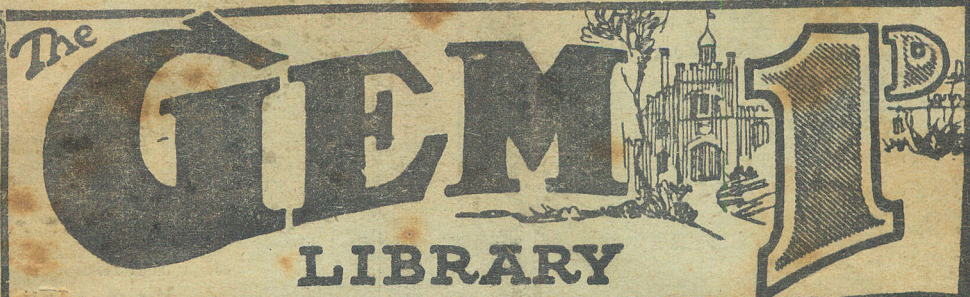


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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"What does this mean?" demanded the tenant of the Pines harshly. "Who are you?" "We've come to warn you, sir," said Monty Lowther briskly. "There's a burglar in your grounds!" (See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 1.

The New Neighbour.

BERNARD GLYN, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, walked into the quad, and approached the Terrible Three, who were chatting under the old elms. It was a glorious summer afternoon, and to remain indoors was out of the question. As Monty Lowther had just remarked, it was altogether too bad to have afternoon lessons.

"He's coming to-day," said Bernard Glyn.

"Eh?"

"He's coming to-day."

"Who's coming to-day, ass?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"The new tenant of the Pines, of course," said Glyn.

"Haven't you heard?"

"We've heard nothing," said Monty Lowther. "We know the Pines, of course, but we didn't know that there was any giddy tenant. It's a furnished house, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Glyn; "and it's been untenanted for months. Well, I've just heard that somebody has taken it for a time, and he's going to do all sorts of experiments down there."

The Terrible Three looked interested.

"Explain yourself, fathead," said Manners. "Be lucid."

Most of the St. Jim's juniors had seen the Pines. It was a fairly large house, which stood in its own grounds on the outskirts of Rylcombe. It was detached, and bordered the moor. For months it had been untenanted, although it was furnished throughout.

"Well, there's nothing to be lucid about," said Bernard Glyn. "All I know is that he's coming down by the evening

train, and that there's a good deal of talk in Rylcombe because he's not having any servants."

"That's nothing," said Monty Lowther. "He's bringing his own."

"No, he isn't!"

"Then he's going to live in that big house without any servants at all?" asked Tom Merry. "You must be mistaken, Glyn."

"It's nothing to do with me," said Bernard Glyn. "I'm only telling you what they are saying in the village. I expect it's all silly gossip."

"What's the merchant's name?" asked Manners.

"Dr. Munson Grenfell."

"My hat!"

"Dr. who—which?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Dr. Munson Grenfell," repeated Bernard Glyn, with a chuckle. "He sounds an awfully important chap, doesn't he? They say he's a distinguished scientist, and that he's taken the Pines especially for carrying out some intricate chemical experiments."

"Well, with a name like that he ought to be able to do anything in the scientific line," said Monty Lowther.

Bernard Glyn walked away, and entered the School House. Afternoon lessons would commence very shortly, and the schoolboy inventor wished to make one or two little experiments of his own in the laboratory.

The Terrible Three fell to discussing cricket, which subject Glyn had interrupted. But in a very few minutes they were disturbed again, and this time by Blake & Co., the famous Fourth Form quartette of Study No. 6.

Next Wednesday:

"THE TOFF!" AND "PLAYING THE GAME!"

Blake & Co. had just entered the gates, and they, too, had evidently just come up from the village. A heated argument seemed to be in progress, and the voice which could be distinguished most easily was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You are uttably w'ong, you boundahs!" exclaimed the swell of the School House. "If you wufuse to back me up in this mattah I can no longer wegard you as fwieds!"

"Look here, Gussy—" "I uttably wufuse to look theah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "It is only awight and pwopah that a stwanger should be accorded a hearty welcome to Wylcombe. St. Jim's is the most important institution for miles around."

"We agree there, Gussy, anyhow," said Herries. "Then theah is no weason why you should not agwee with me in the othah mattah," said D'Arcy. "As I said, it is onlay wight and pwopah—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "It's wrong and improper!"

"You uttah duffah!" "Methinks I discern the sounds of discord!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, strolling towards the Fourth-Formers with Tom Merry and Manners. "Is there any gory quarrel, forsooth?"

"It's Gussy again," growled Blake. "He's got a fatheaded idea, and argument's no good," said Herries.

"Obstinate as a giddy mule," added Digby. "Weally, you wottahs—"

"Explain the trouble, brethren," said Lowther. "Before I explain I wish to give Digby a fearful thwashin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "He has called me a mule—"

"Surely you don't object to being called by your own name?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Weally, Lowthah—" "What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry. "Buck up; it's nearly time to go in."

Jack Blake nodded to D'Arcy. "Well, that ass wants to do a fatheaded thing!" he explained.

"Nothing surprising in that!" murmured Lowther. "But this is even more fatheaded than usual," went on Blake, regardless of D'Arcy's stony stare. "He actually suggests that we should go and meet this new tenant of the Pines—Dr. Bunson Somebody—"

"Dr. Munson Grenfell," said Tom Merry. "Yes, that's the name," went on Blake. "Well, we don't know him, and he's nothing to us. He's simply an ordinary villager."

"Villagah!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "You uttah ass, Doctah Gwenfell is a distinguished scientist!"

"Well, even if he is, that's no reason why we should go and bother him," said Blake. "He'd look upon it as cheek on our part. Besides, it's not the thing to go and meet strangers. Might just as well suggest going to meet the guard of the giddy train he comes by!"

"You fwabjous duffah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Doctah Gwenfell is goin' to be an important wresident of Wylcombe, and it's up to us to give him a hearty welcome."

Tom Merry grinned. "I believe in being polite, Gussy," he said; "but there's no need to meet this chap. For all we know, he might be a regular rotter. Better wait and see who and what he is before we bother him."

"But it will be no bothah—" "Not from your point of view, Gussy," said Manners. "He might think it pure nerve. Distinguished scientists don't like boys—especially when they're perfect strangers. You'd better give up the idea; it's no good."

"Utterly ridiculous!" said Blake. "Leave Dr. Bunson Scentsmell in peace," said Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus glared round through his famous monocle.

"I think it is wathah too thick of you, Lowthah, to widicula the doctah's name in that sillay mannah," he said severely. "Now, I want a stwaight answer fwom all of you. Are you comin' with me to the station?"

"No!" exclaimed the juniors, in one voice. "Then I considah—" "Oh, blow what you consider!" growled Blake. "I considah that you are a set of wank outsidahs!"

exclaimed D'Arcy stiffly. "I shall go to the station alone." "Good luck to you!" said Blake. "And may the giddy doctor merchant fall on your neck," added Lowther genially. "And roll you in the dust," said Digby. "You uttah asses!"

Arthur Augustus looked round loftily, and then marched off with his head high in the air.

But a hitch occurred in his plans. He earned the displeasure of Mr. Lathom in the Form-room by talking rather loudly to Blake about the subject of Dr. Grenfell, and the Form-master imposed an imposition of fifty lines, to be written immediately after lessons.

His chums grinned unfeelingly, but D'Arcy was quite upset. The train arrived at Rylcombe before tea, and Arthur Augustus would be writing lines when it came in. The other juniors didn't mind a bit, for they didn't believe in D'Arcy meeting the stranger.

So Dr. Munson Grenfell was destined to find no St. Jim's juniors awaiting his arrival on Rylcombe platform.

CHAPTER 2.

A Brush with the Grammarians.

"LOVELY evening!" said Monty Lowther. He stood on the School House steps with his chums, and looked at the sun, which lay low in the sky, its golden rays making the fleecy clouds shimmer and gleam. It was, indeed, a lovely evening.

"Lovely evening or not," said Manners, "I'm going to shut myself up in my dark-room. I've got a good two hours' work before me!"

"Oh, leave it until to-morrow!" said Tom Merry. "Why should I?"

"So that we can all go for a spin on our bikes." Manners sniffed.

"That's very likely!" he sneered. "Do you think I'm going to leave my negatives to spoil while I go for a mouldy bike-ride? Blow the bikes! Blow the lovely evening! I'm going to spend my time profitably!"

His chums smiled. Manners had a photographic fit on at present. He was always keen on the hobby, but just now he was exceptionally energetic, and all other matters could slide. He was even reluctant to go out to cricket practice.

This evening, however, there was no practice, and a spin along the quiet country roads just seemed to be the thing; and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther made up their minds at once.

"Well, we're going for a spin," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you're agreeable, Monty?"

"Rather!" said Lowther. "Just the thing, old son!" "Good!"

"Sorry," said Manners, "but I've got something better to do."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Tom. "We don't mind, if you're really in earnest!"

"I wouldn't come if you offered to treat me to a tuck-in in Wayland," said Manners; and he turned about and went indoors.

His chums chuckled, and crossed over to the bicycle-shed. In a few minutes they had their machines out, and were soon pedalling easily along the quiet country road. As it was a pleasure spin, they took it leisurely, and did not exert themselves.

It was exceedingly enjoyable, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther felt that they could not have chosen a better way of spending the evening. But they were not destined to continue their ride in the same easy-going manner for long.

As they approached the cross-road, they heard the ringing of bicycle-bells, and they, in return, sounded their own bells. They slowed down, but arrived at the junction before the other cyclists, and they turned their heads and looked up the road.

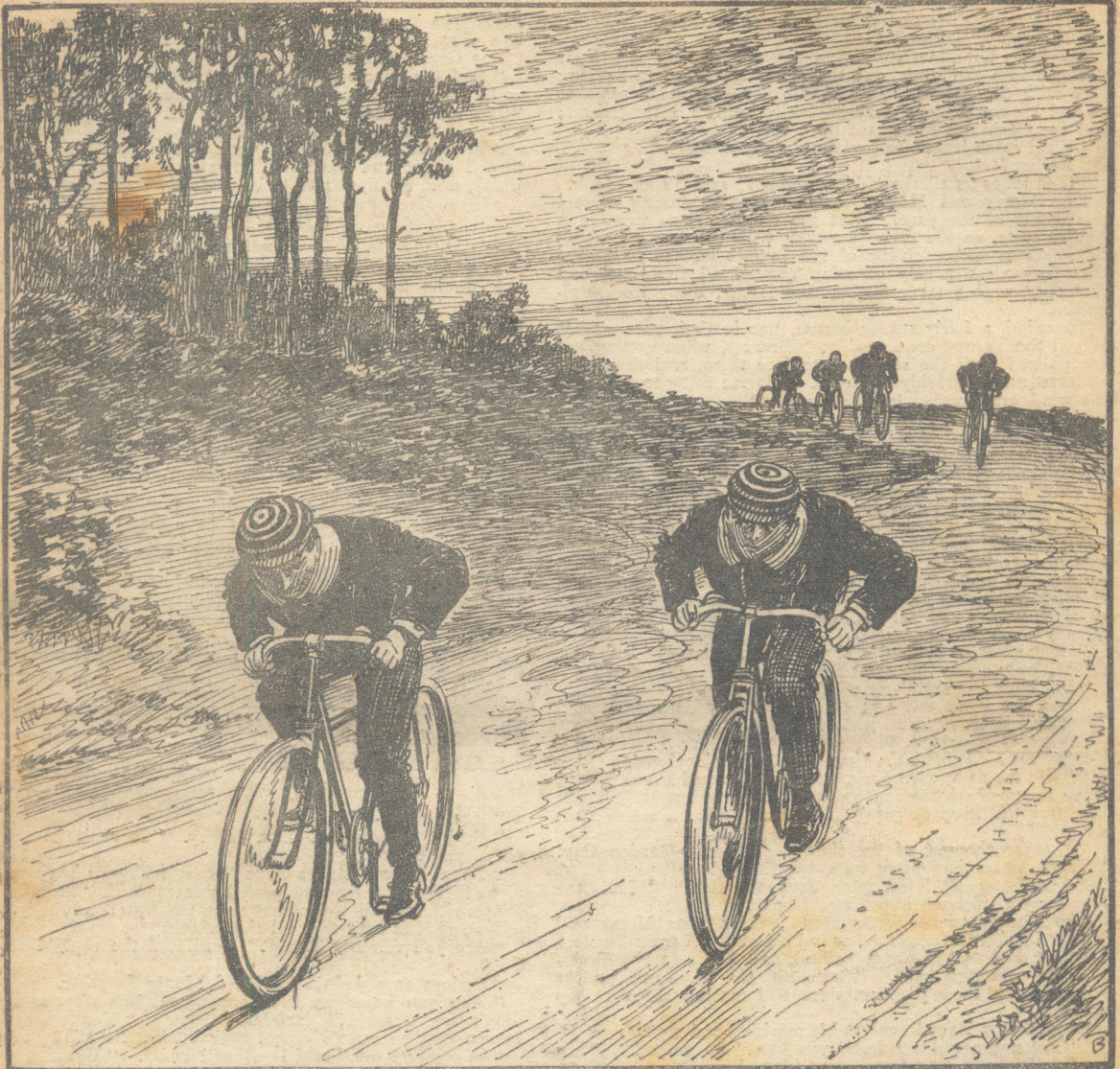
A shout instantly greeted them. "My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay & Co.!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Monty Lowther. Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, were the keenest enemies of the St. Jim's juniors; but their enmity was not serious. The warfare between the two schools was always carried out in the friendliest of spirits. Nevertheless, Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had no wish to be caught by the Grammarians.

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"Let's show the Grammarians what St. Jim's can do in the way of cycling!" said Lowther, and the juniors put on speed. Gordon Gay & Co. exchanged glances, and spurred forward. "After zem!" shouted Mont Blong excitedly. (See Chapter 2.)

The latter were in force. As they wheeled round into the other road Gordon Gay chuckled.

"Merry and Lowther!" he exclaimed. "And they're alone!"

"I vote we collar the bounders!" said Wootton major.

"And make a giddy-example of them!" added Frank Monk.

"Zat is my idea, my shums," said Gustave Blanc, the French junior, more commonly known as Mont Blong. "Let us give zee chase!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther divined the Grammarians' intentions, and they gave one another swift glances.

"It's no good stopping," said Tom Merry, as he pedalled along. "We should simply get wiped out. The only thing is to scoot!"

"And scoot quickly, too!" grunted Lowther. "I'm blessed if I'm going to be collared, anyhow! Let's show the bounders what St. Jim's can do in the way of cycling!"

And they spurred forward, with their backs bent. Gordon Gay & Co. didn't lose a moment in giving chase.

"After zem!" shouted Mont Blong excitedly. "It is zat zat vill escape viz zemselves!"

"Rats!" panted Jack Wootton. "We'll soon catch 'em up!"

"And give it to 'em all the hotter for having the cheek

to try to escape," said Gordon Gay. "Buck up, you chaps! Pedal like the very dickens!"

But Tom Merry and Lowther were as determined to escape as the Grammarians were to capture them. Their bikes were in good order, and they simply flew along the smooth road. Just lately they had been doing a lot of cycling, and were in splendid form.

Tom Merry cast a swift glance behind.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed. "We're keeping well ahead!"

"They're not gaining, then?"

"Not a bit," answered Tom, "although they're putting all their beef into it. We've only got to keep this pace up, and we shall show them a clear pair of heels!"

"Better say a dusty pair of back tyres!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "What a lark if we get a giddy puncture!"

"Oh crumbs, don't talk about it, or we shall get one!" gasped Tom Merry. "I say, I wonder how long those bounders will keep it up?"

By all appearances the Grammarians had every intention of keeping it up until they had caught the fugitives. Gordon Gay was foremost, and he pedalled as though his very life depended upon it.

"My hat, those chaps can ride!" he gasped. "If we let them escape now, they'll crow over it for weeks!"

"You're jolly talkative!" panted Frank Monk. "We're going like a giddy express train now!"

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

NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"THE TOFF!"

"They're getting ahead!" said Wootton major.

"Then pedal harder!"

But the Grammarians were already putting all their strength into the work, yet they only succeeded in keeping pace with the Saints. In fact, Gordon Gay could see that he and his companions were gradually losing a little ground; and the Cornstalk junior set his teeth.

"We'll catch 'em!" he exclaimed determinedly.

"Rather!"

"If it takes us all the giddy evening!" said Frank Monk.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were beginning to feel the effects of the pace. But the Grammarians were in a similar state, so the chase went on with the two parties as far apart as ever. None of the juniors seemed to realise that they were swiftly covering ground all the time, and that they were getting farther and farther away from Rylcombe.

The wind, a fairly strong breeze, was in their rear, and it helped them along considerably. Breezes, when cycling, are not noticed until the rider has to face them, and then they are most uncomfortably apparent. It is one thing to ride with the wind, and another to ride against it.

The dusk was gathering thickly, but Tom Merry and Manners gave all their thoughts to their task. If they allowed the Grammarians to capture them, it would mean ignominious defeat. If, on the other hand, they succeeded in escaping, they would be able to crow over Gordon Gay & Co. for proving themselves to be the best cyclists.

So they had no intention whatever of being captured.

Gordon Gay & Co. kept up the chase doggedly. One or two had dropped behind, but the rest pedaled along in a clump, hot upon the fugitives' track. Tom Merry and Manners were only a couple of hundred yards ahead; but, try as they would, the Grammarians could not diminish that already short distance.

Wootton major uttered a sharp exclamation.

"My only aunt!" he exclaimed. "Look at the sky!"

"Oh, blow the sky!" growled Gordon Gay.

"But the sun's set, you ass; it's nearly dark!" shouted Wootton major. "I've just realised it!"

Gordon Gay started.

"My hat! What's the time, then?" he ejaculated.

"Time for us to turn back, anyhow!" gasped Frank Monk.

"It's no good us keeping the chase up any longer. Those blighters will keep us going all night. What a set of asses we are!"

"I never thought of the time!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "This'll mean lines when we get back, and—"

"A milestone!" interrupted Jack Wootton. "Let's see how far we are from home, sweet home!"

The Grammarians dismounted just as Tom Merry and Monty Lowther disappeared round a bend. A second before Lowther had cast a glance behind, and had seen the Grammarians pedaling hard. Therefore the St. Jim's juniors thought that their pursuers were still coming along at top speed.

Gordon Gay leaned against his machine and panted.

"That was a giddy ride, if you like!" he gasped. "My hat! I'm perspiring from every blessed pore!"

"Oh, blow your pores!" growled Wootton major. "Let's look how far we are from Wayland!"

"About three miles, I should say," remarked Frank Monk.

They bent over the milestone in the dusk. Gordon Gay was nearest, and he suddenly stood upright, his face blank and startled.

"Great Scott!" he gasped.

"What's up?"

"What is ze mattaire, my shum?" asked Mont Blong.

Gordon Gay stared before him.

"Did—did you see?" he asked hoarsely.

"See what?"

"The milestone!" ejaculated Gordon Gay. "We—we're eleven miles from Wayland. That makes it over thirteen miles from home!"

"Thirteen miles!"

"Rats!"

"It must be wrong!"

"Of course!"

"You've made a mistake, Gay!"

"I haven't!" roared Gordon Gay. "We're eleven miles from Wayland, and it's past locking up now. Oh, my Sunday topper; this'll mean a visit to the Head!"

"And zey have escaped viz zemselves!" exclaimed the

French junior regretfully. "We have not even zee satisfaction of rolling zem in zee dust. Ciel! It is zee rotten luck!"

The Grammarians looked blank.

"And the wind's against us!" exclaimed Wootton major, as he felt the breeze blowing against his perspiring cheeks. "It's take us hour and a half to get home. Oh crikey, what a bust-up with the Head!"

And Gordon Gay & Co., their spirits decidedly damped, turned about and pedaled homewards against the wind, which, once faced, proved to be distinctly unpleasant.

CHAPTER 3.

Punctures.

"NOT a sign of 'em!" said Tom Merry breathlessly, as he turned in his saddle and looked rearwards. "They've either given up the chase, or we've worn them out."

"Good!" said Monty Lowther, slowing down. "I thought we should do the bounders in the eye. My hat, it's been a regular cross-country race!"

They had cycled on fully a couple of miles farther than Gordon Gay & Co., and they, too, had been too intent upon the chase to realise how many miles had sped by, and how fast the time had flown.

But now that the excitement was over, they noticed the deepening shadows.

"I say, it's jolly late!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a sudden start. "And we've got to get back to St. Jim's. We shall get into a row all through those fat-headed Grammar cads!"

"Well, there's some consolation in knowing that they will get into a row as well," said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "We've got a long ride home, Tommy, so we'd better make a start."

"Oh, it's not so long," said Tom Merry—"not more than five miles!"

Monty Lowther grinned.

"It's twelve miles to Wayland, to say nothing of the extra bit to St. Jim's," he replied.

"Twelve miles!" gasped Tom Merry.

"About twelve and a half, to be correct!" said Lowther easily.

"Rot!"

"I tell you—"

"Bosh!" interrupted Tom Merry. "It can't be twelve miles, you ass!"

"Then the milestones have been telling whoppers all along! The last one we passed was marked, '12 Miles to Wayland,' and all the others were marked accordingly. Of course, if it is only five, all the better!"

"Are you serious, Monty?" ejaculated the captain of the Shell.

"Serious as a judge!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"And you knew we were coming all this way, and you didn't say a word!" exclaimed Tom. "You must have known that we can never get back in time for calling-over!"

"Of course I did," said Lowther blandly. "But that made no difference at all, my son. It'll only mean lines, anyhow, and that's a lot better than giving into the Grammar cads. If we buck up we shall just be in by supper-time."

There was some satisfaction in knowing that they had beaten Gordon Gay & Co., and they started on the homeward journey with the intention of breaking the records for speed. But they soon found that speed was out of the question.

Their race had worn them out a bit, and their legs ached. In addition they now found that the wind was dead against them, and it had risen considerably. Progress was not exactly speedy; on the contrary, it was exasperatingly slow. The ride, in fact, was nothing but a fight against the wind. It was even necessary to pedal down the hills.

As they were struggling up a rise, after having covered about three miles of the homeward journey, they dismounted, for it was now nearly dark.

"Lighting-up time!" panted Tom Merry.

They lit their lamps and walked to the top of the hill, where they again mounted their machines.

"This is a pretty steep hill!" said Tom Merry. "We'd better go easy."

"Rats!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It's the first chance we've had of doing a bit of coasting, and I'm blessed if I'm going to shove my brakes on!"

They sped down the hill fairly fast, the wind itself acting as a powerful brake. Their acetylene lamps cast bright lights ahead, and Lowther suddenly uttered a cry.

