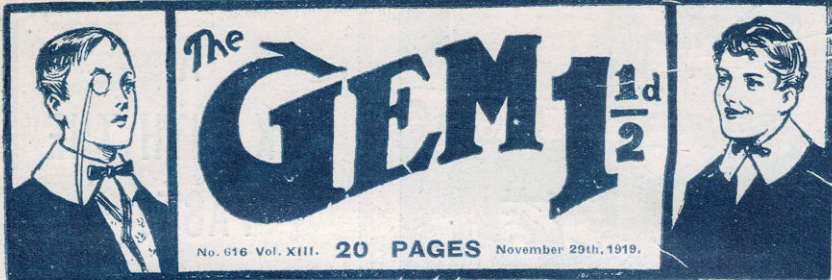


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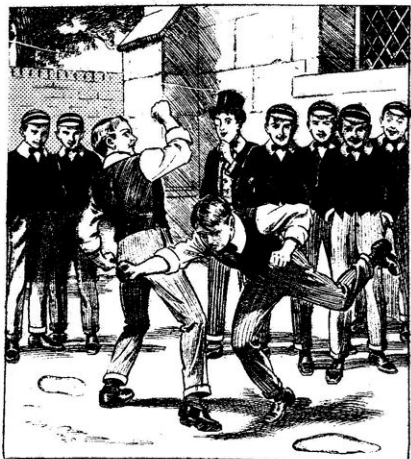
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A LINK WITH THE PAST!



GUSSY'S "FIVER" MISSING!

A Dramatic Scene in the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale in this Number 29-11-19



A LINK WITH THE PAST!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry and Co., of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

A Good Samaritan.

"BOTHAM!"

Arthur Augustus De'Atrey, the luminous light of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was annoyed, he jammed his celebrated eyeglasses into his eye, and frowned upon Blake, Herries, and Digby, his study-mates.

"Bothah!" he said again.

Jack Blake, who was lacing his football boots, looked up.

"Hallo! What's liting you, Gussy?" he asked.

Arthur Augustus gave an aristocratic snort.

"I am exasperated, Blake, at havin' to give up my game of football this aftahnoon!" he said.

Blake stared.

"Eh? Who says you've got to give up your football?"

"Waitton."

"But—but why?"

"There's a new kid comin' to St. Jim's," explained Arthur Augustus, "an' Waitton has requested me to do the decent thing, an' go to the station an' meet him. That means sacrificin' my football. Of course, I couldn't vewy well refuse. Waitton has a way of puttin' things so that you can't back out, you know."

Jack Blake nodded.

"Rough luck, Gussy!" he said.

"Never mind. We'll come along with you."

"Yes, rather!" said Digby. "Football can't be for ones."

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"That is vewy good of you, deah boys!" he said.

"Don't mench!" said Herries.

"We're always willing to give a helping hand to the nobility and gentry."

There was a tap on the door of Study No. 6, and the Terrible Three of the Shell looked in. They were garbed in football jerseys and shorts.

"Shake a leg, you fellows!" said Tom Merry. "Time for the practice match."

"Nothing doing," said Jack Blake shortly.

"What?"

"Nobody's yet invented a wheeze nobbly you can play football and meet a new kid at the same time."

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther. "Is there a new kid coming into this abode of love?"

"Yes, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "A fellah called Stewart. Waitton has requested me—as a fellah of tact and judgment—to go along an' meet him."

"I see," said Lowther. "You're going to do the 'welcoming him in' stunt?"

"And we're going along, too," said Digby.

Monty Lowther looked serious.

"I should stay behind, Dig, if I were you," he said.

"Why?" demanded Digby.

"Your face, you know. It's too great a strain on any new kid."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Digby wrathfully.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "supposing we all go along? New kids don't arrive every day, and we may get some fun out of it if we pilot the merchant up to the school."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

So it was decided to give football the go-by on that particular afternoon. Tom Merry & Co. changed back into their ordinary attire, and accompanied the chums of Study No. 6 to the railway station.

"We mustn't make a mistake this time," said Monty Lowther. "Last time we came to meet a new kid, if you remember, he turned out to be the boot-boy."

"Alias Dalton Hawke, detective," said Tom Merry. "That's not likely to happen again."

The episode to which Monty Lowther had referred was still fresh in the juniors' minds.

Dalton Hawke, the boy investigator, had arrived at St. Jim's in the role of boot-boy, and he had been instrumental in capturing Jim Dawlish, the leader of a notorious gang of crackmen who had

menaced Talbot and Mario Rivers. The affair had been a nine-days' wonder at St. Jim's; but now that Jim Dawlish was behind prison bars, everyone imagined that the gang had broken up.

"We shan't be entertainin' a boot-boy unawares on this occasion," said Arthur Augustus.

"Waitton distinctly said it was a new fellah, of the name of Stewart."

"Comes of an old Scottish family, most likely," said Manners.

"Unless he happens to be the son of a peace profiteer," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Oh, help!"

When the party stepped on to the little platform at Rylcombe, they found they had ten minutes to wait.

"Better explore the chocolate-machines," said Jack Blake.

But the exploration proved fruitless—or, rather, chocolate-less. The ancient machines, like most others in the country, no longer contained penny packets of chocolate. True, there were some cigarettes in one of the machines, but the juniors had no use for cigarettes.

"Wish the beastly train would back up!" rumbled Herries. "It's not even signalled yet!"

"Patience, my son, patience!" said Monty Lowther. "The engine-driver's probably stopped to count his wages, and that takes hours and hours! You see, there's the wage itself, and then the war bonus, and the peace bonus, and the armistice bonus—"

"Dry up, Monty, you idiot!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

At last the train swung into view round a curve.

Arthur Augustus deftly brushed some specks of dust from his elegant trousers; then he anxiously surveyed his chums.

"Do I look all wight, deah boys? I am anxious to make a good impression on the new kid."

Monty Lowther looked critical.

"Your topper's not at a very classic angle," he observed. "But I'll soon remedy that."

And Monty Lowther smote the topper.

with his fist, with the intention of knocking it down over Gussy's eyes.

The intention, however, missed fire. The topper was knocked clean off Gussy's noble head, and after performing several revolutions in the air, it alighted with a thud on the metals, in front of the approaching train.

Arthur Augustus behaved like a fanatic.

"Lowtho, you clumsy ass!" he shrieked. "My toppah will be twice-twice as wined!"

But at that moment a figure dashed up from behind—the nimble, athletic figure of a stranger in Etons.

The youth brushed his way past the juniors, and, before anyone could stop him, he had vaulted down on to the line. "The fool!" muttered Tom Merry. "The mad fool! He'll be killed!"

"He'll be cut to pieces!" gasped Digby, turning away his eyes.

But the stranger acted with miraculous swiftness. He snatched up the topper, and leapt back on to the platform before the engine reached him. Then, as coolly as if nothing had happened, he turned to Arthur Augustus.

"Your toppah, I think?" he said.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus took the proffered topper like a fellow in a dream.

"I—I— Weally, you should not have worn such a tawefible wisk for the sake of a toppah!" he stammered. "I am extremely grateful to you, dear boy, but you shouldn't have done it!"

"It was no trouble, I assure you," said the stranger.

"You were a chump!" said Tom Merry bluntly. "You might have been killed!"

The stranger smiled, showing two rows of white, even teeth.

"Trust me to take care of my own skin!" he said.

"Come along, you fellows!" said Jack Blake. "We've got to keep our optics open for the new kid!"

The stranger smiled again.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I happen to be the new kid!"

"Oh!"

The juniors were staggered.

For some moments no one spoke. Then Tom Merry blurted out:

"But—but we expected you to be on this train!"

"Train!" said the new boy contemptuously. "My dear fellow, I have no use for trains. They're so dashed unreliable, you know. You never know when there's going to be a strike, and you might find yourself stranded miles away from anywhere. Personally, I never trust by train!"

The juniors stared at the new boy in growing wonder.

"I—I don't undahstand," said Arthur Augustus faintly. "Where have you come from?"

"From London."

"At you mean to say you walked?"

The new boy chuckled.

"My dear old top, that would be almost as slow as coming by train!" he said. "Of course I didn't walk! Shouldn't dream of it! I came down on my motor bike!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You—you've got a motor-bike?" faltered Jack Blake.

"Yes, rather. She's a beauty!"

"Where have you left her—or him—or it?" asked Monty Lowther.

"In the quad at St. Jim's."

"My hat!"

"And I came down here on foot to collect my luggage—see? It's on this train."

"Is your name Stewart?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"It is."

"Well, you are weally a most extraordinary person, Stewart—most extraordinary!"

"I must be something like you, then!" said Stewart.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hope I don't look quite such a silly ass, though!"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Weally, Stewart, if it wasn't for the fact that you wescued my toppah, I should feel constrained to admintinat a faithful thwashin'!"

"Spare me!" moaned Stewart.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Excuse me a minute, you fellows, while I get my baggage," said the new boy.

Tom Merry nodded.

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A burly porter was already engaged in dumping Stewart's luggage on to the platform.

"By Jove! What a collection!" said Manners.

New boys often brought large quantities of goods and chattels with them on their arrival but Stewart's personal belongings constituted a record. There were bags of all shapes and sizes, and all of them were fitted with secure and up-to-date locks.

"Shall I send 'em up on the hack, sir?" inquired the porter.

"No, thanks," said Stewart. "I'll tackle them myself. No doubt these fellows will give me a hand."

"Very good, sir."

Stewart slipped a lavish tip into the porter's palm, and beckoned to the juniors.

"Would you fellows care to give me a hand?" he said.

"Delighted!" said Monty Lowther.

"We're always ready to convert ourselves into human pantcheons at a moment's notice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seven juniors took a couple of bags apiece, and Stewart himself carried three.

"Seventeen bags!" gasped Herries.

"What do you keep in them all?"

"Pleasant little mementoes of my childhood!" said Stewart with a laugh.

"Well, you're a queer card, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry, as the juniors quitted the station.

"Seventeen bags and a motor-bike! You haven't brought a tame elephant down with you, by any chance?"

"Not this time."

"Juniors aren't allowed to have motor-bikes," said Jack Blake. "You'll have to hide it, if you don't want it confiscated."

Stewart grinned.

"I can't very well walk about with a motor-bike in my waistcoat-pocket!" he said.

"Ha, ha! Hardly!"

"And if anyone tries to take it from me, there'll be trouble!"

Stewart's tone was grim, and there was a frown on his handsome face.

"Well, it's hard lines, but I don't see how you're going to keep it," said Tom Merry.

"It's unheard of, for a fellow in a lower Form to have a motor-bike," said Digby. "Of course, if you were going into the Sixth, it might be different."

"I'm sticking to my bike," said Stewart grimly. "It's been a good pal to me, and I sha'n't allow it to be taken away!"

But Tom Merry & Co. had other views on that subject. And they chuckled softly to themselves as they accompanied the amazing new boy along the frosty road.

CHAPTER 2. Very Mysterious!

TOOT-TOOT!

"My only aunt!" muttered Monty Lowther.

Toot, toot, toot!

A sound like that of a motor-horn greeted the juniors' ears as they came in sight of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Somebody's havin' a lark, dear boys!"

Stewart dumped his bags down in the roadway, and paused with his hands clenched in listening.

"Some interfering ass is gadding around on my motor-bike!" he exclaimed.

"My hat!"

"I'm going ahead to investigate," said the new boy. "Perhaps you fellows wouldn't mind tackling the extra bags?"

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry.

Stewart set off at a run in the direction of the school gates.

The juniors noted his long, easy stride, and exchanged glances.

"Looks like a giddy athlete!" said Digby.

"Yes, rather!"

"If he can run like that on the football field, he'll be worth his weight in butter-scotch!" said Monty Lowther.

Stewart reached the school gates just as his precious motor-cycle emerged therefrom.

The rider was George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell.

Grundy's knowledge of motor-cycling, like his knowledge of most other things, was limited. He was bending grimly forward, and clutching the handlebars as if his life depended on it.

As for the motor-bike itself, it seemed THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 610.

to be possessed of demons. It flashed through the open gateway and across the road at a tremendous speed, having gathered impetus in the quadrangle.

"Turn it, you fool!" bellowed Tom Merry, quickening his pace.

But Grundy seemed to have lost both his nerve and his presence of mind. He remained glued to the seat, unable to stave off impending disaster, and hoping he would land in a soft place instead of in a hedge of prickles.

His hope was not realised. The machine cleared the ditch at a bound and shot up the steep bank. Then it shot back again, and Grundy was thrown off into the ditch, which was covered by a network of prickles and thorns.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Grundy.
 "My motor-bike!" yelled Stewart.
 "Bust your beastly motor-bike!" groaned Grundy. "It nearly killed me!"

"Pity it didn't finish the job!" said Stewart unsympathetically.

Tom Merry & Co., laden with luggage, had reached the spot by this time.

"Ring up for the ambulance!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Grundy!"
 With great difficulty George Alfred Grundy sorted himself out. He was not seriously hurt. At the same time, those prickles were very painful. They in no wise resembled a feather-bed.

"Just look at my bike!" said Stewart angrily. "It will have to go into dock for repairs. Why did this clumsy ass want to meddle with it?"

"Look here, you new kid," said Grundy, removing a few stray thorns from his trousers. "I'm not going to be called fancy names by you!"

Stewart glared.

"You strike me as being a fit candidate for Colney Hatch!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" spluttered Grundy. "Just back at him chucking me—me, George Alfred Grundy! I—I'll puncture him!"

"In other words, you'll do unto him as you did to his motor-bike!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy advanced towards Stewart with clenched fists.

"Come on, you cheezy boulder!" he roared. "I'll smash you!"

"Hold on!" said Stewart. "Wait till I've stowed my bike away before you start the smashing operations!"

And the new boy rescued his motor-cycle from the ditch, and pushed it through into the quadrangle.

"Mind he doesn't bunk, Grundy!" said Wilkins. "Keep an eye on him!"
 "I will!" said Grundy grudgingly. And he walked alongside Stewart, so that the latter should have no chance of escape.

Tom Merry & Co. dumped Stewart's array of bags in the hall, and hurried out again into the quad.

"Look here, Grundy!" said Tom Merry. "I don't see why you want to start scuffling with the new fellow."

"He called me names!" snarled Grundy.

"Well, you boned his motor-bike. It cuts both ways."

Grundy hesitated.

"Of course, if he chooses to apologise he began."

