

THE PAPER THAT STANDS ALONE.

The

GEM 1 ¹/₂

No. 685.
Vol. XIX.

LIBRARY

20 Pages.

March 26th, 1921.



GORE'S GREAT CONQUEST!

Don't Miss Our Splendid Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's Inside.

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

There will be another really excellent number of your favourite paper next week, and the long complete story will be entitled: "Talbot's Darkest Hour!" This is quite the best story which has ever been written around this ever-popular character, and I am sure you will regard it as a rare treat. In "Talbot's Darkest Hour," the new hero, Kit Wildrake, figures largely, and also the incomparable Tom Merry. Every reader of the "Gem" will be delighted with this exceptional story. Our next issue will also contain another magnificent portrait-study of a well-known character of St. Jim's. This new feature has had a splendid reception, and I certainly think the pictures deserve all the praise which has been bestowed upon them. By the way, the "Boys' Herald" is presenting a series of portraits of the chums of Greyfriars, and these of you who wish to add to their collections should order a copy of that paper at once. Each picture has been splendidly produced by a well-known artist, and they are well worth having. Get a copy of the "Boys' Herald" this week. It is on sale everywhere, and costs only three-halfpence, and you will be just in time to commence the opening chapters of the splendid new story entitled: "The Lure of Gold." This story has been written by one of the members of a party of adventurers who went on an expedition in search of a fortune in New Guinea, and it will undoubtedly create a big sensation.

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO READERS.

"A FAITHFUL READER" (Toronto, Canada).—Talbot has neither mother nor father living now. His father was a great criminal named Captain Crow. He led the gang which Marie Rivers' father, the "Professor," afterwards took over. Talbot has blue eyes and light brown hair. The boys of St. Jim's are forbidden to wear rings. The nearest school for girls to St. Jim's would be the Council Schools at Wayland. I agree with you that some stories for girls are rather dull. The juniors in the Third Form range from a little under eleven to about thirteen and a half years of age.

"JERRY" (Cardiff), writes: "The good old GEM is getting better than ever. I do hope you have some more special numbers soon."

"JAMES H." (Wimbledon). Richard Redfern has a sister.

"EVA AND ETHEL" (Anerley).—The postal address of St. Jim's is at this office. Anything you should care to write and ask will be answered readily enough. Gussy has two brothers—Conway and Walter. His cousin Ethel went to a college called St. Freda's. At the end of each corridor there is a room containing the wash-basins, bath, etc. That is where the juniors do their washing up. Those who have an ample supply of pocket-money, such as D'Arcy, Cardew, Racke, and Lunley-Lunley, "tip" the maids to do it for them; the less lucky ones have to do it themselves.

A. C. M. (Wardhill).—What was it in the GEM that you enjoyed reading so

much years ago? Please write and tell me. The stories of Levison were certainly very good before he reformed. What an interesting old place you live near, my chum. I would certainly come up and have a look round had I only the time. Write again by all means!

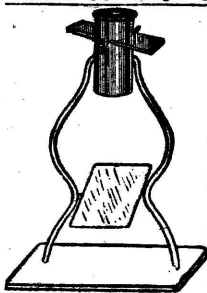
EILEEN" (Newport) writes: "I thought I'd just write to tell you that I think the GEM is getting better and more exciting every week. I think the portrait of Jack Blake was simply lovely, and as soon as I saw it, I cut it out. I am going to hang it up in my den. I hope that there will be one of Tom Merry, who is my favourite. I am not only interested in the nice boys, but I am also interested in the 'rotters,' as they are called, such as Racke or Croke. I would love to come in contact with one of Racke's relations. I like Monty Low, they very much, and I wish I could be always cracking puns like he is; but I can never think of them in time. I like Kildare, and I think the Head is a decent sport as well. I am longing for the holidays, when some of the juniors will probably go and stay with Tom Merry and that funny old lady named Miss Fawcett."

"MARBLES AND HOPSCOTCH" (Cosham).—You say that, judging from the first sketch, one would think Joy wasn't a sensible girl and capable of serious thought. Well, I can tell you one thing, my chum; I would not care to be you for five minutes if you told her that!

Buy a **Mead** ON EASY TERMS



Direct from factory and SAVE POUNDS. World's finest Fabro Grams, Portable-Hornless and exquisitely coloured horn Mead-ophones to select from. Sent on 10 days' trial, carriage paid, with 52 tunes and 400 needles. Write TO-DAY for beautifully illustrated art catalogue. MEAD CO. (Dept. G 105), BIRMINGHAM.



The "Excelsior" Microscope

5/- Post Free.

A High-grade instrument at the price of a toy. Magnifies 2,000 vols. Indispensable for the teaching of Chemistry, Botany, and Zoology, and for examination of Household Food-stuffs, showing Mites in Cheese as large as Beetles, and Animalcula swimming in water, etc. Mounted on solid brass stand, heavily plated. The "EXCELSIOR POCKET" MICROSCOPE, as above, complete with slides, 2/9, post free.

REPEATER WATER PISTOL. All Metal. Ejects 6 powerful sprays with one loading. 2/-, post free. Cross P.O.'s 1 & Co.;



BENNETT BROS., 5, Theobalds Road, LONDON, W.C. 1.

FUNNY NOVELTY PRIZES to all sending 1/- for 100 Cute Con-juring Tricks, 6 Jokers' Comical Cards, Pranks, etc. etc. Great Fun!—C. HUGHES, 15, Wood Street, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM.

BIG AND SUCCESSFUL.—To be tall is one of the chief qualifications for success. It is easy to increase your height by the Girvan Scientific Treatment, which is carried out in your own home. Students report from 2 to 6 inches increase, with great benefit to health. Send a postcard for particulars and our £100 guarantee to ENQUIRY DEPT. A.M.P., 17, STROUD GREEN ROAD, LONDON N. 4.

"CURLY HAIR!"—Wonderful results by using Ross' "WAVEIT." Waves and curls straightest hair. Hundreds of testimonials. 1/3 and 2/6 (stamps accepted).—ROSS (Dept. G. 1), 175, New North Road, LONDON, N. 1.

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Waves and curls straightest hair. Instrument. Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/—T. W. Harrison, 239, Pentonville Rd., London, N. 1.

FILMS CHEAP. Stamped envelope for lists. Machines, etc.—50-ft. Sample Film, 1/3.—TYSON & MARSHALL, 85, Castle Boulevard, NOTTINGHAM.

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS BE SURE TO MENTION THIS PAPER.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

SHARP'S SUPER-KREEM TOFFEE

is

The Prince of Sweetmeats.

TENS of thousands of loyal admirers of all ages and in all places have sworn their allegiance thereto—they will have none other. SHARP'S SUPER-KREEM TOFFEE has a fascination all its own—a flavour which captivates and a purity and downright wholesomeness which has made it the most popular prince of sweetmeats the world has ever known.

Sold loose by weight, or in 4lb. decorated tins—also in 1/2, 1, and 1 1/2 lbs. tins.

E. SHARP & SONS, LTD., MAIDSTONE.



Gore's Great Conquest



GEORGE GORE.

CHAPTER 1.

Skimpole's Subscription!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Monty Lowther of the Shell—known to posterity as the Terrible Three—were chatting over the tea-table in Study No. 10, when a tap sounded at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry cheerfully.

The door opened, and a tall, weedy youth walked in, and blinked at the heroes of the School House through a huge pair of spectacles.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" said Tom, grinning at Herbert Skimpole, from the study next door. "Have you come to tea? Sorry, old sport, but there's not much left!"

The brainy youth of the Shell coughed. "Thank you, Merry, but I have already partaken of tea in the Hall," he said mildly. "The nature of my visit is to explain to you—"

Three gasps arose from Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"Yes, Skimmy, you often do drop in to explain things," said Tom Merry hastily. "Spare us this time, old chap!"

"Buzz off, Skimmy, like a decent sport," implored Manners. "We—we're suffering from brain fog after those rotten French irregular verbs in the form-room this afternoon. We simply cannot bear any more grinding. Besides, old chap, when you get going on Determinism, or Socialism, or any other ism, you run on like old Tennyson's brook—for ever. We can't put up with that, you know."

"Life's too short, Skimmy!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

Herbert Skimpole rubbed his massive forehead, and blinked most reproachfully at the Terrible Three.

A visit from Skimpole generally meant a long lecture on one of his pet subjects. Skimpole was a brainy man, and the probity of his massive intellect knew no bounds. He spent most of his spare time delving into weighty tomes, and studying such heavy subjects as Evolution, Determinism, and Socialism, as propounded by the celebrated Professors Balmcrumpet and Loosetop. Skimpole had absorbed the works of both these learned gentlemen, and had derived much intellectual nourishment thereby. Skimpole himself had commenced to write a great work on Socialism, and, hoped to convert his schoolfellows. Unfortunately

for the genius of the Shell, his schoolfellows positively refused to be converted. They scoffed at his lectures, rudely requested him to bury his book whenever he offered to read them a chapter or so, and regarded Evolution, Determinism, Socialism, and all Skimpole's other isms as "bosh" and "tommy-rot." But Skimpole never despaired, and, like Job of old, had patience. He very often "dropped in" on a fellow to expound his latest theory on Socialism—hence the eagerness of Tom Merry & Co. to get rid of their brainy form-fellow.

"Look here, Skimmy," said Tom Merry diplomatically, "if you care to leave us the umpteenth hundred and ninety-ninth chapter of your book, we'll read it if we can, and let you know what we think of it later."

Skimpole blinked sadly at the Terrible Three.

"My dear Merry, if I could convince myself that you were in earnest, I should derive the greatest pleasure in leaving for your perusal the latest chapters of my book," he said. "But on previous occasions I have left you my manuscript to read, and I have never had them returned to me. Only last week, I remember, Lowther accidentally lit the fire with the two-hundred-and-seventy-eighth chapter—"

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

"This is no occasion for ribald merriment, my dear fellows," said Skimpole peevishly. "The nature of my visit this afternoon is to explain to you a scheme for—"

"Leave it till to-morrow, old chap!" yawned Tom Merry.

"The matter, being of extreme urgency, will not wait until to-morrow," said Skimpole. "As you are aware, my dear fellows, owing to the deplorable social state into which this country has been plunged since the war, there are thousands of ex-soldiers still unemployed, and having very scanty means of subsistence. I have already written to the Prime Minister, giving him my solution of the subject, but through some inexplicable delay, his answer has not yet arrived—"

"Neither has the Greek Kalends!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I can understand Lloyd George being so slack as to ignore your letter, Skimmy. It's really too bad of him!"

Skimpole looked hard at the humorous Monty, but the look upon that youth's

face was one of cherubim-like innocence. "Ahem!" coughed the brainy youth of the Shell. "Mr. Lloyd George is probably suffering from that deplorable ineptitude that has always been apparent among the boys of this school. But I have taken the matter up, and, my dear fellows, I should be much obliged if you will subscribe towards my 'Help the Heroes' Fund'—"

"Eh?"

"The 'Help the Heroes' Fund' will provide assistance for all local unemployed ex-soldiers," said Skimpole impressively. "Every patriotic fellow in this school will be expected to contribute to the fund. In the past, unfortunately, I have been rather financially restricted, but now my father has extended his business, and is doing well, my remittances from home are more frequent and substantial. I have headed the subscription list with five pounds. Cardew of the Fourth has already contributed threepence, Reilly twopence-halfpenny, and Mellish twopence. I trust you fellows will be able to contribute sums in liberal proportion to your present financial resources."

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Skimmy, you are a silly ass, generally, but a good old ass," said Tom Merry. "Your 'Help the Heroes' Fund' is quite a deserving stunt, and we can't resist your appeal. Here's five bob. How much can you stand, Manners?"

"Put me down for three bob, Skimmy," said Manners.

"Make my whack three-and-six, Skimmy," said Lowther, producing his cash.

Herbert Skimpole's eyes glistened with delight and satisfaction behind his huge spectacles, as he pocketed the money, and entered the names of the Terrible Three in his notebook. Then he retired from the end study, leaving Tom Merry & Co. grinning.

Skimpole went in search of fresh fields and pastures new in his hunt for subscriptions. When he had applied at every study in the Shell passage, he made a tour of the Fourth Form quarters. Jack Blake & Co. were quite taken up with the "Help the Heroes' Fund."

Tom Merry & Co. were still discussing Skimpole and his latest idea that had come from his study of Socialism, when their study door opened, and an angry youth looked in.

"Seen Skimpole?" demanded George Gore.

The Terrible Three looked at Gore in considerable surprise. Gore was Skimpole's study-mate, and was the very opposite in nature to that gentle youth. Indeed, Tom Merry always said that they were like a lion and a lamb. Gore, of course, was the lion. He was addicted to bullying, although Gore was not quite such a black sheep as he used to be. He and Skimpole never agreed, and many a time Tom Merry had had to intervene in the next study, to save Skimpole from being battered and bruised.

"Seen Skimpole?" demanded Gore again, breathing hard through his nose.

"He was in here not long ago," remarked Tom Merry. "But what's the row, old chap? Has Skimmy been up to anything?"

"I—I'll wring his blessed neck!" breathed the bully of the Shell. "I—I'll teach him to sell my things to raise money for his rotten subscription!"

The Terrible Three looked interested at once.

"What's he sold, Gore, old chap?" asked Tom Merry softly.

"My silver inkstand and my gold-mounted fountain-pen!" hooted Gore wrathfully. "Melish told me that Skimmy was trying to sell them to Cutts of the Fifth, but Cutts wouldn't have 'em. If Skimpole has sold them, I—I'll brain the idiot!"

With that, Gore departed, slamming the door of the end study with quite unnecessary violence behind him.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other and chuckled.

"Poor old Skimmy!" said Lowther. "The ass thinks all things are common to all in this world—that's one of his mad Socialist ideas. If he has sold Gore's giddy inkstand and fountain pen, I reckon he's in for a hot time!"

Gore, meanwhile, could not find Skimpole, either in the Shell passage; in the Common-room, or in the corridors. So he went outside into the quadrangle.

Clifton Dane, Kangaroo, and Talbot were standing over by the elms, and before them was the tall, weedy, bespectacled figure of Herbert Skimpole. Breathing threats of fire and slaughter, Gore made haste over there.

"My dear fellows, this is a cause worthy of your most hearty support," Skimpole was saying. "I have already several pounds on my lists, and—"

"You scraggy rotter!" bellowed Gore, dashing up. "Where are my things?"

Skimpole blinked round, and blinked still more when he saw the red and wrathful countenance of his burly study-mate.

"Oh, really, Gore—"

"Where's my inkstand and my fountain-pen?" demanded Gore, through his clenched teeth.

"Pray do not excite yourself, my dear fellow—"

"What have you done with 'em?" hooted Gore.

"I—I have sold them."

"What!"

"According to the fundamental principles of Socialism, my dear Gore, all property is communal—that is to say, it appertains to nobody individually, but to everybody collectively," said Skimpole hastily. "Therefore, I utilised your inkstand and fountain-pen for the purpose of my 'Help the Heroes' Fund,' by making a pecuniary exchange—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Talbot.

"You—you goggle-eyed freak!" grated Gore. "Who did you sell 'em to?"

"Control your wrath, my dear Gore, I beseech you!" gasped the brainy man of the Shell. "Racke was kind enough to give me five shillings for the inkstand and half-a-crown for the fountain-

pen. He said that that was all they were worth—"

"Oh, did he, the cad?" hooted Gore. "Five bob for my lovely silver inkstand, and—and half-a-crown for my gold-mounted fountain-pen! Why, I—I—"

Words failed George Gore. Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Talbot chuckled. Herbert Skimpole blinked at Gore apprehensively through his huge spectacles.

"My dear Gore—"

"I—I'll wallop you!" roared the enraged Shell fellow, pushing back his cuffs and advancing upon Skimpole.

"How many more times am I to tell you to leave my things alone? Take that—and that—and that!"

"Yaroooogh!" howled Skimpole, as Gore's giant fists crashed upon his waistcoat, doubling him up. "Pray desist, my dear Gore— Owow! Yah! Yooooop!"

Thud! Whack! Wallop!

Gore, thoroughly out of temper, got the weedy Skimpole's head into chancery, and commenced to pummel for all he was worth.

The amateur Socialist of the Shell struggled and squirmed, and his howls rose crescendo. In the grip of his burly study-mate, he was as helpless as a babe.

"Here, 'nuff's as good as a feast, Gore!" said Kangaroo, interposing. "Let Skimmy alone now, or you'll bust his gig-lamps! He may be a chump, but he's not a thief. Go along and see Racke about it!"