"Look out!" he yelled. "The road's smothered with loose flints just ahead. I forgot the rotten things!"

They had noticed them when they had climbed the hill, and had then decided to be cautious on the return journey. But

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in the darkness the matter had been overlooked. They both applied their brakes, and steered through the flints with desperate hopes that no punctures would result.

But their luck was right out.

Monty Lowther steered frantically round a jagged stone, and congratulated himself. But the next second his front tyre ran over a small piece of flint; it was a sharp piece, with an edge like glass, and it instantly cut through the tyre.

His-s-s-s-s!

"Oh, bust and blow!" roared Monty Lowther. "I'm punctured!"

He applied the brakes sharply as the front rim rattled and grated on the hard road. Tom Merry hopped off, and the pair stood looking at the deflated tyre with dismay. Then Tom Merry glared at his chum.

"You frabjous chump!" he said heatedly.

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, with indignation. "Do you think I ran over the rotten flint just for the sake of bursting the rotten tyre? I told you to go easy, and you took no notice—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Monty Lowther. "What's the good of making a giddy fuss? The tyre's punctured, and the only thing we can do is to mend it. My hat, I'd like to come face to face with the ratter who shoved these loose flints down!"

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

"Quarter-past eight!" he ejaculated. "My only hat, what time shall we get home?"

"Oh, blow! Let's repair this rotten puncture!"

Monty Lowther spoke irritably. He had often been amused when hearing of other misfortunes of the same kind. But now that he was experiencing tyre-trouble on his own account he failed to see anything humorous in the situation.

There was nothing to do but mend the tyre.

The gash proved to be a large one, and the cover itself was badly cut.

To make matters worse there was a scarcity of solution.

There was none in Tom Merry's bag, owing to an oversight, and Monty Lowther's tube was in the last stages of exhaustion.

"Fat lot of good this'll be!" growled Lowther, as he smeared the sticky solution on the rubber. "It's rotten solution, anyhow, and with only a little dab like this—"

"Oh, don't growl!" said Tom Merry. "We're doing our best!"

At last the tyre was repaired and replaced on the rim. By the time it was pumped up half an hour had passed. The juniors lost no time in remounting their machines and continuing their journey.

But Monty Lowther had not ridden two hundred yards before he felt the front rim bumping on the road again. As he had suspected, the solution had not stuck, and the repair was a failure.

Tom Merry, ahead, looked back.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Can't!" roared Lowther. "Tyre's down again!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry dismounted, and again they stared at the tyre, this time with even more dismayed glances.

"This," said Monty Lowther calmly, "is just the sort of thing that makes you feel happy. In common parlance, we're kyboshed, diddled, and done! There's no more solution, and we're over ten miles from St. Jim's!"

"My hat!"

"Pleasant, ain't it?" said Monty Lowther. "You'd better go on, Tommy, and I'll walk!"

"You ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It would take you three hours, and it would be eleven o'clock before you arrived. We shall have to think of something else!"

"Well, that won't tax our brains much! There's no train to go by, we're miles from anywhere, and there's only one jigger. The inference is obvious. We shall have to ride home on your bike, Tommy, and take it in turns on the step!"

There was nothing else for it. Monty Lowther's machine was placed in an old cowshed bordering the road. Then they continued their journey according to Monty Lowther's suggestion.

But it was not sentiment for long. Misfortune seemed to be dogging their footsteps in earnest. A mile had barely been covered when the finishing touch was put to the evening's misadventures.

Without any warning whatever, the back tyre of Tom Merry's bicycle burst.

Bang!

It was not surprising in the least. The tyre was not a new one, and Monty Lowther's weight fully over it had proved too much. No respectable tyre can be expected to carry a double load without protest for long, especially when the tyre happens to be aged.

And this one had protested loudly.

Monty Lowther nearly fell off, for the bang had startled him. As soon as Tom Merry had slowed down they both hopped off. They looked at one another, and said nothing. Just at that moment their feelings were too deep for words.

But at last Monty Lowther found his voice.

"Tommy, old man," he said tragically, "what have we done to deserve this? Why should we be inflicted with this awful catastrophe?"

"Oh, don't be funny, Monty!" growled Tom Merry. "We're dished properly. This means a nine-mile walk to St. Jim's, and it's past nine. Even if we run half the giddy way we can't get there before eleven."

"Old Railton will be off his dot with worry!" said Lowther, chuckling in spite of himself. "There'll be search-parties out looking for us. They'll think we've had a gory accident."

"And all through Gordon Gay & Co.!" growled Tom Merry wrathfully. "My hat, we'll make them pay for this some day!"

"Well, there's no sense in standing here talking," said Lowther. "We'd better be getting on with the walking bizney. We can't ride the bike with the tyre flat, and we can't mend it. So we'd better put out best leg foremost."

It was not a cheerful prospect, but there was nothing else for it. They hastened along at a brisk walk, Tom Merry wheeling his bicycle. Now and again they broke into a trot, and the miles were slowly covered.

By taking the footpath across Wayland Moor, which they knew by heart, they cut off a considerable distance. They did not enter the town itself, but made a bee-line for St. Jim's.

At last they saw the outline of its old walls against the star-studded sky. The woods lay to their left, and the branches shook in the breeze.

"We'll cut along the footpath and go through the wood," said Tom Merry.

"That's it. Thank goodness we're nearly home!" exclaimed Lowther. "Oh, Tommy, I'm fit to drop! I wonder what the blessed time is?"

The captain of the Shell glanced at his watch, and he could just distinguish the face in the starlight.

"Ten-past eleven," he said. "It'll be midnight before we're in bed."

"Well, such is life!" exclaimed Lowther sleepily. "We can't help getting punctures, can we? I don't suppose old Kildare will give it to us very hot if we explain matters gently."

They were both tired out by their long walk, and did not talk. Somehow, conversation was an effort, and they only wanted to get to St. Jim's with as little delay as possible.

Their feet caused no sound as they passed along the path through the wood. And even if they had made a slight noise the wind in the leaves would have drowned it.

As they passed through a opening in the wood a high wall was just visible, with the roof of a house showing behind it.

"That's the Pines," said Tom Merry in a low voice. "I wonder—"

He had unconsciously looked at the wall as he spoke, and he paused abruptly. For a second a dark form had shown at the top of the wall, and it remained there while Tom Merry pointed.

"Look!" he ejaculated quickly. "There's somebody there!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Monty Lowther.

They came to a sudden stop, and stared hard at the wall. And as they did so, the form slipped quietly over and dropped into the private grounds of the Pines.

CHAPTER 4.

Rebuffed!

TOM MERRY drew his breath in quickly.

"Did you see?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" muttered Monty Lowther. "Some bounder dropped over into that garden. Who the dickens can it be?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"He didn't see us, did he?"

"I don't think so," replied Tom Merry. "There's a background of trees behind us, and a cat couldn't have seen us. I say, Monty, I don't like the look of this!"

"Neither do I. It's beastly queer, to say the least!"

There was a moment's silence.

"Well," went on Lowther, "what shall we do?"

Tom Merry looked excited.

"We shall have to do something," he ejaculated quickly. "Look here, Monty, it seems to me that that chap was a burglar!"

"A burglar!"

"Yes."

"My only topper!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "You don't really mean that, Tommy, do you?"

"Who else can he be? Respectable chaps don't go about at this time of night, climbing over other people's private walls."

The two juniors hesitated.

"Well, what shall we do?" repeated Lowther. "While we are standing here jawing, the rotter will break in, and hoof it with old Grenfell's valuables. Shall we hop over the giddy wall and follow him?"

"By Jove, it would be something to tell the chaps!" ejaculated Tom Merry, with sparkling eyes. "If we collared the boulder and lugged him down to old Crump's house—"

Tom Merry broke off.

"Well?" asked Lowther shortly.

"Perhaps we'd better not do that, though," said Tom seriously. "The fellow may be a howling ruffian. Burglars ain't particular, you know, and it wouldn't be a first-class ending to the night's adventures to have one of our heads basted in!"

"Oh, don't be an ass—"

"Now, Monty, don't argue!" interrupted Tom soberly. "It's dark, and the fellow could spring out on us as easily as winking his eye. The best thing we can do is to hop round to the front of the house, wake old Grenfell, and tell him of what we saw."

"Oh, that's so beastly tame!" protested Lowther. "There's no excitement in waking up the old buffer and alarming him."

"Excitement or not, I don't believe in taking fatheaded risks," said Tom Merry firmly. "Come on!"

"Hold on—"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry briskly. "Come on, before it's too late!"

And the captain of the Shell, placing his bicycle against a tree, hastened down the footpath at a run. Monty Lowther followed, grumbling. He didn't see why they couldn't climb over the wall and make an attempt to capture the burglar on their own account.

But his chum was right; it would have been foolhardy, under the circumstances, to enter the garden of the Pines. The enterprise would have been fraught with considerable danger. The mysterious form might, as Tom Merry had suggested, have been that of a desperate housebreaker. And what chance would two schoolboys have had against such a man?

It was some little distance round to the front door, but the two juniors raced round at top speed. They pushed open the heavy gate and ran up the drive. The front of the house was in complete darkness.

"He's gone to bed!" panted Lowther.

"Well, that's not surprising, considering the lateness of the hour," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to bang at the knocker until he wakes up."

But when they arrived in the porch they found that there was an old-fashioned bell-pull. Tom Merry grasped it, and tugged violently. A harsh jangling sounded inside the house.

"That ought to wake the old bird, anyhow," said Lowther breathlessly.

They waited for a moment; then Tom Merry rang again.

"I say, that din will warn the burglar merchant," said Lowther.

"Can't help it. We've got to rouse Grenfell."

"And we've done it, too!" murmured Lowther. "There's a light inside now—"

The banging back of bolts interrupted him, and the two juniors stood back from the door. Next second it opened, and a bright light shone in their eyes.

A tall figure stood before them, framed in the doorway. He held a lamp in his hand, and the light shone sideways upon his face. It was a grim-looking face, the chin covered with a beard. He wore spectacles, and peered forward at the two juniors.

"What does this mean?" he demanded harshly. "Who are you?"

"I suppose you're Dr. Grenfell, sir?" asked Tom Merry quickly.

"I am!"

"Then we've come—"

"You had better explain yourself fully!" said Dr. Grenfell sharply. "I may tell you that you disturbed me when I was in the midst of a most important study. Boy, do you know that it is nearly midnight?"

"It's important, sir!" said Monty Lowther briskly. "We've come here to warn you!"

Dr. Grenfell started.

"What do you mean?"

The question was asked in a quick, alarmed manner, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther wondered why he should seem so concerned. The light in his hand shook a little.

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"There's not a second to waste, sir," said Tom Merry.

"There's a burglar in your grounds!"

"A burglar?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nonsense, boy—nonsense!"

"It's the truth, sir!" snapped Monty Lowther. "We have been for a cycle ride, and we had a puncture. So we've had to walk home. And as we were coming past the wall at the bottom of your garden we saw a man slip over."

"We thought it was too risky to go after him," added Tom Merry, "so we came straight here to give you warning. We'll help you to collar him, if you like."

Dr. Munson Grenfell snapped his teeth.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" he exclaimed angrily. "I do not believe this cock-and-bull story! If you do not go immediately, I will take you up to the school and inform your headmaster of this absurd visit!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"It's not a cock-and-bull story, sir!" he said warmly. "I don't see why you should doubt us. We only came here to do you a good turn."

"That is enough!" snarled the new tenant of the Pines. "Your story is obviously a fabrication, and I can waste no further time. Go, before I lose my temper!"

"But—" began Monty Lowther.

"And if any more children from the school bother me, I will complain to the headmaster!"

The door slammed, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther gazed at one another blankly.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Children!" exclaimed Monty Lowther faintly.

"The—howling rotter! My hat, Monty, I'm blessed if I know what to make of this business! Why, I thought he would have been grateful to us for warning him!"

Lowther grunted.

"Well, I sha'n't care twopence if the burglar pinches the whole house!" he said wrathfully. "Complain to the Head, indeed! Old Whiskers had better look out for himself, or he'll find he's come to the wrong shop. Of all the utter outsiders, I think he's the limit!"

And the two juniors left the Pines. They walked round to the spot where Tom Merry had left his machine, and then continued their way to St. Jim's. Dr. Grenfell's anger had taken them completely by surprise. Why had he treated them so roughly? After all, they had only done him a service by warning him of the marauder's intrusion.

Dr. Grenfell had not created a good impression, and, somehow, Tom Merry and Lowther felt suspicious. So far, there was no ground for suspicion; but, nevertheless, his attitude had not pleased them. Of course, it was quite possible that he was a grumpy old scientist who disliked any disturbance.

"Here we are, home at last!" said Tom Merry sleepily, as they arrived at the entrance gates. "My hat! The gates are open!"

They were, and the late-comers walked in. As they did so, a sharp exclamation came from the School House steps, and a little group of figures approached. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther stopped.

"Who is that?" exclaimed Mr. Railton's voice.

"Only us, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

An exclamation of relief escaped Mr. Railton as he strode up. With him were Kildare, Darrel, and Rushden. They all collected round the two juniors.

"Merry," exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly, "I presume you are prepared to give a full explanation of this amazing escapade? Are you aware of the lateness of the hour?"

"It's about twelve o'clock, isn't it, sir?" said Tom Merry mildly.

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the House-master. "This is most remarkable! We have been worrying greatly—"

"We're awfully sorry, sir; but it wasn't our fault," put in Monty Lowther. "We went for a ride on our jiggers, sir, and, somehow, we went too far. We—we were forced to go, sir."

"Forced to go, Lowther?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Do not be so absurd!"

"Well, not exactly forced," said Tom Merry. "But if we hadn't have ridden like the dickens we should have been collared by—by some other chaps."

Mr. Railton and Kildare exchanged a glance. They fully understood who the "other chaps" were.

"Well?" demanded the House-master.

Tom Merry rapidly explained how first Lowther and then he had met with misfortune. He said nothing of the incident of the Pines. After all, that was nothing to do with the matter in hand.

"We're awfully sorry, sir, and we're properly fagged out," finished Tom Merry. "I hope you're not going to punish us, sir?"

"I am afraid your hope is futile, Merry," said Mr. Railton grimly. "You did very wrong in riding so far from the

school. You have received punishment by being forced to walk such a distance, but I cannot let you off."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will each write me a hundred lines, and bring them to me to-morrow evening!" said the Housemaster, who was feeling greatly relieved at finding the two juniors safe and sound. "Be off to bed, without any further delay!"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, sir."

Tom Merry and Lowther hurried off upstairs, greatly pleased at the light sentence; for they had expected at least a week's gating.

They found Manners and several other juniors awake in the Shell dormitory, and they were immediately stormed with questions. But Kildare had followed the juniors upstairs, and the captain of St. Jim's waited while they undressed.

"Now, get into bed without any more talking!" he said sharply. "It's after midnight. And if I hear any noise from this dormitory I shall come back—"

"Don't worry, Kildare," yawned Lowther sleepily. "We're too blessed tired to do any talking. These chaps will have to wait until the morning to hear of our misadventures."

And Kildare left the dormitory.

A few moments' silence followed, and then Manners sat up in bed. Manners was very anxious to know what had been happening.

"I say, Lowther—" he whispered softly.

Silence.

"Are you awake, Tommy?"

Not a sound.

"Lowther, you ass! It's no good shamming!" muttered Manners impatiently.

A gentle snore from Lowther's bed was the only answer.

"Better give it up," murmured Bernard Glyn sleepily.

"We don't want Kildare back again. But we'll make them explain everything in the morning."

So Manners ceased his efforts, and in five minutes' time the Shell dormitory was slumbering peacefully.

CHAPTER 5. Ordered Off!

GORDON GAY & CO. were to blame for it, and we're jolly well going to make 'em sit up!" said Tom Merry warmly. "Still, I will say that Railton acted like a brick—only gave us a hundred lines each."

The Terrible Three were explaining to an interested group what had happened on the previous evening. It was a glorious morning, and the juniors were waiting in the shade of the elms for breakfast.

"I considah it was weally wippin' of Mr. Wailton!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Now, if it had been you, Figgy, instead of Tom Mewwy, the mattah would have been vewy diff. Old Watty would have dwopped on you like a load of bwicks."

"And the rotter would have flogged you," added Blake.

Figgins of the New House looked warlike.

"You leave old Ratty alone!" he exclaimed. "He may be a beast, but he's the master of the cock-House at St. Jim's, after all."

"Master of rats!" said Lowther disdainfully.

"If you call me a rat—" began Figgy wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't mean it in that way at all," chuckled Lowther. "It was only an expression of well-directed contempt, my son. It's surprising to me how you can have the utter nerve to imagine that that old barn of a New House is cock-House! Why, the place isn't fit to use as a dog-kennel!"

"Wathah uncomplimentawy to Figgins & Co.!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It is wathah like classing the New House boundahs with membahs of the canine wace. Of course, I quite agwee—"

"If you think we're going to stand this, you're jolly well mistaken!" roared Figgins.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Oh, don't make a fuss!" he exclaimed. "After all, it was you who started it, Figgy. I've got something jolly queer to tell you—something that happened last night."

"Blow last night—" began Kerr and Wynn together.

"Something about the new tenant of the Pines," said Tom Merry.

"Oh!"

The juniors were interested at once.

"Something queah!" repeated D'Arcy. "Surely you do not mean to insinuate that all is not wight with Dr. Gwenfell?"

"I'm not going to insinuate anything," said Tom; "I'm just going to tell you plain facts."

"To begin with," said Monty Lowther evenly, "Dr.

Grenfell is a howling rotter, a disagreeable brute, and a nasty-tempered blighter! Of course I could say a lot more pleasant things, but—"

"Weally, Lowthah, I must wequest you to modewate your language!" protested Arthur Augustus. "I am vewy surprisid at you! Doctah Gwenfell is a distinguished scientist, and—"

"You have never seen him, Gussy," broke in Tom Merry.

"No, I have nevah had that pleasuah, deah boy."

"Pleasure!" ejaculated Lowther. "Fat lot of pleasure in seeing old Whiskers!"

"I fail to see why you should be so diswespectful to Doctah Gwenfell!" exclaimed D'Arcy warmly. "It is hardly the thing to wufer to him as old Whiskahs!"

"Wait until you hear what happened last night," said Tom Merry. "The man's a rotter, and he ought to be slaughtered!"

And Tom related the incident which had occurred at midnight. The crowd of juniors listened with great interest, and there were many ejaculations of indignation when they heard how Dr. Grenfell had ordered the two juniors away.

"Didn't he even thank you for warning him?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Thank us!" exclaimed Lowther. "Why, you ass, he told us that we were liars, and that he would complain to the Head if we didn't go away! He was absolutely the limit in hogghishness!"

And Tom Merry nodded in agreement.

"Yes, he's a proper outsider," he said.

"My hat!"

"And who was the chap who hopped over the wall?"

"Yes, who was he?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," said Tom Merry. "If he took all the doctor's valuables, it would only serve the rotter right! I expect he was a tramp, though, looking for a place to sleep."

"Wats! Twamps don't sleep in gardens—"

"Well, I don't care who he was," interrupted Tom Merry. "He slipped over into the garden of the Pines, and that's all we saw. After the interview with the precious doctor, we skipped home!"

"It's jolly queer," said Kerr of the New House, who looked very thoughtful. "Under the circumstances, you would have thought that Grenfell would have taken Tom Merry and Lowther to the back of the house and searched the garden. It almost looks as if he was extremely anxious that nobody should enter the house. But why should he be anxious? If he's a harmless scientist—"

"Ah, that's where I have my doubts!" interrupted Figgins, with a sage shake of his head. "How do we know he's a scientist? To my mind, the whole thing's very mysterious. There's Grenfell in that house all alone, without a single servant; and when two harmless St. Jim's chaps go to warn him of burglars, he sends them away as though he was afraid of them seeing something that's best kept hidden!"

Kerr nodded.

"I don't believe in interfering in matters that don't concern me," he said, "but Grenfell has treated two of our chaps in a rotten manner! Therefore, I shall make it my bizney to keep an eye on him!"

"We'll all keep an eye on him, in fact," said Tom Merry grimly.

Blake looked excited.

"I say," he exclaimed, "suppose it's all swank about his being a scientist? Suppose Grenfell's really a coiner, or something rotten like that? That would explain why Tom Merry and Lowther were treated so sharply! In a big house like that he might go on coining for months without being suspected. Suppose—"

"Suppose nothing!" interrupted Kerr impatiently. "We shall never find anything out by supposing. We want facts, not conjectures!"

"Of course," said Manners, "there may be nothing wrong about the chap at all; but it'll be best to keep a sharp look out. All the same, Grenfell doesn't worry me!"

"And there goes the breakfast-bell," said Tom Merry.

"You'd better buck up, Wynn, or—"

But Fatty Wynn of the New House was already hastening indoors. Wynn was occasionally late for lessons, but he had never been known to be late for meals. The rest of the juniors followed in more leisurely style.

The subject of Dr. Grenfell was dropped after breakfast, except for a few occasional comments, and by dinner-time the new tenant of the Pines was almost forgotten.

It was a half-holiday, and the juniors were too busy planning their afternoon to worry over Dr. Grenfell. The School House juniors had a Form cricket-match on. Figgins & Co. decided to go for a ramble amongst the ruins of the old castle. The famous New House firm were in great funds just at present, and Fatty Wynn gloated over

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN GILFORD!

NEXT

WEDNESDAY

"THE TOFFI"

the fact that they were to take with them a well-packed hamper.

After dinner their time was their own, and they lost none of it in delay.

"Ripping afternoon!" said Figgins, as they crossed the quad.

"Rather! It'll be all serene lolling in the shade of the ruins," said Fatty Wynn, with a loving glance at the hamper which he carried.

The weather had not altered since the morning, and the sun still shone brilliantly. Figgins & Co. crossed the stile in Rylcombe Lane, and passed along the footpath through the shady woods.

When they emerged into the sunlight again, they walked across a large meadow, which, strictly speaking, was private property. The footpath proper made a detour round the meadow. By crossing the latter, however, a good three hundred yards was saved.

For years past the St. Jim's juniors had been in the habit of crossing the meadow, until by now it was generally regarded as public property. The legitimate path was nearly forgotten, and it had almost disappeared amongst the grass and weeds.

Figgins & Co. walked across the meadow with never a thought beyond the object of their visit to the castle. But suddenly a shout sounded, and Kerr looked round.

Standing against a little doorway, which was set into a high wall at the lower end of the meadow, was the figure of a man.

"Is that chap calling to us?" asked Kerr.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn looked.

