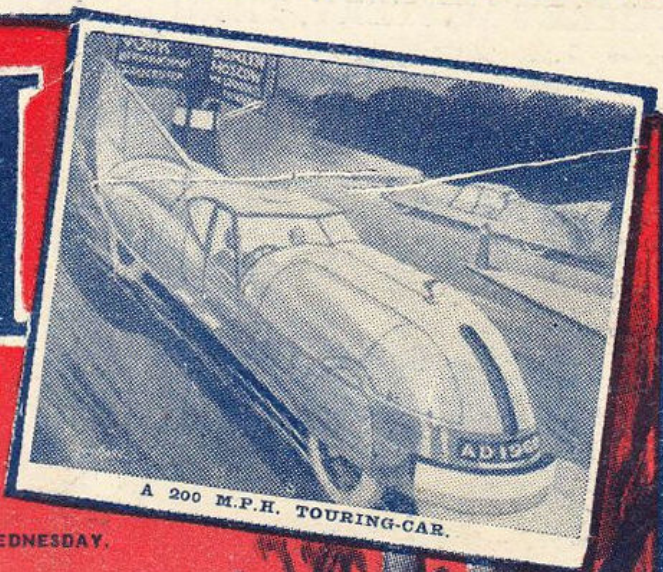


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# The GEM

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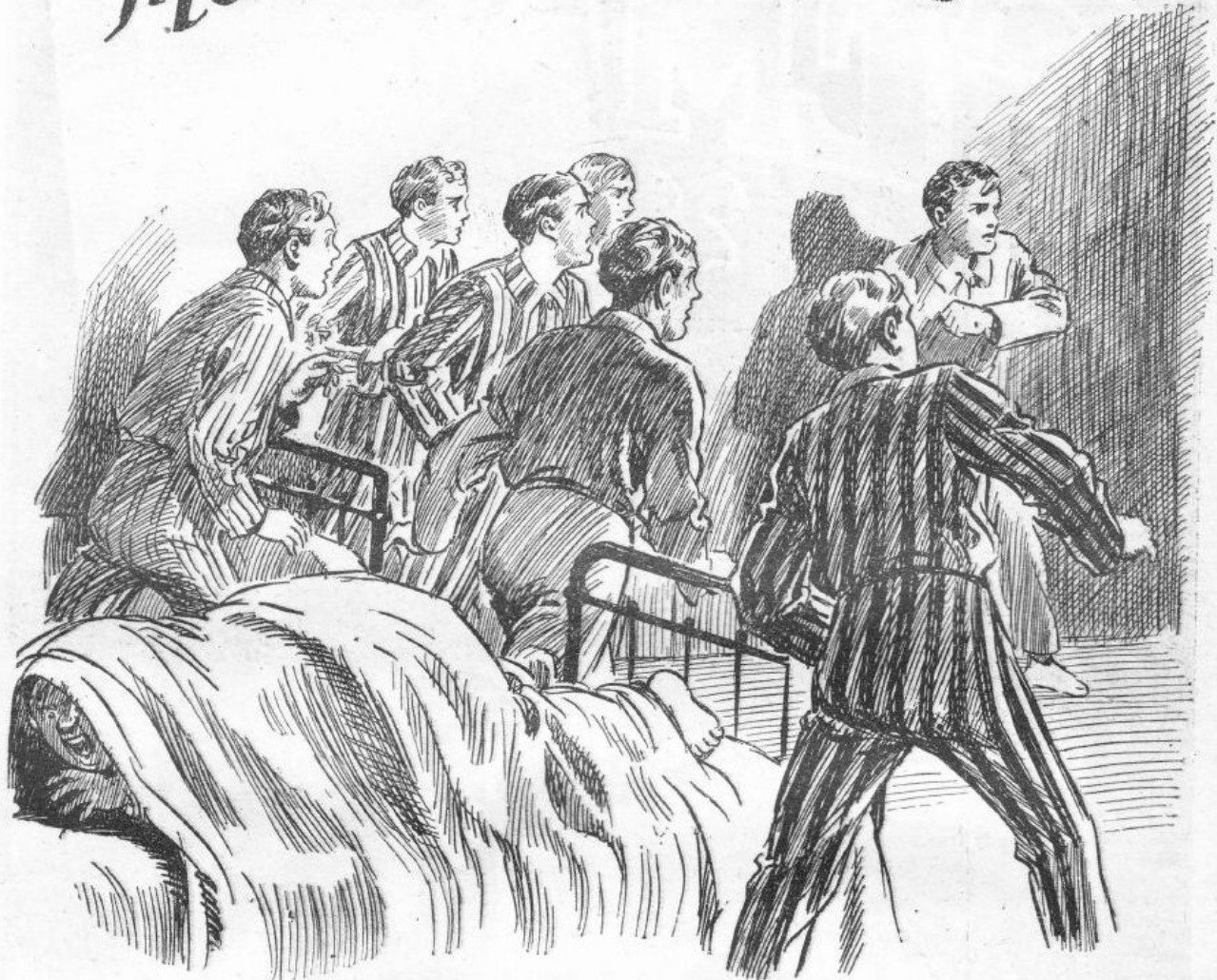
EVERY WEDNESDAY.



