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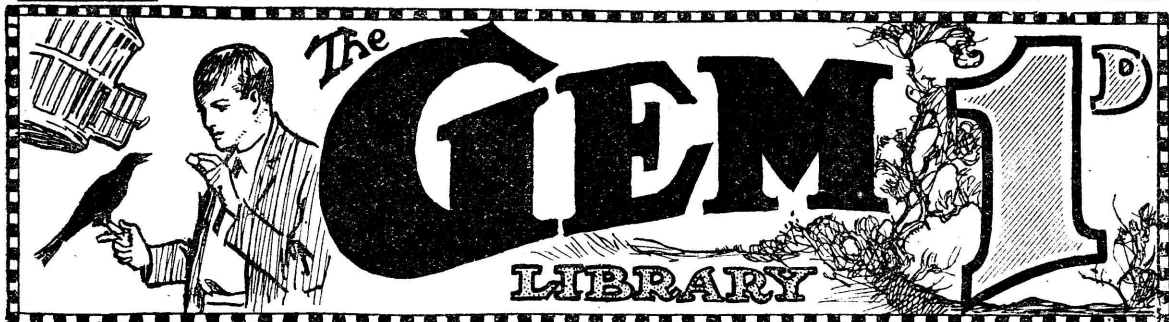
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THE DORMITORY SECRET!



A SPLENDID, NEW, LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE
OF
Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Very Mysterious!

"BAI JOVE, who's that?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered the words in startled tones. It was dark in the Fourth-Form dormitory—very dark. It was not yet bedtime; the long rows of white beds, as yet empty, glimmered in the gloom of the lofty room. Arthur Augustus had come up to fetch a book he had left there, and he had come up without a light. He knew his way about the School House of St. Jim's as well in the dark as in the light. He had entered the dormitory without hesitation, his hands held out before him to feel the way, in case he should run into something.

And all of a sudden, in the deep gloom of the dormitory, his hands did come in contact with something—with the cold, smooth surface of a human face!

It was that, and nothing else; the junior knew that at once. The face jerked back instantly from his touch, but he had felt it, and the sudden and unexpected contact sent a shiver through him.

"Who's that? Who is it?"

There was no reply. "Pway answah, you uttah wottah," said D'Arcy. "You have thwown me into quite a fluttah. Who are you?"

Silence. Faintly, through the darkness, came a slight sound. D'Arcy could hardly tell what it was, and it was gone in an instant.

Then deep silence. The junior shivered a little. There was something strange and uncanny about this. He had imagined that he had run into some other junior who, like himself, had come up to the dormitory in the dark. But unless the fellow was "japing" him he could not be that.

"Where are you, you uttah wottah?" demanded Arthur Augustus, his tones rising in anger. "I touched you, and I know you are here. Where are you?"

His voice echoed faintly in the long, lofty room, and that was all.

"Bai Jove! I woudah—" Arthur Augustus broke off, and backed away towards the door. It was not likely that a burglar would enter St. Jim's before the school had retired to bed. But certainly this

Next Thursday

"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!" AND "DEEP SEA GOLD."

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looked as if the person he had touched was a person who had no right there. D'Arcy backed into the doorway, and shouted.

"Blake! Tom Mewwy! Wesue!"

There was a shout from below immediately.

The School House juniors were always ready for a raid from the fellows belonging to the New House at St. Jim's, and D'Arcy's shout roused them at once.

"Hullo!"

"That's Gussy!"

"New House cads!"

"Come on!"

And half a dozen fellows came tearing up the stairs at once to the dormitory passage. Arthur Augustus was fumbling in his pockets, but he could not find a match.

The juniors rushed up the passage, and bumped into him in the darkness, and there was a yell from D'Arcy.

"Ow! Yawooh!"

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Curious thing he always must get in the way," remarked Jack Blake. "Where are the New House cads, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Where are the giddy raiders?" demanded Tom Merry, of the Shell.

"Weally——!"

"I guess Gussy was only pulling our leg," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the millionaire's son, once known as the Outsider of St. Jim's. "There are no New House fellows here. There is nobody in the dorm. at all."

"You are quite w'ong, deah boy——"

"Who is it, then?"

"I don't know. I was goin' in, and I wan into somebody in the dark," said Arthur Augustus, shivering at the reminiscence. "It was vewy startlin', and it thwew me into quite a fluttah. I don't know who the wottah is, but he's still in the dorm., and I should not be surprised if it was a burglah."

"Rats!"

"Well, he is still in the dorm.——"

"How do you know?" asked Tom Merry.

"Because I kept at the door, and he couldn't have passed me, deah boy."

"Let's get a light and look for the bounder," said Jack Blake. "I expect Gussy is talking out of the back of his head, as usual."

"Weally Blake——!"

"I've got a light," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The Outsider of St. Jim's produced an electric lamp from his pocket, and pressed the button. A bright ray flashed into the darkness of the dormitory. Two or three of the juniors found candles, and a general search commenced.

A dozen or more fellows had collected upon the scene now, and two or three of them stood on guard at the dormitory door, while the rest of them searched the room.

Up and down they went, looking under all the beds, and into all the corners, and into the wardrobe at the end of the dormitory.

But they found nothing.

The old dormitory, with its walls panelled to a height of seven feet from the oaken floor, was one of the oldest parts of St. Jim's, and it had been slept in by old monks hundreds of years before St. Jim's became a school.

Some of the juniors examined the panels in the wall suspiciously.

Secret passages were known to exist at St. Jim's, and there was a movable panel in Blake's study in the Fourth Form passage that gave access to a whole series of hidden passages.

But there was no trace of anything of the sort, so far as could be discovered, in the Fourth Form dormitory, which was on the floor above that upon which the junior studies were situated.

After ten minutes search the juniors collected at the door again. They were in a somewhat exasperated frame of mind.

"I guess there's nobody here," Jerrold Lumley-Lumley remarked.

"Of course not," said Blake. "Gussy was talking out of his hat."

"Weally, Blake——!"

"Pure imagination, my boy," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——!"

"Let's get out," said Manners. "This is all rot."

"Look heah, my deah fellows, I touched the chap, who-evah he was, with my blessed fingah-tips, in the dark," D'Arcy protested.

"Bosh!"

"But I assure you that I did, deah boys. It thwew me into quite a fluttah."

"Oh, you've been reading American fiction, or newspaper

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serials, and they've got into your head," said Herries, of the Fourth.

"Wats! I have not been doin' anythin' of the sort! I tell you that my fingahs touched a human face——!"

"Rats!"

"Where's it gone to, then?" demanded Blake.

"I weally don't know."

"Vanished into thin air, perhaps," Monty Lowther suggested sarcastically. "Melted away into smoke, I don't think!"

"Weally, Lowthah——!"

Tom Merry yawned.

"Well, whether the face was here, or wasn't here, it isn't here now, and I'm not going to stay here, either," he said.

"If you see or touch any strange chivvies again, Gussy, you can give me a call. But you oughtn't to go about doing these mysterious things, you know. You really ought not."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——!"

Tom Merry walked out of the dormitory, blowing out his candle. The rest of the juniors followed him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hesitated a few moments, looking up and down the dormitory, and then he followed the others.

But there was a very worried expression upon the aristocratic brow of the swell of St. Jim's.

That he had touched somebody's face in the darkness of the Fourth Form dormitory he was quite certain. That the unknown had been unable to pass him at the door and get out of the dormitory unseen he was almost equally certain.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking very puzzled as he followed the other fellows downstairs, and into the common-room.

That he had touched a human face in the Fourth Form dormitory in the dark he was practically certain.

But what had become of it?

He was almost certain, in fact as certain as could be, that the unknown could not have passed him unseen as he stood near the door.

Then what had become of him?

The other fellows had settled the matter for themselves, by deciding that D'Arcy's active imagination was at the bottom of the whole incident, but the swell of St. Jim's could not settle it that way.

He knew that someone had been in the dormitory when he had entered it in the dark, but it was in vain that he tried to impress that fact on the others.

"There was weally somebody there, Tom Mewwy," he declared.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Blake, deah boy, there was weally——"

"More rats!"

"Lowthah——"

"Many more rats!" said Lowther.

And Arthur Augustus gave it up.

CHAPTER 2.

A Chess Problem.

TOM MERRY burst into a sudden chuckle.

The Terrible Three were playing chess. Tom Merry was on one side of the board, and Manners and Monty Lowther were on the other. They were playing two against one, and Tom Merry was not holding his own. He was, as a matter of fact, thinking of something else, and his two chums would soon have wiped him off the board if they had been able to agree upon a plan. But they had a system of alternative moves, and each moved of his own free will, and so a connected plan could hardly be carried out. Lowther devoted himself to taking pieces whenever he could, a scheme which Manners scornfully stigmatised as mere "draughts," to which Lowther retorted that he was winning away, and that when Tom Merry hadn't any pieces left excepting the king he couldn't possibly checkmate, and that a fellow played chess to win, anyway.

"Still, there's chess and chess," said Manners.

"Chess so," agreed Lowther, who never could let slip the opportunity of a pun, especially a bad one.

"Oh, chess it! Wiping pieces off is draughts, not chess, and I think——"

"Rats!"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

It was at this precise moment that Tom Merry chuckled, and immediately his two opponents turned their attention upon him, instead of upon one another.

"Hallo," said Lowther, "what do you mean by going off like a cheap cracker? What's the matter with you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where do you feel the pain?" asked Manners.

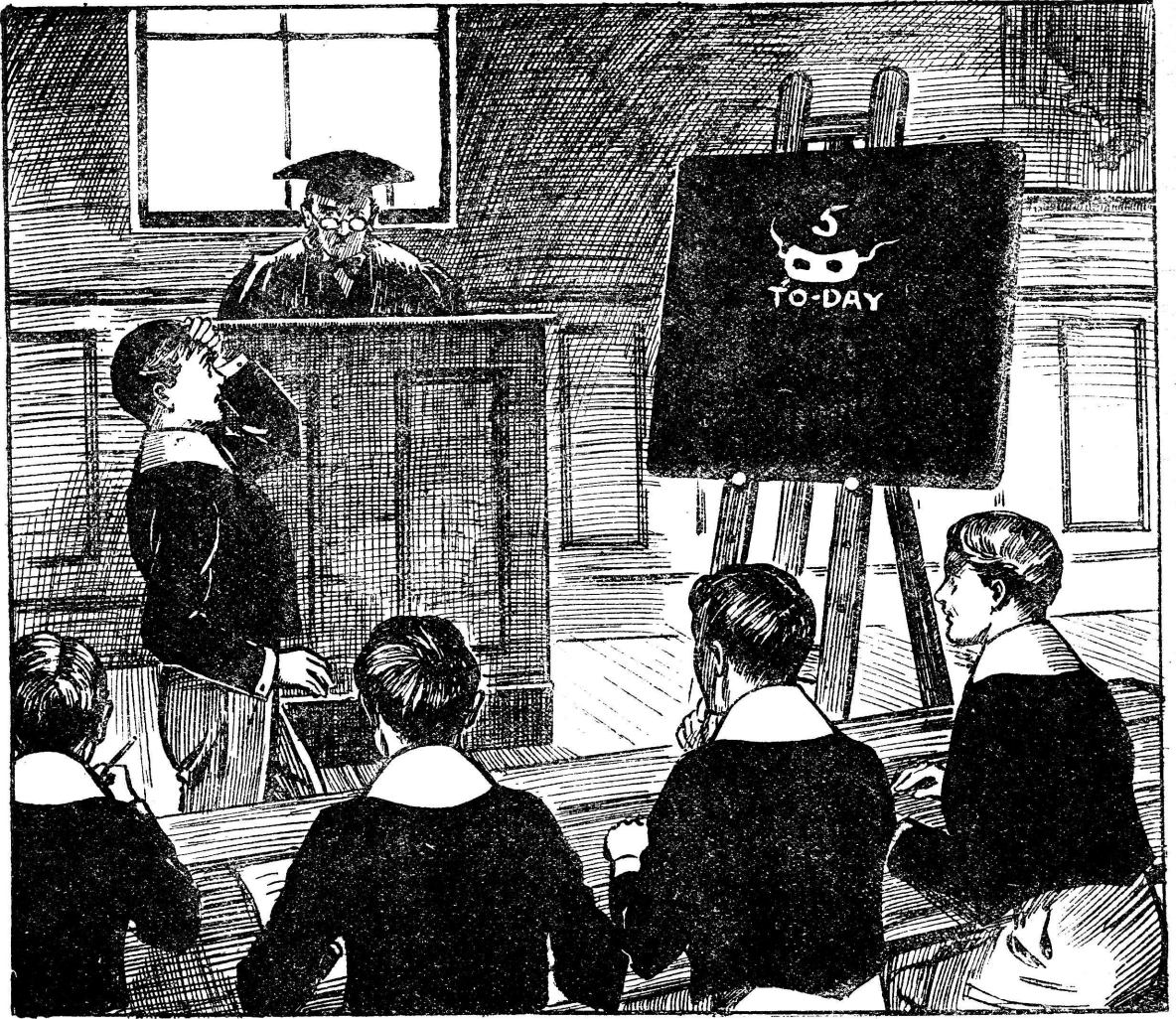
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the coffee's got into his head," said Lowther, crossly,

"he'll be better presently."

"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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



Lumley-Lumley started violently, and stared at the mysterious inscription on the blackboard with his brain in a whirl. What could it mean? Was it a message from the secret society?

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry.

"Better work it off, then—you're not winning so far," said Lowther.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of the chess."

"Weren't you, you ass—what do you mean by playing and not thinking of it, then?" Manners demanded.

Tom Merry laughed again.

"I'm thinking of Gussy and his giddy burglar in the dorm."

Manners and Lowther had to smile too, then. The mystery of the dormitory had caused a good many smiles in the common-room that evening.

"What price a little joke on Gussy?" murmured Tom Merry, looking round to make sure that the swell of St. Jim's was not within hearing. "Suppose we rigged up a set of footsteps and bloodstains in the Fourth Form dorm., just before bedtime—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"May as well chuck the chess now," said Tom Merry, "you chaps are practically beaten—"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Yes, I'm mate in three," said Tom Merry loftily.

"I'd like to see how you make that out," said Monty Lowther, glaring at the chess-board.

"Looks to me as if you're done in, in about six moves."

"My dear chap, look there—bishop king's third—"

"Well?"

"Then rook to bishop's fourth—"

"But I'm going to take your rook," howled Lowther.

"Ahem! Still, the game's practically finished," said Tom

Merry hastily. "Perhaps it would take a little longer, but it would end in the same way—mate in six, say."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!" said Manners.

"Well, we'll call it a draw, then," said Tom Merry, laughing, and closing up the board, using it as a kind of funnel to shoot the pawns and pieces into the box. "There! it's settled now."

"You'd have been done in, in about eight moves," said Monty Lowther.

"Bosh! You were mate in six."

"Ass! I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"

"The game would have been finished before, if Lowther hadn't been helping me," said Manners thoughtfully.

"Why, you ass—you gave Tom Merry the only chance he had," shouted Monty Lowther.

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Let's set the pieces out again, and see," exclaimed Lowther, wrathfully, "I'll undertake to play black just as they were, and beat you and Tom Merry together."

"Oh, I daresay you'd beat me if Manners helped me instead of you," Tom Merry agreed at once.

"Why, you utter ass—"

"You see, Manners—"

"I don't see anything of the sort. Shove the pieces out again, and I'll beat you and Lowther hollow, taking whichever colour you like," roared Manners. "You can't play chess for toffee, either of you. Do you remember where the pieces were, Lowther?"

"No, I don't."

"Ass! Do you, Tom Merry?"

"No fear."

"Fathead!" Manners wrinkled his brows over the chess-board. "I think I can place them. Your king was on rock's second, wasn't it?"

"Very likely."

"Ass! Your queen was at queen's bishop's fourth—"

"Perhaps!"

"Chump! I'll work it out in time—"

"Bai Jove! Can I help you, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, strolling up to the table.

The Terrible Three glared at him. D'Arcy prided himself upon his skill at the deep and difficult game of chess, but as a matter of fact, he was no Steinitz or Morphy. But he was always willing to give advice on any difficult point in the game; generally advice which would lead to disaster if followed. D'Arcy had a way of blindly recommending that you should move your king into check, or lay yourself open to the loss of a queen, and when his little errors of judgment were pointed out to him, he would only say "Bai Jove," and start afresh.

He stood surveying the Terrible Three through his eyeglass, quite prepared to exert his great mental powers, in the most friendly way, in the solution of their problem.

"Yes," snapped Manners, "tell me exactly where these pieces were, so that I can set them out again."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, Gussy can do that," said Tom Merry, gravely. "Gussy can do anything at chess. Set them out for us, Gussy."

"But I nevah saw the board while you were playin', deah boys."

"That makes no difference. Set them out. Regard it simply as a chess problem," said Tom Merry. "Go ahead—we're waiting for you."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're waiting," said Manners, with a grin.

D'Arcy looked quite distressed.

"But weally, I can't do anythin' of the sort," he protested.

"Net havin' seen the board while you were playin', you know—"

"That would make it all the more clever for you to rearrange it," said Tom Merry, blandly.

"Now, go ahead, Gussy; we're waiting."

"You uttah ass—"

"Do you mean to say that you can't do it?" demanded Lowther.

"Of course not, you fathead. I weally—"

"Then you're a humbug."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And an impostor."

"Bai Jove!"

"And the best thing we can do is to bump you for your cheek in offering to solve a chess problem when you can't do it," said Monty Lowther, rising as he spoke. Tom Merry and Manners rose too.

"Yes, rather," said Manners, emphatically.

"B—b—but that wasn't the sort of chess problem—"

"Oh, you can't get out of it that way, Gussy! Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! Hands off—I—oh!"

The Terrible Three had closed round the swell of St. Jom's. They grasped him, and sat him down with a bump, and Monty Lowther emptied the chess-box over his head. Then the Terrible Three walked out of the common-room, laughing.

They left Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sitting on the floor, gasping for breath, and vainly trying to extract two or three pawns that had slipped down his back, between his collar and his neck—another chess problem which it took the swell of St. Jim's quite a long time to solve.

CHAPTER 3.

Written in Red.

KILDARE of the Sixth looked into the junior common-room, by the time Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had solved that chess problem and restored his collar to something like order.

"Bed time, you kids."

"Yaas, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm quite weady. By the way, Kildare, deah boy, I think I ought, to tell you—"

"Oh, cheese it," said Blake, "no good telling Kildare ghost stories."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Keep off the grass, Gussy," advised Digby. "You will only make Kildare think that the ginger-beer got into your head."

"Plenty of room for it there," Herries remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you silly asses—"

"I guess Kildare ought to be told," exclaimed Jerrold.

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A SPECIAL STORY

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"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!" A TALE OF ST. JIM'S. ORDER EARLY!

Lumley-Lumley, abruptly, "Gussy is so certain about it, you know."

"It's all rot," said Kangaroo, of the Shell, decidedly.

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"What for goodness sake are you talking about?" Kildare exclaimed, in amazement. "If you have anything to tell me, D'Arcy, buck up with it."

"Certainly, deah boy. There was someone in the Fourth-Form dormitoway this evenin' when I went in there in the dark. I touched him, you see, and he vanished. And when the fellows came up with lights, he was gone."

"Who was it?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

"I don't know."

"Didn't you see him again?"

"Wathah not."

"One of the kids playing a joke, I suppose?"

"But how did he get out of the dorm.?" said Arthur Augustus. "You see, I stood near the door all the time, and he couldn't have passed me."

"I expect he did, all the same," said Kildare laughing.

"Yes, rather," said Gore.

"My opinion is that it was a burglah or somethin'—"

"Well, if you see anything more of him, let me know," said Kildare, still smiling. "Suppose it was one of the New House fellows, on a jape, and that he shinned down the ivy from the window—"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that."

The juniors burst into a laugh. It was a very simple and probable explanation of the mystery of the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Now buzz off to bed," said the St. Jim's captain.

And the juniors went upstairs. The Terrible Three were not in the common-room, but they joined the Shell in the dormitory passage. The Shell fellows went on to their own dormitory, while the Fourth entered the room in which D'Arcy had had such a startling experience early in the evening.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and took a careful survey of the dormitory. Blake & Co. grinned, and went along the room elaborately, looking under the beds. Then Blake made a progress through the dormitory, looking into all the jugs on the washstands, amid chuckles from the other fellows. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass indignantly upon Blake.

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"I'm only making sure that there are no burglars here, my son," said Jack Blake, blandly. "It would be dangerous to go to bed with perhaps a couple of dozen burglars hidden in the soap dishes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an uttah ass, Blake. Bai Jove!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look here!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye. Upon the white cover of the pillow were traced, in red, the following words:

"Beware! At midnight's hour thou diest! By order!"

D'Arcy stared at the menacing words, and then jammed his eyeglass afresh into his eye, and stared again.

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors gathered round the bed. They stared, too, at the threatening inscription. Most of them were giggling. It was evidently a jape—evidently to everybody excepting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! I knew that there was some feahful villainy on foot!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, looking round excitedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no weason whatevah for wibald mewwiment. I

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wegard this as a vewy sewious mattah?" said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Blake. "It's only half-past nine now, so you've got two hours and a half to live. That's heaps of time to make your will, and I'm sure Kildare wouldn't mind leaving the light on a few minutes longer on an occasion like this."

"Weally, you ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're going to make your will," said Digby seriously, "you might leave me your bike, Gussy. I should like that."

"Weally, Digby——"

"And you can leave your clothes to a charitable institution for clothing the poor," Blake remarked. "There would be enough to clothe pretty nearly all the poor in England."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to have this mattah tweated in a wibald spiwit. I wufuse to be murdahed in my bed at twelve o'clock to-night!"

"Time you were in, you youngsters," said Kildare, coming into the dormitory.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter there?"

"Look here, Kildare."

"Great Scott!"

Kildare stared at the strange inscription upon D'Arcy's pillow. But he did not seem to be startled. He laughed.

"There is nothin' comic, deah boy, in a murderous message like that, w'ritten in blood!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's indignantly.

Kildare roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! That's not blood, you ass!"

"What is it, then?"

"Red ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy bent his head, and scanned the threatening notice more closely. On a closer inspection, it was indeed red ink, and not blood, as he had first supposed in his agitation. The juniors watched him with grinning faces.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, at last.

"You had better turn the pillow over for to-night," said Kildare, "otherwise, the ink will come off on your face."

"Yaas, watah!"

D'Arcy turned the pillow over. There was a yell of laughter from the Fourth-Formers as the under side came into view. For there was an inscription on that, too, in black ink.

"Spoofed! (Signed) TOM MERRY."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The uttah wotrah! Bai Jove! I'll go to the Shell dorm, and give the uttah boundah a feahful thwashin'!"

"No, you won't," said Kildare, laughing. "It's time to go to bed. You can leave Tom Merry until to-morrow."

"Weally, Kildare."

"Tumble in."

"Under the circs.——"

"You hear me, D'Arcy!"

"Oh, vewy well, but I wegard this as vewy inconsiderate."

Kildare's word was law. The juniors turned in, and Arthur Augustus had to nurse his wrath on the subject of the Terrible Three's little jape. But he did not nurse it long. He fell asleep, and was soon quite unconscious of wrath or japes either.