"Apologise—to a boot-faced clown like you?" said Stewart. "Never!"

"That fairly does it!" murmured Monty Lowther. "This can't be settled by arbitration now, Tommy. You'll have to let them have it out."

"Yaas, watah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm afraid it will mean a lickin' for you, Stewart; but you must twy an' keep a stiff uppah lip, deah boy."

Stewart grinned. Evidently he did not share the anticipations of Arthur Augustus.

"I'm ready!" he said, commencing to take off his coat.

"You can't fight here!" said Jack Blake, in alarm. "You're bang underneath the Head's study window. Come round the corner!"

"Any old place will suit me!" said Stewart.

Round the corner, out of range of the windows, quite a crowd began to collect.

It was certainly very unusual for a new boy to have a fight on his hands before he had been half an hour at St. Jim's.

Grundy was a fighting-man of the rough-and-ready variety. Of science he had little, but his sledge-hammer blows were things to be avoided. Not a fellow there believed that Stewart had a dog's chance.

"Go it, yo cripples!" sang out Monty Lowther.

The fight opened in a sensational

manner. Grundy rushing at Stewart before the latter was quite ready for him.

Grundy's fists sailed through the air, and everyone expected to see the new boy go down in a heap.

Stewart, however, just managed to duck his head in time, and his opponent's fist went harmlessly by.

Grundy had put all his force behind that blow, and the fact that it missed its mark caused him to lose his balance. He went sprawling to the ground in an ungainly heap.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a circus, Grundy!" chuckled Digby.

Stewart dropped his hands to his sides while Grundy picked himself up, and then the fight began in real earnest.

Grundy rushed in with lowered head, just like an enraged bull. His fists seemed to be performing the functions of windmills, but Stewart managed to guard every blow, save one, which caught him in the chest and nearly doubled him up.

"Hurrah!" sang out Wilkins. "Good old Grundy!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chortled Gunn.

Stewart, however, had plenty of pluck. The colour had ebbed from his cheeks, and he was obviously in pain, but he continued to stand up to his man.

"About time you called a halt, isn't it, Tommy?" murmured Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Let 'em carry on!" he said. "If we split the affair up into rounds it will only delay matters, and a break or preface might come on the scene."

Spurred on by the shouts of his supporters, Grundy delivered a hurricane attack. He quite expected it would finish Stewart. He expected at any moment to see the new boy collapse and acknowledge defeat. But Stewart was as hard as nails.

"Bal Jove! That new kid's got plenty of pluck!" said Arthur Augustus admiringly. "Still, it's not altogether surprising."

"A fellow who will wescue a toppah in fwoont of an approachin' twain can't be funky of anythin'."

"He's bucking up, too!" said Herries.

"Look at that!"

Stewart was no longer on the defensive. He was hitting out for all he was worth. And his methods were less wild than Grundy's. When he hit, he hit to some purpose.

Wilkins and Gunn began to feel alarmed for their leader.

"Buck up, Grundy!" they shouted, in unison.

But Grundy, who had expended all his energy at the outset, was past the bucking-up stage. Stewart was wearing him down fast.

Right and left, left and right, the new boy's fists shot out.

Tom Merry & Co. could not repress their approval.

"Well played, Stewart!"

"Polish him off!"

"He won't be able to stand much more of that!"

"Grundy's beginning to look quite picturesque!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Look at his nose! It seems to have travelled round to his left ear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd was moved to a high pitch of excitement now.

Arthur Augustus, with his monocle streaming loose, and with his somewhat battered topper flourished above his head, seemed to be dancing a sort of horripole.

"Keep it up, Stewart, deah boy! You've got him fairly cornahed now! Use your left! That's a wight!"

Stewart's left shot out, straight from the shoulder, and the blow took Grundy

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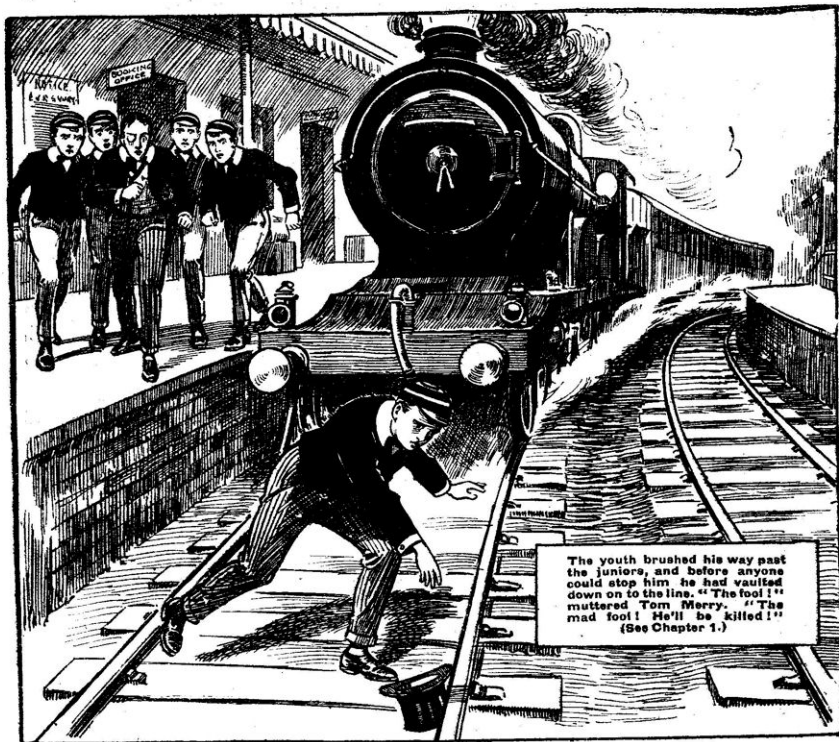
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on the point of the jaw, causing him to measure his length on the ground.

"Hurrah!"

"Well hit, sir!"

"Down and out, by Jove!" gasped Wilkins.

But Grundy was a fellow who never knew when he was beaten.

How he did it he never knew, but he managed to heave himself to his feet, and face his man.

"There's pluck for you, if you like!" said Jack Blake. "It's Grundy's last kick, though!"

"Afraid so!" said Digby.

Stewart had recovered from the effects of that early blow in the chest, and he was as firm as a daisy. He smiled rather grimly as he advanced towards his opponent.

"I give it another ten seconds!" said Tom Merry.

"Or less," remarked Marners.

But at that instant a startling and surprising thing happened.

Marie Rivers, the school nurse, was approaching from a distance, and Stewart, just as he was about to deliver the knock-out, caught sight of her.

The new boy's next actions were extraordinary, to say the least of it.

Without another glance at Grundy, he turned, snatched up his coat, and took to his heels, vanishing round the corner at top speed.

A chorus of amazement followed Stewart's departure.

"What the thump—" began Tom Merry.

"Did the fellow see a ghost, or what?" gasped Jack Blake.

"Fancy taking to his heels like that!" George Alfred Grundy blinked around him in a dazed sort of way.

"Where is he?" he muttered, wildly pawing the air. "Where's that cheeky new kid? I—I want to smash him!"

"I'm afraid the entertainment will have to be postponed, old chap," said Monty Lowther. "Stewart's gone!"

"Gone?" gasped Grundy, who had been too dazed to observe clearly what had happened. "Gone where?"

"Give it up!"

Wilkins helped Grundy on with his coat.

"That was the luckiest thing that could have happened!" he said.

"What do you mean?" demanded Grundy.

"You were on the point of being licked, old man!"

"Rats!" said Grundy. "I'd just got the measure of him! In another two ticks he'd have been biting the dust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, Grundy!" said Tom Merry hastily. "You don't want Miss Marie to catch you like this!"

"Oh, crumbs, no!" said Grundy.

And he moved away, being escorted to the nearest bath-room by his faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn.

CHAPTER 3.

Talbot is Puzzled.

"BLESS my soul!" Mr. Railton uttered the exclamation in tones of surprise.

The housemaster was in the act of emerging from his study, when a dishevelled and breathless figure, carrying a coat under his arm, came dashing along the passage.

Bump!

Before Mr. Railton had time to step to one side, a collision had taken place.

Stewart came off second best. He shot off at a tangent, so to speak, and recoiled against the wall opposite.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Mr. Railton looked stern.

"How dare you career along the passage in such a precipitate manner!" he exclaimed.

Stewart pumped in breath.

"Sorry, sir," he panted, "but—"

"Are you the new boy?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Yes sir."

"Then pray step into my study!" Stewart followed the housemaster into that sacred apartment.

Most fellows would have shown some trepidation in such circumstances. But Stewart showed none. Having recovered his breath, he glanced round the room with considerable curiosity, though he pretended to be quite indifferent when the housemaster's eyes were on him.

Mr. Railton stood with his back to the fire, and frowned.

"You do not appear to have commenced your school career in a creditable manner, Stewart," he said.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Your sorrow does not impress me in the least," said Mr. Railton. "You have been fighting."

Stewart glanced down at his dusty clothes, and his grazed knuckles.

"It doesn't need a Sexton Blake to deduce that, sir," he said.

"You are impatient, Stewart!"

"Not at all, sir."

"With whom have you been fighting?"

"A fellow called Bundy or Monday, or some such name as that, sir."

"Gundy?" said Mr. Railton.

"That's the chap, sir. He's a relation of the celebrated Mrs. Gundy, I suppose."

Mr. Railton's frown deepened.

"These unseemly brawls are in the worst possible taste," he said. "I am surprised that a new boy should indulge in fist-fights within a few moments of his arrival. Who started this fight?"

"I suppose I did, sir."

"Did you strike Grundy with provocation?"

"No, sir; with my fist!"

Stewart's expression was as solemn as an owl's as he spoke.

Mr. Railton, who did not know that his leg was being pulled, could scarcely repress a smile.

"You seem a very stupid boy, Stewart," he said. "Did Grundy do anything to provoke you anger?"

"He borrowed my motor-bike, sir."

Mr. Railton stared.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have a motor-bicycle in your possession, Stewart?"

"Yes, sir. She's a beauty! Twin cylinder, two-and-a-half horse-power."

"I do not desire to know the family history of the machine," said Mr. Railton drily. "You are aware, I suppose, that junior boys are not allowed to be in possession of such dangerous toys?"

"I'm a first-class rider, sir!" said Stewart indignantly.

"Have you a licence?"

"Yes, sir," said the new boy, producing it.

"H'm!" said Mr. Railton thoughtfully. "Won't you allow me to use the bike, sir? You can trust me not to break my neck, or anything like that."

"I am afraid the machine will have to be confiscated, Stewart," said the house-master. "However, you may keep it until a definite decision is arrived at."

"Thank you, sir!"

ward proposition. The Shell studied already had their full complement of occupants, and it was difficult to squeeze in even one new boy.

But something had to be done. Stewart was entitled to a study, just as much as Tom Merry or any other Shell fellow.

"You will, Mr. Railton came to a decision. "You will share Study No. 9 with Gore, Skimpole, and Talbot," he said.

As the housemaster uttered Talbot's name, Stewart started violently. But he had pulled himself together by the time Mr. Railton glanced at him.

"Very well, sir," he said.

"You will find your study mates a companionable trio," said Mr. Railton. "Gore is a boy of rather uncertain temper, and it will be necessary for you to exercise tact in your dealings with him. Skimpole is—ahem!—rather foolish, but well-meaning. And Talbot is a boy whom you cannot fail to like."

"I'm sure we shall pull well together, sir," said Stewart.

"There may be a little opposition at first," said Mr. Railton. "The present occupants of the study will naturally not be keen to have a newcomer thrust upon them; but you may tell them that you have my authority to share their study."

Stewart nodded gratefully, and quitted the housemaster's presence.

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TUCK HAMPER.

His first move was in the direction of the bath-room. Here he spent a very crowded half-hour removing all traces of the combat with Grundy.

When he emerged he looked thoroughly spick and span, and with a light step he went along to the Shell passage.

Outside Study No. 9 he paused, and for a moment his face clouded over.

"Will he spot me!" he murmured. And then he added reassuringly: "Of course not! He can't possibly recognise me, after all these years. And he's only seen me once or twice in his life. Here goes!"

And, tapping on the door, Stewart advanced into the study.

Talbot and Gore sat facing each other at the table, discussing football and buttered scones. Skimpole was trying to digest a stale rock-cake, and the works of Professor Balmcrumpet at the same time. All three looked up as Stewart entered.

"Who are you?" demanded Gore, who did not possess the politeness of princes.

"My name," said the new boy, "is Stewart. And yours?"

"Well, of all the cheek—" began Gore, half-rising from the table.

Talbot hastened to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Pleased to meet you, Stewart," he said. "What can we do for you?"

Mr. Railton's sent me here with an ultimatum—"

"Oh, chuck it!" growled Gore. "We've got one dictionary-swallower in this study, and we don't want another!"

"Really, my dear Gore!" protested Skimpole. "If you are referring to me, I can only say that your articulations are calumnious."

"Chuck it!" snapped Gore. Then, turning to Stewart, he said: "Tell us in two words what you're doing here?"

"Staying here," said Stewart calmly. "What?"

"Mr. Railton tells me I am entitled to one-fourth of this study. We'd better measure off the space, I think, and stick a screen up."

"Don't be an ass!" said Talbot, laughing. "Are you really coming into this study?"

"Such is my good fortune."

But George Gore didn't appear to regard it as a piece of good fortune. In one bitter sentence, he consigned Mr. Railton and the new boy to Jericho.

"Of course," said Stewart. "I know you'll regard me as an interloper."

"There he goes again with his jaw-breaking words!" growled Gore. "Kick him out!"

"Shush!" said Talbot. "We must be civil to the stranger within the gates, you know. Will you have some tea, Stewart?"

"Well, I don't mind," said Stewart. "I'll treat the teapot to keep warm while I bring my goods and chattels along!"

And the new boy departed, leaving Talbot smiling, and Gore frowning.

A moment later Stewart returned, bearing three bags, which he dumped down on the carpet.

"My hat!" said Gore. "You seem to have plenty of baggage!"

"That's merely the first instalment," said Stewart.

"You don't mean to say—"

"That there's more to come? Oh, yes! Heaps more!"

Stewart disappeared, and returned with three more bags. He repeated the operation several times, until seventy bags, piled up in the form of a pyramid, had been brought into the study.

Gore was almost speechless, Skimpole's eyes seemed to start out of his head, and even Talbot was overwhelmed.

"Great pip!" he gasped. "You—you haven't brought a footer team down with you, by any chance!"

