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K. CAMPBELL  
(Partick Thistle F.C.)

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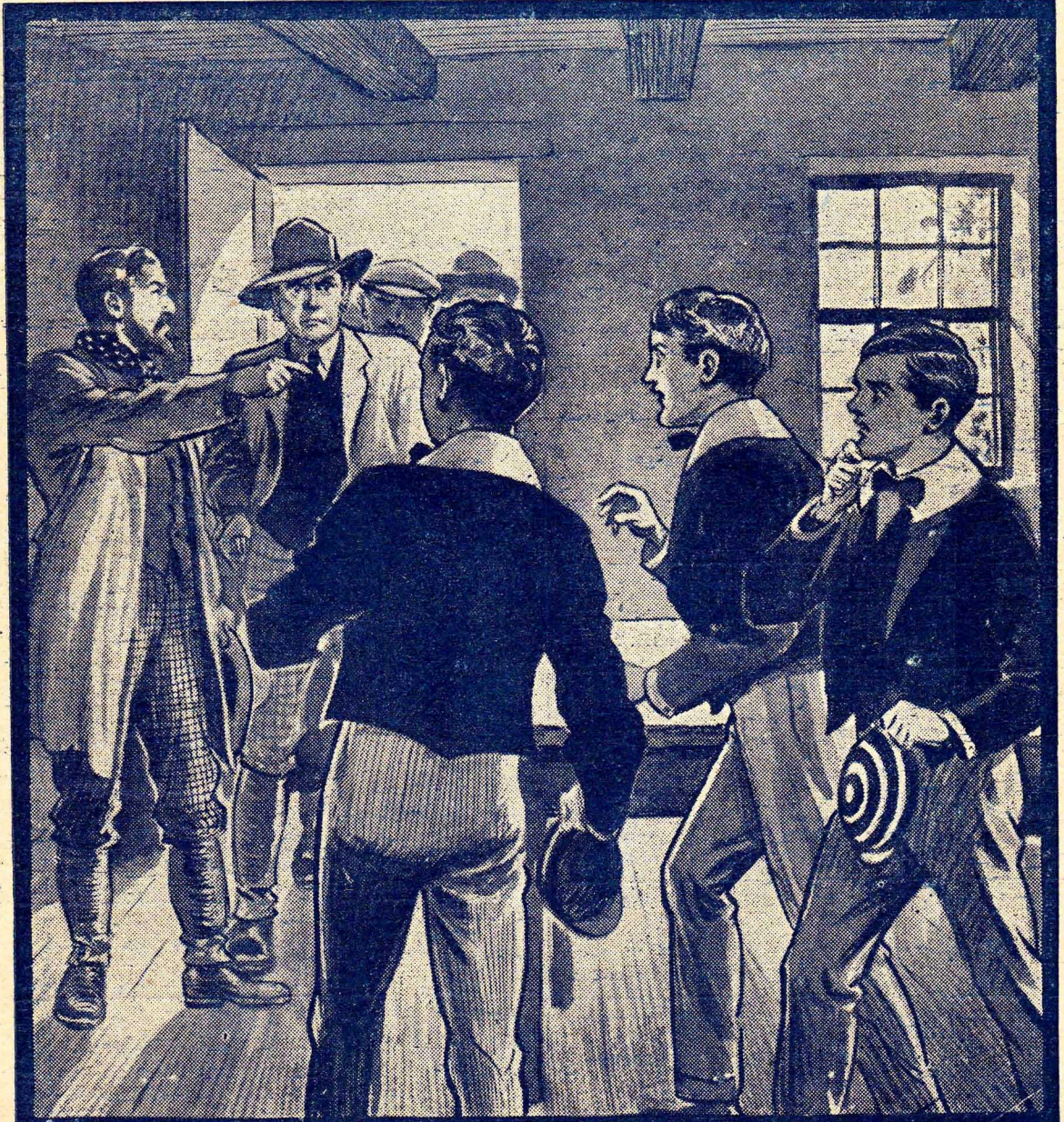


A. GRIMSDSELL  
(Spurs F.C.)

No. 746. Vol. XXI.

Every Wednesday.

May 27th, 1922.



**TALBOT COMES FACE TO FACE WITH "SMILEY JOE"!**

*(An Incident from the Thrilling Long Complete School Story Inside.)*

# TWO STAR FOOTBALLERS!

**KENNETH CAMPBELL**  
(Partick Thistle F.C.)

**ARTHUR GRIMSDELL**  
(Tottenham Hotspur F.C.)

## A GREAT GOALKEEPER.

FOR a long time back Scotland has been rich in goalkeepers of International standard, and the latest man to hold the fort on behalf of the Land o' Cakes is Kenneth Campbell, the goalkeeper of Partick Thistle. He is one of the best, too, and his goalkeeping in the match between Scotland and England last April, when he kept a clean sheet, did much to help the Scots to win that important contest.

As a matter of fact, though, although Campbell was born at Glasgow, and, later, played with Cambuslang Rangers, it was with the Liverpool team, as successor to Sam Hardy, that he really made his name. In goal for Liverpool, Campbell did some wonderful things both before and after the war; but a couple of years ago he was transferred to Partick Thistle, Liverpool then having two International goalkeepers on their books, and Campbell having a wish to get back to his native country.

In his first season with the Thistle, Campbell helped them to a surprise success in winning the Scottish Cup, and is a worthy successor to the long line of famous keepers Scotland has had in the past. He stands 5ft. 10½ins., and

weighs 11st. 8lb. "Kenny," as he is popularly known, seems to possess the goalkeeping instinct to a remarkable degree, and his facility for getting in the right place for a coming ball enables him to make any number of difficult shots look like easy ones.

## A WONDERFUL HALF-BACK.

IN the season of 1920-21, Arthur Grimsdell, the left half-back of the Tottenham Hotspur team, gained two honours in one term of the kind which seldom falls to the lot of a footballer. In the first place he was captain of the England team against Scotland, and a few weeks later he had the pleasure of receiving from the hands of his Majesty the King the English Cup as captain of the Tottenham Hotspur team. But though these honours were in a way unique, we can say that Grimsdell deserved them, for he is a sportsman through and through, even though he is a professional footballer. And since the end of the war he has often been acclaimed as the greatest left half-back in the game.

Well-built and amazingly strong, Grimsdell can do a swerving dribble with

the ball at his toe in a manner which would do credit to any forward; and in his time he has sent in quite a number of successful shots, scoring as many as fourteen goals in one season, which is quite a good bag for a half-back.

In addition, Grimsdell is great at the art of recovery, and so far as one man can ever have been said to have made a team, then Grimsdell has made the Tottenham Hotspur side into a great one since the war. He learnt his football with Watford, and he still lives in the Hertfordshire town. In 1912, though, he was transferred to Tottenham Hotspur for the modest fee of £350, and the team have never picked up a cheaper bargain.

When the war broke out he was among the first of the really prominent footballers to join up. Grimsdell can not only play the game, but he can also talk about it, and he has consented to deliver a series of lectures on the game to boys during the next few months. He is undoubtedly a fine fellow, and a model footballer.

Next week's article will deal with SAM HARDY. See that you get the photograph which will be presented FREE with next week's GEM.

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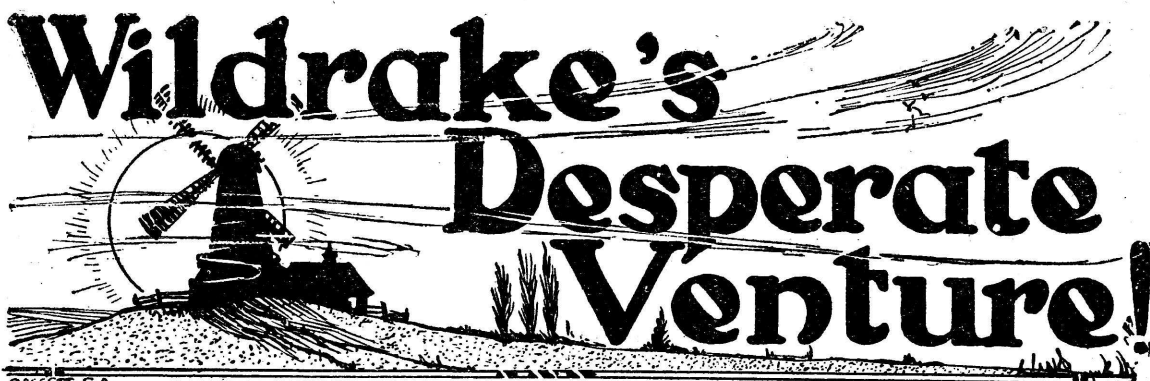
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# Wildrake's Desperate Venture!



A Grand, Long, Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling of the great courage displayed by Kit Wildrake whilst trying to solve the mystery surrounding St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Gordon Gay is Late!

"ABOUT the cricket—"

Jack Blake of the Fourth spoke hesitatingly. On that sunny afternoon, with a smiling blue sky, and a soft breeze rustling the trees, most of the St. Jim's fellows would have been thinking of cricket, in ordinary circumstances.

But the state of affairs at the old school was very far from normal.

Tom Merry did not reply for a moment. His chum Manners looked at him, and shook his head.

"No cricket for me," he said.

"It's the Grammar School match this afternoon," said Blake. "We haven't scratched—"

"We ought to have," said Manners.

"I don't quite see that," said Blake. "We couldn't know what was going to happen last night, anyhow. And, after all, the Grammarians are coming over here to play, so we sha'n't have to go out of gates. I suppose the Head wouldn't let us, anyway."

"That's so!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, what about it?" said Blake. "It's a bit rotten, kept in gates as we've been on account of that kidnapping rotter. I don't want to cut the match. If you fellows don't feel inclined for it—"

"I don't!" said Manners.

"It's rotten, poor old Lowther not being here," said Blake. "But, after all, we can't cut games because of what's happened."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's rather too late to scratch," he said. "We could telephone to the Grammar School and tell Gordon Gay. But—"

"We ought to play!" said Blake. "If you two fellows want to stand out because of old Lowther being missing, you can leave it to us. Wildrake can take a hand; he's turning out well in the practice. I shouldn't mind captaining the team."

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"I don't think I shall stand out," he answered. "In fact, I shall play, Blake. If you'd rather not, Manners—"

"Leave me out."

"Then you can tell Wildrake we shall want him, Blake."

"Right-ho!" said Blake; and he left Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Manners gave a grunt. Tom Merry coloured a little as he heard it.

"I think we ought to play the match, Manners," he said quietly. "Gordon Gay ought to have had warning before if we were going to cut it. I think I feel as much about poor old Lowther as you do, but it won't do him any good to mope about the school looking glum. He wouldn't want us to do that."

"It's not only that, Tom. You know what happened last night," said Manners. "Those scoundrels, whoever they are, got into the school and got hold of Mr. Fix, the detective. They've got him away—goodness knows where—with Lowther and old Kildare. There was a shot fired

and blood was found on the floor. The poor man may be dead, for all we know. In the circumstances—"

"I know," said Tom, his face clouding. "But—"

"And what may have happened to Lowther?" went on Manners, his lips quivering. "He's been a week or more in the hands of those rotters—goodness knows where—and his uncle refuses to pay the money for his release as the Head paid for yours, Tom. We know that the villain who calls himself Nemo has demanded ransom for him and for Kildare, and threatened their lives if it is not paid."

"He would never dare—" said Tom, between his teeth.

Manners gave a shrug.

"How do we know? He's safe enough. The local police can't find a clue to him, and the man from Scotland Yard has been kidnapped just like the fellows he came down here to track out. He was attacked in the school itself at midnight and taken away. The kidnapers are safe enough, so far as I can see. And they're in this stunt to make money. If the money isn't paid they're not likely to keep their prisoners indefinitely, I suppose."

Tom Merry rose, and moved restlessly about the study.

The same fear was in his mind, though he had tried to drive the haunting thought away.

Was it possible that Monty Lowther's chums would never look upon his face in life again?

With such a terrible thought in his mind, cricket—even the first cricket match of the season—seemed a trifling matter enough. But it was not possible, Tom Merry told himself. Nemo was a desperate criminal, but there was a limit to his audacity and to his villainy. It was inconceivable that he would do harm to the hapless schoolboy who had fallen into his hands.

But it was evident that Manners feared the worst.

"It couldn't be!" said Tom at last. "The man would put his neck in the noose if he harmed Lowther. And why should he?"

"Why should he not?" said Manners. "He's in this game to make money, and if he doesn't get the money—"

"If I thought it possible—" muttered Tom.

"I think it likely."

"I can't believe it!" said the captain of the Shell. "I was in their hands, and they never harmed me."

"The ransom was paid for you."

"You fellahs gettin' weady?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form looked in at the doorway, and turned his eyeglass alternately upon Tom Merry and Manners. "The Gwammawians will be ovah heah pwetty soon, you know."

Arthur Augustus was in spotless flannels already, with a nobby bat under his arm. He was looking very cheery, but his aristocratic face became grave as he glanced at the Shell fellows.

"No good mopin', you chaps!" he said. "We can't help poor old Lowthah or Kildare or poor Mr. Fix by goin' about with long faces. We may as well play cwicket. It would be diffewent if the Head would let us hunt for the poor chaps. But he is keepin' us gated, although I have wemonstwatid with him on the subject. He caned me for wemonstwatid with him."

"Serve you right!" grunted Manners.

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"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Manners.

"It would be wathah futile to answah such a vevy unintelligible wemark as that, Mannahs!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wepeat that we are bound to play the Gwaminawians, if only to show that St. Jim's can keep a stiff uppah lip when things are goin' w'ong. But if you do not feel disposed to captain the side, Tom Mewvy, I am prepared to offah to take that dutay off your hands, deah boy. Wely on me."

"I'm playing!" said Tom Merry tersely. He glanced at his chum. "You're not coming, Manners?"

"No!"

Tom Merry left the study with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior, joined them in the passage.

"Blake says you want me," he remarked.

"Yes. Manners is standing out."

"I guess I'm ready," said Wildrake. "I'll be glad to play. When are Gordon Gay & Co. coming?"

"Two," said Tom. "We'd better get down to the ground."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Most of the junior cricketers were already gathering on Little Side, and Tom Merry and D'Arcy and Wildrake joined them there. Few of the fellows looked quite so cheerful as usual. The dark mystery that brooded over the school had its effect upon even the most exuberant spirits. But the general opinion was that it was best to "carry on." Two o'clock rang out from the clock-tower, but the Grammarians, generally very punctual in keeping a sporting engagement, had not appeared.

"Bai Jove! The boundahs are late!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when the quarter chimed out.

"Bother them!" said Blake irritably. "Why the merry dickens can't they keep to time?"

"Oh, give 'em a chance!" said Figgins of the New House cheerily. "It's rather odd, though. Gordon Gay is never late for a match."

Tom Merry bit his lip with impatience. He was anxious to get to the game, if only to keep his thoughts from the tormenting subject of his missing chum. But minute followed minute—and there was no sign of the cricketers from the Grammar School.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Vanished!

