

THERE IS A ONE-WEEK COMPETITION IN 'THE MAGNET.' NOW ON SALE. HAVE YOU TRIED IT?

Every

Wednesday.



Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem.

HIDDEN TREASURE AT ST. JIM'S

A Splendid, New
Long Complete
School Tale—

Introducing Tom
Merry & Co. By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy
has an Idea.

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered that exclamation. For several minutes he had been seated in Study No. 6, looking rather abstractedly into the fire. Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries, his study mates, looked up from their prep.

"Well, what are you 'Gweat Scotting' about?" demanded Blake.

D'Arcy still stared into the fire.

"What's the matter with you, prize ass?" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove, Blake, did you address me?" he exclaimed, turning.

"Yes, I did!"

"Gussy seems to know his proper name!" chuckled Digby.

The swell of the School House turned pink.

"Weally, Digbay, that wemark was uttally uncalled for!" he protested stiffly. "I did not answah Blake because he addresssed me as a pwize ass! I was bwrought out of a bwown study owin' to his uttally unnecessary woah!"

Herries looked up from his books.

"What are you jawing about, Gussy?" he demanded. "You couldn't have been brought out of the study because you're still in it. Besides, it isn't brown at all—the paint on the door may be brown, but the paper's—"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and gave the rather dense Herries a withering look.

"You uttah ass!" he exclaimed.

"Look here—"

"You fwabjous duffah!" went on Arthur Augustus. "I said I was in a bwown study—"

"It isn't brown," persisted Herries obstinately.

"Bai Jove, are you off your wockah, Hewwies?" shouted D'Arcy, rising to his feet. "When I say I'm in a bwown study, I mean I'm—"



"In a brown study!" grinned Blake.

"Nothin' of the sort!" shrieked D'Arcy excitedly. "I uttally wefuse to say I'm—or, wathah, I should say that a bwown study is a wewewie!"

Herries stared.

"A which?" he asked.

"A wewewie, you duffah!"

Herries looked at Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"What on earth's a wewewie?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Blessed if I can see anything funny in it!" growled Herries. "If Gussy chooses to

go off his giddy rocker, I don't see any reason why you should cackle. What's he mean by a wew—wew—"

"Wewer we shall understand is a question," grinned Digby.

"Oh, murder him!" groaned Blake. "Digby, you ass, you're worse than Monty Lowther at puns."

Herries banged the table.

"What's the cackle about?" he shouted.

"What does Gussy mean by that idiotic word?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Gussy means a reverie—an absent-minded study, you cuckoo!"

Herries glared.

"Absent-minded!" he growled. "I reckon Gussy's mind is absent—and gone for good, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Oh, Gussy, you'll be the death of me yet!" chuckled Blake. "But we haven't arrived at an explanation of the 'Gweat Scott' bizney yet. Did something bite you?"

"No, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "An idea stwuck me!"

"Well, it was just as painful, I expect!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to undahstand why you should tweek the mattah in this wibald spiwit!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "An ideah occuwved to me wespectin' the New House wottahs. Figgins & Co. have been wathah too much in evidence lately, and it stwuck me that it would be wathah a good ideah to take them down a peg or two."

Next Wednesday:

"D'ARCY'S DODGE!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

No. 268 (New Series). Vol. 7.

Copyright in the United States of America.

"Of course," said Blake. "They could do with that."
 "That's what I thought, deah boy."
 "Have you got a suggestion, Gussy?"
 "Yaas, wathah!" replied D'Arcy.
 "Oh, you have?" asked Blake, in surprise.
 "Of course, Othahwise I should not have uttached the exclamation. It was at that moment that a wippin' wheeze flashed through my bwain."
 "Pity it didn't stop there," said Digby. "You say it flashed through—"
 "You uttah ass!" said D'Arcy. "I am about to reveal my ideah to you fellows!"
 "Get it over quickly, then," said Herries. "I want to get on with my prep., and if you keep making these silly interruptions I shall never get finished."

Arthur Augustus gave Herries a lofty stare, and turned to the others.

"My ideah chiefly concerns Wedfern & Co.," he said. "Still, as they are New House boundahs, the jape will be just as effective."

"Yes, if the idea's any good," said Jack Blake. "Your ideas, Gussy, don't always pan out howling successes, you know."

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle.
 "Pway wait until I have outlined my scheme, Blake," he exclaimed. "I wathah think you will be delighted with the wheeze. To-morrow is a half-holiday, deah boys."
 "Go hon!" said Digby, in surprise.

"Are you sure, Gussy?" asked Blake.
 "Weally, I fail to see the reason for this wotting," said D'Arcy severely. "To-morrow is a half-holiday, and, as there is no Lowah School match on we have decided to cycle ovah to Ferncliffe and watch the first eleven playin'."
 Blake glared.

"Are you telling us news, you ass?" he asked. "We know all about the first eleven, and decided to go over to Ferncliffe yesterday."

"To-morrow," corrected Herries. "The match isn't until to-mor—"

"You chump!" roared Blake. "I mean, we decided yesterday to go over to Ferncliffe to-morrow."

"Well, that's clear," said Digby—"clear as mud."
 "Besides," shouted Blake, "what's the good of talking about cycling over, Gussy, you ass? You know jolly well that we can't do that. Our jiggers are busted up!"

Blake was referring to an unfortunate accident which had happened the previous evening. Blake, Herries, and Digby had been cycling home from Wayland, and, as the road was clear, had ridden abreast, holding shoulders. When nearing Rykombe, the middle cyclist's front tyre had burst, throwing his steering out. The next second the three riders had collided, and had been pitched to the ground.

The damage was considerable, for two of the wheels were hopelessly buckled, and the other machine had suffered a smashed pedal. All three bicycles were put out of action for at least a week.

It was unfortunate, as they had arranged to go and see the first eleven play Ferncliffe School. The railway did not run to Ferncliffe, so the owners of the injured bicycles would be unable to see the match. But evidently Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had an idea in his head which would alter matters.

"I am well aware, Blake, that your jiggahs are out of action," said Arthur Augustus. "But my ideah is to pwevent Wedfern & Co. goin'—and go ourselves."

"Your bike's all right," said Blake. "I suppose you're suggesting that we should bone Redfern & Co's machines?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.
 "Well, not exactly that, deah boy," he said. "It is somethin' wathah deepah."

"So jolly deep, that we can't make head nor tail of it!" growled Herries.

"Pway wait until I explain," said D'Arcy calmly. "I wathah pwide myself on bein' a deep fellow, you know. This ideah of mine is weally wippin'."

"Let's hear it, then," said Blake, in exasperation.
 "Vewy well, deah boy."
 And Arthur Augustus came to the point. At first his chums listened impatiently, then grew more attentive. A smile broke out on their faces, and finally they all three burst into a roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove, how does it stwike you, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared his chums.
 "Don't you think it is wathah deep—"
 Blake slapped his aristocratic chum on the back.

"Gussy, you're a genius!" he gasped. "My only hat, how did you think of such a ripping idea? I didn't think you had it in you!"

The swell of the School House beamed.
 "I thought you would like the ideah, deah boys!" he said.
 "It's gorgeous!" chuckled Digby.

"Redfern, Lawrence and Owen will be properly left in the lurch!" grinned Herries. "Gussy, you deserve a giddy medal!"

"It only shows that there's a spark of intellect even in the most hopeless cases," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"
 "We won't say a word to anyone," went on Blake thoughtfully. "My hat, if this jape doesn't turn out a complete success you can call me a prize idiot!"

CHAPTER 2.

Redfern & Co. Get Left.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood on the steps of the School House, looking out across the sunlit quadrangle.

It was the day following the little meeting in Study No. 6, and morning lessons were over. The March day was exceptionally fine, and the prospects for the afternoon were of the best.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "it's simply a wippin' day for the match this aftahnoon! I sincerely trust that Blake and the othahs will be successful in workin' out my wathah deep jape! I considah that it is a weally fine ideah, and will be a feahful smack for Wedfern & Co."

"Hallo, Gussy, what are you mumbling about?"
 "Thinking out a love-letter?" asked Monty Lowther genially.

"You uttah duffahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was not mumblin'. I was merely addwessin' a few remarks to myself. Are you chaps goin' to Ferncliffe this aftahnoon to see the first eleven match?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "We're biking over."
 "You Study No. 6 kids are staying at home, ain't you?" said Manners.

"Wathah not, deah boy!"
 "But your bikes are jiggered up."
 "We are using othahs," said D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "At least, we shall do if our awrangements do not miscawwy."

The Terrible Three looked at D'Arcy curiously.
 "What's the game?" asked Tom Merry. "Is it a jape?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Whose giddy idea?" asked Manners.
 "Mine, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, then it's sure to miscarry!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Couldn't expect anything else. Sorry you kids won't be able to come along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The swell of the School House treated the Terrible Three to a stony glare

"You uttah asses!" he exclaimed. "I might have realised that you would tweek the mattah in a wibald spiwit. I was just goin' to let you into the wheeze, but as you—"

"Oh, Gussy, don't be hard on us!" said Tom Merry gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye. "We were only joking, you know. As one gentleman to another, I apologise for myself and these two misguided youths."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thawed.
 "As you put it in that way, Tom Mewwy, I can do nothin', but gwacefully accept your apology," he said, in all seriousness. "As one gentleman to another, it would be bad form if I wufused to cawwy out my owiginal intention, and let you into the secwet."

The Terrible Three grinned.
 "Go ahead with the giddy secret, Gussy!" chuckled Tom Merry.

And Arthur Augustus went ahead. He rapidly told them of the scheme which he had thought out. The chums of the Shell were struck by it, and they roared.

"My hat, Gussy, you're going it!" said Manners, with a chuckle. "Where the dickens did you pinch that idea? You didn't think it out all by yourself, did you?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mannahs!"
 "Well, it's jolly good!" said the captain of the Shell. "I

"THE GEM" Library
FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE
COUPON.

G

To be enclosed, with coupon taken from page 2, MAGNET No. 268, with all requests for correspondents. This may only be used by readers in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Canada, India, or other of our Colonies.

(See column 2, page 27 of this issue.)

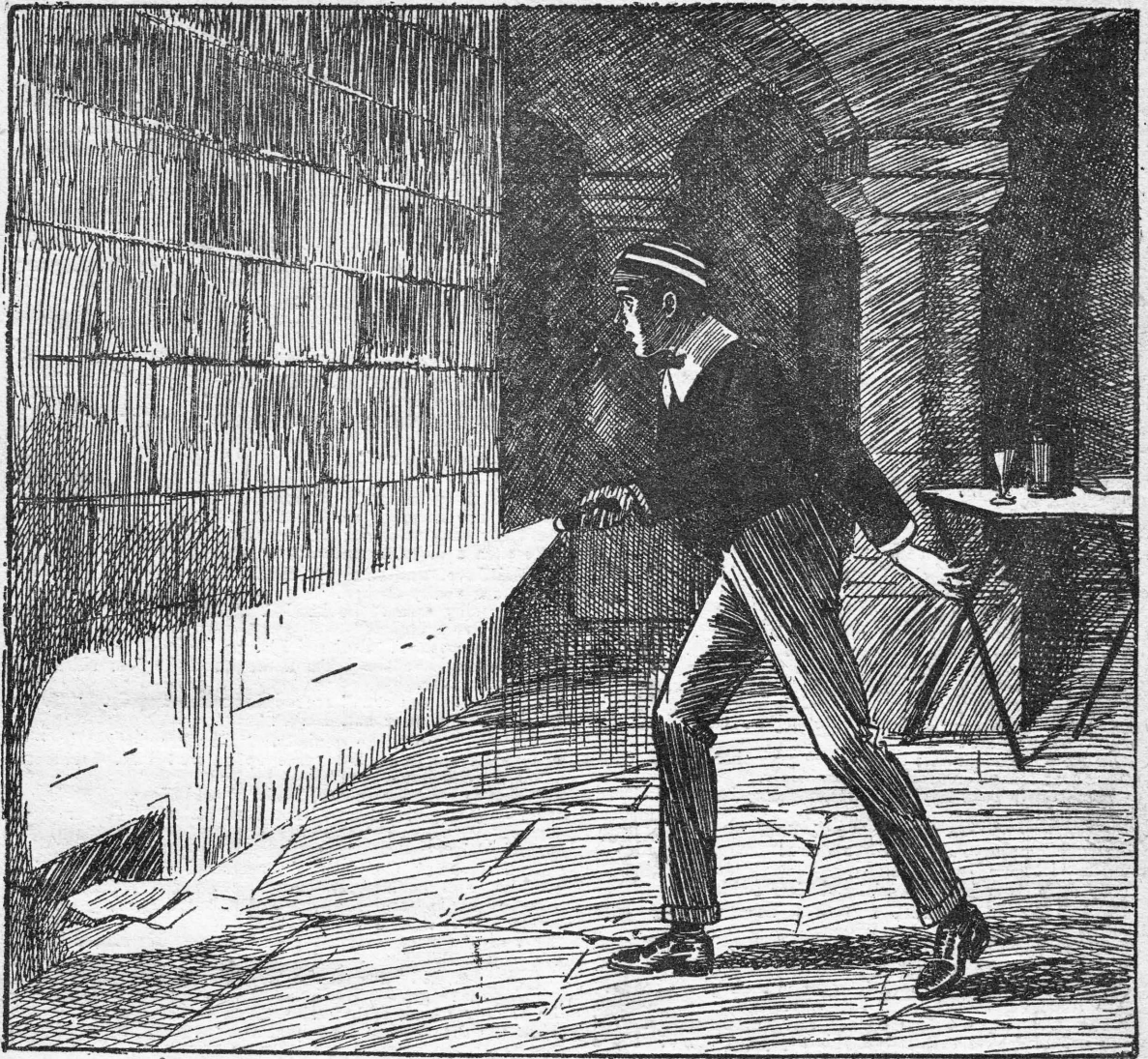
268

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
 Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
 Every Friday.



Manners uttered a sudden exclamation as the rays of his electric torch fell upon something lying in the cavity from whence the stone had been removed. It was an ancient-looking piece of parchment! (See *Chapter 9*.)

suppose Blake and Herries and Digby are doing the deadly deed now?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I hope they're successful," grinned Tom Merry. "Redfern & Co. need taking down a few pegs, and this idea of yours will do it jolly neatly. It's not often you have ideas, Gussy, but when you do have 'em, they're generally top-holders."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

And while he stood discussing the matter with the Terrible Three, his own chums were busy in the cycle shed. Until dinner was over the place was deserted, so the three plotters had it to themselves. Three bicycles—those belonging to Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen—were standing with all six tyres deflated.

Blake chuckled as he looked at them.

"They're finished now, my sons," he said, with satisfaction.

"Well, the giddy tyres are flat enough, anyhow," grinned Digby. "When Reddy & Co. see 'em they'll have about six fits. My hat, this is a jolly good jape of Gussy's!"

"Rather!"

"I vote we clear out now," said Jack Blake. "No need to stop longer than necessary, you know, and—"

"By jingo," interrupted Herries, "there goes the giddy dinner-bell!"

"Good!" said Blake. "No chance of those New House bouncers coming on the scene now! They wouldn't come

here in defiance of the bell. We'd better buzz in and get our own dinners, because we want to be here, or near by, when Redfern & Co. come to get their bikes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chuckling to themselves, Blake & Co. left the cycle shed, and in a few minutes they were in the dining-hall with the rest of the boys.

"Have you done the twick, Blake, deah boy?" whispered Arthur Augustus, as Blake sat down.

"What-ho!" replied Blake heartily. "It's all serene, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Lathom mildly, looking down the table.

The meal proceeded, and most of the juniors were thinking about the match which was to take place that afternoon. It was one of the most important football matches of the year, and always excited general interest. It was so important, in fact, that no junior match had been arranged, as most of the lower school boys preferred to go over to Ferncliffe.

Dinner over, Blake & Co. lost no time in hurrying off to the cycle shed. Most of the boys had stated their intention of starting off immediately, so as to arrive at Ferncliffe in good time. So it was quite likely that Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. would do the same.

The School House juniors took up their positions behind

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"D'ARCY'S DODGE!"** A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

the cycle shed, and waited. Sure enough, in less than five minutes, six well-known forms emerged from the New House, and came across the quad. Redfern & Co. and Figgins & Co. were rivals, but on an occasion such as this all rivalry was temporarily at an end. The New House heroes had decided to cycle over to the football ground together.

"Bai Jove, heah they come, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"Gussy's right!" exclaimed Herries. "Don't let the boudners see you, Gussy!"

"Twust me, deah boy!"

The New House juniors entered the cycle house. There were several boys there already, but they were busy with their own machines.

"Jolly good thing we got our jiggers in order before lessons this morning!" said Figgins, the long-limbed chief.

"Rather!" agreed Redfern. "I'm not sure now that Fatty Wynn's tyres won't burst. The amount of dinner he's eaten is astounding. Blest if I know where he tucks it all to!"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"Don't you worry about me," he said cheerfully. "I didn't have much of a dinner after all. But I'm feeling pretty fit, because just before dinner I whetted my appetite by eating a meat pie, a few sausage rolls, and about half a dozen jam tarts. Besides, I'm taking some sandwiches in my pockets, so—"

"My hat, why don't you shove a blessed trailer on your bike?" suggested Owen. "You could take a regular restaurant along with you then."

"Hallo!" said Kerr, the Scots junior, suddenly. "Look at your giddy tyres, Reddy!"

Redfern looked round quickly, and then gasped: "They're—they're flat!" he shouted, in dismay.

"My hat, that means a delay!" said Lawrence. "I told you that you'd shoved that patch on in a rotten style, Reddy!"

"But they're both flat, you chump!" howled Redfern.

"My only aunt, so they are!" said Lawrence. "Well, mine are all right— Great Christopher Columbus, my giddy tyres are flat, too!"

The New House juniors stared at one another.

"Look at mine!" roared Owen suddenly.

"Somebody's been having a rotten game, here!" declared Figgins grimly.

"All our tyres are flat!" gasped Redfern. "At least, mine and Lawrence's, and Owen's are! Well, of all the caddish tricks—"

"By Jove, look here!" exclaimed Kerr suddenly.

He had moved forward, and was now bending over Redfern's machine.

"What's up?" asked Owen.

"Why, the tyres are full of pins!" exclaimed Kerr wrathfully. "Look at 'em! Stuck in right to their giddy heads!"

The juniors gathered round excitedly.

"This is simply a rotten trick!" said Owen angrily. "If those School House rotters call this a jape, I don't! It's a mean trick—rotten mean trick!"

"Rather!"

The New House juniors looked at the tyres. Protruding from the rubber treads were the heads of many pins. Apparently they had been pushed in with considerable force. Redfern & Co. gazed at one another in consternation.

"Somebody's going to pay for this!" exclaimed Redfern grimly.

"And pay for it hot, too!" said Owen.

"It's a beastly thing to do!" snorted Lawrence.

"Caddish!"

"Rotten!"

"Horrid!" said Figgins.

Suddenly there was a splutter of suppressed laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared four or five voices.

Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three came into sight. They looked into the cycle shed with grinning faces, and the New House juniors glared at them with wrathful eyes.

"Tyres all right?" inquired Blake genially.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Digby.

"No punctures, I hope?" asked Herries.

"I twust not," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be wathah wotten to have a wotten puncture just as you want to start!"

Redfern & Co. started forward.

"You—you rotten cads!" shouted Redfern hotly. "Did you stick those beastly things in our tyres?"

Blake grinned.

"Well, you see," he explained blandly, "we wanted to prevent you using the bikes."

"And so you perpetrated this caddish trick!" exclaimed Figgins contemptuously. "My hat, I shouldn't have thought it of you! It's more in the line of Mellish or Levison!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"And we'll make you answer for it!" said Owen angrily. "We—"

"You see, deah boys," said D'Arcy calmly, "our ideah was to pwevent you using the jiggahs, so that we could use them ourselves."

"That's it," agreed Blake. "Our own machines are in the giddy repair shop, so we thought we'd go over to Ferncliffe on your bikes."

Redfern & Co. simply glared.

"You—you chumps!" roared Lawrence wrathfully. "The machines are useless until the tyres are mended! You've spoilt our ride, and—and— How the dickens can you ride 'em with flat tyres, you burbling asses?" he concluded.

"We shouldn't do that," said Blake. "We should pump 'em up first."

"But they're punctured!" howled Redfern.

"In about fifty places!" raved Owen.

"And completely ruined!" finished Lawrence. "Besides, do you think we should let you have the bikes?"

"Look here," exclaimed Blake pacifically, "I'll bet I make those jiggers rideable in five minutes!"

"Don't talk piffle!" snapped Redfern. "It'll take hours to mend them!"

"Hours and hours!"

"Of course!"

"Well, if we make the jiggers rideable within five minutes, can we use them to ride to Ferncliffe?" asked Blake. "I don't say we can do it; but mending punctures of this sort isn't such a difficult matter."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. Redfern nearly choked.

"You silly asses!" he howled. "How can you mend six tyres in five minutes?"

"It's impossible!" declared Figgins.

"Can we have the bikes if we do make 'em rideable?" persisted Blake.

"Of course you can!" roared Lawrence angrily. "You're talking out of your hat, Blake!"

"Good!" said Blake genially. "You heard what he said, chaps! If we pump the tyres up so that we can ride the bikes we can have 'em!"

"You're off your rocker, Blake!" said Kerr.

"Not just yet, old son!" chuckled Blake. "Get to work, chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

And Blake & Co. instantly produced pumps from their pockets, and commenced pumping up the deflated tyres. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. stood looking on with angry faces. Suddenly Kerr started.

"I say," he exclaimed, "I wonder— My hat, I believe it's a jape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"A jape!" gasped Redfern. "Those giddy tyres seem to be coming up all right! But they're smothered with pins! How the dickens can they hold air?"

"That's the wub, deah boy!" grinned D'Arcy.

The tyres were soon inflated, and Blake & Co. removed the pumps.

"Now for the pins!" grinned Blake. "Out with 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Herries and Digby.

The School House juniors proceeded to remove the pins—their actions being watched by quite a crowd. Blake pulled the first one out, and there was a general gasp. The pin was only about a thirty-second of an inch long. It was, in fact, merely a head with a tiny piece of the pin left on.