"These represent my own personal property," said Stewart.

"My hat! How did you manage to get them all up to the school?"

"Tom Merry and the others helped me."

"Look here," said Gore, "this is a study—not a confounded warehouse!"

"Judging by your face," retorted Stewart, "I should say it was the monkey-house at the Zoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Talbot. Gore sprang to his feet. His face was livid.

"You—you cheeky young hound!" he spluttered.

"Careful!" said Stewart warningly. "I've already had occasion to mop up the ground with a fellow called Grundy! You'd better keep your tongue in your cheek, unless you want to be served with the same medicine!"

Gore pranced about in his fury. "You beastly little upstart!" he snarled.

Stewart's ready fist shot out, and Gore sat down with a bump which shook every bone in his body. He put his hand to his nose, and when he drew it away it was crimson.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh, crumbs! You!"

"Like some more!" asked Stewart pleasantly.

Gore was understood to say he wouldn't. He rose to his feet, dabbing

his nose with a handkerchief, and after that he seemed disposed to treat Stewart with more respect.

"Look here," said Stewart, "I don't want to be everlastingly quarrelling and punching people's noses! If you're willing to shake hands and be pals—why, so am I!"

"Well spoken!" said Talbot approvingly.

Gore was inclined to be sulky at first, but he looked up and met Stewart's frank gaze, and then he extended his hand.

"There's no earthly reason why we shouldn't pull well together in this study," said Talbot. "But I should advise you to shift all those bags into

with a puzzled expression on his face. He was trying to recollect where he had seen Stewart before.

There was something familiar about Stewart's features—something which caused Talbot's thoughts to wander back to his early days. He felt confident that he had met Stewart before, though when and where he could not for the life of him recollect.

With a sort of fascination Talbot kept his eyes glued on the face of the new boy.

Stewart was aware of the scrutiny, and he smiled at Talbot. His heart, however, was beating faster than usual.

"Finding me interesting?" he asked.

CHAPTER 4.

The Van's et Fiver!

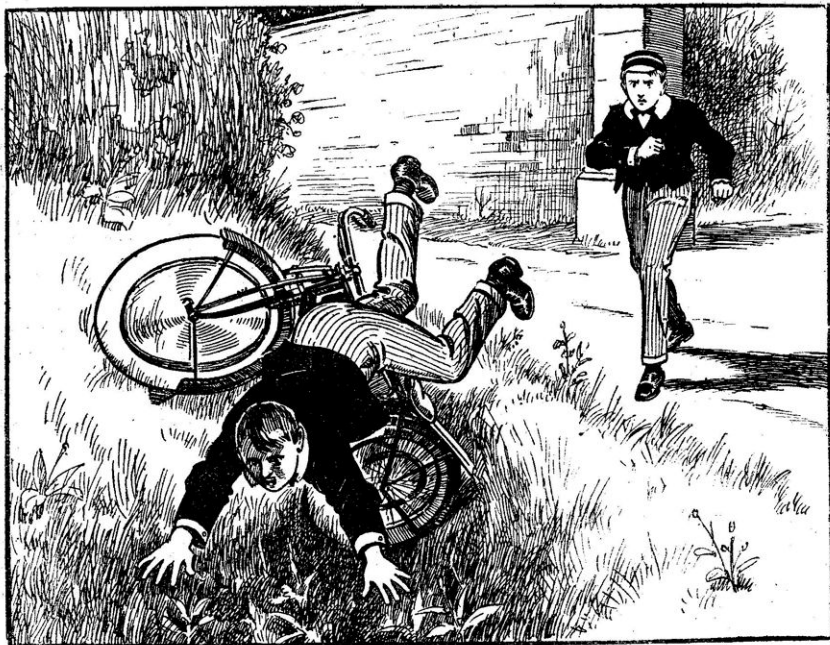
"HEAR! he is, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the exclamation as he glanced in at the doorway of

Study No. 9.

Behind Arthur Augustus, in the passage, were Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby, and the Terrible Three of the Shell.

"Stewart seems to have dug himself in pretty quickly," observed Ten Merry. The new boy grinned.

"These are my allotted quarters," he said.



The machine cleared the ditch at a bound, and shot up the steep bank. Then it shot back again, and Grundy was thrown off into the ditch, which was covered by a network of prickles and thorns. "Yaroooooh!" roared Grundy. "My motor-bike!" yelled Stewart. (See Chapter 2.)

the dorm, Stewart. They'll be in the way here."

"All serene!" said Stewart. "I'll shift them after tea."

"Sorry we can't offer you much in the eating line," said Talbot. "There happens to be one buttered scone left and one rock-cake."

"If you're thinking of tackling the rock-cake," said Gore, "allow me to pass you the poker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We don't happen to be in funds just now," explained Talbot, "consequently we've got to go short of grub."

"Don't apologise," said Stewart. "I won't lead a gift horse in the mouth."

And he looked on his frugal fare.

Talbot watched the new boy curiously,

Talbot flushed.

"I—I'm sorry!" he said. "You must think me a pretty rude sort of bounder to stare at you like that, but I was thinking I'd met you before."

"That's hardly likely," said Stewart. "I've spent most of my life in India."

"Oh!"

"Of course, there must be heaps of fellows who resemble me more or less," Stewart went on. "I'm one of a type. I suppose you've met one of my doubles."

"I—I suppose so," assented Talbot.

Stewart seemed to regard the matter as of small consequence, but Talbot, try as he would, could not dismiss it from his mind. He was prepared to swear that he had met the new boy before.

"What a crush!" said Moidy Lowther. "Three fellows, seventeen bags, and one freak, the freak being Skinny!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed Stewart curiously through his monocle.

"Why did you wun away so suddenly duwin' the fight with Gwunday?" he demanded.

"Yes. Why did you turn tail as if you'd seen a ghost?" exclaimed Jack Blake.

Stewart looked confused.

"I—I— The fact of the matter was I had an appointment!" he stammered. "Couldn't you have mopped up Grundy first?" said Moidy.

"Hardly. You see, it was a jolly important appointment. I was due in Raiton's study."

"And you only remembered it at the tail-end of the fight?" said Digby incredulously.

Stewart nodded.

"Weasly, you are a weeny wummy sort of chap!" said Arthur Augustus. "Still, I can never forget that you saved my toppah from total destruction."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle, and come to the horses!" said Jack Blake. "Come along, Stewart! And you, too, Talbot!"

"Where to?" asked Talbot, in surprise.

"To the tuckshop, my son! Gussy—our peerless, priceless Gussy—is standing a tremendous feed! He's had a fiver from home, and he's going to blue the lot!"

"That's what I call real economy!" said Monty Lowther. "Instead of spending his cash on useless fancy waistcoats and silly spats, Gussy's going to feed the poor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where do I come in?" asked Gore. "You don't!" said Digby. "You stand out!"

And there was a fresh outburst of laughter at Gore's expense.

Arthur Augustus, however, was nothing if not generous. He had little love for George Gore, but he did not wish to see him left out in the cold.

"You can come along, Goah," he said graciously, "an' you, too, Skimmay."

Skimpole blinked at the swell of St. Jim's.

"I'm a not sure," he said, "that Professor Balmcrumpet would approve."

"Oh, bless Balmcrumpet!" growled Tom Merry. "Bring Skimmay along!"

And, escorted by Talbot and Gore, Skimpole was whirled out of the study.

The procession of juniors straggled through the dusky quadrangle, and arrived at the tuckshop just as Dame Taggles was in the act of putting up the shutters.

"One moment, Mrs. Taggles," said Tom Merry. "We've got a shipping order for you!"

"Very good, Master Merry! Will you come inside!"

The juniors followed the dame into the shop.

Arthur Augustus gave orders on a most lavish scale. A fiver, he reflected, would cover a lot of ground, even at a time when the price of foodstuffs was abnormally high.

"Have you any wabbit-pies, Mrs. Taggles?" he inquired.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"I'll take two. Also a cold chicken. Likewise half a dozen veal-an'-ham-pies."

"Very good, Master D'Arcy!"

"An' then we shall wequah pastwies—plenty of pastwies!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "We'd better say a dozen of each, sort, hadn't we, you fellahs?"

"Oh, make it a billion!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Way do not be fatwalous, Lowthah! This is a serious mattah."

"My mistake!" said Lowther. "I thought it was a Punch and Judy show!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus frowned severely at the humorist of the Shell, and turned again to Dame Taggles.

"A dozen pastwies of each sort, please," he said, "an' a couple of cakes—one curwunt an' one seed."

Dame Taggles bustled about with a bustling face.

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The counter of the little shop was soon laden with good things.

"You're getting near the end of your resources, I should think, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

Dame Taggles made a rapid mental calculation.

"What you have already purchased, young gentlemen," she said, "amounts to four pounds, seventeen-and-sixpence."

"Good!" said Jack Blake. "We'll make it up to a fiver with ginger-pop!"

The bottles were accordingly ranged on the counter, and Dame Taggles coughed expectantly.

"Pay up, Gussy," said Digby.

"One moment, deah boy—"

"Pay up, you ass! We don't want to be here all night!"

Arthur Augustus, with a crimson face,

No. 1.—TOM MERRY



Tom Merry, the junior captain of St. Jim's, and leader of the Terrible Three. A great favourite throughout the whole school. Plucky, straightforward, fond of fun, and a good all-round athlete. Shares Study No. 10 with Manners and Lowther, the other two members of the Terrible Three.

was engaged in going through his pockets.

A sudden hush fell upon the crowd in the tuckshop. The juniors glanced rather grimly at their elegant school-fellow.

"I—I—" faltered Arthur Augustus.

"Pay up!" said Digby, for the third time.

"I—I kik-kik-can't!" stammered the swell of St. Jim's.

"What?"

Arthur Augustus looked very distressed.

"I appeal to have mislaid my fiver, deah boys!" he said.

"Lost it, you mean!" said Gore.

"No! I wemembah distinctly puttin' it in my wallet!"

"And where's your wallet?" roared Manners.

"Gone, deah boy!"

"Gone!"

"Yaas!"

"My only aunt!" groaned Jack Blake.

"We've ordered all the things, and they've got to be paid for!"

"Turn out your pockets, Gussy!"

ordered Tom Merry.

"I have already done so, deah boy!"

"You've made a pretence of it, you mean. Turn them out thoroughly!"

"We'll give him a hand!" volunteered

Here.

Arthur Augustus was immediately surrounded by half a dozen juniors, who systematically turned out his pockets.

All sorts of articles were revealed, but there was no sign of the wallet.

"Might have been dropped somewhere," suggested Stewart, who had been watching the proceedings with an amused smile.

"Have you had a tussle with anyone lately, Gussy?" inquired Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus stroked his chin in perplexity.

"Let me think—" he began.

"No, no!" interposed Monty Lowther. "Your thinking apparatus is so fragile that you'll bust it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a laughing matter, you fellows," said Tom Merry. "That wallet's got to be found!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly. "I think it is extremely probable, deah boys, that I dropped it on the station platform, when Lowthah was playin' the giddy goat with my toppah!"

"Rats!" said Manners. "We should have seen it fall!"

"Perhaps we shouldn't," said Tom Merry. "Most of us were watching the train come in. It will be worth while to make inquiries at the station, anyway!"

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "It won't take long to nip down to the station and back. I'll go on my jigger. You fellows wait here!"

Jack Blake hurried away, and during his absence the juniors excitedly discussed the situation.

When Blake returned, twenty minutes later, he was greeted with a chorus of inquiry.

"Any luck?"

"Have you found the wallet?"

Jack Blake shook his head.

"I searched the whole of the platform with one of the porters," he said. "And I inquired of the stationmaster, too. But there's nothing along."

"Gussy's carelessness," said Digby, "is enough to make a fellow weep!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"I know," said Herries, with a sudden brain-wave. "He's probably left the wallet in the study!"

"That's more than likely," said Tom Merry. "We'll go along and see!"

But a search in Study No. 6 was productive of no result.

"Well, here's a pretty go!" said the captain of the Shell. "Who's going to pay for all that tuck?"

"I've no whip round, and each pay his own whack, as far as possible," said Manners.

"That's not a bad wheeze!"

Everyone seemed willing, and Tom Merry gave the command to "shell out." He himself set the ball rolling with ten shillings.

The other fellows gave according to their means, but there were a few who could not give at all.

Talbot, Gore, and Skimpole were in the state known as "stony," and they were, of course, excused; though they felt keenly their inability to contribute.

The money was placed in piles on the table in Study No. 6.

Jack Blake, with crimson countenance, produced the princely sum of ninepence.

"It's all I've got!" he explained apologetically.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry.

"Put it back in your pocket, old scout! We don't want to rob you of all your worldly wealth."

When the contributions were complete, Tom Merry counted the money.

"Four quid!" he announced. "We're a quid short!"

"We can cut down a quid's-worth of stuff," suggested Manners.

"No, no!" interposed Stewart. "I should like to make it up to a liver, if I may. Having only just arrived, you see, I've got tons of pocket-money."

"Weally, Stewart," said Arthur Augustus, "that is extremely generous of you!"

"Not at all!" said the new boy.

And he added a pound note to the amount already on the table, so that Stewart's action sent him up with a bound in the esteem of his schoolfellows.

Not every new boy, even though he was rolling in riches, would have made such a really handsome contribution for the general good.

"Having raised the wind," said Monty Lowther, "we will now go and collect the provender."

The juniors went back to the tuckshop, and between them they carried the good things to Study No. 6.

Dame Taggles was duly paid, although the mystery of D'Arcy's vanished fiver remained as much a mystery as ever.

The feed commenced shortly afterwards; but it did not go with a swing, as it would otherwise have done. Everyone was thinking of the missing fiver. Although no one actually referred to it while the feast was in progress, for fear of throwing a damper on the community, it was in everybody's thoughts.

One of three things might have happened to that fiver. It might have been mislaid—for Arthur Augustus was a past-master in the art of mislaying things. It might have been lost. And there was a third and more sinister possibility. It might have been stolen!

Tom Merry & Co. hesitated to think that a theft had occurred, but as the evening wore on this possibility ripened into a probability.

Diligent search had failed to elucidate the fiver; so the theory that it had been mislaid did not seem the correct one. And it had not been dropped on the railway platform; that was certain.

The Terrible Three managed somehow to keep up an animated conversation at the table—chiefly concerning the match with Rookwood, which was to be played on the morrow. But the most casual observer could easily have seen that the conversation was forced, and that the laughter was neither genuine nor spontaneous.