"Yes, I'll see Racke!" hissed Gore. "If he doesn't return my things, I'll wring his neck!"

And, leaving poor Skimpole under the wing of Kangaroo & Co., the bully of the Shell stamped over to the School House steps and made his way indoors.

Racke and Crooke and Scrope were at home when Gore flung open the door of their study. The first articles that caught Gore's eye were his own inkstand and fountain-pen, lying on Racke's table.

Aubrey Racke's eyes gleamed when he saw Gore, and he reached out instinctively to grasp the articles. But Gore's massive hand closed over them first.

"You rotter, Gore!" exclaimed the dandy of the Shell furiously. "Give me those things—they're mine!"

"Your mistake, Racke—they belong to me," snorted Gore. "You knew jolly well that they weren't Skimpole's when he sold 'em to you. For two pins, I'd give you a thumping good licking!"

"Look here, I gave Skimpole seven-and-six for 'em!" hooted Aubrey Racke. "I—"

"Skimpole's put the money into some scatter-brained fund of his," said Gore, grinning cynically. "You'd better ask him for the cash. These are my things, and I'm going to stick to 'em!"

And Gore walked away from Study No. 3, looking somewhat mollified.

CHAPTER 2.

The Heroes Come!

THE next day Herbert Skimpole was seen to be wearing a thoughtful frown. Skimpole was usually wrapt in thought, but it was evident that some extremely weighty matter was being pondered in his mighty brain.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. went down to the football-field to put in some practice at the nets before tea. Skimpole emerged from the School House soon afterwards, wearing his cap. He crossed the quadrangle, and passed out of the school gates, evidently with a certain fixity of purpose.

On Little Side the junior footballers of St. Jim's were busy. Next Saturday

was the day fixed for an important match with Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, and Tom Merry meant to give his men some gruelling practice. Gordon Gay and his fellow-Grammarians were foemen worthy of their steel.

After an hour's practice, the heroes of the Lower School were hungry. They walked off the field together with Figgins & Co., of the New House.

"Would you chaps care to come in with us to tea?" asked Figgins good-naturedly. "We're in funds, you know!"

The faces of Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. brightened considerably.

"Oh, blessed youth!" exclaimed Monthly Lowther, hugging Figgins affectionately to his breast. "Your offer is as welcome as the flowers in May, old son. These are lean days for us, and very distant are the fleshpots of Egypt!"

"Yow! Leggo, you ass!" gasped Figgins, dragging himself away from Monty's fond embrace. "Come on, you fellows, and keep your tame lunatic in order. I— Mum-my hat!"

Figgins broke off, and uttered that ejaculation in tones of considerable amazement.

His glance had wandered towards the gates, and what Figgins saw caused his eyes to open wide with amazement.

The others looked towards the gates, too, and then they all stood spellbound, rooted to the ground.

"Mum-my only hat!" gurgled Tom Merry at last.

"What the merry dickens!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove! It's Skimmy and a twoop of disreputable twamps, deah boys!"

A queer collection of humanity had entered the gates of St. Jim's. Herbert Skimpole of the Shell was among them. Skimpole's companions were the dirtiest, most ragged, and ill-savoured specimens of humanity that the boys of St. Jim's had ever set eyes upon. There were seven of them in all, and they looked tramps from the tops of their battered hats to the tips of their ragged boots.

Taggles, the school porter, emerged from his lodge by the gate and gazed upon these amazing visitors in deep wrath.

"Hi!" he exclaimed, going up to the foremost tramp, and waving his arms aloft in the manner of windmill sails. "Which the likes o' you ain't allowed in this 'ere school! Get hout!"

The tramps looked at Taggles with bleary eyes. They did not seem in the last perturbed.

"Get hout!" roared Taggles again, pushing the foremost knight of the road. "Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Look 'ere, don't you push me about, my man!" said the tramp indignantly. "Hi'm a nero, Hi am! Hi've fought for me country. This young gent 'as invited me and my mates to tea at this school. We're visitors, we are—and don't you forgit it!"

"My heye!" gasped Taggles, taken aback.

The tramps darted grim looks at the St. Jim's school porter, and they all surged forward.

"Pray do not interfere with these gentlemen, Taggles," said Skimpole, laying his hand gently on the amazed porter's arm. "I have indeed invited them to partake of a meal in my study this evening. The unfortunate fellows are all discharged soldiers, and deserve the best that can be done for them. Everything is quite in order, my dear Taggles, I assure you."

Taggles blinked dazedly at Skimpole. It took some time for this news to sink in.

"Discharged soldiers!" he gurgled, surveying the motley and disreputable

collection of tramps. "Deserve the best that can be done for 'em— My honly 'at!"

Taggles passed a hand dazedly across his forehead.

Meanwhile, the tramps were making their way into the quadrangle, making sundry observations among themselves that were neither delicate nor chaste. In fact, some of the juniors standing round fairly blushed.

"Skimmy, you fearful chump!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where did you collect this crew of seedy-looking merchants? They're tramps!"

"Really, my dear Merry, you are labouring under a decided misapprehension," said Skimpole, turning his huge eyeglasses on the captain of the Shell. "These gentlemen are all discharged soldiers who are unable to obtain employment. I have invited them to tea, according to the Socialistic principles embodied in my 'Help the Heroes' Fund.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

Skimpole regarded the chuckling juniors severely through his spectacles, and piloted his collection of tramps across the quadrangle.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the strange party through his monocle. "What a wuffianly crew, deah boys! I wegahd Skimmy as a feahful chump, to waste the money we fellahs have subvised towards his 'Help the Hewoes' Fund' in entahtainin' these disweputable men!"

"See the conquering heroes come!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Skimmy's a bigger ass than I thought he was!" growled Jack Blake. "These men have stuffed him up properly!"

"He'll get a licking if Railton or the Head catch him!" said Tom Merry. "Skimmy ought to be stopped!"

"Let him rip!" grinned George Figgins. "Skimmy will get fed up with his pet tramps before long, I reckon! Are you chaps coming up to tea?"

"Yes, rather!"

Still chuckling over Skimpole and his ill-assorted guests, the chums of the School House accompanied Figgins & Co. indoors.

Skimpole and his tramps were making their way across to the School House steps, the cynosure of all eyes.

The tramps treated the chuckling spectators with lofty contempt. Fortunately for Skimpole, Kildare and the other prefects were still on Big Side, at footer practice. The masters, too, were indoors, holding a meeting with Dr. Holmes.

But the path of Herbert Skimpole was beset with one difficulty. That difficulty came running up from the school gymnasium, and planted himself right in front of Skimpole and his tramps. Needless to say, this fellow was George Gore.

"Skimpole, you maniac, where are you taking these ruffians?" he demanded viciously.

"Really, my dear Gore, ruffians is not a merited appellation for these gentlemen, who are all discharged soldiers," said Skimpole severely. "I regard them all as heroes, and have much pleasure in inviting them to tea in my study."

Gore almost fell down.

"Wha-a-at!" he gurgled, in a faint voice. "You—you are taking this dirty crew up to my study for tea? My only hat!"

Skimpole blinked at his study-mate through his huge spectacles.

"I trust you have no objection to my entertaining these discharged heroes?" he said mildly.

"Discharged heroes!" roared Gore furiously. "Discharged from prison, you

mean! I should jolly well think I would raise objections! D'you think I'm going to have my study overrun by these ragged, seedy ruffians? Not much! Get out, the lot of you!"

This last remark was addressed to the tramps. These disreputable gentlemen regarded Gore with grim looks.

"Look 'ere, young feller-me-lad, none o' your old buck!" said Mr. Boggs, who constituted himself spokesman of the tramp contingent. "This young gent 'as hinwited us hin, and hin we're goin'!"

"You—you won't!" howled the infuriated Shell fellow. "I—I'll have you all turned out if you don't go away at once! Buzz off!"

"My dear Gore—" remonstrated Skimpole.

"I—I'll skin you, Skimpole!" hooted Gore. "Look here, you tramps, are you going, or— Yarooogh! Oh, crumbs! Hands off! Yah!"

Gore was grasped by many dirty hands and whirled off his feet. It had been raining that morning, and innumerable puddles bestrewed the school quadrangle. Gore yelled as the tramps deposited him into the middle of a large and particularly muddy puddle.

"Yarooogh! Oh dear! You rascals!" roared Gore, jumping out of the puddle with alacrity. "I'm wet! Grooogh! I—I—"

He would have sailed into the midst of the tramps, but the menacing looks of those seedy gentlemen deterred him. Instead, Gore turned upon Skimpole, pushing back his cuffs.

"You—you shrieking idiot, Skimpole! I'll mop up the ground with you!" he grated. "I'm wet and muddy! It's all your fault! You brought these rotten tramps here! Lemme get at you!"

He made a rush at Skimpole, but that weedy youth had seen the wrath to come, and had turned and fled. Skimpole's long legs sped over the ground at

top speed, and Gore came after him, breathing threats of battle, murder, and sudden death. Skimpole streaked towards the cloisters, leaving his tramps unattended.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers. "Haw, haw, haw!" guffawed the tramps, also amused.

Skimpole disappeared underneath the elm-trees, with Gore a few yards behind him.

The tramps looked round them truculently.

"Which this 'ere's a fine way to treat 'eroes!" said Boggs, in tones of indignation. "Ere we are, left all alone, and—"

"Excuse me, sir, but if you like I will direct you to Skimpole's study!" said an elegant youth, coming forward and raising his hat.

The tramps blinked at Aubrey Racke of the Shell.

Racke's disciples, Croke, Scrope, and Mellish, nudged each other and chuckled. Racke was a humorous youth, and he had seen an opportunity to exercise his humorous abilities. He had plenty of pluck—especially as the masters were at a meeting in the Head's study. Croke, Scrope, and Mellish had not so much pluck as their leader, but they were quite willing to back him up.

"Don't wait for Skimpole," said Racke to the tramps. "I'll show you up to his study. I am helping him with the 'Help for Heroes' Fund,' you see."

"Ho!" said Mr. Boggs. "Which that's verry kind of you, young gent. Lead the way, and we'll foller!"

Racke led the way, chuckling, and the tramps followed him up the School House steps and into the hall. Croke, Scrope, and Mellish came in the rear, also chuckling.

Up the stairs went Racke, but instead of walking along the Shell passage, he made his way along the main corridor, and halted outside Mr. Railton's room.



A queer collection of humanity, with Skimpole at their head, entered the gates of St. Jim's. Taggles, the school porter, emerged from his lodge and gazed upon these amazing visitors. "Hi!" he exclaimed. "Get hout!" (See page 4.)

"Here you are!" chuckled the black sheep of the Shell, throwing open the door. "Go in, gentlemen, and make yourselves at home. Skimpole won't be long."

"Thank'ee kindly, young sir!" said Boggs, walking right into the House-master's study, followed by his companions. "No hobjection to hus smokin'—eh?"

"Not at all!" chuckled Racke. "Do whatever you like. Nothing is too good for heroes who helped to win the war!"

The tramps chuckled, and, taking Racke at his word, proceeded to make themselves at home. Racke withdrew, closing the door behind him. He grinned at Crooke, Scrope, and Mellish, who were awaiting him in the passage outside.

"All serene!" chuckled Racke. "Those old rascals are installed in Railton's study, and I reckon Railton will have a shock when he comes in. What a lark! Skimmy invited 'em, and he'll get the blame—not me. I'm going to establish an alibi now. Comin' down to the village bunshop for tea?"

"What-ho!"

And the young rascals of the School House went their way, smiling hugely over Racke's little jape.

CHAPTER 3.

Uninvited Guests!

"BLESS my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Railton.

The Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's had just opened his study door, and the sight that presented itself before his startled vision caused him to fall back and give vent to that ejaculation.

"Bless my soul!"

The air in the study reeked with tobacco-smoke, and it hung like a blue haze everywhere. Seven disreputable and dirty-looking men of the tramp type—and the worst type at that—were seated in the room or lounging against the walls. One unsavoury-looking ruffian had installed himself in the study armchair before the fire, and was resting his ill-shod feet on the mantelpiece.

The tramps looked at the gowned figure of the master and chuckled.

"Arternoon, guv'nor!" said the gentleman in the chair affably, raising his battered bowler-hat. "We're discharged 'eroes, you know, and we've been hinvited to tea. 'Ave a fag?"

Mr. Railton recoiled in horror as the tramp dragged a dirty paper packet from his tattered waistcoat-pocket and extended it towards him.

"Bless my soul! I—I fail to comprehend—"

"Which we wants to know when tea'll be ready!" said Mr. Boggs, who was propping up the bookcase. "Fine way to treat visitors, I must say. We've been 'ere nearly 'arf a hour, and no signs of tea. We'd be wery much obliged to you, guv'nor, if you'd find out where Master Skimpole is!"

"Skimpole!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, like one in a dream. "Then Skimpole has had the audacity to ask you in here?"

Mr. Boggs nodded, and blew forth a dense cloud of tobacco-smoke that made the Housemaster cough.

"Yus. Which Master Skimpole, seein' as 'ow we are all discharged soldiërs wivout jobs, was kind enough to hinwrite us to tea!" he said. "Wot we wants to know is, where's the tea?"

"Groooogh! Dear me!" gasped Mr. Railton, stepping back out of the cloud of smoke that enveloped him. "I have never come across a more amazing affair in all my life! Even if Skimpole did

invite you, this is not Skimpole's study. How came you here?"

"We was shown in 'ere, sir!" replied Mr. Boggs sulkily. "Look 'ere, mate, there's no trickery in this 'ere, is there? We've come to tea, and 'ere we remain till we get it. Wot I says is this 'ere—it's a shame to treat men so shabby wot 'ave served their country in the war!"

Mr. Railton looked disparagingly at the collection of ruffians before him.

"Discharged soldiërs!" he exclaimed.

"Where are your papers, my man?"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Boggs.

"Which I've left them 'ere papers at 'ome. Hif you disbelieves the word of a gentleman, guv'nor—"

"I have no reason to believe that you, or any of your companions, have been in the Army!" retorted Mr. Railton scornfully. "Skimpole is a very foolish lad, and you appear to have played upon his stupidity. He certainly has no right to invite you into this school. And this occupation of my private study is an outrage. I must request you all to leave this school at once!"

The tramps bristled with wrath.

"Wot!" said Boggs. "Us leave wivout our tea? Not much! We're 'ere for tea, ain't we, mates?"

"Wot-o!" chorused the tramps in emphatic voices.

Mr. Railton walked over to the gentleman reclining in the armchair, and forcibly dragged him up.

"You must all leave this instant!" he exclaimed angrily. "This is an audacious outrage! Go, or I shall summon assistance to have you removed!"

The tramps became truculent.

"Look 'ere, guv'nor—"

"We wants our tea!"

"Which this is a shabby trick, and—"

"My dear Mr. Railton—"

Skimpole of the Shell poked his large head in at the door, and gazed in deep consternation through his huge spectacles at the scene before him.

"Skimpole!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, whose face was quite red.

"Goodness gracious, there has been a misunderstanding, Mr. Railton!" said Skimpole sadly, coming into the room.

"These gentlemen have come into the wrong room. Unfortunately, I was absent when they entered the premises, and—"

"Skimpole, you foolish youth! How dare you introduce such disreputable men into this school!" exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"Really, my dear sir, they are discharged soldiërs, and I have invited them to tea—"

"Skimpole, you are the most ridiculous youth I have ever come across!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "These men have never been in the Army, and are merely worthless tramps. No doubt your motives were good, but you have been deceived. I shall not allow these men to remain here. Kindly show them off the premises immediately!"

Skimpole blinked first at Mr. Railton, and then at the tramps.

"Dear me!" he said. "Pray allow me to explain your mistake, Mr. Railton. You are, I assure you, labouring under a misconception—"

"Do not be insolent, Skimpole!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Obey me this instant, boy! Show these men away from St. Jim's!"

Skimpole turned sadly to Boggs & Co., who were looking on with grim, defiant looks.

"My dear fellows, I am so sorry that this great mistake has happened!" he said. "Unfortunately, these are circumstances over which I have no control, and I must therefore passively submit to authority. Will you—ahem!—be good

enough to follow me? This is not my study at all."

The tramps darted grim looks at Mr. Railton, and crowded out of the room after Skimpole. When they had gone, Mr. Railton threw open the window, and, taking up a newspaper, waved it in the air to clear the air of tobacco-smoke. He was angry with Skimpole, and mentally promised that youth a severe censure when he had got rid of his disreputable guests.