"HALF-PAST TWO!"

"Bai Jove! It is weally too bad!"

Tom Merry knitted his brows. He was perplexed and annoyed. If anything had occurred to cause Gordon Gay & Co. to scratch the match, surely word could have been sent ere this. The weather was fine and sunny, and it was only a short run in a brake from the Grammar School at Rylcombe. And there was a telephone, if anything had stopped the Grammarians from coming over.

"It's jolly odd!" said Kerr of the New House. "Begins to look as if they're not coming."

"But they're bound to come!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Nothing's been said about scratching the match," said Levison of the Fourth, looking at Tom Merry. "When did you see Gay last?"

"He came over to see me the day after I was released by the kidnapers," said Tom. "He mentioned the match then, and asked if we'd like to scratch, and I said 'no.'"

"Then he must be coming!" said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"But what the thump is keeping them?"

"Goodness knows!" growled Tom.

Tempers were getting a little "edge-wise" on Little Side at St. Jim's. In the general state of anxiety caused by the mysterious happenings at the school, tempers were perhaps not so equable as usual, anyway. For once the hearts of the juniors were not wholly in their game, which made it all the more annoying to be kept standing about waiting for a team that did not turn up.

"I guess this is more than queer!" Kit Wildrake remarked. "Something must have happened at the Grammar School to keep the fellows from sticking to an engagement."

"What can have happened?" growled Blake. "If the place was on fire I suppose they could have let us know."

"It is not on fiah, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seriously. "We should see the wfection in the sky fwom heah if Wylcombe Gwammah School was on fiah!"

"Go hon!" said Blake sarcastically.

"Weally, Blake—"

"What are you thinking of, Wildrake?" asked Tom Merry, noticing the dark, thoughtful expression on the Canadian junior's face.

"I guess it's possible—" Wildrake paused.

"Well, what?" asked Tom impatiently.

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"The kidnaping rascal may have turned his attention to the Grammar School, that's all!" said Wildrake quietly.

"Something pretty serious may have happened there."

Tom Merry started. The thought of that, certainly, had not occurred to him.

"By Jove!" he said. "I—I suppose it's possible. The Grammarians haven't been gated as we've been. But—"

"I wegard it as vevy impwob," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "Wildwake seems to think that the kidnapah has set up in a wegulah way of business like a gwocah, you know!"

"I think he has!" answered Wildrake. "I believe that this kidnaping stunt has been planned for a long time, and all the arrangements made, and now the villains are going in for a regular harvest. Unless they are nobbled it will go on."

"Bai Jove!"

"I must say I agree with Wildrake there," said Talbot of the Shell in his quiet, grave way. "The thing has been planned carefully, and the rascals are not out for a few hundred pounds. It's a daring scheme and a big thing, and I believe for one that we haven't seen the last of it yet!"

Blake whistled.

"Then you think the rotters have given us a rest because we're so much on our guard and given the Grammar School a turn?" he asked.

"I think it's very likely they would!" said Talbot.

Blake looked incredulous.

"Why don't they give some other school a turn if they're making a business of it," he said. "From all that's been learned they're working from a distance with a fast car. If they're making a business of it they would pick up rich fellows from schools nearer to them—Eton or Winchester—"

"Wildrake believes that they're working in the neighbourhood with a hiding-place somewhere quite close," said Tom.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah; with all respect to Wildwake, I must say that I wegard that as uttah wot!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Thanks!" said the Canadian junior dryly.

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gracefully; "you are vevy welcome to my opinion for what it is worth."

"Which is about a Continental red cent!" said Wildrake, laughing.

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"Quarter to three!" said Fatty Wynn of the New House. "Look here, it's all rot waiting like this; I am getting hungry already."

"And I'm getting fed up," said Figgins. "We'd better give the Grammarians up and knock up a game on our own. No good wasting the afternoon."

Tom Merry reflected. Wildrake's suggestion was lingering in his mind, and he was anxious and troubled.

"I think I'll ask Mr. Railton to let me use his 'phone and ring up the Grammar School!" he said. "I want to know if anything's the matter. Gay isn't the chap to make fools of us like this if he could help it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Cut along, then!" said Levison.

Tom Merry trotted away to the School House. His own period of imprisonment in the hands of the unknown kidnapers had disposed him to regard Wildrake's suggestion more seriously than the other fellows. Tom Merry had the best of reasons to know what a desperate gang of lawless rascals had to be dealt with.

He tapped at Mr. Railton's door and found the Housemaster in his study. Mr. Railton was looking worn. The tragic happening of the night before weighed on his mind. The police had been at the school that morning examining the Blue Room, which Detective-Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard, had occupied, and from which he had been forcibly taken in the dead of night. It had been a busy and wearing morning to Mr. Railton and to Dr. Holmes. But troubled as he was the School House master gave Tom a kind nod and a smile.

"What is it, Merry?" he asked. "Is there not a junior cricket match this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

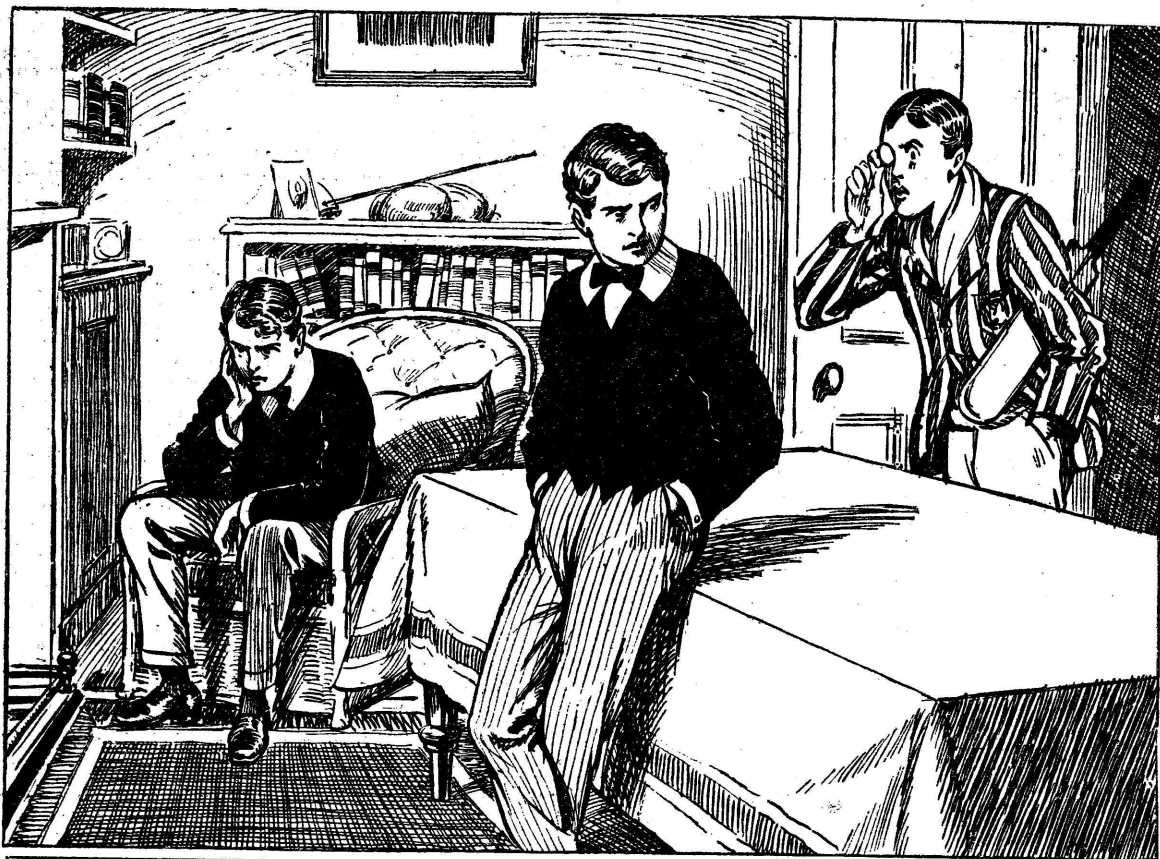
"I should advise you all to carry on, in spite of all that has happened," said the Housemaster. "No good ever came of knuckling under to misfortune."

"We're going to play, sir," said Tom; "that is, if the Grammarians come. But they're nearly an hour late and they've sent no word. I was going to ask you, sir, to let me telephone—"

"That is very strange," said Mr. Railton; "you may use the telephone by all means, Merry."

"Thank you, sir."

Tom Merry crossed to the Housemaster's telephone and picked up the receiver, and gave the number of the Grammar School at Rylcombe. There was no answer for some little



"You fellows gettin' weedy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking in at the doorway of Study No. 10 and turning his eyeglass alternately upon Tom Merry and Manners. "The Gwammawians will be ovah heah pwetty soon, you know." Arthur Augustus was in spotless flannels already, with a nobby bat under his arm. He was looking very cheery, but his aristocratic face became grave as he glanced at the Shell fellows. (See page 3.)

time, but a voice came through at last, and Tom recognised the voice of Dr. Monk, the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School.

"Yes, yes! Is that Wayland Police Station?"

"No!" answered Tom, in wonder. "Tom Merry speaking, sir, from St. Jim's."

"Oh! Have you any news there?"

"News, sir?" repeated Tom.

"Of Gordon Gay?"

"Has anything happened to Gay, sir?" exclaimed Tom, his heart sinking.

"He has disappeared!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom.

"I hoped it was news," Dr. Monk's voice was deeply agitated. "You have seen nothing of him at your school?"

"No, sir!" answered Tom. "We were expecting him over at two o'clock with the cricketers, and as he did not come—"

"I understand. I should certainly have let you know," said Dr. Monk. "But everything has been so disturbed and confused—I am sorry, I did not think of it."

"But about Gay, sir—"

"He walked into the village just before dinner," said Dr. Monk. "He was absent at dinner, and has not returned. In view of the late occurrences at St. Jim's, I sent a master and a prefect to look for him at once. He cannot be found."

"Then—" muttered Tom.

"I fear that he may have fallen into lawless hands," said Dr. Monk.

Mr. Railton stepped to Tom Merry's side at the telephone. He had heard enough to guess what had happened. Tom Merry handed him the receiver, and left the study, leaving Mr. Railton in conversation with the Grammar School headmaster.

Tom hurried back to Little Side. He found some of the cricketers already beginning a game—an impromptu House-match. They had given up the Grammarians now. But the look on Tom's face drew an inquiring crowd round him at once.

And there was a buzz of deep-drawn breath, as Tom Merry answered:

"Gordon Gay has disappeared!"

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Face in the Photograph!

"GORDON GAY!"  
"Disappeared!"  
"Bai Jove!"

Wildrake's eyes glinted. His surmise was well-founded. It was the hand of the kidnapper again.

The cricket stopped. No one, just then, had the heart to play. The St. Jim's juniors gathered in an excited crowd. Every fellow present realised that it was the hand of the kidnapper that had been at work; that the blow that had fallen upon St. Jim's had now fallen upon the Grammar School.

Gordon Gay, the cheery Australian junior of Rylcombe Grammar School, had disappeared, as Tom Merry had disappeared when "Nemo" had first begun his dastardly work—as Kildare had disappeared, and Monty Lowther, and Detective-Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard.

"By gad!" said Cardew of the Fourth. "This is gettin' rather thick!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Something ought to be done!" growled Herries. "Why don't the dashed police do something?"

"Looks as if they can't!" said Blake.

"It's wathah wotten that the Head won't let us try," said Arthur Augustus. "But I weally do not quite know wheah we should begin, you know."

The crowd of juniors broke up at last. Cricket was dropped by common consent. A cloud seemed to have come over the blue summer sky.

Tom Merry walked away to the School House with a dark brow. He saw Mr. Railton come out of his study and turn in the direction of the corridor leading to the Head's room. His expression was very grave and sombre. He was going to tell the latest news to Dr. Holmes—another blow to the troubled old gentleman. Tom Merry went up to Study No. 10 in the Shell, where he found Manners looking over his films in a desultory way. Manners looked up.

"Not at cricket?" he asked.

Tom Merry explained.

"My only hat!" Manners whistled softly. "He's started

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on the Grammar School now! What's going to be the end of this?"

"We seem to be at the mercy of that scoundrel who calls himself Nemo," said Tom Merry gloomily. "It's a regular campaign, as Wildrake says. That gang of rotters are after a big sum of money, and they've covered up their tracks too carefully to be found. I had a lot of faith in Mr. Fix. I really thought he would succeed—and he's fallen into their hands—and if he made any discovery, it will never be known now. Poor old Gordon Gay. It's pretty clear what has become of him!"

Manners clenched his hands.

"If one could only get on the track of the scoundrels!" he muttered. "But there's no clue—no trace of them. The police haven't even been able to trace the car they use."

"Wildrake doesn't believe there was a car," said Tom. "He thinks—"

"Oh, bother Wildrake!" said Manners irritably. "Wildrake's too clever by half. If he hadn't led Lowther and me on a wild-goose chase, poor old Monty wouldn't have been bagged by those rascals. It was going out of bounds that did it."

"It's rotten, marking time like this," said Tom, restlessly. "I don't feel up to cricket now. The Grammar School match is off, anyway. What are you up to now, Manners?"

"I'm going to take some prints from these films," said Manners, who was busy with a printing-frame. "The sun's just on the window-sill now. I've never printed those views of the mill on the moor that I took the day you were kidnapped, Tom. May as well get on with it; no good hanging about doing nothing."

Tom Merry smiled faintly. Manners had disapproved of cricket in the circumstances; but he found relief in giving his attention to his own favourite hobby. The amateur photographer of the Shell disposed his printing-frame on the sunny sill, and watched it with care. Tom moved about the study, his hands in his pockets, restless and dissatisfied. Any danger, any fatigue in searching for his missing chum, would have been preferable to this-enforced idleness, with his black thoughts preying upon his mind.

In the interest of fixing and toning, Manners succeeded in forgetting his troubles for a brief space, while Tom roamed about the study a good deal like a wild animal in a cage. He regretted now that he had not filled up the afternoon with a scratch House-match. Yet he knew that he would not have played a good game—he could not. The mystery that hung over the school seemed to crush him. Manners broke the silence with an exclamation of satisfaction. Tom looked at him.

"It comes out jolly well," said Manners. "I've got the old mill fine. There's Mr. Brown, the miller, leaning on the gate, in his white coat and hat. He's not a bad chap, that Brown; he took quite an interest in my camera when I was rooting round his mill for views. He asked me to drop in any time I liked. I'd have gone before now, only for what's happened. Hallo, Talbot!"

Talbot of the Shell came into the study. His handsome face was clouded.

"Any news?" That was the usual question at St. Jim's now when one fellow came across another. The whole school was athirst for news.

Talbot shook his head.

"Mr. Railton's gone over to the Grammar School, that's all," he said. "He's taken the trap. Gone to see Dr. Monk, I suppose, and get the particulars about poor Gay. It's the same gang, of course?"