Arthur Augustus was looking frankly worried. He had looked forward to playing the part of host, and entertaining his schoolfellows; instead of which, his schoolfellows were entertaining themselves. And they made a very sorry job of it.

When the feed was over, the Terrible Three sauntered along to their own study.

"I can't help thinking," said Tom Merry, "that there's been a thief at work. I didn't say so before, because I didn't want to put the fellows off their feed. But between ourselves, it seems perfectly obvious."

Manners nodded. Monty Lowther, who looked quite serious for once, nodded also.

"The question is," said Tom Merry, "who would be likely to collar Gussy's fiver?"

"Of course," said Manners hopefully, "it may not have been a St. Jim's fellow. It's more than likely that Gussy was robbed by an outsider. It would be a simple enough sleight-of-hand trick to remove the wallet from Gussy's pocket!"

"Well, whoever's collared it, I shan't be happy until the affair's cleared up,"

said Tom Merry. "For all we know, this may be the beginning of a whole series of thefts."

"We shall have to keep our eyes open, that's all," said Monty Lowther, "and if we discover the giddy thief there will be short shrift for him, whether he happens to be a St. Jim's fellow or not!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the Terrible Three left it at that.

CHAPTER 5.

A Stormy Scene!

"CAN you play footer, Stewart?"

Tom Merry, with a football under his arm, met the new boy in the Shell passage before breakfast next morning, and asked him the question.

"Can a duck swim?" said Stewart.

No.2—ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY.



The Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, second son of Lord Eastwood. A bright and shining member of the Fourth, described as the swell of St. Jim's. A prince of fashion, spending far too much time and money on dress. At the same time, he is loved by all who know him. He is always threatening to "admitstah feebish thwashin's," but the threat is very rarely carried out. (Study No. 6—Fourth Form.)

"Care for a scratch game in the quad?"

"I'd love it!" said Stewart with enthusiasm.

"Come on, then."

Tom Merry and Stewart were joined en route by Jack Blake & Co., and Manners and Lowther.

"We've simply got to lick Wookwood this afternoon, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Last time we met them, if you wemembah, they trounced us."

"It was a howling fluke!" declared Jack Blake. "They'll never do it again in a thousand years!"

The morning air was crisp and keen, and the ball was soon set in motion. Despite the fact that it was a makeshift game, Stewart showed excellent form.

On several occasions he robbed Tom Merry of the ball, and made even the captain of the Shell, who was a first-class footballer, look rather an ass.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Stewart's quite a twojan, dear boys!"

"I should like to play him against Rookwood," said Tom Merry, "only I—"

"Only what?" said Manners.

"It would mean your having to stand down, old chap."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Manners promptly. "I've got sufficient savvy to see that I'm not in the same street with Stewart, so far as footer's concerned. Play him in my place by all means."

"That's very sporting of you," said Stewart.

The juniors trooped in to breakfast in good spirits. The fact that they had made a "discovery" in Stewart caused them to forget, for the time being, the affair of the missing fiver.

The match with Rookwood was always an important fixture, and it was doubly important on this occasion, for the Saints had a licking to avenge.

The Rookwood eleven, captained by Jimmy Silver, arrived after lunch. They were looking very fit and confident, and were hopeful of again winning the honours.

Tom Merry shook hands with Jimmy Silver, and nodded cheerfully to the rest of the Rookwooders, with whom he was on the best of terms.

"You've made no changes in your team, I notice," said Tom.

"There's was no need," said Jimmy Silver. "This is the identical team that trounced you before, and we mean to trounce you again!"

"The only difference being," said Tommy Dodd, "that the trouncing will be a bigger one this time!"

"Rats!"

The footballers moved off in the direction of Little Side.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver suddenly. "You've got a new fellow playing, I see."

"And he'll want watching!" said Tom Merry. "He's hot stuff!"

"He's a St. Jim's fellow, I take it?" said Lovell. "You haven't been borrowing him from Tottenham Hotspur?"

"He's quite genuine," said Monty Lowther. "Belongs to the Shell—where all the great geniuses come from!"

And Monty Lowther made a sweeping bow as he spoke.

"By Jove, what a crowd!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, when they reached the ground. "Anybody would think it was a cup final!"

"Or a bull-fight!" said Newcome.

"I must say it's jolly sportin' of these fellows to turn out in force to see us play," said Mornington.

"Ass!" growled Jack Blake. "They've turned out to see us—not you!"

The two teams retired into the pavilion, where the Rookwooders hurriedly changed. Tom Merry & Co. were already in football garb.

There was a cheer as the Rookwood eleven ran out to the field. But it was merely a whisper by comparison with the cheer that went up when the St. Jim's fellows printed out.

The last fellow to leave the pavilion was Stewart, but in the general excitement, nobody noticed this apparently trivial circumstance.

"Come along, St. Jim's!" came in a deafening roar from the crowd on the touchline.

"Play up, Tom Merry!"

"Put your best into it, Gussy!"

"Weally!" protested Arthur Augustus, surveying the crowd through his monocle. "I regard that as a most vulgar expression!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Line up, you kids!" rapped out Kildare, the stalwart captain of St. Jim's, who had consented to act as referee.

Tom Merry won the toss, but there was no advantage in this, as there was not a breath of wind.

The ball was set in motion, and the vocal efforts of the crowd reached their highest pitch.

At the end of five minutes' play, two facts were obvious; firstly, that Stewart was one of the speediest wingers who had ever played in a junior match; and secondly, that Rookwood would only be able to avert defeat by a miracle.

Stewart was the best man on the field. His pace was dazzling, and he not only grasped opportunities, but he made them.

"Just look at that fellow!" said Manners, whose place Stewart was taking. "He's a blessed wizard! He's better than Tommy, and he's better than Talbot—and praise can't go higher than that!"

It was from the foot of Stewart that the first goal came.

The new boy, after a magnificent run, swung the ball across to Tom Merry, and Tom, being hard pressed by the Rookwood backs, sent it back again. Whereupon Stewart, fastening on to the leather like a terrier, drove it into the net at express speed.

"Goal!"
"Well played, sir!"
"Jolly well played indeed!"

The faces of Jimmy Silver & Co. were grim.

"I don't mind playing against ordinary human beings," grunted Tommy Dodd, "but that fellow's a jack-in-the-box!"

"We shall have to bottle him up somehow," said Jimmy Silver desperately.

Tom Merry & Co. fairly beamed at Stewart.

"Keep it up, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Let's have a ditto repeat, as the Italians say!" said Monty Lowther.

Stewart grinned.

"I'll do my best to oblige," he said.

Even at that early stage of the game, Rookwood were overplayed. They fully expected to lose, and they concentrated all their energies on making the margin as narrow as possible.

Presently, however, a misfortune overtook St. Jim's.

Stewart passed the ball to Jack Blake, and, just as the latter was about to shoot, he collided heavily with one of the Rookwood backs, and was seen to collapse.

Kildare blew the whistle for the game to stop, and ran to the spot.

"Hurt, kid?" he inquired.

Jack Blake raised himself on his elbow, and smiled faintly.

"I've given my ankle a twist," he said.

"Badly?"

"Yes; but I don't think I can play on."

"Oh, ewmbs!" said Arthur Augustus in dismay.

"Don't worry about me, you fellows," said Blake. "I'll go and rest in the pavilion until half-time, and perhaps I shall be fit enough to turn out in the second half."

"Hope so," said Tom Merry.

Jack Blake limped away to the pavilion, and the game was resumed.

Rookwood profited by Blake's absence. The game was levelled up considerably, and Jimmy Silver & Co. did a fair share of the attacking.

Shortly before half-time, Tommy Dodd flashed the leather into the net, and the scores were level.

It had been a very strenuously-contested game so far, and both sets of players were feeling the strain as they trooped into the pavilion at the interval.

"Duh it!" said Tom Merry suddenly. "The lemons haven't turned up. And I'm absolutely parched!"

"Same here!" said Jimmy Silver. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 616.

"Never mind, I'll cut across to the tuck-shop and get them. Twenty-two, isn't it?"

"That's right," said Tom Merry.

Jimmy Silver groped in the pockets of his Eton jacket, which was hanging up on the wall of the pavilion.

"By Jove, that's queer!" he exclaimed.

"What's up now?" asked Lovell.

"I seem to have mislaid my cash."

"You'll find it in the pocket of your overcoat, most likely," said Tommy Dodd.

With a puzzled expression on his face, Jimmy Silver went to his overcoat. But he again drew blank.

"Well, if that's not the limit!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, I'll lend you five bob, if you've been as long to mislay your cash," said Newcome.

But Newcome was promising what he could not perform. He went through his pockets, and shared the fate of the celebrated Mother Hubbard.

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A look of alarm spread over Newcome's face.

"Gone!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? What's gone, dear boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"All my tin!" said Newcome dazedly.

Tom Merry gave a start, and so did several of his chums.

Was this another case of theft?

Only the day before D'Arcy's fiver had disappeared. And now—?

"There's something jolly queer about this," said Jimmy Silver. "We shouldn't both mislay our cash by a coincidence. You other fellows had better investigate your own pockets."

The rest of the Rookwooders did so, and all of them, without exception, uttered exclamations of dismay.

"I've lost ten bob!" announced Tommy Dodd.

"Same here!"

"And I've lost half-a-crown!"

"Before the match started," said the elegant Mornington, "I was the proud possessor of a couple of quid. An' now I'm broke!"

Tom Merry's face was quite pale now.

Not only were his worst fears confirmed, but he realised what a terrible predicament he was in. As captain of the home side, he was answerable, in a way, for the safety of the visiting team's property.

And every member of the Rookwood eleven had been robbed.

The faces of Jimmy Silver & Co. were grim; those of Tom Merry & Co. were worried and anxious.

Jack Blake, who had been in the pavilion for the past half-hour, was still seated on one of the benches.

Jimmy Silver turned to him with a curious expression on his face.

"Chuck it, Blake!" he said.

Jack Blake stared.

"Chuck what?" he exclaimed.

"Chuck playing the gidly goat!"

Blake flushed angrily.

"I don't understand you!" he said, with some heat.

"Of course, I'm not pretending for a moment that you deliberately pinched the money—!" began Jimmy Silver.

The words were unfortunate.

In spite of his damaged ankle, Jack Blake sprang to his feet. His eyes were blazing.

"Are you inferring that I've got your money?" he shouted.

"Don't get excited," said Jimmy Silver. "As I say, there's no question of theft. But it's only too obvious that you've taken the cash for a joke."

"Obviously, is it?" hooted Jack Blake, hobbling to and fro with clenched fists.

"I like that! I'm not the sort of fellow to play the fool with other people's money!"

"Of course you're not!" said Tom Merry. "You're not a thief, and you're not a practical joker—not of that description, at any rate."

"In my opinion, Siltrah," said Arthur Augustus, "you're talkin' through your hat!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was Jimmy Silver's turn to get angry.

"Of course, you would try and shield Blake!" he said. "But you can't deny that he's been the only fellow in the pavilion. And if he didn't tamper with the money, who did?"

That was a question which Tom Merry & Co. did not find easy to answer.

"There's no need for any friction," said Tommy Dodd. "We quite understand that it was just a silly practical joke on Blake's part. If he comes to hand over our money, we'll say no more about it."

"You cad!" shouted Jack Blake.

"Now, don't try to brazen it out!" said Tommy Dodd. "Fork up the tin, and then we'll get on with the game!"

"For the last time," said Jack Blake, who was nearly at the end of his tether. "I haven't so much as seen your money!"

"Oh, come off!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Are you trying to tell us that somebody else came into the pavilion and bagged it? If that was the case, you couldn't possibly have missed seeing the money taken, unless you've been asleep," concluded the Rookwood junior sarcastically.

Jack Blake could stand it no longer. He was an honourable fellow, and his own school mates knew him to be honourable. They knew that he was not in the habit of telling lies, and persisting in them.

Jimmy Silver & Co., on the other hand, had only a slight knowledge of Blake, and they might have been excused for jumping to conclusions.

Blake advanced towards Jimmy Silver.

"Will you take back your beastly insinuation?" he demanded.

"Certainly not!"

"Then you can take that!"

And the speaker hit out with all his strength.

Jimmy Silver was sent reeling into the arms of his chums.

"I'll smash you for that!"

"Come on, then!" said Jack Blake furiously.

Tom Merry rushed forward to separate the combatants; but he need not have troubled, for at that moment Kildare of the Sixth stepped into the pavilion.

"Time you kids were on the field—!" began the captain of St. Jim's. Then



"Five pounds and ninepence!" said the captain of St. Jim's. Had Kildare suddenly exploded a bombshell in the pavilion, it could not have had a more startling effect. For the amount of the missing money, and the amount which Jack Blake had turned out of his pockets were identical! (See Chapter 6.)

he broke off, as his eye lighted on Jack Blake and Jimmy Silver, and on Tom Merry, who was wrenching them apart. "What's all this?" demanded Kildare sternly.

CHAPTER 6.

GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY!

FOR a moment, no one spoke. Tom Merry was the first to find his voice.

"The Rookwood fellows have made an unpleasant discovery, Kildare," he said. "All their money's missing!"

"My hat!" said Kildare.

"They all had money in their coat pockets before the match started," continued Tom Merry, "and now they haven't a penny-piece between them!"

Kildare's handsome face clouded over. "This is a very serious matter, and it must be investigated at once!" he said. "What is your opinion of the affair, Silver?"

"The cash was here when the game started," said Jimmy Silver, "so it must have disappeared between then and half-time."

"Has anyone been in the pavilion, to your knowledge?"

"Blake has, of course!"

"Kildare gave a start."

"I had quite forgotten that Blake went off the field," he said. "But then, Blake isn't the sort of kid who would meddle with your money."

"That's precisely what we've been

twin'g to dwell into Silver's head!"

said Arthur Augustus.

"Silence, D'Arcy! Do you accuse Blake of having taken your money, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"I don't accuse him of stealing it —" "You'd better not!" said Blake fiercely.

"But I believe he took it for a practical joke," Kildare frowned.

"There's very little difference, that I can see, between the two," he said. "A fellow who takes money for a lark is practically equivalent to a thief."

"Look here, Kildare!" said Jack Blake. "Do you believe I'd take money for a lark?"

"No, I don't!" said Kildare frankly. "At the same time I can't afford to ignore Silver's accusation. How much money have your Rookwood fellows lost altogether?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stated the items, and Kildare jotted them down on a slip of paper.