The jape was seen in an instant. The tyres had simply been deflated by means of the valves, and the pin-heads inserted into the numerous little flint-cuts—doing no harm to the tyres whatever. Seeing all the pin-heads in the tyres, Redfern & Co. had instantly jumped to the conclusion that the rest of the pins were inside the tyres. Under the circumstances they could scarcely have thought anything else.

"My—my only Aunt Selina!" gasped Redfern aghast.

"The tyres are all right!" panted Owen.

"They weren't punctured at all!" said Lawrence huskily.

"It's—it's all a giddy jape!"

"And we've got full permission to use the jiggers!" chuckled Blake, grinning from ear to ear. "It's jolly decent of you chaps, you know. The bikes'll come in handy."

"My hat, rather!" grinned Herries. "Ready, kids?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

ANSWERS

And Blake & Co., laughing like hyenas, mounted the machines—D'Arcy was using his own mount—and rode towards the gates. Redfern & Co. looked round with sickly expressions, and a roar of laughter went up at their expense. They had been completely, and literally, "left."

CHAPTER 3.

The Threat of Vengeance.

FIGGINS & CO. chuckled. In spite of the fact that the jape had been "up against" the New House, they chuckled. They couldn't help themselves, for the jape was so unexpected, and so complete. Redfern & Co. had actually told their rivals that they could use their machines, never dreaming that Blake & Co. would be successful in pumping up the tyres.

"Oh, crumbs!" exclaimed Redfern faintly. "This—this is simply rotten!" groaned Lawrence. "Our jiggers are gone and we can't go to Ferncliffe. Those School House bouncers have simply diddled us hollow!"

"Absolutely and completely!" said Owen blankly. "You're left, Reddy!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "My hat, it's about the neatest thing I've seen! In addition to japing you, I guess Blake & Co. have got over their difficulty of not having bikes. The thing's acted two ways, and you've come off second best both times."

"It's great!" grinned Bernard Glyn, of the Shell. "I say, whose idea was it?"

"Gussy's," chuckled Tom Merry. "Gussy's!" echoed Kangaroo. "Great Scott!" "Yes, it is a bit steep," said Monty Lowther. "I very nearly fainted when I heard that Gussy had thought of such a ripping wheeze. He must have had a brain wave."

"Well, Gussy does have decent ideas now and again," said Tom Merry. "Don't you think so, Reddy?"

Redfern glowered—then a grin overspread his features. "Well, it's no good crying over giddy spilt milk," he said ruefully. "I must admit it was a jolly good jape, and that we're completely done. I was never more surprised in my life."

"We're whacked!" said Lawrence, recovering his good humour. "Still, we'll jolly soon have our own back on you School House chaps. We're not going to put up with a jape like this without retaliating. My hat, to think those pins weren't real!"

"Why, if we'd only touched them we should have spotted the wheeze!" groaned Owen.

"But you didn't touch them," said Tom Merry genially. "I reckon Gussy ought to be feted for thinking of a wheeze like that. But I say, we shall have to be shifting, or we sha'n't see the start of the Ferncliffe match."

And the crowd of juniors soon fetched their bicycles out and rode away. Figgins & Co. accompanied them, leaving their rivals of the New House to make the best of their misfortune. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were sorry for their chums, but they saw no reason why they themselves should miss the match on that account.

So Redfern & Co., fuming, rushed down to Rylcombe in order to hire bicycles. After considerable delay, they succeeded in hiring three "old irons," and were soon rattling away to Ferncliffe, grumbling at every turn of the pedals. When they finally arrived the match was nearly half over, and they themselves were tired out.

But the New House juniors did not go back on their word. They had given Blake & Co. permission to use their machines, so they could not appropriate them for the return journey. Consequently, Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence did not arrive at St. Jim's—after having taken their hired mounts back to Rylcombe—until the rest of the juniors were in the middle of tea.

And their tempers were not improved by the fact that the first eleven had not been successful—having lost the match by one goal to two. It was quite an unusual event for the "First" to lose; and the juniors especially were sore on the subject.

Redfern & Co. prepared tea in their study with rather long faces.

"I call it a spoil day!" growled Redfern. "Oh, utterly ruined!" agreed Owen.

"First there was that jape of Gussy's," said Lawrence savagely, "and then we had to go to Ferncliffe on jiggers that ought to have been scrapped years ago. If we had seen a ripping match with a glorious win for St. Jim's—it wouldn't have been so bad! But to go all that way to see the first eleven lose—was simply rotten!"

"The giddy junior eleven could have done better," said Owen.

"Oh, heaps!" agreed Redfern confidently. "Kildare played up rippingly. But what was the good of him alone? The rest of the team seemed to be all anyhow. Blessed if I know what the seniors are coming to. They ought to be taught a few lessons by the juniors."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DODGE!"

Owen grinned.

"Yes, I can see 'em taking lessons!" he said.

"Blow the first eleven!" exclaimed Lawrence crossly. "I'm thinking of that jape! I was absolutely spoofed by those giddy pin-heads! Between ourselves, you know, it was a jolly good wheeze of Gussy's."

"It was," said Redfern. "A first chop wheeze. We were let down thoroughly, and we've only got ourselves to blame for it."

"How's that?"

"Why, we ought to have seen through it," said Redfern. "We stood there, staring at the blessed bikes, and didn't even touch the pins. We deserved all we got."

"Yes, but—"

"But we mustn't let a jape like that go unpaid?" exclaimed Redfern questioningly.

"That's it."

"Well, we sha'n't, my sons. We've got to think out a real, first-class wheeze to work off on those School House bouncers. We've got to revenge ourselves. Any ordinary jape won't do—such as wrecking of Blake's study—and it's no good acting until we've got something really startling."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "You've got a wheeze, I suppose?"

"Of course he has," said Owen.

Redfern glared.

"You asses!" he exclaimed. "Ain't I saying that we've got to think of a wheeze?"

"All right—think of it."

"We don't object."

"You silly chumps!" exclaimed Redfern, in exasperation. "I can't think of a jape on the spur of the moment. It may be days, perhaps a week, before we get hold of something really good. There's no hurry."

"Not a bit," agreed Owen thoughtfully. "Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad dodge to allow things to slide for a few days—to let the School House bouncers lull themselves into a sense of false security."

Redfern stared.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "That's a jolly good sentence, anyhow. Did you pinch it out of a book?"

"You ass!" said Owen witheringly. "All the novelists use that sentence. It's a stock one, you know, and comes in jolly handy now and again. We'll let the School House chaps lull themselves into a sense of false security, and then give them the surprise of their lives with our startling jape."

"Which hasn't been thought of yet," reminded Lawrence.

"Well, it will be thought of," said Redfern. "These things only take time. Perhaps one of you chaps will be struck with something good in the wheeze line; it's unlikely, I know, but you might. Stranger things have happened."

Lawrence and Owen looked warlike.

"Look here, Reddy, you ass—"

"Oh, dry up!" grinned Redfern. "We don't want to start a row amongst ourselves. The main thing is to score off Blake & Co. They've japed us, and we've got to avenge the deadly insult."

"Good! We'll utter a giddy threat of vengeance!" grinned Owen.

"We've already done that. The next thing is to think of the wheeze," said Redfern. "Suppose we drop into Figg's study after tea and ask if he's got any suggestions?"

"Good idea!"

So Redfern & Co. settled down to tea, the threat of vengeance having made them feel a little more cheerful.

CHAPTER 4.

Redfern's Discovery.

REDFERN, Lawrence, and Owen, having finished tea, paid a visit to Figgins & Co. The famous New House firm were at home, and they extended a hearty welcome to their rivals. Redfern & Co. and Figgins & Co. were generally at war with one another, but just at present a truce had been declared.

"Have you chaps come about that beautiful jape?" inquired Figgins genially. "Generally speaking, it was up against the New House, but you must admit, Reddy, that you were properly diddled."

"I do admit it," said Redfern; "but there's no need for you to make a giddy song about it. We've come here to see if you kids have any ripping suggestions to offer. We've got to pay the School House back—and pay 'em well."

"It's your shout, my son—"

"We know that," interrupted Owen. "But you're New House chaps, ain't you? It's no good working off a rotten second-hand jape. We want to combine, and think of something that'll absolutely knock the School House into a cocked hat."

Figgins scratched his head.

"That's all very well," he said, "but we're not simply

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

bursting with ideas, you know. To tell the truth, Reddy, I've been worrying about that—jape. There's the prestige of the New House to think of—"

"The what of the New House?" asked Lawrence.

"Prestige, you chump!" said Figgins. "We've got to keep our end up, you know. And, as we're New House chaps, we take an interest in it. I'm bothered if I can suggest a jape on the spur of the moment, though. We shall have to let matters rest for a bit, and then give the School House chaps a giddy surprise."

Owen nodded.

"My idea exactly," he said. "We'll let Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three lull themselves into a sense of false security, and—"

Redfern glared.

"You're jolly fond of that sentence, ain't you?" he asked.

"Well, it's a good sentence!" growled Owen.

"Jolly good!" agreed Kerr. "It puts the thing in a nutshell, my sons. So I vote we lie low for a bit and let things simmer down. Blake and his lot will think that we don't attempt to retaliate, and will laugh at us. But we shall do the laughing bizney afterwards, you can bet."

Fatty Wynn nodded.

"You're quite right," he said thoughtfully. "He who laughs last—er—laughs last!"

"Go hon!" said Redfern, in surprise.

"Well, that's right, ain't it?" asked Fatty Wynn defiantly.

"No, it isn't, you fathead!" exclaimed Figgins. "What you really meant to say was the old proverb—he who laughs longest laughs the most."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Kerr.

"Well, what's up with that?" said Figgins, glaring.

"Why, it's all upside down!" grinned Kerr. "Fancy you chaps not knowing a well-known sentence like that! Its 'he laughs best who laughs last.'"

"Well, that's what I said," declared Fatty Wynn.

"You didn't—you—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Figgins. "What's the good of all this silly argument? We've decided then to let things rest until we think of a first-class jape?"

"That's it," said Redfern.

"Good! Your chaps can buzz off now! We want to get on with our prep!"

So Redfern & Co. took their leave.

Over in the School House all the juniors were chuckling at the success of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wheeze. It was not often that the swell of the Fourth had a really ripping idea; but nobody could deny that this one was not first-class.

Blake & Co. expected that their New House rivals would retaliate; but several days passed without a sign of hostilities, except for a scrimmage now and then in the quad.

The result was that the School House juniors took it for granted that Redfern & Co. were not going to attempt to avenge the jape which had been played upon them so successfully.

To enhance this belief, Redfern & Co. were quite genial in their bearing towards the School House fellows. In the minds of Redfern & Co. it was still very much to the fore.

But, try as they would, they could not think of a jape sufficiently novel or daring to avenge the great wrong. When, finally, the jape was settled upon, its inception came about quite by accident.

It happened that Redfern & Co. had a rather heated argument on the subject of Greek mythology. Owen persisted that Perseus had never become King of Argos, while Lawrence was equally as certain that there never was a kingdom of that name, Redfern, in his superior knowledge, scoffed at his chums, and said that Perseus had grown tired of the Kingdom of Argos, and had exchanged it for Tiryæus.

"Bosh!" said Lawrence warmly.

"Piffle!" agreed Owen. "There never was such a beastly kingdom!"

"Of course not!" agreed Redfern. "It's all mythology!"

"But you said—"

"Of course I said it!" exclaimed Redfern. "What I've told you chaps is just what it's got in all the Greek books. You're jolly ignorant!"

"It's you who's ignorant!" said Owen. "You've got it all backwards way!"

Redfern snorted.

"You burbling duffer," he roared, "I tell you I'm right!"

"Prove it then!" said Lawrence, grinning.

"I will!"

"How?"

"By going to the school library this very minute, and showing you the giddy facts!" declared Redfern heatedly. "If you chaps like to show your ignorance you can! If you come with me, I'll proceed to take you down a peg or two!"

"You mean we'll take you down a peg," said Lawrence.

"Lead the way!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

"Right-ho!"

And Redfern & Co. hurried off to the school library. Each one of them was quite certain that he was right, and all ordinary matters were forgotten. They were soon in the library, and found it to be deserted.

"Now to prove I'm right!" said Redfern grimly.

He went over to one of the bookcases, and soon found the volume of Greek mythology he required. For several minutes the three chums turned over the pages interestedly. And in five minutes Redfern had proved to his chums that he was practically right in his statements.

"There you are!" said Redfern triumphantly. "Now, what have you got to say?"

"Well, it's all rot, anyhow!" growled Owen.

"Of course it is!" said Lawrence. "You don't believe that piffle, Reddy?"

"Piffle be hanged!" said Redfern wrathfully. "Besides, you're trying to get out of it! You distinctly said—"

"Oh, dry up! I'm fed up with the stuff!"

"So am I!" said Owen. "Let's buzz off!"

Redfern's expression changed, and he grinned. His two chums, finding themselves wrong, did not wish to remain in the library further. And Redfern, triumphant, instantly decided to take Owen's advice and "buzz off." He had proved his point, and that was all he cared about.

"Well," he said, with satisfaction, "I've made you chaps sing small!"

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!"

Redfern crossed over to the bookcase, chuckling at his chums' discomfiture. He was about to replace the book in its place when he noticed something protruding from behind the other books. Rather curiously, he moved the books, and pulled the object out. It was a piece of old parchment, yellow with age, and the genuine thing. Probably it had been manufactured two or three centuries ago.

"What the dickens are you doing there?" demanded Lawrence.

"Come and have a squint at this!" said Redfern. "There's a piece of parchment here as old as Adam."

His chums joined him, and examined the parchment.

"Well, what of it?" said Owen impatiently. "It's only a rotten piece of paper! It's yellow and brown with age. Rather queer there isn't any writing on it, though."

"Yes, it's absolutely blank," agreed Redfern. "I wonder how it came to be here? I wouldn't mind betting it was made by the monks who lived in the old monastery that used to stand on the site of the School House."

"Well, suppose it was?" asked Lawrence.

"It's rather curious, that's all," said Redfern, turning the blank piece of parchment over and over. "It's absolutely yellow with age."

"Looks like the key to a giddy treasure," said Owen, becoming interested. "If there was writing on that, and—"

Redfern's eyes became bright, and he drew his breath in quickly.

"My only Aunt Josephine!" he ejaculated.

Lawrence and Owen stared at their leader.

"Well, what's up?"

"Well, what's the matter, ass?"

Redfern gazed at the parchment with excited eyes.

"I say, you chaps, I—I've thought of a wheeze!" he gasped. "It's—it's— Oh, my hat, it's gorgeous! The jape of the century! You'll simply yell yourselves hoarse when you hear it! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Jape of the Year.

"JOLLY funny!" exclaimed Lawrence sarcastically. "I'm simply roaring with merriment! Stop me, somebody, or I shall have a fit!"

"Where does the grin come in?" asked Owen.

Redfern wiped his eyes.

"Oh, you wait, kids!" he gurgled. "You just wait!"

"Of course, we're not waiting now, are we?" demanded Lawrence. "We're enjoying ourselves hugely. He, he, he! Listen to me grinning!"

Redfern carefully folded the piece of old parchment, and placed it in his pocket.

"Come on!" he said, chuckling.

"Are you going to bone that parchment?" asked Owen.

"Bone it be jiggered!" said Redfern. "Nobody wants it, and it's been lying about here for years, I expect. Might have been behind that bookcase since—since—"

"Since the Flood?" suggested Lawrence.

"Well, it looks old enough, anyhow," grinned Redfern.

"Come on, kids! I'll explain the wheeze in our own study, or, rather, with Figgins & Co."

"Oh, there is a wheeze then?" asked Owen.

"There is, my buck, and it's the biggest thing that was

ever thought of! You follow your uncle, and you'll be holding your sides jolly soon!"

And Redfern walked out of the library, his two doubtful chums following him. In a few minutes the three juniors were back in the New House. It was a half-holiday, and as rain was falling, football and other outside games had been declared "off."

Redfern & Co. marched into Figgins's study. The famous firm were at home, taking things easy. The long-limbed chief looked up from a story-book, and yawned.

"Hallo, you kids!" he exclaimed. "Come to liven us up?"

"Rather!" said Redfern, grinning. "Chuck that book aside, Figgy!"

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to do some giddy chin-wagging."

"You generally are doing that," said Fatty Wynn. "Look here, you chaps, you'd better clear out! I'm going to make some ripping toffee in a few minutes, and if you stop here I shall go and shove the wrong ingredients in!"

"That won't matter!"

"I've got a wheeze!" said Redfern. "A jape against the School House!"

"Oh!"

Figgins & Co. were all attention at once. Anything in the nature of a jape was always acceptable, and other matters were instantly put aside.

Even Fatty Wynn forgot his precious toffee.

"What's the idea?" he asked eagerly.

"It's this," said Redfern; and he produced the piece of parchment, and placed it on the table. Figgins & Co. gazed at it curiously.

"That?" asked Figgins. "Do you call that an idea?"

"Looks more like a piece of dirty paper," said Kerr practically.

"It's a chunk of real parchment, and it's going to assist in one of the finest japes that's ever been perpetrated," said Redfern.

"He's dotty!" said Owen. "Clean off his rocker!"

"There's every appearance of it, anyhow," declared Figgins. "Look here, Reddy, cut the cackle, and get to bizney! Explain your giddy self!"

Redfern smiled.

"Right-ho!" he agreed. "To begin with, we've got to manufacture some ink."

"What for, you cuckoo?" asked Kerr. "There's plenty of ink here!"

"But not the sort we want, my son. We want some ink that's got a kind of brown, washed-out look—ink that looks as though it's hundreds of years old when it's put on paper."

The juniors stared at one another.

"Oh, he's clean dotty!"

"Absolutely gone!"

"Poor old Reddy!"

Redfern banged the table.

"Blow your 'poor old Reddy!' he exclaimed. "I'm explaining the wheeze! We want some ink so that we can write on this parchment with it! My idea is to write on the thing that there's a treasure—hidden by the old monks—in the castle ruins. Being written on this parchment, everybody will think it's genuine. The chief thing is to plant it somewhere."

Figgins & Co. gasped.

"It's a jape?" asked Figgins quickly. "You—your mean—"

"I mean that the School House chaps will find the parchment," grinned Redfern. "Of course, we sha'n't know anything about it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "They'll—they'll—Great Scott!"

"It's gorgeous!"

"They'll find the parchment, and think there's a real treasure."

"Exactly!" grinned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The idea, in brief, is to jape Tom Merry & Co. in a colossal manner," went on Redfern. "We must take hours to think the thing out, and arrange every little detail so that there's no possibility of a single hitch. If the bounders had any suspicion that it was a jape, they'd jump to it in a tick, and our wheeze would fall to the ground. No, my sons, we must put our heads together and plan the thing from beginning to end. And, while we're making preparations we must let the School House think that we've given up all idea of paying them out for Gussy's little wheeze the other day."

"Well, that's a long speech, anyhow," said Figgins. "For once, though, you've talked sense, Reddy. You've shown more genius than I gave you credit for. As you say, the only thing to do is to combine and plan the jape from beginning to end."

"Exactly."

"Well, let's start the planning bizney."

"All serene."

And the rival Co.'s put their heads together. For over an hour nothing could be heard in Figgins's study but a steady hum of voices. The New House chiefs were determined to jape their rivals of the School House in such a manner that they would be the laughing stock of the whole school.

After a talk of over an hour and a quarter the six juniors looked at one another with keen satisfaction.

"Well, we've planned everything," said Redfern.

"Every little detail," agreed Figgins.

"And there's nothing to do now but to work off the wheeze."

"That's it."

"First thing," said Kerr, "is to make the giddy ink. I propose to get that done right away. You and I, Figgy, had better go up to the lab. There'll be nobody there now, and we'll be able to experiment."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"While you're gone," said Redfern, "we'll draft out the wording of the giddy parchment. If you're able to make any improvements when you come we'll consider 'em."

"Thanks!" grinned Figgins.

He and Kerr left the study, and Redfern looked at the remaining juniors. On all their faces expectancy and excitement could be seen, and Redfern could not help noticing it.

"I say," he exclaimed thoughtfully. "You chaps mustn't look like that, you know."

"Like what?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Why, you're all on the verge of grinning like Cheshire cats," said Redfern. "If the School House chaps spotted you they'd twig that something was on immediately. I admit that Blake and his lot are pretty smart, and they've got jolly sharp eyes."

"Well, we can't look like judges," said Owen.

"No, but you needn't give the show away," replied Redfern. "Don't forget, my dear kids, that this jape is going to—knock creation. When it's worked off, the School House will be left gasping and staring. They'll be so beaten that they won't be able to hold up their diminished heads again."

"If the jape goes as we want it to," said Owen.

"There's no doubt about it, you ass!"

Redfern drew his chair to the table and picked up a pen. He gnawed the end of it for a few moments, gazing hard at the ceiling for inspiration.

"How shall we begin the giddy thing?" he asked, at last.

"Dear finder of this parchment," suggested Lawrence.

"You ass!" said Redfern. "That won't do!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's—its rotten!"

"How about 'ye discoverer of ye old parchment'—"

began Wynn.

Redfern snorted.

"It wasn't written in the Middle Ages, you frabjous idiot!" he roared.

"No, it's not written at all yet," grinned Owen.

"Can't you understand that it's got to be in the language of about two hundred years ago?" asked Redfern, in exasperation. "I can see it's no good relying on you rotters! You've no more sense than this giddy pen!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Redfern. "What's the good of starting a row?"

"Do you think we—"

"I've got it!" ejaculated Redfern.

The others calmed down as Redfern commenced writing on the piece of exercise-paper. For a few minutes there was silence in the study, and at the end of that time, Lawrence, Owen, and Fatty Wynn had recovered their ruffled tempers.

"How's this?" asked Redfern, looking up.

"Ripping!" said Fatty Wynn promptly.

"Ass!"

Redfern picked up the piece of paper.

"Listen to this," he said. "The wording of this parchment is of undreamt-of significance. I, Jasper Townshend, a monk of this noble establishment, am penning these words in order to set down certain facts which are necessary to the finding of untold wealth. I am in sore fear that the soldiers of his Majesty will swoop down upon us, and I am therefore setting down knowledge of the gold and silver which I and my worthy colleagues have placed safely in the grounds of the castle, lest it should be taken from us. How's that for a start?" asked Redfern, looking up.