"Not much doubt about that," said Tom.

"You fellows care for a four-handed mill in the gym?" asked Talbot. "Blake's on, and four of the New House. I'm looking for two recruits."

"I'm on!" said Tom at once, glad of something, or anything, that would take his thoughts away from the one torturing subject.

"Wait a tick!" said Manners. "Only a minute or two while I finish touching up this print. Not bad, is it, Talbot?"

Talbot of the Shell glanced at it, casually enough. It was really a good photograph, and showed the old windmill on Wayland Moor, with a background of sunny sky. The white-coated miller, with his grey side-whiskers and ruddy cheeks, was leaning on the gate, and another figure was seen near at hand—the figure of a man looking up from hoeing a potato patch.

Talbot's glance was careless. He was not much interested, just then, in amateur photography. But his look became fixed, a startled expression came over his face. He took the photograph to the window to get the full light of the sun upon it, and examined it with a care that surprised and flattered Manners, and rather puzzled Tom Merry.

"My only hat!" muttered Talbot at last, and his voice was strange, tense. "Is it possible?"

"Good, isn't it?" said Manners. "Got it as clear as anything."

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"What? Oh, the photograph," said Talbot. "Yes, it's good. But this man's face—I've seen it before."

"The miller?" asked Tom.

"No! The other man—the man with the hoe," said Talbot. "I know that face, I'm sure of it! In Heaven's name, what is Smiley Joe doing in this neighbourhood?"

"Smiley Joe!" repeated Tom Merry and Manners, simultaneously, startled by the curious name.

"Unless I'm dreaming, that is a photograph of Smiley Joe!" said Talbot.

"Who on earth is Smiley Joe, and what is he?" asked Tom.

A black and bitter look came over Talbot's face. It was a look that his chums knew—a look that always haunted the handsome face when the thought of the past was revived in his mind—the black, almost forgotten past, when Talbot had been known as the "Toff," and in his earliest years had been brought up as the associate of a gang of cracksmen and law-breakers. Those days were far behind Talbot of the Shell now, but they could never quite be forgotten. It was evident that the photographed face had brought the bitter recollections back with a rush.

"Smiley Joe!" repeated Talbot, in a low voice. "Who is he? Cracksmen, garrotter, ruffian, and thief! One of the men I knew—at least, knew by sight—in the old days, Tom—the days when I—I was—"

"Stop!" said Tom. "Don't speak of that, Talbot."

"Well, that is the face of Smiley Joe," said Talbot. "He's altered a little. He's shaved off his moustache, and he's wearing a country labourer's clothes instead of a sporting rig-out; but it's the same man. I'd know that sharp nose and those foxy eyes anywhere. What can such a man be doing down here? Employed at a mill, too! The miller can't know the kind of man he's taken on. He ought to be warned."

Tom Merry drew a quick breath.

"You're sure of it, Talbot?"

"Quite."

"You recognise that man as a criminal—one of the miller's men?"

"Yes."

"Then mayn't that be a clue?" exclaimed Tom eagerly. "If there's a professional criminal in this neighbourhood, passing himself off as a miller's man, isn't it jolly likely that he's had something to do with what's been going on?"

Talbot started. That thought had not occurred to him yet, but now it struck him like a blow.

"It's more than likely," he said slowly. "Much more than likely."

"But are you sure?" asked Manners incredulously. "That face is pretty small in the photograph, and—"

"I am quite sure," said Talbot quietly. "Whether Smiley Joe is now wanted by the police I can't say, but I know that he is a professional criminal, and that this man is he. There isn't the faintest shadow of a doubt about that. There may be a clue in this, Tom."

Talbot pause'd, his brow wrinkling.

"I've got to think this out. Smiley Joe isn't the man to plan a big thing like this kidnapping business. He hasn't the brains for it; he's a follower, not a leader. It's more likely that he's a spy in the neighbourhood, keeping his master posted with the news. If the gang are working from a distance, as the police believe, they would want a spy about here, and a job at the mill is a pretty good camouflage. But Smiley Joe used to work with Rackstraw in the old days and Rackstraw's just the man—"

Talbot broke off, colouring hotly, as he felt the eyes of the two Shell fellows on his face.

For the moment it seemed that Talbot of the Shell had been the "Toff" again, his mind full of the recollections of the past—recollections of an underworld, happily hidden from the knowledge of the rest of the St. Jim's fellows.

"I shall have to think this out," said Talbot abruptly. And he quitted Study No. 10 without another word, taking the photograph in his hand.

Tom Merry and Manners looked at one another.

"If there's anything in it—" muttered Tom.

"But is there?" asked Manners.

"We shall soon know. Talbot's forgotten about the four-handed mill," said Tom, with a smile. "Let's get down to the quad. I want some fresh air."

"I hope he won't lose that print. It's the best I've taken for a long time," grunted Manners. And he followed his chum downstairs and out into the sunny quadrangle.

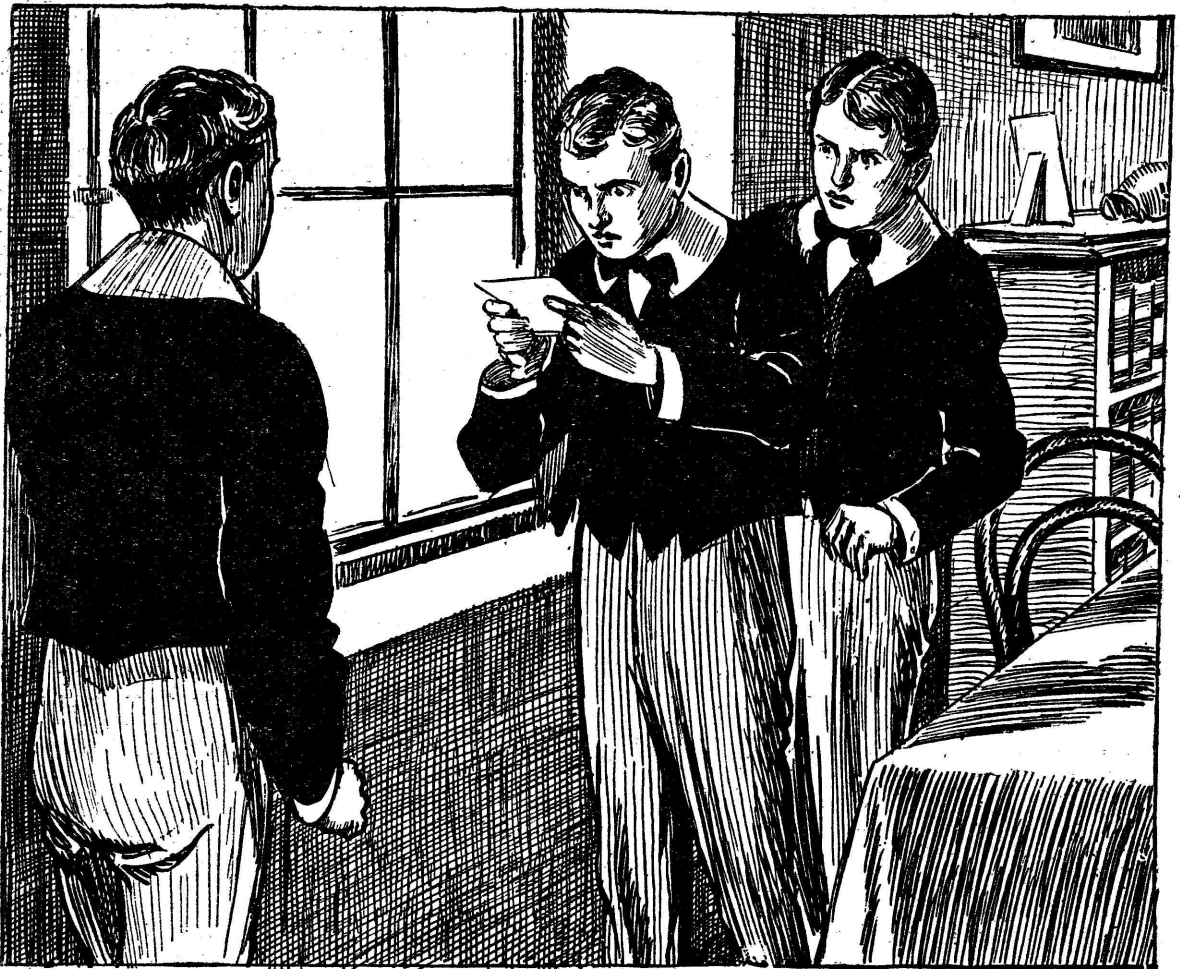
## CHAPTER 4.

### The Master Who Did Not Return.

"TAGGLES!"

"Yes, Master Talbot."

Taggles, the porter, spoke in a rather less crusty tone than was his custom. Like everybody else at St. Jim's he liked and respected Talbot of the Shell.



A startled look came over Talbot's face, as he took the photograph to the window and examined it with a care that surprised and flattered Manners, and rather puzzled Tom Merry. "My only hat!" he muttered. "I know this chap—the man with the nose—it's Smiley Joe. Whatever is he doing in this neighbourhood?" (See page 6.)

Taggles' opinion of boys in general was that they ought to be "drowned"; but he graciously excepted Talbot from that sweeping condemnation. Talbot was grave beyond his years; and certainly he had never been suspected of putting gum into Taggles' slippers, or ink into his bottle of gin—delinquencies that more thoughtless youths had sometimes been guilty of.

Talbot's face was graver now than was its wont. The discovery he had made in Tom Merry's study had come as a heavy blow to him. Back into his mind flooded the bitter memories of the past, the miserable memories he had striven so hard to banish. And the thought of the past could not be dismissed now in his usual quiet, resolute way; for the discovery of Smiley Joe in the role of a miller's man was too serious to be left where it was. In view of the mystery hanging over the fate of Monty Lowther, of Kildare, of Mr. Fix, and now of Gordon Gay, the rascal's presence in the vicinity had to be explained.

"Has Mr. Railton returned yet, Taggles?" asked Talbot.

Taggles shook his head.

"Not yet, sir. Which I expected 'im back afore now," he said. "E told me 'e would be about an hour, and 'e's been gone two."

Talbot nodded, and moved towards the gates. The school gates were kept perpetually shut and locked now. Talbot looked out through the bronze bars into the sunny road.

He was anxious to see Mr. Railton; it was his Housemaster whom he desired to consult with regard to Smiley Joe. He waited and watched for the Housemaster's return. Tom Merry and Manners spotted him at the gates, and came to join him there.

"Wishing you could get out for a little run?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Peri at the gate of Paradise!" said Manners.

"I'm waiting for Mr. Railton. I want to speak to him," said Talbot. "He's late, according to Taggles."

Study No. 6 came along. They were sauntering in the quadrangle rather aimlessly. They were discussing the cricket match that had not come off, and Blake was of opinion that the Grammarians ought to have kept their engagement, even minus Goujon Gay. What was the good of fooling away a half-holiday, Blake wanted to know rather crossly. To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy replied: "Wats!"

"You fellows enjoying life, too?" asked Blake rather grimly. "Looks to me as if we shall all be drawing long faces and sitting around grousing if this goes on. What the thump are you watching the road for? Nothing there, is there?"

"Waiting for Railton," said Tom.

"Bless Railton!" grumbled Blake. "He gave me lines to-day. As if I want lines now! Everything's rotten enough without lines. Hallo, Wildrake! What wouldn't you give for a gallop over the moor now?"

"I guess I'm fed up with gates," said Wildrake.

"Wailton might have taken us for a ddrive with him, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally wish I had thought of mentionin' it. I am gettin' bored, you fellahs."

"Time you were," said Manners. "You've bored other chaps long enough!"

"Weally, Mannahs!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

"Bai Jove! Theah's Wailton in the twap, anyhow."

There was a rapid clatter of hoof-beats on the hard road. The juniors crowded to the gates rather curiously. If it was Mr. Railton returning, he was driving at an unusually reckless pace. A galloping horse came in sight, with an empty trap behind that rocked with the rapid motion, threatening every instant to overturn. The reins dangled over the horse's back as he dashed on uncontrolled.

"The trap!" exclaimed Tom Merry.  
 "Where's Railton?"  
 "Bai Jove, theah's been an accident!"  
 "Taggles!" roared Talbot. "The key—quick!"  
 Taggles came out of his lodge, staring.  
 "I guess I'm not waiting for the key," said Wildrake. And he clambered up recklessly over the high gate.  
 "Ere, ye come down outer that!" yelled Taggles indignantly, a yell that the Canadian junior did not heed.  
 Clatter, clatter, crash! The runaway horse came to a clattering halt outside the gates, sweating, snorting, breathing foam. Scared as it evidently was, it knew its home. It had dashed back to St. Jim's from the spot—wherever that was—where the Housemaster had left it uncontrolled.

Kit Wildrake dropped outside the gates, and caught the horse by the bit. He soothed the animal into quiet. Taggles, in great amazement, came out with the key and unlocked the gates. The old porter blinked at the trap and the panting horse in stupefaction.

"Where's Mr Railton?" he stammered.  
 "There's been an accident!"  
 "Poor old Waitton! He must have fallen out—"  
 Talbot's eyes were gleaming.  
 "Railton isn't the man to fall out of a trap!" he said.  
 "There's been foul play!"

"Foul play!" panted Tom.  
 "I guess that's it," said Kit Wildrake quietly. "Look! There's Railton's hat in the trap—and—look—"  
 His voice sunk into silence as he pointed into the trap. The cushions were trampled—cushions and floor-boards showed the signs of trampling, muddy boots. There had been three or four in the trap, and there had been a struggle.  
 "My heye!" That was all Taggles could say. He led the horse in dazedly.

Darrell of the Sixth came hurrying down to the gates.  
 "What's happened?"  
 "The trap's come back without Mr. Railton!" said Tom Merry, his face white. "There's been a struggle in it—"  
 "Good heavens!"

Darrell took one look into the trap, and then hurried off to the School House. Five minutes later all St. Jim's was thrilled by the news, and even before certainty could come every fellow felt what had happened—that the popular Housemaster, suddenly attacked in the lonely, shadowy lane, had fallen a victim to the gang of unknown scoundrels whose blows had already fallen so heavily upon the old school.

## CHAPTER 5.

## Three on the Track.

TOM MERRY came into Talbot's study in the Shell, his face serious and sombre. Talbot was alone there; his study-mates, Gore and Skimpole, were with the excited crowd downstairs. Talbot was standing by the window, looking down into the quadrangle, where groups of excited fellows could be seen. St. Jim's was in a turmoil from end to end; the tragic disappearance of the Housemaster had been a climax.

"Talbot, old man," said Tom, in a quiet voice, "after what's happened, now Railton's gone, like the others, something's got to be done. I can't sit idle—it's impossible. You think you recognised the man you call Smiley Joe, in the face of Manners' photograph—"

"I am sure of it."  
 "If he's a criminal, it is a clue, of sorts," said Tom. "You were going to tell Railton about it when he came in?"