But there was one fellow in the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House of St. Jim's who did not go to sleep.

That one was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

In earlier days at St. Jim's, Lumley-Lumley had often stayed awake after the other fellows had gone to sleep, for the purpose of stealing out of the school to pay night visits to the Green Man in Rylcombe.

But those days were past.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had changed, and his habits had changed with him, and there were few more decent fellows at St. Jim's now than the junior who had once been known as the Outsider.

But while the rest of the Fourth-Formers dropped off to sleep, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley sat up in bed, with a pillow behind his head, and his eyes fixed wide and unwinking upon the darkness before him.

He did not mean to sleep.

And the Outsider, perhaps from old habit, had a power of sustaining himself without sleep, and showing little or no sign in the morning of a sleepless night.

Coolly and calmly he sat there, silent, watching, while the slow hours rolled past. He heard the last door close below, and still silence fell upon the whole of the great building of the School House.

Twelve boomed out from the clock-tower.

Then there was a sound in the dormitory.

Lumley-Lumley started a little, and his eyes gleamed. A soft, low voice was audible in the tense silence.

"You fellows asleep?"

It was the voice of Levison, the cad of the Fourth.

Lumley-Lumley hardly breathed.

CHAPTER 4.

The Danger of the Night!

HERE was deep silence in the Fourth Form dormitory. Lumley-Lumley, sitting up and leaning back on his pillow in the darkness, against the bed-head was invisible, but watchful. He made no sound—he hardly seemed to breathe. Only his eyes were scintillating in the darkness.

Five minutes elapsed.

Why had Levison spoken?

Was it that he had wakened, and some thought had come into his mind of D'Arcy's experience in the dormitory, and in sudden uneasiness he had called out?

Or was it——

Lumley-Lumley wondered.

Five long, slow minutes, and then the cautious voice came again, more cautiously than before:

"Any of you fellows awake?"

If any of the fellows had been awake, naturally, they would have answered—with the exception of Lumley-Lumley. With the Outsider it was different. Lumley-Lumley had stayed awake purposely to watch for any unusual development in the dormitory that night—for Lumley-Lumley, alone of the Fourth, believed in the strange story told by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Levison might have done the same. But Lumley-Lumley was very suspicious of the cad of the Fourth. Levison was secretive by nature, secretive, suspicious, and always ready to serve anyone an ill-turn. If there was anything underhand going on in the School House, it was only too probable that Levison, of the Fourth, had a finger in it.

"I say, you chaps!"

It was Levison's voice again, louder than before.

But, as before, there was no response. Only the Outsider of St. Jim's was listening with intent ears for what should come next.

What came next was a sound of someone getting quietly out of bed. Then faint, scarcely distinguishable sounds, as the unseen junior dressed himself. Lumley-Lumley did not need telling whom it was. It was Levison!

Where was Levison going? What was he about to do? Lumley-Lumley strained his ears. He dared make no sound, lest he should alarm the cad of the Fourth, and lead him to put off his purpose, whatever it was.

Click!

The sound was so faint and so sudden that Lumley-Lumley doubted if he had really heard it. It was a faint sound as of a door softly closing.

Was Levison gone?

Lumley-Lumley waited a long ten minutes, listening with strained ears. But there was no sound in the dormitory, save the regular breathing of the sleepers. Levison was either gone, or he had gone back to bed; and that, Lumley-Lumley was certain, was not the case.

The Outsider of St. Jim's rose at last. Half-past twelve had sounded dully from the clock-tower.

Lumley-Lumley stepped in the direction of Levison's bed, and turned on the light of his little electric lamp.

The bed was empty.

Levison was gone!

That he had not gone by the window was certain, and that he had gone by the door was very improbable. Was there, then, some secret opening in the dormitory by which it was possible to come and go?

If so, Levison, of the Fourth, was just the fellow to know it—just the person to find it out. There were few things within any distance of Levison that he did not contrive to get to the bottom of.

But if he had left the dormitory by a secret panel in the wall, similar to the one in Blake's study, where had he gone—and why?

Was it on a visit to the Green Man? Lumley-Lumley remembered well enough his own experiences there, and that Levison had often been with him in those days—Levison and his chum, Mellish, the two black sheep of the Fourth Form. They had been close associates of the Outsider of St. Jim's in those days, though since Lumley-Lumley's reform their friendship had changed to bitter hatred.

Many and many an attempt had they made to win back the Outsider into the old paths, but in vain.

Lumley-Lumley's character was determined, either for good or evil. When he was the Outsider of St. Jim's, the black sheep of the School House, he had gone far beyond either Levison or Mellish in recklessness. Now that he was reformed, he was equally resolute in following his new path.

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Levison and Mellish had no more chance of influencing him than the tide of influencing the courses of the moon. And when they realised that, their spite against Lumley-Lumley was stronger than it had ever been against Tom Merry or anyone else.

Had it been Levison who was so strangely encountered in the dormitory by Arthur Augustus? No, for Lumley-Lumley remembered seeing him in the crowd that had come up to the dormitory. He had been loudest in sneering at the strange story told by the swell of St. Jim's.

But had he known who the unseen was?

Had he been the cause of introducing him into the School House? Lumley-Lumley wondered. Levison knew something of the matter, he was certain of that much, at all events.

He shut the light off.

But he did not go back to bed. He sat on the edge of Levison's bed and waited. He did not intend to sleep until the cad of the Fourth returned.

It was a long vigil.

One boomed out from the clock-tower, and still there was no sound of the return of the cad of the Fourth Form.

Lumley-Lumley waited patiently.

Mellish, he had seen, was in bed, and Levison was gone alone upon this mysterious expedition. Where was he gone?

If to the Green Man, he must be home soon. Mr. Jolliffe and his set did not keep their revelry up to this hour. If Levison had been going to the public-house, he would have started much earlier.

Lumley-Lumley decided that he had not gone there.

But where, then?

It was a mystery—a mystery that the Outsider of St. Jim's meant to solve. There was a dark suspicion at the back of his mind.

Click!

The faint sound again—and so faint, and so sudden, that Lumley-Lumley was unprepared for it, and he could not tell from what direction it came.

He started to his feet noiselessly.

Levison had returned!

Lumley-Lumley stood silent, quivering with eagerness, his eyes striving to penetrate the gloom of the dormitory, his ears strained for the slightest sound.

A thrill ran through him as he caught a faint whisper.

Levison had not returned alone, then!

Listening intently, Lumley-Lumley heard a sound from his own bed—a sound as if someone had approached it, and was touching the bedclothes.

His heart beat.

Who was it? What did it mean? Was it Levison, or—

There was a muffled exclamation.

"He's gone!"

That was in Levison's voice.

Lumley-Lumley smiled grimly.

A faint whisper was audible—Lumley-Lumley could not distinguish the words. But it must have occurred to Levison then that if the Outsider was not in bed and asleep, he must be up and awake, and the faint whisper ceased.

Click!

Lumley-Lumley knew that the secret panel had closed again.

The Outsider paused a moment, thinking. Then he stepped silently towards the door of the dormitory, and opened it, and closed it again, keeping inside, as if he had just entered from the passage. Then he groped his way towards his bed.

There was a startled exclamation from Levison, as Lumley-Lumley ran into him close to the bed—purposely.

"What—who—?"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, grasping him.

"Hallo! Who are you?"

"I—I—"

"I guess you're Levison, by the voice."

"Ye-es!"

"What are you doing out of bed?"

"What are you doing out of bed yourself, for that matter?" said Levison, beginning to recover his nerve.

"That's my bizney!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I want to know what you have been doing at my bed? Some jape—hey?"

"N-no!"

"Well, I'll soon see, anyway!"

Lumley-Lumley felt over the bed. Levison stood in the darkness with beating heart. He was glad it was dark, so that Lumley-Lumley could not see the white terror in his face.

"Have you been out?" he asked, with a shake in his voice.

"Find out!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"You've been out of the dormitory, Lumley-Lumley!"

"That's my bizney!"

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A SPECIAL STORY "UNDER SEALED ORDERS!" A TALE OF ST. JIM'S. ORDER EARLY!
NEXT WEEK; BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Look here, I know you've been out!" said Levison savagely.

"How do you know?"

"Because—because I heard you go, and I got out of bed, and looked at your bed," said Levison desperately. "That's how I know. I was—was just looking again, to see if you'd come back, when you came in and startled me!"

Lumley-Lumley grinned silently as he slipped into bed, and drew the bedclothes over him. He preferred to leave Levison in his mistake.

"You've been up to your old tricks again," said Levison. "The Green Man, but you chose to leave me out of it!"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Have you been to the Green Man?"

"Find out!"

"Look here, Lumley-Lumley—"

"Oh, go to bed!" yawned the Outsider. "I'm tired!"

Levison gritted his teeth, and went to bed. He did not sleep easily, however. Neither did the Outsider of St. Jim's. Lumley-Lumley did not care to sleep. That Levison had come back alone to the dormitory he did not think for a moment. But whom had he brought with him? Why had they gone to Lumley-Lumley's bed? What dark scheme was the black sheep of the Fourth mixed up in now?

In the midst of his doubt and bewilderment, one thing stood out quite clearly to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's mind, and that was, that he was in danger. Whatever was the strange secret of the dormitory, Levison's action had shown plainly that it centred round Lumley-Lumley. And it could only mean one thing—danger!

CHAPTER 5.

Friends or Foes?

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY showed no trace, on the following morning, of the vigil he had kept in the Fourth Form dormitory during the night. The Outsider seemed to be made of iron. It was not the same with Levison. He was looking paler than usual and there was a haggard expression in his eyes.

"Any alarm last night?" Tom Merry asked, with a grin, as the Terrible Three met Jerrold Lumley-Lumley at the door of the breakfast-room.

The Outsider smiled.

"There was a scare for Gussy," he said.

"Weally, Lumley-Lumley," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he came downstairs, "I refuse to admit that I was scared!"

"Just as you like," said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully.

"You were scared, whether you admit it or not!"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "At midnight thou diest! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I refuse to entah into any discuss. of such a widiculous mattah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity. "I wegard you as a set of pwaactical jokin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked into the dining-room, with his aristocratic nose held very high in the air.

He left the juniors laughing. The little jape on Gussy appealed to them as being very funny. Of the later episode in the Fourth Form dormitory Jerrold Lumley-Lumley did not say a word. He was keeping his own counsel upon that subject, and so, needless to say, was Levison.

Levison looked curiously at Lumley-Lumley many times that morning. After morning lessons, he approached the Outsider as they came out of the Form-room.

"Can I speak to you a minute or two, Lumley?" he asked.

Lumley-Lumley looked at him.

"I guess you can," he said.

"Come up to my study, then," said Levison.

The Outsider shook his head.

"Thanks! I guess I'd rather not!" he replied.

Levison scowled.

"Why not?"

"Because we're not on friendly terms, and I don't choose to," said the Outsider coolly. "I don't care to come into a fellow's study unless I like him!"

"And you don't like me?" said Levison, with a sneer.

"I guess not!"

"We pulled together well enough at one time."

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders.

"That was when I was as big a fool and rascal as you still are!" he said. "We could be friendly again, I suppose, if you did as I've done."

"Turned goody-goody—"

"I guess you can put it that way, if you like. I call it becoming decent!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Lumley-Lumley. "I don't find it very entertaining, so far!" Levison bit his lip.

"Well, step into the window with me, and I'll tell you," he said. "I don't want everybody to hear." "Oh, all right!"

Lumley-Lumley followed Levison into the window-recess. The cad of the Fourth watched him narrowly, but Lumley-Lumley's face gave nothing away. He simply stood and waited for the cad of the Fourth to speak.

"Look here," said Levison abruptly, "you were out of the dormitory last night!" "Was I?"

"You know you were!" Levison exclaimed angrily. "I know what I know, I suppose!" said Lumley-Lumley, unmoved.

"I know you were out!" "Very well, if you know it, there's no need to ask me any questions upon the subject, is there?" said the Outsider agreeably.

"You went out," said Levison, between his teeth, "to the Green Man, or to some other place of the same sort!" Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders. "Did you?" asked Levison.

"You seem to be so certain that I did that it's a pity to disillusion you," said the Outsider of St. Jim's cheerfully. "I've got nothing to say on the subject."

"I know perfectly well," went on Levison, his irritable temper rising the more the cooler the Outsider appeared. "I know quite well that you have been gammoning Tom Merry and the rest, and that you've not turned over a new leaf, or any rot of that sort! It's all gammon, to take in the fellows, so that you can play your own game more safely!"

"Really?" "Yes. I was taken in, or almost—until last night. But when I found you'd been out, I saw it all pretty clearly." "Then you're satisfied now, I hope?" said Lumley-Lumley lazily.

Levison clenched his hands. "Do you deny it?" he hissed. "I don't take the trouble!"

"You admit it, then?" "No; not that, either!" "Then what have you to say?" "Nothing!"

Levison breathed very hard. It seemed to be as much as he could do to keep his hands off the Outsider. Lumley-Lumley stood looking at him with a cool grin that was very provoking.

"Have you anything more to say?" he queried. "Yes." "Oh, go ahead, then!"

"I know that you've been gammoning, and that you've been keeping up your old habits all the time!" said Levison, between his teeth. "I suppose you've found new friends, that's all. I—I was taken in! I admit it! Now that I know the truth, I'm willing to give you a chance!"

The Outsider stared. "Give me a chance?" he repeated. "Yes." "What do you mean?"

"I'm willing to be on the old terms with you—your friend instead of your enemy," said Levison. Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"Thanks!" "You refuse?" "I guess so!" "And why?"

"I guess I'd rather have your enmity than your friendship," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "You—you hound!"

Levison could contain his rage no longer. He sprang at the Outsider of St. Jim's, hitting out furiously. Lumley-Lumley caught a savage blow on the mouth before he was upon his guard, and he staggered back.

"Foul!" exclaimed Tom Merry, stopping as he was passing the window recess. "Shame! Levison, you cad!" Lumley-Lumley set his teeth.

"It's all right, I guess," he muttered. And he returned Levison's attack. The cad of the Fourth was driven back, and a rain of blows descended upon him. He seemed to be powerless against Lumley-Lumley's onslaught, and in a couple of minutes he was on the floor.

Lumley-Lumley stood over him with blazing eyes. "Any more?" he demanded. "No!" gasped Levison. "Hang you! No!" "I guess you'd better give me a wider berth in the future," said Lumley-Lumley; and he walked away.

Levison sat up painfully. His nose was oozing red, and his mouth felt out of shape. He rubbed his face, and muttered fiercely.

"Hang him—hang him! But he will be sorry for it. I gave him a chance, and he refused it. He'll be sorry for it soon."

And Levison limped away.

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Has a Brilliant Idea.

"I DON'T know whether either of you duffers would be much use," said Manners, looking at Tom Merry and Monty Lowther in the Form-room passage. "Either of you know how to hold a lamp?"

"What on earth do you want a lamp held for?" "Light," said Manners. "Fathead—"

"I'm going to do some developing," said Manners. "My daylight developer is out of order, owing to Herries' beastly bulldog having got at it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I can't see anything to snigger at in that. I've got to do some developing, and I haven't a dark-room. So what am I to do?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Monty Lowther. "No, it isn't!" snapped Manners. "How is a chap to develop without a dark-room or a daylight developer? That's what I want to know. I have been thinking of making a frame to block up the study window, and fixing a red globe on the burner; but one of you idiots would come poking in while the developing was going on, as sure as a gun."

Tom Merry laughed. "Very likely indeed," he assented—"besides, we don't want the study turned into a dark-room. We get enough of your beastly photography there as it is."

Manners sniffed. "You'll get some more if I can't use the vault," he said. "If I fitted up the window-frame and the red globe, of course, I should have a bolt put on the door—"

"My hat!" "And you chaps would be allowed to use the study at certain times—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "But, upon the whole, I think it's less trouble to use the vault for a dark-room. I can get the red lamp down there, and there isn't a ray of light there, especially at night."

As a matter of fact, I should have thought that the chaps who built St. Jim's had cameras in their minds' eye, and meant those vaults to make dark-rooms for their descendants."

"Yes, it's very likely," agreed Monty Lowther. "And you want somebody to go down into the vaults with you and help you with your chemical mucks."

"That's it!" "Go it, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "I've got another engagement myself this afternoon—"

"It isn't in the afternoon I want it done," said Manners. "And another engagement this evening—"

"And it's not in the evening, either." "Oh!" said Lowther. "When is it, then?"

"After lights-out," said Manners. "I suppose you know that the vaults under the School House are out of bounds? The masters are afraid that juniors may break their necks on the stairs, or by falling into some blessed hole or other. As if a chap wouldn't have sense enough to walk carefully, especially if he was carrying a camera or a set of plates."

"After lights-out?" said Monty Lowther reflectively. "You don't seriously mean to say that you are going to get out of bed and go down into the vaults for the sake of developing some rotten photographs?"

"Certainly not." "Then what are you going to do?" "I'm going to develop some very fine photographs."

"Oh, ass! Are you going down out of bed to develop photographs at all?" roared Lowther.

"Yes." "Well, of all the silly asses—"

"I want somebody with me," said Manners. "I don't like the vaults on my lonesome, and I want someone, too, who has sense enough to hold a lamp. I should think either you or Tom could do that by bucking up very hard and exerting all your mental powers."

"I'm such a jolly sound sleeper," Monty Lowther remarked reflectively. "I doubt if I should wake up, even if you called me."

"And I doubt if I should get out of bed, even if I woke up," Tom Merry remarked. Manners grunted. "You can toss up for it," he said.

"You can toss up, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Heads, you go with Manners; tails, Manners goes with you. Good-bye!"

And Monty Lowther walked away whistling cheerily. Tom Merry burst into a laugh. "Oh, I'll come, Manners, old man!" he said. "What time are you thinking of doing your giddy developing?" "Ten to-night." "Right you are!" "And keep it dark," said Manners. "Mind that." "Didn't you say you wanted me to hold a lamp?" asked Tom Merry innocently. "Ass! I mean don't say anything about it. We don't want other fellows poking down there out of curiosity, and perhaps spoiling the development—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "What are you cackling at now?" demanded the amateur photographer of the Shell.

"I don't think fellows are likely to leave their beds and follow you down into the vaults at ten to-night to see you developing giddy negatives," grinned Tom Merry.

"I don't know. Anyway, the silly prefects would stop us if they knew."

"I suppose they would," assented Tom Merry. "Mum's the word. Don't forget to take all the muck you will need. Can't go up and down stairs fetching pyro and things, you know."

"I know," grunted Manners. Manners was not very grateful about it. It was evident that he regarded any assistance in photographic matters simply as a necessary evil. But Tom Merry did not mind. He was always ready to oblige anybody, and he was prepared for a certain amount of rustiness from anybody who had a hobby.

"I'm going to pack all the things I shall want in a bag now," said Manners. "Don't you come and help me; I don't want to get them mixed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" And Manners went up to the study. He met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the passage, and the swell of St. Jim's stopped with an affable smile.

"Mannahs, deah boy—"

"Sorry! Can't stop," said Manners. "Awful hurry."

"Very well. I'll twot along with you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, suiting the action to the word.

Manners grunted. He did not want anybody to trot along with him when he was going to pack up photographic materials.

D'Arcy followed him into the study.

"I have an ideah, Mannahs," he said.

"Where did you pick it up?"

"It flashed into my bwain."

"Into what?"

"My bwain!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with considerable dignity. "It flashed wight into my bwain. Mannahs."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"I don't know much about photogwaphy," said D'Arcy.

"You needn't tell me that. I remember your helping me once," growled Manners. "You mixed the pyro and the hypo, and put the negative into it and left it there. Huh!"

"Of course, I don't know the wopes," said D'Arcy.

"Wasn't that wight?"

Manners snorted. He had no words in his vocabulary suitable to the occasion, and he contented himself with snorting.

"But I didn't come heah to speak about that, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I was not thinkin' of assistin' you on this occasion. My ideah was to take a photogwaph of the mysterious wottah who came into the dorm. yestahday."

"Eh?"

"You see, I am perfectly convinced that some wottah did come in, as I touched his chivvay with my own hand," D'Arcy explained. "If he came once, he must have come for somethin', and as nothin' has happened—why, he will come again. Don't you think so?"

Manners grunted. He was selecting his bottles and other paraphernalia, and not paying the least attention to what the swell of the School House was saying.

"I have asked Figgins & Co. about the mattah," went on D'Arcy, "and they say there was no New House fellow concerned in it. It was some wotten outsidah; and I am convinced of the existence of a secret passage."

"Four dishes," murmured Manners.

"Eh?"

"Pyro, and—"

"What are you talking about, Mannahs? I tell you I am convinced that the wottah who came into the Fourth Form dorm., and who wan against me in the dark, is some awful wascal up to some wotten twicks, and I have an ideah for bowlin' him out. Is it possible to take photogwaphs aftah dark, Mannahs?"

Manners was interested at last. It was only necessary to

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"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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

say the word "photograph" or the word "camera" to wake Manners up.

"Eh?" he said. "Photographs after dark? By flashlight, of course."

"Can you wig up the flashlight?"

"Of course I can."

"Bai Jove! That's wippin'!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Manners. "Let those bottles alone, please."

"I was goin' to help you pack the bag—"

"Bother! Now, who wants a flashlight photo taken?" asked Manners.

"I was thinkin' of it as a means of identifiyin' and awwestin' the wotten wascal who came into the dorm. Suppose you set a camewah there, somehow, so that it will photogwaph anybody who comes in, in the dark—"

Manners fixed a most expressive look upon the swell of St. Jim's. But D'Arcy, engrossed in his brilliant idea, did not notice it.

"You see, by that method, anybody entahin' the dormitory will be photogwaphed, and in the mornin' we shall be able to open the camewah, or whatever it is you do, and see who it was," said D'Arcy triumphantly.

"You frabjous ass!"

"Eh?"

"You utter chump!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Do you think photographs can be taken in the pitch-dark, and left exposed as long as you like?" roared Manners.

"I weally don't know; I'm not a photogwaphah," said D'Arcy. "As you are a photogwaphah, Mannahs, I expect you to know all those things."

"Huh! Ass! It can't be done!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Mannahs, fwom what the fellows say, I had an impression that you were a weally good photogwaphah, you know."

"So I am!" roared Manners. "But I can't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's impossible, ass!"

"Impossible for you, do you mean?"

Manners almost foamed at the mouth.

"Impossible," he shrieked, "for anybody!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"I suppose it's because you're an amateur?" he said indulgently. "I suppose there are lots of twicks that you don't know in the biznai?"

"You—you ass!"

"I am sowwy to have shown you up in this way, Mannahs, but it was weally your own fault, for pawadin' around as a good photogwaphah!" said D'Arcy severely. "I had not the least ideah that I was askin' you to do somethin' beyond your powahs. I considah that you are somethin' wathah like an impostah, deah boy."

Manners gasped for breath. Words had failed him. He seized a bottle of pyro., removed the cork, and swept it through the air. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a wild roar as he received a dose of it upon his aristocratic visage.

"Ow—ow! Yah! What's that, you uttalf ass?"

"That's a face-wash," grinned Manners. "Warranted never to come off."

"Bai Jove!"