## THE MYSTERY OF RIVER GRANGE!

THERE'S MYSTERY, THRILLS, AND DRAMA IN THIS LONG TALE—

# The MYSTERY of



## CHAPTER 1. All Dressed Up!

"MY hat!"

"Great pip!"

George Wilkins and William Cuthbert Gunn paused on the threshold of their study in the Shell passage at St. Jim's, and stared in wonderingly.

Wilkins and Gunn had reason for their astonishment.

Grundy, their study-mate, was within. And Grundy was standing before a mirror adjusting his tie. His appearance was immaculate. As a rule, George Alfred Grundy was one of the most slovenly-looking juniors at St. Jim's. But at the moment he was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. A pair of snowy white spats ornamented his rather large feet, which were clad in elegant patent leather. He had a topper on his head, and his cuffs were quite free from frayed threads, which was unusual with Grundy—as was the fact that his face was shining with an amazing cleanliness. For once, his hair appeared to have been well brushed.

"What the dickens—" breathed Gunn.

"What the thump—"

Grundy turned and glared at them.

"What are you dummies staring at?" snorted George Alfred Grundy. "Come in and shut the door, you asses!" he added, with a growl. "Help me tie this blessed tie!"

"But what the merry dickens are you all pushed up for?" gasped Wilkins wonderingly.

Grundy chuckled.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,118.

"I'm going over to Spalding Hall this afternoon!" he announced.

Wilkins and Gunn jumped.

"M-my hat!"

"Well, why shouldn't I?" roared Grundy, glaring.

"Oh, no reason at all, old man!" said Gunn hastily.

"I'm taking Lady Peggy out to tea in Wayland," explained Grundy condescendingly.

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Wilkins in amazement.

"I like Lady Peggy," went on Grundy, in an off-hand way, "and I mean to take her out quite a lot in future."

"My hat!"

Lady Peggy Brooke was a comparatively new arrival at Spalding Hall, the school for girls near Wayland at which Ethel Cleveland, the pretty cousin of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, and Doris Levison, the charming sister of Ernest Levison of the same Form, were at school. Lady Peggy shared a study in the Fifth Form at Spalding Hall with Ethel and Doris, and the three had struck up a very warm friendship, now forming an inseparable trio. All the St. Jim's juniors who had met Lady Peggy agreed that she was a "ripping girl!" She was pretty, and brimming over with fun.

Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, and Fatty Wynn, the demon bowler of the New House, had particularly "fallen" for Lady Peggy; in fact, both of them were inclined to go quite red at mention of her name! There had been strong rivalry between them for chief place in her friendship—though it was now clear that they would have to share that coveted position between them.

"What about Blake and Fatty Wynn?" murmured Wilkins.

—STARRING THE FAMOUS CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S AND LADY PEGGY!

# RIVER GRANGE!



by  
Martin  
Clifford

What is the mystery behind the eerie old Grange, that it lures three desperate crooks to the vicinity? And what has Lady Peggy, of Spalding Hall School, to do with it? Here's a yarn of baffling mystery and stirring adventure, in which Jack Blake and Fatty Wynn and their chums of St. Jim's play an important part.

George Alfred Grundy frowned a majestic frown. "Rats!" he snorted. "I'm going to cut those two asses out, I can tell you. Is it likely Lady Peggy will want to be extra friendly with them when I'm about?"

"Ahem!"

Wilkins and Gunn both coughed, without answering.

Grundy, though actually the dunce of the Shell, had a staggering belief in his own abilities in any direction. It was a perpetual source of amazement to everyone else how he could do so; but Grundy believed himself the finest cricketer, the best footballer, the strongest swimmer, and the best all-round sportsman in the junior school.

Wilkins and Gunn got very tired of hearing from Grundy how it was only the crass stupidity of Tom Merry, the junior games captain, that kept him from a chance of shining in all spheres of sport. Had not the powerfully-built dunce of the Shell possessed such large fists and such a readiness to use them upon all occasions, they might have told him so.

