

EXCITING SCHOOL AND CIRCUS STORY INSIDE.

The

**GEM** 1<sup>D</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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**LIBRARY**

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Every Wednesday.

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**THE CIRCUS LION ESCAPES!**

(An incident from the Magnificent Long Complete School Story inside.)

## EDITORIAL

My Dear Readers,—

I think I may fairly let the splendid features of this week's "Gem" speak for themselves, confident the number of the ever-popular weekly will be approved by all my friends. There are several matters which I want to refer to, and among them is a letter from a Canadian reader who speaks in such terms of Cardew as might make the character in question flush with pride, if he were made that way. But Cardew is proof against compliments.

In answer to Jack Tinsley (Walsall), I can say that the "Gem" and the "Boys' Herald" are the only boys' papers printed in double columns.

In response to numerous requests I have arranged for a new series of stories dealing with a fierce feud between the School House and the New House. These yarns will be welcomed by everybody, I feel sure. We have had tales somewhat on these lines in the past, and the return to what has always been a fascinating sort of rivalry between the houses will be heartily welcomed.

Nowadays, we are hearing much more about the secret passages at St. Jim's. The old vaults have never been

thoroughly explored, even now, and Mr. Martin Clifford proposes to deal with the subterranean passages with which the ancient part of St. Jim's is honey-combed, in a new story which will introduce Ernest Levison and his mine, also his sister, Doris.

I have long had the idea for this tale in my mind. Ernest Levison, it will be remembered, left his former school, Greyfriars, under a cloud. In the forthcoming tale this cloud will be dissipated, and it will be shown that "Levison of St. Jim's," as he must remain, has left behind him at Greyfriars the reputation of a great sportsman, and the very best of fellows. **YOUR EDITOR.**

## ANSWER TO READERS.

BETTY AND BYRLE (Chester).—The "St. Jim's News" has certainly come to stay.

my chums. The "gun" used to fire down Trimble and Grundy in Pepper's barn was constructed from a long pipe and three sofa springs. I can't say whether a lobby will be built beside the barn to make the affair more realistic. Your remarks about Levison are a bit too previous, for next week he will have quite a long article in the "St. Jim's

News." I am sorry that there was no plan published in last week's issue. You see, it was under the control of the assistant editor, Ralph Reckness Cardew, and he arranged things according to his own ideas. Next week, however, there will be another drawing, and Cardew has given his pal Levison the task of supplying the accompanying article.

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# IN THE HOUR OF PERIL

An Interesting and Thrilling Story Dealing with Sankey's Famous Circus and the Chums of St. Jims.

By Martin Clifford.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Handling a Ruffian!

"I GUESS that somebody's in a hurry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kit Wildrake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, were seated on a stile in Rylcombe Lane. Behind them was the footpath that wound away through the thick wood.

The two juniors of St. Jim's had been chatting, when the sound of heavy footsteps on the path came to their ears.

Wildrake glanced round, and Arthur Augustus, after pausing to fix his celebrated eyeglass in his eye, followed the Canadian junior's example.

Thud, thud, thud!

The rapid, heavy footsteps were approaching them, but the runner was not yet in sight. The thick trees by the winding path hid him from their view, but they could hear his laboured panting as he came on.

"Somebody in a dicken's of a hurry, I guess!" said Wildrake. "Hallo! Here he is!"

A fat man with a florid, perspiring face came into sight on the footpath, panting on towards the stile that gave on the land. A silk hat was set a little sideways on his head, and the top was crushed in, as if from the blow of a stick.

"Bai Jove! It's Mr. Sankey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"The merry circus man!" said Wildrake.

The two Fourth-Formers recognised the fat gentleman at a glance. Sankey's World-Renowned Circus, Hippodrome and Menagerie had been camped at Rylcombe for over a week, and most of the St. Jim's fellows had visited it once or twice or thrice. The stout and ponderous Mr. Sankey presided in the ring, in evening clothes, and a gorgeous waistcoat, and silk topper, and a whip in his hand—a figure of the most imposing dignity during the performances. But Mr. Sankey was not looking very dignified now. He panted, puffed, and perspired, as he came thudding on towards the stile. As he reached it, he reeled breathlessly, and clutched at the top bar for support.

"Ow! Help!" he gasped.

"Somebody after you?" asked Wildrake.

"Oh! Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Bai Jove!"

The circus master clung to the stile and panted; and there was again a sound of footsteps on the path through the trees. Some unknown person, as yet unseen, was evidently in hot pursuit of the circus proprietor.

"Some peaky tramp, I suppose," said Wildrake, in wonder. "Buck up, Mr. Sankey! We'll stand by you if he comes up!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, taking a business-like grip on his nobby malacca cane. "We'll look aftah you, sir."

Mr. Sankey spluttered.

"It's that ruffian Benson—the man I sacked for ill-treating a horse!" he gasped. "He laid wait for me in the wood! I've had my hat smashed in! Ow! I just managed to get away! He's been drinking! Ow! Oh dear!"

"Bai Jove! Your toppah is weally wained!" said Arthur Augustus sympathetically. "A man must be an uttah bwute to wuin a fellow's toppah! There are some things that are weally beyond the limit! The fellow must be an uttah Hun!"

"Here he comes!" said Wildrake, quietly.

The Canadian junior jumped down on the inner side of the stile, as a powerfully-built man, with a hard, stubby face, came into sight, running hard towards the stile. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped down by his side, grasping his cane. Bill Benson, who had once been known in Sankey's Circus as "Texas Bill," was a dangerous customer to tackle,

as both the juniors knew. But they did not mean to leave the fat and breathless Mr. Sankey at the ruffian's mercy. Bill Benson slackened down, as he saw the two schoolboys standing with his former employer.

"Back up, Wildrake, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "There is goin' to be a scwap!"

"I guess so!" said the Canadian junior grimly.

"Help!" spluttered Mr. Sankey.

Benson's halt was only momentary. The ruffian's flushed face and burning eyes showed that he had been drinking, and he was in a savage and reckless mood.

There was a stick in his hand and he swung it up as he rushed right at the circus proprietor, taking no heed of the two St. Jim's juniors.

"Stand back, you hoodigan!" panted Mr. Sankey. "I'll have you prosecuted! I'll have you arrested! Oh! Ow! Help!"

Crash!

As the ruffian rushed down on Mr. Sankey, Kit Wildrake ducked under his uplifted arm, and butted him.

Wildrake's hard head came with a crash on Bill Benson's ribs, and the ruffian staggered aside and reeled over.

His stick swept down, Wildrake escaping it by a bare inch. Before he could recover his balance, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was upon him. Arthur Augustus might be the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School at St. Jim's—he might be the most elegant junior that ever lounged gracefully in the old quad; but he was also a fighting man when his noble blood was roused. His clenched fist felt like a lump of iron as it crashed on the stubby point of Bill Benson's jaw.

The circus-rider went to grass with a heavy bump.

The next instant Kit Wildrake had torn the stick from his hand, and sent it spinning away over the tree-tops.

Benson lay in the grass of the footpath, and gasped.

But he was struggling up the next moment; and if he had gained his feet, there would have been serious trouble for all the trio by the stile. But the juniors were too quick for him.

Arthur Augustus hit out again as he was rising, and Benson went over on his side; and the next moment Kit Wildrake's knee was jammed in his ribs, pinning him down.

"Pile on him, D'Arcy!" gasped Wildrake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus' knees were added, and between them the two juniors fairly pinned the ruffian in the grass.

He struggled fiercely under their weight, striking out savagely, but Wildrake grasped one hairy wrist, and D'Arcy secured the other. And the ruffian's arms were mercilessly twisted till he gave in.

Then he lay panting, and pouring out fierce curses.

"Better language, please!" snapped Wildrake.

A volley of oaths answered him.

"I guess I'll give you something to stop that," said Wildrake grimly, and he twisted back the ruffian's arm till Benson howled with pain. "Now are you going to quit swearing?"

"Oh, oh! Ow! Yes!" gasped the ruffian.

"I guess you'd better!"

"By gum!" ejaculated Mr. Sankey, recovering his courage, and some of his ponderous dignity, as he saw that the "sacked" circus-rider was secure. "I'm much obliged to you youngsters!"

"Pway don't mench, my deah sir!" said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"I guess we've got him safe," said Wildrake. "Do you want to give him in charge for assault, Mr. Sankey?"

"Yes, yes; he will be safe in the stone jug!" said the ringmaster. "Can you hold him till I fetch a policeman from the village?"

"I guess we'll fix him," answered Wildrake.

He jerked off the ruffian's necktie, and Benson's wrists were dragged together and bound. A twist or two of his arm put a stop to the ruffian's attempted resistance.

"Now lend me your necktie to tie up his feet, Gussy!" said the Canadian junior.

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"Buck up!"

"I am sorry to disoblige, deah boy, but I must wufese to allow my necktie to be used for anythin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus. "If you like I will take your tie and bind his hoofs."

"I guess not!" grinned Wildrake. "Here, he's got a belt on. That will do!"

Kit Wildrake unbuckled the circus-rider's belt, and buckled it again, tightly, round his legs between knee and ankle. Then the juniors rose rather breathlessly to their feet.

"I guess he's O.K. now, Mr. Sankey," said Wildrake.

"I think so," said Mr. Sankey, with a smile, looking down at the furious, writhing ruffian. "He will keep, while I walk down to the police-station." Mr. Sankey felt in his pocket.

"If you young gentlemen would like to visit the circus again, you're welcome at all times. I'll give you a card that will admit you to the best seats all the while we stay in these parts."

"Bai Jove! That's vevy good of you, Mr. Sankey."

"One good turn deserves another," said the circus proprietor, with a smile, and he handed the cards to the two juniors. Then he adjusted his battered hat, and walked down the lane towards Rylcombe village.

Wildrake looked at his watch.

"Time we got back to the school, D'Arcy," he remarked. "Tom Merry is expecting us at four—"

"Wight-ho!"

Bill Benson spat out a curse.

"You're not leaving me like this, you young 'ounds!" he howled.

"I guess you're safer like that," answered Wildrake, eyeing him with cool contempt. "Mr. Sankey will be back in ten minutes with a policeman."

"Yess, wathah."

Wildrake and Arthur Augustus stepped over the stile again, and walked off towards St. Jim's. And a volley of oaths from the tied-up ruffian followed them till they were out of hearing.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Baggy Trimble's Luck.

"TOMMY, old top!"

"Scat!" said Tom Merry gruffly.

Baggy Trimble's affectionate greeting did not seem, somehow, to please or gratify the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had come out of the School House at St. Jim's and were sauntering towards the gymnasium, when the fat Fourth-Former appeared in the offing. Baggy Trimble had on his most ingratiating smile; but the Terrible Three knew Baggy too well to heed his smiles. They walked on regardless.

"I say, Tommy—"

"If you call me Tommy," said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "I'll shake you till you burst, Trimble. That's a tip."

"I say, old chap, don't be stuffy, you know," said Trimble, following the Terrible Three towards the gym. "I say, there's an extra special turn at Sankey's Circus this evening."

"Time Gussy and Wildrake turned up," remarked Manners, glancing up at the clock in the tower. "The mill begins at four."

"Trust Gussy to be late!" observed Monty Lowther.

"Bow-wow!" chimed in Jack Blake of the Fourth, joining the Shell fellows. "There's ten minutes to go yet."

"If Gussy has got into a necktie shop in the village he won't be home till morning," said Lowther.

"Tom, old chap!" murmured Baggy Trimble, "I'd like to take you to the circus this evening, if we can get a pass."

"Rats!"

"I'm going to stand treat—"

"Rot!"

"I just want you to come," said Trimble. "Only for your company, old fellow. I'm paying for the tickets. Really!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"And when we get to the door you'll discover that you've left your purse at home," he remarked.

"Look here, you know—"

"Oh, scat!"

Tom Merry shook off the importunate Trimble, and walked on with his comrades. There was a most important affair

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on in the gym that afternoon—a six-handed mill, between six School House boxers and six of the New House.

So Tom Merry wasn't interested in Sankey's Circus at the moment, even if there was an extra special turn for that evening. The Terrible Three, Blake, D'Arcy, and Wildrake represented the School House in the contest; and the New House was represented by Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, Owen, Radford, and Pratt.

The New House crowd were already in the gym, and the School House party arrived there short of two—Wildrake and D'Arcy not having turned up so far. Baggy Trimble wasn't interested in the mill, though a crowd of other fellows were gathering to see it; he was interested in raising the price of admission to the circus that evening. And he bore down on Herries and Digby, as he caught sight of those two cheery Fourth-Formers coming out of the School House.

But he did not speak to them after all. George Herries stopped, and lifted his right boot, as Trimble approached. And Herries' intention was so obvious that Baggy changed his course, and steered clear of the chums of the Fourth. He wheeled off towards the gates, where he sighted Study No. 9 just coming in—Levison, Clive, and Cardew.

"You fellows coming to the circus to-night?" asked Baggy, stopping in the path of the trio.

"Has the boxing started?" asked Levison, without replying.

"Both the boxing! The circus—"

"Come on!" said Clive, and he started for the gym, pushing the fat Fourth-Former unceremoniously out of the way.

"I've a jolly good mind to come after you and lick you, Clive," roared Baggy Trimble indignantly.

The South African junior stopped, and looked back, with a smile.

"I'll wait!" he called back.

Baggy Trimble turned a deaf ear, however. He rolled through the old gateway, and nearly rolled into Talbot of the Shell, who was coming in. He caught Talbot by the sleeve.

"I say, Talbot, old chap—"

"Don't stop me," said Talbot good-humouredly. "There's a boxing show on in the gym at four, and I don't want to miss it."

"O that will keep," said Baggy Trimble carelessly. "I want you to come to the circus this evening—"

"Thanks; I don't care to. Let me pass, Trimble, there's a good chap."

