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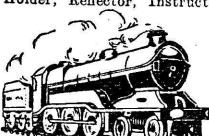
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ST. JIM'S to the RESCUE

A Grand, Long Complete Story of Gordon Gay & Co. and the Chums of St. Jim's,

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 4. Trouble!

THERE'S going to be a wow!"

"A what?"

"A wow!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy impressively.

D'Arcy of the Fourth made that announcement to a crowd of juniors in the School House at St. Jim's after lessons on Monday morning.

The noble countenance of Arthur Augustus was very serious. But Tom Merry & Co. did not look very serious as they received the announcement.

"A wow?" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "What sort of a wow?"

"A fearful wow, I think."

"Do you mean a bow-wow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—" Arthur Augustus turned his eye-glass reprovingly on the humorist of the Shell. "This is not a matlah for jokin'. There is goin' to be a wow, a tewwific wow!"

"Well, who's going to row whom?" asked Tom Merry.

"Dr. Monk has just come in," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "Toby has shown him into the Head's study."

"The giddy Grammar School headmaster!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas."

"My hat!"

The juniors began to look serious now.

A visit from the Head of Rylcombe Grammar School to the Head of St. Jim's certainly looked as if trouble might be in the offing. Of late, the alarms and excursions between the St. Jim's fellows and the Grammarians had been of rather a strenuous nature. The rival schools had, in fact, been "going it."

"Bless Dr. Monk!" said Blake of the Fourth. "I don't see what he's got to grouse about. The Grammarians got the best of the last row."

"Owing to that ass Grundy!" said Digby.

"They did rather score over us," admitted Tom Merry.

"We had all the trouble at our end, anyhow. Dr. Monk can't have come over to complain about us. Our Head is more likely to complain, if you come to that, considering what a shindy there was here on Saturday."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bother these headmasters!" yawned Monty Lowther. "They're a worry. They spoil a school. Headmasters are lacking in a sense of humour. I'd like to know what Dr. Monk has to say to the Head."

"Can't drop in and ask," said Manners. "Hallo! Here's Trimble! Trimble ought to know something about it. There's a keyhole in the Head's study door."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth gave a sniff as he rolled up and joined the group of juniors in the Form-room corridor.

"What's Dr. Monk been saying to the Head, Trimble?" asked Lowther.

"Eh? How should I know?" snapped Trimble.

"Haven't you been listening at the door?" asked Lowther, with a look of great astonishment.

"No!" howled Trimble.

"Great Scott! How did that happen?"

"That beast Kildare was coming along the passage—I—I—I mean, I—I never thought of listening at the door at all—"

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

"But I can jolly well tell you what old Monkey's come over

about," said Trimble. "I happen to know! I get to know things, you know. The Head telephoned to him."

"And how do you know that?" inquired Herries.

"Pure chance," said Trimble. "I happened to be near the Head's door, and happened to hear him at the telephone, and happened to stop to tie up my bootlace at the same moment, and so it happened that I happened to hear what he happened to say on the telephone—"

"What a thumping lot of happenings!" said Blake. "It will happen once too often one of these days, Yumble, and you'll happen to get a boot when you're happening to have your fat ear at a keyhole."

"My ear wasn't at the keyhole. The door happened to be ajar—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course I didn't listen. But my bootlace took rather a long time to tie—just as long as the Head was on the 'phone, in fact. He told Dr. Monk about the row here on Saturday, and—"

"Bai Jove! I weally do not think that we ought to allow Twimble to tell us what he learned by eavesdropping, deah boys."

"I wasn't eavesdropping!" yelled Trimble indignantly. "I suppose a fellow can happen to hear what anybody happens to say in his hearing?"

"Those happenings happen to you too often!" remarked Blake.

"Oh rats! The Head told old Monkey about the row, about somebody distributing handbills, announcing that there was a sale of ex-Government surplus stock in the quadrangle of St. Jim's, and a terrific crowd barging in here for bargains. He said he's 'phoned to the printer at Rylcombe, and learned that the handbills were ordered by a boy belonging to the Grammar School."

"We'd guessed that!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He told old Monkey it was a serious matter; no end of a disturbance at St. Jim's on account of it. He said that he expected old Monkey to larrup the young scallywag—"

"What?"

"Bai Jove! I weally cannot imagine the Head usin' such expressions as that, Twimble."

"Perhaps he didn't use exactly those words," said Trimble. "Something to that effect. Old Monkey must have said that he'd come over and see him about it, because the Head said he would expect him at twelve-thirty."

"That's wight. It was half-past twelve when Dr. Monk wolloled in," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Then it's our Head who's grouching about the row," he said. "And it's Gordon Gay & Co. who are booked for trouble. Better them than us, of course. But I'm sorry. I wish these headmasters wouldn't butt in."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's rotten!" said Blake. "We want to give Gordon Gay the kybosh; but we don't want him flogged by his blessed headmaster. Why can't headmasters keep off the grass?"

"Echo answers why?" said Lowther.

"Bai Jove! I don't quite see that, Lowthah. It appears to me that echo would answah 'gwass.' Echo answahs the last word not the first—"

"He worked that out in his head!" said Monty Lowther admiringly. "Won't he startle them when he gets into the House of Lords?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, they won't keep off the grass," said Tom Merry. "After all, it was rather thick of Gay to land us with a bargain-hunting crowd in our quadrangle. I'm not surprised that the Head is annoyed. I suppose Gay is going to get the chopper!"

"I'll find out for you," said Trimble.

"Eh? How will you find out?"

"You fellows come and keep watch in the passage, in case Kildare or some other beastly prefect comes along, and I'll listen to what they're saying," said Trimble generously. "Depend on me to hear every word."

"Bai Jove! You howwid wottah!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at Trimble. His generous offer to play the eavesdropper, with their noble selves as his accomplices, almost took their breath away.

"Is it a go?" asked Trimble.

"You fat rotter!" roared Blake.

"Look here, you know—"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "Trimble has made us a kind offer, rather too Trimblish to be accepted! I suggest testifying our gratitude to Trimble in an unmistakable manner."

"Hear, hear!"

"If you are thinking of a spread—" began Trimble.

Trimble had no time to finish. Evidently Tom Merry & Co. were not thinking of a spread for Baggy. Their idea of a suitable reward for his kind offer was quite different from that. They closed round Baggy Trimble, and grasped him.

Trimble's fat legs suddenly flew from under him, and he sat down in the corridor with a heavy concussion.

Bump!

"Yaroooooop!" roared Trimble.

Then Tom Merry & Co. strolled away, leaving Baggy Trimble sitting on the floor and spluttering, and probably resolving never to make any more generous offers to these ungrateful fellows.

CHAPTER 2.

The Sympathisers.

TOM MERRY & CO. gathered in the quadrangle to watch Dr. Monk depart.

They "capped" the old gentleman very respectfully, and Dr. Monk returned their salute courteously enough. But there was a deep frown upon his face, and it did not relax. He stepped into his car and departed, and his expression, as he went, boded trouble for somebody.

Whereat Tom Merry & Co. felt a little worried.

It was true that they were at war with the Grammarians, and of late the war had raged with great vigour. It was true that the Grammarians had captured the honours in the last encounter. It was true that Gordon Gay's amazing stunt of announcing a sale in the quad of St. Jim's, by means of handbills distributed all over the neighbourhood, was rather beyond the limit, as Gay himself had probably realised afterwards. It was true that there had been an astounding scene at St. Jim's and that the Head had had difficulty in dispersing the disappointed crowd without a riot.

All these things were true. But Tom Merry & Co. did not want the wrath of Heads to fall upon the delinquent.

They were prepared to deal with Gordon Gay of the Grammar School in the most drastic manner themselves. But they did not want him to be punished by the "Beak." That wasn't in the game at all. The intervention of headmasters really spoiled the whole thing.

They wished that something could be done to ward off that unpleasant contingency. Arthur Augustus proposed a deputation to the Head, and "puttin' it to him as a sportsman." Arthur Augustus was promptly suppressed. There really seemed nothing to be done, which was a worry.

At afternoon lessons that day Tom Merry did not devote his whole attention to the valuable instruction he received from Mr. Linton.

He could not help his thoughts wandering to the Grammar School, and to the "chopper" that was apparently coming down on Gordon Gay & Co.

When the Shell were dismissed Tom Merry spoke to his chums—Manners and Lowther—on the subject that was uppermost in his mind.

"It's rotten about Gay!" he said.

"Rotten!" agreed Lowther. "It serves him right! He's fairly asked for it. But it's rotten!"

"Can't be helped!" said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I suppose there's nothing we can do?" he said. "But I'd like to run over and see Gay about it. We can sympathise, at any rate."

So the Terrible Three wheeled out their bicycles, and pedalled over to Rylcombe, to call on Gordon Gay.

They were going on quite a friendly mission, but they were very wary as they approached the gates of Rylcombe

Grammar School. It was very probable that their friendly intentions might fail to be recognised, and that the visit might result in a rag if they were not very careful. They left their machines at the porter's lodge, and walked into the quadrangle, which was pretty crowded with Grammarian juniors after lessons. And there was a howl when they were sighted.

"St. Jim's cads!"

Lane and Carboy came racing up, with a crowd of the Grammarian Fourth. Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Pax!" he said nastily.

"Pax be blowed!" said Carboy.

Monty Lowther waved his handkerchief. This was intended as a white flag, the sign of truce.

Lane, Carboy & Co. did not heed it. They rushed on the three and collared them.

"Flag of truce!" roared Lowther. "Can't you see the white flag, you ruffians?"

"Where's there any blessed white flag?" demanded Carboy.

"Here it is, you ass—my hanky!"

"Call that white?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar these blessed pirates, you fellows!" said Carboy. "Fellows who sail in under a black flag are entitled to be treated as pirates!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

Monty Lowther spluttered with wrath. It was true that his handkerchief was not fresh from the laundry. But it was an exaggeration to say that it resembled the piratical black flag.

"Hold on, you duffers!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's really pax. We've come to call on Gay."

"Then you shouldn't fly the black flag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well punch your silly head, Carboy!" roared Lowther.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" Gordon Gay, the captain of the Grammarian Fourth came up, looking rather less cheery than usual. "You've come over to see me?"

"That's it," said Tom. "No larks."

"Right! Chuck rags, you fellows!"

The Terrible Three of St. Jim's were released, and they walked with Gordon Gay into the School House. They could not help noting that Gay was looking rather "down," and they wondered whether the chopper had already fallen. But the Grammarian chief was hospitable to his friendly foes, and he led them to his study in the Fourth Form passage. Wootton major and minor were there, and both of them looked dismal.

"Guests to tea!" said Gordon Gay.

"Oh, all right!"umbled Wootton major.

"We didn't exactly come to tea—" began Tom Merry.

"All serene. You've come at tea-time, anyhow," said Gay, "and there's rather a specially good spread to-day. We're consoling ourselves with tuck for the devastating wrath of the merry old Head. Talk about the wrath of giddy old Achilles! It wasn't a circumstance to old Monkey's. Your blessed Head has been barging in with complaints of our rag on Saturday."

"It was rather thick!" said Manners.

"It was," agreed Gay. "Couldn't expect your headmaster to like it. And we're booked in consequence. Never mind; it's all in the day's work!"

"What's the verdict?" asked Tom.

"Extra special caning," said Wootton minor. "I thought at first it was going to be a flogging when I saw Dr. Monk's chivvy after he came back from St. Jim's. But he's fixed it at a caning—extra special—to take place to-morrow morning before the whole school."

"That's as a general warning," explained Wootton major. "We're going to be held up as a horrible example."

"All of you?" asked Tom.

"Six," said Gay. "Us three, and Lane, Carboy, and Frank Monk. Young Monkey will probably get it the worst, as he's the Head's son. And old Monkey will be careful to show that there isn't any favouritism. Not all lavender being the headmaster's hopeful son. Of course, there were more than six in the rag, but I've told the others to keep clear, and old Monkey doesn't know about them. Six is enough to go through it."

"More than enough!" groaned Jack Wootton. "I'd rather it were five!"

"It's rotten!" said Tom.

"That isn't all!" grunted Harry Wootton. "Six half-holidays stopped as well."

"Phew! Monkey is coming down heavy."

"Oh, these headmasters!" said Gay, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Of course, he wants Dr. Holmes to understand how shocked he is at such lawless proceedings! I've a jolly good mind to punch young Monkey's nose for not bringing his father up better. Never mind! Let's have tea."

The three Grammarians and their guests sat down to tea,

and they had hardly started when there was a yell under the window.

"You uttah wuffians! Welsease me, and give me my toppah!"

"Hallo, that's Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Another giddy visitor!" grinned Gay. He crossed over to the study window and looked out. In the quad below a crowd of Grammarians had Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in their midst, and Lane of the Fourth had possession of his beautiful hat. Gay shouted from the window.

"Chuck it! Is it peace or war, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus looked up.

"Pax, deah boy! I came ovah to wescue you ffrom your twouble."

"Oh, my hat! If you can do that, old pippin, I'll stand you a new sevenpenny necktie as a prize."

"Weally, Gay—"

"Let him come up, you fellows," called out Gay. "No rags!"

And Arthur Augustus recovered his topper, and escaped from the Grammarian crowd into the house. He presented himself in a rather breathless state in Gordon Gay's study.

"Trot in, old top!" said Gay.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

"You've come over to see us before the execution?" asked Gay.

"I have come ovah to tell you of a wippin' ideah to wescue you ffrom the execution!" said Arthur Augustus impressively.

"Rot!" remarked Wootton minor.

"Weally, deah boy—"

Gordon Gay laughed.

"There's nothing doing!" he said. "But you're welcome. old pippin—welcome as the merry flowers in the spring. Another cup of tea here!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—after depositing his silk hat very carefully on the book-case—joined the tea-party.

CHAPTER 3.

Gussy's Great Wheeze.

"HEM!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy coughed. He had, as stated, come over to the Grammar School with the benevolent object of rescuing the Grammarian chums from their scrape—quite a noble and dis-

interested object. It was, doubtless, no easy task. Indeed, to everyone but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, it appeared impossible. The sentence had been passed, and was to be executed on the following morning—and certainly there seemed no avenue of escape open.

But Gussy's mighty intellect had been brought to bear on the subject. He had thought the matter out. He had made plans! Generously forgetful of rivalry with the Grammar School, forgiving—if not forgetting—the number of times his topper had been knocked off by playful Grammarians—Gussy had rushed to the rescue.

And now, in Gordon Gay's study, there was a total lack, apparently, of curiosity on the subject! It was remarkable.

Gordon Gay & Co. certainly knew that Gussy had come to save them, for he had told them so! Yet they seemed utterly devoid of curiosity on the subject. They talked on many subjects with the Terrible Three, but did not once refer to Gussy's stunning—and as yet unknown—wheeze!

"Hem!"

