

THE ST. JIM'S TREASURE QUEST!

This Week's Grand
School Story.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

No. 937.
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1926.

LIBRARY

of
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

GRAND TREASURE HUNT OPEN TO ALL

THE SUM OF TEN POUNDS
(IN GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS)

AWAITS THE BOY WHO IS SUCCESSFUL IN
ELUCIDATING THE FOLLOWING CLUES

1 A FOUNDATION. PROCEED DUE SOUTH
2 HONOUR THE BRAVE. "IT'S A LONG LANE

THAT HAS NO TURNING"

3 BEWARE OF THE BULL. ON WITH THE QUEST

4 TWO DOWN, ONE ACROSS WE HEARD HO!

GOODLY PILE

ROOM WITH THE GR

REST OF THE CLUES

INDS.
DIG!



"BAT BARSTOW'S NIGHT OUT!" Thrilling Adventure Story
FEATURING A VIGOROUS NEW CHARACTER WHO BOBS UP LIKE A CORK WHEN LEAST EXPECTED!



My Readers' Own Corner

WIRE IN NOW!

You Know A Good Joke? Let's Hear it, Chum.

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Awarded for Interesting Pars.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: The
GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House,
Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

ANOTHER READER WINS TUCK! TOO THICK!

Doctor: "You should keep to light diets, not puddings. I recommend a little bread and milk for breakfast, a cup of beef-tea for dinner, and a bowl of gruel for supper." Patient: "Look here, doctor, I'm hanged if I am going to die of starvation just for the sake of living a bit longer!" A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to G. Anderson, Park View, Walbottle, Newburn-on-Tyne.

QUITE RIGHT!

Judge (to thief): "How is it that you are a thief, my man?" Thief: "Well, my lord, I was born in a dense fog, and everything I lay my hands on is 'mist'!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eric Biggin, 4, Crimicar Lane, Fulwood, Sheffield.

"ONCE BITTEN—"

McFavish, staying in London for a holiday, decided to go to a theatre. Finding that the pantomimes were still running, he made up his mind to see "The Forty Thieves." Approaching the box-office, he inquired the prices of the seats. "Stalls, half-a-guinea; dress circle, seven-and-sixpence; upper circle, four shillings," answered the box-office clerk. Mac stared at the man in amazement. "Is that actually whit ye chaige for sates in this theatre?" he asked. "Certainly!" replied the other. "Well ye can keep yer sates an' yer pantomime, then," said McFavish heatedly. "And ye can keep yer auld 'Forty Thieves.' Noo that I've seen you, I dinna want to see the other thirty-nine!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Davis, 6, Chilton Road, Walcot, Bath, Somerset.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING!

The little boy marched gamely into a chemist's shop and demanded something for reducing fat. "Anti-fat?" inquired the assistant. "No, uncle!" responded the youngster.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Clark, 16, Deans Road, Hanwell, W. 7.

PROOF POSITIVE!

"You assure me that this is the very latest style?" said the customer. "Sure," said the tailor, "and the very latest!" "And it won't fade?" inquired the swell. "Positive of it!" said the tailor. "Why, we've had it in our window four months!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Kenneth Mayall, 37, Station Road, Reddish, Stockport.

(Another delicious Tuck Hamper on offer for next week, chums. Don't let the grass grow under your feet, but set to work right now and enter this simple competition. If at first you don't succeed—try, try, try again!)

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

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Your Editor Chats With His Readers:

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MANY THANKS!

AS I write this Chat my eye wanders to the formidable array of Christmas-cards and New Year calendars that have been sent me by Gemites from various parts of the world. I believe I have already thanked you chaps for these thoughtful tokens of good will, but there is no harm in thanking you once again. To those readers who sent me greetings and who omitted to give their names and addresses, I wish the very best of luck in the New Year upon which we have embarked.

MATCHBOXES!

A Gemite from Australia writes and tells me that he is collecting matchboxes. It doesn't sound a very interesting hobby at first sight, does it; but it is surprising what interest can be drawn from collecting the thousands of different matchboxes—knocking about all over the world. My correspondent tells me that already he has collected twelve hundred different boxes, and says that his hobby will outlive him even if he were fortunate enough to "run Methusalem to a short head." I quite believe it, for different matchboxes come into being with clockwork-like regularity every week, and matches are pretty certain to be used in the twenty-first century, anyway.

HARRY WHARTON'S NEW SUPPLEMENT!

You are all interested in footer, I've not the slightest doubt, and that being so, Gemites ought to be advised to read every week the brilliant new football supplement, edited by Harry Wharton, commencing in next week's "Magnet." All phases of footer are discussed in this new supplement, which is really a triumph of schoolboy journalistic art. By the way, each number of this supplement contains a special cartoon of a professional footballer drawn by Jimmy Seed, of Tottenham Hotspurs. His cartoons, as doubtless you know, appear in the daily papers. That fact alone speaks of their merit. While we are on the subject of footer, I must mention, too, that, simultaneous with the start of this new supplement in the "Magnet," there is the start of a powerful football and detective story featuring Ferrers Locke, the wizard detective, and his clever boy assistant, Jack Drake. Trot round to the newsagent now and order a copy of next week's "Magnet." You'll not regret it, take it from me.

"THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY!"

Just a reminder that two numbers of this famous school story library are published on the first of next month. I expect a number of you chaps will forget to order them in the whirl of excitement that has rushed you along from Christmas and the New Year. But it's not too late to rectify that error. No. 21 is entitled, "The Greyfriars Journalists," and shows Mr. Frank Richards at his best. No. 22, "D'Arcy of St. Jim's," speaks for itself. Mind you read these volumes, chums!

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"FOOTBALL RIVALS!"

A topping story of the footer field, featuring Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford.

"SANNY!"

Look out for a special supplement dealing with the above subject in next week's issue of the News.

"THE FIFTH STEP!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

That's the title of the next Bat-Barstow story. I'll bet No. 1 went down like hot cakes. Well, No. 2 is even better. Don't miss it!

JINGLE No. 22.

George Darrell of the Sixth figures in next week's Jingle. Look out for this popular prefect. Cheerio, chums!

Your Editor.

TEN GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS! That handy sum of money lies hidden within a three mile radius of St. Jim's—and simply wants finding. There are scores of fellows at St. Jim's who reckon in advance that the money is as good as in their pockets. But there are heaps of disappointments in store for these chaps before the curtain rings down on—



A New Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, with a highly novel theme.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

A Distinguished Visitor!

"HARVEY SHAW!" Baggie Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered the name.

The fat junior blinked in at the doorway of Study No. 10, in the Shell passage, and his announcement drew seven pairs of eyes upon him at once.

Tom Merry & Co., the owners of Study No. 10, were discussing a knotty football problem with Jack Blake & Co., of the Fourth. But the discussion ceased abruptly when Trimble's fat face appeared in the doorway.

"Harvey Shaw!" repeated Baggie.

"Show him in," said Tom Merry. "I've not the faintest notion who Harvey Shaw is; but we can give him two minutes—or three, if he's come on important bizney."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Show him in, Twimble! It's awfully wude to keep a gentleman waitin' in the dwaughty passage."

Baggie Trimble gave a snort.

"Harvey Shaw isn't here, fathead!" he said.

"But you announced him," said Manners.

"I didn't! I merely mentioned his name."

"Who the thump is Harvey Shaw, anyway?" growled Jack Blake. "Is he a friend of yours, Baggie? If so, we don't want to hear anything about him!"

"Oh, really, Blake! Do you seriously mean to say you've never heard of Harvey Shaw?"

"Never!"

"He's not a professional footballer, that's certain!" said Digby. "I know the names of all the League players by heart. There's a Shaw who plays for a Scottish team, but his front name isn't Harvey."

"You've got footballers on the brain, Dig!" said Monty Lowther. "There are mighty men in the land besides footer pros. Perhaps Harvey Shaw is a well-known humorist?"

"Can't be well-known, or we should have heard of him," said Tom Merry.

Baggie Trimble looked at his schoolfellows more in sorrow than in anger.

"Harvey Shaw is the celebrated detective!" he explained.

"My hat!"

"So celebrated," said Manners, "that his name and fame haven't penetrated to St. Jim's."

"And yet he's an Old Boy!" said Trimble. "He left St. Jim's about fifteen years ago. I've looked him up in the school records. He was a great athlete when he was here—something like me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He knocked about the world, in different jobs, for some time and then turned detective," Trimble went on. "I've got his life history at my finger-tips. I'm surprised that you fellows have never heard of my old pal Harvey!"

"Your—your old pal?" stuttered Blake.

Trimble nodded.

"We went to school together," he said, with emotion.

"I—I mean, we might have gone to school together if we had been the same age."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggie Trimble glared at the hilarious juniors.

"You fellow don't seem to believe me!" he said reproachfully.

"We don't!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"You are such a notorious fibbah, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that it is uttably imposs. to believe a word you say! I have nevah heard of Harvey Shaw!"

"That doesn't prove that he doesn't exist, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "But we'll jolly soon find out whether there's a St. Jim's Old Boy of that name. I'll nip along and ask old Kildare. He's burrowed into the school records a lot, and he's quite an authority on Old Boys. Keep Trimble here, you fellows, and if it turns out that he's been telling us whoppers we'll give him a jolly good bumping!"

Baggie merely snorted. It was obvious that he considered himself quite safe from a bumping.

Tom Merry left the study and was back within a couple of minutes.

"Wonders will never cease!" said Tom breathlessly. "Trimble's told the truth!"

"He must be ill!" said Monty Lowther, with concern.

"Kildare knows all about Harvey Shaw," Tom went on. "He left St. Jim's in nineteen hundred and ten and wandered about the world, following all sorts of professions, and then he turned sleuth. He's one of the shining lights of Scotland Yard and a colleague of John Rivers—Miss Marie's father. He's taking a brief rest in Wayland, and he's coming over to St. Jim's this afternoon—his first visit since he left, fifteen years ago!"

"There you are!" said Baggie Trimble triumphantly. "I was right, you see, only you Doubting Thomases wouldn't believe me!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and turned to Trimble.

"As one gentleman to an apology for one, Twimble," he said, "I apologise for doubtin' your word."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Gussy——"

"We shall be vewy charmed to give Mr. Harvey Shaw the glad hand!" went on the swell of St. Jim's. "Funds bein' plentiful, I pwopose, deah boys, that we stand the famous detective a feed. He must be famous, because he's an Old Boy of this illustrious an' honourable school. It is remarkable that we have nevah heard of him until now."

"Oh, I don't know," said Tom Merry. "There are so many distinguished Old Boys that we can't possibly get to hear of 'em all. But how did Trimble get to hear about this, I wonder?"

"Never mind about that," said Baggy hastily. "I say, you fellows, my old pal Harvey would appreciate a jolly good spread! He's awfully fond of doughnuts, you know! All detectives are. They like to dissect them and investigate the middle to see if there's any jam in them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he simply loves jam-tarts!"

"He's not the only one!" growled Manners.

"And he's got a perfect passion for plum-cake!" went on Trimble. "It's up to us to give dear old Harvey the feed of his life! And if you'd like me to fry some sosses——"

"I knew there was a catch in it somewhere!" chuckled Lowther. "Baggy doesn't mean to be left out in the cold!"

"Of course not!" said Trimble indignantly. "My old pal Harvey would refuse to sit down to table if I wasn't present. Now, if you fellows will have a whip-round and hand over the funds to me, I'll see about laying in the supplies."

For some reason or other, the juniors declined to take advantage of this generous offer. They preferred to do their own catering, and they told Trimble so with more emphasis than politeness.

"Now you can get out!" said Tom Merry.

"Beasts!"

"Cut!" said Blake briefly.

Baggy Trimble lingered in the doorway—but only for an instant. A cushion, hurled with unerring aim by Monty Lowther, smote the fat junior full in the chest, and Baggy was bowled over backwards, landing on the hard and unsympathetic linoleum with a bump and a roar.

Tom Merry retrieved the cushion, and the door was slammed against the sprawling Baggy.

That luckless youth staggered to his feet and flourished a fat fist at the closed door of Study No. 10. Then he rolled away towards the quadrangle, to await the arrival of his "old pal Harvey."

CHAPTER 2.

The Golden Trail!

DUSK was beginning to fall, when a two-seater car swung into the St. Jim's gateway.

The car came to a halt in the quadrangle, and Baggy Trimble ran forward eagerly as a tall, smartly-dressed man alighted.

"Mr. Harvey Shaw?" inquired Baggy.

"That is my name," said the newcomer, glancing keenly at the fat junior.

"Welcome to St. Jim's, sir!" said Baggy, extending a flabby hand. "Your old school is proud of you!"

"Hum!"

Mr. Shaw pretended not to see Baggy's outstretched hand. A shrewd reader of character, he was not favourably impressed with Baggy Trimble at first sight. He summed up Baggy at once as a fat sponger who was indulging in lip-service in the hope of personal gain.

The detective decided that he preferred Trimble's room to his company, and he began to walk briskly towards the building.

Baggy Trimble hurried in the wake of his "old pal Harvey." There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; and Baggy seemed determined to stick to Mr. Shaw.

"I—I say, Mr. Shaw!" he panted, as the detective started to ascend the School House steps. "I shall be pleased to show you to the Head's study, if that's where you're going first."

"Thank you; I haven't forgotten my way about," said the detective curtly.

"My hat! You remember St. Jim's, after being away from it for fifteen years?"

"Every nook and corner of it. But how did you know, my plump friend, that I was an Old Boy, who left fifteen years ago?"

"Ahem!"

"I suspect that you have been eavesdropping," said Mr. Shaw shrewdly. "Whilst I was chatting with a friend early

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this afternoon, in the smoke-room of the George and Dragon in Wayland, I saw somebody lurking outside the open window. That 'somebody' was you, was it not?"

Baggy Trimble blushed.

"I—I—my bootlace happened to come undone, and I stopped just outside the window to tie it," he faltered. "I simply couldn't help hearing you telling your friend your life's history. You were shouting like anything—fairly bellowing, in fact!"

The detective paused at the top of the steps and frowned.

"Eavesdropping is a contemptible habit," he said quietly, "and so is exaggeration. I was not bellowing, as you call it. I was talking in quite a subdued tone, but your ear is evidently trained to catch even a whisper. I am rather sorry, now, that I did not step to the window and box your ears."

"Oh crumbs!"

"However, it is not too late to make good my omission," said Mr. Shaw.

And he shot out his hand and administered a cuff that sent Baggy Trimble staggering down the steps, to alight in a sprawling heap at the foot thereof.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble. "Beast! I don't believe you're a detective at all, or an Old Boy of St. Jim's, either! You're just a common hooligan! Yah! You've no right to lay hands on the son of a gentleman. I'll tell Railton! I'll tell the Head! I'll have you kicked off the premises!"

Mr. Harvey Shaw might have heard this stream of abuse—indeed, he could hardly have helped doing so, for Baggy Trimble's voice was neither sweet nor low. But the detective paid no heed to Baggy's fierce outburst. Smiling grimly, he disappeared into the building.

An elegant junior lounged into view in the hall. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He halted as the detective approached, and made a courteous bow. Mr. Shaw returned the salutation, and smiled.

"Am I wight, sir, in supposin' you to be Mr. Harvey Shaw?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"Quite correct," said the detective. The Swell of St. Jim's, with his courtly dignity, impressed him far more favourably than Trimble had done.

"I am pleased an' pwoud to meet you, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "We saw a cah appwoachin' fwom the studay window, an' we felt sure it was you. Would you do us the honah of takin' tea with us, Mr. Shaw?"

"Delighted!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beamed.

"Perhaps you would like to see the Head first?" he suggested.

"Not at all. I am dining with Dr. Holmes this evening, and it will not be necessary to see him till then."

"Good! Pwaw step this way, sir!"

Arthur Augustus piloted the detective to Study No. 10, where an excellent repast had been prepared. Ample supplies had been obtained from the tuckshop, and the table groaned beneath the weight of the goodly viands, as a novelist would say.

Six cheery-faced juniors rose to their feet as Arthur Augustus ushered in the guest.

Mr. Harvey Shaw was given a very hearty reception, and he shook hands all round with his schoolboy hosts.

"Jolly decent of you to come and have tea in a junior study, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathiah!"

The detective smiled.

"It's a great pleasure," he said, taking the chair that Manners placed for him. "This will not be the first time I have taken tea in this study, by the way. This is Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, is it not?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"The very study I occupied eighteen years ago," said Mr. Shaw.

"My hat!"

"What a memory!" murmured Blake.

"There is nothing remarkable in recalling such a fact," said the Old Boy. "Eighteen years hence, I have no doubt you will remember this study, and would have no difficulty in finding it again. What a glorious spread, to be sure! Why, it's just like old times!"

The detective had been allotted the place of honour at the head of the table, and he was waited on hand and foot by the juniors. So great was the zeal of the waiters, in fact, that Jack Blake, carrying a frying-pan, collided amidships, so to speak, with Arthur Augustus, carrying a tray.

There was a crash, and a duet of yells.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"Gussy, you clumsy ass——"

"Blake, you blunderin' elephant——"

"Order, please!" said Tom Merry anxiously. "Mustn't squabble in front of our distinguished guest, you know."

Blake and Gussy exchanged wiling looks. Then they gathered up the fragments of crockery, and the sausages



Herries' belief in Towser's tracking abilities was almost touching. He declared that his pet would make straight for the spot where the treasure was buried. Blake and D'Arcy were not so sanguine for already Towser was straining at the lead in an endeavour to take a northerly direction—which was all wrong. (See chapter 4.)

which had bounced out of the frying-pan when the collision came. Those sausages had been done to a turn; but they were no longer fit for human consumption. Blake proceeded to fry a fresh supply.

Mr. Harvey Shaw smiled serenely, as if blissfully unaware of the calamity. He chatted away very cordially to Tom Merry & Co., and he quickly proved himself to be a well-informed gentleman. No matter what topic came up for discussion, Mr. Shaw was "all there."

Digby was delighted to find that the detective shared his enthusiasm for League football. Manners, also, was delighted to find that Mr. Shaw was a keen amateur photographer. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took stock of the detective's well-cut suit with an admiring eye, and chatted to Mr. Shaw about male fashions. The detective replied quite gravely, giving his views on the subject of spats and fancy waist-coats; but there was a gay twinkle in his eye.

Tom Merry invited the Old Boy to relate some of his schoolboy adventures at St. Jim's; and the juniors listened breathlessly to Harvey Shaw's description of the Great Rebellion of 1908, and many other stirring events of the same period.

The Old Boy did not speak at all boastfully of the part which he personally played in the rebellion. Indeed, he kept himself very much in the background. But the juniors could read between the lines, as it were, and they could see that the detective had enjoyed an adventurous, not to say stormy, school career.

Meanwhile, the meal proceeded merrily. There were no further mishaps, except when Arthur Augustus, laying down the law during a heated debate on Soft versus Stiff Collars, sent his cup of tea flying with a vigorous sweep of his arm.

Shortly after this incident, the door of the study was opened very cautiously, and a fat face insinuated itself through the aperture.

"Buzz off, Baggy!" exclaimed seven voices, in chorus.

"Oh, really, you fellows—I see you're entertaining my old pal, Harvey—I mean, Mr. Shaw!" added Trimble

hastily, as the detective gave him a grim look. "Can you find room for a little one?"

"Certainly—but not for a human barrel!" said Monty Lowther. "Run away and pick flowers!"

Baggy Trimble cast hungry eyes at the plum-cake. It had been a magnificent cake—the best that Dame Taggles had in her shop—but it was now growing small by degrees and beautifully less. Baggy longed to sample some of that cake before it disappeared altogether.

Mr. Shaw noted the fat junior's famished look, and his feelings softened a little towards the fellow who had waylaid him on his arrival, and whom he had cuffed on the School House steps. Perhaps, he reflected, he had acted a little too hastily. True, Trimble had been guilty of eaves-dropping in Wayland; but he had been punished, and the detective was now quite willing to let the matter rest.