"There's an extra special turn," said Trimble. "Lions and tigers, you know—they weren't there when we went last."

Talbot jerked his sleeve away and walked on quickly. "Of all the boasts!" murmured Trimble. "I was offering to stand treat, too! Hallo, here's the other rotters."

The "other rotters" alluded to were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Kit Wildrake, who were coming quickly up the road. Baggy Trimble rolled to meet them.

"You fellows—"

"I guess we can't stop; we shall be late!" said Wildrake.

"Come on, D'Arcy, or Tom will be getting his hair off."

"But, I say—"

D'Arcy and Wildrake walked on rapidly, and Baggy Trimble was left once more to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

The fat Fourth-Former rolled on discontentedly down the lane. Baggy's luck seemed out that afternoon. The price of admission to the evening performance of Sankey's World-Renowned Circus Hippodrome, and Menagerie was not to be raised apparently. Baggy would have been glad of a small loan of threepence for ginger-beer; but even that seemed to be outside the range of practical politics.

He had tried a dozen fellows in the quad—he had tried to soften the heart of Dame Taggles, at the school shop—in vain. With a faint, lingering hope of softening the heart of Mrs. Murphy at the flag shop, Baggy rolled on towards Rylcombe. As he came by the stile in the lane, he decided to rest there for a few minutes—Baggy hated exertion. But as he came up to the stile he jumped.

"Elp!"

On the other side of the stile, in the grassy footpath, a man lay bound hand and foot. He helped out the appeal for help as Baggy Trimble came within his range of vision.

"My hat!" ejaculated Trimble.

He leaned on the stile and looked over.

Bill Benson blinked at him sourly and savagely. But the ruffian hoped to get Trimble to release him, so he choked back the desire to hurl a volley of curses at the fat, grinning junior.

"How on earth did you get like that, my man?" asked Trimble.

"Lemme loose!"

"Tied up like a giddy turkey," grinned Trimble. "Some of our chaps been larking with you?"

"Untie me, please!" gasped Benson.

"Why, I know you now," said Trimble. "You're the man that was sacked from Sankey's Circus for doping a horse; and you robbed Tom Merry of a banknote. I know you!"

Benson ground his teeth. He was in mortal fear every moment of seeing Mr. Sankey return with the village policeman. Mr. Sankey had had plenty of time to reach the village by now. And the prospect of being put into goal to answer a charge of assault and battery was not an attractive one to the ruffian.

"Please untie me, sir," he said, with a civility he was far from feeling. "Some—some young fellows did this for a lark."

"I dare say you tried to pick their pockets," said Trimble.

"I—I didn't! I swear—"

"I'm not going to interfere, anyhow."

"I—I'll give you five bob to untie me!" gasped Benson.

Baggy Trimble, who was turning away from the stile, turned back. He was interested at once.

"I—I said five—"

"Good-bye!" said Trimble.

"Hold on! I'll make it ten bob!" said Benson, gasping.

"I—I'm getting the cramp, sir!"

"Got the money about you?" asked Trimble, eyeing him.

"It's in my pocket."

"Mind, ten bob!" said Trimble, preparing to get over the stile.

"Yes, sir, certainly; and I'll be much obliged to you as well," said Benson, with a silky civility that contrasted curiously enough with the rage he was choking back. "You're very kind, sir!"

"Oh, not at all!" said Trimble airily. "I don't mind doing you a good turn, my man."

He unbuckled the belt round the man's legs, and then started on the necktie that secured his hands. Bill Benson waited very quietly while he was released. His manner, indeed, was so civil and respectful that Baggy Trimble was quite deceived. Wildrake had knotted the tie very carefully, and it took Baggy some time to untie it. But it was off at last.

"There you are!" said Baggy.

Benson rose to his feet, with a glitter in his eyes. Baggy Trimble had done him a good turn, though with a mercenary motive. He really was not a proper object for Benson's savage rage. But the ruffian was in a state of fury that demanded a victim, and the hapless Baggy was the only victim at hand. Little dreaming of what was about to happen, Baggy Trimble extended a fat hand.

"Ten bob!" he remarked pleasantly.

Benson did not answer in words.

He made a sudden stride at Baggy, gripped him by the collar, and swung him off his feet. There was a terrified yell from Trimble.

"Oh! Ow! Leggo! Help!"

He yelled again and again as the ruffian's boot smote him behind. Baggy struggled and wriggled in Benson's grasp, roaring with indignation and anguish.

The sight of Police-constable Crump's helmet in the lane was like a sudden vision of heavenly bliss to Baggy Trimble.

"Help!" he yelled. "Murder! Help! Police!"

Bill Benson sighted the policeman at the same moment. With a swing of his arm, he tossed Trimble over the stile, and the fat Fourth-Former crashed on Mr. Crump's plump knees. There was a howl from Mr. Crump as he went staggering backwards, Trimble collapsing at his feet. The next moment Bill Benson had vanished into the dusky shadows of the wood.

"What's this 'ere mean?" roared Mr. Crump wrathfully.

"He's running!" shouted Mr. Sankey.

"After him! He's loose—"

"Yow-ow-ow!" howled Trimble.

Mr. Crump, grasping his truncheon, clambered over the stile, followed by the circus proprietor. Baggy Trimble picked himself up, dazed and breathless.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow-wow!" he mumbled.

"Oh dear! Oh crumbs! Oh crickey!"

And in the very lowest possible spirits, Baggy Trimble limped away, while Mr. Crump and Mr. Sankey vainly sought for the vanished ruffian in the dusky wood.

## CHAPTER 3.

## Three for the Circus.

"G US, old hoss!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy frowned portentously as his cheerful minor, Wally of the Third, addressed him.

The swell of St. Jim's was reposing in the armchair in Study No. 6, in the Fourth-Form passage in the School House. He was looking a little tired.

The six-handed mill in the gym had been quite a strenuous affair. The School House had won on points, Lefevre of the Fifth being the referee, and Lefevre's decision had rather enhanced his reputation in the School House. On the other hand, Figgins & Co. had departed with the firmly fixed opinion that Lefevre was a champion ass, and that it was a wonder how he had ever squeezed into the Fifth Form at all. Having won the contest, the School House boxers felt very well satisfied with themselves; but that did not alter the fact that Arthur Augustus's nose was a little less Greek in shape than heretofore, that his chin felt lumpy, and that he was fatigued. However, he was prepared to be as fatherly as ever to his cheery minor, when that slightly grubby youth put his head into Study No. 6. It was being addressed as "old horse" that made Gussy frown. That mode of addressing could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be called respectful, or suitable from a younger brother to an elder one.

So the swell of St. Jim's put his eyeglass into his eye, screwed it there securely, and turned it on Wally of the Third in a crushing way.

"Weally, Wally," he said, "your manna's gwow worse and worse ewery day. I am surprised at you, Wally! Your manna's are simply shockin'!"

"Hear what he's saying about you, Reggie!" said Wally, addressing someone behind him in the passage.

Manners minor, of the Third, looked in. Over his shoulder, Levison minor was visible. The three fags were generally together; and they had come in a body to Study No. 6, for what purpose was yet unknown.

"What are you slanging me for, D'Arcy major?"

demanded Reggie Manners.

"I was not slangin' you, Weggie—"

"You said I was shocking—"



"Now lend me your necktie to tie up his feet, Gussy!" said the Canadian Junior. "Weally, Wildwaker—" "Back up!" "I am sorry to disoblige, deah boy, but I must refuse to allow my necktie to be used for anythin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus. "If you like I will take your tie and bind his hoofs."

"Quite a mistake, deah boy," Arthur Augustus explained laboriously. "I was speakin' to Wally. I remarked that his mannahs were shokin'—"

"Well, Reggie's my Manners, isn't he?" said Wally. "The three fags chuckled."

"I perceive that you are makin' a silly joke," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Pway don't wowmy me now with wotten jives. I am feelin' wathah fatigued."

"Piggins give you a warm time with the gloves?" asked D'Arcy minor sympathetically. "Your nose looks a bit of a prize-packer."

"Weally, Wally—"

"But to come to business, old hoss—"

"I stwongly object to bein' addressed as an old horse, Wally. Surely you are awah that it is a vewy disrespectful and unsuitable form of address to your eldah bwothah!"

"Well, I suppose young donkey would be more suitable," remarked Wally, in a reflective sort of way.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To come to business, young donkey—" resumed Wally.

"You uttah young wascal—"

"I suppose you're not going to the circus this evening, Gus?"

"No, deah boy!"

"You couldn't very well take that nose anywhere in public," agreed Wally. "Well, as you're not going, kid, you can lend us the money you were going with—"

"But I wasn't goin', anyway."

"Suppose you had been going, then," said Wally argumentatively. "You save the tin by not going, and you can lend it to us. You would have gone into the three-bob seats, in your swanky way; we're satisfied to go in the bobbers—we're democratic and the Third. So hand over the three bob, deah old geege, and we'll clear."

"I shall be vewy pleased to lend you three shillin's, Wally," said the swell of the Fourth, groping in his pocket. "I tust you have your Form-mastah's permish to go out of gates?"

"Where's the three bob?" asked Wally, without answering that question immediately.

"Heah you are!"

Walter Adolphus D'Arcy slipped the three shillings into his pocket with much satisfaction.

"Thanks no end, old top," he said. "You're a real good sort, Gussey. You can't help being an ass, and I've always said so. I stand up for you in the Third, I can tell you, Gussy. When fellows say you're an ass, I always say you can't help it. Don't I, you chaps?"

"You do!" agreed Reggie Manners.

"Always!" grinned Frank Levison.

"You are a cheeky young ass, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus. "I feah that I do not give you enough thwashin's for your own good. But has Mr. Selby given you leave to go to the evenin' performance at Sankey's Circus?"

"We haven't asked him," answered Wally.

"You are goin' to ask him, I tust?"

"What's the good of asking him, when he's sure to say no?" demanded Wally. "You know what a rusty, crusty old bird he is."

"Weally, Wally, you should not allude to your Form-mastah as a wusty, crusty old bird," said Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "It is not respectful. I do not wholly approve of Mr. Selby, as I considah that his mannahs leave much to be desired; but you youngstahs should be respectful to him. I tust you will remember what I say, Wally."

"My deah chap, you say too much for anybody to remember. You're like the giddy little brook, you know—you go on for ever. Ta-ta!"

"But you must get leave f'rom Mr. Selby—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Unless you do, Wally, I wufuse to allow you—"

"Boah!"

Wally & Co. departed from Study No. 6, and went whistling down the Fourth-Form passage. Arthur Augustus was left with a rather worried look upon his face. It was pretty clear that the three fags were going to the circus that evening without leave, which might prove a serious matter for them if it came to Mr. Selby's knowledge. It was true that Mr. Selby was a cross-tempered gentleman, who was likely to refuse leave for no reason whatever excepting that he was cross-tempered. Still, discipline was discipline, and Arthur Augustus could not approve of disobedience.

Unfortunately, Arthur Augustus' disapproval weighed only a feather-weight in the scale. He rose from the arm-chair, with the idea of following the fags and reonstrating. But he realised that his remonstrances would only draw upon him a volley of "cheek" from Wally & Co., and that they wouldn't affect the fags in any other way.

Arthur Augustus was still thinking the matter out, while he gently caressed his damaged nose, when Blake and Herries and Digby came into the study for prep.

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"Hallo! How's the merry old boko?" asked Blake cheerily.

"My nose is all wight, Blake—"

"Looks rather red to me, not white," remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Wildrake put up a jolly good show," remarked Digby. "That Wild West bouncer can box. He gave Redfern plenty to do."

"He wasn't bad," said Blake, "not at all bad. What's that worried brow about, Gussy? Lost a fiver, or has somebody sat on your Sunday topper?"

"I was thinkin' of my minah, Blake—"

"Oh, bother your minah! No need to worry about him!"

"I am afraid he is lookin' for twouble—"

"He's bound to find it, whether he looks for it or not,"

answered Blake, getting out his books. "Let him rip!"

"He's going to Sankey's Circus—"

"No harm in that," said Dig. "We've been."

"But he hasn't got leave f'rom his Form-mastah—"

"Selby's a bit of a pig," said Blake. "But I dare say he won't know anything about it. Wally will cut after prep and get back in time for bed. He won't see half the performance, but he will like it all the more because he oughtn't to be there at all. Let him rip, I tell you!"

"I hardly like lettin' him wip, Blake, undah the circs. You see—"

"I see we'd better get on with prep," said Blake. "You'd better do the same, Gustavus, if you don't want a scrap with Latham in the morning."

"Oh, all wight."

Arthur Augustus gave his attention to prep, though still rather worried about his reckless minor. Still, worrying wasn't much use, and prep had to be done.

In the Third Form-room the Third were gathered to prep with Mr. Selby—all Forms below the Fourth having to do their preparation in the presence of a master. Wally, Reggie, and Frank Levison were particularly good at prep that evening, and Mr. Selby, who generally had a suspicious eye upon the cheery trio, had no fault to find with them on this occasion. For a wonder, he snapped at Wally only once, and at Manners minor only twice, and at Frank Levison not at all.

And when Mr. Selby retired, glad to have done with the Third for that day, and the Form-room broke into the usual buzz, Wally & Co. quietly subtracted themselves from it. When Frayne and Hobbs and Jameson looked for them a little later, they were missing.

The three young scamps were dropping quietly from the walls of St. Jim's, bound for the circus at Rylcombe.

The evening performance was likely to be half over by the time they reached the circus, but that was a matter of little moment. As Jack Blake had sagely surmised in Study No. 6, Wally & Co. were going to enjoy the circus chiefly because they were there in spite of Mr. Selby.