"Have some more? I—"

But the swell of St. Jim's did not wait for any more. He dashed frantically from the study, and Manners recorked the bottle, feeling somewhat comforted.

CHAPTER 7.

Very Strange Developments.

TOM MERRY and Manners only partly undressed when they went to bed that night. They had to turn out again half an hour after lights-out, to make the expedition into the vaults for the development of Manners's negatives. Manners was very enthusiastic about it, and Tom Merry was too polite to appear anything else. Monty Lowther, indeed, had suggested sending the negatives to a firm of photographers in Rylcombe or Wayland to be developed and printed—a suggestion that had been met with a freezing glare from Manners. Manners's negatives were as the apple of his eye, and he would not allow a profane hand to touch them. And he had the feeling, common to amateurs, that the amateur hand was more reliable than the professional.

Kildare saw lights out in the Shell dormitory, after which the Shell settled down to sleep—with some exceptions. Tom Merry nodded off, convinced that Manners would call him as soon as he was wanted. Manners did not close his eyes. Many of the other fellows chatted football, and many of them were still awake when ten o'clock rolled out on the night air from the tower, and Manners slipped out of bed.



"Who's going to back me up?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Hands up!" "I will for one," said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand. "And I!" chimed in Nugent, and Bull, and Mauleverer together. "And I!" "And I!" "And I!" It was a general shout and a raising of hands then. The Remove had made up their minds.

(An exciting incident taken from the grand, long, complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "SENT TO COVENTRY!" by Frank Richards, contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

"Hallo, who's that shifting?" demanded Clifton Dane.

"It's I," said Manners.

"Looking for Gussy's burglar?" asked Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No," said Manners. "I'm looking for my bag. I left it under the bed. Ah, here it is! Tom Merry, you loafing slacker, get up!"

"Gro-o-o—oh!"

"Get up!" exclaimed Manners, shaking Tom Merry by the shoulder. "It's turned ten, and it's time we were gone!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Gore, sitting up. "Where are you chaps off to? A little expedition to the Green Man?"

Manners sniffed.

"We haven't adopted your old habits, Gore."

"Where are you off to, then?"

"Developing."

"Hey?"

"We're going to develop some photographs in the vaults," Manners explained. "You can come and look on if you like."

Gore chuckled, and rolled himself up in the bedclothes.

"Thank you for nothing!" he yawned. "When I break bounds after lights-out, it will be for something a bit more sensible than that, I reckon!"

"Ass!"

Manners and Tom Merry finished dressing, and left the dormitory, such of the Shell fellows as were still awake chuckling as they went. Manners was generally regarded as an ass for spoiling his night's rest to develop photographs,

and Tom Merry was a bigger ass for going with him. But the heroes of the Shell did not mind. They picked their way cautiously down the stairs, and reached the old oaken door which gave admittance to the stone stair leading down into the vaults. The door was deeply set in the stone, and might have been passed unseen by anyone unacquainted with St. Jim's. There was a chain and a padlock on the door, for the vaults were never used; but the padlock had been broken by some enterprising junior with a fancy for exploring the vaults. It was jammed together and looked all right, but most of the boys knew that it could be opened at will—Manners among them. Manners opened the lock, and opened the door, and the chums of the Shell stepped through upon the stone stair.

"Hold on a tick while I get the light!" said Manners.

"Right-oh!"

Manners lighted his lantern. Then he drew the oaken door shut behind him, and the two juniors descended the stone stairs, Manners leading the way, lantern in hand.

The vaults were very spacious under the old School House and the air was very heavy. The light of the lantern penetrated but a short distance into the deep and heavy gloom. The aspect of the place was chilly and grim. It was no wonder that Manners did not wish to venture into the grim, dark recesses alone.

"Well, here we are," said Tom Merry.

His voice echoed and rumbled along the stone pillars.

"Yes, here we are," said Manners. "Feels a bit parky, doesn't it? But we sha'n't be here more than half an hour."

Tom Merry groaned inwardly at the idea of half an hour

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spent in the dismal place, and thought of his warm and comfortable bed in the Shell dormitory. But he made no remark.

The vault was certainly not a cheerful place.

Manners unpacked his bag close to one of the old stone pillars, while Tom Merry looked up and down the vaults in the light of the glimmering lantern.

There was a subterranean passage from the vaults under the School House, leading into the vaults of the ruined castle near Wayland, and some adventurous juniors of St. Jim's had explored it. Tom Merry had once done so, and since that time he had not been down in the gloomy recesses below the School House.

He looked in the direction of the tunnel, which was at the other end of the long chain of vaults, and gave a sudden start.

From the dimness of the vault came a strange sound.

"Manners! Did you hear that?"

Manners looked up from his unpacking.

"Yes. What was it?"

"Blessed if I know! There can't be anybody else here, surely?"

"Phew!"

"Better put out the light for a tick."

"Right-ho!" muttered Manners. "I don't suppose any silly prefect has followed us down here, but it's just as well to be careful. It means being gated for a half-holiday at least if we're nobbled."

"Yes, rather!"

Manners extinguished the lantern.

The two juniors drew behind the stone pillars and waited. From the direction of the subterranean tunnel the sound came again.

This time it was unmistakable.

It was the sound of a heavy boot grinding on the stone as someone tramped along the passage in the direction of the vaults. In the dead silence of the subterranean depths every sound was clearly audible.

From the darkness in the distance, like a star coming out, a light appeared at the end of the vaults.

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

"It's somebody coming, Manners, with a light, from the underground tunnel! It can't be anybody belonging to St. Jim's, then."

"No fear!"

"It's not a prefect!"

"No!"

"Manners!" Tom Merry's voice sank to a low whisper. "What about the chap Gussy thought he found in the Fourth Form dorm. last night? I thought it was all rot; but—"

"Phew!"

"This looks as if there might be something in it."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hush!"

The gleam of light was approaching the two juniors. Behind the circle of light cast by the lantern appeared a dark figure, and it was approaching directly the spot where the two juniors stood.

CHAPTER 8.

The Mysterious Meeting.

LOSER and closer!

Tom Merry and Manners drew back behind the two pillars, their hearts beating hard.

Had the stranger seen them? Had he caught a glimpse of the light before they had extinguished it?

Did he know they were there?

These thoughts chased each other through the startled minds of the juniors. Who was this man? Someone, certainly, who had no right to be there. A burglar, then? And yet—

The light passed them.

The two juniors breathed again. The man, whoever he was, did not know that they were there, and had no suspicion that anyone was crouching behind the pillars.

They had caught a glimpse of him as he passed—a burly man, in a dark cloak, with a black mask on his face.

The sight of the mask thrilled the two juniors.

That he was a law-breaker of some kind was certain, or there would be no need for him to conceal his features.

But what did he want in the vaults under the School House of St. Jim's?

He had not gone towards the stairs leading up into the house. The juniors realised that the way was open to him. They had left the door unfastened above. But he did not go towards the stair. It was evidently not his intention to enter the house. Then what did he want?

It was an amazing mystery.

From behind the pillars the two juniors watched him

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breathlessly. He approached the wall, at the end of the vault—a wall, seemingly, of solid stone, and groped over it with his hand, and knocked.

Knock!

It was not a loud or heavy knock, but it seemed to boom with a thousand echoes through the deep silence of the vaults.

The juniors watched and listened, with thrilling hearts.

It was evident that the knock was a signal to someone on the other side of the wall, and that made it clear that a secret door existed there.

Who was this man who knew so well the secrets of St. Jim's?

A heavy, oblong block of stone rolled away in response to the masked man's knock, and he passed through the aperture.

The stone rolled back into its place with a slight thud.

Darkness and silence.

Tom Merry and Manners stood silent, dumb with wonder. What did it all mean? The impenetrable blackness of the vaults surrounded them now. They could hardly believe that what had happened was not a dream.

"My only hat!" muttered Tom Merry, approaching Manners in the gloom. "What do you think of that?"

"Blessed if I can make it out!" muttered Manners.

"There's more than one of them. Someone let that chap through the wall."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who can he be?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Who can the other chap be?"

"Give it up."

"And what do they want?"

"Ask me another."

"It's a giddy mystery, and no mistake," muttered Tom Merry. "I thought at first it was a burglar to rob the school; but he hasn't gone into the house. If he had gone up the steps I should have known what to think. But this looks like a meeting of some sort—as if the chaps had met here for some reason."

"My hat! A—a secret society of some kind perhaps," Manners muttered excitedly. "I shouldn't wonder."

"In that case, there may be others coming—"

"Hush! Look!"

A light twinkled in the distance from the direction of the tunnel. Faint sounds that were evidently echoes of voices and footsteps came eerily through the vault.

"More of them!" muttered Tom Merry.

"More than one this time, too."

"Yes, rather."

"What on earth can it mean?" said Tom Merry, utterly mystified.

"Hush!"

The glimmering light and the muttering voices came nearer. Two dark figures emerged from the subterranean passage. It was clear that they, like the first masked man, must have come from the ruined castle near Wayland and Rylcombe. They had followed a course of more than a mile underground. Why? What was the reason of this strange gathering in the dark, dim recesses of the vaults under the School House of St. Jim's?

As they passed the juniors, going in precisely the same direction as the first man, the boys saw them clearly in the light, and saw that both of them were masked. They passed on to the wall and knocked, as the first man had done.

The juniors watched, with bated breath.

The stone opened, and the two men passed through, and the aperture closed after them, as it had done before. Blackness once more plunged over the vault.

"My hat!"

"Wait!" whispered Manners. "There may be more of them coming."

"I wonder!"

The juniors waited. Ten minutes passed slowly by, and then there was a glimmer of a light again and a sound of footsteps in the subterranean tunnel from the old castle.

"Another!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Yes! Quiet!"

Another masked man passed the juniors. As he passed there came to their nostrils a strong scent of spirits. He was admitted by the secret door in the wall, and disappeared.

The chums of the Shell waited again.

But there was no further sound, and no more glimmering

ANSWERS

of lights in the passage from the old castle, no footsteps in the dim vaults.

It was pretty clear that the last of the masked men had arrived, and that the number of the mysterious meeting was complete.

"Five of them, at least," said Tom Merry, in a low voice, breaking the silence at last. "We've seen four, and there was one to let them in. Perhaps he arrived first, before we came down here."

"Very likely—and might have run into us if we'd been a little earlier."

"Phew!"
"Or perhaps he belongs to the school!" muttered Manners. "There may be a St. Jim's fellow mixed up in this, you know. If not, why should they meet here at all? They could meet in the old castle just as well, and save that long tramp through the underground passage. Besides, how would an outsider know the secrets of this place in this way?"

"By Jove, you're right, Manners! There's a St. Jim's fellow mixed up in it, for a dead cert.!" Tom Merry muttered excitedly.

"I should imagine so. But I don't see what we're to do," Manners said thoughtfully. "This may be a secret society of some kind; but—but it may be all rot, you know—some gang of silly asses, meeting to smoke and play cards."

"But the masks?"
"That might be simply bunkum, or they might put them on so as not to be recognised if they should be caught on the premises. They might be chaps supposed in the neighbourhood to be respectable."

"Well, they can't be burglars, I suppose," Tom Merry muttered, puzzled; "and I suppose they can't be a secret society of Anarchists. That would be a little too thick! I rather think you're right, Manners, old son—and they come here to keep it up with some of the black sheep in the school—fellows like Knox and Sefton, and perhaps Levison and Mellish of the Fourth."

"It's most likely."
"Let's see if we can find the door. It's safe now to put the light on," muttered Tom Merry. "I should hardly think there were any more of the rotters coming."

"Good enough."
The juniors lighted the lantern. Tom Merry held it up to the wall through which the masked men had passed, and examined the damp old stone carefully. He found at last a line upon the stone, which indicated the secret door, though there was nothing to show that the detached stone would open like a door.

"That's it, right enough!" murmured Manners.
"Yes, that's it."
"I suppose it opens from the other side," Tom Merry remarked. "Anyway, it would be hardly safe for us to try and open it now. Look here, what are we going to do about this? Ought we to tell anybody?"

"I should say so. They've no right to come here, whoever they are," said Manners.

"But if there's a St. Jim's chap mixed up in it, and it all came out, he would be pretty certain to be sacked from the school."

"H'm! I suppose so!"
"We don't want to bring about anything like that," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Of course, a blackguard ought to be kicked out of the school; but it's not our bizney to give him away."

"Quite right."
"Look here, we'll wait and see whether they go again, and when they go," said Tom Merry. "If we see them safe off the premises we can hold our tongues till the morning, anyway, and consult with the other chaps about it."

"Good enough! I can get on with the developing—"
"What?"
"You seem to forget that we came down here to develop negatives," said Manners, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

"Fathead!"
"Look here—"
"Do you want those blessed chaps in masks to see the blessed red lamp and drop on us when they come out?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Well no. But—"
"Then don't play the giddy goat."
And Manners, on reflection, decided that perhaps it would be more judicious not to develop his negatives just then. He repacked his bag rather discontentedly, and then the two juniors waited in the darkness, with what patience they could muster, for the reappearance of the masked men.

CHAPTER 9.

The Dormitory Secret.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY raised his head quietly from his pillow in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House.

He had not slept that night. Quite unconscious as he was of the vigil being kept below the School House in the gloomy vaults by the chums of the Shell, Lumley-Lumley had been keeping just as keen a vigil in the Fourth Form dormitory.

And his patience was rewarded. It was nearly eleven o'clock when he heard the sound of someone creeping from bed, and detected the sounds as proceeding from Levison's direction.

Levison stepped out of bed and moved noiselessly along the dormitory towards Lumley-Lumley's bed.

The Outsider of St. Jim's understood perfectly well. Levison intended to make sure that he was asleep before he proceeded to anything further. There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows of the dormitory, and Levison was visible as he crept towards the Outsider's bed.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley closed his eyes and breathed regularly.

Levison bent over his pillow. "Lumley-Lumley!" he whispered. There were marks upon Levison's face of the blows Lumley-Lumley had given him that day—his eye was discoloured, and his mouth was cut. There was hatred and malice in Levison's face as he bent over the supposed sleeper.

Lumley-Lumley made no sign. Levison appeared to be satisfied at last. He raised his head again and moved back equally silently to his own bed, and there quietly dressed himself.

The Outsider made no sound. He knew that the cad of the Fourth was about to leave the dormitory again, upon a similar expedition to that which he had made the previous night, when he had not returned alone. And this time Lumley-Lumley meant to follow him if he could. The glimmer of moonlight in the dormitory gave him a chance of watching Levison's movements.

Levison finished dressing himself, putting on some kind of soft slippers instead of his boots, for his footsteps made no sound when he moved again.

Lumley-Lumley silently watched him feeling his way along the wall of the dormitory, his hand groping along the oaken panels.

Suddenly there was a click. Levison disappeared. The next moment Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had sprung from his bed.

He ran along to the place where Levison had disappeared, and put his ear to the wall. Faintly from the other side of the oaken panels he could hear dim sounds—the sounds of someone stumbling away in the dark.

He was upon the exact location of the secret door—he knew that! His hand groped over the wall, as Levison's had groped. That the cad of the Fourth had discovered the secret of the panel for himself at some time or other the Outsider was assured. And if he had found it there was no reason why Lumley-Lumley should not do so.

The faint sounds behind the panel died away. Lumley-Lumley groped and groped. His hand pressed in a slight depression of the oak, where he felt a slight movement under the pressure.

He pressed harder. Click!
A section of the oaken panelling opened back, and a breath of cold air blew upon the face of Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

The junior's eyes gleamed with triumph. He did not pause to dress—he did not pause a second. He groped his way through the dark aperture, and closed the secret panel behind him—but did not close it quite shut, lest he should be unable to reopen it on his return.

Then he felt his way forward. The darkness was like pitch, and he guessed that there must be stairs before him, for the secret panel opened into the thickness of the wall of the school.

Very thick and solid were the old walls of St. Jim's—more than nine feet thick in some places, more than six feet thick in many places—and secret passages and stairs in the thickness of the walls were known to exist.

This was one that was not generally known evidently, and either Levison had discovered it for himself or he had learned of its existence by consulting the old sketches and plans of the school that were kept in the School House library.

Lumley-Lumley felt before him carefully with his feet before planting them down; and it was well that he did so, for the third step found no support, and his foot sank down to a step at a lower level.

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It was a narrow, spiral stair, in the thickness of the wall. Lumley-Lumley followed it cautiously, his bare feet making no sound.

There was a glimmer of a light ahead, now, showing him the bottom of the staircase. He could not go on now without the risk of discovery; but it was useless to come so far, and remain without seeing what was passing below. He had followed the spiral stair so far down that he knew he must be below the level of the ground floor of St. Jim's, on the level of the vaults.

He peered round the winding of the spiral stair.

Levison was there.

He had lighted a candle, and was stooping over a bag that lay in the dark corner. From the open bag he took a black cloak and mask, and put them on. His aspect was changed strangely as he donned the disguise.

Then he tapped at the solid stone wall before him, and extinguished the light. Lumley-Lumley heard a faint sound as of a door opening, but he could see nothing further in the blackness.

He waited!

Silence!

Not a sound came from below.

There was no doubt in Lumley-Lumley's mind of what had happened. Levison had passed through a door in the stone wall into one of the vaults below St. Jim's.

The Outsider waited a few minutes, and then he cautiously crept down the stairs.

At the bottom he felt over the stone wall. It was cold and thick, and showed no opening. His hand groped over it in vain for any means of opening it.

He took the little electric-lamp from the pocket of his pyjama jacket, and turned on the light.

The brilliant electric ray gleamed upon the damp stone wall, but it did not reveal any trace of the existence of the secret door.

Lumley-Lumley was baffled.

Possibly the door opened only from the other side. At all events, there was no means of opening it to be seen. Lumley-Lumley put his ear close to the stone, and listened. He could detect a murmur of voices on the other side.

No word clearly reached him. But he knew that talking was going on there. Levison had joined his mysterious companions. The secret door in the stone wall opened directly, then, into the meeting-place.

What did it all mean?

Was it a convivial party, such as Levison had been in the habit of frequenting at the Green Man in the village of Rylcombe.

Surely not, for in that case, why the visit to the dormitory on the previous night of Levison and his companions, and the visit, especially, to Lumley-Lumley's bed. Levison and his unknown associates were engaged in some scheme with which Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was connected—which meant, in fact, harm to the millionaire's son.

Lumley-Lumley extinguished his lamp, and stole back into the dormitory. There he bent over his bed, and arranged the pillows and bolster under the bedclothes in the form of a sleeper. That done, he slipped on his clothes, and concealed himself in the wardrobe at the end of the long room to watch. He had not long to wait.

There was a click as the secret panel opened, and into the dimness of the dormitory three figures stole silently.

Lumley-Lumley, from his place of concealment, saw them very dimly. But he could make out that two were large, as of full-grown men, and one evidently a boy. He did not need telling whom the latter was.

The three dark figures stole towards Lumley-Lumley's bed. The Outsider watched.

He saw two of the figures bend over the bed, and something was pressed down upon the head of the supposed sleeper.

Then there was a low exclamation.

The midnight raiders, whoever they were, whatever their purpose was, had discovered instantly that it was a dummy in the bed.

The low exclamation had been heard. Jack Blake sat up in bed.

"Hallo! Who's awake?" he asked, his voice sounding strange and startling in the silence of the dormitory.

Two dark figures glided instantly out of the dormitory through the secret opening. Levison remained.

Blake blinked round him, rubbing his eyes.

"Who's that?" he said.

"It's all right," said Levison, in a quiet, calm tone. "I've just got out of bed, that's all, to see whether Lumley-Lumley's gone out."

"Lumley-Lumley! Gone out!"

"Yes," said Levison sourly. "He's at his old tricks again, you see. I found him out last night, and he's gone out again to-night."

"Rats!"

"Look at his bed yourself."

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"Looks to me as if there's somebody in it," said Blake, peering through the dimness towards Lumley-Lumley's bed.

"But there isn't. It's a dummy, made up of the pillows and bolsters."

"By Jove!"

"He's gone to the Green Man, of course!"

"Rats!" said Blake. "Lumley-Lumley has stopped all that. He gave Tom Merry his word of honour on the subject."

"Yaas, wawah!" chimed in the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had been awakened by the sound of talking. "I twist Lumley-Lumley, and if he has gone out, I dare say he has a good reason. You are a wotiah, Levison."

Levison only grunted by way of reply, and returned to his bed. The juniors were soon asleep again. Levison's object, whatever it was, had been foiled for the time. Lumley-Lumley stretched himself on the floor in the roomy old wardrobe, and slept. He did not intend to return to his bed that night. The earliest rays of dawn were stealing in at the dormitory windows when the Outsider of St. Jim's awoke, and crept back to his bed, and then Levison was as fast asleep as the rest of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Secret Meeting-Place.

"H IST!" Tom Merry muttered the word as there was a slight sound in the silence and darkness of the vaults below the School House.

The chums of the Shell had waited patiently, while the slow minutes crawled by.

But there was a sound at last which told of the return of the masked men. The slight sound of the stone door opening was followed by a glimmer of light.

Tom Merry and Manners crouched behind the pillars.

Five dark figures emerged from the stone door, one of them carrying a lantern. They had arrived at different times, doubtless coming from different directions; but it was natural that they should depart together. They passed the juniors in a bunch, and were gone in a few moments, their footsteps and the light dying away in the direction of the subterranean tunnel.

The juniors hardly ventured to breathe until they were gone.

"Five of them!" murmured Manners.

"Yes."

"That's the lot, I suppose—the four we saw, and the one who let them in," said Manners. "I suppose none are likely to remain behind."

"I should say not."

"Because we might explore the place," Manners whispered. "If we can get in, we may be able to discover who they are, and what their little game is."

"Good egg!"

"Better wait a bit, though, and see whether there may be any more of them. You can't be too sure."

"Right you are."

The two juniors waited for ten minutes more. But there was no sound, and they felt pretty certain that all the members of the meeting were gone. They approached the stone wall, and turned on the light. Tom Merry examined the edges of the moving stone, and pressed it in various places, and at last, with a sudden movement, it yielded.

It rolled back, and a black opening lay before the two juniors.

The darkness was a pretty plain proof that the room was untenanted. The two juniors entered boldly, and Tom Merry flashed the light round him.

The apartment was square and walled with stone in large blocks, any one of which might have formed another movable door, for all the juniors knew.

That it had recently been occupied was evident. There were a number of cheap stools, and a table in the room, and the juniors wondered how they had been conveyed there. There was a chest, locked and padlocked, which the juniors guessed to contain refreshments in bottles—as there were evident signs that drinking and smoking had been going on, but nothing could be seen of a supply of spirits. The chest evidently contained the supplies of that sort which were used at the masked meeting.

Several used glasses, and a great deal of tobacco-ash ornamented the table. That was all the juniors could discover.

What was the meeting held for?

They could not guess.

If it was merely a convivial meeting, why did the five strangers come so far? If they met in that secret apartment any body who belonged to St. Jim's, where were the others gone?

"There may be another way out," Manners muttered, answering the unspoken question.

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Tom Merry nodded.

"I shouldn't wonder," he assented.

"They may have been keeping it up with some of the black sheep of the School House," Manners remarked. "There's been drinking and smoking going on, at all events."

"Looks like it."