"Oh, let him come in!" he said. "That is, if you are all agreeable!"

"Oh—ah—yes!" stuttered Tom Merry. "Trot in, Trimble!" "There's woom on the window-sill, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

Baggy Trimble blinked gratefully at Mr. Harvey Shaw as he rolled into the study. He perched himself on the window-sill, and he asked Manners to pass the plum-cake, and Digby to pass the bread-and-butter, and Lowther to pass the jam—all in the same breath.

Waiting upon Trimble went very much against the grain; but the juniors suffered it gladly, for the sake of their Old Boy guest.

The meal was soon over. Baggy Trimble's colossal appetite hastened the end.

Tom Merry then made up the fire, whilst his chums cleared the table.

Chairs were then drawn up to the fire in a semi-circle, and Mr. Harvey Shaw sat puffing at his pipe in silence for some moments. Presently he spoke.

"I have a little scheme which I wish to propound, my dear boys," he said.

"Oh, good!"

"Fire away, Mr. Shaw!"

"It is a scheme for testing your powers of observation, also your deductive abilities," said the detective. "Briefly, I propose to organise a treasure-hunt."

"Ripping!"

"Hurrah!"

Every face was aglow with enthusiasm. There could be no question as to the popularity of the detective's proposal.

Mr. Shaw smiled.

"It is my intention to hide the sum of ten pounds—in golden sovereigns—somewhere within a radius of three miles from St. Jim's. The finder will keep the spoils."

Baggy Trimble squeezed his plump hands together.

"Those ten quids are mine in advance!" he chortled. "I've the nose of a ferret for hunting out hidden treasure."

"Rais!"

"Ten golden quids!" said Trimble, his eyes glistening. "Why, I shall be able to square up all my debts, and have enough left for a first-rate feed at the tuckshop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The detective joined in the laughter which followed Trimble's remark.

"Of course," he said, "it will be necessary to get the Head's approval before I can go ahead with this scheme. But I am dining with Dr. Holmes this evening, and I have no doubt he will readily give his consent for the treasure-hunt to take place."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The Head's wathah a tewwifyin' personage at times, but he's a good sportsman. He's pwtty certain to give his consent, Mr. Shaw. Assumin' he does, when will the treasure-hunt start?"

"To-morrow," said the detective. "I have already mapped out the details in my mind, and a number of clues will be posted up on the notice-board, for the guidance of the treasure-seekers."

"Oh, good!"

"Do not run away with the idea that it will be a simple matter to locate the ten golden sovereigns," said Mr. Shaw, smiling. "I will endeavour to make the quest as difficult as possible, so that it will bring all your powers of deduction and observation into play."

"That's the idea!" said Tom Merry. "The harder the quest, the greater the fun. After all, a fellow can't expect to put his hand on ten quids without making any effort."

Arthur Augustus gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"The principal assets to a treasure-huntah," he observed, "are tact an' judgment. Without these two qualities a fellow cannot possibly expect to twack down the treasure. You may not think so, Mr. Shaw, but I possess the qualities of tact an' judgment in a vewy marked degwee."

"Indeed!" murmured the detective.

"Yaas, deah man. Alweady, in anticipation, I can heah the ten golden soveveigns jinglin' in my pocket."

"Another cheery optimist," said Monty Lowther. "Trimble's certain of finding the treasure, and Gussy's equally certain, so where do we come in?"

"I am wathah afwaid, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "that you will get left!"

"Well, I hope it will prove an exciting quest," said Mr. Shaw, rising to his feet. "I must be off now. My best thanks to you all for your warm hospitality. If the Head sanctions my treasure-hunt scheme, you may expect to see the list of clues posted up in the morning."

And, with a genial nod to the juniors, the detective took his departure from Study No. 10, leaving that celebrated apartment in a buzz.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy's Brain-Wave!

THE Head's consent to the treasure-hunt was readily forthcoming. He did not raise a single objection. On the contrary, he agreed with Mr. Harvey Shaw that a treasure-hunt would stimulate the reasoning and deductive faculties of the boys at St. Jim's.

Accordingly, the following announcement appeared next morning on the notice-board in the hall:

**"GRAND TREASURE-HUNT—OPEN TO ALL!
THE SUM OF TEN POUNDS
(in golden sovereigns)**

awaits the boy who is successful in elucidating the following clues and following them through to their termination. The 'treasure' is concealed within a radius of three miles of St. Jim's, and the search may commence forthwith. Seven days will be allowed for the quest. Should the treasure not be located by the end of that period the treasure-hunt will be declared void.

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STUDY CAREFULLY THE FOLLOWING CLUES!

1. A foundation. Proceed due south.
2. Honour the brave. 'It's a long lane that has no turning.'
3. Beware of the bull. On with the quest!
4. Two down, one across. Westward Ho!
5. A goodly pile.
6. The room with the green blinds.
7. For the rest of the clues—dig!"

The announcement bore the signature of Mr. Harvey Shaw, and it caused considerable excitement at St. Jim's.

The juniors were elated; the fags were noisily enthusiastic; and even the great men of the Sixth were more than a little intrigued—though they pretended not to be.

Ten golden sovereigns were not to be picked up every day. Even by fellows who were well off a "tenner" was not to be despised. As for those who had fallen on stony places, like the seed in the parable, such a sum would be corn in Egypt.

Quite a crowd of fellows had gathered round the notice-board, studying and discussing the clues, or copying them into their notebooks.

The meaning of Clue No. 1 was patent to everybody. Obviously, "A foundation" must be St. Jim's. Even Baggy Trimble's wooden intellect was able to grasp that fact.

The rest of the clues, however, might have been Chinese puzzles, for all the enlightenment they shed. But the juniors were undaunted. They were glad that Mr. Harvey Shaw had set them a stiff problem.

There was no time for treasure-hunting that morning. The Form-rooms claimed the St. Jim's fellows. But the day was Wednesday, and therefore the afternoon would be at the disposal of the treasure-hunters—with the exception of the few unfortunates who were doomed to detention.

Both in the Shell and the Fourth there was a lot of mind-wandering that morning.

The minds of the juniors were concentrated, not upon the works of P. Vergilius Maro, but upon Mr. Harvey Shaw's treasure-hunt. Some of the fellows were holding lists of clues under the desks and taking sly peeps at them from time to time.

When Baggy Trimble was asked by Mr. Lathom, during the history lesson, to quote the last words of King Charles I. he replied:

"It's a long lane that has no turning!"

A reply which earned Baggy a sharp rap on the knuckles with the Form-master's pointer.

A little later Arthur Augustus D'Arcy imparted the astonishing information that the Magna Charta was signed in the room with the green blinds. For this perversion of an historical fact the swell of St. Jim's was awarded a hundred lines.

The morning dragged out its slow length, and there were many sighs of relief when the welcome word of dismissal came.

Lots of fellows were looking very thoughtful at the dinner-table.

The Terrible Three of the Shell had made up their minds to leave no stone unturned in their quest for the golden treasure.

Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth were equally determined. So also were Figgins & Co. of the New House. The treasure-hunt, in fact, would resolve itself into a keen competition between the rival factions.

Dick Julian of the Fourth was looking especially thoughtful. Julian happened to be hard up against it at the moment. He was passing through a very lean period, and the ten golden sovereigns—if only he could locate them—would be like manna from the skies.

Julian intended to set off, after dinner, on his lonesome in quest of the treasure. The majority of the fellows were going to work in parties, and share the spoils if they proved successful.

Another thoughtful face at the dinner-table was the fat and flabby countenance of Baggy Trimble. Presently a smile overspread Baggy's face, and he hurried through his dinner at express speed, bolting it so quickly that he was sharply rebuked by Mr. Railton.

"Trimble," rapped the Form master, "do not swallow your food in that disgusting manner. You will get severe indigestion."

Baggy slowed down a little after that. Even so, he ate at such a rate that none of his scholofellows could keep pace with him.

As soon as the meal was over, and the fellows swarmed out into the quadrangle, Baggy Trimble hurried out of gates.

"Hallo, Trimble means to lose no time!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "He's hot on the trail of the giddy treasure!"

"He's going the wrong way," said Talbot, laughing. "Clue number one says, 'Proceed due south,' which is towards Rylcombe. Baggy's heading for Wayland, by the look of it."

"Baggy's bump of direction is a bit groggy," said Tom Merry. "It would take him a lifetime to find the treasure."

"And then it would only be by a lucky accident!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly chump!" snorted Manners. "Fancy going the wrong way to start off with! Shall we call him back?"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"If the fat duffer doesn't know the points of the compass I don't see why we should take him by the hand and lead him the right way!" he growled. "Let him get on with it!"

And Baggy Trimble got on with it—rolling as rapidly as he could roll in the direction of Wayland.

He was not taking the direction indicated in Clue No. 1. But there was method in Baggy's madness. He was going to Wayland, not in the hope of locating the treasure there, but in order to interview Mr. Harvey Shaw, at that gentleman's hotel.

Baggy's eyes were gleaming as he hurried along. He had put on his thinking-cap during dinner, and a brilliant brain-wave had occurred to him.

Possibly that brain-wave would seem less brilliant after the interview with Mr. Shaw. Possibly Baggy would be sorry he ever had such a brain-wave. But he was not a far-sighted youth.

It was the detective himself, and his tone was curt.

"Y-e-es, sir. I should like to have a private talk with you, if you don't mind."

For an old and esteemed pal, Trimble's tone was very fawning and deferential. The manservant put his hand over his lips to hide a grin.

"I can give you two minutes," said Mr. Shaw. "Come into the smoke-room."

Baggy followed the detective in some trepidation. He had not expected such a frigid reception. True, Mr. Shaw had rolled him down the School House steps on the previous day, but he had subsequently treated the fat junior with kindness. Indeed, it was at the detective's suggestion that Baggy had secured a place at the festive board in Study No. 10.

However, no doubt Mr. Shaw would become more friendly when Baggy's bright brain-wave was put before him. So Trimble thought, anyway.

The two had the smoke-room to themselves. It was a spacious room, exquisitely furnished in the Jacobean style.

Mr. Shaw motioned Baggy Trimble to a chair.

"Now, what is it?" he asked. "I hope you have not called in order to waste my time on some frivolous matter, Trimble."

"Nunno, sir—not at all, sir. The—the fact is, I've got a little proposal to put before you, sir. It's about the treasure-hunt."

The detective frowned.

"I cannot discuss that," he said. "It would not be fair to your schoolfellows."

"Oh, really, sir—"

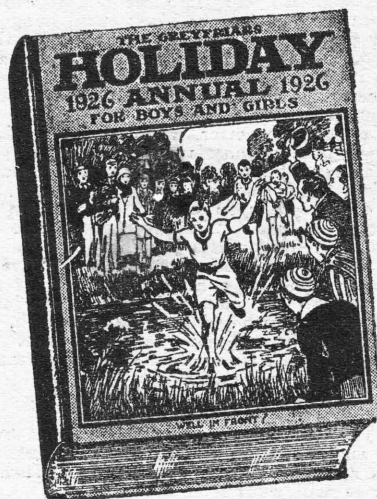
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The unaccustomed exercise undoubtedly did Trimble good. His cheeks were glowing when he arrived at the little market town.

The old-fashioned hotel, the George and Dragon, was situated at the far end of the High Street.

Baggy Trimble halted at the hotel entrance, pumping in breath after his long walk. Then he rang the bell, and a manservant appeared.

"I want to see Mr. Harvey Shaw," said Baggy.

The manservant looked dubious.

"Buck up!" said the fat junior impatiently. "It's jolly urgent!"

"Hem! Have you a card, sir?"

"No; but I'm an old pal of Mr. Shaw," said Baggy confidently. "I've helped him with a lot of his detective cases, you know. Do you remember the Case of the Stolen Rabbit Pie? No? My hat, what awful ignorance! Don't you ever read a newspaper, man? Then there was the Case of the Kidnapped Cook. I had a hand in that, too—I don't mean in kidnapping the cook, but in solving the mystery. My old pal Harvey admitted that most of the credit was due to me. Here, I say— What are you shutting the door for?"

The manservant paused in the act of shutting Baggy out.

"Your business with Mr. Shaw can't be very urgent, or you wouldn't stand there chattering like a parrot," he said. "Mr. Shaw gave instructions that he wasn't to be disturbed, unless it was something very special."

"But this is very special!" protested Baggy. "I must insist on seeing my old pal Harvey—I—I mean, Mr. Shaw," added the fat junior hastily as an athletic form loomed up in the lounge.

"You wish to see me, Trimble?"

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Shaw; and he crossed to the door and held it open for his visitor to pass out.

"Hold on, sir!" said Baggy, rising up from his chair. "I sha'n't detain you a moment. I merely want to know where you have hidden the treasure."

"What-a-at!"

The detective could scarcely believe his ears. Trimble's audacious remark almost took his breath away.

"Tell me where you've hidden the ten golden sovereigns, sir," went on Baggy, "and then—"

Trimble paused. The expression on Mr. Shaw's face was truly terrifying.

"Yes, and then what?" jerked the detective.

"I'll go and get the quids, and hand five back to you, sir," said Trimble, anxious to placate the detective by hurriedly explaining his little brain-wave. "It's your money that's hidden, sir, I believe? Well, you don't want to squander ten pounds in that silly way. If you'll agree to go halves with the treasure, you'll be getting half your outlay back—see? You'll be able to put a fiver back in your own pocket instead of squandering the whole lot. Do you get me, sir? It's a topping idea, isn't it?"

There was an awful pause.

The detective bestowed a wilting look upon Baggy Trimble. If looks could have killed, the Falstaff of the Fourth would have straightway expired on the carpet of the smoke-room.

"You—you fat rascal!" ejaculated Mr. Shaw at last. "I have never heard of such impudence—such brazen audacity!"

Baggy Trimble blinked at the detective in alarm.

"Oh, really, sir! I—I hope I haven't given any offence. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 937.

I wouldn't offend you for worlds, sir. I made you a very sporting offer—"

"Enough!" said the detective sternly.

He pressed a bell, and the manservant appeared.

"Show this young rascal off the premises, James," said Mr. Shaw. "You have my permission to put your boot behind him!"

James grinned. It occurred to him that dear old pals did not usually part company in so drastic a manner.

"Come on!" he said, grasping Trimble by the collar and hustling him to the door.

"Ow! Leggo, you beast! I'll report you for this! I'll speak to the proprietor! Yow-ow-ow! Yarooooop!"

With a series of well-timed kicks the manservant dribbled Baggy Trimble through the lounge. Then he bestowed a parting kick, which sent the fat junior floundering down the front steps of the hotel. Baggy alighted at the foot of the steps with a bump which shook every bone in his body. He felt as if a whole series of earthquakes had happened at once.

After an interval Baggy picked himself up, and limped painfully back to St. Jim's, feeling that brain-waves were not worth having, and that life was not worth living.

CHAPTER 4.

Three on the Trail!

"NOW for the jolly old treasure!"

Monty Lowther spoke cheerily.

The Terrible Three, after seeing Baggy Trimble roll out of gates and disappear in the direction of Wayland, had gone into the building to fetch their rain-coats; for an ominous black cloud hung in the sky. And now the famous trio was prepared for the great treasure quest. Mr. Harvey Shaw had set them a pretty problem; but if the best brains in the School House couldn't solve it, certainly no other brains could. That was the opinion Manners expressed, anyway.

Taggles, the porter, was hovering in the doorway of his lodge when the juniors proceeded out of gates.

"Treasure-huntin', young gents?" grinned Taggles.

Tom Merry nodded.

"We're going in search of the ten golden quidlets, Taggy," he said. "And we hope to come trotting in at tea-time with our pockets jingling."

"Rather!" said Monty Lowther. "I've got the nose of a bloodhound for a hidden treasure. If these fellows will only follow my lead, and trust to my judgment, we shall find the jimmy-o'-goblins easily enough. And we won't forget to tip our hard-working porter. If we find the tinner, I think we shall be able to spare a ha'penny apiece for Taggles—eh, you fellows?"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Taggles laughed, too.

"The hods against you findin' that treasure," he said, "is an 'undred to one. I know Mr. Arvey Shaw of old. 'E's a cool customer, as ever was! Them ten golden sufferings will want some findin'!"

"Are you going to join in the treasure hunt, Taggy?" asked Manners.

Taggles shook his head.

"I can't leave my dooties," he said. "Otherwise, I'd get on the track of them sufferings fast enough. I've studied the clues, an' they're as clear as daylight to me. But I ain't lettin' on. You'll 'ave to get your own intellecks to work, young gents. I wish you luck, but, as I says, the hods are an 'undred to one against you findin' that treasure."

"What I like about Taggles," said Lowther, "is the way he inspires a fellow with hope and encouragement."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's your spades, young gents?" asked Taggles.

"Spades?" echoed Tom Merry.

"Yes. You can't find the treasure unless you takes spades with you. Wot does Clue Number Seven say? For the rest of the clues—dig.' An' 'ow can you dig without spades, I should like to know?"

"My hat!" said Manners. "Taggy is quite right, you fellows. We shall have to take spades."

"You can borrow three from the woodshed, so long as you're careful to return 'em," said Taggles graciously.

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors equipped themselves with spades, and they looked very businesslike as they marched out of gates.

They halted for a moment in the roadway.

"Let's make sure that we're starting right," said Tom Merry. "Clue Number One is 'A Foundation.' Are you both agreed that that means St. Jim's?"

Manners and Lowther nodded. They could not be absolutely certain, of course. There were several meanings to the word Foundation; but the juniors believed that what Mr. Harvey Shaw had in mind when he wrote the clue was

an endowed building. And St. Jim's was an endowed building. Besides, it was only natural that St. Jim's should be the starting-point for the treasure-hunt.

"Proceed due south," murmured Tom Merry. "That's towards Rylcombe, isn't it?"

"Don't ask me," said Lowther. "I'm not a weather-vane!"

"Fathead! You know jolly well that Rylcombe lies due south."

"Then it's the southern trail we strike," said Monty. "Come on!"

The juniors set off at a brisk pace. Other fellows were swarming out of gates by this time, to take part in the treasure-hunt. Figgins & Co. of the New House halted for a consultation in the roadway, just as the Terrible Three had done. And then Jack Blake and Herries and D'Arcy came on the scene. Herries, despite the protests of his chums, had brought his bulldog Towser to join in the treasure-hunt. Herries' belief in Towser's tracking abilities was almost touching. He declared that old Towser would make straight for the spot where the treasure was hidden, and scratch up the earth, and locate the golden sovereigns. Blake and D'Arcy were not quite so sanguine. As a matter of fact, Towser was already straining at his lead, in the endeavour to take a northerly direction—which was all wrong!

Redfern and Lawrence and Owen came into view, carrying spades. Then came George Alfred Grundy, with his two faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn.

Grundy & Co. were equipped as if they were going on a road-mending expedition. They carried not only spades, but picks and lanterns. Evidently they anticipated having to do some digging after dusk.

Dick Julian came strolling out of gates by himself, with his hands deep in his pockets and a thoughtful expression on his face. His mind was busy wrestling with the clues.

A constant stream of fellows seemed to be pouring out of gates. But Tom Merry & Co., getting well into their stride, were soon out of sight of the others.

Half-way to the village they encountered Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School. The Grammarian stopped and stared.

"What's the little game?" he asked, glancing at the spades which the Terrible Three carried. "Is it a burial or an exhumation?"

"An exhumation," said Lowther cheerily. "We're going to unearth a giddy treasure—ten golden sovereigns, to be precise."

"My hat!"

The juniors explained that an Old Boy of St. Jim's had organised a treasure-hunt; and that somewhere, within a radius of three miles of St. Jim's, ten golden sovereigns lay concealed.