The three fags trotted cheerfully away in the autumn dusk, heading for Rylcombe. But as it happened, they were not destined to pay in Arthur Augustus' three shillings at the ticket-office that evening, and to sit on the wooden benches watching the performance of Sankey's World-renowned Circus, Hippodrome, and Menagerie. For as they reached the field, lighted by flaring naphtha lamps, where the circus tent stood, a roar of voices came to their ears—a roar of wild excitement from the direction of the circus tent. Across the field from the tent a crowd was rushing, and more and more were pouring out of the big tent in wild excitement and alarm, yelling and shouting.

The three fags came to a halt, in astonishment and dismay.

"Something's up!" said Wally.

"Looks like it," said Reggie Manners. "Listen!"

"The lions! The lions are loose!" came a wild yell above the roar of terrified voices.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally.

Evidently there was going to be no circus for the scamps of the Third that evening!

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Arthur Augustus Doesn't Tell.

"MANNERS! D'Arcy! Levison!" Kildare of the Sixth looked into the junior Common-room in the School House, and rapped out the names.

Tom Merry & Co. were all in the Common-room, chatting after prep. Manners was seated at the chess-table with Tom, and had just announced to the captain of the Shell that he was mate in three. Tom Merry was wrinking his boyish brow over the board when Kildare looked in. Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were watching the game, both of them offering advice occasionally, which was received with gruff ingratitude by both players. Levison, Clive, and Cardew were in a group by themselves. Kit Wildrake was listening to a thrilling tale of Baggy Trimble's who related how he had been brutally assaulted by Bill

Benson after releasing that gentleman from his bonds out of sheer kindness of heart. And the Canadian junior assured Baggly that it served him right for meddling, much to Baggly's indignation. The general hum of conversation stopped as the captain of St. Jim's appeared in the doorway and rapped out three names in quick succession.

Manners looked up from the chess, and Levison glanced round. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his celebrated monocle upon Kildare in leisurely inquiry.

"What's wanted?" asked Levison.

"You three are wanted," answered the captain of the school. "Mr. Selby wishes to speak to you in his study."

"I'm rather busy now," grumbled Manners. "Mr. Selby's not my Form-master, Kildare."

"Nor mine!" said Levison.

"Nor mine, bal Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Quite so!" agreed Kildare. "But he wants to speak to you, and you'd better go. He will probably speak to Mr. Railton otherwise. Now hook it!"

The three juniors rose to obey. It was true that they were not under Mr. Selby's orders, but a Form-master was a Form-master, after all. Kildare walked away, but the three juniors were in no hurry to follow. They intended to go, but they were in no hurry.

"Don't go, you fellows!" called out Grundy of the Shell.

"Why will you complain to Mr. Railton if we don't," said Manners. "We don't want a row with our Housemaster."

"Like his cheek to send for you, I think!" growled Grundy.

"Form-masters are entitled to cheek us juniors," remarked Monty Lowther gravely. "We cannot rebuke them for impudence as they do us. It's a very unfair arrangement."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the thump can the fellow want?" asked Cardew of the Fourth. "What have you been up to, Levison?"

"Nothing that I know of," said Ernest Levison, laughing.

"I fancy it's something to do with our minors. We've all three got minors in Mr. Selby's Form."

"Oh, that's it, of course!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas, I wergard that as vewy pwob," said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "I know those three young wascals are out of bounds. Pway be vewy careful not to mention that circumstance to Mr. Selby, you chaps."

"Out of bounds!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"Where are they, then?" asked Manners, frowning.

"Gone to the circus, deah boy."

"The young duffers!" said Manners.

"I suppose there's going to be a dashed row with Selby! Serve them right if they get licked!"

"Yaas, I agree; still, we don't want to put Selby on the twack!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Bettah go, I think. Come on, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led the way from the Common-room, and Manners and Levison major followed him. They arrived at Mr. Selby's study, tapped discreetly at the door, and entered.

The master of the Third greeted them with a frowning brow. That was nothing new, however; Mr. Selby was frowning oftener than not.

"You sent for us, sir!" said Manners.

"Yes, Manners, I sent for you!" rapped out Mr. Selby, fixing a grim glance on the three juniors. "I require to know whether you are acquainted with the present whereabouts of your minor?"

"Oh!" said Manners.

"Manners minor, Levison minor, and D'Arcy minor are all missing," said Mr. Selby. "I find that they disappeared immediately after preparation in the Third Form-room, and they are not in the school at all. I have ascertained that. Evidently they have broken bounds. It is my duty to find them at once; and if you can render any assistance it is your duty to render it."

The three juniors were silent.

"Have you anything to tell me, Manners?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"And you, Levison?"

"Nothing!" said Levison.

"And you, D'Arcy?"

"Nothin' at all, deah boy—I mean, sir!"

"Huh!" snapped Mr. Selby. He eyed the juniors angrily, evidently desirous of "catching them out" if he could. He proceeded more categorically. "D'Arcy major, answer this question—do you know where your brother is at this moment?"

Arthur Augustus paused to reflect. He knew it was Wally's intention to visit Sankey's Circus that evening; but certainly he did not know whether Wally was there or not, or where he was at that moment. So he felt that he could reply truthfully in the negative, and he did.

"You are sure you do not know, D'Arcy?"

"Quite suah, sir!"

"Did you know that your brother intended to break bounds?"

No answer.

Arthur Augustus could not reply truthfully in the negative to that question, and he had no intention of replying untruthfully, or of giving Mr. Selby any information. So he remained silent.

The Form-master's eyes glittered. He felt that he was on the track now.

"Answer me, D'Arcy. I can see that you know something. This is a serious matter. Three boys of my Form have left the school after dark without their master's permission or knowledge. I do not know what trouble they may be getting themselves into—what disgraceful proceedings they may have in mind—"

"My young brothah is certainly incapable of doin' anythin' disgraceful, sir!" said Arthur Augustus hotly.

"That is what it is my duty to ascertain, D'Arcy. Tell me at once where he is!"

"I do not know where he is!"

"Tell me all you know of his intentions, then!"

No answer.

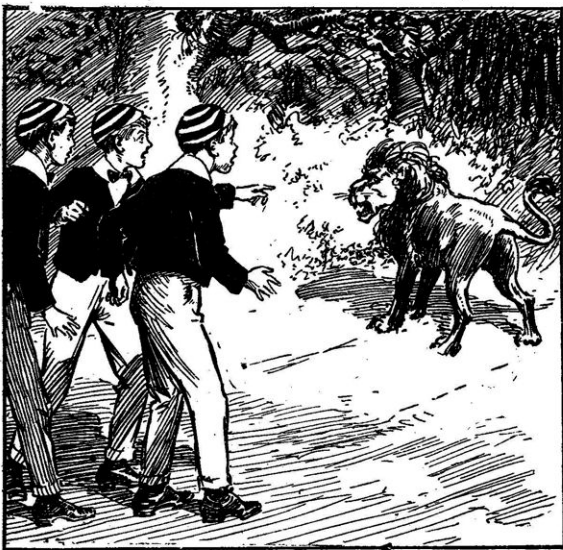
"If you wish me to take you before the Head, D'Arcy, I will do so!" said Mr. Selby harshly. "I cannot allow this matter to pass. If those unhappy boys have fallen into evil associations—"

"Utah wubbish!"

"What!" roared Mr. Selby.

"There is nothin' w'ong in youngstahs wantin' to go to the circus!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "If you would have given them leave sir, they would have asked you."

"So they are gone to the circus?"



Between the trees that lined the lane ahead was a patch of starlight, and in that patch a terrible figure loomed up. The three boys stopped dead. It was the lion! Its tail was towards them; but as they stopped, the huge head turned, and two flaming eyes glittered and rolled.

"I do not feel at liberty, sir, to betway a confidence," said Arthur Augustus. "I have nothin' to tell you. Even if you take me before the Head, Mr. Selby, I shall wefuse to say a word!"

"You utterly ridiculous boy, you have already told me that the three boys are gone to the circus!"

"Weally, Mr. Selby—"

Mr. Selby waved a bony hand in dismissal.

"You may go!" he snapped.

"Vewy well, sir!"

The three juniors left the study, Arthur Augustus frowning, and Manners and Levison grinning.

"Bai Jove! It is vewy hard to remain wespectful to a person like that, you know!" Arthur Augustus remarks in the passage. "Fancy askin' us to give the youngsters away, you know. I am vewy glad you fellows had the gumption not to answeh him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Levison.

"Weally, Levison—"

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Manners.

"I hope the old boundah did not guess from anythin' I said that those young scamps have gone to the circus, Mannahs. I was quite weseolved not to tell him anythin'."

"Ha, ha!" I rather fancy he did!"

"Bai Jove!" chuckled Levison.

"Just a trifle!" Do you weally think so?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I was vewy careful to say nothin', you know. I was wathah nervous of you fellows, as you haven't much tact or judgment; but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently Mr. Selby had derived all the information he needed from Arthur Augustus, in spite of that noble youth's determination to tell him nothing. For a few minutes later he emerged from the School House in coat and hat. He let himself out at the side gate into the road, and stepped out briskly for Rylcombe.

Mr. Wally & Co. were at the circus, their enjoyment was likely to be interrupted. Mr. Selby was not the man to let them have the entertainment and punish them afterwards. He intended to march them out of the circus-tent, and march them home; and he would feel a sense of duty well done as soon as he had made three fellows thoroughly miserable.

But before Mr. Selby reached the circus-field on the outskirts of the village, something happened that drove the three delinquents entirely from his peevish, trouble-seeking mind.

In the dim starlight of the lane, shaded by big trees, a shadow loomed up faintly before him. Mr. Selby, thinking that possibly he had sighted one of the truants, started swiftly forward. Then there came a sound that fairly froze the blood in his veins.

It was a deep, rumbling growl!

He stopped as suddenly as if a bullet had struck him.

The shadow moved, and emerged from the darkness of overhanging foliage, and what seemed like two balls of flame glistened through the dusk at the startled Form-master. And around those flaming orbs loomed the huge head and name of a full-grown African lion.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Treed.

"H OOK it!" said Reggie Manners.

"Better!" agreed Levison minor.

Wally of the Third hesitated.

The crowd was streaming across the field, scattering in every direction. The alarm and terror were general.

In the flare of the naphtha lights, Mr. Sankey could be seen—resplendent in evening-clothes, gorgeous button-hole, gold chain, and diamond studs. He looked like a man beside himself with anxiety and terror. He was running to and fro, a great deal like a frightened chicken; waving his plump hands, and shouting almost incoherently. Joey Jorrocks, the clown, was yelling to the crowd to be calm—without much effect. Joey was far from calm himself, as a matter of fact. Three or four circus-men could be seen with guns and staves in their hands. One man was driving back an obstinate camel that was intent on escaping and two men with a strong net, had bagged a lion-cub, and were dragging it back to the cages. From the menagerie came a loud roaring and bellowing; all the caged animals were wildly excited. The excitement of the scene made Wally reluctant to depart—in spite of the obvious wisdom of hooking it.

"I say, this is a go!" remarked Wally. "I wonder if the lions are really loose—"

"Look!" yelled Reggie suddenly.

In the distance, across the field, a sinuous body was to be seen, with five or six of the circus men round it. It was the lioness, and the fierce animal snapped and clutched every moment at the men who were bent on capturing her, and was only driven off them by blows of their cudgels. A rope was flung round the animal at last, and she was overthrown and dragged back to the cage. By that time the frantic crowd

had almost cleared off, and doors and windows were being locked and barred and bolted throughout Rylcombe. The three fags stayed by the fence, fascinated by the sight, forgotten by the danger, in the excitement of the moment. Joey Jorrocks caught sight of them, and came running across.

"You kids get home!" he called out.

"Any danger?" asked Wally.

The clown pointed.

The lion's loose—the big lion! The others have been caught, but the big lion's disappeared! For goodness' sake, you youngsters, get somewhere out of danger!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Reggie.

"I ought to have cleared off at once!" muttered Frank Levison, as the clown ran back to the tent. "Let's cut!"

"I wonder how they got loose?" said Wally. "Can't have been an accident. Somebody's done this—"

"Let's cut, you ass!"

"Oh, all right! We shall be in in good time for bed, anyhow," said D'Arcy minor. "Come on, you kids; don't be scared!"

"Who's scared?" demanded Reggie warmly.

"Well, don't be!" said Wally. "Come on!"

The three fags darted away down the shadowy lane. The excitement of watching the scene in the circus field had taken up their thoughts hitherto; but now that they were in the dusky lane, they realised more clearly the danger of the situation. Some felon hand had released the wild beasts. And the big lion, the most dangerous of all, was still loose—where? What if the terrific brute was in the lane—on the very road they had to pass to get back to the school?

It was as likely as not!

Even Wally of the Third rather regretted now that he had undertaken that reckless excursion that evening. Keeping their eyes well about them, the three fags ran on as fast as they could, for the school. Every shadow in the shadowy lane was full of threatening terrors to them now.

"Look out!" gasped Wally suddenly. "Stop!"

"What!" panted Frank, stopping.

Wally caught him by the arm.

"There's something—"

"The lion!" shrieked Reggie.

Between the trees that lined the lane ahead was a patch of starlight, and in that patch a terrible figure loomed up.

The three fags stopped dead, their hearts palpitating with terror.

It was the lion!

Its tail was towards them; but as they stopped, the huge head turned, and two flaming eyes glittered and rolled.

"Oh, Heaven!" moaned Reggie, almost fainting with terror.

Wally gripped his arm.

"This way—quick!"

He dashed through the hedge by the road, dragging Reggie Manners, and Frank Levison followed fast. In a few seconds they were clambering into a big tree, and they stopped breathlessly on a high branch.

"I—I say!" quavered Reggie. "Lions can climb trees, you know!"

"Shut up!" growled Wally.

"But—but I say—"

"Perhaps he hasn't seen us!"

"Oh dear! I wish we hadn't come out!"

"Fat lot of good wishing that now!" growled Wally, though he was fervently wishing the same thing himself.