"My hat, it's top-hole!" exclaimed Owen enthusiastically.

"Sounds like the genuine thing!" said Lawrence.

"Might make it better by altering that bit about gold and silver," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"How?"

"Well, wouldn't it be better to put doubloons, or—or groats—"

"Or pieces of eight?" suggested Owen.

Redfern glared.

"You fatheads!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "If I shoved that rot down, the School House chaps would twig it in a tick. Gold and silver's best, and I'm not going to alter it. Of all the chumps—"

"All right," grinned Wynn, "keep your giddy wool on!"

"Get on with the washing," said Lawrence.

Redfern looked at the paper again.

"I haven't finished it yet," he said, "but I reckon this isn't bad—the money is contained in an oaken chest, and it represents wealth untold. In faith, it is indeed a goodly sum. I verily envy the finder of this scrap of paper, which I am concealing beneath the floor of the chapel crypt."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "I like that bit about the goodly sum. It sounds like the real thing."

"You've put 'untold wealth' twice," said Owen critically.

"I haven't. I've reversed it the second time."

"Well, it's all the same," said Owen.

"That's a detail that can be easily altered when it's written down on the real parchment," said Redfern. "Besides, it wouldn't do to be too exact; we want to make it look as though the thing's been written in a hurry."

"How about the oaken box?" asked Fatty Wynn. "If we're going to hide a swank treasure we shall have to—"

"Oh, you're too jolly particular!" exclaimed Redfern crossly. "After all, this is only a rough draft. We've got to draw a rough plan of the castle ruins, and mark the exact place where the treasure is supposed to be buried. I tell you chaps there's a lot of work attached to this jape."

"It'll be worth it, though," chuckled Owen. "My hat, to think of those kids being spoofed up to their giddy ears!"

The juniors grinned in anticipation, and continued their task. They proceeded to draw a rough plan of the castle ruins from memory, and while they were doing this Kerr and Figgins came into the study.

"Got the ink?" asked Redfern, looking up.

"We have, my son," said Figgins. "Ripping ink it is too, Bernard Glyn, of the School House, couldn't have made it better, though he is a giddy inventor."

"Let's have a squint at it," said Lawrence.

Kerr placed a small bottle on the table, and Redfern took the cork out. Then he dipped a clean pen into the fluid and commenced writing on a scrap of paper. Fatty Wynn craned his neck over Redfern's shoulder.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's rotten!"

"Rotten!" ejaculated Kerr. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"It's faint—faint and brown," sniffed Wynn.

"Awful!" added Owen.

"You—you bright specimens of idiots!" roared Figgins. "We've made it like that on purpose. When that's on the parchment everybody will think it was written hundreds of years ago. It will look as though it's faded and brown with age."

"Of course," agreed Redfern. "I think it's fine, Figgy—just the right stuff. These kids here haven't got a grain of sense amongst 'em. The parchment would look nice, wouldn't it, with blue-black writing on it?"

"Perhaps it's best a bit faint," admitted Fatty Wynn. "Talking about faintness, though, I feel rather peckish. It'll be tea-time—"

"Blow tea-time!"

"We've got to write this parchment."

"Tea can wait."

"But I can't!" declared Fatty Wynn. "While you chaps are messing about with that ink, I'll—"

"While we're what?" asked Redfern.

"Using that ink, if you like," said Fatty Wynn pleasantly. "I'll get the kettle on and make some giddy toast."

"All serene!" said Figgins. "You might as well be doing that as looking on. Come to think of it, it is getting rather later than I thought."

And while Fatty Wynn busied himself with preparing the tea, Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern & Co. gathered round the table. Kerr was elected to write the "ancient" parchment, and very soon he was slowly and laboriously writing out an amended edition of Redfern's first effort.

CHAPTER 6.

The Parchment is "Hidden."

"**D**ONE!" said Kerr, laying his pen down. For nearly an hour he had been sitting at the table. There were only a few sentences, comparatively, on the parchment, but Kerr had written them thoroughly. His own handwriting was quite disguised. The cramped, closely-written words on the parchment had every appearance of having been written centuries before.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Kerr and Figgins had succeeded in making a really splendid ink. The writing on the parchment looked faded and slightly brown, as though it had been exposed to damp and decay. Nobody, except a trained expert, would have suspected that the thing was a fake—that it had been written that very hour by Kerr of the New House.

Figgins examined it with enthusiasm.

"My hat, it's terrific!" he exclaimed.

"Rather!" agreed Lawrence, chuckling. "Why, if I didn't know what it really was, I should go off my head myself with excitement—go clean off my rocker!"

"Impossible!" said Figgins.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, it isn't possible for a chap to go off his rocker twice!" said Figgins blandly.

"You long-legged bouncer!" shouted Lawrence wrathfully.

"I'll—"

"You'll just sit down, ass!" said Redfern.

"Of course, you're our guests," grinned Figgins. "Now you're here you'd better stop to tea. There's enough toast on that plate for all of us!"

"What plate?" asked Fatty Wynn, turning from the fire.

"That one on the table."

"You chump!" said Fatty Wynn, glaring. "That's mine!"

"Yours?"

"Of course," snorted the Falstaff of the New House. "I've made that lot for myself. I'm toasting yours now."

Fatty Wynn's face was red, as though he had been doing his best to toast that as well.

"Are you going to eat that lot?" asked Owen, nodding to the huge pile of toast on the table. "Why, you giddy porpoise!"

"You don't know Fatty!" chuckled Figgins. "That toast's only an appetiser. When he's made that disappear, he'll start on the cakes and tarts."

And, with the famous parchment occupying the place of honour in the centre of the table, the rival firms of the New House sat down to tea. It was a merry meal, for the juniors were in high good humour. Practically all their plans were made, and they could already see the downfall of Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

Tea was over at last, and the minds of the juniors went back to the parchment.

"Are we going to work the jape to-night?" asked Owen eagerly.

"It all depends, my son," replied Redfern thoughtfully.

"It all depends on Manners. If Manners decides to develop some of his so-called photographs to-night, we shall be able to do the trick. If he doesn't—well, we shall have to wait."

"He's sure to be busy before long," said Figgins. "I know that he was taking snapshots yesterday, and the films are still in his camera. So if he doesn't develop 'em to-night he's bound to do it soon."

"Come to think of it," said Redfern, "we want to finish the preparations to-night. In my opinion we'd better be content with laying the trap."

"In the chapel crypt, you mean?"

"Of course."

"Suppose Manners is there?" asked Kerr.

"We shall have to make certain that he's not going to be there, my son," replied Redfern firmly. "We're not going to spoil the whole jape for the sake of a little forethought. I vote one or two of us go out scouting now and see what Manners is going to do."

"Good wheeze," said Figgins interestedly. "As you say, Reddy, we'd better not attempt to work off the jape to-night. In fact, we want Manners to keep away from the chapel altogether."

"Exactly."

"Who's coming?" asked Figgins.

Owen and Kerr complied, and a moment later the three juniors left the study on their expedition.

"We shall have to go jolly easy," said Figgins, as they descended the stairs. "We mustn't let Blake and his lot have the slightest suspicion that there's anything in the air, as it were. They must think that we're good little boys, and haven't a single naughty thought."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Owen. "We're giddy models of goodness!"

They emerged into the quad. The dusk was thick, and it was scarcely possible to see across to the gates. The lights of the School House stood out brightly, and reflected themselves in the pools and puddles of the quad. Rain was not falling now, and the sky was comparatively clear.

"Hallo!" said Kerr softly. "Who's that?"

"Who's which?"

"Those chaps over there."

Three forms loomed up from the direction of the School House.

"Hallo, what are you New House bouncers doing out

here?" asked Tom Merry's voice genially. "We're just having a breath of fresh air after the wetness. I say, it's pax, you know—we don't want to roll you kids in the quad. just now."

"You're quite welcome to try!" said Figgins, as the two little parties met. "I wouldn't mind betting—"

"Wicked youth!" interrupted Monty Lowther gravely. "No betting allowed."

"All right, we'll bet silently," grinned Owen. "Oh, my hat!" groaned Lowther. "Kill him!"

"If you indulge in chestnuts like that, Owen, you'll get ragged!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "But I say, you've got mixed, haven't you?"

"Mixed?" asked Figgins. "Yes, mixed up," said Monty Lowther. "I was thinking the same thing. Have you been doing the swopping bizney in the New House, Figg? I admit it's time there was a change, but I didn't think you'd do it just yet."

"Mixed up? Swopping?" asked Figgins. "Are you dotty?"

"No, my son, we're just wondering why you changed Fatty Wynn for Owen," said Monty Lowther. "Owen's a member of Redfern & Co."

"Perhaps they found that Fatty was getting too expensive," grinned Tom Merry. "If so, Redfern and Lawrence are in for it."

Figgins snorted. "Do you think we'd swop Fatty Wynn—the one and only Fatty—for Owen?" he asked indignantly.

"Look here," began Owen hotly, realising that the comparison was not exactly complimentary to himself—"look here, Figgins, I'm as good as Fatty Wynn any day!"

"Rats!" put in Kerr. "Like your blessed cheek!" growled Figgins.

"Well, you rotters!" ejaculated Owen. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "Go it, kids! Wipe Owen up!"

"They'd better try!" said Owen warmly. "Owin' to our interference there's going to be a row with Owen!" said Monty Lowther blandly. "I expect Figg and Kerr are owin' Owen a good many bumps—"

"Oh, my hat, gag him!" howled Figgins. "His puns are horrible!"

"Ghastly!"

"Come on, Tommy," said Manners, grasping Tom Merry's arm. "Monty will let himself go if we stop any longer. We're going to the gym., you chaps, to do an hour's giddy exercise."

"You need it, too!" said Figgins grimly. "I feel faint myself, after listening to Monty Lowther's funniness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three linked arms and strolled away. Figgins, Kerr, and Owen looked at one another. Their slight difference was forgotten, and they all looked eager.

"No need for any more scouting," said Figgins quickly. "What a bit of luck!"

"Rather!" exclaimed Kerr. "They said they're going to the gym., so Manners will be nicely out of the way."

"We'll buzz back and tell the others," said Owen. "All serene!"

And the three juniors hurried back into the New House. Redfern, Lawrence, and Fatty Wynn looked at them in surprise as they entered.

"Well, you've done a fat lot of scouting!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Quite enough, my son," chuckled Figgins. "Manners is in the gym. with Tom Merry and Lowther. The coast's clear. Manners won't do any developing to-night. Collar hold of the parchment and follow me."

But Redfern hesitated.

"We'd better not all go," he said thoughtfully. "If we were spotted the chaps might suspect things. You and I had better go alone, Figg. It wouldn't do to take any unnecessary risks in a big job like this."

"All right," said Kerr. "Buzz off!"

"And don't get collared," added Lawrence.

"Trust us."

And Figgins and Redfern departed.

The two rivals leaders of the New House juniors were on the very best of terms with one another, and they quickly made their way to the chapel. For a period of twenty minutes they were down in the old crypt, then they emerged into the quad, once again.

They looked at one another with grinning faces. "Well, it's done," said Redfern.

"It is—it is," agreed Figgins gleefully. "And now we've got to wait and see what happens. There's no possibility of a hitch, Reddy, my son, and we'll soon have those School House bouncers on toast."

CHAPTER 7.

Redfern is Persistent.

MANNERS looked up from his camera at Tom Merry and Lowther.

"I'm going to develop these giddy snapshots," he announced. "I should have done it yesterday, only somehow I didn't get time."

"Well, it doesn't matter," said Lowther. "Doesn't matter?"

"Of course, not," replied Monty Lowther. "They'll do just as well next year as this. Who wants to see the old photographs, anyhow!"

Manners glared. "I do!" he retorted. "They're ripping snapshots!"

The Terrible Three were in their study in the Shell passage. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had not yet finished tea, but Manners had hurried over his. It was the day following Redfern and Figgins's visit to the chapel, and the great, New House jape had not yet been perpetrated.

Manners looked at his chums rather warmly. "They're ripping snapshots!" he repeated.

"All right," said Lowther. "Let 'em rip, my son!"

"You funny fathead!" sneered Manners. "I suppose you think you're humorous? Just because you don't take an interest in the best hobby going you think I'm wasting my time. You're a couple of beauties!"

"You're very complimentary," said Tom Merry. "I know I'm gifted with rare beauty, but I didn't expect to be told about it. As for taking an interest in photography—why, we simply delight to see you amusing yourself like a good little boy."

"Ass!" said Manners witheringly.

And he passed out of the study, leaving his chums chuckling.

"Photography's all right," said Tom Merry, as the door closed, "but I reckon I should draw the line at going down to that musty, old crypt under the chapel and using it for a dark room."

"It makes a ripping dark-room, and that's all Manners cares," said Monty Lowther. "He'd go anywhere for the sake of his beastly photographs. Pass those tarts."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther went on with their tea; and meanwhile, Manners, with his camera under his arm, walked down the Shell passage and descended the stairs to the entrance-hall. He paused for a moment on the School House steps, looking out into the quad.

It was a beautiful evening, very different from the previous drizzling one. The sun had set, and the sky was red and gold with its evening light. The New House looked picturesque on the other side of the quad; for, in spite of its name, the New House was by no means a modern building.

"By Jove," murmured Manners. "It's a jolly evening!"

He descended the steps and began to cross the quad. When he had covered half the distance, Bernard Glyn of the Shell appeared at the School House door.

"Hallo, Manners, going snapshotting now?" he called. "Not enough light, is there?"

Manners turned. "You ignorant chump," he exclaimed, "of course there isn't!"

"What have you got that Brownie, for, then?" asked Glyn. "That which?" asked Manners, standing still in the middle of the quad, and glaring.

"That Brownie!"

"You—you—"

Manners fairly boiled over with indignation. "Brownie!" he snorted wrathfully. "You fathead, Glyn, you burbling jabberwock! This camera cost pounds! Brownie's are five bob—jolly good things, too, considering the price. But if you think I got this camera for five—"

"All right, don't excite your little self!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "I don't care if it cost fifty quid. If you're not taking snapshots, why are you carrying it about?"

"Because there are some films inside it," said Manners pityingly. "and because they want developing. I'm going to the chapel crypt to develop them. But come over here, you ass, and have a look at the thing! Brownie, indeed!"

Manners was quite indignant that his beautiful and expensive camera should have been referred to as a well-known, but inexpensive, snapshot camera. He determined to show Glyn that it was a perfect instrument in every way, and by no means a cheap one.

Bernard Glyn grinned.

He crossed over to Manners, and the two Shell fellows were soon talking animatedly. Meanwhile, a form, which had been lounging near the old elms, carelessly strolled over to the New House. It was Lawrence, and the moment he found himself in the New House hall he simply darted up the stairs.

"By jingo," he muttered excitedly, "the very opportunity!"

He burst into Redfern's study with a crash. "What the—who the—" gasped Redfern, starting up from the teatable. "What the dickens do you mean by hurling yourself into the room like this, you ass?"

"It's Manners!" panted Lawrence quickly. "He's in the quad."

"With his camera?" asked Redfern.

"Yes."

"Is he going to the chapel?"

"Yes, you cuckoo!"

"How do you know?" demanded Redfern excitedly.

"Because I heard him telling Glyn of the Shell," said Lawrence quickly. "They're talking in the quad, and if you buzz off now you'll be able to work the trick a treat."

"My hat, Lawrence is right!" exclaimed Owen from the window. "Manners is out in the quad, right enough. Buck up, Reddy!"

Redfern jammed his cap on.

"I'm going now," he said. "Rush into Figgy's study and tell him to come along at the right moment. Our arrangements are all made, and we know exactly what we've got to do."

"Of course," said Lawrence impatiently. "Buzz off, you ass! We may not get another opportunity like this for days."

Redfern turned with his hand on the door.

"The jape's just going to commence, kids," he said, with a grin. "It's up to us to see that there's no hitch in the giddy proceedings."

And Redfern hurried out. In a few moments he was in the quad, strolling quietly in the direction of the chapel. Manners and Bernard Glyn were still talking, so there was no need for Redfern to hurry now. He had been waiting for an opportunity to catch Manners on his way to the chapel—now the opportunity had come at last. Much depended on what would happen in the next few minutes; the success of the whole jape rested on Manners allowing Redfern to accompany him to the crypt, and Redfern would have to go without allowing Manners to have the slightest suspicion.

The New House juniors had decided upon a course of action which could scarcely fail to be successful. At any rate, Redfern was feeling quite confident as he glanced in a sidelong direction at the amateur photographer of the School House.

"It'll work," he murmured. "It jolly well can't fail!"

For another two minutes Manners remained talking with Glyn, then he lovingly placed his camera under his arm, and continued his interrupted walk across the quad. Just as he was approaching the old chapel Redfern appeared from the direction of the gym.

"Hallo, kid?" he said casually.

"Pax!" exclaimed Manners. "I'm in a hurry."

"Rats;" said Redfern calmly. "Is that your camera?"

"What does it look like?" asked Manners sarcastically, prepared for a string of humorous remarks. "What does it look like?" he repeated, "a tin of sardines?"

Redfern grinned.

"By Jove—no!" he exclaimed. "It seems to be a ripping instrument! Blessed if I don't envy you, Manners! I'm rather interested in photography myself, and that ripping camera of yours makes me wish I'd got one."

Manners looked at Redfern suspiciously.

"It's a jolly good thing!" he said proudly.

"Rather!" agreed Redfern interestedly. "Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to the old vault under the chapel—I'm using the place as a dark-room."

"Jolly good place, too, I should say."

"Yes," said Manners, turning to go. "You've got more sense than I gave you credit for, Reddy. The old crypt's all right for my job, except for the cold. I admit it's pretty chilly down there."

"And creepy, too!"

"Oh, hang that! I'm not a little kid," said Manners. "It makes a jolly, fine dark room, and that's all I care."

Manners walked on a pace, but Redfern followed.

"I'll come with you," he announced coolly.

Manners stopped.

"You'll come with me?"

"Yes."

"You jolly well won't!" said Manners firmly. "I'm not going to have a beastly New House bouncer down there! I want the films to develop properly, my son. If you come with me you'll stick your nose in everything and mess things up."

"Oh, rats!" said Redfern warmly. "I'll be jolly careful, Manners, old man!"

"You can be as careful as you like," said Manners, "but I'm not going to have you down in the vault with me."

"But—"

"Look here, Reddy, I don't want to be rude," said Manners firmly, "but I'd rather have your room than your company in a job like this."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Oh, that's not rude!" said Redfern. "Don't mention it."

"I want to be by myself, and that's flat."

"Don't be an ass! I reckon you ought to be delighted to have me," said Redfern, in an injured tone. "It's not often I ask to see you developing your films, and you ought to take it as a compliment."

"Bosh!"

"Look here—"

"Buzz off!" said Manners crossly. "I'm in a hurry!"

"You beastly School House bouncer, I'll—"

"Hallo, what's the rumpus?" inquired a cheerful voice.

"Blessed if it isn't Redfern having a row with old Manners! I say, Reddy, old man, what's up?"

Figgins & Co. and Owen and Lawrence strolled up.

"Why," said Redfern indignantly, "I offered to go with Manners to see him develop his rotten photographs, and he told me to go and eat coke!"

Lawrence and Owen stepped forward.

"What's that?" said Owen. "You offered to go with Manners?"

"Of course."

"You ass, Reddy!" exclaimed Lawrence. "What the dickens do you want to go with that School House bouncer for?"

"To see him develop photographs!" yelled Redfern.

"Rats! Come with us!"

"I won't!" said Redfern doggedly. "I'm going with Manners, if he'll have me."

"Then you're a giddy traitor!" said Owen warmly. "If you'd rather go with Manners than with us, Reddy—"

"I would rather."

"All right, go!" said Figgins, with a frown. "We'll get our own back, though, when you come into the New House again."

"Silly ass!" said Redfern loftily. "If Manners will let me go with him, I'll go."

Manners stood looking on with a rather surprised expression on his face. Seeing that Redfern had quarrelled with his chums on his account, he felt compelled, somehow, to accede to his request. It would be very bad form to refuse after Redfern's very emphatic requests to accompany him. Besides, Manners felt somewhat warmed to Redfern for showing such a sensible interest in photography. Never for a second did it enter Manners' head that the whole thing was acted—that the New House juniors had arranged the affair beforehand, and that the "quarrel" was merely a put-up job. The School House junior was completely spoofed, as Figgins & Co. had intended him to be, and he fell into the trap with never a suspicion of a jape.

For the whole success of the hidden treasure joke depended upon Manners' action, and upon his allowing Redfern to accompany him without suspicion into the chapel vault. And the New House juniors were certainly successful in their object, for Manners was totally unconscious of the fact that Figgins & Co. had each been playing a pre-arranged part.

"Oh, well," he said condescendingly, "if you'd really like to come, Redfern—"

"I should just love to," said Redfern eagerly.

"Right-ho, then! Only, I shall expect you to take an interest in what I do and not play the goat!"

"My dear chap, I'm simply longing to see how you turn out such ripping photographs!" said Redfern sweetly.

Manners beamed.

"Good!" he exclaimed heartily. "You've got sense, Reddy. We'll leave these fatheads in the quad!"

And Manners and Redfern walked away.

"Yah, traitor!" yelled Owen wrathfully.

"Why don't you change into the School House?"

"Fancy turning against your own chums."

Redfern turned just before he and Manners disappeared round the corner.

"Rats," he shouted, "and many of 'em!"

But as he turned his head his chums observed a pronounced lowering of his left eyelid. The next moment the two juniors had disappeared, and Figgins & Co., and Lawrence and Owen looked at one another with grinning faces.