Talbot nodded.  
 "It's too late for that," said Tom. "Poor Railton's in the hands of the villains himself now. What about telling the Head?"

"I can't speak to the Head now," said Talbot. "Everything is in an uproar, after what's happened. I saw the Head, and he seemed dazed by what had happened to Railton. Inspector Skeat has come over already, and they've been together. I think most likely a new man is coming down from London. Mr. Fix belonged to the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard, and they're bound to take up the matter. When the new man comes—"

"I've been thinking," said Tom. "We've no evidence, but it's at least likely that this man, Smiley Joe, has a hand in the affair."

"Very likely, I think."  
 "Can't we look into it?" said Tom. "What's the good of waiting? Things are going from bad to worse, and the police don't seem able to help."

"The school's gated," Talbot said, "and after this latest development, breaking bounds would be pretty serious."

"I know! Manners and Lowther and Wildrake broke bounds, and it ended badly enough," said Tom. "But we could keep together. If they had kept together, poor old Monty couldn't have been bagged as he was. Wildrake persists in believing that the rascals are hidden in this vicinity somewhere—Manners doesn't think so, and I'm doubtful—but I know Wildrake is very keen. I've a lot of faith in him. Your finding a criminal passing himself off as a miller's man looks as if Wildrake was right, or pretty near it. All the rascals may be camouflaged something, like that, and walking about under our noses all the time."

"It's possible, I suppose."  
 "We've got a clue to begin on," said Tom eagerly. "And I've met the miller of the moor—he's a decent sort of man—Manners quite likes him. What about us three paying a visit to the mill, and having a look at this man Smiley Joe? Don't you think we might very likely hit on it if he has a hand in the game?"

"We might!" said Talbot. "In fact, I think we could. If the Head would only let us, I should be glad to get to work. The risk counts for nothing. But the Head, Tom—he has enough anxieties now—can we risk adding to them?"

"I've thought of that," said Tom restlessly. "That's why I've taken it as quietly as I could, so far. But there's an end of patience, Talbot. Nemo has threatened Monty Lowther's life if he's not ransomed, and Monty's uncle refuses even to think of yielding to him. He's right, I suppose—but— Now Railton's kidnapped; who will go next? It's not ending here, Talbot. It's a big scheme, and the rascals are after big money, and if nothing's done—"

"I know!"  
 "I wouldn't give the Head any more anxiety for worlds," said Tom earnestly. "But we shouldn't breathe a word about it."

"That's so—it could be kept dark, unless—"  
 "Unless what?"  
 "Unless something happened to us, as to poor Lowther."  
 Talbot of the Shell remained silent a few moments, thinking deeply. He was as eager to attempt something as Tom Merry could be, and the thought of danger did not influence him. Danger and the 'Toff' were old acquaintances. If anything could be done, and Talbot thought that it could— He nodded at last.

"It's a go, Tom!" he said. "We'll try it on. I don't see what can happen to us if we're careful—and we shall be. If Smiley Joe had a hand in dealing with Railton, we shall surely find it out, getting on the spot so soon. He can't be expecting anything of the kind."

"That's what I was thinking," said Tom eagerly. "Manners is keen on it, too. Now there's a definite clue to follow, he wants to get going."

"Then it's settled," said Talbot, though not without inward misgivings. "But for goodness' sake, not a syllable

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to anyone. The Head would be distressed, as well as angry; you know how he would look on it, Tom."

"Not a whisper—and we'll be back in good time for call-over," said Tom.

It did not take the three juniors long to make their preparations.

They concealed their loaded sticks under their jackets, and strolled with an air of carelessness in the quad. When there were no eyes upon them, they slipped into the Head's garden.

That was a forbidden precinct to juniors, and they were not likely to be observed there. They threaded their way cautiously through the shrubberies, and reached the wall that separated the garden from the fir plantation. A few minutes more, and they were scudding down a narrow lane, making for the shelter of the wood.

It had been easy enough to escape, especially in the excitement that now reigned in the school. Tom Merry was keen and eager, as the juniors entered the wood—Talbot was equally keen, but very thoughtful—Manners seemed the most unquiet of the three. Manners could not help thinking of the expedition he had made out of bounds with Wildrake and Lowther, after which Monty Lowther had not been seen again by his friends. Manners could not help feeling that the present expedition was reckless; but he did not hesitate. The long weary waiting for news, the bitter anxiety for his chum, had affected his nerves to some extent—it seemed to him that anything was better than enforced idleness—even the risk of sharing Monty Lowther's fate. But he was a little troubled in mind, all the same.

The three juniors proceeded at a trot through the wood, and came out on the sunlit moor.

A few minutes afterwards the sails of the windmill appeared in sight against the sky.

Two or three men were in the mill yard, as the juniors arrived at the gate. A farm-cart, loaded with straw, had been partly unloaded, and straw was scattered about. Mr. Brown, the miller, in white hat and coat, was giving some directions to his men. Talbot's keen eyes searched every face; but Smiley Joe was not there.

The miller of the moor glanced down at the juniors, and, after a few more words to his men, came down to the gate to speak to them. His ruddy face had a genial smile.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!" he exclaimed heartily. "I'm glad to see you. More photographing, what?" he added to Manners.

"Oh, no," said Manners. "Not this time."

"We want to speak to you, Mr. Brown, if you can spare us a few minutes," said Tom Merry.

"Certainly, my boy," said the miller, looking a little surprised, however. "Come indoors."

"Thank you."

The man in the white coat led the way into the mill-house. The juniors followed him into a little parlour, the window of which gave a view of a wide expanse of moor. Two or three men could be seen at work in the fields attached to the mill, but the mill itself was not grinding. Mr. Brown offered chairs to his unexpected visitors, and sat down himself, and lighted a long pipe. Perhaps it was by chance that he sat with his back to the window, with the sunlight full on the faces of his visitors.

"I hope you've had good news at the school?" he said.

"Nothing yet, sir," said Tom. "Only bad news, in fact."

The miller looked very grave.

"Nothing unfortunate has happened again?" he asked.

"Mr. Railton, our Housemaster, has disappeared."

"Is it possible?"

"He seems to have been attacked while driving from Rylcombe in a trap," said Tom. "The horse came home without him. Nobody knows exactly what happened; but he is missing."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Brown. "This is growing intolerable. The police seem utterly helpless to deal with these scoundrels. But what is it you young gentlemen wished to see me about?"

"About this," said Talbot, taking the photograph from his pocket.

Mr. Brown glanced at it.

"A view of my mill," he said. "A very excellent photograph, Master Manners."

"Not bad, is it?" said Manners.

"Very good indeed. I should like a copy of it, to have enlarged," said the miller genially.

"You shall have one with pleasure, sir," said Manners. "But we want you to look at that face in the picture—the man with the hoe. That's one of your men, isn't it?"

"Yes. That is Peters," said the miller.

"You know him as Peters?" asked Talbot.

The miller of the moor gave Talbot a sharp, penetrating glance.

"Peters is his name," he said. "I don't quite understand you."

"I knew him once when he was called something else," said Talbot quietly. "May we see that man, sir, and speak to him?"

The miller looked perplexed.

"No harm in that, that I can see," he answered. "But it is rather an odd request, is it not? What interest can you possibly take in this labourer of mine?"

"He is not a labourer," said Talbot quietly. "He may call himself one, but his name, or nickname, is Smiley Joe."

"What?"

The miller fairly shouted the word.

"I suppose I have surprised you, sir?" said Talbot quietly. "But I knew the man long ago—when I was in different circumstances. He was a hardened criminal, and generally worked with a cunning rascal of the name of Rackstraw."

"Rackstraw?" repeated the miller.

"Yes. A man I saw a few times," said Talbot. "A man very well known to the police. Can we see this man you call Peters, and whom I knew as Smiley Joe?"

The miller did not answer for a minute. He sat and stared at the juniors in silence. Tom Merry & Co. waited quietly for his answer, suppressing their excitement with difficulty.

CHAPTER 6.

Rogue Rackstraw at Home.

R. BROWN spoke at last.

"You have utterly astonished me," he said. "This was about the last thing I should have expected to hear. Peters has been with me a few weeks. He came here unemployed asking for a job, and I took him on. That is all I know of him. But he has certainly seemed honest enough to me. Are you quite sure, young gentlemen, that your statement is correct?"

"Quite."

"You will excuse me," said the miller. "But I cannot quite see how a schoolboy could have the knowledge of the criminal world that you seem to pretend to."

Talbot of the Shell flushed painfully.

His past was bitter enough in his own memory. He could not think of explaining it, and discussing it with a stranger.

"I was once in different circumstances, Mr. Brown," he said at last. "I needn't go into details, but I am certain of what I say, and, if only for your own sake, I hope you will let me interview this man. You cannot want a disguised crackman working on your land."

"I should say not!" said the miller promptly. "If you are right, I am very much obliged to you. But it is rather surprising. However, you shall certainly see the man. You recognised him from this photograph, I understand?"

"That is so."

"Photographs are very deceptive sometimes," said the Wayland miller, with a shake of the head. "This is certainly a good one. But—you have the negative this was taken from, Master Manners?"

"Oh, yes. I keep all my negatives," said Manners. "I've got it here."

"May I look at it?"

"Certainly."

Manners took out his little leather case and selected the film and handed it to the miller. Mr. Brown examined it very thoughtfully.

"A good film, well developed," he said. "Very good indeed! You little guessed what it was to lead to when you took this photograph, my young friend?"

"That's true enough," assented Manners. "I hope it will lead to a discovery."

"In what way?"

"Well, that criminal is not here for nothing," said Manners. "We think he may have had a hand in the kidnapping."

"It's possible, at least, as he's hanging about here, Mr. Brown," said Tom Merry. "That's why we want to see him."

(Continued on page 12.)

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him, and they don't have to pay much rent for their cottages and farms.

He is the squire of the parish, and you can see old people going about, with tears in their eyes, saying to each other, "Heaven bless t' squire and all his rich relations!" with their hands full of money and blankets and coal and grub and firelighters and things that my pater is always handing out to them. When he comes to Trimble Hall the village kids all crowd up to the lodge, and sing for joy, and the rustics bob at the knees and tug at their fetlocks (or, is it forelocks you mean?—R. R. C.) as he drives through.

When I am on my holidays, you should just see them then! When they hear I'm on the way, all the kids stand in a row, and sing:

"Hurrah! T' young squire is coming to-day;  
So noble and dashing, so handsome and gay!"

And they throw flowers at me as I drive past. (Why flowers? Are there no half-bricks to be obtained?—R. R. C.) It is a kind of triumphal procession, and when the village band, that my pater always engages to welcome members of the family and guests, strikes up "See, the conquering hero comes!" and I throw out money to the village children, it completes a very pretty rustic scene. The wonderful effect has to be seen to be believed. (And even then I shouldn't believe it. Baggy might have applied this remark to the whole of his article.—R. R. C.)

The servants just love me, and you ought to see them dashing about to wait on me! Besides, they know that if they didn't dash they'd jolly soon have the sack. On the days I arrive at Trimble Hall there are fireworks in the grounds during the evening, and all the countryside sees the display, and knows what it means, with the result that there are countless visitors the next day.

**Baggy's Amazing Popularity.**

There is a duke living not far away and he is always the first to call, and generally he wants some advice about running his estate, or an introduction to my tailor, and that sort of thing. He is often puzzled to know just what he ought to wear when he attends Court, and whether he should take his tiara or his coronet, and I set him right on these matters.

Then, again, invitations pour in from all directions, to shooting parties, picnics, dances, hunt balls, house parties, and all kinds of fashionable and expensive functions. I attend as many as I can, but, of course, I can't get all round, and there is a lot of jealousy amongst the people who don't manage to secure me. At the dances and parties I am the centre of attraction, and all the prettiest girls crowd round, begging me to be their partner. That means more jealousy, because it is impossible to oblige them all, and the unlucky ones are always very disappointed. It is no uncommon thing for the hostesses of the houses near Trimble Hall to send out cards of invitation to their guests, and add, "You must come. Mr. Trimble junior will be present!" And, naturally, that fetches them. In return for this hospitality I hold parties at Trimble Hall, and these are proverbial for their splendour and magnificence. Some day I will give an account of one of these wonderful affairs. We sometimes spend thousands of pounds on one function.

Enough has been said, I think, to show that—(More than enough, Baggybus! This is where your article gets the blue pencil where the chicken got the chopper. There are pages more in the MS., but I promised to get the tea to-day, and the study fire has not yet been lit. The remainder of the article will serve the purpose nicely. Thank you, Baggybus!—R. R. C.)

**Baggy Trimble's Rabbit-Pie.**

By Harry Manners.

There is no doubt about it—Baggy Trimble certainly has got a "nose" for grub. He can smell it a mile away. The other afternoon a hamper arrived addressed to Aubrey Racke of the Shell. Baggy saw it, and hurried off to warn Aubrey of the glad news.

"I say, old man," he cried breathlessly, "there's a hamper downstairs for you—full of pheasants and things like that!"

Racke opened his eyes wide. "Gad!" he said. "That must be the game the gov'nor said he would send along after the shooting. Thanks, Baggy, my son! I'll go along and investigate."

Racke strolled off to the porter's lodge. Baggy looked rather blue at being left, but determined not to be done out of the good things, followed the Shell fellow, and was just in time to see him grab hold of Luke Scrope's arm and drag that worthy towards the gates.

Taggles greeted them with a sour look. "Which there's a 'amper of dead birds for you, Master Racke," he said, "and I'll trouble you to take them away from my lodge."

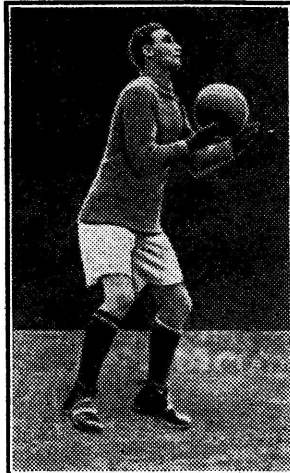
"Keep your hair on, old scout—what little you've got!" scoffed Scrope. "It won't stay there very long."

Racke emerged almost immediately, dragging the hamper after him. He and Scrope then made back for the study.

"My hat!" gasped Aubrey, when he got back. "It's a wonder it didn't walk over on its own. Get that fat toad Trimble to unpack it; it's rather too much for me."

**SAM HARDY.**

Notts Forest F.C.



This picture showing popular Sam Hardy, the famous goalkeeper of Notts Forest, actually IN ACTION on the field of play, gives you only a slight idea of the wonderful REAL photograph which will be presented FREE with next week's GEM.

Baggy swallowed the insult in silence, and waded in to the job of unpacking.

"Help!" suddenly gasped Racke. "Fetch me a gas-mask somebody!"

There certainly was a most unpleasant odour coming from somewhere.

Still with the prospect of a feed uppermost in his mind, Baggy continued his unpacking with stolid calm, and presently held up a brace of extremely dilapidated grouse.

The origin of the smell was located.

"Great corks!" muttered Racke. "Throw them away—quick!"