Messrs. Boggs & Co., meanwhile, had followed Skimpole downstairs, until they got to the hall door at the top of the School House steps. There they halted, and surrounded Skimpole.

"Look 'ere, Master Skimpole, ain't we goin' to 'ave no tea?" demanded one beefy individual, planting himself threateningly in front of the genius of the Shell.

Skimpole blinked.

"Really, my dear sir, I am afraid that, under the circumstances, it is impossible to—"

"Mates," said Mr. Boggs, looking round upon his companions, "we're the victims of a trick! This young cock-sparrow 'as been leadin' us up the garden. There ain't no tea at all! Fine way to treat 'eroes, ain't it? Shameful, I call it! Go for the little whelp!"

"My dear fellows," gasped the brainy man of St. Jim's, as the tramps closed round him, "pray do not resort to violence! I assure you that I am wholly innocuous—"

"We'll learn yer!" roared the tramps, and they laid violent hands upon Herbert Skimpole, whirling him off his feet.

"Yarooooogh!" roared the luckless promoter of the "Help the Heroes' Fund." "Desist, I beseech you! Yah! Oh dear, I assure you—yow-ow!—that you are mistaken! Yarooooop!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Skimpole, wriggling in the grasp of many dirty hands, was whirled down the School House steps, and bumped hard upon the cold, unsympathetic ground.

"That's taught yer not to wound the feelin's of respectable 'eroes!" said Boggs, glaring down at Skimpole, as that luckless youth lay sprawled upon the ground. "Take this 'ere tip—don't come it any more—see? Bloomin' shameful trick! Yah!"

"Come on, mates!"

And the tramps plodded away towards the gates, glaring truculently at the grinning St. Jim's boys, who had watched the episode of Skimpole's bumping. As for that unfortunate and misunderstood youth, he was picked up by Reilly and Kerruish, and Grundy, and carried away, grunting and groaning, to the bath-room, where he partook of a wash and brush-up that he was badly in need of.

CHAPTER 4.

Amazing News!

"RAILTON wants you in his study!"

Curly Gibson, of the Third, delivered that message to Herbert Skimpole, as that youth was sitting reading in his study later that evening.

The genius of the Shell blinked at the fag through his enormous spectacles. Poor Skimpole was looking gloomy and glum.

"Mr. Railton wants me!" he exclaimed. "Oh dear!"

Curly Gibson grinned.

"He's in a tearing rage!" he said. "You are going to get it where the chicken gets the chopper, Skimmy—in the neck!"

With that comforting remark, Gibson departed, whistling.

Skimpole, with a deep sigh, closed his

volume of Professor Balmcrumpet, and left the study.

Mr. Railton greeted him with a stern look as he entered the Housemaster's room.

"Ah, Skimpole, a very serious thing has happened," said Mr. Railton. "Those tramps whom you were so foolish as to invite into this school this afternoon, have ransacked my study, and stolen many articles—some of them of little or no value, but one, of the utmost importance. Have you any knowledge of the subject?"

Skimpole was blinking in dismay at the Housemaster.

"My dear Mr. Railton, surely there is some misconception!" he stammered. "Those men were honourable and upright discharged soldiers, whom I had every confidence in—"

"You are an utterly ridiculous and foolish boy, Skimpole," said Mr. Railton tartly. "Nobody but a fool would have for a moment credited these disreputable ruffians with having fought for their country. During the time that they were in this room, they stole all they could lay their hands upon. This is a very serious matter, Skimpole."

"Oh dear!" gasped the genius of the Shell, in dismay.

"Your stupidity passes my comprehension, Skimpole!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "However, no good can come of idle conversation. I have compiled a list of the missing articles. To the thieves they are worthless, but they are of immense value to me. Before I telephone to the police-station, I must have a full description of the men from you."

Skimpole was then made to give Mr. Railton descriptions of the tramps he had invited to tea. This Skimpole was able to do, but he could not believe that these men were guilty of such common felony. The guileless genius of St. Jim's was still convinced that Mr. Railton was mistaken.

When he had given Mr. Railton the information he required, Skimpole was allowed to go. He retired from the Housemaster's study with a heavy heart.

Mr. Railton went to telephone the police-station, and when he returned, he sent for Gore.

George Gore, of the Shell, came into the Housemaster's study with a look of wonderment. Mr. Railton's face was grave.

"Gore, I have sent for you to acquaint you of some very important news indirectly connected with yourself," said Mr. Railton, in a quiet voice. "I should not have told you had not an audacious robbery been perpetrated here this afternoon. To proceed with my story, my boy. Your uncle, John Raynor, recently inherited Raynor Grange, and a large estate in Dorset, at the death of his brother, James Raynor, did he not?"

"Yes, sir," replied Gore, his eyes opening wide with astonishment. "How—how did you know? And what has that to do with—"

"I am coming to that, my lad," said Mr. Railton gravely. "Now, there is a romance and a tragedy connected with your uncle's inheritance, which you must now be told. James Raynor had a son who, at the age of eighteen, was in the British Merchant Service, and was employed on the liner Atlantis, which belonged to his father's company. James Raynor had great ambition for his boy, until a great tragedy happened. In the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, during one of the voyages of the Atlantis, Lionel Raynor disappeared with all the valuables from the purser's office. The purser, you know, is the man on board a ship who looks after the belongings of the passengers, and many thousands of pounds are

entrusted in his charge during each voyage.

"Young Lionel Raynor had told the ship's officers that he was desperately in need of money, and naturally it was thought that he had robbed the ship, and jumped overboard with his spoil.

"The Danish vessel that Lionel Raynor boarded was traced to Newfoundland, where it was wrecked in a gale. Several of the crew survived, and told conflicting stories of what had happened to the passenger they had picked up from the ocean. Nobody knew whether he was dead or alive, but it was generally supposed that he had escaped the wreck, and was living secretly in the United States.

"James Raynor so took this disgrace to heart, that he made a will that made these provisions: If after James Raynor's death, Lionel was found and his innocence proved, the whole estate should go to him, which meant a fortune of several thousands of pounds. If, however, he were found to be guilty, or if it could be proved that he had died, the estate and all the money should go to John Raynor, brother to James. He is, of course, uncle to both Lionel Raynor and yourself. Lionel Raynor was eventually found, working as a mate aboard a Hull schooner. He was tried, found guilty, and sent to prison for ten years, and John Raynor became sole heir to the Raynor estates. He owns them till this day. But that happened three years ago. Lionel Raynor escaped from prison, and, so far, has not been found. He is still a fugitive from justice if he is alive. If he is dead, then he died a very wronged man.

"Three weeks ago, the man who had been purser on board the Atlantis died, and on his deathbed he made a confession that it was he who had robbed the ship, and not Lionel Raynor. This took place on board another liner—the Memphis—and the purser's confession was made in a strange way. He could not write, for both his arms were paralysed. So he

spoke his confession into a phonograph, and both the doctor and the captain witnessed that confession, also speaking into the phonograph. Thus a record was made of the purser's confession, which proved the innocence of Lionel Raynor, and would put him into possession of the heritage he was entitled to.

"Now, Gore; I, being executor to the will of James Raynor, was entrusted with that phonograph record, which contained the confession. It came into my possession at the beginning of this week, and I was keeping it in my desk until the legal machinery could be put into operation, and poor Lionel found.

"This afternoon, my lad, as you know, Skimpole invited a number of tramps into this school, under the impression that they were ex-soldiers, and with the intention of providing them with tea. Those ruffians came into my room while I was absent at the master's meeting, and when they left I discovered that they had ransacked my desk, and had taken, among other things, that important phonograph record. I tremble to think of the consequences if that record is lost or destroyed, for it is the only proof we have of Lionel's innocence. It is the only evidence that will be legally accepted in the courts of justice. Do you realise what this all means, Gore?"

Gore, who had been listening intently, drew a deep breath.

"Yes, sir, I see what it means," he said with glittering eyes. "So long as that record is not found, my Uncle John can remain at Raynor Hall, and keep everything he inherited. If it is found, and Lionel Raynor can be discovered, it will mean that my uncle will have to give up everything in favour of Lionel."

"Which is, of course, only right and proper," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I perceive that you realise the position, Gore. I have told you this, my lad, so that you may assist me when it becomes possible for you to do so. Lionel Raynor is your cousin, and is but still a young



Gore was grasped by many hands, and deposited into the middle of a large muddy puddle. "Yaroo! Oh dear!" roared Gore, making frantic efforts to regain his feet. (See page 5.)

man whose life, up to now, has been blighted and ruined by unhappy circumstances. Your Uncle John has much to lose, of course, if justice is given to Lionel. But it is the young man whom we must help. Here is a photograph of Lionel Raynor, taken in England three years ago. If you ever happen to see him, you will know him, and can tell him of the purser's confession."

Mr. Railton took from his desk a photograph, which he handed to Gore. The Shell fellow looked at it, and saw a young, handsome man, whose face was lined with care. It was a face he would easily remember, because it was so much like his own Uncle John.

"I—I see, sir," stammered the St. Jim's junior, handing back the photograph to Mr. Railton. "I shall remember the face, of course. But suppose I do happen to meet him? My Uncle John is not very friendly to me, I admit, but he sometimes sends me pocket-money. Why should I tell all I know to Lionel, and ruin my uncle?"

"It is a choice between your uncle and your cousin, Gore," said Mr. Railton, regarding the Shell fellow keenly. "One is young, and must be helped to restart the life that misfortune has made unhappy for him. The other is a man getting on in years, with a comfortable income of his own, apart from the estate he inherited from his brother. Whom would you rather help?"

"My cousin, of course, sir," replied Gore slowly.

"Yes, Gore; I rely upon your sense of honour and justice. The missing phonograph record is in this neighbourhood somewhere, and if the tramps have thrown it away, it is quite possible that you, or one of the boys, may pick it up. A phonograph record is a worthless thing in itself, and one who does not know the importance of the one I have lost, might easily destroy it. I wish you to keep vigilant, Gore, and try and recover the record if you can."

"Very well, sir," said Gore. "I—I'll do as you ask."

"Thank you, my lad! You will render more than one person a great service if you are the means of recovering the record. You may now go."

George Gore left the Housemaster's study, his brow wrinkled in thought.

It was an astounding story that Mr. Railton had told him, yet it was true. Gore had once been a rotter, but there was now a great deal of good in him. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, he felt the urging of his conscience to do something noble and useful, and he inwardly determined to do as Mr. Railton had asked, and, if it were possible for him to recover the missing phonograph record, he would give it back to Mr. Railton, so that justice would be given to Lionel Raynor, whom misfortune had made a fugitive in his own land.

CHAPTER 5.

Gore's Temptation!

GORE was seated in his study that evening, doing his preparation, when Herbert Skimpole came in. Skimpole had evidently been out, for his boots were muddy. He carried a large parcel under his arm.

Gore sat up and looked grimly at his learned study-mate.

"Where have you been, you ass?" he demanded gruffly. "You'll get into no end of a row if your prep isn't finished by the morning."

Skimpole blinked at Gore through his enormous spectacles.

"I have been out, my dear Gore," he said mildly. "Mr. Railton seemed so

angry with me for inviting those discharged heroes into this school, which so unfortunately resulted in the pilfering of his study, that I thought I had better go out and endeavour to find those men, and, if they had committed the misdemeanour, to recover the stolen articles."

"Well?" demanded Gore, showing a new interest.

"Here are few of the things I have been able to recover, my dear Gore," said Skimpole, indicating the parcel he had brought in. "The men who disgorged them were truly penitent. Indeed, they were actuated by the most human and pardonable motives—those of hunger and want, produced by unemployment. I assisted the poor fellows in a pecuniary manner, and they were quite willing to hand me the articles they had purloined. Really, they are of very little value. I quite fail to comprehend Mr. Railton's anxiety concerning them."

Gore's eyes were gleaming.

"What's inside the parcel, Skimmy?" asked the burly Shell fellow.

"Merely a number of papers and small articles I have not yet examined," said Skimpole. "I—I think I had better return them at once to Mr. Railton."

George Gore hesitated. Was the missing phonograph record in the parcel? In his curiosity, Gore was anxious to know.

Skimpole was cleaning his eyeglasses when the study door opened, and Toby, the school page, entered.

"Letter for you, Master Gore," he said, and, laying the missive on the table, he departed.

Gore opened the letter eagerly, for he recognised the handwriting of his Uncle John. There was only one sheet of notepaper, and this is what Gore read:

"Dear George,—Your Housemaster, Mr. Railton, has in his possession a cylindrical phonograph record, which I am most anxious to secure. Unless I have it almost at once I am a ruined man, and I shall have to leave Raynor Hall and all its possessions. You do not understand why this is so, but, believe me, I speak in real earnest. Do not breathe a word of this to anybody, and please destroy this letter as soon as you have read it. I will give you a hundred pounds if you can obtain that phonograph record from Mr. Railton, or destroy it. That would be quite a simple matter for you to do, and nobody need suspect you. Remember, a hundred pounds awaits you for that small service.

"Your affectionate uncle,
"JOHN RAYNOR."

Gore folded the letter carefully, and placed it in his pocket. His eyes were gleaming with a new light as he did so.

A hundred pounds! That was what his uncle offered for the phonograph record. John Raynor was not a man with many scruples, Gore knew. And he offered a hundred pounds for possession of the record. This was a very large sum for a schoolboy to possess. The very thought of it made Gore breathe deeply, and made his eyes glitter. Why shouldn't he do as his uncle asked? The record might possibly be within his grasp now—in the parcel that Skimpole had just entered with; and it was worth a hundred pounds to him! Gore reflected quickly on the situation. What use was the record, if Lionel Raynor were never to be found? Probably he would never be discovered. Perhaps he was already dead. A feeling of desperation took hold of the St. Jim's junior.

"I—I say, Skimmy," said Gore, turn-

ing to his brainy study-mate, "you haven't had tea yet, have you? You must be awfully hungry."

"Yes, my dear Gore; I do feel somewhat hungry, not having partaken of any nourishment since dinner," replied Skimpole. "However, I must deliver this parcel to Mr. Railton, and—"

"Oh, that can wait a little while, Skimmy," said Gore persuasively. "Look here, old chap, there's not much grub left in our study, and the tuckshop is shut, but old Cardew of the Fourth bought up a whole pile of tuck this afternoon. Here's half-a-crown. Run along, and ask Cardew to sell you some. I could do with something to eat, too."

"Very well, my dear Gore," said Skimpole, taking the half-crown, "I will subscribe half-a-crown also, with which to purchase a larger amount of provisions. I'll take this parcel on my way to Cardew—"

"Don't bother, old chap; the parcel will be all right here until you come back," said Gore hastily. "It doesn't contain anything valuable, so nobody will pinch it. Besides, Railton's taking the Third for prep this evening, I believe, as Mr. Selby's caught a chill. Run along, there's a good fellow. I'll look after this old parcel of rubbish."

"Very well, my dear Gore," said Skimpole unsuspectingly; and he withdrew from the study.

As Skimpole's footsteps receded down the passage, Gore locked his study door, and then undid the parcel with hasty, eager fingers.

He drew off the brown-paper covering, and then a motley assortment of papers and oddments were displayed to view. There was a carved oak inkstand, various penholders of different designs, some keys and a cash-box, and a rubber stamp. All these Gore passed over carelessly, but when he discovered a small oblong box underneath some papers, his eagerness was intense. He dragged off the lid of the box, and there, reposing in cotton wool, was a black, cylindrical phonograph record of the old-fashioned type.

"Oh, good!" breathed the Shell fellow, and, slipping the record and the box into his pocket, he hastily repacked the parcel. When he had tied the string, the parcel looked practically the same as it was when Skimpole had brought it in. Gore then unlocked the door, and soon afterwards Skimpole returned, bearing with him a parcel of tuck which he had purchased from Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the Fourth.

"That's right, Skimmy!" said Gore, in a calm voice, though his heart was still beating fast. "Now, while I make some tea, you can take the parcel along to Mr. Railton. I expect he's about finished with the Third by now."

Skimpole took up the parcel, not dreaming that it had been tampered with, and left the study.

Mr. Railton had just entered his room when Skimpole tapped at the door. The Housemaster looked at the genius of the Shell in surprise.

"Well, Skimpole?"