"Is this treasure-hunt a St. Jim's affair, or is it open to all comers?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Purely a St. Jim's affair," said Manners.

"But supposing an outsider was to find the treasure?"

"He couldn't," said Tom Merry. "He wouldn't have the clues."

"He might stumble across the quidlets by a lucky chance."

"Good luck to him if he did. But the chances of the treasure being found by a lucky accident are about a million to one against."

"Well, I wish you fellows luck," said Gordon Gay. "We shall have to get one of our Old Boys to organise a treasure-hunt at the Grammar School. It's great sport. Cheerio!"

Tom Merry & Co. nodded cheerily to Gordon Gay and went on their way. They walked abreast, with their spades at the slope, and they reached the village of Rylcombe in record time.

"Clue Number Two," said Tom Merry, "is a bit of a poser. 'Honour the Brave.' Wonder what that means?"

"If we keep our peepers open," said Manners, "we'll soon find out."

They slackened their pace, and proceeded slowly down the village street, keeping a keen look-out right and left. But they saw nothing which seemed to have any bearing on Clue No. 2.

It was not until they reached the far end of the village that they made a discovery. Then Tom Merry gave a shout.

"Got it!"

Manners and Lowther looked up eagerly.

"There we are!" said Tom. "'Honour the Brave.'"

And he pointed to the Rylcombe War Memorial, a dignified pillar of marble, erected on a grassy plot of ground, at the junction of four cross-roads.

"Good!" said Manners, clapping his chum on the back.

"We're on the right track, Tommy."

The juniors stepped up to the memorial, and stood before it in silence for a moment, with bared heads. They looked at the scroll of names of Rylcombe's honoured dead, and their thoughts were switched back temporarily to the dark and terrible days of the Great War.

Presently they stepped back, replacing their caps.

"Now," said Tom Merry, consulting his list of clues, "the

question is, which way? We've got four roads to choose from."

"And the one we've got to take," said Lowther, "is the long lane that has no turning."

"That must be the lane leading to the Manor Farm," said Manners. "There's no turning to that lane. It comes to a dead end."

"Fall in and follow me!" said Monty Lowther. "The jolly old clues are beginning to unravel themselves. We're on the right track, and the treasure's getting nearer every minute. We're getting 'warm,' as we used to say when we played hide-and-peek in our nursery days."

The Terrible Three took the long, grassy lane which led to the farm. They were feeling very pleased with themselves. True, they had not been called up to do any deep deduction, so far. At the same time, they were on the right track, and that was cheering.

Rain began to fall, first in a gentle patter, and presently in a drenching deluge. The Clerk of the Weather seemed determined to frown upon the treasure-hunt.

Tom Merry & Co. turned up the collars of their raincoats and tramped on—damped in one sense, but not in the other.

"There's ten pounds' reward waiting for us at the end of the trail, anyway," said Tom Merry, taking another glance over his shoulder. "Wonder where the other fellows have got to?"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"We needn't worry about them," he said. "I expect Towser has led Blake & Co. on a wild-goose chase, miles away from the right track. As for Figgins & Co., they'll be stumped over the second clue. There are no brains in the New House. They'll be mooning about in Rylcombe, straining their feeble intellects to find out what 'Honour the Brave' means!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As for Grundy & Co.," Lowther went on, "you can safely trust old Grundy to make a hash of things. He'll be leading Wilkins and Gunn a merry dance! I can just picture them wandering about on the downs, soaked to the skin, with old Grundy wanting to dig up every mole-hill he sees."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fellow we've got to fear," said Tom Merry, "is Dick Julian. He's not taking part in this treasure-hunt for the benefit of his health. He's after the shekels. Julian's a cute



St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 21. HARRY MANNERS, of the Shell.

TO Harry Manners of the Shell
You need no introduction;
He plays his part, and plays
it well,

In many a "rag" and ruction.
He is a member of the "Co."
That's famed the wide world over,
From Baltimore to Borneo,
From Adelatde to Dover!

He differs from his chosen chums,
Though quite devoid of vanity;
He does not take whatever comes
With quite the same urbanity.
He is inclined to grouse a bit
When things aren't to his liking;
By contrast, Monty Lowther's wit
And cheeriness are striking.

But Manners is a solid sort,
For all his growls and grumbles;
He shines at every form of sport,
He joins in rough-and-tumbles.
He's always at his comrades' side
When foes are to be smitten;
His courage cannot be denied,
He is a true-bred Briton.



HARRY MANNERS,
The St. Jim's Amateur Photographer.

He finds a hundred useful ways
To occupy his leisure;
But on the bright and sunny days
Photography's his pleasure.
He takes the most delightful
"snaps"
Wherever he may wander;
While Cardew, and the lazier chaps,
Their hours in slumber squander.

He has a studious turn of mind,
And books he owns in plenty;
On rainy afternoons you'll find
Old Manners reading Henty.
I think he knows by heart the names
That fill the Football Annuals;
And all the rules of all the games
In all the sporting manuals!

Good luck to Manners of the Shell!
A cheer for him we'll bellow;
All loyal GEMITES wish him well,
For he's a sterling fellow.
He's won a place in every heart,
And may he long continue
To play a schoolboy hero's part
With heart and nerve and sinew!

NEXT WEEK:—GEORGE DARRELL, VI Form Prefect.

From time to time they glanced back over their shoulders, to see if they were being followed. But there was nobody in sight. Apparently the rest of the treasure-hunters had not found it such a simple matter to unravel the clues.

"Mr. Shaw was right when he called this a long lane," said Manners, at length. "It doesn't seem as if we shall ever come to the end of it."

"It goes on for nearly two miles," said Tom Merry. "Last time we had a paper-chase I was one of the hares, and we took this lane. That's how I remember."

"We shall be like drowned rats by the time we get to the Manor Farm," grunted Manners, losing something of his former cheerfulness.

"Never mind the weather!" said Monty Lowther, squelching through the sodden grass.

"Whether the weather is cold,
Whether the weather is hot,
We must weather whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not!"

fellow, and he's thorough. When he takes a thing up he never drops it—"

"Unless it's a red-hot brick," suggested Lowther. "Ass! He never drops it, but sticks it out until he has seen it through. Julian's going to be our most dangerous rival."

"Next to our noble selves, I'd like him to bag the treasure," said Manners. "He's hard up—fairly up against it, in fact. He's had no end of a fight lately against the giddy slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. I offered to pay his footer sub for him, when I saw how things were, but he wouldn't have it. Poor, but proud, you know."

"Tell you what," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "When we find the treasure—"

"If we find it," corrected Manners. "When we find it," repeated Tom firmly. "If you fellows are agreeable, let's send half the spoils to Julian, anonymously."

"But he'll never accept it."

"He'll have to, if he doesn't know whom to return it to. And a fiver will be corn in Egypt to him just now."

"Of course," agreed Manners. "But you're going a bit too fast, Tommy, old man! You're counting your chicks before they're hatched. We haven't found the treasure yet!"

The juniors plodded on through the driving rain. They had enjoyed their treasure-hunt up till now, but the elements were beginning to take the gilt off the gingerbread, so to speak.

When the Manor Farm at last came in sight Tom Merry proposed a halt at the farmhouse with the object of having tea and drying their clothes. The proposal was seconded by Monty Lowther and carried unanimously by the trio. And three soaked and streaming treasure-hunters were presently seated before the old-fashioned fireplace of the farmhouse, while the farmer's wife bustled about to prepare an appetising spread.

CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Shaw's Little Joke!

"CHEERY!" said Monty Lowther. The Terrible Three, fortified by an excellent tea at the farmhouse, stepped out into the open again to renew their quest for the treasure. They had lingered rather longer than they had intended in the old farmhouse. The cheering warmth of the blazing log-fire and the amiable chatter of the farmer's wife had held them captive. Moreover, their clothes had been a long time drying.

Really, they need not have troubled to dry their clothes at all; for when they emerged from the farmhouse it was to find the rain coming down by the bucketful.

Darkness had descended with premature suddenness. The countryside lay under a pall of blackness. It was raining in torrents, and it was blowing half a gale. And Monty Lowther, in his humorous way, had summed up the situation with the word "Cheery!"

It was not cheery. It was anything but cheery. By contrast with the snug cosiness of the farmhouse, it was awful!

"Some hopes of tracking down the treasure in this!" growled Manners. "Best thing we can do is to give it up for this afternoon and get back to St. Jim's."

"What!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Give it up when we're hot on the trail? That sort of thing's awfully feeble!"

"It might be feeble, but it's commonsense," said Manners. "Dash it all, we can't go blundering about the country in this darkness!"

"Our eyes will get used to it presently. We ought to have brought lanterns. I thought Grundy was a potty idiot when I saw him carrying a lantern; but it was a sensible move on his part, after all."

"They'll lend us lanterns at the farm," said Lowther. "I agree with you, Tommy, that it would be feeble to throw up the sponge now that we've come all this way."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Manners. "Never mind me!"

Of the three chums Manners was always the most easily discouraged. Monty Lowther's buoyant optimism would have taken him through a trackless wilderness with a smile on his lips, and Tom Merry's resolute determination to see a thing through, no matter at what cost, was well in evidence now.

There was every excuse, however, for Harry Manners being a little discouraged. Clammy drops of rain were trickling down his back, and the wind whisked off his school cap and sent it whirling into the darkness. In retrieving it, Manners went sprawling into a muddy puddle. Such discomforts were enough to discourage anybody but an optimist like Lowther and a philosopher like Tom Merry.

By a majority of two to one, it was proposed to pursue the treasure quest to the bitter—or rather, joyful—end.

Lanterns were readily loaned to the juniors by the farmer's wife; and the lights, screened from the wind by thick glass, were a great asset to the treasure-hunters.

Tom Merry & Co. were confident that they had interpreted the clues aright. The long lane that had no turning was obviously the lane leading to the Manor Farm, and Clue No. 3—"Beware of the Bull!"—was confirmation of this. For those very words appeared on a gate at the end of the lane.

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"The bull won't worry us now," said Tom Merry. "He's shut up for the night. Now, we've got to cross his meadow."

"How do you know?" asked Manners.

"Because it's the only possible way we can take without retracing our steps. And it's hardly likely that Mr. Shaw would lead us to the Manor Farm and then make us fag all the way back into Rylcombe."

Manners gave a snort.

"I'll have something to say to Mr. Shaw when I see him again!" he growled. "He's got a lot to answer for! This beastly rain keeps trickling down my back!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Blame the Clerk of the Weather—not Mr. Shaw," he said. "Come on!"

Tom pushed open the gate of the bull's meadow with his spade and the trio passed through.

There was a footpath across the meadow, and the juniors slipped and squelched their way along it. In some places the mud came up over their shoes.

Manners grumbled and Lowther cracked jokes and Tom Merry forged ahead, leading the way.

"Clue Number Four next," said Tom. "Two down, one across—whatever that may mean."

"Sounds like a Cross Word Puzzle!" said Lowther.

And Manners, floundering in the mud, breathed a malison on Mr. Harvey Shaw and all his works.

The juniors kept straight on, keeping their eyes open for anything which might suggest a solution to Clue No. 4. They saw plenty of mud; indeed, they wallowed in a veritable quagmire of mud; but they failed to see anything which linked up in any way with the clue.

They crossed the bull's meadow and the meadow farther on and the meadow beyond that. They were miles away from the road, and the conditions were not ideal for a cross-country jaunt.

Even Tom Merry and Monty Lowther became a little less cheerful after a time. The rain pelted down harder than ever, and the wind blew with such violence that the juniors had to shout in order to make themselves heard.

"We're on the wrong track!" grumbled Manners.

"We can't be," said Tom Merry.

"But we are!"

Tom Merry halted.

"Look here, I've figured it out—" he began.

"And so have I!" retorted Manners. "I've figured it out that we're a pack of born idiots to come on a wild-goose chase like this. I don't mind playing Jack o' Lantern on a fine night, with the moon shining, but when it comes to wandering aimlessly across muddy fields on a dark and stormy night, I'm a conscientious objector!"

"We're not wandering aimlessly, fathead! We're after the treasure!"

Manners laughed mirthlessly.

"We sha'n't find the treasure," he said. "But I'll tell you what we shall find. We'll find ourselves in the sanny, nursing influenza colds—or worse!"

"Nice, cheerful sort of chap, old Manners!" said Monty Lowther. "He's going to be an undertaker when he grows up. Lead on, Tommy! And we'll wallow in father's footsteps."

Tom Merry bestowed a glare upon Manners in the light of the lanterns and pressed on.

Manners was certainly proving a wet blanket; but then, the conditions were enough to fray the temper of the most placid individual.

"Let's chuck this fool game!" said Manners, when another meadow had been traversed, and each of the juniors had experienced a tumble in the mud, and two of the lights had gone out in spite of the protecting glass of the lanterns.

"Does anybody know where we are?"

Tom Merry peered ahead rather anxiously.

"Why, yes!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Look! There's the river! We're close to where the Rhyl rises."

"Then we're not lost," said Lowther, "which is cause for rejoicing. A tramp of a mile and a half will bring us to St. Jim's."

"Hold on a minute!" Tom Merry's tone was excited. "I've discovered the meaning of Clue Number Four!"

"Eh?"

"Two down—one across!" exclaimed Tom triumphantly. "Can't you fellows see what that refers to?"

"Dashed if I can!" growled Manners.

"It refers to those trees," said Tom Merry, pointing. "Three of them were blown down in a gale a few nights ago. Two are on the ground and one has been hurled across the river. Two down, one across—see?"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Lowther. "You're right, Tommy! This is the reward of patient, plodding persistence! Our goal is in sight—well, almost."



Knox stood on the threshold of his study, staring blankly at the havoc Trimble had wrought. "I—I say, Knox," stammered Trimble, dropping the fishing rod as if it were red hot. "I——" "You fat villain!" roared the prefect. "What have you been doing to my study?" (See Chapter 7.)

The unravelling of Clue No. 4 cheered the juniors immensely. Even Manners brightened up—though he was far from sharing Lowther's view that their goal was in sight. Manners had an idea that they were still a long way from locating the hidden treasure.

"Westward Ho!" said Tom Merry, quoting from the list of clues. "That will take us along the towing-path, and we shall eventually come across Clue Number Five—a goodly pile. Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry broke off suddenly. A look of blank dismay came over his face.

"What's up, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

"We've been spoofed!" said Tom, with a rueful laugh.

"Mr. Shaw has given us a wild-goose chase!"

"I knew it!" groaned Manners.

"Westward Ho takes us back to our starting-point—St. Jim's!" went on Tom Merry. "Clue Number Five is 'A goodly pile,' and that's exactly the same as Clue Number One—'A Foundation.' They both mean St. Jim's."

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle.

"We've been walking in a square," he said. "The first clue took us due south; the second clue took us east; the third, north; and now we've got to go west, which brings us back to our starting-place."

The juniors groaned in an unhappy chorus.

There could be no doubt that Monty Lowther was right.

Mr. Harvey Shaw—probably with the intention of making the treasure-hunt more involved—had introduced five clues which were not at all necessary. They were, in fact, merely a "blind." The detective evidently had a keen sense of humour; but there were at least three persons who failed to see the humorous side of the situation just then. Those three were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. They stood blinking at each other in the rays of the solitary lantern, and their feelings towards Mr. Harvey Shaw were almost homicidal.

"Spoofed!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Dished and done!" muttered Lowther.

"We've tramped all round the world for nothing!" growled Manners. "A precious set of duffers we are, and no error! Mr. Shaw has led us up the garden, and we walked blindly into his trap."

"I don't suppose we're the only ones," said Tom Merry consolingly. "What about Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co., and the others? I'm willing to wager that they've fallen into the same trap. We shall hear some tales of woe in the

Common-room this evening, when all the giddy treasure-hunters return."

"Rather!" assented Monty Lowther. "And now we've got to start all over again to find the treasure."

"Not to-night!" said Manners firmly. "You don't catch me budging out of the study, once we get back. I've had my fill of treasure-hunting for to-day. We'll take up the trail again to-morrow—if we're lucky enough to be still alive! Atishooo!"

Manners broke off with a violent sneeze.

"Don't go catching a chill, for goodness' sake!" said Tom Merry anxiously.

"How can I help it, when I'm soaked to the blessed skin?"

"Shoo! 'Shum!"

"Oh, come on!" said Lowther. "It's simply asking for trouble, standing about like this. Let's cut along to St. Jim's. Hallo! There goes your lantern, Tommy! No use singing 'Show Me the Way to Go Home!'"

The last of the lantern-lights was suddenly extinguished, and the juniors had to make their way along the towing-path in opaque darkness.

Manners, like the cheery optimist he was, predicted that the day's misadventures would end in somebody tumbling head-first into the river. Happily, however, no such calamity came to pass.

Glad indeed were the treasure-hunters to see the friendly lights of St. Jim's. Gladder still were they when they splashed in hot baths, and changed into dry clothes, and sought the cheery warmth of their study fire.

In both senses of the term, the afternoon treasure quest of the Terrible Three had been a pronounced "wash-out"!

CHAPTER 8.

The Return of the Wanderers!

"**W**E'RE the first in," said Tom Merry. "It's not so late as I thought. We seemed to be hours and hours, floundering across those fields. And that last lap, along the towing-path, without a light to guide us, seemed to take an eternity. But it wants an hour to locking-up, yet."

The Terrible Three had quickly recovered their spirits. In Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, all was merry and bright. A cheerful fire blazed and crackled in the grate; the curtains had been drawn, and the famous Co. were regaling themselves with cocoa and cake.

The rain lashed against the window unceasingly; and the fury of the gale made itself heard as it shrieked around the old towers and turrets of St. Jim's.

"Pity the other fellows, if they're going through what we did!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"They're getting it worse than we did," he said. "It was only a common-or-garden storm that we were out in. It's a blessed cyclone now!"

Manners sipped his cocoa contentedly.

"The treasure won't be found to-day, that's certain," he said. "Everybody will tumble into Mr. Shaw's trap, same as ourselves. There will be some wailings and lamentations when the giddy wanderers return."

"Poor old Gussy!" said Monty Lowther softly. "He's the fellow I'm sorry for. His togs will be uttably wuined by this beastly wain, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go down to the hall and wait for the chaps to come in," said Tom Merry.

"All serene!"

"Count me out!" said Manners. "I'm not budging from the armchair. I believe the 'flu germ's got hold of me, and I'm going to stay here and drown him in boiling cocoa."

And Manners poured himself out another cup of the steaming beverage, while Tom Merry and Lowther went down into the hall.

"Here they come!" said Lowther.

There were sounds of squelching footsteps in the quadrangle. The footsteps seemed slow and weary, like those of the ploughman homeward plodding his weary way. Presently the familiar voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy became audible.

"This wotten wain has completely wuined my twousahs, deah boys! An' I lost my toppah when we were comin' along the townin'-path. Did you see anythin' of my toppah, Blake?"

"Br-r-r!" growled Jack Blake.

"Did you see anythin' of my toppah, Hewwies?"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"I believe that bwute of a bulldog got hold of it when the wind blew it off," said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "Towsah has no respect whatevah for a fellow's toppah. I weward him as a low bwute!"

"Bow-wow!" barked Towser.

The chums of the Fourth were returning from their abortive treasure-hunt. They did not appear to be in the happiest of humours, as they came squelching up the School House steps.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, glowing in their dry garments, greeted the Fourth-Formers cheerily.

"Hallo! You fellows seem a trifle damp!" said Tom.

"We're soaked!" gasped Blake, shaking himself like a drenched terrier.

"Dwenched to the skin!" groaned Arthur Augustus, with the rain streaming down his classical features.

"This is the end of a perfect day—I don't think!" growled Herries. "Old Towser seems to have enjoyed it; but nobody else has."

Monty Lowther grinned at the dripping trio.

"Where's the treasure?" he inquired innocently.

"Eh?"