"That may account for what Gussy saw, or thought he saw, in the Fourth Form dorm. last night," said Manners thoughtfully. "Suppose there's another way out of this den, and it leads into the Fourth Form dorm."

"It's possible!"

"In fact, very likely some of the Fourth—like Mellish and Levison—are the chaps who come here to drink and smoke," said Manners. "We know they've been to the Green Man in Rylcombe to do it, so why not here?"

"Likely enough."

Tom Merry took a last look round the room.

"Well, we've seen all that's to be seen here," he said.

"Let's get back. We sha'n't get much sleep to-night."

"What about developing the negatives?"

"Oh, hang the negatives!"

"But that's what we came down here for," said Manners argumentatively, "and the fellows will ask me to-morrow if I managed it all right. We don't want to tell everybody how we've been passing our time here."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I can see you're determined to get the developing done," he said. "I suppose it will be safe enough now. Let's get on with it."

"Good!"

They returned into the vaults, closing the stone door after them. Then Manners lighted the red lamp, and started. It took him considerably more than half an hour before he was finished, but he was finished at last. As Tom Merry remarked, with a sigh of relief, everything comes to an end if you wait long enough—a remark to which Manners replied only with a sniff.

They returned to the upper regions, fastening the door of the vault staircase behind them, and made their way back to the Shell dormitory. They were both very sleepy by this time. The dormitory was wrapped in slumber by the time they entered it. Tom Merry burst into a chuckle as he was removing his boots.

"Manners, old man—"

"Hallo!"

"I've got a dodge for finding out who it is in the Fourth Form that has dealings with those masked bounders."

"Good!" said Manners. "Good-night!"

He rolled into bed.

"Don't you want to hear my plan?"

"Groo!"

"Manners!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Blessed if the silly ass isn't asleep already!" growled Tom Merry, "after keeping me up all this time over his rotten negatives. My hat! There goes one o'clock. I think I'd better get to sleep, too!"

Which he forthwith proceeded to do!

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry's Little Dodge.

TOM MERRY, as he sat at the breakfast-table with the Shell on the following morning, glanced over curiously towards the Fourth Form table.

The Fourth Form—that is to say, the School House portion of the Form—were all there, and Tom Merry wondered which it was, and how many, that had dealings with the masked men who had met the previous evening in the vaults under the School House.

Tom Merry and Manners had confided the whole affair to Monty Lowther, who had heard it in amazement; but the Terrible Three had resolved to let the matter go no further yet.

Who was involved in it, and what might happen if they talked too freely, they did not know; it was better to find out more before speaking out; and as Monty Lowther so sapiently remarked, there was always time to jaw.

Tom Merry scanned the faces at the Fourth-Form table, in search of signs of late hours; and in one face, at least, he found the signs he sought.

That face was Levison's.

Levison was looking very pale and harassed, and seemed to have a headache. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked him over. True enough, Levison not infrequently looked like that. But the Terrible Three agreed that he looked much worse than usual this morning.

"He's one of them!" Manners remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I think it's very likely," he said.

"I feel jolly sure of it," said Monty Lowther. "What about Mellish?"

"He looks more fit than Levison."

"True. And Lumley-Lumley?" suggested Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head decidedly.

"I think not," he replied. "I'm sure Lumley-Lumley meant what he said to me, when he gave me his word of honour that he was done with that kind of thing."

"He broke out before, you know, after reforming."

"Yes; but—Well, I don't think he's mean enough to break his word."

Monty Lowther did not feel quite so sure about it; but the matter was suffered to drop.

Tom Merry had a scheme for surprising the member or members of the Fourth Form who were connected with the secret society, into giving themselves away. He slipped into the Fourth Form-room a short time before first lesson, and was busy with the chalk on the blackboard. He turned the blackboard so that it would be visible to the Fourth-Formers when they took their places, but was turned away from the master's desk. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was short-sighted, too.

Tom Merry was seated at one of the desks when the Fourth Form came in. Tom's place, of course, was in the Shell class-room, but he intended to watch the effect of his device upon the Fourth.

He had designed a mask, with chalk, on the blackboard. Over it he inscribed the number "5," and under it he had written the word "To-night"

It looked very like a mysterious message from a secret society. As a matter of fact, it meant nothing at all; but it would startle any fellow in the Fourth who had dealings with a masked society of five members, in the habit of meeting at night.

Several of the juniors stared at the blackboard as they passed it, going to their places, in surprise.

But when Lumley-Lumley passed it, he started violently, and stopped, and stared at the mysterious inscription.

The Outsider of St. Jim's could scarcely believe his eyes.

That Levison of the Fourth was in secret communication with some unknown persons, who entertained designs against him, the Outsider knew.

But what did this mean?

Not for an instant did he dream of connecting the mark on the blackboard with Tom Merry. His only thought was that it was a message to Levison from the mysterious unknown whom he had secretly introduced into the dormitory the previous night, and who had vanished at the sound of Jack Blake's voice, like ghosts at cockerow.

But where were the mysterious strange ones now, then, and how had they obtained access to the class-room without being observed?

Lumley-Lumley's brain was in a whirl.

Tom Merry watched him, with a soft chuckle—yet with surprise on his face. For it was evident to him now, in spite of his faith in Lumley-Lumley, that the Outsider of St. Jim's was the fellow he wanted to find.

Lumley-Lumley pulled himself together with an effort, and went to his place, looking like a fellow in a dream.

Levison was last in of the Form as he usually was. He passed the blackboard, and glanced at it carelessly, and started. Tom Merry noticed his start; but he could stay no longer, as he was already late for class in his own Form-room. Mr. Lathom was looking at him over his glasses.

"Merry! Is that you, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "I'm just going, sir."

And he went, before the master of the Fourth could ask him any questions.

He hurried into the Shell-room, just in time to get twenty-five lines from Mr. Linton, his Form-master, for unpunctuality.

Monty Lowther and Manners looked at him with mingled sympathy and inquiry. But there was little opportunity of speaking under the eagle eye of Mr. Linton. Tom Merry attempted it, with disastrous results. Mr. Linton was taking them upon a personally-conducted tour through ancient Athens, and all his thoughts ought to have been fixed upon Pericles and Alcibiades, but he had one eye open for the Terrible Three.

"Merry!"

The name was rapped out suddenly in the midst of the adventures of Alcibiades.

"Ye-es, sir," said Tom Merry, in dismay.

"Were you talking to Lowther?"

"Talking to Lowther, sir!"

"Will you answer my question, instead of repeating my words like a parrot, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Were you talking to Lowther?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Take fifty lines."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Linton, breathing hard through his nose, resumed the

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"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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adventures of Alcibiades. Never had the Athenian hero bored the Terrible Three so much—he seemed to have become suddenly as intolerable as Julius Caesar or Cicero. Perhaps he bored Mr. Linton, too, for the master of the Shell seemed to be paying more attention to the Terrible Three than to Alcibiades and the political state of Athens.

"Did it work?" murmured Manners, after a pause.

"Yes. Lumley-Lumley saw it, and—"

"Manners!"

"Ow!"

"Manners!" shouted Mr. Linton.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Were you speaking?"

"Speaking, sir?"

"Yes, Ma'am, Mrs. Were you speaking to Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take fifty lines. Did you answer Manners, Merry?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Take a hundred lines."

"Oh, sir!"

"I will keep order in this class, or I will know the reason why," said Mr. Linton; "the next boy who takes a history lesson as an opportunity for holding private conversations, will be detained for two hours after school."

That settled it. Tom Merry did not seek to impart any information on the subject of his device to Manners and Lowther until the recess after third lesson, when the Shell were released from their class-room for ten minutes. Manners and Lowther caught Tom Merry, one by either arm, and marched him out into the old quad.

"Now?" demanded both together.

Tom Merry laughed.

"It worked!" he said.

"Who saw it?"

Lumley-Lumley gave himself away, and I thought Levison did, but I wasn't sure about Levison. The others, as far as I could see, thought it was a joke of some sort."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"Lumley-Lumley, hey?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "I suppose he knows something about it; but it may be something quite innocent, of course."

"Oh, of course!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "He is an innocent sort of bird—I don't think. How are you going to bowl him out?"

"Ask him."

"Phew! That will give the whole show away, with a vengeance."

"I trust him," Tom Merry said firmly. "I believe he will be able to explain all right. Anyway, we shall get at what he knows on the subject."

"And if he won't talk—"

"I think he will."

"If he won't," said Manners, "we'll bump it out of him. And as it happens, there he goes—we can catch him under the elms."

The Outsider of St. Jim's had passed, at a little distance, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his eyes bent upon the ground, a thoughtful frown upon his brow, as if he were thinking out some problem.

"Come on," said Tom Merry abruptly.

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three followed upon the track of the Outsider of St. Jim's. The Fourth-Former did not observe them. He walked on in the same thoughtful way, looking neither to the right nor to the left. As they passed under the thick old elms, Tom Merry gave the signal, and the Terrible Three ran forward.

Lumley-Lumley started out of his reverie.

"Hallo!" he said. "What do you fellows want?"

"You!" said Monty Lowther.

"I guess—" began Lumley-Lumley.

"Shut up, Lowther!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right, Lumley-Lumley—we want to ask you a question, that's all."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Go ahead!" he said.

"What do you know about the secret meetings that are held in the vault under the School House at night?"

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It came so suddenly that the Outsider could not be prepared for it. He uttered a startled cry, and staggered back.

CHAPTER 12.

The Outsider's Plan.

"WHAT—what do you mean?"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley gasped out the words. He stared wildly at Tom Merry. The Shell fellow's glance never wavered.

"I mean what I say, Lumley-Lumley," he replied quietly. "I have asked you a question, and you can answer it or not as you think fit; but if you don't answer it, I shall know what to think. What do you know about the secret meetings that are held in the vaults under the School House?"

"You—you took me by surprise," Lumley-Lumley muttered.

"That's no reason why you shouldn't explain," said Monty Lowther.

"I—I guess I'll explain soon enough, when I know what you're asking me for," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "I was knocked off my balance." He was recovering himself now. "What do you mean? What do you know about the secret meetings?"

"More than you might guess," said Manners. "We watched them last night."

"You did! Great snakes!"

"And I put that rubbish on the blackboard this morning to see what effect it would have on the Fourth, and I saw you give yourself away," said Tom Merry. "That's why I asked you the question. I hope you will answer it."

"You—you put that on the blackboard?"

"Yes."

Lumley-Lumley drew a deep breath.

"Blessed if I should have guessed that," he said. "I—I thought it was a message of some sort to Levison, though I couldn't imagine how it got there."

"Levison!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"I guess so! Look here," said Lumley-Lumley abruptly, "I guess you know as much about this matter as I do; though I can't imagine how you got on to it. I reckon we'd better compare notes, and see what we know."

"Agreed," said Tom Merry.

"That is, of course, if you trust me," said Lumley-Lumley, with one of his old sardonic looks. "I guess Lowther doesn't."

Monty Lowther coloured a little.

"Well, you can't blame a chap for not trusting you!" he exclaimed. "You have always been so full of blessed trick. I don't know whether this mayn't be another."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "I've said that Lumley-Lumley is fair and square, and I trust him all along the line."

"Thanks," said Lumley-Lumley quietly. "You'll find that you're right, in this case, Tom Merry. As a matter of fact, there's some underhand bizny going on in the School House, and I guess it's up against me, and against nobody else."

"I'll explain first," said Tom Merry. "Then you can tell us what you know."

"All serene!"

And Tom Merry concisely told the story of the visit to the vaults for the purpose of developing Manners' negatives, and of its surprising results. Lumley-Lumley listened with growing wonder.

"My hat!" he exclaimed when the captain of the Shell had finished. "I guess it's queer. That room must have a door on each side, and while you were on one side, I was on the other, I guess. You were there on your lonesome, and I was tracking Levison."

"Levison! What has he to do with it?"

"I want to know, I guess."

The Outsider, in his turn, explained. It was the turn of the Terrible Three to be surprised. Lumley-Lumley and Tom Merry had been able to enlighten one another to some extent; yet it was only, as it were, making darkness visible. They were more puzzled than ever.

"It looks as if it's something up against you, Lumley, by the way you describe their going to your bed," Tom Merry said slowly. "But what can the little game be? And how is Levison mixed up in it?"

Next Thursday:

**"UNDER
SEALED
ORDERS!"**

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



There was a wild and whirling scrimmage. The juniors were tumbling out of bed on all sides, catching up pillows and bolsters to join in the conflict. (See chapter 17.)

"I don't know how Levison is mixed up in it, unless it's through some of the rascals he's met at the Green Man in Rylcombe, or the Bird in the Hand at Wayland," said Lumley-Lumley. "But I can guess what the game is. My father has made a lot of enemies in his time—no man becomes a millionaire without that, I reckon—and I guess this is something up against him, through me—and they're making use of Levison."

"To injure you in some way?"

"I guess so."

"But—but Levison would never be so bad as that!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He couldn't be a party to introducing ruffians into the House to do you an injury, Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley shrugged his shoulders.

"They mayn't have told him the whole story, and they mayn't intend me any actual injury, either," he said. "There's such a thing as kidnapping a millionaire's son to get money out of his pater!"

"Phew!"

"I guessed it was something of the sort when I first got on to this thing," said Lumley-Lumley. "I remember hearing you fellows talking about Gussy being kidnapped once, and kept a prisoner in the old castle near Rylcombe."

"Yes, that was a long time ago."

"It might happen again—only, from what I've seen, I guess I'm to be the giddy victim, instead of Gussy," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "But I'm going to find out."

"By questioning Levison?"

The Outsider laughed.

"That wouldn't be any use, I reckon. Levison would laugh at the whole story, and warn his friends secretly, and the game would be put off to a later time, when it was safe."

"Yes, I suppose that's very likely," Tom Merry assented.

"I guess it's certain. No, I'm going to find out for myself. I'm going to their next meeting!"

"What?"

"That's my little game. I guess they'll congregate here every night until they get their blow in," said Lumley-Lumley. "and instead of Levison going to the meeting to-night, I'm going in his place."

"But he'll never agree—"

"I sha'n't ask him. When he leaves the dorm. I shall follow, and I'll rope him in and tie him up," said the Outsider, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. "I sha'n't stand on ceremony with a worm like that, and if he tries to make a row I'll give him a crack over the napper that will stop him. I'm going to borrow his mask and domino and go in, instead of Levison, and smell out the whole game."

"My hat!"

"I guess that's the lay-out," said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"But—but it's too dangerous!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If they discover you, they may do you real injury—and besides, it's placing yourself in their hands, if they are wanting to kidnap you."

"I'm going to risk it."

"You can't! Now, look here—"

"I've made up my mind," said Lumley-Lumley quietly. "You fellows can help me if you like, and make it safer. Suppose we arrange for you to be in the vaults where you did the developing at the same time that I'm taking Levison's place in the meeting-room? Then, if I'm in danger, I'll whistle. You can run in, and in the confusion I shall get clear. You can have cricket stumps with you."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances.

It was a wild adventure, that exactly appealed to their tastes.

"By Jove! It sounds like a book," said Monty Lowther. "I don't see why it shouldn't work, you fellows."

"It's horribly risky for Lumley-Lumley," said Tom Merry slowly. "We don't know how desperate the rascals may be."

"Oh, they won't go so far as murder," said the Outsider coolly. "Lumley couldn't get mixed up in anything so bad as that, it stands to reason. Suppose they kidnap me—well, to get me away they'll have to go through the vaults, and you chaps will be waiting there, and you can have Kangaroo, and Dane, and Glyn, and some more if you like, to make all sure."

"Good egg!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, after a pause. "We'll let a few of the fellows into it, and we'll be there with stumps ready. If you are in danger, give that whistle of yours—we shall hear it, and we'll rush in."

"All serene!"

"And we'd better help you with Levison in the first place," said Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"No. I'm going to ask Blake to do that. You fellows had better be down in the giddy catacombs at sharp ten, and wait there. I'll speak to Blake and tell him to have a jaw with you about it. No need to let Levison see us all confabbing together. He's as sharp as a needle, and he may get wind of what's going on if he catches half a word."

"Right-ho!"

And after a little further talk they separated.

Needless to say, the Terrible Three waited and watched for the evening with the keenest anxiety.

In the afternoon Jack Blake joined them as they were chatting in their study after school. Blake's face told at once that Lumley-Lumley had spoken to him.

"This is a giddy go, and no mistake," was Blake's first remark.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry. "Lumley-Lumley has let you into it?"

"Yes. It seems like a giddy romance. I suppose the Outsider isn't pulling my leg—what?" said Blake with a lingering doubt.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; it's honest injun," he said.

"It's a rum go," said Blake. "I don't think I shall quite believe it unless I see Levison go on the war-path to-night. I never thought quite so bad as this, even of Levison. If it turns out as bad as Lumley-Lumley thinks, it will mean the sack for that cad."

"And serve him jolly well right!" said Manners emphatically. "St. Jim's would be all the better for seeing the last of Levison."

"Oh, yes, that's right enough; but I can't help thinking that Lumley-Lumley's romancing, or else that he's had a bad dream," said Blake. "We shall see!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed the study door open. "Weally, Blake, I've been lookin' for you for ten minutes. Are you goin' to the footah practice, or not?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake walked away with his elegant chum. But his manner was very absent during the footer practice. He could not help thinking of the dormitory secret, and wondering, as

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he expressed it, whether Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been pulling his leg, or not.

CHAPTER 14.

Into the Lion's Den.

JACK BLAKE did not go to sleep that night.

He was far too excited to think of sleep. Fortunately, Levison was too busy with his own thoughts to have any attention to bestow on Blake, and as it never occurred to him that Blake knew anything about the matter, he never thought of suspecting the hero of the Fourth.

After lights out, Blake waited sleeplessly; and neither did Jerrold Lumley-Lumley sleep, but he waited and watched with perfect calmness. His nerve seemed to be of iron; and the peril he had marked out for himself that night did not seem to affect him in the least.

Boy as he was, Lumley-Lumley had been through many a wild experience before he had come to St. Jim's, and had seen many things that it was not good for a boy to see. His strange life had hardened his character, and perhaps his heart. Under the influence of Tom Merry & Co. he was learning better things; but the iron determination and courage he had learned in many a strange land remained unaltered.

He was looking forward to the night's adventure as calmly as he might have looked forward to an evening party.

Of the three juniors who remained awake in the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House after lights out, Lumley-Lumley was assuredly the coolest.

Ten o'clock struck from the clock-tower.

Blake quivered with excitement. But there was no sound in the Fourth-Form dormitory. Half-past ten! The chime died away, and then there was a sound of someone rising.

Levison was out of bed!

The moonlight glimmered in at the high windows, and showed the cad of the Fourth dimly, as he dressed himself.

He had just finished dressing when Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stopped from his bed. Levison swung round at the sound of a movement, and stared at the dimly-seen figure of the Outsider of St. Jim's.

"Is that you, Lumley-Lumley?" he muttered huskily.

"I guess so."

"You're going out, eh?"

"No fear."

"What are you getting up for, then?"

"Just for a stroll downstairs," said the Outsider with a cool irony.

Levison drew a deep breath.

"You can go," he said. "I'm not going to interfere with you."

"I mean down the secret stairs," said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully.

"What?"

"Through the panel, you know—the spiral stair in the wall."

Levison gave a hoarse cry.

"You—you hound! You watched me last night, then?"

"I guess so."

"You—you were not gone out!" Levison panted in rage and dismay.

"Not much! I was in the dorm. the whole time, and the night before, too," said the Outsider coolly. "I'll trouble you to get back on your bed, Levison!"

"What for? Hang you!"

"Because I'm going to tie you there," said Lumley-Lumley, taking a coil of rope from under his pillow. "I guess that's why."

Levison clenched his fists.

"You'd better not try," he muttered, and then gave a gasp as he was seized from behind. "Oh! Oh! Who—who's that?"

"Me!" said Jack Blake promptly and ungrammatically, as he twisted the cad of the Fourth over upon his bed. "Lie down, you rotter!"

"L-let me go!" gasped Levison. "Let me go, or—I'll yell and wake the house!"

Blake chuckled.

"And what about your friends in the vault?" he asked.

Levison panted.

"You—you know about that?"

"I-guess we do," said Lumley-Lumley, "and we're going to know more. If he makes a sound, Blake, ram the sponge into his mouth! You can tie it there with this length of twine!"

"What-ho!" said Blake cheerfully.

Blake held Levison down, spreadeagled upon the bed, in a muscular grip, while Jerrold Lumley-Lumley tied his hands and feet to the bedposts. In a few minutes Ernest Levison was a helpless prisoner.

The cad of the Fourth was trembling and shivering with

wildly-mingled emotions. He could not resist the two juniors by force; but he did not know what was intended to follow his own capture. By making a disturbance he might alarm the men in the vault, and enable them to make their escape; but then he reflected how far the vault was from the dormitory—they could hear nothing. It was impossible to give the alarm, and if he roused the masters in the School House by calling out, he would only betray himself without being able to warn his associates.

And in that extremity, with the fear of exposure and ruin hanging over him, his courage deserted him, and he shivered and trembled as he lay on the bed.

"You'll keep an eye on him, Blake?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess I'll be back soon."

Levison gave a faint cry of terror.

"Where are you going, Lumley?"

"Only to see your friends."

"You—you mad idiot! You—"

"Stick that sponge in his mouth, Blake; he's going to make a row, and we don't want any giddy prefects on in this scene!" said Lumley-Lumley coolly.

"Lumley! I—O-o-o-o-chi! Groc!"

And Levison's voice was cut short by the sponge, which was jammed into his mouth, and which Blake proceeded to tie in its place with the twine. Lumley-Lumley grinned softly and dressed himself.

By this time half a dozen of the Fourth were awake, and were eagerly demanding to know what was the matter. Jack Blake enlightened them, and there were exclamations of amazement. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in bed, groped for his eyeglass, adjusted it, and turned it upon Blake in the dim light, with a look that might have withered him.

"Pewwaps you will admit now, Blake, that I was wight the othah night, and that there was someone in the dormitowwy!" he exclaimed majestically.

"I shouldn't wonder," Blake assented calmly. "One of the rotters sneaking up here to spy out the lay of the land very likely."

"You persisted in diswedditin' the stowy!"

"Well, why didn't you capture the chap?" demanded Blake. "What was the good of dabbing him on the chivy and letting him go? That's what I want to know."

"Hear, hear!" said Digby.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You see, you mucked it up, as you do everything!" said Blake.

"Weally, you ass—"

Click!

The secret panel had closed behind the Outsider of St. Jim's. The sound stopped the talk in the dormitory. The Outsider had gone into peril that might be deadly. The juniors knew that, and they waited in keen and tense anxiety for his return.

Lumley-Lumley's nerve was of iron, as he descended the spiral stair.

Even now the perilous adventure was close at hand he did not shrink from it. At the bottom of the steps he turned on his electric-lamp, and stooped over the bag he had seen Levison take his disguise from the previous night. The Outsider, with a hand that did not tremble, enveloped himself in the black cloak, and placed the mask on his face.

He was about the same size as Levison; his clothes were similar where they showed. In the mask and domino he was an exact reproduction of the cad of the Fourth as he had appeared when he knocked at the door of the secret vault the night before.

Lumley-Lumley drew a deep breath.