"Here are some articles I have retrieved from the unfortunate fellows whom I invited here this afternoon, sir," said Skimpole, dumping down the parcel on Mr. Railton's table. "Your loss so troubled my conscience that I realised that I was an indirect factor in your loss. So I went out and searched for the men. I discovered a number of them outside the Green Man public-house, whither they had gone for a glass of brandy each in order to sustain them during the coming cold night. I explained to them what had happened, and elicited that,

owing to the fact that they were unemployed, and had no means of subsistence, they had yielded to a very natural temptation to purloin various articles from your study. Those articles I have recovered, and they are in this parcel. The only things that are missing are objects which the men thought of little worth, and therefore threw them away in the river Rhyl."

Mr. Railton was smiling. "That was a very considerate thing of you to do, Skimpole," he said, not unkindly. "I am very glad you have been able to recover some of my property. Let me see what is in the parcel."

Mr. Railton opened the parcel, and anxiously examined its contents. A look of disappointment and dismay came over his face, when he saw that the precious phonograph record was not there.

"Dear me! I am afraid, Skimpole, that the very article I am most anxious to recover is not here. Are you sure these are all the articles the men returned to you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Skimpole, blinking. "I placed them all in the parcel, which you now have. I—I very much regret, my dear Mr. Railton—"

"That is not your fault, Skimpole," said Mr. Railton ruefully. "I shall have to make further inquiries. Skimpole, you are a good-natured lad, but your benevolence is entirely misplaced. Do not allow yourself to be deluded again. Remember, there are many rogues in this world, and it does not do to believe everything you are told. You may go, Skimpole."

"My dear sir, I assure you—"
"Please go, Skimpole! I am busy!"
Skimpole went, feeling quite dismayed, and returned to Study No. 9. Gore greeted him with an inquiring look.

"Is everything all right, Skimpole?" he asked casually.

"Not quite, my dear Gore," replied the genius of the Shell, in a sad voice. "Mr. Railton has not yet recovered the article he is most anxious to obtain. Really, this affair has quite upset me; but it will not deter me from proceeding with my 'Help the Heroes' Fund.' Though the men I invited here this afternoon may have been dishonest, there are scores of deserving fellows in this neighbourhood who merit assistance, and I intend to persevere with my work until I have sown the seed of a great national movement, and the Government, which, I fear, is very slow in its methods, has recognised the real worth of the fund."

Gore grinned, and poured out the tea. "Carry on with your grub, Skimmy," he said good-temperedly, "then you'd better do your prep, and give your rotten 'Help the Heroes' Fund' the giddy go-by for a little while."

Skimpole shook his head, but made no rejoinder. He commenced an attack upon a rabbit-pie, and soon the genius of the Shell was eating hungrily.

CHAPTER 6.

Racke's Ruse.

THE next day was Wednesday, and a half-holiday at St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. were all on Little Side, in their football garb, still hard at practice.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were holding a practice match of their own on the opposite field. The cold, crisp air was full of the cheery cries of the boys at football, and the thud, thud of boot meeting the leather sphere.

George Gore, of the Shell, was on the field. He had been showing great form lately, and Tom Merry meant to keep him hard at practice. Gore was a hefty fellow, and so long as he kept his wind would make a very useful back.

"Played, Blake!"

Tom Merry's eleven had scored another goal against the "scratch" team, which made the total, so far, three to nil. Jack Blake of the Fourth grinned cheerfully as he took his place as the outside-right. Tom Merry was looking cheerful, too. All his men were giving a good display, and, to judge by the shouts that came from the other field, Figgins, Kerr, Fatty Wynn, and Dick Redfern, of the New House, were also "making things hum."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had scored the second goal of the match, beamed at Tom Merry through his eyeglass. Gussy always had his famous monocle near at hand, even on the footer-field.

"Bai Jove, we're doin' wippinly, Tom Mewwy," he said. "We are bound to give Gordon Gay and the other Gwammawians a good thwashin' on Saturday, deah boy!"

"What-ho!" chuckled the captain of the Lower School.

There were three fellows by the pavilion, looking on at the practice match, who sneered.

"Silly asses!" said Aubrey Racke, of the Shell. "Blessed if I can understand why they go so balmy over booting a footer about the field. A good fag and a quiet game of nap is more my idea of enjoyment, I reckon. But still, let 'em get on with it. I'm after my fountain-pen. I paid Skimpole for it, and haven't had my money back yet. So I want the pen—not to keep, for Gore would soon have it back, the cad! Croker, of the Grammar School, wants a pen, and he's offered me ten bob for one. I reckon I'll get my pen out of Gore's jacket in the pavilion. I've paid for that and the inkstand, but I'll let him off the inkstand. You chaps keep cave out here, will you?"

Mellish and Crooke grinned. They did not mind backing up their knuttish leader in his unscrupulous schemes. Racke was the son of a war profiteer, and had plenty of money. But that did not deter his ambition for making more, whenever it was possible. It gave Racke a pain to think that he had paid out seven shillings and sixpence for a fountain-pen and inkstand, which Gore had forcibly seized back. Racke thought that if he could sell the fountain-pen to his friend at the Grammar School, Gore would not dream that it had been taken from his pocket. Fountain-pens were things that were very easily lost.

Crooke and Mellish kept watch outside the pavilion, whilst Racke sauntered in. A number of jackets hung on hooks in the dressing-room, and Racke searched among these until he came to Gore's things. The pen was not in the waistcoat, so Racke felt in the inside pocket. His fingers closed on a folded sheet of paper, and, with his customary curiosity, Racke drew it out and looked at it.

He gave a swift whistle of amazement as he read the missive, which was the letter Gore had received the day before from his uncle John. He had not obeyed the injunction to destroy the letter, but had kept it in his jacket pocket, and, for the time being, forgotten all about it.

"My only summer chapeau!" exclaimed the chief of the rotters' brigade at St. Jim's. "Here's a giddy find! So Gore and his uncle are scheming to get a phonograph record from Railton! I wonder what it all means? And the record is worth a hundred quid! By Jore, I reckon I can take a hand in this!"

Racke hastily scribbled down the name and address of Gore's uncle, and replaced the letter in Gore's jacket. He gave a hurried search in the other pockets, but did not find the fountain-pen. But the pen was now quite a secondary consideration to Aubrey Racke. His face was

suffused with excitement as he rejoined his cronies outside.

"Got it?" asked Percy Mellish.
"No. I expect the rotter has hidden it," replied Racke. "I say, you fellows, run over to the tuckshop and have a feed while I go up and look in Gore's study. I sha'n't be long!"

"Right-ho!" said Crooke and Mellish willingly. Racke was going to pay for their feed, so they did not mind in the least.

Racke made haste over to the School House and went upstairs to Gore's study. The door was unlocked, for Gore had left Skimpole in there, and Skimpole had gone out, quite forgetting to lock the door. Like all other geniuses, Herbert Skimpole was very absent-minded.

Racke went into the study, and locked the door carefully behind him. Then, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, he tried them, one after the other, in the lock of Gore's desk. At last, with a low exclamation of satisfaction, Racke opened the desk, and then he proceeded to search the contents thoroughly.

"By gum!"
Racke took out an oblong box, and, opening it, he gloated down upon a black, cylindrical phonograph record.

"By gum!" he exclaimed again. "So Gore has got it from Railton! Ha, ha, ha! I wonder what Railton would say if he knew! Now this is where I work a trick or two."

He relocked the desk, and placed the record in his pocket. Then Racke left Gore's study, and went along to the end study, which was the headquarters of Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, and his chums, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. Both the Colonial juniors were playing in Tom Merry's team on Little Side, and Glyn had gone over to his home, which was not far away from St. Jim's. Bernard Glyn was making a model railway in the garden of Glyn House, so that all his half-holidays lately were spent at home.

It did not take Racke long to get into the end study. Bernard Glyn had all manner of tools and mechanical devices in there. Among these articles was a "Gem" phonograph, and a box of records. The record box was lying on top of the study cupboard, so Racke, by standing on a chair, took it down.

Then he took out the record he had stolen from Gore's desk, and compared it with several of the records in the box belonging to Bernard Glyn. Soon he found two which corresponded to the stolen one.

He annexed these, and, closing the box, he replaced it on top of the cupboard. He then borrowed a file from Glyn's box of odd tools—not the precious tool-chest which the inventor of St. Jim's kept locked with one of his own padlock devices—and filed off the titles of the records, just as the title had been filed off the one he had taken from Gore's study. This had once been an ordinary record, but the tune had been taken off by means of petrol, thus leaving it blank for another record to be taken upon it.

"Good!" chuckled the black sheep of the Shell. "That's got them almost exactly similar! Now for the final trick!"

He replaced the file, cleaned up the wax shavings, and left the study as he had found it. Then he returned to Gore's room.

One of the records he had taken from Glyn's box he substituted for the one he had found in Gore's desk. He wrapped it up in the cotton-wool, replaced the box where he had found it, locked the desk, and left the study.

"Gore won't know the difference now!" he chuckled. "He's got 'The

Bluebells of Scotland' instead of the genuine article he pinched from Railton. I reckon I'll hang on to that for a little while."

Racke then went into his own study, and taking the other record he had stolen from Glyn's box, he broke it to fragments. Then he wrapped it up carefully in a brown-paper parcel, enclosing a letter which ran thus:

"Dear Sir,—Hearing that you were anxious to secure a phonograph record which was in our Housemaster's possession, I have taken the liberty to obtain it for you, George Gore having failed to do so. I enclose the record in this parcel, and hope you will receive it safely. I have taken a lot of trouble in getting this from Mr. Railton, and it would be serious for me if he found it out. Of course, I rely on you, and shall be glad to receive the money you offered. If you do not send it I am afraid I must tell Mr. Railton what I have done, and the consequences would be more serious for you than for me. I don't mind a good caning, because I am used to it. The record is just as I took it from Mr. Railton's study, and I do not know what is on it, because I haven't a phonograph. Please reply as early as possible.—Yours truly,
AUBREY RACKE."

The reckless young rascal then addressed the parcel to Mr. John Raynor.

"This will take him in properly!" he chuckled. "When he receives these bits he'll think the record has got broken in the post, but I reckon he'll stump up the cash, all the same. Of course, if I sent this spoof one to him unbroken he'd play it, and find out the trick. But he can't play a broken record, I reckon. And he's bound to pay up, because he thinks I've got a hold over him. That letter he sent to Gore would be sufficient to get him into trouble if it were disclosed. Anyway, I'm safe. He wouldn't dare to split to the Head or Railton. And I stand a jolly good chance of getting a hundred quid—if he takes it in. If not—well, I've got the real record safe and sound, and Gore's got another spoof one! Ha, ha, ha!"

Still chuckling over his reckless scheme, Aubrey Racke went downstairs with the parcel under his arm.

He met Baggy Trimble outside the tuckshop in the quadrangle. Dame Taggles had some new jam-tarts in her window, and Baggy was looking hungrily at them. The fat youth of the Fourth was, of course, in his usual "hard-up" state.

"Hallo, Baggy!" said Racke affably.

"What are you doing?"

Baggy Trimble blinked at the Shell fellow.

"I—I was just wondering who would lend me a bob to get a few of those tarts," said Baggy, his glance reverting to the luscious edibles in the window. "Dame Taggles refuses to let me have any on tick; she's still hankering over that little matter of seven bob I owe her. Mean, I call it! She's the most unreasonable woman I have ever met!"

Racke grinned.

"If you take this parcel down to the village and post it for me, Baggy," he said, "I'll give you a couple of bob."

"Good!" said Baggy eagerly. "I'm on, Racke! Gimme the money!"

Racke handed the fat youth of the Fourth two half-crowns.

"Here is five bob," he said. "Pay for the postage, and then take two bob for yourself. And, mind, no more than two bob. You can knock the parcel about as much as you like, Baggy—more the merrier!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

"All right, old chap!" said Baggy, and he rolled away to the gates.

Racke smiled, and joined Crooke and Mellish inside the tuckshop.

Meanwhile Baggy Trimble was on his way down the Rylcombe Lane towards the village. Remembering Racke's statement that the parcel could be knocked about, Baggy threw it down in the road, kicked it, and then picked it up again.

He blinked at it curiously.

"I wonder what's inside?" he murmured. "Must be something rummy, and no mistake! I—I'll look!"

Baggy opened the parcel. He glared disparagingly at the fragments of phonograph record.

"What a sell!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens does Racke want to send these broken bits for, anyway? He might have wrapped 'em up decently. Careless ass! Oh crumbs! I—I can't get the parcel done up again! Dash!"

Baggy, struggling with the paper, inadvertently dropped a few of the broken pieces of record. He did not notice them, however, but trod on them as he passed on.

In this manner, hugging the parcel to him, and minus several pieces of the record, Baggy continued on his way to Rylcombe.

Arriving at the village post-office in the High Street, he rolled inside.

"Yes, sir?" asked the young lady behind the counter.

"I—I say, miss, could you let me have some paper and a bit of string, please?" gasped Baggy. "This parcel has come undone, and I've torn the inside paper."

The young lady obligingly handed Baggy some paper and string, and, going over to the telegram-counter, Baggy proceeded to retie the parcel. Then he was struck with a brain-wave.

"I'd better wrap these bits up decently," he murmured. "Racke may be slipshod, but I'm jolly well not!"

So Baggy took each piece of record and wrapped it up separately in paper! Then he placed these pieces neatly together, with the sealed letter on top, and retied the parcel. When this was done he handed it to the young lady, and paid the postage.

Rolling out again into the High Street, Baggy Trimble jingled the money in his pocket. He was hungry, and could not wait until he got back to St. Jim's. So he went over to the village bunshop, and expended his wealth there.

Baggy was quite satisfied that he had improved on Racke's parcel by wrapping up each piece of record separately in paper. Little did Baggy dream of the ruin he had wrought to Racke's scheme!

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins' Little Joke!

"B R-R-R-R! How's the state of the exchequer, chaps?"

Thus quoth George Figgins, as he and Kerr and Fatty Wynn and Redfern made their way from the football-field.

They had enjoyed the match, and were now feeling hungry and eager for their tea. Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were still playing.

Fatty Wynn was looking disconsolate.

"I've only got ninnepence, Figgys," he said. "And—and I ate that pork-pie in our cupboard before I came down to footer."

"Why, you—you fat cormorant!" exclaimed Figgins, glaring. "And, I suppose, while you were on the job you scoffed the sardines, and the remains of the cake, and the jam—eh?"

"Ye-es, Figgys," faltered Fatty Wynn. "A chap must keep up a good constitution, you know."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins. "I'm worth a tanner. How much you, Kerr?"

"Fourpence, and a French ha'penny with a hole in it!" chuckled George Kerr.

"I've got a solitary shilling and a few odd coppers," said Redfern. "The grand total isn't much, is it?"

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"I—I'm hungrier than ever now, Figgys!" he said pathetically. "Shall we make a friendly call on Tom Merry and Blake when they've finished their footer match, and—and—"

"And cadge a feed? Not likely!" snorted Figgins. "I reckon we shall have to be content with small mercies to-day, boys, and—Hollo! Here's Skimpole! Ahoy, there, Skimmy!"

Herbert Skimpole was strolling along, his massive brow wrinkled in thought, when Figgins' cheery voice broke upon his meditation.

"Oh, it is you, Figgins!" he said, blinking at the New House heroes through his spectacles.

"Yes, only little us!" grinned Figgins. "What weighty matter is bothering your brain now, Skimmy? Are you thinking of inviting a few more heroes to tea? We four are heroes, and we're badly in need of a good tea. Going to invite us, old chap?"

Skimpole shook his head.

"My 'Help the Heroes' Fund' is for those unfortunate men who are unemployed and needy," he replied. "I was cogitating, my dear fellows, when you disturbed my train of thought. Do you think that were I to perambulate the neighbourhood on the exterior of these school walls, and discovered a few needy souls, and invited them into my study for tea, Mr. Railton would be very angry with me?"

Figgins grinned. A new light had entered his eyes.

"Why, of course not, Skimmy, provided the chaps you invited were all needy souls, and perfectly honest. The last little lot were not honest, you know. That's why Railton got his rag out. But look here, Skimmy, we quite approve of your 'Help the Heroes' Fund.' We've all subscribed a few bob each, haven't we? I know of a few poor chaps who are badly in need of assistance. Be at the woodman's hut in Rylcombe Wood in half an hour, and you'll find the men waiting for you."

"Really, my dear Figgins, that is very commendable of you," said Skimpole, beaming. "If you can quite recommend the men—"

"Take it from me, Skimmy, they're the most deserving and honest fellows you'd ever meet!" said Figgins solemnly.