The swell of St. Jim's coughed again. He was not, as he often explained, a fellow to put himself forward in any way. His tact and judgment were at anybody's service; but he was a modest youth. He waited for the conversation to come round to his benevolent purpose in visiting the Grammar School.

But it didn't come round! He waited in vain! It really looked as if the Grammarians didn't place any value on the "stunt," whatever it was, and were not keen to hear about it.

"Hem!"

At the third cough, Wootton major glanced at Gussy.

"Like a cough-drop?" he asked. "I've got some."

"Thank you—no!"

"You seem to have a bit of a cold," said Wootton major.

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Pass Gussy the jam-tarts," said Gordon Gay.

"Thank you, I have finished, deah boy. The fact is—"

Arthur Augustus paused for inquiry, but no inquiry came. Evidently the whole study had forgotten that Gussy had a "stunt" at all. "The fact is, I was goin' to explain my scheme to you fellows—"

"You've got a scheme?" said Gay.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Some new design in neckties?"

"Nothin' of the sort!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Weally, Gay, I have already mentioned that I have a scheme for wescuin' you fellows ffrom the wescults of your fatheaded twicks on Saturday."

"Of what?" ejaculated Gay.

"Fatheaded twicks, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Gussy's always polite like this, when we take him out to tea," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You mean our stunning jape?" asked Gay.

"As I am a visitah beah, deah boy, I will allude to it as a stunnin' jape, if you like," said Arthur Augustus, yielding the point gracefully. "But if I were not a visitah, I should certainly describe it as a fatheaded twick. However, to wescume. I suppose you fellows do not want to be whacked by your headmastah to-morrow—"

"We're not yearning for it," assented Gay. "We could do without it, and still find life worth living."

"'Tain't only the caning," said Jack Wootton dolefully—"it's six half-holidays gone as well!"

"Wely on me, deah boy. I am goin' to wescue you," said Arthur Augustus. "I have brought my bwain to beah on this subject, and thought out a way of savin' you ffrom the consequences of your fatheaded—stunnin' jape. I pwesume you would like to heah the details?"

Gordon Gay & Co. smiled the smile of resignation. They gave Gussy credit for the very best of intentions. But really they did not think there was "anything in it."

"Oh, worry on!" said Wootton major.

"Bai Jove! That is not a vevy encourwagin' way to put it," said D'Arcy. "Howevah, I will pwocceed. It appeahs



Lane and Carboy, with a crowd of Grammarian Fourth, charged upon the Terrible Three. Tom Merry hold up his hand. "Pax!" he said hastily. Monty Lowther waved his handkerchief. This was intended as a white flag, the sign of truce. The Grammarians did not heed it. They rushed on the three and collared them. "Flag of truce!" roared Lowther. "Can't you see the white flag, you ruffians!"

that your headmastah has taken this matiah vevy sewiously, and is goin' to make you sit up."

"Just that!" said Gay.

"Suppose he welented—"

"He won't relent, ass. Why should he? He looks on these little games of his as a duty."

"Yaas; but suppose we could make him welent—"

"How?" ejaculated Gay.

The three Grammarians stared at Arthur Augustus. So did Tom Merry & Co. The swell of St. Jim's had the attention of the whole study at last.

"Suppose there was a burglawly in this school to-night," ha said.

"A—a what?"

"A burglawly."

"My hat! Suppose there was—what then?" said Gay blankly.

"Suppose you fellows—all the fellows who are goin' to be caned to-morrow—suppose you woke up and caught the burglars—"

"Well?"

"And saved Dr. Monk frowm a vevy heavy loss—I suppose he has some money in his safe?"

"I suppose so!"

"Well, then, it stands to weason that aftah a bwave and devoted action like that, he would welent, and decide not to wallop you."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" said Gay.

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead with a saddened expression.

"Don't mind him," he said. "Gussy can't help these things. It's a vevy old family, you know, and the brains went some generations ago. Gussy will never really be in his right element till he goes to the House of Lords or Colney Hatch."

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Lowthah—"

"But—but—but," gasped Gordon Gay, "a burglaw won't come burglaw the Grammar School to-night, I suppose, just so that we can stop him and get Dr. Monk to relent?"

"Yaas, wathah! That's the stunt!"

"Can you turn a giddy burglaw on, then?" howled Wootton major. "Are you going to telephone to the stores for one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You do not quite compwehend yet, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus complacently. "There are goin' to be three or four burglaws, in ordah to make the affair convincin' and excitin'. I am goin' to be one of them—"

"You!" yelled the Grammarians.

"Yaas; and Blake, pewwaps, and pewwaps Tom Mewwy, if he will undahtake to do exactly as I tell him—"

"I can see myself doing it!" murmured Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy— You catch on to the stunt?" asked Arthur Augustus, beanning on to the astounded Grammarians. "They won't be weal burglars, of course, but Dr. Monk will think that they are weal. You will baffle the pwetended wobbewy, but the burglaws will escape, of course. Othahwise, the old gentleman would tumble to the twick. Havin', as he will suppose, wescued him frowm a feahful wobbewy, he is bound to be gwateful, and welent, and let you off the wallopin'. What do you think of that ideah, deah boys?"

Like Brutus of old, Arthur Augustus paused for a reply. He waited for the chorus of admiration. But instead of choring admiration, six juniors stared at him dazedly.

"Well," repeated Arthur Augustus, "what do you think of the ideah? Don't all speak at once!"

But the juniors did all speak at once. Their answer was brief, but unanimous:

"Rotten!"

CHAPTER 4.

A Stunning Stunt:

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY polished his celebrated eye-glass upon the corner of a cambric handkerchief, adjusted it carefully in his eye, and then turned it upon the half-dozen juniors, one after another. Six faces were grinning round the study table; but the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus was gravity itself.

"I weally think my yahs must have deceived me," he said, at last, with a great deal of dignity. "Am I to undahstand that you sewiously chawactewise my wippin' scheme as wotten?"

"Just that!" grinned Manners.

"Yes, rather!" assented Wootton major. "In fact, rotten isn't the word! Fatheaded!"

"Bosh!" said Wootton minor.

"Piffle!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Potty!" said Monty Lowther.

Gordon Gay did not speak. He had joined in the chorus of condemnation, but that was on the first impulse. Now

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 732.

there was a vevy thoughtful expression on Gay's face. He was thinking it out.

Certainly, it was a hare-brained scheme. It was an amazing stunt! But just as a mariner in danger of shipwreck decides upon any port in a storm, so Gordon Gay was willing to consider any scheme, however hare-brained, that would offer the least prospect of rescue from a record caning and the stoppage of six half-holidays.

Arthur Augustus frowned portentously.

"I was thinkin' this out all the aftahnoon," he said coldly. "I was waggid in class by Mr. Latham for not attendin' to lessons. I have exerted all my bwain powahs in thinkin' out this wippin' wheeze. Now you tell me it is wotten."

"Putrid!" said Lowther.

"I wegard you as a sillay ass, Lowthah. I wegard Tom Mewwy and Mannahs as sillay asses!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Bein' a visitah, I will not state how I wegard these chaps!"

"Hold on!" said Gordon Gay. "Let's think it out—"

"Fathead!" roared Wootton major. "Are you thinking that there's anything in a potty scheme like that?"

"Pway, give Gay a chance, you fellows. It is quite poss that he is not such a sillay ass as his fwends, you know."

"Why, you chump—"

"Why, you fathead—"

"I wepeat, that it is quite poss," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"Let's go into it," he said. "As matters stand, we're booked for a thumping good licking to-morrow morning, and holidays stopped for three weeks. Whatever we do, even if it fails, it can't make matters much worse. Monkey major can only give us one licking at a time, and he isn't likely to go exploring further ahead than three weeks to bag holidays from a chap. It looks to me that we stand to gain if successful, and can't lose vevy much if we fail."

"Something in that," said Wootton major. "But—"

"But—" grunted Wootton minor.

"Figure it out," said Gay. "Three or four masked ruffians break into the school—they find a box-room window open,

say—

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Horrid alarm at midnight," continued Gay. "Half a dozen heroic youths rush down from the Fourth Form dormitory in their pyjamas—"

"Jolly cold weather for pyjama stunts."

"Well, you can take a fur-lined overcoat to bed with you, if you don't think the Head would smell a rat when he saw it," said Gordon Gay sarcastically.

"Oh, cut out the sarc! Get on!"

"Six heroic juniors rush down, and catch the horrible ruffians in the act," continued Gordon Gay, his eyes lighting up. "There is a terrific scrap, which brings everybody on the scene—"

"But if the burglars are caught, and turn out to be St. Jim's chaps, won't the Head smell a rat, then?" demanded Jack Wootton.

"He might," said Gay. "Very probably he would, image! But the burglars won't be caught! The fearful scrimmage will take place near a window that's open, and when the crowd come on the scene, the burglars will bolt. They'll drop a few burglarious implements to give colour to the thing—"

"Where are they going to get any?"

"Anything will do—say, a cold chisel, and a brace and bit," said Gay. "They will look burglarious enough. They escape—leaving proofs behind them. Six noble youths—us, and Monkey and Lane and Carboy—remain breathless and victorious. The Head exclaims—"

"Does he?"

"Yes, he does—he exclaims: 'My brave boys, you have saved me from a terrible loss!'" said Gordon Gay. "Then we all go back to bed—"

"I should think the Head would telephone for the peelers, if he believed it was a posh burglaw."

"Well, let him—the St. Jim's chaps will be back in bed by the time they come."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In the morning," continued Gay, evidently very much taken with the idea now, "the Head bethinks him—"

"He whatters?"

"Bethinks him, that the six chaps he is going to scalp, are the six who risked their lives to baffle the deadly burglars. In the circs, he simply couldn't lay it on hard. There's such a thing as gratitude, even in the stony heart of a headmaster. Dr. Monk looks pretty tough outside, but it stands to reason that there's a soft spot in his heart somewhere—"

"A soft spot in his head would be more useful to us, with a stunt like that!" said Wootton minor.

"Don't argue, old chap! Instead of licking us as a horrible example to the school, he takes us by the hand—"

"By the ear, more likely."

"Shurrup! Takes us by the hand, and makes a little speech, holding us up to the school—"

"He couldn't hold the three of us up at once. Besides, why should he hold us up?"

"Fathead!" roared Gordon Gay. "Holding us up to the school as an example of courage and coolness in the hour of danger."

"Oh, I see!"

"Which would be our due," said Gay. "The danger, of course, that we'd faced, would be the danger of a licking, not the danger of a burglary. The Head wouldn't know that. So all his compliments would be deserved, though not exactly in the way he will mean."

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "Aren't you counting your chickens rather early, Gay?"

"Better see 'em out of the incubator first!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Wats! Gay has worked it out exactly as it is bound to happen!" said Arthur Augustus. "Dr. Monk could not possibly tumble to the facts. We shall be masked vevy carefully, and we will have our faces blacked under the masks, in case they come off. Nothin' could be safah."

Gordon Gay nodded.

"It could be worked," he said. "If two or three St. Jim's chaps care to take it on, it could be worked. We'll declare a *truce pro tem*."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But—" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"The fact is, the risk's on your side," said Gay. "If we're bowled out, we sha'n't get much more than we're going to get, anyhow. But if you fellows get nailed, you'll be booked for a licking, too. Fact is, you'd better not take it on—though it's quite a good stunt!"

"I shall insist upon takin' it on, Gay. I have made up my mind to rescue you chaps from your painful pwedicament."

Gordon Gay made a slight grimace. The scheme, hare-brained as it certainly was, seemed to promise a possibility of success—and Gussy's noble brain had originated it! It was impossible, therefore, to request the swell of St. Jim's to leave it in other hands—that would have been too ungrateful. But, as a matter of absolute fact, Gay would have preferred Arthur Augustus to take a nap in the dormitory at St. Jim's while the scheme was carried out. But Gussy had no doubts—he had not the faintest idea of that doubt in Gay's mind. He was very keen on his stunt, and prepared to take the lead and make it a triumphant success.

The Terrible Three looked at one another. They had doubts—strong doubts—but they felt that they were called upon to play up. If they could save their old rivals, by running some risks themselves, they were quite ready to do it. The warfare of the rival schools could stand over till this pressing matter was settled.

There was a keen discussion in Gordon Gay's study for some time, and then Frank Monk and Lane and Carboy were called in. They heard of the proposed stunt with blank amazement. But they came round; every one of them had dismal anticipations of the scene in the morning, when "Monkey major" was to wield the cane. Any chance was better than no chance, Frank Monk declared, and it was barely possible that the thing might be a success.

So the six Grammarians and the four St. Jim's fellows discussed the plan of campaign, and discussed it again, and turned it over, and looked at it under all aspects. And they agreed that whether a success or not, it would be a most tremendous "lark."

Only Arthur Augustus felt absolutely assured of success; the rest hoped for the best.

Every detail of the scheme, at all events, was settled as carefully as could be; the rest had to be left to fortune—which is said to favour the brave.

And when Tom Merry & Co. left, Gordon Gay and his chums walked down to the gates with them, and there was the most amicable cordiality on all sides. Dr. Monk, happening to glance out of his study window, observed that friendly crowd, and smiled benignantly, and glanced at Mr. Adams, the master of the Fourth, who was in the study.

"It is a little difficult to follow the workings of the juvenile mind," the Grammar School Head remarked. "Those boys seem to be on the very best of terms now—observe them, Mr. Adams. Yet it is very rarely that they meet without what they call, I believe, a scrap."

Mr. Adams smiled as he looked from the window.

"Youthful high spirits, sir," he said. "Their scraps do not do them very much harm. I am glad to see them so friendly now!"

"And I am sorry that I have so painful a task to perform in the morning," said the Head. "They must learn to keep their exuberant spirits within reasonable bounds!"

"Oh, undoubtedly!"

"Dr. Holmes was naturally very much put out!" said Dr. Monk. "I am bound to make an example. I shall do my duty. It will be painful, but I shall do it!"

Evidently the Head of the Grammar School was quite decided upon that. And there was no doubt that it would be painful—not only to Dr. Monk!

CHAPTER 5.

Keeping it Dark.

POTTY!

That was Jack Blake's opinion.

"Fairly potty!" agreed Dig.

"Barmy!" concurred Herries.

There was a meeting in Tom Merry's study at St. Jim's after prep. Study No 6 had come along to discuss the great scheme.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was as enthusiastic as ever, but his chums—Blake and Herries and Digby—seemed to lack enthusiasm. Potty, fairly potty, and barmy were not expressions of admiration.

"Well, it is a bit thick!" assented Tom Merry. "But Gordon Gay seems to think there may be something in it."

"Gordon Gay's an ass!"

"We've agreed to play up," said Lowther.

"Then you're an ass, too!"

"Weally, Blake—" remonstrated Arthur Augustus.

"Still, it will be a tip-top lark," said Blake, "and I don't mind taking a hand! Gussy can't be in it, of course!"

"No-fear!" said Herries and Dig simultaneously.



