neighbourhood. By that time the police will be looking for you."

"Is that your answer to your brother?"

"You are not my brother," said the Head quietly. "I never sent my brother two hundred pounds to Quebec! He certainly never received it. If you were my brother, you would know that. You have attempted to impose upon me by your likeness to my brother. You are a scoundrel, sir!"

And Dr. Holmes's voice trembled with anger and scorn. Carson uttered an angry oath.

"Then that game's up!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said the Head of St. Jim's indignantly. "That game is up, as you express it."

Carson smiled sneeringly.

"Not so fast, I reckon!" he replied, and he called out to the man below: "Beetle!"

"Hallo, Pete!"

"Come up here!"

"You bet!"

The long-limbed ruffian came up the wooden, rickety stairs. Dr. Holmes made a movement, and both Pete Carson and the Beetle stood in his way. There was a glimmer of steel as the sunburnt man drew his hand from behind him. A revolver was glistering in the glimmer of the candle.

CHAPTER 8.

Kidnapped.

"LET me pass!"

Dr. Holmes's voice shook with angry indignation as he endeavoured to push his way past the two ruffians to the stairs.

"Stand back!"

"I will do nothing of the sort! I——"

Click!

Dr. Holmes started back, in spite of himself, as the muzzle of the revolver touched his breast.

Carson grinned evilly.

"Better go slow!" he remarked.

Dr. Holmes faced him calmly—scornfully.

"You dare not use that weapon!" he said quietly. "Whatever may be the ways of the country you come from, you dare not use that weapon in England. You would be hanged, sir, if you were to do so."

The sick man sat up in the bed, and kicked the bed-clothes off. He was grinning, the grin looking strange enough on his pallid face. But it was clear now that his pallor was merely the effect of make-up.

"I only half expected it to work," he said, and his voice sounded strong enough now. "But we have another string to our bow, Dr. Holmes."

"You have soon given up your hypocrisy, sir," said the Head.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

He stepped to a rickety washstand, and drew a wet sponge over his face, and then proceeded to towel it. As he did so he spoke with perfect coolness. It was clear that this man, the youngest of the three, was the leader.

"They all said I was like Jim Holmes," he said; "and I reckoned I was like enough to him to pass for him in a dim light, and made up like an invalid. But you were sharper than we gave you credit for, sir."

"Your wretched cheat is useless now," said the Head. "You have made me anxious about my brother, but I think I could forgive you now that I know he has not fallen as I was led to fear."

"Your brother is perfectly well, and digging gold, I believe, in the Canadian North-West," said the other coolly. "I knew him there; but did not get on with him. When he was tipsy sometimes he blurted out enough for me to know his history, and when circumstances made it necessary for me to give Canada a rest, I thought of this little game."

"You have had your trouble for your pains, sir."

"I guess not."

The doctor smiled contemptuously.

"You can hardly expect to gain anything from me now!" he exclaimed.

"That's where you make a mistake," said the other coolly. "That's just what I do expect. This was only a trial run, as it were—a preliminary canter. If it had succeeded, I should have made a raise out of you. As it has failed, I have another string to my bow."

"You will get nothing from me!"

"Give it to him straight, Kid, and get it over!" growled Carson.

"Hold your tongue, Pete!"

"Look here——"

"Who's captain here?" asked Kid quietly.

"You are, I s'pose."

"Then hold your tongue, and leave me to manage matters my own way! You see, my dear sir, we know enough about you to know that you could afford, if you liked, to hand a cheque for five hundred pounds to a brother in distress."

"I certainly shall not hand anything of the sort to you."

The Kid smiled agreeably.

"I rather reckon you will," he replied. "But we shall see."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the Head, in amazement. "Why should I give you money when I have proved you to be an impostor and a cheat?"

"Because you cannot help yourself," said the Kid coolly.

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"In the first place, supposing that your brother was here, hiding from the police, you have kept your visit here a secret."

"That is true."

"Nobody knows where you are."

"What of that?"

"A great deal," said the Kid. "You are here—and you are going to stay here."

"Stay here?" repeated the Head dazedly.

"Exactly."

"I shall certainly not stay here! Why should I do so? Are you mad?" exclaimed the Head of St. Jim's, in angry amazement.

The Kid shook his head.

"Not at all."

"Do you mean that you will detain me by force?"

"I guess so."

The Head stared at him. That the three ruffians would venture upon any such course had never even occurred to him. To his quiet and law-abiding mind it seemed wildly impossible that even these ruffians could think of introducing Wild Western outrages into a peaceable English countryside.

"Are you speaking seriously?" Dr. Holmes exclaimed at last.

"Quite."

"You will detain me here by force?"

"Yes."

"Till when?"

"Till you hand us a cheque for five hundred pounds, and the cheque has been cashed, and we have the money in our pockets."

"Oh! You are mad!"

The Kid laughed.

"You will see!" he replied.

Dr. Holmes made another movement towards the stair. The Beetle stepped in the way, and Pete Carson raised the revolver. The Kid turned on him sharply.

"Put that barker away, you fool!"

"I guess—"

"Put it away!"

Carson sullenly obeyed.

"There is no need for that," said the Kid smoothly. "I think the three of us could handle our respected friend easily enough if he should be so ill-advised as to attempt violence. Do you not think so, sir?"

The Head trembled with rage.

"I think that you can do as you like if you dare to use violence towards me," he said. "I am an old man, and you are three to one. But there is a law in this country to punish you."

"I hope not! Please sit down, sir—you must be tired."

The Head made a negative gesture.

"Very well," said the Kid, seating himself upon the bed, and nursing one knee as he talked. "Let me explain the situation to you a little. You have come here without anyone knowing it. Nobody suspects for a moment that you are here, that you have been kidnapped, that there is a scheme for holding you to ransom. When you are missed from the school it will be known that you left of your own accord, and that you have met with violence will be an inadmissible theory. It will be supposed that you are absenting yourself for reasons best known to yourself, especially—"

"Well?" said the Head, as the Kid paused.

"Especially," went on the young man, with perfect coolness, "as a telegram will be received at the school, signed with your name, stating that you are detained unavoidably, and asking your second master, Mr. Railton, to take your place temporarily. You see, I am well posted up to the work I have taken in hand. What do you think?"

The Head could only stare at him blankly.

"Do you think that, under the circumstances, you will be found, or even looked for?" asked the Kid blandly.

"You—you cannot keep me here long," said Dr. Holmes.

"Why not?"

"Oh, it is impossible!"

"We shall see," replied the Kid. "I think it is both possible and easy. What I chiefly regret is that it will be highly inconvenient for you, as you will have to stay in a single small room, and live on decidedly plain fare. But doubtless that will bring you to a reasonable view of the situation all the more quickly."

Carson and the Beetle chuckled.

"What do you ask of me?" said the Head quietly.

"Five hundred pounds."

"You will certainly never get anything of the sort. If you will let me leave this house without further trouble I will give you what loose money I have about me."

The Kid laughed.

"We are not pickpockets, I reckon," he said. "You can see that."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199:

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG

COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Please Order Early.

keep your loose cash, and your watch, too. We are out to make a stake, and we are going to make it, or know the reason why."

"You will certainly make nothing of the sort out of me!" said Dr. Holmes contemptuously.

"We shall see! You refuse to sign the cheque?"

"Most decidedly!"

"Perhaps you will be in a more amenable frame of mind to-morrow," said the Kid, rising. "Meanwhile, may I trouble you to enter your room?"

He opened the door of the adjoining bed-room. Dr. Holmes cast one glance at the stairs. But the two powerful ruffians were in the way, and either of them was more than a match for the Head of St. Jim's, even if it had not been inconsistent with his age and his profession to enter into a violent struggle with them. Without a word the Head of St. Jim's stepped into the adjoining room, and the door was closed upon him. There was a click of a key in the lock, and it struck strangely upon Dr. Holmes's ears. He was a prisoner, held to ransom, and it seemed to the Head of St. Jim's like a strange and terrible dream from which he must presently awaken.

CHAPTER 9.

Missing!

M R. RAILTON, the master of the School House, knocked at Kildare's door. It was a late hour for St. Jim's—half-past ten. Kildare had seen the Shell off to bed at half-past nine, and then he had retired to his study to work till half-past ten, his own bedtime. He was just finishing when the House-master knocked, and came in.

Kildare rose from the table.

There was a troubled frown upon Mr. Railton's face, and the captain of St. Jim's could see at a glance that something was wrong.

"Kildare, I suppose you do not know—"

Mr. Railton paused.

"Yes, sir," said Kildare inquiringly.

"Where the Head has gone?"

"Has he gone out, sir?"

"Yes."

"I did not know it, sir."

"Mrs. Holmes has told me that he has not come in," Mr. Railton explained. "She is a little anxious about it, I think, as he has been—well, I suppose it does not matter if I mention it to you—a little troubled about something to-day."

"Ah!" said Kildare.

Mr. Railton looked at him sharply.

"What are you thinking of, Kildare?"

"I thought the Head seemed a bit bothered about that tramp chap who came to see him this afternoon, that's all, sir," said Kildare frankly.

Mr. Railton nodded.

"I was thinking of the same thing," he said. "I did not know that the Head intended to go out, and as he has explained nothing to Mrs. Holmes, she seems anxious. I thought I would ask you if you knew anything."

"Nothing, sir."

"Very well."

"You are going to stay up, sir?"

"Yes."

"Shall I stay up with you, sir?"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"No, thanks! It is not necessary."

And Mr. Railton returned to his study. He was looking and feeling very troubled. There was a very strong bond of friendship between Mr. Railton and the Head, tempered with deep respect on the younger man's part. He remembered what the Head had said in his study about having received bad news, of which he would know more that night. It seemed clear to Mr. Railton that something had happened, and he was very anxious for the return of Dr. Holmes.

He sat in his study reading till eleven o'clock chimed out, and then he rose uneasily. Half an hour passed, while Mr. Railton paced his study. Half-past eleven!

The house was now quite silent.

Everyone, with the exception of Mr. Railton and Mrs. Holmes, had gone to bed. There was a light tap at Mr. Railton's door, and Mrs. Holmes came in. The House-master bowed to her very gravely.

"The doctor has not returned, Mr. Railton."

"I know it," he said. "I cannot understand it—it is inexplicable. But I should advise you to go to bed, madam, or at least to lie down. I shall wait up for Dr. Holmes."

"What can have happened?"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"I cannot imagine. The Head must have been detained

somewhere. You are sure that you did not know where he was going?"

"He did not tell me."

"It is very strange."

"There has been some accident," said Mrs. Holmes, in a trembling voice. "I am sure of it. Nothing else could keep him away."

Mr. Railton was silent. He could not help thinking so himself. There seemed to be no other way of explaining the strange absence of the Head. He persuaded Mrs. Holmes to go to her room at last, and waited up alone.

"Twelve!"

It was midnight.

With a deep, booming sound the strokes came through the stillness of the night, waking strange echoes in the old buildings of St. Jim's.

Mr. Railton threw open his window and looked out.

Stars were twinkling now in the sky. It was dark but clear, and the old trees, gaunt and leafless, rattled their bare branches in the wind.

Where was the Head?

What had happened?

The House-master paced his study again. He did not know what to do. It was unlikely that the Head would absent himself until midnight without giving a reason, yet it might so easily happen that he might be detained somewhere. Losing a train would account for it if he had gone some distance from St. Jim's. He might have telephoned in that case, but then—

Mr. Railton felt a natural hesitation about commencing a search for a man who might come in at any moment, and who then would be surprised and certainly not pleased at having been searched for. The fact that the Head had not mentioned even to his wife where he was going seemed to indicate that he did not desire attention to be drawn to the matter at all.

Mr. Railton could not help thinking that the secret expedition had something to do with the tramp who had called in the afternoon. For many reasons it was possible that the Head did not wish the matter to be made too public.

Yet there might have been an accident, and—

There was a knock on Mr. Railton's door again, and he turned uneasily as it opened. It was Kildare this time. The captain of St. Jim's was fully dressed.

"Has not the Head returned, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"There must have been an accident, then."

"I am beginning to fear so, Kildare. Yet in case of an accident it is very strange that word is not sent to the school. Even in case of a fatality, Dr. Holmes would have proofs of his identity upon him, and they would communicate with us at once."

"It is very strange, sir. Would it be any use to look for him?"

"In what direction, Kildare?"

The captain of St. Jim's was silent. They did not know in what direction the Head had gone, or even whether he had taken a train at Rylcombe or not.

"I think, perhaps, we had better wait till morning," said Mr. Railton. "If Dr. Holmes is not here by dawn I will go down to the village and make inquiries."

"Very well, sir."

And Kildare retired.

The rest of St. Jim's was sleeping soundly. In their dormitories, Tom Merry & Co. slept the sleep of healthy youth, little dreaming of the shadow that overhung the fate of their beloved headmaster. Mr. Railton did not sleep. He was still wide awake and watching when the first grey streaks of the winter dawn crept in at his study windows.

And the Head had not returned.

Mr. Railton put on his coat and hat, and quitted the School House. The early morning air blew refreshingly on his tired face, as he strode across the quadrangle. He let himself out, and walked down to the village.

Kildare was up very soon afterwards, and he went to Mr. Railton's study, and found him gone, and waited anxiously for his return. It was broad day when the House-master of the School House came back.

The rising-bell clanged out, and the boys of St. Jim's were turning out to a new day's work and play. In the bright, sunny quad, a crowd of juniors were punting a footer about before breakfast, as Mr. Railton came in.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Mr. Wailton has been out early. Good-mornin', sir!"

"Good-morning!" said Mr. Railton absently.

He entered the School House, leaving the juniors amazed at his pale and troubled looks.

"Something's gone wrong somewhere," opined Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare met Mr. Railton eagerly as he came in, and sat

down tired and troubled in his study. The captain of St. Jim's read the result of his inquiries in his looks.

"You have heard nothing of the Head, sir?"

"No, Kildare. I have inquired at the station, and found that he did not go there last evening, and at Wayland, and he was not seen there. Nobody, apparently, has seen him. Under the circumstances, I have laid the matter before Inspector Skeat, at Rylcombe, and he is going to have Dr. Holmes searched for. There was nothing else to be done, I think."

"I am sure of it, sir."

"I hope we shall hear news soon, if only for Mrs. Holmes' sake."

And Mr. Railton went to the Head's house, to tell what he knew—and it was little enough.

In a very short time all St. Jim's knew the cause of Mr. Railton's troubled looks. The Head was missing—he had been away all night, and no news had been received of him since he quitted St. Jim's. And the St. Jim's fellows simply gasped as they heard the news. Dr. Holmes—missing!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah think that that takes the cake, you know, deah boys!"

And the dear boys agreed that it did.

CHAPTER 10.

The Captive Schoolmaster.