"My hat! That wall divides off the garden of the Pines," said Figgins. "I expect that chap there is the precious new tenant himself!"

"Well, suppose it is, what's he shouting at us for?" asked Fatty Wynn.

The trio looked at the approaching figure, for Dr. Munson Grenfell was stepping briskly across the meadow towards them. As he came up Figgins & Co. could see that his face was alight with anger.

"What is the meaning of this?" he rasped out. "How dare you trespass upon my property?"

Figgins & Co. stared.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Figgins, with extreme politeness, "but would you mind repeating what you said? I am not sure that I heard you correctly."

"Do not be insolent, brat!" snapped the doctor.

Figgins reddened.

"Insolent!" he repeated quickly. "I don't know what you mean—"

"I mean that this meadow is my property, and that I will not have any impertinent schoolboys running across it!" exclaimed Dr. Grenfell angrily. "Take yourselves off at once, and do not attempt to argue!"

His tone was extremely harsh, and Figgins & Co. felt their blood rising.

"Look here, sir, there's no need for you to talk in that bullying fashion!" exclaimed Figgins hotly. "We're simply walking along this footpath, and—"

"There is no footpath here, boy!" said the new tenant of the Pines. "This meadow is my property!"

"Oh, but that's rot!" said Kerr.

"Tommy-rot!" agreed Fatty Wynn heartily.

"We've used the footpath across this meadow for years, sir," said Figgins warmly. "I don't see why you should make us go all the way round, and cause all this unpleasantness. We're doing no harm!"

"Enough! Go at once!"

The doctor pointed, but Figgins & Co. didn't move.

"We might as well thrash the matter out, sir!" exclaimed Kerr grimly. "Are we to understand that all St. Jim's boys are forbidden to cross this meadow?"

"You are forbidden to even set foot in it!"

"Well, we shouldn't walk across the giddy meadow on our hands!" said Fatty Wynn sarcastically.

Dr. Grenfell glared.

"You young hound!" he shouted. "If you dare to be impudent again, I will thrash you soundly!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Fatty Wynn, flushing with anger. "You've got a blessed lot to say! Thrash me, indeed! If you try that game on, you'll find yourself in the wrong box, I can tell you! Seems to me you came to Rylcombe for the sole purpose of causing unpleasantness!"

The doctor fumed with fury, and he advanced on Fatty Wynn with his stick upraised; but before he could use it Figgins stepped forward.

"Better go easy, sir!" he said sharply, and with conviction. "If you use that stick, we won't be answerable for the consequences!"

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, 1st.

CHAPTER 6.

Quite a Beast!

DR. GRENFELL lowered his stick slowly, and breathed hard. Figgins's tone had told him that it would be an unsafe proceeding to administer corporal punishment upon Fatty Wynn's ample person.

"This is outrageous!" he exclaimed furiously. "You, mere junior schoolboys, dare to threaten me—"

"Hold on, sir; you threatened us first!" interrupted Kerr sharply. "If this meadow is your property, of course you can do as you like with it. And if you order us to go, we'll go. But the consequences will be serious for you if you use force!"

"Go!" snarled the doctor, in a low voice. "And the next time any boy dares to enter this meadow I will write to your headmaster and have him severely punished!"

"You can write to the Head," said Figgins grimly, "but Dr. Holmes wouldn't punish us for simply walking across your meadow. He'll very likely place it out of bounds, but that's all."

Dr. Grenfell clenched his teeth.

"Never in all my life have I had to submit to such outrageous treatment," he said fiercely. "And let me tell you this—I will not submit beyond a certain length. Last night I was interrupted in the midst of a most intricate experiment by two of your wretched playmates. And now I am forced to come here to protect my property from you children. I object to little boys—"

"Little boys!" gasped Figgins faintly.

"Children!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, gazing down upon his substantial person with indignation. "Look here, you outsider—"

"Are you addressing me, boy?" roared the doctor.

"Yes, I am!" said Fatty Wynn hotly.

"You—you— Upon my soul, this is past all bearing! Get out of this meadow before I throw you out! Do you hear, you young brats? Out of it at once!"

Figgins clenched his fists.

"We'll go," he said, gritting his teeth. "But, my hat, you've gone the wrong way to work, Dr. Grenfell! St. Jim's chaps don't take insults lying down, and you'll regret taking up this rotten attitude! We don't stick bullies at any price!"

The doctor nearly choked. But before he could speak Figgins & Co. wheeled round, and left the meadow. Fatty Wynn clenched the handle of his hamper fiercely, and but for the fact that it contained the wherewithal for a glorious feed, he would have been tempted to hurl it at Dr. Grenfell's head.

The new tenant of the Pines had a perfect right to order people off his property. But he had done it in such an outrageous manner that Figgins & Co. boiled with anger and indignation. What could the doctor's reason be for such an action? What harm was there in crossing his meadow? The juniors would not have minded taking the correct footpath so much; it was the idea of the thing that nettled them. It seemed objectless, save that the new tenant of the Pines wished to create as much ill-feeling as possible.

The New House trio walked on to the old castle, but their lively spirits were damped. Even Fatty did not seem to be very enthusiastic. They were all enraged with Dr. Grenfell, and could think and talk of nothing else.

"There'll be a giddy fuss when we tell the chaps," said Figgins, as he and his chums prepared for the feed. "I thought Tom Merry and Lowther had exaggerated a bit, but it seems their language wasn't strong enough to fit the case. Of all the howling, absolute rotters, Dr. Grenfell is the limit!"

"The thing that puzzles me," said Kerr, "is that he should be so nasty. What's the reason for it?"

"Because he's a brute, I expect," said Fatty Wynn.

Kerr looked doubtful.

"Possibly," he replied; "but I believe it's something deeper. Of course, I don't know what, but when Tom Merry first mentioned the matter of last night I felt suspicious."

"Suspicious?" said Figgins curiously. "Suspicious of what?"

"I don't know."

"You ass; you must know."

"But I don't," said Kerr quietly.

"Then how the dickens can you be suspicious if you don't know what you're suspicious about?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

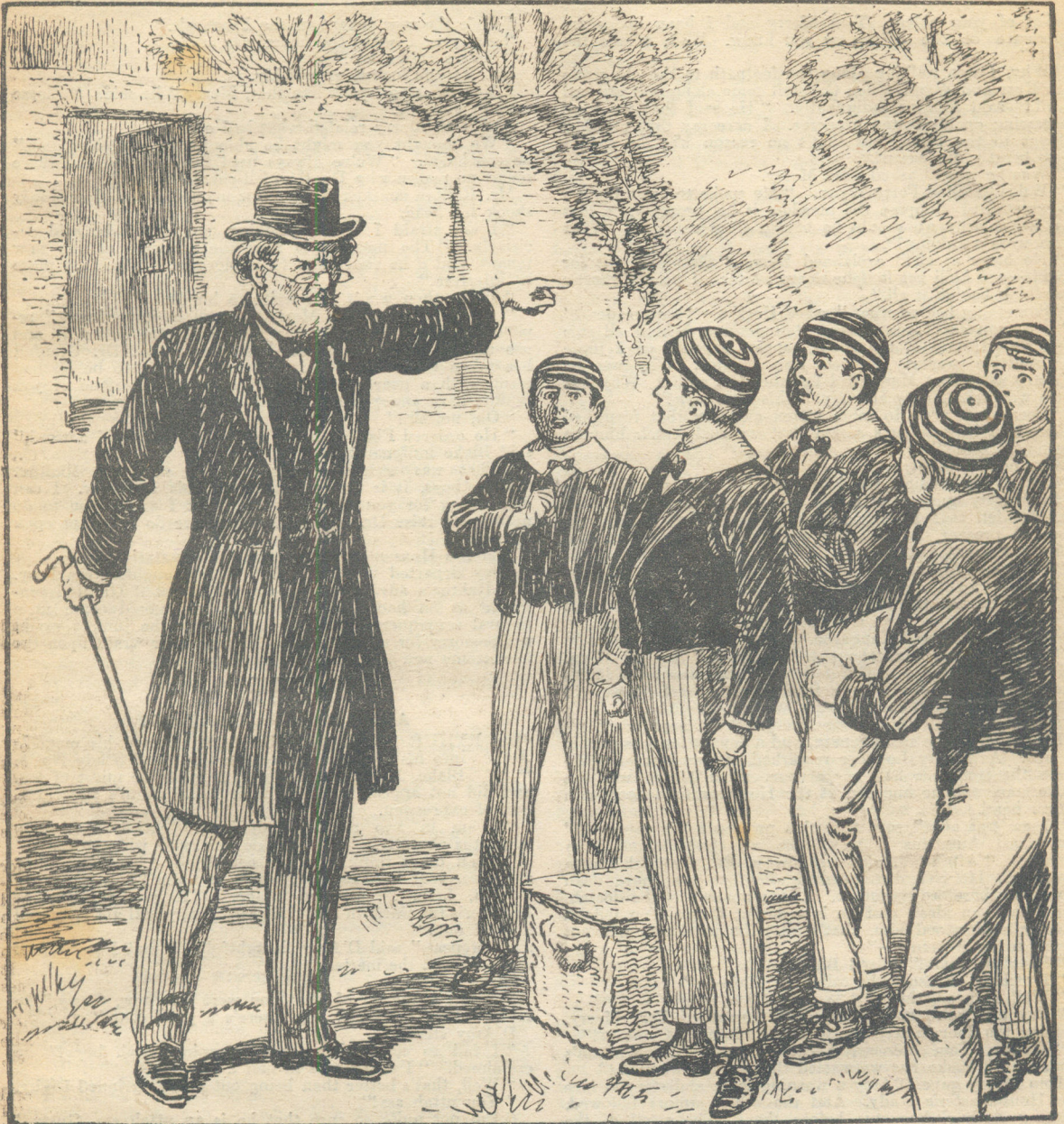
"That's piffle, you ass!"

"I can't explain what I mean," said Kerr, "except that I'm suspicious of Dr. Grenfell himself. He looks an utter rotter to me, and not a bit like a harmless scientist."

"Then you think that—"

"I don't think anything at present," replied Kerr calmly.

"But I'll tell you this, chaps. I'm going to keep my eyes wide open."



"This meadow is my property!" said Dr. Grenfell angrily. "Take yourself off at once!" Figgins & Co. reddened furiously, and the leader of the New House juniors felt his blood rising. "Look here, sir," he said, "there's no need to talk in that bullying fashion! And you're talking rot!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Good idea," mumbled Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full of steak-and-kidney pie.

And the others realised that while they had been talking Fatty Wynn had been tucking into the good things. Figgins and Kerr lost no time in following his example. The juniors' thoughts were disturbed, and when all the provender was consumed they unanimously voted upon a prompt return to St. Jim's—for they were anxious to impart the news to their chums.

It was still early in the afternoon, and when Figgins & Co. arrived home the School House junior match was in full progress. But, although Tom Merry & Co. were not available there were plenty of other fellows who were ready and willing to listen. In quite a short time an excited crowd collected round Figgins & Co.

It had grown considerably in proportion by the time the cricket match was over. Tom Merry & Co. had seen that something unusual was "on," and they were anxious to learn what that something was.

"Now, what's all the giddy excitement about?" asked Monty Lowther, as he came up with his chums and a crowd of other Shell fellows. "Is it a gory fight, or is it somebody giving away money? They're about the only things that'll draw a crowd like this!"

Figgins pushed through the crowd.

"It's the limit!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"What is?" asked Lowther. "Your face? I know it's a ghastly sight—"

"Oh, don't be an ass—"

"He can't help being an ass, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "It's his giddy nature."

"Look here—"

"Dry up, Monty!" said Manners. "Figgy's serious about something."

"I should say I am!" exclaimed Figgins, waving his hands. "I've seen Dr. Grenfell, and I think he's the most absolute worm I've ever met!"

"Oh, good!" said Lowther. "Glad you agree with the

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

NEXT WEDNESDAY

"THE TOFF!"

CHUCKLES! In the preceding chapters of this complete series contained

ERRERS LOCKE DETECTIVE

verdict of your elders. Tom Merry and I have had some experience of the rotter, as you know. Well, what's the latest?"

"Why, I was walking along the footpath to the old castle with Kerr and Wynn, when Grenfell came along and ordered us off!" said Figgins indignantly. "He said that we were trespassing on his rotten property. I dare say that meadow belongs to the Pines, but that's no reason why he should be so beastly unpleasant."

"Was he wild?" asked Tom Merry.
"Wild?" sniffed Fatty Wynn. "He spoke to us as though we were dirt! Suppose the meadow is his property, is that any reason why we should be barred from using it? What harm were we doing?"

"No harm at all!" exclaimed Kerr. "Grenfell's out for trouble—and he'll get it if he doesn't alter. I believe there's something behind it all."

"Something behind what," asked Herries—"the meadow?"
"No, you ass!" said Kerr. "Something behind all this nastiness. If any of the chaps happen to walk on a piece of Grenfell's property he gets into a panic. Why was he so sharp with Tom Merry and Lowther last night? Why was he so wild with Figgy and Wynn this afternoon?"

"Because he's up to some rotten game in that furnished house—and because he's afraid that we shall catch him on the hop!" said Tom Merry grimly.

Kerr nodded sagely.
"That's my opinion, too," he agreed. "I'm not the chap to form hasty opinions as a rule, but there's something about Dr. Grenfell that I don't like. I'm not going to say any more at present, because my suspicions can't be put into definite shape."

"Good old Sexton Blake!" exclaimed Figgins. "If anybody can find out what game Grenfell is up to, you can!"

"Yes; but all this doesn't alter the case," said Bernard Glyn. "I vote we form a deputation and go to Railton."

"What for?" asked Kangaroo.

"Why, to ask him about the footpath," replied Glyn. "Perhaps he'll write to Grenfell, and make him draw in his giddy horns. It would be a feather in our cap if we got Railton to champion our great and worthy cause!"

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry. "We'll go now."

The juniors were all indignant, and a deputation was hastily formed. As Monty Lowther remarked, it was best to strike while the iron was hot, as it were. Tom Merry was the spokesman, and he knocked at the Housemaster's door with a firm hand.

"I am not at all sure that this pwoceedin' is cowweet!" murmured Augustus D'Arcy, who was just behind Tom Merry. "Aftah all, the meadow is Dr. Gwennell's own pproperty. He is a distinguished scientist, you know, deah boys, and therefore eecentwic. I have nevah met the doctah, but I have an ideah that he is a decent chap. You fellows have misunderstood him, that's all. His harshness was not meant to be wotten—"

"Shut up, idiot!" hissed Blake.

"I uttahly wefuse to be called an idiot—"

"Well, fathead, then!"

"Dry up, we're now going in!" murmured Tom Merry, opening the door in response to Mr. Railton's "Come in!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I cannot entah Mr. Waitton's studay until Blake has wotwacted that wotten wemark!"

Tom Merry gave D'Arcy a warning look, and stepped into the Housemaster's study. And the other juniors followed, pushing Arthur Augustus before them. The swell of the School House forgot where he was.

"You wuff boundahs!" he exclaimed loudly. "I uttahly decline to be pushed into Mr. Waitton's studay! Blake, you wottah, I must insist—"

"Oh, you howling dummy, wait until we get outside!" breathed Blake darkly.

"Weally Blake—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" rapped out Mr. Railton, from his table.

"How dare you enter my study wrangling in this fashion? What is the meaning of this visit?"

Arthur Augustus turned pale.

"I trust you will forgive me, sir!" he exclaimed. "I ovahlooked the fact that I was in your pwesenec, sir. Pway—"

"That will do, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir, but—"

"Silence!"

Arthur Augustus relapsed into silence meekly, and Mr. Railton turned his gaze to Tom Merry.

"Well, Merry, I suppose you have something to put before me?" he said. "I am busy, so you must be brief."

"It's—it's about Dr. Grenfell, sir," said Tom Merry hesitatingly.

"Dr. Grenfell?" repeated the Housemaster. "I do not understand, Merry."

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"He's the new tenant of the Pines, sir."

"Ah, yes; I heard the house was let."

"He's a rotter, sir!"

Mr. Railton looked up quickly.

"You must not speak like that, Merry," he said. "Please explain yourself."

And Tom Merry related what had occurred.

"We thought you might be able to do something, sir," he concluded. "We've always used the meadow, and there seems no reason why Dr. Grenfell should bar us."

Mr. Railton considered for a few moments, and then slowly shook his head.

"I am afraid I can do nothing, my boys," he said decisively. "The meadow is now the property of the new tenant, and if he chooses to be unpleasant it is not my place to interfere."

"Then—then won't you write to him, sir?"

"It would be useless, Merry, as well as impertinent," replied the Housemaster. "You must make the best of it, and use the legitimate footpath. I am sorry that Dr. Grenfell has taken this course, as it is uncomfortable to be on bad terms with a near neighbour. I suppose that none of you juniors have annoyed him in any way?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"He ordered Figgins & Co. off before they said a word," said Blake indignantly.

"That was certainly rather harsh," said Mr. Railton. "Well, boys, it is useless prolonging this interview. I can do nothing for you in the matter. But I advise you to do nothing to raise Dr. Grenfell's wrath; we do not want open warfare."

And the Housemaster dismissed the deputation.

They departed in silence, but their thoughts were busy. Mr. Railton's advice was all very well, but if Grenfell continued as he had begun, open warfare would come as a natural consequence; and in their hearts the juniors would not be sorry for an opportunity to vent their wrath upon the unwelcome new tenant of the Pines.

CHAPTER 7.

Arthur Augustus Convinced!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked steadily round Study No. 6. Blake, Herries, and Digby were in the midst of tea, and did not appear to notice their noble chum's concentration of expression.

"I am in two minds, deah boys," exclaimed Arthur Augustus absently. "I weally do not know what to think."

"Then don't think at all," said Digby cheerfully. "In any case, your thinking isn't worth anythink!"

"Oh, hellup!" groaned Blake. "If you try any of Lowther's funniness in this study, my son, you'll get jolly well hooked out!"

"I wepeat," said D'Arcy thoughtfully, "that I am in half a mind about the mattah."

Blake grinned.

"That's a quarter of what you were just now, Gussy," he said. "Pass the tarts, Dig, there's a good chap."

D'Arcy stared.

"I fail to compwehend your meaning, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I said I was in half a mind—"

"Well, that's better than being out of it!" grinned Digby.

"You uttah ass!"

"I'm not quite so sure that he is an uttah ass, Gussy," chuckled Blake. "By the way you're talking anyone might think that you are clean dotty! First you say you are in two minds, and then you say you're in half a mind! Explain yourself, jossler!"

"I wefuse to be called a jossah—"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"Vewy well, I will ovahlook your wotten behaviour," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I was wefewin' to Doctah Gwennell. I am not at all sure that he is as black as he is painted. Personally, I have an ideah that he is a vewy clevah scientist. Pevwaps he is a triffe cwustay, but it is the pwewogative of all clevah scientists!"

"The what of all clever scientists?" gasped Blake.

"The pwewogative, deah boy!"

"Look here, Gussy, we don't allow language like that in this study," said Blake firmly. "And what you say about old Whiskers is all piffle. He's a regular out-and-outer!"

"How do you know?" asked D'Arcy.

"Well, they all say so—Tom Merry, Figgins, and the rest!"

"It's vewy w'ong to form opinions upon idle chattah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus grandly. "Before I condemn the doctah, I want proof that he is a wottah—and I am of opinion that that pwoof will nevah be forthcomin'. It is not often that I am w'ong in my conclusions—"

"Only about nine times out of every ten, Gussy," said Blake. "Of course, it's not your fault, and we don't blame you in the least. Now shut up about old Grenfell, for goodness' sake! Get your giddy tea, and don't jabber so much!"

"I nevah jabbah—"
"If you don't dry up, I'll use this fork as a jabber, and dig you in the waistcoat," said Blake. "We are going down to Rylcombe after tea, and we don't want to be late for calling-over."

Arthur Augustus subsided gracefully. When he formed an opinion, wild horses would not change it. If everybody in the school declared that Dr. Grenfell was a rank outsider D'Arcy would still stick to his original opinion. The only thing that would convince him would be a personal encounter with the precious newcomer.

Blake & Co. soon finished tea, and they lost no time in setting out for Rylcombe. The sun was still shining, and they had heaps of time for their jaunt, in spite of Blake's haste.

As they walked down the lane towards the village, they fell to discussing cricket. But that subject of conversation was soon interrupted; for, as they passed a high wall, Digby pointed to it.

"That's the garden of the Pines," he said. "To enter there is fatal! Anyone found within those sacred precincts will be executed at the stroke of dawn!"

"Uttah wot!" exclaimed D'Arcy warmly, stopping in the middle of the road. "I would entah the garden willingly, but for the fact that I am in my best clobber. Anyone might think that the doctah was a howwible ogre!"

"If you're so certain that he's a decent sort, why don't you nip over the wall and take a stroll round the gardens?" asked Blake, with a grin. "We'll climb up and have a look on, so you won't feel lonely!"

"But my clothes, deah boy—"

"Oh, blow your giddy duds—a few tears won't do them any harm!"

"I could not think of it," said Arthur Augustus, gazing down at the crease in his beautiful trousers.

Blake stepped forward, and removed his noble chum's shiny topper.

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's all right, Gussy; I sha'n't hurt it," grinned Blake; and he calmly tossed it over the wall into the garden of the Pines.

Herries and Digby roared when they saw D'Arcy's expression.

He gazed at Blake speechlessly for a moment.

"Now go and fetch it!" chuckled Blake humorously.

"You—you— Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, recovering his voice. "You uttah wuffian! You howwible boundah! You burblin' lunatic!"

"Glad you think so highly of me, Gussy," said Blake cheerfully. "Well, we're waiting to see you pop over the wall."

"You're not funky, are you?" asked Digby.

"Funkay!" shrieked Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Bai Jove, you are a set of regular wascals! I'll show you whether I am funky!"

And he made a running leap at the wall. He was so excited that he never gave a thought to his clothes, and when he arrived at the top, they were dusty and dishevelled. Next moment he disappeared over.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Let's climb up and see what he's doing," said Digby. "I'm rather curious. If old Grenfell spots him, there'll be fearful ructions. I say, Blake, it was a bit thick chucking his giddy topper over there."

"Rats!" said Blake. "Gussy wants convincing!"

They were not so particular about their clothes, and, in a moment, they were astride the wall. Arthur Augustus was gazing into the branches of a tree some distance away. He turned his head as he heard the sound of laughter.

"My toppah has lodged in this wotten twee!" he shouted.

Before Blake could reply, he heard a deep bark from the house, and he caught a glimpse of a big dog rushing through some bushes at top speed. Arthur Augustus did not appear to hear it, for he continued to gaze at his topper.

Blake's grin faded away, and he looked serious.