Blake dragged the swell of St. Jim's into cover in the hedge. Tom Merry and Lowther scuttled after them. As the bullseye lantern came nearer there was a gasp from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ow! Oh cwumbs!" "Will you be quiet!" breathed Blake. "You uttah ass, you have plumped me down on a lot of wotten thorns!" cried D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! I should uttably wefuse to be left out of my own wippin' stunt!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Now you know what a goat you are, Gussy!" said Blake, in a tone of patient remonstrance.

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the kind, Blake! I am pweetly certain that the whole thing will be mucked up if I am not there to give divections! I beg you fellows to wemembah that this is my stunt, and that I am goin' to take the lead!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I twist I am not the fellow to put myself forward in any way. But this is a wisky bizney, and tact and judgment are wequiahed! Wely on me to see you though!"

"But—" said Tom Merry doubtfully.

"It's all wight, deah boy—nothin' to argue about!" said Arthur Augustus. "The stunt is goin' to be a gweat success! You fellows will only have to wemembah to cawwy out my divections vewy carefully."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Four of us will be enough," continued Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to take two of the Shell and two of the Fourth—Tom Mewwy, Lowthah, Blake, and myself! A cwozd would spoil it!"

"Four's quite enough, certainly," said Tom Merry.

"But—"

"I don't think Gussy ought to lose his beauty sleep!" said Manners.

"Wats!"

"It will very likely be drizzling rain to-night," said Monty Lowther. "What about your silk topper, Gussy? It's risky! You can't go burgling with an umbrella!"

"I shall go in a cap, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Besides, I shall put on my oldest clothes."

"You see, Gussy—"

"Pway, do not argue, deah boys! If you argue, I shall leave you out of it, and ask Figgins of the New House to back me up!"

"Catch him doing it!" grunted Blake. "Figgy's got too much hoss-sense to be found dead in a stunt like this!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Tom Merry laughed. Really it was impossible to leave Arthur Augustus out of his own stunt, greatly as the juniors doubted the tact and judgment of the noble youth. For his own sake they would have preferred to leave him sound asleep in the Fourth Form dormitory—for the sake of things in general, too. But Gussy, rather naturally, was not likely to agree to that. In fact, Gussy was afflicted with doubts about the ability of his comrades to carry out their share in the transaction. He wondered seriously whether he ought not after all to go it alone, in order to make absolutely certain that there would be no mistakes made!

This difference of opinion on the subject was not likely to be reconciled, so the discussion dropped. It was settled that the amateur cracksmen should consist of Tom Merry, Blake, Lowther, and the great Gussy. Manners and Herries and Digby were not wholly sorry to be counted out, though it made them, of course, rather anxious as to the success of the scheme.

At eleven o'clock four surreptitious juniors were to get out of the School House of St. Jim's and take their way to the Grammar School. They were to be masked, and to have blackened faces under their masks, in case of accidents—at any price, whatever happened, they were not to be recognised as St. Jim's juniors. They were to be provided with electric torches, and with any tools that could be supposed to be of a burglarious appearance, to be dropped in the scuffle.

All was carefully arranged, and the necessary impedimenta were stacked in an obscure corner of the box-room before dorm.

Arthur Augustus impressed upon Blake as the Fourth went up to bed that he was not to utter a word in the dormitory, or to betray any signs of excitement. It was necessary to keep the whole thing very dark. Jack Blake gave his noble chum a basilisk glare. Three or four fellows were within hearing of Gussy's carefully-impressed warning.

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo! What are you chaps up to to-night?" asked Levison, of the Fourth.

"Anything on?" asked Clive.

"Gussy's been lookin' jolly mysterious all the evenin'!" remarked Cardew. "What's the awful guilty secret, D'Arcy?"

"Bai Jove! Have you been lettin' anythin' out Blake?" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's.

"Shut up!" breathed Blake.

"These fellows seem to guess that somethin' is on!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Aftah all my warnin's, I feah you have been weckless, Blake!" Still, peiwaps it was Tom Mewwy. Cardew, old bean, I am sowwy I cannot give you any information! It is wathah a secwet?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 732.

"What is?" grinned Cardew.

"The stunt, you know!"

"Oh, there's a stunt on, is there?" asked Levison.

"I would wathah not answah that question, Levison!" said Arthur Augustus cautiously. "Pway, excuse me!"

"The answer is in the affirmative, as they say in the talkin'-shop at Westminster!" chuckled Cardew. "Is it a great stunt up against the New House, Gussy?"

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"Are you raiding the Grammarians and scalping them in their beds?" chortled Clive.

"Not waidin' them, Clive. We have declared a twuce while we wesuce them frowm their feahful scwape, you know. Blake, stop dwaggin' at my arm! I am not goin' to tell these chaps anythin'!"

Jack Blake dragged the swell of the Fourth into the dormitory and Levison & Co. followed, chuckling. Arthur Augustus' way of keeping things dark had its humorous side.

Kildare, of the Sixth, came in to see lights out for the Fourth, and Arthur Augustus, in an excess of caution, gave Blake a warning glance, and placed his finger on his lips as a sign of dead silence.

Kildare glanced at him.

"D'Arcy!"

"Eh? Oh! Yaas, Kildare?"

"What are you up to?"

"Up to?" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Yes. Is there anything on in this dormitory?" asked the St. Jim's captain, gnancing round suspiciously.

"Bai Jove!"

"Only pyjamas, Kildare," said Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, turn in," said Kildare, laughing, and, to the great relief of Arthur Augustus, the Sixth-Former turned out the lights, and departed without asking further questions.

"Bai Jove, that was a nawwow escape!" murmured Arthur Augustus from his bed. "Do you think Kildare suspected anythin', Blake?"

"Not your fault if he didn't!" snorted Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"But what on earth's the game?" asked Wildrake. "Gussy has been keeping something so jolly dark that the whole Form knows about it, I guess."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now I guess Kildare smells a rat," said Wildrake. "If you're up to some jape, I reckon you'd better put it off till another night!"

"Imposs, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "You see, to-night is the last chance, as the Gwammawians are to be walpoted to-morrow mornin'."

"What on earth's that got to do with it?" asked Julian.

"I am afraid I cannot wreply to that question, Julian, as we are keepin' it vewy secwet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why not sing it out from the housetops, Gussy?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Everybody knows there's something on now," said Digby. "Everybody except the Head and the Housemaster. Better run downstairs and tell them, and have done with it!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Of all the chumps—" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"But what's the game?" called out Trimble. "I say, Gussy, you can tell a pal, can't you?"

"I'm not goin' to tell anybody anythin', Twimble! In fact, I wefuse to admit that there is anythin' on at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By the time the Fourth went to sleep most of them had a pretty clear idea of what was on, owing to Arthur Augustus' secretive methods. And when eleven o'clock came, and D'Arcy and Blake turned out of bed, there were half a dozen fellows awake in the dormitory. And as the two juniors, having dressed in the dark, cautiously quitted the dormitory, two or three whispered voices followed them, warning them not to finish the night in the cells of the police-station.

Blake closed the dormitory door without a sound, with deep feelings. Arthur Augustus whispered to him.

"You see, I was wight to warn you to be careful, Blake. You seem to have let it all out somehow."

And silence being essential at this stage of the proceedings, Jack Blake restrained his deep yearning to bang Arthur Augustus' head against the corridor wall.

CHAPTER 6.

The Nocturnal Expedition.

TOM MERRY and Lowther were already in the box-room when the two Fourth-Formers arrived there. Blake turned on a glimmer of his electric-torch and revealed the two Shell fellows.

"All ready?" he whispered.

"Waiting for you," answered Tom. "You've not let on to anybody in the Fourth, I hope, excepting Herries and Dig?"

"Gussy's told the whole Form."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I weally cannot allow that statement to pass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "Somehow or othah, it appears to have leaked out. Blake declahs he has said nothin', so it must have been one of you Shell chaps—"

"Dry up, old windbag!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's get out!"

"Can't be helped now," said Tom. "The Fourth won't jaw, anyway. They can't, as they've gone to bed. We've got to chance it now."

"Yaas, wathah! It will be all wight, deah boy. Don't open the window yet, Tom Mewwy. We haven't blacked our faces or put our masks on."

"You prize idiot!" hissed Blake. "Are we going to walk a mile in the open air with masks on? Suppose we meet somebody?"

"I object to bein' called a pwize idiot, Blake! And the ideah is to weah masks in case we are wecognised. They will be all the more necessary if we meet somebody, I considah."

"Oh, kill him!" groaned Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"And if anybody saw four chaps trotting along with masked faces, do you think he wouldn't give the alarm?" demanded Blake.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that. Pewwaps we had bettah leave the masks till we get to the Gwammah School."

"Ready now, if Gussy's done jawing," said Blake.

Tom Merry carefully opened the box-room window. In a few minutes the four juniors were out of the house, the window being left an inch open to await their return.

All was dark around the school. Only a light still glimmered in Mr. Railton's study window, which they passed at a distance as they headed for the school wall, to the spot where the slanting oak made it easy to climb.

A few minutes more, and they dropped one by one on to the road.

"Easy as anythin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I told you it would be all wight. Now follow your leadah, deah boys!"

The juniors hurried down the lane at a quick walk. It was a rather dark night, with a glimmer of starlight, and a cold wind which occasionally bore a few drops of rain. The St. Jim's fellows kept their eyes well about them as they hurried on. They were muffled up in their oldest coats, with scarves on, and caps—without the distinctive school badge—pulled down over their faces. But there was danger of recognition if they met anyone on the lonely road. And the consequences of being found "out of bounds" at that hour of the night were very serious. The fact that they were going to commit an innocuous and friendly burglary certainly would not have excused them in the eyes of Dr. Holmes.

There was a glimmer of a bullseye lantern on the dusky road ahead, and Arthur Augustus halted.

"Bai Jove! That must be old Cwump!" he exclaimed.

"Silence!" hissed Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Blake dragged the swell of St. Jim's into cover in the hedge beside the road, and Tom Merry and Lowther scuttled after them. They sank down in deep cover as the bullseye lantern came nearer. There was a gasp from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ow! Oh cwumps!"

"Will you be quiet?" breathed Blake.

"You uttah ass! You have plumped me down on a lot of wotten thorns!"

"Silence!"

"They are stickin' into my twousahs!"

"Quiet!"

"Ow, wow!"

The bullseye lantern stopped, just opposite the ambush of the four juniors. P.-c. Crump, of Rylcombe, had certainly heard something.

"Hi!" ejaculated Mr. Crump. "Wot's that? Who's there? I see you!"

"Bai Jove! He sees us, deah boys. Gurrrrrrg!" woud up Arthur Augustus, as Blake clapped a hand over his mouth.

"I see you!" shouted Mr. Crump. "What are you 'iding there for? Come out of that!"

It was pretty certain that Mr. Crump did not see through the thick hedge in the dark, whatever he had heard. His suspicions were aroused, and he came closer up to the hedge, flashing the light of his lantern before him. Tom Merry's hand closed on a loose turf, and he jerked it through an interstice in the hedge, and it crashed on the bullseye lantern and sent it flying from Mr. Crump's hand. The lantern went out as it crashed to the ground, and Mr. Crump jumped back into the lane and drew his truncheon.

"Come on!" breathed Tom.

The juniors backed away into the field, and took to their heels along a footpath.

Mr. Crump's further proceedings they never knew. In a few minutes they were out of hearing of the village policeman.

"Bai Jove! That was a wathah nawwow escape!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as they dropped into a walk at last. "But you fellows will weally have to be a bit more careful. We may not get off so well next time."

"What about tying Gussy to a tree, and gagging him?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"He will land us yet," said Tom Merry resignedly. "I say, Gussy, do you think you'd better stay outside, at the Grammar School, and—keep watch?"

"I do not think anythin' of the kind, Tom Mewwy."

"It—it would be safer."

"I could hardly trust you fellows to cawwy out the scheme without me, you see. I've got to keep an eye on you, or you will muck up the whole thing. Come on!"

The walls of the Grammar School were reached at last. Beyond the walls the great red-brick building rose into view dimly in the dusky night. There was not a light to be seen. From somewhere in the distance three-quarters chimed. It was a quarter to twelve.

"Good time," said Lowther. "They expect us at midnight. Now we've got to negotiate the wall."

The wall was negotiated in an obscure spot shaded by trees. Tom Merry and Blake were "bunked" up first, and they lay on the wall, and gave helping hands from above to the other two. The amateur cracksmen dropped into the Grammar School grounds.

They knew their way fairly well, but they were excessively cautious as they circled round the buildings, to reach the box-room window by which they were to gain entrance to the house. Their hearts were beating rather fast now.

In the silence and stillness of the night their extraordinary enterprise seemed much more exciting, and, somehow, less agreeable, than when it had been planned at the cheery tea-table in Gordon Gay's study.

But it was too late for retreat, if the enterprising burglars had thought of retreat, which they did not.

In a dark shadow, they halted, to rub their faces with blacklead, and then to tie on the black cloth masks that had been carefully prepared.

Thus equipped, certainly their nearest relations would not have dreamed of recognising them. P.-c. Crump, if he had seen them, certainly would have "run them in" on sight. Whatever burglarious gifts they might lack, they undoubtedly looked the part now.

There was a sudden glitter of light, and three masked juniors jumped in alarm. But it was only Gussy turning on his electric torch.

"You fathead!" hissed Blake. "Turn it off!"

"I want to see whethah I have got this wight, Blake. I cannot look in my pocket-miwvah without a light."

Blake jerked away the electric torch and slipped it into his overcoat-pocket. Darkness reigned again.

"Bai Jove! Are you off your wockah, Blake? Give me my electwic torch at once."

"I'll give you a dot in your silly eye if you don't shut up!" growled Blake. "You fellows ready? Come on!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Tom Merry climbed the lower building below the box-room window at the back of the Grammar School. His comrades followed him, Arthur Augustus suppressing his indignation. The window opened to Tom Merry's touch. Five minutes more, and the four amateur cracksmen stood within the Grammar School.

**CHAPTER 7.
Burglarious.**

GORDON GAY, of the Grammarian Fourth, was wide awake when midnight tolled out in the distance. He had not ventured to close his eyes that eventful night.

As he lay wide awake in the dormitory, thinking of the scheme that was to be put into execution at midnight, Gay was assailed by many doubts. But he did not allow them to worry him. Hare-brained or not, the scheme was the only chance of escaping the record licking of the morrow, and the sacrifice of six half-holidays. He felt that it was worth trying, anyhow. A few minutes before twelve Gordon Gay turned out of bed, and awakened his comrades, Wootton major and minor, Frank Monk, and Carboy. They drew on their trousers, and would gladly have donned the rest of their attire, for the night was cold. But that was out of the question. They had to show up looking as if they had rushed down from bed, and certainly they would not have

(Continued on page 14.)



Our Gripping Yarn Which Tells of a Party of C Read How They Set to Work to Make Their

A Rotter Threshed.