"I can quite confidently recommend them. They have all seen better days, but have come down a lot through shortage of cash. Be at the woodman's hut as I said, Skimmy, and all will be well."

"Thank you very much, my dear Figgins!" said Skimpole, who had brightened considerably. "I much appreciate your kind help. I shall certainly make a point of appearing at the woodman's hut in half an hour. I—I will go and purchase some provisions in readiness."

As the brainy man of the Shell walked away Figgins' chums turned to him in astonishment.

"What's the game, Figgys?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Don't you twig?" asked Figgins, with a chuckle. "These four needy chaps are little us! We'll dress up as fellows who have come down in the world, meet Skimmy at the hut, and come back with him for tea. He won't have the faintest suspicion, and won't the chaps laugh when it comes out? Of course, we'll pay

Skimmy back when we get some cash in. But he's going to invite us to tea to-day and we'll be incog, to use the Latin word for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins' chums roared at the scheme. Kerr, who was an adept in the art of make-up, had plenty of "props" and grease-paint. The heroes of the New House secured these, made up a parcel of all they required, and stole out of St. Jim's just as Tom Merry & Co. were coming from the footer-field.

In the solitude of Rylcombe Wood Figgins & Co. proceeded to make startling changes in their appearance. By the time their work was completed nobody would have recognised them as the neatly-clad St. Jim's juniors who had entered the wood a short while before. They looked ragged and hungry, and their whole attitude was that of a hopelessness of despair.

"Good!" chuckled Figgins, tightening his neck muffler. "I reckon we look our parts to a tea. Good joke that, what? Ha, ha, ha! Now for the woodman's hut and Skimmy!"

They arrived at the woodman's hut, but Skimpole had not yet made his appearance. So they opened the door and went in. As they did so a ragged, unkempt man sat up from beneath some sacking. He looked at them wild-eyed and suspiciously.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, forgetting for the time being that he looked almost as disreputable as the man in the hut. "What the merry dickens—"

"It's all right, mates," said the man, standing up. "You gave me a start when you came in, that's all. You are tramps like myself—eh?"

"Ye-es, of course!" stammered Figgins, blushing beneath the "make-up."

The man before them spoke in a more refined manner than they would have expected from one of his class. There was a weary, hungry look in his eyes, and the lines on his sunken cheeks denoted real suffering and care. Figgins' warm heart was touched at once.

"I say," he said, laying a hand on the stranger's arm, "we are meeting a fellow from St. Jim's School here in a minute, who has invited us to tea. He's got a fund, the 'Help the Heroes' Fund' he calls it, and his object is to find men who are unemployed and in need, and help them. Won't you come with us?"

The man looked curiously at the disguised schoolboy.

"But—but who are you?" he asked. "You—you don't speak like a—tramp, but like a boy."

Figgins chuckled, and then explained everything. The stranger smiled, too, although it was rather a haggard smile.

"It's a very good joke," he said. "Just the sort of thing I used to get up to when I was a boy at school. Those days are far away, and—and I'd best forget them."

Figgins & Co. looked compassionately at the man. They could see that once he had been in very different circumstances from what he was in now. But they did not ask questions. That would have been indelicate.

"But you'll come with us, won't you?" said Figgins eagerly. "You are just the sort of fellow that Skimpole wants to help. And here he is."

CHAPTER 8. Bowled Out!

HERBERT SKIMPOLE'S large head poked through the doorway, and he blinked at the five occupants of the woodman's hut. "Ah, here you are, my dear fellows!" he exclaimed delightedly. "So Figgins has not failed to inform you."

Figgins nudged the stranger, and walked forward.

"Which it's very kind of you, young sir," he said, in a husky voice. "Which we have come at Master Figgins' invitation. Are you Master Skimpole?"

"Yes," said Skimpole. "My dear fellows, it grieves me deeply to see you so degenerated through no fault of your own. How long have you been out of employment?"

"Well, sir, I haven't been in a regular job for quite sixteen years," said Figgins solemnly. "Very hard, isn't it?"

"Hard, indeed!" said Skimpole sympathetically. "And your companions are out of employment, too?"

Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern nodded. It was as much as they could do to keep from laughing.

"Follow me to St. Jim's!" said Skimpole, leading the way out of the hut. "Really, your looks and manners impress me quite favourably. I am sure that Mr. Railton would approve of my assisting you."

Figgins & Co. thus disguised as relics of humanity, followed Skimpole into the wood. The stranger came with them, though rather reluctantly. But Figgins had one arm and Kerr the other.

Skimpole regaled them with his views and theories upon the present social system on the way back to St. Jim's, and outlined in detail, and with very big words, his scheme for helping the heroes. Figgins & Co. listened attentively, and were loud in their praise of Skimpole. This was like healing unction to Skimpole's soul, and he felt that he deserved well of his country as he walked in at the gates of St. Jim's, followed by those five disreputable and jaded-looking individuals.

Taggles glared at them, but held his peace. That was because Skimpole had previously mollified him by the donation of a shilling.

Across the quadrangle went Skimpole and his band of "heroes," and they went indoors without being interfered with, although Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the

Third looked at them in high amusement.

Fortune favoured Skimpole. Most of the fellows were at tea, and he did not meet anybody but a few Fourth-Formers and fags on his way to the Shell passage. Gore was not in the study, either. Tea was laid, and Skimpole made his guests comfortable.

The disguised New House juniors looked with satisfaction upon the assortment of good things arrayed upon the table. Fatty Wynn's heart glowed within him. The stranger, too, appeared to have brightened considerably at the sight of the appetising food Skimpole had provided.

"Tea is ready, my dear fellows," said the good-hearted genius of the Shell. "Make yourselves comfortable, and eat whatever you desire. I have made special provision for your entertainment, you see."

"Thank you, sir!" chorused Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern. Their other companion looked his thanks at Skimpole, and they all fell to, willingly.

Skimpole did not eat much. He was too busy watching his guests eat. His learned visage was wreathed in smiles as he saw the five of them attack the good things with gusto. They certainly appeared remarkably ravenous, and Skimpole's warm heart beat gladly.

The meal had proceeded for ten minutes, when the study door was flung open, and George Gore strode in.

He glared at the festive scene before him.

"Why, what the merry dickens—" he gasped. "Skimpole, you idiot—"

"My dear Gore, interposed Skimpole, rising hastily, "I trust you will not create any unnecessary disturbance here, while my guests are taking of some much-needed nourishment. They—"

"Didn't I warn you not to bring any more of these ruffians into the study?" roared Gore, advancing and pushing back his cuffs. "Why, I don't want my things burgled! Get out, the lot of you, before I get you pitched out!"



The quick eye of Tom Merry detected the disguise in a moment. "Why, that fat chump is disguised!" he exclaimed, striding forward. "Hold him, Gore! This is a matter we must look into." Gore made a leap for the disguised Fatty. (See page 12.)

"But, listen, my dear Gore—" gasped Skimpole desperately.

"Outside, the lot of you!" hooted Gore. "I-I-I—"

"Hallo! What's the rumpus?"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked in, and behind them came Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth. They had all been having tea in Study No. 10 next door, and had been attracted by Gore's angry voice.

Gore indicated Skimpole's guests with a wild sweep of his arm.

"Look at this crew of scarecrows!" he snorted. "More of Skimpole's pet tramps! I'm jolly well not going to put up with it! They're all going out!"

The "tramps" looked at Gore apprehensively. They also seemed dismayed at sight of Tom Merry & Co. To make matters worse, Fatty Wynn, who had been very busily engaged devouring a rabbit-pie, had disarranged his false whiskers. The quick eye of Tom Merry detected it in a moment.

"Why, that fat chap is disguised!" he exclaimed, striding forward. "Hold him, Gore! This is a matter we must look into. It seems jolly fishy to me!"

Gore grabbed the disguised Fatty, and held him in a firm grip. Fatty squirmed. "Leggo!" he yelled. "Look here, I— Oh crumbs!"

Fatty had forgotten to disguise his voice. And, to make matters worse, his false eyebrows fell off. Tom Merry & Co. regarded him in amazement.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "That chap looks like Fatty Wynn! I—"

"Bolt for it!" panted Figgins.

Thereupon, four of the "tramps", dashed to the door in a bold attempt to break through and escape. But Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co. did not allow them to break through.

The four disguised New House juniors were overwhelmed by their rivals. The School House fellows piled on top of them, and dragged off their disguise. The faces of Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern were revealed.

"Figgins & Co. I My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! The awful boundahs!"

"Groooogh!" moaned Figgins, who lay sprawled on the floor, with Herries and Lowther on top of him. "Lemme

gerrup! Yow! Take your blessed big feet out of my face, Herries!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sole remaining guest of Skimpole had regarded these proceedings in high amusement. But when Tom Merry & Co. looked grimly at him his expression changed.

"Yow! That chap's all right!" gasped Figgins, sitting up, and rubbing his injured forehead. "He—he's the real article, and we brought him along—yow-ow!—because we thought the feed would do him good. Groooogh! What are you going to do now, Tom Merry?"

"Rag you, baldheaded, old son!" chuckled the captain of the Shell.

Herbert Skimpole had regarded these proceedings in deep dismay and amazement.

"Goodness gracious!" he ejaculated, blinking energetically through his spectacles. "My dear fellows, I—I am astounded—shocked—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "You've been spoofed again, Skimmy! What a deep trick! Figgins & Co. rigged themselves out as hard-up sons of misfortune, and palmed themselves off on Skimmy for a free tea! Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, under pressure, explained. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled. Even Gore was smiling.

"Well, I reckon we'll boot these giddy tramps out!" said Tom Merry. "Figgy, old scout, you've walked into the lions'-den properly this time. Hold them, chaps! Any soot up your chimney, Gore?"

"Plenty!" said Gore. "And there's some ink in the cupboard, if you want it, you fellows."

"Good egg!"

Figgins & Co. looked apprehensively at Tom Merry and Blake, as those two cheery youths raked down a heap of soot from the chimney.

"Look here!" howled Figgins. "Don't you dare shove that muck on us! I— Yerrrrugh! Gug! Gug!"

Figgins broke off and uttered these queer gurgles as Blake cheerfully scooped a shovelful of soot over his visage.

"Yoooooogh!" gurgled Fatty Wynn, as he was also dosed with soot. "You rotters! Gerrrugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr and Redfern suffered the same

treatment. And while they were gurgling and spluttering, Monty Lowther poured red ink down their necks. The effect was remarkable in the extreme. As Blake remarked, Figgins & Co. were a sight for the gods and men and little fishes.

"Yooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House juniors.

Figgins & Co. did not look happy.

Tom Merry & Co. laid violent hands on their rivals, and hustled them away from Gore's study, and down the Shell passage.

Skimpole followed, pleading and protesting, leaving Gore alone in the room with the stranger.

Gore was chuckling, although his study carpet was in rather a bad state. He looked at the stranger in his room, and as he looked for the first time full at him, his expression changed.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Gore.

"Lionel Raynor!"

CHAPTER 9.

At the Last Minute.

LIONEL RAYNOR!"

George Gore looked at the man before him like one in a dream. Vividly he remembered the photograph Mr. Railton had shown him. This was the original of that photograph, although he looked years older, and the eyes were sunken into the hollow cheeks. But it was Lionel Raynor, he was convinced. That was why he uttered that name so suddenly.

The ragged man before him gave a start, and recoiled towards the window.

"You—you know my name?" he gasped hoarsely.

Gore recovered himself, and looked full at him.

"Then I am right—you are Lionel Raynor?"

"How—how did you know?"

Gore laughed—a harsh, dry laugh.

"You don't know me?" he asked.

Lionel Raynor looked hard at him.

"You are not my uncle's nephew on the Gore side?" he asked. "Why, yes, you are just like the photograph I saw! You belong to my family?"

"My name is George Gore," replied the St. Jim's junior calmly. "I didn't

"Billy Bunter's Weekly"



Edited
By
**BILLY
BUNTER**

Every Friday in the POPULAR you will find a screamingly funny 4-page feature, entitled "Billy Bunter's Weekly," edited by the famous fat boy, and giving all the latest news of Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Jim's Schools. Do not miss it. Ask TO-DAY for

The POPULAR
The Great School Story Paper.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

Grand Value for Money Story Books

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

4 each

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

4 each

NUGGET LIBRARY

3 each

No. 546.—**IN SEARCH OF THE VEILED QUEEN.**
Grand yarn of adventure in a strange land. By Stacey Blake.

No. 547.—**THE WYCLIFFE SCHOLARSHIP BOY.**
Topping school tale. By Jack North.

No. 548.—**THE GOLD TRAIL.**
Thrilling story of three boys in Canada. By S. S. Gordon.

No. 549.—**THE SECRET OF THE SILENT CITY.**
Splendid adventure yarn. By Dagney Hayward.

No. 164.—**THE GOLDEN CASKET.**
A wonderful tale of fascinating detective adventure.

No. 165.—**THE HIDDEN MESSAGE.**
A tale of strange mystery, detective work, and thrilling adventure in Persia and England.

No. 166.—**THE CASE OF THE FIVE MERCHANTS.**
An absorbing romance of detective work and thrilling adventure in five cities.

No. 167.—**THE GNAT.**
A remarkable story of Sexton Blake and Tinker. By the author of "The Affair of the Blackfriars Financier," etc.

No. 45.—**THE WHITE MAN'S SECRET.**
Detective Romance, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER v. Count Carlac and Professor Kew.

No. 46.—**THE MAN IN THE COPPER CASKET.**
Novel of Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Hon. John Lawless.

Now on Sale Buy Your Copies TO-DAY!

know of your existence until a few days ago. Then I heard the full story."

A weary look came into Lionel Raynor's eyes.

"I suppose it's of no use telling you that I am innocent of the charge laid against me?" he said dully. "Nobody believed me, and I was convicted and sent to prison. From there I escaped, and I have been living like a dog ever since. Nobody knows the suffering I have had to bear. You—you would not understand—you—"

His voice broke off into a dry sob, and, sinking down on a chair, the unhappy fellow buried his head in his long, thin hands.

A wave of hot feeling surged over Gore. Looking down on his stricken cousin, he could not help feeling compassion for him. Lionel had suffered all these years, had been hounded from decent society, and forced to live, as he said, like a dog, because he had been accused of a crime of which he was innocent. Gore knew that he was innocent. He had proof—the record. Gore's pulses beat quickly at thought of the record. It was worth a hundred pounds to him. But what was it worth to Lionel? New life and liberty, and restitution of the great wrong that had been done him. That was what the record meant to Lionel Raynor. A great struggle took place in Gore's soul—the struggle between what he knew was right and honourable, what he had promised Mr. Railton, and what he knew was as mean and despicable an action as anybody could do.

What should he do? Tell Lionel what he knew, and give him the purser's confession, or send him away again, to the back streets and the fields, a fugitive from the police, and an outcast? For the first, Gore had nothing to gain but decency and honour, and for the last—a hundred pounds! Was decency and honour worth a hundred pounds? Could Gore have the heart to send his cousin back to the life of misery, starvation, and tragedy, without disclosing what he knew? Gore knew what he ought to do, and yet he hesitated.

Lionel Raynor was looking curiously at him.

"Well?" he said, in a low voice. "You know that I am wanted by the police. You know that I am entirely in your hands. You have only to call somebody to secure me, and the police will take me away—back to that horrible prison! Are you going to give me away?"

"No," said Gore. "I am not going to give you away. You may go. I—I know you are innocent—I know—"

Gore broke off in confusion. The door had opened, and Skimpole came in. Lionel Raynor looked gratefully at Gore, and then he turned to Skimpole.

"I cannot thank you enough for your kindness, Master Skimpole," he said fervently. "Take my word, I shall never forget your good work, and I hope you succeed in it. I must now be going—"

"But, my dear fellow, you will surely stay and partake of a little more—"

said Skimpole.

"Thank you, Master Skimpole, but I really must go. Good-bye, sir! Good-bye, George—er—Master Gore!"

With that Lionel Raynor went from the study. Gore watched him go with a swiftly-beating heart. Skimpole followed Lionel from the study, and showed him the way down to the gates.

"Good-night, my dear fellow!" he said, pressing some money into Raynor's hand. "No, pray do not refuse it! The money has been subscribed towards my 'Help the Heroes' Fund.' I wish you the best of luck!"

Skimpole stood in the gateway, and blinked after Raynor as he walked away

into the gloom of the Rylcombe Lane. Dusk was drawing over the countryside, and lights were being lit in St. Jim's.