"GOOD-MORNING, sir!"

It was a cool and mocking voice.

Dr. Holmes raised his head.

He had been sleeping.

For the greater part of the long, long night the captive schoolmaster had paced the narrow limits of the room in which he was confined, his brows wrinkled, with troubled thought, his breast full of anger and dismay.

He had thought of St. Jim's, of his wife's anxiety, of the alarm that would be caused at the school by his disappearance.

To the doctor's quiet, serene nature, anything in the nature of disturbance and scandal and sensation was detestable. The talk that would go on, the surmising and the conjecturing—that his disappearance would cause—the thought of them all, and shuddered. He would have given very much to be back in the old school. But he would not give what his captors demanded. It was not merely the money, although he could ill afford to part with such a sum as five hundred pounds. But his principles would not allow him to yield to the demands of a kidnapper and black-mailer. If he had consented to purchase his freedom from these ruffians, he would have despised his own weakness. At any cost, he was determined that he would not yield to the demand that had been made upon him.

He had thrown himself upon the truckle bed at last, and slept. He was in an uneasy slumber when a knock at the door awakened him, and he raised his head to see the Kid in the room, looking at him with a mocking smile.

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"Good-morning!" repeated the Kid coolly.

The doctor did not reply.

"I hope you have slept well," said the Kid.

"I have not slept very well, sir," said the Head.

"I am sorry!"

The Head was silent.

"But you have only yourself to blame," the Kid went on cheerfully. "You have but to sign a cheque for five hundred pounds—"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"—and to promise to take no steps to recover the money or to put the police on our track," went on the Kid, unheeding.

"I refuse!"

"Then you can go!"

"If that is the price to pay, I shall never go!" said the Head coldly. "I will not part with one shilling to a gang of ruffians, and I certainly shall use every endeavour to bring you to justice when I am free again!"

The Kid shrugged his shoulders. There was a growl of anger from the adjoining room, and the sunburnt man put his head through the doorway. There was a click as he moved the cylinder of his revolver.

"Lemme deal with him, Kid!" said Pete Carson.

"Get out!" said the Kid.

"But—"

"And put that barker away, you fool! Do you think you are in the Rocky Mountains here?" the Kid exclaimed irritably. "Put it away!"

"Oh, have your own way!" growled Carson sullenly. "I'd treat him as we did the Mexican at San Antonio—"

The Kid laughed.

"You are not in Texas now," he said. "Leave him to

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me! Dr. Holmes, I suppose you have thought over your position here?"

"Undoubtedly!"

"You realise that you cannot escape?"

The doctor glanced round the little room. There was but one window—too small for a man to pass without squeezing—and it was strongly barred, and outside a wire-netting was nailed over it. And the only door gave upon the room occupied by the kidnappers. It was very clear that there was no escape for the captive headmaster. The Kid watched his restless glance, with a cool grin upon his handsome, reckless face.

"Well, sir?"

"Yes," said the Head slowly.

"Then you had better come to terms?"

"Impossible!"

"Five hundred pounds is not so much to you."

"Five hundred pence, sir, and it would make no difference! I cannot consent to pay money to a gang of criminals!"

The sunburnt man growled again, and there was a muttered curse from the Beetle in the next room. But the Kid showed no sign of anger.

"You will remain, then," he said.

"Until I am found," said the Head.

"That is not likely to happen."

"I shall certainly be searched for," said the Head. "I trust that I shall be found. In any case, I shall not yield to your demand."

The Kid gave a shrug.

"We shall see."

He quitted the room, and locked the door upon the outside. Dr. Holmes paced up and down the narrow chamber. He was thinking of the school, and of the excitement and alarm his absence would cause there. He could send no word; there would be no explanation. What would they think? What could they think? The cunning of the kidnappers in making use of his scapegrace brother's name to draw him into the toils had prevented him from saying a single word as to his destination when he left St. Jim's. There would be no clue. Even if he were searched for, where were the searchers to look?

The door was opened, and a tray was pushed into the room. It held a plate of dry crusts and a jug of water. That was the breakfast for the Head of St. Jim's.

For a long time Dr. Holmes left it untouched. But as the morning advanced hunger assailed him, and he ate and drank of the meagre fare. It was very cold in the prison chamber. He paced uneasily up and down—six steps in one direction, and then six returning. In the next room he could hear a sound of clinking glasses, and the smell of tobacco came strongly through the door. He heard words that indicated that the three rascals were playing cards. Gambling, drinking, and smoking at an early hour in the morning! The Head's lip curled with scorn. And these were the men into whose hands he had fallen!

CHAPTER 11. A Little Argument.

FIGGINS of the New House came dashing across the quadrangle after breakfast with a very red and excited face. Tom Merry & Co. were just coming out of the School House as Figgins came panting up, and he ran almost into their arms. They were round him in a moment.

"Here's the New House bounder!"

"Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's our cake, you rotter?"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on!" gasped Figgins. "I—I—"

Bump!

"Yow! Pax! I say, pax!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I came over here to speak to you chaps!" roared Figgins.

"Leggo!"

The chums of the School House grinned, and released the long-legged chief of the New House juniors.

"Why didn't you say so before, then?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yow! You didn't give me a chance, you fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins dusted himself down wrathfully. The School House fellows stood round him and chuckled. As a matter of fact, they had not supposed that Figgins was dashing across the quad. to raid the School House single-handed; they had chosen to mistake his intentions, as Figgy knew very well.

"Look here, you chumps—" said Figgins.

"We're looking," said Monty Lowther blandly.

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NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE: "THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL" By MARTIN CLIFFORD Please Order Early.

"The Head's disappeared."

"Whose head?"

"Chump! The doctor's disappeared!" said Figgins excitedly. "I heard it over brekker!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"So did we," he said. "At any rate, he left the school last night, and hasn't come back. I hope nothing has happened."

"Oh, I thought perhaps you hadn't heard the news," said Figgins.

Jack Blake gave a sniff.

"Rot!" he remarked. "Of course we've heard it. The Head's a School House chap."

"What?"

"Well, the Head's House is part of the School House," said Blake. "I look upon the Head as a School House chap."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rot!" said Figgins warmly. "Why—"

"I don't want any trouble," said Blake, pushing back his cuffs, "and I'm not thinking about any old cake, but I'm willing to fight anybody who says that the Head isn't a School House chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, then!" said Figgins, assuming a very warlike attitude. "It's about time I gave you a licking, I think!"

Tom Merry pushed between the two warlike Fourth-Formers.

"Hold on!" he said. "It's quite possible that there's been some accident, and something's happened to Dr. Holmes. Under the circumstances, it would look rotten to be fighting, you silly kids!"

"Yaas, wathah! There's such a thing as keepin' up appearances, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I quite agree with Tom Mewwy. I regard you as a pair of weckless boundahs!"

Blake dropped his hands.

"Oh, all serene!" he said. "Perhaps you're right. But I can't stand New House cheek, you know."

"These things are only sent to twy us, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But if you fellows have finished gasin', I've got somethin' to say. The Head has disappeared!"

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Anybody coming down to the footer?" asked Digby.

"Weally, Digby—"

"I've got to go and see to Towser," said Herries.

"Hewwies, you ass—"

Monty Lowther waved his hand soothingly to the swell of St. Jim's, who seemed to be growing excited over these incessant interruptions.

"Keep calm, dear boy!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Don't lose your head. We've lost one Head already."

"Pway don't make any of your wotten jokes on a serious subject, Lowthah. I stwongly object. I have been thinkin'—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lowther incredulously.

"I have been thinkin'," said D'Arcy, taking no notice of Monty Lowther, "that as the Head has disappeared, he ought to be looked for and found."

"Splendid!" said Tom Merry. "I wonder whether anybody else has thought of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gussy had better suggest it to somebody," said Blake solemnly. "It's a brilliant idea, and nobody else will think of it."

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake. What I mean is, that we ought to look for the Head. It is our duty. I am quite willin' to take the lead, as a thing of this sort requires a fellow of tact and judgment to take the lead. If you chaps will back me up, I will see the whole bizney through. What do you say?"

"Rats!"

"Weally, deah boys," said D'Arcy, as the other fellows made that reply with singular unanimity—"weally, you know—"

"It's not a bad idea to look for the Head, as far as that goes," said Figgins thoughtfully. "If you School House chaps will back me up—"

"Bosh!"

"Look here!"

"Of course, it's a thing we ought to take up, as juniors," Tom Merry remarked, in a thoughtful way. "I suppose the masters will be looking for him, but you know what they are."

The other fellows agreed solemnly that they did indeed know what they were.

"And I suppose the police will search, too," said Digby.

"But you know how much they are worth."

General unanimity again.

"I dare say the prefects will take a hand," Manners observed. "But if the Head belonged to me, I shouldn't care to leave the search in the hands of the prefects."

"Rather not!"

"Quite wight, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "That is why I suggested you backin' me up, as it wequires a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Oh, cheese it, you know!" said Figgins. "I admit that it's a matter for juniors to look into, but a New House chap will have to take the lead, of course."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah; wats!"

"Look here, you chumps—"

"Look here, you fathead—"

"What I say is—"

"Rot!"

"I tell you—"

"Piffle!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Yah!"

Blake and Figgins rolled in the quad, in a loving embrace. Kildare came out of the School House, with a troubled expression upon his handsome face. He caught sight of the juniors, and came up, frowning.

"Blake! Figgins!"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Stop that! You should be ashamed to be fighting, when we are so anxious about the Head!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain sharply.

Blake and Figgins separated, looking very red and confused.

"H'm!" murmured Figgins.

"Ahem!" said Blake.

Kildare looked at them very sternly.

"You had better keep quiet, all of you," he said. "Mrs. Holmes is in a state of great anxiety, and so are we all. I suppose you don't want to appear unfeeling?"

"Oh, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's walked away. Figgins and Blake were crimson. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and regarded them with an air of great severity.

"I told you so, deah boys!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins crossly.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Go and eat cokernuts!"

And Figgins tramped away towards his own House, his usually sunny face quite clouded.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bestowed his attentions upon Jack Blake, who was looking very cloudy, too.

"Blake, you ass—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I told you—"

Biff!

Blake smote the beautiful silk hat of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and it floated away from the head of the swell of St. Jim's. There was a wild ejaculation from D'Arcy, as the shiny topper splashed into a puddle left by recent rain.

"Oh! Ow! You wotah! You feahful wotah!"

He rushed to rescue the damaged topper. He lifted it up streaming with muddy water. He turned round to take vengeance upon the spoiler, but Blake was gone. Blake had tramped into the School House, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his brows wrinkled; and Arthur Augustus was left to wipe his muddy topper, unavenged.

CHAPTER 12.

The Telegram.

THE day passed at St. Jim's—a strange day enough for the old school!

There was no news of the Head!

In every interval from lessons the juniors asked one another eagerly for news; but there was no news.

Mr. Railton had nothing to tell.

Inspector Skeat, from Rylcombe, had come to see him about noon, and they had had a long talk in Mr. Railton's study. But that was all; nothing came of it.

The inspector had promised to do his best to obtain news of the Head, but the task was almost an impossible one.

Dr. Holmes had disappeared without leaving a trace behind.

He had said not a word as to his destination, or as to the probable time of his return, although it had been understood that he was returning later in the evening.

He had not been seen in Rylcombe or Wayland, and had certainly not taken a train at either station. The Head of St. Jim's was too well known in the neighbourhood to pass unremarked.

Telephone and telegraph had been at work during the day,

and if there had been any accident in which Dr. Holmes was involved, certainly news of it would have reached St. Jim's. But no news came.

What had become of the doctor?

The mystery seemed utterly impenetrable.

The roads and the wood had been searched, but in vain. Even Wayland Moor was visited by mounted policemen, and searched up and down. Men had fallen into the old quarries sometimes, and if the Head had crossed the moor in the dark, that might have happened to him. But it was almost unimaginable that he should have gone in that direction at night. Still, the search was made, and nothing was discovered.

It seemed certain, to a disinterested onlooker, that Dr. Holmes had absented himself of his own accord—that nothing had happened, excepting that for some reason, best known to himself, he did not choose to return to St. Jim's.

But at St. Jim's no one was likely to place faith in such a theory as that.

They knew that Dr. Holmes would not alarm the whole school, and inflict cruel anxiety upon his wife, if he could possibly help it.

If he did not return to the school, it was because he could not. And if there had been no accident that could be heard of, what had happened? Was it possible that the Head had fallen into ruffianly hands, and was detained a prisoner somewhere against his will?

The theory seemed too wild for credence.

The fellows went in to afternoon school in an excited frame of mind, which left them little attention to bestow upon their lessons.

But the masters were patient.

The masters, too, were amazed and troubled by the disappearance of the headmaster; and they had another trouble, too. In the Head's absence, the senior master of St. Jim's assumed his authority, and Mr. Ratcliff, the House-master of the New House, was senior master. Mr. Ratcliff was very unpopular, and his elevation into authority, if it lasted long, was likely to make him even more unpleasant than usual.

Afternoon lessons were over at last; and when the boys were dismissed, they hurried to inquire if anything had been heard.

Nothing had been heard.

But news was coming. It was just after five o'clock when the telegraph boy from Rylcombe came up to the School House, with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

He was spotted at once, and everybody guessed that the telegram contained news of the Head, and quite an army followed the lad into the house, eager for information.

The telegram was for Mr. Railton.

The School House master had seen the telegraph boy from his study window, and he had come out into the hall. He took the telegram, and opened it immediately. The crowd of fellows, seniors and juniors, gathered round him thickly, eager but respectful.

Mr. Railton uttered an exclamation of surprise as he read the telegram.

"News, sir?" asked Kildare. "May we know?"

Mr. Railton nodded.

"Yes, certainly. This wire is apparently from Dr. Holmes, and is sent from London. I will read it out to you."

A pin might have been heard to fall, so intense was the silence, as the School House master began to read out the message.

"Unavoidably detained in London. Writing later to explain.—HOLMES."

Kildare drew a deep breath.

"Then he is safe, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Mr. Railton, with a puzzled look.

"And he is staying away of his own accord, then, sir?" said Darrel, of the Sixth.

"Yes, if this telegram is from him."

"If, sir!"

"I shall take it to Inspector Skeat immediately, and we shall inquire at the Euston Road Post-office, in London, whence it was despatched," said Mr. Railton. "It is easy for anyone to send a telegram."

"Oh!"

And Mr. Railton left the school at once.

He left the fellows in a buzz.

Opinion was divided as to the telegram.

Many of the fellows fully believed that it was from the Head, and that the anxiety and alarm was a storm in a teacup. Other fellows, who favoured the theory of kidnapping, held that the kidnapper had sent the telegram to put the police off the scent.

