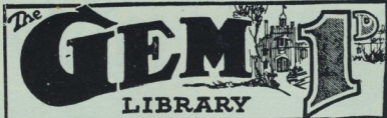


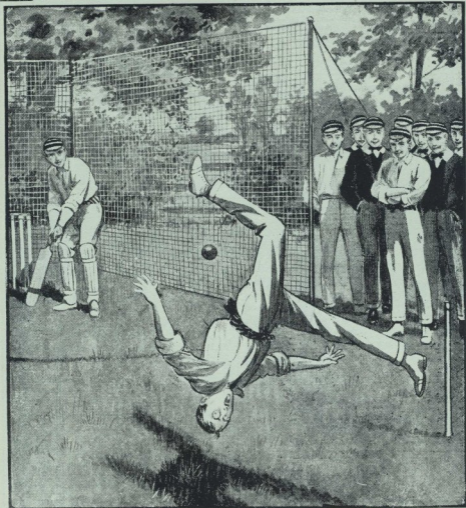
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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Mr. Selby stopped and looked down at the dusty and dishevelled fags. "What is this?" he snapped. "Disgraceful! Take fifty lines each and go to your Form-room!" (See Chapter 2.)

## CHAPTER 1. "How's That?"

**Y**OU pitch a few. Talbot!"  
Talbot of the Shell, the new boy at St. Jim's, was standing outside the pavilion on Big Side, looking on, with his hands in his pockets.

Kildare was at the wicket. It was not a match. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, was putting in some practice at the nets, and some of the juniors had been called upon to fag at bowling.

As a rule, Tom Merry & Co. did not approve of fagging. But they were always ready to fag for old Kildare, especially on the cricket-ground. Bowling to Kildare was, as Monty Lowther sapiently remarked, an education in itself. And it would have been a great distinction to take Kildare's wicket—if, by a miracle, that had happened. Not that it seemed

likely to happen. Tom Merry and Mansers and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, had tried their powers, and their bowling had been knocked all over the ground.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth had followed them, with no better result. Talbot of the Shell was looking on.

The new Shell fellow had been only a few days at the school, but he had already shown that he could play cricket. And Tom Merry was curious to see whether he was equal to the task of bowling to Kildare.

"Wait a minute, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the ball was fielded. "I am goin' to twy old Kildare with a yor'kah. You can look out for squalls this time, Kildare, deah boy."

The St. Jim's captain laughed.

"File in!" he said.

Arthur Augustus gripped the round red ball in his trusty right hand, and barked away to take his little run. The

Next Wednesday:

"THE HIDDEN HAND!" AND "A BID FOR A THRONE!"

other juniors looked on, grinning. Arthur Augustus had great faith in his powers as a bowler—a faith that was not shared by his comrades. He had tried several balls in vain, but he did not see any reason why he should not take Kildare's wicket. Certainly he was long enough in making his preparations this time.

"Back up!" sang out Tom Merry.  
 "Pway allow me to take my time, deah boy. This is goin' to be a really good ball—something wathah special."  
 And Arthur Augustus made his run, and turned himself into a kind of Catherine-wheel for the delivery of the ball—and his foot slipped, and he came down with a bump on his hands and knees on the crease.

There was a yell of laughter from the onlookers:  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Something very special indeed!" yelled Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly. Kildare was laughing at the other end of the pitch. The group of juniors at the bowler's end were yelling. Arthur Augustus groped for his famous eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye.  
 "Bai Jove! Is Kildare's wicket down!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite!" gasped Tom Merry. "You're down. Nothing else down so far."  
 "Bai Jove! Where's the ball, then?"  
 "Puzzle—find the ball!" grinned Monty Lowther.

The juniors looked round for the missing ball. Arthur Augustus blinked round him as he sat. But the ball was not to be seen.  
 "Bai Jove! This ground feels frightfully bumpy!" Arthur Augustus remarked, and he slowly picked himself up. "Vewy bumpy indeed—"

Blake gave a yell:  
 "There's the ball, fathead!"  
 "Where, deah boy?"  
 "You've been sitting on it!"  
 "Gweat Scott!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry pecked up the ball.  
 "That's what felt bumpy, I suppose," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pway chuck me the ball, Tom Mewey."

"Nuff aerobic performances," replied Tom. "This isn't a circus. This way, Talbot!"  
 "But I haven't twiced that yorkeh yet, deah boy—"  
 "Take him away and put him in a strait-jacket, Blake. Here you are, Talbot!"

Jack Blake dragged his elegant chum off the bowling-crease. Arthur Augustus still protesting that his "yorkeh," if delivered, would prove to be something very special. But the juniors were not listening to him. Talbot of the Shell had taken the ball in hand, and Kildare was looking out.

Talbot took a little run, and the ball went down, and Kildare's bat gleamed in the air—and then—  
 "My hat!"  
 "Great pip!"  
 "Bai Jove!"  
 "How's that?" yelled Tom Merry. "Oh, Kildare!"

Kildare of the Sixth looked down at his wicket. The middle stump was out of the ground, leaving the wicket looking as if it had paid a recent visit to the dentist's. The captain of St. Jim's looked astonished, as well he might. It was a new experience to the finest batsman at St. Jim's to be bowled by a junior.  
 "Well bowled, kid!" said Kildare. "We'll see if you can do that again."  
 "I'll try," said Talbot, with a smile.

There was a chuckle from Cutts of the Fifth, who was looking on. It was not a good-natured chuckle. Cutts of the Fifth was particularly pleased to see the captain of St. Jim's come a cropper in that way. Kildare heard the chuckle, and he frowned a little. He was very careful with the next ball.

But Talbot's luck was in, and he was a finished bowler too. As the ball left his hand Tom Merry murmured, "This'll be a wide!" And Kildare was of the same opinion. "But the elusive leather broke in, escaped the snick of the Sixth-Former's bat, and there was a clatter of falling balls.  
 "Oh, crumbs!"  
 "How's that?"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Kildare. "I say, youngster, I suppose you're not a Zangari in disguise, by any chance?"  
 Cutts of the Fifth laughed. Kildare turned to him quickly. "Perhaps you'd like to try the kid, Cutts?" he said quietly. Gerald Cutts shrugged his shoulders.  
 "I fancy he wouldn't bowl me quite so easily as that," he remarked.

"Give him a chance."  
 "Oh, I don't mind!"  
 Cutts took the bat and swaggered to the wicket. Kangaroo of the Shell had set it up again. Cutts was a good cricketer when he liked, but he had a flourishing way which somehow made fellows glad when his wicket went down, even when they were in the same team with him. And Cutts had never put on more "side" than he did on the present occasion. He grounded his bat with the air of one who was monarch of all he surveyed, and glanced along the pitch with a contemptuous smile.

Tom Merry caught the ball from Kangaroo, and tossed it to Talbot.  
 "Do your level best," he murmured. "Get that swanking rotter out if you can. Don't let him swank over old Kildare."

Talbot smiled.  
 "You bet!" he said tersely.

Cutts was looking out for that "wide" ball which was not a wide. But it was quite a different ball that the Shell fellow sent down. It pitched well to leg, curled under the willow, and there was a roar:  
 "How's that, Cutts?"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts's face turned almost green as he looked at his wrecked wicket. One long look he gave, while the spectators shrieked with laughter at the expression on his face.  
 "Pride goeth before a fall," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts looked along the pitch at Talbot, and gripped the same handle of the bat as if he would have liked to lay it about the shoulders of the successful bowler—as, indeed, was the case. But as that was not exactly feasible, he flung the willow down and strode angrily off the pitch. Kildare picked up the bat, laughing. He had not been sorry to see the swaggering Fifth-Former's wicket go down.

"That'll do," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Much obliged, you kids!"  
 "Don't mench, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus politely; and Kildare laughed and walked off the pitch. "Talbot, old man, that was wippin'—simply wippin'. I could not have done better than that myself."  
 "Go hon!" said Monty Lowther incredulously.  
 "No, honah bwright, I couldn't!" assured Arthur Augustus.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Oh, you are wottin' yow wathah! I considah—"  
 "Talbot, old man, you're a giddy jewel!" exclaimed Tom Merry, thumping the new junior heartily on the back.

"What a rod in pick for the New House—ch, what!"  
 "What-ho!" said Blake.  
 "Yas, wathah! We've got a boslah as good as Fatty Wynn at hat! Huwayy!"

And Talbot of the Shell received quite an ovation as he walked back to the School House with Tom Merry & Co.

**CHAPTER 2.**  
**Great News!**

**B**ERNARD GLYN of the Shell was waiting for the Terrible Three in their study. Tom Merry & Co. came in in high spirits. The discovery of Talbot's powers as a bowler was a source of great satisfaction to them.

They were thinking of the surprise-packet he would prove for Figgins & Co. in the next Junior House match. Tom Merry's team was a good one: but the School-House fellows had to admit that they had no bowler like Fatty Wynn of the New House. And now they had captured one—the new boy was quite Fatty Wynn's class—and they chuckled at the thought of what an "eye-opener" he would prove for Figgins & Co.

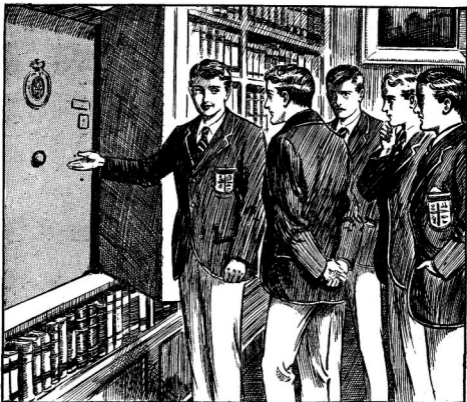
Bernard Glyn was sitting on the study table when the chums of the Shell came in. He nodded to them cordially.

"Come to tea?" asked Tom Merry. "You've come at the right time—behold!" And Tom Merry dumped down on the table a parcel he had brought from the tuck-shop.

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Bernard Glyn crossed to the wall-case and pressed a certain spot in the moulding, and the book-case swung away from the wall. Instead of a panelled wall being revealed, however, the iron door of a safe sunk in the wall met the eyes of the juniors. (See Chapter 7.)

"No, I've had my tea; I've been home," said Glyn. "But I've got some news for you chaps—good news!"

"Good! Shove the kettle on, Lowther. You can open the jam, Manners." And Tom Merry pushed Glyn off the table, and proceeded to lay the cloth.

Glyn laughed, and transferred his person to the armchair. Bernard Glyn was the son of a Liverpool merchant who had settled down in a country house near St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. frequently went home to tea with him at Glyn House—a great treat, for Glyn's sister had a wonderful knowledge of catering for schoolboys.

"Look here, do you want to hear the news?" demanded Glyn.

"Certainly. You can make the toast while you're telling it," said Tom cheerily, shoving great slices off a loaf. "Lucky the fire's in. We're hungry, my son; we've been fagging at bowling, and capturing Kildare's wicket."

"Gammon!" said Glyn laconically.

"Fact—we haven't exactly captured it ourselves, but Talbot has. Same thing. And won't we make Figgins & Co. sit up in the next House match!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Won't we!" said Lowther. "Just!"

"By the way, you said you had some news, didn't you, Glyn?" added Tom affably.

"Yes, see! I've been home to tea—"

"You've done that before," said Lowther.

"Ass! That isn't the news. My pater's got a lot of people down—quite a crowd. He's giving a cricket week."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, interested. "Your pater always does things in style, Glyn. That's the advantage of being a giddy millionaire, and rolling in filthy lucre. Does he want some of us to go over and coach his team!"

Glyn grinned.

"No, ass! They've got a good eleven up among the guests. There's Woidyer, who's engaged to my sister, and Lord Conway—Gussy's elder brother, you know—and Yorke, who played for Leamshire, and a few more. They've got a couple of good matches on; but, as it happens, they had nothing for to-morrow, Wednesday. They wanted a one-day match to fill up the week."

"Well!"

"And that's where we come in. I put it to the pater," explained Glyn. "I told him we had an eleven here that would give 'em a good match. He thought I was talking about the first eleven!" And Glyn sniffed. "Of course I meant the junior eleven—us! He had the cheek to laugh when I explained; but I stuck to it, and the long and the short of it is that we're challenged to take the eleven over to-morrow, and play the Glyn-House team."

"My hat! A whole day!"

"That's it!"

"But it's only a half to-morrow."

"I thought of that. The pater telephoned to the Head, and asked leave for the junior eleven for to-morrow. I made him, and my sister backed me up, like a brick she is. The Head hummed and hawed a little bit, and consented. That's my news—is it good?"

"Good!" gasped Tom Merry. "Come to my heart!"

And the Terrible Three, leaving the preparations for tea standing, so to speak, rushed upon Bernard Glyn, and collared him, and hugged him, and waltzed him round the study in a wild war-dance, till he yelled for mercy.

"You howling maniacs!" roared Glyn. "Leggo! Yahi! Chuck it!"

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"THE HIDDEN HAND!"** A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Leggo!"

Glyn tore himself away at last, and plumped down in the chair.

The Terrible Three ceased their wild gyrations, panting for breath.

"Bai Jove! You seem to be weicinin' heah, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking into the study.

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry. "There's great news—gorgeous news—topping news! Glyn's paler is a brick, and his sister is another brick, and Glyn is a brick himself; all bricks, and all warranted genuine. There's a whole holiday to-morrow for the junior eleven—us! We're going over to Glyn House to play the cricket week—I mean, Glyn's paler is holding a cricket week, and we're going over to play the giddy country-house team. Your brother is there—old Conway—"

"Yaas. I was thinkin' of wunnin' ovah to see old Conway," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove, this is good news! I suppose it is a grown-up team at your place, Glyn?"

"Of course!"

"Howevah, we will beat them. You can leave most of the bowling to me, Tom Merry, and I will try them with my special yerkah—"

"I don't think!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "You can keep your yerker till you get to Yorkshire. Talbot will do half the bowling, and Fatty Wyn will do the other half, and Blake will do the rest."

"Weally, Tom Merry, I don't see how you work that out. If Talbot does half, and Fatty Wyn does half, where will the rest come in?"

"You can work it out in algebra if you like," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Tell Blake. Lemmo see, what about the team? We've got to find room for Talbot, of course. Talbot's going in; he bowls like an angel. I'm afraid you shall have to leave you out, Gussie."

"Pway don't be funny, deah boy."

"Lemmo see. There's myself, skipper; Lowther, Blake, Talbot, Kangaroo—that's five. Then Figgins and Fatty Wyn—that's seven. Redfern—must have Reddy to bat—that's eight. Kerr must go in—he's a good bat, and a good change bowler—that's nine. Glyn ought to go in, considering that he's worked up the whole bizney for us—I suppose you want to go in the eleven, Glyn?"

"Well, I had some faint idea in that direction," said Bernard Glyn sarcastically.

"That's ten! We ought to have Clifton Dane—"

"Clifton Dane can come and score for us, deah boy. Of course, you can't leave me out. I should wefuse—"

"No, we won't leave you out," said Tom. "After all, you can bat."

"I wathah think I can. But what about Howies and Dig! They're in Study 6, you know, and I wecally think all my study ought to be played on an occasion like this."

"You really think so?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then your thinker wants oiling," said Tom Merry calmly. "Go and oil it. I expect there will be a rush on the eleven; but I'm going to take the best going. Figgins & Co. will grumble at having only four New-House chaps in. But we'll take Lawrence as a reserve, in case you do any acrobatic performances, and get crooked—"

"Weally, you aas—"

"I'll buzz off and tell Figgins now," said Tom Merry briskly. "This will be glorious news for Figgins. Get the tea while I'm gone, you chaps."

And Tom Merry rushed out of the study. He seized Arthur Augustus by the collar, and waltzed him down the passage, and left him staggering against the wall and gasping helplessly. Then he dashed down the stairs. On the first landing he met Wally D'Arcy—the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus—full tilt. D'Arcy minor gave a roar, and clutched both of the Shell fellow to save himself. Tom Merry waltzed the astonished rag round the landing, and plumped him down on the stairs, and fled.

"M-m-my only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally. "Is he dotty? What's the matter with him?"

Tom Merry did not stop to explain. He sped out of the School House, and scudded across the quadrangle. Figgins & Co. of the New House were the deadly foes and rivals of the School-House fellows; but they played together in the junior school team, and, considering that they were deadly foes, they were on remarkably good terms. Tom Merry dashed into the New House, and rushed breathlessly into Figgins's study.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous "Co." of the New House were sitting down to tea. Tom Merry came in in a great hurry, and bumped on the tea-table, catching at it to save himself. The table rocked, and Fatty Wyn swallowed

a very large mouthful of pork-pie too quickly, and coughed violently. Figgins, who was lifting his tea-cup to his lips, started back as the table rocked, and received the tea in his neck instead of his mouth. The tea was hot, and so was Figgins's temper as a result.

"You silly chump!" roared Figgins, jumping up, streaming with tea. "Collar him!"

"Here, hold on—"

"Yes, hold on—and bump him!" said Kerr.

And the New-House trio held on to Tom Merry, and ho bumped down on the study carpet.

"Chuck it!" gasped Tom, struggling in the grasp of the New-House juniors. "I've got good news for you, you silly fatheads—glorious news! Grooh!"

"Bump him first, and have his news afterwards," said Figgins.

"Bump, bump!"

"Now, out with your news, and if you're spoofing, we'll bump you again!" said Figgins, mopping at the spilt tea with his handkerchief.

"Ow!" gasped Tom Merry. "Leggo! I tell you it's topping! Cricket week at Glyn House—junior eleven going over to play their team—you fellows are coming—whole holiday to-morrow!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry staggered to his feet and dusted himself.

"That's the news," he said. "Is it good—what?"

"Spiffing!" said Figgins heartily. "You can consider that we take back that bumping. I suppose you'll want a good many New House chaps on an occasion like this? Let's see. There's us three, and Reddy and Owen and Lawrence, and Kouni Rac, and Thompson—"

"Cheese it! You three and Reddy—no room for more!"

"Now, look here! For a special occasion like this we want a really good team, and you School House fellows ought to be willing to take a back seat, for the good of the cause," said Figgins argumentatively.

"Rats, and many of them!" said Tom. "I'm going to tell Talbot now."

"Playing that new chap?" demanded Kerr.

"Yes, rather! He bowls as well as Fatty—"

"Booh!"

"Rats!"

"You should have seen him take Kildare's wicket, and Cutt's! Ta-ta!"

And Tom Merry departed, leaving Figgins & Co. much excited over the news.

Tom Merry scudded back to the School House, to carry the good news to Talbot of the Shell.

He found the new junior in Study No. 8 in the Shell passage, which he shared with Gore and Skimpole.

"Talbot, old man, come to tea with us! I've got news for you, and I'll tell you over tea."

And without giving the surprised junior time to speak, Tom Merry dragged him away and marched him into the next study, where Lowther and Manners had tea ready. It was a joyful party that sat down to tea in Tom Merry's study.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Ambitious Fags.

D'ARCY MINOR of the Third Form came into the Third Form-room, with a grim expression upon his face.

There was a smell of burning toast in the Third Form-room. Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne were making toast, apparently not with great success. Wally sported. Frayne looked round quickly from the fire, with a ruddy face. He looked relieved when he saw that the new arrival was only D'Arcy minor.

"Only you?" he said. "I was afeared it was old Selby. He'd do us on feeding in the Form-room."

"Like his cheek!" growled Wally. "We've a right to have tea if we like!"

Frayne grinned.

"No good telling a giddy Form-master that," he remarked. "Selby been going for you again, Wally?" asked Curly Gibson, noting the frown upon the brow of the chief of the Third.

Wally shook his head.

"No; 'tain't Selby. The old bouncer has been much tamer since his blessed collection of coins disappeared and tumbled to turn up. He thinks one of us has hidden them, and he hopes they'll be found—if he's good. Jolly queer what has become of his giddy numismatic collection, when you come to think of it, ain't it?"

A troubled look came over Joe Frayne's face.

"Jolly queer!" he agreed.

Wally looked at him sharply.

"You don't know anything about that, Joe!"  
 "Me! No! Why!"  
 "You always look queer when it's mentioned, and you've been pretty down in the mouth ever since it happened," said Wally.

"I didn't have nothing to do with it," said Frayne, in a low voice.

"My dear kid, two negatives make a positive," said Jameson. "That's as good as saying that you did have something to do with it."

"You let Joe's grammar alone, Jimmy," said Wally severely. "Ain't it been agreed that Joe is to talk any grammar he likes, and drop his h's as thick as leaves in Valhalla if he chooses. But never mind Selby and his giddy nummatics. There's something else on. I've just had it from Gussy."

"Nothin' missin'!" asked Frayne, the troubled look deepening in his face.

"No, as! Glyn's pater's having a cricket week at Glyn House, and the bouncer has got a match for the junior eleven there—whole holiday to-morrow for the members of the team."

"They do bag all the luck, and no mistake!" growled Jameson.

"I think we ought to bag some of it this time," said Wally enthusiastically. "You know we've often claimed that the Third Form ought to have a whack in the junior eleven."

There was a grin from the other fags. Wally had often advanced that claim, but he could not get the junior eleven to agree to it. The junior team of St. Jim's was picked from the Shell and the Fourth, and the Third were out of it—quite out.

"Well, where does the grin come in?" demanded Wally crossly. "Look here, my eldest brother is a guest at Glyn House now—old Conway, you know. That's another reason why I should be in the junior eleven—the way I look at it."

"I don't suppose you'll get Tom Merry to look at it in the same way," grinned Curly.

"I'm going to see. I think there ought to be a couple of the Third in the team," said Wally. "I want you fellows to come with me, and we'll put it straight to Tom Merry. Never mind that toast—'tain't fit to eat, anyway. Come on!"

"They'll boot us out."

"Two can play at that game. That's why I want you with me. If they cut up rusty, we'll wreck the study for them."

"Ahem!"

"Oh, come on, and don't jaw!" said Wally.