On the other side of the hidden door in the stone wall were the men Levison had met, whom Levison had brought up to the Fourth Form dormitory by the hidden stair, for a secret purpose—a purpose, however, which the Outsider of St. Jim's could guess.

Five of them, according to the account he had received from Tom Merry, and in all probability men of the most reckless and desperate character.

It was a perilous adventure he had entered upon, and for a single instant even the cool, resolute Outsider of St. Jim's paused, with his hand raised to knock upon the stone.

But it was only for an instant.

Then he set his teeth and knocked, as he had heard Levison do on the previous night. The knock echoed faintly, with a hollow sound, up the spiral stair.

There was the sound of a movement on the other side of

the wall, and Lumley-Lumley felt a cold draught of his face as a block of stone rolled back.

He knew that there was an opening before him now, but he could see nothing. There was no light, only deep, intense blackness.

But he knew that he was expected to enter, and he stepped boldly in. He knew that Levison had done so, and it was his cue to do exactly as Levison had done. A hand fell upon his shoulder, and in spite of himself he shivered a little. He was led forward in the darkness, and he heard the stone door close behind him.

"Light!" said a voice.

Lumley-Lumley's heart was beating fast.

A light flared out, and the room was illuminated; and Lumley-Lumley gazed round him, through the holes in his mask, with glinting eyes at the masked men in the secret vault.

CHAPTER 15.

The Kidnappers.

LUMLEY-LUMLEY caught his breath for a moment, but only for a moment.

Then he was cool as ice again.

He looked round at the strange assembly. There were five men round the table in the secret vault, and all of them wore black dominoes and were masked.

Who were they?

Their nearest acquaintances could not have recognised them. All that could be seen of them was the glinting eyes through the openings in the masks.

There was a smell of spirits in the room. Several bottles and glasses stood upon the table, and the chest in the corner was open. The damp, heavy air of the vault was laden with fumes of tobacco.

Lumley-Lumley's eyes wandered from the masked men round the vault. Opposite the door by which he had entered, and which was now closed again, was a wall of solid blocks of stone, and in that wall, he knew, was the secret door known to the Terrible Three.

On the other side of that wall, if the arrangement had been kept, Tom Merry & Co. were waiting. Were they there? Would they be able to open the stone door in case of necessity? The voice of the leader of the masked men interrupted the Outsider's reflections.

The leader, a fat man, from under whose mask protruded a big cigar, and who had a general flavour of rum and gin about him, sat at the head of the table. There seemed to be something familiar to Lumley-

Lumley's eyes in the outlines of his figure, concealed as it was by the folds of the ample domino. The junior had little doubt that he was one of the blackguards from Rylcombe or Wayland whom he had met in his earlier days, when he was the Outsider of St. Jim's, and the most reckless scapegrace in the school.

"Well, my lad," said the masked man, in a deep voice, removing the cigar from his mouth, "is it all right for to-night?"

Lumley-Lumley smiled slightly.

He knew the voice. It was that of the landlord of the Bird in Hand in Wayland, a man with whom the Outsider had played many a game of nap in the old days, and whom he had "skinned" without mercy. For the Outsider, whom the rascal had looked upon as a pigeon to pluck, had had more skill in play than his grown-up competitor, and he had come out best in the contest, leaving Mr. Gryce with a very sore feeling on the subject. Mr. Gryce's feelings were by no means friendly towards the Outsider of St. Jim's, and still less so since his reform.

"Yes," said Lumley-Lumley, in a low voice, and imitating as far as he could the metallic, sharp tones of Levison; "it will be all serene."

He coughed as he spoke, as if he had a slight cold. That would account for any little difference in the voice.

"He isn't gone out?" asked the masked man.

"Not to-night."

"It's curious," said another of the masked men. "I have been asking some questions in Rylcombe to-day, and it seems that Lumley-Lumley has not been there—I mean, he hasn't been seen at his old haunts. Where has he been for the last two nights, then?"

"I don't know," said the junior.

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"The same old game, I suppose?" said Mr. Gryce, with a hoarse laugh.

"I can't say."
 "You've got a cold, my boy," said Mr. Gryce, looking at the Outsider as he coughed again. "It will be just as well for you when this business is over. Is it safe to go up into the dormitory now?"

"That depends. What is the plan exactly?"
 The masked man stared.

"You know the plan as well as I do," he replied. "If Lumley-Lumley is in bed, we have only to press the chloroformed rag over his face, and he will not wake up. Then it will be easy enough to carry him down the stair in the wall, and get him here."

Lumley-Lumley grinned under his mask. He understood clearly enough now. He was to have been chloroformed in bed—that was why the rascals had come to his bedside each of the previous occasions when Levison had let them into the Fourth Form dormitory by the secret panel.

"But I mean after that?" he said. "After you have got him here, Mr. Gryce?"

The masked man uttered an oath.
 "No names here!" he exclaimed angrily. "Have you no more sense than that? You know that it is not safe, you young fool!"

"Sorry! I—"
 "Well," said Mr. Gryce, recovering himself, "after he's here, it's simple enough. We get him along the underground tunnel to the old castle, and we shall keep him there. As nobody knows the dormitory secret excepting yourself, he cannot be followed or traced, I should think. Nobody can possibly guess how he went."

"That's right enough."
 "Nobody can guess that he's in the old castle, I reckon. But if he's not safe there, we can easily get him to the island in the river, where he certainly couldn't be found. At one place or the other, we shall keep him safely enough until we have made terms with his father."

"With Mr. Lumley-Lumley?"
 "Exactly!"

"You know all that, youngster," said one of the men. "What are you getting at now?"

"I want to know where I come in," said Lumley-Lumley, still in Levison's metallic tones, which he imitated wonderfully well. "In the first place, how much are you going to ask Mr. Lumley-Lumley?"

"A thousand pounds."
 "And you think you will get it?"

Mr. Gryce chuckled.
 "I shall get it, if the millionaire ever wants to see his son again," he replied.

"But supposing he won't pay up?"
 "The boy will be kept till he does—on short commons. When he has starved for a week or so, I dare say he will be willing to write a letter, in his own hand, urging his father to pay the money."

And the group of masked rascals chuckled together.
 "Not much difficulty on that subject," said Mr. Gryce, evidently well satisfied with his scheme. "The millionaire is bound to cash up. What is a thousand pounds to a man like Lascelles Lumley-Lumley? Nothing. He could pay ten thousand and not miss it. I reckon we shall get the money. If we don't the boy will suffer. They can't get on to us—our faces have never been seen here, even by one another. We shall take it in turns to keep guard on the boy where we keep him, and he will never see anything but a masked face. The whole thing is perfectly simple, owing to your knowing the dormitory secret."

"But—"
 "Time we got to business, I think," said another of the group.

"Wait a bit," said Lumley-Lumley, with a cough; "hold on! I want to know where I come in. How am I to have my whack?"

"It's agreed that you're to have fifty pounds," said Mr. Gryce. "That's a good slice, considering that you take practically none of the risk. Besides that I shall give you back your I O U's, and release you from the money you owe me—a good sum, too, as you know very well. It's making Lumley-Lumley pay your debts—a very fair revenge upon him for deserting his old friends."

Lumley-Lumley nodded.
 He could understand now how the cad of the Fourth had been drawn into this rascally scheme. Levison had been a far more reckless gambler than the Outsider, and he had had far worse luck. He was deep in the clutches of Mr. Gryce and his friends—he owed money, and they had his signature upon it. They had only to show his papers at the school, to get him instantly expelled from St. Jim's. His fate was in their hands. The fact that he had had such dealings with them was more than sufficient to make Dr. Holmes expel him from St. Jim's. Perhaps threats of something of the sort had

been used, to urge Levison to this—perhaps he had been urged on still more by his hatred of Lumley-Lumley, and his desire to be revenged upon the Outsider for what he regarded as his desertion. Yet it was possible that the whole scheme was Levison's in the first place; and certainly the masked rascals could never have known anything of the secret panel in the dormitory, unless Levison had told them. Levison had discovered that, and he was using his discovery for this purpose. It was pretty clear that there were the makings of a very thorough criminal in Ernest Levison.

"Fifty pounds!" repeated Lumley-Lumley, for the sake of saying something, "and when am I to have the money?"

"When the millionaire pays up, of course."
 "Good," said the Outsider. "I only wanted to make the thing clear. It couldn't be carried through at all without me."

"I know that," said Mr. Gryce, "when you told me about the secret panel, and suggested carrying off Lumley-Lumley, and getting money out of his father, I know that I didn't think much of it at first. It was your idea, and I'm willing to admit it. But we are taking all the trouble and risk; you've simply got to get back into bed, and hold your tongue, while we deal with the boy. The sooner we do it the better, too. If the coast is clear up there, we may as well get to work at once."

"And we shan't come here again," said one of the masked men. "One more drink all round before we get to work."

"Good," said Mr. Gryce, "about not coming here again, I don't know. If we work this game successfully, we may try it again—with another boy perhaps—that fellow D'Arcy, for instance. He was kidnapped once—that was what put the idea into your head, I suppose, youngster?"

Mr. Gryce mixed himself a glass of rum and water—a great deal of rum, and very little water. A glass was filled for the junior, but he did not touch it. Lumley-Lumley was feeling a little nonplussed now. He had discovered what he had come there to find out, and his next step was doubtful. The masked rascals were ready to enter the dormitory now, to carry out their scheme; but that was not what the Outsider wanted. Now that he had found out all he wanted to know, he only wanted to get clear of them. But that was not likely to be easy. He was conscious, too, that one of the masked men, who had not spoken at all, was watching him with a fixed gaze. He did not venture to look at the man, in case it should strengthen his suspicions, if they were aroused; but he was conscious all the time of that steady, unwavering, watchful gaze. He backed away a little towards the door behind him. The man who was watching him started to his feet.

"Don't be in a hurry, kid," he said, speaking for the first time, "we ain't finished here yet, I think."

Lumley-Lumley's heart beat.
 "What's the matter?" asked Mr. Gryce.

"Our young friend has got rid of that bump on his chin remarkably quick," said the man, still regarding Lumley-Lumley fixedly. "Don't you reckon so?"

Mr. Gryce uttered a sharp exclamation.
 "What! My dear Collier him!"

Lumley-Lumley made a spring backwards. But even as he did so, two of the masked men seized him, and he was dragged forward to the table again, a helpless prisoner in their grasp.

CHAPTER 16.

Rush to the Rescue.

"LET'S see him!" said Mr. Gryce, between his teeth. "Now you mention it, Ginger, I remember the youngster had a bump where we could see it, under the mask, last night, and I said it came from a fight with Lumley-Lumley. Where's that bump gone?"

"That's what I've been wondering," said Ginger.
 "Take his mask off."

Lumley-Lumley did not resist.
 He knew that it was useless in the grasp of two burly men. Two of them dragged off his mask and his mask. There was a yell of amazement from the gang of kidnapers.

"Lumley-Lumley!"
 "Himself!"
 "Gosh!"

Mr. Gryce stared blankly, almost dazedly, at the Outsider of St. Jim's. He seemed to be scarcely able to believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Lumley-Lumley!" he gasped at last.
 The Outsider was as cool as ice.

"I guess so," he said.
 "Lumley-Lumley! My word!"

The man called Ginger grinned unpleasantly under his mask.

"I reckoned there was some game on, from the first, and I've been watching 'im," he said, "it's a game to find out

about us—he has been watching Levison, I reckon. He's come down 'ere instead of the other."

Mr. Gryce clenched his hands.

"He's come down, and saved us the trouble of fetching 'im," he said. "We've got him 'ere now, and he won't get away again so easy."

"But—but if the game's known—!" began one of the masked men uneasily.

Mr. Gryce uttered an oath.

"I don't care if it's known! We can get him away now, under the chloroform, and keep him in another place—we'll try the old hut in the wood, or some such place, and he'll be safe, and even if Levison talks, there ain't any evidence against us. Where is Levison, you young villain?"

"He's in the dormitory," said Lumley-Lumley, coolly. "He's tied down to his bed, and three or four fellows are watching over him. You won't see Levison."

Mr. Gryce's teeth came together hard.

"It wasn't a very safe game to play," he said. "If there was danger for us in it, Master Lumley-Lumley, you might never get out of this vault alive."

"I don't think you'd go as far as that, Gryce—"

"Hang you! Hang you! You know my name, of course."

"I know your voice, and if you carry this game on, I shall give evidence against you," said the Outsider coolly. "For the sake of old times, I'm willing to let you off—if you clear out at once, and give up the scheme."

"Give up five thousand pounds, hey?" said Mr. Gryce, savagely. "Not if I know it. With five thousand quid between us, it would pay us to clear out of the country."

"Five thousand—and you told Levison one thousand," said Lumley-Lumley. "You were going to give him fifty out of five thousand. You know how to drive a bargain, I guess, Mr. Gryce."

He dragged Lumley-Lumley towards the door by which he had entered.

But the Outsider stopped.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.

"Come—buck up—"

"Not that way!" said Lumley-Lumley, hurriedly. "They'll be after us in the vaults—come this way!"

He quickly opened the door by which he had entered the secret vault, that gave admittance to the spiral stair into the Fourth Form dormitory.

Tom Merry understood at once. It was a safer and quicker retreat, and in a minute or less, they could be with the Fourth Form.

"This way!" shouted Tom Merry.

The Shell fellows followed him and Lumley-Lumley. The masked men had been quite knocked out, for the moment, in the surprise of the attack. It was just as well to be gone before they recovered themselves. If they chose to follow the juniors, the odds on Tom Merry's side would be irresistible, once the juniors were in the dormitory along with the Fourth.

The excited juniors dashed blindly up the spiral stair in the dark.

Tom Merry stayed at the foot of the stair till the last, and drew the stone door shut after them.

Then he followed his comrades up the stair, panting. The conflict in the secret room had been brief but breathless.

In the vault, the masked men staggered up. Most of them had had very hard knocks, and one of them was stunned. Mr. Gryce put his hand to his head, where a big bruise was forming, and cursed.

"What—what was it?" he gasped. "Who was they?"

"The young villain had his friends close at 'and," gasped

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"You mind your own business," said Mr. Gryce. "Ginger, my lad, get the chloroform. I reckon the young 'ound will be sorry he came down 'ere."

Lumley-Lumley did not flinch. He put his lips together, and uttered a sudden loud, shrill whistle. The action was so unexpected that the masked men made no motion whatever to stop him.

"Stop 'im!" Gryce yelled. "Silence 'im, can't you?"

A hand was clapped over Lumley-Lumley's mouth.

At the same moment, the stone door of the vault rolled open; the whistle had been heard on the other side, and Tom Merry & Co. were ready. There were six sturdy juniors there, all armed with cricket stumps or bats, waiting for the signal from Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. The shrill whistle rang through the vault; and Tom Merry's hand was already upon the stone door. It rolled open, and the juniors dashed into the secret room.

The interruption was utterly unexpected: the masked men were taken totally by surprise.

Ginger was soaking a cloth with chloroform, ready to be used upon Lumley-Lumley, and the other men were standing round.

Tom Merry & Co. rushed upon them without warning.

"Sock it to 'em!" roared Tom Merry.

"Hurray!"

"Look out!" gasped Mr. Gryce.

But there was no time to look out.

The rush of the juniors hurled the masked men to right and left, the Shell fellows swiping out recklessly with bats and stumps. The masked rascals were knocked flying, and Tom Merry caught Lumley-Lumley by the arm.

"Come on!" he exclaimed.

Ginger. "They rushed us, and they 'ad cricket bats. Ow! My head!"

There was a chorus of groans from the masked men.

Mr. Gryce ground his teeth.

He understood now how thoroughly he had been "done" by the Outsider of St. Jim's, and his rage knew no bounds.

"The game's up, guv'nor," said Ginger. "We're done 'ere. We'd better 'ook it while we've got the chance."

Mr. Gryce shouted out an oath.

"I'm not going without the boy," he said.

"What!"

"Let's follow them," said Gryce savagely, "we know the way, and there's a chance yet. We've got cudgels 'ere, and they're as good as kids' cricket-bats."

"But—"

"Look 'ere, are we going to take all this 'ere trouble for nothing, to be fooled by a kid?" yelled Mr. Gryce. "I ain't, for one. It's cost us something, in time and trouble, and I tell you I'm going to have the kid, and get the money from his father, all the same."

"But we can't—we—"

"I'm going up," said the leader, savagely. "If you ain't rotten cowards, you'll follow me. Who's coming up with me?"

Ginger was already leaving the vault by the opposite door, as Mr. Gryce strode towards the secret stair. Another of the ruffians followed him, and they disappeared together. Mr. Gryce, in his fury, hurled a rum bottle after them, which smashed upon the stone wall, and fell to the floor in a thousand fragments.

"I'm going up," said Mr. Gryce, "them as don't follow me, don't share in the cash, that's all. Come on, I say."

He tramped up the spiral stair in the wall. Two followed

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him—ruffians as desperate as himself. Now that all was known, they could not venture to remain in that part of the country, and if they were to leave everything and run, they meant to take the Outsider of St. Jim's with them, to make at least an attempt to extract ransom from his father.

Mr. Gryce led the way up to the Fourth Form dormitory with a bludgeon in his hand. The fight for the Outsider of St. Jim's was not yet over.

CHAPTER 17. The Last Attempt!

TOM MERRY & CO. burst breathlessly into the Fourth Form dormitory.

Blake had opened the secret panel as soon as he heard footsteps on the hidden stair, and they came rushing in, one after another, gasping.

The electric light was on in the dormitory now, and the Shell fellows blinked at the sudden change from the darkness. "Here we are!" gasped Tom Merry.

Blake chuckled.

"Yes, I can see you are here," he remarked. "You seem to be in rather a hurry, too."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the Shell fellows as they crowded in. "Have you got Lumley all wight?"

"Here he is."

"I guess I'm all serene," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley coolly. "But if it hadn't been for Tom Merry being there, I should have been under chloroform by this."

"Chloroform! My hat!"

"Gweat Scott! The uttah wascals!"

Lumley-Lumley walked over to Levison's bed. The cad of the Fourth looked up at him with wide-open, terrified eyes. All Levison's nerve was gone now.

The Outsider looked down upon him with a grim smile.

He removed the sponge from the junior's mouth, and Levison gasped for breath.

"I've come back, you see," Lumley-Lumley remarked.

"You mad idiot!" gasped Levison. "They might have—"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"But they didn't," he said. "Tom Merry & Co. were on the other side of the vault, you see, ready to chip in, and they chipped in. And I guess some of the scalawags down there are feeling a bit chipped now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me go!" muttered Levison. "It's all up now! I—I was drawn into it. Gryce holds papers of mine. He threatened me—"

"Oh, come off!" said Lumley-Lumley. "It was your idea from the start, I guess."

"He—he lied if he said that. Lumley-Lumley, you don't want to get me expelled," muttered Levison. "Keep it dark. I was your friend once. Don't get me sacked from the school."

His voice was shaking with terror. The Outsider of St. Jim's smiled contemptuously. In any strait, he would never have begged for mercy from a fellow he had injured. But Levison was made of different stuff.

"I guess I don't want to be hard on you," he said. "You're a pretty thorough rascal, Levison, but it's not my business to get you expelled from the school."

"You—you'll say nothing?" panted Levison.

The Outsider was unfastening the cord that held the cad of the Fourth down to his bed. "I don't say that, Levison."

"If you betray me—"

"I guess I'll keep it as dark as I can. That's all I can say, and the best I can promise you," said Lumley-Lumley. "If it all comes out, you'll have to stand the racket. It's your own fault, anyway."

"The matter will have to be explained," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Only you fellows know that I—I was connected with them," whispered Levison. "If you say nothing about it—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I—I shall be expelled. Think of my people—oh!"

"We'll do the best we can for you," said Tom Merry, with mingled scorn and pity. "I suppose this will be a lesson to you?"

"It will—it will! I swear it will!"

"Yaas, I should wathah think so. I considah that Levison ought to have a feahful thwashin', deah boys, and we can let him off with that, undah the circs."

"I guess Gryce and the rest will run, and if they're not arrested, there's no need for Levison's name to be mentioned," said Lumley-Lumley, in a low voice. "Only three or four fellows know he was in it, and they'll keep it dark."

"Yaas, wathah, for the honah of the Form!"

Tom Merry nodded.

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"Yes, I suppose we've seen the last of those scoundrels. I—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Blake, holding up his hand.

There was a crash upon the secret panel in the dormitory wall.

It burst open, and three masked men sprang in.

"My hat!" shouted Blake. "Here they are!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look out!"

"Sock it to them!"

"Down with them!"

The three ruffians blinked for a moment in the light. There was a sound of footsteps in the passage outside the door. Levison ran to the light and switched it off.

"You fools!" he shouted. "Run for it."

But the ruffians did not heed Levison. In the dim moonlight that struggled in at the windows of the dormitory, they rushed towards Lumley-Lumley.

It was the last attempt, and a desperate one. Lumley-Lumley caught up a bat, to defend himself, and Tom Merry & Co. closed round him instantly.

There was a wild and whirling scrimmage.

The juniors were tumbling out of bed on all sides, catching up pillows and bolsters, or any weapons they could find, to join in the conflict.

The ruffians had no chance.

Mr. Gryce staggered back, with Tom Merry's stump crashing upon his head, and fell to the floor. He picked himself up, and made a dash for the secret panel to escape. The other two ruffians followed him, under a shower of blows.

There was a sound of tumbling and crashing from the spiral stair. The three ruffians had lost their footing, and they were rolling down.

Tom Merry burst into a breathless laugh.

"Hurray! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They're gone!"

"After them!" roared Jack Blake, brandishing his bat, and making a rush towards the secret door.

Tom Merry dragged him back.

"Hold on, Blake!"

"Let's follow them! We can capture them!" exclaimed Blake. "Come on! My hat! This will make the New House chaps green with envy."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"It won't be safe to follow them down there," said Tom Merry soberly. "Besides, we don't want to capture them."

"But—but—"

"If they're caught they'll give Levison away. Think of the honour of the Fourth."

Blake paused.

"Oh, all right! But they ought to have been laid by the heels. Still, they've had a pretty severe punishment, all the same."

"Yaas, wathah! We have given the uttah wottahs a feahful thwashin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, with much satisfaction. "I myself stwuck one of them a feahful blow!"

Someone switched on the light again. It was not Levison. He had crept into bed, and was lying trembling under the sheets, fervently hoping that his share in that night's work would never come to be known, and shivering at the thought of the consequences if the truth came to the ears of the doctor.

The door opened.

The din in the Fourth-Form dormitory had awakened many, and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, and Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, were at the door. They stared in at the scene in the dormitory in utter amazement.

It was a strange scene enough, and sufficient to amaze the Housemaster and the prefect.

The room was in utter disorder—the beds were wildly disordered, the floor was scattered with cricket-stumps and bats and bludgeons and torn masks.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What has happened?"

"Great Scott!" muttered Kildare. "This is something more than a kids' jape! What has happened, Tom Merry?"

"Pway allow me to explain, sir—"

"Cheese it, Gussy! Leave it to Tom Merry or Lumley-Lumley," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You see, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What are you Shell boys doing in this dormitory?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "I shall require a very explicit explanation of this extraordinary disturbance, Merry."