"Surely the ten golden sovereigns ought to compensate you for getting a trifle damp?"

"Ass!" snorted Blake. "We've not found the ten golden sovereigns. All we found was that our legs had been pulled by Mr. Shaw."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We solved the first five clues," growled Blake, "and they've brought us back to St. Jim's, so we're no forrarder than when we started! How did you fellows get on?"

"Exactly the same as yourselves, only we started earlier, and therefore got in earlier," said Tom Merry. "Where's Digby? Hasn't he been with you?"

"He wouldn't come," explained Blake. "He preferred to sit and frowst in the study all the afternoon."

"Isn't he keen on the treasure-hunt?"

"Oh, I believe he's keen enough. But he said it looked like rain, and he didn't fancy getting a soaking. So he stayed indoors."

"Digby's the only sensible fellow among the lot of us," said Tom Merry. "He hasn't lost anything by staying in. He's still got as much chance of finding the treasure as any of us."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wish I had followed Dig's example, an' stayed in. But who would have thought it was goin' to wain in towntents, an' blow a gale into the bargain? Gwooooh! I'm wet! An' I've lost my toppah, too! Did you see anythin' of my toppah, Blake?"

Jack Blake gave Arthur Augustus a wilting look.

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"That's the tenth time you've asked me about your blessed old toppah, Gussy. If you ask me again, I'll march you out into the quad and sit you down in a puddle!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy can't get any wetter than he is already," chuckled Monty Lowther. "I should advise you fellows to go and get a hot bath and a change of clobber."

"I've got to shut Towser up, first," said Herries. "Come on, Towser! I reckon you'll be glad to get into a dry kennel, and have some nice juicy bones for supper."

Woof! Woof! Towser, wagging his stumpy tail, barked in joyous anticipation.

Herries went off with his canine treasure, which had signally failed to locate the other treasure. But Towser's failure had not shaken his master's faith in him.

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus disappeared into the building; and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther waited for the rest of the wanderers to return.

A solitary figure, buffeted by the wind, fought his way across the quadrangle, and came slowly up the School House steps. It was Dick Julian. He was wet, and he was weary; and he presented so bedraggled a spectacle, as he came into the hall, that Tom Merry and Lowther could not find it in their hearts to chaff him, as they had chaffed Blake & Co.

"Poor old chap!" said Tom Merry. "You've been through it."

Dick Julian smiled wanly.

"It's been a nightmare, fighting my way home through this storm!" he panted. "I wouldn't mind so much if I had found the treasure. But I haven't!"

"Neither has anybody else," said Lowther. "I suppose you fell into Mr. Shaw's little trap, Julian?"

The Jewish junior nodded.

"Jolly artful of him to put in those meaningless clues," he said. "We've been walking in a square, and finishing up where we started. At least, I have. I suppose you fellows have had the same experience?"

"We have!" said Tom Merry feelingly. "Seen anything of the others, Julian?"

"There are some more fellows just coming in," said Julian. "Grundy & Co., I think. They don't seem wildly happy. I heard Wilkins and Gunn arranging to give Grundy the bumping of his life as soon as they get in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Julian removed his sodden raincoat, and hurried into the building in quest of a bath and a change of attire. Scarcely had he gone when three woebegone figures came staggering into the hall. They were Grundy, and Wilkins, and Gunn.

George Alfred Grundy was looking sullen and defiant. Wilkins and Gunn were looking hostile—almost homicidal. All three were looking wet—decidedly wet.

"See, the conquering heroes come!" said Lowther. "Found the treasure, Grundy?"

Grundy shook himself savagely.

"No, I haven't!" he growled.

Wilkins levelled an accusing forefinger at his chief.

"That frantic idiot," he said, in sulphurous tones, "has led us the very dickens of a dance! We knew he was on the wrong track, but he wouldn't admit it. He's taken us miles and miles—and then some! I don't believe there's a square yard of Sussex we haven't set foot on this afternoon and this evening. We meant to bump the potty ass when we got in, but we're too jolly fagged."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Where on earth did Grundy take you?" he asked.

"Don't ask us!" growled Gunn. "We've been wandering about the country like lost sheep. One place where Grundy insisted on taking us was seven miles away from here—a place called The Bull. It was an inn. Oh, you needn't look startled, Merry; we didn't go inside! But there was a clue which said 'Beware of The Bull,' and Grundy was positive that it meant The Bull public-house!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Monty Lowther.

"I still believe it meant The Bull public-house!" said Grundy, with sullen obstinacy.

"Why, you frabjous duffer!" gasped Tom Merry. "It meant the bull at the Manor Farm!"

"Oh!"

"Has the treasure been found yet?" asked Wilkins.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Then Grundy can jolly well search for it on his own to-morrow!" said the exasperated Wilkins. "I'm fed-up to the teeth with his tomfool notions! No more treasure-hunting for me!"

"Or me!" growled Gunn. "Come on, Wilky! The mere sight of that ass Grundy makes me want to break the Sixth Commandment!"

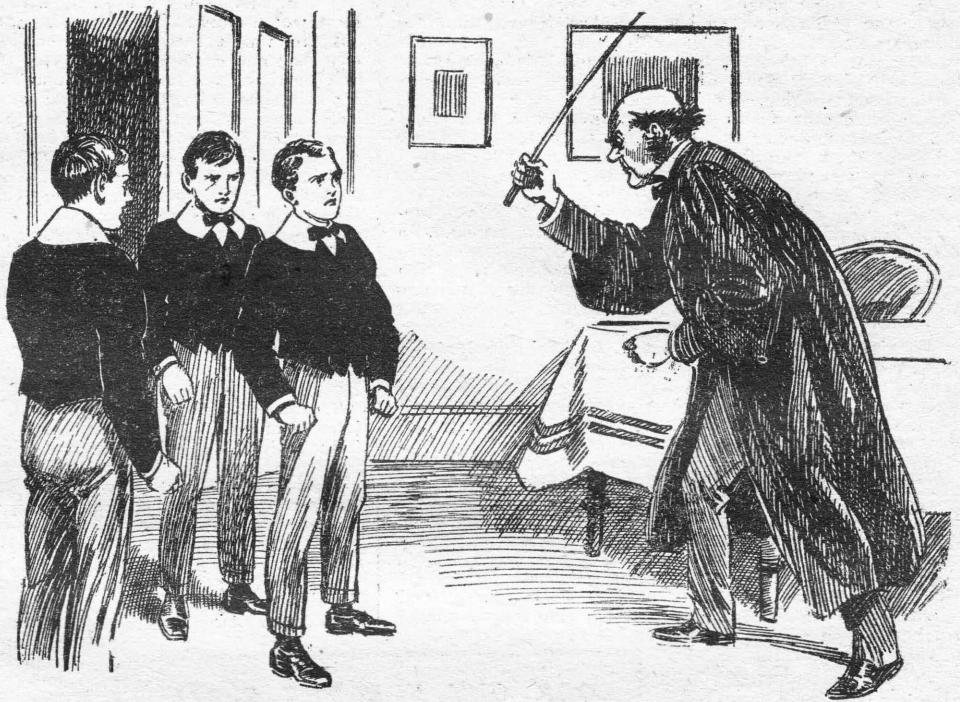
Wilkins and Gunn stamped and squelched their way through the hall. Grundy followed at a more leisurely pace. There was no doubt that the great George Alfred, by misreading the clues, had led his study-mates a merry dance. And there was no doubt that those study-mates were ex-

tremely angry with him in consequence. Burly fellow though he was, Grundy realised that it would be policy to keep out of the way of Wilkins and Gunn for a time.

The remainder of the baffled treasure-hunters came in shortly afterwards. The latest arrivals were Figgins & Co. of the New House.

All were wet; all were weary; all had tales of woe. The great majority of them had fallen into the trap which Mr. Harvey Shaw had prepared.

It was a fortunate thing for Mr. Shaw that he did not visit St. Jim's that evening; for even such a distinguished personage as the Old Boy detective would not have been safe from a bumping at the hands of dozens of disappointed and rain-soaked treasure-seekers!



CHAPTER 7.

A Trap for Trimble!

SHUSH!" Jack Blake whispered the warning.

It was the day following the disastrous experiences of the treasure-hunters, and Blake was at tea in Study No. 6, with Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Digby was not present. He had gone over to Wayland after lessons, and had not yet returned. He had told his chums not to wait tea for him.

The juniors had been deep in discussion concerning the hidden treasure, when Jack Blake's quick ear had caught the sound of a stealthy footstep outside the door.

Blake surmised—correctly, as it happened—that Baggy Trimble, the Paul Pry of the Fourth, had taken up his position outside the door of the study. Baggy was up to his favourite trick of eavesdropping, and Blake had no doubt that the fat junior's ear was glued to the keyhole. Hence his warning "Shush!"

Herries and D'Arcy glanced inquiringly at their chum, and Jack Blake grinned.

"I believe that fat toad Trimble is outside, listening with all his ears," he whispered.

"Bai Jove!"

"He's anxious to pick up some information which may lead to the discovery of the treasure," Blake went on in a low tone. "Well, I don't see why we shouldn't oblige him."

"Weally, Blake—"

"It's all right, Gussy. We're not going to admit Trimble to our secret confab. We're going to lead him up the garden and put him on a false scent. And it will serve him jolly well right for eavesdropping."

Blake winked at his chums, and their grins showed that they understood.

"Now, about this treasure," said Blake, speaking in his natural voice. "I think we've hit the right trail at last—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"It's taken us all day to discover the meaning of Clue No. 6—'The Room With The Green Blinds,'" Blake went on. "But we've solved the giddy conundrum at last. The room with the green blinds is Knox's study."

"Right on the wicket!" said Herries, with a grin.

"Awfully cunning wheeze of Mr. Shaw's, to hide the ten golden quiddlets in a prefect's study," said Blake. "Nobody would think of ransacking a prefect's den for the treasure."

"No, wathah not!"

"Now, the question is," said Blake thoughtfully, "in what part of Knox's study has the loot been hidden? That's what we've got to find out."

"It wouldn't be in an obvious place," said Herries, "or Knox would have spotted it by this time. It's tucked away in some remote corner."

"Pwobably up the chimney," said Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake gave an excited shout.

"There is no treasure here!" stormed Mr. Ratcliff. "I will not tolerate these interruptions. Hold out your hand, Merry!" Tom Merry hesitated. "You hear me, boy!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "You're not my Housemaster, sir," said Tom. "If there's any question of punishment, it's a matter for Mr. Raifton to deal with!" (See chapter 8.)

"Gussy's got it! That's just the place a cunning sleuth would choose—the chimney! There's a niche in Knox's chimney a few feet up, and I expect the ten sovereigns are there, in a sealed packet. It's an ideal hiding-place."

"Gussy, you're a marvel!" said Herries admiringly. "How do you think of these things? Is it inspiration, or—"

"Bwains an' judgment, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus modestly.

"Well, we've solved Mr. Shaw's puzzle at last!" said Blake delightedly. "All we've got to do now is to go along to Knox's study and help ourselves. We won't go yet, in case Knox is at home. We'll wait till the coast is clear."

The juniors stopped talking. Listening intently, they heard a sound of scuttling footsteps in the passage.

Blake darted to the door and opened it a few inches. Peering through the aperture, he was just in time to see the fat figure of Baggy Trimble disappearing from view at the end of the passage.

"It was Trimble, all serene," said Blake, turning to his chums. "He's swallowed the bait, and I believe he's going straight along to Knox's study. I'm afraid he'll be unlucky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fourth chuckled as they resumed their tea.

Meanwhile, Baggy Trimble was hurrying away to the Sixth Form passage.

Baggy's little round eyes were fairly agleam with excitement. He told himself that he was on the trail of the treasure at last!

Up till now, Baggy's treasure-hunting experiences had been disastrous—even more calamitous than the experiences of his schoolfellows the previous day.

Baggy had not bothered about the list of clues. They were so much Greek to him, and he had made no attempt to solve them. He had searched for the treasure without the aid of clues, hoping to stumble upon the ten golden sovereigns by a lucky accident. Baggy was convinced that the treasure was hidden somewhere within the school precincts, and he had been very busy all that day, ransacking studies and box-rooms and lumber-rooms with commendable thoroughness.

Study owners, however, had not taken Baggy's intrusions kindly. They had a rooted objection to their studies being overhauled and turned upside down, and in some cases they had shown their disapproval by planting well-timed kicks behind Baggy Trimble's plump person.

Baggy had been caught in Kildare's study, peering into every nook and corner, and Kildare had cleared him out with an ashplant. A little later, Trimble had been found nosing about in the study belonging to Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts had ejected him with violence, and then dribbled him the length of the Fifth Form passage.

These were only a few of the misadventures which had befallen Baggy during his quest for the treasure. There had been others, and Trimble reflected that he would have earned those ten golden sovereigns by the time he found them—if he ever did find them.

And now, by a lucky chance, Baggy had come into possession of valuable information—as he thought. He had no idea that Blake & Co. had been aware of his presence outside their study, nor did he dream, of course, that the juniors' statements had been made with the deliberate intention of misleading him and sending him on the wrong trail.

"Knox's study!" muttered Baggy, as he hurried along. "That's one of the studies I've not searched. And even if I had, I shouldn't have thought of looking up the chimney. What a cute wheeze of Mr. Shaw's! And how jolly clever of old Gussy to tumble to it! Of course, it's only guess-work on his part. He can't be certain that the treasure's hidden up the chimney. But it's a jolly likely hiding-place, and I'm going along to explore!"

Already, in his mind's eye, Baggy Trimble saw himself in possession of the ten golden sovereigns. Already he could see the gleaming gold coins. Trimble was not likely to see them with any other eye but his mind's eye, but in his mind's eye he saw them very clearly indeed.

The fat junior rolled along the Sixth Form passage and halted outside the door of Knox's study. He tapped on the panels, with an excuse handy in case Knox should be at home.

But Knox was not at home. There was no response to Trimble's tap, so Baggy opened the door and rolled into the study. It was deserted.

Had Trimble taken the trouble to examine the window-blinds he would have observed that they were blue, like most of the window-blinds of the St. Jim's studies. This being the case, "the room with the green blinds" mentioned in the list of clues could not possibly be Knox's study.

But it did not occur to Trimble to examine the blinds. He was bursting with eagerness to examine the chimney.

There was one little drawback to this investigation. A big fire was burning in the grate, and the flames were leaping up the chimney. It would therefore be impossible to explore the chimney without risk of being badly burned.

"I must put that fire out," muttered Trimble. "A pail of water will do the trick."

Baggy quitted the study and hurried along to the end of the passage, where there was a water-tap. There was also a pail handy, and it was the work of a moment to fill it and convey it to Knox's study.

Swish! Swoosh!

With a sweep and a jerk Baggy Trimble discharged the contents of the pail. There was a loud hissing noise as the torrent of water splashed into the flames.

The fire fought manfully for its existence, and for quite a moment the conflict raged, and it looked as if another pail of water would be required. But presently the flames gave up the struggle and petered out. A cloud of black smuts floated across the study.

"Out!" said Trimble triumphantly. "Now I can go ahead."

There was a fishing-rod standing in the corner. It was a handsome and expensive fishing-rod, and Knox of the Sixth would have had a fit if he had seen that rod perverted to the base use of scouring a chimney. But Knox was away—far away, Trimble fondly hoped.

The fat junior knelt in the dusty grate, regardless of his trouser-knees, and thrust the fishing-rod up the chimney. He poked and he prodded, and a large quantity of soot became dislodged and shot down into the grate in a black shower.

Baggy Trimble choked and spluttered as the soot got into his eyes and mouth.

"Gug-gug-gug! Ooooch!"

Baggy had not bargained for that avalanche of soot.

"Why doesn't Knox have his chimney cleaned?" he spluttered.

"It's simply choked up with soot. Grooh! Here comes some more!"

There was a further deluge—and Baggy backed away, coughing and choking, and gouging soot from his eyes. By this time Baggy's face was as black as a nigger minstrel's. By this time, also, the soot had spread far afield. There were sooty deposits on Knox's tablecloth and on Knox's chairs and on Knox's carpet. Judging by the appearance of the hearthrug, it seemed to have been snowing soot.

Trimble found the soot a decided discomfort, since he could scarcely see. He would not have minded so much if something else had come down with the soot—a little packet containing ten golden sovereigns. But there was no sign of such a packet.

"Groooogh!" spluttered Baggy, still frantically gouging the soot from his eyes. "I don't believe the beastly treasure's up the chimney, after all. Still, I'll have another go as soon as I can see out of my eyes."

But Trimble was not destined to have another "go."

There was a quick step in the passage, and the door of Knox's study was opened suddenly—by Knox himself!

The prefect stood on the threshold, staring blankly at the interior of his study. He saw a fat and sooty junior, whom it took him a full minute to recognise; he saw his priceless fishing-rod, smothered from end to end with soot; he saw all his furniture covered with soot as with a garment. It was a case of soot, soot everywhere, and some of the sooty specks were wafted into Knox's face as he stood there.

The expression on Knox's face became positively Hunnish. The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, was nothing to the wrathful eye of Gerald Knox. Not only did his eyes roll, but his brow grew black with fury—and soot.

Baggy Trimble had scrambled to his feet in alarm on hearing the door open. He dropped the fishing-rod with a clatter, and stood blinking apprehensively at the angry prefect.

"I—I say, Knox—"

"You fat villain! What have you been doing in my study?"

What Trimble had been doing was only too apparent. The extinguished fire, the sooty state of the study, and the fishing-rod told their tale only too well.

"You've been ferreting up my chimney!" hooted Knox, without waiting for an answer to his question.

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"What on earth for?"

"The—the treasure!" faltered Trimble.

"What!"

"The ten golden sovereigns that Mr. Shaw hid, you know. They are up your chimney."

"You—you fat young fool!" Knox was almost incoherent. "I've solved all the clues, Knox," explained Trimble, "and this is the room with the green blinds mentioned in Clue No. 6."

"Green blinds?" roared Knox. "My window hasn't got green blinds! They are blue!"

"B-b-blue?" stuttered Baggy in dismay.

"Yes, blue!" thundered Knox. "And you'll be pretty blue by the time I've finished with you! You've smothered my study with soot, you fat rascal!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I—"

Baggy Trimble blinked at the window-blinds and saw that Knox had spoken truly. The blinds were not green, but blue.

Baggy was still blinking at the blinds, when he suddenly became aware that things were happening. Knox, who had been standing on the threshold, as if he had taken root there, had suddenly recovered the power of action. He snatched up an ashplant and strode towards Baggy Trimble.

Whack, whack, whack!

The ashplant fairly sang in the air. And Baggy Trimble sang, too. In fact, he executed a song and dance, and dodged wildly round the study. The lashing ashplant followed him relentlessly.

"Ow! Yow! Yarooooo! Chuck it, Knox! Keep off, and I'll let you go halves with the treasure! I'm certain it's up your chimney somewhere! Yow-ow-ow!"

Knox continued to do great execution with the ashplant, and Baggy Trimble made a wild dart for the door. He fairly streaked away down the Sixth Form passage, where his sooty appearance caused his studymates, Wildrake and Mellish, to start and stare and burst into a peal of laughter.

Baggy Trimble collapsed in a heap on the sofa, panting and gasping. It was not Trimble's lucky day!

CHAPTER 8.
Rough on Ratty !

IT'S either Blake's study, in the Fourth, or Mr. Ratcliff's," Tom Merry spoke thoughtfully.

The Terrible Three had spent a busy day on the track of the treasure; but the ten golden sovereigns were not yet in their possession—nor, indeed, in anybody else's possession.

St. Jim's had been in a state of upheaval that afternoon. Everybody was agreed that the treasure was hidden somewhere on the school premises—doubtless in the room with the green blinds. The puzzle had been to find out which room answered that description. There were a good many rooms at St. Jim's—studies and bed-rooms and box-rooms and other apartments—and the location of the room with the green blinds was not a five-minute task.