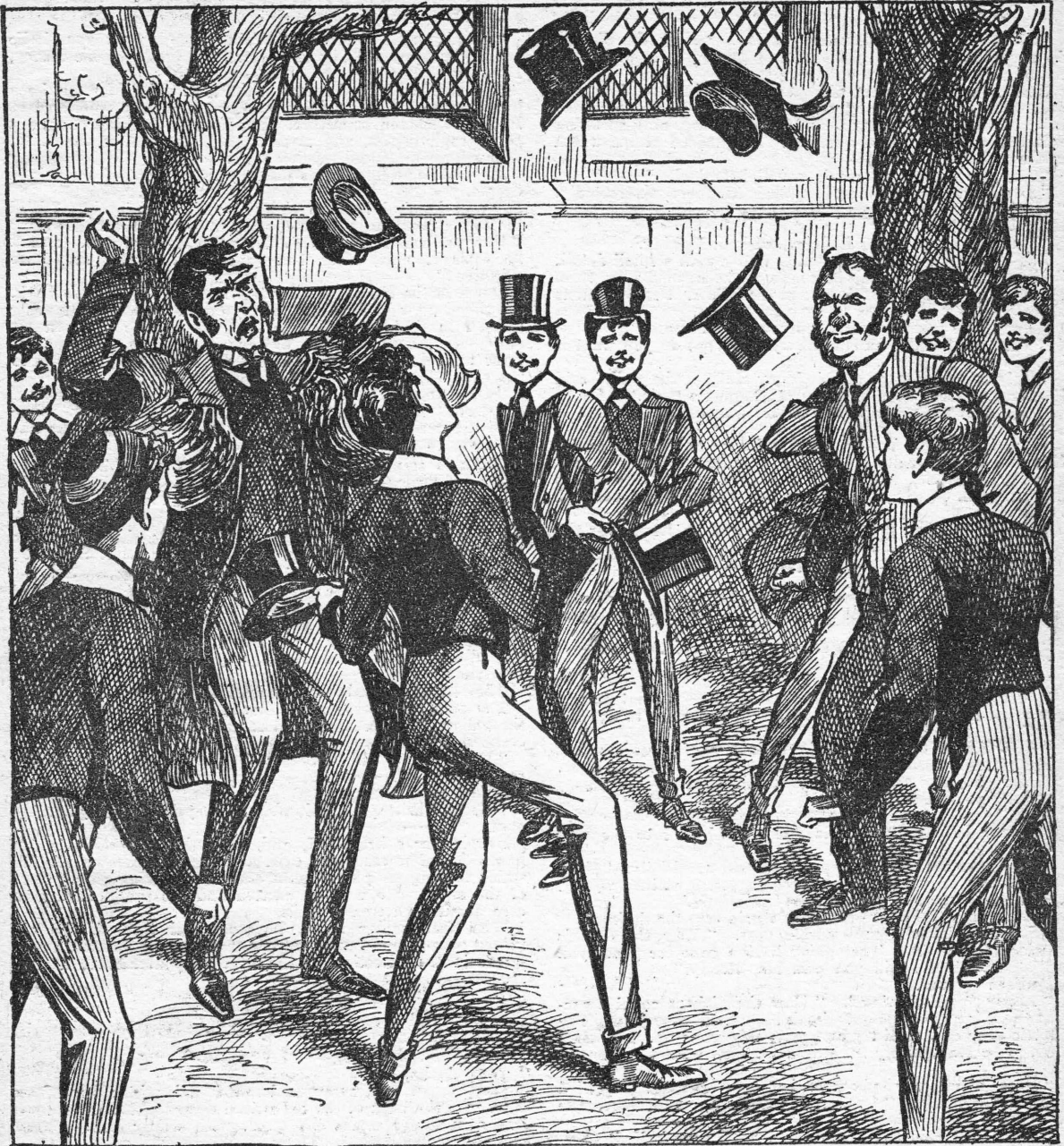
"It's worked!" chuckled Figgins gleefully. "My hat, kids, Manners was spoofed as neatly as we could have wished. The great jape's started, and I'll bet my boots it turns out to be the biggest thing that's ever happened at St. Jim's!"

CHAPTER 8.

Developing.

"COME on!"

Manners led the way over the rough stones and through the shattered portal of the old ruined chapel. In the evening light the place looked dreary and dismal; but neither of the juniors had eyes for the old ruins. They had both been there many a time before, and at present their thoughts were centred upon their separate missions, for



"Dear me! The boy appears to be deaf!" cried Mr. Quelch as he advanced hastily towards the new boy. Then he uttered an exclamation of amazement. Kipps had snatched the mortar-board from his head and added it to the spinning hats, keeping the six going with perfect ease. There was a yell from the Greyfriars fellows. (An amusing incident from the splendid long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled "THE SCHOOLBOY CONJURER," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale, price One Penny.)

Redfern was bent on very different work to that which Manners suspected. The New House junior was not so interested in photography as he wanted Manners to believe. The old parchment was concealed down in the crypt, and it was Redfern's duty to bring about its "accidental" discovery.

"I'll go first," said Manners.

"All serene! Lead on, MacDuff!" said Redfern cheerfully.

Manners led the way across the ruins to the entrance of the crypt. The two juniors passed down the old stone stairway until they reached the bottom. A series of arches opened out before them as Manners switched on a little electric-lamp, and they passed between the heavy stone pillars to the spot where Manners' photographic materials were placed.

Redfern shivered.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "It's beastly chilly down here!"

"Well, I didn't ask you to come."

"I know that, ass! Don't you think it's chilly?"

Manners opened the door of his red lamp.

"Blessed if I've ever thought about it," he said. "When I come down here I come down to work, not to think about it being chilly."

Redfern grinned to himself.

"Don't you ever think of the old story about this crypt?" he asked cheerfully. "I've often wondered if there was anything in it. You know, there was an old monk buried alive here by robbers, and his shrieks and moans—"

Manners snorted wrathfully.

"You burbling chump!" he roared. "Can't you dry up? Do you think I believe that tosh? If you're funky, you can buzz off! I thought you'd be bothering me all the time."

"Don't get your rag out, old man," said Redfern penitently. "I'll be as quiet as a little lamb, and look at everything you do with huge interest. My hat, that's a ripping lamp you've got! Pity the light's red, though."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DODGE!"

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Red!" exclaimed Manners, glaring. "How the dickens do you think I'm going to develop photographs without a red light? Be quiet, for goodness' sake!"

Redfern grinned to himself again, and subsided. For well over twenty minutes he stood beside Manners, watching the School House junior busy with his developing, only speaking now and again to ask a question. He glanced at his watch in the red light.

"Soon be done now, won't you?" he asked.

"In about ten minutes," replied Manners abstractedly. "My hat, Redfern, these photos have developed rippingly! How do you like 'em?"

"Oh, first chop!" said Redfern, without looking.

But Manners was too occupied to notice such a small detail. Redfern was thinking, and in a moment he strolled away from the table and passed over to one of the pillars. For a moment he pretended to examine it, then he turned.

"I say," he said casually, "got a penknife there?"

"Yes," replied Manners absently. "What do you want it for?"

"Only to scrape some of this funny stuff off the wall," said Redfern, crossing over to the photographer's table. "Looks like moss, or something. I'm rather curious to see what it is."

He picked up the knife and crossed over to the wall again. Manners still remained bending over his beloved photographic accessories and did not observe that Redfern was watching him closely, although he was whistling carelessly all the time.

Suddenly Redfern pretended to trip, and clattered over the rough stones. Then he straightened up.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated blankly.

Manners turned.

"What's up with you, ass?" he asked impatiently. "Blessed if you're not playing about all the time, instead of looking at me!"

"I slipped," exclaimed Redfern. "I—I say, old man——"

"Well?"

"I've dropped your giddy knife."

"Well, pick it up!" said Manners crossly. "What do you mean by distracting my attention over a silly thing like that?"

"The blessed thing's gone between two of these stones," said Redfern anxiously, bending down and gazing at the floor.

"It dropped, and then went down this chink!"

"Can't you see it?"

"No."

Manners left his little table and crossed over to the spot where Redfern was standing.

"Well, you are a burbling ass!" he said wrathfully. "That knife was a ripping fine one—three blades, a corkscrew, and lots of other things. It cost about half-a-quad."

"I'm sorry," said Redfern, with a grin into the darkness.

"Sorry be blowed!" growled Manners. "Why, this chink's as wide as your fist! That giddy knife's gone for good, you ass! That's half-a-quad you owe me, Reddy."

Redfern snorted.

"Likely!" he exclaimed. "How the dickens could I prevent the thing going down? Look here, hand over your giddy electric-lamp and we'll try and prise this stone up. It doesn't seem to be extra firmly fixed, and we shall want the lamp to see by."

"How about my photographs, you chump!" howled Manners excitedly. "Look here, Redfern, you'll leave the thing until I've finished."

"All right," said Redfern readily, "it's your knife."

So Manners went back to his table and completed his task, Redfern looking on, meanwhile, with a gleeful twinkle in his eyes. At last Manners had finished, and then he lifted up the slide of the red lamp so that it gleamed white.

"That's better," said Redfern. "We can see now."

Manners carried the lamp across to the chink in the floor.

"This'll show more light than the electric," he said. "You are an ass, you know, Reddy, dropping my knife down here. Hand over that piece of iron."

Redfern picked up a broken rod of iron which was lying against the wall, and the next moment the two juniors were prising up the heavy stone. The New House chiefs had done their work well, for there was not a sign that the slab had been removed previously. At last, with a heave, it came back, and crashed down on the other stones.

"Got it!" said Redfern, breathlessly. "My hat, I wonder how long it is since this stone was raised?"

"It's never been raised before, you ass!" exclaimed Manners. "It's been down hundreds of years!"

"I don't think!" thought Redfern, with an inward chuckle.

Manners now used his electric lamp, and flashed it into the cavity. His knife was lying there uninjured, and he picked it up and examined it.

"It's all right," he said. "Jolly lucky we were able to take up this stone, though."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Good!" said Redfern. "Well, as you've got your knife back, Manners, and as you've done the photographic bizney, I'll buzz off!"

And Redfern moved across to the exit. Had Manners been less preoccupied in his thoughts, he would have wondered at Redfern's sudden departure. But he was thinking about his photographs again, and carried the lamp back to the table, where he commenced tidying up.

Meanwhile, Redfern was making his way out of the ruined chapel.

"Will he find it?" he thought rather anxiously. "Will the silly chump have sense enough to look in the hole again? I thought he'd have spotted the parchment at first. But if he finds it now, after I've gone, it'll be all the more effective!"

Down in the old crypt, Manners was finishing up his work. He tidied up, and then blew out the dark-room lamp, leaving himself in darkness. But he had the electric lamp in his hand, and he pressed the button. He passed the beam of light to and fro, with the object of illuminating his way to the exit. Then he uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Oh, hang! That silly ass, Redfern, has left that stone out of place!" he murmured. "If I don't put it back, somebody'll come down here and break his giddy leg. Just like Redfern, to go and leave me to do it!"

Manners stepped over to the stone, and, with a certain feeling of curiosity, flashed his light into the cavity. It was fairly deep, and the earth was dry and sandy. Manners became thoughtful as he stood there.

"And these stones were laid down by the old monks," he thought abstractedly. "My hat, I wonder what St. Jim's was like all those years ago? I'll——"

Suddenly, Manners' train of thought was interrupted, and he bent down quickly. He had caught sight of a glimpse of yellow amongst the sandy earth, close up against the other bricks, as though a piece of paper were tucked under the adjoining stone. Manners grasped it, and pulled it out into the light.

"My hat!" he exclaimed curiously. "What is it?"

The amateur photographer of St. Jim's excitedly unfolded the yellow old parchment and commenced to read the faded, crabbed handwriting.

"It's—it's an old document!" he murmured excitedly, reading on. "I——"

He let out a whoop.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" he yelled, with gleaming eyes. "It's——"

But Manners broke off, and, with the parchment in his hand, darted towards the exit, and ran pell-mell up the old stairs, leaving his photographs and camera lying on the floor of the crypt. He was too excited and too thunderstruck to care about such small details.

With fast-beating heart, he scrambled through the old ruined chapel, and ran at express speed across the now dusky quad, in the direction of the brilliantly-illuminated School House.

CHAPTER 9.

Manners Explains!

"H A, ha, ha!"

A soft, suppressed sound of laughter came from the back of the old ruined chapel as Manners' form was seen flying across the quad, with wildly waving arms and fluttering jacket. There could be no mistaking his attitude; he was intensely excited.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's found it!"

"Old Manners has dug out the giddy parchment!"

"Oh, my hat, what a lark!"

Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. gazed at one another with grinning and gleeful faces. It was not quite dark yet, but the dust was thick behind the old chapel, and the New House juniors had the quad, to themselves. Redfern looked at his chums with an expression of intense satisfaction.

"It's worked, kids!" he chuckled. "It's worked!"

"My only Aunt Matilda Jane!" exclaimed Figgins, gazing over towards the School House. "That giddy barn over the way will be wild with excitement in about an hour! I say, I wonder if they'll buzz off to the old ruins to-night?"

"No fear. There's not time," said Kerr, shrewdly. "They'll wait till daylight, I expect. I know one thing, though—they won't recognise my handwriting!"

And the New House heroes fell upon one another's breasts and nearly wept with laughter. The success of their jape was almost too good to be true; for, inwardly, they had feared that some hitch would occur. But, so far, matters were running on exactly the right lines.

Manners simply hurled himself into the entrance-hall. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, happened to be there, and he

stared at Manners in amazement, as the Shell fellow rushed up the stairs.

"My only hat!" said Lumley-Lumley. "He's mad! He's off his rocker!"

Manners disappeared, and shot round the corner into the Shell passage. As he did so he collided violently with Clifton Dane, and the latter sat down with considerable abruptness.

"Sorry!" gasped Manners. "Couldn't help it, old man!" But he did not offer to help the unfortunate junior. Clifton Dane picked himself up, and gazed after Manners in sheer astonishment.

"What the dickens is up with him?" he murmured. "What did the silly chump come flying round the corner at that speed for? He—he ought to be shoved in a strait-jacket!"

Clifton Dane walked away, brushing himself, and Manners wrenched open the door of Tom Merry's study and flung himself into the room. So violently did he enter that he collided with the table, and stood there grasping its edge and panting for breath.

"You ass!" howled Tom Merry, "look what you've done!" "Upset all the giddy ink!" roared Monty Lowther.

The sudden jerk of the table had tipped the ink-pot over, and the dark fluid was flowing all over the tablecloth. Monty Lowther endeavoured to shift in time, but the ink reached the table-edge and splashed on to his trousers. Lowther let out a fendish yell.

"Ow! My trousers are ruined!" he roared, starting to his feet. "You—you fatheaded lunatic, Manners! What the——"

"Sorry!" gasped Manners, his eyes gleaming. "I say, I——"

"You'll feel in a minute!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bump him!"

"Collar the rotter!"

Manners started back and dodged. He banged the door to, and waved the yellow parchment in the air.

"I've got it!" he shouted. "Look at this! I've found something that'll make you go off your nappers with excitement! I'm a bit excited myself——"

"You're mad!" panted Monty Lowther.

"You're off your rocker!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm not! This parchment——"

"Blow the parchment! What do you mean by bursting into the room like a babbling lunatic? Have you been seeing ghosts down in the crypt, or——"

"I've found a treasure!" roared Manners excitedly. "A giddy treasure!"

"You'll find a thick ear before you've done!" growled Tom Merry.

"And a black eye!" added Monty Lowther wrathfully.

Manners looked at his chums excitedly.

"You asses!" he yelled. "Don't you understand? This parchment's thousands of years old!"

"Go it!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "Why don't you say it's millions of years old? You'll be telling us it's an Egyptian papyrus next!"

"Well, it's hundreds of years old, anyhow," said Manners.

"Rot!"

"Tosh!"

"It is!" shouted Manners.

"Yes, I said it is tosh!" grinned Tom Merry.

"No," howled the amateur photographer of St. Jim's. "I mean it's hundreds of years old! Can't you chaps realise that I've made the biggest discovery of—of modern times? This parchment is a key to a hidden treasure!"

"It doesn't look like a key to me," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "I'll bet it wouldn't fit the lock of this door, anyhow!"

"Not that kind of key, ass! I tell you I—I——"

Manners paused, unable to frame his words. The parchment still waved in his hand, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther advanced on their chum, and grasped him firmly. They could see that he was very much excited, and knew there must be some reason for it. They were beginning to be curious.

"What's up with you, Manners?" asked Tom Merry severely. "What do you mean by coming into this study like a howling Red Indian?"

"Yes. Give us an explanation," said Lowther.

Manners, in swift sentences, told his chums how he had found the parchment.

"It must have been under that stone for hundreds of years!" he finished excitedly. "The thing couldn't have been up before, or the paper would have been found. If Reddy hadn't dropped my knife down we should never have seen it."

"Let's have a squint at it," said Tom Merry quickly.

Manners moved across the table, followed by his two interested chums. He planked the parchment down, and all three bent over it. For several minutes there was no sound in the study, except the quick breathing of the juniors,

and then, as though with one accord, they straightened their backs and stared into one another's face.

"Well?" demanded Manners abruptly.

"I—I—— Blessed if I know what to say!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"It—it can't be true!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Why can't it? The thing was buried hundreds of years ago, and it's absolutely genuine! Anybody can see that with half an eye! Look at the parchment! Look at the old writing! Look at the dirt stains! Why—why, the thing's as genuine as—as I am!"

Manners was becoming more excited than ever.

"Can't you realise what it means?" he went on animatedly. "Don't you chaps realise that there's a giddy treasure hidden in the castle ruins? It's been there ever since—ever since it was hidden!"

"Go hon!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Marvellous!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't rot!" Manners exclaimed. "The chap who wrote this thing——"

"Jasper Townshend."

"Yes, that's his name. He said he wrote this parchment so as to let the finder know that he'd hidden gold and silver in the castle. Of course, at that time the castle wasn't in ruins; but the spot must be the same, although now it will be all grass-grown. I tell you, chaps, it's the biggest thing that's ever happened."

"I wonder how much treasure there is?" said Monty Lowther, with gleaming eyes. "He says there's a 'goodly sum.'"

"That's it," said Tom Merry. "A goodly sum in an oaken chest. Wealth untold. My only aunt, I—I can't believe it, you know!"

"Let's read the thing again!"

And the Terrible Three hastily scanned the faded, crabbed handwriting, which did not bear the slightest resemblance to Kerr's, of the New House. Tom Merry & Co. had not the faintest suspicion of a jape, and it was gradually dawning upon them that they, or rather Manners, had hit upon something which would startle the whole school.

How could they possibly suspect a jape?

The parchment had apparently been found by the purest accident. Manners had no idea that Redfern had deliberately dropped his knife down the chink. Besides, Redfern had not been present when the discovery had been made, and there was the parchment to vouch for its genuine nature.

It was old, stained, and the writing upon it was apparently brown and faded with age. The Terrible Three did not consider the matter long. They told themselves that the parchment was genuine, and there was, indeed, an enormous treasure hidden in the old castle ruins.

Figgins & Co.'s jape was working out to perfection.

CHAPTER 10.

Excitement in the School House.

TOM MERRY looked up.

"There's no swank about it," he said. "Manners, old man, you've hit upon something that's really big. I vote we rush along to Study No. 6, and tell Blake & Co. My hat, what a smack in the eye this'll be for the New House!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What-ho!"

The Terrible Three hurried out of their study, Tom Merry carrying the parchment. They were all very much excited, and ran along the passage to Study No. 6, the famous apartment occupied by Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

The Terrible Three burst into the study with a crash. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were busy at their prep, and they started to their feet in alarm, thinking, for the moment, that it was a study raid.

"What the——"

"Who the——"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, it's a waid!"

"It's Tom Merry!"

Blake & Co. stared at the invaders with warlike looks.

"Any more of you?" inquired Blake, putting up his hands.

"Because, if you Shell bouncers are looking for a scrap——"

"Don't be an ass, Blakey!" said Tom Merry. "We're not raiding you; we're on a peaceful mission."

"Bai Jove, that's all right then!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But I must remark, Tom Mewwy, that you entahed the studay with quite unnecessary violence. Weally, I do not wegard it as good mannahs——"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "We've made a discovery!"

"What, have you been able to decipher one of Manners' photographs?" inquired Blake.

"Look here——" began Manners.

"Or found out the meaning of one of Lowther's puns?"

added Digby.

"My hat, you rotters," said Lowther, "I'll—"

"You'll be quiet, my son!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Look here, Blake, we didn't come here to rag you, or be ragged ourselves! We came to let you into a secret—the biggest thing imaginable!"

"Bai Jove, you know, you make me curious, deah boy! Pway let us know what this remarkable discovery is!" said Arthur Augustus. "Has it got anythin' to do with that piece of papah you are wavin' in your hand, Tom Mewwy?"

"It has, Gussy; a lot to do with it," replied the captain of the Shell. "You may not believe, but it'll probably be the means of our finding thousands of pounds."

"What?"

"Which?"

"How much?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Thousands of pounds!" repeated Tom Merry firmly, and with an impressive air. "It's a key to a hidden treasure, kids. And we've only got to follow out the directions to make ourselves as rich as Yankee millionaires."

Blake & Co. stared.

"Rot!" said Jack Blake.

"Piffle!"

"You're pulling our giddy legs!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You wait till you've read this parchment!" said Manners excitedly. "Of course, we knew you wouldn't believe it at first, but you'll jolly soon be convinced!"

"Rot!"

"I found it under the stones in the old chapel crypt," went on Manners. "It's been there for hundreds of years, and it tells all about a treasure that was hidden by the monks."

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye.

"Bai Jove, you know," he ejaculated, "this is wathah intwestin'! I always wondahed if there was a hidden treasure somewhere about. Those old monks were queah johnnies, an' there's no tellin' what they were up to."

"Let's have a look at that paper," said Blake practically.

"That's the idea!"

The Fourth-Formers pushed their way to Tom Merry's side, and the latter held up the old parchment so that it could be read. Then, with breathless interest, Blake & Co. perused the quaint document. When they had done, they looked at the Terrible Three with fast-rising excitement.

"I—I say!" exclaimed Blake. "Do—do you think it's genuine?"

"Of course it is!"

"But—but—"

"There are no 'buts' about it, my son," declared Tom Merry. "The whole thing's as plain as a pikestaff!"

"Plainer than that," said Monty Lowther. "It's jolly certain that those old monks wouldn't write a paper like that, and hide it up just for fun. Besides, it's just the sort of thing that might be expected, when you come to look at it in the right way. The monastery was threatened by soldiers.