"Five pounds and ninepence!" he said, when he had added up the figures. "It's hard to believe that a fellow would take a sum like that for a joke."

"Whether it's hard to believe or not, it's a fact," said Jimmy Silver.

"Do you still persist in your accusation?"

"Yes."

Jack Blake struggled fiercely in the grasp of Tom Merry.

"The cad! Let me get at him!" he panted.

"Calm yourself, Blake," said Kildare. "Would you be calm if you were accused of a caddish thing like this?" retorted Blake.

"I don't think I should," replied Kildare. "Still, punching each other's noses won't help matters much."

Blake grieved. "Have you any objection to being searched, Blake?"

"Pshaw! That's a bit thick, isn't it?" said Manners.

"Keep your mouth shut, Manners!" said Kildare angrily. "Your opinion can wait! Now, Blake!"

Jack Blake hesitated. "It's rotten being searched like a heastly criminal!" he said. "Still, if you insist, Kildare —"

"I'm afraid I must," said the captain of St. Jim's. "You will turn out your pockets in my presence."

Blake was wearing his Eton jacket over his football attire, and there were not many pockets to turn out.

With Kildare's keen eye upon him, Jack Blake fished out all sorts of odds and ends which didn't matter, also a great deal of money, which mattered considerably.

There were two pound-notes, there were two ten-shilling ones, and there was a vast heap of silver and copper.

Tom Merry & Co. stared blankly at Jack Blake as he turned out his pockets. Only the day before, when contribu-

tions were required for the feed in Study No. 6. Blake had told his school-fellows that he possessed only ninepence. And now he had disgorged several pounds!

The suspicion which had taken shape in Jimmy Silver's mind began to take shape in the minds of Tom Merry & Co. "Oh crumbs!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "This is awful, dear boys! I do hope Blake will be able to explain how he came by all this money!"

Jack Blake continued to turn out his pockets.

"That's the lot," he said at length. Kildare's face looked very set and stern as he advanced to count the money. The footballers watched him in silence. The captain of St. Jim's looked up at last.

"Five pounds and ninepence!" he said. Had Kildare suddenly exploded a bombshell in the pavilion it could not have had a more startling effect.

For the amount of the missing money, and the amount which Jack Blake had turned out of his pockets, were identical!

"My only aunt!" muttered Tom Merry. "I should never have thought it of Jacky!"

Jack Blake spun round sharply. "You mean to say you think this money belongs to the Rookwood fellows?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders. "What else are we to think?" he said. Jack Blake glanced wildly around him. He saw nothing but accusing faces.

The Rookwood fellows were glancing accusingly at him, and that was bad enough. But his own chums—D'Arcy and Digby and Herries, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, and the others—they, too, thought him guilty. He was condemned on every side.

Kildare gathered up the money. "Whose are these pound-notes?" he inquired.

"Mine," said Mornington. "Have you a note of the numbers?" Mornington shook his head.

"That is unfortunate," said Kildare. "If you had, the matter could be settled beyond all doubt or dispute. However, even as things stand, the evidence against Blake is overwhelming."

"I tell you—," began Blake. "Here is your money, you kids," said Kildare.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came forward to receive what they regarded as their property. But Jack Blake intervened.

"That money's mine!" he said emphatically.

"Nonsense!" said Kildare sharply. "But I tell you it is! And, what's more, I can prove it!"

"Then you had better produce your proofs in the presence of a master," said Kildare. "You will come with me to Mr. Raitlon. I will take charge of the money meanwhile."

The captain of St. Jim's escorted Jack Blake from the pavilion, and Tom Merry & Co. followed.

"I must say I am greatly distressed at what has happened," said Arthur Augustus. "If Blake was in need of money he only had to come to me for it."

"A fat lot of use that would have been," said Monty Lowther, "when your own money's missing!"

Tom Merry started violently. It had not occurred to him until this moment that Blake might be responsible, not only for the theft in the pavilion, but also for the affair of Gussy's wallet.

And yet it seemed absurd on the face of it to suppose that a level-headed fellow like Jack Blake had suddenly become a kleptomaniac.

Tom Merry's brain was in a whirl. He hesitated to believe Blake guilty. Yet

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what other conclusion could he possibly come to?

"This is a beastly business!" said Stewart. "From the little I've seen of Blake, he's impressed me as being one of the best. And yet there can be no doubt that he took this money."

"Personally, I think there's a very big doubt," said Talbot. "I didn't think so at first. When I saw that the two amounts tallied I was ready to condemn Blake with the rest. But on reflection, I'm inclined to believe Blake's innocent."

"What makes you think that?" asked Stewart quickly.

"Because I know Blake isn't that sort of a rotter," replied Talbot.

The procession came to a halt outside the door of Mr. Raitlon's study. Kildare ushered Blake inside.

Mr. Raitlon was writing at his desk:

No. 3—HARRY MANNERS.



Harry Manners, of the Shell. A member of the Terrible Three. A more studious fellow than either of his two chums, and not so powerful as an athlete. An enthusiastic and skilful photographer, and a clever mathematician. A bright and cheerful British schoolboy of the very best type; popular with all at St. Jim's. (Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.)

He looked up in surprise as his visitors entered.

"Bless my soul! Is anything amiss, Kildare?"

"Yes, sir. As you are probably aware, the Rookwood boys are here to-day for a football match—"

"Yes, yes!"

"And a wholesale theft has taken place in the pavilion. Their pockets have been ransacked!"

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Raitlon. "Blake was in the pavilion during the time of the theft, sir," continued Kildare.

"And it was on him that suspicion naturally fell. I ordered Blake to turn out his pockets, and a sum of money, amounting to five pounds and ninepence, was found in his possession. That was precisely the amount which was stolen."

Mr. Raitlon looked very grave. "That is a most serious charge, Blake,"

he said. "Unless you are able to make a satisfactory explanation—"

"I am, sir!" said Jack Blake. "The money which I turned out of my pockets is my own. I can explain how I came by it. Last night I had ninepence, and this morning I received a five-pound note from one of my aunts."

There was a buzz of amazement from the crowd of juniors in the passage.

"I am afraid Blake is concealing this story, sir," said Kildare. "If, as he says, he received a five-pound note, how is it the note was not found on him?"

"Because I cashed it, of course," said Blake. "Dame Taggles, at the tuck-shop, cashed it for me. She gave me two pound notes, two ten-shilling ones, and the rest in silver and coppers."

"Will Mrs. Taggles bear out your statement, Blake?" asked Mr. Raitlon.

"Of course, sir!"

"Very well. I will send for her and question her."

The Housemaster stepped to the door and dispatched one of the juniors for Dame Taggles. That good lady arrived in a few moments, looking considerably agitated.

"You need not be alarmed, Mrs. Taggles," said Mr. Raitlon. "I merely wish to ask you if it is correct that you cashed a five-pound note for Blake this morning?"

"Quite correct, sir," said the dame. "That is all, Mrs. Taggles. Thank you!"

Jack Blake's honour was now vindicated to the satisfaction of Mr. Raitlon, Kildare, and the throng of juniors in the passage.

Somebody started to cheer, and the applause was taken up on every side, until it rang through the corridors of the School House.

Tom Merry could not resist rushing into Mr. Raitlon's study, and grasping Blake by the hand.

"I—I'm sorry I doubted you, Blake," said the captain of the Shell. "But none of us knew you had received a fiver. We knew you only had ninepence last night—"

"And you thought I'd made up the rest by rifling the Rookwood fellows' pockets?" said Blake.

Tom Merry flushed.

"We could hardly help thinking so, since you didn't explain," he said. "Why didn't you tell us you'd had a fiver from your aunt?"

"I wanted to keep it a secret," said Jack Blake. "I intended to stand a big feed, and not to breathe a word about it."

"Oh!"

"I am very glad, Blake," said Mr. Raitlon, "to be able to acquit you of this charge. At the same time, the affair of the theft must be cleared up. Did no one come into the pavilion while you were there?"

"Not a soul, sir, until half-time."

"It looks as if the money must have been taken between the time the match started and the time Blake got crooked and had to retire to the pavilion," said Kildare.

"But surely no one could have entered the pavilion unobserved?" exclaimed Mr. Raitlon.

"Somebody must have done, sir!"

"Bless my soul! This is a most extraordinary affair, besides being an unpleasant one. The reputation of the school will suffer if it becomes known that a visiting eleven have had their pockets picked. I shall have to discuss the matter with Dr. Holmes."

"Then we can do nothing more at present, sir?" said Kildare.

"Nothing, Kildare, except to advise

the Rookwood boys that Blake is not responsible for the theft."

Kildare nodded, and quitted the study. Jack Blake and Tom Merry followed him out, and the whole crowd made their way back to the pavilion to acquaint Jimmy Silver & Co. of Blake's innocence.

But there was a surprise in store for the St. Jim's fellows.

The Rookwood eleven, with all their bags and baggage, had taken their departure!

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Looks as if they've gone back to Wookwood in disgust, deah boys!"

"And abandoned the match!" said Digby. "Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Any use going after them?" suggested Manners.

Kildare glanced at his watch, and shook his head.

"They've caught their train by now," he said.

The St. Jim's juniors exchanged dismayed glances.

It was an event almost without parallel in the history of school football for a visiting team to pack up its traps and depart at half-time.

"How will they get back to Rookwood?" said Tom Merry. "They've got no cash!"

"They'll settle up at the other end, I suppose," said Stewart. "Anyway, they've gone, and it's no use hanging about here. I'm going in to tea." And Stewart went, followed by the rest of the School House juniors, who were looking dazed and bewildered.

Jack Blake's name had been cleared, and; but there still remained the mystery of the theft—in fact, it was a two-fold mystery.

Two thefts in two days, and no clue as to the culprit!

"It's amazing, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Positively amazing!"

And, for once in a way, Gussy's school-fellows were in complete agreement with him.

CHAPTER 7.

The Head Takes Action!

"I'll do it now!"

Tom Merry uttered the words with an air of finality.

"Do what, you chump?" growled Manners. "If you mean you'll upset my inkpot, you needn't trouble. You've done it already!"

"Bust your inkpot!" said Tom Merry. "I'll write to Jimmy Silver to-night!"

"Convey to him my loving wishes," said Monty Lowther, "and tell him not to behave like a two-year-old infant in future!"

Tom Merry pushed his prep on one side, and, after many interruptions on the part of his chums, he succeeded in compiling his letter.

When completed, the epistle ran as follows:

"My Dear Jimmy,—Sorry you went off in a huff this afternoon. If you had waited, you would have heard that Jack Blake had nothing to do with taking your money. He was able to explain the whole thing to Railton, the Housemaster. It appears he had ninpence overnight, and this morning he received a fiver from one of his aunts. The fact that the amount found on him corresponded with the amount you lost was merely a coincidence.

"I hope you haven't taken back with you to Rookwood the impression that St. Jim's is a thieves' kitchen, or anything of that sort. We mean to do our level best to discover what really happened to your money, and whether it was taken

for a joke or otherwise, there will be a short shrift for the fellow who took it.

"It seems a great shame that the match was abandoned, especially as there was every prospect of a close finish. But we hope you will bring your team over during the week for a replay.

"Yours sincerely,
"Tom Merry."

"Not a bad letter, that," said Manners. "If Jimmy Silver doesn't write and apologise for accusing Blake, he's not the sportsman I took him for."

"I'll apologise quickly enough," said Monty Lowther. "His reply, when it comes, will be swamped with tears of remorse. And when he sees Blake again he'll fold him in his watchchain and weep!"

But Monty Lowther's prediction proved false.

No. 4.—MONTAGUE LOWTHER.



Montague Lowther, the third member of the Terrible Three. A loyal chum and a good sportsman. Full of fun and humour. Always looks on the bright side of things, and is a good chum in a time of trouble. Has real literary ability and dramatic talent. He can impersonate very well, but usually only does so in a good-natured way. (Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.)

Jimmy Silver's reply came by return of post, and the nature of it made Tom Merry gasp.

The captain of the Shell had written quite a friendly letter, in the circumstances, but the reply was the reverse of friendly. Half a dozen Rookwood juniors seemed to have compiled it, but Jimmy Silver had obviously been the prime mover.

This was the letter:

"Dear Merry,—We have received your letter concerning Blake's explanation, which we consider decidedly feeble.

"If, as Blake says, he received a fiver from his aunt, why couldn't he have explained in the first place, when taxed with having taken the money? It is only

too clear that he told Railton a cock-and-bull story, and thus wriggled out of a tight corner.

"We absolutely refuse to replay the match, or to arrange any further fixtures with you. We want nothing more to do with fellows who allow visiting teams to be robbed, and then try to shield the thief. We suggest that, for the benefit of other teams who have the misfortune to visit St. Jim's, you display a notice in the pavilion to this effect: 'BEWARE OF PICKPOCKET!'"

(Signed) JAMES SILVER.
ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL.
GUSSEY RAY.
ARTHUR NEWCOMB.
TOMMY DODD.
VAL MORNINGTON."

Tom Merry's face changed colour as he read that bitter effusion.

"What's the matter, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was hovering near the post-rack.

"Matter enough!" growled the captain of the Shell. "Just look at this!" And he handed over the letter.

Quite a crowd of juniors glanced over Arthur Augustus' shoulder as he read it. A perfect howl of indignation arose.

"The cads!"

"The awful outsiders!"

"They still think Blake's guilty!"

"Shame!"

Feeling ran high in the Shell and the Fourth.

Hitherto, there had been a bond of union between the St. Jim's juniors and the Rookwood juniors. And now that bond was ruthlessly severed.

Arthur Augustus crumpled the offending letter in his hand.

"It's a downright beastly shame!" he exclaimed. And his tone was so unusually loud and fierce that it attracted Mr. Railton to the spot.

"Really, D'Arcy, you must not raise your voice in that way!" said the Housemaster. "What is wrong?"

"Show Mr. Railton the letter, Gussy!" said several voices.

Arthur Augustus hesitated. He was not sure that it was altogether fair to Jimmy Silver & Co. to show their letters to a master.

But Jack Blake's honour was involved, and Arthur Augustus considered, on reflection, that Mr. Railton ought to see the letter, especially as it contained a flagrant assertion that St. Jim's was nothing more or less than a den of thieves.

D'Arcy handed over the letter.

"Am I to read this, D'Arcy?" inquired Mr. Railton.

"We should be very glad if you would, sir. Pewsaps you could suggest what action we ought to take in the matter."