Tom Merry & Co. had just returned to their study, after making an exhaustive investigation.

They had discovered that there were only two rooms at St. Jim's which boasted green window-blinds. One was Mr. Ratcliff's study, in the New House; the other was Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage—green blinds being a whim of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's.

The majority of the window-blinds in the school were either yellow or blue. Only two were green—so the search for the treasure was now narrowed down considerably.

"It wouldn't be Blake's study," said Manners. "If Mr. Shaw had hidden the treasure there—or merely the rest of the clues—they would have been spotted by now. Study No. 6 has already been turned inside out and upside-down. Blake told me so."

"Then Ratty's study must be the place," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"The poser is, how are we going to search Ratty's den?" he said. "We can't very well stroll into a master's study and start turning it upside down. And Ratty's not the sort of master who'd give us permission to search his study."

"But we must search it, if we want to get any forrarder," said Lowther. "We must beard the giddy lion in his den, and ask him nicely if he'll let us have a look round."

"And if he refuses?"

"Well, we shall be at a deadlock. Of course, we could search Ratty's study when he's not there—"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Wouldn't do," he said. "You know what old Ratty is. If he came in and caught us, he'd accuse us of burgling his desk, or something of the sort. He's got a nasty, suspicious mind. And, anyway, I don't like the idea of rooting round a master's study when his back's turned."

"Well, if we're going to interview Ratty, now's the time," said Manners briskly. "We mustn't let the grass grow under our feet. Other fellows will be finding out that the room with the green blinds is Ratty's study—if they haven't found out already."

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

And the three chums made their way to Mr. Horace Ratcliff's study in the New House.

In the rival house they encountered Figgins & Co.

"Hallo! What do you School House bouders want?" demanded Figgins.

"We're treasure-hunting," said Tom Merry, with a grin.

"Looking for the room with the green blinds—what?" said Kerr.

"No; we've found it."

"So have we," said Fatty Wynn. "But we haven't found the blessed treasure yet."

"We haven't had a chance to forage for the ten golden quidlets," said Figgins glumly. "The owner of the room with the green blinds refused to let us explore his study."

"Meaning Ratty?" said Tom Merry.

Figgins nodded.

"We found out that there were only two rooms at St. Jim's with green window-blinds," he said. "One was Ratty's study, the other was Blake's. We scouted the idea of the treasure being hidden in Blake's study. If it had been it would have been found by now."

"Just what we were thinking," said Manners.

"Ratty's study must be the place," went on Figgins. "But when we interviewed Ratty after tea, and asked him, very politely, if we could have a look round, he jumped down our throats."

"Nearly bit our heads off, in fact," said Fatty Wynn.

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle. "Then it's not much use our going to Ratty with that same request," he said.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Kerr. "You might have better luck. You're School House chaps, and Ratty isn't so down on you as he is on us. Besides, we've been getting into his black books a good deal lately; and I expect that's why he refused to let us search his study."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Well, we'll go and beard the old buffer in his den," he said. "Nothing venture, nothing have. The worst that can happen to us is a snappy notice to quit."

"Good luck!" said Figgins. "Let us know how you get on."

The Terrible Three passed on to Mr. Ratcliff's study.

It was with a certain amount of trepidation that Tom Merry rapped on the door.

In view of the fate of Figgins & Co., the prospects of the School House chums being allowed to search Mr. Ratcliff's study were not very bright. It was quite on the cards that Mr. Ratcliff would resent this further interruption, and fly into one of his well-known tantrums.

Hence Tom Merry's trepidation. Just as Daniel of old must have quaked when approaching the lion's den, so Tom Merry quaked now. But he quickly pulled himself together as a grating voice called:

"Come in!"

The Terrible Three stepped into the Housemaster's study.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff was seated at his desk, with a frowning brow. He had been very busy preparing some examination papers, containing numerous traps for his unwary pupils. It was a pleasant task; but Mr. Ratcliff had not been able to concentrate upon it properly, because of sundry interruptions.

Ever since tea-time there had been a constant stream of visitors to Mr. Ratcliff's study.

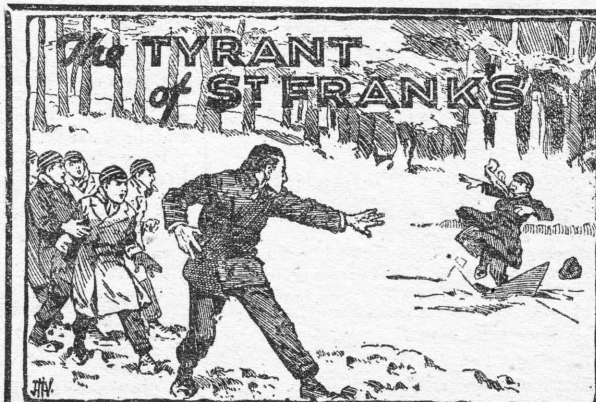
Figgins & Co. had been the first. They had coolly asked Mr. Ratcliff if he had any objection to their searching his study for the treasure, or for clues that would lead to the unearthing of the treasure. Mr. Ratcliff did have an objection—a very strong objection, and he had said so, in tones which had not been very polite for a scholastic gentleman. He had sent Figgins & Co. about their business, and had settled down to work again.

But not for long.

Within ten minutes of the banishment of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn another trio had turned up.

Dick Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had come to the conclusion that the room with the green blinds must be Mr. Ratcliff's study; and they had hurried thither, to proffer the same request that Figgins & Co. had proffered. Mr. Ratcliff had given them a Hunnish glare, and a hundred lines apiece, and marching orders. And Reddy and his chums had retired hurt.

Then came a School House invasion—the invaders being Cardew, Clive, and Levison major. Ralph Reckness Cardew had figured it out that the remaining clues to the whereabouts of the treasure were concealed in Mr. Ratcliff's study. Little dreaming that they had been fore-



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stalled by others, the thums of the Fourth had called upon Mr. Ratcliff, like eager detectives armed with a search warrant.

By this time the constant interruptions had got on Mr. Ratcliff's nerves, and he had chased Cardew and Clive and Levison from his study with a cane.

Mr. Ratcliff was aware, of course, that a treasure hunt was in progress. But he did not imagine for one moment that Mr. Harvey Shaw had hidden the treasure, or any clues bearing upon it, in his study. With all St. Jim's and the surrounding district to select his hiding-place from, it was hardly likely that the detective would choose a Housemaster's study.

If Mr. Ratcliff had really thought that the ten golden sovereigns were concealed somewhere in his study, he would have looked for them. Mr. Ratcliff was addicted to what Byron calls "the old-gentlemanly vice of avarice," and he would not have missed an easy chance of acquiring the sum of ten pounds. The treasure hunt was open to everybody at St. Jim's—masters and boys alike—and if a master chanced to come across the treasure it would be his.

Not that any of the masters were taking an active part in the treasure hunt. It would be far beneath their dignity to ferret into nooks and corners like zealous fags. But there was nothing to prevent a master finding the treasure by a lucky accident; and had the gold coins been hidden in Mr. Ratcliff's study he would certainly have found them—by pure accident, of course!

But the Housemaster was quite certain, in his own mind, that the treasure was not there. And many of the juniors seemed to be equally certain that it was there; for they gave Mr. Ratcliff no peace. Interruptions had followed thick and fast ever since tea.

Mr. Ratcliff suffered from what Monty Lowther described as a "pain in his temper." And when the Terrible Three stepped into Mr. Ratcliff's study they saw that the pain in his temper was more acute than usual.

The Housemaster bestowed the glare of a basilisk upon the trio.

"Well?" he snapped.

Tom Merry coughed.

"Ahem! We—we've come to ask you a favour, sir—"

he began.

"Quite a small favour, sir!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly.

Mr. Ratcliff clutched at a cane which lay conveniently to hand.

"And what is the favour you require of me?" he asked grimly.

"We—we've got reason to believe, sir," stammered Tom Merry, with a dubious glance at the Housemaster's cane, "that Mr. Shaw has hidden some treasure clues—possibly the treasure itself—in your study. This is the room with green blinds, mentioned in Clue No. 6. And if you wouldn't mind us just having a look round, sir—"

"We won't disturb anything, sir," said Manners.

"If we have to shift any of your stuff we'll be careful to put it all back, sir," said Lowther.

Mr. Ratcliff was on his feet, his eyes gleaming.

"This is a plot—a conspiracy on the part of you young rascals to interrupt my work!" he snarled.

Tom Merry flushed.

"Nothing of the kind, sir—"

"Be silent, Merry! Ever since tea-time I have been subjected to a constant stream of interruptions. First Figgins and his friends called upon me, with an audacious request that they should be allowed to search my study. Then Redfern and his friends called, with a similar request. Scarcely had I dismissed them when Cardew and Clive, and Levison called upon me—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three were astonished. They had plumed themselves upon being among the first to discover the room with the green blinds. But it seemed that they were among the last to make that discovery.

"It is monstrous!" snorted Mr. Ratcliff. "It is unheard-of! There is no treasure here—a fact of which you are well aware! It is a plot—a prearranged plot—to cause me annoyance! I will not tolerate these continued interruptions! Hold out your hand, Merry!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"You hear me, Merry?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"You're not my Housemaster, sir," said Tom. "If there's any question of punishment—though we've done nothing to deserve punishment—it's a matter for Mr. Raiton to deal with."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed like live coals.

"You are impertinent, Merry!" he thundered. "You will obey my command, or accompany me at once to your headmaster!"

"Oh crumbs!"

A scene with the Head was a thing to be avoided. Mr. Ratcliff had a habit of making a fellow's conduct appear far

more flagrant than it really had been. He exaggerated the original offence out of all proportions.

Burning with resentment at the injustice of it Tom Merry held out his hand.

"Swish, swish!"

"Now, Manners!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Manners sullenly extended his hand, and the cane bit into his palm—twice. Manners seemed to be understudying a professional contortionist as he stepped back.

Monty Lowther received a similar dose; and Mr. Ratcliff tossed the cane into a corner, and pointed to the door.

"Go!" he rapped out.

The Terrible Three went willingly enough. They emerged from Mr. Ratcliff's study just as Jack Blake and Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were approaching it.

"Go back, you fellows!" said Tom Merry warningly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You're thinking of bearding Ratty in his den?"

"Yaas, deah boy. We have made this discovewy—thanks to my bwains an' powahs of deduction—that the woom with the green blinds is Mr. Watchiff's study. An' we are goin' to ask permish, to make a search—"

"You'll be flayed alive if you cross Ratty's threshold," said Manners. "We've just been to ask him the same thing, and he doled out two stingers apiece."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ratty's like a raging lion, seeking whom he may devour," said Lowther. "The treasure might be in his study and it might not. There's no earthly chance of making a search."

"Rotten!" said Jack Blake.

And the two Co.'s went back to the School House together. Monty Lowther suggested that it would be a good wheeze, to save others from sharing their unhappy fate, to affix to the door of Mr. Ratcliff's study the forbidding inscription which appeared at the entrance to Dante's Inferno:

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here!"

CHAPTER 9.

More Tribulations of a Treasure-Hunter!

"NOW'S my chance! The old beast has just gone out of gates!"

Thus Baggy Trimble.

It was prep-time, but Baggy was not thinking of prep. There would probably be "ructions" in the morning with Mr. Lathom, his Form master; but the morrow could safely be left to take care of itself.

The treasure still remained undiscovered; but Baggy Trimble had sanguine hopes that it would be discovered by bed-time, and that the discoverer would be Baggy himself.

The fat junior stood at his study window, blinking out into the dark quadrangle. He had just seen a tall figure go striding down to the school gates. He could not be quite certain, but the tall figure had seemed to be that of Mr. Horace Ratcliff. The unpopular Housemaster usually took a constitutional at this hour.

Baggy Trimble's search for the hidden treasure had not been an unqualified success, so far. It had, in fact, been a chapter of calamities. Ever since his ill-fated visit to Mr. Harvey Shaw, in Wayland, when he had proposed that the detective should go halves with the treasure, things had gone wrong.

But Baggy was undaunted by these reverses. His head was bludgeoned, but unbowed, so to speak.

Baggy had been doing some more eavesdropping, and he had ascertained, by listening at the keyhole of Tom Merry's study, that "The Room With the Green Blinds" was Mr. Ratcliff's study.

Baggy had also heard of the tragic fate of the juniors who had asked Mr. Ratcliff's permission to search the study. He had no intention of walking into the same trap. He had waited patiently for Mr. Ratcliff to leave the building; and, now that the coast was clear, Baggy proposed to search for the treasure.

From one of the lumber-rooms Baggy had obtained a hammer and an iron chisel, and these useful implements were concealed on his person.

Clue No. 7 said: "For the rest of the clues—Dig!" Baggy therefore anticipated that there would be some digging to do in Mr. Ratcliff's study. He concluded that the remainder of the clues—and perhaps the treasure itself—were concealed under the floorboards of the study. Before taking such an extreme course as prising up the floorboards, however, Trimble meant to carry out a thorough search of Mr. Ratcliff's apartment.

With this object in view, the fat junior rolled away in the direction of the New House.

He encountered nobody on the way. Both School House and New House juniors were at prep.

In order to make certain that Mr. Ratcliff was not at home, Baggy tapped on the door of the Housemaster's study. There was no response.

"Good!" murmured Baggy. "It was old Ratty all right who I saw going out of gates."

He turned the handle and rolled into the study. The room was in darkness.

Baggy switched on the light; then he crossed to the window and drew the blinds, noting with great satisfaction that they were green blinds. He was on the right track this time, he told himself.

The invasion of such a sacred apartment as a Housemaster's study by a mere junior was a serious matter. Certainly, if Baggy Trimble were caught in the study, the chopper would come down with a vengeance.

But Trimble was too keen to lay his plump hands on the treasure to worry about such considerations. Baggy wanted those ten golden sovereigns, and he wanted them badly. He had already made a mental calculation as to how much tuck could be procured for the munificent sum of ten pounds. Enough to last for several days, even though Baggy possessed a super-appetite.

"Now I'll get busy!" muttered the fat junior, blinking round the Housemaster's study.

The search would have to be thorough; at the same time, it would have to be swift. There was no knowing when Mr. Ratcliff would return. He was usually absent for an hour, when he took his evening constitutional; but his work had been hindered considerably that evening, so he might be back earlier.

Baggy Trimble's method of searching was drastic, but by no means gentle. He started with the mantelpiece, exploring the interiors of the vases, and omitting to put them back in their proper places. As soon as an object had been explored, Baggy cast it carelessly aside.

He opened the back of the clock, thinking that Mr. Harvey Shaw might have chosen that as the hiding-place. There were works inside the clock, but there were no clues, and there was no treasure.

Crash!

The clock fell from Baggy's impatient fingers and landed in the fireplace. Baggy did not trouble to retrieve it. There were fresh fields awaiting exploration, and Baggy could not be expected to bother his head about a mere timepiece. Undoubtedly the clock was broken, for the crash had been accompanied by a splintering of glass; but Trimble didn't worry. Having explored the mantelpiece, he turned his attention to the bookcase.

Mr. Ratcliff owned a voluminous collection of books, and it was quite possible that the list of further clues was hidden between the leaves of one of them. It would take some little time to shake out all the books, but it had to be done.

Baggy grabbed the priceless tomes, one at a time, and took them by the covers and shook them. A few bookmarks fell out on to the carpet, but that was all.

After each volume had been dealt with in this way it should have been put back in its proper place. But it wasn't. Trimble hurled each volume from him in disgust, when he found that it contained nothing of importance. Presently the floor of Mr. Ratcliff's study became littered with volumes. They were strewn about as plentifully as leaves in Vallombrosa.

"No go!" muttered Baggy lugubriously, when he had shaken the last of the volumes. "I've been wasting my time. Clue Number Six says 'For the rest of the clues—



Dr. Holmes fairly gasped when he saw the condition of Mr. Ratcliff's study. "Trimble!" thundered the Head, "Do I understand that this is your handiwork?" "Nunno, sir!" gasped Trimble. "N-not at all, sir. You see, sir, it was my sub-conscious self!" (See chapter 9.)

Dig!" So it's pretty certain that the rest of the clues are under the floor somewhere."

Disappointed at his non-success, but still full of hope, Baggy proceeded to pile all the furniture into one corner of the study. He shifted the table first; then he piled the chairs on top of it. After which, exerting all his strength, he shoved Mr. Ratcliff's desk into the corner.

The volumes which lay on the floor were either thrown or kicked out of the way, to leave the carpet clear.

It was the work of a few moments to take up the carpet. Baggy rolled it up, and stood it perpendicularly against the desk.

The hammer and the iron chisel were now called into action, and the fat treasure-hunter proceeded to take up the floorboards. The banging and the crashing which this operation entailed filled Baggy with alarm. Supposing a master or a prefect should come along to ascertain the why and wherefore of that terrific rumpus in Mr. Ratcliff's study?

"Pity I didn't pile the furniture against the door," reflected Baggy. "It would have served as a barricade then, and nobody would be able to get in. But I won't bother to shift it again. I've strained my muscles as it is. Let's hope nobody hears this awful row!"

And he went on with his hammering.

Alas for Trimble's hopes! Taking up floorboards is not a silent operation, and the noise that Baggy made would have been sufficient to arouse the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

The din was heard by every study-owner in the New House. It seemed as if a gang of workmen was busy in Mr. Ratcliff's study.

Monteith, the head-prefect in the New House, heard it; but he did not feel called upon to interfere. It was no business of his, he reflected. If Mr. Ratcliff chose to kick up such an unearthly din in his study that was his own affair.

But there was another person who heard the din, and who did not think twice about interfering. This was Mr. Ratcliff himself!

The Housemaster had not gone out, as Baggy Trimble had supposed. It was Mr. Railton, and not Mr. Ratcliff, whom Trimble had seen striding down to the gates in the dusk.

Mr. Ratcliff had merely adjourned to his bed-room in the hope of securing peace and quiet. All the evening he had been besieged by eager juniors wishing to explore his study, and it had been impossible for Mr. Ratcliff to settle down

to his work. Finally, he had collected such books and papers as he wanted, and stalked upstairs to his bed-room.

When the noise of hammering smote upon Mr. Ratcliff's ears, he did not connect it in any way with his study. But the noise was going on somewhere in the House, and it was the Housemaster's duty to ascertain the *raison d'être* of that terrific din.

Mr. Ratcliff came downstairs to investigate.

On reaching his own corridor he paused for a moment aghast.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "That noise is proceeding from my own study!"

Having recovered from his astonishment, Mr. Ratcliff fairly whisked along the corridor.

The sounds of hammering ceased abruptly as he approached the door of his study. Evidently his approaching footsteps had been heard by the marauder within.

Mr. Ratcliff threw open the door and stood on the threshold as if transfixed.

He was amazed. He was horrified. Thunderstruck, in fact, would not be too strong a word to describe the state of mind of Mr. Horace Ratcliff as he surveyed the extraordinary scene in his study.

The apartment was in a state of complete chaos—"confusion worse confounded," as Milton would have put it.

In the far corner of the study the furniture had been piled in careless disorder. Mingled with the furniture were some of Mr. Ratcliff's priceless and treasured volumes. Other volumes had been kicked into the fireplace to keep the clock company. The floor was innocent of a carpet, and already a number of floorboards had been prised up.

The central figure in that scene of chaos—a kneeling, cowering figure, terror-stricken by the unexpected entry of Mr. Ratcliff—was Baggy Trimble!

Baggy blinked up at the Housemaster in alarm and dismay. The hammer and chisel fell from his grasp and clattered to the floor.

For a full moment, Mr. Ratcliff stood petrified—unable to move or speak. When at last he found his voice, it resembled the rumble of thunder.

"Boy! Trimble! I can scarcely believe my eyes! I have caught you red-handed in the execution of this—this unprecedented act of vandalism!"