Now, it appeared, Grundy fancied himself as a lady-killer! Wilkins and Gunn could not help but smile, though they were very careful to conceal their smiles from George Alfred Grundy.

"Ahem!"

Grundy glared at his two study-mates suspiciously.

"Well?" he snorted. "I suppose you don't deny that any sensible girl would prefer me to Blake and Fatty Wynn, you dummies?"

"Hem! Nunno! But—"

"Or that Lady Peggy is a sensible girl?" roared Grundy.

"Rather not!"

"Well, then?" growled Grundy.

"Ahem!"

"Lady Peggy and I are going to be great chums," went on Grundy. "She may be particularly pally with Blake and Wynn at present, but as soon as I tell her I am going to be friendly with her—"

"She'll faint, I should think," murmured Gunn softly.

"What's that, Gunn?"

"Nothing, Grundy, old man!" answered Gunn hastily.

"Does Lady Peggy know that you and she are going to be such great friends?" inquired Wilkins, with a wink at Gunn.

"Not yet," answered Grundy carelessly. "I'll tell her when I see her this afternoon."

"Oh!"

"That'll be a treat for her," murmured Wilkins.

"Yes," nodded Grundy unsuspectingly. "There's no doubt she'll be pleased."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gunn faintly.

Grundy was not a handsome youth. His features were rugged rather than classical. His manners were rough-and-ready rather than polished, too. But apparently Grundy considered that Lady Peggy would "fall" for him head over heels! There was no shadow of doubt about it—in the opinion of George Alfred Grundy.

Wilkins and Gunn begged to differ—inwardly! But they would not have ventured to tell Grundy so for worlds.

With Gunn's aid, Grundy finished tying his tie at last, and surveyed his reflection in the glass with great satisfaction. There was no doubt that for once in a way Grundy was looking quite well-turned-out.

"Those are smart socks, old boss!" exclaimed Wilkins.

"Not bad," nodded Grundy. "They're Gunn's."

"What?" shrieked Gunn.

"They fit better than your shoes, Wilkins," added Grundy.

"What?" howled Wilkins. "My shoes?"

"Luckily, your topper fits fine," went on Grundy. "So does your waistcoat, Gunn."

"M-my waistcoat?" gasped Gunn faintly.

"My topper?" panted Wilkins.

"Yes; but I'm not sure that I quite like the cut of these bags of yours, Wilkins."

"You—you—"

"And your coat's a bit tight about the shoulders for me, Gunn, old man. However," finished Grundy, picking up his gloves and stick—or, rather, Gunn's gloves and Wilkins' stick, "it'll do!"

And George Alfred Grundy strode towards the door.

"You—you—" gasped Gunn.

"Come back!" roared Wilkins.

Grundy paused and glared.

"What's up?" he demanded truculently. "You don't object to my borrowing a few of your things, I suppose?"

"I do, anyway!" hooted Wilkins. "A 'few' of our things? Why, if you took off our 'things' you'd be practically naked, you blessed robber!"

The worms had turned! Even Wilkins and Gunn would not put up with absolutely anything from their muscular

study-mate. And, as they realised that Grundy was clothed from head to heel in their best garments, they jumped for the door to intercept him.

"Gimme my coat and waistcoat!" snorted Gunn.  
"Gimme my bags and shoes!" howled Wilkins. "And my topper, and my stick—"  
"And my socks—"

Grundy breathed hard.

He did not argue. It was not Grundy's way to argue when fists would do. He hit out, and Gunn and Wilkins collapsed in a heap, clasping their noses. It was upon their noses that Grundy's fists had landed.

"Yow! Gerrooch!"

"Oh! Yooooop!"

"There!" roared Grundy, his face burning with a righteous wrath. "That'll teach you not to be such stingy rotters when a chap asks to borrow something!"

"Ow!" gasped Wilkins. He sat dazedly dabbing at his nose. "But you never did ask to borrow 'em—you just bagged 'em!"

"Do you want another dot on the boko?" boomed Grundy indignantly.

Apparently, Wilkins did not. He sat massaging his damaged nasal organ tenderly, and the great George Alfred strode majestically from the study, and slammed the door behind him.

With Wilkins' topper on his head and Gunn's socks upon his feet, Wilkins' coat buttoned tightly across his muscular frame, and Gunn's trousers gracing his legs, George Alfred Grundy strode grandly down the stairs.

There was a satisfied smile upon his face. But it was a completely unselfish satisfaction.

Grundy was not thinking so much of the pleasure that Lady Peggy's company would give him that afternoon as of the joy that his company would give to Lady Peggy!