Wally generally had his way in the Third Form. Curly Gibson and Jameson, and Frayne and Hobbs followed him from the Form-room. They made their way to the Shell passage, and passed outside Tom Merry's door. There was a sound of teacups and cherry voices within. The Terrible Three were evidently in good spirits that evening.

"You can do the jawing, Frayne," said Wally.

"Me!" said Frayne.

"Yes, you. Tom Merry always sticks to you, you know, because he extracted you from that giddy slum, and caused you to be brought to St. Jim's. He may take more notice of you than of me, even."

"Seems like a cheek—" said Joe hesitatingly.

"Root! And if they cut up rusty, there's five of us, and only three of them. They're bigger, but we've got the odds on our side. We'll rag 'em bald-headed."

"I can hear that new chap's tooth in there," said Jameson.

"The Toff!" exclaimed Frayne.

"Talbot!" said Wally. "What on earth do you call him the Toff for, Joe? I've heard you call him that before."

"I—I—" Frayne stammered.—"I—"

"Seems to me that you know something about that new chap that you haven't told us," said Wally severely. "Keeping secrets from your pals! Yah!"

"Oh, Master Wally! I—I—"

"Don't! Master Wally—me!" growled D'Arcy minor. "Does I keep on telling you that you don't live in Angel Alley, St. Giles, now, and that you're just as good as anybody else at St. Jim's? But 'nuff jaw! Come on!"

Wally kicked the study door open, and the fags marched in.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and Talbot were seated round the tea-table. They all looked at the fags in surprise as they marched in grimly.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry genially. "This is an unexpected pleasure!"

"To what," said Lowther solemnly. "do we owe this great honour, gentlemen?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" snapped D'Arcy minor. "We've come here to talk business. Frayne's got something to say to you. Go it, Frayne!"

Talbot half rose from his chair, fixing his eyes with a

very peculiar expression upon Frayne. The wail of the Third avoided looking at him.

"Frayne's got something to say!" repeated Talbot.

"Yes, rather! Pile in, Frayne!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Frayne.

"Go ahead, Frayne!" said Talbot, in a strangely quiet voice. "If you've got anything to tell Tom Merry, don't mind me."

Frayne looked at him quickly.

"Tain't anythin' about you, Toff," he murmured.

"I don't see why the dooce you should chip in, Talbot," said Wally testily. "Pile in, Frayne! I'll jolly well punch your head if you don't."

"You see, Master Merry—" stammered Joe.

"Tom Merry!" roared Wally. "Don't 'Master Merry' him, you silly ass. Don't I tell you you're not in Angel Alley now!"

"Oh, let him get on," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We shall never get it over at this rate. Go it, kid!"

"You see, Master Tom—I mean, Tom Merry—Master Wally thinks—I mean, Wally thinks—as how the Third ought to have a look in—in the junior eleven, and so—a hem!"

"Lot of good it is you doing the talking!" snorted Wally. "Shut up, and leave it to me! Look here, Tom Merry! The Third Form want a couple of men in the team at least. You can put in Jameson and me—that's a chap from each House."

"Thanks!" said Tom good-humouredly. "The team's made up. No room for fags. Much obliged, all the same! Good-bye!"

"Tain't good-bye yet," said Wally. "We want a whole holiday to-morrow, same as you do. Now, are you going to give us a couple of places in the team?"

"No fear! You're really not quite up to it, you know."

"Now, look here," said Wally. "I don't want trouble; but we're going to come over to Glyn House, a couple of us, or there'll be war. Savvy?"

"You should hit fellows your own size, and spare small fry like us," said Monty Lowther reproachfully.

And the Shell fellows chuckled.

"Last time!" shouted Wally. "Yes or no?"

"No!"

"Then we'll take some of the swank out of you," said Wally. "Pile in, kids!"

And the exasperated chief of the Third seized the tea-table with both hands, and hurled it sideways, to begin with.

Tom Merry and Lowther received a shower of chests and saucers and plates and cutables on their chests and knees, and they gave a roar of wrath.

Before the fags had time to proceed with the ragging, the four Shell fellows were upon them. Wally, struggling desperately, was whirled to the door, and hurled into the passage with a loud concussion. Then—

Bump—bump—bump—bump!

Wally sat up dazedly. Frayne and Hobbs and Curly and Jameson were distributed round him on the linoleum. Then the study door slammed, and there was a sound of laughter within.

"Ow!" gasped Wally.

"Grooh!" murmured Jameson.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh erik!" groaned Frayne.

There was a step in the passage, and Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, stopped and looked down at the dusty and dishevelled fags. Mr. Selby had a peculiar gift of turning up always just where and when he was not wanted.

"What is this?" snapped the Third Form-master. "Disgraceful! Take fifty lines each, and go to your Form-room at once and write them! Not a word! Go!"

And Wally & Co., with feelings too deep for words, went.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Mysterious!

**T**OM MERRY & CO. set the tea-table to rights again, and proceeded with their tea. There had been a considerable breakage of crockery; but that was not an uncommon occurrence in a junior study, and the chums of the Shell did not allow it to disturb their equanimity. The Third-Formers, and their claims to play in the Junior Eleven, had been disposed of.

"Cheeky young bouncers!" Monty Lowther remarked, as he wiped butter from his trousers. "To think of playing Third Form fags against cricketers like Wodger and old Conway, and York of Lonsbire. We shall need the strongest team we can take over, if we're to have an earthly!"

"We've got a good team," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We're very strong in bowlers—Fatty Wynn and Talbot!"

Talbot smiled.

"I shall be glad to play, of course," he said; "but I hope I sha'n't be keeping anybody else out of the eleven. As a new chap—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry. "I'm cricket captain, and it's my business to make up the best team I can. Of course, on smaller occasions, the second-best players are given a chance; but when it's a question of representing the school, we have to make up the best possible team. If you hadn't been at St. Jim's more than an hour, I should put you in all the same. We couldn't leave out a bowler of your form!"

"Well, it's a stroke of luck for me," said Talbot. "And for all of us," said Manners. "If you weren't here, Talbot, I should be in the team; but I don't mind a bit, so long as St. Jim's wins. I'm coming, anyway, and I shall bring my camera. You'll have to palm me off as a reserve, Tommy; I'm bound to come."

"Oh," said Tom. "I think I'm entitled to take four reserves—you and Herricks and Dig and Lawrence. We shall have a good time at Glyn House, too, apart from the match. Old Mr. Glyn is a brick. You've not been there yet, Talbot—you'll find it ripping. Glyn's sister is splendid. She can make cakes heaps better than you get at the tuck-shop. It was simply ripping for Glyn to fix this up for us!"

"Is it far from here?" asked Talbot.

"As a new boy, he had a nodding acquaintance with Bernard Glyn, who was in the same form, but he knew nothing about the Liverpool lad's place or people.

"No; just off Rycolomb Lane—a tremendous big place," said Tom. "Mr. Glyn is a millionaire—made it in ships or something—and he's retired from business now, and come to live in the South—chiefly to be near his son, I think. Glyn House is topping—big grounds, and a lake, and a garage—everything topping; though Glyn never puts on any side, so you'd hardly think he'd got such a ripping show at home. Why, the giddy silver plate alone is worth a fortune! And there's gold plate, too, that's used on great occasions. It won't be got out for us, of course; but I've seen it—Glyn showed it to us once. There was an attempt to burgle it all once, and Ferrers Looker—you've heard of Ferrers Looker, the detective—asked the bowler?"

"I suppose it's all kept pretty safe, though?" said Talbot.

"Yes, rather—stacked away in a safe; and there's only one key, and Mr. Glyn keeps it about him," said Tom. "Glyn says it's a safe that can't be cracked. Glyn goes in for mechanics and things, you know, and he knows all about it!"

Talbot laughed.

"I don't know much about safes," he remarked: "but they say there never was a safe yet that couldn't be cracked. I'd like to see it."

"Glyn'll show it to you to-morrow, if you like," said Tom. "He's rather proud of that safe. It's stuck away in a place where a burglar would never think of looking for it, too!"

"Really?" asked Talbot, with interest.

"Yes; hidden behind a section of bookcase in the library," said Tom. "And there's an electric bell that rings in the butler's pantry if that section is meddled with. Glyn showed it to us."

"Must be a lot of valuables there, for all that trouble to be taken?"

"Ten thousand quid at least."

"Phew!"

"By the way, don't forget to take a bag with you to-morrow," said Tom. "Glyn's arranged for us all to stay the evening, and come back to St. Jim's in the morning. Of course, we sha'n't finish the match much before dark; and it gets dark late now, so there won't be much evening. There'll be a ripping spread after the match, too; Glyn's sister will look after that."

"That all sounds awfully good!" said Talbot. "You are letting me in for a jolly good thing?"

"It's your bowling, my son. Where did you pick up your cricket?" asked Tom. "You hadn't been to school before you came here?"

"No; I had a tutor. I lived with my uncle, and I used to get a lot of cricket, in one way and another."

"Australia?" asked Louthor. "I've heard you lived in Australia."

"I was there a good time," said Talbot.

"That was before you met Frayne in London, I suppose?"

"Frayne?"

"Yes; you remember you told us you came across Frayne in London, before he came to St. Jim's, when he was a poor little beggar in Angel Alley, before Tommy found him and planted him on his uncle."

"Oh, yes! I had come over on a trip with my uncle at that time," said Talbot.

Talbot's manner was uncommunicative; indeed, the other fellows had noticed more than once that the new fellow never said very much about himself. Where Talbot came from, excepting that he was supposed to have lived a good deal in THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 355.

Australia, was unknown. He never said a word about his parents, and some ill-natured fellows like Gore and Levison hinted that he hadn't any. He seemed to be well supplied with money, however.

All the school fellows knew of him was that he had helped the Head on an occasion when Dr. Holmes was attacked by footpads, chipping in in the most plucky way; and after that he had come to St. Jim's, and was looked upon very kindly by the Head.

They did not want to know more than that he was a jolly good fellow, frank and good-natured, and a ripping cricketer. That was quite enough to make him popular in the School House.

Only Frayne of the Third had met him before he came to the school, and had called him by the peculiar nickname, the "Toff"; but Talbot had explained that by mentioning that he had come upon the little wall once while "slumming" in London.

That was before Joe Frayne had been taken from his early wretched surroundings, and brought to St. Jim's at the expense of Tom Merry's uncle.

Talbot rose from the tea-table. Tea was finished. "Time for prep!" he remarked.

"Right-ho!"

And Talbot left the study.

Monty Louthor wore rather a thoughtful look. "Penny for 'em?" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I was thinking about Talbot. It's rather odd—"

Louthor paused.

"What's odd?"

"When it came out that he'd lived in Australia, Kangy was on to him like a bird. He thought he'd spotted a fellow—Lorustaik, and wanted to jaw bush and blue-gums to him," said Louthor. "But he couldn't get anything out of Talbot. Kangaroo says he won't say a word about his life in Australia."

"May have had a rough time there," suggested Tom Merry. "No need for him to tell us all about his people. It's his own business?"

"Oh, yes, quite so!"

Talbot, meantime, had gone into his study, which was next to Tom Merry's. Gore and Skispole had finished their tea and left the study. There was a very thoughtful look upon Talbot's face as he closed the study door. He paced to and fro in the little room, gnawing his underlip.

If the Terrible Three had seen his frowning face just then, they would have guessed that troubling thoughts were in the new junior's mind, and that, as some of the fellows hinted, there was something odd and secretive about him.

Now that there was no observer, the usual sunny expression had dropped from Talbot's face like a mask.

There was trouble in his expression—trouble and doubt, but a sort of despatching of shame and remorse.

"I wish they wouldn't be so jolly decent to me!" That was what the new junior was muttering inaudibly. "It makes me feel rotten—rotten! But if I didn't get into their confidence it would be no good coming here at all. What does it matter? I know what I came here for—the whole game is cut and dried. I've got my own game to play, and there's no going back." He burst into bitter laugh. "What would the Rabbit and Hokey Walker say if they guessed that the Toff was beginning to be troubled by scruples—by his conscience? But there shall be nothing more here—nothing more of that kind in the school; it's too utterly rotten! At Glyn House, that's different. And I must live. But—but I wish they wouldn't be so decent to me!"

He made a sudden, angry gesture, as if driving away troublesome thoughts by an effort of the will.

His face cleared.

He crossed the study to his desk. It was a large desk of solid mahogany, and very strong and heavy. Taggles, the porter, had groaned dismally when he was given the task of transporting that desk to the new boy's study. It was rather an unusual piece of furniture for a junior to possess. Talbot had carefully explained that he had picked it up cheap, second-hand. It was fitted with a peculiar lock, and it was not left unlocked, and Talbot always kept the key on his watch-chain.

He opened the desk, and then, on second thoughts, crossed to the study door and turned the key. Then he returned to the desk. His finger touched a secret spring, and a lid, of which the existence would never have been suspected, opened. There was a glitter of steel within the secret receptacle as the gaslight fell there. Steel instruments of strange shapes lay packed there, and by them was laid a coil of tin, strong rope.

There came a rattle at the study door-handle, and Talbot hastily closed the secret receptacle, closed the desk and locked it, and crossed to the door.

"Hallo!" called out Gore from the outside. "What's this blessed door locked for?" He rattled angrily at the handle.



Talbot unlocked the door and threw it open. Gore strode in, looking surprised and angry.

"What the deuce do you keep the door locked for?" he demanded.

"The fags have been ragging in this passage," Talbot explained carelessly. "I locked the door as I was going to do my prep—"

Gore groaned.

"Oh, rot! I'm not afraid of the fags, if you are! Let that door alone!"

"Just as you like!"

And Gore snorted again, and sat down at the study table.

## CHAPTER 5. A Day Out.

THE next morning there were fifteen juniors at St. Jim's who were in the most exuberant spirits.

They were the junior eleven and the four reserves who had permission to accompany them to Glyn House for the country-house match.

Wednesday was always a half-holiday, but on this occasion it was a whole holiday for Tom Merry & Co., thanks to the kindness of the Head.

Certainly there were some fellows who grumbled. Gore and Crooke of the Shell, and Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, growled out unpleasant remarks about favouritism and Mellish might say. Most of the fellows envied the lucky juniors in a good-natured way, and wished them good-fortune.

It was very agreeable for Tom Merry & Co. to be packing their bags while the other fellows were going into the classrooms.

Wally & Co. of the Third, though they did not share Gore and Levison's feelings, were decidedly indignant.

D'Arcy minor was firmly convinced that the Third ought to be represented in any junior eleven that deserved the name; and if it had been so represented, Wally would have shared in that whole holiday. Arthur Augustus sought to console his minor.

"It's all right, Wally," he said. "You can come oveh in the afternoon and watch us play, you know."

"Bow-wow!" said Wally disrespectfully.

"That is not an intelligent remark, Wally. You will learn something by watchin' me delivah my vevy special yorkeh that I have been pwactisin'—"

"I am not studying for an acrobat," said Wally.

"You are a cheeky young wascal!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly; and he walked away and left his minor without any further consolation.

"We'll go over all the same," said Wally to his chums. "It's a half of this afternoon, anyway, and we'll go and watch them play the giddy goat. Glyn will be standing a ripping tea."

"Ear, ear!" said Joe Frayne.

"As my eldest brother is staying there, and as Gussy will be there too, I can go over if I like," argued Wally. "In fact, I dare say the Glyn's will expect me to give them a look in."

"And to take a friend or two with you?" suggested Jamson.

"Yes, rather! And perhaps Tom Merry may come to his senses, and give us a chanco after all. Like his check, to be playing 'em that new kid and leaving us out!"

"'Er Toff's going?" asked Frayne.

"Talbot's going," said Wally. "I admit he's a good bowler; but I would undertake to bat his head off. Hallo! There's the beastly bell! Now we've got to stand old Silly all the morning. Br-r-r-r!"

And the fags went into their Form-room.

Tom Merry & Co. were not long in making their preparations. Besides their cricketing things, they had to take the necessaries for a night out. Study No. 6 packed all their things into one bag, and the four New House players also made one bag meet their wants. Tom Merry offered Talbot a

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Dainler, with room for all the fellows in it, with some squeezing. A good-looking young man had come over in it to meet the juniors, and they recognised Mr. Wodger, who had once been at St. Jim's as a master, and who was engaged to Glyn's sister. Mr. Wodger greeted the cricketers heartily, and they packed themselves into the car.

"We're comin' to give you a lickin', deah boy!" Arthur Augustus said cheerfully.

Mr. Wodger smiled genially.

"We know the risk we're taking," he said seriously.

"Who's captainin' the house team?"

"Your brother."

"Old Conway! Vevy good!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Tom Mewey, deah boy, you would pewpaws care to wescin the skippahn' to me for to-day, so that—"

"Perhaps!" grinned Tom Merry.

"As my bwothah is captainin' the othah side, it would be wathah a good ideah!" urged Arthur Augustus—"make it quite a family affair, you know. I appeal to all the fellows. What do you fellows say?"

"Aye!" said the fellows heartily.

And Arthur Augustus did not press the point.

"We shall have a crowd over in the afternoon, I expect, Woddy," Glyn remarked. "I've told all the fellows to come if they like, and have a whack in the spread."

"Then I think there will very probably be a crowd," said Mr. Wodger, laughing. "There will be a good many village folk in the grounds, too, to see the game—and to see us beaten."

"Yaas, wathah! I have been pwactisin' a vevy dangerous yorkeh—"

"Too dangerous for use," grinned Tom Merry. "You're not going to bowl, Gussy. You haven't seen our new bowler, Mr. Wodger—Talbot here. He's a giddy marvel. He bowls like a cherub."

"I've never seen a cherub bowl," said Mr. Wodger. "I shall have to take your word for it. But if our wickets go down too fast you must put D'Arcy on to bowl, and give us a chance, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Mr. Wodger—"

The cricketers chatted merrily as the big car buzzed down the lane towards Klycombe. It turned into the lane that led up to the big gates of Glyn House.

As the car buzzed into the broad drive the juniors could see the cricket pitch in the distance, and a number of fellows chatting there in flannels. The house team was ready.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, screwing his monocle into his eye. "There's old Conway! How do you do, Con, deah boy?"

Lord Conway, the oldest brother of Arthur Augustus, shook hands with the swell of St. Jim's as he descended from the car.

"Glad to see you, Arthur! You've come over to watch—"

"Watch!" repeated Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Weally, Conway, you must be perfectly aware that I have come oveh to play!"

"Then it's all up with us!" said Lord Conway dependently.

And the juniors chuckled.

Tom Merry & Co. descended from the car in great spirits. Glyn's pater, a kind-looking old gentleman, with white whiskers, greeted them very cordially, and so did Glyn's sister.

"There'll be some fellows coming over in the afternoon to look on, Mewey," said Glyn—Mops being the name by which he called Miss Edith Glyn. "They'll want a whack in the spread. You don't mind, pater, do you?"

"The more the merrier!" said Mr. Glyn heartily.

"How many, Bernard?" asked Miss Glyn.

"Oh, about a hundred!" said Glyn.

"Very well," said Miss Glyn, laughing. "I will see that the spread, as you call it, is equal to the occasion."

"Good old Mops!" said Glyn.

"Stumps are ready, when you kids are ready," said Lord Conway.

"Weally, Conway, you are aware that I object to bein' chawckowised as a kid—"

"Change in the house," said Glyn. "Come on to my quarters."

Tom Merry & Co. followed Glyn to his quarters. Glyn had two rooms to himself in the house; and there were several rooms adjoining, where his friends were accommodated when they stayed with him. The rooms had been prepared for the numerous guests.

"We've had extra beds shoved in," said Glyn. "Can't spare fifteen rooms, you know, with so many people in the house. Three each in my two rooms—that's six—four in the next—it's larger—that makes ten. Three in the next, and

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two in the little one at the end of the passage. Set yourselves out as you like."

"I suppose it doesn't matter much," Talbot remarked, and he dumped down his bag in the smallest room, at the end of the corridor.

The juniors chose their quarters; Study No. 5 taking the four-bedded room, and Figgins & Co. and the Terrible Three a room apiece. Redfern and Lawrence shared Glyn's room; and it fell to Kangaroo to share the smaller room with Talbot.

It did not take the cricketers long to change into their flannels; and in ten minutes they came out of the house in a cheery crowd, and proceeded to the pitch.

## CHAPTER 6.

### "Well Bowled!"

LORD CONWAY and his team were ready. Tom Merry looked them over with a critical eye.

They were, of course, a grown-up team, and, as such, above the weight of a junior schoolboy eleven. Some of them, too, were first-class cricketers. Lord Conway, who captained the country-house side, was an old Blue; and Yorke had played for Loamshire, and Mr. Wedger was a fine player. They were the pick of the basket, as Tom Merry quickly decided. There were several other young men who looked like good players, and a few middle-aged cricketers. Most of them were smiling good-humouredly, evidently not taking it on, to fill up a blank day, and to please their host, who had been persuaded by his son. But they expected to walk over the schoolboys without the slightest difficulty, and their opinion on that point was easily to be seen. But Tom Merry meant to show them that in the St. Jim's Juniors they had a harder nut to crack than they supposed. With batsmen like Tom Merry, Blake, Figgins, and Redfern, and Kangaroo, and bowlers like Talbot and Fatty Wynn, the St. Jim's side was pretty certain to put up a good game.

The pitch had been freshly rolled, and was in beautiful order. It was a bright and fresh July morning, ideal weather for cricket.

Lord Conway and Tom Merry tossed, and the luck was with the former. He decided to bat first. He was overheard to make a remark to Captain Cleveland, a cousin of his and Arthur Augustus's, who was in the House team.

"We'll bat till lunch, and make enough to win. They can follow their innings in the afternoon."

And the captain smiled assent.

Tom Merry had heard the remark, and he grinned as he led his merry men out to field.

"They're going to bat till lunch, and then let us follow our innings in the afternoon," he remarked, as he tossed the ball to Talbot. "They won't need to bat a second time. That's the programme."