"Ow!"

"You shall pay dearly for this outrage, wretched boy! Get up, sir!"

Baggy Trimble tottered to his feet.

"I—I— If you please, sir—" he faltered.

"Be silent! Nothing you can say will have the effect of mitigating your outrageous conduct," stormed Mr. Ratcliff.

"But, sir—I—I was only looking for the treasure!" stutered Baggy. "I knew it was hidden in your study, and I came to ask your permission to let me make a search. But you were out, sir, so I thought you wouldn't mind if—I went ahead."

"Silence, I say!"

Mr. Ratcliff's tone was so terrifying that Baggy Trimble shut up like a knife.

The Housemaster stepped out into the corridor. Monteith of the Sixth was coming along, and Mr. Ratcliff hailed him.

"Monteith! I must ask you to remain in my study with this wretched boy while I go and fetch the headmaster."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble.

Mr. Ratcliff stalked away, his brow dark with anger. He was back again within five minutes, and Dr. Holmes accompanied him.

The Head fairly gasped when he saw the condition of Mr. Ratcliff's study, and his brow grew very stern.

"Trimble!" he thundered. "I understand that this is your handiwork—that you are responsible for this unparalleled outrage?"

"Nunno, sir! Not at all, sir!"

"What?"

"You—you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick, sir. I mean—it wasn't me at all, sir! I know nothing about it."

The Head's frown deepened.

"Trimble, you are telling me falsehoods! Do you dare to suggest that somebody else was responsible for wrecking Mr. Ratcliff's study?"

"Yessir! It wasn't me, sir. I—I mean, it might have been me, but if it was, I didn't know anything about it. You see, sir, it was my—my subconscious self!"

"Your—your subconscious self?" gasped the Head.

"Yessir—you've got it, sir!" said Trimble eagerly. "Of course, a fellow isn't responsible for what his subconscious self does, is he, sir? It wouldn't be fair to punish him in those circumstances."

"You utterly stupid boy, Trimble! Do not utter another word! I am satisfied that you consciously and deliberately reduced Mr. Ratcliff's study to this state of chaos. You

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shall be severely punished for this outrage. Follow me at once to my study!"

The Head rustled away, and Baggy Trimble crawled mournfully in his wake. Mr. Ratcliff brought up the rear of the procession. He meant to see that Trimble got his just deserts.

And Trimble did! He spent a very painful ten minutes in the Head's study; and when at last he emerged from that sacred apartment, he was limping painfully, and giving vent to the most heartrending lamentations.

It was said of old that the way of the transgressor is hard. The way of the treasure-hunter was equally hard, if not more so—in the opinion of Bagley Trimble!

CHAPTER 10.

The Right Trail!

"STUMPED!" said Tom Merry.

And Manners and Lowther nodded glumly.

Another day had passed, and still the treasure was unfound. Nor did there seem to be any prospect of finding it now.

The treasure-hunters had reached an insurmountable obstacle. The clues had led them to the room with the green blinds—Mr. Ratcliff's study. But there they were balked. Mr. Ratcliff would not allow his study to be searched.

Baggy Trimble had searched it overnight without permission, and had paid dearly for his rashness. But Trimble had not found the treasure. Baggy still believed it to be hidden under the floor in the Housemaster's study; but nothing would have induced Trimble to venture a second time into that lion's den.

The juniors were, indeed, "stumped." They had come to a dead end, and could get no farther.

"Fairly floored!" said Manners. "It was a bit too thick of Mr. Shaw, in my opinion, to hide the rest of the clues in Ratty's study. He must have known that we shouldn't be allowed to ransack a Housemaster's den."

Tom Merry nodded.

"The treasure will never be found now," he said. "We can't get over Ratty. The whole affair will fizzle out, and the treasure-hunt will be a failure."

"Pity," said Monty Lowther, "especially after all the trouble we've taken, and that fearful soaking we got the other night. This is where we throw up the giddy sponge. What's the good of going on, when Ratty won't let us search his study?"

Lowther's cheery optimism had evaporated for once. He spoke hopelessly. He was now in despair of ever finding the treasure; and so were Manners and Tom Merry.

So, also, were the majority of the St. Jim's fellows.

What was the use of going on with the quest when the room with the green blinds was barred to the searchers?

Jack Blake and Herries and D'Arcy had already announced their intention of taking no further part in the treasure-hunt. Figgins & Co., of the New House, had also dropped out.

Now that a seemingly insuperable barrier had been raised against the finding of the treasure, most of the fellows had lost interest in the quest.

But there was one fellow who did not intend to throw up the sponge just yet.

Dick Julian, of the Fourth, was seated at his study table pondering over the list of clues. He was pondering over the sixth clue—"The Room with the Green Blinds."

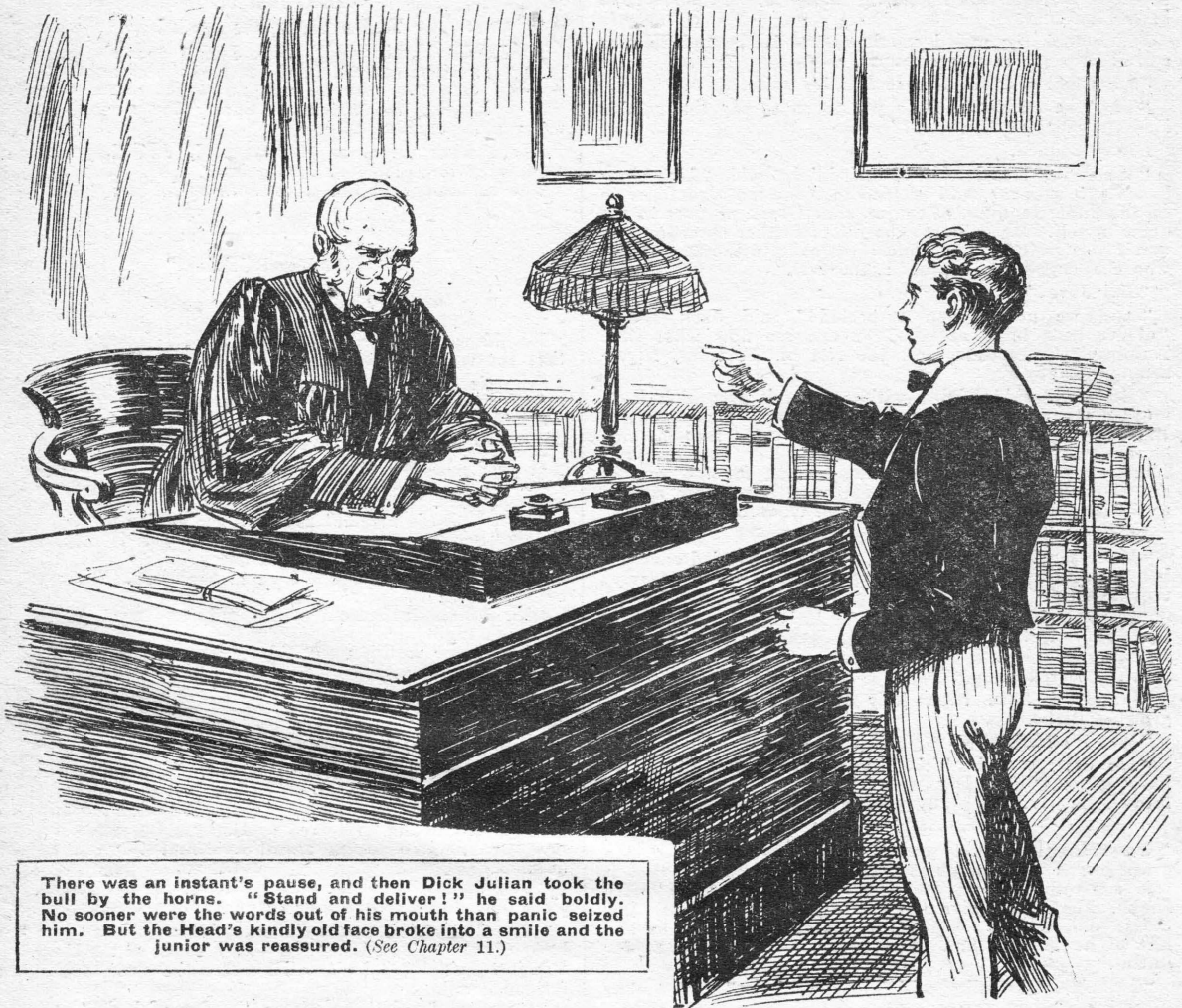
There were only two rooms at St. Jim's answering to that description. There was Mr. Ratcliff's study, and there was Jack Blake's. Julian had ascertained these facts for himself. He had not been content to rely upon the discoveries of others.

The Jewish junior was not satisfied that the further list of clues was hidden in Mr. Ratcliff's study. He could not imagine Mr. Harvey Shaw choosing such a hiding-place. The detective would surely have realised that a Housemaster's study could not be made use of in that way, without unpleasant consequences.

Rejecting the theory that the list of clues was in Mr. Ratcliff's study, Julian was left with only one study to exploit—No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. And that study had already been explored very thoroughly.

Julian had seen Jack Blake, and Blake had assured him that every nook and corner of the study had been investigated. The chimney, the bookcase, the desks, the various articles of furniture, had been overhauled. Even the interiors of the cushions had been explored. Blake was prepared to swear an affidavit that there was no list of clues concealed in Study No. 6.

Dick Julian's brow was corrugated in thought. His eye travelled from Clue No. 6 to Clue No. 7, and the words, "For the rest of the clues—Dig!" set him thinking furiously.



There was an instant's pause, and then Dick Julian took the bull by the horns. "Stand and deliver!" he said boldly. No sooner were the words out of his mouth than panic seized him. But the Head's kindly old face broke into a smile and the junior was reassured. (See Chapter 11.)

"Dig!" muttered Julian.

And even as he uttered it the word struck him with a new significance.

The obvious meaning of "dig" was to delve with a spade. But the word had another meaning peculiar to St. Jim's.

"Dig" was the familiar and abbreviated form of Robert Arthur Digby.

Julian's eyes gleamed. He sprang suddenly to his feet.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "I've got it! For the rest of the clues—Dig! In other words, for the rest of the clues, apply to Digby!"

The more he thought about it the more convinced Julian became that Digby of the Fourth had something to do with the hidden treasure.

It was curious that Digby should have taken no part in the treasure-hunt. He had not joined Blake and the others on any of their excursions. In the ordinary way, he would have been as keen as mustard on such an enterprise.

Why had Digby stood down from the treasure-hunt?

Dick Julian wrestled with this problem, and a ready solution came to his mind.

It was possible—in fact, probable—that Digby had been taken into the confidence of Mr. Harvey Shaw. The detective had given him the rest of the clues to hold in his possession until challenged to give them up.

The rest of the clues were reposing in Digby's pocket—had been reposing there, in fact, ever since the treasure-hunt started!

And the first person to make the discovery, by dint of sheer hard-thinking, was Dick Julian!

"Of course, I might be wrong!" muttered the Jewish junior. "But I don't think I am. Anyway, I shall jolly soon know!"

He hurried out of his study and sprinted along to Study No. 6. He tapped on the door and entered without waiting for an invitation.

Jack Blake & Co. were at tea. Digby was present. Dig's chums were bemoaning the failure of the treasure-hunt, and Dig was apparently sympathising with them.

Four pairs of eyes were turned towards Dick Julian as he stood panting in the doorway.

"Trot right in, Julian!" said Blake genially.

"Yaas, wathah! There's woom for a little one," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pour out another cup of tea, Hewwies!"

Julian raised his hand.

"It's all right," he said. "I haven't dropped in to tea. I want to speak to Digby."

Digby eyed the Jewish junior curiously.

"Go ahead, Julian!" he said.

Julian hesitated. He was about to challenge Digby to deliver up the rest of the clues. But supposing Digby hadn't got them? Supposing Julian's line of reasoning had been all wrong? If that were so, he would look a priceless fool in the eyes of his schoolfellows.

But Julian's hesitation was only momentary. He looked straight at Robert Arthur Digby and took the plunge.

"Digby," he said quietly, "I call upon you to hand over to me the rest of the clues in connection with Mr. Harvey Shaw's treasure-hunt!"

It was a breathless moment.

Jack Blake and Herries and Arthur Augustus looked astonished, as well they might. They wondered if Dick Julian was in his right senses.

"What the merry dickens—" began Blake, in bewilderment.

"Julian, deah boy," gasped Arthur Augustus, "what an extraordinary request! Dig hasn't got the rest of the clues. What evah made you think he had?"

"He has got them!" said Julian triumphantly. He could tell by Digby's face that he was on the right track, and that his theory was correct.

Digby rose to his feet with a smile. He extracted a sealed envelope from his breast-pocket and handed it to Julian.

"Congratulations!" he said heartily. "You're the first

fellow to find out that I held the clues. These fellows have been blind!"

Julian took the sealed envelope, and Blake and Herries and D'Arcy sat as if spellbound.

Jack Blake was the first to find his voice.

"Dig," he exclaimed, "do you mean to say that you've held the clues all the time?"

Digby nodded.

"When the treasure-hunt started," he said, "Mr. Shaw had a jaw with me, and decided to make me a confederate on the understanding, of course, that I took no part in the quest myself. He gave me the list of further clues to hold, and I was instructed to hand them over to the first fellow who challenged me. Julian is the first."

"Bai Jove!"

"And we never even suspected!" said Jack Blake. "We've been blind as bats! I can see now what Clue Number Seven means. For the rest of the clues, Dig—meaning Digby!"

"Exactly!" said Digby, with a grin. "You took it to mean dig with a spade, like everybody else—except Julian. But Julian put on his thinking-cap and went into the clue more deeply. He's discovered that 'Dig' means your humble servant, and he's challenged me for the rest of the clues, and I've handed them over. And now it's up to Julian to go ahead and find the treasure!"

Julian smiled.

"Many thanks, Dig!" he said, placing the sealed envelope in his pocket. "I'm going along to my study to swot at these clues!"

"Good luck, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you will find the tweasuah. You deserve to. How remarkable that the weal solution to Clue Numbah Seven nevah occurred to me!"

"It would have been jolly remarkable if it had!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We deserve to be kicked!" said Herries. "We might have guessed that Dig was in league with Mr. Shaw, because he never took any part in the treasure-hunt."

"We might have guessed, but we didn't," said Blake. "We were all so jolly cocksure that the room with the green blinds was Ratty's study. If we had realised that it was our own den, we might have connected 'Dig' with Digby. We didn't give the matter enough thought. But Julian did, and he's beaten the lot of us. It will be bad luck if he fails to find the treasure after getting as far as this."

"I don't think Julian will fail, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "He's a vewy wesolute an' determined chap—somethin' like myself."

"Rats!" snorted Blake.

"If you say 'Wats!' to me, Blake—"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy! Those ten golden quidlets are lost and gone for ever, so far as we are concerned. Pass the jam, Herries!"

Herries passed the jam, and the chums of the Fourth resumed their tea. Blake and Herries and Arthur Augustus were looking rueful. The all-important clues had been within arm's reach of them, in Digby's breast-pocket, and they had never known—never even suspected. Hence the rueful expressions of Blake and Herries and Gussy. But Robert Arthur Digby, the chosen confederate of Mr. Harvey Shaw, was smiling serenely.

CHAPTER 11.

To the Victor, the Spoils!

ALONE in his study, Dick Julian opened the sealed envelope containing the rest of the clues.

He felt that he was now well on the way to locating the treasure. Surely there could not be many more clues to solve?

There were three, as it happened, and they did not seem very formidable at first glance.

The remainder of the clues were as follow:

(8) Feet towards Head.

(9) "Stand and deliver!"

(10) The treasure is yours!

No. 10 was not really a clue at all. It merely signified that the treasure-quest was at an end.

Clue No. 8 was an enigma. What on earth did it mean? reflected Julian. "Feet towards Head." The junior scanned that baffling phrase for a long time, but he could not make head or tail of it.

If only he could puzzle out the eighth clue successfully, Julian felt certain that the ninth would solve itself automatically.

"Feet towards Head!" repeated the junior for the sixth time. "Seems a senseless sort of clue. But it must mean something, and I've got to find out precisely what it does mean. I think I'll take a turn in the quad. I can think better out in the air."

Dick Julian strolled out of his study and went down into the keen night air.

Tom Merry & Co. were chatting on the School House steps, and they called out to Julian.

"Found the treasure yet, Julian?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Not yet," said the Jewish junior, with a smile.

"I hear you've found the rest of the clues. Blake has told us all about it. Congratulations, old scout!"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "Julian, you're the only brainy boy of the family! The rest of us were absolutely stumped by the seventh clue. We didn't tumble to the fact that 'Dig' referred to Digby. But you did, and now you deserve to go ahead and find the ten golden quidlets."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "What are the rest of the clues like, Julian? Are they teasers?"

"The first one is," said Julian. "If only I can get the hang of that I think I shall be within reach of the treasure. I'm just going to take a stroll under the elms to try and fathom it out."

"Go ahead," said Tom Merry, "and good luck!"

"Thanks!" said Julian.

And his form was quickly swallowed up in the shadows.

The Terrible Three were naturally disappointed that their own activities in the treasure-hunting line had come to an end. At the same time they were honestly delighted at Dick Julian's good fortune. They knew that he was hard up against it and that the ten pounds would be a godsend to him. Like Blake & Co., they felt like kicking themselves for having missed the point of Clue No. 7. But, as Monty Lowther sagely remarked, it was no use crying over spilt milk—or misinterpreted clues. Dick Julian's powers of deduction had risen superior to their own; and it was only fitting that Julian should reap the reward of hard thinking and persistent effort.

But Julian was not through with the problem yet. And as he paced to and fro under the leafless elms, in the winter dusk, his face grew more puzzled, and he seemed to be getting no nearer enlightenment.

"Feet towards Head." It seemed quite incongruous. It reminded Julian of some queer acrobatic performance, in which a fellow's feet were pointing towards his head.

But the word "Head" might not refer to a cranium. It might refer to a headmaster. It might, in fact, refer to the headmaster of St. Jim's!

Looking at the matter in that new light, the meaning of the clue swiftly flashed upon Dick Julian's mind.

"Feet towards Head" could only mean one thing. It meant that Julian must wend his way to the Head's study!

"Fool!" muttered Julian in self-reproach. "Why didn't I think of that before. I must go along to the Head's study, and then—"

He paused, and his thoughts turned to Clue No. 9.

"Stand and deliver!"

That phrase had a highwayman touch about it; but its meaning and portent became clear to Julian at once. It meant that the Head must be challenged, in the same way that Digby of the Fourth had been challenged.

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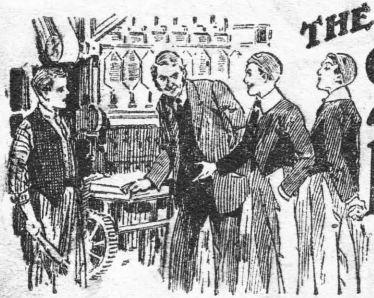
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Digby had held in his possession the remainder of the clues. And the Head doubtless held in his possession the treasure itself—the ten golden sovereigns!

Dick Julian pondered the matter at great length before he decided to go to the Head. He wanted to be certain that he was on the right track—that he had not been jumping to wild conclusions.

No alternative meaning to the clues, however, presented itself.

"Feet towards Head—stand and deliver!—the treasure is yours." It seemed clearly to imply that the Head must be approached and challenged.

Satisfied at last that he had interpreted the clues aright, Dick Julian went back into the building and made his way to the Head's study.

The junior's heart was beating faster than usual as he tapped on the door.

"Come in!"

The deep voice of Dr. Holmes bade Julian enter.

"Well, Julian?"