"Yes, sir. You see—"

"Pway leave it to me, Tom Mewwy. I had better explain to Mr. Waitton. Undah the circs.—"

"Cheese it—"

"I wefuse to cheese it! Undah the circs.—"

"Order!"

"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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"I decline to ordah—I mean——"

"Let Merry speak," said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir, but——"

"That will do, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton quietly.

"Certainly, sir. I only wished to say that, undah the cires——"

"Silence. Go on, Tom Merry."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy relapsed into indignant silence at last, and Tom Merry proceeded to explain. He gave as good an account as he could of the affair without mentioning Levison's name. Whether, upon the whole, it was better to screen the cad of the Fourth, or whether he ought to have been shown up, Tom Merry hardly knew. He did not want to be put in the position of telling a tale that would cause a fellow to be expelled; yet it was certain that some tale had to be told. At the same time, Tom Merry had not the least intention of avoiding telling the truth for Levison's sake.

If the fellow could be passed over unmentioned, that was all Tom Merry could do for him. If inquiry was strict and searching, the whole facts of the case would have to come out, and the cad of the Fourth must take his chance.

But it never occurred to Mr. Railton or to Kildare either as they listened that any St. Jim's fellow could have been base enough to lend himself to the scheme for kidnapping a member of his Form.

That the rascals had discovered the secret mode of entrance into the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House, and that they had entered for the purpose of kidnapping Lumley-Lumley; that was all that it was necessary for the House-master to know.

Unless Mr. Gryce and his friends were captured, and told what they knew in order to ruin their accomplice, Levison was likely to escape.

"It is extraordinary—most extraordinary," said Mr. Railton. "It is unheard-of! I am very glad that you have been able to defeat these rascals. The police must be communicated with at once. Do you know any of them, Tom Merry?"

"One was named Gryce, sir."

"The landlord of the Bird in Hand at Wayland, sir," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Any others?"

Lumley-Lumley did not speak.

"Very well, that will doubtless be a sufficient clue to the scoundrels, and the police shall have possession of it at once," said Mr. Railton. "I will see that that panel is fastened up at once, and you boys can go back to bed."

"Very well, sir."

In their excited state of mind, the juniors were not much inclined to go to bed again; but the Housemaster's word was law.

The Shell fellows went back to their own dormitory, where they found the rest of their Form awake, and determined to hear the whole story; and it was a long time before sleep visited the Shell dormitory in the School House.

In the Fourth-Form dormitory, Mr. Railton nailed up the secret panel with his own hands, and then the juniors went back to bed.

Long they lay awake, discussing the matter, but one by one they dropped off to sleep, with a single exception.

That was Levison!

The cad of the Fourth was too terrified to sleep.

What exactly might be his punishment, if the whole truth came to be known, he did not know. He knew that he would be expelled from St. Jim's. Dim visions of a reformatory, of a prison, floated before his scared mind.

He could not sleep!

When the light of dawn came creeping in at the high windows, the cad of the Fourth was still wide awake, with restless, haggard eyes.

His face was white and harassed, haggard to look upon, as he rose that morning, and Lumley-Lumley, who was not given to being tender-hearted, felt a gleam of pity for him. He gave the junior a slap on the shoulder.

"Buck up," he said, in a low voice. "You're safe, unless Gryce and the others are caught, and even then they may not betray you. We shall hold our tongues."

"But will they be caught?" muttered Levison.

"Not if they can help it! They've had the night to get clear in, anyway, and I guess Gryce was the man to make good use of it."

"It's—it's awfully good of you to treat me like this, after—after what I've done, Lumley!" Levison stammered.

The Outsider of St. Jim's shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I despise you too much to want to punish you," he said, with unpleasant frankness, "and I reckon you're punished enough, too, by the state of mind you're in. I'd rather face the music a hundred times than go about in a blue-funk like that."

Levison gritted his teeth. There was no real gratitude in his heart; at that moment he liked Lumley-Lumley even less than before. But he turned away without another word. It was not safe now to express what was in his heart.

The affair of the Fourth-Form dormitory made a great sensation at St. Jim's. The police looked for Mr. Gryce for a long time, but they did not find him. The Bird-in-Hand had lost its landlord, and Mr. Gryce was not seen in the neighbourhood of Rylcombe or Wayland again. And as the days passed, and nothing was heard of him, Levison began to breathe more freely.

The spiral stair in the dormitory wall was blocked up with brickwork, and the secret panel fastened down; there was no danger of another attempt being made by the same means. Nor was Mr. Gryce likely to return to such a dangerous neighbourhood for the purpose. And all the juniors who knew the true story agreed that Levison was the last fellow in the world to be concerned in an attempt at kidnapping again. The cad of the Fourth had had his lesson, and probably he would never quite recover from the scare he had had on the night of the revealing of the dormitory secret.

THE END.

(Next week: "UNDER SEALED ORDERS," another splendid, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford, and "DEEP SEA GOLD," our amazing new Adventure Serial, by Reginald Wray. Order your copy of the "GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

His Goal.

A touch fight was in progress between the youths of Wash-ton Grammar School and "Parents." Scrum after scrum took place, run after run, and the spectators cheered their relatives lustily. Meanwhile, in goal, young Willie Wilks strode up and down, chafing and muttering.

At half-time he approached the centre-forward, captain of the school.

"Look here, Jimmy, old chap," exclaimed the boy, "you might come and play goal a bit, and let me take your place as centre-forward."

"But why, on earth?" exclaimed the perspiring captain. "Goal is your place, and always has been."

"I know," replied his friend, dropping into a whisper; "but, you see, I just want to get a kick or two at father!"

An Advt.

Out in the streets, amid the raging blasts and the swirling snow, he stood, coatless and hatless, and distraught.

"Gone!" he shouted wildly. "Gone—gone—gone!"

A dozen curious men emerged from their business houses, offering sympathy.

"Did your cashier slip off with all your oof?" asked one.

"No; ah, no!"

"Lost a kid?" said a second.

"Nay, nay!"

"Lose your watch or pocket-book?"

"Not that—not that!"

"Then what in the name of thunder is it that is gone?"

"Why, yesterday, my friends—yesterday. But before to-day is gone you should take out a life insurance in the—Or, ow! Help, help!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 189.

A SPECIAL STORY
NEXT WEEK:

"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!" A TALE OF ST. JIM'S.
BY MARTIN CLIFFORD. ORDER EARLY!

New Storyettes.

What—Again!

The two belligerent men faced each other.

"You're a prevaricator!"

"You're a yellow pup!"

"Fight!" shrieked a small boy.

The curious crowd began to gather.

"Come round the corner, where a bobby won't bother us," said the prevaricator. And the two hastened to an empty plot, dogged by a crowd of bloodthirsty men and youths.

Arrived, the prevaricator mounted a wooden platform that was not there yesterday, while the pup dived into the box and extracted therefrom a bulging bag.

Then the prevaricator thus addressed the crowd:

"While the doctor gets out our packets of magical herbs, guaranteed to cure cancer, bunions, all skin diseases, etc., I will entertain you with a few sleight of hand tricks."

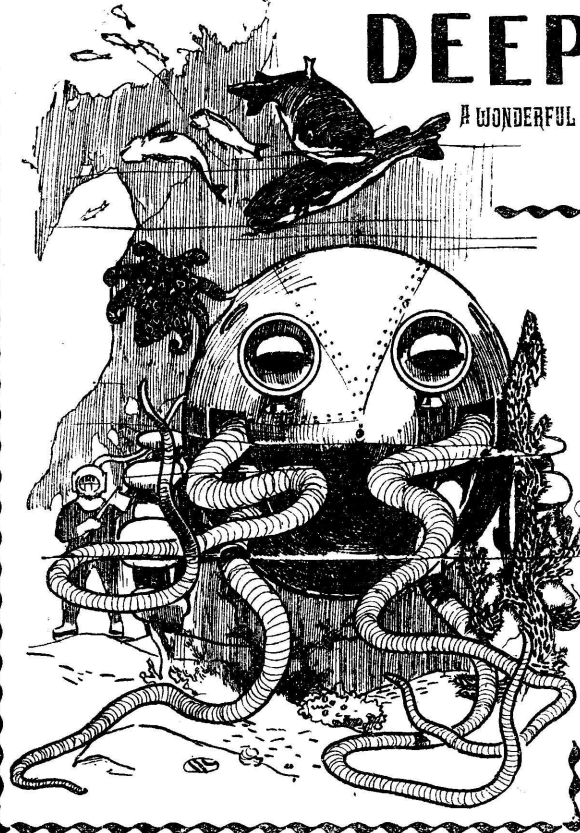
"What's in here?" asked the tourist.

"Remains to be seen," responded the guide, as he led the way into the mummy room.

DEEP SEA GOLD!

A WONDERFUL NEW STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURE IN A SUBMARINE MOTOR CAR.

By REGINALD WRAY.



The Opening Chapters of "DEEP SEA GOLD," specially re-written for this number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY. Just read this, and you can commence the story to-day.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums of Weltsea College, are bathing in the sea early one morning, when they are suddenly seized by enormous octopus-like tentacles and dragged swiftly down beneath the surface of the water. The chums are almost at their last gasp, when a dark trap-door appears before them, and they are pulled aboard a strange submarine craft, the like of which they have never seen before. It is, in fact, a submarine motor-car, and the boys are soon introduced to Captain Flame, the captain of the Octopus, as the strange craft is named.

The crew consists entirely of boys, with whom Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are soon on good terms. So fascinating does life beneath the waves prove, that when, after a period of thrilling excitement and amazing adventure, Captain Flame offers the two chums their liberty, they decide to remain on board the Octopus and throw in their lot with him.

Captain Flame sets out on a voyage of discovery in search of the hidden treasure of the deep—the sunken gold which has accumulated for centuries on the bed of the ocean. The trail of the old French frigate *Le Monde*, which was lost with all hands generations before, is soon struck by means of her guns, which had evidently been thrown over-board to lighten her.

The Octopus is hot on the scent, when she is forced to turn aside and flee from a great iceberg, which bears down upon her with terrible swiftness. As the submarine motor-car speeds along the bed of the ocean away from the gigantic berg, Dick Dauntless discovers that Jack Orde is missing. Just then the iceberg runs aground and stops, and Captain Flame and Dick, donning their wonderful air-helmets, leave the Octopus, and set forth in search of Jack.

In the meantime the missing lad has made a great discovery. Having been cast upon the iceberg, he falls down a deep fissure in the face of it, and finds himself standing on the deck of the very ship they are in search of! There is the old *Le Monde*, frozen solid with all her crew, and in a perfect state of preservation.

For days Jack remains on board the frozen *Le Monde*, exploring her thoroughly, and actually living on frozen

provisions which he finds on board. One day he is in the rigging, when a huge polar bear crashes to the deck, where it writhes and struggles in its death agony.

The Secret of the Frozen Pirate.

Waiting until the bear's struggles had ceased, Jack Orde slid down a frozen rope, and cautiously approached the huge creature.

As he did so, he sprang forward with a cry of amazement.

Immediately behind the brute's left ear was a large hole which could only have been caused by a rifle bullet.

The thought that assistance was so near, for the moment robbed Jack Orde of power to move or speak.

The next he was shinning up the main-mast, and, having worked his way to the top royal gallant, shouted and yelled, until he was hoarse.

But no answering shout replied, and, seeing that the hole through which the bear had fallen was again blocked up with loose masses of snow, he returned to the deck, a prey to the keenest disappointment.

Until that moment he had not realised how terrible it would be to be shut up on that awful ship without hope of rescue.

Despair rending his heart, he entered his cabin, and, flinging himself down on the quaintly-carved bedstead, he burst into a flood of bitter tears.

Thus it happened that he did not see Dick Dauntless and Captain Flame climb to a ledge which ran along the face of the iceberg, some six feet above the sea, and gaze in amazement through the thick but transparent ice upon the frozen ship.

As our readers know, there is no night or day as we know them in more temperate climes in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, but a six months' long day as followed by a six months' long night.

It was now day in the Antarctic regions, and, having neither clock nor watch to guide him, Jack Orde had grown accustomed to sleeping only when he felt tired.

On the present occasion he had remained awake longer than usual, with the result that he soon forgot his disappointment in a deep, dreamless slumber.

Dreamless, that is to say, at first, but after a time he dreamt that the frozen passengers and crew of the *Le Monde* had come to life, and were cutting a way through the ice that the ship might return to its native element.

Tick, tack, bang, thud! went their hammers as they nailed slabs of ice instead of wood over the gunshot wounds, which seemed to Jack to have turned the frigate's stout sides into a veritable sieve.

Now and again the knocking would cease, to be succeeded by a strange, scraping, grating sound, caused by innumerable narwhals boring holes in the ice plugs, as quickly as the frozen crew put them in.

Presently he awoke with the ring of hammers still sounding in his ears.

He sat up and listened.

No; it was no dream.

From what seemed a great distance away came a regular succession of blows, accompanied by the unmistakable ring of iron on iron.

For some minutes Jack sat listening to the strange sounds; then, as the truth penetrated his sleep-dulled brain, he sprang to the floor, and rushed headlong from the cabin.

As he reached the deck the knocking ceased.

Rushing up the ice-encrusted stairway leading to the quarter-deck, he gazed up and down, to right and left.

Naught met his eyes but the deep blue of the ice that surrounded him on every side.

Could it have been but a dream, after all?

His hand resting on a rusted swivel-gun that swung on the quarter-deck rail, he listened intently.

Suddenly he started as a distant hallo, in tones of warning, fell upon his ears.

In a bound he had reached the frigate's deck, and hurried to the bows, from beyond which the shout had come.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 789.

"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

is the title of the splendid, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. One Penny.

Scrambling along the heavy bowsprit he looked down. A loud shout, rendered almost inarticulate by emotion, burst from his lips.

Through the clear ice immediately before him, and some twenty feet beneath the surface of ice on which the frigate rested, he saw Captain Flame, Dick Dauntless, Will Avery, and Tom Allstraw.

They were standing on a ledge beneath the waves, each with a reel of wire on a framework fastened to his back. "Captain Flame—Dick Dauntless! Here! I'm—" The frantic cry died away in a hollow moan of despair.

Led by Captain Flame, the three boys had sprang from the ledge, paying out the wire from their reels as they sank. Wonderingly Jack watched the quivering wires.

They seemed to be fastened to the berg. Following the direction of one pair of wires he saw it was attached to a long shining cylinder thrust deep into a hole in the ice.

The mystery of the knocking was explained. His comrades from the Octopus had drilled holes in the ice beneath the *Le Monde* whilst he slept.

But why? A second glance at the long steel cylinders, and a new terror assailed Jack Orde's heart, for he recognised them as mines filled with a strong explosive, the nature of which Captain Flame had explained during one of their chats in the chart-room.

A sudden panic gripped the boy's heart. Rising to his feet, Jack ran swiftly along the bowsprit, and, jumping on to the deck, made his way, at headlong speed, to his cabin.

His helmet hung on a peg behind the door. Knowing there was not a moment to be lost, he drew it over his head with feverish haste.

Barely was this done ere a deafening report sounded in his ears. The floor of the cabin first tilted to an angle of forty-five degrees, sank slowly back to its former position, then more quickly the fore part began to descend.

Overhead was heard the crash of rending wood, as huge masses of ice from the top of the cave descended on the frigate's deck.

Sick with terror, Jack Orde clung to the carved post of the bedstead as the ship swayed and tossed, her every timber groaning like a giant in pain.

Suddenly, with a strange grating sound, as her sides broke free from the ice which had held her prisoner so many years, the frigate plunged heavily forward, and Jack Orde knew that she was rushing headlong through the opening in the ice caused by Captain Flame's explosives to the sea.

Then came a loud splash as the ship plunged into the sea. Glancing through the porthole which lighted his cabin, Dick saw that the gallant ship was floating in a disturbed sea, amidst huge lumps of ice, which had been torn from the face of the berg by the force of the explosion.

Eager to see more of what was going on than the narrow porthole revealed, Jack Orde rushed from the cabin, and made his way to the companion-way.

With difficulty he found a passage past the ice to the deck.

A wondrous change had taken place on board the *Le Monde*.

Her deck groaned beneath hundreds of tons of ice. Cook's cuddy, quarter-deck rails, poop, had all been ground to splinters.

Strangely enough, the quarter-deck itself had escaped almost without injury, and thither, clambering over a miniature Alps of ice, Jack turned his steps.

Why he went there he could not have told, unless it was to assure himself that the wondrous Pheasant Throne remained uninjured.

For the first time for days he entered the state cabin.

The fearful group was exactly as he had seen it last.

The dead lay upon the floor; the wounded still nursed their hurts against the wall.

Jack Orde turned to leave the cabin.

But even as he reached the curtained entrance, he clung convulsively to the doorpost, for with startling suddenness the bows of the old ship sank, and ere Jack could quite realise what was happening, she dived beneath the water, dragged down by the tremendous weight of water on her bows.

A moment later the in-rushing water struck Jack, and hurled him the whole length of the cabin.

It was only by clinging with all his force to the Pheasant Throne that he saved himself from being dashed against the end of the cabin.

For some minutes Jack felt the water swirling round; then the ship, regaining a level keel as her heavy deck load of ice was washed away, sank more slowly.

It was a strange sensation, that of being in a ship sinking to the bottom of the ocean, yet able to breathe freely and take note of everything that had occurred.

Jack found that a ship does not sink straight to the bottom, but, with a strange movement that is half a roll and

half a pitch, glides downwards as though along an inclined plane.

Presently he felt a slight jar pass through the ship; then all motion ceased, and he knew she was at rest on the sandy bed of the ocean.

Jack Orde's first impulse was to clamber on deck and search for the Octopus; but ere he could creep from behind the Pheasant Throne, he heard the thump of leaden-soled boots against the vessel's side, and knew that his comrades were coming to secure the treasure.

Overjoyed at the prospect of once more returning to the Octopus, Jack could scarcely contain his delight.

He was ripe for any mischief.

Dropping behind the throne, he listened intently at the footsteps, having gained the deck, trudged heavily towards the cabin.

A moment later the door was darkened, and a small, agile form dashed into the cabin.

It was Mopsa.

On the threshold the little Chinaman paused, then flashed his portable searchlight over the scene.

The next moment a frightened yell burst from his lips, and he flung his hands high above his head.

"Don't shoot, mister! I no want de bild. I'd no touchee it with pail of tongs!" he stammered.

"Approach, catiff!" thundered Jack from behind the throne.

Thinking it was the frozen Frenchman who spoke, Mopsa trembled in every limb as he replied:

"Thankee, sir! Me velly comf'able hele."

"What! You refuse? Then remain where you are. Move not, unless you would have me send a bullet crashing through your brain!" thundered the colonel, or, rather, Jack Orde.

Jack could hear Mopsa's teeth chattering through his helmet.

"Me no want nasty lead in blainbox," meant the frightened Celestial.

Jack received the statement with a blood-curdling moan which almost defeated his ends.

Only the levelled pistols pointing straight at his head kept Mopsa from turning tail and fleeing for dear life.

Silently but swiftly Jack dived beneath the table, and, reaching between the Chinaman's extended legs, tugged smartly at his pigtail.

"Ohee! Who pull my tail?" yelled Mopsa, wheeling round.

That was exactly what Jack wanted.

With a yell which sounded in the scared Chinaman's ears like the combined efforts of a thousand sea-fends, he sprang from under the table, and sprang on to Mopsa's back.

The yell which arose from the Chinaman's lips quite out-classed, at least in volume, that which Jack had given tongue to.

Believing that Davy Jones himself was taking a pickaback ride on his shoulders, he darted down the narrow passage and out into the ship's wreckage-littered waist.

But even as he raced along the passage he thought that the laughter of his unwelcome rider was not quite as fiendish as one might have expected from the lips of a respectable spook.

Cautiously he glanced over his shoulder, to see the laughing face of Jack Orde within a few inches of his own.

Mopsa's revenge was swift and certain.

Rushing to where the shattered bulwark arose some three feet from the deck, he placed his hands on the jagged wood-work, raised his heels, and sent Jack flying over the side.

As it happened, Dick Dauntless was approaching the wreck at the time.

Hearing a commotion overhead, he looked up just in time to see the chum he thought buried in the heart of the iceberg flying towards him, with legs and arms outspread.

Paralysed with astonishment, Dick could not even raise a hand to catch his friend, with the result that Jack's shoulder struck him full in the chest, and sent him gracefully to the ground in a sitting position, whilst Jack, who had rebounded from him, dropped down opposite him.

Grimming from ear to ear, Jack Orde saluted, saying:

"Come aboard, sir!"

With a wild whoop of delight, Dick Dauntless sprang from the ground, and, dragging Jack to his feet, literally hugged him with delight.

"Why, you double-barrelled old fraud, what do you mean by it? We thought you were dead. Where have you been?" he asked, breathless with excitement.

"I've been amongst the dead men, anyhow," replied Jack, adding excitedly: "Dick, I've found the Pheasant Throne."

"Where, boy?" demanded Captain Flame, who had approached them unperceived.

Then, as Jack turned round, his pale face flushed with pleasure, and he grasped the youngster's hand, crying:

"My dear boy, can it be you? We had given you up for lost!"

It was with difficulty Jack Orde concealed his surprise.

It was not the words that impressed him, but the tone of genuine pleasure and relief in which they were uttered.

He had not credited the stern man, of whom even Dick Dauntless was perhaps a little afraid, with so much feeling.

Eager to please the inventor, he cried excitedly:

"The Pheasant Throne, sir, is in the frigate's state cabin."

Captain Flame made no reply, but an eager look flashed into his eyes as he turned towards where the rope by which Mopsa had mounted the deck hung, stiff with ice, over the side, and immediately drew himself on to the deck, closely followed by Dick and Jack.

Striding across the ice-encumbered deck, Captain Flame made his way to the state cabin.

On the threshold he paused, overawed for the moment by the strange sight that confronted him.

With a low, intense cry, the inventor strode down the cabin, brushing heedlessly past the frozen company as he did so.

Reaching over the grey-headed old soldier, he wrenched the jewelled pheasant from its perch.

As the rays from his searchlight fell upon the wondrously befathered bird, Dick Dauntless drew Jack Orde from the cabin.

There was an expression on Captain Flame's face just then that was not good to see.

The Islands.

"By Jove, old chap, it seems incredible!" ejaculated Dick Dauntless, when, seated in the chart-room of the Octopus, Jack Orde had related his adventures whilst the moving house rolled swiftly towards the Cape of Good Hope and the Pacific. "Surely never before have two boys met with such extraordinary experiences as we have! What would the fellows at the college say?"

"Simply that we were two of the most accomplished taradiddle spinners on record," laughed Jack. "But, tell me, Dick, how did you come to find the *Le Monde*?"

"By accident, as you did, though perhaps in not quite so extraordinary a way," replied Dick. "As I have already told you, I was nearly frantic when I saw you, as I thought, trapped in that fearful crevice.

"Captain Flame seemed almost as upset by your peril as I was. As the iceberg had grounded, and the Octopus was no longer in peril, he not only consented to my going on what we both thought in our hearts would prove a hopeless quest, but offered to accompany me.

"Entering our torpedo-like boats, we skirted the ice for several miles, until at last we came to a kind of bay, where the coast-line, if I may so call it, shelved down to the sea.