"Do shut up, Reggie!"

The three fags clung on the high branch, and watched the lane below feverishly. Shadows moved in the lane, as boughs stirred in the starlight. But the lion was not seen for some time. It was probable that the animal was bewildered, in his new freedom, and possibly he was not meaning mischief, at present, at least. There was no sign of his coming towards the tree into which the fags had climbed. Wally caught sight of him at last—the dim, huge form lay in the grass by the roadside, crouching. And suddenly there came to the fags' ears the sound of footsteps. Somebody was approaching from the direction of St. Jim's.

"Somebody's coming!" panted Levison minor.

"Better shout to him—"

"And bring the lion on to us!" mumbled Reggie, through his chattering teeth.

"Shut up, Reggie!"

Wally watched the dim lane anxiously. The lion had moved away a little distance towards the village before crouching down in the grass—perhaps having looked for the vanished fags. The tree to which the juniors clung was between him and the school. Whoever was approaching from St. Jim's would pass under the overhanging branches before coming upon the lion. Wally swung himself to a lower branch.

A form loomed up in the gloom. Wally was about to call out a warning, when the form stopped, as a deep, savage growl sounded from the lion. The huge brute dragged himself out of the grass.

"Good heavens!"



The fags knew that voice. "Selby!" breathed Reggie. "Looking for us?" muttered Frank Levison, guessing at once why the Third-Form master was coming down the lane towards the village just then.

Another deep growl came from the lion. He stood pawing the ground, his eyes flaming at the Form-master, who stood frozen to the earth in utter terror.

"Mr. Selby!" Wally, lying over the lowest branch over the Form-master's head, called to him. "Mr. Selby!"

The Form-master started violently. "Get through the hedge, sir, quick—before he jumps! There's a gap close by this tree! Get through, and I'll help you into the tree! For goodness' sake, sir, be quick! He may spring!"

"Good heavens!" moaned Mr. Selby. He was too terrified to act for the moment. But another savage growl seemed to electrify him into action.

He made a jump for the hedge, and scrambled blindly through, and collided with the tree-trunk, and gasped. His hat went flying as he clambered frantically at the trunk.

"Help, help!" he panted. Wally got a grip on his collar from above, and dragged. Frank Levison ventured down, and helped. Reggie hung on where he was. From below came a loud and reverberating roar.

It was only a few seconds, but it seemed an age to the terrified Mr. Selby before he was dragged into the lower branches. Certainly he would never have reached them without the aid of the fags above. He clambered higher, breathlessly. There was a brushing and a rustling below, as the lion paced savagely under the tree. The sound of the terrible animal fairly underneath him, almost made Mr. Selby faint with terror.

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Wally. "Oh, Heaven! Help!" "A bit higher, sir! There's a forked branch here where you'll be safe—"

Mr. Selby was landed safely in the fork of the high branches, a good forty feet from the ground, with swimming brain and throbbing heart. Below, there sounded again and again the roar of the lion, reverberating through the dusky wood with a thousand echoes.

But the animal made no attempt to climb the tree. He paced under it, roaring, and finally emerged into the lane again.

"He—he's going!" breathed Frank Levison. Wally peered through the foliage. He caught a glimpse of the huge animal, loping away along the dusky lane in the direction of St. Jim's. In a minute the lion had disappeared from sight.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Cardew Brings News.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDREW, of the Fourth Form, strolled into the common-room as nine tolled from the clock-tower. Tom Merry and Manners were engaged upon another game of chess, and Levison and Clive were looking on at it, along with D'Arcy and Lowther and Talbot. Tom was struggling hard against a more powerful opponent; and there was a sweet smile on Manners' face—a smile that indicated a certain "mate" up his sleeve, as it were. Tom's king had had a series of narrow escapes, and was being slowly but surely driven to doom. Cardew strolled up to the table, and stood looking on with his hands in his pockets, and a rather curious smile upon his handsome face.

"You fellows awfully deep in chess?" he yawned.

"It's wathin an interestin' game," said Arthur Augustus. "I think Tom Mewwy is goin' to be beaten. He refused to move the wook when I advised him to."

"Ass!" grunted the captain of the Shell.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"He couldn't have moved the rook, Gussy," remarked Wildrake. "It would have left his king in check."

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"You wouldn't!" remarked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Are you fellows know anythin' about natural history?" asked Cardew.

"Bother natural history!" grunted Tom Merry.

"More interested in chess?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Still, natural history's an interestin' topic, in some circumstances," said Cardew, in a thoughtful way. "Clive, old man, you come from the country where the merry lion goes up and down seekin' what he may devour?"

"What about it, duffer?" asked Sidney Clive.

Levison looked at Cardew rather curiously. He could see that there was something behind his chum's bantering manner.

"I'm interested in lions," explained Cardew airily. "Can you tell me, Clive, whether lions can jump gates?"

"I dare say they can, if the gate isn't too high," said Clive, with a stare. "I've seen a lion jump over a palisade."

"How high?"

"Blessed if I remember," said Clive. "It was a lion-hunt in the karroo, and I saw him at a distance. I think the palisade was about seven feet."

"Our school wall is higher than that," remarked Cardew.

Clive laughed.

"I suppose there isn't any old lion prowling round St. Jim's looking for a place to jump over?" he remarked.

"Weally, Cardew, you seem to be talkin' out of your hat, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I'm interested in the matter," explained Cardew.

"If you're too deep in chess, I won't worry you; but really I should like to know whether a lion could jump the school wall if he wanted to. I really wish I'd given a bit more attention to the entrancin' subject of natural history.

Wildrake, my Wild-Western pippin, is it true that you brought a gun to St. Jim's with you?"

"I guess not."

"I've heard Trimble say he's seen it—"

"It was a tin-opper Trimble saw," chuckled Wildrake.

"His merry imagination did the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, a gun would come in handy now," said Cardew.

Railton's got his old service-revolver in his study, I believe.

Blessed if I don't think I'll borrow it!"

"What on earth are you driving at?" demanded Kit Wildrake. Most of the lookers-on at the chess had turned their attention to Cardew now.

"You see, I've just met a lion," explained Cardew.

"What?"

"Rats!"

Cardew shrugged his slim shoulders.

"Horrid for a fellow to have his word doubted—especially such a serious and sober merchant as myself," he remarked.

"Astonishin' as it seems, dear men, I've just met a lion—quite a big old lion, with a set of teeth that would make a dentist's fortune as an advertisement. Luckily, there was the gate between us, or I shouldn't be here to tell the thrillin' tale!"

"Tom Merry looked round.

"Mate in two!" cooed Manners.

But Tom Merry did not heed. His eyes were fixed on Cardew, with a startled look.

"Are you gammoning, Cardew?" he asked. "Is there any sense in what you're saying?"

"Is there ever?" asked Cardew. "I'm statin' the facts, if that's what you mean."

"King of Beasts, laws and mane complete, as pictured in natural history books for the young!" answered Cardew, with a nod.

"Where?" demanded Tom.

There was a buzz in the Common-room. A dozen fellows had gathered round Cardew. One thoughtful junior closed the door quickly.

"If you're not playing the kangaroo, tell us what you've seen, you howling ass!" exclaimed Garat, lord of the Shell.

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Cardew calmly.

"A short while back, I went into the quad for a stroll—been bored by the honourable and entertainin' company here. Strollin' along by the gates, I saw somethin' in the road—somethin' that growled loud—not unlike Herries' cornet—"

"Ass!" interjected Herries.

"Lookin' at it through the bars of the gate," continued Cardew, unmoved. "I recognised the merry old lion, as pictured in natural history books for— But I've said that before. He saw me, too, and came up to the gate and clawed through the bars. Apparently he wanted his supper—but though I rather pride myself on bein' a goodnatured and obligin' chap, I didn't feel called upon to stand him his supper in the form he wanted it in. It would have been too painful for me personally. Besides, we hadn't been introduced."

"Bai Jove!"

"Is all that true?" demanded Levison, blankly.

"Honest Injun! I jumped back from the gate—the dear old lion was rather long in the reach," said Cardew. "Having taken a good look at him, I departed, not carin' to push the acquaintance closer. I gathered that he had escaped from Sankey's Circus, but I didn't ask him."

"My only hat!"

"Of course, he mayn't be the menagerie lion," said Cardew.

"That's why I wanted you fellows to tell me somethin' about natural history. I don't recollect ever meetin' any in Rylcombe Wood, when I've been ramblin' there. I wouldn't be certain; but I feel fairly surd that the old fellow has escaped from a cage somewhere—probably from Sankey's Circus. And now," continued Cardew, smiling round at the startled faces, "can any fer low here tell me anythin' about a lion's jumpin' power? If he can jump the school wall, I feel that somethin' ought to be done."

"Pshaw!"

"Don't be alarmed!" said Cardew soothingly. "If he comes in here for his supper, he's practically certain to bag Trimble, as the fattest and juiciest fellow present—"

"Yaroooh!" Baggy Trimble made a wild dive under the table. Cardew looked round with a smile.

"Don't blush unseen, Trimble. Remember, too, that a fellow ought to be kind to animals, and the lion must be in want of his supper—"

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"Very likely you could save all our lives, Trimble, by offering yourself up as a merry sacrifice—I believe lions only take one supper at a time. Do you know, Clive?"

"Don't be silly, ass," said Clive sharply. "I'm going to warn Mr. Railton on once—if it's true."

"Is it true, Cardew?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Why not amble out into the quad and see?" suggested Cardew. "The jolly old lion is probably still there."

"My minor's out of gates!" exclaimed Manners suddenly, turning pale. He rose hurriedly, knocking over the chess.

"And mine!" exclaimed Levison.

"Bai Jove, and mine!"

The three juniors made a rush for the door, and in a moment more they were out of the Common-room. Tom Merry and Lowther rushed after them, followed by Wildrake and Levison and Clive, and Kangaroo, Talbot, and Blake & Co. Ralph Reckness Cardew sank into an armchair and stretched out his elegant legs.

"What a thunderin' lot of excitement!" he yawned. "All because a jolly old lion is nosin' round the gates. But I'd really like to know whether he can jump over the wall. Do you know, Trimble?"

"Yow-ow! Help! Keep him off!"

"My dear fat friend, he's not here yet! What a merry surprise, though, if he should look in at the door yonder?" smiled Cardew.

"Wow!"

Baggy Trimble squirmed out from under the table, darted to the door, slammed, and locked it.

Cardew chuckled.

"Now, suppose he gets in at the window?" he suggested.

"Oh dear!"

"The glass wouldn't stop him," remarked Cardew. "Trimble, old man, you see what comes of bein' a greedy, graspin', grub-hunter. If you weren't so jolly fat and juicy—"

"You awful rotter!" gasped Trimble.

Cardew glanced at the window.

"What's that movin' on the glass?" he asked. "Is it a branch?"

"Yaroooh!"

Baggy Trimble unlocked the door, and bolted out of the Common-room. Up the staircase he went as fast as his fat little legs could carry him, and he did not stop till he reached his study in the Fourth Form passage, where he locked himself in.

Cardew leaned back in his chair and chuckled. By this time wild excitement reigned throughout St. Jim's; but it was not shared by Ralph Reckness Cardew. He did not trouble to shut the door after Trimble. He sat lazily in the armchair, looking towards the open doorway, and wondering—lazily; as if it were a problem that did not concern himself in the least—what he would do if he saw the grim visage of the escaped lion looking in.

## CHAPTER 7. To the Rescue!

**T**OM MERRY & CO. came out into the starlit quadrangle with a thud.

They believed Cardew's strange tale, but his satirical and mocking manner left a doubt in their minds. They wanted to know whether it was true or not. Manners was pale as chalk, as he thought of his minor. Reggie Manners was at the circus—and if the lion was loose!—the bare possibility of it was enough to wring Manners' heart. And Levison and D'Arcy were feeling the same as Harry Manners. In their own different ways, the three juniors were deeply attached to their minors.

The Terrible Three of the Shell ran down towards the gates. Cardew's cool query as to whether a lion could jump the school wall was a very important question just then—but they did not care. Manners was thinking only of Reggie.

A sudden, deep, rumbling sound came through the night air, and Lowther paused, and gasped:

"Is—is that thunder?"

"Tom set his teeth."

"It's a lion!" he said.

Monty Lowther knew that it was; he had heard the lion roar in the cage of Sankey's Circus. There was no further doubt. The lion was loose, and he was very near the school. The roar came from the road that passed the walls of St. Jim's at one point.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Young Wally is—"

He pointed to the gates.

Outside in the road a huge, wild figure was seen in the starlight. It was the lion. The animal's back was towards the juniors. He was glaring away down the road towards Rylcombe. From the direction of the village lights were advancing, and there was a sound of shouting.

"They're after him!" panted Lowther.

The juniors ventured nearer the gates. Tom Merry clambered to the top of the stone pillar beside the gate, heedless of the fact that he was within reach of the lion's spring, if the savage animal should turn his way. But the lion's attention was evidently fixed on the advancing party in the road, and he did not look round.

From the top of the pillar Tom could see the crowd coming up from the village. It was led by a powerfully-built man with a rifle in his hands. Tom had seen him before, at the circus, and recognised the lion-tamer, whose name on the circus-bills was Hercules. He was followed by Mr. Sankey, also with a gun. Half a dozen other circus-men were with them, and several rustics armed with pitchforks. Three or four of the men carried lanterns, and flashed the lights to and fro as they advanced.

The lion, crouching in the road, glared at them as they came on, and there was a sudden halt when they sighted him.

"There he is!"

"Look out!"

"Come back, Tom," called out Lowther anxiously.

Tom Merry dropped back within the gates.

"He's off!" exclaimed Manners.

A quiver ran through the lion's body, and he looked for a moment as if he were going to spring at the hunters. But the flashing lights and the shouting disconcerted him, and he changed his mind. He turned, and skulked away in the shadow of the school wall.