Perhaps the King had intimidated that he was going to pinch all the tin, so the monks thought that they'd diddle him out of it."

"Lowther's right!" said Manners excitedly. "And after all the fuss was over, when it was no longer necessary for the gold to be hidden, the monk who'd written this paper was dead. So, of course, the treasure's still there. It must have been lying buried for centuries."

"The poor old monk must have been murdered," suggested Blake, drawing on his imagination. "That would explain why this parchment had been there all this time. In those days, you know, they used to commit all sorts of outrages. And they'd think nothing of raiding a monastery, and shooting everybody."

"Bai Jove, you know, that's w'ong!" put in Arthur Augustus. "They didn't do shootin' in those days, deah boys! I wathah imagine that they'd win them through with swords, or stwing them to the gallows!"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy!" said Blake.

"You needn't go into details!"

"I was only we-imaginin' the affiah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "Howevah, the main thing is that Mannahs has found the parchment. Bai Jove, I suggest we wash off like anythin' to the wuins, an' search for the tweasuah!"

"Now?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, not now," he said, recovering his calmness somewhat. "Look here, kids, there's no need for us to get excited. Nobody but us has seen this paper, so there's no terrific hurry to search the ruins."

"We haven't any giddy rivals, the same as they've got in stories," said Monty Lowther. "If this had been in a story, Redfern would have spotted the thing, and he and the rest of the New House bounders would have tried to steal a march on us. But Redfern didn't see it, did he?"

Manners shook his head.

"Of course he didn't!" he said.

"The silly chump buzzed off before Manners found the parchment," said Tom Merry. "Now, as nobody else knows, I vote we keep it a secret among ourselves, and then form an expedition."

"That's the word," said Blake heartily—"an expedition!"

"Sounds like the real thing!"

"Bai Jove, I should wathah say that a search-party would sound bettah!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "A search-party, you know, deah boys—"

"Search-party be jiggered!" interrupted Monty Lowther. "We're not looking for somebody who's lost! Still, it doesn't matter what you call it. It's a good idea, and I second it. We'll keep mum, and search for the treasure by daylight."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Pway let me inspect the parchment again, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus pored over the "ancient" key to the "treasure," and his chums followed his example. Blake & Co., in addition to the Terrible Three, were quite taken in by the parchment. Its unexpected discovery, its very genuine appearance, and its whole aspect of probability deceived the juniors completely. They never dreamed that it was nothing more nor less than a gorgeous jape on the part of their rivals of the New House.

"I say," exclaimed Digby suddenly, "suppose we rush off to the old crypt, and have a squint down that hole? There's a chance there might be something else."

Manners looked doubtful.

"I didn't look very thoroughly," he admitted; "but I don't think there's anything else there. Still, it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to go and make sure."

"All serene," said Tom Merry, "we'll go!"

And the juniors moved towards the door in a body. Their interest was thoroughly aroused, and this new suggestion of Digby's struck them all as being very practical. There was just a chance that the cavity in the crypt might contain something else, and it would be best to make sure.

So, excited and eager, they wrenched open the study door and simply poured into the passage, those behind pushing their chums headlong out.

There was a sudden yell, then a wild scuffle.

"Ow!" yelled a well-known voice. "Great Scott! You young rascals, I'll—"

"Cave!" hissed Blake, in a low voice.

In their hurry to leave the study, the juniors had biffed into Knox, the School House prefect, with considerable violence, causing Knox to flounder to the floor, and knock his head with a crash against the wall. The temper of Knox was very uncertain, as the juniors knew to their sorrow, and they all followed Blake's example without hesitation. The Terrible Three scrambled past their chums of the Fourth, and took to their heels, Blake & Co. following immediately behind.

"Come back, you young rascals!" roared Knox furiously. "Come back, or—"

But his voice fell on deaf ears. The juniors fled, and emerged into the dark quad, in a scattered group.

"My hat," panted Tom Merry, "that was a narrow escape! What the dickens did you chaps want to bowl Knox over for?"

"It was your fault for pushing!" growled Blake.

"I say, deah boys, hadn't we bettah huddy across to the cwypt?" suggested D'Arcy. "The quad is deserted now, and we shall not be ovahlooked. The chaps might think it funny if they saw all of us goin' into the chapel."

"Yes, we'll go across straight away—"

Tom Merry uttered an ejaculation.

"I—I say," he exclaimed, in a startled voice, "who's got the parchment?"

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:
**D'ARCY'S
DODGE.**

A New, Long Complete
School Tale of Tom
Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ORDER YOUR COPY
IN ADVANCE.
PRICE 1d.



Manners wrenched the door of Tom Merry's study, and waved the yellow parchment. "I've got it!" he shouted. "Look at this, you chaps!" (See Chapter 9.)

"You have, you ass!" said Blake.

"I haven't!" said Tom Merry quickly.

Nobody else had, and the juniors looked at one another in dismay. It was evident that it had been brushed out of Tom Merry's hand in the scuffle with Knox. In the excitement, Tom Merry had not noticed its disappearance.

CHAPTER 11.

Knox Makes Up His Mind.

"GREAT Scott!" ejaculated Manners blankly.

"The parchment's gone!"

"Tom Merry's lost it!"

"I—I had it in my hand!" exclaimed Tom Merry quickly.

"My hat, I believe I know when I dropped it! I pushed past Herries, and my hand caught his arm! The parchment must have slipped from my fingers!"

"You careless ass!" said Manners excitedly.

"I didn't do it on purpose!" said Tom Merry indignantly.

"It was Knox's fault, really. If he hadn't come along at that moment we shouldn't have biffed into him. I expect the parchment's in the passage."

"Go and fetch it then!" exclaimed Blake anxiously.

"If that's lost—"

"Somebody else will get the treasure—"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry crossly. "You chaps get into the crypt, and I'll buzz back and find the parchment!"

And the hero of the Shell, feeling greatly worried, hastened back into the School House.

The others crossed over to the ruined chapel, and, by the aid of Manners' lamp, made their way down into the crypt.

The New House combine was chuckling with glee.

"The jape's working simply a treat!" grinned Redfern.

"Rather!" agreed Figgins. "Tom Merry & Co. have told Blake and his lot, and they're all going down to the crypt to inspect the hiding-place of the parchment!"

"I shall faint," exclaimed Lawrence—"I know I shall! Oh, my hat, there's never been a jape played like this before! The School House will simply be fuming when Tom Merry & Co. find the 'treasure!'"

"Ha, ha, ha! They'll be the laughing-stock of St. Jim's!" chuckled Redfern. "Our plans are going splendidly, and, in my opinion, there won't be a single hitch!"

But, although the others agreed with him, Redfern was wrong. There had been a hitch already.

Tom Merry had dropped the parchment in the excitement of knocking Knox over, and he and his chums had dashed

off without knowing of their loss. Knox picked himself up with a black brow, and scowled round him furiously.

Not a sign of the juniors could be seen; they had conveniently vanished.

Knox was very unpopular at St. Jim's. His bullying tendencies, his bad temper, and his disagreeable spirit generally made him one of the most cordially disliked fellows in the school. He indulged in bullying whenever occasion offered, and gave the juniors lines with a heavy hand.

"The young brutes!" he muttered, as he glared down the passage. "They knocked me down on purpose! But I know who they were, and I'll—"

Knox paused, and his attention became riveted upon the floor.

"What on earth's that?" he muttered.

He bent down, and picked up the parchment which had been lying against the wall, and turned it over in his hand.

"Queer looking lot!" he muttered. "Those young rascals must have dropped it!"

He stuffed it into his pocket, and walked away to his own study. Arriving there he turned on the gas, and seated himself in a chair.

He pulled the parchment out of his pocket, and slowly turned it over in his hand, finally frowning at it in a puzzled manner.

"Hanged if I can make out what it is!" he murmured. "Seems to be an old piece of parchment, with some faded writing on it. I reckon it's—"

Knox paused as he began to take in the sense of the wording. He bent forward eagerly, reading the words aloud. At last, in some excitement, he rose to his feet and stepped across to the gas-jet, and stood beneath it scanning the parchment. At last he looked up, and in his eyes there was an expression of disbelief and amazement.

"It can't be right!" he muttered. "It must be some silly trick of the juniors!"

He looked at the parchment again, and noted the brown, faded writing.

"And yet it can't be," he told himself. "This thing wasn't written yesterday, I'll swear! By Jove, I wonder—"

Knox paused, and paced up and down his study.

"I wonder if it can be genuine?" he thought. "I can't make inquiries as to where it came from, because I should let the young beggars know I've got it! They must have dropped it when they bowled me over!"

Knox's excitement was growing, and he still continued to pace his study with short, nervous strides. At last he sat down in his chair, and bent over the parchment. For ten minutes he sat there, examining it closely, then he looked up.

"It's the real thing right enough," he said to himself. "There's no swank about it. Those kids must have found it somewhere. Perhaps Manners has been playing with his camera in the chapel crypt. Of course, that must be it! The writer of the parchment says he was going to hide it in the crypt. That explains why the kids were so excited, and why they dashed out of the study at such a rate. By George, I—I hardly know what I'd better do!"

Knox was perfectly aware that the parchment was not his, yet the thought that it would be the means, perhaps, of his finding a priceless treasure, caused him to become thoroughly excited.

"Why should I give it back to those Shell kids?" he thought. "After all, I found it in the passage. I don't know for certain whose it is, so I can't give it back to the owner."

A disagreeable grin passed across the Sixth-Former's face. "Hang it," he exclaimed aloud, "I'll keep it for myself! I found it, and I've got a perfect right to it! If those kids ask me anything about it, I'll say that I haven't seen it, and send them about their business. But I don't believe they will ask; they'll be too funky."

Knox did not possess many scruples, and he came to his decision after very little thought. To his mind there was nothing dishonourable in what he was going to do. He had found the parchment, and, therefore, it was his to do as he liked with.

Knox would have thrown the thing into the fire then and there, had he suspected its real nature. But he did not suspect it, and was as thoroughly "spoofed" as the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. had been.

"I'll study the thing thoroughly," he decided, "and then go over to the old castle ruins to-morrow before lessons, and search for the treasure. If I find it, I shall explain that I found the parchment, and that it's mine. Anyhow, I'm hanged if I'm going to take it to those juniors to play about with!"

And Knox turned to the table again, and re-read the document from beginning to end. He was very much excited, and forgot all else but the ancient parchment and its amazing message.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

CHAPTER 12.

Tracking the Parchment.

TOM MERRY glanced at his watch as he hurried down the steps of the School House into the quad.

"There's an hour before supper," he murmured. "Time to do a lot, if we hurry. Prep. can go to the dickens for to-night! With such a thing as hidden treasure on the board, we can't afford to think about prep!"

And the captain of the Shell crossed the quad, to the old chapel.

Tom Merry was feeling rather worried. He had searched the Shell passage, but had seen no sign of the parchment. He had also casually dropped into several studies, and into the common-room, but everybody seemed to be in their normal state, and no excitement prevailed. So Tom Merry took it for granted that the parchment had not been found by any of the juniors. He had asked one or two boys if they had seen a piece of paper lying in the passage, but nobody had any knowledge of it.

He descended into the old crypt with a worried look upon his face, and his chums crowded round him in the light of Manners' red lamp—the red slide being removed.

"Well," demanded Manners quickly, "have you got it?"

"Have you found the giddy parchment?"

"Yaas, wathah! Have you discovahed it, deah boy?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he replied shortly.

"No, you haven't got it?" exclaimed Blake blankly.

"No, you ass!"

"Then you're a silly cuckoo!" declared Manners excitedly.

"What the dickens do you mean by losing the thing, Tommy? You're a nice chap, I must say, to be trusted with the parchment!"

"You ought to have kept it yourself, Manners," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly, "you don't think I dropped the parchment on purpose, do you?"

"Well, it wasn't far off it!" growled Herries.

"What?"

"I say it wasn't far off it," repeated Herries obstinately. "You must be off your rocker, Tom Merry! How the dickens could you drop the parchment without knowing it? I've never heard of such a careless ass!"

"Look here, you cheeky Fourth-Form kid—"

Monty Lowther held up his hand.

"Peace, children!" he exclaimed. "A row won't do any good, will it?"

"Well, Tom Merry shouldn't—"

"Well, Herries shouldn't—"

"What's the good of rowing?" repeated Monty Lowther, with a shout. "The thing is to get the parchment back before any harm's done. I wouldn't mind betting Manners' camera that Knox had collared it. It's just the kind of thing he would do."

"That's what I think," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'm awfully sorry, you chaps, that the parchment's lost, but it wasn't my fault!"

"Oh, no, of course not!" said Herries sarcastically.

"Well, it wasn't! The blessed thing was jerked out of my hand. I vote we make Knox give it to us back!"

"That's all very well," said Jack Blake, "but I don't see how you're going to do it, my son! Knox is a prefect, and a beastly rotter at that! We can't go up to him and demand the thing. Besides, if we did, he'd give us lines all round for biffing him over!"

"Oh, hang the lines!" said Tom Merry, with a worried look. "What are a few lines compared with treasure? But it's my opinion that if Knox has got the thing he won't give it up. He's cad enough for anything!"

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle.

"Well, what's to be done, deah boys?" he asked. "I wathah think it would be a good ideah if I bearded the boundah in his den, as it were! It needs a fellow of tact and judgment for a job like that, and I am just the wight chap!"

"I don't know about being white," growled Monty Lowther, "you're green enough!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Yes, dry up, you punning rotter!" said Blake. "It wouldn't matter so much if you made decent puns! But I say, it's no good us standing here in a group talking. We shall never get the parchment that way."

"That's my idea," said Tom Merry. "We'd better get to work! I'm jolly certain that Knox has collared the parchment, so we must search his study!"

The others stared.

"Search his study?" repeated Blake, aghast.

"Yes!"

"But Knox is a prefect!" exclaimed Digby.

"And we should get into a fearful row if we were found out!" added Manners.

"But we shouldn't get found out, you chump," replied Tom Merry. "Are we going to stand by and see that rotter Knox collar our parchment? Are we going to let him get the hidden treasure for himself?"

"Wathah not, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Well, some of you chaps seem to be in favour of it," said the hero of the Shell. "In a matter like this we must take certain risks without hesitation! It's practically certain that Knox has pinched our parchment, and I therefore propose that we search his study on the quiet, and see if we can find it!"

"Good idea," said Manners. "Knox is a beastly rotter, and it would be just like him to keep the parchment to himself, just because he happened to pick it up. It's mine, and I'm blessed if I'm going to be diddled out of it. Why, the thing may be worth thousands of pounds! Think of it, chaps—thousands of pounds, and that cad has got it, and won't give it up!"

The juniors began to get excited again, and were all in favour of Tom Merry's suggestion to pay a visit to Knox's study.

"One moment, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "Don't you think it would be bettah to find the parchment, and then make a copy of it for our own use?"

"Why, Gussy?"

"Well, deah boy, in that way, Knox would not know that we had been, for he would still have the parchment, and we could take a wise out of him by awwivin' at the tweasuah gwound first!"

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"It's a good wheeze, Gussy," he admitted. "A jolly good wheeze. In fact, we could get up early to-morrow morning, and go over to the castle before breakfast. I suppose you chaps would be game?"

"Rather!"

"Of course!"

"We're game, Tom Merry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Then I vote that Manners and I leave the supper-table ten minutes before the usual time—we can easily give an excuse—and search Knox's study. You other chaps will be able to keep your eye on the Sixth-Form table, and see that he doesn't surprise us. When he does come, he'll find everything untouched, but we shall have made a copy of the parchment."

"Good egg!" said Blake. "That's a ripping fine idea, Tom Merry. Of course, Knox may not have the parchment at all, but I don't think there's much doubt."

"I don't think there's any doubt at all," said Tom Merry, looking round the old crypt. "By the way, did you find anything else in that hole?"

"No," said Manners, "nothing at all. We didn't expect to."

"Well, if we don't find the parchment again, it'll be rotten!" growled Jack Blake. "Why, it makes me go hot all over to think of it! I'm jolly certain there is a treasure, and if we're going to lose it—"

"We're not!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Don't be an ass, Blake. Knox is bound to have it—if some of the other fellows had collared it, I should have heard about it."

"You wouldn't have heard much about it, if Mellish or Levison had collared it," replied Blake. "They're rotters enough for anything."

"I know that," said Tom Merry, "but I got to know that both of the cads had been in the Fourth-Form common-room for over an hour, so they couldn't have had a hand in it. It's Knox, I tell you, and we'll do the bounder yet!"

And the treasure-hunters, all of them still thoroughly excited and eager, discussed the plan further. Finally, they all ascended to the chapel and passed out into the quad. Their ardour was a little damped by the sudden disappearance of the parchment, but all of them had high hopes of its being recovered before bed-time. They knew that it would be practically useless asking Knox for it if the prefect made up his mind not to give it up. So they had, therefore, decided upon the only likely course of action.

CHAPTER 13.

Redfern & Co. Make Inquiries.

"WE shall have to buck up, Manners, old man. If Knox comes along and finds us here, there'll be a fearful shindy!"

"Oh, we sha'n't be more than ten minutes, and I don't suppose Knox will come along yet," replied Manners. "I don't care for the job of searching another fellow's study as a rule, but this time I've got an idea that we're justified."

"We shall be justified if we find that Knox has got it,"

said Tom Merry. "While I look through these drawers, you search the bureau!"

But Manners did not have to do much searching. Before Tom Merry had been looking at the desk-drawers two minutes, he uttered a low exclamation.

"Here it is!" he murmured excitedly. "As large as life, and twice as natural! I knew the rotter had it!"

"The bounder!" ejaculated Manners. "I say, we'd better start making a copy."

"Rather!"

And for the next five minutes, there was nothing to be heard in the study save an occasional murmur, and the scratch of pen on paper.

"Done it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now, Knox, my beauty, we've got you on toast! If you think you're going to collar the treasure, you're jolly well mistaken. It's ours, and we're not going to be done out of it by a beastly bully!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Manners elatedly. "My hat, it was a ripping idea of yours to search this study! Just fancy Knox collaring the parchment and sticking to it. I say, he's a blessed burglar!"

"I expect he thinks he's a right to it, as he found it. Of course, he hasn't, really, but Knox is rotter enough for anything!"

"I don't care what he does now!" grinned Manners delightedly. "We've got a copy of the parchment, and we'll be on the scene before him! He'll never dream of this move, and think he's got plenty of time!"

And the two Shell fellows, very much elated, hurried out of Knox's study, and dashed off to the Fourth-Form passage, a copy of the parchment safely in Tom Merry's pocket. The juniors had just come from supper, and Blake & Co., and Monty Lowther, looked at their two chums rather anxiously.

"Have you got a copy?" asked Jack Blake quickly.

"Was the giddy parchment in Knox's study?"

"Was—"

"Yes it was!" grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "It's all right, kids, you needn't worry any more! We've got a copy of the parchment, and Knox will have to take a back seat! He'll never suspect that we've been to his study, and we shall be able to steal a march on him!"

"Hurrah! That's ripping!" exclaimed Blake, his spirits rising rapidly. "I'd begun to think that we should be diddled! That idea of yours, Tommy, was ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, deah boys, I feel all of a fluttah! If this tweasuah is a weally big one, I shall buy a motor-car with my share!"

"Why not go further, and have a giddy yacht, Gussy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "But I say, chaps, I'm blest if I know how I'm going to sleep to-night! There's no doubt about the parchment being genuine, and there's no telling how much gold there is buried at the old castle!"

"That's why I'm so jolly impatient!" said Manners. "Hanged if I don't feel like breaking bounds and going to the ruins now!"

"We all feel like that," said Tom Merry, "but it can't be done, my son! And, after all, there's no such hurry as that. Now that we've got a copy of the parchment we can all hurry off to the ruins, and be there long before Knox is up."

"Of course."

Reilly and Lorne, of the Fourth, came along the passage.

"Hallo, what's all the excitement about?" asked Lorne curiously. "You chaps look jolly pleased over something."

"Faith, perhaps somebody's left 'em a fortune!" grinned Reilly.

"Can't we look happy now?" asked Blake.

"Sure, ye're welcome to look happy," replied the Belfast junior, "but is it some jape against the New House?"

"Not this time, Reilly, old man," replied Tom Merry.

And to avoid further discussion, the juniors entered Study No. 6. But they did not stop there long. They were all excited to a degree, and too restless to sit down. So, at Blake's suggestion, they passed out into the quad, in a body to have a breath of fresh air before bed-time. Now that they had recovered—or as good as recovered—the parchment, they were all immensely enthusiastic about it. Even now, after having had time to think about the matter, the idea that the parchment was a New House jape never entered their minds.

"We shall have to be up early," said Manners thoughtfully. "I'll bet we sha'n't need an alarm-clock, either! We shall all be awake as soon as it's light!"

"If we tumble out just before seven—"

"Hallo, you chaps, holding an open-air meeting?"

Three forms loomed up out of the darkness. They were Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, of the New House, and they looked at their rivals with affected surprise.

"No," replied Tom Merry, "we're just talking about a wheeze which is going to make you New House bounders sing smaller than you've ever sung before!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DODGE!" A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Rather!" chuckled Jack Blake. Redfern & Co. grinned.

"Rats!" said Redfern. "I'll bet you won't take a rise out of us!"

"You wait, my son!" yelled Manners. "Ha, ha, ha! You wait! You and Figgins & Co. will go green with envy to-morrow!"

"Well, you've gone green without any envy," said Owen blandly.

Manners turned red.

"Fathead!" he said warmly.

"But what's the excitement?" asked Lawrence innocently.

"Blessed if you chaps don't appear to be off your heads about something!"

"There's something important on," said Redfern wisely.

"There is—jolly important," said Tom Merry. "But we're not going to tell you fellows yet. You'll know all in good time, if you are good little boys."

Redfern & Co. linked arms.

"Oh, we're not curious," said Redfern loftily. "Keep your old secret!"

"Good-night!" said Owen sweetly.

"Good-night."

Redfern & Co. crossed the quad. to the New House, leaving their School House rivals chuckling. But as soon as Redfern & Co. entered their own House they doubled themselves up and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my only chapeau!" moaned Lawrence. "I shall bust my giddy sides!"