"Here we landed, and spent day after day climbing over the ice plain, grudging the time when we were compelled to go back to the Octopus for food and rest.

"Just as we were on the point of abandoning the search, we came across your tracks in the snow, and followed them until we came to where a huge bear was wandering backwards and forwards before what looked like a stretch of newly-fallen snow.

"Now and again the brute would stop and paw at the snow, as though eager to advance but afraid to do so. Thinking a bear's ham would be a nice addition to our larder, Captain Flame fired at it.

"As you know, the captain never misses. But we were disappointed of our bear's meat, for the brute rose on its hind legs, pawed fiercely at the air, then, falling over backwards, disappeared beneath the snow."

Jack Orde nodded.

"I know. It fell on the frigate's deck, and I knew from the shape of the wound that it had been shot. Do you mean to say you did not hear my shouts?" he asked.

"Of course not, or I would have followed the bear at any cost, and very likely have broken my neck as a result," replied Dick. "But after all it was the bear, in a way, that led us to you. Thinking that the bear might have slipped into the sea, we returned to our boats, and, steering for the face of the berg, were almost struck stupid with astonishment when we saw the *Le Monde*, looking exactly like a toy ship in a glass case.

"Captain Flame immediately recognised her as the vessel of which we had been in search. Hastening to the Octopus, he returned shortly afterwards with two of the fellows, boring tools, and electric mines with which to shatter the face of the berg and liberate the imprisoned ship. The rest you know."

"Yes, and I am not likely ever to forget it, either," declared Jack. "But I've been puzzling ever since I dropped on to the old ship how on earth she got where we found her."

"Oh, I forgot! You have been sleeping like a top ever

since you returned to the Octopus, and do not know that Captain Flame found part of a kind of log, or diary. There were only a few leaves left, and some of those were washed clean by the water, but he made out sufficient to get a very fair idea of what had happened.

"It appears that, as we thought, the gentlemen adventurers mutinied, arrested their officers, and seized the ship. Then came the storm which made them throw their guns overboard. It must have lasted quite a long time, for it blew them right into the Antarctic Ocean, and finally threw them up high and dry into an ice cave at the foot of an enormous glacier. Here the officers regained their liberty. A fierce fight for the Pheasant Throne ensued, in the midst of which there must have been a sudden fall of temperature, for the combatants were, as you saw for yourself, frozen stiff in the act of fighting."

As Dick Dauntless brought his narrative to a conclusion, both boys fell into a reverie, from which they were aroused by the entrance of Mopsa to summon them to the general-room for dinner.

For several days the Octopus continued her uneventful way along the bed of the Pacific Ocean.

Uneventful, that is to say, in comparison with the strenuous time they had recently passed through. Every hour brought them amongst grander and more variegated scenery or revealed some new species of fish swimming by.

One day Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde were with Captain Flame in the small chamber above the chart-room.

They were being taught how to find their way from point to point over the trackless plains, mountains, and valleys of the sea.

Presently Dick uttered an ejaculation of surprise.

Immediately before the Octopus was stretched an enormous barrier that at first sight looked like a gigantic wall. As they drew nearer they saw that above the solid foundation of this strange structure arose a succession of arches, ornamented with the most delicate tracery.

What added in no slight degree to the beauty of the barrier was the fact that it seemed hewn out of many coloured rocks, ranging in colour from the purest white to a red which now and again took on so deep a tone as to be almost black.

Dotted here and there were what Dick first took to be huge flowers, but with regular, rounding tops, rising from hundred of branching stems.

"It's a wonderful submarine house!" ejaculated Orde, drawn to the glass by Dick's exclamation.

"More likely a wall," declared Dick.

"You are right, Dauntless. It is the wall that surrounds my island home," interposed Captain Flame. "It has cost the lives of millions. Millions perish with every layer, and millions are still at work raising that impenetrable barrier above the waves.

For nearly a minute the boys regarded the great inventor with amazement.

Then Dick Dauntless burst into a hearty laugh.

"What mugs we are, Jack. It is a coral reef!" he cried.

Captain Flame nodded.

"Quite right, Dick. And now to let my subjects know their king is at hand," cried Captain Flame.

As he spoke, the great inventor pressed one of the many buttons and switches that decorated the walls of the narrow compartment. Immediately the weird, long-drawn, mournful bellow, which had drawn Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde on their wondrous voyage beneath the sea, boomed out through the clear blue waters.

A gasp of amazement burst from the boys' lips.

In answer to the reverberating signal, the wall of coral immediately before them opened to right and left, revealing a dark, tunnel-like opening, into which the Octopus plunged.

As she passed through the opening her searchlight blazed out, for the valves behind them had closed, apparently of their own accord.

But a few seconds later the glare of the searchlight was dimmed by the brilliant light of day as they passed through a second pair of gates into a perfect fairyland beneath the waves.

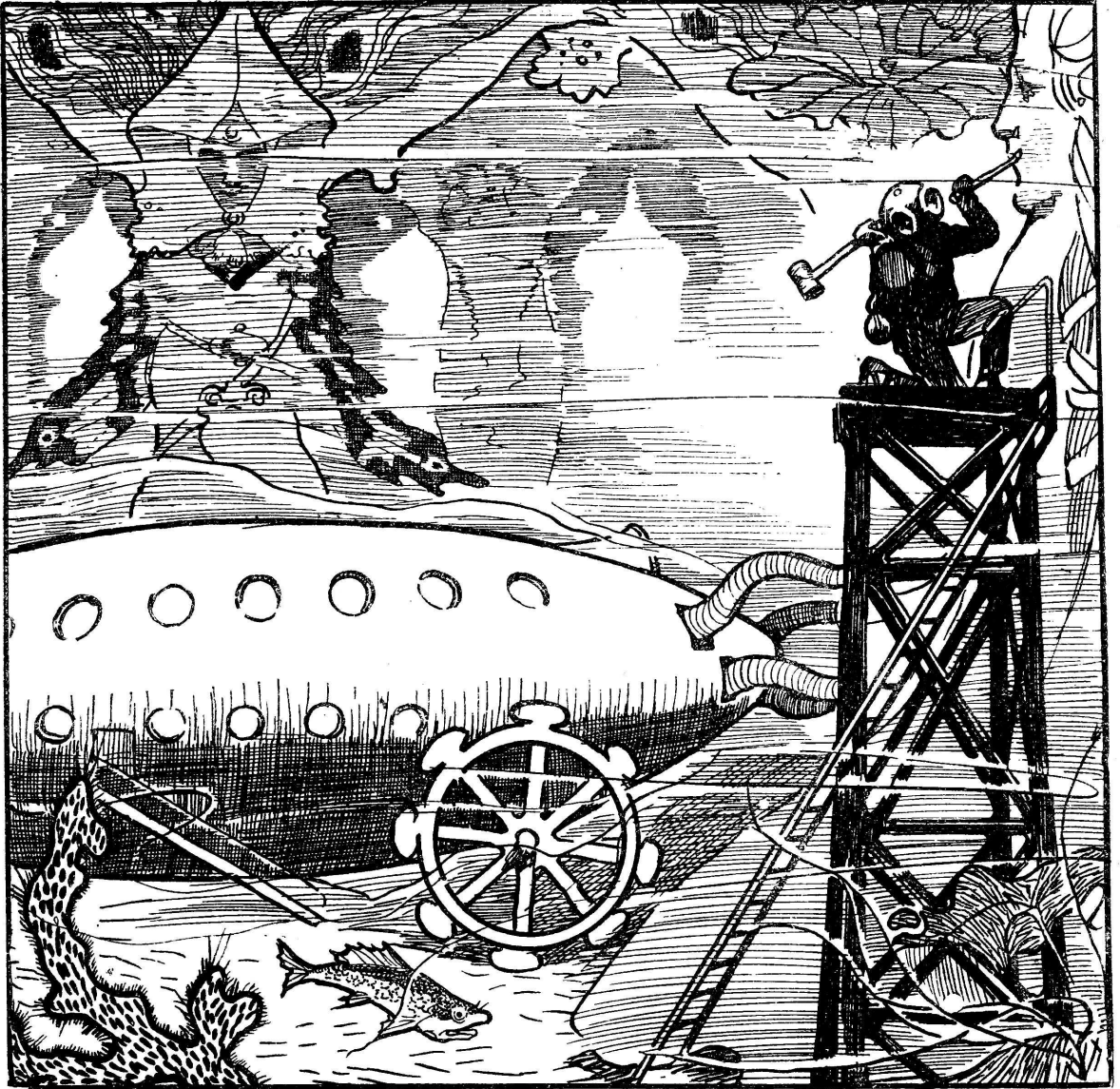
Here were coral grottoes, rich with brilliantly-coloured anemones, huge cup-shaped sponges, shrub-like weeds, through the branches of which darted fish of every colour in the rainbow, and beneath them a carpet of gracefully-curved, wondrously-tinted shells.

A mile ahead loomed two enormous mountains. They stood side by side, their anemone-covered bases rising in gorgeous cones until they ended in a ridge of yellow sand, beyond which rose huge peaks, similar in shape but totally unlike each other in character, for whilst one had gentle slopes covered with flowering shrubs and luxuriant trees, the other rose from the sea dark, grey, and forbidding, without a trace of vegetation on its iron sides.

There was something so sinister in the appearance of the

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



As the submarine motor-car traversed the mighty hall, the boys noticed the figure of a man, clad in one of Captain Flame's wonderful diving-suits, working with a hammer and chisel, and carving strange figures from the living rock. (See Page 26.)

last island that both Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde felt a cold shiver sweep up their spines.

Even Captain Flame seemed moved by the sight of that dark, impregnable rock, for his face hardened and his eyes took on a peculiar steely glitter.

Without a word he turned his back on the boys, and stole from the room.

"Dat's de Island of Lest," announced a voice close behind the boy.

Turning, they saw that Mopsa had stolen into the room.

"Muchee joy and happiness, muchee fluit, muchee sleep, muchee do nothing," he explained.

"And the other island, Mopsa?" asked Jack Orde.

"De Island of Lost Hopes," replied the little Chinaman, gancing, with a shudder, towards the door through which Captain Flame had disappeared shortly before.

"Are they inhabited?" queried Dick.

"That one is," replied Mopsa, pointing to the Island of Rest.

"And the other?" persisted Dick.

Mopsa shook his head.

"Me no know," he replied, but with the air of one who was evading a direct answer.

"But I thought you said you had lived on this island?" asserted Jack.

Mopsa nodded.

"So I have. But wait, little boy, until we land; then perhaps one day someone ask you same as you ask Mopsa, and you say all one bit same as Mopsa."

The chums asked no further questions, for at that moment the Octopus struck the base of the mountain, and commenced climbing up its precipitous slope, until at length it plunged into a huge cavern.

Of all the wondrous roads Dick and Jack had travelled since they were first drawn on board the submarine motor-car, this was perhaps the one which filled them with the greatest delight.

If the interior of the atoll had seemed like fairyland, there are no words left in which to describe the beauties by which they were surrounded. They seemed to be traversing the aisles and terraces of an enchanted palace, threading their way through masses of growing coral, rising in pillars and arches of the most delicate tracery.

Presently the boys saw, stretched out before them, what looked like a mighty hall, its lofty roof supported on huge pillars, carved with rare skill and of a design such as neither Dick nor Jack had ever seen before.

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"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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"Surely that is the work of men's hands?" cried Dick. Barely had the question left his lips, ere it was answered, for they came to where a man, clad in one of Captain Flame's wonderful diving suits, was sitting on a scaffold, secured by iron rods to a pillar on which he was working with hammer and chisel, carving from the living rock the strange figures and designs which had so excited the boys' admiration shortly before.

So engrossed was the sculptor with his work, that it was not until the Octopus was close upon him, that he turned his face towards the moving house.

A cry of pity and dismay burst from the boys' lips. Never before had they seen such misery, and hopeless despair depicted on a human face.

The next moment the expression on the worker's face changed to one of the utmost hatred, as his flashing eyes gazed past the boys at someone standing behind them.

They turned to find that Captain Flame had re-entered the room.

The next moment the sculptor had hurled his heavy hammer straight at the plate-glass wall.

The missile, thrown with fearful force, struck the thick plate glass full in the centre with a force which caused the two boys to draw back in dismay.

But the hammer rebounded from off the toughened glass without so much as starting it, and the thrower, springing from his scaffolding, strove to find safety in flight.

But in vain. One of the Octopus's steel rope tentacles shot out, and, clasping the unhappy man round the waist, drew him into the open water-door.

A minute later the inner door of the water dock opened, and the prisoner, in obedience to Captain Flame's stern order, slunk sullenly into the room.

"So, Signor Trascati, it seems that even a long sojourn on the Island of Lost Hopes has not broken you of your craving for murder," was Captain Flame's greeting, as the prisoner stopped before him.

"No, nor will it, so long as you cumber the ground," flashed back Trascati.

Captain Flame made no reply, but striding to a trophy of arms that adorned the wall, drew from it a wavy-bladed Malay kris, as sharp as a razor, and of a shape which made a single stab fatal.

Holding the murderous weapon by the point, he held the handle towards the sculptor, saying, as he fixed his keen, flashing eyes intently upon him:

"If your heart tells you that your punishment is greater than your crimes deserve, plunge this blade into my heart."

A fearful expression flitted across Trascati's face. Eagerly he snatched the weapon from the other's grasp, then, shortening his arm to strike, cried:

"Fool, you have tempted fate once too often. Die!"

The Island of Lost Hopes.

As the hate-laden words, shrill with the wild, fierce joy of a vengeance long delayed, achieved at last, burst from Trascati's lips, Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde sprang forward to arrest the impending thrust.

But ere they could reach the would-be murderer's side, he had launched his blow.

Straight to Captain Flame's heart the crooked-bladed kris descended.

Suddenly the descending arm was stayed. With a long drawn wail of despair the sculptor threw the blade away, and, covering his face with his hands, stood in the attitude of one who expects a well-deserved punishment.

Calmly picking up the kris, Captain Flame restored it to its former place in the trophy, then turned to the sculptor, saying:

"Beppo Trascati, you have rebelled against my authority and know the punishment. Report yourself at once to the Keeper of the Lower Gate."

A deadly pallor overswept the man's pale face.

He stretched forth his arms with a gesture of appeal.

But there was naught of mercy in Captain Flame's stern face.

"Go!" he cried, pointing to the water dock. "And, that these boys may see that I know how to punish, as well as reward, they shall accompany you. Put on your diving suits and accompany yonder would-be murderer. And if that which you see revolts you, remember that there is not a man on the Island of Lost Hopes who is not stained as deep with crime as he," he added, turning to the boys.

There was that in Captain Flame's tones that brooked no reply. Without a word the two boys obeyed.

Five minutes later Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde followed Trascati from the Octopus and up a shelving floor of silvery sand until, at length, they emerged into a narrow channel that divided the two islands.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 189.

Before them stretched a bridge of coral over which they passed to a black, cavernous opening in the side of the Island of Lost Hopes.

Into this their guide plunged, and, after a moment's hesitation, the boys followed, the rays of their headlights showing them that they were in a narrow tunnel evidently hewn by human hands out of the living rock.

Presently they reached a narrow flight of stairs that mounted upwards in a series of zig-zags, until, just as Dick was beginning to think it would never end, they reached a rocky floor, and saw before them a distant glimmer of daylight.

Without a word their guide removed his helmet and hung it with a number of others on pegs driven into the rocky walls.

Dick and Jack did likewise. Beckoning them to follow, Trascati led the way towards the distant speck of daylight.

Soon they stood at the mouth of the cave and looked down upon a strange and terrible scene.

The cave in which they stood looked out on a huge circular opening, evidently the crater of a still active volcano, for from a dark pit in its centre arose wreaths of thin smoke, tinged now and again with a deep crimson, as though from some distant fire.

Around their tall walls of rock rose some three hundred feet above their heads.

The rocks were of a dark slate grey that gave a peculiarly sombre and depressing appearance to that enormous pit.

As the two boys' eyes grew accustomed to the twilight which, save at midday, obtained in that fearful vale, they saw a number of forms stretched in attitudes indicative of hopeless weariness, before the numerous caves with which the rocks were pierced.

Dick Dauntless would have questioned their guide, but the man was already striding sullenly along a narrow terrace cut in the solid rock, which slanted down the sides of the pit to within fifty feet of the plain.

Presently Dick saw one of the miserable objects below look up, then, springing to his feet, point excitedly towards them.

Never had either boy heard anything so truly awful as the fearful howl which arose from the men of the pit as they scrambled to their feet, and commenced hurling pieces of jagged rock at them.

With a warning cry their guide, bent almost double, started to run. The two boys lost no time in following his example.

In a small cave looped off towards the plain, they paused, safe from the stones that had whizzed by them. Then, for the first time, their guide spoke.

"If you boys were down there they would tear you limb from limb. One day they will reach the Island of Rest, then Heaven help those who may be on it."

"Who are they? How came they in that state?" asked Jack Orde.

"Ask the man whose tyranny has made them the wild beasts they are," replied Trascati, and, though the boys plied him with further questions, he would say no more.

Their guide now led them through another tunnel cut in the rock, until, at length, they came to a number of huge caverns that resounded to the blows of hammers, the ring of iron on iron, and the scraping of various tools.

They did not enter any of these caves, but passed along a terrace protected by tall iron railings let into the rock above and below them.

It would take too long to describe all the wonders the boys saw in that busy subterranean land.

Suffice it to say that almost every industry was represented there. In one cavern carpenters were at work; in another, blacksmiths; in another, two chemists bent eagerly over a bench laden with retorts and testing tubes.

In one cave they saw, to their astonishment, a large house on huge wheels, like those of the Octopus.

As they penetrated deeper and deeper into the earth the atmosphere grew closer and muggier, whilst a constant roaring sound, accompanied by the ring of hammers on anvils, and the roar of escaping steam, grew louder and louder at every step.

Presently they entered a cavern filled with boilers, swift revolving cranks, and piston rods that worked the countless pulleys and shafts they had seen in the upper caves.

Through the hissing safety-valves of the engines spoke of a fierce fire burning somewhere close at hand, no sign of a furnace could be seen, but Dick noticed that the end of each boiler was embedded in rock, which emitted an angry glow.

Wondering what wonder might next greet their eyes, they passed from the engine-room into a huge forge, or, rather, a number of forges, each with its anvil, at which half-naked smiths toiled and sweated.

We have spoken of forges, but surely never before had human eyes rested upon such forges! They were carved out of the glowing rock, and the flames which heated the smiths' iron was that which burns in the very centre of the earth itself.

"SENT TO COVENTRY!"

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

Captain Flame had impressed even the volcano into his service.

Presently their way was barred by a gate, at the top of a flight of steps leading into the forge.

As their guide came to a halt before this gate, two men clad in a black uniform, each with a revolver at his belt and a sword at his side, came forward, and, unlocking it, swung it open.

"Hallo, Trasecati, back again, then?" cried one of the warders. "I thought you would not keep away long. Look out, this is the second chance you have had. There will be no third!"

The sculptor shivered, but made no reply as, with a look of hopeless despair, he passed through the gate.

Dick and Jack would have followed, but the warder slammed the door in their faces.

"No, no, young gentlemen. Your time for this fearful place has not yet come, and, unless you belie your faces, never will," he cried, adding, as footsteps behind him caused Dick to look round, "Here comes my relief. If you will wait a few minutes I will take you by a short cut to the Island of Rest."

As he spoke, Dick and Jack stood aside to allow two warders to pass by.

A few minutes later the relieved warders joined them, and the four retraced their steps to the engine-room, from whence their new guide led them along a tunnel that branched off to the left.

As they mounted a sloping tunnel cut from the living rock, the warders explained the working of what he called Captain Flame's Penal Settlement.

They told the boys that Captain Flame's workmen were recruited from the most desperate criminals of Europe and America; men whom the law could not touch, or who had escaped the full penalty of their crimes.

When a stranger was first brought to the Island of Lost Hopes, he was placed in one or the other of the workshop caves, according to the crime of which he had been guilty.

No man was forced to work, but it was only by working his way up, stage by stage, that he could attain the liberty and privilege of living in peace and happiness on the Island of Rest.

Should he prove intractable or muginous he was sent back to the caves to begin his hard life of toil over again.

"What did you mean when you told Trasecati that he had been sent back twice, and would not get a third chance?" asked Orde.

The warder laid his hand impressively on Jack's shoulder. "Look here, my boy; there are things connected with the Islands that it is not well, for your own peace of mind, that you should inquire too closely into," he declared gravely.

Ere either boy could speak again they reached a broad stone platform, overhanging the mighty chasm between the two islands. Beneath them the sea roared and thundered in never-ceasing tumult as it beat against sharp-pointed, jagged-teethed rocks.

As the boys peered over the edge of the masonry, gazing in awe at the swirling waters beneath them, one of the warders pressed a bell-push.

It was answered from the opposite wall of rock, and, a second later, a narrow iron bridge fell across the chasm.

News of the Morning Star.

But if Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde had been depressed and alarmed by the Island of Lost Hopes, they were simply enraptured by the beautiful scene spread out before them when, the drawbridge crossed, they stood beneath an exquisitely-wrought marble gateway, and gazed across miles of undulating pasture and forest to the distant sea beyond.

Immediately beneath them was a grassy slope, traversed by well-kept paths, bordered by gorgeous flowers.

At the foot of the slope was a small town of huts, surrounded by pastures, in which grazed small cows of the Alderney breed.

"Those are our quarters, sir," explained one of the men. "Did ever warders have better? It is a real haven of rest to those of us who come from the crowded slums of the big cities of Britain."

Ere Dick could reply, Jack caught him by the arm and pointed to a large house that stood on an acclivity on the opposite side of the valley, which was about five miles in width.

"What bird is that?" he demanded. "My eye, but it's a whoopper!"

The warders smiled, but said nothing, whilst Dick looked in amazement at an enormous figure gliding on extended wings towards them.

"Good gracious, it's an aeroplane!" gasped Dick at last. "Yes, and if that isn't Mopsa's yellow face just behind the propeller I'm a Dutchman!" cried Jack.

Ere they could say more a little aeroplane skimmed like a swallow through the air, then, after circling gracefully round their heads, came to rest before the astonished boys, and Mopsa, who was stretched, face downwards, in a hollow between the two wide spreading planes, sprang to his feet, and, with an exaggerated bow, handed Dick a note.

It was from Captain Flame, and ran as follows:

"News of your father. Rejoin the Octopus at once.—F."

"Hurrah, Jack! Read that!" cried Dick, his nerves athrill with excitement, as he handed the paper to his chum.

Scarce giving Jack Orde time to grasp the import of the welcome message, he turned to Mopsa, crying:

"Quick, Mopsa! Lead me to the submarine house!"

"All light. Follow me," cried the little Chinaman.

Throwing himself on to the aeroplane, which was like nothing so much as a toboggan sledge on wings, he glissaded down the slope a little way, then, as the machine gathered sufficient speed, soared in the air and dashed off in the direction from whence he had come.

Dick Dauntless looked in dismay after the rapidly flying Chinaman, then, bidding the warders good-bye, hastened along a path which disappeared amidst a plantation of pines that occupied the centre of the valley.

But before the two boys had covered more than a mile, they found further progress barred by a small building not unlike an Indian tomb.