Scrope, holding his nose, seized the defunct birds and threw them out of the window.

"That's that," he said. "Is there anything else in the hamper, my pippin?"

Baggy burrowed in the straw, and then held up two fine rabbits, which were certainly in a better state than the grouse.

"That's more like it," said Racke. "But what on earth are we going to do with them?"

"Oh, really," cried Baggy anxiously, "I'm a jolly good cook, you know! Let me make you one of my topping rabbit-pies."

"We shall all be poisoned!" jeered Scrope. "Oh, no, Scrope," said Baggy. "I'm sure

my old pal Racke can trust my cooking abilities!"

"There seems to be nothing else for it," said Racke dubiously. "Unless we give them in at the kitchen, and I don't want to do that. Let's get the little rotter to make us a pie, and if the worst comes to the worst, we can bury his ugly head in it."

"Oh, really—" began Baggy. "All right," broke in Scrope, "have a shot at it, and we'll get a few of the fellows in to a late tea."

Baggy went on with the two rabbits in quite a triumphant mood. He was certainly very shaky as far as making rabbit-pies were concerned, but with the aid of a battered cookery-book he possessed, he hoped to be able to do fairly well.

Having skinned the rabbit, he got busy making the pie, adhering closely to the instructions in the book.

Aubrey Racke looked in later in the afternoon. Satisfying himself that all was going well, he proceeded to invite Gerald Crooke and one or two more of the noble army of nuts to a little flutter in his study, and afterwards to tea, at which the crowning glory was to be the rabbit-pie.

Tea-time came, and Baggy brought in his culinary effort, and set it before Racke at the head of the table.

"My hat!" said Crooke, as the pie was cut and the steam rose. "It smells jolly good!"

Racke smiled happily as the giver of the feast.

"Yes, rather!" he said. "We must pass a vote of thanks to young Trimble here."

Baggy actually blushed at the praise of the others, and his mouth watered.

"Now, then, everybody," said Racke, when Baggy finished dishing up the pie, "start right away!"

Crooke took one huge mouthful. Immediately there was an uproar.

"Help! Water, somebody, quick! I'm dying!" he bellowed. And from each of the others came shouts and cries for water.

"Trimble, you fat beast, I believe you've poisoned us all for the purpose!" cried Scrope, seizing the unfortunate Baggy.

"What have you put in that pie?"

"N-nothing, S-Scrope!" stammered out poor Baggy. "Nothing except what it says in the book."

He produced the precious volume from his pocket.

"Here you are, page 59: 'How to make a tasty rabbit-pie.'"

Scrope snatched the book from his hands.

"What's this?" he said. And he read out: "Before placing the crust on the dish, cover—plenty of salt, cayenne, mustard, and vinegar."

"Why, you young fool," he hooted, "there's a page missing from this book! Here's page 59, and the next is 62. Do you really mean to say you put all that beastly tack in our pie?"

"Oh, really, you know," groaned the alarmed Baggy. "I wasn't to know that, was I?"

"Rot!" howled Scrope. "You ought to have been more careful. Let's bump him, you fellows!"

The nuts proceeded to do so—hard. Shortly afterwards a fat, dejected figure picked himself up from the unsympathetic linoleum of the Shell passage and crawled painfully down the stairs.

"Yah! Beasts!" was his parting shot.

The Shell simply howled over the story when they heard it, and it was many a day before they forgot about Baggy's rabbit-pie.

**ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

G. A. G. (Shell).—"The chaps who read your 'Weakly' rag, agree the contents riles 'em, its editors ought to have a gag, or be put in an asylum—' Marvellous, G. A. G.!" The editors are going to have a G. A. G., and when we catch "him," "in payment for his hot-stuff rhyme, we'll give him a hot-stuff time!"

Wood B. Poet (Third).—"I have managed to get the first three lines of my 'Ode to Nature' all right, but am stuck for a line to finish the verse. Can any of you literary experts help me? Here's what I've written: 'How soft and sweet the evening air, wafts woodland, vales, and hills. And Nature turns from toil and care—' How about 'to anti-bilious pills'? or 'to pay the tradesmen's bills'? Shakespeare isn't in it with us, and Milton and Tennyson are 'also rans.'

(More replies another time.)  
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## Wildrake's Desperate Venture.

(Continued from page 9.)

The miller nodded.

"If you positively identify him, I shall detain him here while the police are sent for," he said.

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"On the other hand, if it should prove to be a mistake, it is rather rough on the man, if you have told people about this suspicion of yours," said Mr. Brown.

"We've told nobody so far," said Talbot. "I was going to consult my Housemaster, but it was too late. If Mr. Fix had not disappeared, I should have consulted him. But I can tell you, immediately I see the man, whether there is a mistake, I am certain that there is not."

Mr. Brown rose.

"I will call him in," he said. "I shall, of course, say nothing of what you have told me. He will face you without knowing what to expect. If he has deceived me, let him take his chance."

The miller quitted the room. Tom Merry and Manners exchanged a satisfied look. Talbot's brow was wrinkled with thought.

"Jolly obliging chap, anyway," said Manners. "I'm glad we came! We shall soon see now whether you were right, Talbot."

"I am certain that I was right," said Talbot. "But—" He paused, and his dark frown deepened. He sank his voice as he went on. "I'm not sure we did wisely in coming here."

"It seems to me to be turning out very well," said Tom.

"Yes. But—" Talbot broke off again.

Outside the window was a geranium patch, and two men had come round the mill-house, and they started hoeing among the flowers, almost under the window.

Talbot drew a quick, hard breath.

Tom Merry and Manners gave him a rather startled look. They realised that something had occurred to Talbot's mind of which they were still unsuspecting.

"What is it, Talbot?" asked Tom in a whisper.

"Only fancy, perhaps," said Talbot, in the same tone.

"But—but—I came here believing that Smiley Joe had deceived the miller into giving him a job. I did not suspect that—that perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?"

"That perhaps the miller was in the game," whispered Talbot.

"Impossible!" ejaculated Tom.

"Dash it all, he's all right," said Manners incredulously. "He looks as honest as the day. And sixty-five at least."

"He looks it," said Talbot. "But—I don't know his face, but his eyes seem familiar. I've seen him somewhere before, where he looked different, I believe. I can't be certain, but—"

"Fancy," said Manners. "You're letting your imagination run wild, old chap."

"Perhaps!" muttered Talbot. "But since the miller left us, those two men have come to hoe under the window."

"Why shouldn't they?"

"They cut off our escape, at least," muttered Talbot.

"Good heavens!" breathed Tom Merry. "You can't imagine—"

"Hush! He's coming!"

The miller re-entered the room. He was followed by a man in a dusty white coat, who held a dusty hat in his hand. It was the man whose face was in the photograph. He looked the miller's man to the life, excepting for the sharp, rat-like watchfulness of his narrow eyes.

"This is Peters!" said Mr. Brown.

"Is this the young gent what wants to speak to me?" said Peters civilly. Then as he looked at Talbot in the sunlight he gave a startled exclamation involuntarily: "Gad! The Toff!"

"You know me, I see, Smiley Joe!" said Talbot, with a bitter smile.

The miller of the moor looked from one to the other. There was a strange expression on his ruddy face. The genial expression was gone; the face had hardened, and the eyes gleamed like steel. It seemed to be almost a different man that stood before the St. Jim's juniors. Tom Merry breathed hard. The two men outside the window had ceased hoeing among the geraniums and drawn close to the sill, and were looking into the room.

Was it possible—

Tom's brain whirled at the thought. Was it possible—was it credible—that blindly, unthinkingly, the three juniors had walked into the very den of the kidnapers? Surely it was impossible!

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"So you recognise the man?" The miller spoke in a hard voice.

It was too late for Talbot to recede now.

"Yes," he said.

"And he appears to recognise you," said the miller.

"Yes."

"Recognise him, gov'nor!" exclaimed Smiley Joe, with an oath. "I should say so! He's no schoolboy; he's the Toff—as sharp as they make them—that used to be in the gang with Rivers and Captain Crow. If he's agin us now, the game's up if he ain't put quiet."

"Good heavens!" panted Manners.

The ruffian's words were proof enough—proof, too, that measures had already been taken to cut off the escape of the juniors. The miller stamped his foot on the floor. Three men pushed in at the doorway. At the same moment a revolver glimmered in the hand of Mr. Brown.

A hard and cruel grin came on his face.

"Thank you for coming here, my young friends!" he said.

"I shall take care that this photograph and negative remain in safe keeping, and that you do not chatter from the house-tops what you have told me. Checkmate to you, Toff!"

Talbot did not speak. The odds against the juniors were hopeless; they were in a trap from which there was no escape.

"I did not recognise you, though I saw you once or twice in the old times with Captain Crow," said the miller, with a grin. "You are older; you've changed, Toff!"

"I know you now," said Talbot dully. "You are Rackstraw—Rogue Rackstraw, as you were called in the gang. Fool that I was to come here! I might have guessed that the jackal would not be here without his master."

Smiley Joe burst into a hoarse laugh.

"You're losing your keenness, Toff, since you gave up the old lay," he said. "Fancy meeting you 'ere, Toff! Took my breath away for a minute, it did. And you're agin us!"

The three schoolboys drew together, grasping their sticks. The position was hopeless, but they were desperate.

"Seize them!" said Rogue Rackstraw coolly.

There was a rush of the miller's men.

"Back up!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Desperate and enraged, the three juniors put up a savage fight. There were yells from the miller's men as the heavy sticks lashed through the air. Smiley Joe rolled on the floor, half-stunned by a blow from Talbot, but the next instant Talbot of the Shell was down in the grasp of Rogue Rackstraw. With a panting of breath and trampling of feet the other rascals collared Tom Merry and Manners. Desperately the juniors struggled—desperately, furiously, heedless of the savage blows rained upon them.

But the unequal struggle could end only one way; and in a few minutes Tom Merry and Manners and Talbot were panting helplessly on the floor in the grasp of the kidnapers.

### CHAPTER 7.

Brought to Terms.

MR. LINTON, the master of the Shell, tapped at the door of the Head's study at St. Jim's and entered quietly.

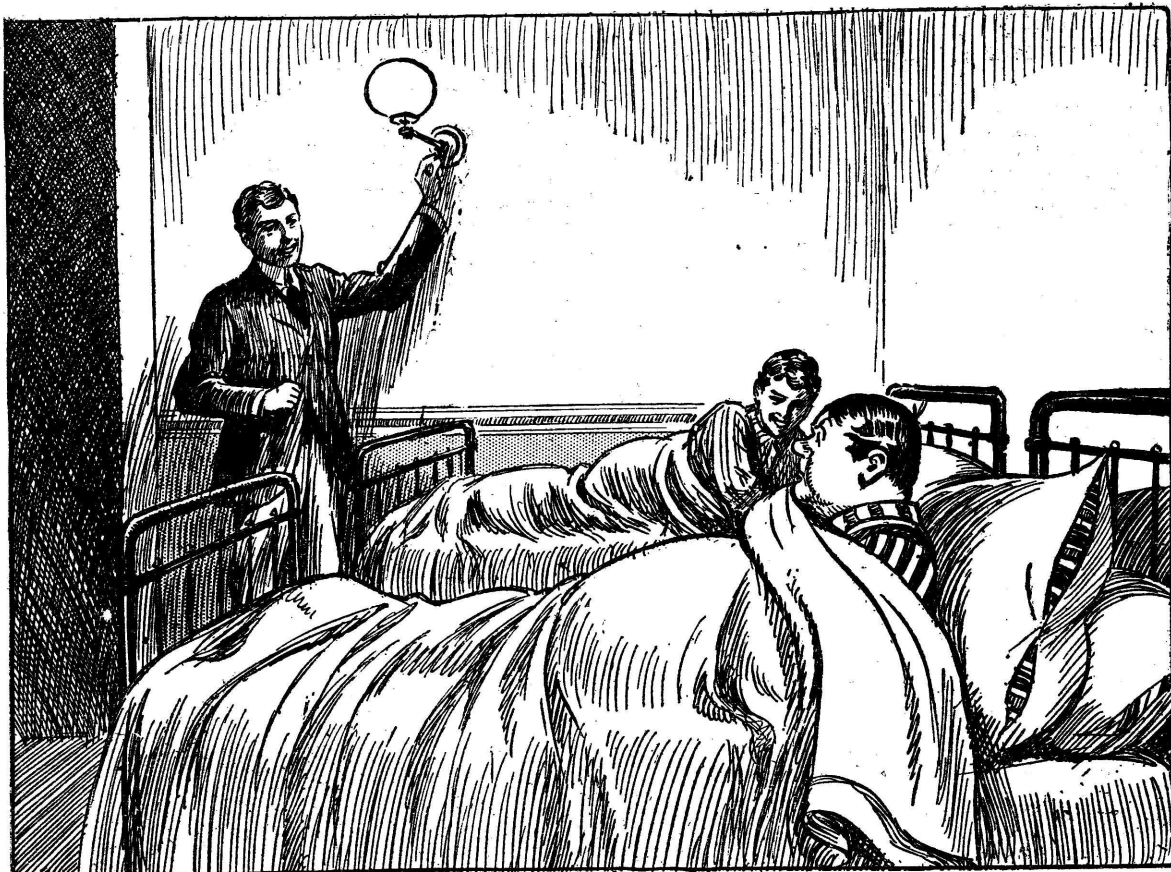
His face was very grave, and its rather severe expression softened into a look of sympathy as he saw Dr. Holmes.

The Head was seated at his writing-table, his kind old face pale and worn, his chin resting on his hand.

He looked like a man who had received a heavy blow that had had a dazing effect upon him.

Indeed, that was not far from the truth. The disappearance of Mr. Railton had been like a crushing blow to the Head. The Housemaster was always his right-hand man, and in the present terrible emergency he depended on Mr. Railton more than ever. And now he was gone—struck down by violence, and gone—perhaps never again to be seen in life. The man who had fought through years of warfare in Flanders had fallen at the hands of a gang of thieves and blackmailers. And the Head wondered, with a shudder, whether he would ever see his friend and colleague again. It was the last blow—and the heaviest. Without the strong support of the cool-headed, steady Housemaster, the unfortunate old gentleman felt utterly unfitted to deal with the sea of troubles and anxieties that had closed so suddenly and swiftly upon him.

Upon the table before him lay a letter—a typewritten letter. It was another letter from "Nemo," the mysterious kidnapper. It demanded in terms of menace the ransom of Kildare, of Monty Lowther—five hundred pounds in each case. The Head had no doubt that a similar letter had already been received by Dr. Monk, at the Grammar School, on account of Gordon Gay. The letter made no mention of Detective-Inspector Fix, who had been abducted from the school itself in the dead of night, and the Head could not help surmising that the unhappy man had fallen a victim to the fear, or the revenge, of this mysterious gang of criminals.



Darrell was about to turn the light out, when there came a squeak from Trimble's bed. "I say, Darrell, can't we keep the light on to-night?" The prefect looked at him. "Keep the light on!" he repeated. "Why?" "In case the kidnapper comes!" stammered Trimble. "You young ass!" said Darrell. And he turned off the light. (See page 15.)