When his guest was out of sight, Skimpole turned away, with a sigh.

"Poor, poor fellow!" he muttered, wagging his head. "Thus has the social system of this country degenerated. If only I could persuade Lloyd George to adopt my 'Help the Heroes' Fund'! Why, good gracious! My dear Gore!"

George Gore had dashed up, his face red and excited, and in his hand he clutched a box.

"Where is he—Raynor—the fellow who just left?" he demanded of his bewildered study-mate. "Which way did he go?"

"Really, Gore, I trust there is nothing wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong, only I want to see him—I must!" exclaimed the burly Shell fellow. "Which way did he go?"

"I—I think he turned down the footpath leading into the wood," replied Skimpole. "Gore, pray—"

But Gore was gone. He had dashed through the gates, and was running up the Rylcombe Lane in search of his cousin, to give him the purser's confession, and do what he knew he ought to do, and, stricken with remorse, had resolved to do.

CHAPTER 10.

Saved from Peril.

RYLCOMBE WOOD was dreary and deserted as Gore took the footpath that led from the lane.

A soft wind soughed among the branches of the trees, and the crashing of twigs as Gore made his way swiftly through the undergrowth, was the only other sound that disturbed the dark silence of the wood.

He had proceeded ten minutes without seeing or hearing Lionel Raynor, when suddenly a burly, thick-set man rushed out at him from among some trees, and planted himself in the junior's path.

"Old 'ard, young gent!" said the ruffian. "Just a word wiv you."

Gore tried to force his way past the man, but found himself held in a firm, strong grip.

"Look 'ere, young gent," said the disreputable rascal, leering at Gore, "I'm one o' them 'ere men wot was invited to your school, and got turned away. You was the gent wot made all the fuss, remember!"

"Let me go!" panted Gore, struggling. "I don't remember you! I don't want anything to do with you! Hands off, I say! I—I want to catch somebody!"

"Not so fast, sonny!" chuckled the burly ruffian, who had evidently been drinking. "Which I'm a discharged soldier, and wants 'elp. Not bein' able to get it by fair means, I'll get it by foul. 'And over that 'ere parcel!"

Gore turned pale, and struggled desperately.

"I—I won't!" he shouted. "Let me go, you rascal! Help! Rescue, St. Jim's!"

"Shut up, will yer?" snarled the ruffian viciously. "If yer don't gimme that parcel—"

"Help!" shouted Gore, hanging on grimly to the parcel. "Rescue, St. —"

His voice broke off into a gasping cry of pain, for his assailant had whipped out a heavy weapon from his pocket and dealt Gore a cruel blow across the forehead.

Gore's senses reeled, and he staggered back dazedly. In that instant the ruffian seized the parcel he was carrying, and ran away through the bushes.

It was some moments before Gore's

senses revived sufficiently for him to realise what had happened. Then with swift suddenness it flashed across his mind that he had been robbed of the box—the box that contained the record.

"Stop!" shouted Gore, dashing away in pursuit. "Come back, you thief!"

He could hear the crashing footsteps of his quarry in the wood, and, using this as a guide, he plunged on desperately.

At last he emerged from the wood at the point where the little rustic bridge spanned the River Rhyl. There, making for the bridge, was the man who had robbed him of the box.

The man turned, and saw Gore approaching, and, with a snarl, turned to the right, and ran along the bank. By crossing the bridge he would come upon people who would stop him. On the quiet, deserted bank of the river he had more chance of eluding the determined junior.

But Gore, having forgotten the pain in his head in his desperation, was swifter-footed than the stumpy, semi-intoxicated rascal he was pursuing. They had not gone far along the river bank before Gore caught him up.

The unkempt ruffian turned, with a snarl of rage, just as Gore flung himself at him. The two closed, and then began a desperate struggle on the river-bank.

Gore twined his arms round his assailant, and reached into the depths of his ragged pocket. His fingers closed round the box, and he pulled it out. The rascal he was fighting with realised this, and, with savage fury, he exerted all his strength and pitched the schoolboy away from him.

This took place on the very edge of the steep bank. Down below, the river, swollen with recent heavy rains, was rushing swiftly towards the mills lower down its banks. Gore staggered away from the man, and lurched clumsily on the edge of the bank, still clutching the box he had wrested from the thief. Then a stabbing pain came in his head, and he reeled forward. With a great splash, the St. Jim's junior went into the swirling water of the river like a log.

The ruffian on the bank looked down, his eyes wild and frightened. Then, with a snarl, he turned away and dashed into the wood opposite, leaving Gore, half-conscious, at the mercy of the flood.

The waters buffeted the schoolboy's body, but Gore's senses had completely left him. The reaction from the cruel blow he had received, together with the shock of the ice-cold water, had robbed him of consciousness. He struck out feebly, dimly realising the peril he was in, but could make no practical effort to save himself.

He sank once and rose, and saw the stars in the night sky overhead.

"Help! Help!" he cried chokingly, and then the swirling waters again enveloped his head.

For the second time he rose, now quite conscious, but feeling weak and powerless from the throbbing pain in his head. He raised his voice in a sobbing cry:

"Help! Help!"

And then, as he sank for the third time, he heard, quite near him, a splash as of somebody diving in.

Enveloped by the roaring torrent, Gore's sense reeled again. He was like a helpless log in a mill-stream. A blind mist came before his eyes, and his lungs seemed to be bursting. Then an arm encircled his waist, and he was drawn to the surface. The night air filled his lungs, and, opening his eyes, he could see the figure of a man in the water beside him.

"Hang on—don't struggle!" came a

gasping voice close to his ear. "I—I think I can manage!"

Gore did not struggle. Fresh hope dawned, and he did all he could to assist the man who had plunged in after him. He was not able to do much, but he struck out feebly, and, sustained by his rescuer, they came gradually nearer to the bank.

It seemed an eternity before Gore was able to grasp the firm reeds, and drag himself out of the water. His rescuer was already on the bank, and assisted him to climb up. At last he was on dry land again, breathing deeply of the sweet night air coming from the woods.

Then he turned to the man beside him.

"Thanks!" he gasped. "If you hadn't come in after me— Why, it's you! Lionel Raynor!"

Gore's cousin smiled wanly. Now he had performed the great task, he was weaker than the schoolboy he had rescued. He sat on the bank, his face pale as death, holding a hand to his heart.

"Lionel!" ejaculated the St. Jim's junior, gripping his cousin's arm. "You've hurt yourself! You've—"

"It's my heart," said Raynor, breathing with difficulty. "The years of privation and misery have affected my health, and—I am not used to this exertion. But it will be all right in a minute."

"Lionel! You saved me! And you are not strong—"

Gore broke off, and looked round him, and he gave a sudden cry of dismay.

"The box! It's in the river! We cannot find it now!"

Lionel Raynor, who appeared to have recovered considerably, was looking curiously at him.

"You've lost something in the river?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Gore miserably, and then he proceeded to unburden himself of the whole sorry story.

Lionel Raynor listened in silence, except for one or two breathless exclamations. When Gore had finished, he pressed a hand to his forehead.

"So my innocence has been proved!" he muttered hoarsely. "The pursuer confessed—on the record—and the record is at the bottom of the river!"

"I was running after you, to give it to you," said Gore dully. "But that rascal attacked me, and took it. I caught him up, and got it back again, and then he pitched me into the river. Of course, I let go the box, and—I don't suppose we can get it."

Lionel Raynor shook his head. His face was white and strained.

"What luck!" he muttered, clenching his fists. "What horrible luck!"

"It's all my fault!" muttered Gore miserably. "If I hadn't kept it back till the last minute— Oh, Lionel, I'm awfully sorry! If there was anything I could do— But you must come and see Mr. Railton. He has all the particulars, and he wants to see you. Won't you come back to St. Jim's with me?"

"Yes; I—I'll go and see Mr. Railton," said Lionel Raynor, rising to his feet. "He may be able to do something for me. I thank Heaven that my innocence has been proved, though now the proof has gone!"

Gore and his cousin, shivering with the cold of their wet garments, hastened into the wood, and made their way back to St. Jim's.

Taggles had locked the gates when they arrived, and, in response to the bell, he came out of his lodge and glared at two dripping figures before him.

"My heye!" he said. "Wot tho—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

"Let us in!" said Gore. "It's me—Gore—and a visitor for Mr. Railton."

Taggles, blinking in amazement, opened the gates, and the two bedraggled figures entered.

"Which wot I says is this 'ere—" began Taggles.

But they did not wait to hear what Taggles had to say. Gore led the way over to the School House, and they went indoors, ignoring the amazed looks and inquiries of the fellows they met.

Gore took Raynor straight up to Mr. Railton, and for over an hour they were with the Housemaster. Gore made a full confession of everything. And then Mr. Railton listened to Raynor's story—a story that caused a lump to rise in the Housemaster's throat, and made Gore's eyes dim with tears.

"My dear Raynor," said Mr. Railton at last, gripping the young man's hand and pressing it warmly. "This is, indeed, a most unfortunate state of affairs. But do not despair; we may, even yet, gather sufficient evidence of your innocence to convince a judge and jury. You must stay here as my guest, for the present, at any rate. I shall explain everything to Dr. Holmes, and he is sure to agree that that is the best thing to be done. Gore, I trust you are truly repentant for your mean, selfish actions. I am glad, however, that your conscience told you what to do at the last moment, and that, in your intention to surrender the record to your cousin, you allowed your better self to conquer. Let this be a lesson to you, my lad. You may now go and change your clothes. Raynor, my dear fellow, I will see that you are made comfortable."

Gore went, his face crimson, and his whole body bowed.

Never before had Gore been taught so severe a lesson. And his soul was torn with anguish for his cousin, who had saved him that night from a horrible death.

CHAPTER 11. Light at Last.

LIONEL RAYNOR stayed at St. Jim's as a guest of Mr. Railton, and, dressed in respectable clothes, and well nourished, the change in him was remarkable. Nobody at the school besides Gore knew his real identity; meanwhile, inquiries were set in motion on behalf of the falsely-accused young man.

A few days later Gore received a letter from his Uncle John, and this letter caused Gore to open wide his eyes. For this is what his uncle said:

"Dear George,—I have received a letter from a boy in your school, named Aubrey Racke, who appears to have secured the letter I sent you regarding the missing record. The little rascal sent me a parcel of broken fragments of a record, purporting to be the record I am anxious to obtain, and says in an accompanying letter that he sent the record intact, demanding payment for it. He could not have sent the record intact, unless somebody else tampered with the parcel afterwards. This is a very serious affair, and I am very anxious about it. Will you make inquiries at once, and find out what has become of the record? Your negligence in not destroying my letter is responsible for this state of affairs. You must see this Racke at once, and get the truth from him, and relieve my mind as soon as possible. Your uncle,
"JOHN RAYNOR."

George Gore drew a deep breath after reading this letter. He did not understand what had happened, but the know-

ledge that Aubrey Racke was connected with the business was sufficient for Gore.

He picked up a cricket stump, and left his study.

Racke was alone in his study, indulging in the luxury of a cigarette, when Gore strode in. Racke looked up scowlingly at Gore.

"Did they ever teach you to knock at a door in the slum you were brought up in, Gore?" he asked surlily.

Gore wasted no time in words, but, going over to the knut of the Shell, he jerked the cigarette from his mouth, hurled it in the grate, and dragged Racke to his feet.

"Now, you rotter," said the burly Shell fellow, between his teeth, "I've got a few things to say to you, Racke. First of all, how did you get that letter my uncle sent me?"

"Leggo, you cad!" panted Racke, struggling in Gore's firm grip. "I don't know anything about your uncle's letter. Why should I?"

"Because I've just had another letter from him, and he's told me everything, that's all!" said Gore grimly. "Now, Racke, you rotter, if you don't own up, I'll give you the biggest lamming you've ever had in your life."

Racke eyed his burly form-fellow uneasily.

"Look here, Gore," he began, "if I was to tell the Head all about—"

"The Head knows all about it!" cut in Gore. "Mr. Railton knows, too. I've told him everything, and we want that record. You sent a broken one to my uncle—was it the real one?"

"Yes, it was!" panted Racke desperately.

"Then you took the real record out of my desk, and put a dud one in its place?"

"What if I did?" snarled Racke. "Your uncle had the real record, didn't he? I sent it to him whole."

"You didn't!" flashed Gore, shaking the black sheep of the school. "You sent it to him in bits—we've got proof of that. You wouldn't have smashed up the real record. It was another 'dud record you broke up and sent to my uncle. You unspeakable rotter!"

Racke had turned quite green. He felt nervous now, and it did not dawn upon him that, had he bluffed, he might have deceived Gore. The grim look of anger on Gore's face, and the cricket-stump, frightened Racke. He was a coward at heart, and he did not relish the punishment Gore would give him.

"Well?" demanded Gore viciously. "You've played a double game all through, Racke. Where's the real record?"

"I—I don't know!" gasped Racke desperately.

Gore gave a snort, sat down, pulled Racke over his knee, and commenced to lam him with the cricket-stump. Racke squirmed and roared.

"Yarooooooogh! Leggo, Gore! Ow-ow-ow! Yawp!"

"Will you tell me?" hissed Gore, pausing in his operations with the cricket-stump. "If you don't—" He raised the cricket-stump again menacingly.

Racke wriggled.

"Yooooooop! I'll tell you, you rotter! Lemme go! Groooooogh!"

"No larks!" said Gore suspiciously. "If you break it—look out!"

He allowed the black sheep of the Shell to go. Racke crawled over to his desk, unlocked it, and took out the phonograph record he had stolen from Gore's room. He might have dropped it out of spite, and broken it, but Gore had previously warned him.

"There you are, you cad!" he said, giving it to Gore. "Take it—hang you! You and your uncle are mixed up in some shady business, and—"

"Rats!" said Gore, pleased now that the real record was in his possession once again. "I expect you'll get a licking from the Head over this, Racke. I shall have to tell him all about it—and, for once, I sha'n't mind sneaking!"

With that, Gore went, leaving Racke to sink down into the study armchair, gasping and groaning, and on tenterhooks of anxiety as to what punishment the Head would mete out to him.

Gore went straight to Mr. Railton's study. Lionel Raynor was in there when he entered. Both men looked in astonishment at Gore when he entered. Gore looked excited and eager.

"I've got it, sir!" he exclaimed, holding up the phonograph record. "Here's the genuine record!"

Mr. Railton and Lionel Raynor looked at Gore in bewilderment.

"But—but—" stammered Raynor. "The record is in the river."

"No, it isn't; that was a spoof record I dropped in the river!" said Gore. "You see, somebody had been to my desk, and changed the record for another one. I, not knowing, thought I'd still got the real one, and that was the one I dropped in the river. But the real record was at this school all the time—and here it is!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Railton, in amazement.

"How—how did you find out?" asked Lionel Raynor, whose face looked radiantly happy.

Then Gore proceeded to tell how it had all come out. He did not spare Racke. Mr. Railton's brow grew grim as he heard of Aubrey Racke's cunning scheme.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, when Gore had finished. "Then Racke—the young rascal—intended to blackmail your uncle! I shall deal with him very severely. Raynor, my dear fellow, Fortune has indeed worked in our favour. Had it not been for Racke substituting the records, this record—the one which is of such vital importance to you—would at this moment be lying at the bottom of the river, irrecoverable. So that Racke's scheming has indeed been

of benefit to us. John Raynor, too, deserves the severest censure, although his disappointment at being thwarted in his attempt to steal your heritage from you, Raynor, will be sufficient punishment for him, I think. Gore, we are deeply indebted to you for the part you have so nobly played since your change of mind. I trust that you will always remain noble and upright, and a credit to St. Jim's."

"I—I'll try, sir," said Gore, and there was a wealth of meaning in his words.

Glyn's phonograph was borrowed, and the record played over. Lionel Raynor listened, with shining eyes, as he heard the gasping, but distinct tones of the dying purser making the confession that would set him free. After the confession, came the voice of the ship's doctor, then the captain, bearing witness to the confession.

"Well," said Lionel, when the record had been taken off. "I thank Heaven that things have turned out as they have. I am now as good as free; and my poor father's estate now belongs to me; and the house where I spent my boyhood. Mr. Railton, I cannot say how happy I am."

The Housemaster smiled. "I congratulate you, my dear fellow," he said. "It is strange indeed how Fate works its wonders. Had not Skimpole, in the first place, conceived his idea of the—er—'Help the Heroes' Fund,' as I believe he calls it, events would surely not have taken place as they have done."