The Housemaster perused the letter, and his brows contracted.

"This is a most offensive and ungentlemanly epistle!" he exclaimed. "I quite fail to understand the attitude of the Rookwood boys. Blake's explanation was perfectly satisfactory to me—"

"But, then, the Rookwood fellows don't know Blake so well as you do, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Nothing can excuse such a letter as this!" said Mr. Railton.

"I only wish we could weed out the thief somehow, sir," said Tom Merry. "One wonders what's going to disappear next. First there was D'Arcy's fiver—"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry coloured. He realised that he had let his tongue run away with him.

"Do you mean to tell me, Merry," said the Housemaster, "that D'Arcy has lost five pounds?"

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"That's so, sir."
 "Then why was I not informed?"
 "We didn't regard it as sufficiently serious at the time, sir. We thought D'Arcy might have dropped the note, or mislaid it. He's often been known to do that sort of thing, you see—"

"Weally, Tom Mewsey—" protested the scull of St. Jim's.

"And you are now of the opinion, Merry?" said Mr. Railton, "that the five-pound note was stolen?"

"Yes, sir—by the same person, who stole the money from the pavilion."

The Housemaster looked grave.

"Really, there seems to be quite an epidemic of theft in the school!" he exclaimed. "I shall have to report the loss of D'Arcy's five-pound note to Dr. Holmes. I have already acquainted him of the other episode."

"And what are we to do about that letter from Rockwood, sir?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Nothing," said Mr. Railton. "I have no doubt that you would like to answer it in the strongest terms, but no good can come of a hostile interchange of correspondence between the two schools. For the present, the matter had better be left where it is."

"Very well, sir!"

The Housemaster handed the letter back, and then went along to see the Head.

"Ah, Railton!" said Dr. Holmes, as the young Housemaster came in with his athletic step. "Have you made any discoveries concerning the regrettable occurrence, you mentioned to me the other day?"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"There is not a single clue as to the thief's identity," said Mr. Railton.

"Dear me! Was Blake's innocence expressed to the Rockwood boys?"

"It was, sir; but they refuse to set any store by it. They have written a most insulting letter to Merry, saying that they still believe Blake guilty, and that they have no intention of bringing a football team to this school again."

"Bless my soul!"

"This boycotting of one school by another is not pleasant, sir," said Mr. Railton.

"At the same time, I fail to see what steps can be taken until the actual thief is discovered, and expelled with ignominy from the school."

The Head nodded.

"Quite apart from that affair, sir," said the Housemaster, "another theft has just been brought to my notice. It appears that D'Arcy of the Fourth Form has been robbed of a five-pound note."

Dr. Holmes started.

"Upon my soul, this is most alarming!" he exclaimed. "One would think that a whole gang of thieves is busy on the premises. It will be necessary for us to take instant action, Railton. The matter cannot be allowed to rest here."

"I suggest, sir," said Mr. Railton, "that you again requisition the services of Dalton Hawke, the boy investigator. You engaged him a short time back, you remember, and he was instrumental in capturing Dawlish, the cracksmann."

"I remember the affair quite well," said Dr. Holmes. "But there is a difficulty in the way of Dalton Hawke coming again."

"You mean," said he, "that he has another engagement, sir?"

"No—at least, not to my knowledge. But when he came to the school before he assumed the disguise of a boot-boy. If he repeats that ruse, the thief will be aware of his identity, and will know that he is being watched."

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"There would be no need for Hawke to adopt the same disguise twice, sir," he said.

"Do you suggest, Railton, that he should come here as a pupil?"

"Hardly. But what is to prevent the appointment of a temporary games master? Hawke is admirably suited for that part."

"Capital!" said the Head.

"Of course, the post would be merely a sinecure," Mr. Railton went on. "But Hawke would be given ample opportunity of tracking down the thief. I certainly think you ought to engage him, sir. If these thieves become general—and there is every indication that they will do so—Hawke's presence will be sorely needed."

The Head nodded.

"I will get into communication with Hawke at once," he said. "The sooner this distressing affair is satisfactorily cleared up, the better."

As Mr. Railton made his way back to the School House, he told himself that when Dalton Hawke arrived on the scene the thief would rapidly be brought to book.

But the Housemaster quite overlooked the possibility that the skill and cunning of the thief might prove superior to the skill and cunning of Dalton Hawke, detective!

CHAPTER 8.

A Mystery of the Night!

"THIEF!" That word, inscribed in printed capitals on a card, stared Jack Blake in the face when he went into Study No. 6 that evening.

The card had been placed in a prominent position on the mantelpiece, and the word seemed to leap out at Blake as he stood, with clenched hands, on the threshold.

"My hat!" muttered the junior savagely. "What end has done this?"

The study was deserted. D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby being in the junior Common-room.

Evidently one of Blake's enemies—for he had a few—must have sneaked into the study and placed the insulting placard on the mantelpiece.

It was only too obvious that it was intended for Jack Blake.

Although most of the fellows were satisfied as to Blake's innocence, there were just a few who still hinted that he knew something of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s money—though they were careful not to make such a hint in public.

For a moment Jack Blake stood still, his face working convulsively. Then he rushed forward, snatched down the card, and tore it into fragments, which he hurled up to the fire.

But Blake did not intend to let the matter rest there. He meant to find out who was responsible for the outrage; and when he did find out there would be trouble.

In a royal rage the indignant junior strode along to the Common-room.

Most of the Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were there, discussing the letter from Rockwood.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, as Jack Blake came in. "Wherefore that furrowed brow?"

Blake came to a halt. All eyes were fixed on his white, passionate face.

"Some low-down cad has insulted me!" he exclaimed, in ringing tones. "I went into my study just now, and found a card stuck on the mantelpiece, with the word 'Thief!' written on it."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That's a bit too thick!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Yes, rather!"

"I mean to find out whose handwork it was!" said Jack Blake.

"That won't be easy," said Stewart, "unless you can identify the handwriting."

"It wasn't handwritten—it was in printed capitals. And I've burnt it!"

"Oh!"

Jack Blake scanned the circle of faces around him.

"If the rotter who is responsible for that insult will own up," he said, "I'll give him a thundering good licking!"

"Oh, come!" said Monty Lowther. "Make that offer a bit more tempting than that! Why not promise the giddy culprit a pound of sugar?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to sneeze at!" said Blake irritably. "Some beastly cad stuck that thing up in my study. Was it you, Racke?"

Racke of the Shell glared.

"Well, I like that!" he said, wrathfully.

"Was it you?" persisted Blake.

"No, it wasn't!"

"Was it you, Crooke?"

"Look here," blustered Crooke, "you've no right to cross-examine me as if I were a beastly criminal!"

Jack Blake strode forward, grasped Crooke by the shoulders, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

"Answer my question!" he rapped out. "Was it you?"

"No, hang you!"

Blake released his grasp, and turned to Mellish of the Fourth.

"Do you know anything about this, Mellish?"

Mellish would have protested at this point, but he did not like the expression on Blake's face.

"No!" he said promptly.

Jack Blake paused. His cross-examination of the black sheep of the Fourth and Shell did not seem to be getting him much "forrader."

But Blake was furiously angry, and he meant to get to the bottom of the business somehow.

"Trimble!" he exclaimed, his eye lighting on the fat junior.

"Nunno!" said Barry Trimble beastly.

The promptness of the denial roused Blake's suspicions.

"I believe you know something about this!" he said grimly.

Baggy Trimble's flabby complexion turned the colour of chalk. He was very ill at ease—a fact which was painfully obvious.

"Owl! I—I wasn't—I didn't—" he stammered wildly.

Jack Blake stepped up to the fat junior and a buzz of excitement.

"I'm convinced that you can throw some light on this affair," he said. "If you don't tell me the truth, you'll get it in the neck."

"Oh, really, Blake!" said Trimble, his knees fairly knocking together. "I—I didn't happen to be looking in at the doorway when Racke stuck that card up on the mantel-piece!"

"So it was Racke?"

"Nunno—that is to say, I don't know! How should I know when I was in the quad at the time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble was getting deeper in the mire at every word he spoke; and the audience, with the exception of Aubrey Racke, appreciated the humour of the situation.

"Look here," said Jack Blake, addressing the fat junior, "it was Racke who planted that card on my mantel-piece, and you stood in the doorway and saw him do it!"

Baggy Trimble nearly fell down.

"Mum-mum my hat!" he stammered. "I didn't know you were watching me, Blake!"

"I wasn't watching you, you fat idiot! But what I've just said is the truth, isn't it?"

"Yes—no—yes!" blurted out the fat junior, in desperation.

"I thought as much!" said Blake.

And he turned to the scowling Racke, who was looking at Baggy Trimble as if he would eat him.

"Put up your hands, you cad!" exclaimed Blake.

"I don't see why—" began Racke.

"But I do! You've favoured me with a beastly insult, and now I'm going to favour you with a licking, to make it equal. See?"

Racke did not see, but he felt.

Jack Blake's fist shot out, catching the cad of the Shell on the point of the jaw.

Racke reeled, and fell against one of the desks.

"Come on!" said Blake savagely. "I haven't finished with you yet!"

"Give him an extra punch for me, dear boy!" sang out Arthur Augustus.

"And for me!" added a dozen voices.

Aubrey Racke was not feeling in fighting trim just then, owing to the fact that he had consumed more cheap cigarettes than were good for him. But he saw that there was no way of escape, so he did the most sensible thing possible, in the circumstances, and stood up to his man.

Jack Blake hit out with a strength and a fury of which not even his intimate chums had deemed him capable.

"Fetch the ambulance, somebody!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther's humorous request might have become a very serious one, for Racke was getting very badly knocked about. But at that moment the door of the common-room was thrown open, and Kildare of the Sixth appeared.

"Stop that scrapping there!" rapped out the captain of St. Jim's. "Blake and Racke, you will each take a hundred lines for brawling in the common-room!"

"It was Racke's fault!" said somebody.

"I don't care whose fault it was," said Kildare, frowning. "I'm not going to have this place turned into a prize-fighting booth! Get to bed, everybody!"

"Jolly lucky for Racke that Kildare came in when he did," observed Manners as the juniors went upstairs. "I've never known Blake to let off steam like that before!"

"When a fellow calls you a thief, you can't help letting yourself go!" said Tom Merry.

"Fear, hear!" said Stewart. "Racke got no more than he deserved. If anybody ever called me a thief, he'd become permanently bedridden!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Aubrey Racke was groaning and gasping as he turned in. But no one had any sympathy to waste on the cad of the Shell.

The juniors remained awake longer than usual that night, chatting over recent events.

The two recent thefts, and the letter from Jimmy Silver & Co., afforded plenty of scope for conversation.

Presently, however, the voices of the speakers grew drowsy, and one by one the juniors sank into the arms of Morpheus.

The dawning of the new day brought fresh developments in its train.

Shortly after rising-bell clanged out, Manners discovered the loss of a very valuable camera.

So valuable was the camera, in

Manners' eyes, that he had been in the habit of keeping it on his person by day, and underneath his pillow by night.

And now it had disappeared!

Manners was naturally very upset.

"That camera cost goodness knows how much money," he said, "and now it's gone!"

"You're quite sure you put it under your pillow?" said Tom Merry.

"Positive!"

"Well, that's jolly queer! Has any fellow taken Manners' camera for a lark?"

But the Shell fellows replied that they didn't believe in larks of that description.

"You're sure you didn't leave the camera in your study, Manners?" said Stewart.

"Of course, as! I haven't a leakage in my memory-tank!"

Stewart didn't like being called an ass: but Manners was not in the mood to scatter honeyed words. He prized his camera highly, and it infuriated him to think that someone had taken it from under his pillow.

"The giddy thief's at work again!" said Monty Lowther.

"Looks like it!" said Tom Merry.

"But—but I don't like to think that there's a thief in this dorm."

It soon became apparent, however, that the thief might belong anywhere.

From several other dormitories came complaints of losses.

One of the Fourth had been deprived of a handsome gold watch which had long been the envy of his school-fellows.

Cardew was not the sort of fellow to make a fuss, and he had confided the loss merely to his chum Clive. But Clive had felt so indignant on the subject that he had shouted the affair from the house-tops.

The thefts did not end there.

Knox of the Sixth had lost a silver cigarette-case. He could not very well describe it as such, for fear of an encounter with the authorities, so he referred to it by another name.

Knox was mightily indignant about it, but not more so than Kildare, who had lost a gold tie-pin—a present from his brother in Ireland.

Even the New House had suffered.

Monteith of the Sixth had had his fountain-pen confiscated, and Figgins of the Fourth had been relieved of three pound Treasury notes.

"Anybody would think," said Tom Merry, when the news had been collected from all quarters, "that a gang of crackmen were at work."

"It wally looks like it, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the juniors strolled in the quad, discussing the mysterious affair. "I am not a victim on this occasion, thank goodness! My best Sunday toppah is safe an' sound!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've had thefts at St. Jim's before," said Manners, "but never on such a big scale as this!"

"It's simply unheard of!" agreed Digby.

"What do you make of it all, Stewart?" inquired Tom Merry.

Stewart was looking very worried.

"I've just made a discovery that's knocked me all of a heap," he said.

"What's that? What's that, dear boy?"

"My motor-bike's been stolen!"

"Gwast Scott!"

The junior stared at the new boy in amazement.

"But—but how could anybody steal your motor-bike?" gasped Jack Blake.

"Don't ask me! All I know is that it's gone. Raiton told me I could keep it locked up in the bike-shed, until it was

decided whether I could have it permanently or not. And now I find that the bike-shed's been broken into, and the motor-bike's taken into itself wings!"

"My hat!"

There was a rush of juniors to the bicycle-shed, and they found that Stewart's statement was correct. The lock had been forced, and the motor-cycle was missing.

"This is where your camera pales into insignificance, Manners, old man!" said Monty Lowther. "A motor-bike's a jolly sight more valuable than a camera, any day."

"Rats!" growled Manners. "Still, it's pretty awful for Stewart, losing his bike like this!"

"Are all the push-bikes safe?" inquired Talbot.

Investigation proved that they were.

"My pater will be awfully ratty about this," said Stewart. "He gave a small fortune for that motor-bike."

Tom Merry & Co. glanced sympathetically at the new boy.

"Never mind!" said the captain of the Shell. "Let's hope it will turn up again soon."

"This makes it look as if the larder is somebody outside the school," said Herries.

The others nodded.

"The thief must have looked like Santa Claus," said Monty Lowther.