For in his case it was not greed of money that had actuated them; it must have been fear of his investigations.

Had the Scotland Yard man made any discovery? The Head did not know; and now he would never know—never, unless Mr. Fix escaped from the ruthless hands that had seized him—which was not probable. It was only too clear that Nemo and his gang knew how to cover up their tracks well.

Courageous, firm-minded as he was, the Head of St. Jim's felt beaten, overwhelmed. Kildare of the Sixth, Lowther of the Shell, were under his care; he was not to blame for what had chanced, but he felt the weight of his responsibility. Kildare's people were in the north of Ireland—they had had to leave the affair to the police—and Lowther's uncle, on his visit to St. Jim's, had stated explicitly that he would never yield to the demand for money from a gang of law-breakers. If the ransom was paid, it had to be paid from the Head's private resources; but he would not have shrunk from that, heavy as the loss would have been, for the sake of the boys. But what was the end to be?

The kidnapper seemed to work in the dark with impunity. All that he received would be an encouragement to demand more, and to take measures to extort more. The Head knew it; and yet the thought of paying the ransom and obtaining the release of his boys was the only one in his mind that brought him any hope.

He glanced up wearily at the master of the Shell, without speaking. Mr. Linton had been taking the roll-call, and the Head supposed that he had come to report that all the members of the school had answered to their names as usual. He little dreamed of the news he was about to receive.

Mr. Linton hesitated to speak. The Head looked so old, so worn, that he shrank from dealing him another blow. But he had to speak.

"Nothing is wrong in the school, I hope, Mr. Linton?" asked Dr. Holmes, reading the expression on the Form-master's face, with alarm. "You surely have no bad news for me! Heaven knows there has been enough!"

"I fear, sir—" said Mr. Linton.

The Head gave almost a groan.

"Speak!" he said. "I can see that there is some fresh

misfortune. I have almost given up expecting anything else. What has happened, Mr. Linton?"

"Three boys of my Form, sir—"

"Not missing!" exclaimed the Head huskily.

"I am sorry to say, yes, sir."

"Good heavens!"

For some moments the Head did not speak. His head leaned more heavily on his hand. Mr. Linton's face was full of sympathy and compassion. Dr. Holmes raised his glance at last.

"Three boys did not answer to the roll, Mr. Linton?"

"That is so, sir."

"Their names?"

"Merry, Manners, and Talbot."

"Merry! Tom Merry!" The Head started. "Already he has been in the hands of the kidnappers, and his release was only obtained by yielding to their iniquitous demands. Surely Merry cannot have ventured beyond the school walls; surely he would be sensible enough—would have sufficient consideration for me—to keep within the walls."

"I should have thought so, sir, but—"

"Is it certain that these boys are not in the school?"

"Before troubling you with the matter, sir, I have had a search made," said the master of the Shell. "Merry and Manners and Talbot certainly are not within the precincts of the school."

Dr. Holmes bowed his head.

"They were last seen soon after the return of the horse and trap, without Mr. Railton," said the master of the Shell. "D'Arcy of the Fourth remembers seeing them go downstairs together soon after that, but they did not tell him where they were going. Trimble, however, states that he saw them enter your private garden. The garden has been searched, but they certainly are not there."

"They must have gone out of bounds," said the Head. "It is scarcely credible that even the reckless villains whom we have to deal with would venture into the precincts of the school in the daylight."

"After what happened to Mr. Fix, sir, I should be surprised at nothing," said Mr. Linton.

"But Mr. Fix was attacked in the dead of night. This is quite a different matter. The boys must have gone out of bounds," said the Head in an agitated voice. "It was reckless, inconsiderate, especially on the part of Merry. I expected more consideration from him, at least. Mr. Linton, what is to be done?"

"I really do not know, sir, excepting that the police should be immediately informed—"

"That I shall certainly do. They may add three names to the list they already possess of persons missing," said the Head in a bitter tone. "I expect no other result. It is almost too much to bear with patience."

"If there is anything I can do, sir—"

"There is nothing," said the Head. "I will telephone the latest wretched item of information to the police at Wayland. We are powerless in the matter."

Mr. Linton left the study, and the Head, with a deep sigh, turned to the telephone. He was about to pick up the receiver when the bell rang. He took the receiver, his heart beating. The thought was in his mind that it was the kidnapper's voice he was about to hear.

"Is that Dr. Holmes?"

"Yes," said the Head dully.

"Nemo speaking!"

Dr. Holmes did not answer.

"Have you decided in the matter of the boy Lowther?" came the voice.

"It is not for me to decide!" muttered the Head. "His guardian positively refuses to pay the money—any money."

"Then his nephew's blood will be upon his head!" said the voice. "To-morrow morning, Dr. Holmes, you will receive a registered packet from the Midlands."

"A registered packet!" said the Head mechanically.

"Containing a reminder that we mean business, sir. You will find one of Montague Lowther's fingers in the packet!"

Dr. Holmes gave a cry.

"Villain! Coward!"

He broke off, panting.

"Continue!" said the voice coolly. "As you are to pay the piper you are entitled to express your feelings on the subject. Continue, my dear sir. You were saying—"

There was cool mockery in the tones.

"You cannot mean this!" said the Head in a choked voice. "You cannot—you dare not! Such things may happen in Sicily and Spain. In this country—I do not believe it. You cannot—you dare not!"

"If you rely upon that, sir, you are leaning upon a rotten reed," said the cool, hard voice. "I give you my word that I am in earnest; as you will know when you open the packet to-morrow. Good-bye!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the Head. "Hold! One word—"

"I am listening."

"If you are in earnest in this threat—this diabolical threat—"

gasped the Head.

"You will find me so."

"I am not a rich man," said the Head. "What I possess is the saving of a lifetime. But I will sacrifice it to save the boy who was placed in my care. Dictate your terms. I am helpless, and others cannot help me. I must submit."

"Five hundred pounds in currency notes," said the voice. "The same as in the case of Merry. Where the money comes from I care little. I only know that I need it."

"Do you wish the money to be placed in the hollow oak in Wayland Wood, as before?" asked the Head, with a gleam of hope.

There was a light laugh over the wires.

"Thank you, no! I am aware of the discovery your detective, Fix, made with regard to the oak."

"Then what am I to do?"

"To-morrow you will walk to Wayland. On the way a man will speak to you, and he will give you the password 'Nemo.' You will hand him the packet of notes."

"And if I thus place myself at your mercy, villain, how do I know that I may not be your next victim?" exclaimed the Head sternly.

"You must take your chance of that!" said the voice coolly.

"But you may realise that it is not to my interest to harm you; you may reflect that I have not finished with you yet, Dr. Holmes; and, moreover, although you may ransom others, I scarcely believe that you would consent to ransom your own liberty."

"That is true. In my own case I would perish rather!" said the Head. "If you know me, you know that."

"I do know it! You have found me keep my word hitherto. Take my word that you will be safe if you attempt no trickery. You will walk alone; you will have the money on your person. Hand it over without a word when you are accosted. If you are followed or watched you will not be approached by my agent, and the result will be serious for my prisoner."

"I have no choice," muttered the Head. "I will call at the bank in Wayland at three o'clock to-morrow, and walk back to the school through the wood."

"Good!"

"Unless justice claims her 'own in the meantime," added the Head sternly.

There was another light laugh.

"I take the risk of that, sir. My agent will be many a long mile away before you can give his description to the police. Enough! Doubtless, sir, you are acquainted with the relatives of your Housemaster, Mr. Railton."

"I am."

"It will be wise to inform them that the gentleman is a prisoner, and that his release will cost five hundred pounds. If they desire to see him again they must advertise the word 'Agreed!' in the Birmingham 'Daily Gazette.'

The voice was heard no more.

Dr. Holmes put up the receiver, and sank into his chair again. He had yielded to the kidnapper's demands; right or wrong, he felt that he had no choice in the matter. Unless justice claimed her own, as he had put it, in the meantime, the ransom was to be paid on the morrow. Again the ruthless rogue was to score! And there was no help for it! But where was it to end?

CHAPTER 8.

Kit Wildrake Makes Up His Mind.

"IT'S howwid!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dismally.

"Rotten!" growled Blake.

"I guess it's the giddy climax!" remarked Kit Wildrake, his sunburnt face dark and sombre.

There were grim faces in the Common-room.

The mysterious vanishing of Tom Merry, Manners, and Talbot of the Shell, had fallen like a heavy blow upon the school.

Whether they had gone out of bounds, or whether the desperate rascals had ventured into the school, the fellows did not know; and as the dusk descended, every fellow was glad

to get into the shelter and safety of the lighted houses. Not the most reckless of the juniors felt inclined to walk into the quad after dark.

The danger had come home to their minds. It seemed to them that some invisible net was drawn over the old school—that danger lurked in every shadow.

Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was quite pale, and he blinked into every corner as he passed, with frightened eyes. But Baggy was not the only fellow whose nerves were rattled.

"They must have gone out!" said Roylance. "The rotters couldn't have ventured near the school in the daylight. But what could have made them do it?"

"Looking for Lowther, I suppose," said Grundy of the Shell.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was frightfully reckless, after what's happened, if they did," said Levi-son. "Especially Tom Merry—after he's been in the rotters' hands once already."

"If the duffas had only consulted me!" said Arthur Augustus, with a dismal face. "I should have advised them

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not to play the goat, you know—or, at least, gone with them. Then it would have been all wight!"

"The rotters would have bagged four instead of three silly asses!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewvies—"

"I reckon they figured it out that they had some sort of a clue," said Wildrake.

"What clue could they have had?" asked Blake.

The Canadian junior did not reply.

He was wondering whether the same suspicion had occurred to Tom Merry as had been working so long in his own mind.

Of his own suspicions, Wildrake had said nothing, since his talk with Detective-Inspector Fix of Scotland Yard. Mr. Fix had warned him to be silent, and he had been silent. He had been well content to leave the affair in the hands of the man from Scotland Yard.

But matters were altered now.

Detective-Inspector Fix had himself fallen into the hands of the gang—dead or alive. And Wildrake was perplexed. He had debated in his mind whether he should tell Mr. Railton what he had told the London detective; but it was too late to think of that now. Mr. Railton was gone—a prisoner in the same dastardly hands. He did not think of going to the Head, bowed down as the old gentleman was by grief and anxiety.

He thought of Inspector Skeat, of Wayland, but shook his head. The portly, stolid inspector was utterly out of his depth in this strange case—he was little likely to listen to a schoolboy's wild suspicions. Mr. Fix had listened to them, but he was a detective of quite a different calibre.

Besides, what had Wildrake to tell him?

He asked himself that question, and the answer was not reassuring. Vague suspicion, which amounted almost to certainty in his own mind, that the mill on Wayland Moor was the headquarters of the gang of kidnapers! Circumstances—a host of trifling circumstances—backed up Wildrake's startling theory. But—

Even if the rural inspector listened—even if he acted on the communication—what then?

An official visit to search the mill. What was it likely to reveal? There would be nothing on the surface—that was quite certain. If the white-whiskered miller was indeed the desperate and cunning criminal that Wildrake suspected, it would not be difficult for him to pull the wool over Mr. Skeat's eyes.

At the back of Wildrake's mind a plan had been slowly forming—a plan that was wild, almost desperate, and yet that attracted his daring nature strangely.

There was one way in which he could put his suspicions to the proof—one way in which he could bring the crime home to the criminal; but it was a way that involved his liberty and perhaps his life.

Perhaps the very recklessness of the plan attracted Wildrake a little.

In his cool, quiet way, the Canadian junior thought it out—considered it in all its bearings.

While the discussion ran on in the Common-room, Kit Wildrake was still thinking. Prep was over for the evening, and few of the juniors had given prep much attention. The danger and the mystery hung on every mind. Already some of the fellows were talking of leaving St. Jim's—of going home until the strange mystery was solved, and the old school became again a safe shelter. Crooke of the Shell had already written to his father to fetch him—other fellows were going to write. Something like demoralisation was setting in.

And Wildrake knew—or thought that he knew—and there was only one way of testing his suspicion—of putting it to the proof. And in taking the desperate step he was thinking or he knew that he might be looking his last upon the old school, and upon the familiar faces there—that he might be going to imprisonment, perhaps to death. His nature was undaunted; but he was no fool to rush thoughtlessly into danger, and he thought the matter out long and coolly before he made up his mind.

He went to his study—No. 2 in the Fourth—which he had to himself. His study-mates, Trimble and Mellish, preferred to keep in a crowd. The Canadian junior's mind was made up at last, and he had work to do before bedtime.

He took a sheet of impot paper and began to write.

Slowly, thoughtfully, methodically, he wrote, till the sheet was covered.

Then he read over what he had written, and nodded his head.

"I guess that fills the bill!" he remarked.

He folded the paper, placed it in an envelope, and sealed the envelope with sealing-wax. On the outside he wrote: "Dr. Holmes!"

When he had finished, he locked the envelope up in his desk, and left the study.

It was nearly bedtime when he returned to the Common-room, a few minutes later Darrell of the Sixth came in to march the Fourth off to their dormitory.

In the Fourth Form dormitory, Baggy Trimble made a round of the room, looking under all the beds in turn. Some of the fellows laughed; but Baggy was not deterred. And when Darrell was going to turn the light out, there was a squeak from Trimble's bed.

"I say, Darrell, can't we keep the light on to-night?"

The prefect looked at him.

"Keep the light on!" he repeated. "Why?"

"In case the kidnapper—"

"You young ass!" said Darrell, and he turned off the light.

"Pway don't be a wotten funk, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reprovingly. "Twy to wemembah that you are a St. Jim's chap, and don't show the white feathah."

"Yah!" retorted Trimble.

Darrell left the dormitory, but sleep did not soon visit the eyes of the juniors. Baggy Trimble's voice was heard in scared accents.

"Suppose he comes—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Levison.

"It's all very well for you, Levison—your people are poor," said Trimble. "But the kidnappers may have heard of Trimble Hall—"

"Bai Jove!"

"They wouldn't let me go under ten thousand pounds, if they got me!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"If they get you, I hope they'll keep you!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that at the foot of your bed, Trimble?" inquired the dulcet tones of Ralph Reckless Cardew.

"Oh! Yaroooh! Help!" yelled Trimble.

"All serene, old scout! It's only the foot of the bed," said Cardew cheerily.

"Yah, you rotter! I wasn't frightened!"

"Pway, don't make wotten jokes, and fwighten that sillay funk, Cardew," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"Did the window creak just then?" asked Cardew imperturbably.

"I—I didn't hear it!" gasped Trimble. "You're rotting, you rotter! You can't scare me! I fancy I'm about the bravest fellow in this dormitory, and chance it."

"Oh, gad!" said Cardew. "What must the rest be like?"

It's all right, Trimble. Remember your width, old scout, and your weight, and your merry circumference. The giddy kidnapper couldn't get you away unless he brought a steam crane with him."