OUT from the sun-bathed harbour of Honolulu, through the lines of shipping, there came early one morning in late spring a battered, two-masted schooner. It was one of those tramp vessels which, after years of honest endeavour, find themselves relegated to the task of trading with the islands, and spend the remainder of their useful career lumbering through the warmer latitudes, where the winds are always gentle, and crazy old hulls may move from anchorage to anchorage without risk of buffeting tempests or cold, icy seas.

The Wittywake—for that was the name of the schooner—was a very sad specimen of its class. Its sun-scorched, blistered bulwarks and decks, splashed here and there with a coat of tar, were innocent of paint of any kind. Its spars and gear were old-fashioned, and the little forest of sails that were raised aloft had been patched and repatched until they were more like variegated quilts than anything else.

By no means was the Wittywake a ship that might be considered to carry the golden dreams with it, and yet, as she turned her fat bows seaward, and her sails began to fill with that wonderful breeze that always blows steadily towards the Isles of the Blest, the spirit of true adventure travelled with her.

A little group of youngsters were gathered close to the capstan in the bow. They had all lent a hand to raising the anchor, and now that broad-fluked object had been hauled on board and stowed down, and they were talking together, as they watched the seas ahead of them.

Standing head and shoulders above the others was a sturdy, self-reliant-looking youngster who seemed to be the leader of the group. He was Donald Gordon, and opposite him stood a younger, weaker-looking edition of himself, in the person of his brother, Valentine Gordon.

Seated on the anchor was a fat-sided, happy-looking fellow who had taken a huge banana from his pocket, and was now munching contentedly at the ripe fruit.

Tommy Binks, a schoolboy chum of the Gordons, had had no real need to step on board the Wittywake at all, but, thanks to an indulgent mother, he had succeeded in persuading her into believing that great application to study had caused him to have a mental breakdown, and a long holiday had been provided for him.

The truth of the matter was, however, that Tommy Binks had never had a day's illness in his life, but when the news came to St. Christopher's School that the Gordons were going out to the Solomon Islands to join their uncle, Hector Gordon, on a big plantation, the romance in that statement had appealed to Tommy, and he had set to work at once to persuade his mother to allow him to accompany his chums.

The fourth member of the group was a sawly, lanky-limbed youth who was the eldest of the party. He had been christened Septimus Caesar Anthony Todd, and had been one of the younger masters of St. Christopher's School. His presence with the others was due to the fact that Tommy Binks' mother had insisted on a tutor accompanying her son, and after trying vainly to get that

mandate rescinded, Tommy had hit on the novel idea of persuading Scat—for it was by this somewhat dubious name that Septimus Todd was known—to accompany him.

Septimus Todd, thanks to the fact that he was in the last year of his teens, and that on his upper lip there were indications of a moustache, endeavoured to add to his dignity by wearing a pair of large, round, tortoiseshell spectacles. These, perched on his nose, only seemed to add to the owl-like appearance of his long, cadaverous countenance.

He was a good sort, was Scat, and it was due to that fact that he was tolerated by the younger members of the group. He was a studious youth, and had a bent, for mechanics and invention, of which more anon.

It was Scat who was speaking now. He had a small book in his hands, and was reading extracts from it. It had something to do with the manners and customs of the natives of Solomon Islands, and Scat, having found a particularly impressive paragraph concerning the cannibalism of these people, was reading out the gory details with much contentment, until Donald Gordon, reaching forward, snatched the book out of the lean fingers and turned to the first page.

"Just what I thought, Scat," he said. "Why, hang it, man, this book was written in 1860, and that's nearly sixty years ago."

Valentine had been rather impressed by the details in the book, and he started to his feet now.

"Great Scott, Don! Is that true?"

Donald held out the book.

"Of course it is. Have a look for yourself."

The volume was passed from hand to hand until it reached Tommy Binks, and that youth promptly put an end to the matter by chucking the book overboard. Scat made a dash to try to save his treasure, but he was too late, and the volume of out-of-date information floated away on the crest of a smooth wave.

"Serve you jolly well right, Scat!" said Tommy. "What's the good of trying to harrow our souls with all that smoked-skull stuff? They tell me there's tramcars in the Solomon Islands now, and they have a cinema in every native village."

The group laughed, and Scat, leaning against the bulwarks, folded his long, thin arms over his chest and regarded them for a moment calmly.

"All right; you can laugh," he said. "But you see if I am not correct. There are still cannibals among the lesser known islands, as you may perhaps find out later on."

"Well, if we do come across any cannibals, old chap, you'll be about the last they'll tackle—although I wouldn't say much for Tommy's chance, if they like 'em fat."

Another laugh went round, and from the cabin behind the wheel a burly, black-bearded man in his shirt-sleeves appeared for a moment, shading his eyes with his hands, and glancing in the direction of the group in the bow.

He was Captain Targe, owner of the schooner Wittywake. There were very few people who knew Targe's nationality, for he never gave much information about himself. It was generally rumoured that he was a

Norwegian, and it was granted by all who knew him that he was a master-sailor.

His one handicap lay in the fact that he had a fiendish temper, which made him many enemies.

The group of youngsters had reached Honolulu by one of the big passenger vessels, and had been met by Targe, who had shown Donald Gordon a letter written by his uncle, Hector, in which Targe had been requested to meet Gordon's nephews and bring them to Matata, the island where Hector Gordon's plantation was situated.

Targe had been rather taken aback when he had seen the size of the party, and he had told Donald that he understood there would only be himself and his brother Valentine; but they had all been taken on board the Wittywake, and after a day in Honolulu buying various stores, the last leg of the voyage had begun.

Behind the burly figure in the doorway of the cabin another shape appeared. It was that of a black-haired youngster about the same age as Donald Gordon, and he stepped up to the captain's side and glanced along the littered deck towards the group.

"Seem to be enjoying themselves," he said, in a half-contemptuous tone; "but I wonder how they'd shape when the wind rises."

Ralph Siddeley was the son of one of Captain Targe's planter friends in the islands, and he had been spending a brief holiday in Honolulu. Captain Targe had promised to take him back to the islands, and was carrying out that promise now.

"Why shouldn't they enjoy themselves, Raff?"

A clear, silvery voice sounded from behind Ralph Siddeley, and he and the skipper turned their heads. A slender figure in a white dress had come round the side of the cabin, and was looking towards the bow, with one small hand shading the wide, violet eyes.

From her small, arched feet to her well-shaped head, with its raven-black tresses, Anna Targe looked a veritable daughter of the sea. Slim, tanned, graceful, she made a beautiful picture as she stood there, swaying slightly to the rise and fall of the schooner.

Many of the island folk wondered why Captain Targe insisted on taking his daughter with him on every voyage that he made, for it was common knowledge that he treated her harshly, and had never been heard to display any signs of affection towards the girl.

Yet Anna seemed to flourish under that treatment. Her beauty, like that of a wild flower, seemed to increase under the hard life that she lived.

"I'm going to speak to them," Anna went on. "I suppose there's no harm in my doing so?"

She cast a glance at the black-bearded man in the doorway of the cabin, and Targe gave her a surly nod.

"No reason why you shouldn't," he said. "We shall be having dinner in a moment, and will all be together then."

He drew his brows together in a scowl. "But don't answer any questions," he said. "They're simply passengers, and you've got to treat 'em as such. Understand?"

Anna tossed her head. "I don't suppose they'll want to ask me



YOUNG MEN Who Were Stranded on an Uninhabited Island. They Found a Strange Home into "The Island of Pleasure!"

any questions," she said, as she moved away along the deck.

Targe drew aside and beckoned to Ralph, who emerged from the cabin.

"You had better go along and make friends, too," he said. "You'll be together for the next week or so, and you might as well be friendly."

"I don't know that I want to be friendly with anybody connected with Hector Gordon," Ralph Siddeley returned.

Targe's dark face widened into a smile. "Don't you mention anything about that to them," he warned. "I shall have something to say to you about it later on. Now, off you go!"

Ralph Siddeley went along the deck, and when he reached the bows he found Anna in the centre of the group of youngsters. It was obvious to Siddeley that the appearance of the dark-tressed, sun-tanned girl had made a big impression on the group. Even Seat, who always proclaimed a lofty disdain towards the opposite sex, was taking part in the quick flow of conversation that had broken out.

As Ralph appeared the group opened out, and Anna, after a glance at the newcomer, began to introduce him.

"I don't think I can remember all your names," she said, her white teeth flashing in a smile, "but I'll try to."

Ralph's manner was rather overbearing, and there was a slight touch of patronage in his attitude that did not escape the notice of the circle. He seemed instinctively to make a special mark of Donald Gordon, and presently one of his remarks brought an angry flush to the latter's cheek.

"I don't know what you tenderfoots expect to do out at Matata," he said. "You tell me you are going on your uncle's plantation, but it's a pretty poor show. I know it very well."

He eyed Donald Gordon for a moment. "I hate to say it," he went on, "but the truth of the matter is that your uncle's plantation is known as the Gin Sling."

Donald flushed. "What do you mean by that?" he asked quietly.

"Oh, well, it's nothing to do with me!" Raff returned. "But everyone on the islands knows that your uncle has taken to the drink of late, and he has let his place go to rack and ruin."

Even if that had been true, it was an unkind remark to make, and Anna Targe suddenly intervened.

"You've no right to say such a thing, Raff," she broke out. "You haven't been near the islands for a long time, and you know nothing about Matata."

Ralph Siddeley turned and scowled at the black-haired girl for a moment.

"It doesn't make any difference whether I've been to the islands or not," he said. "A fellow can't help hearing rumours, can he?"

His announcement concerning Hector Gordon had had rather a gloomy effect on the circle of chums. Donald saw Tommy Binks and Seat exchange somewhat doubtful glances, and a flush crossed his face. He took a pace forward, and halted in front of Ralph.

"I don't know who you are," he said slowly, "but I'm not going to believe you. It's a pretty mean charge to make against anyone, and I prefer to wait until I have

seen my uncle myself before accepting your statements."

Anna laughed. "That's quite right, Mr. Gordon," she said, turning and giving an appreciative nod to the flaxen-haired, handsome youngster. "I shouldn't believe anything that anyone told me against a friend of mine."

She put out her small hand and placed it on Donald's arm, a friendly little gesture which brought an answering smile to the youngster's lips.

The demon of jealousy which had already begun to work in Ralph Siddeley's heart was roused by that little exhibition on Anna's part, and his face darkened into a frown. The whole truth of the matter was that Ralph Siddeley had resented Anna's obvious interest in these new acquaintances of hers, and he lost control of himself.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded, turning to Donald. "Are you suggesting that I'm a liar?"

"I'm not making any suggestion," Donald

Gordon returned quietly. "All I say is that I prefer to wait until we reach Matata before accepting any statement from outsiders concerning my uncle. I do not require any information from you. I am quite able to judge for myself."

Ralph Siddeley gave vent to a sneering laugh.

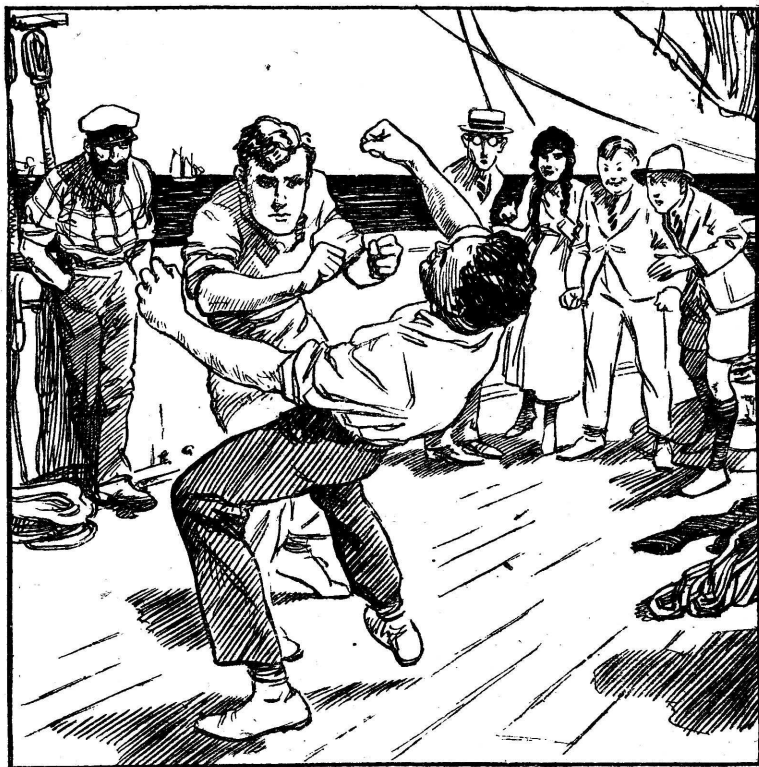
"In the islands, if a man calls another man a liar, he gets knocked down, my friend," he said. "We've got a quick way of settling disputes out there, let me tell you."

Donald Gordon's face was very set as he looked at this newcomer.

"I don't want any quarrel with you," he returned quietly, "but if you are anxious for a row, you can have one."

"I'm not going to be called a liar by you or anyone else," Raff snapped back, working himself up into a fury. "You've got to take back what you said or fight me now."

Seat, the peace-lover, made an effort to



An angry glint came into Gordon's eyes, and he forced his opponent away from him. Then, as Siddeley tried to close again, Don brought his right flat round with the speed and accuracy of a piston-rod, landing it full on his rival's jaw.



Val looked aft as Don extended his finger pointing towards the stern. A couple of figures emerged from the after-companion-way carrying a heavy burden, which they slipped into the lifeboat that was swinging from the davits in the stern.

intervene, but Tommy Binks grabbed his tutor by the arm and held him back.

"Nothing doing, Scot," he said. "It seems to me that this fellow came along here just to pick a quarrel, and it might as well be finished with straight away. You needn't worry about old Don. A fellow who won the middle-weight schools championship last year isn't likely to be hurt by a half dago-looking skunk like this chap."

"You want to fight, do you?" Don said. "I want you to apologise or fight," Raff returned in a snarling tone.

Anna Targe stepped in between the two speakers.

"I won't have it—I won't have it!" she cried, with a stamp of her foot, glaring at Siddeley. "Mr. Gordon was quite right to stand up for his uncle; anybody would have done the same. How dare you come here and pick a quarrel in this way?"

Ralph Siddeley shrugged his shoulders. "It's got nothing to do with you, Anna," he said, "but if Gordon wants to hide behind you, he can."

Don placed his hand on the girl's arm and drew her to one side.

"I'm sorry, Miss Targe," he said, "but I've got to see this thing through now."

A couple of the crew were at work 'midships, and one of them chanced to look in the direction of the group in the bow just as Donald Gordon peeled off his coat and commenced to roll up his shirt-sleeves, an action which was followed a moment later by Siddeley.