Inquiry at the post-office in London certainly should have revealed something, and the Saints waited eagerly for news.

It was late that night before the result of the police inquiries at the London post-office were known.

As soon as news was received, Mr. Railton allowed the whole school to know. It was only fair that the boys, who

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were quite as anxious as the masters, should know what was going on. And they learned that a defective had made inquiries at the Euston Road Post Office, and learned that the telegram had been handed in by an elderly gentleman with white hair, wearing glasses and a silk hat—a gentleman whom the young lady in attendance judged to be, by his appearance, a clergyman or a schoolmaster.

That settled it with most of the St. Jim's fellows. Dr. Holmes had handed in the telegram himself, and there was no cause for anxiety. Most of the fellows felt ashamed of having been anxious for nothing, and began to pooh-pooh the whole matter. Even Mrs. Holmes, though greatly puzzled, was relieved. There were few fellows at St. Jim's who still held to the theory of foul play. The school simply settled down to wait for the Head's return.

And, while the school waited for his return, for the most part satisfied that he was safe and well, the captive schoolmaster waited and watched in the prison chamber in the lonely cottage on the moor.

A day had passed—a day of wearing anxiety and physical discomfort to the Head of St. Jim's.

He was cold, and he was hungry. Another meal of bread and water had been given him, and that was all. When darkness descended no light was afforded him, and he sat in the darkness, hearing the voices through the partition from the adjoining room. But there were only two voices now—those of Pete Carson and the Beetle. The Kid appeared to be gone. It was late in the evening when the doctor heard the voice of the leader of the gang of adventurers again.

The door of his room opened, and a candle glimmered in. The Kid entered, with his hat on, evidently having just returned from a journey.

He nodded coolly to the Head, as he held up the candle and caught sight of Dr. Holmes's pale and harassed face.

"Still here?" he said, with a grin.

"Yes, I am still here," said Dr. Holmes quietly.

"And as obstinate as ever?"

"As determined as ever."

The Kid laughed.

"We will not quarrel about a word," he said. "I have been on a journey—to London. I have sent the telegram to St. Jim's."

The Head frowned.

"Then you have become a forger, as well as a kidnapper, you scoundrel!" he said bitterly.

"If you like to put it that way, yes."

"The police will inquire at the post-office; they will discover that it was not I who sent the telegram," said the Head contemptuously.

The Kid grinned.

"They will discover that it was you," he replied. "I made myself up in what I flatter myself was a skilful disguise to represent you; and the man who sent the telegram will certainly be found to answer the description of the Head of St. Jim's."

The doctor's heart sank.

"There is no chance for you," said the Kid. "They will not even search for you any longer. Had you not better make up your mind to the inevitable?"

"I have made up my mind."

"To pay the money?"

"No."

"Very well! Another twenty-four hours on bread and water may bring you to your senses," said the Kid carelessly.

And he withdrew, taking the candle with him; and the door was locked again. Dr. Holmes was left to himself in the darkness.

CHAPTER 13.
Tom Merry takes the Matter in Hand.

THE next day was Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's. As a rule, the St. Jim's fellows would have thought of footer that afternoon, and of nothing else. But there were a good many fellows now who gave

no thought to the great winter game. There were many who were still anxious about the doctor. The telegram and the subsequent inquiry had satisfied some; but it had not satisfied all, and among those who were uneasy were Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry thought more about the matter than about his work during morning lessons that day, with the result that he gained a total of a hundred and fifty lines from Mr. Linton, his Form-master. But he gave the impositions hardly a thought. His brow was still wrinkled in reflection when the Shell were dismissed and he came out of the Form-room with his comrades. Then he was startled out of his reverie by a thump on the back from Lowther, and he gave a jump.

"Lowther, you ass—"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Lowther.

"What do you mean by going about like a bear with a sore head?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I wasn't aware that I was going about like that," he replied. "I've been thinking about the doctor. I'm certain that telegram is a fake."

Monty Lowther nodded.

"I shouldn't wonder," he assented.

"I can't help thinking that the Head's disappearance has something to do with that rotten fellow who came to see him on Monday," said Tom Merry abruptly.

"Quite possible. But—"

"Of course, it seems a pretty wild theory to imagine that the Head has been kidnapped," Tom Merry said. "Only it's still more unlikely that he would stay away and make people anxious for nothing."

"But the telegram?" said Manners.

"That could have been sent by anybody, and that anybody could easily have disguised himself to resemble the Head in general appearance."

"That's rather thick, Tom."

"I don't care! Why was the telegram not sent on Monday night, to save Mrs. Holmes from a night's anxiety?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Because it wasn't sent by the Head," said Tom Merry firmly. "Because the Head wasn't in London at all. Somebody is keeping him away from the school; and he either went to London to wire in the Head's name, or made somebody there do it. That's why the telegram came on Tuesday after: they had made sure of getting Dr. Holmes into their hands."

"Phew!" said Lowther. "You work it out like Sherlock Holmes, Tommy!"

"Besides, if the Head went to London, how did he get there?" demanded Tom Merry. "All the people at Rylcombe and Wayland Stations know him, and they all declare that he never took a train at either of those stations."

"Yes, that's right enough."

"He couldn't have flown. And there's no other station within miles. Why should he walk six or seven miles across country to a station where he wasn't known, instead of taking the train at Rylcombe as usual, if he was going to London?"

"That's a poser."

"It shows that the Head never went to London at all!" said Tom Merry firmly.

"And my belief is that he's still quite near St. Jim's. He would have taken a train if he had been going any distance, and if he has been kidnapped, or anything of that sort, he could not be taken any distance without discovery. Therefore—"

"Ergo—," said Monty Lowther.

"Therefore, he's still somewhere in the neighbourhood. You remember that D'Arcy of the Fourth was kidnapped once by some rotters who wanted to make money out of his father, Lord Eastwood. Something of the sort may have happened to the Head."

Monty Lowther whistled.

"Sounds more like a newspaper report than real life," he remarked.

"But newspaper reports are reports of things that happen in real life, you ass!"

"Yes,—sometimes!" agreed Lowther.

"Well, that's my idea of what's happened," said Tom

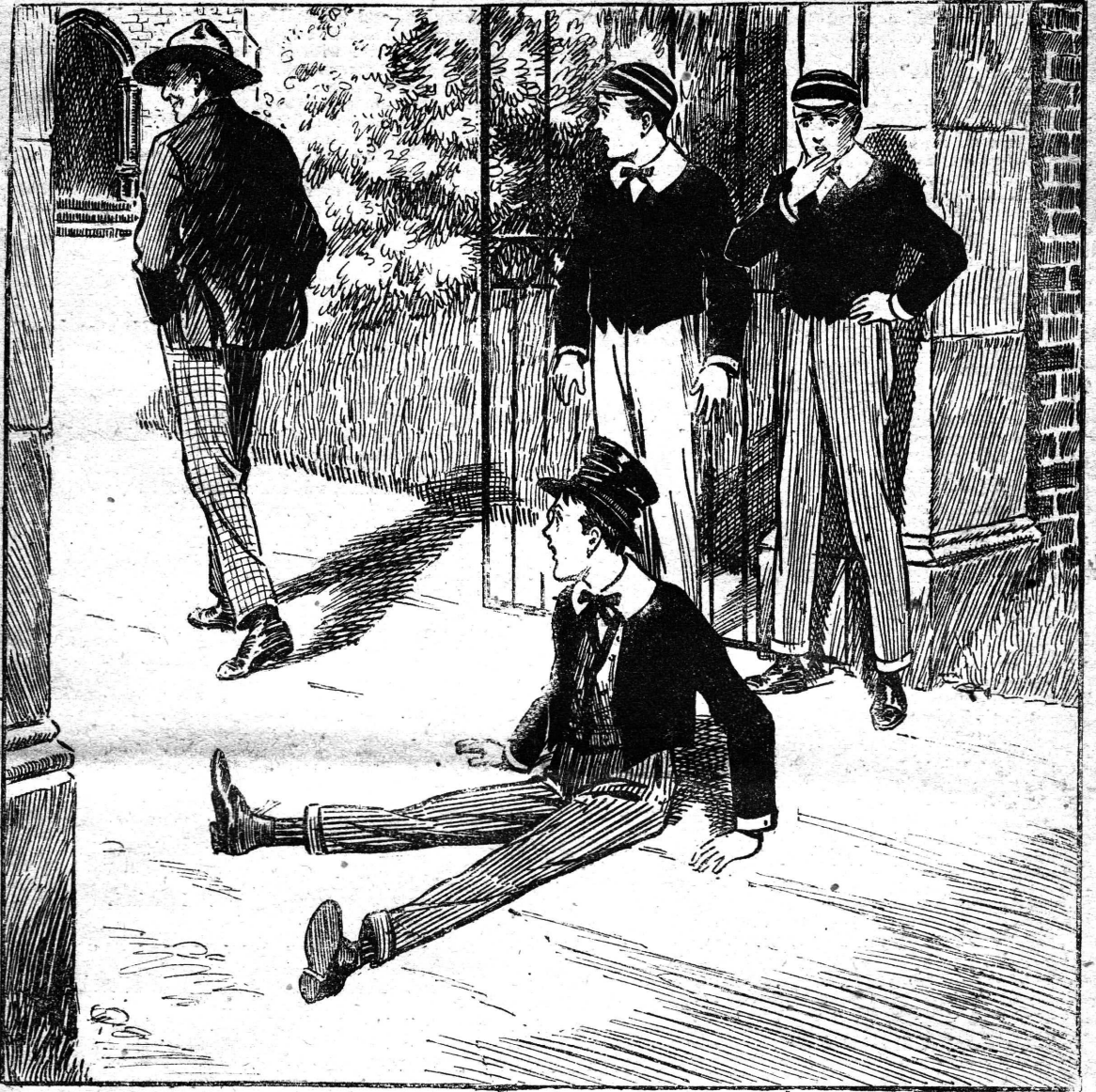
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The swell of St. Jim's landed sprawling in the road with a bump. The sunburnt man gave him one glance, laughed, and tramped away into the quadrangle towards the School House. Arthur Augustus sat up in the dust and gasped. "Bai Jove! Was—was that an earthquake?" (See Chapter 1.)

Merry. "Now that the telegram has been received, I expect the police will let the matter drop, or they won't take much trouble, at all events. And if the Head has been really kidnapped—"

"Phew!"

"Anyway, I think he ought to be looked for," said Tom Merry.

"You mean that we ought to look for him?"

"Yes!"

"Well, I'm game," said Monty Lowther. "It's a good way of spending a half-holiday, if you think it will do any good."

"It won't do any harm, if it doesn't do any good," said Manners, "and I can take my camera and get a few films, so the time won't be wasted."

"Oh, blow your camera!" said Tom Merry. "Let's go and see Blake about it, and see if he's willing to join."

"Right you are!"

Blake & Co. were punting a ball about in the quad, while they waited for dinner. They left off immediately, as the Terrible Three came up, and they listened with great attention to what Tom Merry had to say. Blake evidently agreed

with Tom Merry in opinion, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still more emphatic.

"I am perfectly convinced that that wottah who came here on Monday has done some injuw to the doctah," he said.

"Blessed if I know why you should feel so sure about it!" said Digby.

"He is an uttah wascal! He tweated me with gwose diswespect, and called me a 'young shavah!' A feillah who would do that would do anythin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause whatevah for laughtah. That man is an uttah sweep, and I feel quite suah that he has caused the doctah's wemarkable disappearance. If you fellows are willin' to follow my lead—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Never mind about the leadership," said Tom Merry. "Let's look for the doctor, and see if we can get on the track."

"Hear, hear!"

"The question is—how are we going to begin?" said Digby.



"Not much question about that, I should think," said Herries. "There's only one way to begin."

"How's that?"

"I'll fetch Towser."

"Towser!"

"Yes," said Herries a little defiantly, "Towser! You know how jolly good Towser is at following a scent. If I can get him on the track of the doctor, of course, he'll hunt him down as easy as winking."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, Towser can come!" said Tom Merry.

"I stwongly object to Towser's comin'. That beastly bulldog has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Towser's coming!" said Herries unpleasantly. "If the doctor's lost, Towser will nose him out in no time. We've only got to show him something that belonged to the Head, and he'll track him down—same as a bloodhound."

"Wats!"

"Look here, you tailor's dummy—"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Peace, my children!" said Tom Merry. "We'll take Towser if Herries will keep him on a chain."

"And muzzled, deah boy!"

"Rats!" said Herries.

The bell, ringing for dinner, interrupted the discussion. After dinner the chums of the School House prepared for the expedition. Herries was so bent upon giving Towser a chance that Tom Merry & Co. had not the heart to deny him, though their faith in Towser was nil.

Herries brought his favourite round from the kennels and joined the group of juniors in front of the School House, looking very determined. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ostentatiously withdrew as far from the bulldog as possible.

"Ready?" asked Herries.

"Yaas, wathab!"

"Got something belonging to the Head?"

"Ahem!"

"Towser can't start without that," said Herries.

"Perhaps we had better start without Towser," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny, Lowther!"

"Hallo!" said Kangaroo of the Shell, coming up. "You fellows off?"

"Herries is," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries glared at Monty Lowther. But, Towser showing a strong desire to bolt just then, his master had plenty to do to hold him in, without paying attention to the humorist of the Shell.

"We're going out," said Tom Merry. "You can come along if you like. We're going to look for Dr. Holmes."

"Good! I'll come," said the Cornstalk.

"We want something belonging to the Head," said Herries. "Something for Towser to niff—to start him on the scent."

Kangaroo grinned.

"I'll get you something," he said.

"Jolly good, if you can! Something belonging to the Head, mind."

"Yes, rather! Will a hat do?"

"Yes, if you're sure it belongs to the Head."

"Hats generally do belong to the head," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Herries crossly.

Kangaroo disappeared, and returned in a few minutes with an old silk hat. The Terrible Three grinned as they looked at it. It was an old topper which the Shell fellows sometimes used in amateur theatricals, but they did not know anything about its having been once the property of Dr. Holmes. But they did not feel called upon to venture an opinion. Herries took the hat, and looked at it, and held it out to Towser.

"Now you watch him!" he said.

And they watched Towser.

CHAPTER 14.

Towser Leads the Way.

TOWSER sniffed at the silk hat, and did not seem to be particularly edified. He sat down in the quadrangle, and closed his eyes. The juniors grinned.

"Bai Jove! He's goin' to sleep!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do shut up!" said Herries irritably. "How the dickens is Towser to get on to the scent when Gussy's jawing all the time?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Quiet! Give Towser a chance!"

They gave him a chance. Herries ramm'd the silk hat THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

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under his chin, and the bulldog had to open his eyes. He made a snap at the silk hat, and tore off a considerable portion of the brim with his teeth, apparently under the impression that it was something to eat.