"It's too funny for words!"

"It's gorgeous!"

"Those fatheads are taken in completely!" chuckled Redfern gleefully. "The jape's working a treat, kids! Tom Merry & Co. are simply off their rockers with excitement!"

"I—I say," gasped Owen, "let's go and tell old Figgy!"

"Come on!"

They passed upstairs, still holding their sides, and entered Figgins & Co.'s study. For a moment they stood in the room gasping. Figgins rose to his feet in alarm.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "What's up? Are you chaps ill?"

"Been eating poison?" asked Kerr anxiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Redfern.

"We're—we're laughing!" gasped Lawrence.

"Oh, I thought you were pegging out!" said Figgins.

"What's the grin about? What are you chaps laughing like hyenas for—at this time of night, too?"

Redfern wiped his eyes.

"We've just seen those School House kids!"

"They're in the quad," explained Owen.

Figgins & Co. grinned a grin of understanding.

"Well?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"They're dotty with excitement!" said Redfern. "The secret hasn't got beyond the Terrible Three and Blake & Co., but they're simply red in the face with excitement. My hat, it's screaming!"

"It's the jape of the term!" chuckled Kerr.

"I expect the silly asses will rush off to the castle ruins immediately after lessons to-morrow," said Figgins. "We must keep a strict watch—"

"Half a tick!" interrupted Owen.

"What's up?"

"Why," said Owen, "didn't we hear Manners saying something about getting up early, Reddy? We just caught a word or two as we strolled up."

"My hat, that's right!" said Redfern excitedly. "Owen, you're a wonder! Manners mentioned an alarm clock, and then Blake chimed in with a remark that they would have to tumble out at seven! It hadn't struck me before!"

"They're going to get up early," said Figgins.

"Before rising-bell."

"So that they can rush off to the ruins and dig for the giddy treasure!" yelled Lawrence. "Ha, ha, ha! It's too funny for words!"

The juniors burst into a roar.

"They're as enthusiastic as—as old Manners with his camera!" chuckled Figgins. "Chaps, this jape's worked out in first-class style, and we shall have the School House absolutely on toast! My only Sunday topper, it's simply grand!"

"They think they're going to make us sing small, while all the time they're running their heads into the giddy noose!" said Lawrence. "I say, I wouldn't miss seeing them dig for the treasure for worlds!"

The Three Champions



New Series of SPORTING Yarns


The sporting stories of the century! If you have the slightest interest in sport start this great new series dealing with every kind of athleticism.

Nothing like them has ever been written before!

Based upon an exceedingly novel plot "The Three Champions" will appeal to every sports-lover. Read about them TO-DAY in the "Sports Library," the only halfpenny sporting fiction paper.

THE SPORTS LIBRARY $\frac{1}{2}$ d

JUST STARTING! A TALE OF - - THRILLING ADVENTURE IN THE - - ANTARCTIC. - -



THE LOST EXPLORER
AN ENTHRALLING NEW SERIAL STORY OF A DASH TO THE SOUTH POLE
BY MAXWELL SCOTT.

No one should miss this tribute to the pluck and spirit of adventure that has made the British Empire the greatest in the world.

GET TO-DAY A COPY OF

The "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^d.
NOW ON SALE EVERYWHERE.

"No fear!"
 "We'll go," said Figgins firmly. "We'll get up early on purpose, and follow the bounders. I suppose you chaps are game?"

"Rather!"

"I should say so!"

"My hat, yes, Figgy!"

"We'll all get up at seven," went on Figgins decidedly, and with a twinkle in his eyes. "We'll— But there goes the clock—time for us to go to bed."

"We sha'n't need any waking to-morrow morning," chuckled Redfern. "I hope it'll be fine, you chaps. When Tom Merry & Co. return after finding the 'treasure' they'll be the laughing-stock of the whole school, from the First to the Sixth! They'll feel like burying their diminished heads until the laugh's over."

"Then they'll have to bury 'em for a long time!" grinned Figgins. "The laugh'll last for weeks, once it's started."

"Well, it's started now," said Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New House juniors burst into a roar, and didn't stop chuckling until they fell asleep in their beds.

CHAPTER 14.

The Treasure Hunters Set Out.

KNOX the prefect sat in his study after the juniors had gone to bed. Before him on the table was the piece of ancient parchment which was causing so much excitement. Knox was reading it word for word, and in his eyes there was a look of great excitement.

"It's great!" he murmured. "The thing's as genuine as I am. Just before bedtime all those kids were collected in the quad, discussing the loss of this parchment. I can see as plain as anything that they were excited."

Knox rose to his feet and paced the room.

"I'll bet a quid the little idiots never guessed that I've got it!" he said to himself with a chuckle. "They think they've lost it in the quad, or about the grounds. Well, I found it, so I'm going to stick to it."

Had Knox been less excited, and less enamoured with the prospect of finding the treasure, he would have had a suspicion that all was not right. He would have realised that the thing was so utterly improbable as to be well-nigh impossible.

But Kerr had done his work so thoroughly that Knox was entirely deceived. The thought that the thing was a jape never entered his mind.

On his desk were several old books—books relating to the monks who had lived in the monastery hundreds of years before. For a considerable time Knox had been poring over them, filling his mind with an atmosphere which made him forget all everyday matters. He could think of nothing else but monks, and old castles, and hidden treasure. The genuineness of the thing had so taken hold of him that had he been told it was all a jape he would still have gone to the ruins and searched at the spot mentioned in the parchment.

For Kerr, in his thorough manner, had mapped out the exact spot where the treasure was supposed to lie. The Scottish junior had even gone so far as to make a small plan, showing quite distinctly the place at the ruins where the treasure was hidden. The plan was not elaborate—merely a small drawing at one of the bottom corners of the parchment.

Knox picked the latter up, and stood regarding the closely-written, crabbéd handwriting.

"And to think this was written hundreds of years ago!" he murmured. "Why, anybody with half an eye could see it was!"

He read over the faded characters.

"The wording of this parchment, although speedily written, owing to necessary haste, is of very great significance," Knox read out. "I, Jasper Townshend, a monk of this noble monastery, am penning these brief words in order to set down certain facts which are necessary to the finding of untold wealth. Indeed, I am in sore fear that the soldiers of His Majesty will swoop down upon us, like the vultures they are. Therefore, before it is too late, I am setting down knowledge of the gold and silver which I and my worthy colleagues have placed safely in the grounds of the castle—which is, indeed, but a short distance from here—lest it be wrested from us. The money—a vast hoard—is contained in an oaken chest, and it represents the savings of years. In faith, it is indeed a goodly sum. I verily envy the finder of this scrap of paper, which I am concealing beneath the floor of the chapel crypt. A rough plan below will guide the finder of this paper to the spot where I have hidden the treasure. If he follows the directions closely it is impossible to go wrong. I need write no more."

Knox stared at the paper, after he had finished perusing it, with gleaming eyes, and glanced at the rough plan below. He could recognise the ruins immediately, for Kerr had done

his work cleverly. Had Knox been calm he might have wondered why the monk did not conceal his treasure beneath the floor of the crypt, but that was only a detail.

"It's genuine enough," he told himself for the twentieth time. "Great Scott, there's no telling how much money there is in the oaken chest! Those old monastery johnnies used to have pots of money hidden away!"

Knox pored over the parchment and the old books, and at last stowed the former in his pocket, and turned the gas out.

"I'll get up early, and go before breakfast," he told himself excitedly. "I've got a jolly good alarum clock, and I'll be up before anybody else. When I come back to breakfast I may be a second Rockefeller!"

And Knox, full of his dreams, went up to bed.

Soon St. Jim's was all asleep.

The morning dawned clear and fine—a beautiful spring dawn. Long before the rising-bell was due to ring, Jack Blake of the Fourth hopped out of bed. The sun, already risen, was shining slantwise over the landscape, making everything look fresh and beautiful.

"Ripping morning!" murmured Blake. "My hat, we'd better get up and rout those Shell bounders out!"

And Blake turned from the window, and bent over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bed.

"Wake up, Gussy!" he whispered.

D'Arcy sat up, blinking.

"Bai Jove, Blake, I was only dozin'!" he exclaimed. "Is it time to get up, deah boy?"

"Of course it is, chump!"

"Weally, Blake—"

But Blake was rousing the others, and D'Arcy hopped nimbly out of bed and commenced dressing. In less than five minutes the juniors were ready—with the exception of Arthur Augustus.

"Ain't you ready, Gussy?" asked Herries impatiently.

"Bai Jove, I have been scarcely no time, deah boys!" protested D'Arcy. "Pwaw allow me anothah ten minutes to conclude my dwessin'. I have only to—"

"You've only to bung on your jacket and come with us!" said Blake firmly. "No fancy dressing this morning, Gussy."

"I uttahly wefuse to come immediately," said Arthur Augustus. "I have to dwess carefully, deah boys, or—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus, much against his will, was forced to leave the dormitory before he had dressed to his satisfaction. But he was consoled by the remembrance that he could finish his toilet after the return from the castle.

Blake & Co. hurried along to the Shell dormitory, and they were just going to enter when the door opened, and the Terrible Three emerged.

"Oh, you're up!" said Blake in surprise.

"Of course we're up, ass!" replied Tom Merry. "We were just going to rout you chaps out."

"Well, we've routed ourselves out, thanks!" grinned Blake. "Come on, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The little crowd of juniors descended the stairs, and quietly unbolted the outer door. In a few moments they were crossing the quad. Taggles, the school porter, was already about, and the gates were unlocked.

Just as the juniors were passing out of the gate the door of the lodge opened, and Taggles stood in the portal, gazing at the juniors in surprise.

"My heye!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, Taggy!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Nice morning!"

"My heye!" repeated Taggles. "If you young ribs ain't hup!"

"Go hon!" said Blake. "We're not up, Taggy—we're down."

"Nice goings hon!" said Taggles. "Seems to me the 'ole school's a-gettin' up hearily!"

"No, not all the school, Taggy," said Monty Lowther; "only the most important members of it."

"Young rip!" growled Taggles.

The juniors passed out of the gates chuckling. They were intensely eager to get to the ruins, and as they walked Tom Merry carefully examined his copy of the plan, and memorised the directions beneath it. Suddenly Herries came to a stop.

"We've forgotten something," he said.

"Forgotten something?"

"Yes, we ought to have brought Towser along," said Herries blankly. "My bulldog would have sniffed out the treasure in no time! I—"

But Herries' voice was howled down.

"Blow your bulldog!" growled Tom Merry. "He ought to be drowned."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly. "As a wule I don't believe in puttin' animals to death, but Hewwies' bulldog is wathah above the limit, you know! I entirely agwee with Tom Mewwy."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DODGE!" A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Look here——" began Herries.

"Towser's not coming!" roared Blake.

So the party proceeded without the pleasure of Towser's company. They soon forgot about the matter, Herries included, and hastened on to the ruins with eager footsteps and expectant hopes.

So eager were they, in fact, that they proceeded on their way without once glancing behind. Had they done so they might possibly have caught sight of several lurking forms, like shadows, following them.

Tom Merry & Co. were unaware of the fact, but the rival Co.'s of the New House were hot on their track. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. had carried out their plan, and they tracked their School House rivals to the ruins with many chuckles and grins. As Figgins described it, they were grins that wouldn't come off!

CHAPTER 15. Hidden Treasure.

"My hat, don't the ruins look fine!"

Blake uttered the words. The juniors were crossing the meadows to the ruins, and they were now within half a mile of their destination. The old castle stood out magnificently in the morning sunlight, its old walls, covered with clinging ivy, looking picturesque in the extreme.

But the other juniors were too intent upon their object to take any notice of the beauty of the scene. They proceeded on their way excitedly. Manners, who had been looking ahead with eager eyes, suddenly came to a halt with a surprised ejaculation.

"My only Aunt Josephine!" he ejaculated blankly.

"Well, what about her?" asked Monty Lowther.

"You ass!" exclaimed Manners excitedly. "This isn't a time to rot! There's—there's somebody at the ruins! I just saw him moving!"

"What?"

"Eh?"

"Somebody there!"

"Yes!" said Manners, in dismay. "I tell you I saw him moving!"

One name flashed through all the juniors' minds.

"Knox!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"That's who it is—Knox!"

"He's there before us!"

"He's forestalled us!"

"Bai Jove, this is wotten!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, deah boys, that fwithful boundah has played the same game as us. He's come heah to awvive at the scene of action first. He will collah the tweasuah!"

"My hat, he won't!" yelled Manners. "It's ours! I found the giddy parchment, and I——"

"What's the good of talking here?" interrupted Tom Merry briskly. "The best thing we can do is to hurry to the ruins and see if it really is Knox. It may not be him, after all."

"There's not much doubt about it," said Blake.

"No, but there's a chance," replied the captain of the Shell, "and I vote we steal up without letting him know. Then, if it is him, we can watch him dig the treasure out, and pounce on it afterwards."

"Let him do all the work, you mean?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"That's the idea!"

"Good!"

And the juniors, feeling more excited than ever, hurried forward, now proceeding with great caution. At last they arrived at the old ruined wall of the castle.

"We shall have to go easy," whispered Tom Merry. "The hiding-place of the treasure is just against the north wall, and we can see it if we dodge round these old heaps of stone. I'll go and have a peep first, and if Knox is there you can all come up and watch proceedings."

Tom Merry crept forward among the old stones, and cautiously pushed his head round a jutting piece of masonry. Then he caught his breath in quickly.

For, at exactly the spot marked on the treasure-chart, Knox the prefect was digging away at the loose stones with considerable energy.

"It is Knox!" murmured Tom Merry, turning his head to the others. "Come on, chaps, there's plenty of room for all of you round about these stones."

Two minutes later the School House juniors were all crouching against various chunks of masonry, only their heads showing from Knox's side. And the prefect was too preoccupied to glance up. Even had he done so, it is doubtful whether he would have seen the heads.

Tom Merry & Co. were intent upon their task, and were too interested to think of anything else. And behind them six forms cautiously made their way across the open space to the other side of the ruins.

The New House juniors were soon ensconced in a position.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

equally as good at Tom Merry & Co.'s, and they looked upon Knox with wide open eyes.

"My—my only hat!" gasped Redfern. "That explains why they're all lying down looking on. It's Knox, the giddy School House prefect—the worst Sixth-Former at St. Jim's!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Figgins blankly. "Then—then our giddy jape's miscarried!"

"Has it!" chuckled Kerr. "I think it's going better, my bucks! Fancy Knox, a prefect, falling into the giddy trap! Why, it's—it's gorgeous! We shall have the laugh on the School House right through!"

"By Jove, yes!" agreed Figgins, with a grin of understanding. "But I wonder how the dickens Knox came to get hold of the parchment? He's got it in his hand!"

"Blessed if I know!" exclaimed Redfern. "But he has got it, and Tom Merry & Co. are flabbergasted about it, too. That's what they were pointing at a little while ago."

Tom Merry & Co. were indeed dismayed, and they crouched behind the old ruins watching Knox with growing anger and anxiety.

The situation was a curious one in the extreme.

Knox was under the impression that he had the ruins to himself, while Tom Merry & Co. thought that they were the only watchers. The perpetrators of the jape were looking on with grinning faces. The others, however, under the impression that the parchment was genuine, did not feel like grinning.

"I say, you know, this is wotten!" declared Arthur Augustus. "If Knox weally unearths the tweasuah he will vewy likely claim it all for himself!"

"If he does, we'll jolly soon make an alteration," said Tom Merry grimly. "Come to think of it, it would be best for us to reveal ourselves now, and ask him what the dickens he means. I——"

"Look there!" exclaimed Digby suddenly.

His tone caused the others to rivet their attention on Knox again. The prefect was bending over the hole he had dug, and the juniors could see that he was very much excited.

The spot where the "treasure" was hidden was one which the New House juniors had carefully selected. The ground was composed of loose pebbles, which penetrated downwards for several feet. Therefore, when Knox had commenced digging, there was no indication that the spot had been recently disturbed. At the time when the parchment had been made out, two of the perpetrators had hurried off to the ruins to select the spot, so that there would be no mistake.

Knox had dug for a considerable depth, and the loose stones were piled about him. Had he been less eager he would have realised that a place such as that would be very exposed for a treasure to be hidden.

Now he bent over the hole, and laboriously lifted out a square, heavy oak box—an old chest which Figgins & Co. had routed out from the New House box-room. It certainly looked ancient enough, and Knox's eyes gleamed triumphantly.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed aloud. "It's true! The parchment was right! I've found the treasure, and by the appearance of this box it looks like a valuable one!"

With feverish haste and shaking hands Knox inserted the edge of his spade under the box-lid, and wrenched it open. The lid gave a creak, and finally flew back.

"Now for the rumpus!" giggled Redfern to his chums.

Knox gazed into the box with expectant and eager eyes. Then, with startling abruptness, all the colour fled from his cheeks, and he started back with a loud exclamation.

"Good heavens!" he shouted.

Blankly, scarcely realising the truth, he bent over the chest. It was half full of loose stones, while on the top of them a small book rested. It was a well-thumbed volume, entitled "The Fretworker's Treasure," and its cover was decorated with gaudy gold and silver lining.

Knox picked it up dazedly, and gazed at a piece of paper which was stuck on the back cover. It simply bore the words: "The Treasure! The gold and silver will be found on the front cover." The words were written in the same handwriting as the parchment, and with the same faded ink.

Knox staggered back as though struck, and his brow grew black as thunder.

"It's a jape!" he gasped, his fury rising rapidly. "It's a jape! Great Scott, those young sweeps left the parchment in the passage on purpose—on purpose for me to pick up!"

Tom Merry & Co. were gazing at Knox with amazed and startled faces. They, too, could not realise that the whole thing was a jape. Yet there was obviously something wrong, for the prefect's face was a study of rage, disappointment, and chagrin. Suddenly he moved, and the box, half on its side, was revealed to the juniors. They could see that it contained nothing but stones!

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus aloud, starting to his feet. "Bai Jove, Knox has found the tweasuah, deah boys!"

Knox turned quickly, and his angry looks intensified. The

next moment he came striding across to the juniors, and was upon them before they could make their escape.

"You—you young humbugs!" roared Knox, black in the face with fury.

"Here, I say," began Tom Merry wrathfully.

"What do you mean by daring to jape a prefect?" roared Knox, with an angry scowl. "Great Scott, you shall pay for this!"

"J-j-jape you!" gasped Manners.

"W-w-what d-do you mean, Knox?" panted Blake in dismay. The juniors were too flabbergasted to attend to the prefect's questions. They, themselves, could scarcely realise that the parchment was nothing more nor less than a gigantic jape.

"What do I mean?" shouted Knox. "I mean that I'm going to report you to Mr. Railton, and that I'm going to have you flogged! Good heavens, I—I—"

Words failed the enraged prefect, and forgetting himself in his fury he hurled himself at Tom Merry, who was foremost. Before the captain of the Shell could realise it, he was flung violently to the ground, and Knox stood glowering round him almost unconscious of his action. But the juniors forgot their dismay in a moment. They sprang forward in a body.

"You rotten bully!" roared Blake.

"What?"

"You cowardly bully!" shouted Blake in ringing tones. And, before the others could stop him, he hurled himself at Knox, and punched the prefect violently upon the nose. At St. Jim's, it was against all rules to strike a prefect, and Blake started back, dismayed at his own action. Blood was streaming from Knox's nose.

But the blow had calmed him, and his face was now pale and set.

"All right!" he muttered thickly. "You shall pay for this, you young hounds! You're all in it, and you'll all be severely punished!"

And Knox, realising that if he stayed he might let himself go, pushed roughly through the juniors, and strode off towards St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 16.

Tom Merry & Co. Catch It.

TOM MERRY looked round him with a rather sickly expression.

"I—I'm dashed if I know what to say!" he exclaimed. "It's a jape, kids—a gigantic jape of those New House rotters! My hat, they'll grin over this for weeks!"

"It was all Manners' fault!" said Blake, anxious to clear himself.

"My fault!" roared Manners indignantly.

"Yes, you found the parchment!"

"Well, how was I to know it was a giddy fake thing?" shouted Manners wrathfully. "Now I come to look at it, we were all a set of mugs to be taken in! Of course, Redfern dropped my knife down that chink on purpose!"

"Of course he did!" said Tom Merry. "The whole thing's a plot—carefully arranged and carried out to the smallest detail! On the quiet, chaps, it was a jolly fine wheeze, and we can't deny it! We were spoofed completely, and I don't mind owning that Figgins & Co. have scored!"

"Well, it's rotten!" growled Blake dismally.

"Horrible!" agreed Manners.

"Diabolical!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Suppose we go and look at the 'oaken chest,'" said Tom Merry. "After all, kids, the jape wasn't against us really. Knox stepped in and saved us in the nick of time."

Blake grinned in spite of himself.

"So he did," he said. "My hat, wasn't he wild! It just served him right for sticking to the parchment. The jape's compensated for by old Knox falling into the trap!"

And the School House juniors, feeling a little more cheerful, slowly walked across to the spot where Knox had been labouring. But they were very silent. Even now they felt a little dazed, as though unable to realise the awful truth.

Tom Merry grinned as he looked at the "treasure."

"They did it jolly well, you know," he said. "There's a treasure here, right enough. But not the sort we expected. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that?" ejaculated Blake, startled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody laughin' deah boys!" said D'Arcy.

"Found the treasure?" yelled a voice, full of merriment

"You're giddy millionaires now!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at one of the old walls with their wrath rapidly rising. Over the top of the wall six faces were visible, and upon each face a grin of delight could be

seen. The New House combine was immensely enjoying itself!

"You awful spoofers!" yelled Manners.

"You swankers!"

"Bounders!"

"Diddlers!"

"New House wasters!"

"Go on!" yelled Figgins encouragingly. "We like being called those names, you know. Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"New House!" roared his chums.

"Rats!" howled Manners wrathfully. "School House for ever! If you bounders come down here, we'll shove you in this hole and bury you!"

"Not this morning!" said Redfern sweetly. "It's nearly brekker time, children, and the morning air has made us hungry. Good-bye! Hope you have a nice time with old Knox. We didn't mean him to be japed, but accidents will happen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be a different kind of accident happen in a minute!" said Tom Merry significantly. "We'll get our own back, Figgy!"