"Hi, Bill!" the observer cried. "Say, I guess there's going to be a bit of a skirmish. Come along!"

It is wonderful how news spreads, even in the confined spaces of a small schooner. There had only been two men on the deck when that first indication of the coming conflict was made, but five minutes later, when Donald and Ralph faced each other in the cleared space behind the capstan, there was a large knot of native sailors, together with the three or four white men of the crew, gathered on the fore-hatch; and presently Targe himself came strolling along the deck to lean against the rigging.

He made no attempt to interfere in the fight, contenting himself with watching it from under his bushy brows.

Tommy Binks' prophecy proved correct. The truth of the matter was that Donald Gordon was a boxer of more than average ability, and had that keen fighting instinct which made him a dangerous opponent to tackle.

Ralph Siddeley, a rough-and-tumble fighter of sorts, made the first savage attack, and

knuckles landed full on Siddeley's face, bringing his rush to a halt; then, as he made another wild charge, Don met him half-way, and this time his fist went home on his rival's jaw.

There is not much sound on board a sailing-vessel. The chatter of the sails and the whispering of the wind make a subdued melody, and so that quick, crisp thud of bunched knuckles on jaw-bone echoed along the deck, and the crew, craning their necks as they leaned over from the hatch, saw Ralph Siddeley double up like a knife and collapse in a heap at his rival's feet.

A smothered laugh broke out; then a native, dressed only in a pair of ragged dungarees, plunged out from the group of sailors, and, raising one arm aloft, began to count—

"One—two—three—"

"Here, you, get away there! Clear off, the bunch of you!"

The gruff tones of Captain Targe's voice put an end to that comedy, and the crew scattered as the black-bearded skipper moved forward. He stalked across to where Ralph Siddeley lay helpless on the deck. Donald had withdrawn, and was watching his rival quietly.

"All right, Gordon!" Targe said. "I saw the fight, and it was a fair enough one. But you had better let it end here. I don't want any further trouble on board my ship, you understand!"

Anna came out from behind the windlass where she had been seated.

"It was not Mr. Gordon's fault at all," she said to her father. "Raff absolutely picked the quarrel."

The skipper had stooped, and he raised the groaning Ralph in his arms.

"I don't care whose fault it was!" he returned gruffly. "There's got to be no more of it!"

And with that he turned on his heel, and walked off down the deck, carrying the unconscious body of the youngster with him.

At the Mercy of the Storm.

"VAL! Val! Wake up old chap!" Don's voice roused the sleeper, and Val Gordon, raising himself on his elbow, peered for a moment over the edge of his bunk.

Donald Gordon was standing in the centre of the little cabin, and his hand reached out and touched his brother on the shoulder.

"Don't make a noise!" he warned. "I want you to come with me, but be careful!"

Val Gordon slipped from the bunk, and dressed himself hurriedly, while Don waited on guard at the door of the cabin; then

presently the two youngsters made their way along the narrow corridor, and moved towards the foot of the companion-way, halting there for a moment.

For a long fortnight the Wittywake had been sailing steadily southward through smiling, sunlit seas; but gradually the atmosphere of doubt and suspicion on board the schooner had had its effect on the young passengers.

Ralph Siddeley and Captain Targe were constantly together, and many curious incidents had happened that had awakened Don Gordon's suspicions. He had felt instinctively that for some reason or other the black-bearded captain was an enemy, and a sense of insecurity had gradually taken possession of the sturdy youngster.

Don had been voted unanimously into the position of leader of his little party, and the responsibility of that position had made him doubly alert.

Val and the others were aware that there was some sinister undercurrent at work, and it cast a gloom over them all.

"Wait here for a moment, old chap," said Don. "I sha'n't be very long."

He climbed the companion-way, and Val saw his brother's head and shoulders appear in the flood of moonlight, then vanish, and he had to wait three of four minutes before Don reappeared again.

"Are you there, Val?"

"Yes, Don."

"Right-ho! Come along; only be careful!"

Val Gordon crept up the companion-way, and found his brother waiting for him under the shadow of the great awning that was stretched between the masts. Don took his brother by the hand, and they moved forward, skirting the hatch; then, at a signal from Don, the younger lad dropped on his hands and knees, and crept on until he found himself in the shelter of one of the life-boats.

He was looking aft now, and Don, extending his finger, pointed towards the stern. A couple of figures had just emerged into view from the after-companion-way. They were carrying a heavy burden with them, and they crossed the deck, and slipped their burden into the lifeboat that was swinging from the davits in the stern.

As they turned to walk back to the companion-way again, the moonlight shone full on their faces, revealing their identity. The first man was Captain Targe, and with him was Ralph Siddeley, and when they had vanished down the companion-way again Don turned to his brother.

"I have been watching them at work for this last half-hour, he said. "They're loading up that lifeboat for some reason or other, and I don't like the look of it! They've got water and food and heaps of stuff stowed away there."

"What do you think is going to happen?" Val asked.

Don's clean-cut face was very grim as he looked at his brother.

"It was Targe who put me on to this, Val," he said, mentioning the name of a slim young islander who acted as cabin-boy and steward on the schooner. "Targe is scared to death of Targe, but I think he's inclined to be friendly with us. In any case, he warned me not to go to sleep to-night, but to keep watch here. He said he would come along and join me as soon as he could. Perhaps we'll hear more about it then."

"But what does it mean? What are these beggars after?"

"I don't know, Val," his brother returned; "but it looks to me as though they're going to desert the ship. At any rate, they're preparing for something of that sort."

Val gave vent to a low breath of dismay. "Desert the schooner," he said. "But why?"

"No good you asking me those sort of questions now, old chap," Don returned. "I know just as little about it as you do. But I have felt all along that there was something fishy here. Targe and Siddeley have got some plan up their sleeves, and I'm inclined to think it's directed against us. Why, goodness only knows!"

Once again the two figures emerged, carrying other burdens; then this time, when they had deposited them in the longboat, the sheet that had been cast aside was drawn over the boat again, and made fast by the black-bearded skipper.

"It'll be all right," they heard his deep voice say. "There's everything in there that we shall want when the time comes!"

The two figures vanished, and a long moment passed, then suddenly Val saw a

sinewy figure emerge from under a sheet of tarpaulin on the left. It made its way across the deck, and as it drew near to where the two youngsters were kneeling, it spoke: "You fellah Gordon there?"

Taga, the young islander, spoke that curious pidgin-English which is used all over the South Seas, and Don and his brother were only just beginning to get the hang of the curious language.

"Yes, Taga. Come along!" Taga's sinewy shape slipped in between the two brothers, and flattened itself out on the deck.

"You see Cap'n Targe, eh, and that other fellah?"

"Yes, we saw them all right, Taga." The young cabin-boy's teeth shone in the darkness, then he reached out, and tapped Don on the chest.

"Cap'n went down in hold to-day," he said. "Taga follow him. He go looking about among cargo. Taga see him open one case, then cap'n he put piece line in case, and run line along hold, and up through ventilating-shaft into cabin. Taga get piece of that line and also some of stuff in case. Look!"

A long thin cylinder was produced, and handed to Don, then Taga drew a bundle of cord from his waist, and placed it on the deck. A glance at the cord indicated to the youngsters what it was. It was slow-fuse, and after studying the cylinder for a moment he drew a quick breath of horror. For at the bottom of the cylinder was a label printed in red, and three letters on it—"T.N.T."

"Why, this is explosive!" Don said. "Lots more like that in case," Taga returned, with a nod of his head. "What you think about it, eh, you fellah Gordon?"

Val and his brother exchanged glances. There was no doubt about what Taga's discovery meant. For some reason of his own Captain Targe had arranged a means by which he could cause an explosion to take place on the schooner, and that explosion would be sufficient to shatter the vessel to atoms.

"What are we going to do, Don—what are we going to do?"

Val's horrified voice sounded thin and hoarse, and Don, slipping out from behind the boat, arose to his feet.

"We are going to make a move right now, old chap!" he said. "Goodness only knows what Targe means by it, or when he is going to carry out his dastardly scheme, but we dare not wait!"

He turned to Taga, and pointed to the slender cylinder.

"Look here, Taga!" he said. "That cap'n fellow is going to blow up the Wittywake, and we all go sky-high if we stay here. The only thing we can do now is to get away sharp!"

The cabin-boy nodded his head. "That what Taga think" he said. "Longboat there ready? Why not get away now? Taga come, too."

He leaned forward and touched Don on the arm.

"Watch all below now, 'cept man at the wheel. Taga look after him if you, fellah Gordon, say the word. When boat ready to go Taga come and join it. That all right?"

There was no time to make any other plans, and Don agreed.

"We'll have to go and rouse the others," he said to Val, "and we must be quick about it."

The task of rousing their companions was speedily performed, but it took Don some time to drive into Tommy Binks' rather fuddled brain the necessity for quiet and immediate action. Tommy hated being aroused from his slumbers, and Don had to shake his stout companion before he could prevail upon him to arise from his bunk.

"But why—why the dickens should we go now?" Tommy observed pathetically, as he scrambled into his clothes.

"There's no time to explain," Don said. "But it's either go now or not at all. We are in a hole, I tell you, Tommy, and the sooner we get out of this the better."

Val had made himself responsible for the rousing of Seat, and that lanky individual presently appeared fully dressed and carrying a small leather bag under one arm.

"I must protest against all this," he said as soon as he caught sight of Don. "It seems an altogether unnecessary proceeding, and I'd like to have a word with Captain Targe."

"If you do that it would be all up with us," Don Gordon returned sternly. "I give you your chance of either coming with us now or remaining behind here and taking

your chance of whatever happens. I can tell you this much, though, we are in immediate danger, and a word to Captain Targe now would only precipitate the disaster."

His earnest words made their impression on the argumentative Seat, and the four figures moved off down the corridor at last and out on to the deck, heading for the stern.

Don crept to the after-companion-way and closed it quietly; then, while Val began to remove the sheet from the longboat, Don slipped forward towards the wheelhouse. As he came round the corner of it he caught sight of a huddled figure lying in front of the wheel and the slim shape of Taga standing behind it, his hand on the spokes.

"All right, Taga. We're ready now."

The islander picked up a piece of rope and proceeded to lash the spokes into position; then, with a final glance at the heavy-breathing shape lying sprawl the deck, he and Don hurried off towards the stern.

It was under Taga's skilful directions that the longboat was lowered until it swung clear, then the four youngsters climbed into it; but just as Taga scrambled on the stern the quick patter of feet sounded, and, to Don's dismay, the slim figure in white leaped on to the taffrail and leaned forward.

"I'm not going to be left behind. I—I know what's happening, and I'm coming with you!"

In another moment Anna Targe had leaped into the swaying boat, to be caught in Don's arms and held there for a moment, then she dropped into one of the seats and sat there, very white and still, her hands clasped together.

Taga swung into the boat, and the last ticklish operation was carried out skilfully and well. The boat was lowered into the sea, and as it touched the water Don and Taga knocked the tackle aside so that they swung clear, rocking for a moment in the gurgling wake of the schooner. Then for a long second the little party sat still and silent in the longboat watching the black hull of the Wittywake as it slipped through the moonlit seas, its sails casting black shadows over the silver-streaked waters.

They watched it until the blue dusk swallowed it up, then Taga started to ship the little mast, and presently the longboat was trimmed and the sail set, and it began to move under the pressure of the gentle night breeze.

It had all happened so suddenly that it was not until they found themselves sailing steadily on through the darkness that the real meaning of their position came to the youngsters.

Tommy Binks, who had wedged himself in the bow, came scrambling aft, and seated himself beside Taga, who had taken charge of the tiller.

"Where are we going to, Taga? Any idea?"

The young islander's white teeth lifted into a smile, and he pointed ahead where the Southern Cross shone like a sword in the sky.

"We follow the stars," he said quietly. "By-and-by we strike islands—plenty islands. Maybe one day—two day. Who knows?"

It was not a very cheering statement, and Tommy turned to Don with a groan of despair.

"I suppose this isn't a dream," he commented plaintively. "We won't all waken up and find ourselves in our bunks again, by any chance?"

Don laughed. "Not much of a dream about it, old chap—as you'll find out pretty soon," he returned slowly. "But I think we have done the right thing."

Anna Targe was seated next to Val, and she leaned for-

ward now, her face framed in the long black plaits hanging on either side, making a beautiful picture in the soft moonlight.

"You are quite right," she said in a low voice. "I wanted to warn you, but I—I dared not do so. Something terrible was going to happen on board the Wittywake. I heard my father and Raff Siddeley talking it over this evening."

She paused and looked across at Don. "Why should my father hate you as he does?" she asked. "I heard him swear that you should never reach Matata—neither you nor any of your friends. He was going to—blow the Wittywake up—destroy it. And only himself and Raff and I were to be allowed to get away alive."

Her hands were clasped tightly together.

"I think my father must have suspected that I knew something about it," she went on; "for he locked me up in my cabin, and I had to wait until everything was quiet before I could break the door open. I meant to warn you, but when I came on deck I saw that you seemed to know already. That's why I have come with you; I would rather share whatever fate may be yours than stay on the Wittywake now."

Her quiet, dramatic statement was received in silence, then Seat leaned forward and bowed to the slender girl.

"I believe you would have helped us if you could, Miss Anna," he said. "And, by Jove, you—you are some girl!"

"Some girl," Taga repeated. "That good name, you fellah. Miss Some Girl—eh?"

And it was as "Some Girl" that Anna Targe was to be known to that little group for many days.

Dawn found them pulling along under a steady wind, and they had their first meal—a ration of biscuits and a few mouthfuls of water.

Taga, who was still at the tiller, kept glancing back over his shoulder every now and again; and presently Don crossed to the young native and asked his reason. Taga pointed with his thumb towards the horizon, where a small black cloud had appeared.

"Guess we go for to strike trouble," he said. "Yon fellah bad—make plenty wind and rain."

To Don it seemed impossible that anything could disturb the wonderful calm of that day; yet two hours later, when the first breath of the storm struck them, it was followed by a darkness that was almost as profound as night itself. The sail had been lowered, and it was under a bare pole that the longboat scuttled along in front of the wind.

(Continued on page 20.)



The waves increased tremendously, and down into the long, green valley the boat dipped dizzily. "How long will it last, Taga?" asked Don, who was helping the native to steer. Taga turned an ever-smiling face and shook his head. "Worse to come yet, fellah Gordon!" he cried. "We only just beginning things now!"

"ST. JIM'S TO THE RESCUE."

(Continued from page 9.)

looked the part fully dressed. They were quite ready when midnight tolled.

The rest of the dormitory was fast asleep. Gordon Gay & Co. had kept the little secret rather more efficiently than Arthur Augustus at St. Jim's.

"Time!" murmured Gay.

"Wonder if they'll come!" murmured Lane.

"They'll come all right. Let's hope it will go off," said Gay. "I'll get down and see them. You fellows keep around the door, ready to rush down when you hear a crash."