"My hat, that dog'll do some damage!" he said quickly. "Gussy—Gussy!"

The urgency of his tone caused D'Arcy to turn his head.

"Run!" roared Blake frantically.

"There's a dog after you," howled Herries; "twice as big as Towser!"

Arthur Augustus gave a start, and gazed round fearfully as he heard a louder and nearer bark. The dog was coming up rapidly, and it did not appear in a very sweet temper. In point of fact, it was showing its teeth in a most disconcerting

manner, and the hairs on its back were standing up almost straight.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus hoarsely. "I believe that wotten dog is comin' for me! Bai Jove, how vevy awkward!"

"Run, you ass!" hooted Blake wildly.

D'Arcy gave one more glance at the dog, and made a frantic rush at the nearest tree. He was almost too late, for as he grabbed wildly at the lowest branch, the dog—a fierce-looking mastiff—jumped into the air. He just succeeded in getting hold of D'Arcy's trousers, and there was a rending tear.

"Bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus, turning pale.

He drew himself up, and sat on the branch with his legs out of danger. The mastiff was leaping about below him, barking furiously. A good six inches of D'Arcy's elegant trousers lay on the grass.

Had the junior been a moment later the dog would have had him, and D'Arcy knew that it would have caused grave injuries. All the anger had died from his face now, and it was pale and drawn with the narrowness of his escape.

His chums, on the top of the wall, looked on with fast-beating hearts.

"Thank goodness!" ejaculated Blake, as he saw that D'Arcy was safe. "My only aunt, what a brute of a dog! It would have killed Gussy!"

"Old Grenfell ought to be prosecuted for having such a dangerous animal about the place!" exclaimed Digby angrily. "Great pip, I feel quite faint!"

They were all feeling rather groggy. They knew that their chum had had a very narrow escape, and Blake was furious with himself for leading D'Arcy into the danger. But Blake had had no idea of the dog's presence.

Arthur Augustus, in the tree, mopped his brow.

"Bai Jove, I thought that the wotten thing had collared me!" he gasped. "Blake, you boundah, welease me ffrom this howwible pwedicament!"

"I'm awfully sorry, Gussy—"

"Not so sowwy as I am!" shouted D'Arcy. "Can't you do somethin' to assist me? I am a pwisonah!"

"Wait a minute. Let's think what to do!" yelled Blake.

"You stick in that tree, Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I have no intention of gettin' down while that wretched dog is loose! I think— Bai Jove, here comes Doctah Gwenfell!"

His chums had seen the doctor at the same time, and they looked at the new-comer curiously. Grenfell seemed to be in very much the same state of mind as his dog; his face was contorted with anger, and he carried a heavy dog-whip.

"Ah, he has brought a whip to thrash that wotten animal!" murmured Arthur Augustus, watching Grenfell as he approached. The doctor hurried up.

"I think I am right in addressing you as Doctah Gwenfell, sir?" said D'Arcy politely. "I am extremely glad that you have come—"

Dr. Grenfell stopped under the tree, and gazed upwards with a furious expression.

"You confounded young hound!" he roared, slashing the air with his whip.

Arthur Augustus nearly fell off the branch.

"Are you addressing me, sir, or the dog?" he asked blankly.

"I am talking to you, boy!" snarled Grenfell. "What are you doing in this garden? How many more times am I to be pestered and bothered with you? Come down at once, and I will thrash you within an inch of your life!"

D'Arcy's monocle dropped from his eye, and his jaw gaped. "Weally, sir, I must wequest you to modewate your language!" he ejaculated. "Your dog nearly bit me—"

"The wretched animal is useless!" snarled the doctor, and he turned abruptly and slashed viciously at the mastiff, which was standing near by, wagging its tail with excitement. The whip descended with terrible force across the dog's head, and it uttered a piercing howl of pain. Then, still howling, it took to its heels and raced for the house.

Arthur Augustus glared at the doctor.

"You bwute!" he shouted angrily. "The dog deserved a thwashin', but you stwuck it a most cowardly blow. Bai Jove, I must be mistaken, aftah all! You are a feahful wottah, just as Tom Mewwy says!"

"Hear, hear, Gussy!" yelled Blake, from the wall. "The chap ought to be boiled in oil! I've never seen such a rotten brute!"

Dr. Grenfell almost choked with fury.

"Come down!" he snarled, stamping about. "This garden is private property, and you have no right here. Come down at once! The dog will not harm you!"

"Yaas; but how about that whip?"

"I shall thrash you severely with it!" said Grenfell angrily. "I want to hear no excuses. You are trespassing, and I shall teach you a lesson!"

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

"THE TOFF!"

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—
Every Saturday

Every Friday

Every Monday

OUR COMPANION TALES

Arthur Augustus did not move. He had no intention of accepting the invitation to come down and receive a thrashing. He saw that his chums had been right about the new tenant of the Pines. Dr. Grenfell was obviously a brute of the first water. Any man has a right to be angry with school-boys for trespassing; but Grenfell's attitude was altogether too violent and ruffianly to fit the demands of the case.

"I uttahn wufuse to come down until you pwomise not to use that whip!"

"Do you think I will make promises with a brat of a schoolboy?" exclaimed Grenfell hotly. "Come down immediately!"

"Bai Jove, this is weally too much!" ejaculated D'Arcy, bristling with indignation. "I uttahn wufuse to be called a bwat! You're a wuffian, sir, with the mannahs of a dwunken bully!"

"Upon my soul, if you were down here I would teach you a sound lesson!" rapped out Grenfell, red in the face with anger. "I will give you one more chance, boy. Come down immediately, and I will do nothing!"

"You mean that you will make no attempt to thrash me with that whip?" asked Arthur Augustus cautiously.

"I have said that I will not harm you."

"You will let me depart—"

"I will not touch you if you come down at once," said Grenfell, biting his lips with impotence.

"Honour bwight?"

"Hang you, boy, I have given you my word!"

"Vewy well, in that case I will descend!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus gracefully.

And he clambered down nimbly, watched by the doctor and by his chums. As he touched the ground he turned and looked at Grenfell coldly.

"I pwesume that you will allow me to wecovah my toppah!"

Grenfell laughed harshly.

"I will allow you to do nothing!" he grated between his teeth. "I have got you down, and shall now administer the thrashing you deserve!"

The dog-whip hissed through the air, and cracked round D'Arcy's legs viciously.

"Ow! Yawooh! You uttahn scoundwel! Ow!" roared D'Arcy.

Slash! Slash!

The whip descended again and again, and Arthur Augustus danced in agony. The doctor was laying it on with tremendous violence. Blake, Herries, and Digby, from the wall, uttered shouts of furious indignation.

"You rotten coward!" roared Blake. "You gave your word that you wouldn't touch him! My hat, what a dishonourable beast!"

"Wescue!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Ow, wescue!"

"All right, Gussy, we're coming!"

But Arthur Augustus, maddened by the pain, decided to take matters into his own hands. He uttered a shout of defiance, and hurled himself at the doctor. Grenfell was totally unprepared for the attack, and he went flying, with D'Arcy's fist on his jaw. The whip fell to the ground, and D'Arcy snatched it up.

"Hurrah! Go for him, Gussy!"

"Give him beans!"

"Let him have some of his own rotten medicine!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Now, you uttahn wottah, take that, and that! You have no more honah than a fwog!"

Slash! Slash!

The whip hissed round Grenfell's legs.

"Ow! Yoooooop! You young whelp!" hooted the doctor, dancing about. "Drop that whip at once! Drop—Yaroo!"

D'Arcy was turning the tables with a vengeance, and he put every ounce of strength into his blows. Grenfell had acted in a most despicable manner, and he thoroughly deserved a liberal taste of the whip.

"It's all wight, deah boys!" panted Arthur Augustus, as his chums dashed up. "I am not in need of your assistance. I have given the wottah his gwuel, and I don't care if he wites to the Head! The Head would not punish me for teaching the boundah a lesson!"

He flung the whip down, and walked away with as much dignity as he could assume, under the circumstances. Dr. Grenfell, speechless with pain and rage, collapsed on to the grass, and swore furiously under his breath.

"I reckon it's time for us to go," said Blake disgustedly.

"I dare say we've let ourselves in for a row, if the brute complains to the Head; but it was worth a dozen rows to see him whipped!"

Arthur Augustus had completely forgotten his missing head-gear, and he walked to the wall without a glance behind him. But his chums recovered the topper in a few moments by shaking the tree. Then they, too, left the garden.

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, 1st.

Dr. Grenfell wisely held his tongue. He had sense enough to see that the juniors would turn on him if he attempted another exhibition of violence. So he picked up his whip, and slunk towards the house, limping painfully.

"Well, Gussy," said Blake grimly, when they once more stood in Rylcombe Lane, "are you convinced now? Is Grenfell a rotter or not?"

Arthur Augustus's eyes flashed.

"I have not sufficient command of the English language to descibe him!" he declared, with equal grimness. "When I return to St. Jim's I shall go stwaight to Tom Mewwy and offah him, as one gentleman to another, my sincere apologies for doubting his statement."

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry's Decision.

BLAKE nodded.

"That's about the only thing you can do, Gussy," he said. "But how do you feel about the legs?"

D'Arcy made a grimace.

"Vewy wockay, deah boy," he replied, hobbling about. "The uttahn bwute laid it on with feahful force, and my legs are smothahed with weals!"

"Well, there's some consolation in knowing that Grenfell's legs are just as bad," said Dig. "My only chapean, you did give him a roasting!"

"Yaas; and I am inclined to think he could do with a few more feahful thwashin's!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I have altahed my opinion completely. I don't believe he's a scientist at all! Vewy pwobably he's a countahfeitah, as Blake suggested."

"Or something worse," said Blake. "Look here, I don't feel like going down to the village now. Suppose we go back and tell the chaps?"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"I was about to suggest the same thing," he said, with a rueful glance at his attire. "I am uttably unfit to entah Wylcombe—in fact, I hardly care to think of entahing the quad. My collah is wuffed, my clothes smothahed in dirt, and sevoral inches of my twucks have disappeared. Weally, I feel like a wotten scarecwow!"

"Poor old Gussy!" chuckled Blake, in spite of himself. "I must admit that you look somewhat shop-soiled. Still, you've got some more clobber, and that's one thing to be thankful for."

Arthur Augustus grunted, and the chums of Study No. 6 walked back to St. Jim's as quickly as possible. This was not an excessive speed, for D'Arcy found walking decidedly painful. Blake and Digby considerably offered to carry him, but D'Arcy declined with thanks. He felt that the remedy would be worse than the disease; and he was undoubtedly right.

The evening was still young, for the sun was only just setting. When they arrived at the gates the quad was scattered with juniors. The Terrible Three were standing in a group close to Taggles' lodge, and they spotted Blake & Co. first. Their conversation stopped abruptly, and they stared.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What has hap-pened to Gussy?"

"Looks as if he's been having an argument with a steam-roller," remarked Monty Lowther humorously. "You don't need to take two glances to see which came off best!"

Blake & Co. approached, all looking serious.

"Oh, Gussy, Gussy, why will you do these things?" said Monty Lowther. "I'm surprised at you! What do you mean by entering the sacred precincts of St. Jim's with six inches of your trousers missing?"

Arthur Augustus looked distressed.

"Weally, Lowthah, it is wathah wotten to make fun of my trousers!" he said. "I am fully aware that they are in a disgwaeeful condish. But it is no time for joking; I have been most bwuttally tweated!"

"You look it!" chuckled Lowther.

"What's up, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry. "Anything serious?"

"I considah that is wathah an unnecessary question," said the swell of St. Jim's. "My vewy appearance is enough to show the sewiousness of the mattah. But I wish to terdah my humble apology, deah boy."

"That's all right, Gussy. I'm not offended."

"I don't mean to apologise for my appearance, you uttahn ass. This morning I doubted your word wegarding Dr. Grenfell, and I have since learned that your language was quite inadequate. He is a howlin' wuffian of the first watah!"

"Oh, so that's the cause of this battered appearance," remarked Lowther. "I must say you've come off pretty roughly. I jolly well hope Grenfell didn't get off scott-free!"

"Wathah not. I gave him a feahful thwashing!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Gussy's right!" said Blake quickly. "He gave Grenfell a terrific hiding!"

"With a dog-whip!" added Herries, in a satisfied tone,

"My only aunt!"

"Great Scott!"

"A dog-whip!"

Several other juniors had collected, and quite a large crowd was now surrounding Blake & Co. They clamoured for the facts.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy related what had occurred, with numerous interjections from his chums. There was great excitement.

"My hat, it wants some believing!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell.

"It's the twuth, anyhow!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I gave him a sewies of feahful slashes, and made him howl like anythin'. But the wascal deserved it aftah his wotten conduct!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good old Gussy, you've upheld the traditions of St. Jim's!" said Monty Lowther. "This beastly outsider will have to learn that he can't do as he jolly well likes."

"I reckon he's learned that already," remarked Blake. "Of course, he'll very probably write to the Head and make a complaint."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I am wathah of the opinion that he will do nothin' of the kind," he said. "Gwenfell knows vewy well that he had no wight to thwash me with a dog-whip simply because I had entahed his wotten garden to wecovah my toppah. And I am not at all sure that he is allowed to have a howwible bwute of a dog about the place like that w'etched mastiff."

"I think he's within his rights there, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "After all, you were trespassing. But to give you his word that he would not touch you if you came down from the tree, and then set about you afterwards, was the act of a cad! He must know that it was rottenly despicable, and I don't think he'll court publicity by complaining to the Head."

"Pewwaps not, deah boy," exclaimed D'Arcy. "But watevah he does, I uttably wefuse to stand here any longah in this disgwaceful condish. Pway excuse me."

And Arthur Augustus hobbled into the School House.

The juniors collected into little groups, discussing the affair. The new tenant of the Pines was making himself thoroughly objectionable, and the juniors told themselves that they wouldn't stand much more of it. They didn't seem to realise the fact that this last incident was due mainly to Blake's little joke with D'Arcy's topper.

Strictly speaking, D'Arcy had brought it on himself, for, all said and done, he had had no right in the garden of the Pines. Nevertheless, Dr. Grenfell had behaved in a manner that had aroused the juniors' indignation and anger.

Let severely alone, the doctor would probably have been quite harmless; but the mischief-loving juniors found it very difficult to do so. He had acted in such a manner that he practically invited their curiosity and suspicion.

The Terrible Three talked the matter over as they lounged round the gates.

"I don't care what you say, it's jolly queer!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Everything points to it, and it's my belief—"

"That's no good, Monty, we want facts!" interrupted Manners.

"Agreed, fair youth," said Lowther. "And the only way to get facts is to investigate."

"Investigate!"

"Precisely," went on Lowther calmly. "Who is this Dr. Grenfell? Where did he come from? What's he doing in that great house all alone?"

"Ask me another!"

"It's a mystery," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'm jolly suspicious myself. The way he sent us off when we warned him of that burglar was blessed queer. And why does he keep a fierce mastiff loose in the garden? A decent house-dog is all very well, but this animal seems to be a fair terror."

"In a nutshell," said Lowther, "Grenfell seems to be in mortal fear of anybody getting into the garden and seeing things that we oughtn't to see. He's up to some rotten game—coming, or something—and he doesn't want to be found out."

Tom Merry looked doubtful.

"That's piling it on a bit thick," he said. "Still, I admit there's plenty of cause for suspicion, and, what's more, I'm with you, Monty!"

"Good!"

"I think we ought to investigate," said Tom. "There's no sense in delay, so suppose we get permission from Kildare

to go out just after dark? We'll slip over the wall of the Pines, and creep up to the house, and have a good squint round."

"My hat!"

"To-night?"

"Why not? Let's strike while the iron's hot. Think how those New House bounders would look if we exposed Grenfell as a giddy criminal! They'd go green with envy! Kerr usually does the detective bizney, and I think it's about time the School House had a turn."

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther excitedly. "We'll do it! We'll go to-night! We'll—"

"Half a minute," interrupted Manners. "I'm not going to-night."

"Why not?"

"Too busy!"

"Too busy be blowed!"

"I've got a whole pile of negatives to be developed," said Manners. "I'm not going to let them slide for the sake of a prow round Grenfell's fatheaded garden! Ten to one it'll end in a flogging from the Head."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "We sha'n't allow ourselves to be caught."

"Well, I'm not going."

"Don't be an ass! Bust your silly negatives!"

"I'm not going!" repeated Manners flatly.

"His answer is in the negative," said Monty Lowther. "All the same, he's a chump, and he doesn't deserve to come with us. We'll go on our ownsome, Tommy, and reap all the giddy honours!"

"If you're game, I am," exclaimed Tom Merry. "After all, the three of us might be too many. You and I will go, Monty, without saying a word to the other fellows."

"Good enough! I'm on!"

Manners sniffed.

"I wish you luck!" he grunted. "And if you come back intact I shall be jolly surprised."

"Intact! What are you getting at?"

"Perhaps you've forgotten that sweet-tempered dog?"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther exchanged dismayed glances.

"Oh, my hat! I'd clean forgotten that beastly mastiff!" ejaculated Tom Merry blankly. "By what Gussy says, it doesn't seem to be a particularly amiable creature."

"But, hang it all," said Lowther, "we're not going to be stopped by a confounded dog! I vote we go!"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, rats! We can keep a sharp look-out, can't we? I'm not particularly fond of dog-bites myself, but I'm willing to take the risk. Perhaps the thing won't be loose to-night," added Lowther hopefully.

Manners gazed at his two chums with an amused expression.

"Well, I'm blessed if you two chaps aren't clean potty!" he exclaimed. "I've got my suspicions about old Grenfell myself, but I'd think twice before I'd risk my calves, with a savage mastiff knocking somewhere around! Gussy's trousers are visible evidence of its biting propensities."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Tom Merry. "Come to think of it, it would be a bit risky. Perhaps—"

"Perhaps—" began Monty Lowther.

Manners grinned.

"I thought you'd think better of it!" he chuckled. "I thought you'd funk meeting that dog!"

"Funk meeting it!" roared Tom Merry indignantly.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Lowther. "We'll show you whether we funk it! We're going, ain't we, Tommy, dog or no blessed dog?"

"Rather!" agreed Tom Merry readily.

As a matter of fact, they had, indeed, been thinking of giving up the project, but Manners's taunt had decided them definitely.

They would go.

CHAPTER 9.

Captured!

"KILDARE! I say, Kildare!"

It was Tom Merry who shouted out the words. The evening was now well advanced, and the shadows were merging into blackness. Calling-over was finished, and Tom Merry was in the quad with Monty Lowther. They had just spotted Kildare, the popular captain of St. Jim's, leaving the gymnasium.

Kildare turned.

"Hallo! Who's that calling?" he shouted.

"Only me, Kildare!"

"Well, come over here, you young ass, if you want to speak to me!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther hurried over to the spot where Kildare was standing.

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"Now, what's the trouble?" he asked.
 "We want to pop down to Rylcombe, Kildare," said Tom Merry meekly. "Can we—will you give us a permit, please?"

Kildare frowned.
 "Couldn't you have gone earlier?" he asked. "I've seen you lounging about the quad for an hour past. Why didn't you go before locking-up?"

"We—we— That is—"
 "Exactly!" said Monty Lowther. "We—we want to go down now, Kildare. There's a train comes in soon, and I'm expecting a parcel."

In point of fact, Lowther actually was expecting a parcel—a new suit of white flannels—so he had not told an untruth. He didn't mention that the parcel wasn't expected until the next day. Kildare happened to be in a hurry, so he didn't press the juniors further.

"All right; I'll give you a permit," he said good-naturedly. "But you must be back in good time for supper. And, mind, no larking about. I suppose you haven't planned a jape of any sort?"

"Oh, no, Kildare!"
 "Not likely!"

The junior's statements were definite, and Kildare smiled. He wrote a permit on a sheet out of his pocket-book, and handed it to Tom Merry. The latter gave Lowther a satisfied glance as the stalwart skipper of St. Jim's walked away in the dusk.

"Got it!" murmured Tom Merry. "Good old Kildare! We're all right, Monty!"

"Yes, and we'll go straight off," said Lowther. "It's nearly dark now, and we want to get back before supper."

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.
 "We've got over an hour," he said. "Time for a good old prow round. Come on!"

And the pair walked towards the gates.

Taggles happened to be sitting outside his lodge enjoying a pipe, and he eyed the two Shell fellows suspiciously.

"You can't go hout, young gents," he said. "I've locked hup."

"Well, unlock, then," said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "We've got a permit to go hout, Taggles, old man, and it hain't hany use harguing."

Taggles grunted, and read the permit.

"Mischievous young rips!" he muttered under his breath. "I'll bet you're hup to some game or other!"

"You shouldn't bet, Taggles; it's very wrong," said Monty Lowther, as the porter unlocked the gates.

Taggles gave another grunt, and the two juniors passed out. They walked briskly down the lane until they were opposite the wall of the Pines. Then they paused and looked up. Somehow, now it had come to the actual adventure, they were rather doubtful as to the wisdom of it.

But, having gone so far, it was impossible to give up the project.

"Got your giddy pistol handy?" asked Lowther.
 "Yes."

Tom Merry produced a wicked-looking pistol and flourished it about. It wasn't nearly so deadly as it looked, for it was merely an elaborate pea-shooter. It was quite harmless, but at close range its tiny projectiles caused a painful sting. If the mastiff appeared upon the scene, a hail of peas would probably send it away howling, with its tail between its legs.

"You first, Tommy," said Lowther. "You're the chap with the firearm."

Tom Merry quickly and

nimbly climbed over the wall, and Lowther followed immediately. Once inside the grounds of the Pines, they looked round them cautiously. All was quiet. It was very gloomy under the trees, and through them they could just see the house, with one window illuminated.

"The coming department!" murmured Monty Lowther.
 "Oh, don't be an ass!" said the captain of the Shell. "Grenfell's not a coiner. Much more likely to be a manufacturer of bombs!"

"In league with the Suffragettes," suggested Lowther, with a grin. "Dr. Munson Grenfell, maker of bombs, pillar-box fluid, window-smashing hammers, etc."

"Oh, shut up, you cuckoo!"
 They moved forward slowly and silently, keeping their eyes "peeled" for the mastiff. Closer and closer to the house they got, and once Tom Merry trod on a piece of rotten stick, causing it to break with a loud crack. But although they paused, with their hearts beating fast, nothing happened.

It was soon apparent that the dog was not loose, for it would surely have made its appearance before this if it had been. The two youthful detectives felt safer and more at ease.

They were fully aware that they had no right whatever in the garden; but that fact didn't trouble them in the least. They felt it was their duty to investigate, and they did not hesitate. Under a tree close to the house they came to a standstill.