"Does he always begin like that?" asked Kangaroo.

Herries made no reply.

The juniors waited for Towser to get to work. The bulldog appeared to be in no hurry. He rent the portion of the hat that he had torn off with his teeth, and, apparently disgusted with it as an article of diet, ejected it, and closed his mouth and his eyes again. Herries jerked rather savagely on the chain, and Towser reopened his eyes, and rose to his feet.

"He's getting on the scent," said Herries.

"Bai Jove!"

"Do be quiet!"

"Weally, Hewwies, old man—"

"Shut up!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard through his nose, but he obeyed. Herries dragged on the chain, going in the direction of the spot where the juniors had "bumped" the Head on Monday night, in mistake for Figgins. From that spot Towser was likeliest to pick up the scent, if he picked it up at all.

Towser had no choice about going—Herries dragged on the chain, and he had to go. Arrived on the spot, Herries jammed the torn hat under Towser's nose again.

Towser looked round, sniffed, and began to lope off towards the school gates.

Herries' eyes gleamed with triumph.

"What do you think now?" he demanded.

"I think he's seen the gates, and wants to go for a run!" Monty Lowther remarked innocently.

"Oh, rot!"

Towser was certainly going now. He dragged on his chain, and Herries had to put on speed to keep up with him. The juniors followed fast. Towser might or might not be on the track, but as they had not the faintest idea in which direction to look for the missing schoolmaster, one direction was as good as another to them. Towser trotted out of the gateway of St. Jim's, and into the road, with the juniors close behind.

In the roadway Towser paused, as if at a loss. Herries watched him anxiously. After so good a beginning, he did not want his favourite to fail.

"Go it, Towser!" he said encouragingly. "Stick to it, Towser, old boy! Buck up, Towser!"

Towser started again.

He trotted down the road in the direction of Rylcombe, the juniors following. Kildare, who had been down to the village, met them in the road.

"Where are you youngsters going?" he asked.

"Looking for the Head!"

"Oh!" said Kildare.

"Towser is on the track," explained Herries. "We hope to find Dr. Holmes pretty soon, if he is still in the neighbourhood, Kildare. Towser's simply marvellous at following up a scent!"

Kildare smiled, and walked on. He thought that if the finding of the Head depended upon Towser's powers in following up a scent, St. Jim's was likely to be for a very long while without a headmaster.

But there was no doubt in Herries' mind. Herries' faith in the bulldog and its wonderful powers was quite touching. Indeed, Monty Lowther had declared, in one of his humorous moments, that he was quite touched by it, and that he firmly believed that Herries was "touched," too.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Herries suddenly. "Look here!"

Towser had dragged at the chain, and was plunging into the wood that ran beside the lane. His eyes were gleaming now, and he was evidently on the track of something.

"He's got a scent!" shouted Herries. "Come on!"

"What price rabbits?" murmured Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser dragged furiously at the chain, and plunged recklessly through the thickets. Herries dashed after him, running at top speed, and the juniors put on pace to keep up with him. But they soon became separated in the tangled thickets. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kept close behind Herries for some time, and when he turned to call to the others to keep up, he found that they had disappeared from sight.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Hallo, you fellows!"

But no voice answered him. He turned again to follow Herries, but Herries and the bulldog had both disappeared. The swell of St. Jim's was alone in the wood.

"Bai Jove! That's wotten!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

He ran on, in the hope of finding Herries again. There was a rustle in the thicket, and D'Arcy paused.

"Is that you, Hewwies?"

(Continued on page 13.)

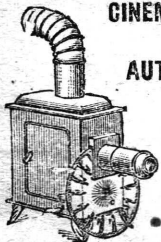
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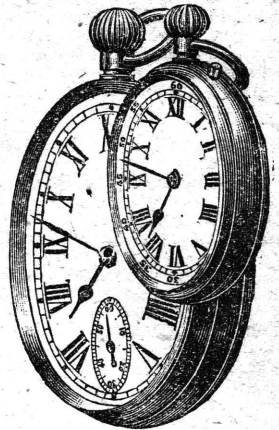


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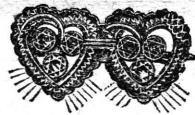
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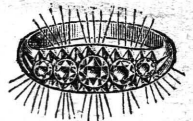
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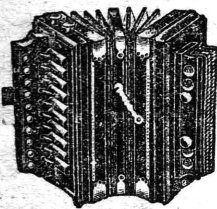
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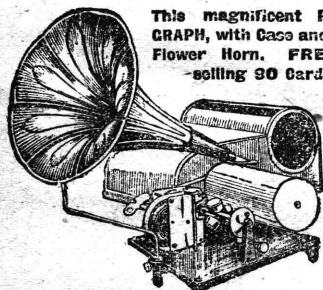


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Crash!

An unseen figure leaped upon the swell of St. Jim's from behind, and he was hurled to the ground.

A knee was planted in the small of his back, and D'Arcy was pinned to the ground, wriggling under the heavy knee very much like a worm. His face was buried in a heap of damp, dead leaves, and he could not raise his head sufficiently to see about him.

"Got him!" said a deep, deep voice.

"Ow!"

"Aha! Silence!"

D'Arcy shivered.

He understood.

In hunting for the kidnappers of the Head, he had himself fallen into their hands. He had no doubt upon the subject. It was only too clear.

He tried to shout for help, but his captors, as if anticipating that, pressed the back of his head, and his artistic features were jammed yet more tightly into the mass of dead leaves, choking his cry, and he gurgled instead.

"Gwoo!"

"Keep still, will you?"

Arthur Augustus felt his heart sink at the sound of the surly voice.

"Not much, wathah, deah boy!" he said defiantly.

"Wefuse me at once, you howwid monstah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will not laugh iatah on, you awful secoundwel!"

Ow!"

The ruffian ground his knee into Arthur Augustus's back.

"Fetch me the chopper, Bill!" a gruff voice said,

"Bai Jove!"

"Not so cocky now, are yer?" went on the gruff voice.

"Hurry up, Bill!"

"I wefuse—"

"Keep still! D'y'e 'ear?"

"Yaas, wathah! But I'm not goin' to be done in so easily, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, making frantic struggles.

"You're a howwid boundah—"

Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly. He saw that he must reserve his breath if he wanted to have any chance with his assailant. As a matter of fact, he was making a very good fight. The fellow who was holding him down was hard put to it to hold him. But he did hold D'Arcy, all the same, as a sturdy yell testified next moment.

"Ow! Gro-o-o-o! O-o-o, you beastly wuffian! Take my beastly nose out of the wbacken! O-o!"

"Now, Bill!" roared the ruffian. "That there chopper—quick!"

D'Arcy struggled madly. But it was no use; the fellow held his head down in the dead leaves as easily as if Arthur Augustus had been an infant.

"I'll jolly well cut yer head off, young feller!" he assured D'Arcy.

"I wefuse—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave himself up for lost. In his present state of excitement, the laugh sounded like one of those terrible spasms so ably portrayed by shilling shocker writers. Such words as blooderndling and fiendish glee instantly occurred to poor D'Arcy.

"We will cure you young wasters, once and for all!" went on the ruffian.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus, in dire distress as he considered himself, was determined not to show the white feather, though Bill might be coming with fifty choppers.

"There are othahs who will avenge my death, deah boy!" he said stoutly, and between mouthfuls of dead leaves.

"Yaas, wathah! You're a vulgah wottah!"

Arthur Augustus could have gone on for any length of time. But his assailant, pushing his nose deep in the bracken, made it rather difficult.

"You dare not use your giddy choppah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, when he was allowed to get his nose out.

"It would be murdah, deah boy—"

"It will be!" said the ruffian sternly.

"Wats! I wefuse to believe it—"

"Bill, Bill, Bill!" shouted the fellow. "Buck up with that chopper! D'you hear?"

"Hallo!" came an answering cry from the woods.

"I thought he wouldn't be much longer!" said the ruffian confidently.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy's exclamation was only just above a breath, but the ruffian on his back heard it and grinned. Arthur Augustus put up another struggle. But that knee in the small of his back was an insurmountable obstacle. He could not shift the ruffian an inch.

"Hallo!" came the shout from the woods again.

"Bai Jove!"

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The ruffian chuckled.

"Say your prayers, young feller!" he said.

"Not much!" said D'Arcy, a note of hope in his voice.

"That was Tom Mewwy, I'm sure!"

"Bill!"

"Wats! Tom Mewwy! Tom Mewwy!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came answering shouts, that were unquestionably the voices of the Terrible Three. "What's up? Who's that?"

"Help! Murdah, deah boys—"

"My hat!" came Tom Merry's cheerful voice. "This way, kids! The one and only's in trouble again—"

"Buck up, Bill!" roared his assailant, as D'Arcy made really fearful struggles. "We can do the lot in while we're about it!"

"Tom Mewwy! Help! Help! Murdah! He's goin' to use a choppah!"

"Who is?" came an answering shout, as bracken was heard being hastily thrown on one side, and figures burst into the arena of the struggle. "My only hat!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Making one supreme effort, Arthur Augustus managed to get out of the grasp of his adversary.

In a second he was on his feet, and turning to close with the ruffian.

"Seize him, Tom Mewwy!" he shouted. "The kidnappah, deah boys! I have him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!" expostulated D'Arcy, struggling furiously with his assailant.

"You silly ass!"

"Yaas, wathah, but I've got— Bai Jove! Figgy!"

Arthur Augustus stood petrified to find that his assailant was none other than Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 15.

A Shot in the Wood.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stared blankly at Figgins.

Figgins stood with his hands in his pockets, grinning. Kerr and Wynn were with him, and they were grinning, too. Tom Merry & Co. stood round, yelling with laughter. The whole party had gathered on the spot, attracted by the sound of the struggle, with the exception of Herries and his famous bulldog. The juniors seemed almost in hysterics, and Arthur Augustus was scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"Figgins!" he gasped breathlessly. "Figgins! You uttah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins!"

Figgins of the New House nodded cheerfully.

"Yes, here I am," he said.

"You jumped on me—"

"Yes, I believe I did."

"And you were holdin' me down, and pwetendin' to be a feaful wuffian, and callin' for a choppah, you uttah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I—I—I—"

The juniors shrieked with merriment. D'Arcy was rubbing the damp, dead leaves from his face and the mud from his clothes. He was too busy for the moment even to attack Figgins, but there was a deadly gleam behind his eyeglass.

Figgins nodded blandly to the School House juniors.

"We came out to hunt for the Head," he said. "I suppose you fellows are on the same tack?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! You can help us if you like," said Kerr.

"Rats! We'll let you help us if you're good."

"I shall wefuse to take any furthah step until I have given Figgins a feaful thwashin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He has thawown me into quite a fluttah, and wuined my necktie. I wegarid him as an uttah beast!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brushed down his clothes very deliberately. There was a determined expression upon his aristocratic features which meant mischief. Jack Blake slapped him on the back.

"It's all right, Gussy! We've saved your life, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Besides, I don't believe Figgy would have cut your head off, really, would you, Figgy?"

"Couldn't," said Figgins blandly. "I haven't a chopper with me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to listen to these wibald and diswespectful

remarks. Undah the circs., I considah it impewative to give Figgins a feahful thwashin'."

"Order!"

"I wufese to ordah—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his soiled cuffs.

"Will you kindly put up your beastly hands, Figgy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's advanced wrathfully upon Figgins. The long-limbed hero of the New House backed away behind Tom Merry, grinning. D'Arcy followed him round, and Figgins dodged behind Blake, and then behind Lowther.

"You uttah wottah!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I insist upon your stoppin' immediately, so that I can thwash you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are afwaid, Figgins——"

"Of course I'm afraid," said Figgins. "Can't you see me tremblin'? Can't you hear how my voice is sh-sh-shaking?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are wottin', you wottah—— Ow!"

Arthur Augustus fell over a foot—he did not see whose foot. He sat in the dead leaves, and groped for his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

"Pax!" said Tom Merry. "Make it pax, Gussy, old marr. I vote that we join forces to look for the Head instead of havin' House rows now. We can lick the New House afterwards."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "I'm willing to leave lickin' you bounders till after we've found the Head, though, if you like. We came out to look for him, but we haven't had much luck so far."

"Better have some sandwiches before we go on," Fatty

"Good heavens!"

"Can Herries hav——" Tom Merry paused. He dared not frame the terrible thought in words. Was it possible that Herries had met a foe, and that—— What did that sudden ring of a pistol-shot in the lonely wood mean?

Crash!

It was the sound of a heavy body plunging through the thickets.

"Look out!" muttered Figgins.

A man came dashing through the wood at top speed. He did not see the juniors. He was tearing through the wood in the direction of the moor, his face pale and set, and there was a smoking revolver in his hand.

He dashed past, through the thickets, within sight of the group of horrified juniors, but without casting a glance in their direction. It was evident that he did not see them. He had disappeared in a few seconds, but those seconds were enough for Tom Merry & Co. to recognise him.

It was the sunburnt man—the tramp who had accosted D'Arcy on the previous Monday at the gates of St. Jim's, and who had insisted upon seeing the Head.

Why was he flying—what had he done?

There was one terrible thought in the minds of all the juniors. Blake made a movement to follow the man, but Tom Merry stopped him.

"Herries!" he whispered. "Let's look for Herries!"

Blake nodded without a word. He was as pale as death. The juniors plunged through the wood in the direction the sunburnt man had come from, peering in the bushes, listening with straining ears and beating hearts, in terror every instant of coming upon a still, inert form in the thickets, of seeing a pale, upturned face—a face they knew!

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Wynn remarked. "Fortunately, I thought of bringing some with me."

Arthur Augustus scrambled up.

"Undah the circs., Figgy, I will not thwash you till after we have found the Head——"

"For this relief, much thanks!" sighed Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But immediately the Head is found I shall give you a feahful thwashin'." Arthur Augustus polished his eyeglass and jammed it into his eye. "Now I am weady to lead you!"

"Go hon!"

"Where's Herries, I wonder?" said Blake. "We're all here now excepting Herries. I wonder where that blessed bulldog has led him to?"

"A long way away, I twust," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a sniff. "We shall get on bettah without Towzah. That howid bulldog has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs. Pway do not call Hewwies."

"Hark!" shouted Tom Merry.

He held up his hand.

Crack!

Clearly and sharply through the silence of the wood came that sharp sound like the crack of a whip.

But it was not the crack of a whip—all the juniors knew that.

It was the report of a pistol.

The sound passed, and the echoes died away among the trees, and the juniors stood petrified, gazing at one another in blank horror.

"Good heavens!" muttered Kerr.

"It was a pistol," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You remember that man who came to St. Jim's had a revolver on him?"

CHAPTER 16.

Right on the Track.

G R-R-R-R-R!