"Yah!"

Cardew's assurances brought no relief to Trimble, and it was quite a long time before the fat junior's snore resounded through the dormitory. But it resounded at last, and lasted till morning, when Baggy awoke at the sound of the rising-bell, much relieved to find himself still safe and sound.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Wildrake's Venture.

**K**IT WILDRAKE turned out at the clang of the rising-bell, and was one of the first down from the Fourth Form dormitory. He strolled in the quad, with a very thoughtful expression on his face, till breakfast.

When he came in to "brekker" with the Fourth he went to the head of the table where Mr. Lathom sat.

"May I ask if there is any news yet, sir?" he inquired.

A score of fellows listened eagerly for Mr. Lathom's reply, eager to know whether the night had brought news.

The Fourth Form master shook his head.

"I am sorry to say that there is none!" he answered. "We must hope for the best, my boy."

The Fourth Form breakfasted in silence. A good many eyes turned towards the Shell table, where four places were now vacant. The Terrible Three were gone, and Talbot. From the Sixth Kildare was missing, and the familiar figure of Mr. Railton was not to be seen. There was a subdued look on all faces, and if a fellow spoke, it was in a whisper.

After breakfast Study No. 6 went out into the quad together. Kit Wildrake went up to his study, and took from his desk the sealed envelope he had locked there the previous evening, and slipped it into his pocket. His face was grave; but there was no sign of faltering in it; his mind was made up. There was no news of his missing school-fellows, and Wildrake had resolved to act.

He walked out into the quadrangle and looked for Blake & Co., and found them.

"I want you to do something for me, Blake," he said abruptly.

Blake nodded.

"Any old thing, dear man," he answered. "Stony? I'll lend you something out of Gussy's last remittance."

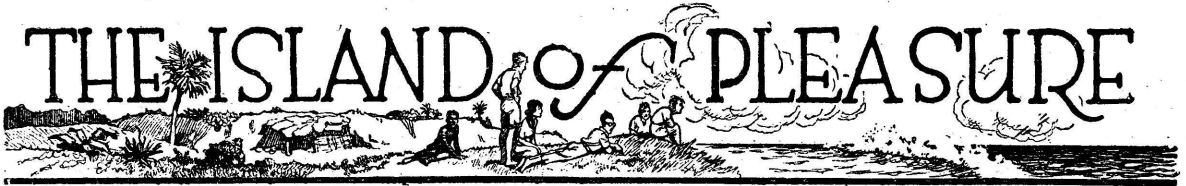
"Weally, Blake—"

Wildrake smiled.

"Nope," he said. "I want you to stick this envelope in your pocket, and keep it for me till dinner."

(Continued on page 19.)

# THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE



## Our Magnificent Story of Daring and Adventure.

### Hector Gordon Takes Charge.

**D**ONALD GORDON and his brother Val, together with Tommy Binks and Septimus Todd, left St. Christopher's School on an expedition to the Solomon Islands to join Hector Gordon, an uncle of the two brothers, who is on a big plantation there.

Captain Targe, captain of the Wittywake, and a scoundrel at heart, heard of the party's quest. He planned to abandon the boat, and leave the party to their fate—this, in order that he might carry out his plans and more easily overthrow the wealthy plantation owner and obtain hold of his land. His dastardly scheme proved futile, however, Taga, the black cabin-boy, warning the party and assisting them in making their escape. They were about to leave in one of the ship's small boats, when Anna, anxious to get away from the harsh treatment of her father, joined them.

Not long after they started on their perilous sea journey a severe storm arose, and the party got washed up on the Island of Pleasure.

They prepared their new home, living on the products the island offered. Shortly afterwards the happy party were startled by the reappearance of the Wittywake out at sea. Don kept watch, and, to his surprise, saw Targe, together with Ralph, land, carrying with them a metal box, which they deposited in the bed of a pool, to be guarded by a slimy, tentacled monster of the deep. Don wisely decided to keep the grim secret to himself.

It was some time afterwards, when the party were returning from a picnic, that a severe storm broke over the island. The chums were only just able to escape from their hut, which, with the combined forces of wind and waves, was brought crashing to the ground. The party underwent a terrible time that night, the angry waves carrying them hither and thither in their fury.

The storm subsided with the break of dawn, and of the separated party, Don, Anna, and Taga were reunited, but of the others there was no sign. Taga and Anna, tired after their night of terror, fell asleep, but the ever-watchful Don kept on the alert.

Meanwhile, of the others, what had happened? Tommy had luckily managed to get a footing on the roof of the hut, which, having fallen in, had acted as a raft. He found Val struggling with Scat, and the two had dragged the exhausted tutor on to the crazy raft. Washed on the sands, the three chums fell into a deep slumber. Val dreams of his old enemies, and, waking up suddenly, is horrified to find himself looking into the very faces of the men who had haunted his dreams—Captain Targe and Ralph Siddeley.

The chums are made prisoners, and taken on board the Wittywake. Targe, having to make a special journey to the island, leaves his prisoners in charge of a trusty lieutenant, and, with Ralph, puts off in a small boat to be rowed to the beach. Val makes a daring escape from the schooner, and follows the two rascals.

They had not gone far, however, when Val saw Targe turn suddenly upon Ralph, shaking his fist in his face.

Guessing the two rascals were quarrelling, Val kept a close watch on the moving figures. A few steps farther and they reached the ravine. Suddenly, to Val's horror, Ralph picks up a huge stone, which he casts, with unerring aim, full into the back of the leader, sending him reeling over the edge of the cliff into the black depths below. Val tries to render assistance to the dying captain, but his efforts prove futile. In Targe's last words, Val hears the secret of the pool, and how Ralph, through his treacherous action, can only meet death.

Val then leaves the dying man behind, and continues his way in search of the missing

chums. He eventually meets them, and tells of the terrible scene he has witnessed, taking care not to let Anna hear him. The party rush to the pool, but arrive only in time to see Targe's treacherous companion take a header into it.

The prisoners on the Wittywake, meanwhile, overcome their guard, and, in endeavouring to find a hiding-place, come across a number of dynamite cases. Tommy is surprised when he hears from Mr. Gordon that the natives probably use dynamite for fishing.

"For fishing?" Tommy remarks. "Curious sort of bait, isn't it?"

"Oh, no; they don't use it as bait," Don's uncle explained. "They light the fuse, then—and they have to be very nippy, I can tell you—as the cylinder is about to explode they throw it into the sea. It bursts there, and the concussion brings the fish to the surface within a range of forty or fifty yards. Some of the native boys are extremely expert at handling this dangerous stuff, although I have seen one or two nasty accidents."

Mr. Gordon had seated himself on one of the boxes of copra; then suddenly an idea seemed to come to him, for he arose to his feet.

"I am inclined to think that we may make very good use of this discovery of ours," he said, "for there isn't a native in the islands who doesn't know what dynamite is, and what it can do. I have a good mind to turn the tables on Targe. Will you lads help me?"

"What do you want us to do, sir?" asked Scat.

Hector Gordon glanced at the deck above, following the sections of the hatchway; then, after examining one or two of them, he came to a halt before a section on the right.

A pressure of his hand saw the hatch lifted slightly, and he beckoned to the two youngsters.

"We've got to shift this hatch first," he said. "It may be covered with tarpaulin, but I don't suppose it is. I know it is 'midships, and exactly between the saloon and the fo'c'sle. If we could get on deck without being seen, I think we could bring the whole crew under control at once."

He turned to Scat. "You will have to wrap something round the lamp, so that it will not be seen until I give you a signal," he went on. "You,

Tommy, come along and help me to shift this hatchway."

It was rather a ticklish job, but Hector Gordon and his young assistants managed to raise the heavy section at last, and slipped it back.

They saw a strip of blue sky above them: then Mr. Gordon climbed out from the hold on to the dark deck, followed by Tommy, and finally Scat, with the lamp muffled in his shirt.

The light was still burning above the companion-way, and the armed figure, seated cross-legged in front of it, had not moved.

For'ard the faint beams of light, emerging from the fo'c'sle companion, revealed the dark shapes of the crew.

"Now, Scat," said Gordon, "show the light—quick!"

The trio were standing in the centre of the hatch, and, at Mr. Gordon's command, Scat drew aside his shirt, revealing the lighted lamp.

At the same moment Mr. Gordon raised his voice in a shout, and there was a clatter of tin plates from the crew in the fo'c'sle, while the armed figure in front of the saloon leapt to its feet and swung round.

The light from the lantern held in Scat's hand fell full on the figure of Gordon, and in his outstretched hand was the long cylinder of explosive!

Just what Mr. Gordon said then neither Scat nor Tommy were able to understand, for he spoke in the native tongue, but his gestures were unmistakable.

One swing of his hand brought the cylinder near to the lamp, and he uncoiled the fuse.

"Open the lamp—quick, Scat!" Scat's fingers fumbled with the catch as he threw back the glass slide, and Mr. Gordon thrust the fuse into the flame.

There was a hiss and a splutter, and a stream of fiery sparks commenced to spray out as the fuse leapt into life.

The planter turned round, jumped from the hatch, and, swinging the cylinder above his head, made a menacing move for'ard, raising his arm as though to cast the cylinder from him.

At this action there went up a high-pitched yell of fear, and the group of half-naked natives cowering in the bow made a sudden headlong rush for safety.

Tommy saw the armed figure give a wild leap to the rail, then go head first into the sea, and a moment later splash after splash from for'ard indicated that the rest of the terrified natives were following his example.

"Right!" Tommy turned round to face Mr. Gordon, and he saw the planter reach out and pluck the fuse from the cylinder with his disengaged hand. The hissing fuse dropped on to the deck, and Mr. Gordon put his heavy foot on it.

"No need to waste seven pounds of good dynamite," he commented. "I think we have cleared the ship. Quick, now! Let us see they don't come back again, except on our terms."

He led the two lads for'ard with a rush, and Scat gripped at a very ugly-looking axe which was leaning against the mast, while Tommy possessed himself of a long bar of iron.

Mr. Gordon found a similar weapon, and, climbing on to the rigging of the foremast, the planter sent a shout out over the quiet sea.

Between him and the shore there were a dozen wet heads bobbing up and down as the natives swam for'ard.

Hector Gordon's booming voice followed them, this time in the quaint speech which serves as English in those southern latitudes.

"You fellas come back and take job under me. I am skipper of this ship now, and you find me good fella. You come back along o' me to my place. You no come back now I send Government launch presently, and you all fellas go die. You hear me? I talk true.



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You come right back, and everything all right.”

Scat nudged Tommy on the arm. “Better go down and try to find that rifle, old chap!” he whispered. “If Mr. Gordon’s going to get those fellows to come back on board here, we’ll want something more than a marine-spike to keep them under control.”

Tommy slipped off along the dark deck, and reached the companion-way which led to the saloon.

A search round the deck put him in possession of the rifle, which the frightened half-caste had thrown aside when he had taken that leap into the sea.

It was a Winchester repeating rifle, and, on examining it, Tommy found that it was completely charged.

Mr. Gordon, standing in the rigging, was still shouting out his threats and exhortations, which were beginning to have effect, for, as the fat youngster reached Scat’s side again, the first of the natives gained the side of the schooner.

Scat had found a length of rope, which he had fastened round the rail. He slung the rope overboard now, and a native sailor came scrambling up on to the deck.

“All right, Tommy!” Mr. Gordon said, over his shoulder. “You will find him quite to be trusted. I have had a word or two with him already, and he says there is no love lost between him and Targe.”

Two more natives followed, but the others preferred the safety of the beach, and although Tommy was half inclined to have a shot or two at them in order that he might scare a few more on board, Mr. Gordon shook his head.

“You let them go,” he said. “I think we’ve enough on board now to handle the schooner, in any case.”

“Handle the schooner! Is that the idea?” “Yes; come down to the saloon, and I’ll explain my plans.”

Mr. Gordon turned to the first man who had come on board, and spoke to him for a few minutes. Then, taking the rifle out of Tommy’s hand, he gave it to the native.

“You in charge now,” he said. “Anyone come on board, you shoot. You see?”

A broad grin crossed the native’s brown face.

“I see,” he answered. “That captain fella come on board I shoot him, eh?”

They little dreamed that Targe’s tremendous bulk would never be seen on board the Wittywake again.

As they entered the saloon, a groan reminded Tommy of the bound native who was lying under the table, and, while Scat lighted the lamp, Tommy dragged the fellow out and cut his bonds, then ran him up the companion-way on to the deck, and left him there.

When he returned to the saloon again, Mr. Gordon and Scat were seated at the table, and the former was talking in an earnest voice.

“In my opinion Targe and that young ruffian Ralph are going off across the island in order to try and gain the reef. I doubt very much if they will be able to get there

before to-morrow morning, which means that Don and the others are bound to be caught.”

“It would have been much easier for Targe to have gone round by boat,” Scat put in.

“Yes, that is so, but I suppose he had some reason of his own for not adopting that course. In all probability he did not want his native crew to know anything about it. That is why he decided to go along with Ralph, whom I take it he thought he could trust.”

Mr. Gordon nodded to Scat.

“You tell me that there is a passage through the reef, but I don’t suppose Targe knew about it, or he would have brought the Wittywake through. I remember him talking to Ralph. They ran the Wittywake in here just before the storm broke, and it was fortunate for them they did, for Targe said nothing could have saved them from being driven on to the reef.”

“The reef ends just beyond Dugong Cove,” Scat said, “and I think there is enough deep water there to float the schooner. Besides, by keeping up close to the mangroves you could almost work your way along the shore through Dugong Cove.”

“I certainly don’t intend to sail round,” Mr. Gordon observed. “My idea is to launch one of the boats, and get those brown fellows to work.”

“The Wittywake is only a very light schooner, and there’s no earthly reason why we should not be able to tow her. It will be hard work, but it is worth while risking it. I am going to baffle that rascal if I can, and with a little luck we ought to get round to the other side of the island before he does.”

Half an hour later the long-boat had been launched, and a rope was attached to it. Then began a long and arduous task, while the Wittywake was being towed through the darkness away from Settler’s Cove, and round the tall black cliffs into Dugong Cove.

Here the task became easier, for there was a slight wind, and under a rag of sail the Wittywake crawled forward slowly, Scat squatting in the bows, while Tommy took charge of the wheel.

It was rather fortunate for all concerned that Scat had studied Dugong Cove pretty closely, and on several occasions had spent a night there among the mangroves, in order to study the habits of its great, unwieldy inmates.

The low booming of the reef began to make itself heard, and Hector Gordon came clambering forward, and took a seat beside Scat.

He found the lanky tutor folded up like a monkey across the bowsprit, peering down at the water through which the Wittywake was moving at a slow crawl.

“That is the reef, isn’t it?” “Yes, you can just hear it now.”

Mr. Gordon stared steadily ahead for a long moment.

The moon was very clear now, and at last he could catch an occasional flash of white foam as the breakers curled over the reef.