Talbot laughed.

"We'll try to upset the programme a little bit," he suggested.

"What-ho! If they bat till lunch, it will be because you've left your bowling boots at home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Awful nerve!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "They jolly well won't bat till lunch, if you let me try my yorker, Tom Merry."

"Rats!" said Tom cheerily.

"Shall I bowl the first over, dear boy?"

"Thank a no!"

"I would encourage the team if we took a wicket in the first over, you know," said Arthur Augustus temptingly.

"Yes; that's why you're not going to bowl. Now, 'nuff said."

"Oh, wats! Where am I to field?"

"Anywhere you like, so long as you don't get in the way," said Tom affably.

And Arthur Augustus glared, and tramped away to long-stop.

Lord Conway opened the innings himself with Captain Cleveland. Tom Merry waded his men away to field deep. He led Lord Conway's hitting.

Talbot bowled the first over.

All the other members of the team were known to Lord Conway; but Talbot, being a new boy at St. Jim's, was unknown, and the viscount did not know what to expect. But whatever it was, he did not think that it would be very dangerous. But the first ball from Talbot opened his eyes a little. He just stopped it. The second ball came down, and he just stopped that. Lord Conway began to look a little more serious. It was not the schoolboy bowling he had expected.

He did not venture to hit out until the end of the over, and then he secured two. It was not the beginning the House team had looked for. Fatty Wynn bowled the second

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over to Captain Cleveland. The captain was a good batsman, but Fatty's bowling gave him plenty to think about, and the over gave him only four runs. Then Talbot took the ball for the third over, Lord Conway receiving the bowling again.

Talbot was getting his hand in now. He took his little hitting run, and the ball left his hand like a bullet. Lord Conway played a shade too late, and there was a chirrup from all the field:

"How's that?"

"Beggs!" ejaculated Conway.

His feet stumpled as he was reclining at an angle of forty-five or thereabouts, and the balls were on the ground. Lord Conway stared at the wicket as if he could hardly believe his eyes; as was, indeed, the fact. He had been bowled out in his second over, for only a couple of runs—clean bowled by a junior schoolboy!

"Out!" said the umpire, who was grinning too.

Lord Conway smiled good-humouredly, and carried out his bat. He stopped to speak to Yorke of Loamshire, who was next on the list.

"Look out for that kid; he's hot stuff."

"It wasn't a fluke?" asked the Loamshire man.

"Fluke be dashed!" said Lord Conway. "He's a topping bowler."

"I'll take care of him!"

The Loamshire man came to the wicket. He looked out carefully for that ball which came down with the speed of a four-point-seven shell. But it was not that four-point-seven ball that came—it was a "slow," and it caught the Loamshire man napping, and his middle stump whipped clean out of the ground.

"My hat!" said Yorke.

"How's that?" shrieked Tom Merry.

There wasn't much need for the umpire to say "Out!" The gentleman from Loamshire walked off with a duck's egg to his credit.

"Man in!"

Man in was a stout, middle-aged gentleman who had been a great cricketer in earlier days, and was still very active, and prided himself upon his batting. He took up his position with an exaggerated edition of the "Harrow straddle," which he had brought many years ago from the famous school on the hill. His look plainly showed that, whatever might have happened to the old Blue and the Loamshire man, nothing of the sort would happen to an old Harrovian.

But he was speedily undeceived. He was ready for a fast ball or a slow ball; but he was not ready for a ball that looked like a wide, and broke in at an almost impossible angle, and whipped a stump out of the ground before he knew that it was there.

And the field yelled in chorus:

"How's that?"

"Bless my soul!" said the old Harrovian.

And he toddled away, his plump cheeks very pink.

Tom Merry rushed up to the bowler and thumped him on the shoulder.

"The hat trick!" he gasped. "Oh, this is ripping! You bouncer, to start the innings with the hat trick! You're worth your weight in gold!"

"I've been lucky," said Talbot, with smile.

"Lucky be hanged! It's topping bowling—and two of them were two of the best, too. We shall make hay of them at this rate."

"Yaas, watah! My yorker will weally hardly be second."

The batsmen were very careful with Talbot after that. All the House team were looking at him very curiously. The bowler who had so speedily dismissed an old Blue and a county player was worth watching.

Talbot and Fatty Wynn shared the bowling for some time, Fatty Wynn accounting for two wickets in one over. By that time the home team were five down for the miserable total of fifteen runs. Batting till lunch, and then making the schoolboys follow their innings, was evidently "off"—very much off. Captain Cleveland, however, was still in, and he was making the running now, backed up by an old Eton man, and the score began to rise. By the time Tom Merry caught the Eton man out at cover-point, the home figure was forty.

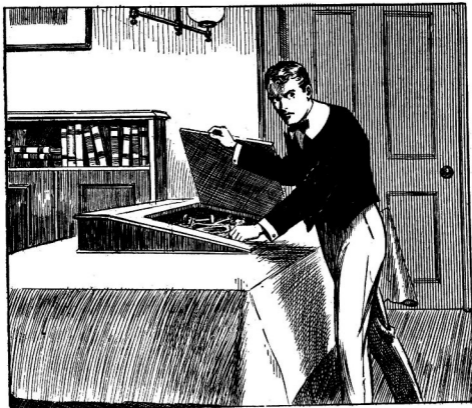
"Sin down for forty," said Jack Blake, looking at the score. "This is where our friend the enemy come down off their giddy perch."

"Yaas, watah!"

A "nutty"-looking young stockbroker joined Captain Cleveland at the wickets. Tom Merry sent Blake on to bowl to give Talbot a rest.

But the new junior speedily showed that he was as good in the field as on the bowling crease.

The stockbroker was a flashy bat, and he knocked Blake's bowling far and wide, taking eleven for the over, and then batting again against Fatty Wynn's bowling. He captured six runs from Fatty, and then swept the fourth ball of the



His fingers touched a secret spring and a lid opened, to reveal a glitter of steel within the recess. There came a rattle at the study door-handle, and Talbot hastily closed the secret receptacle. (See Chapter 4.)

over fairly into the ready palm of Talbot, who leaped up to catch at the exact moment.

Smack!  
Talbot's fingers closed on the ball, hot from the bat. He tossed it up, and caught it again, as he called:

"How's that?"

And the dashing young stockbroker disconsolately went off without the century he had been determined to make, his only satisfaction being that he had brought the home score up to the more respectable figure of 57.

"Seven down for 57!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What price batting till lunch?"

And the field smiled.

"Feel up to another over, Talbot?"

"Twenty, if you like," laughed Talbot.

"Go in and win, then!"

The innings dwindled out. Talbot and Fatty Wynn, with occasional assistance from Blake and Kerr, disposed of the rest of the wickets. Eight down for 6—nine down for 68. Last man in!

Last man in "bucked up" the score a little, and Captain Cleveland was still batting. The score was at 90 when the captain was bowled by Talbot, and the innings ended.

"All down for ninety," said Tom Merry, "and barely eleven o'clock. Doesn't look as if we shall have to follow on our innings this afternoon—what?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Well played, you young fellows," said the old Harrovian genially, as the field came off. "You'll be batting again before lunch after all!"

"Yass, wathsh!"

And Tom Merry opened the innings for St. Jim's with

Figgins at the other end. By lunch-time St. Jim's were 50 for four wickets, Tom Merry still batting, and then the cricketers knocked off for a well-earned rest and a feed.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Safe.

LUNCH was a cheery meal, in the big oak-panelled dining-room of Glyn House, with its wide windows looking out on the park and the cricket-ground. The juniors were in great spirits. It was not only certain that the country-house team would have to bat a second time, but Tom Merry was not without hopes that his eleven would not have to bat a second innings. Talbot was the centre of a great deal of attraction. All the house cricketers spoke to him, and the amount of "kudos" reaped by the new member of the team might have caused a pang of jealousy in a less good-natured breast than Tom Merry's. But Tom Merry never thought of anything of the kind. He was joyful at having secured a bowler who had accounted for five of the enemy's wickets—four bowled and one caught.

Talbot bore his blushing honours thick upon him with becoming modesty. And the total absence of "side" about him made him more popular than ever.

After lunch, the juniors strolled out to while away the time till the resumption of the match. Talbot joined the Terrible Three and Glyn.

"Like to look over the place, kid?" Glyn asked, remembering that Talbot was a new boy, and had never visited Glyn House before.

Talbot nodded.

"I should!" he said. "Tom Merry was telling me last

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night about a wonderful safe your pater's got somewhere. If you're allowed to show it—

"He's shown it to all the chaps," said Glyn. "I'll show it you with pleasure. I fixed up the electric alarm myself. I do that kind of thing, you know."

"Always inventing some giddy rot," murmured Monty Lowther. "You haven't seen his mechanical dog, Talbot—and his electrical armchair, and the rest of it."

"It's a jolly good invention, this one," said Glyn. "This way!"

The Shell fellows accompanied him to the library. It was a large, lofty apartment, and the walls were lined with bookcases. There was no one in the room just then, the guests being mostly out of doors. Talbot looked round at the well-lined walls with an interested eye.

"Looking for the safe?" chuckled Glyn.

"No; I was looking at the books," said Talbot. "There are some beautiful bindings here."

"Tell the pater that, and you'll win his heart for ever," said Glyn. "He goes in for bindings and things. Now, where would you think of looking for the safe?"

"It certainly isn't in sight," said Talbot. "But Merry told me it was hidden behind a section of a bookcase."

"That's the dodge! Come here!"

Bernard Glyn crossed to the wall-case beside a large open fireplace. The case looked like all the rest, firmly fixed to the wall; but Glyn pressed a certain spot in the moulding, and the bookcase swung away from the wall.

Instead of a panelled wall being revealed, however, the iron door of a safe sunk in the wall met the eyes of the juniors.

"Good!" said Talbot. "It would have to be a clever burglar who'd think of looking there for a safe. But where's the bell?"

"I've disconnected it—I don't want to bring the butler here now," said Glyn, with a laugh. "You see, when the pater goes to the safe, he doesn't want the bell to ring, of course. That's one of the reasons. See this moulding under the door. Press it in the right, it opens the case, and leaves the bell ringing; but if you press this little cornice, too, at the same time, it disconnects the bell. Now, I'll bet you a burglar would never spot that."

"Hardly," agreed Talbot.

He looked at the massive iron of the safe-door curiously. It was fitted with a new combination lock.

"You can't open it, of course," Talbot remarked.

Glyn shook his head.

"No; the pater sets the combination, and keeps it a secret; and he has the only key too. It's the latest thing in locks, specially designed for the pater, and there doesn't exist a crackman who could crack it."

"It looks pretty thick for anybody to try," Talbot remarked. "I've read that there are crackmen who have a kind of gift for that kind of thing—and can crack any safe."

"I'd like to see one trying on that!" said Glyn, laughing.

"You seem to let a good many people into the little secret," Talbot observed. "How many fellows know the safe is hidden here, for instance?"

"All the chaps I've shown it to," said Glyn. "But they're not likely to talk of it before any professional crackmen, I suppose. It's true that a St. Jim's chap was related to a crackman who tried to rob my pater once; but such a thing's not likely to happen again."

"No; I don't suppose many St. Jim's chaps have crackmen among their relations," said Talbot, laughing.

"Besides, the safe's safe enough," said Glyn. "It doesn't matter much if anybody knows where to find it, so long as he couldn't open it. It's quite invulnerable."

Talbot swung round suddenly.

The French windows at the end of the library were wide open, and Talbot made a sudden run towards them.

The Shell fellows looked after him in surprise.

"What's up?" asked Glyn, as Talbot turned back from the window.

Talbot breathed hard.

"Somebody was looking in," he said. "I just spotted his face for a moment. One of the servants, perhaps, out of curiosity."

"How?" said Glyn. He closed the bookcase over the safe door, and it clicked shut. "I hope not. Still, most of the servants know where the safe is; it's not a secret from the people in the house, you know."

"Then it doesn't matter. Let's have a look at your mechanical dog, if there's time before we bat."

"What-ho?"

"I've seen that weird animal," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'll go down and have a look at the pitch!"

And the Terrible Three strolled away, while Talbot followed Bernard Glyn to his quarters, and the amateur inventor of the Shell was soon busy, and greatly delighted, in showing his mechanical treasures to the new boy. They were

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soon the firmest of friends, and Glyn confided later to the Terrible Three that Talbot was really a ripping chap, and quite intelligent—which Tom Merry & Co. guessed to mean that Talbot was a particularly patient and polite listener. Glyn was so interesting in showing Talbot his contrivances, in fact, that neither of them showed up in time for the resumption of the St. Jim's innings, and Blake went to fetch them, as Tom Merry and Kangaroo started batting again.

Yorkie was bowling, and he started well. Kangaroo's wicket went down, and Kerr came in, and was quickly dismissed, and then Fatty Wynn's wicket followed. The Leamshire man was compensating himself for his ill-luck in batting. St. Jim's were now seven down, and it was Talbot's turn to bat.

Tom Merry gave him a cheery word as he passed, going to his wicket.

"Buck up, Talbot! Look out for that Leamshire chap—he's very warm."

"Right-jo!"

The Leamshire man finished the over to Talbot, who stopped the ball without taking a run. Then Lord Conway bowled to Tom Merry, and Tom took a single, which brought Talbot to the batting end. Lord Conway was a finished bowler; but Talbot dealt with his bowling in a masterly manner. The St. Jim's fellows, looking on, clapped and cheered each hit.

"Bad Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "That chap's as good a bat as he is a bowler. He is really quite an all-round man."

"What a bit of luck having him!" chuckled Lowther.

"Yas, wathah! It's a bit of a surprise for old Conway. Bai Jove! There he goes again. Huwwoy!"

Talbot had swiped away the ball; and Tom Merry was about to run, but the new junior waved him back. It was a boundary.

"Bravo, Talbot!"

"Well hit, sir!"

The score was looping up now. Tom Merry was caught out in the next over, and Bernard Glyn went in. Glyn's luck was out, and Glyn followed it out. Nine down for one hundred.

"Beaten their record, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Yas, wathah!"

"Last man in! Hurry up, Reddy!"

Redfern of the Fourth was last man in. Figgins & Co. gave him an encouraging whoop as he went to the wicket. Redfern was a New House fellow, and for that excellent reason Figgins & Co. expected him to do great things. Redfern fulfilled their expectation, playing a splendid second to Talbot.

Yorkie and Conway and Wodger in turn essayed to capture the wickets; but they essayed in vain. And all the time the two clever bats were making the running, the St. Jim's fellows cheering wildly. And the volume of cheering was increased by St. Jim's fellows, who were now dropping in by twos and threes, taking advantage of the half-holiday, and Glyn's generous invitation to a tremendous feed, to come over and see the match.

Gure and Lervison and Mellish were somewhat "up against" Glyn, as a pal of Tom Merry's; but they had come over, all the same, and Giffon Danc came with Reilly and Kerroish and Lumley-Lumley and Hammond, and a crowd more, and the thickening crowd of St. Jim's fellows cheered every good hit.

Away went the ball once more from Talbot's bat, another boundary, and the batsmen did not need to run.

"Hooyay!"

"Bravo!"

"Good old St. Jim's!" shrieked a voice that Arthur Augustus recognised as his minor's. "Go it! Give 'em the giddy kybosh!"

"That is a wathah vulgar expression, Wally!" cried Arthur Augustus. "Why, where is that young boundah?"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked round for Wally, but failed to see him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"G'wast Scott! Where is that young boundah?"

Arthur Augustus looked round in all directions, and at last he thought of looking upward. Then he spotted his minor, Jarroson and Curly and Frayne were among the crowd, which was now very thick round the ropes; but the active Wally had climbed a tree to gain a coign of vantage. Near the ground stood a big tree, a vast mass of foliage against the blue sky, and D'Arcy's minor had "shinned" up the broad trunk, and crawled out upon a long branch.

He was at a height of thirty feet or more from the ground, and sitting straddled on the branch, which swayed under his weight. From the ground the fag's position looked decidedly dangerous, and D'Arcy shouted to his minor:

"Come down at once, Wally, you young ass!"

"Bats!"

"You are in dangah up thah!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Bai Jove! If you don't come down, I'll come and fetch you—or, wathah, I would, only it would make my clobber dirty!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" said Wally imploringly.

"Keep your wind for taking runs!"

"My wicket is down, you young duffah!"

"Duck's egg!" asked Wally.

"You cheeky young wascal! If you don't come down, I'll call Conway!"

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Augustus frowned. Wally's position on the high branch was certainly dangerous, as he would indubitably have been killed if he had fallen; but he had a splendid view, and that was all the reckless fag cared about. He held on to the swaying branch with his legs as he sat, and detached both hands to clasp.

Lord Conway, however, was bowling now, so Arthur Augustus could hardly call in the elder brother's authority at that moment.

"Hundred and thirty!" grinned Blake, looking at the score. "My hat! You'll have to declare, Tommy, if the game's going to be finished to-day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of declaring tickled the juniors very much, especially after Lord Conway's programme of making them follow their innings. Talbot was batting again now. Lord Conway sent the ball down, and Talbot let himself go at it. Smack—whiz! And the batsmen were running.

"Where's the ball?" yelled Blake.

Where was it? There was a sound of tearing foliage, and leaves came fluttering down from the big tree, on the branch of which Wally was seated. The ball had been cut away right through the branches of the tree. It dropped out of bounds, but a shriek of horror from Arthur Augustus drew all attentive away from the ball.

"Wally! Good heavens! Wally!"

All eyes were turned upon the high branch of the tree, and every face went white.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Between Life and Death!

"WALLY! He will be killed!"

There was a buzz of horrified voices round the crowded field. The batsmen ceased running in the middle of the pitch, careless of wickets. The game stopped; there was no thought then of cricket.

For that ball, cut away by Talbot's mighty drive, had swept through the tree past Wally, narrowly missing the fag as he sat on the branch, and the startled fag had pitched sideways.

He swung right over and down; but his desperate clutch fastened on the branch, and he hung upon it with both hands, tossing as the branch swayed, thirty feet above the ground.

"Good heavens!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Wally! He will be killed!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

"Climb up, Wally! Get on the branch!"

From the fag hanging in mid-air came a gasp:

"I can't! I've hurt my arm!"

There was a groan of horror from the juniors underneath. That sudden swing on the branch, the sudden catch to save himself, had twisted the fag's arm. He could not climb up; it was all he could do to hold on. And the sudden drag on the branch, as he had caught it, had caused it to give a deep and ominous creak.

The creak was repeated. The branch was cracking through, half-way between Wally and the parent trunk.

"Blankets! Fetch blankets to catch him!" shouted Lord Conway.

A dozen fellows raced off towards the house.

But they feared—they feared only too rightly—that the branch would never stand the strain till they returned, even if the fag could hold on so long.

Wally, his face white with pain, was holding on grimly, awing on the creaking branch.

Joe Frayne looked up at him, his face set and stony. The wail of the Third seemed frozen with horror. Death was hanging over his chum—his best chum—the boy who had befriended him, stood by him through thick and thin, and been a splendid pal to him.

When Joe Frayne had come to St. Jim's, fresh and rough from the slum, where he had dwelt, and many of the Third had shunned him, and despised him, it was Wally who had stuck to him—Wally, the son of an earl, had never hesitated for a second in making a pal of the gutter-boy, caring nothing for his rough exterior, only for the heart of gold within. And through Wally's friendship Joe Frayne had won his way

on in the school; but without the generous lad his struggle would have been bitter indeed.

And there was his pal, hanging between life and death. It seemed to Joe at that terrible moment that if Wally was to die, he would rather die with him than survive him; and the wail of the Third made a wild rush to the tree to climb it—to help Wally or to share his fate. He could have done nothing, but he was ready to throw his life away for his pal.

But as Frayne reached the tree, another reached it, and pushed the fag back.

It was Talbot.

He had dropped his bat in the middle of the pitch, and run towards the tree at the first alarm, acting with a decision and promptitude that were wonderful.

Joe struggled in his grasp.

"Let me go! I—I—"

"You can't help him! Leave it to me!"

Talbot was climbing the tree at the next moment. Joe Frayne would have followed, but Lord Conway had reached the spot by then, and he pulled him back.

"Keep back, kid! If anybody can do anything, Talbot can. Keep back. The branch won't bear one, let alone two!"

And Joe, realising that it was true, covered his face with his hands, with a dry sob. He could not bear to look upon his chum's fearful danger.

All eyes were on Talbot.

It was too late for anyone else to make the attempt. Fearfully perilous as it was, there were many fellows there who would have risked it. But Talbot was first. His intention was plain—to crawl out on the breaking branch, reach down to the fag, and pull him up. And if the branch broke under his weight, instant death to two instead of one. And it must break; it seemed only too certain.

The cricketers watched with fascinated gaze.

Talbot moved with wonderful quickness. In a twinkling, as it seemed, he was upon the branch where it jutted out from the trunk; but the branch was a long one, and Wally, where he hung, was twenty feet from the trunk.

Talbot threw himself on the branch, face down, and crawled along it.

As far as the middle of it he was safe enough. Beyond that was the crack, and the branch was thinner. If he passed the middle of the branch he took his life in his hand. And not for a second did he hesitate, though the wood cracked under him as he crawled.

Wally, clutching on, unable to draw himself up, saw him coming. The fag's face was white as a sheet, but he had not lost his courage. There was death below—grim death if he had lost his nerve for an instant, and he knew it.

"Talbot!" muttered Wally hoarsely.

"Hold on! I'm coming."

"Go back—go back! It won't bear!"

"I'm coming."

Crack, crack, crack!

Talbot was very close to the fag now. Wally's starting eyes stared up into his. Well the fag knew that he was doomed unless Talbot succeeded—and well he knew that Talbot must share his fate unless a miracle befriended him. Would the branch hold?

"Oh," muttered Jack Blake, between his teeth. "it's going! No—it holds! Thank Heaven, he's reached him now!"