"I should not be here now," said Lionel Raynor quietly. "It was through Skimpole inviting me to tea that I met my cousin, and—"

"And made me realise what an utter rotter I had been," broke in Gore, a queer throb in his voice. "Lionel, I'm sorry. I mean to act straight in the future."

The cousins grasped hands. Gore's voice rang true and sincere, and Lionel, in his happiness, forgave him, and forgot everything save that his innocence was proved, and that soon he would be free, vindicated in the eyes of the law and all his fellow-men.

Gore departed, to inform Racke that Mr. Railton wished to see him. Racke

went to the Housemaster's study, full of foreboding, and his fears were realised when he received a thorough thrashing for the low part he had enacted.

Skimpole was absorbed in Professor Balmycrumpet's works when Gore arrived in his study. Skimpole looked up at his study-mate, and immediately withdrew a huge pile of manuscript paper from the table-drawer.

"Gore, my dear fellow, I have just completed the two-hundred-and-seventy-ninth chapter of my book on Socialism," he said. "In my estimation, it exceeds anything that has ever been written before on that great subject—with the possible exception of Professor Balmycrumpet, of course. May I read it to you?"

At any other time, Gore would have requested his learned study-mate to bury the two-hundred-and-seventy-ninth chapter of his book on Socialism, or might have forcibly seized the manuscript, and consigned it to the hungry flames in the study fire. But now Gore smiled good-temperedly.

"If you like, Skimmy," he said, as he sat down.

Thereupon Herbert Skimpole proceeded to read forth that extract from his famous work. Gore bore the ordeal with heroic fortitude, though on several occasions he gave an irreverent yawn.

At last, Skimpole finished the chapter, and laid it down with an air of triumphant pride.

"What is your opinion upon it, my dear Gore?" he asked.

Gore grinned, and, taking some chestnuts from the cupboard, proceeded to roast them. And there was peace in Study No. 9—which was rather unusual between George Gore and the brainy genius of St. Jim's.

THE END.

(There will be another long story of the chums of St. Jim's next week, entitled: "TALBOT'S DARKEST HOUR!" By Martin Clifford. Make a point of ordering your "GEM" EARLY.) Special Note: Get this week's "Boys' Herald" and read the opening chapter of the magnificent new story "The Lure of Gold." On Sale Everywhere. Price 1½d.)

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

Gerald Knox was seen leaving the Head's study the other day wearing a smile. Quite unusual for him, I'm sure. Possibly he'd seen the "tail" of a guinea pig. Seems I should have to laugh myself, were I to see one.

Whilst having a private conversation with Mr. Martin Clifford the other day, I was very surprised to learn that Herbert Skimpole's father was a milkman. Probably that accounts for the nickname "Skim."

Further excitement was caused at St. Jim's the other day, when a party of juniors spotted Baggy Trimble shinning up a tree, with the waiting Towser snarling and sniffing below. It's pretty evident that Baggy would sooner the "bark" than the bite.

Scores of letters have reached me lately stating what a clever fellow Kit Wildrake is. Yes; and quite right, too! It has been found that he can dust a mantle without breaking it!

Alonzo Todd, of the "Boys' Herald," will be pleased to hear from anyone giving information concerning the culprit who has "nibbled" at the cake which was sent him for his birthday. William George Bunter declares he knows nothing about it; "gnaw" do we.

Great excitement has been caused among the juniors of the Shell Form, owing to the sudden epidemic of sore throats. Harry Frere is our last victim, but for all those interested, we are pleased to state his throat seems much "freer" at the moment.

What a set of grumblers this world seems to be! Even with the nice long evenings we are indulging in now, we hear of Lord Mauleverer grumbling because it keeps early so late.

On the occasion of Alonzo's birthday, already mentioned, George Gore has found pleasure in presenting our worthy with a pair of yellow socks. Rather "Gore-dy," we think.

Rumours have been spread by Baggy Trimble that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is shortly to become engaged to Miss Bunn, of local tobacconist fame. We are of the opinion that there is no "ring" in the statement. We have heard of Baggy's rumours before.

Patrick Reilly, I am informed, has taken a great liking to our "Joy." He has even written to ask me for her address, with a view to corresponding with her. "Reilly," Patrick, this is rather sudden, isn't it?

Why should Joy wear a fur? I am asked. Well, as "fur" as I know, it's "fur" her own good.

News has leaked out to the fact that George Gerald Crooke, having broken bounds for the purpose of visiting a night party, has been felled. Should have thought he was well aware of the fact that all "crooks" are "bent" at the end.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.



JOHN SHARPE.

The INVISIBLE HAND



IRON HAND.

This wonderful story has also been filmed by the popular VITAGRAPH Film Company, and readers of the "GEM" should make a point of seeing the picture week by week at their favourite cinemas.

Read This First.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service of Chicago, to track down the band of organised criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, is captured. Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand. She is not known to Sharpe.

The mountain den, Eagle's Nest, is run by Potsdam, Iron Hand's lieutenant.

Sharpe spoils many of the plans of the gang. Later he discovers that the gang possess a submarine, and they plot to blow up the Oriental mail steamer. Sharpe sends word for the steamer not to sail, and communicates with a border patrol to have a bombing aeroplane ready for instant use. The submarine is destroyed.

Sharpe follows Iron Hand to Nest No. 2, another lair of the gang, and succeeds in gaining admittance to the house, after a fight with a savage dog. Iron Hand is warned of his presence, and Sharpe is made a prisoner. Anne arrives in time to see Sharpe escape. Sharpe follows Iron Hand to the latter's hotel. Anne also goes there. Iron Hand prepares to receive Sharpe. In the adjoining room, a gas machine is arranged so that a bag is to be dropped over Sharpe's head.

Sharpe is enveloped in the folds of the gas-bag. Iron Hand and others secure the bag around Sharpe. Inside the bag Sharpe adjusts a gas-mask, and then pretends to grow weaker and weaker, until he apparently becomes lifeless. Sharpe is thrown into a trunk.

Iron Hand orders his men to get a porter, and then dump the trunk in the river. Anne watches, helpless. With a sudden idea she slips out to the hall, lures Iron Hand from the room by a false message, and then returns and unlocks the trunk. She is frightened by a noise in the hall, and goes to her room. Sharpe rises, freed of the gas-bag, and quickly substitutes some rugs and logs from the fireplace, putting them in the trunk, so as to make up the weight. Hartmann and others remove the trunk.

Sharpe and some troops under Captain West chase Iron Hand and the gang to Eagle's Nest. Later, Sharpe discovers a plot to steal some valuable jewels, and he tracks the gang down to a "house of mystery."

Iron Hand and his gang make a clever attempt to work the big jewel robbery; but they are foiled by John Sharpe, and all their elaborate scheming is of no avail. Iron Hand is furious at being beaten, and he is determined to get the jewels he covets sooner or later. He again captures the detective, and also kidnaps the proprietor of the shop. With the aid of a knife the two endeavour to cut their bonds and escape.

(Now read on.)

Foiled.

JOHN SHARPE'S hands were soon free, and he and Mr. Amidon could distinctly hear Iron Hand, Black Flag, and Anne Crawford in conversation in the next room.

The detective took the knife from Mr. Amidon, and he was about to free his friend, when he heard Iron Hand and his assistants approaching towards the door. Quickly he hid the knife from view, and stood as he was before, as though his hands were still bound.

Iron Hand and Black Flag, who had now changed into the uniforms of the watchmen, drew their revolvers, and ordered their two prisoners out. Sharpe and Mr. Amidon marched together towards the living-room.

Iron Hand next forced them into a small room adjoining, and closing the door behind the prisoners, the three made their exit, and sat down at a table in order to take a meal.

It was approaching dawn before they stirred again; then the leader ordered Sharpe and Mr. Amidon to follow them downstairs. When they had reached the outside of the house, the two prisoners were forced to enter Mr. Amidon's large car, which was stationed outside.

With the exception of one of the gang who was left on guard, the street was quite deserted. Black Flag took his place beside the wheel, and Anne Crawford was at his hand. Sharpe, Amidon, and Iron Hand took their places in the body of the car.

Iron Hand turned to the remaining man.

"There is no room for you," he said. "Go to Nest 3, and wait for me. Don't get caught" was his final instruction.

The man who had acted as a guard saluted and made his departure, and the big car moved off.

Sharpe and Amidon, as they lay huddled and bound in the car, wondered what the crafty leader's next step would be, and where their destination was.

The Deserted Wharf.

TIED up to the side of a deserted wharf, there was a small steam-launch with a skiff attached to it.

A figure, easily recognised as Potsdam, and two or three of his assistants, stealthily made their way towards the launch.

Potsdam glanced around, in order to make quite sure that the movements of the gang were not being observed; and when he was satisfied on this point he quickly leaped into the launch, and the others, following his lead, stepped into the skiff behind. Soon the motor was started, and the launch and skiff commenced to glide swiftly along.

In a short time Potsdam piloted the launch out into the open sea, and he made straight for a sailing barque, which had her sails already set, so that she could immediately get under way with the approaching ebb.

She made a pretty picture outlined against the coming dawn. Potsdam strained his eyes, but could not see anyone on board the boat. He was pleased at this, for it would make his work a good deal easier. He did not desire any opposition just now.

As the launch approached nearer the craft, Potsdam and his crowd pulled in alongside. Then he hailed the vessel, and in answer to his call a sailor came up, and the second in command climbed on deck, and commenced to talk to him. Potsdam spun a yarn, and pretended he required certain information.

The conversation went on for a minute or two, and the members of the gang commenced to climb stealthily on board the ship, under cover of the darkness.

Potsdam continued his conversation with the sailor. But the man was evidently not in agreement with what was being said, for he repeatedly shook his head, indicating that he refused to accede to Potsdam's request. Then the sailor took up a more determined attitude, and he ordered him to clear off.

Potsdam, however, never let small difficulties get in his way.

Suddenly, from behind, an arm was passed around the neck of the sailor, a hand was placed firmly over his mouth, and he was dragged to the ground.

Several of the gang quickly closed round him, and dealt with him so that he was not likely to cause them any more trouble for a time.

Leaning over the side of the boat, Potsdam called over to the man who had been left in the launch, and ordered him to return to the wharf. There was no necessity for him to wait now that the gang were firmly established; and besides, there was another urgent call on the services of the craft.

By this time several of the crew had discovered that something was amiss, and they scrambled up on deck. The gang, however, were in readiness, and they effectually held them at bay. A moment later the captain also emerged from his cabin, and he was also quickly subdued, thus leaving Potsdam in complete control of the vessel.

While this little drama of the sea had been going on, the car driven by Black Flag was speeding towards the wharf, and this was why the launch had been ordered to return there. The whole elaborate scheme had been timed to the minute.

Iron Hand was sitting alongside Sharpe and Amidon, guarding them with his gun, while the motor-car was driving rapidly along.

Anne Crawford realised that something

would have to be done speedily if she was to get them out of their predicament, and, making quite sure that Black Flag was not observing her movements, she slyly moved her foot towards the switch which controlled the motor.

The car came to a stop, and Black Flag and Iron Hand wondered what was the matter. The driver dashed out and lifted up the hood, and while the attention of the man was thus occupied she looked quickly round at Sharpe. She noticed that he had one hand free, and that he was clutching the knife firmly in one hand.

After inspecting the car, Black Flag returned to his seat, muttering, "I can't see anything wrong with it at all," and he prepared to start the motor-car off again. Then came a surprise.

Sharpe delivered a powerful blow at Iron Hand's head with the handle of his knife, momentarily stunning the leader of the gang, and like a flash the detective leaped from the car.

Before Black Flag had time to realise what was happening, the detective had made himself scarce. Iron Hand began to recover from the shock of the blow, and he stopped his assistant when he saw him start off in pursuit of Sharpe.

"It is too late to go after him now!" he growled. "We dare not delay any longer. Drive as fast as you can. We'll make sure of this one"—as he pointed his revolver at Mr. Amidon.

The car bounded forward and continued its journey at a rapid pace.

When he realised that he was safe from pursuit, John Sharpe looked in the direction of the fleeing car, and he felt angry at his helplessness. He wondered what he could do for the best, and decided that he would go off in search of assistance.

A short time later the car reached the wharf, and its occupants, which consisted of the two members of the gang, Anne Crawford and Amidon, got out. Ahead of them they could see the launch which was to take them to the appointed place.

Arriving at the barque, Iron Hand and Black Flag forced the unhappy Mr. Amidon aboard, and then they assisted Anne to board the vessel.

Under the point of revolvers the crew set sail. All the members of the gang were well armed, and the crew were powerless to resist. Iron Hand was standing by the captain on the quarter-deck.

Anne Crawford was looking idly out across the water when a sudden thought made her walk towards the deckhouse, which she entered unobserved by anyone.

The fact that the vessel was fitted with wireless had attracted her attention, and as she examined the instrument she decided to take a desperate chance.

Sitting at the instrument, tense and excited, she started to send a message. Then her heart almost stood still, for she heard footsteps approaching. She could hear the voices of Potsdam and Iron Hand, and a third man, whom she judged to be the captain.

They heard the crackling of the wireless above, and were naturally curious as to the reason for it. Iron Hand and Potsdam looked at each other in amazement as they realised that someone was working the wireless. Then the leader of the gang turned to the captain of the ship, and, glaring at him, said threateningly:

"I thought I ordered that wireless operator to be locked up?"

The captain shook his head.

"I know nothing about that," he replied.

Feeling in his pocket, Potsdam pro-

duced a key, and, showing it to Iron Hand, he said:

"The operator is locked up!"

The situation was becoming more puzzling to the leader, and he ordered Potsdam to watch the captain. The second in command obeyed, and kept the captain covered as Iron Hand rushed towards the deckhouse.

In spite of her fears of discovery, Anne did not stop, and she continued to send desperately, casting apprehensive looks around her, and wondering all the time what would be her fate.

Just in front of the deckhouse one of the crew was stooping to coil a rope, and he was evidently possessed of a keen sense of humour, for when Iron Hand approached, on the run, the sailor slyly stuck out his foot, and Iron Hand tripped over it, and fell heavily to the ground.

Getting to his feet again as rapidly as he could, he hurled a curse at the sailor, and, with his revolver ready, pushed open the door of the deckhouse and entered.

Anne was ready for him, and decided to put her powers of acting into operation again. Looking as innocent as she possibly could, she idly touched the key of the instrument. Iron Hand almost collapsed when he saw who it was.

"You!" he gasped. "What the dickens are you doing here?"

Anne looked up to him with astonishment at his gruff manner, and with an artless air she pointed to the wireless, saying:

"Why, nothing. I just pressed the key, and it makes such funny noises—see?"

She touched the key again in order to give an illustration, apparently with no knowledge of the apparatus whatever.

Iron Hand looked at her searchingly for a moment, then breathed a faint sigh of relief. He apologised to her for his gruff manner, and told her it was dangerous for her to meddle with things she did not understand, and to keep away from the wireless.

The girl left the room wondering what there was for Iron Hand to get so excited about, and the leader followed her, locking the door after her and pocketing the key.

Iron Hand made his way again to the quarter-deck, where Potsdam was holding up the captain. The second-in-command eagerly asked what had been taking place.

With a loud laugh, Iron Hand explained that it was a false alarm.

"Only our friend Marna Black playing with the wireless."

Anne opened her eyes wide with astonishment, and said: "Wireless? Was that it?"

The leader smiled, and nodded, but Potsdam was growing hourly more suspicious of this girl whom his master admired so much. He glared at Anne Crawford, who was still posing as Marna Black, but he dared not accuse her openly in the presence of Iron Hand.

The captain of the ship, who was an interested spectator, was also rather dismayed at the girl's apparent lack of knowledge. He had hoped that someone was sending a message for assistance!

Hot on the Track.

IN the office of the chief of police Captain West was talking excitedly to the officer. They were evidently discussing the message which was lying on the desk before them. Then

the name of John Sharpe was announced, and the chief and Captain West were delighted to see him again.

The detective's old friend, Captain West, turned to him, and said:

"We have just tried to get you on the 'phone. The patrol-station have picked up a wireless message which they don't understand, and we thought perhaps you would be able to help us out."

There was an interested look in Sharpe's eyes when West commenced to read out the message:

"Tell Sharpe gang on San—" Then there were a lot of meaningless letters followed by the word "Bertons," and some more unintelligible stuff after that. "What do you make of that?" queried Captain West.