"Just picture him walking along on a motor-bike, with gold watches and fountain-pens clustered all round him!"

"The police might have collared him, dear boys!" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"The police!" scoffed Manners. "A fat lot of use the local police are. If they saw the merchant coming along, they'd take to their heels!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Stewart, the new boy, did not join in the general laughter. He stood apart from the rest, with a melancholy expression on his face. Evidently he felt the loss of his motor-cycle keenly.

Tom Merry was about to clap him on the back, and tell him not to despair of seeing his treasure again, when an extraordinary thing happened.

"Excuse me, you fellows," said Stewart hastily. "I—I've just remembered something!"

Then he turned, and sped swiftly into the building.

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

And Arthur Augustus blurted out:

"Bai Jove! Stewart's the wummiest beggar I've evah stwuck!"

CHAPTER 9.

Enter Dalton Hawke!

MARIE RIVERS, the school nurse, happened to be crossing the quadrangle.

The girl looked very charming in her neat nurse's costume, but she did not greet the juniors with her usual bright smile.

"Good morning, Marie!" said Talbot.

"It appears to be anything but a good morning, Toff," said Marie. "I understand there have been wholesale thefts in the night?"

"That's so," said Tom Merry. "The list of victims in a long one. Manners has lost his camera, Cardew his watch, Knox his cigarette-case, Kildare his gold tie-pin, Monteith his fountain-pen, Figgins three pounds, and now we've discovered that Stewart is minus his motor-bike!"

"Stewart!" echoed Marie. "Who is he?"

"The new kid," said Talbot. "Haven't you seen him yet?"

Marie shook her head.
"Well, you'll see him before long. He's an awfully good sort, but he behaves like a tame lunatic sometimes. He's got a habit of dashing away like a frightened rabbit while you're speaking to him!"

"How extraordinary!" said Marie.
"Extraordinary isn't the word for it," said Arthur Augustus. "It's positively amazing!"

Marie Rivers was looking very worried and anxious. She beckoned to Talbot, who walked by her side away from the others.

"This is a serious matter, Toff," said the girl.

"Very serious?" agreed Talbot.
"I hate anything in the nature of theft," said Marie vehemently. "It always reminds me so much of the days that I want to forget—the Angel Alley days, when—when we lived by dishonesty."

Talbot smiled slightly.
"Those days are dead and gone, Marie"

"They are resurrected every time an affair like this happens," was the reply. "I am afraid, Toff—afraid for your sake."

"For my sake?" said Talbot in wonder.
"Yes. You have lived down the past. You have made atonement a thousand times over—you are not without your enemies in the school. You cannot escape calumny. And if they should think—if they should suspect—"

Talbot laughed aloud.
"Why, Marie," he exclaimed, "not a soul would ever suspect me of having had a hand in this business. Even the enemies you speak of—the fellows who dislike and detest me—know by this time that I'm well able to keep my hands from picking and stealing. You are thinking absurd thoughts, Marie."

"I hope I am!" said the girl. "But I could not help feeling a little alarmed—"

"There's no cause for alarm, I can assure you! Even if one of the cads did mention my name in connection with this affair, no one would take any notice of him—except to punch his head!"

Marie was impressed by Talbot's cheery confidence. But there was something else which worried her.

"Whom do you think is responsible for these outrages, Toff?" she inquired.

"Haven't the foggiest notion," said Talbot. "If I had, I should take action at once, of course."

"You don't think that Jim Dawlish—"

"Dawlish!" repeated Talbot. "Why, he's behind prison bars!"

"But he may have escaped—"

"Not he! Escaping from prison isn't as easy as falling off a form, I can assure

you. Not that I'm speaking from experience," added Talbot hastily.

Marie smiled.
"I take your word for it, Toff," she said. "But granted that Jim Dawlish is out of harm's way, what about the other members of the gang? They are still very much alive, you know!"

Talbot shook his head with conviction.
"Not one of them is clever enough for the part," he said. "Just think of it! The thief had to go into several dormitories, into several prefects' studies, and into the bike-shed, without disturbing a soul. That sort of thing requires the skill of a Raphael. And I refuse to believe that any member of Jim Dawlish's gang possesses such skill."

Marie sighed.
"I wish I could share your opinion, Toff," she said. "But I cannot help thinking that Dawlish's gang is in some way connected with this affair."

"Look here, Marie," said Talbot, half jokingly and half seriously, "if you start worrying like this, you'll have to give up your job as nurse and become a patient."

Marie brightened up.
"I'm sorry, Toff—"

"Care killed a cat," said Talbot. "And you're not a cat!"

"Miss Pinch thinks I am, sometimes," said Marie, with a smile.

And, pressing Talbot's hand, she flitted away to her duties in the school sanatorium.

There was considerable excitement at St. Jim's that morning.

The masters found that their pupils could not concentrate on lessons, and the pupils found that even the masters were restless, and inattentive to their work.

In the middle of the morning the Head received a telegram from Dalton Hawke, and the telegram was followed, shortly afterwards, by the detective himself.

Tom Merry & Co. were on very friendly terms with the youthful investigator, but they did not extend him a cordial greeting on this occasion, for the simple reason that they were blissfully unaware of his identity.

After morning lessons the following announcement appeared on the school notice-board:

"Mr. Richard Brown has been appointed games-master at this school. All games and sports will be under his immediate control, and he will be treated with the same respect as the other masters."

(Signed) RICHARD HOLMES, "Headmaster."

Quite a crowd surged round the notice-board to read the Head's announcement.

"Treated with the same respect as the other masters," quoted Monty Lowther. "Therefore, if we treat him

like we treat Ratty and Selby, he'll get no respect at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's hope he's a good sort," said Tom Merry.

This hope was realised. Mr. Brown proved to be an excellent fellow in every way, and Kildare and others, who had viewed the appointment of a games-master as a mixed blessing, were relieved to find that Mr. Brown did not interfere unduly in matters of sport.

However, the games-master was not jolly. He had a very definite dislike of slacking, and the fellows of the Aubrey Racke type began to quake in their shoes at the prospect of being compelled to take an active part in football and similar healthy pursuits.

There was another fellow who, although he did not quake in his shoes, regarded Mr. Brown's appointment—and Mr. Brown himself—as a nuisance. That fellow was Stewart of the School.

"You're going to be somewhat in the way, Mr. Brown," murmured Stewart, as he watched the lithe figure of the games-master disappear in the direction of the football-field. "I think I've tumbled to your little game, and I think, also, that in me you will meet your master!"

Would Stewart prove to be right?

Or was there yet another triumph in store for Dalton Hawke, the boy-detective?

THE END

(Another long complete story of TOM MERRY & Co.'s next week entitled "LOYAL MISS MARIE!" Do not miss this exceedingly clever story.)

NOTICES.

BACK NUMBERS.

Edward McMahon, 2696, Mance Street, Montreal, Canada, wants "Magnets," 81, 88, 108, 119, 138, 148, 150, 152, 162, 171, 172, 179, 180, 200, 220, 244, 254, 257, 276, 283, 295, 361, 367. Write first, stating price.

G. Lomas, 6, Brookfield Street, Oldham, Lancs, has for sale 12 numbers of the "Id Gem" Library, including "Piggins' Pig Pudding." What offers?

Wilfred Godfrey, 181, Carlton Hill, Carlton, Notts, offers for sale large quantity of Companion Papers. Particulars on receipt of stamped, addressed envelope.

Miss Eileen McEugh, Albion Hill, Inverell, New South Wales, Australia, wants "Gems," 1-50, 467, and 555, 2d each offered.

Pat Corcoran, 66, Seville Place, Dublin, wants "Bob Cherry's Barring Out," "School and Sport," "Boy Without a Name," "Driven to the Wall," "Wingate's Folly," "By Shivers Orit," "A Schoolboy's Cross Roads," "The Call of the Past," "Cast Out From the School," "Loyal to the Last," also Nos. 1 and 2 "Boys' Friend," is offered. Write first.

Frank James, 7, Brunswick Street, Leamington Spa, has a large number of "Nelson Lee Library," for sale.

Her remarkable meeting with Lord Kitchener—her strange correspondence with her long lost brother—her travels and thrilling adventures make this the most interesting book ever written.

Begin it TO-DAY in the
PICTURE SHOW
On Sale Everywhere.

Just me!
by Pearl White

A most wonderful life story, the simple, straightforward tale of the childhood, early struggles and ultimate success of the great film star told in her own words. Do not miss the long opening instalment in TO-DAY'S "Picture Show," which contains ever so many good things, including a fascinating new competition called "Peeping Stars," in which cash prizes of £100 are offered.



The Editors' Chat.



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY.

"LOYAL MISS MARIE."

By Martin Clifford.

This is an exceedingly clever and exciting story describing the activities of Dalton Hawke, the boy detective, in endeavouring to capture a daring and skillful thief at St. Jim's. He is defeated in his object, however, and the thief gets away clear—but all the stolen property is returned!

Miss Marie Rivers figures prominently in the story, which recalls the days when she and Talbot were members of a notorious gang of thieves.

"LOYAL MISS MARIE."

is a very thrilling story which is just the sort my readers are certain to enjoy. Order your copy of next week's GEM now, and read this great yarn.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE MERSEY.

A valued correspondent writing from Liverpool says:

"Had you been in Liverpool on Monday morning, you would have been pleased to see a boy after him in the different streets eagerly devouring the 'Greyfriars Herald.' What delighted me specially, was the impression I obtained that the 'G. H.' brought the famous and dearly-loved characters of the old college closer than ever before. The idea of their being fictional beings seemed to have been forgotten, for they seemed to live and to come to one's very fireside in this latest publication."

With such support to rely on, small wonder that Harry Wharton and his colleagues have achieved a bumper success!

THE INK WORKS.

Many of my chums are always eager to hear about Fleet Street, and what goes on there. Fleet Street is its old self once more after the war, though, alas! many once familiar figures are missed in the crowd.

The Ink World, so to speak, gave some of its best men in the war for the Great Cause. It was the same in the busy quarters everywhere, and we all know. The Ink World, all the same, was second to none. In the Editorial Departments, in the Printing Offices, and everywhere there are gaps.

THE UNDER SIDE OF FLEET ST.

The big public knows little of the workers in the realm of newspapers and publications. It reads its morning paper, and would be sadly disappointed if it did not find its own special bit of news.

The men who look after all the departments of intelligence live a sort of hidden existence. Their hours are different to other workers. In winter-time they seldom enough see the daylight at all. Their labours start after sundown. They have to be at the theatres, the billiard matches, and at meetings, and that work entails working hard till far into the

night, or, as a matter of fact, into the following morning. They hand in their copy and go to bed.

It is a life in which day is turned into night. As you pass down Fleet Street in the middle day, you see nothing of all this. The street looks just fairly busy, but behind there is a lot more worthy of note.

About six o'clock the sub-editors of the dailies are getting busy. Reporters are hastening off to their engagements, fresh news is coming in, and so it goes on until long after midnight. London has its very late editions of the papers, and these go to press in the very small hours.

ALL-ROUND MEN.

It is doubtful if you would ever find a more all-round fellow than the working journalist. He has to see the funny side of life. He cannot help that. It is shoved up against him all the time. So, too, of the tragic.

It is rather funny journalists have the softest hearts of any. They know so much of a subject, and they are accustomed to looking north and south, and east and west.

I have heard a journalist described as an indifferent-looking fellow in a blue serge suit and a bowler hat, but there are some of all kinds. As a rule, the writing man has no-time for dress.

TOWN OR COUNTRY.

When winter gets nippy, lots of folks talk about the south. But would they really like it? They are used to the rush. When the fog, the rain, the frost, the snow and slush come to town, you hear folks sighing after sunshine and warm corners behind south walls, and all that sort of thing. They say they want to leave London and live where life jogs along quietly.

I doubt myself whether they would be satisfied if they got their alleged desires. It may be uncomfortable and crowded in town, but those who have grown up there, and become accustomed to the rush and noise, and the ceaseless work, would feel like fish out of water anywhere else.

PRaise FROM THE R.A.F.

I must find space for the following letter from a gallant representative of the Royal Air Force:

"Dear Editor,—I am writing to congratulate you on the success you have made of the 'Holiday Annual.' You have had, indeed, a gigantic task before you the last few months, but a very few moments after I had opened the book, I felt confident your labours had not been in vain. I was a regular subscriber to the GEM and 'Magnet' until about two years ago, when I found my two young brothers read the books, and they sent them on to me from time to time.

"There are not many older readers than myself, I venture to assert. The first GEM I read was No. 123, and was entitled, if I remember correctly, 'The Scallywag of the Third.' It dealt with

the escapades of Wally D'Arcy & Co. When I took that GEM up, I thought I was in for a dull afternoon, but I soon found my mistake. Since then I have hardly missed an issue. Although I read the GEM first, and like to keep by that paper as a favourite, it must be justly admitted that the 'Magnet' fully equals it. The story that, in my opinion, reached the pinnacles of fame was undoubtedly 'A Very Gallant Gentleman,' by Frank Richards. That yarn gripped me by no other has, and seemed to transfer the emotion in the pages to the heart of the reader. Second on my list comes Martin Clifford's four stories dealing with 'The Toff's' arrival at St. Jim's. It showed the influence of a straightforward, honest fellow like Tom Merry over a wayward comrade; it brings out the inward fight of the latter; the good conflicting with the temptation to do wrong, and the final triumph of the right thing over the wrong, and the plucky moral courage of the fellow who decided to 'play the game.' Martin Clifford took merely four yarns to make the splendid series complete, and these, with 'A Very Gallant Gentleman,' brought more staunch supporters to the already large number, than any of the rest put together, in my honest opinion. There are, of course, dozens more I could mention, but these five yarns are the best I have read.

"My favourite characters are Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus, and Talbot of the GEM, and Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Vernon-Smith of the 'Magnet.' They are all upright, straight-dealing fellows, the kind who could be depended on to play their part of an English gentleman, and who would spread far the fame and honour of the nation they represent. To those fellows I raise my glass and drink to their health, and long may they live to reign in the hearts of Gemites and Magnetites!

"The grumblers, whose letters I have seen from time to time don't really count, and the best thing to do about them, I suppose you know what to do about them a little better than what I do—oh? I am almost twenty-one now, but I am not too proud to read the old papers—why should I be? To-day I found another aim (excuse the expression) who was an enthusiastic supporter of the Companion Papers, and we had quite an interesting chat about the various characters in the stories. We both seemed to like the same fellows best, too! I should like to wish the Companion Papers the best of luck, and may they go on and on until even those that are yet to come may read and follow the example of the fellows of St. Jim's and Greyfriars."