Encouraged by his retreat, Mr. Sankey and his party came on more boldly, waving the lanterns and shouting.

They passed the school gates, and pushed on in pursuit of the lion.

"What's all this blessed row?" inquired Taggles, coming out of his lodge. "Nice goings on! What's it all about?"

"Lion escaped from the circus!" said Wildrake.

Taggles blinked at the juniors, and made one jump back into his lodge. The next moment they heard him locking and bolting the door. The old school-porter evidently did not want to see the lion.

"Bai Jove! Taggles appears to be wathah alarmed!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a shout across the dusky quad.

"All juniors into their Houses!"

It was Kildare's voice.

"I guess we're going to be rounded up safe," said Wildrake.

"It's only sensible," said Blake. "The lion may dodge into the school grounds to get away from that crowd."

"I guess it's likely enough."

"I'm not goin' in," said Arthur Augustus quietly.

"Come on, ass!" exclaimed Blake.

"Pway welease my arm, Blake. My minah was at the circus, and I am goin' to see whethah he is safe."

"Look here—"

"Same here," said Levison, between his white lips.

"Heaven only knows what harm that brute may have done already! If he's got Frank, he can get me as soon as he likes! I don't care!" And Ernest Levison clambered over the gate.

"But—"

Levison did not heed him. He sprang down into the road, and Manners of the Shell was only a moment behind him. Blake was still holding D'Arcy's arm, and trying to reason with him.

"I dare say Wally's all right—"

"I'm goin'—"

"You can't help him, anyhow!" urged Digby.

"I'm goin'!"

"I'm goin'!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I'm goin'!"

Tom Merry and Lowther exchanged a look. It was the wildest of hair-brained adventures, to venture out, unarmed, to seek the fags, with a savage, goaded lion prowling in the vicinity. But Manners, heedless of danger, had gone, and his chums were not the fellows to desert him. Kildare and Darrel and two or three other prefects were calling out in the quadrangle, rounding the juniors up into the Houses, and there was no time to be lost. Tom Merry and Lowther, with a word, clambered over the wall and dropped into the road. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tore himself away from Blake, and followed.

Jack Blake compressed his lips.

"We can't let him go alone!" he said. "Come on, you fellows! Study No. 6 sinks or swims together."

"Yes, rather!"  
 "Stop!" Kildare of the Sixth came racing up. "Come back directly! How dare you go out?"  
 "You see, Kildare—"  
 "Stop!"  
 Kildare grasped the juniors as they were clambering over the wall, and dragged them back by main force.  
 "You see," panted Blake, "D'Arcy—"  
 "Has D'Arcy gone out?" roared Kildare, in great wrath.  
 "His minor's out of gates. He's gone after him, and we were—"  
 "The young idiot! Get back into the House at once!"  
 "But we—"  
 "Take them in, Darrel, will you?"

"You bet!" said Darrel, and he shepherded the three juniors off to the School House. Rusden of the Sixth captured Clive, and marched him off at the same time. Up and down the dusky quadrangle went the prefects of both Houses, rounding up all the fellows who were out of doors, and marching them back to safety. The alarm of the escaped lion was all over the school. St. Jim's was buzzing with such excitement as it had never experienced since the old days of the air-raids in the war.

Mr. Bailton, the Housemaster of the School House, was in the quadrangle, giving directions. Mr. Ratcliff, of the New House was not to be seen, but the New House prefects were busy. When the roll-call was taken in Big Hall by the Head personally, there were a good many names to which "adsum" was not answered. The Head, with a troubled and frowning brow, marked down as absent quite a list of juniors—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell; D'Arcy, Wildrake, Levison, of the Fourth; Manners minor, D'Arcy minor, and Levison minor, of the Third. Nine juniors were out of gates; as well as Mr. Selby, the master of the Third Form, and the Head's brow was corrugated with deep anxiety.

And his anxiety was well-founded. Within the walls of St. Jim's, with doors bolted and windows locked, distant sounds penetrated—the crack of a rifle and the deep, furious roar of a savage lion.

### CHAPTER 8. In Direst Peril.

"LOOK out!"  
 Tom Merry panted out the words as a shadow loomed in the lane. But the next moment he was relieved.  
 It was a man's figure that came through the dusk, and the juniors recognised Joey Jorrocks, the clown of the circus. Manners caught him by the arm.  
 "Stop a minute—" he panted.  
 "Have they gone this way?" demanded the clown.  
 "Yes, yes! But tell me!" Manners panted for breath. "Has there been any—has the lion injured anybody, or—"  
 "Not that's known," answered Joey.  
 "My young brother was at the circus, and—"  
 "There's been some folks shoved and trampled," said Joey Jorrocks. "But that's all I know. All the animals have been got in, excepting the big lion. They're after him now."  
 "How did it happen?" asked Tom Merry.  
 Jorrocks gritted his teeth.  
 "That villain Benson! He attacked Mr. Sankey in the wood to-day for sacking him, and some kids handed him—"  
 "I guess that was us!" said Wildrake.  
 "He was seen hanging about the place after dark, by one of the men," went on Joey Jorrocks. "There was a sudden alarm that the animals were loose—he wasn't seen to do it, but there ain't much doubt. He opened the lion's cage, and let loose the camel and a panther, too. They've been rounded up and caged again. You should have seen the big tent when the news got out that the wild beasts were loose." Jorrocks shivered.  
 "It's a wonder people weren't killed. Panic, if you like. I never want to see anything like it again!"

"What time did it happen?" asked Levison.  
 "What does that matter?" exclaimed Manners impatiently.  
 "Let's get on. I'm going on—"  
 "It may matter a lot," said Levison quietly. "Wait a minute! When were the animals found loose, Jorrocks?"  
 "About half-past eight. The evening performance was full on, and it would have been the lion-tamer's turn in a few minutes more—"  
 "Then the fags can hardly have been in the circus," said Levison. "Prep in the Third Form-room did not finish till eight-fifteen this evening, and they had to get from the school—nearly a mile. They couldn't have arrived before the panic."  
 "You looking for some of the school kids" asked Jorrocks.  
 "I saw three of them by the field fence—"  
 "That would be the three!" exclaimed Tom Merry.  
 "I warned them to clear off," said Joey Jorrocks. "They went, I believe; they hadn't been in the circus."  
 "Oh, good!" exclaimed Levison.

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 "Hold on!" said Manners uneasily. "Perhaps it wasn't Reggie—I mean, perhaps it wasn't the three we want. What were they like, Jorrocks? Was one of them anything like me?" He struck a match for the clown to see his face clearly. Jorrocks nodded.

"One of them was very like you, sir; and one a good deal like this young gentleman!" He indicated D'Arcy.  
 "That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"You boys had better get into safety," said the clown, and he hurried on up the shadowy lane after Mr. Sankey's hunting-party.

The group of juniors did not heed Mr. Jorrocks' advice, good as it was. They had come out to seek the three fags, and they did not intend to go back without them.

They consulted hurriedly.  
 "If they turned back when Jorrocks spoke to them they ought to have been back at the school before we came out," said Manners. "Something must have happened to stop them."

"The lion must have come down this lane, to get to St. Jim's as it did," muttered Levison thickly.



"What were they like, Jorrocks? Was one of them anything like me?" Manners struck a match for the clown to see his face clearly. Jorrocks nodded: "One of them was very like you, sir, and one a good deal like this young gentleman!" He indicated D'Arcy. "That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.  
 "They may have taken to the woods," said Tom Merry.  
 "I guess that's more likely than not," remarked Wildrake.  
 "Let's look for them, and don't think of the worst till we know it's happened."  
 "Come on!"

The six juniors hurried down the dusky lane, and, reckless of the possibility of attracting the attention of the lion, they shouted the names of the missing fags.

Suddenly, to their intense relief and delight, there came an answering shout.

"That you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! It's Wally!" Arthur Augustus stopped in his tracks. "Where are you, Wally, you young wascal?"

There was a chuckle in the darkness.

"Over your head, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove!"

The junior stared upwards into the thick mass of foliage of the big tree overhanging the lane.

"Are you all there?" panted Manners.

"I'm here, Harry!" faltered Manners minor.

"Thank Heaven! Safe?"

"Yes."

"And I'm here!" said Frank Levison, peering down from the branches. "Have you seen anything of the lion?"

"Yes. He's gone past the school," said Tom Merry. "There's a crowd after him. Come down, you young asses, and let's cut. We shall get into a frightful row for being out of gates."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'd have come down before," answered Wally. "We saw a party go by with lanterns, and reckoned that the lion was mizzling off somewhere. But we couldn't."

"Why not? Come down at once!"

"Old Selby's here."

"Mr. Selby!" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment.

Wally chuckled.

"His merry self?" he answered. "We yanked him up into the tree; he jolly nearly walked into the lion. You should have seen the merry funk he was in! Talk about cold feet!"

"Bai Jove! Is it possible, Wally, that you are speakin' in that wotton way of your Form-mastah in his presence?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, greatly shocked.

"Oh, he can't hear me," said Wally—"he's fainted!"

"Gwast Scott!"

"We've had no end of a job with him," said Levison minor. "He'd stuck in a fork of the tree up here, and we've had to hold him all the time. He'd have fallen when he fainted if we hadn't held him."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"We can get him down, perhaps, if some of you fellows help," said Frank Levison. "We're afraid of dropping him if we move him. We shall have to carry him to St. Jim's, too, if we get him down, unless he comes to. He's in a dead faint."

"We'll come up," said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

A faint and feeble voice was heard in the deep foliage. "You insolent young rascals! How dare you speak in that manner! I shall punish you severely!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally, in utter dismay. "He's come to!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Frank Levison.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "There's going to be trouble for those merry fags when Mr. Selby gets them home again after this!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Wildrake suddenly.

There was a loud, reverberating roar in the distance. It was repeated, closer at hand, and there was an echo of running feet.

"The lion!"

"Good heavens! He's coming this way!" panted Tom Merry. "Up into the tree, quick—all of you!"

"Buck up!" yelled D'Arcy minor.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. clambered into the big tree in frantic haste.

Holding on to the branches, they looked down breathlessly into the lane. The running figure of a man came into view in the starlight. Wildrake uttered an exclamation.

"It's Benson, the circus rider."

"The man who let the wild beasts loose!" muttered Manners.

The running man stopped, staggering with exhaustion, and panting for breath. It was not only exhaustion that troubled him, however; he had been drinking, and his eyes were glazed as much by strong drink as by fear, as he stared back along the lane. A huge form, that moved with incredible swiftness for its size, was loping along the lane, evidently in pursuit of the circus rider. The lion had dodged his pursuers and doubled back, and evidently Benson, lurking in the vicinity after doing his evil work—perhaps gloating

over the harm he had done—had fallen in with the escaped beast. The man's coat was ripped from shoulder to wrist, where a claw had caught, showing how close the lion had been. Blood was dripping from his finger-tips. Tom Merry shouted to him.

"This way—get into the tree! Here—here—quick!"

Villain as the man was, it was no time to think of that. The juniors thought only of the fearful peril he was in. The exhausted, half-intoxicated man staggered, and stood unsteadily, staring upwards at the branches; and then, as he caught sight of the lion rushing down on him, he gave a shriek of fear, turned, and ran desperately again. A long, sinuous body leaped itself through the air, and came down again—and a long, fearful scream rang out in the night, as the staggering man went down under the spring of the lion.

## CHAPTER 9. Rough Justice.

"GOOD heavens!"  
 Tom Merry scrambled down the tree.

Benson had fallen to the earth, screaming again and again, and the lion was crouching over his prey. Tom scrambled down, hardly aware of what he was doing, but unable to keep back while the wretch lay under the lion's claws.

"Come back, Tom!" yelled Lowther.

"Tom Mewwy—"

"After him!" muttered Wildrake.

Tom Merry dropped into the lane. He had no means of attacking the lion—and once within reach of the fearful animal, one lash of a claw would have killed him. But he did not stop. He waved his hands and shouted at the lion, to draw his attention from the man struggling under the paws—and in that he succeeded. The lion glared round with burning eyes at the new enemy, and undoubtedly that saved the life of the hapless wretch in the ground.

Lights flashed along the lane—there was a roar of voices in the distance. The hunters were close on the track of the lion again.

The great brute lifted himself from the fallen man, and whirled round towards Tom Merry.

"Tom!" yelled Manners.

But Tom was on his guard.

As the lion turned on him the Shell fellow leaped back through the hedge, and darted round the tree. In a second he was clambering in the lower branches again.

Something struck the tree-trunk a foot below his boot as he clambered—something that clutched and tore. It was the claw of the savage beast he had so narrowly escaped. White and shaken, Tom swung himself into safety, and the lion roared below.

The terrible animal turned back through the gap in the hedge. Benson, covered with blood, was striving to drag himself away. For a moment the lion glared at him; but the flashing lights and shouting voices were close now, and the animal turned again and loped away into the recesses of the wood.

The crashing of the underwoods and thickets told which way he had gone; and the sounds died away in the distance as Mr. Sankey and his party came panting up.

The juniors descended from the tree. The lion was gone, and it was safe now. They gathered round the fallen man.

At a glance it was to be seen that Bill Benson was terribly injured. He lay in a pool of blood, with a colourless face looking upward, breathing in gasps.

Mr. Sankey came up breathlessly.

"It's Benson!" he exclaimed.

The circus rider gave a groan and opened his eyes. "You let the lions loose, Benson!" said the circus proprietor, fixing his eyes upon the man's ghastly face.

Benson groaned again.

"It serves me right!" he muttered. "I let them loose—and he got me! He got me—I'm done for!"

And he groaned again and fainted.

Mr. Sankey knelt by his side and made a hasty examination. The schoolboys gave him their handkerchiefs to bind up the insensible man's lacerated arm and shoulder.