Talbot was within reach of the fag.

He reached down, and his strong grasp closed on Wally's collar. It was time, for the fag's strength was spent. His fingers were shaking, their hold as Talbot reached him. He was shaking by one hand—his hurt arm had refused to hold. And that single hand was slipping, when Talbot grasped his collar from above.

"He's got him!"

"Where are the blankets?"

But they had not come; it had all passed too quickly for that. Talbot did not try to drag Wally on the branch. He worked his way backwards towards the trunk, holding the fag by the collar and supporting him. The whole weight of the lad was upon Talbot's right arm now—Wally's last grip had gone. That grasp, fastened like iron on collar and shirt, held Wally suspended in midair, and the fag's eyes were closed now—the horror of the position had been too much for him, and he had fainted.

Backwards went Talbot, slowly now, as fast as he could—but slowly. It seemed amazing that his right arm, strong as it was, should bear the strain. But it bore it. And now Tom Merry clambered quickly into the tree, to be ready to receive him if he reached the trunk—if!

That strong right arm, which had shown its sinewy strength with those mighty drives with the bat, was tested to the utmost now. Wally hung a dead weight upon it—and still Talbot was working his way back along the creaking branch.

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Creak, creak, creak!

The branch bent low under the double weight, and from the crack in the wood came creak after creak, each more ominous than the last.

Would it hold?

Ages seemed to pass to the agonised watchers below. Would it hold?

Talbot was in the middle of the branch again now—over the weak spot—past it—past and almost in safety—and a deep breath of relief came from the crowd below.

The branch would not break now.

But would Talbot's strength hold out till he reached the trunk, with that dead weight on his stretched right arm?

Slowly—slowly—slowly!

Still he worked backwards to the trunk; his face white, his eyes glinting, his teeth set hard.

Slowly—slowly—till his feet touched the trunk—touched Tom Merry waiting there in the fork to help him.

Then Talbot spoke in low, husky accents, telling of the strain on him.

"Who's there?" He could not see behind him.

"I'm here—Tom Merry—"

"The branch will hold here—close to the trunk. Crawl over me and take Wally. I can't hold on much more."

"I'm coming!"

Tom Merry leaped out over Talbot, as he lay flat on the branch—leaped lower and lower till he could reach the insensible lag—and drove his fingers into Wally's collar, and secured a grip upon him there, and relieved Talbot of the strain.

Talbot panted.

"Hold on; we can hold him together till they—"

"There's the ladder coming!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Thank Heaven for that!"

Captain Cleveland and the gardener could be seen dashing towards the spot, with a long ladder in their grasp. The two juniors held Wally fast, sharing the strain.

"Quick—quick!" panted Talbot.

The ladder was reared under the tree, and planted against the trunk. Lord Conway came springing up it. He reached them—and his grasp closed on Wally round the waist.

"I've got him—let go!"

Gladly enough the two juniors let go. Lord Conway, with Wally upon his shoulders, white and motionless, descended to the ground.

Tom Merry swung himself upon the ladder when it was clear.

"All right, Talbot?"

"One minute, while I get my breath; I'll follow you."

Tom Merry descended a few rungs, and waited. Talbot lowered himself from the branch to the ladder, catching at a rung with his left hand. His right arm hung nerveless to his side.

"It's all right," he said.

Tom descended, and Talbot followed him slowly. Wally had been rushed away to the House at once. Talbot reclined as he set his feet on the firm earth at last, and half a dozen hands were put out to catch him.

"God bless you!" said Lord Conway huskily. "God bless you!"

Joe Frayne gave a choking cry.

"Tuff, you've saved 'im—you've saved my pal!"

And the tears streamed down the cheeks of the waif of the Third.

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Hero of the Hour.

TALBOT stood in the midst of the cricketers, breathing hard, but quite cool. The colour was coming back into his cheeks now. But his right arm was hanging stiffly by his side. It would not be of much more use for batting that day, after the strain that had been put upon it. That, however, his comrades were not thinking of for the moment. They were only thinking of the heroism of the new junior had shown. He had saved Wally's life; there was not the slightest doubt about that, and he had nearly lost his own in doing it. He listened quietly to the exclamations round him.

"It was splendid!" said Lord Conway, laying his hand on the junior's shoulder. "I won't try to thank you, kid! Yours aren't much good. But you know how we all feel."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with emotion.

"You've saved my young Ewochah's life, Talbot. You are a hawk!"

"It was splendid," said Tom Merry.

"Ripping!"

"Top-hole!"

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"Well, I really endangered him by cutting away that ball through the tree," said Talbot, with a smile. "I didn't see the young duffer there, of course!"

"He oughtn't to have been there!" said Lord Conway.

"It was a risky place for the young ass!"

"Yaas, I ordahed him to come down, you know—"

"I'd give him a licking, only I don't think he could stand it now," said Lord Conway. "My dear kid, you've acted splendidly—splendidly!"

"Like a hero!" said Edith softly.

Talbot coloured.

"Oh, don't pile it on, you know!" he said. "You make me feel an awful ass. What price the cricket? Reddy, if we don't get back to the pitch we shall get stumped, the pair of us. We're off the crease!"

There was a laugh. Both the batsmen, of course, could have been put out, but the field were not likely to take advantage of that chance. However, Talbot's words reminded them that the game was to be finished.

The cricketers returned to the field, and the spectators crowded back behind the ropes.

"I'm sorry, Merry!" Talbot said to his skipper. "I sha'n't be able to go on batting. My arm's frightfully stiff. And—and I feel rather done up!"

"No wonder!" said Tom Merry. "Of course you can't but again. I'll speak to Conway. We shall have to declare the innings closed. I was thinking of declaring, anyway."

But Lord Conway would not hear of it.

"Rot!" said the viscount tersely. "You'll play a substitute for Talbot."

"Yes, you can, if the opposite skipper chooses!" said Lord Conway, with a smile. "You don't think we're going to benefit on the score, because your best bat has saved my brother's life and got crooked, do you? Put your best man in Talbot's place. All my men will agree."

"Well, after all, that's only fair," said Tom thoughtfully.

"Talbot had a good many runs left in him but for what's happened."

"Quite so!"

"Then if you suggest it, and your men agree—"

"Of course we agree!" said Mr. Wodger; and the House team chorused assent.

"Right-ho! Kangaroo, you'll go in again for Talbot."

"Right-ho!" said the Cornstalk.

Redfern was back at his wicket. Noble took Talbot's place. It was unusual, certainly, but the circumstances were unusual. It would have been too hard on the schoolboy team to lose a wicket because their batsman had saved Wally's life. Talbot joined the spectators, and he was the centre of an admiring throng.

"Hadn't you better have your arm seen to, my boy?" asked Mr. Glyn.

Talbot smiled.

"No; it's all right—only stiff. It will wear off. How's Wally?"

"Oh, the young rascal is all right. He has recovered already, and he is coming out to see the game," said the millionaire, with a smile.

And a little later Wally appeared. He was looking somewhat pale, but otherwise his old self. Frayne was with him, and Frayne showed more signs of the strain he had been through than Wally did. The waif's lip was still quivering, and his eyelashes were wet. Wally joined Talbot.

"I say, you Shell bouncer, that was awfully decent of you!" he said.

"That's all right!" said Talbot.

"I suppose you saved my life," said Wally. "I don't quite remember the finish. Joe says I fainted, but Joe's an ass. I never faint!"

"You did, Master Wally!" said Frayne.

"Rats!" said Wally. "I suppose I was a bit dazed; I never faint. But it was jolly decent of you, Talbot. You've really got my place in the eleven, but I'll say now that you're welcome to it."

"Thanks!" said Talbot, laughing.

"Hallo! There goes Reddy!"

Yorkie had caught out Redfern at last. St. Jim's finished with the score at 140.

"One hundred and forty on the first innings for our noble selves!" chuckled Jack Blake. "And our friend the enemy bagged ninety. What price on the following innings?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Certainly Lord Conway's airy programme was very much off. There was an interval of ten minutes between the innings, and Tom Merry came up to Talbot a little anxiously.

"I suppose I'd better put in a substitute to field for you, Talbot," he remarked. "How is your fin?"

"Still pretty stiff," said Talbot. "Otherwise, I'm all right. But don't you want me to bowl?"

"Bow! You can't bowl with that arm!" Talbot held out his left.  
 "I've got another."  
 "What!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "You don't mean to say you're a left-handed bowler, too?"  
 "My left's as good as my right," said Talbot, with a smile.  
 "My hat! You're a giddy wonder. If you really feel up to it—"

"Quite!"  
 "Sure you're fit?"  
 "Fit as a fiddle!"  
 "Then you're our man!" said Tom Merry joyfully. "I didn't know you were a left-handed bowler, too, by Jove! Blessed if you ain't an Admiral Crichton all round!"  
 "Talbot playing?" asked Blake, as they made a move to the field.

"Yes. He bowls left as well as right."  
 "Great pip!"  
 "If Talbot doesn't feel quite up to bowlin', Tom Mewey, I am quite willin' to try my york on those bounds!"  
 "But he does," grinned Tom Merry. "And we can't afford to let you bowl, Gussy. We want wickets."  
 "Will you take the first over, Talbot?"

"With all my heart!"  
 Tom Merry tossed him the ball, and Talbot caught it with his left. The second innings of the home team started with Yorke and the Old Harrovian. The rest of the House players stood looking on with surprise as they saw Talbot sent on to take the first over.

"That kid's arm won't be much use to him, sure," said Captain Cleveland.  
 "Regad!" ejaculated Lord Conway. "He's bowling left!"

"They've got a treasure there," said Mr. Wodger. "That kid will be playing for England in a few years' time, I should say!"

"If certainly ought to be," agreed Conway.  
 They looked on with keen interest to see how Talbot would shape with his left. The St. Jim's crowd were equally keen. That Talbot, who batted splendidly, and bowled wonderfully with his right, should be a good left-hand bowler, too, was astonishing, and all the fellows were anxious to see how he shaped. He soon showed them that there was no ground for uneasiness.

The Harrow gentleman was the only one who needed to be uneasy; but he was soon put out of his misery, so to speak. For the first ball from Talbot glided round his bat as if it had been a serpent, and the leg stump was knocked out of the ground.

"Oh, my hat!" shouted Tom Merry. "How's that?"  
 "Ha, ha! Out!"  
 "Bai Jove, I couldn't have beaten that myself!"  
 "Man in!"  
 "Play!"

Down came the next from Talbot's left, and man in was promptly man out.

"Well bowled!"  
 " Bravo!"  
 Lord Conway went to the wicket, and he succeeded in surviving the rest of that over. But Talbot had shown plainly enough that he was as dangerous as ever, or even more so.

Fatty Wynn took the next over, and accounted for a wicket; and then Talbot, who seemed as fresh as paint after his rest, went on again. Another man down!

The St. Jim's team were in exuberant spirits now. Blake and Kerr did some of the bowling, but Fatty Wynn and Talbot shared most of it. Lord Conway and Captain Cleveland made a fine innings between them, and the score was at 50 when his lordship was caught out by Figgins. Then Mr. Wodger came in, and he sailed up runs. Tom Merry's faint hope of winning by an innings was knocked on the head; but that St. Jim's would win by runs he had not the slightest doubt. The afternoon was wearing on, but there would be time for St. Jim's to bat after tea. They would not need all their wickets, Tom Merry was assured.

Fatty Wynn finished off the innings in fine style, and at tea-time the home team were all down for 75. The second innings had totalled well under the first. The whole score for Glyn House was 165. St. Jim's wanted 26 to win in their second innings, and they were all quite assured that they could get three or four times as many if they had been wicketed.

Tom Merry almost hugged Talbot as they came off the field to adjourn for tea.

"You're a giddy treasure!" he declared.  
 "I shan't be able to bat again, though," said Talbot.  
 "But we only want twenty-six," said Tom, laughing.  
 "We shall knock them up in half an hour after tea, I expect. We shall win hands down—and you'll have won that

match for us. It was a good wind that blew you to St. Jim's."

"Was it?" said Talbot, with a curious smile. "I'm glad you think so."

"Not much doubt about it," said Monty Lowther. "Now for tea. Fatty's started already."

## CHAPTER 10.

## Well Woa!

FATTY WYNN was enjoying himself. Tea was taken on the wide lawn in the golden sunshine of the July afternoon. It was a large party, for besides the guests Glyn House and Tom Merry's team there were at least a hundred St. Jim's fellows there who had come to see the match, and they all shared in the generous hospitality of Glyn's pater. Fatty Wynn turned an ecstatic look upon the chums of the Shell as they came up to his table.

"This is simply ripping!" he said, with his mouth full.  
 "Topping, I call it! Glyn's pater is a brick; and Glyn is a brick, too! So's his sister. I wish I had a sister like Glyn's. She makes these cakes herself. Glyn told me so. I'm going to ask her to tell me how she does it, and I'll try my hand in the study."

"I'll give you the recipe," said Miss Glyn's laughing voice behind the fat Fourth Formers.

Fatty Wynn looked round.  
 "Oh, I didn't see you, Miss Edith! Excuse me."  
 "Not at all. I'm glad to hear that I am a brick, and that father is a brick, and my brother is a brick," said the young lady, smiling. "Quite an architectural family!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Talbot was very much in request. The Terrible Three wanted him, and Study No. 6 tried to capture him for their table, and Figgins & Co. were looking for him; but Wally of the Third succeeded in capturing the hero of the hour and dragging him off.

"You're coming with me," said Wally. "This way! We've got a lovely pie."

And Talbot laughed and assented.  
 The fags had a little table to themselves under the tree which had so nearly seen the termination of D'Arcy minor's reckless career. Wally seemed to have forgotten all about his perilous experience by this time. Frayne was thinking of it more than Wally was. The waif of the Third looked oddly at Talbot as he joined the fags, and Talbot gave him a friendly nod. Jameson was carving the pie, and Curly Gibson handing him plates. Wally pushed Talbot into a camp-stool.

"You sit there," he said. "You belong to us for a bit. You've really got my place in the team."

"Mine!" said Jameson, pausing with the carving-knife.  
 "Boosh!" said Wally. "Mine!"

"Look here, you School House duffers—"

"Well, you New House fatted—"

"Order!" said Curly. "Shut up, and serve the pie, Jimmy. I'm hungry!"

"And Talbot's hungry, too," said Wally. "Ain't you, Talbot? How's your arm?"

"Getting better," said the Shell fellow.

"Blessed if I know how you did it," said Wally. "You must be all muscle. I ain't a light-weight—not a skinny beggar like Frayne, here. You must have had rather a twist, holding me at arm's-length I should say."

"It was rather a twist," said Talbot.

"It was splendid!" said Frayne, in a low voice. "I knowed you was strong, Toff, but that was splendid! You saved Wally's life, you did."

"Oh, don't!" said Talbot, laughing. "I'm getting fed up, kid. I shall begin to wish soon that I had let him drop."

"All get you to show me that left-hand bowling of yours at St. Jim's," said Wally. "Jolly useful thing to be able to bowl with the left. Do you like the pie?"

"Topping!"

"Good! I've got some cakes here to follow—Miss Edith makes them herself. Jolly clever girl, Glyn's sister. She doesn't want a vote; she makes cakes," said Wally. "That's the sort."

"Eur, ear!"

The pie was disposed of, and Wally and Curly rushed away for a supply of ginger-beer to wash down the cakes. Frayne and Talbot were left alone. Jim stole a look at the handsome, grave face of the Shell fellow.

"Talbot started, and made an irritable gesture.  
 "I wish you wouldn't call me that," he said. "Why can't you call me Talbot?"

"I'd do anything I could to please you now," said Jim.  
 "It's a'd to get out of old 'abits, but I'll try. Toff—I mean Talbot. I want'er say somethin'." You've saved my pal's

life. Wally's been a splendid pal to me; but for 'im I'd never 'ave been able to stay at the school. Master Tom brought me there—it was kind of him—but, you see, he's in the Shell, and he couldn't 'elp me much in the Third, and lots of the kids was down on me, 'cause I didn't speak like the rest, and—and—y'ou savvy?"

"I quite understand," said Talbot.  
"But Wally palled on to me at once, and stood by me like the real brick he is," said Joe. "If Master Wally 'ad been killed, I think I'd 'ave wanted to be killed, too, I should 'ave felt a sick about it. You saved him, Toff—I mean, Talbot. I—I'm sorry!"

"Sorry I saved him?" smiled Talbot.  
"No. Sorry for 'aving suspected you," said Joe. "Yes, I did. When Mr. Selby's coins was taken I did. You 'ad told me you was at St. Jim's on the straight, but when them coins disappeared, and ain't turned up since, I couldn't 'elp suspecting that you was on the old lay, Toff, and that you 'ad done it."

"Indeed?"  
"It made me feel 'orrible uneasy, though you told me you 'adn't done it," said Frayne. "I've been feelin' beastly about it ever since. But—but now I know it's all right. A fellow 'ad not would do as you've done this afternoon couldn't be a thief!"

Talbot compressed his lips.  
"It's queer wot's become of Mr. Selby's collection," went on Frayne. "But I believe now that some kid has 'idden them to pay him out—they ain't stolen. I 'ope they'll turn up in time. Anyway, I don't believe you 'ad a 'and in it. And if you did, and I know it, I couldn't give you away, arter what you've done for my pal. If you 'ad saved my life I shouldn't feel like that; but it was Wally, you see, my best pal, and so I waster tell you I'm sorry I didn't trust you, Toff."

"That's all right," said Talbot. "Don't talk about it. It's dangerous even to speak about those things here."  
"O'erlight. Only I wanted to tell you that."  
Wally and Carly turned with the ginger-beer, and no more was said. But Frayne's words seemed to have troubled Talbot. There was a cloud on his brow now, as if the gratitude and faith of the fag weighed somehow on his mind. He gave the signal for the cricketers to turn out.

The sun was sinking now, but there was ample light for play. In any case, the St. Jim's team were safe on the result of the first innings. But Tom Merry & Co. wanted to finish the match. Had a big score been wanted, the fact that Talbot was "crooked" for batting would have been a great misfortune to the side; but as the matter stood, it was not serious. Tom Merry assigned him for last man in, and he was pretty certain that last man would not be required.

Tom Merry opened the innings with Figgins. It was quite on the cards that the pair of them would get all the runs that were wanted. But it did not come off. Figgins was clean bowled by Yorke, and in the next over Tom was caught out by Lord Conway in the slips. Redfern brought the score up to fifteen before he fell, and then Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn piled on runs. Glyn was caught out, and Blake chuckled:

"Four down for twenty-three! What price us?"  
"Y'as, watah! Two wanted to tie!" grinned Arthur Augustus.  
"Few-waps I had better go in and put them out of their misery, Tom Merry!"  
Tom Merry laughed.  
"You can go in if you like, Gussy. A duck's egg won't matter to us now."  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus; and he joined the Cornstalk at the wickets.

Arthur Augustus took two for the first ball, and there was a cheer, not so much for the swell of St. Jim's, but for the fact that St. Jim's had now tied. If all the rest of the wickets went down for nothing they could not be beaten now. But they were not likely to go down for nothing. Arthur Augustus resolved to finish the matter with a boundary hit, but unfortunately his mighty swipe missed the ball, and the rattle of his balls followed.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, and he came off.  
"Man in!" said Tom Merry. "Go in and finish, Blake."  
"What-ho!" said Blake, swinging his bat.  
The ball came down to Blake, and he snicked it away for a single. Blake and Kangaroo crossed the pitch, and rested on their laurels. They had topped the score now, and St. Jim's had won by six wickets.

"Hurrah!"  
"What price us?" chortled Blake.  
"Hip-pip!"  
"Huw-way, deah boys! Conway, old man, what price fellows on our innings—what?"

Lord Conway laughed good-humouredly.  
"You've beaten us," he said. "You are hotter stuff than I suspected. Congratulations!"

"That's vewy decent of you, Conway, deah boy! We should have put you out of your misery soonah—without this innings at all, in fact, if Tom Merry had put me on to bowl. I had a vewy special yorker I was goin' to surprise you with."

"We should have been surprised if you had taken any wickets with it," agreed Lord Conway genially.

"Woolly, Conway—"  
"Oh, ring off, Gus!" said Wally. "We've won, and I'll excuse Tom Merry for not putting me in the team now, though he was an ass."

"Thanks!" said Tom, laughing. "We've won without your batting and without Gussy's bowling, so we can pat ourselves on the back, I think."

And the St. Jim's cricketers did pat themselves on the back. They had good reason to be satisfied with their performance. They had reason to be satisfied with their performance.

CHAPTER 11.

Many Guests.

DUCK was falling over Glyn House, and the St. Jim's crowd were streaming off to get back to the school for calling-over. But Tom Merry & Co. were not going. The match had ended a little earlier than had been anticipated; but the team were staying at Glyn House for the evening.

Manners, who had been busy with his camera during the match, borrowed Bernard Glyn's dark-room for development purposes. When Tom Merry & Co. came in to dinner they were surprised to find Wally & Co. still on the scene. The fags of the Third had not gone home.

"What are you kids doing here?" demanded Tom Merry. "You've missed calling-over."

Wally grinned serenely.  
"Blow calling-over!" he replied. "We're out for the night, my infant. Couldn't go home and leave Gussy without anybody to look after him."