"Right you are!"

Gay opened the dormitory door, and passed out, and his five shivering comrades collected round the door, keeping it ajar. With a cold draught playing on them, they hoped fervently that the climax would not be long delayed.

Gordon Gay groped his way along to the box-room on the next floor below. As he approached it, he had a demonstration that the burglars had arrived, the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy being audible.

"Pway keep quiet, you fellows! It is fwrightfully wisky to make a wov now. Don't talk!"

"Shut up, you ass!"

That was Blake's voice, in a thrilling whisper.

"Weally, Blake—"

Gay opened the box-room door softly.

"Bai Jove! What—"

"Shut up! It's only little me," whispered Gay.

"Oh, all wight!"

Gay came in and closed the door, and then he turned on an electric torch. He started a little as the light glimmered on four masked, muffled figures. He turned the light off at once.

"By gad! You look the part!" he said. "If they see you looking like that, and don't catch you, it will be all serene."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Your pals ready!" asked Tom Merry.

"Quite! Now I'll take you to the Head's study," whispered Gay. "The safe's in the study. That's what a burglar would make for, of course. Don't make a row. We've got to pass Mr. Adams' door, and he's not a heavy sleeper."

"Wely on us, deah boy. I have impressed upon these fellows that they have got to be vevy careful."

"This way," said Gay.

The Grammarian junior led the way along a passage and down dusky stairs. There was a sudden sound in the darkness, and the juniors thrilled.

"Wh-at's that?" breathed Lowther.

"All sewene, deah boy; only my boot knockin' against the banistahs."

"Can't you keep quiet?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"This way!" whispered Gay.

They trod on carefully into a wide corridor with big windows. Dr. Monk's study opened off this corridor. They stopped at the study door.

"You get in here," whispered Gay, "and open the study window. That will give you a line of retreat, and will look as if you came in that way. You fastened the box-room window upstairs?"

"Yes."

"Good! Come in here."

Gordon Gay turned the handle of the study door. But it did not open.

"We're waitin', deah boy."

Gay breathed hard.

"The dashed door's locked!"

"Unlock it, then, my deah fellow."

"The key's not here."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"I—I didn't know the Head locked his study door at night!" muttered Gay. "He's too jolly dashed careful, I think! That rather lets us out."

"Let us pick the lock," said D'Arcy. "Burglars are supposed to pick locks and things."

"Can you pick a lock, fathead?" muttered Blake.

"I object to bein' called a fathead, Blake."

There was a pause. The study door being locked rather baffled the amateur cracksmen. Everything, of course, could not be foreseen by burglars new to the profession.

"Dash it all!" muttered Tom Merry. "That's rather a facer! We shall have to give the study a miss. Suppose

we got in by one of the passage windows here; that's near enough. We can open one of them."

"That will have to do!" agreed Gay. "Let's see. The burglars got in by a passage window, and were making for the study here, when we rushed down from the dormitory and caught them."

"Yes, that will do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come along, then."

Gay led the way back along the corridor to the nearest of the tall windows. He fumbled with the fastenings. A very skilful cracksmen indeed would have been required to open those fastenings from without. But from within it was easy enough. The lower part of the window was a casement, and Gay unfastened it, and pushed open one side. The cold night air blew in on the masked faces.

The feel of it was grateful and comforting to the St. Jim's cracksmen. They felt a sense of relief in knowing that an avenue of escape lay open to them.

"All serene now," said Blake. "But how is it that the burglars happen to give the alarm? Your dorm is a good way from here."

Gay thought a moment.

"A burglah might happen to let off a wevolvah by accident!" suggested D'Arcy brilliantly.

"Have you got a revolver?" hissed Blake.

"No, deah boy!"

"Then dry up, ass!"

"Weally, you know—"

"One of you drops a jemmy on the floor," said Gay. "Happening to be awake—that's true enough—I hear it, and come down."

"But we haven't anythin' like a jemmay, deah boy!"

"A chisel will do—or a screwdriver."

"Good! I've brought a sewewdwivah. I will let it fall with a feahful cwash on the flooah, and then—"

"Right-ho!"

Crash!

Arthur Augustus apparently thought that the time for action had arrived. His big and heavy screwdriver came down to the polished floor of the corridor with a crash that rang terrifically in the deep silence of the night.

"You ass!" breathed Tom Merry. "Cut off, Gay! You ought to be heard coming downstairs—"

Gay darted away in the darkness.

With beating hearts, the St. Jim's burglars waited. There was a sudden sound on the stairs. Wootton and the rest had heard the crash, and they had started from the dormitory.

Gordon Gay's voice rang out:

"Burglars! Come on, you chaps!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Footsteps rang and echoed on the stairs. The alarm was given now. Four burglars waited in the corridor; six Grammarians clattered downstairs to discover them. Two or three doors opened above. The voice of Mr. Adams, the master of the Fourth, was heard calling:

"What is that? What—"

"Burglars!" roared Gordon Gay.

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, gad, what larks!" breathed Wootton major.

There was a sudden blaze of light in the corridor, as Gay turned on the electric switch. Four masked ruffians were revealed, and the six Grammarians rushed on them. And then there was a wild scuffling and panting and trampling, which was very realistic indeed.

"Help! Help! Burglars!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Help!"

"Pway don't dwag me awound like that, Gay—"

"Fathead—"

"Help! Burglars!"

Mr. Adams, scudding downstairs in his dressing-gown, with a poker in his hand, saw a startling sight over the banisters.

CHAPTER 8.

The Reward of Heroism.

"HOOK it!" breathed Gordon Gay.

It was time for the baffled cracksmen to flee.

They could see Mr. Adams, over the banisters—and he could see them—six gallant youths engaged in strenuous battle with four masked burglars. That was enough. The burglars had to be seen, to make the thing realistic. But it was obviously undesirable for Mr. Adams to get too near. The Fourth Form master of the Grammar School was rather a stalwart gentleman, and the cracksmen would not have had much chance in his powerful grip. And he was hurrying to the scene, greatly alarmed for the safety of the bold juniors who had so gallantly attacked the burglars.

Doors were opening, voices were shouting, on all sides now. Delamere of the Sixth came in sight in his pyjamas behind

Mr. Adams, with a cricket bat in hand, racing to the rescue. Three or four more of the Grammarian Sixth were on the way. The voice of Dr. Monk was heard somewhere in the distance. And away in the direction of the gates, a light flashed in the window of the porter's lodge. The sudden uproar in the school had startled Corporal Cutts, the porter, out of his slumbers.

"Hook it!"

It passed like a scene on the films. At one moment, Mr. Adams, speeding down the stairs, saw, across the broad banisters, a terrific battle being waged in the corridor. The next moment, before he was at the bottom of the staircase, he could see four masked ruffians scrambling desperately out of the open window.

Gordon Gay & Co. made a brave show of grasping and clutching at the escaping cracksmen. But they managed to let the ruffians slip out of their clutches.

One by one the masked invaders dropped from the window-sill, six feet to the ground below.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped one of the cracksmen. "Don't tread on my foot, you uttah ass!"

"Quiet!"

"Ow!"

"Hook it!" gasped Tom Merry. "Scatter—quick—there's a light ahead—the porter's turning out—"

The masked ruffians dashed away in the darkness, scattering to dodge Mr. Cutts, who was emerging from his lodge, lantern in hand, with a big stick in the other hand.

Meanwhile, Mr. Adams was on the scene in the corridor. Half a dozen of the Sixth were with him there, and other fellows were crowding downstairs, half-dressed, in wild excitement. Delamere stared from the open window.

"They've got away, sir!" he exclaimed. "Shall we go after them?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Mr. Adams. "I cannot allow you to run the risk. My boys—Gay—Wootton—Lane—my dear boys, are you hurt?"

Mr. Adams' kind anxiety for the Fourth-Formers was so genuine that the hearts of Gordon Gay & Co. smote them. For the first time it dawned upon them that there was a side to this escapade that was not exactly a "lark." But it was too late to think of that now. The Grammarians were landed in it, and they had to carry it through.

"No—no—oh, no, sir!" exclaimed Gay hastily. "Not a bit hurt, sir. You—you see, we were two to one—"

"What has happened? What—"

Dr. Monk, in flowing dressing-gown, came sailing on the scene, very much perturbed. "Mr. Adams, what—"

"An attempted burglary, sir," said Mr. Adams. "These very courageous lads seem to have caught the burglars, and stopped them. I saw at least four of the ruffians—"

"Four at least," said Delamere. "I wish you'd let us go after them, sir."

"No!" exclaimed the Head. "They may be armed—desperate! Is it possible that these boys—juniors—engaged in conflict with burglars—"

"Jolly nearly captured them, sir," said Wootton minor.

"Very nearly!" said Wootton major.

"Frank! Are you hurt?"

"No, father; not a bit," said Frank Monk, hanging his head a little. He realised, as Gay had done, that there was a rather disagreeable side to the adventure.

"And you others—thank Heaven, you have escaped unhurt!" said Dr. Monk, in great relief.

"Not a scratch, sir," said Lane.

"They must have entered by this window—it was open," said Mr. Adams. "Had not these boys given the alarm, they would certainly have robbed the school."

"The boys have acted very bravely, if recklessly," said Dr. Monk. "But how did you know, Gay—"

"We—we—"

"We heard a crash from the dormitory, sir," said Wootton major, sticking to the exact facts.

"I—I think they dropped a jemmy, or something, when they got in," murmured Carboy.

"This is what they dropped, evidently," said Mr. Adams, picking up a big screwdriver.

"And you boys came down!" exclaimed the Head. "You should not

have done so—it was very reckless. You might have been injured. But you have shown very great courage. I thank you for what you have done."

The Grammarian juniors coloured deeply. Fortunately, their blushes were taken for the blushes of modesty under praise.

"Oh, it—it was nothing, sir!" stammered Gay.

"N-n-nothing at all!" mumbled Lane.

"It was an act of very great, if thoughtless, courage," said the Head warmly. "These boys are a credit to your Form, Mr. Adams!"

"I agree with you, sir," said Mr. Adams heartily; "I am proud of them!"

The blushing heroes felt very much inclined to kick themselves. Never in their lives had they felt so "horridly mean." The Head glanced at them with warm approval.

"Dear me!" he said. "And they are the six boys whom it was my duty to punish to-morrow morning for their foolish escapade on Saturday! This makes my task very painful!"

"We—we're not asking to be let off, sir!" stammered Lane.

Certainly the Grammarians weren't asking it. But undoubtedly they were expecting it!

"My dear boys," said the Head, "I shall certainly consider the matter. I shall acquaint Dr. Holmes with your very gallant conduct to-night, and ask him as a favour to let the matter drop without punishment being inflicted. I am bound to consult him, but I have no doubt that he will meet my views. No doubt whatever."

"Oh, sir!" murmured the heroes.

There was a sudden exclamation from Delamere, of the Sixth, who was staring from the open window.

"Cutts has got one of them, sir!"

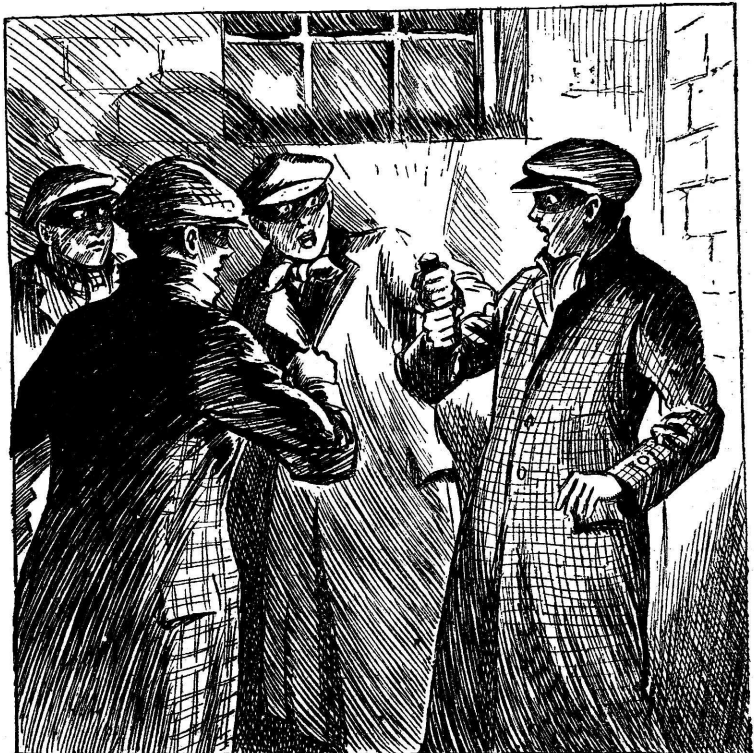
"What?"

"He's got him, sir!" exclaimed the Grammar School captain excitedly. "The rascal's struggling! I'll lend a hand!" Delamere leaped from the window without finishing.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Adams.

"That is very satisfactory!" said the Head. "One, at least, of these wicked depreicators can be sent to prison! Please unlock the door, Mr. Adams, and let the villain be brought in and secured!"

There was a general crowding to the door. But Gordon Gay & Co. did not move.



There was a sudden glitter of light, and three masked juniors jumped in alarm. It was Gussy turning on his electric torch. "You fathead!" hissed Blake. "Turn it off!" Blake jerked away the electric torch and slipped it into his overcoat pocket. Darkness reigned again.

They stood rooted.

They looked at one another—with sickly faces! One of the cracksmen had been captured! Up to that point everything had gone swimmingly. But now— They felt their brains almost whirl under this awful disaster. One of the cracksmen—captured!

They had not counted on the porter. Corporal Cutts had been left out of their careful calculations; but the old military gentleman had "barged" into the affair very effectively now. Gordon Gay & Co. looked at one another with feelings too deep for words!

CHAPTER 9.

Alas!

THE great door was flung wide. Electric light streamed into the darkness of the quadrangle.

Up the steps came the crusty old corporal, with triumph in his gnarled face and his powerful grip on the arm of a wriggling prisoner. Delamere, of the Sixth, gripped the prisoner's other arm.

Between them the hapless cracksmen was marched into the house, into the midst of a crowd numbering now fifty or sixty boys and masters.

There was a catching of breath at the sight of the masked face of the ruffian.

"Got 'im, sir!" said Corporal Cutts, with a wrinkled grin. "He was a-dodging along the wall, sir, when I spotted him and grabbed 'im, sir! Hit me on the nose, he did, but I 'ad him!"

"Very good, corporal—very good, indeed!" said Dr. Monk, with great satisfaction. "He shall be locked in a room until the police can come. The others have escaped?"

"They scattered and cleared, sir," said the corporal. "I saw one or two of 'em bunking over the wall, but I 'adn't a chance to get at 'em with my stick. But I collared this here beauty!"