Your Editor



A TALE OF ADVENTURE

IN THE SOUTHERN SEAS

by

REGINALD WRAY

Dick Danby, a stalwart lad of sixteen, obtains the promise of partnership from Captain Morgan Kidd, skipper of the auxiliary schooner Foam, and his daughter Stella, in a treasure cruise to the wrecked Pathan, which was torpedoed, and lying, half-submerged, off an island in the South Seas. In the strong-room of the ill-fated ship is two million sterling in bar-gold and money, and the Dragon's Eye, a wonderful diamond.

Otto Schwab, posing as a Dutchman—though in reality the commander of the U-boat which sank the Pathan—and Sulah Mendazzo, a villainous Malay, are their unscrupulous rivals for the treasure.

Harry Fielding and Joe Maddox join the expedition, also Wang Su, a Chinese boy. They reach the island off which the Pathan is sunk, and a fierce encounter with the Red Rover takes place, in which our friends are victorious. Later, Dick and Stella go for a swim around the island. During their absence from the ship a cyclone approaches, and the Foam has to leave them and make for safety.

The Red Rover is sighted, and later Stella and Dick hear the sounds of firing. Wang Su appears on the scene, and he explains that he swam from the Foam when she encountered Otto Schwab's ship.

Stella and Dick climb the cliff. Meanwhile, the Chinaman dives down to the wrecked Pathan.

Now Read on.

Captain Kidd Wounded!

RISING to the surface, Wang Su shot a hasty glance towards his white companions.

Dick Danby and Stella were clinging like flies to the face of the cliff, their stiff limbs giving them but little opportunity of watching the Chinaman, even if they had thought of doing so.

Again Wang Su dived into the crystal-clear waters of the lagoon.

This time he alighted in front of the dark, cavernous openings which had been the vessel's holds. He had no difficulty in climbing over the masses of bent and riven steel, for the action of the waves had long since swept the vessel clear of cargo.

But he was unable to remain long beneath the surface, and four times he dived and groped his way into the hold, careless of the formidable fish and strange marine creatures that floated around him, until at length he reached his goal—the door of the wrecked ship's strong-room.

Although the highest part of the wrecked steamer was a good twenty feet below the surface, the water was so clear, the tropical daylight so strong, that Wang Su could plainly see the figures on

the combination lock which secured the stout iron door.

The stern of the mighty vessel lay partly on its side, with the result that, standing where the wall joined the floor, Wang Su was looking down on the tightly-closed door.

Crouched in the angle, he worked at the lock with feverish haste.

It was not long ere he was compelled to rise to the surface and refill his empty lungs.

Again he descended. This time he completed the work which would unlock the strong-room door, then, turning the handle, pulled at it with all his might.

In vain. For all the effort his efforts had on it, it might have been part of the solid steel wall.

Dick Danby had often remarked on the perfect lack of expression which characterised Wang Su's face.

He would have thought differently had he seen the little Chinaman just then.

His face was contorted with fury as he strained at the door-handle until the veins stood out on his forehead, and his lungs felt as though they must assuredly burst.

Nor had he any better luck when, having revisited the surface, he renewed the attack.

At length, after hammering the door with his fists, as though it had been a deadly enemy, Wang Su gave up the attempt.

But his face was now as impassive as ever, and the only sign he showed of his late frantic excitement was his quick breathing, as he clambered on to the Chair Rock and resumed his former attitude.

Presently his dark, pencilled eyebrows were elevated, his narrow slits of eyes opened until they were almost round, as he muttered:

"Big foolce Chinaman! Heap foolce Chinaman! Top hole foolce Chinaman! First chop foolce Chinaman!"

As there was no other Chinaman present, he must have been referring to himself.

As a matter of fact, he had just realised that as the door was practically lying flat, instead of standing upright, as deers should do, he had been engaged in a vain attempt to lift some twenty feet of the Pacific Ocean.

A distant shout caused him to look to where Dick Danby and Stella were seated on a protruding rock high up the cliff, their feet dangling over the dizzy abyss below, and their faces turned towards the east.

Cocking his head on one side, like a

sparrow who has just seen a peculiarly fat and inviting worm, Wang Su smiled sweetly, then, crooking his elbow, with his hand thrust towards the pair, waved to them with a shrill:

"Heep, heep, hullah!"

Then, as Dick and Stella turned, he resumed his former position, thus giving them the impression that he had not moved since they looked towards him last.

But they could only spare a fleeting glance at the Chinaman. Their eyes were again fixed upon the stirring scene they had been watching with thrilling interest.

From their loftyerie they could see where the Foam, after a sharp fight with the Malays—only the tail-end of which, however, the boy and girl chums had witnessed—had driven the Red Rover on to the rocks of the adjacent island, while her crew, clambering over her sides, were seeking safety amongst the rugged rocks at the base of the precipitous cliffs.

Although the scene of the conflict was some distance away, the eye travels far in that clear air, and Dick and Stella laughed aloud when they saw the Jolly Roger haunting from the Foam's mizen.

"What a desperate old pirate he is!" cried Dick. "When we get the treasure on board I'll have to sleep with a pistol in either hand, and a knife between my teeth. And, now I come to think of it, I believe the mate of the Foam is as reckless a ruffian as the skipper!" he added, with mock seriousness.

"Worse, Dick Danby—ton times worse!" laughed Stella. "What on earth is that dear, silly old dad of mine up to now? Was ever a girl troubled with such a father?"

The last sentences were called forth by the Foam swinging round and rushing straight at the stranded craft, as though anxious to share her fate on the rocks.

But when the bows of the schooner were within a cable's length of the Red Rover, she ported her helm, a puff of white smoke burst from her bows, and a gaping wound showed in the Red Rover's long-boat, which lay on blocks between her bows' masts.

"There's method in his madness, at any rate! He doesn't mean Schwab's lot to interfere with us if he can help it!" declared Dick.

Even as he spoke a dozen faint puffs of smoke came from the rocks amongst which the Malays had taken refuge, and a cry of dismay burst from Stella's lips when she saw her father stagger back from the quickfrier and fall to the deck.

The next moment he was hidden from view by the schooner's forecast, as the Kanaka at the wheel put up the schooner's helm and the Foam turned her stern to the island.

White to the very lips, her blue eyes dilated with horror, Stella watched the schooner until she was hidden from view by a towering cliff, then descended the precipitous rock at a speed that made Dick Danby hold his breath as he watched her.

When yet some twenty feet from the surface of the lagoon, she dived into the water, and swam in frantic haste towards the reef.

More cautiously, yet still with reckless haste, Dick Danby followed.

He was barely half-way to the reef before Stella had reached it, and, standing knee-deep in the foam, was shading her eyes as she gazed in the direction from whence the schooner would come.

A few minutes later she saw the white,

As he rose on the crest of a wave he saw the golden hair of his girl chum a hundred yards ahead.

Setting his teeth, he struck out with all the strength and skill of which he was master; but well he knew that, if the brave girl was attacked by the tigers of the deep, he was too far off to help her ere it would be too late.

The Tiger of the Deep!

STRAINING every nerve, Dick Danby strove to overtake his girl chum.

But anxiety for her father seemed to have given her redoubled strength, and, with a groan, he realised that, so far from overtaking her, she was actually gaining on him.

Though the distance between them was gradually growing wider, the Foam was coming on under a favouring breeze, and

ing round, Stella shot forward, straining every nerve to escape the fearful fate that menaced her.

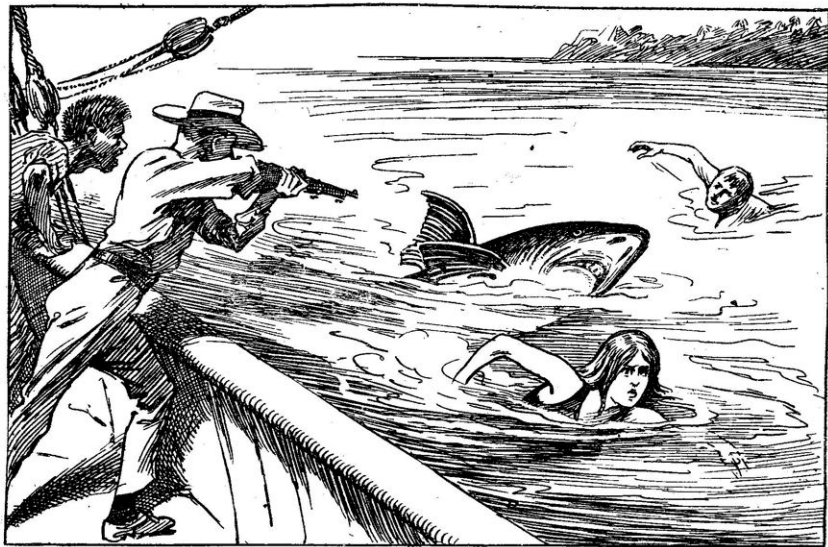
Joe disappeared from the bows, to reappear in less than half a minute armed with a rifle, which he levelled at the threatening fin.

But the next moment he had lowered his weapon, for Dick's head was exactly in line with the shark.

"Fire, Joe—for Heaven's sake, fire!" cried Dick, in an agony of apprehension. For, although Stella was within a few strokes of safety, the shark was almost upon her.

Treading water—for he knew he could not possibly reach his girl chum in time to save her—Dick watched through seconds as long as minutes, scarcely hearing the whistle of the ricocheting bullet over his head as Joe fired and missed.

A sigh of relief escaped Dick Danby's lips when he saw that Stella had seized



"Fire, Joe—for Heaven's sake, fire!" cried Dick, in an agony of apprehension. For although Stella was within a few strokes of safety, the shark was almost upon her.

bellying jib of the Foam emerge from behind the outer rocks.

Stella had evidently seen it also, for she was staggering over the uneven surface of the reef towards it.

Suddenly a cry of:

"For Heaven's sake, Stella, come back!" burst from Dick's lips, as he saw the girl stand for a moment motionless on the seawards of the reef, then raise her hands above her head, and knew that, in her impatience to rejoin her father, she was about to plunge into that shark-infested sea.

It is doubtful if the girl heard his cry.

Certainly she did not heed it. The next moment she had plunged beneath a booming wave, and Dick clambered on to the reef just in time to see her head rising on the surface of a long roller.

For a moment Dick Danby hesitated, then, careless of the fearful peril into which he was rushing, followed in the wake of the grief-distracted girl.

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soon Dick felt the dread that had chilled his heart grow less as he recognised the fact that in a very few minutes she would be safe on board the schooner.

It was useless tiring himself out. Who could tell when he would have to swim—

ay, and perhaps fight for his life?—Slowing down, though still cleaving through the water at a good pace, he swam a score yards or so further; then, with a cry of horror, literally flung himself through the water.

Half-way between himself and Stella a dark dorsal fin had shot from the sea, and was cutting rapidly through the water in the wake of the swimming girl.

"Swim, Stella—swim for your life!" cried Dick, in a shout that was almost a shriek.

His cry was echoed by warning shouts from the Foam, in the bows of which appeared Joe Maddox and two Kanakas.

Evidently conscious of her danger, although she did not waste time by look-

ing to a rope which one of the Kanakas had thrown to her.

The next he moaned aloud, for the shark's dorsal fin disappeared, and he knew that he had turned over on his back to seize his prey.

Then Dick disappeared beneath the surface, for so engrossed with Stella's peril was he that he had forgotten to keep himself afloat.

Thus it happened that he did not see a Kanaka jump overboard on to the shark's upturned belly.

Startled by the sudden force of the blow with which the native struck him just below the jaw, the shark swerved on one side, narrowly missing a head-on collision with the schooner.

Even now, had the monster returned to the attack, it might have been in time to seize either Stella or the Kanaka who had so nobly sprung to her rescue.

Fortunately, though the most ferocious creature that swims the sea, the shark is

probably the most cowardly. Turning tail, it fled straight to where Dick Danby, who had risen to the surface, to find his gilt chum safe, was swimming.

The monster shark's body scraping against his own was the first intimation Dick had of his peril.

His heart almost ceased to beat, then commenced to pulse violently as he almost flung himself out of the water in his haste to reach the schooner.

Finding, as he fondly thought, a fresh victim ready to hand, the shark wheeled round and charged straight at the swimmer.

It is quite possible that the brute's internal arrangements had been considerably upset by the heels of the Samoan alighting on his stomach; at any rate, he checked himself just as he was about to roll over and seize his victim, and for a few yards swam alongside Dick, his small, evil eye glaring at him, as the boy afterwards boasted with malicious mockery, as though he said: "No hurry, my friend! You are my meat, and I will begin on you in my own time!"

Presently the monster shot ahead, and Dick felt for his knife, knowing well that

the next he saw of the shark would be its white underpart as it turned to seize him.

A momentary panic swept through the impelled boy when he found his knife gone, and its sheath dangling, empty, behind his back.

He gave himself up for lost. But the very certainty of his fate seemed to harden his nerves and clear his brain of all lingering terrors.

Twenty yards to his right he saw the triangular dorsal fin arise above the waves, then disappear, and he knew that the huge tiger of the seas was charging towards him at lightning speed.

Plunging beneath the surface, he swam towards the direction from whence that deadly peril came.

He saw it flit grey mass loom through the waves, turning to a dirty white as the brute rolled over, and, with an anguished prayer, he dived, flashing beneath the shark's back towards the bottom.

Straightening out, he swam a few yards, then sought the surface once more.

But ere he could reach it he saw, with a despairing sinking of the heart, that the baffled monster had turned, and was making straight towards him once more.

He dare not dive again. Already his straining lungs warned him that he must have air or die. Shooting up, he tried his utmost to reach the surface.

Do what he might, he could not keep his eyes off that fearful grey form.

With a sense of despair, he realised that by striving to reach the surface he was but playing into the shark's game.

Better to sink and drown than to feel those awful teeth tearing through his living flesh.

But ere he could obey the promptings of despair he realised that it was too late.

Swift as a lightning flash the shark had turned over, and was darting at him.

With a shudder, Dick Danby closed his eyes.

But the sharp dart of pain for which he waited did not come.

Instead, he felt the shark brush past him, and he knew that, for a second time, he had escaped death as though by a miracle.

(Another long instalment of this magnificent adventure story will appear in next Wednesday's GEM. Be sure to order your copy in advance and thus avoid disappointment.)

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