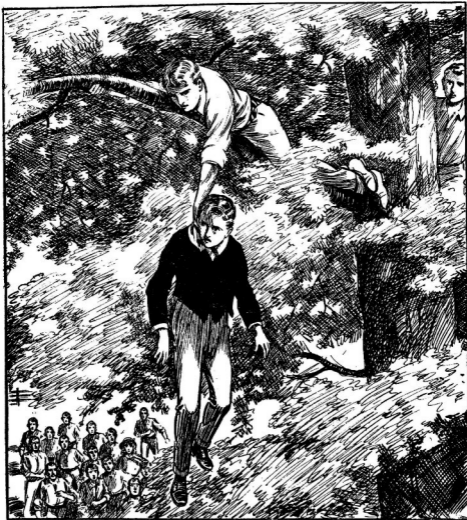
"Woolly, you cheeky young wascal—"  
"Now, don't—you begin, Gus!" implored Wally.  
"But you'll get into a row with Selby," said Talbot.  
"No fear! I told Conway we wanted to stay, and got him to ask Glyn," explained Wally. "Mr. Glyn telephoned to the Head—wonderful invention the telephone, ain't

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Talbot worked his way backwards towards the trunk, holding the fag by the collar and supporting him. That grasp of iron held Wally suspended in mid-air. The fag's eyes were closed now—the horror of the position had been too much for him, and he had fainted. (See Chapter 8.)

it? Never mind old Selby. We sha'n't have any prep this evening, but he'll be able to rag us as usual in first lesson to-morrow. So here we are, the four of us. Of course I wasn't going to stay without my pals."

"No fear!" said Jameson. "We wouldn't have let you!"

"Wouldn't you?" said Wally warmly. "I'd jolly well like to know how a New House bounder would have stopped me!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Jameson.

"If you want a thick ear, Jimmy—"

"I want all you can give me, fathead!"

"Then I'll jolly well—"

"Are you going to start a fight in Mr. Glyn's dining-room?" demanded Tom Merry severely.

"Ahem!" said Wally, remembering that he was not in the Form-room at St. Jim's. "Behave yourself, Jameson! What do you mean by ragging now? If you don't mind your p's and q's I'll never bring you out again!"

"Bow-wow!" said the New House fag disrespectfully.

Wally & Co. sat down cheerfully at the long table. Talbot's face had clouded at the sight of Frayne there, but it had passed in a moment, and he did not look at the waif of the Third again. The St. Jim's cricketers were in great spirits, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was looking worried. He consulted to Blake the cause of his inward trouble.

"It's simply rotten!" he said.

"Rot!" said Blake. "Why, that soup was a treat! We don't get soup like that at St. Jim's."

"I wasn't alludus' to the soup, deah boy."

"Well, if you mean the fish, I can only say you're an ass! Would you rather have Yarmouth blasters than whitebait?" demanded Blake witheringly.

"The whitebait is weally toppin'. And, in any case, I trust you do not suppose that I would pass disparagin'!"

remarks on the grub. I was alludin' to my attiah. It's wotten, and it's all your fault."

"Your waistcoat?" asked Blake, looking at it. "It's a bit loud; but I don't see that it's my fault."

"I am alludin' to the fact that I am in Etons."

"Did you want to dine in your flannels?"

"You uttah ass! Of course not! But if you had not objected to my packin' some more things, I should have brought my evenin' clobber. You were perfectly well aware that they dress for dinnah heah, and you wouldn't let me put my clobber in the bag—"

"Oh, is that all that's worryin' you?" said Blake cheerfully. "Never mind! I'll turn that into an evening-waistcoat for you, if you like."

And Blake approached his knife to Arthur Augustus's chest. The swell of St. Jim's started back in alarm.

"Weally, Blake, I twust you are not goin' to play any kids' tricks at Mr. Glyn's hospitable board!" he muttered.

"But if it worries you to have your shirt-front hidden, it would be quite easy—"

"Fray wing off, you sillay ass!" And Arthur Augustus did not confide any more to Blake of the trouble that weighed on his mind with regard to his "clobber."

However, in spite of the fact that he was not in evening-clothes, Arthur Augustus succeeded in making a very good dinner.

After dinner Arthur Augustus obliged with a tenor solo in the drawing-room. Nothing would have induced Arthur Augustus not to give that solo. As he remarked to Tom Merry, it was only due to Mr. Glyn after his magnificent hospitality. Arthur Augustus was very particular about his accompaniment, and he declined Figgins's offer to accompany him, although Figgins declared that he could play quite well with one hand. Miss Glyn's attention was occupied at the moment by Mr. Wodger—it often was. Talbot offered in his modest way.

"Bai Jove! You play, deah boy?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes, a little bit."

"You seem to be able to do everythin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Quite an all-wound chawctah, bai Jove! What about your arm?"

"That's quite all right now."

"Vewy well. I'll take you on twust."

And Talbot sat down on the music-stool.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's solo did not suffer from the accompaniment; but Monty Lowther remarked, sotto voce, that the accompaniment suffered very much from Arthur Augustus's solo, a remark that was generally endorsed.

"So you are a musician, too?" said Miss Glyn to Talbot, with a smile. "I shall insist upon you playing us something. Look over my music."

"I wogard that chap as a wondah," Arthur Augustus murmured to Tom Merry, as Talbot began to play a difficult piece of Raff. "He plays weerkably well. What did you think of the solo, deah boys?"

"Rippin'!" said Monty Lowther.

"You weally think so?"

"Yes! I thought you were going to rip the ceiling!"

"You—you—you—" Words failed the indignant tenor.

"You're a tenor, I think?" asked Lowther thoughtfully.

"Yaas, you ass!"

"Ought a tenor to sing so low?"

"So low?"

"Solo," explained Lowther.

"Pway keep your wotten puns for a more suitable occasion, you ass—"

"Shurrup!" murmured Tom Merry. "Talbot's playing toppingly! This is worth hearing!"

"Yess, watah! I weally think—"

"Shurrup!"

Talbot joined the Shell fellows when he had finished. Tom Merry made room for him beside him.

"Is there anything you can't do, Talbot?" he asked, with a laugh.

"Yes," said Talbot, with a sudden gloomy look.

"I'd like to know what it is, then," said Tom.

"But Talbot did not reply to that. He sat with a slight shade upon his face, in silence, and Tom wondered what he was thinking of. It would have startled him if he could have guessed.

That evening wound up with a cinematograph entertainment in the big dining-room, managed by Bernard Glyn.

Among the schoolboy inventor's other hobbies was cinematography, and he gave a series of pictures of St. Jim's which he had taken himself. There was a chapkin in the audience as Arthur Augustus was seen on the screen, chasing his silk hat across the quadrangle. Then Fatty Wynn appeared, standing outside the school shop and decouring tarts from a bag.

"Life-like, ain't it?" grinned Figgins.

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"Makes me feel quite hungry," murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was considerably past their usual bedtime when Tom Merry & Co. said good-night to their kind host, and departed for their sleeping quarters. Wally & Co. had a room to themselves on the same floor as Glyn's companions. The juniors chatted for a while with Glyn in his room, and then dispersed to their various quarters. Kangaroo yawned as he came into the room he shared with Talbot.

"Well, I shall sleep to-night," he remarked. "It's been a ripping day, Talbot."

"Topping!" said Talbot.

"You don't look very chippy, though," the Cornstalk remarked, with a curious look at the new junior.

"I'm a bit tired," said Talbot.

"No wonder. You've worked harder than the rest of us in the match," chuckled Kangaroo, "to say nothing of your exploits as a heroic rescuer."

"Oh, cheeze it!"

The juniors turned in. They were all pretty tired after their long day, and there was no doubt that they would sleep well. Talbot was quickly in bed, and Kangaroo turned off the light and turned in.

"This is comfy," he remarked. "I say, Talbot, did you get much cricket when you were in Australia?"

No reply.

"Talbot, old man!"

Silence.

"Asleep already? Well, I sha'n't be long after you," yawned Kangaroo.

And in two minutes after his head was on the pillow the Cornstalk was sound asleep. But Talbot was not sleeping.

## CHAPTER 12.

### In the Dark Hours.

"MASTER WALLY!"

Joe Frayne sat up in bed.

All was darkness in the room where the four fags were sleeping.

Two o'clock had rung out from somewhere, faintly, from the distance, the sound floating in at the open window. It was a still, calm, starry night.

"Master Wally!"

There was no reply from D'Arcy minor. He was sleeping soundly. A faint snore came from Jameson, in the next bed. Curly Gibson was deep in slumber, too. Only one of the four beds had a wakeful occupant, and that was Joe Frayne's.

But little Joe was very wakeful.

"Master Wally!" he repeated, raising his voice a little.

But Wally was tired that day, and he slept still. Joe Frayne hesitated some moments, and then he stepped out of bed, crossed to Wally, and shook him. D'Arcy minor came out of the land of dreams with a start.

"Grook!" he murmured. "Lemme alone! Shurrup! 'Tain't risin'-bell!"

"Wally!"

"Hallo!" said Wally, broad awake now, and he sat up so suddenly that his head came into contact with Frayne's with a sharp concussion.

"Ow!" gasped Wally.

"Quiet!" whispered Joe.

Wally rubbed his head ruefully.

"You sillay ass!" he murmured. "Is that you, Frayne?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothin', I tope," muttered Frayne. "I—I ain't been to sleep, Master Wally."

Wally stared at him in the darkness. There was a faint starry glimmer in at the window, and he could just make out the form of the fag beside his bed.

"Nothing wrong?" he asked. "What's the matter with you, Joe? I should have thought you could sleep. I'm as tired as a dog. Not seedy?"

"No."

"Then why don't you go to sleep?" demanded the puzzled Wally.

"I—I can't."

"Oh, rot! You don't mean to say that you've woke me up just because you can't go to sleep yourself?" demanded Wally indignantly. "I was just having a lovely dream! I thought I'd got old Selby down on the floor of the Form-room, and was laying into him with a ruler. Go to bed, you duffer."

"All right, Master Wally."

"Hold on! What's the matter?" said Wally. "Don't hurry! You haven't seen a ghost, I suppose, you young chump?"

"Quiet!"

"What am I to be quiet for?"

"I—I thought I 'eard something," whispered Frayne.

"Heard something? Oh, you've been dreaming!"

"I ain't! I ain't closed my eyes this blessed night!"

said Frayne, in the same strange, hushed voice.

"Why haven't you?"

"I can't."

"There's something wrong with you," said Wally. "You had too much dinner. I saw you tucking into it, young Frayne, and I knew you'd have the giddy nightmare."

"I tell you I ain't sleep' a wink!"

"Then you ought to have."

"I think I 'eard somethin'." S'pose there was burglars in the 'ouse?" whispered Frayne.

D'Arcy minor snorted.

"S'pose your grandmother!" he replied. "Burglars! With about fifty or sixty people stayin' in the house! Rats!"

"You know there's a lot of oof in the safe—I've 'eard about it—thousand and thousand quid's worth of stuff there!" said Joe. "I—I ain't been able to sleep for thinkin' about it, Master Wally."

"More duffer, you! What business have you got to be thinking about Glyn's pater's gold mugs and things?"

"I mean, s'posin' there was a burglary?"

"Why should there be a burglary to-night more than any other night?" said Wally impatiently. "Have you seen any Bill Sikes or Raffles hanging about the house?"

Joe Frayne did not reply to that question.

"It's your tummy," said Wally comfortingly. "Go back to bed."

"I thought I 'eard a footstep in the passage houthide," Wally laughed.

"Well, you young duffer, if a burglar came, he'd go for the safe in the library—he wouldn't come to the top of the house to burgle our trousers and Tom Mercy's cricket-bat."

"I can't sleep for thinkin' about it. P'raps it was fancy," said Frayne. "But I thought I 'eard somethin'—a step in the passage—"

"Rot! There's nobody in the passage but ourselves—all the rooms are taken up with St. Jim's chaps," said Wally. "None of them are likely to turn out at this time of night, I suppose!"

"I 'opo not."

"You hope not! Blessed if you're not talking in giddy riddles. Why should any of the fellows get up in the middle of the night?"

"Course, 'tain't likely," said Frayne. "But I can't 'elp feelin' uneasy, somehow. But arter this afternoon, 'tain't possible—no, 'tain't possible." The wail of the Third seemed to be speaking to himself rather than to Wally.

"After this afternoon!" repeated Wally, more and more annoyed. "I don't know what you're driving at, Joe. Make it a bit plainer."

"I—I—can't! But it ain't possible—it ain't possible; only I can't 'elp feelin'— And then I believe I 'eard a sound."

"Jimmy snoring, I expect."

"It was in the passage—"

"Well, a rat, then."

"P'raps! I 'ope it was only a rat. I—I— Look 'ere, Master Wally, git up, and let's 'ave a look round."

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in exasperation. "Here, I'm as tired as a dog, and you want me to get up and go burglar-hunting! You silly young ass, I tell you there can't be any burglars. They wouldn't come up here after cricket-bats. And there's an electric-alarm to the safe; and Glyn says it couldn't be cracked, anyway."

"Yes, it could, if—the right man got to work on it."

"What right man? Look here, if you mean that you've seen any suspicious party hanging round the house, say so; that's different."

Joe Payne was silent.

"But I'll get up, if you like," growled Wally. "I suppose you won't let me go to sleep, now you're in a state of nerves. Blessed if I can understand you. You ain't a funk, as a rule."

"I ain't a funk now," said Joe. "I ain't afeard. Only if Mr. Glyn was robbed, arter he's been so good to all of us—"

"I'd chip in, like a bird, if that was so," said Wally. "But it's all rot."

"I 'ope it is," muttered Frayne. "Cause I couldn't say nothin'—I couldn't—arter—"

"What's that?"

"Nothin', Master Wally. But—but it come into my 'ead—and—and I couldn't sleep. I've been wide awake ever since you went to bed, and it's past two now."

"Well, you're a dummy," said Wally, who had slipped out of bed now, and was drawing on his garments, "a blessed dummy! But we'll have a look in the passage, if you like."

He opened the door of the room quietly. He did not want to wake up anybody else in the house, owing to Frayne's unaccountable fear of imaginary burglars.

At one end of the corridor was a broad landing; at the other, a big window, through which the starlight glimmered. The passage was silent and deserted. Wally was feeling exasperated, and not without reason.

All the rooms of that corridor were occupied by St. Jim's fellows, and Wally felt how unreasonable it was to suppose that a cracksmen, if he came, would penetrate to that part of the house at all.

The loot was far away, safely locked up in the library, and that apartment was too distant for a sound there to reach the bedrooms.

"Well, there's no burglars in sight," granted Wally.

"No, there ain't," said Frayne, peering into the passage.

"Come downstairs with me, Master Wally."

"Downstairs? Both?"

"Let's 'ave a look in the library."

"Boah!" repeated Wally, with emphasis. "Suppose somebody wakes up, and hears us, and asks us what we're doing downstairs in the middle of the night? If you want to go down, you can jolly well go alone."

"I can't! If anything's 'appened, I'd want somebody with me, to prove I didn't 'ave nothin' to do with it," muttered Frayne.

"You utter idiot!" said Wally crossly. "Do you think anybody could suspect you— Oh, you're too fatheaded for words!"

"You wouldn't," said Frayne. "But some night—the perlice, for instance, when they knowed as I came from Angel Alley. I mean, if I went down alone. You come with me—"

"Look here," said Wally, closing the door. "you're not going down, and I'm not going down. It's nerves, that's what it is. I can just imagine Mr. Glyn's chivvy, if he woke up, and found us prowling about his house at two o'clock in the morning. I can't understand you. You've got no reason to suppose that a burglar would come to-night more than any other night; and if you heard anything in this passage, it couldn't possibly have been a burglar, for he wouldn't come up here."

"You—you don't understand—"

"No, I don't," snapped Wally. "Get back to bed!"

"Let's look in the next room, anyway," urged Frayne.

"Eh! That's Kangaroo's room. Do you think Bill Sikes has come to steal Kangaroo's cricket-bat?" snorted Wally.

"The Toff's there—I I mean—"

"You mean Talbot? Yes; and they're both fast asleep. They haven't been hearing any giddy footsteps through over-eating themselves," said Wally crushingly.

"Let's ask them, anyway."

"Oh, all right!" growled Wally. "You won't be happy till you get it, I suppose. Come on—and if they chuck a boot at you, serve you right!"

They stepped out of the room into the passage. Joe Frayne cautiously opened the next door. All was dark within.

"You fellows asleep?" whispered Frayne.

There was no reply; only the sound of steady breathing.

"Of course, they're asleep," growled Wally. "Don't wake them up! They'll think we're potty."

"Old on; can you 'ear both of them?"

"Do you think one of them has jumped out of the window or has vanished up the chimney?" asked Wally sarcastically.

Frayne did not reply. He stepped into the room. The starlight glittered at the window, and faintly showed the two beds. Both of them were occupied. Frayne soon ascertained that Kangaroo was breathing deeply, evidently fast asleep; and a gleam of starlight fell on Talbot's face, showing his eyes closed.

"Come out, fathead; you'll wake them!"

Frayne stepped back into the corridor, and closed the door softly. He seemed relieved now that he had seen the two Shell fellows in bed.

"It's all right, after all," he murmured. "He's there."

"They're there, you mean."

"Ye-es, that's wot I mean."

"Come back to bed, duffer."

The fags returned to their room. Wally turned in, feeling decidedly bad tempered. He was sleepy, and his bare feet were cold.

"Now go to bed, and don't dream any more," he growled.

"I ain't dreamed—"

# ANSWERS

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

NEXT WEDNESDAY—"THE HIDDEN HAND!"

"Rate!"

And Wally closed his eyes, and was soon asleep again; and Joe Frayne, relieved of the secret uneasiness that had oppressed him, dropped asleep also, and did not wake again till the morning sunshine was streaming in at the window.

### CHAPTER 13.

#### Startling News!

**T**OM MERRY & CO. came down in the morning bright and cheery.

A merry party gathered round the breakfast-table. Many of the guests were not down yet, as Tom Merry & Co. were breakfasting pretty early, in order to be at St. Jim's in time for the first lesson. But Lord Conway and Captain Cleveland, and several more of the house cricketers, were down to see the victorious eleven off.

After breakfast, the big Daimler came round to carry the juniors to St. Jim's. The bags were brought out; Talbot going to fetch his bag, and carefully placing it in the car. Joe Frayne looked in a rather peculiar way at Talbot and at his bag. For a moment his uneasiness of the previous night seemed to return to him.

But his fear of burglary was apparently unfounded. Evidently no signs of burglars had been seen in the house, or there would have been an alarm.

"Bai Jove! There wasn't he spare fur fags in the cab," Arthur Augustus remarked to his minor. "If you are comin' in, pwey don't tward on my feet."

"Rats!" said Wally. "You shouldn't have such whopping feet."

"Why, you young wasal—"  
"Lots of room, if we squeeze a bit," said Jameson, plunging in. "Stick those bags under the seats out of the way. Whose blessed bag is this?"

"Mine," said Talbot quickly. "Leave it alone; I'll move it."

"Oh, I'll shift it!" said Jameson, dragging at the bag. "Great Scott! How many pairs of boots have you got in that bag, you Shell bouncer? Blessed if I can lift it!"

"I tell you I'll do it!" exclaimed Talbot, and he angrily pushed the fag away, and took hold of the bag, sliding it under the seat.

Jameson stared at him. Talbot was such a good-tempered fellow that that sudden ebullition of temper was surprising.

"Look here; you jolly well mind whom you're shoving with your School-House paws!" exclaimed Jameson wrathfully. "I've a jolly good mind—"

"Sorry!" said Talbot, regaining his good humour. "I—I had a twinge in my arm just then—"

"Oh, all right," said Jameson, mollified at once, remembering how that arm had saved his chum the day before. "I forgot that, old man! You can shove me again, if you like."

Talbot laughed. His laugh died away as he saw Joe Frayne's eyes fastened upon him with a startled look in them. "You're mighty pertickler about that bag, Toff," muttered Frayne.

Talbot did not seem to hear the remark. He turned towards Mr. Glyn and Miss Edith, who came to the car to say good-bye to their young guests.

Cordial good-byes were exchanged, and Mr. Glyn shook hands with Talbot twice over, and Miss Edith did the same. The new junior had made an excellent impression upon Glyn's people.

"Remember, we shall always be delighted to see you, Talbot," Mr. Glyn said, in his hearty way. "That applies to all my boy's friends, of course, but especially to you, my dear lad."

"You are very kind, sir," said Talbot, in a low voice.

"Mind you bring Talbot over again soon, Bernard," said Miss Edith.

"What-ho!" said Glyn cheerily. "I'll jank him over by the cars if he won't come. Now, then, here we go! Ta-ta! By-by! Be good!"

And the car rolled away down the drive. The juniors inside

it were pretty closely packed, owing to the addition of the four fags to the party, but they were in very lively spirits.

"What a ripping time we've had!" said Tom Merry. "Not only winning the match, but it's been ripping all round. You belong to a family of bricks, Glyn, old chap!"

"Hear, hear!" said all the juniors together.

"The pater and Mops are awfully taken with you, Talbot, old fellow," said Glyn. "If I were Wodger, I should be jealous, by gum! That's what comes of being a giddy bloke!"

"Oh, don't!" said Talbot. "Your father has been too kind to me. I should like to feel that I deserved it!"

"Well, don't you?" said Glyn, with a stare. "Blessed if I ever heard of such a beastly modest bouncer! Didn't you save young Wally's neck? It wasn't worth the trouble, I dare say, but you did it!"

"Did it like a brick?" said Wally. "And he can keep my place in the Junior Eleven now for keeps!"

The car arrived at St. Jim's in good time for morning lessons, and Tom Merry & Co. dispersed to their various Form-rooms. The other fellows who had been at Glyn House the previous afternoon had spread the story of Talbot's heroism, and all the school knew it; and when the Shell came out after third lesson, Talbot received a good many congratulations and complimentary remarks.

Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth came up and shook hands with him; even Coates of the Fifth had a kindly word; and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, spoke to him in warm commendation. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was equally kind. Soon afterwards Talbot was called to the Head's study, and he made a grimace to Tom Merry as he went.

"I shall begin to wish soon that I had let young D'Arcy break his neck," he murmured.

Tom Merry laughed.

"You must bear your blushing honours—grin and bear 'em!" he remarked. "Naturally, the Head wants to have his whack!"

Dr. Holmes received Talbot very kindly.