With those modest thoughts, George Alfred Grundy stepped out into the quad and turned in the direction of the gates. A group of School House juniors, standing by the bottom of the steps, staggered back at sight of him.

"M-my hat!" gasped Kangaroo, the Australian junior.

"It's Grundy!"

"He's got a clean face!" ejaculated Bernard Glyn, in astonishment. "He's been washing, I do believe!"

"Look at his tile!" breathed Clifton Dane, the Canadian junior. "Where did you dig it up, Grundy?"

Grundy glared and snorted.

He contemplated making a rush at the grinning trio; but he refrained. A rough-and-tumble with the three chums of Study No. 11 would undoubtedly result in damage to his elegant attire. With his nose in the air, Grundy sailed on towards the gates leaving Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn staring after him, with grins and chuckles.

By the gates, a noisy group of fags was gathered. But they broke off their chatter as Grundy approached, and stared.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" ejaculated Wally D'Arcy, the leader of the Third. "Look at this!"

"It's Grundy!" gasped Curly Gibson. "All dressed up and nowhere to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned. He did not approve of Third-Formers laughing at their elders, particularly when their elders happened to consist of George Alfred Grundy!

"What are you kids cackling at?" growled Grundy, with a look that was intended to awe the Third-Formers into a respectful silence.

"I'm cackling at a giddy tailor's dummy!" returned Wally, grinning. "What are you cackling at, Curly?"

"I'm cackling at a silly dressed-up fathead!" said Curly Gibson. "What are you cackling at, Reggie Manners?"

"I'm cackling at a prize idiot called Grundy!" chuckled Reggie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags shrieked at the look on Grundy's face. They hurriedly drew shoulder to shoulder, expecting the burly Shell fellow to make a rush. But Grundy was not going to risk damaging his gorgeous appearance for the sake of a group of fags, despite their staggering cheek in failing to be awed and respectful in the presence of the great George Alfred.

With crimson countenance and a wrathful snort, Grundy passed on out of the gates, on his way to Spalding Hall.

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## CHAPTER 2.

## Making an Impression!

"M Y hat!"  
"Whew! Look!"  
"It's Grundy!"

Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, with Monty Lowther and Manners, his two study-mates, and Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House, were strolling along the leafy lanes between Wayland and Spalding village, with Ethel Cleveland, Doris Levison, and Lady Peggy Brooke. They had cycled over to Spalding Hall immediately after dinner, and so had arrived there a considerable time before George Alfred Grundy.

It was the sight of Grundy's immaculate figure approaching down the road that had caused the little party to give exclamations of astonishment.

"Grundy, in his best bib and tucker!" chortled Blake. "Oh, carry me home to die!"

Ethel and Doris smiled. They knew Grundy, and knew that, as a rule, he was rather slovenly in his appearance. This startling change, and the fact that Grundy was bending his steps in the direction of Spalding Hall, seemed significant!

"Yes, it really is Grundy!" murmured Ethel, wonderingly.

"How smart he's looking!" laughed Doris.

"My hat! Is it human?" exclaimed Lady Peggy, staring at the approaching Grundy wide-eyed.

She was a pretty girl, a few months younger than Ethel and Doris, with an unruly mass of red curly hair showing beneath her hat. She had freckles, and a little snub nose, and a happy grin; and there was a dancing light in her brown eyes that had completely "bowled over" the St. Jim's juniors—particularly Jack Blake and Fatty Wynn!

"Yes, it's more or less human," chuckled Fatty Wynn. "It's name is Grundy, and it lives in the School House, Best place for it."

"Look here, Fatty—" began Blake wrathfully.

"Oh, shut up, you two!" interjected Lady Peggy hastily. "For goodness' sake don't start rowing about the School House and New House!"

"No; let's look at Grundy!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Whew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy was quite near them now, and he raised Wilkins' topper with a flourish.

It had been a blow to Grundy to find Ethel & Co. in the company of Tom Merry and the others. He eyed Blake and Fatty Wynn with an especially unfavourable eye; he noted, with a growl, that they were walking on either side of Lady Peggy. But he told himself that it would not take him long to "cut out" the pair with the new Spaldingite. No girl could help but "fall" for Grundy—in the opinion of George Alfred.

Grundy halted in front of the smiling group. He mistook their smiles for a sign of pleasure at his arrival, and, with that encouragement, he raised Wilkins' topper a second time and bowed.

"Charmed to meet you!" murmured Grundy. "Charmed, I'm sure! How do, Miss Ethel? How do, Miss Doris? How do, Lady Peggy?"

As he turned to Lady Peggy, Grundy bowed again gallantly. There was a sudden startling sound.

—Ri-i-ip!