"I vote we creep up to that window," murmured Tom Merry—"that one that's illuminated. The blind's down, but we might be able to see something. In fact, it's the only thing to do. It's no good squinting into dark rooms."

"Yes, but—"
 "But what?"

"The giddy window's wide open," whispered Lowther. "Can't you see? The lower sash is right up. It's pretty close to-night, you know. Old Whiskers will be able to hear every movement."

"Well, we mustn't make a sound, that's all," replied Tom. "Look here, the ground's all paved with bricks in front. Suppose we slip our boots off? Then we can creep up as noiselessly as two shadows."

"Good wheeze!"
 And Monty Lowther bent down and unlaced his boots. In a few moments the pair were in a bootless state, and when they walked they made no sound whatever.

The illuminated window was now barely ten yards away, and all was silent. The light behind the blind shone steadily. It was a cloth one, and the wind caused it to flutter every now and again.

The juniors crept closer. Their hearts were beating fast. What were they going to discover? Would they merely see Dr. Grenfell sitting in the room reading, or would he be engaged in scientific work?

Were they about to expose the doctor as a criminal?

It seemed to Tom Merry and Lowther that their very stockings made a noise as they padded over the bricks. But at last they stood against the window-sill, side by side. And as they held their breath, a chair was pushed back in the room, and somebody coughed. Tom Merry started.

"That wasn't Grenfell's voice," he thought tensely. "My hat! I wonder—"

Again the man in the room coughed, and a shadow suddenly appeared upon the blind. It was a mere uneven shape for a moment, then the man's profile stood out clear and sharp. And the juniors saw that the room's occupant was clean-shaven.

"That can't be Grenfell," breathed Monty Lowther, in

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

THE TOFF!

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

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.



PLEASE ORDER EARLY!

Gran



Kerr heisted himself up on to the wall and looked over. In a patch of sunlight lay the mastiff, busily biting pieces off a boot. "Great pip!" gasped Kerr, suddenly; he recognised the boot as Tom Merry's! (See Chapter 12.)

his chum's ear. "Grenfell's got whiskers! I thought he was alone in the house. I thought—"

"Ssh-sh-sh!" whispered Tom Merry. "He'll hear us, you ass!"

They became silent, waiting for they knew not what. They heard the man walk across the room, open the door, and go out.

For over a minute there was not a sound.

Tom Merry leaned towards Lowther.

"Suppose we lift up the blind an inch?" he suggested. "I believe the room's empty now. I'm simply bursting to know what— Oh crumbs!"

Without warning, the light in the room had suddenly been extinguished. Yet there had not been a sound, there had not been a movement. It was almost uncanny, and the juniors looked at one another with some little alarm. Was their presence known to Dr. Grenfell?

"I say, we'd better sheer off!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I don't half like the look of this, Tommy. It seems to me—"

He paused. He and his chum were standing side by side, facing the open window. And Monty Lowther felt, somehow, that another presence was close by. He turned his head sharply, and uttered a short gasp.

Right behind them a black form loomed in the semi-darkness

of the night. It was very close, and as Lowther turned a pair of hands shot out.

In a flash the hands were fastened upon the necks of the two juniors.

"So I have caught you, eh?—you prying young hounds!" snarled the harsh voice of Dr. Grenfell. "By Heaven, you shall pay dearly for this!"

The juniors were taken absolutely by surprise.

Before they could even attempt to struggle, Dr. Grenfell exerted all his strength, and Tom Merry and Lowther plunged head foremost into the open window, tearing down the cloth blind as they sprawled into the room.

The whole thing had been so unexpected that they scarcely realised what had happened. Tom Merry, as he fell, caught his left temple a frightful crack on the hard floor, and he lay still, partially stunned.

Monty Lowther was not so unfortunate. He landed on his hands and knees, and instantly sprang to his feet. But Grenfell had followed his victims in, and he grasped Lowther in a savage and painful grip.

"Tommy!" gasped Lowther wildly. "Where the dickens are you, old man? Don't let this rotter get the better of us!"

But Tom Merry didn't answer.

In the darkness it was impossible to see what was going on, but Grenfell knew that Tom Merry was put out of action.

With a harsh curse, he yanked Lowther nearly off his feet, and rushed him across the room.

A door opened, and the confused Lowther pitched forward into another apartment. The door slammed, only to be opened again later, to admit the still more confused person of Tom Merry. The juniors hardly knew what had occurred—except that they were now in another room, which was apparently situated across a narrow passage.

The door crashed to, and the key turned in the lock. Then the panting voice of Dr. Grenfell sounded through the thick door.

"You are prisoners!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I saw you creep up to the house, and this is your reward for interference in matters that do not concern you! It is useless to attempt to escape, for the window is heavily shuttered and padlocked! You do not leave this house until I choose to let you!"

CHAPTER 10. Manners as Well.

PRISONERS!

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were speechless with amazement and consternation.

They heard Dr. Grenfell leave the passage and enter the other room. Then all was silent, except for the heavy breathing of the two alarmed juniors. The darkness was pitchy.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, at last.

At the moment he couldn't think of anything else to say. Tom Merry uttered a rueful groan of pain, and it gave Lowther the power of coherent speech again.

"Hallo, what's the matter?" he asked. "Are you hurt, old chap?"

"Nothing much," growled Tom Merry, rubbing his head. "I caught my head a terrific whack on the floor, though, and it sent me dotty for a minute. What's happened? Where are we? I'm blessed if I can see!"

"That's not surprising, considering that we're in a place like the Black Hole of Calcutta!" said Lowther, scrambling to his feet. "My only Sunday tile, I can't believe it! We're prisoners, Tommy—prisoners!"

They discussed the situation, and their tones were grave and serious.

"What can it mean?" said Tom Merry, after five minutes' talk.

"It means that Grenfell is a scoundrel," replied Lowther grimly. "Our suspicions are justified up to the giddy hilt. There's something going on in this house that isn't square. But what—what?"

"Who was the chap we saw on the blind? It wasn't Grenfell?"

"No, of course not. Unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Lowther. "It's jolly queer, that's all. We didn't see anybody else but Grenfell afterwards. If there had been some other chap here, wouldn't he have helped to collar us?"

"But we saw the other chap, you ass!"

"We didn't—we only saw his shadow!"

"Well, wasn't that enough?" asked Tom Merry. "He hadn't any whiskers, so he couldn't have been Grenfell."

"Why not?" said Lowther shrewdly. "I've had my suspicions about those whiskers!"

"My hat! Do you think—"

"I do!" went on Monty. "I think it's very likely that those whiskers are false. Grenfell was sitting in that room without 'em, and he heard us whispering at the window. You remember the clean-shaven chap left the room? Well, I believe it was Grenfell himself. He shoved his whiskers on, and came outside and collared us."

Tom Merry nodded in the darkness.

"Looks a bit like it," he agreed. "But we haven't any proof that there's not another chap. Taking it all round, the odds are against a second chap, though. As you say, he would have helped to collar us!"

"Of course! But, my only aunt, what are we going to do?" said Lowther. "We've got to think of our position, Tommy. There'll be a hue and cry when we don't turn up at bedtime!"

"Not a bit of it, my son!" said Tom Merry, lowering his voice to a mere whisper. "Have you forgotten old Manners? He knows we're here, and he'll soon make things hum! Our being captured like this is the best thing that could have happened. Manners will come with a lot of chaps, and Grenfell will be exposed, and collared!"

"My hat, yes!"

But Tom Merry's prediction was not destined to come true. Manners knew where his chums were, certainly, but he did not confide in any of the other fellows. He never dreamed that the matter was really serious.

He had expected Tom Merry and Lowther back in good

time for supper, and, having finished his developing, he lounged about the quad waiting for them to appear. But supper-time came, and still they were absent.

"Silly asses!" murmured Manners to himself rather uneasily. "What the dickens can be keeping them? They'll get in a row, now, with old Kildare. Well, I'm going in to supper alone!"

But he didn't go. Somehow, he didn't feel inclined to eat his supper before his chums put in an appearance. He looked round the quad, but it was deserted save for himself.

"Oh, rats! Why don't they come?" he muttered.

He was thinking of the savage mastiff. Should he go and tell Kildare where his chums had gone? Perhaps it would be as well, in case anything had happened. He thought over the matter for several minutes.

"No!" he finally decided. "I'd better not tell Kildare. They may be on their way back now, and if Kildare knew that they had been in the garden of the Pines, they'd get called over the giddy coals—and I should be blamed!"

Manners's position was rather awkward, and at length he determined to run down Rylcombe Lane himself, in the hope of seeing his chums, and hurrying them up. He was really anxious now, and did not hesitate to break bounds.

In a few moments he had clambered over the wall, and was trotting down the lane. He paused now and then to listen, but the road was deserted.

"Oh, the chumps!" he muttered impatiently. "I warned them not to go. I hope to goodness that rotten dog hasn't bitten them!"

He arrived at the wall of the Pines garden, and nimbly climbed up. He could just see the house, with that one window illuminated as before. He wondered if the mastiff was loose, and resolved to test it. He stood up on the wall, and reached for a tree-branch. Next moment he broke it with a loud snap, and then beat the wall with the branch.

The sound could not have been heard from the house by human ears—but had the dog been loose, it would instantly have heard the commotion, and barked accordingly. But not a sound resulted—the mastiff was evidently shut up somewhere.

Manners felt rather alarmed.

He thought that the animal had bitten one of his chums, and that the latter had gone into the house to have the wound attended to. Rotter though Grenfell was, if his dog had caused a bad bite, he would be compelled to have it bandaged. The mastiff, of course, would naturally be confined.

"That's the explanation, sure as anything!" Manners told himself. "One of the fatheads have been bitten! I'll rush round to the front door and inquire."

He prepared to descend from the wall, and then paused.

"Perhaps I'd better not, though," he thought. "I've got no proof that they've been bitten, although it's probable, and if they haven't, I shall only put my giddy foot in it. If Grenfell hasn't seen anything of 'em, my inquiries will only arouse his suspicions, and he'll search the garden, and perhaps find 'em. No; I'd better sneak up to the house this way and have a squint round."

And without any further delay he dropped into the grounds of the Pines and hurried towards the house. As he passed beneath the trees he didn't notice a door open in the gloom, a little to the left of the lighted window.

As a matter of fact, it was Dr. Grenfell himself who had just emerged. He was still a little uneasy, for he thought it probable that another junior or two had accompanied Tom Merry and Lowther, and that they had escaped his eye. It was the irony of Fate that Manners should have entered the garden at such a time.

He crept forward until he was quite near to the house. He crouched down against some bushes and gazed searchingly at the lighted window. He would have been surprised could he have known that his chums' boots were within a yard of him, hidden by the bushes.

"Can't hear anything!" he murmured to himself. "I wonder where the dickens the silly fatheads are? I don't like this game. If I don't see or hear something before long, I shall clear off. I expect the chumps are at St. Jim's!"

A pair of strong hands gripped Manners' shoulders, and he gave a gasp of surprise.

"You silly asses!" he ejaculated. "I thought that you were copped—Oh!"

In the dim light he could see that he was not grasped by his chums, as he had at first supposed.

"By thunder, so I was not wrong!" hissed Dr. Grenfell furiously. "I suspected that there were more of you! Whelp—"

"Look here—"

"Silence, you young dog!"

Manners struggled wildly.

"What's the meaning of this?" he roared. "Rescue, St. Jim's! Res—"

"By Heaven, I will silence you!" snarled the doctor, clapping his hand upon Manners' mouth.

The surprised and alarmed junior struggled frantically. But it was useless. Grenfell simply lifted him off his feet and carried him, kicking and wriggling, into the house. Manners was too excited to notice anything in the lighted room as he passed through it. Next moment he heard a key turn in a lock, and he received a violent shove.

He sprawled forward, and fell on his hands and knees in the darkness. And from behind came the sound of a slamming door, followed by the rattle of a key.

Manners sat up, dazed.
"Well, I'm jiggered!" he gasped faintly.
"It's Manners!" ejaculated a well-known voice. "Oh, my hat, he's a prisoner like us, Monty!"

Manners panted with amazement.
"Are you—are you both here?" he asked hoarsely.
He felt himself gripped by his chums.

"Yes, we're both here, Manners, old man," said Tom Merry quickly. "But what the dickens does this mean?"

"I'm blessed if I know!" said Manners, who had scarcely recovered his wits. "Old Grenfell flew at me and chucked my hat, he's a prisoner like us, Monty!"

"We know that, you chump!" exclaimed Monty Lowther impatiently. "We're prisoners! He's up to some rotten game, and he's collared us because he's afraid we shall bring the police, or something! We were relying on you to get us out of this hole!"

"Re—relying on me?" ejaculated Manners.
"Of course," said Tom Merry. "You knew that we were here; and we thought that you would bring Kildare and a lot of other chaps to search for us."

"But—but I had no idea you were in such a fix as this," said Manners quickly. "I popped down at supper-time to try and find you, and Grenfell spotted me, and here I am! I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought!" interrupted Tom Merry anxiously. "Did you tell any of the other chaps—Blake or Figgins—where you were going? If you did, they'll come down and make things hot for Grenfell before long."

"But I did not say a word to anybody," said Manners blankly. "Nobody but us three knew of this visit to the Pines. I just came down here to look for you without speaking to a soul. Blake asked me earlier in the evening where you were, but I simply said that you had gone out!"

"Then—then there's not a soul in the whole of St. Jim's who knows where we are?"

"Of course not! How could they know?"
Monty Lowther groaned.

"Then there's no telling how long we shall be here," he said. "If nobody knows that we are here, they won't look for us here, will they? Good lor', we're in a nice mess, and no giddy mistake!"

"But it's amazing!" exclaimed Manners. "Here, within half a mile of St. Jim's, we're imprisoned in a room, like—like chaps used to be imprisoned in the Middle Ages! Grenfell must be an escaped lunatic!"

While Manners had been speaking he and his chums had not noticed the sound of soft footsteps outside, in the passage. But Grenfell had just walked away. He had heard all that had been said, and was satisfied.

He knew that no other St. Jim's fellows would appear on the scene; for the Terrible Three had paid this visit to the Pines unknown to another soul in the school. They were at his mercy.

To hope for rescue was almost futile.
And the Terrible Three, in their dark prison, reviewed the situation with dismay and alarm.

CHAPTER 11.

No Trace!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood upon the steps of the School House, looking across the quad in the direction of the entrance-gates.

"It's vewy stwange, deah boys!" he said, in a puzzled voice.

"It's downright queer!" declared Jack Blake. "What can have become of the idiots? Supper's been finished twenty minutes, and it'll soon be bedtime—and still they're out! Kildare's tearing his giddy hair!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "When I passed him in the passage just now he grabbed hold of me an' asked me where the Tewwible Thwee had got to. And his face was vewy crossoo-lookin', and he did not seem in a bettah tempah when I told him that I had not the least ideah where the boundahs had disappeared to."

Bates and Smith minor of the Fourth appeared.
"Any sign of those Shell bounders yet?" asked Bates.

"No, they haven't turned up," said Blake shortly.
"Oh, well, I suppose they will sooner or later," said Smith minor intelligently, and the pair went off again.

Nearly all the juniors were talking about the non-appearance of the Terrible Three. To be out after supper was almost unheard-of, and the Lower School was curious to learn the cause of the delay.

"Faith, and there's not a ghost of a sign of the Terrible Three!" said Reilly, approaching from the gates, with Kerruish and Ray of the Fourth. "I'm thinkin' they'll be in for a jewel of a dressing-down!"

"I'm blessed if I can understand it!" said Digby. "Tom Merry and Lowther were fearfully late the last time they went out. But they were on their bikes then, and had punctures. This time they were walking, so they can't be far away."

"Tom Merry and Lowther have been gone ever since dusk," remarked Bernard Glynn, who had joined the group; "but I was talking to Manners only a few minutes before supper."

"And I saw him lounging about the quad," said Kerruish. "I thought he was waiting for Merry and Lowther. He must have broken bounds, for Taggles didn't let him out."

"Didn't he tell anybody where he was going?" asked Blake.

"Appawently not, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "If he had done so, we should have heard. He simply disappeared. Bai Jove, there's quite a crowd collectin'! Heah come Figgins & Co. now."

The New House trio had come over to see what the excitement was about, and in answer to numerous inquiries they declared that they had not seen Manners all the evening. They had no information to impart.

The time went on, and the juniors became more curious than ever. Quite a large crowd had gathered in the quad to see the Terrible Three when they returned. Their lateness was all the more curious because Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had not returned until midnight the previous night.

Kildare went about looking very angry, and he told himself that he would give the culprits exceptionally severe impositions when they did return.

Bedtime arrived, and still the Terrible Three were absent. The Fourth and Shell went to their dormitories in a state of unsatisfied curiosity. Bernard Glynn and several other Shell fellows decided to keep awake, in order to learn from Tom Merry & Co. the cause of their lateness.

Downstairs, Kildare stood at the School House door, frowning into the darkness of the quad.

"Young rascals!" he muttered. "It'll be a long time before I give them a permit again! Manners will have to give a very satisfactory explanation for breaking bounds, too. To be late twice running like this is above a joke. It will be a job for the Head, I'm afraid."

Kildare was always on the best of terms with the Terrible Three, and they had never before taken advantage of his leniency. But it certainly seemed as though they were seriously in the wrong on this occasion.

He had said nothing so far to Mr. Railton, but he felt that he would have to do so now. The Housemaster knew, of course, that the missing juniors had not been at the supper-table, but juniors frequently missed supper if they were in exceptional funds. Mr. Railton merely thought that the Terrible Three were having a spread in their own study.

Kildare waited a few moments longer, and then strode to Mr. Railton's study, and tapped upon the door.

"Come in!" invited Mr. Railton from inside.

He looked up from a book as Kildare entered.
"Oh, it's you, Kildare!" he said pleasantly. "Is there anything wrong? You seem worried."

"I am worried, sir," replied Kildare. "There are three juniors still out."

"Upon my soul! It is past bedtime!"

"I know, sir. I gave two of them permits to stay out until supper-time, but the third broke bounds."

Mr. Railton frowned.
"This is very serious, Kildare," he said. "Who are these boys?"

"Merry, Lowther, and Manners, sir."

Mr. Railton looked up quickly.
"Dear me! And they are the two boys whom I should least suspect of such conduct," he said. "Especially after the escapade of last night—especially after that, Kildare."

"It's very strange, sir," exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's. "Merry and Lowther assured me that they were contemplating no jokes of any sort, and I know them well enough to take their word. I believe they went to the station."

"To the station, Kildare?"

"To fetch a parcel, sir."

"Ah, yes; I understand!" said Mr. Railton. "Well, we

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must wait until they return, and then hear what they have to say. But I am very much afraid that Merry, Lowther, and Manners are in for severe trouble."

Ten o'clock struck, and then the half-hour, but still the three juniors were absent.

At eleven o'clock Kildare went up to the Shell dormitory to satisfy himself that the Terrible Three had not slipped in unobserved. But their beds were vacant. When Kildare descended to the hall, he found Mr. Railton awaiting him. The Housemaster was looking serious.

"Surely those boys have returned, Kildare?" he exclaimed.

"No, sir; they're still out."

"Upon my word, this is outrageous!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "They shall pay dearly for it. A fortnight's detention within gates will bring them to their senses. I am deeply disappointed in them, Kildare."

"Perhaps they will explain—"

"There can be no explanation sufficiently adequate," interrupted the Housemaster. "Come, we will go down to the station together and make inquiries."

But when they arrived at Rylcombe Station they gained no information. The stationmaster was still up, fortunately, and he assured Mr. Railton that there had been no St. Jim's boys there the whole evening. He had been in charge of the booking-office himself, and there had been no Shell fellows inquiring after a parcel.

Master and prefect walked back to St. Jim's in frames of mind that were far from easy. They told themselves that the Terrible Three would be there when they arrived. But the missing juniors were still absent.

Mr. Railton saw the Head, and Dr. Holmes was very grave. It was past midnight now, so it was evident that something out of the ordinary had occurred. The Head decided that it would be best to wait for a time; but one o'clock boomed out, and there was still no sign.

Kildare was sent to arouse other members of the Sixth. The Head and Mr. Railton were now really alarmed. For three juniors to be out after one o'clock was unprecedented, and Dr. Holmes decided to send out search-parties.

And at half-past one four parties started out into the night with lanterns—one in charge of Mr. Railton, and the other three headed by Kildare, Darrel, and Rushden. All manner of conjectures were made—that one of the juniors had met with an accident, and that the other two were unable to carry him home; that they had foolishly attempted a night row up the river, and that they had all been drowned; and so forth.

And while Dr. Holmes awaited anxiously in his study at St. Jim's, the search-parties, weary and sleepy, trudged on unsuccessfully.

The Terrible Three had completely disappeared.

Not a trace of them could be discovered.

They had vanished as though into thin air.

And as the dawn broke, grey and chill, the four search-parties straggled back to St. Jim's, dead-tired, haggard, and worn out.

Their labour had been in vain, their efforts fruitless.

CHAPTER 12.

Kerr on the Job.

ST. JIM'S seethed with excitement.

It was noon of the day following the disappearance of the Terrible Three.

Morning lessons had been a mere farce; seniors and juniors alike had been too excited to think of work.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were still absent from the old school. Not a trace of them had been discovered, and the rest of St. Jim's had no other subject of conversation; it was the one, all-absorbing topic.

Indeed, in the village—in Rylcombe itself—the usual daily gossip was overshadowed by the news which had come from the school. Shopkeepers stood at their doors and discussed the affair with shaking heads.

P.-c. Crump, the village constable, had paid a visit to the Head. And, later on, an inspector from Wayland had driven over. There was an air of suppressed mystery and excitement overhanging all.

Blake & Co. went about looking gloomy and serious. A laugh had not been heard all the day, except from Levison or Mellish, or fellows of their kidney. The juniors were too excited and too concerned to joke.

What had become of their schoolfellows?

It was a question without an answer.

Immediately after morning lessons several parties of juniors sallied out, in the vain hope of finding some clue.

But they all returned in time for dinner empty-handed, as it were.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, just before dinner, rushed wildly into the quad, shouting excitedly that the Terrible Three

were coming up the lane. A frantic rush followed, during which many juniors were bowled over, and for a moment everybody thought that the Terrible Three really had returned.

But the trio of juniors who were approaching, arm-in-arm, proved merely to be Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Kangaroo, who had been out searching. They were nearly bumped by the excited juniors when their identity was revealed.

Arthur Augustus was not merely bumped—he was bumped with considerable violence. And when the disappointed juniors allowed him to go, he was a mere wreck of his former elegant self. He went in to wash, telling himself that he was a very badly-used person.