The Head was seated at his desk, and his tone was kindly enough. It gave the junior courage. And, after all, it required no little courage to call upon the grave and reverend headmaster of St. Jim's to stand and deliver! There was an instant's pause, then Dick Julian took the bull by the horns.

"Stand and deliver!" he said boldly.

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than panic seized him.

Supposing he had made an awful mistake? Supposing his line of reasoning was hopelessly wrong?

But the Head's smiling face quickly reassured Julian.

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet and put his hand in his pocket and produced ten golden sovereigns. Before Dick Julian's gaze he counted out the coins, and then handed them over to the junior.

"My hearty congratulations, Julian!" said the Head. "Your powers of perception and deduction do you credit."

The gold coins clinked into Dick Julian's palm. He gazed at them for a moment as if fascinated. He could hardly believe his own good fortune—that he was the winner of the treasure, the only person who had prosecuted the treasure-hunt to a successful conclusion!

The Head was still smiling. In fact, he was looking quite delighted. Perhaps he knew something of the straits in

which Dick Julian was placed, and was glad that the "treasure" had been discovered by the fellow who needed it most.

"I shall be interested to hear, Julian, how you worked out the clues," said Dr. Holmes. "Perhaps you will be good enough to enlighten me?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Julian.

And he described his treasure-hunting exploits in detail, from their commencement right up to their successful conclusion.

"Splendid, my boy!" said the Head, when Julian had finished. "I will make a public announcement this evening to the effect that the treasure has been discovered."

Long before the official announcement was made, however, St. Jim's heard the news, and the fellows swarmed around Dick Julian to congratulate him.

Mr. Harvey Shaw also paid a visit to the school that evening, and added his hearty congratulations to those of the others. Perhaps the only disgruntled person who refrained from patting Dick Julian on the back was Baggy Trimble. Baggy declared that he had virtually won the treasure himself—though on what grounds he based that extraordinary claim it was difficult to see.

Baggy had the audacity to suggest that Julian should "part up" with half the spoils. Baggy contended that he was really entitled to the whole lot, but he was a generous fellow, and he knew that Julian was hard-up, and he would not therefore bear too hardly upon him.

But Baggy Trimble shared the unhappy fate of Mother Hubbard's dog in the nursery rhyme—he had none!

Baggy received one pound, however, from the finder of the spoils; but it was not one pound sterling. It was one pound in the chest with Julian's fist, which upset Baggy's equilibrium and caused him to sit down violently in the Fourth Form passage.

Dick Julian spent a very happy evening, and he stood a little celebration in his study, to which his most intimate chums were invited.

And thus the curtain was rung down upon yet another exciting episode in the history of the old school—The St. Jim's Treasure Quest!

THE END.

(Now look out for "Footer Rivals," next Wednesday's grand story of Tom Mervy & Co., and take the precaution of ordering your copy of the GEM in advance.)

THERE ARE NO KID GLOVE TRICKS ABOUT BAT BARSTOW. WHEN HE'S ROUSED HE HITS OUT STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER! AND HIS PUNCH IS LIKE THE KICK OF A MULE!



BAT BARSTOW'S NIGHT OUT

By

CECIL FANSHAW

The opening story of a grand series of complete adventure yarns, featuring Bat Barstow, the modern Hercules.

CHAPTER 1. A Chance Meeting.

LITHE as a panther, tough as copper wire, over six feet in his socks, and broad in proportion, Jim Barstow strode down the steps from the Wanderers' Club.

On the bottom step he paused, cane in one hand, feeling for his cigarette-case with the other, and surveying the passers-by through gold-rimmed spectacles.

It was past midnight, but Piccadilly still blazed with light. Big cars rolled up and down, giving a glimpse of gleaming, luxuriously-fitted interiors, of men and women in evening dress.

Taxicabs whirred by with a rattle and clatter of loose ironmongery. One, on the prowl, crawled close to the kerb, and the driver looked up inquiringly.

Jim Barstow shook his head.

"No, thanks, old bird," he muttered, placing a cigarette between his lips and fumbling with a box of matches, "I don't need a wagon to tool me to digs just round the corner. I've got big, flat feet, and know how to use 'em! Now then! That's enough from you! Good-night!"

With a hoarse bark of disgust the pirate at the wheel shot away. Jim smiled; then, striking a light, he sheltered the flickering flame in his cupped hands. The flame revealed firm, clean-cut features, clean-shaved save for a small, close-clipped moustache.

It was the face of a young man, strong if not handsome, and bronzed by tropical suns to the red-brown colour of mahogany.

True, the gold-rimmed glasses lent an air of owlish vacancy. But the eyes behind the glasses belied that air. They were grey, penetrating eyes, with the fine-lined wrinkles at the corners that come from gazing over shimmering deserts.

A habit of peering and blinking had earned the young giant a nickname. East of Suez, from Calcutta to the Cape, men called Jim Barstow "Bat." Not that he was short-sighted, though it suited him to be thought so. Very expressive and keen eyes really had Bat Barstow.

The end of the cigarette glowed red. Jim Barstow tossed

away the match, caught up his cane, and swung down Piccadilly with a long, easy stride.

Passers-by shot envious glances at the care-free, loose-limbed figure, felt hat characteristically over one eye. But Jim Barstow rapidly forged ahead.

Soon he could see the many-coloured electric signs flaring and whirling over the Circus. Then he crossed the road, blundered through the traffic, and turned down a side street.

Jim was making for his rooms in Jermyn Street, thinking of nothing in particular and everything in general. But a sudden sharp scuffling sound brought him to his senses and a halt with an abrupt jerk.

He glanced round, peering and blinking rapidly. He could see nothing in the dim-lit alleyway.

"Pish!" he muttered. "Only some jolly old soul wending his way—Hallo! No, it wasn't!"

To his ears had come a choked-off cry, a gasp, and a dull thud. Followed the sound of boots scraping on pavement, then more blows.

"Someone's gettin' it in the neck!" breathed Jim; and, reckless of consequences, he sprinted down the alley like a track-runner.

A sudden bend, and Jim saw a tall, young fellow, back to a wall, at grips with a man dressed like a chauffeur. The latter's throat was gripped, his head forced back. But two other men were trying to get at the cornered fellow. And one held a pistol by the barrel.

"Get out, Noakes! Hop aside!" came a hissing voice. "Let me fetch him a rap on the dome with this gun! That'll settle 'im, I guess!"

"Guess again!" struck in the hard voice of Jim Barstow. "You're barking up the wrong tree, old son!"

Then a bone-hard arm clipped round the gunman's neck. A wrenching heave, and the ruffian was on his back, head making contact with the pavement, heels kicking in the air.

That instant the chauffeur broke free. He spun round with a yelp of rage, the third man with him. Both saw a loose-framed young giant, who glared at them through gold-rimmed glasses. Jim Barstow saw a hawk-faced, capless chauffeur, and a fellow who looked like a racecourse tough. He went into action.

Out shot his long, gorilla-like arms. His hands, as big as hams, clamped down on the men's necks. A swift jerk brought two heads together with a crisp smack as of billiards-balls meeting.

"It's Bat, by Jove! Good old Bat! Bang 'em harder!" It was the fellow who'd been attacked who spoke—or, rather, croaked. He was leaning against the wall, gasping, an ugly gash over one eye, his collar and tie hanging in shreds. Astounded at hearing his name, the huge Jim spun round. Then he let go his prisoners and sprang forward with a roar:

"Archie Wentworth! By all the tin gods of Asia, Archie,

I thought you were dead! Dead an' tucked away in a hole somewhere beyond the Khyber Pass—"

"No, I'm not dead, Bat!" laughed Archie weakly, trying to draw himself up. "Though there's no knowing what might have— Oh, I say, you've let those rotters escape!"

The sound of retreating footsteps beating a rapid, explosive tattoo told that the "rotters" had escaped. Jim made to pursue, gave it up as the scoundrels vanished, then swung back to Archie.

"No matter, old bird!" he exclaimed, leaning on his cane, as he beamed on his friend. "Those night-hawks'll soon bump trouble. They were the ordinary low type of footpad."

"They weren't!" gulped Archie. "That's just the trouble."

"Eh? What d'you mean?"

Jim Barstow blinked owlishly.

"Just what I say, Bat," replied Archie. "I've been followed ever since I left the ship—only landed at Tilbury this mornin'. I've been shadowed ever since. An' someone tried to help me overboard in a gale coming through the Bay. Bat," Archie added, leaning forward impressively, "I'm up against something that gets right past me. That trio of rotters are mixed up in some scheme to remove yours truly off the earth."

"Tut-tut!" grinned Jim. "Likewise pish! That sort of thing only happens in books, old lad! You're off your oats, Archie, straining the old imagination, an' all that sort o' thing. Why didn't you yell for a bobby, anyway?"

"Dense as ever, Bat," sighed Archie, straightening his torn tie. "If I'd summoned a limb of the law I'd never have learnt what those lads were after. I meant to collar that chauffeur chap—glimpsed him before—and twist the truth out of him."

"Quite!" beamed Jim. "Also the gent called Noakes, not to mention the lad with the pistol. You're a glutton for scrapping, Archie. But you're lookin' untidy now. Trot along with me and lower a basin of bread-and-milk, what time you relate why you're in London instead of buried in wild and woolly Afghanistan."

Still beaming, Bat Barstow hooked his arm through his friend's and drew him along towards Jermyn Street.

In two minutes they were out of the deserted alley, Archie straightening his tie and crumpled clothes as they went along. Then they swung to their right.

"Out with it, Archie," said Jim cheerfully, as they strolled along. "Spin the yarn. It's a long, tiresome trek from the Khyber to Piccadilly. What ill wind blew you along?"

"Tain't much of a yarn, Bat," laughed Archie. "I was collared by long-haired, baggy-trousered Afghans, as you know. But they didn't kill me; they kept me prisoner."

"Well, to make it snappy, I escaped, an' kept shiftin' fast till I reached Lahore. In Lahore Club I picked up a copy of the 'Pioneer.' You remember the 'Pioneer,' Bat?"

"Rather!" burst out Jim. "Topping paper—full of adverts of polo-ponies. I once picked up a snorting gee through the 'Pio—'"

"Hang your gees, Bat!" exclaimed Archie disgustedly. "I'm tellin' you my story! An' off you ramble jawin' about polo-ponies! Can't you be serious?"

"Sorry, Archie!" chuckled Jim. "Fire away! But the pony was a snorter, anyway."

Archie gulped, then resumed:

"Well, in the 'Pioneer' I found a notice sayin' some lawyers wanted news of me. They were London lawyers. I cabled 'em, an' they cabled back, sayin' my dad was dead and had left me a fortune. They asked me to come home at once."

"So here you are!" beamed Jim, as though making a discovery.

"Yes, here I am!" returned Archie. "You've got a wonderful brain, Bat! An' I'm buzzin' round to those lawyers to-morrow unless some other lad tries to bump me off meantime. I wish you'd hung on to that 'shover,' Bat. I'd swear I glimpsed the fellow down at the docks when I landed."

"Imagination, old son!" replied Jim Barstow airily.

"Twasn't!" retorted Archie angrily. "But that's like you, Bat!" he added, with a laugh. "You never could see beyond your nose. When you were with the regiment we always said you'd got beef in your skull as well as on your arms. You're all beef! Don't you ever think?"

"Not often," admitted Jim, blinking through his glasses. "It's so exhausting."

"Well, anyway," laughed Archie, "you've heard my yarn. What's yours? Why are you rolling round London like a lord?"

"Me?" echoed Jim Barstow. "No reason in part'clar. I chucked the Army soon after th' Armistice. That's why I missed your Afghan show. I rambled over to East Africa—been huntin' elephant, chasin' slave-raiders, an' generally barguin' up an' down the map."

"I made a pile out of ivory the last seven years. I've

come home to spend it. When the boodle's finished I'm going back for more—lots of ivory in Africa, Archie."

"So I've heard," smiled Archie. "But it takes some gettin'."

"No, it doesn't," grinned Jim. "Only a rifle an' a handful o' cartridges. But, look here," he broke off, stopping before a small hotel entrance. "Here's my digs. Come on in an' fish the pow-wow."

"Don't think I will," replied Archie, glancing at his wrist-watch. "I've got to rouse early to-morrow an' see those lawyer-folk. I'll roust you out later. What's your phone number, by the way?"

"Mine?" echoed Bat, while his mind groped for the right answer. "Oh, Gerrard, ten thousand! Ring me up if you meet your shover pal again."

"I will," promised Archie. "S'-long!"

He gave a flourish with his cane and strode off down the street.

For a few seconds the vast Jim Barstow stared after his pal. He saw Archie's slim figure swinging past street-lamps, then vanish up a turning.

There was nothing idiotic about the Bat's face now. It was set and stern.

"I wonder," he muttered, as he spun on his heel and dived into the hotel—"I wonder if Archie's right—'bout being shadowed? But th' old boy'd been wild if I'd offered to see him home. He'll ring up if things get breezy. Now for bed—too much excitement in one night is bad for th' nerves."

Ting! Ting! Ting-ting-ting!

"Oh, hang it! What the deuce!"

Only half awake, Jim Barstow rolled over in bed. In a second he was snoring again.

Once more the shrill summons of the telephone disturbed his slumbers.

"Dash that instrument!" roared Jim. "I'll— By Jove! Could it be Archie?"

In a flash memory returned. Then the slow Jim Barstow became greased lightning.

There came a click as his big hand shot out and snapped on the switch. Electric light flooded the luxurious bedroom of the Jermyn Street hotel. It showed Jim the clamorous phone at his side.

"Who's there?" he roared, snatching up the instrument.

Over the wire a voice came thinly:

"Is that Gerrard, ten thousand? Quick! It's urgent!"

"Yes!" Jim bawled into the receiver. "Right number. That you, Archie? Bat speaking?"

"Thank Pete!" came the hoarse reply in Archie's voice. "Get round here smartly, Bat. Where? To my digs—fifty-six, Fordham Road, just off Baker Street."

"Eh?" bellowed Jim. "Why, o' course I will! Bat what—"

"I'm in my bedroom now," came Archie's voice, quaintly distant. "I can hear men creeping up the stairs. I'll try an' stand 'em off—if they—"

A slamming crash, plainly audible over the wire, drowned Archie's words.

Gripping the receiver in his huge hand, Jim Barstow bellowed down his end that he'd be along at once. Then his eyes flashed fire.

No reply came over the phone, but Bat heard another splintering crash, then pounding feet. A cry, a thud. Then silence!

Someone had cut the wire the other end.

CHAPTER 2.

The K.O.!

FOR a split second Bat Barstow, resplendent in red silk pyjamas, that did not hide the muscles of his huge frame, sat spellbound. Then he forced out:

"By gum! Archie was right! He's been shadowed. The brutes ha' got him. Who the plague can they be?"

Then out of bed shot Bat. It took him rather less than ten seconds to tumble into outdoor clothes.

It took him five more to go clattering and thumping downstairs, past the amazed hotel night-watchman, and out into quiet, dim-lit Jermyn Street.

Hatless, Jim Barstow sprinted round to a garage close by, whipping out the key as he ran. In he dived, to switch on the lights and start up the engine of his fast two-seater.

There was a humming roar. Then, with a jerk, the light car slid out of the garage, the huge Jim gripping the steering-wheel. The keen eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles were like crimson marbles. There was trouble at hand for someone. Bat Barstow was on the warpath in grim earnest!

Like a silver streak, the grey two-seater dashed down Jermyn Street. It rounded a corner on two wheels, to shoot up between rows of dark houses, awaking the echoes.

In Piccadilly Jim swung to his left. A moment later he spun the wheel round once more, and was humming up Bond Street.

"Stop!" shouted a policeman, leaping forward, with hand upraised as the small car whirled into Oxford Street. "Hold hard, sir! You can't drive like that!"

"I can, old man!" Jim hissed through clenched teeth. "And I must! A matter o' life and death!" And he stepped on the gas, and shrieked on like a rocket.

The shouting policeman was dropped behind. Down the broad street right ahead, Jim saw another jump from an island into the black, shining roadway. The man barred the way.

But Jim knew London as well as he knew every twist and turn in Calcutta and the back streets of Cape Town.

His mouth set in a hard, straight line, he went humming and purring down side streets, dodging the few cars about, till at last he whirred into Baker Street and slowed down to get his bearings.

"Fordham Road!" he muttered, peering up through his glasses at the name-plates. "It's just about here. Yes, there it is! Now to find fifty-six! If Archie's—"

Jim broke off. He had just turned into a dark road, flanked on each side by blank houses towering like cliffs. Near a deserted lamp, he saw a big blue touring-car, with the tail-light glowing redly. A door was still open.

"It's outside Archie's digs!" roared Jim. "It's a quid to an onion that's the bus used by the skunks I heard on the phone!"

And down he raced full split, his exhaust popping like musketry fire.

But a face was thrust out from the blue car. A hand clamped down on the open door.

The yellow light shone down on a face like a pugilist's, a flattened nose, slit eyes, topped by a check cap, with a huge peak. Jim knew that face.

"Ha! The gent called Noakes!" he cried savagely. "Well met, brother Noakes! We'll renew our acquaintance!"

Now there came shouts from the car. Jim saw wrath and amazement distort Noakes' features. Then the check cap and the head under it was hurriedly withdrawn. The door slammed and the blue car roared off.

"The deuce!" bawled Jim, perplexed. "My homely mug seems to worry that fellow! Now, do I dash up an' give first-aid to Archie, or do I pursue that wagon through the jungles of London?"

"What a dumb-bell I am!" he yelled the next instant. "Those thugs won't have cracked Archie's dome an' left him for tees to find! Someone wants Archie to vanish. The old lad's in that bus, alive or dead! The chase is on!"

It was. Leaning over his steering-wheel, the Bat sent his two-seater in roaring pursuit.

But the second's hesitation had given the blue car a start. Already it had swung round a corner, Jim only rounded the bend in time to see the red tail-light vanish round another.

Followed a thrilling hunt right across London. Up and down side streets, across empty, gloomy squares, dodging great fruit-vans heading for Covent Garden.

Jim was a smart driver. He never lost sight of his quarry, despite the rumbling traffic that clatters up some streets in the early hours.

But the chauffeur of the blue car proved a wizard at the wheel. He had a large vehicle to pilot through the traffic; but he slid in and out, taking hair-raising chances. Bat could not gain on him.

The chase swept through London's back streets and spilled out into open country. It was heading across Essex.

The night wind whistled in Jim's ears. Trees that thrust above the hedges loomed up ahead, came abreast, and were dropped behind. But Jim didn't glance at the flying, black landscape. He kept his eyes glued on the swaying big car, at the back of which the tail-light glowed like a red eye.

They roared through sleeping villages. Windows were flung up as they hummed through bigger towns.

Then they were out in the country once more, following twisting lanes that wound between high hedges.

"Whoever's snatched Archie from his cot must want him pretty badly!" gritted Jim. "What wouldn't I give for a gun now, to plug their tyres!"

But Jim hadn't got a gun. So the chase went on, neither pursuer nor pursued gaining any advantage.

All at once a corner hid the blue car completely. Jim crashed on every ounce of speed and whirled round after it.

Then he gave a yell, cutting off his engine, and applying his brakes with a grinding wrench. The blue car had pulled up out of sight, but was dimly visible not a few yards ahead.

As Jim roared round the bend he almost crashed on top of the stationary vehicle. Then a shot rang out.

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Bang! Jim saw a jet of red flame leap from the gloom. He heard something buzz past his ear. Came another shot, zipping clean through the two-seater bonnet, and cutting the petrol-pipe.

Jim's car was done for! It wouldn't budge another inch this night.

"That'll make you hold back, mister!" came a mocking laugh. "Thank your stars one o' these lead plums didn't drill your gullet! Stop there an' cool!"

A whirring followed as the blue car's engine started up.