But the New House juniors only roared with laughter, and joining arm-in-arm, they strolled away chuckling and hugging one another. Fatty Wynn was walking unusually fast, for a change—perhaps because he knew that breakfast was waiting for him upon his arrival at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at one another with grim looks. "Well, we're done!" said Tom Merry. "We're diddled, kids!"

"Dished and spoofed!"

"Done as brown as a berry!"

"Well, it's only the ups and downs of war," said Jack Blake philosophically. "The luck has turned against us this time, but we'll soon get our own back!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Those New House boundahs will cwow like anythin'."

"The whole school will crow—that's the worst of it!" growled Manners.

And, in a dejected group, the School House juniors wended their way back to the school, enraged with themselves for having fallen so easily into the New House trap. They did not attempt to disguise from themselves the fact that they had been utterly and completely beaten.

When they arrived at Rylcombe Lane, they looked ahead at the gates rather apprehensively. And their fears were justified. For at the gates, nearly the whole of the New House juniors were gathered, waiting to welcome them!

Figgins & Co. had hurried back in order to acquaint the fellows with the news.

Tom Merry & Co. passed in the gateway with crimson faces.

"Who's cock-house now?" yelled Pratt defiantly.

"New House!" came a roar.

"Who was completely spoofed?"

"School House!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry, glaring round. "You chaps can grin—"

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "Much obliged to you for giving us permission!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling fatheads!" said Manners, loftily. "What was your old jape, anyhow? If I couldn't think of a better one than that, I'd bury my head!"

"That's what you'd better do now," chuckled Redfern. "I should think you all ought to bury your heads after being shown up!"

"Shown up!" roared Blake.

"Yes, shown up, my sons!" replied Redfern. "You're all shown up as the representatives of the least important House at St. Jim's! New House is cock-house, and if you get too fresh again, we shall have to—"

"Salt the beggars!" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the juniors were in the very best of spirits—all the New House juniors, that is! A small crowd standing on the School House steps looked at their returning comrades with cold looks.

"You're a nice leader," growled Bernard Glyn.

"Properly messed things up, haven't you?" said Kangaroo, the Cornstalk. "My hat, Tom Merry, the New House have hit us one this time!"

"Faith, an' ye're right, Glyn darlin'!"

"That's what comes of having a rotten leader like Tom Merry," sneered Levison, of the Fourth.

"Rather!" said Mellish. "The rotters ought to be kicked off their perch! They're played out—"

"Dry up, you cad!" interrupted Lumley-Lumley warmly.

"Tom Merry & Co. are all right! We can't expect to win every time. Besides, it's rather a change for the New

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

House to get the better of us—and a change is good for everyone!"

"Well, that's not a bad way of looking at it!" said Tom Merry with a smile. "Hallo, there goes the breakfast-bell!"

Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three rushed up the dormitories to complete their unfinished toilets, and when they appeared in the dining-hall, a low murmur of laughter ran through the big room from end to end. But Tom Merry & Co. were getting accustomed to the laughter by now, and they merely grinned in response.

After breakfast, Kildare, the popular captain of St. Jim's, put his head into Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

"Hallo, Kildare?" said Tom Merry cheerily. "How are you going?"

"You young rascal," said Kildare, sternly. "What have you been up to? Mr. Railton wants you at once in his study. I've already told Blake and his chums to go there!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Manners. "Cut along," said Kildare sharply. "You'd better not keep Mr. Railton waiting, you know."

The captain of St. Jim's withdrew, and the Terrible Three looked at one another grimly.

"Well, this is a nice thing!" said Monty Lowther. "I say, what a cad Knox is!"

"He's an outsider," said Tom Merry. "But I suppose we'd better go."

"No help for it," said Manners. And the Terrible Three left their study and made their way to Mr. Railton's room. The Housemaster of the School House was there, and before him Blake & Co. were lined up, all of them looking as though butter would not melt in their mouths. Apparently, they were exceedingly surprised to find themselves there, and were racking their brains to find an adequate reason.

But Mr. Railton was very stern. "Knox has told me of a very disgraceful affair!" he exclaimed. "I do not interfere with juniors as long as they keep their jokes to themselves, but I cannot allow you to play practical jokes upon prefects."

"But, sir—" protested Tom Merry. Mr. Railton held up his hand.

"It is useless making excuses, Merry," he said severely. "Knox has informed me that a joke has been played upon him connected with an imaginary treasure, hidden in the castle ruins. This sort of thing will not do, my boys—I cannot allow you to play tricks with a prefect in such a manner. In addition—and this makes your offence very serious—you set upon Knox when he discovered the trick, and treated him with gross disrespect and violence!"

"We didn't, sir!" protested Blake. "Did you touch him at all, Blake?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Blake reluctantly. "I—I punched his beastly nose!"

Mr. Railton's brow grew stern. "You admit that, Blake, and then try to make excuses," he said coldly. "Let me tell you all that I am very much surprised at your action. As a rule, you are well-behaved; but on this occasion you have evidently forgotten yourselves. To play such a joke upon a prefect, and afterwards assault him, is a serious offence. You will all be punished alike, and I shall make it very severe, in order that you may realise the seriousness of your offence. Every boy in this room is forbidden to leave the school grounds for a fortnight!"

"Gated for a fortnight!" ejaculated Tom Merry blankly. "Yes, Merry," said Mr. Railton sternly. "And I hope you will realise in that time that you have acted very wrongly. You may all go."

"Thank you, sir!" The juniors filed out of the room, their thoughts very bitter against Knox. The disagreeable prefect had evidently told Mr. Railton a whole string of lies—or had twisted the facts so that they were as good as lies—and the Housemaster had accordingly punished them very severely.

"It's rotten!" said Blake bluntly, as they paused in the passage. "We couldn't say anything to excuse ourselves, because it would have come out then that it was Figgins & Co.'s jape, and we don't want to get those bounders into a row."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry. "Old Railton's a brick, as a rule, but this time he's cut up rusty."

"Which is proof that Knox has been telling whoppers," said Monty Lowther. "Of course, Knox thinks we japed him on purpose, and that makes it worse. We—we can't do anything."

"Gated for a fortnight!" groaned Manners. "How rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agwee with you, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy wotten indeed!"

"We're helpless," said Blake. "Can't do a thing."

"Can't we, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "We can't sneak, of course; but there is nothin' to prevent

us goin' acwoss to the New House, and waggin' Figgins & Co. That would weleave our feelin's a bit."

"Good egg, Gussy! We'll bunk over directly after dinner!" said Tom Merry, brightening up. "Even if we're gated, we'll make things jolly warm for Figgins & Co., for daring to get us into such a hole as this."

CHAPTER 17.

Figgins & Co. Explain.

MORNING lessons were rather gloomy from Tom Merry & Co.'s point of view. Their thoughts were continually wandering, and by the time the bell for dismissal rang, lines had been showered liberally upon the unfortunate juniors.

"It seems to me we've caught it both ways," said Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three met Blake & Co. in the passage. "We've been successfully japed by Figgins & Co., and, to finish off, we're gated for a fortnight because of it—because Knox was cad enough to pinch the parchment, and stick to it himself. I feel jolly indignant!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "Suppose we go ova to the New House, deah boy, and waise a dust?"

"How about your trousers, Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"In a mattah of this sort, Lowthah, my twousahs are of secondawny importance," replied Arthur Augustus. "I am quite willin' to wisk gettin' them wumped. Figgins & Co. need bumpin', deah boys!"

"They do," agreed Tom Merry. "They've let us in for all this trouble, and we're not going to let them off scot-free!"

"Rather not!"

And the seven juniors, gazing indignantly, sallied out into the quad, and marched across to the New House. They were just going to enter, regardless of the consequence to themselves, when Blake suddenly paused.

"I say," he exclaimed quickly, "Figgins & Co. are round by the gym! Suppose we buzz round there, and put them to the torture? We can find Redfern & Co. afterwards."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And they hastened across the quad, with all speed. As Blake & Co. had said, Figgins, Fatty Wynn, and Kerr were round by the gymnasium. When the School House juniors came up, in fact, their deadly rivals were already in the building.

"We've got them fair and square!" said Manners quickly. "The silly asses ought to have kept out of the quad, where they could call for assistance. We can go in there now, and simply pulverise them!"

And the juniors, excited and indignant, pushed open the doors of the gymnasium, and burst in.

A sudden cry arose: "Look out! School House rotters!" yelled Figgins suddenly.

"School House avengers, you mean!" exclaimed Tom Merry, dashing across the floor of the gym. "We've come to avenge our wrongs, Figgy, and we're going to put you through your paces!"

Fatty Wynn raised his voice: "Rescue!" he roared. "Rescue, New House!"

"Collar him!" panted Blake.

Fatty Wynn was seized before he could cry out again, and the next moment Figgins & Co. were in reclining positions on the floor, with their deadly rivals piled on the top of them.

"Here, I say," exclaimed Figgins, "what's this for, you asses?"

"We're going to rag you, my sons!" said Tom Merry grimly. "You've let us in for no end of trouble, and the only thing we can do is to give you a sound ragging to wipe out the insult!"

"But, you silly asses," gasped Kerr, "you don't mean to say you're going to rag us because we japed you?"

"I do mean to say it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're wild, and the only thing we can do is to vent our anger on you! You needn't worry, we sha'n't break any bones!"

"But—but," spluttered Fatty Wynn, "I'm blest if I can see why you should be so wild, you chaps! After all, the laugh wasn't so much against you, as it was against Knox."

"Perhaps not," replied Blake grimly; "but you were the perpetrators of the jape, and through it we've got gated!"

"Gated!" repeated Figgins. "Gated for two weeks!" growled Manners.

Figgins struggled to sit up. "My hat," he exclaimed, with concern, "that's rotten!"

"It's fearful!" said Digby. "But why are you gated?" asked Kerr. "The master's don't interfere with our japes, as a rule."

"It's through that cad, Knox!" Tom Merry said; and he proceeded to explain how the circumstances had come about.

Figgins & Co. listened concernedly. Their interest was so genuine that the three New House leaders found themselves released, and they straightened out their ruffled clothing without attempting to be cross with their assailants.

"So Knox collared the parchment, thinking it was genuine?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"The—the giddy thief—the burglar!" gasped Figgins. "Why, it's unheard of! And fancy him having the utter sauce to go to Mr. Railton!"

"But you've forgotten one thing," put in Blake. "Knox thought that we japed him—that we left the parchment there especially for his benefit. Of course, it doesn't alter the fact that he's a burglar; but it made him wild!"

"Well, I know what I shall do," said Figgins.

"And what's that?"

"Go straight to Mr. Railton," replied the long-legged chief.

"What do you say, chaps?"

"Rather!" agreed Kerr and Wynn in one voice.

"We may get ourselves into trouble," went on Figgins; "but we're not going to stand by and see you chaps gated for nothing! We're the perpetrators of the jape, so we shall have to pay the piper!"

"It's jolly good of you, Figgy!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Figgins hastily. "Why, we should be nice sort chaps if we saw you gated, and didn't do anything! Come on, we'll rout out Redfern & Co., and take them with us!"

And Figgins & Co., now on good terms with their rivals, hurried out of the gym. into the quad. The New House juniors were thorough sportsmen, and determined that their rivals should not suffer for a jape which had been all against them. Knox's caddishness and misrepresentation of facts to Mr. Railton—for the prefect had evidently made the most of Blake's blow—should not end in Tom Merry & Co. being the sufferers.

"Hallo, Figgy, what on earth are you doing?" inquired Redfern, from the other side of the quad., where he and his two chums were sunning themselves. "Why are you chumming with those School-House bounders?"

"Because there's been a miscarriage of justice," said Figgins grandiloquently.

"A which?" asked Redfern, coming across to the others.

"A miscarriage of justice," repeated Figgins. "The poor chaps are gated for a fortnight, all because of Knox's interference."

And Figgins told Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen what had happened.

"Well, there's only one thing for it," said Lawrence readily. "We must go and explain things to Mr. Railton."

"Of course," agreed Redfern. "When he knows everything, he'll—he'll remit the sentence. That's what they call it, isn't it?"

"Something like that!" grinned Tom Merry. "Well, if you chaps really mean to come—"

"We do mean to come!"

"Right-ho!" said the hero of the Shell. "We'll go now,

and get the bizney over before dinner. I don't like you chaps having to own up, because you might be reported to Mr. Ratcliff, and we all know what a bounder he is!"

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins. "We're not going to let you chaps be tomatoes—I mean martyrs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co., together with their School House rivals, went straight to Mr. Railton's study. The Housemaster was at home, and he gazed at the troop of juniors in surprise. There were thirteen of them, and the room was pretty full.

"Dear me," exclaimed Mr. Railton, "what is the meaning of this, boys? How dare you enter my study in this—"

"Please, sir, you said 'come in,'" said Tom Merry demurely.

"Yes, but—but— Good gracious, I'd no idea there were so many of you!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What is it you wish to speak to me about, boys? I see many of you belong to the New House."

Figgins stepped forward.

"It's about the gating you've given these chaps, sir. They don't deserve it!"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Figgins," he exclaimed, "how dare you? How dare you dispute my—"

"I'm not, sir," interrupted Figgins quickly. "You see, sir, that jape about the hidden treasure was ours—I mean it was a New House jape, sir."

"A New House—er—jape, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir."

And Figgins proceeded to explain, with occasional interruptions from Redfern & Co. When the long-legged, New House chief had done, Tom Merry explained that he had accidentally dropped the parchment, and that Knox had accidentally found it.

Mr. Railton nodded, a smile at the corners of his mouth.

"I think I begin to understand," he said. "Well, boys, I will ring for Knox, and see what he has to say."

Three minutes later Knox entered the study.

"I think there has been a little mistake, Knox," said Mr. Railton quietly. "These juniors did not deliberately play a practical joke upon you. The parchment was dropped by accident!"

"It's a lie, sir!" shouted Knox angrily. "It was placed there on purpose for me to find! I know them, the young scoundrels!"

"Knox," said Mr. Railton sharply, "please be careful what you say!"

"Well, sir, the young beggars set upon me at the ruins!" growled Knox.

"They didn't!" said Redfern quickly. "Knox went for Tom Merry, and knocked him down! Blake, like a sensible chap, dotted him on the boko—I mean—"

"That will do, Redfern," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I think, Knox, that this matter had better come to an end immediately. I do not wish to inquire into it further. The punishment I gave is remitted, and there is nothing more to be said."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry gladly.

"But—" began Knox furiously.

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the Housemaster sternly. "I may say that I am surprised at the part you have taken in this affair, and I do not wish to inquire too closely into the details. Knox, you may go!"

And Knox went, feeling very small.

The juniors trooped out of the study, all of them feeling pleased.

"Old Railton's a brick!" said Figgins. "All's well that ends well. And the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Tosh!"

"Piffle!" grinned Tom Merry. "We'll get our own back, Figgy, don't you worry!"

And the School House juniors vowed to themselves that before long they would wipe out the stain. Really, there was not much stain to wipe out, for the jape had been against Knox more than anybody else.

And there was never any more reference—in the School House, at least—to the time when there had been hidden treasure at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled "D'Arcy's Dodge," by Martin Clifford. Don't miss this highly amusing story of the famous swell of St. Jim's latest escapade—it will make you shriek! Please order your copy of next Wednesday's "Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

Rudge-Whitworth
Britain's Best Bicycle

"Thought Out"
Said a customer recently:
"The thing that first attracted me to the Rudge-Whitworth Bicycle was the way that every small point seemed to have been thought out, from the all-important all-steel flush-joint frame down to the patent grip which prevents so many irritating minor worries; and next, the organisation of the supplies of spare parts, all numbered, priced and ready."

It is this "thinking out" that makes all the difference.
Write for the 1913 catalogue.
Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd.
(Dept. 31), Coventry. R183

London Depots:
230, Tottenham Court Road
(Oxford Street End), W.
23, Holborn Viaduct, E.C.

Approved Cycle Makers to H.M. King George V.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "D'ARCY'S DODGE!"

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

THE RIGHT KIND OF OIL.

Brown was very impatient that morning, for he was late for business; and the constant stoppages of the motor-bus almost drove him crazy.

He stamped his feet upon the roof of the vehicle, thumped on the sides with his fist, and whenever he saw a wayfarer at the top of the street raising an umbrella to stop the car, he became literally frantic.

"Can't you make the thing go faster?" he inquired, peering down at the driver.

"No, sir," was the reply, "I'm getting on as fast as I can."

Brown fumed and growled for a few minutes longer, and then implored the driver to put forth superhuman efforts to increase the speed.

"There's only one thing," said that worthy, "that 'ud make 'er go faster."

"What's that?" asked Brown.

"Oil," was the answer; "but it's a special kind of oil, and I ain't got any."

"What kind of oil is it?" was the impatient Brown's next question.

"Palm oil," replied the driver with significance. "Hand us down a little!"

ON THE INSTALMENT SYSTEM.

They were experts in many things, but chiefly in the art of bragging. At that moment they were discussing their own wonderful triumphs as vocalists.

"Why," said the American, looking at his companion through the smoke-rings from his cigar, "the first time I sang in public the audience literally showered me with bouquets—flowers of every sort, size, and description. Bless you, there were enough of them to fill a flower-shop!"

"Faith, and I can beat that!" cried the Irishman. "The first time I sang was at an open-air concert, and, begorra, the audience were that delighted they presented me with a house!"

"What!" exclaimed the American. "Presented you with a house? You must be off your head, man!"

"Not a bit of it," replied Pat. "I tell ye, they gave me a house. True," he added, in a whisper, "they gave it to me a brick at a toime!"

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE.

Little Jack, aged five, had accompanied his mother on a trip to the City. They made the journey by tramcar.

Presently the conductor came round to collect the fares, and, on approaching little Jack, of course, asked the usual question:

"How old is the boy?"

The mother informed him; then he passed on to the next passenger. But the lad who was the subject of the inquiry sat quite still, apparently pondering over something, until at last, concluding that full information had not been given, he called loudly to the conductor, now at the other end of the car:

"And mother's thirty-five!"

"Only fools are certain, Tommy. Wise men hesitate."

"Are you sure, uncle?"

"Yes; certain of it!"

She: "Pardon me, sir, for walking on your feet!"

He: "Oh, don't mention it! I walk on them myself, you know."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

UNEXPECTED REVELATIONS.

Mrs. Smith, presiding at a select little tea-party, bustled busily and beaming among her guests.

"Yes," she remarked to one of her friends, "my little girl really is very clever, you know, she can imitate almost anyone!"

"She can, indeed," echoed the host delightedly. "Come, Alice; show what you can do. Pretend to be the housemaid!"

Eagerly the little girl came forward; then stood meekly in front of one of the guests.

"Will you take some more tea, madam?" she inquired politely.

"Madam" said she would; and the little servant bore her cup away in the most consequential manner to the tea-table.

At this the guests were very much amused, and asked for more of the entertainment. When, to their surprise, little Alice, suddenly backing away from her father, exclaimed in a terrified tone of voice:

"Sir, let me go! Don't touch me, sir! Give you a kiss indeed! What if the missus were to hear?"

The clever little darling was then ordered to leave the room instanter.

WHAT MORE COULD HE EXPECT?

Jock McFizzle rather fancied himself as a dog-breeder, and on the occasion of a local show he felt firmly convinced that a young dog he was entering would carry off the first prize.

So assured was Jock on this score that he invited a select number of his special cronies to be his guests at the show, promising to stand as universal banker during the day.

But, alas! human plans, even the best of them, are never very stable.

Not merely did Jock's dog fail to run off with the first prize, but, to the owner's great grief and annoyance, he failed to secure so much as a second, third, or even an honourable mention.

It was too much, especially after current expenses. So that, seeing one of the judging officials, Jock rushed at him, and exclaimed:

"Mon, for why did my bit doggie not win the prize? Wha's wrang with him?"

"Wrong?" replied the judge of dogflesh, as he surveyed the dejected quadruped in question. "Well, to begin with, he's about a yard too short in the legs!"

Jock eyed his "bit doggie" in sheer astonishment for a couple of seconds. Then he turned:

"Eh, mon," he said. "You're a fule! The doggie's legs are touching the ground! Wha' more d'ye want?"

HIS ROADSIDE PAL.

Jones's opportunity at last had come. He had been offered a really good job in Australia. So he forthwith threw up his thirty-bob a week clerkship in London, and made arrangements to leave for the island of kangaroos.

While passing through Liverpool on his way to the docks, he was suddenly and unexpectedly hailed by a friend from Manchester, who inquired:

"Hallo, old man! Where are you off to?"

"Australia!" was Jones's blunt reply.

"Right-ho, then!" said his friend. "I'll walk a bit of the way with you."

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED
The Editor, "The Gem" Library, The Fleetway
House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN
ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

Great New Public-School Serial!

Sir Billy, of - - - - Greyhouse!

A Magnificent New Serial Story
dealing with Public-School Life.

By R. S. WARREN BELL.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

Under the stern rule of Mr. Patterson, the new head-master, Greyhouse is growing restive, and one memorable night, when the Head, with most of his staff are absent for the evening, and Wardour is on the sick-list, the school breaks out in open revolt. Mr. Kitt, the master in charge, retires before the storm, and Bannerman, a reckless and popular Fifth Form senior, is left in supreme command of the excited mob of rebellious Greys.

(Read on from here.)

The Commencement of Hostilities.

Under Bannerman's orders the pantries were raided again and stripped of their contents. Mindful of all things, Bannerman caused his men to bring their water-jugs and mugs into Big School, at the far end of which loaves and cold joints were placed in regal profusion. Then he had the desks piled up under the windows, so that invaders might be repelled if any dared attempt an entrance that way, and he had drill-sticks and bats, and stumps—everything that would hit and hurt—brought in and stacked ready for use.

Also, as the weather was chilly, he bade his army provide itself with blankets and overcoats; and, as the army did not quite know what it was doing, it obeyed him implicitly.

Finally, when quite a couple of hundred fellows were in Big School—all the monitors and many of the juniors were left outside—he closed the great door, locked it, and barricaded it with desks and forms—and they were ready.

Hardly were his preparations for a siege complete when there came a loud rapping on the door, and a man's voice outside was heard demanding admittance.