The impenetrable undergrowth on either side of the path forbade the boys going round, and they were about to retrace their steps when they heard a distant rumble of wheels, followed by the groaning of brakes, as the sound drew nearer, until, at last, the vehicle seemed to come to a standstill just within the horse-shoe-shaped door of the tiny building.

The next moment, his yellow face almost split from ear to ear by a wide grin, Mopsa stood before them.

"Now where, in the name of all that's wonderful, did you spring from?" demanded Dick.

Mopsa vouchsafed no answer to the lad's question, but, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, said:

"De carriage waits, gents."

Wondering what the mannikin was driving at, the boys peeped through the doorway, to see a low vehicle, just large enough to hold two people, standing at the mouth of a dark tunnel, which seemed to lead into the very bowels of the earth.

With considerable misgivings, for they both knew Mopsa's propensity for practical joking, they entered the car.

Barely had they taken their seat, ere, with a wild, ear-splitting yell, the little Chinaman gave the vehicle a shove, and, as it dashed swiftly into the tunnel, sprang on to a kind of footboard behind it.

On dashed the car, now sinking with sickening rapidity into a dip, now rising almost as swiftly up some steep hill, but all the time moving through the darkness at breakneck speed.

At last, with a suddenness which precipitated both lads from their seats, and sent them rolling head over heels on the soft sand, Mopsa stopped the car.

Springing from his perch at the back of the car, Mopsa flung himself down, and, holding his sides, literally squirmed with laughter.

Suddenly he grew serious, and sprang to his feet, as Captain Flame emerged from the open door of the Octopus, and was regarding him with frowning brows.

Mopsa touched his forelock.

"Hab de honour to report Massa Dick and Jack have approved!" he announced.

In the meantime the chums had picked themselves up, and were looking about them with interest.

They were in a large cave, one end of which was lapped by the waters of the submarine passage up by which they had gained the island, the other filled with a double set of storehouses, into the first one of which men were at that moment carrying the Peacock Throne and the other valuables the Octopus had gathered during her journey, whilst from the second other men were carrying stores of all kinds as rapidly as they could handle the heavy cases in which they were packed.

Ignoring Mopsa's announcement, though a slight smile drove the frown from his face, the captain led the way into the chart-room of the Octopus.

"Read this, Dick!" he said, thrusting a newspaper cutting into the boy's hand.

Dick obeyed.

As he did so his heart beat high with a new-found hope.

(To be continued in next Thursday's number of "THE GEM" Library. Will regular readers kindly hand this number containing the opening chapters of "Deep Sea Gold" on to their friends?—The EDITOR.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 189.

A SPECIAL STORY
NEXT WEEK:

"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!" A TALE OF ST. JIM'S.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD. ORDER EARLY!

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE —

Next Thursday.

Martin Clifford's latest story of the famous juniors of St. Jim's deals with a strange mystery, and bears the title of

"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!"

Tom Merry is entrusted with a mysterious packet, and all in good faith, and accompanied by his chums, takes it to its destination at Southampton. Next week you will be startled to read what happened, when you read

"UNDER SEALED ORDERS!"Specially Interesting Letters Acknowledged.

Owing to lack of space, I can, of course, print only a very few letters each week out of the many hundreds I receive. My best thanks are due to all those of my readers who have written to me, and particularly this week to the following, who have sent specially interesting letters: H. Kincaid, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia; Miss C. Dixon, Nottingham; Florrie C., Herne Hill, London; "Gemite," Sandown, Isle of Wight.

Good Value for a Penny.

Here is an interesting letter showing, among other things, how much enjoyment for a number of folk may be extracted from even one copy of THE GEM Library:

"Temperley,
"Cheshire.

"Dear Editor,—I feel that it is my duty to write you to tell you that I think 'Deep Sea Gold' THE GEM'S masterpiece, or, rather, I should say, will be, if the rest of the instalments are anything like the first. My word, it is great! I can see it is going to be very interesting, and if GEM readers are anything like myself, I say that is what they want. I have been a regular reader of the good old GEM for close on three years, and I can tell you I enjoy THE GEM from start to finish. 'The Brotherhood of Iron' was a very good tale, and I always enjoy Tom Merry & Co., who, I thought, were nearly done when poor Tom was out in the world on his own, and I was delighted when he came back to St. Jim's, where I hope he will remain.

"I will just tell you where THE GEM goes to after I have done with it; in fact, my two pals do the same as myself. If I have read it by Friday, I can always be sure of finding a lad, who, I am sorry to say, has not a very good home, and I take it to him. My pals give their GEMS to other poor chaps in our village, and I can tell you why they are always anxious to talk to us about Tom Merry & Co., and his doings at St. Jim's. Talking to one of these boys, I learnt that my GEM had passed through no less than a dozen lads' hands. Thursday does seem to be a long time off yet, but I am waiting patiently for next week's instalment of the best tale ever put before us—namely, 'Deep Sea Gold.'

"Always yours sincerely,
"W. A. C."

Many thanks, W. A. C.! Your welcome letter, in common with the many hundred similar ones I am constantly receiving, makes me feel satisfied that my efforts to secure for GEM readers the finest stories that brains can produce, are not in vain.

More High Praise for "Deep Sea Gold."

Herbert West, of Beckery House, Glastonbury, Somerset, writes me a very nice letter, in which he speaks of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries in general, and their new serials, "Deep Sea Gold," and "Beyond The Eternal Ice," in particular, in terms of the highest praise. This staunch Gemite also asks me to inform Robert McCullum, who some weeks ago was inquiring, through the medium of this page, for back numbers of "The Magnet" Library, that he has a limited number of these.

If Robert wishes to obtain these, he should write to Herbert West at his address given above. In reply to my chum's query as to whether Dick Brooke won the Sir Everard Jevons' Scholarship after all, I am pleased to be able to make his mind easy on this point. The winning of this prize enabled Dick Brooke to continue his career at St. Jim's, and more may be heard of him in the future.

An Appreciative Postcard.

"Chorlton-cum-Hardy,
"Manchester.

"Dear Editor,—I have taken THE GEM in ever since it came out, and I think it is the finest boys' or girls' paper there is. I am anxiously awaiting the next issue of 'Deep Sea Gold,' which is a splendid modern and exciting story. I have taken your companion paper, 'The Magnet,' in since it started. I think they are both ripping books.—Yours sincerely,

"REGINALD BROOKES."

Master Reginald Brookes is evidently one of the keenest readers of THE GEM and "The Magnet," and I owe him my best thanks for his loyal message.

Replies in Brief.

James Peacock, 117, High Street, Cowdenbeath, N.B., desires No. 136 of THE GEM Library, containing "Herrie's First Prize." Also other back numbers, both of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries.

R. Browne, Kingston, Canada.—Buck Finn is still at St. Jim's, and more may be heard of him in the near future.

F. J. Drew, Southampton.—"The Iron Island" and "The Brotherhood of Iron" have not yet appeared in book form, but may be looked for before long, as has been before stated in my chat.

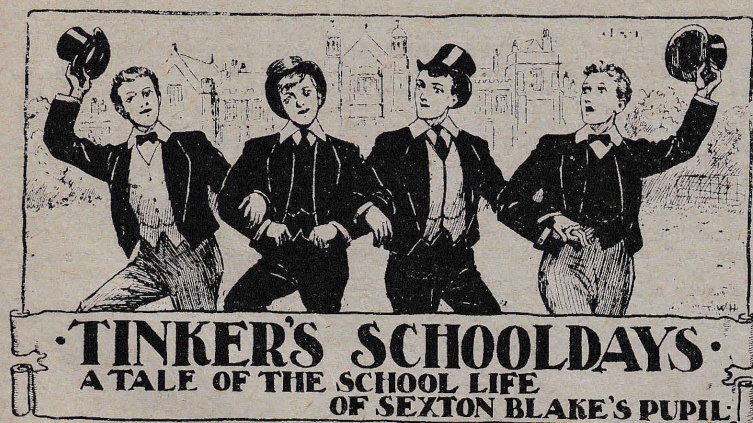
Master Griffin, Kingstown, Dublin, Ireland.—More will be heard of Skimpole very shortly.

A Lancashire Reader and His Friends.—Ferrers Locke, detective, has not been forgotten, though his services have not been required at St. Jim's lately. You may rest assured that he will not fail the chums in time of need.

Private J. Regan, H Company, Royal Scottish Fusiliers, Londonderry, Ireland, desires to correspond with a young man in England.

Roy Harris, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.—The quickest way for you to obtain the back numbers you want would be to order them from the local newsagency which supplies you weekly with your copies of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries. Your order will then be put through to our agents at 371, Queen Street West, Toronto, in the ordinary course of business, and you can rely on obtaining all those numbers which are not out of print.

THE EDITOR.



CHAPTER I.

Tinker bags an empty reserved carriage and takes a prisoner.

The station platform was littered with piles of luggage—iron-bound playboxes—shouting porters, and a few scores of boys of varying ages.

The bigger ones were mostly strolling about in small groups of threes and fours, swapping yarns about the holidays; junior boys were ragging in and out the luggage heaps, and a few solitary and rather disconsolate-looking specimens eyed the rest askance, and got deftly out of the light when the ragging came their way.

They were the new kids—too shy to speak to anyone, and mostly in a state of bluish-green funk.

There was one exception, however, a slight-built boy, with a bright, cheery face, who sat on a couple of boxes with his hands in his pockets, swinging his legs unconcernedly, and taking in all that went on round about him.

He wore a peculiar hat, which seemed to bother him a bit, for it would slide over on to one ear, giving him a rakish appearance; and he was conscious that his clothes were painfully new. He detested new clothes; they felt too stiff.

"Rummy lot of beggars," he said to himself speculatively. "Hallo! Who's the giddy bridegroom?"

A tall, lanky figure was coming striding down the platform in a tremendous hurry, and in the matter of clothes it was certainly a feast for the eye.

The boy on the box heard a youngster near him say:

"My hat, here's Rosie! Isn't he sweet?"

Mr. Rose—otherwise "Rosie"—wore a beautiful light-grey morning-coat, which hung in bags from his slender shoulders, an immaculate double-breasted white waistcoat, and a pale lavender tie. An eyeglass on a black ribbon was perched in his off eye, and in one hand was a pair of yellow gloves, and a silver-mounted walking-stick, in the other a slip of paper.

He bore down straight on the nearest group, and began hustling them into carriages of the waiting train.

Presently he caught sight of the boy on the box, who was still swinging his legs unconcernedly.

"You are for Telford's?" he asked.

"That's me all the time," said the boy. "D'you live there yourself?" he added ingratiatingly, without any idea of who or what the radiant vision might be.

"Ah, a bew noy—I mean, a new boy—I perceive! I'm a master at Telford's, so say 'Sir' when you speak to me. You may find your schoolfellows

a little rough and out of hand at first, so you and the other new boys had better get a parriage acart—carriage apart—that—that is." And without another word he had descended on the next group.

"Rummy bird!" said the boy to himself; and, slipping off the boxes, he sauntered across the platform. "Travel with the other new kids, indeed! Not much! There's one of 'em blubbing already—leaving home and country, and faithful Fido—pore little dear!"

He saw an empty carriage near by, on the window of which was a piece of rather grimy paper, fastened with a bit of stamp edging, and bearing in big, sprawly blue lettering, which ran all skew-wise, the magic word "Reserved."

"Now, I call that thoughtful," said the boy. "I didn't tell 'em I was coming, but I like travellin' in state."

He got in, slammed the door, wedged a coin in the lock to prevent the handle turning as he saw someone making for the compartment, and then when that danger was past, repocketed the coin, took off the long-faced hat, which he tossed into the rack, and putting his feet on the cushions opposite, prepared to make himself comfortable, and devote his attention to the study of a paper.

Just as the train was starting he heard a yell from a scandalised porter, who went spinning round and collapsed amongst some empty milk cans. The carriage door was wrenched violently open, and a dark-haired, thick-set boy scrambled in, panting.

"Near squeak!" said the newcomer to himself, slamming the door again, and leaning out to make faces at the porter—"deuced near thing! Hang it. I've dropped that melon, after all! What a rotten—Hallo!" He had turned away from the window, and for the first time realised that he was not alone. "Here, I say," he burst out indignantly, "you can't come in here, you know!"

"Did you observe the notice on the window?" asked the first-comer sweetly. "The managing director of the line thoughtfully labelled this carriage reserved, and—"

"You silly young ass, I put it there myself. I and two pals who get in at the next stop, always keep a carriage to ourselves at the beginning of term, and you'll jolly well have to clear out. Who are you—new kid, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Don't answer in that cheeky tone! What's your name?"

"Tinker, please, sir," said the boy, with mock humility.

"I told you not to check; don't say 'sir' to me."

"Sorry! I thought p'raps you

were a master—or the Duke of Wellington."

The dark boy's fist shot out, but by a seeming miracle his victim's head moved ever so slightly in the last fraction of a second, and the dark boy's knuckles came crash against the wood-work.

"Ouch!" he said, surveying them ruefully. "Look here, Stinker, you've jolly well got to get out at the next stop. Understand?"

"My name is Tinker."

"Tinker what?"

"Plain Tinker."

"Oh, you're plain, right enough; you'd frighten a decent-looking codfish! Tom, Tom, the tinker's son, stole a— Here, who are your people who's sending you to Telford's?"

"My boss."

"Boss—what do you mean?"

"My boss—a man called Blake. He's sending me, and here I am."

"Well, you won't be here long, duckie; at the next station out you go, jolly sharp, and don't you forget it!"

"My doctor says—" began Tinker languidly, but the other fellow flew at him in a royal rage.

"You infernal little beast! I don't hold with thrashing new kids, as a rule—bad form—but unless you do as you're told, I'll give you the finest hiding you ever had in your life."

"My word, you must be a terror!" said Tinker, grinning.

The bigger boy leapt at him, and as he leapt he realised that something had hit him twice, not very hard, but on the same tender spot under the chin. His head jerked backwards, and instead of grabbing his opponent he only grabbed empty air, and came down squelch on the dusty carpet.

He picked himself up, and dashed in again, but again something so quick that he couldn't see it, caught him on precisely the same place, and he fell backwards, hitting his head a nasty crack against the heavy metal door-handle.

For a moment he felt very sick, and more than half-stunned. It wasn't the force of the blows that had done the damage so much as his fall against the door.

Tinker bent over him, still grinning.

"Naughty—naughty," he said, "losing its temper like that! How's a pore, infernal little beast like me to protect himself from a savage terror like you? 'Orrible Outrage in a Railway Train' The evening papers are sure to have a full description. And you called me Stinker, too. I'm all on my lonesome, and I must take precautions, dearest."

As he spoke, he unfastened the straps which held his rug and overcoat in a neat bundle, and, with a few deft turns, had fastened his assailant's ankles, and bound his arms tightly to his side.

"You say we're going to have company at the next stop, don't you, darlin'? I'm sorry, but you might scream and alarm 'em, and that would never do."

"You little beast, I'll pay you out for this!" said the other, scowling.

"Quite so," said Tinker; "but this is my turn, my lambkin." And snatching a handkerchief from his helpless victim's pocket, he crammed it into its owner's mouth just as the latter worthy had opened it, and got as far as "Stin—"

"Hush a bye, baby!" cooed Tinker. "Now let's have it's little ticket to give to the nice, kind guard."

He dived into the fallen hero's waistcoat pockets, and found the bit of blue pasteboard which he transferred to

his own keeping. The boy on the floor glared as though he would have liked to rend Tinker limb from limb.

Tinker nodded at him genially, and whistling a soothing lullaby between his teeth, sat down, and, using both feet at once, gave a vigorous shove, and the scowler disappeared from view amongst the dust and stale cigarette-ends under the opposite seat.

Stretching out, Tinker pushed him hard up against the compartment wall, as far back as possible; then he took the victim's hat, stick, and overcoat, and shoved them under the seat, too, just as the train began to slow up.

Tinker, spread out on the corner seat above his victim, watched the platform eagerly. There were some twenty boys waiting for the train's arrival, and two of them, spotting the blue-pencilled label on the carriage window, made a dash for the compartment.

Tinker sought concealment behind his comic papers, and awaited developments.

"Hallo, old man," said the foremost boy, wrenching open the door. "Here we are again, Micky and I—" Tinker lowered the papers, and the other two gasped.

"Here I say, where's Maxwell?" asked the first boy. "He said he was going to reserve this carriage. Where the deuce has he got to, and who are you?"

"I'm only a new boy, please," said Tinker meekly. "I don't know any of the other fellows."

"Oh! New kid, are you? Micky, cut along and see where Mac has got to—he must be in another carriage."

But it was too late to investigate. The guard's whistle had blown, and the train was already on the move, so there was nothing left but for the two friends to jump in.

"Can't understand about Mac," said the first one, a boy called Orford. "He told me we'd be sure to know his carriage by the faked 'reserved' label."

"Shure, an' it's his writin'," answered Micky, scratching a red-thatched head in perplexity.

"Hang him! I've got an awful lot I want to jaw about before we get there," said Orford.

"Perhaps if you could describe him," said Tinker meekly. "I could tell you—"

"You shut your head!" said Orford sharply. "We don't want any new kid butting into our affairs. You read your papers, and don't bother us. You've no right to be here at all."

The train whirled through a tunnel, and there came the sound of a muffled sneeze from under the seat. Tinker barked out a cough to try and drown it, but too late.

"Don't snuffle and sneeze like that again," said Orford, as the train dashed out into the sunlight again.

"I beg your pardon," said Tinker. "I only coughed."

"You didn't; you sneezed. Didn't he, Micky?"

Tinker sat still, and wondered what would happen if the chap under the seat sneezed again, or managed to work his gag loose.

He needn't have worried, however, for the missing Maxwell was lying as still as a mouse. Not for worlds would he have allowed his two friends to know where he was, or that he had been put there by a new kid. He would rather have been smashed to pieces in an accident, or lain doggo till the crack of doom.

"Vestead Junction," said Orford, after a long pause, as they flashed through a station. "Only ten minutes

to Telford now—next stop. I've bagged number five octagon study for us this term. I fixed it with Woodford just before he left, and gave him thirty bob for the furniture. That'll be ten bob from you, Micky, and ten from Mac. Hallo! Look! There's the old diving-pool, and there's the first of the old coll. buildings. Here, you thingamyjig in the corner, be'old your 'appy 'ome, where, for new kids, there are three rules—do as you're told; do it at the jump, and don't check. Savvy?"

"Yes, sir," said Tinker. "Thank you!"

"Not such a bad little beast, as new kids go," said Orford under his breath. "Seems civil enough, and doesn't blub as most of them do. Confound you, you sneezed again! I told you not to!"

"I didn't, really," said Tinker, chuckling inwardly.

The dust from the carriage floor was getting into Maxwell's nostrils, and he was making frantic efforts to keep quiet.

"Telford! Telford! Tickets please!" roared a raucous voice, and a collector appeared at the door.

Orford and Micky Doran gave up theirs, and began collecting their things. Tinker, with an eye to an early escape, had already grabbed his.

"Now, then, young gents, 'urry up," said the collector.

Tinker edged to the door, and solemnly handed over two tickets.

"Ere, wot's this?" said the collector. "I only want one of these."

"The other," said Tinker gravely. "belongs to a gentleman under the seat."

"Under the seat? Why, what do you mean?"

"Being a comparative stranger," said Tinker, edging one foot on to the platform. "I can't explain his peculiar tastes, but you'll certainly find him there, and he—er—entrusted me with his ticket."

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" came in an explosive wail from under the seat. Tinker had just quitted.

"Great Scott!" said Orford; and dived to investigate. "My jumping aunt, it's Mac," he said, "trussed up like a bloomin' chicken! What the—"

Tinker saw his prisoner being dragged into light, and waited for no more. With a dive he was through the barrier, and perched on a vacant seat in one of the school flies. Glancing back, he saw three very angry and excited figures in pursuit, shaking their fists at him. Then a crowd of boys surged in between, and the fly having been filled up, went off at a shambling trot.

Chapter 2.

"ALL new boys to the Head's study. Follow me!" shouted a voice, and the second prefect, having headed in a round dozen of dazed, bewildered, and rather scared boys, hurried them down a long, covered passage through a stone-flagged hall, and up a broad oak staircase.

There they found themselves in a big room, in the centre of which was a table. Around it were placed high-backed chairs, and in front of each chair was a square of blotting-paper, foolscap, and pen and ink.

"Sit down, please!" A door at the far end of the room had unexpectedly been opened, and the Head appeared in cap and gown. He was a tall, powerfully-built man, a trifle over six feet, and broad in proportion, with bushy, black eyebrows, dark, piercing eyes, a well-cut nose, and a dark beard and moustache which effectually hid his mouth. In his left

hand he carried a small sheaf of papers, and his eyes swept slowly from face to face as if he were taking a mental photograph of each one in turn. Without a word he laid a short, general examination-paper in front of each boy. Then, with a nod to the second prefect, he said "Half an hour. I shall be back by then. Meanwhile, you will keep order."

Tinker glanced down the list of questions ruefully. It was his first taste of an examination, and he didn't like it. One or two of the questions seemed scarcely intelligible. He looked round at the other boys, to see how they were taking matters. Two had subsided hopelessly into tears, two more were staring stoically in front of them in resigned despair, and one, a beak-nosed, ferret-eyed youngster, was simply revelling in the questions, writing as if his very life depended on it.

"Dirty little swot!" said Tinker; and, reaching out under the table, he hacked him on the shin.

"Ouch!" squeaked the ferrety boy; and gave a start which sent half an ink-potful splashing over a page he had just completed.

Tinker gurgled, and the ferrety boy heard him.

"Please, that boy over there kicked me severely," he squeaked, "and he's ruined my answers to questions two and three."

The second prefect, who was rather a nice-looking chap, eyed him with cold contempt.

"Do you good, you pink-eyed swot," he said. "Can't you take a little ragging without making a song and dance about it?" Then he turned sharply to Tinker. "Here, you, what's your name, leave him alone, or I shall have to see you in my study afterwards."

Tinker reluctantly occupied himself with the papers in front of him. Some half dozen of the questions seemed fairly sensible, and to these he scrawled the answers. The rest he left severely alone, and, finding time hang heavily on his hands, made darts out of some spare sheets of foolscap, armed the point of each with pieces of broken nib, and looked for a suitable target. The ferrety boy was forbidden fruit, but the two next to him, fat pink and white kids, looked tempting.

With a deft jerk, Tinker fired his missiles under the table in the fashion of the late lamented Captain Kidd, of buccaneering fame. There were two simultaneous screeches, and the fastest of the two went over backwards, chair and all.

Corbett, the second prefect, looked up sharply.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Something stung me on the legs!" wailed the fat boy.

"And me, too!" bleated his neighbour. "It was a wasp."

"I find it impossible to write with concentration amidst this uproar," said he of the ferret eyes.

Tinker, apparently intent on his papers, said nothing. He was busy trying to recover the tell-tale darts from under the table with his feet.

The second prefect eyed him critically, then, rising slowly, he looked over his shoulder. "You seem to have finished your paper already," he said drily.

(The continuation of this fine story of the school-life of Sexton Blake's pupil will be found in the issue of "The Boys' Friend" on sale at all newsagents on Tuesday, September 19. Every reader of the GEM LIBRARY should make a point of ordering a copy of this issue.)