It was a low, deep growl.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Towser!" he muttered.

The juniors trod on more quickly. Tom Merry caught sight of a St. Jim's cap through the thickets and ran forward. It was Herries, but——

Herries turned his head.

He was kneeling on the dead leaves, a handkerchief in his hand, and a stain of blood was on the handkerchief.

"Herries!"

"Hallo!"

"Hurt?"

"No!"

"Thank Heaven!"

The juniors came up panting, their hearts thumping wildly with relief. Herries was unhurt. The blood on the handkerchief was Towser's blood. The juniors of St. Jim's understood now. Herries and Towser had come upon the sunburnt man in the wood, and the man had fired at the bulldog.

"Thank goodness, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy. "We—we feahed——"

"I'm all right," said Herries, with a grunt. "We came on the villain—have you seen him?"

"Yes; he passed us."

"It was the same chap who was at St. Jim's the other day," said Herries. "We came on him suddenly; he had snared a rabbit, and Towser went for him. It wasn't for the rabbit. Towser wouldn't think of going for a rabbit when he was out on an important scent."

"H'm!"

"You can say 'h'm' as much as you like, but I know

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Towser," said Herries crossly. "Towser knows his bizney. He went for the man, and I called on him to give in, and the howling rotter jerked out his rotten pistol and shot at Towser. He might have killed him."

"Is Towser hurt much?"

"No, only a scratch along the ribs," said Herries. "Just a bit of skin shot off. But the villain might have killed him—he meant to."

"Bai Jove, I'm not surprised, if Towser was goin' for him!" said D'Arcy.

Herries snorted.

"I'm jolly well going to settle with him for it as soon as Towser's all right," he said, dabbing at the bulldog with the handkerchief. "Towser's not much hurt, and he'll be able to pick up the scent again. I'm going to track that villain down. If the Head has been kidnapped I'm convinced that that man had a hand in it."

"Why?" asked Kerr.

"Well, because he fired at Towser, for one thing," said Herries. "Besides, what is he doing in the neighbourhood? Poaching rabbits, too! He's a rotter!"

"Yaas, that's quite wight," agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He's an uttah wottah! The vevy first time he saw me he addressed me as a young shavah, and a man who would do that—"

"We'll follow on his track, anyway," said Tom Merry. "It's odd his being still in the neighbourhood unless he's up to some mischief. And if there is anything in our theory he must have had a hand in the doctor's disappearance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better wait for Towser," said Herries.

Tom Merry smiled.

"You can follow with Towser," he said. "The man was making direct for the moor, and he was crashing through the thickets at a great rate. He must have thought that Towser was still after him."

Herries chuckled.

"Yes, he was scared out of his wits," he said. "Towser did go after him a bit till I stopped him, to see how much he was hurt. You'd better wait for Towser—he'll follow the trail like a bloodhound if you give him a chance."

"Well, if he does, you can catch us up!" said Kanzaroo.

"Oh, just as you like!" growled Herries. "You'll make a muck of it without Towser, that's all!"

And Herries went on attending to his damaged favourite. Tom Merry & Co. turned in the direction taken by the fugitive, and tramped quickly through the wood. They were keen to get on the track of the sunburnt man again. Upon that man all Tom Merry's suspicions centred, and the discovery that he was still in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's confirmed his theory that the ruffian had had a hand in the doctor's disappearance.

The hurried flight of the ruffian had left plain enough traces in the wood. The soft soil and the beds of damp leaves retained traces of heavy footfalls, and the torn thickets showed where the ruffian had crashed through.

Tom Merry & Co. had had a good deal of training as Boy Scouts, and they could pick up a trail that was not very difficult.

The trail in the present case was easy, and they followed it with scarcely a halt to the edge of the wood, where, standing among the thinning trees, they saw the great expanse of Wayland Moor stretching before their gaze.

There the trail was lost. An expert tracker, no doubt, could have followed it further, but it was lost to the eyes of the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Well, it's certain that he came as far as this," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry scanned the moor with his eye. There was a single column of smoke rising in the distance from a lonely cottage, but no other human habitation was in sight. There was a thoughtful frown upon the Shell captain's brow.

"Well?" said Monty Lowther.

"The chap is here somewhere," said Tom Merry. "He came this way to get on the moor—and that looks as if he's digging here."

"That's so!"

"That cottage is the only place in sight," said Tom Merry.

"But—"

"You know that cottage," said Tom Merry. "We've passed it often enough in the paper-chases. Last week we had a paper-chase, and we laid the trail through the garden there and round the house."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There was nobody in the place then—it had been unoccupied for a long time," said Tom Merry. "You can see that there's somebody there now. There's smoke coming from the chimney."

"Bai Jove!"

"The cottage has been taken during the past week, then,"

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said Tom Merry. "And that ruffian, whose name we don't know, has disappeared here. It looks to me as if he's the chap who's taken the cottage. It fits in very well."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What do you chaps think?"

"I think it's very likely," said Kerr. "One thing's certain—and that is that if he isn't in the cottage we've lost him for good, as he's not in sight; so we shall have to investigate at the cottage, or chuck the whole bizney, as far as that fellow's concerned."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That means that we shall investigate at the cottage, as we're not going to chuck up the bizney so long as there's the ghost of a chance left," he said.

"Just so!"

"Come on, then, deah boys!"

Tom Merry restrained the eager swell of St. Jim's.

"Hold on, Gussy! If that fellow's in the cottage he's watching from the window to see whether he's being followed. It would be a mug's game to follow him there in the daylight, especially as it gets dark so early now. It will be dark in an hour."

"Good!" said Figgins. "We'll wait for dark, and then creep up to the cottage. My hat! This reminds me of the time when we played Red Indians!"

"I'm going to see this thing through!" said Tom Merry determinedly. "But there's one thing for you fellows to think of—that man's got a revolver, and doesn't seem to mind if he uses it. There's danger!"

"Wats!"

"Yes, rats!" said Figgins. "If the Head's there we're going to have him out; and the shooter's no more dangerous to us than to you for that matter."

"Yaas, wathah! And it would be quite imposs. for a D'Arcy to wetweat and leave another chap to face the dangah—quite imposs."

"Then we stick it together?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

Fatty Wynn was the only one who did not speak. He seemed to be deeply buried in serious, almost painful, reflection. Figgins clapped him on the shoulder, and the fat Fourth-Former came out of his reverie with a start.

"Not afraid, Fatty?" Figgins exclaimed warmly.

"Eh? Afraid of what?" asked Fatty absently.

"The revolver."

"Oh, blow the revolver!" said Fatty peevishly. "I was thinking. Tom Merry suggests waiting here till after dark."

"Yes. Isn't it a good idea?"

"It seems impossible to me," said Fatty Wynn.

"Why impossible?" demanded Tom Merry, in surprise.

"It seems to me easy enough."

"Because I've only got three sandwiches left. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly hungry now, and I've only got three sandwiches left. I shall have to share out—fair play's a jewel! But how far will three sandwiches go among ten chaps?"

Tom Merry grinned.

"You shall have them all, Fatty," he said. "I never feel quite safe with you when you're hungry. Bolt the lot, and give us a rest."

"Oh, really—"

But Fatty Wynn's objections were very faint and half-hearted. The three sandwiches disappeared in record time; and then Fatty Wynn waited contentedly for dark with the rest.

CHAPTER 17.

Tracked Down!

THE dusk was already creeping over the dim, leafless woods. It deepened and darkened, and the wild wastes of the moor were lost in shadows. From the lonely cottage by the stream a light gleamed out into the dusk, twinkling like a star from afar. Tom Merry & Co. waited. The wind blew coldly through the trees, and they tramped about to keep themselves warm. But they were patient. It was almost dark when Herries came tramping up with Towser. Herries was looking very cross.

"Blessed if I could find you!" he exclaimed.

Monty Lowther chuckled softly.

"Why didn't you make Towser follow our track?" he inquired.

Herries did not appear to hear the question.

"What are you waiting here for?" he asked.

Tom Merry explained. Herries nodded approval.

"Jolly good idea!" he said. "I know perfectly well that that rotter has had something to do, with the Head's disappearance. A man who would shoot at a dog would do anything!"

"Yaas, wathah! And he called me a 'young shavah'—"
 "I wonder if there are any more of them there though?"
 said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "There might be a gang of them."

"Well, there are a gang of us!" grinned Figgins.
 "One of them has a pistol—"
 "He wouldn't dare to use it—excepting on Towser! But it would be a jolly good idea to cut ourselves cudgels," said Blake. "They may be useful, and it will fill in the time."
 "Good egg!"

It was certainly a good idea. Each of the juniors cut a stout cudgel in the wood; and, thus armed, they felt more prepared to face the unknown dangers of the lonely cottage. Tom Merry pointed with his stick towards the lonely little building. It was swallowed up in the gloom now, but two lights gleamed from it, from the upper and the lower storey.
 "More than one man there!" he remarked. "The same man wouldn't have lights going on two storeys of the house at once."

"Quite wight, deah boy!"
 "Dark enough to get on now, I think," said Kerr.
 "All serene!"

The juniors, eager to come to close quarters, quitted the wood and stole across the moor towards the lonely cottage. They knew the ground thoroughly well; many a time in their training as Boy Scouts they had camped and trailed on Wayland Moor.

"Keep that dog quiet, Herries," muttered Tom Merry, as Towser growled.

Herries sniffed.
 "You trust Towser—"
 "But he'll give the alarm!"
 "No, he won't!"
 "Do keep him quiet, there's a good chap!"
 "And keep his beastly jaws furthah away from my twousahs, Hewwies, you ass!" came in muffled tones from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Look here, D'Arcy—"
 "Suppose Herries stays behind with Towser," said Kangaroo, in bland tones. "What I'm afraid of is that the rotters may shoot Towser. They wouldn't dare to fire on us, but they would shoot Towser like winking. It would be a shame."

Herries pulled his bulldog to a halt.
 "I'll keep Towser here," he said. "If there's a fight we'll come on."
 "Right you are!" said Tom Merry, grinning in the darkness.

And, thus relieved of the assistance of Towser, the St. Jim's juniors crept on closer and closer to the old cottage. They reached the fence that surrounded the ragged, unkempt garden, and there Tom Merry called a halt.

"Hold on here, you chaps!" he whispered.
 "Yaas. What is it, deah boy?"
 "We'd better do some scouting before going on. One of us can look round—"

"Vewy good! I shall be quite willin'—"
 "Ahem! I'm going."
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Perhaps I'd better go," murmured Blake.
 "Rot!" whispered Figgins. "It would be better to have a new Housie chap on the job—"
 "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn.
 "What's the matter, Wynn?"
 "Look! Look!"

Fatty Wynn pointed excitedly towards the window of the lower room in the cottage. The glass was uncurtained, and the juniors could see into the room. A form passed the window at intervals as a man moved about.

"What did you see—the Head?" said Manners excitedly.
 "The Head! No!"
 "What then?"
 "That chap's cooking sausages!" said Fatty Wynn excitedly. "I can almost smell them from here! I suppose there's no reason why we shouldn't have those sausages if we raid the place?"
 "You—you—you—"
 "You fat boulder!"
 "Shut up!"

"Well, you see, I'm frightfully hungry, and—"
 "Dry up!" growled Figgins, in disgust.
 "Yes, for goodness' sake get your eyes off the sosses!" grunted Digby.

"Sausages, deah boy."
 "Sosses!"
 "Sausages!"
 "Cheese it, you asses!" murmured Tom Merry. "Wait here while I do a scout. Figgy can come with me; you other chaps stay here."
 And Tom Merry glided away without stopping for argu-

ment. Figgins followed him into the garden, and the other fellows, growling a little, remained where they were.

Tom Merry and Figgins looked in at the lower window as they drew closer to it. There was but one man in the lower room of the cottage—a man they had never seen before. It was the long-limbed ruffian whom his comrades called the Beetle.

The sunburnt man was not to be seen. Doubtless he was in the upper room.

"Two of them, at least!" murmured Figgins.
 "Yes. Let's take a look round the back."
 "Right-ho!"

They crept round the cottage. Here the garden was longer, stretching down to the reedy bank of the river. The lower room extended over the whole ground floor of the cottage, but there were two rooms on the second storey. The back room was quite dark. Tom Merry and Figgins peered up at the window, and Figgins caught his companions' arm excitedly.

"Do you see that?" he muttered.
 "What is it?"
 "There's wire netting nailed over the outside of the window."

"And there's a wooden bar across the window, too," murmured Tom Merry.

"By Jove! That shows—"
 "There's somebody shut up in that room!"

The juniors were trembling with excitement now. The window was shaded from distant view by a tree, but they stood just below it, and it was not too dark for them to see that the window was secured against ingress or egress. There could be but one object in thus securing the window—there was someone confined in the room a prisoner.

"The Head!" muttered Tom Merry.
 "Yes, rather!"
 "Hush! Look!"

A light glimmered in the window.
 The two juniors drew back at once into the cover of the tree, peering out from behind the trunk at the window where the light gleamed. The cottage was so small that the second storey window was not eight feet from the ground, and they could almost see into it. All the upper part of the room was visible to them, as the window was unblinded.

A young man came into view—they could see his head and shoulders, and the candle he carried. He was a stranger to the juniors, but in his handsome, reckless face they thought they saw something familiar—a likeness to the younger brother of the doctor, whom they had seen long ago at St. Jim's.

The sound of a voice came from the upper room, but the juniors could not distinguish the words. The young man was speaking.

A voice answered, in deep and indignant tones, which came audibly from the window, closed as it was, to the juniors outside.

"You may save your breath, you rascal! I will never consent."

Tom Merry jumped.
 "Dr. Holmes!" he muttered.
 Figgins squeezed his arm excitedly.
 "Yes, rather! The Head! We've found him!"

The voices went on, and the juniors caught a word here and there. Then there was silence, and the light disappeared.

"Let's get back to the others!" muttered Tom Merry.
 And they crept back to where the juniors were waiting impatiently outside the fence.

CHAPTER 18.

The Fight in the Cottage.

"W EALLY, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Hush!"
 "You have kept us waitin' a feahfully long time."
 "We've found him!"
 "Whom?" whispered Blake excitedly. "Not the Head?"
 "Yes."
 "My hat!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "He's shut up in the back room on the second storey," said Tom Merry. "We've heard his voice; he's there right enough. There's a third chap in the gang—a young man—so we have three of them to tackle at least."
 "What about getting at the window?"
 "Can't be did!" said Figgins. "It's barred, and there's wire netting nailed over the outside. They've got the doctor tight enough."
 "The wascals!"
 "What's the programme, then?" asked Kerr.
 "We're going to rescue the Head."
 "Oh, of course. But does he know—"
 Tom Merry chuckled softly.