"Take off his mask," said the Head. "Dear me! He looks little more than a boy, so far as size goes! Some wretched youth who has taken very early to a career of crime, I suppose?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated the cracksmen.

Mr. Adams gave a start.

That exclamation and that accent were rather startling from a gentleman of the Bill Sikes variety.

Indeed, the burglar's voice sounded rather familiar to Mr. Adams' ears somehow. He thought he had heard it before. Certainly it would have sounded very familiar indeed to a St. Jim's master.

Delamere jerked off the cracksmen's mask. A blackened face was exposed to view.

"A negro!" exclaimed Dr. Monk, with a start of surprise. "Weally, sir—"

"Take him to the punishment-room and lock him in safely," said the Head. "I will telephone for the police at once!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"One moment, sir," said Mr. Adams quietly. "There is something very odd about this—this person. I do not think he is a negro. His face is blackened for purposes of disguise."

"Yes, I observe that it is so, Mr. Adams, now that you mention it," said the Head. "Doubtless, he is known to the police!"

"He is evidently a boy," said Mr. Adams, scrutinising the prisoner's dusky countenance. "His features even seem a little familiar to me as well as his voice. May I question him, sir?"

"Certainly, Mr. Adams!"

"What is your name, boy?" demanded the Form-master.

"In the circus, sir, I am bound to wefuse to give you my name!" answered the cracksmen.

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed the Head. "He does not seem to speak as—as a low ruffian would be expected to speak! This is very extraordinary!"

"Very!" said Mr. Adams dryly. "Boy, give me your name at once!"

"I am sowwy, sir, but I am bound to wefuse!"

"He is evidently a schoolboy!" said Mr. Adams.

"A schoolboy!" exclaimed the doctor, greatly shocked. "A schoolboy—in league with a gang of burglars!"

Mr. Adams smiled slightly.

"I think it very probable, sir, that if the other burglars had been captured, they might have turned out to be school-boys also."

"I do not quite understand!"

"Unless I am mistaken, sir, this boy's name is D'Arcy, and he belongs to the Fourth Form at St. Jim's."

"Bai Jove!"

"What?" exclaimed the astounded doctor.

"Answer me, boy! Is not your name D'Arcy?"

"Weally, sir—"

"You must be aware that this foolish escapade cannot be kept up, D'Arcy! Do you wish Dr. Monk to telephone for the police?"

"Gweat Scott! Wathah not!"

(Continued on next page.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

Half-a-crown is paid for each contribution printed on this page.

If your name is not here this week it may be next.

GETTING AHEAD.

They were talking of folks who get on in the world, and Jones pointed to a meek-looking little man who was sitting with his wife. "See that fellow," said Jones, "you might not think it from his appearance, but he has left behind crowds of people who struggled to overtake him." "What is he?" "A bus conductor."—Miss Mabel Buckley, 130, Upper Sutton Street, Aston, Birmingham.

THE QUESTION.

An inspector, after visiting the senior half of the school, went to see how the juniors were getting on. "Now, boys," he said, "can any of you ask me a question I cannot answer?" A bright fellow rose and said: "Sir, if you were up to your neck in mud, and a stone were aimed at your head, would you duck?"—Leonard Charles Frost, 32, Edward Road, Brislington, Bristol.

WHY NOT?

A little boy was sitting on the lawn with his father, and the latter asked the boy if he loved his grandmother. "Of course I do," replied Billy. "And when I get a big boy I am going to marry her." "But you can't do that, Billy." "Why can't I?" cried Billy. "You married my mother: Why shouldn't I marry yours?"—Jack Knight, Mill Lane, Bassingbourne, Cambs.

THE CLEVER ONE.

Mrs. Green: "There isn't a smarter or cleverer boy anywhere than our Jim!" Mrs. White: "You don't say!" Mrs. Green: "But I do say it! Jim has a wonderful head. Look at these two chairs. He made them out of his head, and he has as much wood left as will make an armchair!"—Norman Ingham, 64, Pitt Street, Gladwick, Oldham.

PRACTICAL WORK.

Smith: "Take two letters from 'money,' and 'one' is left." Brown: "Is that a joke?" Smith: "Yes." Brown: "Well, I heard of a fellow who took money from two letters, and it was no joke—he got twelve months!"—Anthony Duff, 562, North Circular Road, Dublin.

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

The "Gem" is going strong in serials, but the new serial, "The Island of Pleasure," goes one bit farther in excellence.

But few of us, I take it, have ever been marooned. To find yourself shut up in an island is a rare test. Some would take

the thing coolly, light a fire, and see about supper—if there happened to be any supper. Others would start hating the adventure right away. But the characters in "The Island of Pleasure" have a fine old time.

By the way, the "Popular" this week has been enlarged, and the price will be 2d. In addition to a big budget of stories there will be a free coloured plate of an express engine.

Just a word about a considerable change I am making in the "Boys' Herald." A fresh and very sensational series of detective tales always makes one sit up and take notice. In the new yarns

in the "Boys' Herald," the scene is laid at Greyfriars. Drake, Locke's young assistant, an old Greyfriars boy, goes back to the school to help Locke in fathoming an extraordinary mystery.

The first of these stories is called, "Who was the Man?"

Another good feature in the "Boys' Herald" will be found in the stories of Teddy Heron's Schooldays. Get the "Boys' Herald" this week.

Don't miss next week's wonderful number of the "Gem," which contains a splendid signed portrait of Martin Clifford, the popular "Gem" author.

YOUR EDITOR.

St. Jim's to the Rescue!

(Continued from page 16.)

"You are D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's?"
 "Yaas!" gasped the cracksmán.
 "Bless my soul!" said Dr. Monk. "This is—is dreadful! A boy belonging to a famous public school—a well-connected lad—sinking to the level of an associate of criminals—engaging in a desperate attempt at theft—why, he is actually laughing! This is no laughing matter, D'Arcy!"
 "Pway, excuse me, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I—I—I am not exactly a despewate cwiminal, sir! You—you see—"
 "I think that perhaps Gay can explain," said Mr. Adams.
 "Gay, come here at once!"
 The hapless Grammarian came forward. His comrades followed him, hanging their heads. The game was up now, with a vengeance.
 "You know this boy, Gay?" exclaimed Mr. Adams magisterially.
 "Ye-e-es, sir!"
 "You know who his comrades were?"
 "Ye-e-es, sir!"
 "You were a party to this insane prank?"
 "Oh, dear!"
 "Prank!" said Dr. Monk dazedly.
 "Keep it dark, old chap," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "I seem to have got lagged, but I am not goin' to say anything."
 "Oh, you ass!" groaned Gordon Gay.
 "Weally, Gay—"
 "You thumping owl!" groaned Wootton major. "You were bound to get caught, of course, and give the whole show away!"
 "It was not my fault, Wootton! I dwopped my eyeglass, and while I was gwopin' for it, that wuff old boundah collahed me!"
 "My heyc!" said Corporal Cutts.
 Dr. Monk was beginning to understand now. His face hardened, and his eyes gleamed. He looked at the swell of St. Jim's, and he looked at the shivering Grammarians.
 "So this was a—a—a practical joke?" he exclaimed.
 "Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Gay.
 "There were no burglars at all?"
 "N-n-no, sir!"
 "You resorted to this—this wretched artifice in order to obtain credit for yourselves without deserving it!" exclaimed the Head.
 Gay crimsoned.
 "Oh, no, sir! We—we never thought about that! It—it was quite a different reason—" He broke off.
 "Was it a scheme to escape your punishment to-morrow, Gay?" asked Mr. Adams grimly.
 "Oh!" exclaimed the Head. He fully understood now. Gordon Gay suppressed a groan.
 "That was it, sir. No harm intended—"

"None at all," mumbled Frank Monk.
 "No harm!" thundered the Head, in righteous wrath. "You have alarmed the whole school at midnight. You have sought to escape a just punishment by a stratagem, and very nearly succeeded. No harm! Upon my word, I shall not cane you to-morrow. I shall administer a flogging instead, a very severe flogging!"
 "Ow!"
 "And I have no doubt that Dr. Holmes will do the same with his boys concerned in this unheard-of escapade!" exclaimed the Head. "Go back to your dormitory at once! As for D'Arcy, he must be taken back to his school. May I request you, Mr. Adams—"
 "Certainly, sir!"
 "Bai Jove! I'm awf'ly sowwy, you chaps!" said the swell of St. Jim's. "It was a weally wippin' stunt, but it does not seem to have been a gweat success, aftah all, owin' to this interfewin' old boundah. I am awf'ly sowwy."
 But Arthur Augustus's sorrow was not of much use to the hapless Grammarians. They shivered away to their dormitory, and ten minutes later Arthur Augustus, having washed his noble face, was seated beside Mr. Adams in a trap, driving home to St. Jim's. In Rylcombe Lane, three uneasy juniors, waiting for their missing comrade to rejoin them, spotted him in the trap, and realised that the game was up. And the feelings of Tom Merry and Blake and Lowther, as they followed the trap to St. Jim's, could not have been expressed in words.

CHAPTER 10. Catching It.

TAGGLES almost fell down.
 Loud ringing at his bell had brought Taggles, the St. Jim's porter, out of the land of dreams at one o'clock in the morning. In the worst of tempers, Taggles had turned out at last, and gone down to the gates. Having allowed the bell to ring for ten minutes, Taggles had realised that it really must be somebody who wanted admission.
 His lantern gleamed through the gate bars at a trap, a steaming horse, a frowning gentleman with his coat-collar turned up, and a junior whose face looked decidedly snudgy.
 "Master D'Arcy!"
 "Pway open the gate, Taggles! You are keepin' Mr. Adams waitin' in the cold, and the horse, too!" Disaster had not robbed Arthur Augustus of his polished politeness or his kind consideration for others.
 "My heyc!" stuttered Taggles.
 Taggles let them in, and went back to his lodge like a man in a dream. Mr. Adams walked Arthur Augustus in, and three shadowy figures followed. The Grammar School master glanced round grimly. Tom Merry and Blake and Monty Lowther had put their masks into the deepest depths of their pockets, and had washed their blackened faces as well as they could in a ditch. Now they joined Arthur Augustus and his conductor. The game was up, and they were prepared to face the music with the captured swell of St. Jim's.
 "You three?" said Mr. Adams.
 "Yes, sir," said Monty Lowther meekly. "Sorry to bring you out like this on a cold night, sir."
 Mr. Adams granted.
 "You uttah asses!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "What did you show up for? I was not goin' to say a word about you."
 "Fathead! We're all in it."
 "Wats! Buzz off now, and say nothip'. I am suah that Mr. Adams will not weport you to the Head, undah the circs."
 "Ass!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "What did you let them catch you for, you howling dummy?" said Blake, as the juniors followed Mr. Adams to the School House.
 "It was a wotten accident, deah boy. I hardly think you will blame me when you know what happened."
 "Well, what happened?" grunted Blake.
 "I dwopped my eyeglass."
 "What?"
 "Dwopped my eyeglass, and while I was gwopin' for it I was collahed. You see, it was a feahful accident that might have happened to anybody."
 "You—you—you—" gasped Blake. "Mr. Adams, will you wait a minute while we kill that lunatic?"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "You frabjous owl!"
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 Mr. Adams was ringing loud peals at the School House bell. It was some time before the hall window opened, and Mr.

(Continued on page 19.)
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GREAT NEWS!

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Dr. Brutell's Invention is Successful:

MADELEINE struggled with all her power to free herself from the clutches of Ram Darry, but her efforts availed her nothing. The mystery man gave a brief signal to his followers, and they at once rushed in the room.

Ram Darry instructed them to tie Madeleine up, and when this task was completed he told them to carry her downstairs and place her in the motor-car which they had left outside.

Madeleine Stanton had passed through a great many adventures and some very unpleasant experiences while in search of her father, but she had never come face to face with this man before.

She wondered who he could be.

There was no doubt in her mind that he was connected with the Black Circle gang, for, as far as she knew, she had no other enemies anywhere in the world.

As she was being carried towards the motor-car, Madeleine tried to think why her friend Dr. Brutell had not come to help her in her distress. Possibly, she thought, the door of his laboratory was closed, and, being deeply engrossed in his experiments, her cries had not reached him.

It never entered her mind that these queer men who had invaded her room had dealt with him also. She had great faith in Brutell's cleverness, and felt that he would be able to outwit easily such men as these. Soon he would become aware of the fact that she was missing, and then she knew that he would set out once again in search of her.

Madeleine was placed upon some rugs right at the back of the luxurious motor-car belonging to Ram Darry and his men. Here she was completely hidden from view, and as she was still securely gagged, there was not the slightest possibility of her attracting anybody's attention.

The motor-car set off at a great speed, and Madeleine wondered where the destination would be, and what surroundings she would find herself in this time when the end of the journey was reached.

She hoped it would not be very long, for the ropes around her limbs had been tied by no means loosely.

Not long after the departure of Ram Darry the doctor's butler returned from an errand. Almost as soon as he set foot inside the house again he felt instinctively that all was not well, and when a moment or two later he came upon the unconscious form of the housekeeper, Mrs. Browning, his worst fears were realised.

The butler went over to her at once, and he was overjoyed to find that she was not dead. Indeed, there were signs that the good lady was rapidly returning to consciousness again.

He waited until Mrs. Browning at last opened her eyes. She looked around in a most bewildered sort of manner, and it seemed that she gave a sigh of relief when

RAM DARRY

The Mystery Man

Written by Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.

she saw the familiar figure of the butler standing before her.

"Have—have they gone?" she asked appealingly.

The amazed man shook his head, indicating that he was puzzled.

"Who?" he asked earnestly. "What has happened?"

It did not dawn upon Mrs. Browning that, having only just arrived upon the scene, she had not the slightest idea of the terrible ordeal through which she had passed recently.

The butler did his best to calm the housekeeper. He told her that there was no danger about now, and that it would be a great help to him if she would inform him of what had taken place during his absence.

Mrs. Browning did her best to give an account of the whole affair, but she was still so nervous and excited that it was a most disjointed narrative altogether.

The butler placed the housekeeper in a comfortable chair, then he hurried upstairs to the laboratory to find his master.

Dr. Brutell had by this time also partially recovered from the effects of the hypnotism, and with the assistance of the butler he soon returned to his normal mood again.

The scientist was able to shake off the after effects much quicker than the unfortunate Mrs. Browning. His thoughts turned at once to Madeleine.

Was she safe? he wondered. Then a dreadful fear entered his heart.

"Follow me!" commanded Dr. Brutell, without further delay; and the two men bounded upstairs to the room used by Madeleine as a reading-room.

The scientist threw open the door, and burst unceremoniously into the room.

"Madeleine!" he said hoarsely.

But there was no answer; the room was empty, and immediately the truth dawned upon Dr. Brutell.

Madeleine had been taken away by the man, who had caught him by surprise, and rendered him incapable of assisting her. Brutell blamed himself for this tragedy.