After dinner, Figgins & Co. discussed things with Blake & Co., but they could come to no satisfactory conclusion. Not a soul in the school knew where the Terrible Three had gone to the previous evening.

It was noticeable that Kerr was strangely silent. The keen Scots junior was thinking deeply, and he kept his thoughts to himself. Before he told of his suspicions, he meant to have a certain measure of proof that he was not on the wrong tack.

And just after tea he received that proof in an overwhelming degree. He suspected Dr. Grenfell of having a hand in the matter, and his suspicions were justified by his discovery.

While the Head and everybody else, including the police, were at their wits' end, Kerr of the New House quietly went to work to find things out. His discovery was, in a degree, largely owing to a stroke of luck.

He had been down to the village to satisfy himself that the Terrible Three had not been there the previous evening. Figgins and Fatty Wynn had refused to accompany him, considering the project futile. And, returning in the lengthening shadows, Kerr suddenly saw the figure of Dr. Munson Grenfell approaching.

"I'll bet all I've jolly well got that that rotter knows where the Terrible Three are!" thought Kerr to himself: "I wish I could be certain."

He kept his eyes on the ground until Dr. Grenfell was very close; then Kerr glanced up sharply. Grenfell was looking at him with the evening sun's yellow rays full upon his face. Kerr only got a single glance, and then he was past.

But Kerr's eyes were gleaming.

Upon the doctor's left cheek there was a livid bruise. His whiskers almost concealed it, but Kerr's sharp eyes were not deceived. What could that bruise mean? How had Grenfell received it?

"A penny to a haystack he copped that from Tom Merry's fist!" thought Kerr shrewdly. "For some unearthly reason he's collared the Terrible Three! By gum, I'll have a scout round now, while the rotter's out!"

As a matter of fact, Grenfell had received the bruise as a result of Manners' frantic struggles, but Kerr's shot had been very near the mark. The Scots junior did not hesitate now.

He hastened quickly up the lane until he was opposite the wall of the Pines garden. Then he hoisted himself up and looked over.

It was quite gloomy under the trees, although the sun had not yet set. But close by, in a little patch of yellow sunlight, lay the big mastiff.

Kerr made a rueful grimace.

"That's done it!" he told himself. "I can't do any scouting with that brute loose about the place. Rotten!"

He watched, frowning wrathfully at the dog, and guessed that Grenfell had loosened it to keep guard while he was absent. Kerr had been very silent, and the mastiff was unaware of the junior's presence. It was very busy with something, and Kerr thought at first that it had a bone.

Then he saw that the mastiff was busily biting pieces off a boot.

"My hat, he must be hungry!" thought Kerr.

But the dog was merely in a playful mood. Now and again it tossed the boot up, and then started afresh. Suddenly a cat appeared close to the house, and the mastiff saw it immediately.

Leaving the boot, the animal shot across the garden and disappeared amongst the bushes. But Kerr was not watching it. His eyes were fixed upon the mutilated boot. And his face was flushed with sudden excitement.

"Great pip!" he gasped.

For he recognised the boot as Tom Merry's. It was quite an ordinary boot, but right across the toe-cap was a jagged rent in the leather. Kerr had good cause to recognise that rent, for he had been present when Tom Merry had caught his foot on a nail while climbing a wall at St. Jim's. Kerr had laughed, then; but he did not laugh now.

He was not partially certain about the matter—he was

absolutely positive. The boot's presence in the garden of the Pines proved beyond question that Tom Merry was not very far off. And it was only natural to suppose that Manners and Lowther were with him.

Kerr's eyes blazed with excitement, and there was a glint of anxiety, too. He did not like the look of things at all. But there was no sense in delay. He would inform his chums of his discovery, and make up a rescue-party.

Next moment Kerr was running up the lane at top speed.

CHAPTER 13.

Nearly—But Not Quite.

"STEAK-AND-KIDNEY pudding!" said Monty Lowther, smacking his lips.

"Oh, you silly ass, don't talk about it!" growled Tom Merry. "Here we are, nearly starved, and you talk about steak-and-kidney pudding!"

Monty Lowther sniffed the air.

"I can almost smell it," he said, with a sigh. "I've got five-and-a-tanner in my pocket, and I'd give every penny of it for one of Dame Taggles' steak—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "Goodness knows, our position is bad enough, without you making it worse by mentioning such things!"

The Terrible Three were not in the best of humours. They had been imprisoned in the shuttered room a night and a day, and their tempers were not improved. The only food they had eaten had been a loaf of stale bread and a chunk of cheese, which Grenfell had thrown them during the morning.

One loaf could scarcely be considered a hearty meal for three hungry youngsters, and the Terrible Three had polished it off at express speed, swallowing their indignation at the same time. At first Manners had refused to touch a mouthful, but when he heard the others eating, he soon came round.

And now, in the late evening, they were all ravenous and desperate. Their confinement was galling; but how could they escape? The window was shuttered and padlocked, so escape by that means was out of the question. True enough, the door was only provided with a cheap lock, but to force it—which they undoubtedly could have done—would have entailed a great amount of noise, and Grenfell would have been upon the scene in a moment.

The chums had talked over the situation until their throats were dry.

"It's no good!" growled Tom Merry, laying back on the hard boards, and resting his head upon the floor. "It's impossible—Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, something scratched my face," replied Tom Merry, sitting up and passing his hand over the floor at the spot where his hand had lain. The darkness was pitchy, and he could see nothing. But after a moment he uttered an exclamation.

"A giddy piece of wire!" he grunted. "Jolly good thing it didn't stick into my optic!"

And Tom Merry lifted his hand to throw the wire across the room. But at the last moment he paused, and uttered a short gasp. Then he felt the wire with quivering hands. It was of fairly thick gauge, and about six inches in length.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he gasped.

His tone caused the others to sit up quickly.

"What's up, you ass?" asked Manners.

"Why—why, this piece of wire is just the thing we want!" exclaimed Tom Merry in a low voice. "The door-lock's only a cheap one, and I'll bet that I pick it in less than ten minutes. I've picked a lock before now, and—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Monty Lowther excitedly. "Do you think you can do it, Tommy?"

"I know I can!"

"Then do it!" said Manners practically.

The Terrible Three rose to their feet. Their ill-tempers had gone, and they discussed the new hope with eager voices. If they could once get out of the room, it would be a simple matter to make their escape from the house altogether. At least, that is what they told themselves.

The wire caused some little trouble in bending, but at length Tom Merry had it done to his satisfaction. He in-

serted it in the lock, and twisted it. But it was useless. The bolt refused to slip back.

Again and again Tom Merry tried, each time altering the shape of the wire.

"Oh, it's no good!" said Manners disappointedly. "You can't do it, old man!"

There was a sudden soft click.

"Can't do it—eh?" exclaimed Tom Merry in a triumphant whisper. "It's done! The door's unlocked!"

"My hat!"

The Terrible Three held their breaths.

"Come on!" breathed Tom Merry, laying his hand upon the door-knob. "Might as well make a dash straight off!"

He turned the knob and pushed. The door opened without a sound, and the escaped prisoners silently padded out into the passage. Manners had removed his boots, so they were all in their stockinged feet.

Down the passage a bright light shone from beneath one of the doors, and caused the passage to be very faintly illuminated. To the Terrible Three, coming out of their pitchy prison, the light seemed almost brilliant, and they could see one another distinctly.

They crept down the passage until they were opposite the other door, and Tom Merry raised his finger. They all stopped, hardly daring to breathe; and the sound of voices came to them, clearly and distinctly.

"So that clean-shaven chap we saw on the blind wasn't Grenfell, after all," thought Tom Merry. "There's somebody else in the house all the time."

He and his chums listened intently.

"Those brats of boys have ruined everything!" the harsh voice of Dr. Grenfell was saying. "It's no good, Jim, we must get away from Rylcombe without delay."

"When?" asked another voice.

"To-night, boy, to-night!"

"But how about those kids you've got locked up?"

"They will come to no harm," said Grenfell quickly. "A little hardship will do them good. By thunder, they deserve more than they have received at my hands! I have written a letter to the headmaster of the school, and we will post it in Wayland. It will be delivered in the morning, and the boys will be released. The letter can do us no harm, for we shall be in London by the time it is received."

"It's a confounded nuisance, gov'nor!"

"Don't grumble, Jim, or I shall get angry!" said Grenfell harshly. "I am doing all this for you, don't forget. There's not a soul in Rylcombe knows that you are here. Even these boys, who are in the house with us, are under the impression that I am alone. I have heard them talking together. They saw your shadow on the blind, and they think it was me without my whiskers. It was absolutely necessary that they should be imprisoned until to-night; had I allowed them to go they would have warned the police, and we should have been caught like rats in a trap. As it is, I have had time to make fresh plans. A telegram has just arrived, in code, from Maitland, and he says that he will have everything ready for us upon our arrival in London. By this time to-morrow we shall be on the Continent, safe and sound."

"Then the sooner we're off the better I shall like it."

"When it is quite dark we will walk to Wayland across the moor, and catch the night train," said Grenfell. "I shall remove my whiskers, and adopt another disguise, as I have no fear of being recognised as the pseudo 'doctor' of the Pines. We will cheat the police yet, Jim, in spite of our folly in coming to this place. Had I known there was a public school near by I would have fought shy of Rylcombe. These boys—hang them!—are worse than all the detectives of Scotland Yard!"

The Terrible Three exchanged excited glances. They had gained some valuable information, although even now they did not know who or what the two men were. But it was very evident that they were criminals hiding from justice.

Tom Merry placed his mouth close to his chums' ears.

"We'll skip out now!" he breathed. "In ten minutes we can be back with Kildare and a lot of other fellows, and these rotters will be copped red-handed!"

And Tom Merry continued his way down the passage. Another door, which presumably led to the front of the house, barred his way. He laid his hand on the knob, and turned it.

"Come on!" he whispered.

The Terrible Three already felt safe; they told themselves that they would be outside the house in less than a minute. Then something occurred to fill them with utter dismay.

As Tom Merry opened the door a quiet patter of feet sounded, and then something sniffed.

"The mastiff!" gasped Tom Merry.

A snarl followed, and it changed to a furious bark. Tom Merry's foot, which had been thrust through the doorway, was nearly grasped, and he drew it back sharply and slammed the door.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—"THE TOFF!"

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"Oh crumbs!" groaned Monty Lowther. "We're done—we're diddled!"

Escape was impossible by that means, for the mastiff's savageness could not be faced. And as the Terrible Three gazed at one another in consternation, a shout of fury sounded from the lighted room. The door burst open, and the passage was flooded with brilliant illumination, which almost blinded the juniors.

Grenfell grasped the situation in a moment.

"By Heaven, so you've escaped!" he roared.

He darted forward, and in a moment was struggling fiercely with the Terrible Three. He realised that they must have heard at least some of their conversation.

"Jim!" he shouted frantically.

His companion darted out of the room, and proved to be a young man of considerable strength. In less than a minute the fight was over. The Terrible Three were bundled roughly back into their prison, and Grenfell breathed hoarsely as he relocked the door and propped it with a stout piece of wood.

"By James!" he snarled. "How much have they heard? I will not post that letter now! The young hounds can remain in here until they die for all I care! We must think of our liberty, Jim!"

The Terrible Three, bruised and exhausted, heard the words, and their faces blanched. They were prisoners again, just when they had congratulated themselves that they had gained their freedom.

And the door was now impregnable. How would they escape? They asked themselves that question with pale and haggard faces.

They did not know that Kerr of the New House was hot on the scent. Could they have known that fact, their spirits would have been raised to the highest pitch—for when Kerr really got going something generally happened.

CHAPTER 14.

The Rival Co.'s to the Rescue.

JACK BLAKE looked worried. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked worried; in fact, there was hardly a face at St. Jim's which did not express excitement and anxiety. The Terrible Three were very popular, and their mysterious disappearance was causing grave consternation.

It was now late evening, almost dark, and still no facts had been discovered. The concern of the juniors was growing. Blake & Co. and Figgins & Co. were talking in a clump near the gates, and the only one of their number who was missing was Kerr.

"It's no good!" growled Blake miserably. "The awful asses have completely done it this time. Where are they? Why did they go? What's the meaning of it? Who's responsible? What—"

"Weally, Blake, your remarks are wathah wedic!" interrupted Arthur Augustus severely. "There is uttahnly no sense in askin' all those pwepostewous questions!"

"There is no sense in anything!" said Blake impatiently. "Why can't something be done?"

Figgins, who had wandered out into the roadway—the gates were still open, although it was past locking-up—suddenly uttered a shout.

"There's somebody buzzing up the lane like an express engine!" he declared. "Perhaps he's got news. Oh, it's Kerr!"

Kerr rushed up, and gazed excitedly at the group.

"I've found 'em!" he panted.

"Found 'em?" repeated Figgins. "Found what, you ass?"

"The Terrible Three!" said Kerr, calming down. "They're prisoners, and I know where they are!"

"What!"

"Prisoners!"

"Rats!"

"You're spoofing!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You chumps!" roared Kerr impatiently. "I've found 'em, I tell you. I suspected that they were there all the time. Old Grenfell's collared 'em, and they're imprisoned somewhere in the Pines. Whether they're hurt or not I don't know, but we'll jolly soon find out!"

"In the Pines!"

"Grenfell's prisoners!"

"Great Scott!"

"Explain!" shouted Blake excitedly. "Dry up, you giddy asses, and let Kerr explain himself!"

Kerr was given a hearing, and he rapidly told of his discovery. The faces of his chums were serious when he had finished.

"I say, it looks jolly bad!" said Figgins gravely. "How the dickens could that dog have got one of Tom Merry's boots?"

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"Are you sure it was Tom Merry's?" asked Blake.

"Positive!" said Kerr flatly.

"But boots are very much alike——"

"Oh, you make me tired!" exclaimed Kerr wrathfully.

"Dog or no dog, I'm going to make a raid on the Pines, and if you chaps don't choose to come with me, I'll find someone who will!"

"We'll come!" declared Blake quickly. "Kerr's right, you chaps!"

"Of course he's right!" said Figgins excitedly. "Kerr always is right. What silly asses we were not to suspect Grenfell before!"

Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Kangaroo joined the group. And the next moment Harry Hammond and Reilly of the Fourth came up. They soon gathered the facts, and the party, now numbering a round dozen, set off before the news spread. If it got to the ears of Kildare he would probably forbid any drastic action—and the rival Co.'s felt like drastic action just then.

They rushed down Rylcombe Lane at a fast run, everyone believing implicitly in Kerr's statement. The keen Scottish junior was leader, and he came to a halt against the wall of the Pines.

"The dog's loose," he began.

"Bothah the dog!" said Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"He's a howivable bwute, as I have good weason to know, but he would nevah attempt to attack a cword. I vote we wisk it, deah boys!"

"Yes, risk it!"

"Rather!"

The juniors were unanimous. They poured over the wall like a flood, and almost immediately a furious barking was heard. The mastiff came pelting up, but a chorus of yells made it pause and eye the crowd uncertainly.

Kerr stepped forward in a gingerly manner.

"Good dog!" he said persuasively. "Come on, old chap!"

He threw the dog a piece of toffee which he had found in his pocket, and the animal munched it up contentedly. Then, assuring itself that it was amongst friends, it approached, wagging its tail.

Some more contribution of sweets were found from various pockets, and in less than a minute the mastiff was on good terms with everybody. Although savage and dangerous when ordered to attack by its master, it was evidently a good-tempered dog otherwise.

"Come on!" said Kerr briskly. "He's all right now!"

And as the party moved towards the house the mastiff ran alongside, quite amicably.

Not a light was showing from the Pines, and the juniors approached the building in a body. If Grenfell appeared now he would find himself in an awkward position. But there was not a sign of life, and all was still.

Kerr did not mean to waste time. He marched up to the rear door and turned the handle. The door opened readily, and he passed through, followed by the rest. They soon found themselves in the room which Grenfell and his companion had lately occupied. The juniors did not know it, but the pair had been gone only a very few minutes. It was scarcely five minutes since the Terrible Three had been locked in the shuttered room once more.

"No sense in being quiet!" said Kerr sharply. "Shout, you chaps!"

A perfect roar went up.

Then there was silence, the juniors listening with bated breath. And quite near by an answering chorus of voices made itself heard.

"It's the chaps!" shouted Tom Merry's voice.

"Hurrah!" yelled Manners.

"Rescue, St. Jim's!" came Lowther's lusty bellow.

There was a babble of excitement.

"They're here!" roared Blake joyfully. "Oh, my hat, I feel quite faint! Let's go and lug the bounders out!"

There was a fearful crush in the little passage, until a couple of electric torches illuminated the scene. The wooden prop was rapidly removed, and the key—which was in the lock—turned. The door burst open, and the Terrible Three emerged into the rescuers' arms.

"Thank goodness you've come!" said Monty Lowther fervently. "I feel just like Fatty Wynn!"

"Like me!" said Wynn questioningly.

"Yes, I feel that I could eat four dinners at one sitting," declared Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You bounders!" exclaimed Blake, grabbing hold of Tom Merry. "You've given us all a fearful fright! Kildare's nearly dotty, Mr. Railton's going grey, and the Head——"

"Oh, bother the Head!" interrupted Tom Merry, without any disrespect to the reverend chief of St. Jim's. "Grenfell and the other chaps have gone, and while we're jawing here they'll get clear away!"

"They only left five minutes ago," said Manners quickly.

"Left? Who's left?"

"Grenfell and the other chap?"

"The othah chap? Weally, Tom Mewwy, if you will be more explicit—"

"Shut up, Gussy, and I'll explain!" said the captain of the Shell.

In a few words he had told his companions what he had overheard.

"They're walking across the moor now," he finished up quickly. "I don't know what they've done, but they're evidently a pair of frightful rotters! The best thing we can do is to hop up to St. Jim's, get our bikes, and whiz to Wayland. We can be at the station first then, and have the rotters arrested!"

"Good wheeze!"

"We'll do it," said Kerr calmly.

"Half a minute," complained Monty Lowther. "I haven't got any giddy boots! Who'll carry me up to St. Jim's?"

Nobody was kind enough to offer his services, so Monty Lowther went in search of his boots, Tom Merry accompanying him. Lowther found his under the bushes, but there was only one of Tom Merry's. Somebody gently broke the news that it was lying somewhere in the grass in a chewed-up condition.

After a short search the boot was found, and, although most of the upper was missing, Tom Merry slipped it on. The delay had been but slight, and the juniors hastened up to the school at a breakneck run.

The Terrible Three were in front, and the manner in which they had kept the lead proved that they were little the worse for their adventure. Just inside the quad Kildare and Mr. Railton were standing, and they looked round curiously as they heard the running feet. The Terrible Three burst upon them like a vision.

Master and prefect uttered a simultaneous exclamation of astonishment and relief.

CHAPTER 15.

Quite Simple.

MR. RAILTON recovered himself quickly. "Merry," he exclaimed, striding forward, "you have returned at last—"

"It's all right, sir!" gasped Tom Merry. "We're not hurt a bit!"

"Only hungry, sir!" said Monty Lowther, as he dashed by. "Can't stop now, sir; we're going to collar those fearful bounders!"

And the Terrible Three made a dive for the bicycle-shed, followed by the other juniors, who were all wildly excited. Mr. Railton called to them, but nobody seemed to hear. And the next moment the Housemaster and Kildare had to make a frantic run for safety.

Tom Merry & Co. had grabbed the first bicycles that they could lay hands on, and they pedalled out of the quad at an appalling speed. The only wonder was that there were no collisions.

"Boys!" roared Mr. Railton.

But the excited juniors were out of earshot—at least, they pretended to be. Mr. Railton's presence there was most unfortunate, for none of them wished to be denied the privilege of being in at the death, as it were. So they conveniently were deaf to Mr. Railton's calls.

Almost in a minute the entire fifteen had whizzed out of the quad.

"Well, upon my word!" gasped Mr. Railton, staring at the gates.

"The juniors are very excited over something," said Kildare quickly. "But I am jolly glad to see that Merry, Manners, and Lowther are back, sir!"

"Yes, Kildare, it is a great relief," replied the Housemaster. "I will go and inform Dr. Holmes. Meanwhile, you had better jump on your bicycle and follow those juniors. Unless they have a very satisfactory explanation for their astounding conduct, they will be severely punished. Go at once, Kildare!"

"Yes, sir."

Kildare was as curious as Mr. Railton, and he lost no time in setting off. He pedalled hard, and by the time he reached the village he had caught up with the stragglers. He passed these without a word, as he wished to speak to the Terrible Three.

Some of the juniors' bicycles were fitted with lamps, and some were not. Lamps were an unimportant detail at such a time.

Kildare could hardly help smiling as he observed the figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy just ahead of him. The swell of St. Jim's was sailing along with his coat flying in the breeze. His monocle was swinging at the end of its cord

over his shoulder, and his shiny topper suddenly flew from his head as Kildare ranged alongside.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

But he did not cease pedalling. He was very excited, and even the loss of his famous topper did not worry him. To have stopped to recover it would have meant considerable delay, and D'Arcy had no intention of being left behind.

At last Kildare overhauled the Terrible Three, who were riding along just behind Blake & Co.

"Merry," shouted Kildare, "stop at once!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Kildare?" panted Tom Merry, pedalling harder than ever. "Now, don't spoil everything! We'll explain all after the circus is over. We're going to have two blighters arrested at Wayland, and if we stop they'll escape!"

Tom Merry managed to give Kildare a few of the facts as they whizzed through the night.

"Leave this to me," said the captain of St. Jim's, setting his jaw. "You say that Dr. Grenfell and his companion imprisoned you? Very well; they'll be arrested on that charge. If there is anything against them, that's the affair of the police!"

"Hadm't I better whizz on ahead and call in at the police-station?" suggested Tom Merry breathlessly.

"I'll do that," said Kildare. "I can ride faster!"

And he forged ahead.

His figure soon disappeared into the darkness ahead. The juniors pedalled on with all their strength, and soon they were passing through the lighted streets of Wayland. It was not necessary to pass the police-station on their way, so they cut straight through to the railway-station.

Kerr, who was still in command, called a halt just before the station came in sight. The juniors collected round him excitedly.

"Now, there's no sense in us all crowding up to the booking-office," he said quickly. "If the rotters are just coming along the road they'll spot us, and take the alarm. We musn't let them suspect anything."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"What shall we do, then?" asked Tom Merry.

"Why, we must all keep out of sight, and watch the station entrance," said Kerr briskly. "It's only just round the corner, and this is a quiet, dark road. I don't think we can do better than stop here and watch."

Manners stepped to the corner of a building, and glanced round. The station entrance was quite close, and Manners suddenly let out a low yell.

"They're there now!" he shouted excitedly. "Look!"

Tom Merry and Lowther jumped to their chum's side.