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"No. If we called up to the window, he'd tell us to go and fetch the police, or something like that. And they'd very likely take the alarm, and shift him off somewhere else. We're going to carry this thing through ourselves."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There are three of the rotters whom we've seen; I don't suppose there are any more. There are ten of us, without counting Towser. We ought to be able to handle them."

"What ho!"

"I suppose all you fellows are gamo?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then come on!" said Tom Merry. "I don't know whether the front door is locked, but in any case we can bump it open with one of those big stones. Then we'll make a rush. We'll have that long-legged chap a prisoner before the others can get downstairs, for a start. Then it will be a fight."

"Good!"

Tom Merry selected a heavy stone, of which there were numbers scattered on the moor, and stole silently towards the door of the cottage. The rest of the juniors were behind him, with their cudgels ready in their hands. Kerr had thoughtfully taken a length of whipcord from his pocket and made a loop on it. Herries had rejoined his comrades, with his hand on Towser's collar. Towser was likely to lend good aid when it came to a fight, and it did not matter if he gave the alarm now. Tom Merry raised the heavy stone in his hands, and poised it over the latch of the door.

Crash!

The door flew open wide. The stone rolled in, and after it pelted the juniors in a sudden rush, shouting excitedly.

The Beetle was engaged in the very prosaic occupation of turning fried sausages out of a frying-pan into a dish. He dropped the dish with a crash in his surprise, and the sausages were scattered in the grate. Before he could do anything else, he was collared by half a dozen pairs of hands, and whirled over on the floor of the cottage.

"Look after him!" muttered Tom Merry, and he dashed for the stairs.

Kerr was kneeling on the Beetle, and Fatty Wynn and Blake were holding him. In a twinkling Kerr had the whipcord noose over the man's wrists, and drawn tight and knotted. The Beetle was out of the fight before it started.

Tom Merry was up the stairs in a twinkling, Figgins behind him, and then Lowther and Manners. In the upper room the Kid and Pete Carson had been playing poker. At the crash below they had leaped up in amazement.

Then Tom Merry came dashing into the room.

The sunburnt man gave a yell of rage.

"Thunder! What the—"

He dragged at his hip-pocket. Whether, in his rage and fear, he would have used the revolver; cannot be said; he was given no chance. Tom Merry's cudgel was lifted as he ran forward, and it descended with a terrific crash upon Carson's right arm as he groped for the weapon.

Carson uttered a terrible shriek, and staggered back against the wall. His right arm hung useless at his side, and his face was deathly white with pain.

The Kid cast a wild glance round, and caught up a heavy stool. That his scheme was finished—that his plan for extorting money from Dr. Holmes had come to nothing now—he knew. He was thinking only of saving his liberty. He made a feint of rushing forward, and then dashed at the window. The heavy stool crashed down, breaking through glass and sash, and the Kid flung himself bodily through the opening. The juniors heard him fall heavily into the garden below.

For a moment they stood open-mouthed in amazement. Then Tom Merry shouted:

"After him!"

There was a savage growl below, and a yell of terror from the Kid.

"Towser!" roared Figgins.

The juniors crowded to the window, excepting Figgins and Lowther, who were holding the disabled Carson, and searching him for weapons. In the dim garden a man was rolling over and over, with a dog gripping him. The Kid and Towser were engaged in desperate combat.

"He'll be killed!" gasped Tom Merry. "Herries! Herries! Call Towser off!"

"Towser! Towser! Towsey!"

Tom Merry leaped from the window. Herries ran out of the cottage. Between them they dragged Towser off the gasping, exhausted Kid. Three or four more of the juniors piled upon the kidnapper, and he was soon secured. In three or four places his clothing was torn, and stains of deep red upon it showed that Towser's teeth had gone deeper.

There was a sound of knocking above. Tom Merry hurried upstairs. The Head of St. Jim's was knocking at the inner side of his door.

"All right, sir!" called out Tom Merry.

"Is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

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Tom Merry unlocked the door; the key was in the lock. He threw it open, and the Head came out into the room—Dr. Holmes, pale, fatigued, almost emaciated, but Dr. Holmes, the man they had searched for and found!

The Head gazed at the juniors and the signs of conflict in amazement. He seemed to be unable to credit his eyes.

"My dear boys!" he exclaimed. "I heard your voices; I could not believe it was real. How did you come here?"

"We—we guessed something had happened, sir, and that the telegram from London was a fake, sir," said Tom Merry. "We—we took the liberty of looking for you, sir, and here we are!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The doctor's eyes were moist.

"I shall not forget this, my lads," he said, in a voice tense with emotion. "I shall not forget what I owe you. I was kidnapped on Monday night by those villains, and they demanded five hundred pounds as the price of my freedom. What has become of them?"

"They're prisoners, sir—all three."

"Bless my soul! I hope and trust that none of you are hurt, my dear boys."

"Not at all, sir," said Figgins cheerily.

"Thank Heaven for that! You have run terrible risks," said the Head softly. "I thank you from my heart for your gallant conduct."

A voice came up the stairs—the voice of Fatty Wynn!

"I say, you chaps, you'd better come and try some of these sausages! They're prime."

The juniors laughed, and Dr. Holmes's pale face broke into a smile.

The juniors remained on guard over the prisoners at the cottage, while Figgins sprinted to Rylcombe village to warn the police. Inspector Skeat had the kidnappers in charge in less than an hour, and then the juniors returned to St. Jim's, triumphant. Dr. Holmes had already returned there, and the school had heard with amazement of his strange adventure. All St. Jim's knew of the rescue by the time Tom Merry & Co. arrived, and all the school turned out to meet them.

The Sixth and Fifth joined with the juniors in doing honour to the rescuers of the captive schoolmaster. Tom Merry & Co. were marched across the quadrangle in the midst of a cheering crowd, and Mr. Railton greeted them very warmly as they came into the School House. Clifton Dane, and Reilly, and Lumley-Lumley, and Glyn, and some more of the fellows, had prepared a feast of honour in Tom Merry's study, ready for the return of the rescuers; and, needless to say, the heroes of the hour were fully prepared to do it justice.

School House and New House juniors sat down to tea in a crowded study on the best of terms, very well pleased with themselves and with one another. Herries looked the most cheerful of all. He regarded the rescue of Dr. Holmes as a tribute to the wonderful powers of Towser, and he was not slow in saying so.

"I suppose you'll all admit that Towser can follow a scent now," he remarked, with a glance of challenge round the table.

"Yes—anything, from a red herring to a rabbit," said Blake.

"He found the Head—"

"Didn't he follow the track right to the wood, and put us upon the track of that rotter who shot at him?" demanded Herries excitedly. "If Kangaroo hadn't shown Towser that old hat belonging to the Head, and put him on the trail, the doctor wouldn't have been found yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo.

Herries stared at him.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha! That old tile didn't belong to Dr. Holmes."

"What?"

"You said I was to get something belonging to the head," said Kangaroo blandly, "so I got a hat. A hat belongs to the head."

"You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Gentlemen, order! Towser is a wonderful dog! Fill up your glasses to Towser!"

"Hear, hear!"

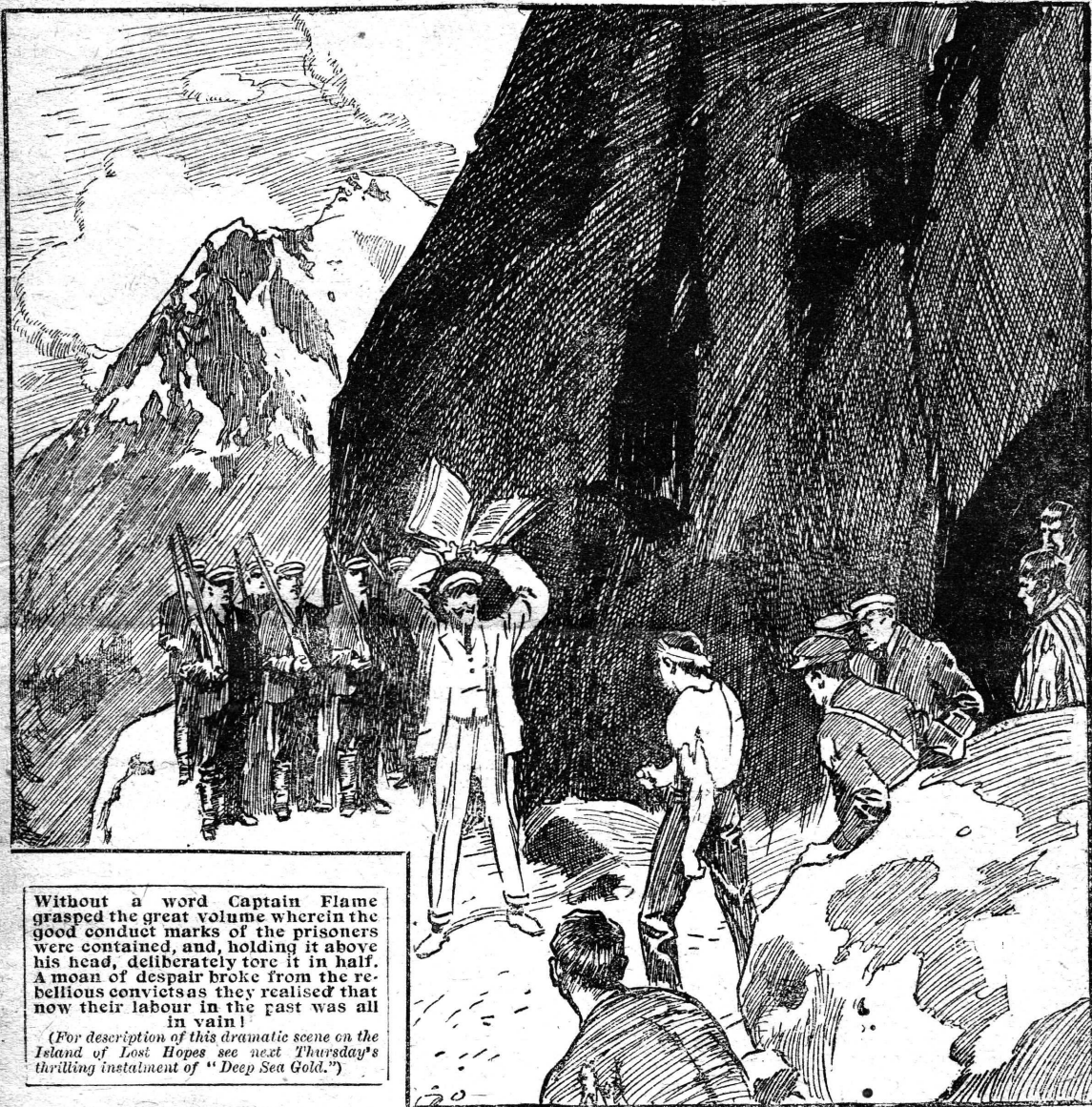
And Towser's health was drunk in ginger-beer with acclamation, and Herries was satisfied. And nothing ever shook Herries' firm conviction that to Towser, and to Towser only, was due the rescue of their respected headmaster when he was Held To Ransom!

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete school tale of the CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S next Thursday, entitled: "The Raiding of the Rival School," by Martin Clifford. Don't forget also that next Tuesday marks the appearance of the Grand Xmas Double Number of our popular companion paper "THE MAGNET" Library, containing extra special long complete tales by Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. Please order both your "GEM" and "MAGNET" for next week in advance.)

DEEP SEA GOLD!

A NEW STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURE IN A SUBMARINE MOTOR-CAR. By REGINALD WRAY.



Without a word Captain Flame grasped the great volume wherein the good conduct marks of the prisoners were contained, and, holding it above his head, deliberately tore it in half. A moan of despair broke from the rebellious convicts as they realised that now their labour in the past was all in vain!

(For description of this dramatic scene on the Island of Lost Hopes see next Thursday's thrilling instalment of "Deep Sea Gold.")

The Opening Chapters of "DEEP SEA GOLD," specially re-written for this number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums of Weltsea College, are bathing in the sea early one morning, when they are suddenly seized by enormous octopus-like tentacles and dragged swiftly down beneath the surface of the water.

They are pulled aboard a submarine motor-car, and are soon introduced to Captain Flame, the captain of the Octopus, as the strange craft is named.

The crew consists entirely of boys, with whom Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are soon on good terms.

The chums learn that Captain Flame is bound for the Pacific with the express intention of searching for Dick Dauntless's millionaire father, who was a friend of his, and whose yacht the Morning Star, has long been reported missing.

They make for that dreaded mass of floating weeds known as the Sargasso Sea, and there, stuck fast in the midst of the weeds, they find both the Morning Star and the tug that had

been sent out to aid her. While investigating, the Octopus is attacked by a body of Tankas—huge men who dwell in the crater of an extinct volcano. They defeat these, but have to make for an island where the repairs to the submarine can be properly attended to. Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are sent to the Island of Rest for chemicals, but on arriving at their destination, they find that the prisoners who are kept on an adjoining island, the Island of Lost Hopes, have rebelled. The boys escape with the chemicals, but when they arrive at the island on which the Octopus was grounded, they find it buried beneath a mass of lava. The two boys discover an underground world, and while exploring, they rescue Dick Dauntless's father from the hands of the Tankas. The three are surrounded by an advancing line of these huge men, when they are saved by the Octopus. Captain Flame, after capturing the traitor, Karl Munchen, who had escaped from the submarine motor-car, turns in the direction of the Island of Lost Hopes to quell the mutiny.

(Now go on with the story).

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

"THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH!"

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.

Attacked by the Fishmen.

Dick Dauntless's fingers pressed the bulb of the bell which communicated with the chart-room, then he looked swiftly back over the rounding top of the car, attracted by a strange, rushing noise in his ear.

At first the flurry hid the cause of the disturbance from view; then, as the water cleared, he saw a number of ropes crossed and recrossed immediately behind him.

The car rebounding from some obstruction, caused him to look ahead. He found that he had blundered into the centre of an enormous net.

"What is it, boy? What has happened?" cried Captain Flame, rushing into the conning-tower at that moment.

"We are caught, sir—caught in a net! There is one before us, another closing in on our stern!" gasped Dick.

Captain Flame cast a quick glance around him. As he did so his face hardened.

The angry light which Dick Dauntless knew so well, and had learned to dread, shone from his eyes.

"So this is the trap the Tankas spread for us, is it?" he muttered. "Stop the engines," he added, "or we will have the wheels entangled in the meshes." Then he shouted through the telephone which communicated with the general-room: "Avery, Allstraw, Orde, take axes and get outside. Cut the net in which the Octopus is entangled. Quick, lads! Our lives depend upon you!"

Vainly Captain Flame manipulated the steel wire tentacles. He could only get one free, the others were held tight to the car's side by the encompassing net.