He was foolish to have allowed Ram Darry to beat him so easily. What could be done for the poor girl now?

Dr. Brutell remained deep in thought for a moment, as though deciding what course to pursue. Then he walked over to the telephone, and rang up the police-station.

"Send an inspector around at once!" he said.

Brutell gave his name and address, and, hanging up the receiver, walked out of the room in company with the butler.

The kindly doctor felt very sorry for poor Madeleine. She had come to his house to stay with him in order to be out of the reach of the Black Circle, and now this terrible catastrophe had happened.

Brutell had had no time yet to work up a theory of his own regarding this disappearance of Madeleine, but he felt that the strange intruders into his domain were working independently of the Black Circle.

What reason could they have in kidnapping Madeleine? That was the question.

Dr. Brutell hoped that the next few hours would clear up the mystery, and that the poor, harassed girl would be safe home again before another day had passed. He would certainly leave no stone unturned in his search for the truth.

Madeleine must be found, and at once!

In obedience to Dr. Brutell's urgent call, the detective arrived at the house with all speed. Although there was not the slightest doubt that he was one of the smartest men

available, he was quite unable to make much headway over the present case.

It was a baffling mystery for him to solve. Ram Darry had succeeded in covering up all this trellis, and, consequently, there were no clues for the investigator to work upon.

The detective turned towards Mrs. Browning, hoping that he would be able to glean a few important particulars from her concerning the men. But, unfortunately, he was no more successful in his cross-examination than the butler had been previously.

She was so scared by the appearance of the intruders, and was so keen on making her escape at the time, that she failed to notice what they were like. And the shock of being hypnotised assisted in making her memory an almost complete blank.

"Can't you recall anything that took place, Mrs. Browning?" asked the detective, in desperation.

He waited eagerly for the answer, but the housekeeper remained silent.

Things did not look at all promising, until a plan suddenly occurred to Dr. Brutell.

He went off at once to his laboratory, and in a few minutes he returned, bringing with him an extraordinary thing, composed mainly of a number of mirrors.

The scientist pressed a lever, and the mirrors started to revolve.

"Perhaps the memory can be revived while in a hypnotic state," muttered Dr. Brutell, as he adjusted his machine.

Then he turned to Mrs. Browning, and asked her if she had any objection to being the subject of a little experiment.

The housekeeper had great faith in her master, and she at once signified her willingness to do anything to assist the investigator.

"Look closely at those revolving mirrors, and tell me exactly what you see," remarked Dr. Brutell, as he placed his instrument on the floor opposite the chair in which the housekeeper was seated.

The good lady did as she was bid, and gazed intently at the mirrors, which were now revolving at a fairly rapid rate.

The spinning glasses had a peculiar effect upon Mrs. Browning, and in a few seconds she had closed her eyes; and very soon afterwards she fell off into a deep sleep.

Dr. Brutell started to speak to the housekeeper in a low voice, and he put a number of questions to her.

By the aid of his marvellous instrument this amazing man had placed her completely under a spell.

"You are thinking of the strange men who entered my house?" he asked the housekeeper.

Mrs. Browning answered in a queer tone that seemed to come from afar off.

"Yes!" was her reply.

"Then tell me exactly what happened, and describe as closely as you can what the intruders looked like."

There was a pause for a few minutes, then Mrs. Browning started to talk again. Slowly, and bit by bit, she unfolded the incidents which had taken place at the scientist's house.

Dr. Brutell listened with great interest. This was the first occasion he had made use of this new invention of his, and, so far, it had turned out quite a success.

While under the strange spell, the housekeeper gave a detailed description of everything which had taken place, and the detective looked at the strange scene in wonderment.

The description Mrs. Browning gave of the unwelcome visitors was so perfect that Brutell and the detective would have been able to draw a picture of them, if necessary.

(To be continued next week.)

"ST. JIM'S TO THE RESCUE."

(Continued from page 17.)

Railton, in a dressing-gown, looked out. A few words from the Grammar School master, and the astounded Housemaster of St. Jim's opened the door. Tom Merry & Co. filed in, silent, scarcely daring to meet their Housemaster's eyes. They stood in a silent and dismayed row while Mr. Adams explained matters. During the course of his career as a Housemaster, Mr. Railton had met with some surprises. But certainly he had never been so utterly astounded as he was now as he listened to Mr. Adams' explanation, and stared blankly at the hapless amateur cracksmen. He seemed almost too overcome for speech.

"Upon my word!" he gasped at last. "Upon my word! Boys, go to your dormitories! The Head will deal with you in the morning."

Four hapless juniors crept up the staircase.

It was some time before they slept, tired as they were. The anticipations of the morning were too harrowing.

Tom Merry & Co's anticipations, harrowing as they were, were more than realised.

In the morning they had an interview with the Head.

Dr. Holmes seemed scarcely able to credit his ears when he heard the story of the amazing adventure.

He kept the juniors waiting while he rang up the Grammar School, and exchanged views with Dr. Monk.

The two headmasters were quite in accord as to what ought to be done in the amazing circumstances.

The Head of St. Jim's turned to the culprits again.

"I will not say how astonished—in fact, astounded, I am at this unheard-of escapade!" he said. "Words would fail to convey my feelings. I will only remark that the punishment will be exemplary."

Which was cheering!

"Very exemplary!" said the Head. "I am amazed—astonished! Such a wild and reckless scheme almost passes the bounds of belief! Surely, Merry, you realise that you should not have been so—so—so utterly, absurdly reckless, so—so incredibly stupid, as to think of such a plan—"

Tom was uncomfortably silent.

"Pwaw don't ccredit Tom Mewwy with thinkin' of this wippin' ideah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "It was my ideah, sir."

The Head glanced at him.

"I trust you now regret your absurd action!" he exclaimed sternly.

"We wegwet vewwy much how it has turned out, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"What?"

"But we felt that it was up to us to save the Gwammah School chaps ffrom a lickin' if we could, sir," said Gussy. "I twust, sir, that you will recognise the fact that our motives were good. Stop kickin' my ankle, Blake, while I am explainin' mattahs to the Head!"

"Dr. Monk has decided to flog the boys of his school concerned in this outrageous adventure," said the Head. "I cannot do less."

"Bai Jove!"

"After prayers!" said the Head, in a terrible voice. And so they were dismissed.

Let us draw a veil, as the novelists say, over what followed. It was painful. Dr. Holmes, like the kind old gentleman he was, told the juniors how painful it was to him to inflict a flogging. It was still more painful to the juniors. However sensitive the flogger may be the floggee always feels the thing more keenly.

For the remainder of that day there were four juniors at St. Jim's who looked glumly on the gloomy side of life. At the Grammar School there were six fellows plunged into the darkest depths of pessimism.

But it passed.

"They meant well," Gordon Gay said to his chums a few days later. "Of course, they mucked it up, but they meant well. And they're a good sort of silly owls, and we'll give them the kybosh, anyhow."

"It was a potty idea from the start," Tom Merry told his comrades, when the flogging had worn off. "We got what we asked for. And we'll jolly well give the Grammarians the kybosh, anyhow."

But it still remained to be seen which of the rival parties was going to receive the "kybosh!"

THE END.

(Next week Tom Merry & Co. find themselves up against the villagers. Be sure you read "TAKING DOWN AUBREY RACKE." By Martin Clifford.)

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THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

(Conclusion.)

The End of Maxla.

But by the time they reached the foot of the lava slope Billy and Tony were some fifty feet on their way. A shower of big stones whizzed up. Several passed close to the climbers' heads, but neither were touched, and before more could be discharged there was a sudden thunder of huge feet, a yell of utter panic, and Tony, glancing down, saw the brontosaur careering across the plain.

The immense brute showed some intelligence. It did not make for the man Maxla, who, deaf to warnings, continued to prance at the foot of the slope, but went straight towards the mouth of the gully into which the Mangas were crowding. But it was a trifle too late. The last of the fugitives dived into shelter and scrambled up the cliff before the long neck shot the snapping head within reach. It turned. It spied Maxla, and strode towards him.

The wretched medicine-man must have gone mad in that moment. Even then he might possibly have saved himself, by dodging amongst the many great boulders around him, for the bronto was cumbersome. Instead, he rushed into the jaws of destruction.

With a frightful yell, he raised his axe and cut at the great head swooping towards him. The blow fell, but the creature heeded it not at all. The long jaws opened, the yell rose to a shrill shriek—and ceased!

"De medicine-man got his medicine! Golly, what a beast!" muttered Billy Kettle, and got going again.

They climbed steadily, and presently reached the mouth of the gorge and the waiting Hobby, whose heart had been in his mouth during the last moments his friends had spent below.

"I thought either the Mangas or the beast would get you," he said. "But, anyhow, we're out of it. Shall I haul up the rope? If we leave it those reds may get out and come after us."

So the rope was hauled up, and coiled under a rock. One last waft of their bat-

tered hats towards the forest where the Arika waited unseen, and they turned away to march up the gorge.

They had raced down it in a few minutes when borne on the crest of the wave that had taken them into the valley. Now, after hours of heavy going, they had not reached the lake in the ancient crater when darkness fell, but had to camp while still some way from it.

It was no pleasant camping-ground. A heavy, sulphurous smoke oozed from cracks in the rock, and there were odd rumblings as of distant artillery. The ancient volcano was not extinct.

About midnight Billy, who was keeping watch, roused the others.

"Look, gemmen!" he quavered. "Look dere! Flames! And de ground shake! Dere's going to be a blow-up! Dese here rocks will come down! Us'd best be going on mighty quick!"

There was reason for his alarm. The smoke was no longer oozing, but gushing from every crevice, while from a narrow ravine over which they had passed-jetted a flickering tongue of blue fire. The rocks beneath them heaved. A fragment, dislodged from the cliffs above, crashed down close to them.

Snatching up their bundles, they made off. Weariness was forgotten. On they sped, lighted by the fires that now sprang up from several fresh cracks.

As the first light of dawn began to penetrate the hanging pall of yellow smoke they reached the ledge of rock that confined the waters of the lake, and turned along the sloping sides of the crater towards the hut where they had found the Indian canoe in the beginning of their strange adventure.

The light strengthened as the sun burst through the clouds. They saw the hut before them, and several tents beside it. A group of Indians stood about a fire. One of them turned and saw the three. He uttered a loud yell. More Indians appeared; then out of one of the tents came a tall white man,

who at sight of them began to run towards them.

"It's my uncle! We're in luck at last!" exclaimed Tony, and next moment was shaking Sir Herbert's hand, introducing Hobby, and trying to tell of their adventures all in a breath.

Sir Herbert cut him short.

"You came only just in time, boys," he said. "I have been searching for you all along the range. One of your treacherous guides quarrelled with the others, and came to me with the whole story. I have been here two days; but I was about to break camp, for we are in danger. We'll march. You can tell me the tale as we go."

Half an hour later, mounted on mules, the three adventurers sketched their doings as they ascended the slope of the crater and turned out upon the ridge beyond. Sir Herbert halted to glance back.

"All that you have told me is marvellously interesting," he said. "And this valley where the creatures that roamed the earth before the coming of man still survive must certainly be explored by a properly equipped expedition. But we will have to—"

His words were drowned by an appalling subterranean explosion. The earth rocked. A huge jet of flame shot up from the gorge through which the trio had made their toilsome way, and as it subsided the tall cliffs on either side swayed inwards with a grinding crash that left the spectators stunned for several seconds.

When they looked again the gap was closed. The cliffs split asunder long ages before, had come together again.

Sir Herbert shook his head.

"There may be another way in," he said. "But I fear we may never find it. Let us be thankful that you, at least, have seen and escaped to tell something of its marvels; for I think many a long year is destined to pass before white men's feet again tread your vale of terror."

And, turning his mule, he led the way back to civilisation.

THE END.

"THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE."

(Continued from page 13.)

At Taga's suggestion the sail had been rigged over the bows to form a temporary shelter and a barrier for the waves, and it was under this rough shelter that Anna and the rest of the youngsters crouched, while Don, seated beside Taga, helped the young native to steer.

The waves had increased tremendously, and it was down into long green valleys that the boat dipped dizzily, down and down until it seemed as though it would never rise to the surface again; then the bow would start to tilt, and would climb up into the lather and fury of the wind and rain, a tiny, helpless shell on the face of the turbulent ocean.

"How long will it last, Taga?" Don had to place his lips close to the native's ear as he shrieked out the question. Taga turned an ever-smiling face, and shook his head.

"Worse to come yet, fellah Gordon!" he cried. "We only just beginning things now."

Hour after hour passed, and there was no sign of the storm abating; then, when the darkness increased until even the seas themselves were blotted out, the shivering inmates of the wind-buffed longboat heard above the roar of the gale another and more sinister sound—the deep, reverberating boom of breakers ahead.

Now and again a vivid flash of lightning would streak through the darkness, and under one of those flashes Don caught sight of Taga's face. The native was standing up now in the stern, holding on to the tiller.

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while he peered ahead, and there was no mistaking the anxious expression on the wet, copper-hued countenance.

"We gotta look out now," he said. "Big fellah reef ahead, and we driving straight on it. No good do anything."

Don shook himself free of the detaining hand and arose to his feet, balancing himself to the sway of the longboat. There came another flash of lightning, and, peering before him, Don managed to make out the great barrier of white foam lying like a streak across their path.

"I'll have to warn the others!" he called. "Hang on, Taga!"

It was with the greatest difficulty that the plucky youngster worked his way to the bow, where, under the strip of canvas, his chums and the dark-haired girl lay shivering. Don placed his hands round his lips, and, bending forward into the shelter, he roared out his information, and the wretched group commenced to scramble out of their place of safety into the wind and rain.

An awful moment passed, and now all around them was the sound of the breakers. A final vivid flash of lightning struck down, and Don saw the great wall of foam immediately in front of them.

A cry of fear came from his side, and he flung one arm up, and it closed round the wet, slender figure of Anna. Then came a sudden awful tilt; the bow of the longboat began to climb higher and higher until it seemed as though it would turn completely over, then it fell forward, there was a crash and a rending sound. A ten-foot breaker came surging into the boat and lifted Don and his companion away as though they were mere pieces of straw.

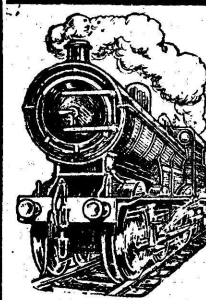
Down and down into the warm, gurgling sea Don was dragged, until at last, with the rush of waters in his ears and the heavy, piston-like drumming of his heart making a steady cadence, the youngster's brain seemed to snap.

His last clear memory was a dumb, fierce determination to hold on to that slender

burden, and his arms tightened round it as the mammoth breaker drew them into its mighty embrace.

(Surprising incidents happen in next week's splendid long instalment of this grand adventure serial. Make sure of getting your copy of the "Gem" early. There will be a big demand for this issue, which also contains a fine portrait of your great favourite, Martin Clifford.)

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