It seemed to Mr. Gordon’s eyes that this band of foam was absolutely unbroken, running

from beneath the black headland which marked the end of Dugong Cove, round in a semicircle, to vanish into the distance.

“It’s—it’s all right, Mr. Gordon,” Scat’s quiet voice said. “We’ve been round here in the catamaran heaps of times, and I studied the channel. It’s quite deep enough to take the Wittywake, I promise you that.”

A fugitive gust of wind, coming across the tops of the mangroves, made the schooner heel over, and her pace quickened.

A moment passed, then Scat’s voice arose. “A little to the left, Tommy, please!”

Neither Don nor Val had ever been able to get Scat to use nautical phrases.

When it came to tackling the catamaran, port or starboard were meaningless to the lanky tutor.

“What do you think of him, Mr. Gordon?” Tommy called. “Telling me to go to the left, please! You might imagine we were floating down the Strand!”

Yet the stout youngster swung the wheel in the required direction, and the bow of the Wittywake came round until it seemed as though the lanky man in the bow was intending to run her ashore.

Nearer and nearer to the frowning cliff she came, and Mr. Gordon heard a low murmuring break out from among the native crew.

“They are getting scared,” the planter said, “and, by James, I don’t blame ’em! From what I can see of it, this channel would be difficult enough to steer through in the daytime, and now it seems to me next to impossible for anyone to manage it.”

“Right, Tommy—right! Steady! That’s enough!”

The Wittywake answered her helm at once, and came round.

A moment later, so far as Hector Gordon was concerned, it seemed as though the schooner was charging directly into the line of foam which marked the presence of the reef.

It was steering away from the headland, and nearer and nearer to the patch of foam, until at last Mr. Gordon could have sworn that the white lather was under their bow; then Scat’s shout came once more.

“Now left, Tommy—quick!”

A gap seemed to open in the white lather, and the Wittywake headed into it, held on for a fathom or so, then swung to starboard again. The freshening wind tilted her over, and she began to move through the quiet stretch of water between the reef and the shore.

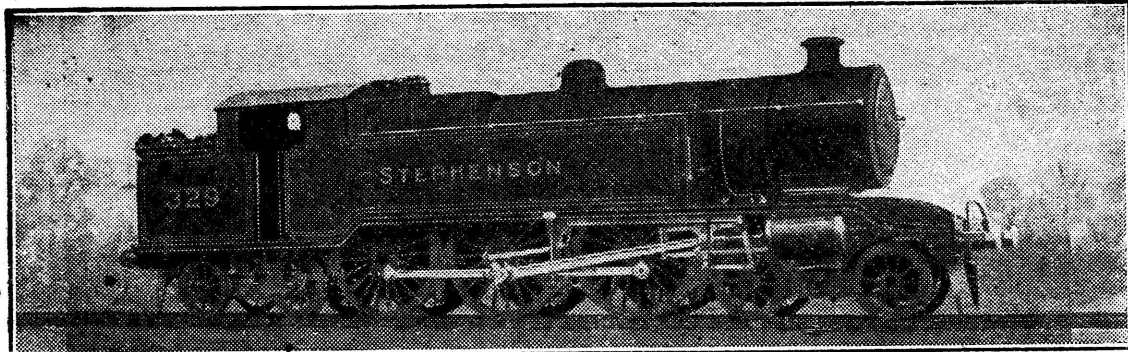
“That’s all right now, Mr. Gordon,” Scat said, turning round a beaming countenance on the planter. “To tell the t-truth, I wasn’t quite sure if that w-was the channel at first.”

Mr. Gordon placed his hands on his hips, and stared at the tall, ragged figure.

“You mean to tell me that you had a doubt about it?” he demanded.

“Well, you see, the c-catamaran is such a s-small craft compared to a schooner,” Scat answered. “There are two openings in the reef: one of them just deep enough to take the

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catamaran. I didn't know which we were in, you see."

"You didn't, eh? Well, I must say that you didn't reveal it in your manner. Strikes me, young man, that under the circumstances your calm was almost indecent. What were you going to do if we had struck?"

"J-ump," said Scat.  
They were moving along that stretch of black, threatening cliff that ultimately opened out on to Turtle Bay.

It seemed to Mr. Gordon that Tommy was hugging the shore rather closely, and, suddenly, there was an ominous bump and scraping sound as the Wittywake slithered over a sand bar.

It was touch and go with the little schooner, but she just managed to glide off into deep water again, and Mr. Gordon, pacing back along the deck, kindly but firmly removed the wheel from Tommy's hands.

"I am afraid that my nerves are not good enough for you and Scat," he remarked. "I don't doubt your abilities, but it seems to me that your knowledge of this part of the coast is rather sketchy."

"I'll admit I've never steered anything as big as this before," Tommy commented, "but, hang it, we're all right. If we did bump we could swim ashore, couldn't we?"

"I would rather not bump," said Hector Gordon. "The Wittywake will probably come in very handy presently."

And in order to make sure of things, the sail was lowered so that the schooner came to a halt.

It was only when the dawn commenced to break that Mr. Gordon permitted the sail to be raised again.

So it came about that at long last the Wittywake swung round to the end of the cliffs and into the smooth waters of Turtle Bay.

Then a freshening wind filled her sail, and she began to skip along at a steady pace across the stretch of blue, sparkling water.

"I say, Tommy, who's that? Look—look!"

Scat had been glancing idly along the line of the reef when his eye picked out a moving object far ahead.

The Wittywake was now half-way up the bay, and, as it drove onward, they caught sight of the cliff which had been the site of their camp for so many long months.

"There's someone on the reef all right," said Tommy, "but I can't make out. Hallo, the beggar's gone!"

Scat caught Tommy by the arm.

"He dived into the pool," he said. "Don't you remember that adventure of yours? It's the very pool which Don saw Targe and Ralph making for."

"Aho! there!" Mr. Gordon's voice came. "There's someone on the shore to the left. Look!"

The Wittywake, moving on steadily, had come into sight of two figures standing in the cove, and a whoop of delight broke from Tommy's lips.

"It's Don—Don and Val!" he cried.

*(Read the conclusion of this grand serial in next week's GEM. The opening instalment of our coming grand new serial will please you.)*

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**:: EDITORIAL CHAT ::**

My Dear Chums,—

It was just as I expected. The splendid photos of footballers I am giving every week in the GEM have enjoyed a reception which may be described as enthusiastic. The fact is, that word hardly describes the sort of welcome the new feature has received. The GEM was waited for every Wednesday with the keenest anticipation before, but the rush now beats all records.

Next week I am giving a finely executed photograph of famous Sam Hardy, the goalkeeper of Notts Forest. This is a very special likeness, and shows Hardy at his job, in action, on the field.

Just a reminder of what the "Magnet" and "Boys' Friend" are doing in the same line. The "Magnet" next week includes two first-rate photos, one of W. Flint (Notts Forest), the other of Cringan, of Scotland and Celtic. The "Boys' Friend" scores once more, as is its way, with a capital likeness of Charles Ledoux, the celebrated French boxing champion (bantam weight). Ledoux has won a big name for himself, and France need wish for no finer representative for the great sport.

I must have a word about our new serial, though space is short, a circumstance which always gets in the way when I want to have a good, long chat with you all. I like this great serial, "All On His Own," because it shows character, and the steadiness of spirit shown by the chief figure. Trouble is no

end of a fine thing, really, so long as it is conquered, and one gets a few useful, handy sort of lessons about life in the fine yarn.

But, of course, readers of the GEM make a dash for the St. Jim's story. This wonderful Tom Merry mystery has taken my friends by storm. This is no idle boast, for the letters which reach me are all to the same tune. There is an impression abroad that Mr. Martin Clifford has never done better. I doubt if he has, but I don't mind passing the word on to you that the world-renowned author has still more striking yarns up his sleeve. There are, so to speak, as good fish in the sea of Mr. Martin Clifford's marvellous imagination as ever came out of it. We shall see what we shall see. Keep your eye on the GEM.

A correspondent, whose letter I have just opened, is enormously interested in that first-class snob, Aubrey Rake, and his career (if you can call it a career) at St. Jim's. Well, Aubrey has done many weird and wonderful things, and one still chuckles as in the mind's eye one sees him scampering out of reach of the hefty fist of Grimes, the grocer's boy. By the way, I intend to include Grimes in the portrait gallery. Look out for him in next week's GEM.

You must make a special point in future of ordering your GEM well in advance, as the demand grows for this splendid school story paper.

YOUR EDITOR.

**"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"**

Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.  
*(If your name is not here this week it may be next.)*

**This Wins Our Tuck Hamper. WHEN CRICKET WAS BANNED.**

English kings used to look upon cricket with disfavour, because, like football, it interfered with archery practice. Edward IV., in 1477, threatened to imprison for three years any person who permitted the game to be played on his premises, and to fine the offender £20 in addition. Not merely this, but the bats, balls, and stumps were to be burnt, and each player fined £10 and given two years' imprisonment. Yet in spite of all these set-backs cricket made its way and became the king of games.—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Thomas Bates, 106, Crabbill Lane, Foleshill, Coventry.

**AN ANTEDILUVIAN ANIMAL.**

Reports of the existence of an enormous prehistoric monster, which frequents the lakes in the territory of Chubut, Patagonia, have been received. The creature is described as a plesiosaurian amphibian, hitherto believed to be present only in fossil form. It is an animal with a colossal neck resembling that of a swan, and with a body shaped

like that of a crocodile. The plesiosaurus is, or was, connected with the Patagonian animal. It is an extinct marine reptile of Europe and North America, with four limbs developed as paddles for swimming, in addition to the long neck and crocodile-shaped body. This animal was recently described in the GEM in the course of the serial "The Valley of Surprise." Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Griffin, 4, Londesborough Road, Southsea, Hants.

**THE AFRICAN ALPS.**

In the Drachensburg Mountains on the borders of Natal, there is some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Many people, even those living in the country, do not know how wonderful the region is. Mont-aux-Sources is one of the most wonderful parts. The country hereabouts is rich in minerals; quick-silver and diamonds have been found there. In the near future there will be railway facilities to this neighbourhood, and an influx of visitors may be expected.—H. Pole, Kilyvington, Winterton, Natal, South Africa.

**TUCK HAMPER COUPON**

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## Wildrake's Desperate Venture.

(Continued from page 15.)

"Eh?"  
"Keep it safe," said Wildrake. "If I don't ask you for it by dinner-time, take it to the Head."

"The Head?" ejaculated Blake.

"Sure."

"Look here, Wildrake, if this is some jape—" began Blake, rather warmly.

"It isn't!" said the Canadian junior quietly. "I guess I'll tell you this much. I've written down in that envelope some things I've thought out that may help in nailing the kidnapers. If I don't ask for it by dinner-time, it will be because they've got at me, and I can't. Catch on now?"

"They can't get at you here," said the mystified Blake, impressed in spite of himself by the Canadian's quiet, earnest manner. "But I'll do as you ask; and if it's a jape I'll jolly well punch your head!"

"You'll be welcome!" said Wildrake dryly.

Blake secured the envelope in an inside pocket. Wildrake walked away, whistling in a low key.

"That young ass has someh'n in his sillay head," said Arthur Augustus sapiently. "He is wathah a duffah not to confide it to a fellow of tact and judgment, you know."

"Bow-wow!" yawned Blake. "I'm blessed if I know what he was driving at; but I can't see that it matters much, anyhow. Let's go and punt a ball about till lessons."

"Yaas, wathah!"

When the bell rang for classes Study No. 6 went into their Form-room with the rest of the Fourth; with one exception. Kit Wildrake was not to be seen.

Mr. Lathom came in, and glanced over his class. He noted the absence of the Canadian junior.

"Where is Wildrake?" he asked.

There was no answer.

"Has anyone seen Wildrake?" asked Mr. Lathom sharply.

"I was speaking to him twenty minutes before lessons, sir," said Blake. "In the quad."

"He should not be late for lessons, especially in such a time of anxiety as this!" said Mr. Lathom crossly. "Blake, you may leave the Form-room and look for him."

"Yes, sir."

Blake left the Form-room in a state of wonder. He could not help thinking of the mysterious letter in his pocket, and coupling it with Wildrake's absence.

It was a quarter of an hour before Blake returned to the Form-room, and then he came alone. Mr. Lathom looked at him sharply, with the dawning of alarm in his face.

"Blake, where—"

"I can't find him, sir," answered Blake. "I've looked jolly nearly everywhere."

The Form-room was plunged into a sudden silence.

"You will keep order here while I step out and speak to the Head," said Mr. Lathom, addressing the class.

The Fourth Form master left the Form-room. There was an excited buzz as soon as he was gone. When he returned his face was grave and a little pale; and lessons went on without any mention of Wildrake. But during the morning Wildrake's place remained empty in the Fourth Form.

Lessons were a good deal of a farce that morning; the Form was seething with suppressed excitement. The Fourth were dismissed at last; and in the quad, there was a buzz of comment on Wildrake's absence. It was only too evident by this time that the Canadian junior had to be added to the list of St. Jim's fellows who had disappeared.

"He's gone, you chaps!" said Arthur Augustus. "Poor old Wildrake! It's gettin' awfully thick, you know."

Blake drew a deep breath.

"He gave me this paper to give the Head if he didn't ask for it by dinner-time!" he said. "He must have had it in his mind, then, to go out of bounds. He's gone out, and they've got him!"

"Bai Jove! But what can be in the envelope, Blake?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in amazement.

Blake shook his head.

"I don't know! I can't guess! But it's something! I'll keep my word to him; if he doesn't turn up at dinner-time I'll take it to the Head!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

When the dinner-bell rang Blake looked anxiously over the crowd going into the dining-hall. But the well-known face of Kit Wildrake was not to be seen among them; his place was empty at the dinner-table. Where was Wildrake? He had gone—and gone knowingly—whence he could not return. And if there existed a clue to his fate, it was written in the mysterious paper he had placed in Blake's keeping.

THE END.

(You should make sure of reading next week's splendid story entitled, "OUT OF THE DEPTHS!" By Martin Clifford. Wildrake plays a prominent part in this splendid thrilling story. Do not miss it!)

## Teach Yourself Wireless Telegraphy

Mr. E. J. BARNARD, Welling, Kent, writes:—

"I think I ought to tell you how much I value 'The Amateur Mechanic.' It has proved of great assistance in a variety of jobs, and especially as to the article on WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY. I constructed an instrument entirely according to the instructions, and was rewarded with success on the first trial. Sunday last was for me a red-letter day, as I succeeded, with the same instrument, in picking up the telephonic message from London to Geneva at 9.40 a.m. Considering that my aerial is only 42 inches long and 18 inches high, I think these are grounds for self-congratulation. I may add that until I became interested in the article in your AMATEUR MECHANIC, I had not the slightest elementary knowledge of Wireless Telegraphy."

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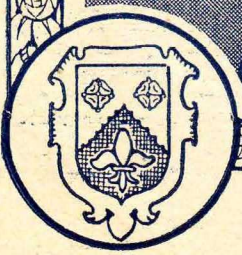
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