The single tentacle was unable to do more than shake the thick ropes uselessly.

Presently the Octopus's huge hull began to roll from side to side. Peering in the direction of land, they saw a multitude of Tankas and fishmen surrounding a dozen windlasses, by the aid of which they were hauling the car towards the shore.

Captain Flame raved like a caged beast.

Presently the car would be pulled upon its side, and they would be drawn ashore as helpless as a stranded whale.

Darting from the conning-tower, he rushed to the armoury, and, snatching up an axe and helmet, ran swiftly into the empty dock.

Too late! The door was hopelessly closed.

"Where's Avery, Orde, and Allstraw?" he demanded of Mopsa.

"They went outside in obedience to your orders," was the reply.

"Good lads! Heaven grant they may be in time! It's a slender chance, but it is our only one."

Captain Flame would not have felt so anxious could he have seen the three boys fall upon the entangling strands directly they stepped out of the car.

Working not only for their own lives, but also for the lives and liberty of their comrades, they attacked the thick ropes with a succession of swift, sweeping blows that gradually severed strand after strand.

Suddenly they threw themselves to the ground as they saw the car, released from the net, sway towards them; then, escaping their prostrate bodies by but a few inches, she rolled over into deep water.

A loud cry of rage from the Tankas and fishmen greeted the escape of their expected prey.

Rapidly the three boys rose to their feet; anxiously they gazed towards the Octopus.

Thanks to a precipitous drop of some twenty feet in the sea-bed, she had rolled completely over, and had alighted on her feet, or, in other words, on her wheels.

The rescuers could see the top of her conning-tower rising above the rounding edge of the submerged cliff.

"What next, Will?" demanded Allstraw.

"Back to the Octopus," suggested Orde.

"What's the hurry?" asked Avery.

"She must make a considerable detour to reach us here," began Orde, "and—"

He ceased speaking to gaze through the water towards the shore.

"Look out, chaps! The fishmen are coming!" he added hurriedly.

Anxiously the three lads gazed in the direction indicated.

Jack Orde had spoken the truth.

Forced onward by blows and angry shouts from the Tankas, the fishmen had plunged into the water, and, armed with spears, were swimming swiftly towards them.

Furious at the escape of the submarine car, whose capture they had evidently looked upon as certain once she had blundered into their nets, the Tankas were determined to capture her at any cost.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

The boys were not greatly alarmed.

Numerous though their foes, they knew that they would be no more dangerous to the Octopus beneath the water than so many buzzing gnats.

"Come on, lads! Back to the car!" cried Avery, turning his back on the advancing fishmen.

An ejaculation of dismay burst from his lips. They had delayed too long.

The car was moving swiftly away from them.

A splashing noise immediately in their rear caused the boys to face the shore once more.

"Out swords! Back to back!" yelled Avery, as, whipping out his blade, he parried a spear thrust from the nearest fishman. Lunging forward, he plunged his keen weapon through his foe's body.

Then he sprang back in time to assist his comrades to beat off the fishmen's first attack.

Though Avery, Orde, and Allstraw did not abate their efforts, it seemed as though they could not possibly hold their ground.

The fishmen swarmed everywhere. To right, to left, before, behind, wherever the boys looked, they found themselves confronted by a circle of hideous faces and darting spear-heads.

It was well for the three lads that fencing had been one of their principal amusements on board the Octopus.

Not only had Captain Flame instructed them in broadsword exercises, sword versus bayonet, etc., but, realising that the spear was the favourite weapon of the savages with whom the Octopus was likely to come in contact, he had taught each boy how to defend himself against the deadly thrusts of that oldest of all weapons.

Well the boys had profited by the trouble he had taken in their military education.

Their flashing blades were everywhere.

With cries of baffled rage the fishmen recoiled from the glistening points which held them back.

Again and again the hideous horde charged, only to recoil with depleted ranks from each attack.

But this kind of thing could not go on for ever.

Sooner or later those gleaming spearheads must prevail.

The fall of one would make a break in the circle of steel, their foes would rush in, there would be a medley of writhing bodies around them, the unbearable agony of those broad blades entering their bodies, then death.

Yet the boys fought on.

Suddenly Tom Allstraw uttered a low, pain-laden moan.

"Hit, Tom?" gasped Jack, parrying a spear-thrust that came perilously near his helmet.

"Sword arm!" gasped Allstraw. "It's nothing! I can use my left— Ah! Would you?"

The last sentence was addressed to a fishman, who, seeing the young Britisher wounded, had darted forward, and sought to clasp him by the throat, but only to recoil, howling pitifully, with a sword-cut on the wrist.

The boys knew the end was near.

That they had been able to keep so many swarming foes at bay even for a few minutes was a feat of which they might well feel proud.

Chattering like angry monkeys, the fishmen drew back for a final rush.

"Ta-ta, chaps! It's all up!" said Avery, taking advantage of the momentary breathing space.

"Afraid so!" retorted Orde. "Well, can't be helped! The fishmen will not have gained an easy victory after all— Hold up, old chap!" he added, as Tom Allstraw reeled against him.

The fishman's spear had severed a vein, and he was bleeding freely.

"On guard! Here they come!" cried Will Avery, as his quick eye detected a movement in the circle of their foes which he knew indicated a renewal of the attack.

He had once watched a wounded fish attacked by a swarm of smaller fry, and as he glanced at the hideous forms of their assailants the memory of how gamely the fish had fought for its life, how swiftly the end had come when its countless foes closed upon it, seemed typical of their present plight.

A hoarse, hissing cry from the fishmen heralded the attack.

The next moment the fearful circle closed upon the apparently doomed boys.

It was a fearful sight, the more fearful because of the air of dreamlike unreality lent to the scene by the strange shape of their clustering foes.

"Britain—Britain for ever! Hurrah, hurrah!" burst impulsively from Jack Orde's lips.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" echoed his companions.

Then, just as the foremost foe was just within striking distance, the circle of spears were beaten down, and they found themselves in a stout cage formed by the Octopus's feelers, which had descended between themselves and their foes.

"To the door, lads! I'll keep the brutes off you!" came clear and distinct from Captain Flame in the conning-tower.

Jack Orde and Will Avery sprang forward to obey, but Tom Allstraw had barely taken a couple of steps ere, weakened by loss of blood, he stumbled and fell.

Immediately his comrades returned.

Thrusting their swords into their sheaths, they dragged him towards where the helmeted form of Dick Dauntless appeared in the open doorway of the water dock.

A wild shriek of baffled rage burst from the fishermen as they saw their prey escaping.

Heralding their charge with a shower of spears, the fishermen advanced, but terror and excitement had disturbed their aim, though one broad blade passed between Jack Orde's sword and belt, and, severing the stout leather, rendered him weaponless.

Then the car's mighty tentacles got to work. Thrashing the water above and behind the fleeing boys, they sent the fishermen flying in all directions.

Half a minute later the door of the water dock had closed behind them and the two gallant lads and their wounded comrade, and they were saved.

The Last of Crater Island.

Having welcomed his comrades with a hearty clasp of the hand, more eloquent than words, Dick Dauntless carried Allstraw to his bunk, where he left him in the care of Mopsa.

Then he made his way to the conning-tower, where he found Captain Flame had guided the car to the verge of the water, and was gazing thoughtfully at the crowded beach, from whence the fishermen had been driven to make room for the serried ranks of the better-disciplined Tankas.

Evidently the men of the under-world determined to prevent their escape at any cost.

"The water gate is to the left of the fishermen's village, sir,"

suggested Dick, pointing to a paved roadway leading through a cutting in the outer rim of the extinct volcano.

Captain Flame nodded.

"I know," he replied, in thoughtful tones. "But don't you see it is left unguarded? That would not be the case unless there was some cunningly-contrived trap prepared for us, and I do not feel inclined to walk into it. Besides, I remember what I suffered in yonder castle, and I am unwilling to leave one stone of it standing upon another."

As he spoke something hissed by overhead, falling with a sullen plunge into the water.

Looking up, they saw a number of Tankas clustered round a huge catapult, which had just discharged an enormous block of stone at them from the castle walls.

A dark-frown furrowed Captain Flame's brow.

Without a word he reversed the engine, and the car glided into deep water.

Beckoning Dick Dauntless to follow, the great inventor led the way into the chart-room, where Mr. Dauntless was watching through a porthole the, to him, new and strange sights at the bottom of the sea.

"Dick and I are going on a dangerous errand," announced Captain Flame as Mr. Dauntless turned at their entrance. "You will take command of the Octopus. If we are not back within an hour make your way out as best you can, for you will never see us again."

Mr. Dauntless's cheek paled as the ominous words fell upon his ears.

"Can I not come with you?" he demanded.

Captain Flame shook his head.

"You are not yet so accustomed to move about beneath the water as your son," he explained. "Besides, you, and you alone, can carry on my work, if Fate wills that my life should end here. You will go, in the first instance, to the island, subdue the rebels, if they are not already conquered, then take steps to remove the treasure to Europe. I entrust it to you as a solemn charge to be used in the cause of which you are aware, and to which I have devoted my life.

"Come, Dick! I would not have spoken so freely before you, but I know fear of death will not deter you from doing your duty," he added, as, turning on his heels, he strode from the room.

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

"THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH!" 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.

Pausing only to clasp his father's hand in what might prove their last farewell, Dick Dauntless followed.

He found Captain Flame in the armory. He was connecting a round iron cylinder, some eighteen inches high by as many in circumference, to wires wound round an iron reel.

Without a word Captain Flame motioned Dick Dauntless to don his helmet; then, bidding him take the reel of wire, lifted the cylinder, to which it was attached, from the floor, and the two made their way to the water dock.

As he stepped from the car Dick Dauntless saw the grey walls of the castle looming high above their heads; through the waves the iron-grated opening, through which he had helped Captain Flame and his companions to escape on his first visit to Crater Island.

Moving with a care which betrayed the dangerous nature of his burden, Captain Flame approached the cell.

Strapping the cylinder to his back, he told Dick Dauntless to hold the reel by the iron-pin on which it revolved; then, pausing only to lay his hand impressively on Dick's shoulder and say, "Remain here until I return—or the end comes," he drew himself up to the surface.

A few minutes later Dick saw him creep through the grating, the broken iron of which had not been replaced.

Thrilled with excitement, Dick watched the spool revolve as the wire paid out.

His whole frame was thrilled with that sense of danger which is at the same time both a pleasure and a pain.

What was the end to which Captain Flame referred?

He could not so much as guess, save that it must refer in some way to the fearful explosive which he knew the cylinder contained—an explosive so fearful in its effects that Captain Flame had refused to make the secret of its manufacture public.

Ready to rectify the slightest kink or entanglement, Dick Dauntless trembled lest some undetected bend in the wire should have escaped his keen glance.

Once it stopped altogether, and remained motionless so long that Dick began to fear that a catastrophe had befallen his leader.

But presently the wire began to unwind again, more slowly now than ever, and, as well as though his eyes could pierce the thick wall, Dick Dauntless knew that Captain Flame was creeping slowly and stealthily through the very heart of the strongly-garrisoned castle.

Once more the reel ceased to revolve. Once more Dick Dauntless could have cried aloud with anxiety as the minutes rolled by.

Suddenly a sigh of relief escaped his lips.

From whence he had come Dick could not say, but Captain Flame stood by his side.

"Come!" said the inventor, laying his hand on Dick's arm, and moving towards where they had left the Octopus.

As they approached the car Dick saw his father peering anxiously through the conning-tower, and saw his face lighten with a look of relief, as he raised his hand in greeting.

Removing two plugs from the Octopus's hull, Captain Flame connected the wire still on the reel with the car, then, securing the reel itself to the hull by means of a pocket, evidently intended for that purpose, the adventurers entered the car.

As Captain Flame removed his helmet Dick was struck by the look of determination on his face.

Entering the conning-tower, Captain Flame took his stand by the wheel, and the next minute the Octopus was gliding slowly from the tower.

Presently, when, as near as Dick could judge, they had almost reached the opposite side of the inland sea, Captain Flame stopped the car.

Mr. Dauntless laid his hand on the inventor's arm.

"You are about to blow up the castle?" he asked.

Captain Flame made a gesture of assent.

"And the garrison?" asked Mr. Dauntless.

"Will perish," was the cold, calm reply.

Mr. Dauntless shuddered.

"Is it needful? Cannot we escape without the fearful loss of life that must entail?" he pleaded.

A spasm of rage swept across the inventor's face.

"And would you have me leave intact the castle in which, not only you and I, but hundreds—it may be thousands—of shipwrecked sailors, whose ill fate has drawn them into the Sargasso Sea, have been imprisoned, that they might be sacrificed to the cruel superstitions of the Tankas?"

"I tell you, Henry Dauntless," he added, with increasing anger, "if I could exterminate the whole accursed race as easily as I am hurling their castle to the ground, I would do so!"

As he spoke, Captain Flame touched an electric button, which sent the current flashing along the wires they had recently laid.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

A moment's breathless suspense, then the three men were hurled together as the Octopus reeled and trembled, as though the mine had been actually exploded beneath them.

A fearful, deafening, reverberating roar seemed to shake air and sea alike.

The next moment the car was lifted off her wheels by the rush of a mighty volume of water, and deposited on the shelving shore close against the cavernous entrance to the under-world.

Though a thick, yellowish smoke hung like an awful mist over the scene, the Tankas could be seen, gazing as motionless as though turned to stone towards where the proud castle had reared its lofty height shortly before.

Within a stone's throw of the Octopus stood the Tanka king, surrounded by guards, courtiers, and a large body of priests.

They had just heard of the Octopus's presence in Crater Island, and had hastened to assist in its capture.

But, though the object of their hatred was so close, not an eye was turned, not a hand was raised against it; every face, stricken with the pallor of a deathly fear, was turned towards the castle.

Suddenly a moan of terror from five thousand throats penetrated to the interior of the Octopus.

The cry was echoed by those in the conning-tower.

Even Captain Flame's impassive face showed remorse.

A gust of wind had blown the smoke away, and they saw that where the grey walls of the castle had been was a mighty cascade of surging waters.

In a flash those on board the Octopus realised what had happened.

The explosion had shattered the rocky wall which held the outer sea in check, and the ocean was rushing, in a constantly-increasing flood, into the crater.

So appalling was the sight that for a moment even Captain Flame was held spellbound.

Leaning over the telephone, he roared the order: "Full speed ahead!"

The Octopus sprang forward like a thing of life, the roar of her booming syren piercing even the terror-deafened ears of the doomed Tankas.

Filling the air with despairing cries, they divided to right and left. Some aimed futile blows with spear, sword, or battleaxe, at the avenging car; but the weapons only glanced harmlessly from the steel plates, and the car, sweeping aside their disordered ranks, wound its tentacles tightly round some huge spurs of rock rising from the side of the crater.