The detective remained silent. He thought he began to understand, but did not like to express a definite opinion. Instead, he asked casually:

"Any news of Mr. Amidon's car?" The police chief nodded his head, and then the 'phone rang, and he went over to answer it while Sharpe again directed his attention to the curious wireless message.

As the policeman hung up the receiver the two others looked over in his direction, waiting for him to tell them what the conversation was about.

"I have just received information," he said, "that Amidon's car has been found on a deserted wharf at the upper end of the harbour."

The two men looked at each other significantly. Meanwhile, Captain West had been interesting himself in a morning newspaper, which had been lying about.

He eagerly showed the other an item of news which had attracted his attention, and Sharpe read out the paragraph indicated.

It was only a line or two in an obscure corner of the paper, under "Shipping News," but it was of vast importance to them. It said, "Cleared. Barque San Joaquin. Captain Cleveland. Loaded with lumber for California. Departing at 6bb."

Like a flash the truth of the situation dawned on the detective's mind. The gang were on the San Joaquin.

Sharpe turned towards the police chief, and said excitedly:

"Get ready your fastest police-launch, with a dozen good men, and I think we'll overhaul her off Berton's Island."

The meaning of the jumbled wireless message was now plain to them all. Sharpe had evidently hit upon the right interpretation.

Captain West grabbed Sharpe's hand, and said:

"I'm going with you, old man, if you don't mind."

Sharpe smiled.

"I shall be glad to have you," he replied.

The barque was making little progress, and was, in fact, lying almost becalmed, with her sails flapping idly. On deck were Iron Hand, Anne, and Potsdam.

Captain Cleveland and the crew were prisoners below deck, and a few of the gangsters towards the stern of the vessel were the only other men visible on it.

One of the men was pacing up and down, raising to his eyes every now and again a pair of glasses.

Suddenly he grew excited, and shouted out:

"The launch is coming back!"

Iron Hand and Potsdam were considerably surprised when they heard this news.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

"Impossible!" growled the leader. "Klein hasn't been gone long enough to take that important message I sent him with and bring the launch back."

But Potsdam, always suspicious and prepared for the worst, produced his glasses, and focused them shoreward. What he saw gave him a terrible shock. A launch was undoubtedly tearing towards them through the waves at top speed, and it contained Detective Sharpe, Captain West, and a number of policemen and troopers, all armed.

Potsdam quickly broke the news to Iron Hand. He was thoroughly alarmed and excited as he made the report to his chief.

"It's Sharpe and a crowd of armed men!" he said breathlessly. "Too many for us. It's that cursed wireless!"

The second-in-command advanced threateningly towards Anne, but the plucky girl even now was not dismayed. She turned to Iron Hand with an appealing look, as though asking for his protection, and the leader gave her an opportunity of explaining and clearing herself.

The girl's brain moved rapidly, and with apparent frankness she said:

"You left Amidon's car on the wharf. Any man could see through that, with this ship gone before its time to leave."

Potsdam would not accept the explanation, but Iron Hand could not doubt the word of this girl he was so madly in love with.

"That must be it," he rejoined. "We were mad not to cover up our traces. But wait—if we can't fight, we can trick them. I mean to outwit Sharpe even yet."

Potsdam curled up his lip with scorn. "Trick Sharpe," he growled. "We've got a big chance, I must say. We had him in our power once; we ought to have got rid of him then."

Iron Hand had already prepared for action. He ordered all the gang to gather round him, and he gave them all orders which they rushed to obey.

Meanwhile, the launch with its crowd of eager men anxious to get at their prey, was speeding through the water at terrific speed.

Two of the gang went downstairs and brought up the unfortunate Mr. Amidon, who was still securely bound. They made quite sure that the lashings on his hands and feet were tight, and then took him down the deck.

Another of the men was told to guard the captain, and another near by made his way to one of the small boats lying amidships.

Picking up a large axe, he smashed in the bottom, rendering it quite unseaworthy. There was another boat hanging from davits a little farther up, and on this he repeated the process.

Opposite, there was still another, somewhat larger, and this was the side farthest from the direction in which Sharpe's launch was approaching.

Into this Mr. Amidon, still bound, was bundled by the members of the gang, and Iron Hand ordered Anne to be placed in this one also. Then two of the gang took their places, and it was lowered into the water.

Potsdam and Iron Hand next made their way to the stern of the vessel, where there was a small whale-boat hanging. The two men entered, carrying with them a small can of powder and a fuse.

They carefully arranged the powder to their satisfaction in a small locker, lighted the long fuse, and then made

their way to the boat in which Anne, Amidon, and the other members of the gang had now taken their places.

There was very little time to spare now, and with frantic haste the two leaders slid down the rope into the boat, when the men at once commenced to row it towards the front of the large vessel. Their movements could not have been seen by anyone on the launch.

The launch had now almost reached the barque. No one on board knew quite what had taken place on board the sailing vessel, and there were no signs of life at all on deck when they came up to her.

"We'll spring alongside and board her by the main chains," instructed the detective. Sharpe and West leading the way, climbed rapidly up the side of the boat, quickly followed by the others. All had their revolvers handy. One man only was left in the launch.

Once on deck, they surveyed the scene very warily, and as there was no one in view, they were quite ready for a surprise attack. Very carefully the whole party advanced towards the cabin of the vessel.

Meanwhile, the boat containing Iron Hand and his gang was keeping quite close to the side of the barque.

One man in the front peered around the bow of the vessel, and, seeing that all was well, and that Sharpe and his party had boarded the vessel, he signalled to the rowers to continue. As the boat rounded the bow they caught sight of the launch in which one policeman remained keeping guard.

He was looking towards the stern of the vessel, where the detective had gained admittance to the barque, and he failed to see the approach of the smaller craft containing the gang.

When they were near enough one gangster leaped on board the launch, and, striking the policeman with a heavy bar, they pushed him overboard, and all the villainous crew at once boarded the boat.

Without wasting a minute they started the motor and drove away. The policeman who had been attacked rose to the surface of the water, and he yelled out for help at the top of his voice. Unfortunately, he was unable to swim.

Sharpe, West, and the others heard his cry, and they all went to the side of the boat and peered over, astonished and alarmed when they saw the launch in possession of the gang again.

The craft was moving rapidly now, and some of its occupants who were seated right in the rear fired their revolvers at the sailing vessel, which they were leaving behind them.

Sharpe and a number of men holding on to the rigging of the vessel returned the fire. Bullets struck the water all round the launch, and those who were not in action kept down out of sight as much as possible.

The detectives realised that it was no use continuing, as the launch was now out of range.

The policeman, who was still yelling feebly for help, attracted Sharpe's attention, and he immediately leaped overboard and swam towards the struggling man.

The others threw ropes from the deck, and the detective, managing to get hold of one of these, was dragged up to safety, with the half-unconscious policeman in his arms.

There was more excitement in store for them, however, for one of the men had discovered the captain and crew, who were tied up and imprisoned below

deck. Very soon Captain Cleveland and his men were released, and they rapidly related the whole story of Iron Hand's piracy.

The detective next turned his attention to the boat, which was moored at the side of the vessel. He desired to return to shore, and this was the only means available; but he did not, of course, know that Iron Hand had prepared it for his reception.

The detective, followed by Captain West, two of the troopers, and Captain Cleveland, walked towards the stern of the sailing vessel.

Turning towards the sergeant of the police, Detective Sharpe said:

"I'll leave you in charge. Captain Cleveland will sail the vessel back to Los Angeles."

Followed by Captain West and two of the policemen, he then entered the whaleboat, and it started to glide away. The two troopers were rowing the boat, but it was hard work for them.

Sharpe noticed their evident weariness, and, turning to them, he said:

"There is still a good way to go. We'd better eat a bit, and then Captain West and I will take the oars."

The men were very glad of the rest, and, producing sandwiches from their pockets, they all set to eat, with evident relish. Their next requirement was some water, and they looked about with the hope of finding a keg.

One of the men moved towards the locker and tried the door, but it was locked, and they started to force it with the aid of a large knife. It was then that they came to the conclusion that there was something amiss.

A long stream of smoke started to trickle through the opening they had made in the door. As they continued to force it the smoke issued steadily.

Sharpe was quite concerned when he saw it.

"Look out!" he yelled, and the next minute he and Captain West promptly dived overboard. They were not a moment too soon. There was a terrific explosion, and the bow of the boat was blown to pieces.

As Sharpe and West rose to the surface the wreckage landed all round them, and they saw that the man nearest the bow had disappeared entirely, while the other was in the water, wounded and dazed, with large cuts on his head.

John Sharpe and West grabbed hold of a stout piece of wreckage, and, clinging to this, they stretched out for the wounded man. The wreckage was only sufficient to keep two afloat, and Sharpe, leaving the wounded man with West, said:

"You take care of him, and I'll swim ashore and get help."

And without waiting to hear West's protests at his chivalrous action, the detective struck out for the shore.

The launch containing the gang had now reached the pier, and Iron Hand and his villains alighted, forcing Amidon to accompany them.

The leader ordered his men to make themselves scarce for the time being, and gave them instructions where they could find him later on. Then Potsdam, and Amidon led by Iron Hand, entered a motor-car.

"I will conceal this man where they'll never find him!" he muttered as the vehicle drove off. The leader had despatched Anne with an important message which he wanted delivered.

(This amazing story will be continued in next week's GEM! Don't Miss It!)

THE £ s. d. VALUE OF YOUR HAIR.

HEALTHY AND BEAUTIFUL HAIR MAY BE YOURS FREE!

WRITE FOR FREE "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL" OUTFIT.

NOT everyone would barter their hair during life for money as do the poor fisher-maids of Brittany. For, after all, a really good head of hair has a higher value to its possessor than it would ever realise if offered for sale.

Every man and woman can have this priceless wealth of beautiful hair, if he or she will only devote two minutes a day to the practice of the wonderfully successful "Harlene Hair-Drill." To-day, too, you can prove the truth of that statement without fee or obligation.

THE FOUR-FOLD GIFT.

1. A free bottle of "Harlene," the most invigorating food and tonic for hair and scalp.
2. A free packet of "Cremex" Shampoo Powder, a delightfully refreshing and cleansing preparation that prepares the hair for "Har-Drill."
3. A free bottle of "Uzon" Brilliantine that gives a final polish and lustre to the "Harlene" drilled hair.
4. A Free Copy of the new "Harlene Hair-Drill" Manual, giving complete instructions.

This Trial Outfit does not cost you a single penny—the only small expense to which you are put being the outlay of 4d. in stamps to defray cost of postage and packing.

HAIR THAT IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD.

No man or woman to-day can afford to neglect his or her hair. Thick, lustrous and beautiful hair has a definite cash value to everyone. It adds to your personal appearance, and a good appearance opens all doors to you. A woman has no charms to equal long, silken and radiant tresses of beautiful hair, the

inspiration of a thousand poems. To a man healthy and well-conditioned hair gives dignity and crispness.

ENRICH YOUR HAIR TO-DAY.

There is no excuse to-day for any man or woman having thin, brittle, weak, or falling hair. "Harlene Hair-Drill" overcomes every kind of hair trouble, no matter from what cause it springs. It preserves the hair in health and restores lankly hair back to health and beauty once more. Let "Harlene Hair-Drill" enrich your hair and increase its value to you. Simply send 4d. stamps for postage, and a Free Harlene Outfit will be sent to your address.

After a Free Trial you will be able to obtain further supplies of "Harlene" at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 9d. per bottle; "Uzon" Brilliantine at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle; and "Cremex" Shampoo Powders at 1s. 6d. per box of seven shampoos (single-packets 3d. each), from all Chemists and Stores, or will be sent direct on receipt of 6d. extra for postage from Edwards' Harlene, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, and 26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C. 1.



Do you Value Your Hair?

It costs you nothing to acquire a full Seven Days' Trial Outfit of the universally popular "Harlene Hair-Drill." You will be pleasantly surprised with the results of even a short course of this delightful "two minutes a day" toilet exercise. (Send the Free Coupon to-day.)

"HARLENE HAIR-DRILL" GIFT OUTFIT COUPON.

Detach and post to EDWARDS' HARLENE, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, and 26, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.C. 1.

Dear Sirs, — Please send me your Free "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit as described. I enclose 4d. in stamps for postage and packing of parcel to my address.

GEM, 26/3/21.

NOTE TO READER.

Write your full name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it, and post as directed above. (Mark envelope "Sample Dept.")

HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS from 21.—Real Value. Films Galore. A Boon for Winter Evenings. Lists Free.—Desk E., DEAN CINEMA CO., 34, Drayton Avenue, West Ealing, LONDON.

"CURLY HAIR!" "Mine curled at once," writes Major. Thousands of testimonials, proof sent. Summers' "Curlit" curls straightest hair. 1/5, 2/6 (stamps accepted).—SUMMERS (Dept. G.M.), Upper Russell St., Brighton.

VENTRILOQUISM made easier. Our new enlarged book of easy instructions and ten amusing dialogues enables anyone to learn this Wonderful Laughable Art. Only 1/-, post free. "Thousands Delighted." (Dolls supplied.) Thought-Reading, 8d. Mesmerism, 1s. 2d.—G. Wilkes & Co., Stockton, Rugby, England.

PHOTO POSTCARDS OF YOURSELF. 1/3 doz., 12 by 10 ENLARGEMENTS. Ed. ALSO CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL, CATALOGUE AND SAMPLES FREE.—HACKETTS, JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

THIS WEEK!

THREE GREAT NEW ATTRACTIONS

IN THE

"BOYS' HERALD."

A Magnificent Portrait of the CAMBRIDGE BOATRACE CREW.

The first of a splendid series of Special Art Studies of the **BOYS OF GREYFRIARS.**

The Opening Chapters of the Amazing New Adventure Story, **"THE LURE OF GOLD,"** a personal narrative written and illustrated by one who took part in the gold-hunting expedition.

Don't miss this wonderful number of the **"BOYS' HERALD."**

On Sale Next Tuesday. Price 1½d. Order Early.

15 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Packed FREE. Carriage PAID. Direct from Works. **LOWEST CASH PRICES. EASY PAYMENT TERMS.** Immediate delivery. Big Bargains in Shop Soiled and Second-hand Cycles. Tyres and Accessories at popular Prices. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Refunded. Old Cycles Exchanged. Write for Monster Size **Free List and Special Offer** of Sample Bicycle.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY, Incond., Dept. B 607, BIRMINGHAM.

WORKING MODEL STEAM ENGINE

Model 7/6 and 10/6. Complete Electric Light Outfits 5/- and 8/9. Shocking Coil Parts or Telegraph 1/10. Electric Motor Parts 3/4 and 8/3.

HARBORNE SMALL POWER CO., 38, QUEEN'S ROAD, ASTON, BIRMINGHAM.

Above prices include Postage and Packing.

HEIGHT INCREASED 5/- Complete IN 30 DAYS. Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System **NEVER FAILS.** Full particulars and Testimonials 1d. stamp.—Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. S.), 24, Southwark St., S.E.

STRENGTHEN YOUR NERVES. Nervousness deprives you of employment, pleasure, and many advantages in life. If you wish to prosper and enjoy life, strengthen your Nerves, and regain confidence in yourself by using the Mento-Nerve Strengthening Treatment. Used by Vice-Admiral to Seaman, Colonel to Private, D.S.O.'s, M.C.'s, M.M.'s, and D.C.M.'s. Merely send 3 penny stamps for particulars.—GODFREY ELLIOTT-SMITH, Ltd., 527, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London, E.C.4.

FUN FOR ALL!—Ventriloquist's Voice Instrument. Fits roof mouth. Invisible. Astonishes, Mystifies. Imitate Birds, Beasts, etc. 1/- P.O. (Ventriloquism Treatise included).—IDEAL CO., Clevedon.

CUT THIS OUT

"The Gem." **PEN COUPON.** Value 2d.

Send this coupon, with P.O. for only 5/- direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet St., London, E.C.4. In return you will receive (post free) a splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6. If you save 12 further coupons, each will count as 2d. off the price; so you may send 12 coupons and only 5/- (Pocket Clip, 4d. extra.) Ask for fine, medium, or broad nib. This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to the GEM readers. Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Self Filling, or Safety Models, 2/- extra.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 685.

Special Art Plates of the Boys of Greyfriars free in the "Boys' Herald."

The GEM LIBRARY

1½d



GEORGE CORE.

The Bully of the Shell. (Another Splendid Portrait Study next week.)

(Special Note: A magnificent picture of the Cambridge Boat Race Crew is Given Away in this week's "Boys' Herald." On sale everywhere. Price 1½d.)