"Yes, that's Grenfell's companion right enough!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "And the other chap is Grenfell—only he's wearing a pointed beard instead of whiskers!"

"You're right, Merry," said Kerr grimly. "Come on! we'll rush 'em in the booking-office!"

"Hurrah!"

The fifteen juniors dashed round the building, and streamed across the open space in front of the station. The Terrible Three dashed into the booking-office, where Grenfell and his companion were just obtaining tickets. They swung round as they heard the commotion.

Grenfell's face blanched as he saw his former prisoners.

"Good heavens!" he gasped hoarsely. "Run, Jim! We must escape!"

They made a dash for the platform; but the juniors were too quick for them. In a moment the whole crowd were piling on top of the two men. They had no chance whatever. For a brief space there was a wild, exciting struggle. Then the would-be fugitives collapsed under the sheer weight of their captors.

"Got 'em!"

"Yaas, wathah! We've collared the fwightful wottahs!" The stationmaster and a couple of porters hurried up, their faces expressing blank astonishment; but before they could speak Kildare dashed into the booking-office, followed by an inspector and two constables.

"Now, then, youngsters, let them get up!" said the inspector sharply.

The juniors released their prisoners, and Grenfell and his companion scrambled to their feet. The former began to bluster.

"By thunder, somebody shall pay for this—"

"None of that!" said the inspector sternly, looking from Grenfell to his companion.

Something about the latter caused the police-officer to look closer. In the struggle a wig he had been wearing had jerked loose, and the inspector tore it off.

"The spectacles aren't necessary," he said, jerking the glasses from the man's face. "Ah, by the Lord Harry, I've got you now, my friend! You're James Hood, wanted by Scotland Yard on a serious charge of embezzlement!"

(Concluded on page 26, Column 2.)

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INTRODUCTION.

Geoffrey Foster's father fails in business, and flees the country, and shortly after Geoffrey himself is wrongfully expelled from Grovehouse School. After he has filled many positions, including office clerk and professional cricketer, he joins his father's old regiment, the 29th Hussars. Much to his surprise and pleasure, he finds that Haines, one of the few of his schoolfellows who believed him innocent, is also a trooper of the same regiment. In addition to this, Hewitt, Jellotson, and Jeffcock, all old Grovehouse boys, are officers of the 29th.

A rising of the natives in Africa results in the regiment being sent out to help quell the insurgents. But time hangs heavily on their hands, and races are arranged. Geoffrey is successful in riding two winners.

A short time after this, Patrick Mulready, an old servant of Geoffrey's father, comes staggering into the camp with the news that Joe Gost, a man who has been leading a number of men against the insurgents with wonderful success, is badly in need of help. Joe Gost, Mulready explains, is none other than Major Foster, Geoffrey's father! Major Renton, of the 29th, decides to send help at once.

Meanwhile, Mulready faces Lieutenant Jeffcock with flashing eyes.

(Now go on with the story.)

Jeffcock's Forebodings.

"Major Foster is no criminal!" the Irishman said. "I'm near the end of my tether—I know it—I feel it! Something tells me I haven't many more days to live. But I know the truth about the London and County Building Society frauds, and I'll tell the truth before I go! Major Foster was an innocent man. He never defrauded the company out of a single farthing! He is suffering for another man's crime—and I leave you to guess who that other man is—Lieutenant Jeffcock! Think of the man who has befriended me even after I had deserved dismissal by him a thousand times! I'm a low, cowardly villain, with a dirty record behind me, but I mean to wipe the slate clean before I go!"

"That's enough of that!" said Sergeant Finlay, interfering, and roughly pushing Mulready. "Escort! Forward, march!"

They took Mulready to the canteen, and here he was supplied with food and drink which, no sooner had he eaten, than he fell upon the ground, and slept so heavily from sheer bodily exhaustion that nothing could wake him.

Not all the preparations for departure caused him to even turn over as he slept, and it was only when he was roughly awakened at sunset, told to dress himself in the military

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FERRERS, LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, I.d.

clothing, torn and worn, that they had brought him, but which was preferable to his own dirty rags, that he roused himself, and followed his guide to a spot where a horse stood ready for him. He was directed to mount, but was well-guarded. His tired Basuto pony trotted along with the baggage train, which was light enough for the rapid march they had before them, and soon the two regiments of mounted men were taking their way through the long and narrow defile of the Rackensberg.

Lieutenant Jeffcock sat moodily silent upon his horse. His brows were knitted together in thought, his cheeks had paled beneath their tan, he was thinking, with a vague feeling of dread, of what Patrick Mulready had said.

Lieutenant Bangley Jeffcock had always wondered at the tie that seemed to bind Patrick Mulready to his father. Could it possibly be, he thought, that Mulready knew some guilty secret of his father's which could yet be published to the world? He remembered now how concerned and ill at ease his father had been when Mulready, whom he had taken into his employment again after the Irishman's dismissal from Gricé & Mortimer's, had disappeared, leaving no trace behind him.

Major Foster had always looked upon his brother major, Rufus Bangley Jeffcock, of the 29th Hussars, the man who had saved his life, as his very dearest and firmest friend. But Lieutenant Jeffcock knew only too well that his father's friendship for Major Foster was a sham, assumed he knew not for what purpose, and it was that knowledge which had led him to dislike Geoffrey Foster when the boy had first come to Grovehouse.

Vague fears of an impending calamity assailed Jeffcock now as the troops journeyed on in the cool of the evening. He somehow wished that Fate had not thrown him into touch with Foster, Jellotson, Haines, and Hewitt out here in the war. He wished that Mulready had not come to them as he had, linking his life in some indefinite way with his father's old regimental comrade, Major Foster, who was wanted in England for fraud.

He wished with all his heart that the bullets of the sharpshooters had brought Mulready down when he had so gallantly ridden in the eyes of the whole waiting army into the camp on the Rackensberg. But Mulready lived, and while living Bangley Jeffcock could not help feeling that his father's life and honour were at stake.

"But," he muttered to himself, "my father won the Victoria Cross; he is brave, and whatever else he may be I cannot believe him to be dishonest."

The sun had set behind the mountain now. The grey and purple tints of fast approaching night began to steal across

the valley, and right above the advancing body of horsemen hung a cloud as black as pitch.

Then a weird, wild cry rent the air from afar, and went echoing over boulder and rock.

Major Renton, of the 29th, turned to his lieutenant-colonel. "That was a native signal, sir, or write me down a fool," he said. "Can it be that this wild Irishman is leading us into ambush? I'll swear our advance has been noted."

"If he plays us false," said Lieutenant-colonel Travers grimly, "he won't benefit much. I have given instructions for him to be shot should we be surprised. But I have no fear. Our scouts will warn us of any danger lurking ahead."

But in Lieutenant Jeffcock's ears the cry had a different significance. It was to him a knell of doom, unable to account for the feeling though he was, and, shuddering, he drew himself upright in the saddle. The Irishman had declared Major Foster to be innocent, and had sworn that he could prove it. Who, then, had been guilty of the London and County Building Society Frauds?

He wondered, and, wondering, fell into gloomy reverie as the mobile force advanced.

In the Silence of the Night—The Camp-fire—Lieutenant-Colonel Travers Tells of Major Foster's Bravery—The Shot—The Orderly's Message.

Twenty-four hours after the passing of the 49th's King's Own Mounted Infantry and the 29th Hussars through the pass of the Rackensberg, the two regiments halted for the night, with outposts well thrown out to guard the camp, with fires lit, and the camp put in a state of defence.

All round them the country was wild and rugged. During the day's ride they had again and again seen traces of the enemy, and strange, wild cries had echoed through the night after the camp was pitched.

They were in a hostile country, and the rebels, aware of their approach, seemed to be mustering in large numbers all about them.

But Lieutenant-Colonel Travers had little fear. His command of over 1,000 mounted men he considered powerful enough to withstand and repel any attack.

Patrick Mulready was closely guarded night and day. After food had been partaken of, the horses having been already groomed, fed and staked out, the troops, such as were not on duty, lay down to rest, with their arms ready to their hand in case of surprise.

Patrick Mulready, who had relapsed into a gloomy silence during the last day's journey, lay stretched out on the ground, with Trooper Haines and Trooper Foster keeping close guard over him, with Sergeant Findlay smoking a pipe filled with Boer tobacco not many yards away.

Lieutenant Jeffcock happening to pass, and seeing the trio, paused for a half second, then walked on again without saying a word.

Lieutenant Jellotson, Lieutenant Hewitt, Major Renton, and Lieutenant Fordyce, of the 4th Mounted Infantry, sat smoking as they lay round a camp fire a short distance away. Above their heads the sky was of inky blackness, with the

bright silver stars twinkling in selfish mockery of all things earthly.

Jellotson had been telling his hearers all about the old Grovehouse days, of the manner of Foster's going down, and of how bravely he had faced the ordeal of expulsion, and his innocence of the charge brought against him.

"And do you mean to say," said Major Renton, "that Trooper Foster was made the victim of a cowardly plot like that? Who could have stolen that money from the cricket club treasury, then?"

"I think it was Weames," said Hewitt slowly. "I can't help thinking it was Weames, and I have always had a suspicion that Jeffcock had something to do with it too. I don't think he committed the actual theft, but I do believe he thought it all out, the brute!"

"And here we are," said Jellotson, "pushing forward to the relief of Major Foster, once major in our own regiment. It's strange how things come about."

"That reminds me," put in Lieutenant Fordyce of the 4th, "isn't your Trooper Foster the professional who played for Surrey, and who was turned out of the club for ruining the wicket in the Surrey v. Yorkshire match?"

"Yes," said Hewitt, turning an inquiring glance on the speaker. "But Foster was innocent. I know it. He told me so, and he's not the lad to tell a lie."

"I had a letter brought with the provisions in the commissariat wagons the other day," said Lieutenant Fordyce, drawing an envelope from his pocket, and taking out of it the folded sheets of paper it contained. "It is from an old chum of mine, Atterbury. You know Atterbury, of course, Hewitt, having played for Surrey? Well, the Surrey captain tells me that the whole club now knows Foster to have been innocent. After the news of the affair at Bethlehem reached home, there was a long list of casualties printed in the papers as usual, and amongst those reported killed was Trooper Foster, 13,949. It was a misprint, of course. It should have read Trooper Fulton, and the mistake was afterwards corrected on reference to the number being made. But it had such a powerful effect on a professional named Ryan, who has been playing for Surrey Second, that he went straight to Captain Hilton, the Surrey chairman, and confessed that it was he who turned the hose on the wicket that night, and that a chum of his had written the letter which, as you will remember, implicated Foster, and he had placed it in the hose-house so that it might be found. Ryan had never dreamt of his plot succeeding so well as it did. Foster's turning up at the Oval in the early morning in that extraordinary way, and being seen by Fielding just as he was leaving the grounds, was something that he could not have counted on. However, Ryan has owned up, and Foster's name is cleared. Ryan hints that there was someone, a member of the club, and a gentleman player, who urged him on to ruin Foster. I wonder who it could have been?"

"Jeffcock," said Jellotson, leaping to his feet. "Well, anyway, Foster's name is cleared. I'll find the lad out, and tell him. It will bring him some slight measure of happiness, poor lad."

"What a plucked 'un the lad must be," said Major Renton musingly. "I remember hearing it said that Major Foster, of the 29th, was the bravest man that ever wore a uniform. I wonder if that was right?"

"It was," said a quiet voice. And, turning round, they noticed for the first time that Lieutenant-colonel Travers was standing beside them, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his grizzled head bent forward in a thoughtful way.

He sat himself upon the ground, and lit a small Dutch cigar.

"I remember Major Foster very well," he said. "We met when he was serving in India, as lieutenant in the 10th Bengal Lancers. A fine, upstanding, cheery, handsome man he was too. And I shall never forget his pretty little wife. I was a sub-lieutenant then, attached to a Sepoy regiment, and it was long before the trouble in Afghanistan, which brought me rapid promotion. Well, there was trouble up in the hills, and Lieutenant Foster went with his regiment to help quell it. Within a few weeks all India was thrilled by an account of a sensational act of bravery by which he saved the life of a trooper in the Bengal Lancers.

"It appears that Lieutenant Foster, and a party who had been out searching for traces of the ambushed enemy, were returning along a narrow ledge, not wide enough to permit of the passing of an ammunition cart, which ran along the face of a mountain. On one side the cliff rose sheer upward from the ledge, on the other a chasm fell right away to the banks of a trickling river 300 feet below.

"On turning a bend in the narrow way, the party suddenly came right upon a magnificent tiger, who, having heard their approach, had been lying in wait for them, and was crouching to spring. Before either of them could realise

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the danger, the beast had hurled itself through the air, and, passing Lieutenant Foster, attacked the horse upon which a native trooper rode. In a moment the frightened beast had thrown its rider, and the horrified Lancers saw it topple over the brink of the ledge and go hurling down to its doom, whilst the unfortunate native, borne to earth by the savage man-eater, lay full length, with the fierce talons of the beast fastened into the flesh of his shoulders.

"What followed was the work of a moment. Like a flash Lieutenant Foster had dismounted, and, drawing his revolver, he rushed forward. His first thought was to distract the attention of the tiger from its victim, and this he did by hurling himself on the beast. The two rolled over together with only a yard or two separating them from their doom. Then the lieutenant pressed his revolver against the soft body of the beast, and a shot rang out, then another, and—"

Bang!

Jellotson, Hewitt, Lieutenant Fordyce, Major Renton and some others who had joined the group beside the camp fire, and who had been carried away by Lieutenant-Colonel Travers' recital of Gilbert Foster's bravery, suddenly started as a revolver shot echoed through the air.

The lieutenant-colonel stopped in the middle of his story and sprang to his feet. What did it mean? He frowned. Strict orders had been given that on no account should there be any firing in camp.

"The sound came from quite near," said Hewitt. "I wonder what it was?"

"Oh, one of the officers was cleaning up his weapon, I suppose," said Major Renton, "and it happened to go off."

But at that moment an orderly came running up. His face was flushed with excitement.

"What is the matter, my man?" asked the commander of the 29th.

"You're wanted at once, sir," cried the orderly. "The prisoner Patrick Mulready has been shot."

The Truth Revealed at Last—How Haines Wrote Out the Affidavit—The Fatal Shot.

In order to explain what had happened it is necessary to hark back a bit. Soon after night had come, Patrick Mulready, who had been showing symptoms of mental unrest during the heat of the day, and who seemed to be weak and ill, stirred uneasily.

"I want Mr. Foster," he cried. "I want Mr. Geoffrey Foster."

"He's here," said Haines, who was helping his old Grovehouse chum keep guard over their prisoner.

"Mr. Foster," said the Irishman, "come here. I've got something I want to say to you. I want your chum to listen too. He's an old Grovehouse schoolboy, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Geoffrey, wondering. "What is it you want to say?"

"I want to clear your father's name," said Mulready hoarsely, "I want to clear up a great many things. I've got a feeling on me that I sha'n't live to see another sunrise, and I must speak out."

Geoffrey cast a look of compassion on the suffering man, then turned to Trooper Haines.

"Haines," he said, "I think he's wandering in his mind."

"No, I'm not, sir," said Mulready quietly. "I was never saner in my life. Have you got some paper and a pen?"

"I can get some foolscap," said Haines, "if it's any use, and I've got a fountain-pen. It's full of ink too, for we're going into action, and if we get into a tight corner I want to write a line or two to my dad at home before the end comes."

In a minute or two Haines, who sent a comrade for the paper, had the writing materials in his hand.

"Do you want me to take something down, Mulready?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Irishman, with a queer smile. "My dying confession, and every word of it is true."

He paused and asked for a drink, and, after partaking of half the contents of a water-bottle, he sat up quite cheerful, and with a smile on his face.

"Come a bit nearer, Mr. Foster," he said. "I want you to hear every word I say, and you to write it down, Mr. Haines."

"First of all, then," said Mulready, after a pause, "I want to go back to the affair of Botha's Bluff, during the South African War, where Major Jeffcock won his Victoria Cross, and I was mentioned in dispatches. All the world has lauded Major Jeffcock as a hero. There is no braver deed in history than his rescue of his comrade, Major Foster, under fire, with the burning veldt closing in upon him, and no help or succour near. Well, there mightn't have been if it had been true"—Mulready spoke bitterly—"but Captain Jeffcock never ought to have been decorated. He threw

down his arms like a coward as soon as the Boers came near, and he lay shivering with fright behind a dead horse, prone upon his stomach and screaming for mercy, whilst Major Foster and myself kept the advancing enemy in check.

"We retreated yard by yard," continued the Irishman, his features lighting up with enthusiasm at the remembrance of the gallant action, "disputing every inch of the ground, and twice during the action did Major Foster save my life. And always Captain Jeffcock scuttled away behind us, seeking whatever cover he could. Once he took out his handkerchief and waved it as a token of surrender, but I snatched it away from him. Major Foster didn't see that, or he might have left him to his fate. Well, then, after that Major Foster was hit by a flying piece of shell, and I thought he was dead. I gave up fighting then, and, putting him across my shoulder, ran with him out of range of the burning grass, and with the bullets pattering about me. Captain Jeffcock was always a long way ahead, he was, and none of us were safe. At last, when I had covered a mile or two, and we saw troops coming to our relief—we were almost the only survivors of that terrible affair—I was hit by a spent bullet, and as I lay half unconscious on the ground a second struck me, and I lost consciousness. It was then, when all the work had been done, that Major Jeffcock, seeing the chance of earning distinction, lifted up the wounded body of his major and carried him onward to meet the relieving troops. That's how he won his Victoria Cross, sor, and it's the holy truth."


"The coward! The miserable coward," cried Geoffrey, his eyes flashing. "And all these years he has led my father to believe that he saved his life."

"But Major Foster doesn't believe it now, sir," said Patrick Mulready. "I've told the truth, and when he returns to England there will be a reckoning to pay. Have you got that down, sor?"—turning to Trooper Haines.

"Yes. In affidavit form," replied the old Grovehouse boy. "It is the gist of everything you have said, Mulready."

"Thank you," said the Irishman. "And now, sor, I want to tell you about the London and County Building Society frauds, of which your father is as innocent as you are!"

It was at this moment that a figure that had been listening to everything that Mulready had said, and who had been arrested in his walk first of all by the mention of Major



LIGHTS OUT!

A novelty in prison stories, telling how Captain Dick Sheppard, while undergoing a sentence of penal servitude, was able also to live a life in the world outside. Unknown to the prison authorities he lived a double life—one in fetters, the other in freedom from dusk to dawn. And through this, while yet in prison, he wins back his character and the respect of his fellow-men, unravelling the plot of the enemies who had sent him to prison. See

THE HALFPENNY WONDER

NOW ON SALE.

Jeffcock's name, threw itself down flat on its stomach, and stretched its ears to listen.

Lieutenant Jeffcock, of the 4th Mounted Infantry, knowing that Foster and Haines were guarding the prisoner Mulready, had approached under the cover of the night to try and catch what they might say, and he had heard too much.

"You know I was employed as messenger to the London and County," the member of Joe Gost's command said, continuing his story. "Well, one night—it was the day after Major Jeffcock had announced his intention of retiring from his seat on the Board of the two companies with which he and Major Foster were connected—I happened to be in the office after all the rest of the employees had gone. I had been down in the lavatory washing, and I think they must have thought that I had gone with the rest. Anyway, I heard Major Foster and Major Jeffcock talking angrily together. They were at high words. You couldn't help overhearing what was said. And what was it? Write this down, Trooper Haines. It is important. I heard Major Jeffcock declare that he had defrauded the companies out of over £60,000, which he had converted to his own use. I heard Major Foster tell him plainly what he thought of him, and I heard Major Jeffcock appeal to him in remembrance of having saved his life to conceal the truth. He called on Major Foster to remember how he had supported him in business for years, and he asked him to take the blame on his own shoulders, and quit the country. I can't tell you all the arguments he used, Mr. Foster, but your father, resting under a deep sense of obligation, at last consented to act as scapegoat, and you know the rest. I can't tell you to what fraudulent devices Major Jeffcock had recourse in order to obtain the money he stole, and to fix the guilt on his friend. I don't know how he managed the accounts so as to make it appear that it was Major Foster and not himself who had the money. But if the books and banking accounts are carefully examined at home, there will be proof enough to condemn Major Jeffcock. Major Foster means to denounce him when this war is over, for he is going to surrender to the police and face his trial. He'll come out of it all with a character as spotless as a dove, sor."

Haines was busy writing on his sheet of paper. The pen could not run fast enough. The good-hearted lad knew of what vital importance this confession would be to his chum Foster.

"Have you got it all down, sor?" asked Mulready, of Haines.

"Nearly. I'm making it as clear as print," returned Haines.

"But knowing Major Jeffcock to be a coward and a poltroon as you did, Mulready," said Geoffrey, "what made you enter his services when you got back to England? Why didn't you speak the truth at the time? Look at the trouble it would have saved!"

"I hadn't the pluck to tell the truth, Mr. Foster," said the Irishman, hanging his head in shame. "You must remember I was ill a long time in hospital, and when I reached England, an invalid, and on half-pay, Major Jeffcock had already received his Victoria Cross. I went to him, meaning to tell him what I thought of him, and he offered me a bribe. I was poor. I thought it best to let sleeping dogs lie, and I took it. But my conscience was uneasy, and I took to the drink. I'd been a poor weak fool until I had the letter from my chum out here, and then, burning my boats, I came out to join Major Foster's force."

"The confession is written," said Haines. "Here, stop a minute, I'll read it all over to you."

In slow, measured, distinct tones Trooper Haines read out what he had written.

"Is that correct?" he said.

"Yes, sor," said Mulready. "It is exactly what I mean."

"In order to make this confession of value," said Haines, "you must swear it is the truth, and affix your signature. Foster and myself will witness it."

"Give me the pen," cried the Irishman. Haines handed it to him, and it was just when he had taken the paper, and was about to write his name at the foot of his confession, that the revolver shot that had startled the camp rang out, and the next moment Patrick Mulready had fallen prone upon his face, with his hands outstretched upon the ground.

With a cry of horror Haines and Foster bent over him, and when they had raised him up, and turned to see who his assailant might be, the figure of Lieutenant Jeffcock had vanished in the darkness.

Patrick Mulready's Uneasy Soul Crosses the Bar—The Night Attack—A Desperate Fight—Major Foster's Peril Increased—The Arrival of a Relieving Force—Father and Son Meet Again.

"Lift the poor fellow up," commanded Lieutenant-Colonel Travers.

Trooper Foster and his chum Haines raised poor Mulready, and the regimental surgeon gave him a draught which put some life into him. He opened his eyes wearily and looked around.

"I'm done for," he murmured, with a faint smile flickering about his lips. "That bullet went right home. I felt it go through my back. It's a wonder I'm alive to speak at all."