"I have been told of what happened yesterday, Talbot," he said. "You are probably getting tired of the subject by this time—it is only natural for a very brave lad to be modest—but I must say a word. It was your courageous help to me that first caused you to come to this school, and I congratulate myself now upon having aided you to carry out your wish. You have saved the life of your schoolfellow, at a terrible risk to yourself. You are a noble lad, and a credit to the school. Well, well, I will not say any more, excepting that I am very glad I met you that night, and that you came to this school in consequence!"

And Dr. Holmes shook hands cordially with the junior and dismissed him.

Talbot's face was moody as he went down the passage.

"What are they all so decent to me for?" he muttered.

"If they only knew what a worm I feel!—what a rotten worm—Bah! What's the good of thinking of it? My way was fixed for me before I could speak, and it's too late to think of escaping from it now—too late—too late!"

He almost groaned as he said it.

But his face was quite clear as he came out into the quadrangle. The strange junior had a wonderful power of self-command.

A group of juniors stood outside the School House, with startled looks on their faces.

Bernard Glyn was talking excitedly. He had just come out of the house. The crowd round Glyn was thickening. Evidently something very unusual was "on the carpet." Talbot joined the crowd.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Glyn's just been telephoned by his pater—"

"I phoned to the pater, and then he told me the news," explained Glyn. "I was asking him about the cakes Mops is going to send, and it nearly knocked me over when he told me his news in return, I can tell you!"

"Anything happened to the cricketers?"

"The cricketers? No; it's burglary!"

"Phew! At your house?"

"Yes. The safe's been cleared out!"

"Not in the daylight!" exclaimed Talbot, with a look of astonishment.

"Last night, ass!"

"But—but we were all there last night," said Talbot.

"Do you mean to say there was a burglary, with the house crowded with guests?"

Bernard Glyn nodded.

"That's just what I mean to say. It beats me. The fellow must have had the check of old Nick, burgling a house crammed with people!"

"Yas, wathab!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's

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**CHUCKLES, 1/2.**

extraordinary! I wish I had woke up and heard the fearful wotbah!"

"I wish I had!" growled Glyn. "The pater says it's an awful big haul—most of the gold plate that was easy to carry, my sister's jewels, a bundle of bonds figuring out at six thousand pounds, and other things. Altogether, the villain has got away with a good fifteen thousand pounds!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"What a rotten shame!" exclaimed Blako. How was it done! It couldn't have been known before we left this morning!"

"That's the extraordinary part of it," said Glyn. "If the safe had been busted, of course, it would have been discovered first thing this morning. But it wasn't—it was opened: There's only one key, and my pater had that, and has it still. The safe was cracked, and the man that did it must have been a regular demon. Goodness knows how it was done! But he did it—and shut the safe up after him, and didn't leave a single trace behind to show he'd been there. If the pater hadn't had to go to the safe this morning, he wouldn't have discovered it yet. But he went there, and, of course, missed at once the things that have been taken!"

"I hope they'll catch him."

"Yaas, wathah?"

"They've got the police there now, of course," said Glyn. "The pater's going to try to get Ferrers Locke, the detective, to take up the case. I've got to go home this afternoon. I want you to come with me, Talbot!"

"Certainly!" said Talbot. "I don't quite see what use—"

"Don't you remember, you saw somebody looking in at the library window when I was showing you the safe?" said Glyn. "The police ought to know that. I've told my pater on the 'phone, and he's told me to bring all who were with me at the time—"

"That's us, too," said Tom Merry.

"Yes. We'd better have lunch at Glyn House, and not stay for dinner here," said Glyn. "The sooner the quicker, you know. I'll go and speak to the Head now."

Glyn ran into the house. The crowd of fellows were left in a buzz. The news was very startling, and very disconcerting. Every fellow felt the keenest sympathy towards the old gentleman who had been kindness itself to them the day before.

"It's rather awkward," Monty Lowther remarked. "The police may suspect some of the guests in the house if they can't find the cracksmen."

"I hardly think so," said Talbot, with a shake of the head. "From Glyn's account, this seems to have been the work of an extra good professional!"

"We'll get the bikes out," said Tom Merry. "No good losing time."

As the Terrible Three went towards the bicycle-shed Joe Frayne caught Tom Merry by the sleeve. The *Isag's* face was white.

"Master Tom! Hold on a minute!"

"What is it, kid?" said Tom. "I'm in a hurry!"

"Only a minute—"

"Get the machines out, you fellows—Glyn's, too, and Talbot's."

"Right-ho!" said Lowther; and he ran on with Manners.

"Now, what is it, Frayne?" asked Tom Merry. "Buck up!"

"I—I 'eard somethin' just now!" stammered Frayne. "Is it true that there's been a burglary at Glyn's place?"

"Yes, I'm sorry to say."

"Last night, while we were all there?"

"Yes."

"My 'eavens!" gasped Frayne.

Tom Merry looked at him curiously. The waif of the Third was looking utterly horror-stricken. Tom did not quite see why Frayne of the Third should take Mr. Glyn's loss so much to heart. He was hardly on intimate terms with Glyn of the Shell. Tom himself was feeling keenly enough about it, but not to the extent that Joe Frayne appeared to be feeling, to judge by his looks.

But there was no time to waste on Frayne. Lowther and Manners were running the five bikes round the house. Frayne stood as if rooted to the ground, looking dazed, and he did not speak again.

"Here, take one of these bikes, Tommy," said Lowther. "I can't wheel three very well."

And Tom Merry took his machine. Talbot had gone into the house, but he came out again as Bernard Glyn appeared. "I've told the Head," said Glyn. "He says we're to go. Come on!"

And in a minute more the five Shell fellows were cycling rapidly towards Glyn House.

## CHAPTER 14

## The Clue.

G LYN HOUSE was in a state of commotion. The servants were looking startled and scared, and the guests very much concerned. Lord Conway's team was playing a visiting team from the county town that day, and the cricketers were all in to lunch when the juniors arrived. There was a policeman in the hall, and Miss Edith, who met the juniors with a very grave face, told them that Mr. Glyn was in the library with Inspector Skeat from Ryleombe.

"Go in at once," she said. "Inspector Skeat is waiting to see you."

"Right-ho, Mops," said Glyn affectionately. And the juniors hurried to the library. Mr. Glyn, who was looking very much perturbed, greeted them kindly enough. Inspector Skeat of Rylcombe looked at them and took out a fat notebook.

"These are the boys who were with my son yesterday, Mr. Skeat," said Mr. Glyn. "It seems that Bernard showed them the safe—"

Glyn looked very contrite.

"I've often shown it to the fellows, dad," he said, while Mr. Skeat shook his head solemnly.

"I don't blame you, my boy," said the millionaire. "I know you have done so, and I never had any objection. I relied upon that safe absolutely. There was no harm in doing so; it was the safe I relied upon, not the concealment of it. But it happened unfortunately yesterday that you were seen showing it to Merry."

"I was showing it to Talbot," said Glyn. "The others have seen it before. But Talbot's a new chap, you know. Of course, I couldn't think anybody was spying in, in broad daylight. I thought Talbot was dreaming when he said somebody was looking in at the window."

"Yet that was very probably the person who afterwards rifled the safe," said Mr. Glyn. "Of course, it is possible that it was only an inquisitive servant. I hope Talbot will be able to give Inspector Skeat a description of the person."

Talbot looked doubtful.

"I caught the merest glimpse of him—," he began.

"Yes!" said Inspector Skeat quickly. "Him!" He made a note. "It was a man?"

"Oh, yes, it was a man!" said Talbot.

"Then it will be necessary only to question the men-servants on the subject, to clear up whether it was a member of the household staff," said the inspector. "That is one point. What was he like, young sir? Think before you speak."

"A little man," said Talbot reflectively. "I really didn't see him properly. I doubt if I could identify him if I met him. All I remember clearly of his face was that he had something on his nose. It looked like a red bump. I remember that."

"None of the household staff here answer to that description," said Mr. Glyn.

"Then this is undoubtedly a clue," said the inspector, with satisfaction. "We have it established by this young gentleman's evidence that a stranger was within the grounds at that time."

"There were a good many countryfolk in, to see the cricket," said Mr. Glyn. "All who cared to come in were allowed to do so."

"But not to prow round the house looking in at the window," said the inspector.

"Some merely inquisitive person, perhaps."

"Quite possible. At the same time, it may have been a spy of the burglar, or the burglar himself, taking advantage of the fact that strangers were admitted yesterday, in order to post himself about the lay of the land here. Unluckily, if that is the case, he had the opportunity of seeing your son show these young gentlemen the location of the safe. But that is not all—it is a distinct clue. You say the man was little, and had a red bump on his nose, Master Talbot!"

"Yes, I am certain of that."

"You did not notice his eyes?"

Talbot smiled slightly.

"I hadn't time to notice anything, he whipped out of sight so quickly, sir. I couldn't say more than that they were dark. I'm pretty certain of that."

"Black, perhaps?" suggested the inspector.

"Very likely, sir; though I couldn't be certain. But certainly dark."

"I fancy that settles it," said the inspector, closing the notebook with a satisfied snap. "This young gentleman has been of the utmost service, Mr. Glyn. Of course, he doesn't know it, but he has practically given me a description of one of the best-known cracksmen in London—Jerry Hutton, who's done a stretch of three years for this very thing, and only came out three months ago. He was supposed to have cleared out for America; but I fancy the truth is he's been lying."

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low, looking out for a fat job all the time. He seems to have found one here."

"By Jove!" murmured Tom Merry, squeezing Talbot's arm. "You're always the right chap in the right place at the right time, Talbot. None of us saw that fellow at the window."

"If Talbot's description fits a well-known criminal, it is certainly a very valuable piece of information," said Mr. Glyn, with a grateful glance at the junior. "This Jerry Hutton—is he a skilful cracksmen?"

"About the only man who could have done it, I should say," replied the inspector. "Why, he's known from Land's End to John o' Groat's for his skill in that line. It was a wonderful job, that—the inspector made a gesture towards the safe—"wonderful! If you wasn't certain you had the key all the time, sir, I should say—"

"I am quite certain of that," interrupted Mr. Glyn. "The key was on my watchchain when I awoke this morning, as usual, and I always keep it under my pillow at night."

"Well, that seems to settle it, I must say. The safe was cracked; and how he did it is a mystery. There ain't more than two cracksmen in England could have done it, and Jerry Hutton is one of them," said Inspector Skeat. "There was a third, but he's dead. He was called Captain Crow. Only two who could have done it, and one's Jimmy Hutton."

"And the other?" asked Mr. Glyn curiously.

"Captain Crow's son—a mere kid," said the inspector.

"He was an artful kid, and he used to go on the lay with his worthy parent. He was known by reputation, you see, but not by sight, and he disappeared after his father's death."

"Tain't that young scoundrel at this time; it's Jerry Hutton right enough; and if we lay him by the heels—which I don't doubt—it will be thanks to this young gentleman."

"And the inspector took his leave at once. Having obtained that clue, he was anxious to be at work. Mr. Glyn put his hand on Talbot's shoulder.

"My dear boy," he said, "I cannot say how grateful I am. If my property is recovered, and there certainly seems a good chance of it now, it will be owing to you. With so good and complete a description, the police can hardly fail to find this man's lair. You have relieved my mind very much. Let us go to lunch."

Once more Talbot was the hero at the table. As Tom Merry remarked, he seemed to be always doing somebody a good turn. But Talbot was very silent, and he seemed relieved when he quitted the house, and cycled back to St. Jim's with his chums.

## CHAPTER 15.

### The Last Appeal.

TOM MERRY & Co. reached St. Jim's in time for afternoon lessons, and went directly into the Form-room.

There was a good deal of curiosity in the Shell as to the result of their visit to Glyn House, but curiosity had to wait till lessons were over.

When the Shell were dismissed, however, a crowd gathered round Bernard Glyn in the Form-room passage, and Glyn told them all he knew.

"Talbot again!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Is there any blessed thing that Talbot can't do, I wonder?"

"Regular Admirable Crichton," said Jack Blake. "Plays cricket like an angel—bowls left and right—bats like W. G.—plays the piano—rescues silly fags who try to break their necks—and furnishes clues for policemen while you wait! You ought to set up as a giddy Whiteley, Talbot."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly lucky Talbot saw the man," Figgins remarked. "With a description of him, it ought to be easy for the bobbies to find him."

"Of course, it's not certain that the man I saw committed the burglary," said Talbot. "I could only tell Inspector Skeat what I knew."

"Oh, it's a dead cert!" said Figgins. "What would a professional cracksmen be lurking about the house for? Looking for a chance, of course. When they find him, they'll find the swag; I think they call it swag. And you'll be the chap that's put them on the scent, Talbot. Glyn's pater ought to give you a medal."

"What a bit of luck that we had Talbot in the team," said Tom Merry.

"And that I showed him the safe," remarked Glyn. "I expect the cracksmen would have spotted it, anyway, once he was inside the house. But his happening to look in just then gave him away, and it gives the bobbies a chance. So it was lucky after all that I was showing Talbot the safe."

"Yaas, that's quite wight. Did any of you fellows spot the wotah at the window?"

"No," said Manners. "We were there, but only Talbot saw him."

"You have a remarkably quick eye, Talbot, dear boy. I THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 335.

suppose that's weally what makos you such a wippin' good bowlah," said Arthur Augustus. "By the way, suppose you come and show me that left-handodge of yours. I'll show you my special yorkah in return."

"Right-ho!" said Talbot cheerfully.

Wally & Co. had been listening, as interested as the rest, to the talk of the Shell fellows. Joe Frayne was looking strange enough. There was a dazed expression upon his face, as if he had had a heavy blow and had not recovered from it.

"Come down to the cricket, kids," said Wally. "I want to watch Talbot with that left-hand ball of his. Pick up points, you know. Come on, Joe!"

"I—I—" muttered Frayne.

Wally stared at him.

"What's the matter with you to-day, Joe?" he asked. "You've been like a fellow in a dream all the afternoon. You gave old Selby a dozen chances at you."

"And he took every one," grinned Jameson.

"He did!" growled Wally. "But it was Joe's fault. Why can't he wake up? Are you still feeling the pointer, Wally? Selby did lay it on."

"Tain't that!" said Frayne.

"Then what's the matter?"

"Nothin'."

"I don't see that you need to worry so much about Glyn's burglary," said Wally. "It's a bad job, but there's a chance of catching the rotter now, and getting the stuff back."

"There ain't," said Joe.

"What rot, when Talbot's given a description of the man," said Wally warmly. "Jolly lucky Talbot spotted him, and noted what he looked like, as it turns out that the man he saw is a well-known cracksmen. But, anyway, they didn't burgle your shirt or trousers—so what are you worrying about?"

"If I'd knowed—if I'd knowed—" groaned Frayne.

"But you couldn't know!" snapped Wally. "I suppose you're thinking about the footstep you thought you heard last night. That's all rot. The burglary was in the library—six floors down—four or five, anyway. The burglar never came up to the top of the house at all; he wouldn't have, and couldn't have. Therefore, the noise you thought you heard couldn't have been the cracksmen, therefore you couldn't possibly have done anything, and therefore it's no good your saying what you'd have done if you'd knowed, because you couldn't possible have knowed. So if that's what's worrying you, chuck it, and come down and watch Talbot."

Wally's logic seemed to be unanswerable; though poor Joe could have found an answer to it. But he did not reply. Wally & Co. went down to the cricket-field, but Frayne slipped away from them before they reached it. From a distance, however, he watched Talbot, and smiled bitterly as he saw how cool and cheerful he looked.

When Talbot came back to the School House later, Joe Frayne joined him in the quad.

"Hallo!" said Talbot, with a smile. "You're not looking very fit, kid. Anything the matter?"

"I ain't feeling fit, Toff," said Frayne grimly. "And something is the matter. I gorter speak to you. Come along with me."

Talbot hesitated a moment, but he followed the fag. Frayne led him round the House, to a secluded spot near the old tower. They were safe from observation and from chance listeners there.

"Well," said Talbot, still smiling, "you seem to be rather mysterious, kid!"

Joe looked him in the eyes.

"You're goin' to give it back, Toff!" It was not a question, or a statement, but an appeal that was beseeching.

"I don't understand you," said Talbot easily. "Give what back—to whom?"

"Don't tell me no lies, Toff," said Joe wearily. "I 'card a step outside my door last night."

Talbot did not move a muscle.

"Did you?"

"Yes. I feared it was you goin' down; I 'ad the thought in my mind all the time. I knowed you, Toff, though I tried to trust you. When I looked into your room and found you there all right, I felt right arter. Now I know that wot I 'eard wasn't you goin' down—it was you comin' back. You had passed the door fast without me 'earing you. When Wally and me looked into your room, you was only pretendin' to be asleep. I half knowed it agin, when you was so ratty at Jimmy touchin' your bag in the car. I know now wot was in that bag, Toff."

"My dear kid—"

"Let me finish," said Frayne. "You know I'm telling you Heaven's truth, Toff. Now that Captain Crow's dead, there's only one thief in England who could 'ave cracked that safe, and that's Captain Crow's son. Wot would Inspector Skeat

think if he knewed that you was the son of Captain Crow?"

Talbot's eyes glittered.

"Does that mean—" he began.

"But for wot 'appened yesterday, I'd go straight to 'im and tell him," said Joe. "Then wot do you think wot'd 'appen?"

"I think you would have to prove it," said Talbot quietly.

"You seem to forget that the police don't know Captain Crow's son by sight. I think very likely, Joe Frayne, you'd be denounced as an infamous slanderer, and expelled from this school."

Joe breathed hard.

"Ain't that wot keep's me back," he said. "I know you've laid your plans well, Toff; I dessey you've got it all out and dried for to prove that your name is not wot I know it ain't—and that you come from Australy—where you've never been in your life. I know you are deep, Toff, and I shouldn't wonder if you could prove a lot of lies, and get me sacked for roundin' on you, jest as you say. But it ain't that that stops me—I'd risk that."

"You'd risk it!" said Talbot, between his set teeth. "I should hardly have thought you'd risk that, Joe—for it isn't a risk, it's a certainty. But if that doesn't keep you quiet, what does?"

"You saved my pal's life yesterday," said Joe, in a low voice. "You might 'ave been killed. There wasn't no swindle about that. You're as brave as a kid could be—that's the holy truth, and a rattling good fellow, if you was only honest. But for you, my best pal would be lyin' dead this minute, and I'd be only too thankful to lie dead aside of 'im. Arter that, you know my mouth's closed. You know I can't give you away. I've thought it over—it's been buzzing in my head all day, and I know I can't do it. But if you've got a 'cart in your body, Toff, you won't put it on me to be in a way of speakin' your 'complice. You'll 'and buck wot you took last night, Toff."

Talbot's face set hard. The glitter in his eyes was like steel. Tom Merry & Co. would have started if they could have seen his face then; it was old, old with years of crime and guilt seemingly graven upon it. And yet it was the same face—the handsome face of the dashing cricketer, of the hero who had risked his life to save a boy he hardly knew.

"Wot do you see, Toff?" Joe's voice was low, whispering, beseeching. "Toff, I know now it was you got Mr. Selby's things. That's five 'undred quid's worth of coins. Can't you let Glyn's father alone? The feller wot's been a pal to you, Toff—arter you've been treated so well by his father, and his sister, too?"

Talbot winced. But his face hardened again at once.

"If there were anything in all this balderdash you've been talking, Frayne," he said, in an even voice—"if there were anything in it, do you think the loot would still be in my hands? Do you think it's still in my study?"

Frayne started.

"I—I thought so, Toff, 'ave you got rid of it already? Was one of the gang wain't round the school to take it, then?"

"I don't admit anything. But if it was as you suppose, the loot-is far enough away by this time."

"My Heaven!" groaned Frayne.

"Keep a stiff upper lip!" said Talbot scornfully. "Drop it out of your mind. The burglary was committed by Jerry Hutton; the police have his description, and—"

"And they won't find him," said Frayne. "You lie, Toff! There wasn't any man at the winder. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther and Glyn didn't see nobody—only you. You 'ad it in your mind to crack the safe then—that's why you made Glyn show you where it was. You said you saw a man at the winder, having it in your mind all the time to give Hutton's description afterwards. By the time they've found Hutton, there won't be any chance of their workin' back and gettin' a fresh clue. Not that they'll find Hutton, either, for most likely he's out of the country, and you know it, or you'd 'ave given a safer description, seein' that you know all the well-known thieves in London and Manchester by sight. You've took in Inspector Skeat, Toff—but you can't take me in."

"Have you done?"

"Ain't that the 'oly truth?" demanded Joe.

Talbot shrugged his shoulders.

"Toff, ain't you got nothing to say?" muttered Joe, as the Shell fellow turned away. "You ain't going to refuse wot I ask?"

"I've got nothing to say."

"But—but you'll do wot I ask—"

"I shall do nothing."

Joe Frayne groaned.

"'Eaven forgive you, Toff. This 'ere is the finish for me. I can't give you away, and you know it. But I can't stay 'ere and know wot you're doin'; it'd be as bad as bein' a thief

myself. I won't be your 'complice, Toff. You've finished me at this school, and much good may it do you!"

Talbot started.

"What do you mean? You're not—"

"I'm goin'," said Frayne miserably. "Can I stay 'ere, and know wot you're doin' of, and 'old my tongue? And can I send to prison the bloke wot saved my pal's life? And besides, as you say yourself, melbe you'd prove you're all right, and me a slanderer, though I'd risk that. But I ain't stayin' 'ere to be your confederate. I've got to go."

Talbot's look became kinder.

"Don't think about it, kid," he said. "Drive it right out of your mind. Act as if you'd never seen me before I came to St. Jim's—in fact, mind your own business."

Frayne shook his head.

"I can't 'elp thinkin' about it. If I stay 'ere, I'm as bad as you if I 'old my tongue. I've got to go!"

"If you need money—"

"I don't want stolen money, thanks all the same. I've earned my livin' once—and I can do it agin. I don't deny I wasn't any more honest than you when I was in Angel Alley—'Eaven knows I didn't know better. Since I've been as straight as a die—and I'm goin' to stick to it. But I don't want to go—I don't want to quit Master Wally, the best chum a poor chap ever 'ad. Toff, won't you think better of it?"