But, even before the mocker had ceased mocking, Jim was out of his wrecked car like a thunderbolt. Three gigantic strides brought him up to the blue car. A bound and he was on the running-board, glaring at the driver through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Ha, my hawk-nosed friend!" Jim shouted exultingly. "We meet once more! And Mr. Noakes and the gun' gent'll be inside. Splendid!"

Jim's big right hand shot out, cutting off the engine. The swaying, lurching car slowed down at once. Then Jim's left hand seized the hawk-nosed chauffeur's throat in a vice-like grip.

"Noakes! Kling!" gurgled the ruffian, his eyes bulging. "Out this gorilla! He— Ugh! Gluck—gluck!"

"It's out with you, my son!" muttered Jim grimly, and gave a wrenching heave.

The chauffeur was whisked from his seat like a winkle from its shell. With one hand the vast Jim had plucked him forth, to send him sailing through the air, arms and legs spread-eagled like a starfish.

But a savage grunt came from behind. Too late Jim heard quick footfalls and whirled about.

Something came down on his head with stunning force. His senses left him. Down he crashed in the road, his huge limbs asprawl.

"You done for the brute, Kling?" gasped the chauffeur, rising groggily, and shaking a fist at the senseless Jim. "Settle him proper! He's as dangerous as a mad bull. B'gosh, he slung me out like a bag o' feathers! Settle him!"

"Stow that!" growled the gunman Kling, swinging by the muzzle the Colt with which he had stunned Jim. "Th' big stiff's took a K.O. Let him lie. He can't follow now.

"Crank up an' get moving! The young gent inside'll wake up soon. I ain't got no more dope for him, an' the boss don't want him rough-handled more'n necessary. Get a skate on!"

Followed the slamming of a door and the roaring of an engine. Then the big blue car, containing the three ruffians and their prisoner, slid off.

Back in the moonlit road, Bat Barstow lay in the white dust. A few yards away stood his motionless, useless car.

CHAPTER 3.

Jim Insists!

"WHERE am I?" groaned Archie Wentworth. "There's a million hammers beatin' in my brain! My tongue's like leather! I wish I could remember things."

With an effort, Archie opened his eyes. He found himself in a bare attic, of which the sloping roof almost met the floor on every side. There was no furniture, save for a plain deal table and a wooden chair.

"Well, I ain't in my room in Fordham Road, that's certain," he muttered. "My digs may not be palatial, but they aren't as bare as a barn. And, jeminib, I'm bound!"

An effort to raise a hand to his throbbing head told Archie he was bound hand and foot. He also discovered that the bare wooden floor he was lying on was exceedingly hard.

He tried to struggle, but in vain. Finally, giving it up, he started racking his brains, groping in his memory.

"I remember leaving Bat outside his hotel," he muttered.

"Then I went home—went to sleep. Jove! Of course, I was woke up by hearing noises on the stairs. I phoned Bat. Then men burst into my room, and laid me out with a gun butt. They were the same ginks who jumped on me in the alley—a bruiser called Noakes, a gunman, an' a vulture-faced shover."

Archie broke off. He was trying to recall what occurred after the savage onslaught in his Fordham Road rooms.

"Ah!" he went on. "I came round in a car. Noakes said: 'That big, ugly guy in gig-lamps is on our heels.' Then I tried to smash the window an' get at the shover. But the gunman—they called him Kling—pushed a needle in my arm. It must ha' been a hypodermic syringe. I was doped, went all wuzzy, then conked out altogether. Bing!"

With a short laugh, Archie broke off again. But he didn't laugh long. He realised that the men who had captured him must have some sinister purpose in view.

"Of course," he resumed, "Noakes' 'big, ugly guy' must have been Bat. Good old Bat! He got on my trail pronto. But they must have slipped him somewhere.

"Now, why all these queer happenings? Why was I shadowed at the docks, an' finally kidnapped? It's past me. I don't remember fallin' foul of any blessed society out in India. If I had, the kidnappers wouldn't be white men. An' I've no enemies that I'm aware of. What a mess!"

Once more Archie fell to fighting furiously. But his bonds had been too well tied.

Even if he burst them, he knew he would have a job to escape. He could see he was in the top attic of what was probably a big house, and might be many feet from the ground.

Exhausted, he lay panting. Just then a queer sound reached his ears. There was a scraping of boots on the outside wall. Somebody was breathing heavily.

Then, before Archie's astonished gaze, a face bulked in the little attic window.

There was no mistaking those rugged features—the granite chin, the bristling, toothbrush moustache, and the gold-rimmed spectacles. The wall-scaler was big Jim Barstow.

"Bat!" gasped Archie, his eyes shining. "How the green-eyed god of Goona did you blow up here?"

"Walked, old son!" beamed Jim, blinking through the little window, of which one pane was missing.

"On my large, flat feet. They've covered quite a heap of this globe, you know, an' they're still going strong."

"Bully for you, Bat," Archie laughed weakly. "It's like you to stick to a trail. But I'm afraid it's no use. You can't heave your carcass through that foot-square window."

"Can't," beamed Bat, who seemed to be clinging to an

whacked my head with a gun butt. Mr. Kling's going to buy me a new engine before he's finished!"

Archie laughed. "Kling dropped you, Bat, did he? I expect he'll be sorry about that some-day. But how did you get here with a busted car?"

"Followed the trail afoot, son!" grinned Bat. "Same way one chases the wild and woolly elephant in its natural haunts. The trail led me to this house—it's a big house with a lake close by."

"I blew along just after dawn, glimpsed a handy drain-pipe and shinned up it. My intention was to enter the house via the roof; but, happening to glimpse through this attic-window, on the way—"

"You spotted me!" broke in Archie. "Thank Mike! An' now I guess we'd best shin down that pipe!"

"You will!" corrected Jim. "I'm waiting here for the Piccadilly trio. They'll buzz upstairs soon."

"Rot!" snapped Archie anxiously. "I'm not goin' off alone!"

"You are!" declared Jim firmly. "I'm not coming till I've squared up with the fellow who cracked my skull and spoilt my two-seater!"

But Archie wasn't gulled. "You ain't bothering about your car, Bat!" he broke out hotly. "I know you. You're going to stop here an' beat up the thugs who kid-

napped me. You're out to probe this mysterious business single-handed. You sha'n't! I'm not sneakin' off to leave you to do my jobs!"

"Archie," growled Jim, blinking rapidly, "are you going out o' that window an' down that pipe, or am I going to throw you out? Once down the pipe, you can beat it through a wood. In three miles you'll come to a station. Take a train for London. Leave this sand-bagging gang to me!"

"Bat—" protested Archie.

"There's no 'but' about it!" rejoined Jim, thrusting out his square jaw. "Get goin', son. Make for my hotel in Jermyn Street, an' wait for me. If I don't show up by dusk, you can warn police an' send 'em down here—not before!"

Archie gave up arguing. He knew that once Bat had made up his mind there was no shifting him, bodily or mentally.

So, with a final growling protest, Archie lowered his slim frame through the wrecked window.

Bat watched Archie slither down the pipe,

then vanish into a wood of green oaks.

Then he spun round with a grunt of satisfaction. "Now we prepare for the kidnappers!" he grunted, and scooped up Archie's unravelled bonds, draped them round his own big form, and stretched himself out in a dark corner of the attic.

Hardly was Jim ready than footfalls sounded coming up the stairs. A hand rattled the door-handle.

Then the door opened slowly. The apparently bound Jim stifled a grim chuckle.

CHAPTER 4.

The Last Laugh!

"IN here?" barked a harsh voice outside. "Good! You men have done well. Wait below. When I want you, I'll call."

Jim Barstow pricked up his ears at the sound of the voice. He hadn't heard it before.



With one hand Jim plucked the chauffeur from his seat and sent him sailing through the air, arms and legs spread-eagled like a starfish. (See chapter 2.)

invisible pine with one hand, "is a word only found in the dictionary of fools, old lad. For which remark I refer you to the memoirs of one Napoleon Bonaparte. See here!"

There came the sound of splintering wood. Archie, his eyes bulging, saw the whole window-frame shaking.

Crack! The woodwork parted, amidst a shower of splinters. Then into the attic writhed the herculean form of Jim Barstow, carrying the window-frame in his left hand.

Lightly depositing the shattered frame in a corner, Jim tiptoed over to his bound pal.

"Where there's a will, old son," he chuckled, "there's quite often a lot of ways. But you're all tied up. Tush! We must see to this!"

The knots that held Archie's bonds were quickly unravelled by Jim's strong, big fingers.

"You're a winner, Bat," he laughed, rubbing his numbed limbs. "But how the thump did you find me? You can't spook me you footed all the way from Baker Street."

"Right first shot," rejoined Jim. "I didn't. I tooled along in my little car. But the lads who'd got you laid a neat trap at a corner. They'd stopped, an' I didn't know it. A gent called Kling put a bullet through my engine, then

But he still lay motionless. Then, through half-closed eyes, he saw a big, bearded man in a tweed suit step across the threshold, followed by a youth in flannels.

"Ha! At last!" grunted the big man, stroking his black beard and peering at the bound figure in the corner. "We've got our quarry. He seems to be slippery. No wonder the Afghans couldn't hold him!

"But now, Basil, I think that nothing remains but to make sure that our friend there is Archie, and then—"

"That's as easy as pie, dad!" broke in the white-flannelled youth languidly. "Archie's got a blue snake tattooed on his right arm. It says so in his passport. The owl who failed to fling him overboard on the voyage home glimpsed both the arm and the passport. He wrote me he was shadowing the right fellow."

"Very well," grunted the big man. "We'll make investigations."

The youth called Basil was just reaching out to examine Jim's huge forearm for the tattoo-mark that really adorned Archie. But he jumped back as if he'd been stung.

"Dad," he cried shrilly, "this hulking ruffian isn't Archie! He's twice Archie's size! Confound Noakes an Kling! They've got the wrong man!"

Basil ended in a scream. For even as the bearded man lunged forward with a savage grunt, Jim rose and gripped him!

The loose ropes dropped magically. Up shot Jim's great hands, plunging through the black beard, clipping like a steel trap. A heave, and the bearded one was down, with huge Bat Barstow kneeling on his chest.

But there came a flash of white flannels across the attic. The youth Basil evaded Jim's paw by a scant inch and reached the door in one bound.

"Noakes! Kling! Baker!" he shrieked. "This way! Quick!"

Came shouts and pounding footfalls. Into the attic burst the bruiser, the gunman, and the hawk-faced chauffeur.

"The Piccadilly trio once more!" roared Jim, and brushed the yelling Basil aside and charged at Noakes.

A blow from Jim's sledgehammer fist sent the bruiser staggering backwards. But Kling and the chauffeur dived at Jim's feet, wrapping their arms about his ankles.

Pandemonium broke loose in the attic. Jim was being attacked by four men at once. Even Basil had joined in, gaining courage from numbers.

The room rang with shouts, echoing the stamp of feet. With the four clinging to him, Jim dragged round, like a lion beset by jackals. He dragged the whole bunch across the floor.

But the struggle ended abruptly.

The bearded man had regained his feet. He snatched up the wooden chair, to bring it smashing down on Jim's head from behind.

There was a dull thud. Then Jim went down with all his assailants atop of him. He wasn't stunned. But he was exceedingly dizzy. He could only struggle feebly, while the men, with difficulty, heaved him up into the chair and securely lashed him to it.

Panting, they stood round, the bearded man carefully brushing his neat tweed suit, but snarling venomously.

"You bonehead, Noakes!" screeched Basil, flannels no longer white. "You got the wrong man!"

Noakes let fly a string of hot words. But the bearded man, evidently the leader, shut him up.

He shot a glance at the ruined window, nodded grimly, then rounded on Jim.

"You're very strong, my friend!" he purred menacingly, at the same time running his fingers through his beard. "But even the strongest should be wary when they interfere. You know the proverb about fools rushing in—"

"Quite so!" put in the tightly-lashed Jim, in bored tones. "But chuck quoting proverbs, my good man. You had my pal Archie kidnapped. I set him free. That's all."

"It's not all!" barked the burly gang-leader. "I had excellent reasons for kidnapping your friend Archie—as you crudely put it. Now tell us where he's gone. The quicker the better—for you!"

"You don't know me, fuzzy-face," laughed Jim shortly, "or you wouldn't ask foolish questions!"

"I don't know you," agreed the bearded one calmly.

"And I don't want to. But I've ways an' means of making you speak!"

The leader took a small iron object from his pocket and turned on Jim.

"I've no rack, unfortunately," he purred. "But here is a little relic of the Middle Ages—to wit, a thumbscrew. Will you speak? No? How sad!"

The bearded leader's voice was ominous. He stooped, and

with a quick movement placed the instrument on Jim's thumb. A split second later Jim felt a red-hot pain shoot up his hand.

Again the question was asked. But Jim sat like a sphinx, his eyes sparkling dangerously.

"Another twist!" purred the scoundrel leader—and applied it.

Jim had no intention of putting the gang on Archie's scent, neither had he any intention of being tortured while he was helpless. He had recourse to an old trick.

A hollow groan burst from his lips, then his head fell forward on his chest. It was a well-simulated faint.

"Bah!" spat the bearded one. "I thought he'd stand more than that. But it's no use going on while he's senseless. Stand back! Give him air!"

Jim daren't open his eyes. But he heard the men shuffle off a few feet, then talk in growling voices. He strained his ears, chuckling inwardly.

To Jim's ears came mention of the lake outside, also of Archie's capture being imperative. Followed a lot more. The conversation was in low tones, but Jim got every word of it.

And what Jim heard was so astounding that he almost let out a gasp of amazement and anger. He just managed to control it. Then Noakes growled out:

"See here, guv'ner! 'Tain't our fault this big stiff butted in. But you say you won't cash' up without we get back the right gent. Hunt the grounds pronto. Your young gent may be hidin' close, waitin'. 'S'all right to leave this chap. He's as fast to that chair as if he was glued in it."

There came a barked assent from the leader. Then Jim heard the gang clatter from the attic and go pounding downstairs.

Hardly had they gone than Jim jerked his head up, his eyes gleaming behind his glasses, his mouth straight.

"The utter squids!" he muttered. "Who'd ha' guessed it? Poor old Archie! If I hadn't butted in he'd 'a' been drowned meat by now! Well, I've rumbled the dark plot, and here's where I beat it. Another day I'll square up for the thumb-windin' business—after I've put Archie wise."

Then Jim bunched his big muscles, striving to burst the bonds. Powerful as he was, he soon found he couldn't.

For a second dismay tore through his brain. But Bat Barstow was full of resource. His usual inane expression had dropped from him like a shed garment.

"Where there's a will—" he thought, and dug his toes on the boarded floor and started to rock the chair—to which he was bound—to and fro.

It was difficult. The chair was heavy, and Jim was swathed in cords. But he pushed and tilted with all his might.

The chair swung farther each shove. It was nearly over. Then—crash!

The chair was on its side in splintered ruin. The fall, under Jim's great weight, had smashed it to pieces.

"Eureka!" gloated Jim, and started to disentangle himself from the cords that now hung loose from the broken chair legs and back. In a second he was on his feet. But that very instant he heard a shout from below.

"Dad!" screamed the high voice of the youth Basil. "There's something wrong in the attic! I believe that hulkin' boundah's escapin'!"

A storm of shouts drowned Basil's voice, followed by thudding footfalls. The gang was swarming upstairs full tilt.

Jim's feet were still mixed up in a tangle of cord and splintered chair legs. He managed to wrench free in the nick of time and hurl himself through the attic door.

Jim saw Basil in his dust-stained white flannels leading, at Basil's heels the bearded man in tweeds. Then followed the bruiser and the chauffeur, with Kling, the gunman, last.

There were shouts of dismay as the scoundrels saw the herculean Jim charging down on them. Basil squealed and made to fly.

But Jim came down a flight with one bound and a thud, snatched up Basil in his great hands, and swung him above his head.

"This for you, friend Noakes!" he roared. "For that swipe you gave me when I was helpless!" And he hurled the dandified Basil with all his force.

Past his father shot the youth, to crash into Noakes with stunning force. Both went headlong, rolling and bumping down the wide staircase.

But Jim hadn't finished. And he had just caught the gleam of Kling's pistol. Showing exultingly, he leaped down on the bearded man, grappled, and lifted him before him.

Jim's strength was amazing. With the burly gang-leader

held as a shield from Kling's bullets, he thundered down on top of Kling. A heave, and the leader flew forward, to smash up against the gunman and the chauffeur.

The house rang with sounds. All five scoundrels were writhing, clutching, and rolling down in a heap.

"But I want you, Mr. Beaver!" roared Jim, and, charging down, scooped up the burly leader and slung him over his shoulder.

On Jim hurried with his burden, to reach the ground floor and hurl himself at the open hall door. There came yells of rage from behind, then sounds of pursuit. A gun roared, and a bullet buzzed past Jim's head.

But Jim burst out of the big house. He knew where the ruffians' blue car was, and meant to reach it with his prisoner. He shouted in triumph, but another gunshot spurred him on. It would be touch and go!

Crack! The wood-work parted amidst a shower of splinters. Then, into the attic writhed the herculean form of Jim Barstow, carrying the window frame in his left hand. (See chapter 3.)



In Jim's bed-room at the Jermyn Street Hotel sat Archie Wentworth. He had obeyed Jim's orders.

But now anxiety was stamped on his features. The sun was sinking.

"Dusk," he muttered, "an' Jim hasn't shown up!" And he reached for the telephone to ring up Scotland Yard.

Just then footsteps sounded outside—a pair firm, and a pair dragging and reluctant—then the door burst open.

Archie swung round, his mouth agape, to see the huge Jim stride in gripping the arm of a big, bearded man in a fast, lock-grip.

"Bat!" yelled Archie, springing up. "Good old Bat! I was just goin' to send out the S.O.S. But who've you got?"

"Your uncle, old bird!" roared Jim, depositing his limp prisoner in a chair. "Though you don't seem to have met him before! Meet your uncle, Kenneth Wentworth!"

"My uncle!" shouted Archie. "I've heard of him, of course, but I'd never set eyes on him!"

"Nor, perhaps, on your cousin Basil," beamed Jim, blinking through his glasses. "He's a sweet lad. I'm afraid he's got a broken arm now—so also has the gent Noakes."

"Explain!" gasped Archie.

"Suttinly, old lad!" replied Jim heartily. "It seems your Uncle Kenneth here—who has given up struggling—learnt you had escaped from the Afghans. He heard you were coming homewards to claim your father's estate."

"That, Archie, didn't suit your Uncle Kenneth. He and Basil had been rejoicing to think you were buried beyond



the Khyber Pass. Your untimely return would do Uncle Ken out of the spoils."

"So he hired a gang to put me out!" cried Archie.

"Exactly," replied Jim. "You were taken to the country mansion to be identified—then you were to be dropped in the lake attached to a hod of bricks. So simple! But when Ken and Basil buzzed up to the attic, lo! the wrong man lay enmeshed in toils. Nasty jar! Very!"

"How did you learn it all?" cried Archie, round-eyed.

"Uncle Ken," replied Jim, nodding at the bearded man, who sat purple with rage, "talked too loud with his friends when he thought I'd fainted."

There was a shout from Archie's uncle, a strangled yell of wrath. But Jim ignored it.

"Police, Archie?" he queried. "Or——"

"Let him go," snorted Archie. "You've beat him, Bat. I guess he won't meddle with Bat Barstow's pals again."

A door slammed. Kenneth Wentworth had lit out. Then Archie rounded on Jim, burbling his thanks, offering huge rewards.

"At least you'll accept a new two-seater, Bat?" he ended. "You had your car bust in saving my life."

"A new car, Archie?" bellowed Jim. "Why should I want a new two-seater? I've boned Uncle Kenneth's blue limousine!"

THE END.

(Look out for another thrilling Bat Barstow yarn next week, chums, entitled: "THE FIFTH STEP!" Every line contains a thrill!)



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