"Carry him into the village, two of you," said Mr. Sankey. "He will recover all right, if he's taken care of. He'll never be the same man again, I reckon—and serve him right, after what he's done! Did you young gentlemen see which way the lion went?"

"Into the wood," answered Tom Merry, and he pointed the way.

"I reckon we've got a hard night's work afore us, then," said Mr. Sankey. "You youngsters ought to be indoors. Come on, men!"

Two of the men carried the insensible circus rider away, to be placed in the Cottage Hospital in the village. Mr. Sankey and the lion-tamer and the rest plunged into the wood, in hot pursuit of the lion.

"Better get back to St. Jim's while we've got the chance," said Manners. "Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Help me!" Mr. Selby's querulous voice came from the branches overhead; the juniors had forgotten him. "I cannot get down without assistance! I command you to help me—"

"No need for that, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "We're ready to help you."

"Don't be impertinent! Help me at once!"

Tom Merry and Wildrake clambered into the tree again to help the Third Form-master. It was not an easy matter to get him down, for Mr. Selby was trembling with apprehension and full of nervous fears. But he was landed safely at last.

"Now return to the school, all of you!" he said sternly. "I shall punish Manners minor, Levison minor, and D'Arcy minor severely; as for you others, as you are not in my Form, I shall report you to the Head for being out of bounds!"

"Is that your way of thanking us for helping you, sir?" inquired Kit Wildrake.

"Don't be insolent, Wildrake! Follow me at once!"

Lowther winked at his comrades.

"Do you fellows hear anything?" he asked. "Is that the lion—"

Before Lowther could say more, Mr. Selby, with a yelp of terror, was speeding up the road towards the school as fast as his long, thin legs could go. The juniors chuckled as they followed at a more leisurely pace.

They did not lose time by the way, however, mindful that the hunted lion might emerge from the wood again. When they reached the school gates they found Mr. Selby hammering frantically and dragging at the bell. Taggles, the porter, had not come out of his lodge. Taggles was not going to open the school gate again that night.

"Can't you get in, sir?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"You see that I cannot, Merry! Don't be foolish!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"Ahem!"

"Betah climb ovah, deah boys."

"Come on!" said Tom. The juniors climbed the wall, Mr. Selby eyeing them angrily.

"Kindly help me over!" he snapped at last. The juniors kindly helped him over; and perhaps it was by accident that Mr. Selby landed on the inner side of the wall with a heavy bump. If so, it was an accident that Mr. Selby certainly deserved. A few minutes later the little crowd were hammering at the School House, where they were promptly admitted.

CHAPTER 10.

The End.

TOM MERRY & CO. were severely called over the coals by the Head; but, taking into consideration their motive in going to the rescue of the fags, Dr. Holmes let them off with a lecture. And Mr. Selby, much to his disappointment, was deprived of the pleasure of punishing Wally & Co. After he had heard the whole story, the Head pointed out to Mr. Selby that the fags had undoubtedly saved him from the lion, which Mr. Selby grudgingly admitted; and, having admitted it, even Mr. Selby had to let the delinquents off. So Wally & Co. went to their dormitory rejoicing.

But there was little sound sleep in St. Jim's that night. The thought of the escaped lion was in all minds; and the whole school looked forward to the morrow with uneasy anticipation.

(Get next week's "Gem" which will contain another splendid, long complete story of the Chums of St. Jim's. Don't miss this extra special yarn. Out next Wednesday.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Half-a-crown is paid for all contributions printed on this page.

NOTHING TO LAUGH ABOUT.

An old lady visited the Zoological Gardens, and, after wandering about for some time, she went up to a keeper and tapped him on the shoulder with her umbrella. "I want to ask you," she said, "which of the animals in the Zoo you consider the most remarkable?" The keeper scratched his head. "Well, mam'am," he said at length, "after careful consideration I've come to the conclusion that the prize goes to the laughing hyena." "Indeed," said the old lady, "and why do you consider the hyena so remarkable?" "Well, mam'am," was the reply, "he only has a meal once a month, he only has a sleep once a week, and he only has a drink once a year. As for what he's got to laugh about is a mystery to me."—Bernard Goodman, 4A, Spills Meadow, Upper Gornal, near Dudley, Staffs.

VERY NEAT.

A witty lecturer was giving a lecture on "Fools," in a village hall, and the chairman, also witty, remarked to the audience: "We are here this evening to listen to a lecture on fools, by one of the greatest"—he paused a minute—"lecturers of the day." At the end of the proceedings the lecturer returned thanks for the pleasant things said about him. "I should like to feel," he said, "that you do not consider me such a fool as your chairman"—he halted here for a space—"would make me out to be."—E. Gundry, 40, Milton Avenue, East Ham, E.6.

JUST IN TIME.

Excited Speaker: "I've been to the Front, gentlemen. I've been wounded twice—once in the leg, once just here." He put his hand to his chest. "Liar!" shouted a member of the audience. "If a bullet had hit you there it could not have missed your heart." "I know," retorted the other, "but my heart leapt into my mouth and the bullet just missed it."—F. Keeling, 166, Brunswick Street, Leicester.

THE FROG.

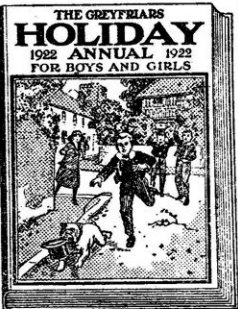
The frog is of the amphibia class that breathe by gills in their early life, and by lungs in their adult condition. Their eggs are laid in ponds in March, and consist of black yolks imbedded in a gelatinous mass of the white of egg. A fortnight later the tadpole hatches, and attaches itself to a water weed. At the start it is practically a fish, breathing with gills, and using its tail for swimming. Its hind limbs develop and its tail dwindles, and its gills disappear. In three months it is a frog.—A. Pender Crichton, 74, Gower Street, Kelvinside, Glasgow.

A MERE SHADOW.

A soldier returning from the front lines in India, after being down with fever, which had made him quite thin, was met by a friend on the quay, who greeted him thus: "Hallo! Is it you? I'm glad to see you're back from the Front." Soldier: "Good heavens! I did not know I was so thin."—William H. Lea, 145, Cross Road, Foleshill, Coventry.

SALUTATIONS.

Two elderly women were awaiting the train at Redhill Station. They were going to Looe, in Cornwall. "Go and get the tickets, Martha," said Hannah, who was nervous, though the train was not due out for half an hour. Martha did as asked, and, finding the office not yet opened, tapped on the shutter. "Two to Looe," she said to the clerk who opened it. "Pip-pip!" he responded, and banged the shutter down again.—F. Rose, 27, New North Road, Reigate, Surrey.



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Edited By TOM MERRY.

## Great Relay Race Result.

TOM MERRY'S FINE EFFORT.

### SKIMPOLE CREATES A SENSATION.

By REGINALD TALBOT.

SATURDAY was a glorious day, and, incidentally, the occasion of our first great sporting event. Shortly after twelve, the runners who had to take up their positions at the greatest distances from the school departed. Lawrence, Wynn, Digby, Brooke, Kerruish, Levison, Lumley, and Scrope left at 12.15, and went by train to Abbotsford, accompanied by two prefects. The latter four had only to walk along to the High Street, and wait until the former four ran up. The others, of course, had to take a two-mile walk out to the railway viaduct.

The rest of the fellows who had to go a considerable distance chose cycles, taxis, and motor-boats to convey them to their place of waiting.

At two o'clock Ralston fired his pistol, and Relay I commenced. If you have got the list printed in last week's "Gem" near by, you will observe that your humble is one of the four entrants. I won the first relay hands down, and my partner in Relay 2 made off like lightning. Noble came in about a hundred yards behind me, and then big second partner, Lorne, flew off. Frere panted up third, and released the anxious Con-tarini, and then Racke crawled in, utterly winded, and almost on the verge of collapse. By the time Hammond started away my second partner, Wyatt, had reached our third man—ahem!—Trimble. Before I proceeded further I want to make a remark about Racke.

Not knowing the date for which this event was fixed, Racke had arranged a smoking concert this afternoon at the Green Man. He was naturally furious when he found his name on the list as one of the first relay runners. When Racke finished his run, he was left on the towing-path of the River Rhyll, and about five minutes' walk from the back entrance of the Green Man. Knox had been the prefect in charge of the second group, and he was feeling very wild with Ralston for choosing him to take such a part. Knox was holding a "party" in his study at St. Jim's, and he made haste to get back to it when the second relay had all started off. This left Racke a clear field for crossing to the Green Man and keeping his appointment. This he did, arriving at the pub in his slimsy running-togs. He could not have enjoyed himself very much in that attire, but apparently Racke had worked things out ahead. Friday evening he cycled down to the village, and a big parcel, and gave a local boy half-crown to take it to Abel Joliffe, the landlord of the Green Man. So when Aubrey arrived at the village inn, he immediately changed his togs, and no doubt spent a very convivial afternoon. Racke's a bit of a fox, isn't he?

Hammond finished second in Relay 2, and then Blake went off in Trimble's wake. Con-tarini finished third, and released Manners. Then Lorne crossed in, and away tore George Figgins! Now, old Figgy's race was unquestionably the finest of the lot. Baggy Trimble was about a third of the way to

Wayland Moor when Figgy started. Blake was overhauling Trimble rapidly, and Manners was about two hundred yards behind them. Before they covered another hundred yards the New House leader had caught Manners up. He bounded over hedges and fences five-feet-six in height, which took the other three at least half a minute to negotiate! Figgy won the third relay—a distance of a mile and three-quarters, after having started last—by a clear six hundred yards! It's simply the finest run I've known a fellow make. Blake came in second, and Manners, who ran splendidly, came in third—less than a dozen yards behind Blake. Of course, that fat as Trimble threw us far behind. When he reached the road over Wayland Moor he paused for three minutes to buy some mucky sherbert-water from a wayside vendor. I wish I could have planted my boot behind him!

Reilly ran very well after the leg-up Figgins had given them, and the fourth relay stood to his credit. Mulvaney also ran well, and he placed second by beating Clampe and French. French came in third, and Clampe—after Blake's lift-up—came in last. Digby kept the well-established lead in the third division. Lawrence made up for Clampe's bad run by coming in second. Wynn and Brooke came in level.

#### The Return Course.

Lumley-Lumley, who suffers with his heart, had to take his run steady, and the result was that Ernest Levison beat him in the last half mile of Relay 6, and gave Dick Julian, in Relay 7, a good quarter of a mile start. Kerruish and Lumley ran in dead-heat. Scrope lost all our chances again.

But Relay 7 contained another surprise of the Figgins type. Clifton Dane—who has some Indian blood in his veins—started last, and outstripped Julian by ten yards. He had to move mighty hard to do it! D'Arcy also paced along well, and he came in at Julian's heels. Gibbons ran in very behind Gussy. This resulted in Mellish, Clive, Pratt, and Lennox all starting off in a bunch.

This relay was fated to be the most starting of the lot. Pratt caught up the other three after one hundred and fifty yards had been covered. Then Mellish's wind gave out, and he had to crawl along slowly. Clive developed a stitch, and took ten minutes to get over it. Then Pratt showed himself to be a dark horse, and he moved over the ground with amazing speed. Lennox made good progress for us until he got an insect in his right eye, and had to waste a quarter of an hour getting it out. The consequence was that Pratt had Relay 8 to his credit. Chowle started off first in Relay 9. This person seemed to have done the decent thing once. He had given smoking the go-by and taken to training. Cardew commenced second in this race, and travelled at about the fastest rate a snail can move. Smith started away in Relay 9, and then Kerr was released. Chowle won Relay 9. Kerr came in second, Smith third, and Cardew last. This lazy idiot actually had the cheek to taunter us with a flag in his mouth! Koumi Ran was first away from Minnow's Eyot; Gore got off second, Reddy third, and Gunn last. The Indian kid must have slithered along like greased lightning, for he really did Skimpole a good five minutes before Tom Merry started. Durrance got away third, and Herries fourth.

From the Grammar School to St. Jim's is just a mile, and Tom Merry stood to win easily. But Skimpy had been running for eight minutes—he was seized with the desire to read the ponderous book on determinism which he carried under his arm. So absorbed

did he become in his potty, pifflish pages that he floundered into a half-dry bog which separates the return track to St. Jim's from a big private residence.

When Skimpy at last scrambled out of this pit he discovered he had taken a short cut round this residence, and saved at least a third of the distance to St. Jim's. He then became struck with the idea of winning for his party, and scuttled along in grand style to the school.

A skinny object, covered with green slime and clinker dust, was what the crowd waiting at St. Jim's first set eyes upon.

Tom Merry, who ran for all he was worth, caught sight of Skimpole when the student of Professor Balmcyrumppett was only fifty yards from the school gates. Tom spurred magnificently, and covered three yards to Skimpole's one, and if the school gates had been another four yards on, the captain of the Shell would have won. Skimpy puffed under the old archway with Tommy fifteen yards behind him. Durrance and Herries tore in level.

This is the first event Skimpy has ever won in running races, and he was mildly surprised to find himself a popular hero. When asked about his wonderful appearance he could give no answer. Skimpole forgets some things about two minutes after they have happened. But the fellows soon worked things out, and several tried to make an objection. Ralston promptly told them their objections were groundless. The relay races between each appointed place were to be as straight as the cross flows when conditions allowed. All the last four could have gone through the ballast bog had they known what a distance it would save, and Ralston said Skimpole deserved to win for having been brave enough to wade through it. So, you see, Professor Balmcyrumppett's wonderful works have proved themselves really useful—for probably the first time.

REGINALD TALBOT.

## Making Things Comfy Out West.

LIFE ON THE OPEN PRAIRIE.

By KIT WILDRAKE.