They were only just in time.

Barely had the last steel-wire rope entwined itself round an out-cropping rock, ere, with a roar as of thunder, the walls to right and left of the castle, loosened by the force of the explosion, burst inwards, and a fearful wave fifty feet in height swept fishermen, Tankas, and the former's roughly-constructed houses to destruction.

Even above the roar of water came the despairing shrieks of the doomed Tankas as they fled, a wild, undisciplined mob, from the beach.

For a few seconds Dick Dauntless caught a brief glimpse of the mighty mass of water sweeping down upon them, its foaming front dotted with struggling forms; then the Octopus trembled from stem to stern as the huge wave closed over her.

The next ten minutes all was confusion.

But for Captain Flame's precautions she must have been borne back to the strange land beneath the earth they had just left.

At times Dick Dauntless thought that the Octopus must be carried from her moorings by the irresistible weight of the flood.

Gradually, though the Octopus still tugged at the restraining wire cables, as though striving to break away, the tumult ceased.

Long ere this the despairing voices of the Tankas, the shrill, hissing cries of the fishermen, had ceased; either they had all been swept to their deaths in the raging waters, or their voices drowned by a constant, deep booming roar as of a mighty stream falling over a precipice.

Gradually Captain Flame released his hold of the rocks, then, with the waters rushing by at an incredible pace, steered the car along what had been the beach to the breach in the crater's side.

So fierce was the rush of water that it was as much as the car's powerful engines could do to make headway against it.

After what seemed an eternity of waiting the Octopus clambered up the jagged waste of masonry, which her crew scarcely recognised as the foundation of the castle, until at

length she rested on a rugged ridge, and those within raised a rousing cheer as the bright light of day poured through the glazed panes of the conning-tower.

Taking the precaution to anchor the Octopus by means of her steel-wire tentacles to the surrounding rocks, Captain Flame stopped his engines, threw open the top of the conning-tower, and, followed by his entire crew, hastened on to the glistening top of the hull.

A fearful sight met their gaze. Save for a narrow half-circle of weed-covered rock, to which clung numberless shrieking, frightened fishermen, Crater Island had disappeared.

Where the beach, the castle, and the fishermen's village, had been was a mass of swirling, raging water, carrying death and destruction to all left within that strange country beneath the earth.

The Lost Treasure Ship.

It was a very silent party which descended to the depth of the Sargasso Sea, on their way to the outer seas and the Island of Rest.

The thought that a whole nation was being swamped out of existence in the strange world from which they had recently escaped, filled their hearts with regret, the only relief from which was the knowledge of the subterranean passage from the land of Tankas to the volcano island, and the probability of there being similar roads of egress from that strange land.

It is true that the inhabitants of the subterranean world had, by their ruthless destruction of ships entombed in the Sargasso Sea, deserved their fate; but that did not make their sudden ending the less terrible.

Probably, alarmed by the fearful explosion which had marked the destruction of the castle, the monsters of the Sargasso Sea had crept in terror to their lairs, or remained hidden in the impenetrable thickness of the forest of weeds.

At any rate, the occupants of the car saw nothing of them, and, having forced their way through the mighty hedge of tree-trunks, greeted with a cheer clear, open water once more.

And now, for the first time, Dick was able to enjoy a long conversation with his father.

They were in the chart-room, watching the ever-changing panorama of the ocean-bed across which they were moving; but, for probably the first time since he had boarded the Octopus, Dick scarce noticed the strange and wonderful sights displayed before his eyes.

He had never inquired as to the source of his father's income. Boylike, he had taken the unstinted funds with which he had been provided whilst in England, as a matter of course.

Great was his amazement, therefore, to learn that his father had long acted as Captain Flame's principal agent.

It was he who had collected the materials, machinery, and necessary appliances for the wonderful workshop which the great inventor had instituted in the heart of the Island of the Lost Hopes.

It was in ships chartered by Flame and commanded by Henry Dauntless, that the workmen employed in those works had been conveyed to the island.

Mr Dauntless hinted at, a time in the near future, when the end for which the great inventor had toiled so ceaselessly would be achieved.

What that end was he was not at liberty to say.

"And now, my boy, with respect to the future. I will soon be afloat once more, on a far different craft to the Morning Star. You can accompany me if you wish, but it will have to be merely as a passenger on a craft which may be laid up for months in some unknown harbour on a bleak and desolate coast. On the other hand, although he is anxious that you should consider yourself perfectly free to take your own path, Captain Flame is anxious for you to remain with him, and to continue in your present post as second-in-command. Much though I would like to have you with me, I tell you honestly, Dick, I envy you your chance of being with, perhaps, the most wonderful man the world has ever seen. I need not point out the danger which will menace you on board the Octopus during her lonely journeys over the ocean-bed. But there will be dangers also with me. I do not think that a Dauntless will be influenced, one way or another, by the consideration of peril.

"And you are quite sure, Dad, that you would not rather have me with you?" asked Dick anxiously.

His father smiled.

"Your question is a sufficient answer in itself," he replied. "If I thought it possible for either you or I to be content with a life of luxury and ease on shore, I would not part with you again, my boy; but the old Viking strain is strong in our blood, and I am certain that, after the adventurous life I have lived, I could not remain on shore six months."

He turned as Captain Flame entered.

"It is as I said, Flame," declared Mr. Dauntless. "Dick will remain with you."

An expression of delight relieved the sternness of Captain Flame's features.

"I was certain of it!" he declared, grasping Dick's ready hand. "But I thought it only fair, my boy, to give you the chance of calling off now there is time. We are steering for the islands; there to put our somewhat disturbed house in order. A few weeks' rest while the Octopus is being refitted, and the Red Terror prepared to accompany us, then, if your soul thirsts for adventure—as I know it does—you will have sufficient to satisfy you, Dick, glutton for excitement though you may be."

"And my chums?" asked Dick.

"I have already given the same choice to everyone on the Octopus, and they have all agreed to remain with me," was the reply, which drew an involuntary cheer from Dick's lips—a cheer which was heard in the general-room, and echoed by the others, who had guessed its reason.

The ringing of a bell close at hand announced that something unusual had been seen by the steersman in the conning-tower.

"Go and see what it is, Dick!" ordered Captain Flame. "If it is merely some strange ocean monster, avoid it, for I am anxious to get to the islands as quickly as possible. If it's a wreck worth overhauling, call me. Our strong-room is empty, and I don't care to return to the island without some slight contribution to my treasure-chest."

Saluting, Dick hastened to the conning-tower, and found Will Avery, whose spell of duty at the wheel was over, peering, with a puzzled frown, through the huge telescopic lenses before him.

"What is it, old chap?" asked Dick, as he approached his comrade's side.

"Can't quite make it out! Looks more like a huge raft than anything!" replied Avery.

Dick took his chum's place, and saw, some half-mile ahead—though the mighty lenses appeared to draw it almost immediately before them—a huge mass of timber, from which arose no less than nine masts, some with the rotten sails still clinging to the yards, others broken off a few feet from the deck.

Ringling down to half-speed, Dick carefully surveyed the wreckage, and discovered that he was approaching three ships lashed tightly together.

The centre one he at first believed to be a battle-ship, so huge its timbers, so massive the sole remaining mast which rose from its centre.

The other two were smaller craft, of a low, rakish build, which reminded Dick Dauntless of descriptions he had read of the pirate craft which swept the seas in days of old.

Unwilling to disturb Captain Flame, Dick Dauntless steered the Octopus until she approached the stern of the three vessels, and he read upon its elaborately-carved and richly-gilded quarter the word "Himalayas."

The name seemed familiar to him, though where he had heard it he could not for the moment recall.

He knew that the mighty chain of mountains to the north of India had stood godfather to a long succession of ships, to stately Indiamen, and warships of the British Navy.

Yet she seemed to be connected, in some way, with Captain Flame.

In a flash it burst upon him that, at the time they had taken the Peacock Throne from the ice-engulfed Indiaman, the inventor had spoken of a sister ship, carrying even richer cargo, which had left India a few months later, and had never been heard of again.

As though to corroborate his suspicions, Dick noticed a huge rent in the Indiaman's hull, immediately alongside the stout rudder-posts, beyond which the rays of the Octopus's brilliant searchlight revealed a number of stout, iron-clasped chests.

Stopping the car within fifty yards of the hulls, Dick sent Will Avery for Captain Flame.

"Well, my lad, what is it?" asked the inventor, as he passed through the small trap-door which gave admittance to the conning-tower.

"Haven't I heard you mention the Himalayas, sir?" asked Dick, trying in vain to keep the excitement surging through his veins from his voice.

"Most likely. What of her?" asked the captain.

"She is here," replied Dick, moving aside to allow his superior to look through the lenses.

With an ejaculation of wonder and delight Captain Flame stepped to the steering-wheel.

A single glance through the lenses, and Dick saw the wrapt, eager look he knew so well creeping over Captain Flame's face.

Another Grand, Long instalment of this thrilling adventure serial next week. Also "THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL," a splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 199.

"THE DOWNFALL OF THE FIFTH!"

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.

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE

**Next Week's Story.**

The title of next Thursday's long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co., is:

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL,"

by Martin Clifford, and it tells of what happened to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant swell of St. Jim's, when he fell in with Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School; and how he was avenged by the juniors of St. Jim's. For a rousing school story,

"THE RAIDING OF THE RIVAL SCHOOL"

will be hard to beat, so please make a point of ordering in advance.

Health Hints.**Stationary Running.**

Of all breathing exercises I know of none better—except cycling—than those which can be described under the heading of stationary running. This is accomplished as follows:

Incline the body forward, the right foot in advance, the right knee bent as in the attitude of running; the hands closed and on the chest, as in the position of the Army "Double-quick." Keep the chest active, the mouth closed, until the breathing occasioned by the exertion is again normal.

The breathing becomes deeper as the pace is increased, but it should regulate itself according to demand. While running, remain in the same position. Begin slowly, increasing the speed to your liking. Decrease slowly. Mentally count your steps as your feet touch the floor. Run one hundred steps the first day. Increase the number every day by one hundred until you reach one thousand, which you should be able to run in seven minutes. Then run from five hundred to one thousand daily.

This exercise results in expanding the lungs, is an excellent circulator of the blood, and has a wonderful tonic effect on the whole system.

Do not breathe through your lips if you would be free from catarrh of the head, if you wish to preserve your teeth—in short, if you wish to keep your health.

Too much cannot be said about the necessity of deep inhalations or complete exhalations. Deep, full breathing is a great blood purifier, and a most efficacious tonic.

From a Staunch Girl Reader.

I have pleasure in publishing the following frank letter from one of my loyal girl readers.

Park View House.

Portsmouth Road, Surbiton.

Dear Editor,—I am a great reader of THE GEM, which I like so very much. A friend lent me some back numbers of THE GEM up to 34. I commenced taking them in at No. 39, and have taken them in ever since. I am 19 years of age and some of my friends, who do not take in THE GEM, tease me very much over them. I tell them I don't mind, and they little know what a lot they miss every week.

I see you have some girl readers that have written to you, so I thought I would write to you, and tell you what I think of THE GEM.

I see in the Weekly Chat of No. 169, a reader of THE GEM named F. J. Drew, Southampton; has written to you. Would you please tell me if F. J. Drew is a boy or a girl, as my surname happens to be Drew?

I have very few friends, so I should be awfully pleased if any of your readers, who write to you, would care to write to me. I am short and fair, I rink, cycle, play tennis, sing, and play the piano. I like watching football, and I am very fond of reading. I read the "Brotherhood of Iron," which I

liked, and thought very exciting. Altogether, I think THE GEM is ripping!

Yours truly,

DOROTHY R. DREW.

Thank you, Miss Dorothy! Your good sense does you great credit, and I am proud to hear your high opinion of the good old GEM. If I remember rightly, F. J. Drew, your namesake, of Southampton, is a boy.

As to your request for correspondents, I have no doubt whatever that some of your fellow-readers of THE GEM will readily oblige—and probably Master F. J. Drew amongst them.

Special Note to Correspondents.

Readers desiring correspondents are asked to note that their requests will not be published on this page, except in conjunction with their names and full addresses. For obvious reasons, no letters can be forwarded to readers through the medium of this office. When requiring correspondents, readers should, therefore, be careful to send their names and full addresses, which will be published, with their requests, in the first available issue of THE GEM Library. I should also like to take this opportunity of reminding my chums that both THE GEM and "The Magnet" go to press several weeks in advance, so that some time must necessarily elapse before readers' letters, etc., can be published. In addition, space is limited, and all my chums alike must wait their turn.

Canadian Correspondence to Arthur B.

Two Canadian readers have written to me to express their willingness to correspond with Arthur B., aged 15, whose letter was published in the Chat Page of THE GEM Library, No. 192. Their names and addresses are: George Worden, 11, Butterant Street, St. Henry, Montreal, Canada; and Victor L. Harber, 28, Hazelwood Avenue, Toronto, Canada. Perhaps Master Arthur B. will write to them direct.

Our Correspondence Exchange.

F. Clarke, of 16, Crosswell Street, C-on-M., Manchester, wishes to communicate with a reader in some part of Australia, about 18 years of age.

Miss A. Nicholls, of 43, Camden Park Road, Camden Square, N.W., would like some Scottish, South African, or Australian chum to correspond with her.

"Gemite," care of Ashton & Haslam, 75, Princess Street, Manchester, would like to correspond with a girl reader of about 15 or 17 years of age, who is interested in modern literature.

The Editor's Acknowledgments.

The Editor's best thanks are due to the following readers for their very interesting letters:

Mrs. L. Carlton, Dublin; A. Whaley, Hanwell, W.; T. F. B. Cork; R. Ferry, North Woolwich; F. W. D., Hants; J. H. R., Castleford; E. Earle, Norbury, S.W.; Eric Grey; E. Lewis; Hoxtonian; P. B., Shoreditch; Marie S., Kilmarnock; L. H. I., Windsor; F. McDonald, Manchester; "Delighted Reader," from Darlston; P. S., Kidderminster; J. W. Belts, Norwich; L. Wells, Peckham, S.E.; F. G. Palmer, Scarborough; L. Cohen, Manchester; "Constant Reader," Cottingham; Eileen M. M., Belfast; Sidney H., London, E.C.; Frank Lester, Kingston; B. F. Murray, Toronto, Canada; T. Alker, Wigan; George S., Haddington; Violet M., Aberdeen; E. Knight, Tewkesbury; Frank Nash, Toronto, Canada; T. Austin, Gourock, N.B.; G. Speiss, Glasgow; F. A. S. Guernsey; H. T., Merthyr Tydfil, Bristol; B. S., London, E.; F. C. J., Ilford; J. S. Noble, R. J. Binfield, Slough.

THE EDITOR.