"I've nothing more to say!"

"Then I 'ope you'll never feel like wot I'm feelin' now, that's all, Toff," said Joe Frayne wretchedly. "You can go; I ain't got no more to say to you."

Talbot strode away.

## CHAPTER 16.

### The Wait's Farewell.

TOM MERRY and his chums were doing their preparation in the study a little later, where there was a tap on the door, and Joe Frayne came in. The Terrible Three started as they looked at him. His ragged little face was white, and there was a suspicious redness about his eyes.

"Why, what's the matter, kid?" exclaimed Tom, greatly concerned. "Some cad been bullying you?"

"No, Master Tom."

"Aren't you well?" asked Lowther.

"I'm well enough. I—I got something to say to you, Master Tom." Frayne's voice almost broke, but he steadied it and went on. "I got to leave St. Jim's."

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Leave St. Jim's—you?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"What rot are you talkin'!" exclaimed Tom. "What do you want to leave St. Jim's for?"

"I don't want to," said Frayne, holding back his tears with difficulty. "It cuts me to the 'eart, it do really, to think of goin' away from Master Wally—and you, too, Master Tom—and the other blokes wot 'ave been too good to me. But I got to go."

"But why?" exclaimed the amazed captain of the Shell.

"That's wot I can't tell you, Master Tom. But—but I mean it. I've got to go. And—and I want you to speak to the 'Ead for me. Ask him to let me go."

"I jolly well sha'n't do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "I think you must be off your chump. It was jolly kind of the Head to have you 'ere, and you know it. Now to go and tell him that you want to clear off, without giving anything like a reason, of course it can't be done!"

"Of course it can't, Joe!" said Monty Lowther. "You must be daft to think of such a thing. You'd have to ask Tom's uncle, anyway, as he's sending you 'ere. You couldn't leave without asking his permission."

"And what are you going to do if you leave?" asked Tom.

"Where are you going?"

"I—I dunno, Anywhere."

"Stick to it, you haven't made a plan?"

"No."

The chums of the Shell looked at him dumbfounded.

"You must be ill, kid!" said Manners soothingly. "If there's anything the matter, explain it to us, and we'll set it right."

"That's jest wot I can't do," said Joe, half crying. "There ain't nobody wot can 'elp me in this 'ere. I can't explain to you—I can't! Only I'll tell you this much, that if I stop 'ere I sha'n't be no better than a criminal—a 'complice of a criminal, anyway. You know wot I was when you saved me, Master Tom. Well, if I stay 'ere I sha'n't be no better than that, and I've swore to go straight, and I mean to stick to it."

(Concluded on Page 26, Column 2.)

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 335.

**ST. JIM'S JINGLES.**

No. 5.—FATTY WYNN.

Within the old, secluded shop,  
Away from wrathful "Fatty,"  
Regaling pies and ginger-pop,  
Is found the famous Fatty.  
Amid the clash of fork and spoon  
His eyes are gaily gleaming,  
And full as any harvest moon  
His ruddy face is beaming.

"Eat not to live, but live to eat"—  
What doctrine could be better?  
And Wynn, who loves a tuck-shop treat,  
Obeys it to the letter.  
Delicious tarts, divine to taste,  
And doughnuts in their legions,  
Are all despatched with frantic haste  
Toward the "inner regions."

The full extent of Wynn's renown  
No mortal man could tell us;  
'Twould make the Peckham fat boy frown  
And feel extremely jealous.  
The hungry "porpoise" oft will pook  
About a dozen courses;  
And what he merely terms a "snack"  
Would feed the British forces!

Although the dear delights of tuck  
Are Wynn's chief consolation,  
The boy possesses heaps of pluck  
And dour determination.  
In all the conflicts which exist  
Within the ancient college,  
He shows, with hard and heavy fist,  
A fund of fighting knowledge.

When summer sheds her golden sheen  
On every glade and thicket,  
Arrayed in flannels he is seen  
Among his chums at cricket.  
For in the world of bowling, few  
So skillful can be reckoned;  
And brilliant bats feel rather "blue"  
On facing Hirst the second.

But if at cricket Fatty shines,  
At football he's resplendent!  
The stout custodian clears his lines  
In manner most transcendent.  
And when he stops each lightning drive,  
Averting all disaster,  
The finest forward of the five  
Must own he meets his master.

Good luck attend you, worthy Wynn!  
And though we've never seen you,  
We hope you long may revel in  
The good things on the menu!  
The boys of Britain all acclaim  
Your actions clean and clever;  
And may your good and glorious fame  
Abide with us for ever!

Next Week:  
**REDFERN.**

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 335.

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Every Monday.

Every Friday.

Every Saturday, 12.

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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.4."

C. Wilson, 1, John Street, off Miller Street, South End, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 16-17.

A. R. Sutherland, and C. E. Jackson, c/o Mrs. Brink, Wolmanans Street, Potchefstroom, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in Great Britain.

Miss Sylvia Brown, 34, Kimberley Road, Twyveville, Johannesburg, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in England or Ireland, age 13-21.

A. C. S. Ward, P.O. Box 43, Springs, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 15-17.

P. A. Thomsen, P.O. Box 3226, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Ireland.

Thornly George Bawden, 1, Stamford Street, Kimberley, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Lancashire, age 17-18.

Cyril E. Jones, 169, Johannesburg Road, La Rochelle, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in the British Empire, age 16-17.

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L. Taylor, Scandia Street, Palmerston North, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in the British Isles or America, age 15-16.

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G. Ross, 13, Alvan Street, Mt. Lawley, West Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Canada, age 14-15.

H. Mackinnon, Wilson Street, Horsham, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Ireland or Scotland, age 16-18.

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The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

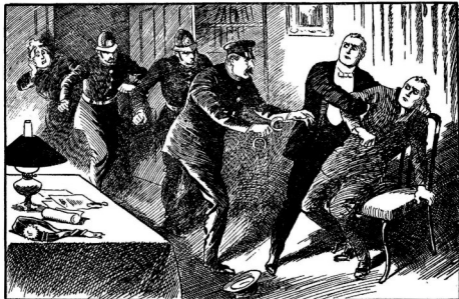


THE FIRST INSTALMENT OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY.

# A BID FOR A THRONE!

A Magnificent New Story of Thrilling and International Intrigue.

By **CLIVE R. FENN.**



A sergeant of police, followed by a couple of constables, dashed into the room. Stanton was seized, and the handcuffs were on his wrists, even as he began protesting anew. "Old hand, sir!" said the officer to Satorys. "It's a lie!" cried Stanton. (See Chapter 1.)

## CHAPTER 1.

### The Arrest.

"At last!" Paul Satorys gave a deep sigh as he bent over a number of documents. He was seated in the comfortable library of the house he had made his home since he had settled in England. It was a cosy, old-fashioned residence out Kensington way, with a nice garden, and rooms which with their dark panelling were a nice blend of the ancient and the new.

There was satisfaction on the man's strong, firm, hard-thinking face, the lips set with a suggestion of perpetual decision.

The light from the reading-lamp under its green shade fell on the papers, which were embossed with the arms of the Republic of Istan. Satorys smiled as he read them over again. They restored to him the vast fortune of his ancestors, and now that he had abrogated his shadowy claim to the Throne of Istan, his rights had been recognised in so far as the personal estate of his family was concerned.

Satorys leaned back in his chair and lit a cigar. From far away came in a sultried way the everlasting rumble of the London streets, and from the dining-room he had only quitted a matter of twenty minutes before he heard the movements of Martha Barton, his faithful cook-house-keeper, who served him so well, and who was the only servant he kept.

Satorys had not cared so very much for money until he

had met Grace Lang, a year earlier, when staying at a country house. He had lived the retired life of a thinker and savant. Many of his friends had urged him to try and make good his rights to the Sovereignty of Istan, but he had regarded the matter as visionary.

He had had a few hundreds a year, and his income he had augmented by writing for the papers. But the one thing he had done was to lay his rights to the private fortune of the former Kings of Istan before the accredited authorities of the country which had once been his.

They did not want him in Istan. The people might not be satisfied with the Government, but, after all, it seemed to Satorys better to hold aloof than respond to the advances of certain partisans, who would have plunged the land in a new war.

Satorys rose from his seat, and walked to the window. As he did so he heard a sound, the unmistakable sound of someone feeling at the catch of the door leading out into the garden at the back, by way of the small conservatory, which at night was curtained off from the room.

Satorys drew softly back into the shadow of the curtains. Yes, he was right, somebody was forcing an entrance. Now the glazed door moved he recognised the creak, and a second later he saw the hangings which fell over the entrance to the little winter-garden move slightly.

Satorys was not alarmed, but he glided back to the

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"THE HIDDEN HAND!"** A Magnificent New, Lost, Complete School Tale of Tom Herry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

table where the electric bell was placed, and he was about to press the little ivory knob, when he saw the face of a man peering through the curtains. He did not sound the alarm, and ceased to think of sending his house-keeper for the police.

What he saw was so amazing, he felt he might have been looking at his own reflection. The intruder was his double. Of that there could be no doubt. Satorys drew further back, and the murderer did not see him. Satorys saw the thief glide into the apartment, gaze round, and the move towards the safe. He set down a bag he was carrying, and now he was kneeling before the door of the safe busy with deft hands at the lock.

With a bound, Satorys was upon him, his strong hands at the throat of the miscreant, driving him downwards, where he held him helpless.

"Help! Don't kill me, governor! I—" the pleading cry stopped as the visitant looked up into his captor's face, and saw the likeness of his own.

Satorys permitted the man to rise.

"Who are you?"

"You will let me go, sir?"

"Why should I let you go?"

"Because you can afford to be generous. I haven't taken anything, and—"

"Through no fault of your own," said Satorys drily.

He was becoming interested now. He released his grip of the man's arm, but the other made no attempt to escape.

"If you will give me a chance, sir, I promise you I will let you alone."

"Much obliged to you," said Satorys, "but it seems to me that you are an expert, and that the police would like to have a talk to you. What is your name?"

"Tom Stanton."

"And why did you choose my place?"

Until a few days before Satorys reflected that he had been a poor man, poor but for the possession of the Royal Regalia of Istan, which reposed in the safe.

Stanton dropped weakly into a chair. Then he jerked himself together, and realising that if he pitted his own strength against that of Satorys he would stand no chance, decided on relying on frankness.

"I know you are a gentleman," he said.

"Much obliged!" snapped out Satorys. "What more, pray?"

"It was this way, sir. We in our trade get to know a lot, and there has been talk amongst us of the jewels you keep there." The man's eye roved about the room, and he saw the documents lying under the lamp. "That was all, sir, as I live, and now it seems a bit queer seeing you—"

He stopped again, as though afraid to go on.

Satorys waited, and a smile flickered over his features as he thought of the wonderful similarity between himself and this man, who was a professional thief.

"I know who you are, sir, of course. You are Count Paul Satorys."

"I am Mr. Satorys!"

"That is as it maybe," said Stanton quietly, "but I have read about you in the papers, and I know that a great gentleman like you will not hand me over to the police."

"You can rely upon it that I shall!" said Satorys firmly. "It is a duty one owes to the State to do that. Ah, no, you don't, my fine fellow!" he went on, as Stanton made a spring for the window. "You will remain here until the police are fetched."

"Not if I know it!" came hoarsely. Stanton's hand went to his pocket, but as he raised his revolver Satorys caught his wrist, the revolver exploded harmlessly in mid-air, and the scoundrel was hurled to lie back over a chair, his arms pinioned in Satorys' grip, as Mrs. Barton came hurrying breathlessly into the room.

"Just run out, and bring in the first policeman you happen to meet," said Satorys calmly, as he tightened his grasp of the man's arms.

"Yes sir! You are not hurt, sir! I thought we was all being murdered, sir!" the woman cried.

She hastened off to obey her master's orders.

"Let me go, sir! You will never see me again! There's a good bit up against me, and it means going back for years and years. You will let me go!"

Satorys' pity was not touched, only his contempt for the wretch. Stanton had ceased to struggle now, and he was blubbering.

"I am not going to set you free," said Satorys. He jerked the man to his feet, and held him before him.

"You are against society, and stand to suffer when you are caught. There are thousands of men who work for a pittance, and do not complain. You rob to live in luxury, and now you are caught. It is the fortune of war,

my friend, and you need not think you are being hardly dealt with."

There was a stir outside, and the next moment a sergeant of the police, followed by a couple of constables, dashed into the room, after them coming the old housekeeper, who was panting with her run.

Stanton was seized, and the handcuffs were on his wrists, even as he began protesting anew.

"Old hand, sir," said the officer to Satorys.

"It's a lie!" cried Stanton.

"Stow that, my lad! You're wanted—wanted for a number of things, and it's a lucky catch!" The officer turned again to Satorys as Stanton was led to the door by the two constables: "You've done a good night's work, sir. This fellow escaped from Parkmoor more'n a year ago. There, take him along!"

Stanton's show of weakness might have been assumed. At any rate, it was gone now. As he was dragged away he turned, and, raising his manacled hands, he shouted out imprecations.

"I will come back, Count Satorys, and pay what I owe you, and it will be compound interest next time!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### In the Under-world.

Clink, clink, clink! I went the picks in the quarries, and the brown-coated convicts seemed, to an onlooker, to be parts of a machine, as they worked in the hot sun, with the armed guards pacing up and down, ready to stir up a malingering or stop any talk.

Stanton had had his sentence—a new sentence, which would run consecutively following that which was yet to be served—and as he lay on he thought, and his thoughts took a curious turn.

Satorys had done him in. Satorys had stood in the witness-box at the Central Criminal Court, and given evidence against him, and now there was nothing ahead but prison—prison which would endure to the end of his days.

Unless!

To the individual plunged into the deepest abysses of despair there is always an unless, always a hope; and Stanton was thinking hard, even though he saw the sunshine gleaming on the carbine of the warder who was standing on a ledge just above his head.

Stanton was an educated man. He had begun life as a clerk in a bank, and the fall had come one Saturday afternoon at Kompton Park—a sure thing Scimitar for the Jubilee; but the money he borrowed from the bank, intending to repay it, was lost, for the "cert" was a failure, and the Monday morning found him an outcast. He had come out of prison that time, after doing six months' for embezzlement, a man ready to wreak vengeance on all, but he forgot himself.

Clink, clink, clink!

He was maddened—prepared to do anything to get away. A run for it! He darted a look at the warder, and the gleaming barrel of the carbine seemed to be winking at him malevolently, as though to say: "Try it on, old fellow; but it will be no use!"

Clink, clink, clink!

He is like me!

That was the one thought. Satorys was a great man, and he was the very counterpart of the individual who was to pass the rest of his days shut up in the gloom of the fortress-like building which stood within sound of the murmuring sea.

Stanton confused his thoughts to an old lag. Prison conversations are different to all other conversations, but the lag managed to say what he thought of the matter. That was just what Stanton thought himself.

"It's your chance, lad, your chance to hide the past. I know this Count Satorys—saw him once—and he is the very spit of you. And so he did you in! He's a big pot—might be a king if he chose, but he doesn't choose, so they say, and I don't know that I blame him, for he has the dibs. If you got away, and managed to pass yourself off as him, well, you wouldn't have anything to worry about in your natural. Try it, old hos, try it!"

The idea clung to Stanton, but as the weeks slipped away the prospect of making a successful run for liberty seemed more and more remote.

He sensed the possibility which lay ahead, a chance which faced off into a myriad wonderful dreams—for Satorys might have been a king!

His fellow-prisoner was removed soon afterwards to another gang; but though Stanton saw him no more, the words of the wily, old convict lingered, ripened, took fresh and more definite shape, and in the night Stanton saw himself escaping, saw himself gaining the place where Satorys was, and then of

personating the man he hated, the man who focussed in his own individuality all the wrongs which the captive had against the world.

His chance came. It was a week later. A light ground-mist crept up from the sea, and, as it grew denser, the gang was fallen-in to be marched back to the prison.

Stanton drew himself up. The next man to him in the line was now only a blurred shadow in the thick vapour, and the figures of the warders were blotted out entirely. Stanton let his pick slip from his hand to the grassy edge of the track, and then turned and glided off into the fog.

A rifle-shot rang out. He ran on. The air seemed filled with cries. Rifles crashed all round him. He reeled on for life and liberty, and for more—for revenge, and yet something which lay grandly on the other side of revenge.

The sounds of pursuit came now as through a blanket—muffled and strange.

On and on!

He cleared the belt of mist, but his footsteps were deadened by the thick carpet of ferns, and the track of forest land he entered screened him from view.

Behind him rose the white wall of mist, ahead lay brilliant sunshine. Stanton stopped at last, and looked round.

He was free, but the moment he was seen it would be all up with him, garbed as he was. There was not a country yokel but would either run at the sight of the fugitive or else give the alarm.

Evening came on. Stanton pushed forward again. In a field where poppies were growing amidst the fresh, young corn, stood a scarecrow. The convict went up to it, and dragged the old coat from off the stick and straw-filled figure.

The garment almost concealed the uniform of the prison, and he pressed on once more, keeping to the open, afraid to venture into the roads and lanes.

How could he hide? If he could gain London, it would be easy, for he had friends who would enable him to smuggle out of the country until the first heat of the quest had died away. But to reach London! It was impossible!

He stopped to listen, for a curious sound caught his ear. It was music—music which was carried by the wind. Far ahead of him he saw a gleam of white, and then, to his amazement, he realised that he had run in a circle, and had approached the sea.

He dropped down amidst the bracken as some children came dancing towards him. They passed out of sight. Stanton was up again, creeping forward, plans dimly forming in his mind.

He gained a clump of trees, and saw, stretching before him, far below, the white sands of a seaside resort, rows of bathing-machines, people strolling along the shelving walks, and, dotted here and there, rustic-seats, useful rest-places for invalids, as they gently ascended the chine.

He must get clothes and food. He crept on, fighting against the weakness which was making itself felt. There must be a way! Then he crouched down behind some bushes planted on the sloping ground.

Had Fate been so kind to him as that? He heard voices, and, peering out of his place of concealment, he made out two people sitting on a white-painted bench placed in one of the little alcoves midway up the hill.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Another Man's Shoes.

It was a beautiful scene. The music from the bandstand with its cupola roof, down on the glittering parade, floated up to the two individuals who were chatting together, quite unconscious of the fact that a watcher—a man with a luggard face and piercing eyes—was close to them.

The fugitive seemed about to spring. He felt at one moment that it was a dream, a vision conjured up by his excited brain; but as he listened, he knew that it was no dream.

The man who was within a few feet of him was Paul Satorys, the runaway who had no mercy, but had handed him over to the police that night long before, and he was talking to a beautiful girl.

The words came distinctly to Stanton.

"I think you are so good, dear Grace, to assent to what I wish, and have a quiet, country wedding. I believe I was meant for a quiet life, a life out of the hurly-burly, and it makes me smile to think that if I did as some of them want, I should be fighting for a throne!"

The girl laid her hand on her companion's arm.

"It is that thought that troubles me, Paul."

"Why should it trouble you, dearest?"

"Because, maybe, you are giving up too much. Perhaps it is your duty to try and take the place which is yours by right."

Satorys shook his head. He little dreamed that peril—a worse peril than death—was so near.

"I am ready for duty," he said, "but not ready to cause the deaths of thousands so that I may be a king. Happiness is far simpler than that; and, besides, I have signed away those fancied rights. The Republic of Istan has restored the fortune which belonged to my family, and I am content, ay, as I would be content without it so long as you were near."

Stanton listened avidly. There was his enemy, and his victim; but for the moment he knew he could do nothing. He waited, and at length saw the two rise and stroll off down the cliff-walk.

Satorys raised the light cane he carried, and pointed out something to the girl. There was a merry laugh, and then, after walking about half a mile, they came to a halt at the door of a dainty bungalow, placed like a pretty toy, midway down to the sea from the summit of the cliff.

"I will get back to the hotel now," said Satorys, "and return for dinner, may I?"

"May you?"

Another laugh.

Stanton saw Satorys standing gazing after the girl as she flitted through the wonderful terraced garden of the bungalow. Then the man who was affianced to Grace Lang turned and walked slowly along the cliff behind the town, evidently intending to reach the main parade by one of the lifts which connected the heights with the sea front.

They were both now in the belt of trees from which Stanton had first caught sight of the sea, and then, as Satorys hesitated, taking out his cigarette-case, and slowly lighting a cigarette, smothering the match in the palms of his hands, something seemed to descend upon him. He was jerked back, being brought heavily to the ground, and his head struck a stone, rendering him senseless, and his assailant stood over him, noting the little trickle of blood from the forehead of the unconscious man.

"To make all sure!" he muttered. "They will find him dead."

He was bending over the other. Yes; Satorys had found his end. His heart was not beating. Stanton gave a sigh. It was safer so.

He darted a look round—a look of fear. It was all right. There was no one to disturb the fell work on which he was engaged, and he laboured feverishly, removing the convict dress, and substituting for it the attire of the man who lay there still and helpless—not a quiver of the eye, not a sign of life.

The task was long. Stanton had removed all trace of the other's identity, even to the rings on his hands, and now he stood up fidgeting with the wrist-watch with its little buckle, which he had placed on his own arm.

Was there anything else?

He remained there thinking hard, his face ashen as he realised the work there was still before him. He hastily turned up the collar of the blue gaffer coat he was wearing, and drew the soft felt hat well down over his eyes.

They would find their man—the police would see in the dead man the convict who had escaped.

Stanton stooped and raised the silent form, staggering with it to the edge of the cliff. There he set it down. It now lay on the sloping pathway close to the platform of the lift.