THESE are many useful little whizzes which scouts and campers can learn from those who live almost entirely in the "great outdoors." Of course, when you are camping out you don't mind a few hardships; that's all part of the game. But, at the same time, you don't want something to happen that is going to spoil your little holiday altogether.

The boys on the prairie don't often have to make their beds on the ground, with the sky as the roof, because there's no alternative, and if it's been raining a good deal, and the ground is thoroughly soaked, it looks as if they would be in for a pretty rough time. But are they? Not on your life, boys!

These red-blooded lads of the prairie are used to combating a few hardships like this. Let me tell you a little trick we used to do at my home in Boot Leg Ranch.

Sometimes the men had to go out for a good hard ride to round up some straying cattle, and it was a matter of going over a meadow or two, I can assure you.

I often used to accompany them on these expeditions, and at the end of the day we were so saddle-sore and tired that we were

glad enough to lie down just where we were, without even troubling to run up a little bit of branches of trees.

Dirk Mace, the foreman of the ranch, and a real handyman, always knew what to do in an emergency.

On one occasion I had persuaded my father, the boss of Boot Leg Ranch, to let me go with Dirk and some of the cowboys who were trailing down a number of men suspected of cattle rustling. We started very early in the morning, and at sundown Dirk called a halt, and we were all mighty pleased, too, to get a rest, for we had been over some of the best country that horses had ever been asked to do.

It was all rocks and hills, and thick undergrowth, and, added to that, it had rained like fury the best part of the day. Unfortunately, we had far not yet been rewarded with a glimpse of the outlaws we were after.

The ground, of course, was soaking wet, and I wondered if we should have to stand up all night, for it would have been madness to have attempted to sleep on the grass, and we knew that there was no shack within miles of us. But all the time I was thinking of Dirk Mace and I somehow felt that he would see us through all right.

He had already lit a big bonfire, and it was very comforting to sit near it, and feel the warmth-giving glow. Already our dried clothes were almost dry upon us.

One of the other boys prepared a hot drink, and then I noticed that Dirk Mace was starting to light another big bonfire.

"Say, Dirk," I said to him, "You will be roasting us alive if you make another fire like the other!"

The ranch foreman looked at me, and there was a humorous smile upon his brown, handsome face.

"I'm going to let the first one out in a minute," he replied, and I could tell by the way he said it that he had something in view that was not yet apparent to a tender-foot like me. In a few minutes the second fire was blazing away right merrily, and the first had already begun to die down, as we had put no more fuel upon it.

"That will be the night fire," said Dirk, indicating the new one to me. "And this" he commenced to rake the last glowing embers with a stick in order to back them down, "is the day one we are going to sleep when it's cool, of course."

Dirk's wheeze was now quite plain to me. When the first fire had completely gone out, all that was left was a carpet of nice dry wood ash, and all around where the big blaze had been burning furiously some while before the grass was charred, and the ground beautifully dry.

There was plenty of room for all our merry party, and we quickly fell to sleep. The second fire kept us warm in the night air, and we awoke in the morning thoroughly refreshed, and without the slightest traces of cold.

So remember this, boys, if you are faced with a similar difficulty. Even if you have a tent with you, it is a good plan to dry the ground first, and then pitch it on the spot where you are to be burning. There's nothing like looking after yourselves, is there?

Yes, we caught the cattle rustlers the next day, but that is another story. It was a most exciting adventure, and perhaps some day I will tell you all about it. If Tom Merry can find room for me.

KIT WILDRAKE.

## Monty Lowther's Bright Idea.

### THE GREAT FISH STORY.

By TOM MERRY.

IT was on the occasion of a half the other day when Harry Manners, Monty Lowther, and myself were seated together, discussing ways and means of passing the few spare hours before tea.

Study No. 10 could never boast of its coolness, but on this particular occasion, with the sun beating it upon its roof, it gave one an absolute feeling of laziness.

To make matters worse, Manners and Lowther had perched themselves up on the window-sill, and were keeping out what little fresh air had a chance of coming in.

Suddenly we were interrupted by a knock on our door.

"Come in, fatted!" Manners shouted for me.

Of course, I was greatly perturbed. Supposing it was a master, or, worse still, the Head himself? Whatever would it have to do with me?

"Well, thank goodness it was only the Fourth-Form bouncers. Of course, we all rolled up our sleeves to stave off a possible jab, but we were not intended."

The chaps were not in that mood, however, and had come in to have a little chat, being in the same position as ourselves.

Well, we got thinking and thinking, but we were not to drive the nail home, as it were. Then dear, delightful old Gussy tried to enlighten us on some new fashions, but a bosh with a cushion soon finished him.

"Quiet, chaps," I said; "this won't do. Why the dickens can't someone think of something to do?"

There was then some shouting in the corridor outside, as though a heated argument was in progress.

"Bang!" Our door swung suddenly open, and there on the threshold stood our worthy, bespectacled old friend, Skimmy Before, by the shoulder.

"Wherefore this thuneess?" he demanded in a harsh tone.

The frightened Skimmy looked at him, and offered an explanation of his intrusion.

"My dear fellows," said the weedy youth, "I have just been expounding the tale of the loaf and the ten fishes to Wynn, but he seems to not drive the nail home, as so many men on one loaf, and with ten fishes—"

Thump!

"Oh!" yelled Digby, as he fell forward, banging his nose on the wooden table waving

him propelled by Lowther's rough handling. "What the merry dickens!"

"Desist!" yelled Monty frantically. "I've—I've really got it."

"You haven't," interrupted Digby, rolling up his sleeves in a warlike attitude; "but you're going to, and now."

He was promptly held back by several hands, and Monty Lowther was asked to explain. "Really, Dig, old man, I couldn't help it," said Monty sorrowfully. "It's like this. I've got a wheeze, and a real good one, too. Talking about fish—"

Just as he looked on spellbound at the excited Lowther, whose mouth was now opening, but with no sound forthcoming.

"It was some seconds before Monty continued."

"Listen, you fellows, and I will a tale unfold. As we are fishing for something to do, and our friend has come in with a fishy yarn, it has occurred to me that we could, just as we do time dangling the suspended pin, and endeavouring to tempt the tiny 'tidder.' What say you?"

It was not long before the occupants grasped the situation, and then, with one party who succeeded in getting the first bite.

The juniors straightaway ventured to ask Kildare to accompany a party of them down to the river on a little fishing expedition. The captain of the school, and a considerable fellow that he is, got interested in the notion right away.

It was a cheerful party, some from the New House, others from the School House, now, armed with a rod and line, and with the command of Eric Kildare, made their way to the River Rhyl to fish for the elusive "tidder." To make the outing more interesting, Mr. "C" offered a silver-handled walking-stick to the member of the party who succeeded in getting the first bite.

Arthur Augustus remarked it was a "weal certainty for him, as when he last fished with Earl Eastwood he landed eight pounds worth for his uncle had baited his line.

The river was soon reached, and the party scattered themselves on the bank, rods and lines at zero, waiting for the order to

begin. The order given, all fingers twitched nervously with the exception of one, David Llewellyn Wynn, who, strange to say, had eaten his bait, having had to satisfy an acute feeling of hunger on the boat, and this meant a false start, and the little difficulty was got over by all setting to work with a will to dig for a worm with which to bait the pin. The necessary item was soon found, and, with a splash, all lines dropped into the water together.

The fishing crowd watched intently for their floats to bob, indicating a possible bite.

Excitement came very early in the way of a terrific shout from Herbert Skimpole. It was not the learning of Professor Balmyn-crumpet that caused this sudden outburst, but, needless to say, the natural wit of St. Jim's was the first one to get a bite—a real live bite it was, too, and on his very ear! A saucy gnat, having spotted Skimmy's ear sticking out like the sails of a windmill, had alighted thereon, and made a playful bite. A sharp clap with his right hand, and Skimmy soon succeeded in drumming out the pest which had so pestered him, the little insect was falling a victim to his side. It had evidently bitten off more than it could chew.

A bright idea then struck Wynn, the noted goatee of the New House. He rigidly drew in his line, he affixed the dead gnat to his pin, and then slung his line in again with the others.

There were cries of annoyance from both sides as the dropping line disturbed the line preparing to gobble the delicious luxuries dangling before their noses from the other lines.

All was soon quiet again, but not for long.

Suddenly Wynn, with a sharp movement, nearly upsetting his chums and sending them rolling into the water, drew in his line.

There was amazement written on all faces, for there, shining in the sun, was a real live fish—and Fatty had caught it.

The winner of the walking-stick was proclaiming it with much applause. He can be seen any day now waving a stick along with his stick, and looking the very catch of the season himself.

## Towser, The Terrible Tyke.

### NO WONDER FIGGINS LAUGHED.

By GEORGE HERRIES.

We were feeling a trifle riled. By "we" I mean Blake, Digger, and Gussy, and myself, who share Study No. 6. George Figgins had been making a name for himself, and succeeded in carrying out a jape in a manner far too successful for our general liking. So I conceived the idea of sending my dear old dog Towser across to the Casual Ward for the purpose of obtaining a suitable rope with which we could crow over Figgins for ever more.

It took Towser just five minutes to get the sort of thing we wanted. My pet rushed back into the study panting, and carried a considerable portion of some unucky individual's nether garments.

"Figgins!" we cried, as Blake held up the piece of garment to view.

"Looks rather an expensive cloth for Figgys to wear, doesn't it?" remarked Digby, curiously.

At that very moment George Figgins entered the study himself. He had a bright smile on his face, and we noticed with puzzled frowns that his nether garments were quite intact.

"You fellows aren't half in for some trouble!" he remarked ominously.

We stared at him with many minglings. And then Blake asked him what he was gassing about.

"Well," he grinned, "your dear bowzer Towser has just paid a brief visit to the New House, and yanked out half the seat of old Ratcliff's trousers!"

### STOP PRESS!

#### Miss Ethel Cleveland on Holiday.

In our last issue Miss Cleveland ended her article by saying she would write this week on how George Edward Barby spent his first days at St. Jim's as a new boy. You will see that her article is missing, and my explanation is that she has gone away for a holiday. Her article will appear next week as usual.

### NO PARLIAMENTARY MEETING.

Debates this week are also off—for full explanation see next week's issue. There will, however, be a special article with a diagram dealing with secret passages and Pepper's Barn, by Ernest Levison.

TOM MERRY.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 709.



## A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

### NEW READERS START HERE.

Tom Mace, the son of a crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. The poor circumstances in which he has lived earn for him the scorn of Simon Lundy & Co., the school snobs. Spiky Meadows, a friend of Tom's father, Mr. Bill Mace, calls upon Tom, and tries to persuade the lad to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night. Returning late that evening, Tom is questioned by his Form-master, Mr. Mullins, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious Mr. Mullins, who knows something about Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. The following day Tom sees Mr. Gale, whom he had seen in conversation with Spiky Meadows when journeying to the school. Mr. Gale warns the lad against this man. Later Tom's mother comes to the school, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom would have fought the snob but for the promise to his mother not to fight. Tom is again visited by Spiky Meadows, the incident being witnessed by Lundy and Mr. Gale. Lundy is rather interested, and meets Spiky Meadows himself. He is encouraged by him to place a bet. Mainly through Tom's efforts, his Form win an important cricket match, and his companions suggest that an election should be held for a new Form captain. It goes strongly in favour of the scholarship lad, for most of the fellows are heartily sick of Lundy & Co. But Lundy is not satisfied, and the point is to be determined by a fight. Tom knocks Lundy down, but Bradley, who is keeping time, tries to cheat him of victory.

(Now read on.)

### Tom Mace's Victory!

FOR a moment no one doubted Bradshaw's counts. But before he could count out "four" quite two seconds elapsed. "Fair play!" howled the crowd. "Take the watch away!"

But the Sixth-Former who was refereeing had taken the precaution to check the count, and he sang out "Eight!"

Lundy heard that and jumped up. He was savage now—his temper out of control. And those who watched knew that he was a beaten man.

His temper had gone, and unless he recovered it this would be the last round.

He went at Tom like a bull at a gate—madly, blindly.

Tom staved him off, but he was up against the side of the ring now. Garnet stood behind him, and Garnet gave Tom's ankle a sly, cruel kick.

No one saw it; they were watching the fighting, not the fighters' feet.

Thus when Tom in pain dropped his left arm for a second there was a gasp of surprise.

With a sweeping right swing that had every ounce of his weight and strength behind it Lundy caught Tom just under the left ear, almost lifting the scholarship lad's jaw from its socket.

Down like a log went Tom. He did not open his eyes, he did not move at all; he seemed dead to the world.

Panting and triumphant, Lundy drew back a pace.

Tom's hour of triumph seemed short indeed.

"Now who's captain?" hooted Garnet, and there was a deep silence.

The Sixth-Former had already started to count.

"One!" counted the Sixth-Former, amidst a hush.

Tom Mace stirred slightly, though he did not rise, but remained as he had fallen, a helpless figure on the gym floor.

"Who's captain?"

That query echoed through the gym, and reached the ears of Tom. Yet he was powerless to move. That cruel kick that Garnet had given him still hurt, but it was forgotten. Somehow he seemed to feel no pain, although his whole frame was subjected to a peculiar numbness he had never felt before.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 709.

"Tom!" whispered Bob Peel anxiously. "Come on, old man, there's a chance yet!"

Bob Peel's tone was pleading, and his face was worried and exceedingly anxious. For the cheerful fellow could not bear the thought that his chum was to be defeated—and by such a fellow as Lundy.

Moreover, it was a fight for the captaincy. Peel could not forget that, and now it would mean that Lundy would retain the leadership, and probably the juniors would lose faith in Tom.

Valiantly, though his brain swam, Tom Mace strove gallantly to rise to his feet. The Sixth-Former was still counting:

"Six—seven—"

Tom Mace stirred slightly, and Peel shrugged his shoulders. "The poor old chap's done!" he said. "Unless—My word! He's getting up! He's up!"