He paused and looked around.

"You're there, I see, Mr. Foster," he said. "And so is your chum Mr. Haines. I intended to write a confession. Did I do it?"

"Yes," said Haines, holding out the paper. "It's here all right, Mulready."

"I want the lieutenant-colonel to come here," Mulready went on with a sigh, and his face grew grey with approaching death.

"I'm here, my lad," said the lieutenant-colonel quietly. "What do you want to say?"

"I want to say, sor," said the Irishman, slowly, "in the hearing of you all, that Major Jeffcock was a coward, and never should have been decorated with the Victoria Cross. I want to say that it was he and not Major Foster who committed the London Building Society frauds. I am sane. You can see that. I know what I am saying. The truth is all written on that piece of paper, which Trooper Haines holds. I want to say that Major Foster has been a loyal sergeant of the Empire, and that Major Jeffcock is a scoundrel, a villain, a thief!"

He sank in the arms of those who held him, and they laid him quietly on the ground.

"I've got to sign that paper," he said, with a wan smile. "Give me the pen, somebody."

Haines put it in his fingers, and, kneeling, held the paper for him so that he could sign.

"I swear what is written here at my dictation is the truth," said Patrick Mulready, with a sigh. "There, have I written clearly?"

Haines looked at the signature.

"It will do," he said.

"Will the lieutenant-colonel also sign as a witness?" asked Mulready.

"I must hear what is said, first," said the commander.

Haines read the paper out.

"Do you swear that is the truth, Mulready?" asked Travers, when the trooper had finished.

"Yes, sir."

The lieutenant-colonel signed. Major Renton affixed his name, and Haines and Foster, to whom the confession had been made, added theirs to the list.

"Why do you think they shot you, Mulready?" asked Lieutenant-Colonel Travers, then.

"They didn't want me to sign," said the Irishman. "But they forgot what tough stuff I'm made of. Somebody must have overheard every word I said."

The lieutenant-colonel and Major Renton exchanged quick glances.

The same suspicion occurred to them both at once.

Lieutenant Jeffcock was the guilty man!

A change came over the dying Irishman. His eyes grew bright, but his cheeks sank away. He half struggled up.

"There goes the reveille," he muttered. "I must get up. It's going to be hot work to-day. Keep 'em off, major. We shall get out of this mess yet. You can't rely on Captain Jeffcock. He's got no pluck in him. My stars, they've fired the veldt. Look how the stuff burns. The wind's driving it right on to us, from three sides. We shall be burnt out. It's all over with us."

He laughed quietly to himself.

"The relief will never get up, major," he wandered on. "Trooper Bright might get through to the nearest block-house and call some of the troops up, but they'll never get here in time. Don't you come risking your life for a tough like me. Keep yourself to cover, major. Captain Jeffcock knows how to play that skulking game. Hullo! Here they come. Stand tight! Stand tight!"

He fell back, and when his eyes opened again calmness had come upon him once more.

"I think I've been wandering a bit in my mind," he sighed. "Mr. Foster, give me your hand."

Geoffrey obeyed.

"I've been a bad lot, I have. I've been a bad friend to you. Say you forgive? I'm dying. It's all wiped out then, isn't it?"

CHUCKLES

1D.
2

**THE CHAMPION
COLOURED PAPER,
EVERY SATURDAY.**

NEXT
WEDNESDAY

"THE TOFF!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 333.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merrin, A Soldier, by MORRIS CLIFFORD.

"Yes, Mulready," murmured Geoffrey brokenly.
 "Good-bye to the old regiment," said Mulready, smiling.
 "I'm glad I've gone out this way. It's what I wished more than anything. Good-bye to the old 29th. Lieutenant-Colonel, save the major—save—Major—Foster."

His voice sank into a whisper, fluttered, and went out. The dying man's head fell back, and his eyes closed. His breathing became faint, then fainter still, slow, and irregular, and a few minutes later Patrick Mulready was no more.

Scarcely had his last breath gone, hardly had his body been stretched out beneath the blanket they drew over it, than a fierce, awful yell broke the stillness of the night, a thousand jets of brilliant light flashed in the surrounding blackness, and in an instant the camp was in a state of commotion, the bugles calling the men to arms.

Then down upon the hastily-erected barricades came horde upon horde of natives in one great impetuous charge, whilst the outposts who had failed to detect the advance of the enemy until they were right upon them, came rushing back to the defences pell-mell with their very lives in their hands.

It was fierce, hot, terrible work, that rivalled anything ever seen in the Zulu and Matabele wars. Maxims, carbines, and rifles poured a relentless hail of bullets into the ranks of the advancing enemy, but nothing seemed able to check them. Thrice they pierced the defences, and dozens of stalwart blacks were butchered within the camp. Yet they came again and again to the charge, and the tired troopers, fighting with the dogged desperation of their kind, began to think that there would not be much left of the 4th Mounted Infantry and the 29th Hussars when the dawn broke.

But before dawn the shattered remnants of the besiegers drew off, and out of rifle-fire they waited, nursing their wounded, and holding a council of war, whilst on the ground on every side, but especially towards the north, where abundant cover had been found to encourage the attack, hundreds of dead bodies lay.

There was not one Boer or Colonial amongst them; the enemy that surrounded them were entirely black.

Lieutenant-Colonel Travers and his staff reconnoitred the ground on every side, but they discovered that, for the time being, they could not push on. To break their camp, with its strong defences, would be to play into the hands of the enemy.

No, the only thing to be done was to wait quietly on, and trust to the heliograph for conveying a message of their danger to the valley of the Rackensberg, and so hurry the other regiment of mounted infantry to their relief, or trust to the message reaching Du Cros, who could not be so many miles distant from them.

The whole of that day they remained in a state of inactivity, while through their field-glasses they could see the fierce Matabele preparing for another attack.

"It's a tight hole that cursed Irishman has got us into!" muttered Lieutenant Jeffcock, who seemed to have lost his spirits since the day of the races at Rackensberg. "I knew the man was a traitor. It was a good thing he was shot."

Lieutenant Fordyce, of Jeffcock's regiment, who had been present when Mulready died, said nothing.

The day passed away, and night came. The enemy were quiet; it seemed, from careful observation, that reinforcements were being hurried up, and that there were some white men operating with them now.

The night fell, and still there was no attack. In the morning the enemy made a show of advancing, but no sooner had they got within rifle-range than they wheeled about, and their impis returned to cover.

"There will be no attack until to-night. I know these beggars!" said Major Renton.

"I wish we could ride out and go through the beggars!" said Jellotson impatiently. "Since I stood and heard Mulready's confession I've been seized with an overpowering restlessness, Hewitt."

"So have I," said the late captain of Grovehouse. "But it's foolish. It would be madness to go out and be cut to pieces, Jellotson. Have you seen Jeffcock? He looks hard hit, don't he?"

"So would you if you had the crime of murder on your soul!" remarked Jellotson grimly.

"You think it was he who shot Mulready?"

"I'm sure of it. Why, one of his troopers swears to having seen him loitering in the neighbourhood of the prisoner!"

"Then it will go hard with him when we get out of this blessed hole," said Hewitt reflectively. "What about Major Foster? He was in dire straits when Mulready came to us? If he was in danger then, he must be dead by now."

"I'm afraid he must be," said Jellotson gravely. "Mulready's confession, like most good things, has come too late."

(This Grand Serial will be continued in next Wednesday's Issue.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 333.

FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in CHUCKLES, 1d.

ORDERED OFF!
 (Concluded from page 21.)

The young man swore under his breath. "You've got me, hang you!" he said sullenly. "But there's nothing against my father—"

"So he's your father—eh?" said the inspector. "I think there is a very great deal against him, and you will both be taken to the station to await your removal to London!"

And James Hood and his father were marched off by the constables. The inspector was looking decidedly pleased with himself, for this capture would be a feather in his cap, although his part had been a very small one. The St. Jim's juniors were entirely responsible for the apprehension of the wanted men.

And Dr. Holmes, when all the facts were related to him, decided that any punishment would be unjust. In point of fact, he warmly complimented the Terrible Three and Kerr for their efforts in the little drama, after prayers the next morning.

So, although there had been much excitement at St. Jim's during the week, the affair was soon relegated into the back-ground, and the late tenant of the Pines was almost forgotten.

The whole facts of the case came out at the trial. They were quite simple.

James Hood had embezzled a very large sum of money, and had found himself literally caught in a net. Escape seemed impossible, and he went to his father and confessed all. The father, tempted by the large amount of money, agreed to help the son evade the law, on condition that the spoils were divided.

Some time before his son had come to him he had made arrangements to take the Pines, at Rylcombe, in order to carry out some experiments in quiet, for Robert Hood was, in reality, something of a scientist; and he had conceived the idea of going down to the Pines, and hiding his son there unknown to a soul.

When the pair had come down, the father, under the name of Dr. Grenfell, had arrived at Rylcombe alone. His son had come from Wayland across the moor late at night. It was he whom Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had seen climbing over the wall that night.

And it was now easy to understand why "Grenfell" had been so short-tempered. But for the chance puncture of Monty Lowther's tyre, the juniors of St. Jim's would never have had cause to come in contact with the tenant of the Pines. James Hood would have been concealed there for weeks, perhaps months.

The exposure was mainly due to the father's fatal mistake in showing such a hostile spirit towards the St. Jim's juniors. Had he been wise, he would have been pleasant and genial.

But, as Tom Merry remarked, it was impossible for such a howling rotter to be genial, and thus the exposure had come about.

The mastiff was taken charge of by the police, and once more the Pines became empty. But it would be a long time before the Terrible Three forgot their imprisonment in the shuttered room, and their exciting adventures with the late mysterious tenant.

THE END.

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!

Another Splendid Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled, "THE TOFF!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Order in Advance. Price One Penny.

ST. JIM'S JINGLES.

No. 3.—GEORGE FIGGINS.

The fame of Figgins I appraise,
The noble-hearted giant!
Arise and magnify his ways,
So dashing and defiant!
The mighty men in days of yore—
Grim Greek and gallant Roman—
Must pale into the shade before
This fierce, unflinching foeman!

If Figgy fought for Joan of Arc,
He would not fail to please her;
He'd also reap a rich remark
From celebrated Cæsar.
For he displays, when fights rage high,
And foes are sorely smitten,
That deep desire to do or die
Which stamps the true-born Briton.

The School House stalwarts are assured
That nothing shall defy 'em,
And call the New House "casual ward"
And "lunatic asylum."
These doubtful compliments succeed
In rousing Figgy's faction;
And then our hero sees the need
For swift and instant action.

The atmosphere of strife and storm
Pervades the rival studies,
And all the would-be warriors swarm
To where the good red blood is.
The final cry of "Pax!" reveals
A row of blackened orbits;
And many a sad survivor feels
He's smashed in three or four bits.

Such stirring scenes are seldom marred
By actions mean or spiteful;
In fact, the combatants regard
A skirmish as delightful.
And though perhaps 'tis "infra dig."
To sink to such a level,
No person but a hopeless prig
Would spoil a schoolboy revel!

But Figgins sometimes seeks a rest
From cries of "No surrender!"
When peace prevails he is possessed
With feelings true and tender.
For Cousin Ethel's charms entrance
His youthful soul with glamour,
And when he meets her gentle glance
His heart beats like a hammer!

The pioneer of healthy sport,
By decent boys befriended,
Our hero bears a rich report,
And shines in all that's splendid.
Then let us when, on Wednesday morn,
His might is set before us,
Dispense with everything forlorn,
And cheer in hearty chorus!

Next Week:

MONTY LOWTHER.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

Geo. S. Drysdale, c/o J. M. Porter, North Road, North End, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Scotland (Glasgow preferred), age 18-20.

J. Purvis, 118, John Street, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers interested in postcards, age 15-16.

Lim Chuan Kay, 662, North Bridge Road, Singapore, India, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, postcards or photography.

Rue. Arnold, Wilson Street, Horsham, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps, birds' eggs.

George Durocker, 2637, Park Avenue, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or the United States, age 16-17.

G. Coffin, c/o Post Office, Plymouth, Michigan, United States of America, wishes to correspond with a reader living in Scotland interested in sports, age 15-16.

Miss F. Priestley, 161, Rawdon Street, Bantford, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers.

B. Hamilton, 270, Crinan Street, Invercargill, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England, age 16.

L. Rattray, c/o Dept. of Interior, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 16-20.

Eric Cherry, 8, Hunt Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 17-18.

Cecil F. Victor, Station Inspector's Office, P.O., Box 40, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Scotland interested in postcards, age 17-18.

J. Hoffman, 220, Schoeman Street, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

Ernest C. Preston, 20, Sebastian Street, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 18-19.

Miss Lyla Brearley, c/o W. Monaghan, Perth Road, Albany, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Ireland, Scotland, or Australia.

A. H. Doe, 94, Paisley Street, Footscray, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in France or Germany interested in postcards, age 17-19.

Miss A. Rowring, 69, Barrack Street, Hobart, Tasmania, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards.

John A. Richardson, Coburg Post Office, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in America.

Miss Lucy McBride, Lawley Park, Albany, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 14-16.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 333.

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

"THE TOFF!"

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to — — — — —
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For Next Wednesday,

"THE TOFF!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is a grand long, complete tale of the famous Chums of St. Jim's, written in Martin Clifford's very best style. The strange circumstances under which a new boy comes to St. Jim's form in themselves a thrilling narrative. Then the personality of the new-comer, which instantly attracts the chums of the Shell and Fourth Form, and makes Talbot the most popular junior in the school in the space of a couple of days! But there is one fellow at St. Jim's whose heart is heavy, and who watches Talbot's progress in the affections of the school with terror and amazement; and that junior is little Joe Frayne, the waif who was rescued by Tom Merry from his squalid surroundings.

What is the secret about Talbot which troubles Joe Frayne so? This is the question which makes

"THE TOFF!"

one of the most thrilling tales which has ever appeared in THE GEM Library.

A NOVEL IDEA.

In No. 24—the current issue—of our grand Coloured Companion Paper, "Chuckles," a new note has been struck in one of the popular complete stories, which is a special feature of the paper. "To the Rescue," a story of the chums of Greyfriars and their rivals of Courtfield Council, by Frank Richards, is founded upon a plot supplied by one of "Chuckles' readers. Mr. Richards is, of course, the author of the popular Harry Wharton stories which appear in "The Magnet" Library every week, and the collaboration of this famous author and one of his readers has produced a very fine story, invested with a special interest. "To the Rescue" is the first of these stories to be written under the conditions of the "Chuckles' "Postcard Plot" Competition, in which all "Chuckles' readers are invited to submit plots or bare ideas for these stories, written on postcards, for Mr. Richards' inspection. Suitable ideas will be "written up" into complete stories by Mr. Richards' able pen, and will appear in "Chuckles" from time to time. A Cash Prize will be awarded to the sender of each "Postcard Plot" thus used.

This novel Competition, and the splendid, complete, school story to which it gives such a peculiar interest, are only two of the good things which "Chuckles" offers. Get a copy this week, and enjoy the amusing antics of Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, Rufus Rubberneck, and Boxo, the Muscular Marvel, and all the rest of the merry "Chuckles" chums. Every copy of "Chuckles" is beautifully printed in colours, and is full of absolutely clean and wholesome fun, as well as the best of fiction. It is the bright paper for the whole family to read—and it only costs one halfpenny! No wonder it has scored an astounding success!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

A. T. (London, S.E.)—The L.C.C. conducts schools of art. Apply at the local school for particulars. I also believe that there is an excellent school situated on Streatham Hill. Best wishes!

HOLIDAY MAKING WITH A CAMERA.

By H. Snowden Ward, F.R.P.S.

(Editor of "The Photographic Monthly").

The Size of the Picture

for the holiday-maker should be quarter-plate (4½ inches by 3½ inches) or 5 inches by 4 inches. Half-plate (6½ inches by 4½ inches) is the size I should recommend for all-round work, but the extra portability of the 5 by 4, or smaller camera, is an advantage on holiday. There are charming little cameras made to take plates or films of 3½ inches by 2½ inches, a size which is very popular, and seems likely to become established as a standard, but this seems too small to be of much real use on tour.

The great simplicity of photography is one of its chief claims upon the holiday-maker who wants a record. All the difficulties that beset the method in the old days have been modified and smoothed away to such an extent that anyone who begins with a little instruction, and who is willing to "shun ambition," can make satisfactory negatives and prints right away, from the first attempt, and with almost a certainty that there will be no failure. He must be content to use one make of plates, to stick to one lens-opening, to vary the speed of his exposure very little, and to expose only on well-lighted objects. Even with these restrictions it will be possible to use a great many plates or films, and to secure a large series of records of any interesting holiday.

The development of the pictures may be entrusted to a dealer or photographer, but so much of the pleasure of photography lies in seeing one's own work coming up, that I strongly recommend everyone to develop his own exposures. If possible, have a demonstration by some dealer or photographic friend, and start by using the "tank" or "stand" or "time" method of development, in which the exposures are developed for a standard time in a standard solution, and need no examination during the process. This is the scientific and the best method, in addition to being the simplest. It gives better average results than can be obtained by the old methods of watching the development and "tinkering" with the developer, and it finally abolishes the need for the dark-room, with its air of mystery, its frequent inconvenience, its anxiety and its uncertainty.

The Subjects to be Photographed

are very numerous and varied, even when one keeps within the limits laid down in an earlier paragraph. As one learns the versatility of the camera, one's scope widens, and one attempts—with success—many things that would have been impossible in the earlier days. At first, the companions and friends of the holiday, the groups at the railway stations, the boating, paddling, cricketing, picnicking, and other engagements will probably attract most attention. For these subjects, which will generally be in motion, I can give a few first rules that may help the beginner:

- Learn to judge distance, to show when your principal objects are in focus.
- Do not work earlier than 8 a.m., or later than 5 p.m.
- Use a large lens-opening.
- Give a quick shutter exposure.
- Have the main lighting from one side of the camera and of subjects if possible; if not, let it be behind the camera rather than behind the subject.

(Another "Camera" article
next Wednesday.)

The Editor

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OUR PRIZE STORYETTES.

VERY POLITE.

"Although he overcharged me, the cabdriver who took me to Paris was most polite," said our friend who had made holiday abroad.

"All Frenchmen are," we observed.
"Yes; but this one got off his box and helped me to find the necessary words in my French-English dictionary, so that I might say what I thought of him."—Sent in by W. Baxter, Catford.

SAVED BY A SHAMPOO.

"Out! Out!" roared the villagers, as Wilkins, one of the village cricket team, was biffed a "leg-before."
The village barber, who was officiating as umpire, was appealed to.

"Not out!" he emphatically ruled.
"Ay," whispered Wilkins jubilantly, as he awaited the adjustment of the bails, "pretty close shave that!"

"What's that?" roared the barber.
"A pretty close shave," replied Wilkins.
"It was," admitted the umpire. "And I might add that if you weren't in the habit of having a shampoo I might have kept to my everyday principle, and said, 'Next gentleman, please!'"—Sent in by M. Ostick, Yorkshire.

POSSIBLY TRUE.

In a railway-carriage, on the way to London, a youth had disturbed and annoyed the other passengers by foolish remarks during the journey.

"I often think," he remarked as the train passed a lunatic asylum, "how nice the asylum looks from the railway."
And a quiet man sitting in the corner of the compartment broke in:

"And some day you will probably remark how nice the railway looks from the asylum."—Sent in by A. C. S. Ward, South Africa.

WHY NOT, INDEED!

Paddy was brought before the Court to answer the charge of assaulting a dumb man.

"O'Flanagan," thundered the judge, "why did you hit this man?"

"Well, shure, yer honour," answered Paddy, "I kept on asking him where the station was, and he didn't answer, so I hit him."

"Of course," said the judge, "he didn't answer. He is dumb!"

"Faith, then who didn't the spalpeen say so?"—sent in by John Welch, Gloucester.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING.

The Italian organ-grinder had been playing before the house of an irascible old gentleman, who, furious and with wild gesticulations, ordered him to move on. The Italian stolidly stood his ground and played on, and at last was arrested for causing a disturbance. At the court he was asked by the magistrate why he did not leave when he was requested to do so.

"Me no understand mooch Ingleese," he replied.

"Well," said the magistrate, "but you must have understood by his motions that he wanted you to go."

"Na, na!" was the rejoinder. "I tink he come to dance!"
—Sent in by W. Jenkins, Cardiff.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

Smith: "I heard you shooting this morning, Mr. Jones."

Jones: "Yes; I had to kill my dog."

Smith: "Was he mad, then?"

Jones: "Well, he didn't seem any too well pleased."—Sent in by H. E. Brightman, Walsall.

A MIXTURE OF TITLES.

The juniors, who were At Grips With the Grammarians, were Making Things Hum at the Celebration of the New Captain, who was One of the Right Sort. Then followed the Winter Sports at St. Jim's. The Founder of the Feast was The Black Sheep, and although one of the Friends Divided was Led Astray by Peter Todd's Plot, he had a £100 Reward. But the next morning there was Ructions in the Remove, and only one showed The White Feather.—Sent in by F. Chapman, Australia.

DEAR LITTLE FELLOW!

Little Sammy was generally at loggerheads with his father, who had a habit of using his razor-strop in a way that was not in accordance with Sammy's views.

One morning, after the razor-strop had been more than usually busy, Sammy's mother went out into the field to look for her much-stropped child. To her intense astonishment, she found him fondling a huge goat for which he usually professed a deep hatred.

"Why, Sammy darling," she cried, "it is nice to see you being so kind to poor Billy! Tell me why you feel so kind to him to-day."

Over Sammy's face came a look of unspeakable gratitude as he gave the wondering goat another carrot.

"He butted father into the pond this morning," murmured the little chap, patting his four-footed friend affectionately.—Sent in by Eric G. Smith, Liverpool.

NOW HE KNOWS.

Little Boy: "What is an acre, dad?"

Father: "Four rods."

Little Boy: "What is a rod?"

Father: "Forty square rods, poles, or perches."

Little Boy: "What is a wiseacre, dad?"

Father: "One who keeps a square rod, pole, or perch to apply to a boy who asks useless questions. Fetch my cane!"
—Sent in by Miss I. Marshall, Liverpool.

THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP.

The family were emigrating to Australia, and little Willie did not feel altogether at home in his new quarters on board ship.

"Mummie, I'se ever so sleepy!" he exclaimed piteously, sitting up in his bunk. "I'se want to go to bed."

"But you are in bed, dear," answered his mother.

"I'se not in bed," was the tearful reply. "I'se in a chest of drawers!"—Sent in by S. Lindsay, Durham.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED—The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in other wise than on postcards, will be disregarded.



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