So great was the uproar within that the man's tones could not be distinguished. The masters weren't due back till three. Perhaps it was Hallam—still, he'd hardly be such a fool as to think they would let him in.

"Open this door," cried the voice, and the hammering outside became thunderous.

"I say," said Littlewood, shaking a bit, "I seem to recognise that voice. Make 'em shut up a minute."

Bannerman leapt on to the rostrum and held up his hand. "Steady! Somebody at the door," he shouted. "Stop your row—d'you hear?"

He had a big voice, and the others certainly heard him. There was a dead silence.

Then from without came:
"Open this door at once, Bannerman! I command you to open this door."

Good heavens! Bannerman's lieutenants looked at him in horror. The voice was Doddie's!

It was. Mr. Dodson was back from London already—Mr. Dodson—Doddie—the master at Greyhouse that Greyhouse feared most.

"Are you going to open this door?"

Every eye was fixed on Bannerman as he got off the rostrum. What would he do?

Bannerman approached the door.

"Anyone there?" he inquired.

"Yes—I—Mr. Dodson. I want to know whether you are going to open this door."

Greyhouse hung on Bannerman's lips.

Presently he replied, quite coolly:

"No, sir, I am not going to open this door and I am not going to allow anybody else to open it."

Mr. Dodson was, in every-day affairs, quick to chide and passionate—like a changeful western sea, full of sudden storms. But to-night he saw that it would be necessary to keep his temper cool and his brain clear.

After that most audacious reply of Bannerman's there was an awful stillness. Mr. Dodson made no reply. Greyhouse, within the barricades, kept mute.

Bannerman slid his hands into his pockets and strolled towards the fireplace. He felt that he had taken the fatal step and he meant to abide by it. What if he was expelled? He could easily persuade that lenient peer, his great-uncle, that he was the victim of most untoward circumstances, and finish up the interview by wheeling the old gentleman into sending him up to Oxford, come the autumn.

Presently Mr. Dodson turned coolly to the pack of frightened kids that lingered at his heels.

"Off to bed with you—sharp! Last fellow up, fifty lines!"

Of course—as they knew—he wouldn't remember to ask the most laggardly for the "impot," but this wheeze always had the desired effect. Those kids sprinted to their dormitories in breathless haste, and Mr. Dodson was left alone in the dim corridor.

"Two hundred to one," he muttered, "at least till 3 a.m. Hallo!"

This exclamation was elicited by the appearance of the monitors, headed by Farrar and Hallam. With the exception of the last-named, they all looked extremely sheepish. Their discomfiture was not lessened by the scornful look Doddie cast upon them.

"I think you are rather late, gentlemen," he observed, with a curling lip.

"We found it impossible to preserve order, sir," was Farrar's lame retort.

"Your idea of discipline has always been so extremely delicate," said Doddie, "that I am not surprised to hear it gave up the ghost entirely to-night. I really do not think," he added, "that you can avail much by sitting up any longer, so suppose you go to bed?"

And he turned his back on them with a gesture of dismissal.

Hallam strode forward.

"Excuse me, sir—"

Doddie's eyes lit up dangerously as he wheeled round on the one strong man of the group.

"I thought I told you to go to bed."

"I simply wished to inform you, sir," said Hallam, standing

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"D'ARCY'S DODGE!"

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

his ground doggedly, "that Farrar was too hurt by things they threw at him to be able to stop the row. I took down the name of every fellow I saw out of his room. Here is the list."

And with this attempt to vindicate the spectacled captain and himself, Hallam handed the roll of offenders' names to Doddie and walked away.

Doddie now perceived the bruises and cuts on Farrar's face. When he spoke again his tone was more gentle.

"You had better see your matron," he said. "Ah—Hallam!"

"Sir!"

"I wish to see you alone. As for the rest of you—do as you please about going to bed. I fear we shall be unable to stop this business until the headmaster returns."

Then Doddie—this was so like him—slipped his hand round Hallam's arm, and they disappeared down the gloomy corridor. The other monitors, gazing blankly after the retreating forms of master and boy heartily wished they had plucked up courage enough to do even what Hallam had done, for undoubtedly he had acted pluckily and to the best of his ability.

"What now?" asked one.

"Sit up till Pat comes," said another.

"And then?"

"Oh, I suppose they'll send for the police. There's one comfort—Bannerman's bound to be expelled for this. He's at the bottom of it."

"Yes, that's one comfort," muttered a puny scholar who stood in constant dread of the leader of the rioters.

"Think they'll send for the police at once?" asked the monitor who had first spoken.

"When it's light. Oh, yes—they're sure to—if Bannerman doesn't give in."

Thus the monitors. But Doddie had other plans.

"You must forgive me for having been so short with you," he said to Hallam, when they reached the master's common-room, "but this matter is calculated to upset a saint's temper!"

"I think, sir," began Hallam, "that the Head has been a trifle too—"

"Quite so," interrupted the master, "too much iron hand, and not enough velvet glove. No use mincing matters. I speak to you in confidence, as a monitor. What a pity Wardour's laid up! All the other fellows in the Sixth seem to be old women, except you—that's why I've brought you along to help me. I want you to go and find Cripps."

"Cripps?"

"Yes; as the school porter, he has charge of the gas arrangements, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good; rout him out and bring him here."

Hallam found the porter in the kitchen, discussing a jug of beer. The other servants had taken refuge in their bedrooms.

"Cripps, Mr. Dodson wants you."

"Shockin' in—sh—bordinashun!" slobbered Cripps, waving his glass above his head, "ought t' read t' Riot Act!"

"Come on, you old fool," said Hallam, in his blunt way, "and bring your keys."

Cripps preceded Hallam with unsteady steps to the common-room.

"Call out t' military!" hiccupped the porter, fixing his glassy eyes on Mr. Dodson.

"Cripps," said Doddie, "passing over the fact that you've had too much to drink—"

"I'm an ole policeman," Cripps interrupted, "and what I shay is, read the—hic—Riot Act—"

"Don't talk nonsense!"

"And then fire-over-their'eads," concluded Cripps, all in a breath.

"Where is the gas-meter?" demanded Mr. Dodson sternly.

"In the boot-room," Cripps managed to say.

"Very well, then. Go to the boot-room and—but stay, we will accompany you." And Doddie took a lighted candle off the table.

Pushed and pulled by Hallam and Mr. Dodson, Cripps descended a long stone staircase to the basement, and at length managed to reach the boot-room. The door was locked, but the key was in the lock.

"Let me out!" whined a voice.

"Ghosht—it's a ghosht!" gurgled Cripps.

"No, it ain't! It's me—Mike! They locked me in 'ere when you sent me off on my bike to tell the masters. Let me out, won't you?"

Mike was promptly released. He slunk off to bed, looking very cold and miserable. Seeing Mr. Dodson, he felt sure that there was no necessity to fetch any other master.

"Now, Cripps, turn off the gas!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"But there won't be no light anywhere!" objected Cripps, astonished into lucid reasoning.

"In Big School, for example," murmured Mr. Dodson; "yes, that is the idea. Turn it off, Cripps!"

So Cripps plunged Greyhouse into total darkness by turning off the gas at the main meter, and then went off to his sleeping den, while Hallam and Mr. Dodson returned to the common-room.

"The next thing on the programme—Cripps being useless—is to turn off the tap of each gas-bracket wherever gas has been left burning. If you will take the whole building on the left of the Big School, Hallam, I will take all on the right."

So master and monitor went each his way, meeting in the common-room again half an hour later.

"I wonder how those beggars in Big School are getting on without any light?" said Doddie, with a chuckle.

He quite appreciated the humour of the situation.

"Shall I find out for you, sir?"

"Certainly! But how?"

The windows of Big School, it should be explained, were a considerable distance from the ground. Each lay snugly back in the shade, between two huge buttresses. On the right of Big School were situated the Hall and headmaster's House, with dormitories above; on the left came, first, the most ancient portion of this old building, dating back to the fourteenth century, and tacked on to this was the rest of the school, divided into houses, whose doors opened into the quadrangle that ran right round the back of the buildings—of more modern architecture—some of it a hundred, some of it two hundred years old. The chapel stood near the left wing, and the infirmary in a corner of the upper playing-field. But Mr. Dodson had forgotten one bit of Greyhouse—a new bit. Straight across the wide expanse of asphalt, which was divided from the upper playing-field by palings nine feet high—and which was, in fact, the playing-ground proper—stood the gymnasium, an absolutely up-to-date structure. One could get out on to the roof of the gym. by means of a trapdoor, and from the roof obtain a glimpse of what was going on in Big School.

Hallam explained this to Mr. Dodson.

"And if you will lend me your field-glasses, sir, I can tell you what they are up to. They're bound to have some sort of a light."

"Good idea!" said Doddie, and went off to his private sitting-room for his glasses. Returning with these, Hallam and he again roused up Cripps, and procured the key of the gymnasium from him.

It was dark and dangerous work scaling the rope ladder which depended from two big staples close to the trap, but Hallam was a gymnast. He drew the bolts, crept out on to the roof, and got the glasses into position. Then he inspected the movements of the malcontents.

An ejaculation of alarm escaped him.

"What's the matter?" anxiously inquired Doddie from the darkness below.

"They'll set the school on fire if they're not careful, sir. They're breaking up the desks, and have got a huge fire roaring up the chimney. I can see the sparks coming out at the top! Bannerman may not care much about the old place," he concluded, speaking rather to himself than to his companion, "but it's a trifle low of him to risk burning it down in this way."

Mr. Dodson overheard him.

"As bad as that?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

Doddie put on his thinking-cap.

"Look here," he said, "there are plenty of trapdoors in the main building, aren't there?"

"There's one leading to the big tank on the top of Headmaster's house," Hallam bawled in reply, "because the other chaps and I used to lark about up there on summer nights, when I was a junior. You can get on the roof of Hall from there, and so on to the roof of Big School."

"You were a bad boy to lark round the tank," Doddie howled back, "but I'm glad you did. It'll be something more of a lark this time, however, so come down, and I'll tell you what I think we can do."

It was cold and windy on the gym., and Hallam was quite willing to leave his post up there.

"Tell the other fellows in the Sixth I want them; I will go and dig Cripps out again."

The blood of battle was flowing through Doddie's veins, and he felt that in Bannerman he was meeting a foeman worthy of his steel.

There was none of the warrior thirsting for the fray about the lethargic Cripps, however.

"Lemme alone," grunted the porter. "If you read t' Riot Act an' fire-over-their'eads, it'll be aw' right."

Mr. Dodson shook him fiercely.

"Wake up, wake up!" he cried. "Do you want to be burnt in your bed?"

This frightening question had a wonderfully sobering effect on the ex-policeman.

"Burnt? Oh, lor! Where is it?"

"Close here," said Doddie. "Now, then, come along, quick! Collect all the fire-buckets, and take them into the playground."

Having made sure that Cripps understood his order, Doddie repaired to the main ground corridor, and found that Hallam had collected the Sixth. Then Doddie explained.

"I have plenty of rope in my room," he said to them, "and I want three of you to get out of the trapdoor by the tank, each taking a long rope, and swarm along till you reach Big School chimney. Then let your ropes down, and haul up very carefully the buckets we fasten to them. Who will go with Hallam—it's risky work, and will require some nerve?"

Several volunteered at once. Doddie provided them with ropes, and they were soon out of the trapdoor and creeping carefully towards the chimney on the roof of Big School.

Cripps had collected the buckets. The playground tap, with its iron cup dangling by, was close at hand. One by one the ropes came skipping down—thus announcing that the roof-journey had been accomplished in safety—and a bucket of water was made fast to each line. The venturesome and agile Hallam descended the broad leaden water-way which skirted the roof, and passed each bucket up to the next fellow, while a third emptied it down the hot and smoking chimney.

Swosh! Swosh! Swosh! Swosh!

Bringing dirt and soot with it, the water pounced on to the huge fire into the grate below, causing a great outcry among the fellows sitting round the blaze. Those most close to it, of course, were Littlewood and other worthy ones in the Upper Fifth, and these received a rich coating of wet grime.

The fire was just recovering itself from the watery avalanche, when—the buckets having been replenished and drawn up again—down came another torrent, quite drenching Littlewood and Jewell, who, by Bannerman's orders, were coaxing the damp wood with torn-up exercise-books.

And even after this the fire might have burnt up again, but no, a few minutes later came a third dreadful downpour, completely putting an end to any hopes the rioters may have entertained of toasting their toes again at the bars. The huge grate was quite under water.

"I think that will do," said Doddie, when, to make doubly sure, the Sixth Form fellows on the roof had poured four more buckets down, "I think that will do for the present."

When the Head, Mr. Forbes, and the other masters got back to the school at three o'clock that morning, they found themselves compelled to hunt their pockets for matches, the gas jets which usually afforded a dim and ghostly light in entrance-hall and corridors being nowhere visible.

"That fellow Cripps must go," said the Head irritably; "this is too bad."

Stumbling into the common-room, one of the younger masters found a candle burning, and his colleague, Mr. Dodson, slumbering peacefully in a big armchair.

"Hallo! Dodson back already?"

A sigh from one sleeping in another part of the room drew his attention to the recumbent form of Hallam, and still another deep-drawn breath to that of Farrar.

The assembly of masters gazed upon this interesting trio.

"Seems to have been entertaining the Sixth to some purpose," said Mr. Forbes.

Just then Doddie opened his eyes.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Glad you fellows have come at last. We were just having forty winks." And then he briefly informed the Head of what had taken place.

"A rebellion! Oh, this is absurd! You cannot have spoken seriously to them, Dodson."

"Suppose you try the effect of your dulcet tones, sir," said Doddie, with a yawn. "Personally, I'm for bed."

And so, taking it that he was now "off duty," Doddie lit another candle and marched upstairs.

The Head strode down the corridor, followed by the other masters, and halted in front of the massive portal of Big School. He rapped loudly on the door.

There was no response.

"Open this door, I say! Open this door!"

Not a sound.

Again he thundered on the staunch panels.

"You in there, I say! Open this door! Do you hear me?"

Apparently they did not.

The Head gazed round at his staff. It was dawning on him that Doddie had not used the word "rebellion" unadvisedly.

(Another magnificent instalment of this grand serial next Wednesday. Don't miss it, but order your "Gem" Library in advance.)

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

M. Hodges, 73, High Street, Kew, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers and exchange photographs.

A. L. Inkster, care of State Fire Insurance, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Scotland, age 17-18.

F. Smith, 8, Victoria Avenue, Brantford, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Winnipeg or British Columbia, age 19-20.

W. McCallum, 12, Rue Cheikh Ibrahim Pasha, Alexandria, Egypt, wishes to correspond with girl readers in the British Isles, age 17-19.

A. W. Ferris, Pilbroch, Alberta, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in the British Isles, age 18-20.

Miss M. Scott, 185, St. Charles Street, Point St. Charles, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in the British Isles or Australia, age 17-18.

R. Burton, Manitoba Club, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Great Britain, age 13-14.

B. Reid, P.O. box 378, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

Miss L. A. Trischler, "The Laurels," Upper High Street, Blenheim, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles.

G. Hertle, 94, George Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, age 15-16.

A. G. Anderson, 501, Miller Street, Hastings, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 16.

Miss L. Patterson, 193, Clarendon Street Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader about 20 years old.

L. Johnson, "Amboyna," Charles Street, Ascot Vale, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl reader living in England.

E. A. V. Hellemann, Montague House, Sloan Street, Goulburn, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Great Britain, age 12-13.

A. J. Doret, 14, Kirk Terrace, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and postcards, age 17-19.

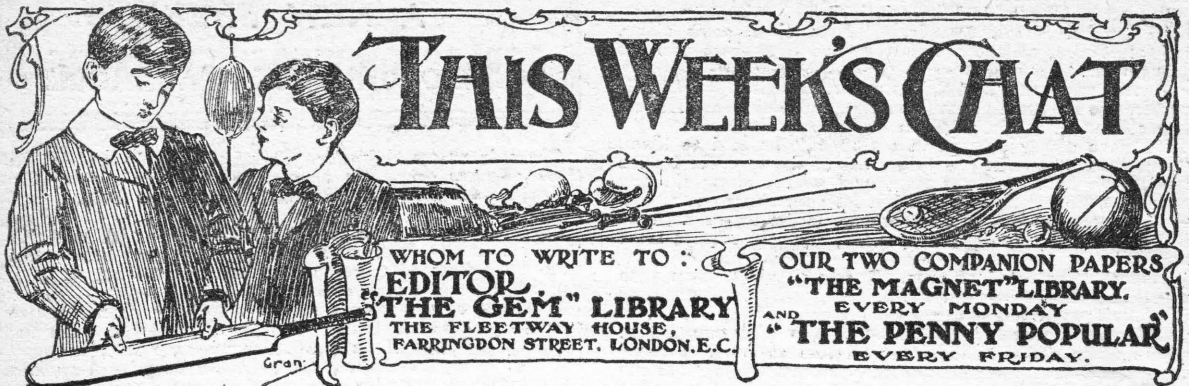
G. Bancroft, 46, College Hill, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 16-17.

J. Jeffrey, of Barberton, Transvaal, South Africa, would like to hear again from Miss L. O'Neill.

W. Gittins, 19, Caine Road, Hong Kong, China, wishes to correspond with readers all over the world.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"D'ARCY'S DODGE."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Under this title, our splendid complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's for next week relates the amazing adventures of the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. A disastrous mistake on D'Arcy's part causes so much trouble that the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's deems it wise to disappear from the school, for a time, at any rate, until the storm blows over.

He therefore obtains a situation in Wayland at a weekly salary of five shillings, for which princely sum he undertakes to perform certain duties which turn out to be rather complicated. This story is an intensely interesting and amusing one, and every "Gem" reader should take particular care not to miss

"D'ARCY'S DODGE."**OUR COMPANION PAPERS THIS WEEK.**

The current issue of our two grand companion papers, "The Magnet" Library and "The Penny Popular" are well worth the notice of every reader of the "Gem" Library by reason of their brightness and the amount of first-class reading matter they contain. In "The Magnet" Library, too, a

A Grand New Picture Feature

is just starting in place of the very popular "Picture Gallery" series which has just been concluded. The new series of pictures is entitled "Contrasts," and illustrates interesting scenes which must have stirred the pulse of every schoolboy one hundred years ago, compared with the modern edition of the same scenes such as greet the eyes of the schoolboy of to-day. This new feature in our companion paper—which is the outcome of one of my readers' suggestions—is specially interesting and instructive, and bids fair to eclipse even the famous Portrait Gallery in popularity. As for this week's "Penny Popular," the three splendid long complete stories it contains can only be described as "Better than ever." If anything, perhaps, the highly entertaining story which deals with the adventures of Tom Merry and the famous Co. at St. Jim's will perhaps make the strongest appeal to my "Gem" readers. My strong advice to all my chums is, "Don't on any account miss this week's issues of both our splendid companion papers."

A BRIGHTON "GEM" LEAGUE.

I am asked to state that a "Gem" League has been formed in connection with the British Boys' Association at Brighton, and any reader of "The Invincible Trio" of companion papers wishing to join will be cordially welcomed. Full information can be obtained from Mr. Leslie E. J. Tutt, 73, Upper Lewes Road, Brighton, Sussex.

Replies in Brief.

L. W. F. (Crewe).—To reduce your weight you should take a course of physical exercises. If this, strictly done daily, has no effect you should consult your doctor without delay.

Will Mrs. L. Carlton accept my very best thanks for her very interesting letters, and for the excellent suggestions for future stories contained therein?

WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
 EVERY MONDAY
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

"A 'Gem' Lover" (Australia).—The gipsy boy is still at St. Jim's.

H. Sibbick (Portsmouth).—A catalogue of dramas, etc., can be obtained from Samuel French & Co., 25, Southampton Street, London, W.C.

A. Gatt (Surrey).—You ask me who is the most fitted to hold the position of champion junior athlete at St. Jim's. I think, without a doubt, Tom Merry is.

S. Jones (London).—I should like to hear more of your proposal. If you write again, let me have fuller details.

"THANK YOU!"

I have to thank the following of my readers, who have so kindly sent me letters containing useful suggestions, which I will bear in mind:

J. Vaughan (South Wales), L. Normann (Canada), "A True Gemite," "Dublin K'nut," "Irish," N. S. (Natal), Alice and Marjorie G. (Johannesburg, S.A.).

HOW TO BECOME A GARDENER.

Should you wish to become a gardener in private service, you should make personal application to the head-gardener of a large estate, and in all probability you will find no difficulty in obtaining a position as a "garden-boy." You will receive, to start with, about 8s. per week, and after a short time you will probably get a rise to 10s. per week if your employer is satisfied with you.

Free lodgings in the house set aside for the under-gardeners will generally be given, and a woman is in attendance at meal-times to cook the food. Although some employers give milk and vegetables, the garden-boy has to buy the other things he may require.

You will have to remain a garden-boy for about 14 or 16 months, during which time you will be required to do such things as weed the gardens, run errands for the head-gardener, and so forth. After satisfactorily completing these 14 or 16 months, as the case may be, you will be made a journeyman gardener, when you still receive the free lodgings, but have an increased wage of about 6s. per week more than before.

After twelve months or so in this position you may be made a foreman gardener; this man is the head-gardener's right-hand man. The next rise is to the post of the head-gardener himself, and can only be obtained on the death or resignation of the man who already holds that position.

This position is worth about £80 a year on a medium-sized estate, but naturally varies in proportion to the number of men employed at the place. Besides the salary, the "head," as a rule, receives coal and light and a free house on the estate, also milk and vegetables, and, in some cases, fruit.

If you do not wish, or have not the opportunity, to enter private service, it is open to you to become a jobbing gardener, working either for a nurseryman or on your own. In the latter case it may prove difficult to obtain regular employment, and it is necessary to work hard in all weathers. The pay of a jobbing gardener averages from four to five shillings per day of about 8½ hours.

To become a landscape-gardener or his assistant, it is necessary not only to be an excellent gardener-in-ordinary, but also to be able to arrange flower-beds, etc., in new and artistic styles. For vacancies you should look at the advertisements in such papers as "The Garden" and other gardening periodicals.

THE EDITOR.