By an almost superhuman effort, Tom Mace had raised himself on one arm, then though his head seemed to hang like lead, he had got on to his feet. He ducked away from his opponent.

Lundy gasped with amazement and annoyance. He had thought and hoped that Tom was a beaten man. When the scholarship lad had fallen so heavily, the bully of the Fourth thought all was over. But he had been mistaken, as he learnt now.

"Go in and finish him, man!" shrieked Garnet.

"Yaas, absolutely!" echoed Bradshaw. "Finish him, you know. Wipe the cad up, Lundy, old man."

And that is just what Lundy would have liked to have done. He gritted his teeth, and, crouching low, went for his smaller opponent.

Tom Mace's head was clearer now, and he watched Lundy's every movement warily. With the return of his senses, his brain had quickly thought over the last few moments before that terrible right swing that had felled him.

He remembered the kick upon the ankle—he could hardly forget it, for the aching sensation in his leg made him limp slightly.

It was then that Tom knew there had been treacherous work of some kind. So during the last few seconds of that round he kept well into the centre of the ring.

Lundy's eyes had a strange glitter, venomous and vicious, and his lips formed a thin, straight line—a line that always speaks of cruelty.

The crowd was silent now. To most of them it seemed that this round must be the end—with only one end, too—the defeat of Tom Mace.

Once, twice, Lundy rushed, but each time Tom side-stepped and sent into the cad's face a left, which, though stinging, had not the power or speed of Tom's usual punches.

Now Lundy was more careful, and he approached, with his usual crouch, waiting for a suitable chance to hook over one of those lefts.

A gasp went round the ring as Lundy rushed, and Bob Peel gave an exclamation of dismay. This was the end. Bob was sure of that.

To most of the fellows present Tom Mace resembled a wounded but very game bird, with Lundy the cruel, ready to spring.

He sprang, aiming at Tom's head, ready for the side-step and the left lead that he felt would follow. Being prepared for that left, Lundy hoped to avoid it, and send home a hook that would finish the fight for ever.

That hook might have come off if only Lundy could have made Tom Mace miss that lead. But he couldn't. His head seemed a magnet that drew the scholarship lad's left glove, and not only drew it, but held it.



The sound as Tom's gloved fist met Lundy's mouth, could be heard above the many whispers.

Then, even as Lundy staggered back, came the referee's call of "Time!"

Into the human ring ran Garnet, with Bradshaw at his heels, and between them the two led their leader to his corner. But, apart from his two bosom pals, Lundy was left alone.

At Tom Mace's corner, though, there was a small crowd of fellows all endeavouring to shake the scholarship lad by the hand.

"How on earth you got up after that smasher, goodness alone knows!" exclaimed Bob Peel. "Honestly, I thought you had gone for good, Tom."

"So did I," nodded Rider. "My stars, wasn't Tom's a punch, though?"

"It was," said another who stood by. "And if it hadn't been for time being called, old Lundy would have gone right out!"

And that seemed the general opinion. No one appeared to be in any way sorry for Lundy, or at all hopeful that he would succeed. Even if he won the fight and regained the captaincy, it was doubtful if he would have any loyal supporters amongst the juniors.

Peel was fanning Tom as for dear life, while Rider sponged the scholarship lad's face.

And Tom Mace lay back on the chair that some thoughtful junior had brought him. Tom's head ached, his ankle ached, and in his position many fellows would then and there have thrown up the fight.

"By the way, Tom," said Peel suddenly, "whatever made you drop your guard and let Lundy get home on you?"

Before replying to that question, Tom glanced round at the faces near to him, and then across to where Garnet was sponging his leader's face.

"I'll tell you another time," said Tom. "My ankle is aching like fury."

At that rather jumbled announcement Peel blinked, and he looked anxiously at Rider.

But Rider, who was sharper witted than Peel, laughed. "I get you, Tom," he said. "Weren't you in front of Garnet at the time, old man?"

Tom Mace nodded and smiled. Rider had caught his meaning.

"Then I'll stand behind the dear chap this time," said Rider, "and keep my eyes skinned."

The referee called "Time!" and the two principals went forward into the ring again. Rider took Peel's arm.

"Chump!" he whispered. "Don't you understand? Garnet hacked Tom's ankle—that's why he dropped his guard. Watch for squalls this round!"

Peel whistled and understood.

The second round opened rather tamely, for Tom being slightly lame, could not open hostilities, and had to leave that part of the fighting to Lundy. But that youth was not so sure of himself now as he had been in the first round.

He had no affection for those stinging lefts, and he wanted to steer clear of them. But in that he had set himself a rather difficult task. Once he went in to a lead, but could not get away quickly.

Like lightning Tom hit to his opponent's jaw, and again with his right to the ear.

Lundy let out a gasp, and, much shaken, went back, followed by Tom's relentless, drumming fists, which played havoc on the cad's face and head.

"Follow him up!" came a roar from the crowd.

"Knock him out!"

"Now for a one!"

Tom knew that he had got Lundy beaten—knew as well as Lundy did.

The bigger fellow was losing ground rapidly, at every blow. Into the side of the ring went Lundy, with Tom Mace close upon him. Now Lundy was by Garnet, and that fellow was watching keenly out of his ratlike eyes.

Smash, smash! went the punches upon Lundy's head and body. Timed punches they were, and for half a second Lundy dropped his arms, as he drew back from a left.

Then was Garnet's chance. But suddenly that wonderful opportunity passed. Dick Rider, wide awake, and watchful, shipped his arm round Garnet's waist, and to that fellow's dismay, lifted him clear of the ground, and back.

Not a word of protest did Garnet utter; he was too surprised. And Lundy, as he saw his trickster companion foiled, almost lost heart a gasp, and, much shaken, went back, followed by Tom's relentless, drumming fists, which played havoc on the cad's face and head.

"Follow him up!" came a roar from the crowd.

"Knock him out!"

"Now for a one!"

Tom knew that he had got Lundy beaten—knew as well as Lundy did.

Lundy's left feinted a drive; then, as Tom had expected, his right came up for a swing. Quick as lightning Tom countered, and went in to close quarters.

A right jab, that bruised Lundy's ribs and made him gasp, took away the last vestige of that fellow's ebbing spirit.

A smashing right on the mark crumpled the ex-Form captain up, and sent him reeling back, just to comfortable hitting distance.

Then clean as a knife through butter went Tom's left, with the whole of his lithe body behind it. And Lundy, with one last gasp that seemed to be the signal of defeat, went toppling back like a felled tree.

"Out!" cried Bob Peel, with a light-hearted skip. "He's out!"

The referee and timekeeper held up his hand for silence, and commenced to count.

"One—two—three—"

Eagerly the crowd waited and watched. But Lundy was out; no doubt about that. If that blow on the solar plexus had not been enough, the left to the point of the jaw had been all too sufficient. Now the big fellow lay a silent, unprotesting, crumpled heap.

"Six—seven—eight—nine—out!"

Lundy lay still.

Then a cheer rose that bade fair to lift the roof from the gym. Lundy was out—completely out!

Tom Mace was once more the hero of the hour.

"Hurrah!"

"Tom Mace!"

The glove captain of the Form bowed and smiled.

"Thank you!" he said softly; then stooped to raise his fallen opponent. And he was the only one there to do it.

Garnet had gone, with Rider's vigorous boot behind him; and Bradshaw, when he saw the way things were going, had gone, too, lest someone should pick a quarrel with him. For all he knew, Tom Mace might decide to fight him.

And the first thing that Lundy heard as he came to were the cheers for Tom Mace. To Lundy that was worse even than the defeat, and that had been bad enough, in all conscience.

Tom Mace was now the hero of the hour—captain of the Form. And Lundy had tried so hard to keep the scholarship lad under—had tried hard to make the other fellows scorn Tom, even as Lundy himself did.

#### Rogues in Council.

DU SK was falling as Mr. Mullins, the master of the Fourth Form at Millford College, came out of the School House and commenced to cross the quadrangle.

A slight breeze was blowing through the tree-tops, but the evening was nevertheless warm, almost oppressive.

Mr. Mullins was whistling to himself, as though he seemed happy. Yet there was no reason for that happiness. For had not Tom Mace that afternoon made himself popular throughout the school? And Mr. Mullins hated Tom—possibly for no other reason than that the lad was at Millford on a scholarship.

By now he had reached the gate on the far side of the quadrangle. The small gate was locked, but Mr. Mullins took from his pocket a key.

It was a private gate, to which masters alone had the key. Thus when they came in late at night they could let themselves into the school grounds without disturbing the school porter, or anyone else who might hear the clanging bell.

As yet it was only just past nine. The juniors had gone to bed, but lights still shined from various windows high up in the front of the school, which told that masters and seniors were still awake and in their studies.

Mr. Mullins had no desire whatever to stay in the school. To tell the truth, the master of the Fourth was not particularly fond of school life, but he had adopted it from force of necessity.

Out in the small path that led from the side door down to the lane that ran by the front of the school, he waited, looking round.

He thought he had heard a noise. His thin lips tightened. The first thought that entered his mind was that the sound might have been caused by some juniors breaking school bounds. That was why the master waited, keeping close to the wall, so that he could see without being seen.

A snapping twig, a footfall, and a figure stood before him. Mr. Mullins started and raised his eyes, staring at the man. He was big and shabbily dressed, and he leaned closer, and peered into the master's face.

"You!" he said. "My stars!"

Mr. Mullins drew back against the wall.

"What do you mean?" he asked hoarsely, attempting a bluff. "I don't know you, my man. Why are you hanging round here at this time of night?"

The man grinned.

"Come off it!" he said. "Don't work that gaff with me. S'pose you think I don't know you. I'd like to know how you thought I'd forget?"

"I don't know you!" snapped the master. "Get away from this school, man, or I will rouse the porter!"

The master waved his hand, and the ruffian before him sneered.

"Not so fast, matey," said the man. "You know me all right. You can't kick Spikie Meadows."

"Spikie Meadows!"

"Oh, chuck it, Edgar, whatever you call yourself now!"

"Mullins—my name is Mullins, and I am a master at this school."

"Oh, well, then, Mullins. That's as good a name as any other—eh? You were Morris when I knew you. A master are you? I've seen you about 'ere, an', though you've dazed your 'air, and changed a bit, I 'aven't forgotten. I shall never forget the time—"

"Stop!" cried the master. "That is over now. I am a master."

Spikie Meadows nodded.

"Hiding?" sneered. "Well, it was a good way. You had an education, and you always was a good penman. Don't suppose you had much difficulty in getting a job 'ere."

"I don't understand you," said the master.

Spikie Meadows kicked his teeth.

"Come off it!" he snarled. "Cut the cackle, Mullins, or Mullins, whatever it is. I know why you're 'ere. You're on the same job as I am—the 'eadmaster's pictures!"

"The headmaster's—"

Mr. Mullins dropped his jaw.

"So that's your game!" he cried. "You're hanging round here so that you can get into the school and get those!"

"Surprises you—eh?" he said. "You'd never think of such a bad, wicked scheme as that! Oh dear, no!" He lowered his voice. "Now, you listen to me. This is a big deal. A man I know's offered thousands for those pictures, and I'm on the job with another bloke, one Bill Mace."

"Mace!"

"Yes, Mace, father of your bright scholar, Tom, of that ilk. Know 'im?"

"Of course!" snapped the master. "He's a new boy, here on scholarship."

"That's right," said Spikie. "That kid's a nuisance, though. Bill and me thought he'd do the open window stunt. Then things 'ud be easy. He could do several things for us, too. Those pictures are in the 'eadmaster's library—"

Mr. Mullins was anxious and silent. He had been in perpetual fear ever since he had been at the school. And now his first thought was to resign.

But Meadows seemed to read the master's thoughts. "I ain't finished yet," said the ruffian. "Not by any manner of means. This kid ain't no good to us, but you are. You're going to leave that window open, or up comes your past against you with a bang!"

"What—what do you mean!" ejaculated the master. "You want me, a master of the school, to leave a window open, so that you can come in and steal the pictures! You fool! I will report you to the police—"

Meadows gave a grating laugh.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "Sounds very fine, that! But, listen to me! It is you that'll be reported, my friend. You've been 'idden down 'ere for a time, but your game'll be up if I'm lagged by the police."

Mr. Mullins went quite white. Here in the school he had deemed himself safe. He had gone straight, too, and had thought that his past was quite forgotten. But now, with Meadows' return, all seemed black again.

"Do what I ask," repeated Spikie Meadows, "and I'll leave you alone. I'll forget you're alive, Mullins."

The master was trembling with agitation now.

"Why couldn't you leave me alone?" he groaned. "I have done nothing to you, Meadows!"

Meadows shook his fist.

"Will you do it?" he cried angrily.

And then, after another long pause, the master nodded.

"You had a key to that side-gate," said Meadows. "You can give me that. It will prove very useful. And don't forget—leave that small window open to-morrow night!"

The master nodded weakly.

"All right," he said. "I will!"

Mr. Mullins turned on his heel, and, after handing the key of the side-gate to Meadows, returned to the school. He had come out for a stroll in the cool night air. But he did not feel like a stroll now.

And while the master was pacing the study, trying to clear his mind of doubts and fears, Lundy, Bradshaw, and Garnet were creeping across the quadrangle to the side-gate.

Lundy had a key to this gate. He had taken the liberty of purloining Mr. Mullins' one day, and had had a copy made of it. The gate, to his surprise, was unlocked.

The three knots stopped. They had come there, breaking bounds, to meet Spikie Meadows. Lundy was more keen than ever now to find out from Meadows the truth about Tom Mace.

"Hallo!" said Lundy. "Here you are!"

Meadows came forward.

"Hallo, me lads!" he said. "I've got bad news!"

"Bad news!" ejaculated Lundy. "What about? You don't mean Brian of the Morning lost!"

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