The lift turned, and walked swiftly in the direction of the town. Here he entered an hotel, and made his way to the bar, ordering a glass of ale, and beginning to munch the sandwiches, which stood under a glass cover, he studied his reflection in a flower-decked mirror which faced him. He removed his hat. His hair was short, but not suspiciously so. He strolled out of the hotel, and walked slowly down the parade, to enter a barber's shop, where he was shaved.

How soon would his double be found?

That was the question which kept on humming through his brain. He was out of the barber's saloon, and once more mingling with the crowd. He sat down on one of the many seats facing the sea, and examined the papers in his pocket. There was a bill bearing the name of the Queen's Hotel. He rose and made his way along the front, observing the various buildings. Ah, there it was! He sauntered casually up to the entrance, and his heart gave a leap as a man in uniform hurried towards him in the vestibule.

"There was this telegram for you, Mr. Satorys."

"Thank you!"

Stanton took the missive, and opening it, read the contents as he stood in the hall of the hotel:—"Urgently requested to come to Cosmopolitan Club to-night.—Duvigny."

Not for nothing had Stanton graduated in the school of crime.

He made his way to the room which Satovys had taken, finding out the number from the obiding young woman at the bureau, who smiled when he said his memory was defective.

Not for nothing, either, did Stanton race through the various papers he found amidst the luggage of the man he had so basely supplanted and, when an hour later he sallied out of the Queen's, he was fairly well primed with knowledge as to his double's movements, though he knew he would have any amount more to learn.

First, he went to the bungalow on the hill. For the first time at least he must continue to play the role expected of him by Grace Lang.

The girl saw him approaching, and came running to meet him through the garden.

"Why, how serious you seem, Paul! Is anything wrong?"

Stanton was ready. He drew the telegram from his pocket, and held it out to Grace, who took it and read it, her brows peckering. Then she gave a happy laugh.

"I am glad, Paul, glad because this shows me that perhaps, after all, you may come to your own. Oh, how I wish it could be so, because I know that you would make them happy in Istan, for you are wise, and then it is your right! You were not thinking that you should not go?"

"Yes," said the man.

"But I insist! Remember this, sir, that you have told me all about Duvigny, and of how he wishes you to do your duty, for it is your duty. They had no right to ask you to sign away your rights, and you can return them the fortune, and tell them that you cannot, after all, consent to give up what is really yours."

Stanton nodded. He fought down the sense of bewilderment, the amazement which he experienced at the success of his plot. Grace Lang had no doubt, and that night, as he travelled to London, reaching the Metropolis at nine, and taking a taxi to the Cosmopolitan Club, he saw nothing but triumph ahead.

(A long instalment of this grand new serial in next Wednesday's "Gem" Library. Order early. Price One Penny.)

HERO AND RASCAL.  
(Continued from page 21.)

The Terrible Three looked at one another helplessly. They could see that the fog was in a state of nervous agitation, and on the point of breaking down. But what had happened to move him so was an utter mystery to them.

"You won't tell the 'Ead for me, Master Tom!" asked Frayne at last.

"I'll go to him if you like, Joe," said Tom, perplexed.

"He'll only send for you at once, and make you explain."

"I—I can't do that."

"Then it's not much use going to the Head, is it?"

"I—I s'pose it ain't, 'I s'pose he wouldn't let me go."

"He couldn't, Joe, without hearing from my uncle, at least. You're here in my uncle's name, you know. He's taken charge of you. He would have to be referred to."

"I—I s'pose so," said Joe. "Well, you shan't bother 'im you like this 'ere, Master Tom. And—and I s'pose you'll always remember that I was grateful for all that you've done for me. I shan't never forget your kindness."

"Joe, old chap—"

"It's all right, Master Tom. Don't you worry about me. Good-night!"

"Good-night, kid!"

And the wail of the Third went to bed with the rest of the Form.

There was a surprise in the School House of St. Jim's the next morning.

Wally brought the news down, rushing down half dressed from the Third Form dormitory, with a white and startled face, and a fragment of notepaper in his hand.

"Joe!" he gasped. "Frayne! He's gone!"

"Gone!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Gone! Run away! Read that!"

Tom Merry almost snatched at the paper. It was scrawled on in pencil, in Frayne's rugged hand, and blotched strangely—only too evidently by the falling tears of the unhappy lad as he wrote.

"Dear Wally,—I've got to go! I can't stay 'ere any longer. I s'pose there won't be any searching for me, 'cause I shan't come back. Don't forget your old pal. Tell the Head, and tell him as this don't mean any disrespect. I've got to go!"

"Joe!"

Tom Merry was speeding away to the Head's study the next moment, with the note in his hand and Wally at his heels. But the Head was at breakfast, and he ran off into the Head's house, starting the stately breakfast-table with his sudden entrance. But the note which he handed to Dr. Holmes explained the surprising intrusion.

"Bless my soul!" Dr. Holmes exclaimed, as he glanced at the note. "You did quite right to bring this to me at once, Merry! Has the boy really gone?"

"He's gone, sir," said Wally, half blubbing. "Somebody's been doing something—I know that. He was queer all day yesterday. It's somebody else's fault, sir—"

"We shall discover that when he is found," said the Head.

"Of course, he must be found at once."

And the Head hurried from the room, leaving his breakfast unfinished.

In ten minutes the School House was in commotion; ten minutes more, and the commotion had spread to the New House. Nothing but the unaccountable flight of Joe Frayne was discussed that morning. All kinds of surmises were afloat, the favourite one being that Joe had been scared away by some former associate in his old life in the slums.

"We'll know the truth when he's found," said Tom Merry. But Joe Frayne was not found. Search was made far and wide. But the one-time wail of the slums knew how to elude pursuit, and he had had a long start. He was gone, and day followed day, and there was no news of him. Where had he fled? Back to the dens and crannies of poverty and vice in his early surroundings, perhaps, and if so, the search was indeed hopeless. Day followed day, and Joe Frayne's place in the Third Form-room was still empty, and he began to be forgotten by all but his own chums. But Wally did not forget, and Tom Merry did not forget, and the hope did not die in their breasts that the wail of the Third would yet come back to his old place among his chums at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "The Hidden Hand!" by Martin Clifford. Order early. Price One Penny.)

No. 335.



# A FIGHTER of the PLAINS

A daring pioneer, more brave and reckless even than the heroic Buffalo Bill, NAT RICE, nicknamed "Red Lynx," pits his enormous strength and uncanny woodcraft against the fiendish cruelty of a great Apache chief. His life story and thrilling adventures form one of the most stirring narratives of the Wild West ever written.

"A Fighter of the Plains" starts in the DREADNOUGHT, out on Thursday, One Penny.

## DREADNOUGHT

# PLAYING THE GAME!

By A. S. HARDY.

(Concluding Chapters of our Popular Sporting Serial Story.)

## Outside the Courthouse—Acquitted—Arrested for Forgery and Fraud—Lieutenant Jeffcock's Letter.

Outside the courthouse in Cape Town thronged a crowd of many thousands. The place was black with people packed as tight as they could be; and presently, as an announcement they had been waiting for was made, a mighty shout went up: "Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!"

It was a good, old-fashioned British cheer. But there were many throats other than British that uttered it.

Gruzzled and scarred men who had fought against Britain in the South African Campaign cheered with the best of them.

Major Foster—or Joe Gost, as many still chose to call him—had, after a trial lasting three whole days, been acquitted, and the judge had honoured him as scarcely ever prisoner had been honoured before.

Major Foster was a free man!

The nation had willed it and wished it. There had been such an outcry in the Press both at home and in the Colony against his condemnation that no jury in the world could with safety have convicted him. Venerable farmers, whose lives and property had been saved by his prompt action in raising his unauthorised troops, travelled thousands of miles to give evidence in his favour. Native chiefs—even those who had borne arms against the Empire in their rebellion—came to tell of his deadly enmity towards them from the very outset.

Lieutenant-Colonel Travers told how, after he had decided to start to Major Foster's relief upon the coming of Trooper Mulready, and he had himself been hemmed in by the force that had been harassing Foster, but who had come to attack him on seeing the new danger, Joe Gost had ridden to his relief, achieving a feat almost unparalleled in modern history.

Small wonder that Major Foster was acquitted, then!

With the cheers thousands in front of the courthouse, it was deemed advisable by the authorities that Major Foster—now a free man—should make his exit by the back entrance to the building.

This he did, and he found a number of uniformed friends awaiting him. First of all there was Lieutenant Jellicott.

"My congratulations, major," said the old Grovehouse boy, leantly wringing the soldier's hand.

"And mine," said Lieutenant William Hewitt, of the 29th Hussars, late Captain of Grovehouse, pressing forward, "in the name of the old 29th!"

"And mine, too!" said Sergeant Haines. "You don't know me, major; but I'm an old Grovehouse boy, and a great comrade of your son's."

Geoffrey then came to his father's side.

"Dad!" he said, a bright light shining in his eyes, "all your troubles are over now. You will be able to go home and lace the world with a light heart."

"I shall, my son," was the reply, whilst the major's chest heaved with emotion. "I shall have no scruples now. I know my old friend Major Jeffcock now for what he is, and I shall not spare him!"

"But the world doesn't know yet," said Geoffrey.

"They will know soon enough," was the quick reply. And, placing both hands on Geoffrey's shoulders, Major Foster glanced at him in pride. "Geoffrey," he said, "what a career you have before you! Lieutenant-Colonel Travers told me as I was leaving the court just now that he mentioned you in despatches for gallantry in the field. You will get your D.S.O."

As that moment a man approached. He was a tall, smart, well-dressed man, with something of a professional air about him.

"Major Foster," he said, with a genial smile, "my name is Hackett—Detective-Inspector Hackett, of Scotland Yard—and I arrest you on an extradition warrant for being connected with the London and County Building Society frauds."

"I am ready," answered the major, returning the detective's glance unflinchingly. "I should advise you not to use the handcuffs. I shall make no attempt to escape. If the crowd were to see me with them on my wrists, they might attempt to rescue me, and they might also make an effort to lynch you!"

"Very well, major, if you give me your word," said the detective, in a firm tone.

"When do we sail for England?" inquired the major next.

"To-morrow morning, sir," was the quick answer. "The berths are booked. I shall expect you to remain with me till then."

"I am content," was the reply.

"And, Mr. Hewitt," said the lieutenant-colonel of the 29th, stepping forward, for he had come out of the courthouse just in time to witness the arrest, "let me tell you that we have a dying confession of a man named Mulready, late trooper in the 29th, which will completely clear the major of the charge, and place the guilt on the proper shoulders. I tell you this in order that you shall treat your prisoner with all due and proper respect."

The detective touched his hat.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I know something of all this, and I am sorry to have to arrest the major at all; but I have my duty to perform, and cannot help myself."

The following morning the major went aboard, and sailed with Hewitt for England.

And by the same boat, included in the mails, was a letter, written by a man who had been standing in the crowd when they cheered the major's acquittal on the charge of high treason.

This man, ragged, unkempt, and dirty, with haggard face, and gaunt, hungry figure, was Bangley Jeffcock, late lieutenant in the 4th King's Own Mounted Infantry, but so changed that scarcely anybody would have recognised him.

The letter was addressed to his father, Major Bangley Jeffcock, at his offices in London. It reached the major on the morning of Major Foster's arrival in London under arrest.

At the very time that Major Foster was placed in the dock, and the charge of fraud and forgery preferred against him—at the very moment that angry victims of the London and County Building Society were suing outside the court, clamouring for the blood of their supposed swindler—Major Jeffcock, the spoilt sport of commercial fortune, the man who was supposed to be worth millions, the man who had won his Victoria Cross, the honoured and petted darling of society, he who had wronged his friend past all forgiveness, sat in his palatial office reading the letter which his son had written.

It was long and lucid. It explained everything exactly as it had happened.

There is no need to recapitulate it here. But there were some learning sentences towards the end which ate their way into Major Jeffcock's brain like fire.

"What must my feelings be," the son wrote, "I, whom you brought up to hate the Fosters with a bitter hatred that was as unreasonable as it was unreasoning, to find that they are both all that is good and noble, and you, my father, the man I honoured as a boy, because you had won a Victoria Cross, that noble decoration that carries with it so much honour and distinction, to learn that you won it by fraud; that you were a poltroon and a coward, even as you had led me to believe Major Foster to be; that you were guilty of the frauds for which poor Foster suffered—yes, my father! I committed a base and terrible crime to try and shield you in your wickedness. I tried to shoot Major Foster in the last battle of the late war, but failed; and I am glad that I failed, for it was you, and not he, that should die. I have just seen the crowd here cheering his name as that of a hero, and my heart is too full for words. I am wanted on a capital charge. I am homeless and friendless. I have no money. I am an outcast. For me there is nothing but blackness and despair, and you have brought it all upon me—yes, my father! I can do nothing but curse your memory! Yes, curse you—curse you! And I tremble, as for the last time I sign myself your son."

Lieutenant-Colonel Travers holds Mulready's confession, in which he exposed the truth about your V.C. and of the Building Society frauds. It has been placed in proper hands, and when the major appears to face his trial like a man, there will be no hope for you!"

(To be concluded Next Week.)

Now turn to page 23 and read the opening chapters of

"A BID FOR A THRONE!"

Our Grand New Serial, by  
CLIVE R. FENN.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 335.

A Magnificent New, Lond. Complete School Tale of Tom Herry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



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For Next Wednesday.

**"THE HIDDEN HAND!"**By *Martia Clifford.*

In our next grand, long, complete tale of the famous chums of St. Jim's College, Talbot of the Shell again takes the principal lead. A well-organised raid is made by Tom Merry & Co. on their rivals of the Grammar School, and it is the sequel to this raid that leads up to the mystery of

**"THE HIDDEN HAND!"****WHY GIRLS CAN'T THROW.**

"Why can't girls throw?" That is the question which is put to me by "Boy." He, in common with many others, has noticed that girls never throw a ball or anything else in the same way as a person of the masculine sex, and wants to know whether this is entirely due to clumsiness. "I cannot think it is altogether," he gracefully adds, "for, generally speaking, girls are much less clumsy than boys."

The reason is that the girl throws with her whole arm rigid, the boy with his whole arm relaxed. This difference is explained by the fact that the collar-bone in the feminine anatomy is some inches longer and set lower down than in the case with males. The long, awkward bone interferes with the free use of the arm, and that is the reason why girls can't throw stones.

**REPLIES IN BRIEF.**

Will the following readers accept my best thanks for their letters: Miss Amy Turner (Worcester); A. G. Mailman (New Zealand); Mrs. Lillian Carleton; F. Bairn, and E. S. (Toronto).

Pat (Salford).—There is nothing better than plenty of exercise to increase one's height.

J. C. (Stourbridge) and others.—When Mr. Frank Richards has time his first task will be to write a story for "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library. Fatty Wynn's Christian name is David.

Charles Billett (Tooting).—There are no prizes offered for "Talks to Tell" in the "Penny Popular."

R. A. D. (Dublin).—Many thanks for your letter and your appreciative remarks about our companion papers.

R. J. D. (Brighton).—The ages of Figgus, Kerr, and Wynn are 15, 14, and 14 respectively. Gordon Gay & Co. are in the Fourth Form at Rylecombe Grammar School. Jameson is in the New House.

**GUARDING THE KING.**

Everybody knows, of course, that the King of England is safer, both at home and abroad, from the attack of the assassin, than any other European monarch; this is partly due to the fact that our monarch is the head of the freest form of Government in the world. But it would be a mistake to suppose that no particular precautions are taken to safeguard His Majesty's life; as a matter of fact, King George is practically never out of sight of those whose special duty it is to watch over his safety, and though the system by which he is guarded is quite unobtrusive, it is, nevertheless, most thorough and complete.

There are altogether twelve detectives told off to guard King George, whose movements are controlled by Scotland

Yard. Nine of these are detailed for "out duty," two of them always remain in close attendance on the Royal person, whenever His Majesty drives out from any of the Royal residences. The other seven are stationed at various points along the route between the palace and wherever the King may be going, and communication is continually maintained between these "out" detectives and those on duty at the palace. Every policeman on the route which His Majesty intends to take is also notified of the fact, so that the traffic can be held up at an instant's notice, at the approach of the Royal carriage, and any suspicious-looking passengers kept at a safe distance. The three officers on duty at the palace (or wherever the King may be in residence), known as the Household Staff, are notified at least a couple of hours beforehand, when His Majesty intends to leave the palace, his destination, and the route he intends to take. The Staff then at once communicate their orders to the "out" detectives, which, to a great extent, depend on the information daily received from Scotland Yard and various other sources by the Staff. Sometimes it may be considered advisable to ask the King to alter the route he first decided on, but this is rarely done, except in extremely urgent circumstances.

**Plots Against the King.**

It may here be stated that the information received by those specially charged to look after our monarch's safety is of a more intimate, accurate and fuller character than can be secured by any other like officials in Europe. The liberty accorded to political refugees in this country, the only country in the world where they can find a safe asylum from the laws of their own country (for we never grant the extradition of political offenders, unless they are proved beyond all doubt to have committed some violent form of anarchy), has resulted in their furnishing Scotland Yard with highly valuable and accurate information concerning the movements and doings of those extreme and dangerous individuals, whom no consideration would deter from making an attack on King George, simply because he occupies a throne. It is probable that never a year passes without half a dozen plots being made for the assassination of the King of England, but almost ere they are formed, they are discovered and destroyed by those who ceaselessly keep watch over the safety of the Sovereign. The discovery creates no sensation, no scare; nothing about it ever gets into the papers. No one is even arrested. Two or three misguided fanatics are simply told to leave the country, and are never allowed to return, and with their departure the plot ends. The greatest secrecy is of course observed about the manner in which the King is guarded. The detectives in charge of the Royal person assume many disguises, which effectively allay any suspicion in the minds of the public as to who they are and the nature of their duties.

For example, when King George drives out in London, a few minutes before the departure of the Royal carriage a couple of hansom-cabs may be seen leaving St. James's Park each containing a gentleman garbed in the conventional attire of the ordinary cab driver. The cabs are numbered in the ordinary way, and the drivers also display their numbers, but, as a matter of fact, these cabs are not licensed for hire. They are from the Royal stables, and the gentlemen sitting in them are members of the detective staff on duty.

(Another Article on  
 "Guarding the King"  
 next Wednesday.)

**A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.**



# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE

## WAITING FOR A MEAL.

She hadn't anything to give away, so Cadger Bill moved on. And he met on the high-road his old friend Moneyless Pat, with a beautiful beam on his face.

"You looks in luck," said Cadger Bill.

"Whist! O'm ill," replied Pat. "An', if yez take moi tip, ye'll be ill yerself."

"Wot's the game, matey?" asked Bill.

"Who, listen!" exclaimed Pat. "O' filled a bottle with whisky, and went to a cottage an' said O' was a sick man. 'An' here's me medicine to prove it,' O' sez. 'An' it's wihin' O' could take it that O' am.'"

"'Who! can't yez?' asked the lady. 'Is it wather ye're after?'"

"'No, lady,' sez O', with a wink. 'The doctor said O' wasn't to dilute me medicine on any account. But it has to be taken after meals; an', shure,' sez O', 'it's the meal O'm after foindin'.'"—Sent in by E. Hawkins, London, W.

## THE ONLY WAY.

Scene—Tramcar. 1st Old Lady: "Conductor, open this window! I shall be smothered to death!"

2nd Lady: "Conductor, shut that window, or I shall catch my death of cold!"

1st Old Lady: "Conductor, will you open—"

Irate Passenger (interrupting): "Conductor, open that window, and freeze one of these women to death; then shut it, and smother the other one!"—Sent in by H. C. J. Matthews, England.

## TONGUE-TWISTERS.

Read the following aloud—the shorter ones quickly—six times in succession:

Six thick thistles flying.

Flosh of freshly-fried flying-fish.

The sea ceaseth, but it suffeth us.

Give Grimes Jim's great gilt gig-whip.

Two toads, totally tired, tried to trot to Tedbury.

Strict, strong, Stephen Stringer snared six sly snakes.

She stood at the door of Mrs. Smith's fish-sauce shop welcoming him in.

A haddock, a hadlock, a black-spotted hadlock. A black spit on the black back of a black-spotted hadlock.

Susan shineth shoes and socks; socks and shoes shines Susan. She ceaseth shining shoes and socks, for shoes and socks shuck so Susan.—Sent in by H. Tuckfield, Australia.

## WEEF, WEEF!

An Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman were travelling along the road together. The Englishman had stolen a horse, the Scotsman a cow, and the Irishman a cart. On the way they met a policeman, who questioned them as to where they had got these things from.

"I've had the horse since it was a colt," said the Englishman.

"I've had this cow since it was a calf," the Scotsman answered.

"And I," said the Irishman, "have had this cart since it was a wheelbarrow."—Sent in by W. A. McGrath, Walham Green.

## PAT BEAT HIM.

Pat: "I was at a party last night, when a conjurer took four matches and a lemon and made them into a pig, and challenged anyone to make more of the same material."

Mick: "Well, you cannot make more out of the same material."

Pat: "But I beat him."

Mick: "How?"

Pat: "I took four matches and a lemon, peeled the lemon, strewn the peel and the matches all over the floor, and made a 'hitler.'"—Sent in by E. Clarkson, Keighley.

## OLD REMEMBRANCES.

An old countrywoman went on a visit to some friends. The following Sunday they took her to church, and all the time the sermon was on she wept bitterly. The preacher, being a kind-hearted man, sent for her after the service was over.

"My good woman," he said, "I heard you weeping during my sermon. Now, tell me, what part of it so affected you?"

The old woman began to weep again.

"Oh, sir," she sobbed, "it was none o' the sermon that affected me, for I could not hear a word you said; but, seeing your jaws going wag, wag, wag, and they heard a-bobbling about, it reminded me of my auld billy-goat as died a fortnight come Monday."

The interview terminated abruptly.—Sent in by J. Ballantine, Dublin.



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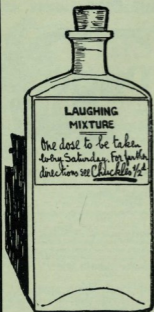
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