Grundy's face went suddenly scarlet. He straightened himself with a jerk, and his hand went convulsively to the seat of Wilkins' trousers.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Grundy in dismay.

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

"Split your bags, Grundy?" chuckled Tom Merry.

"I thought he would!" gurgled Lady Peggy.

Grundy glared at the shrieking juniors. He turned a sickly smile upon Lady Peggy.

"It's n-nothing!" stammered Grundy.

Fortunately, Gunn's coat covered the damage done to Wilkins' trousers. But it was with very uneasy gait that George Alfred Grundy strutted off beside the grinning group as they resumed their walk.

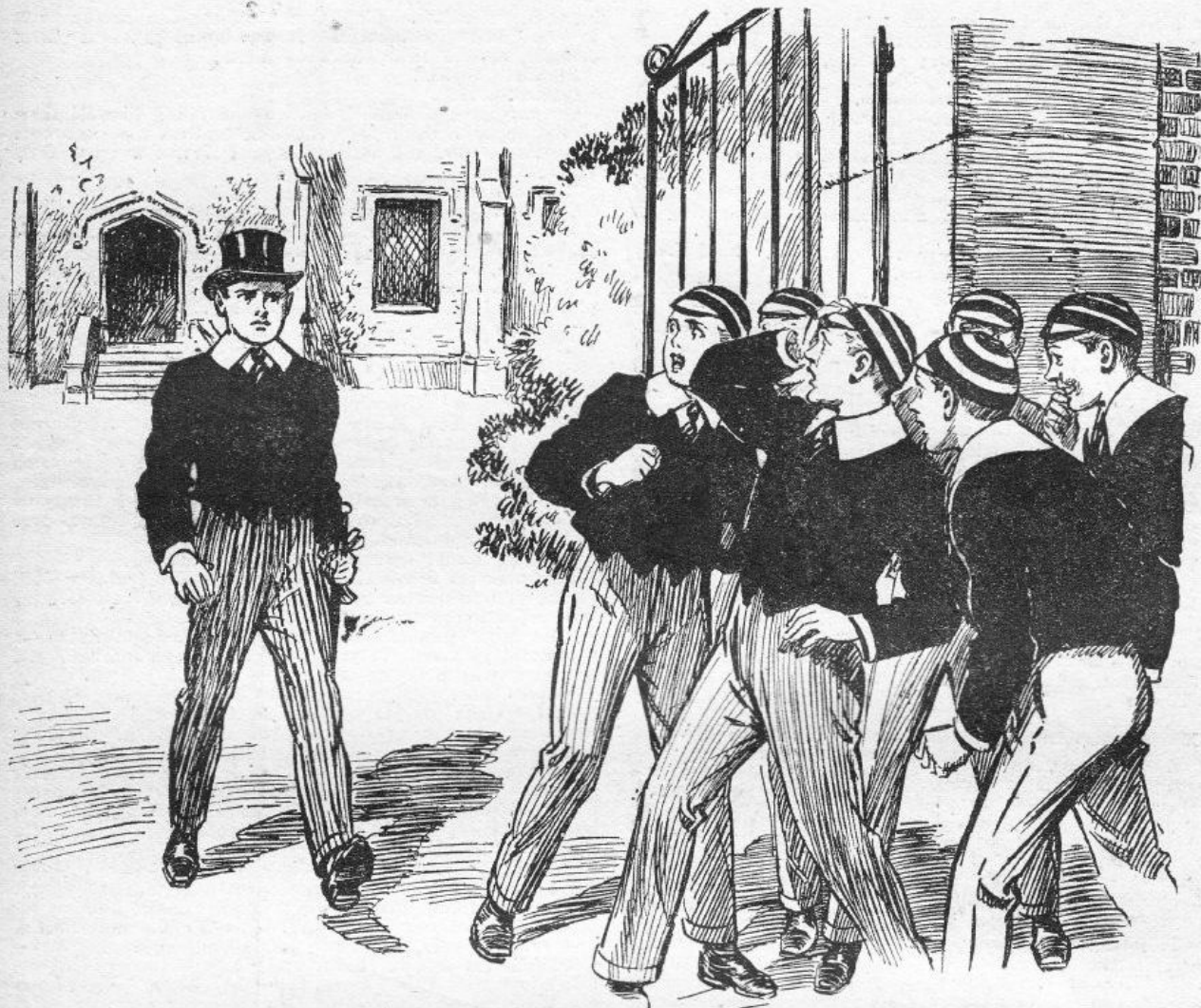
It did not take him long, however, to recover his confidence.

He noticed that all three girls were smiling at him—particularly Lady Peggy. Grundy took this for a proof of his fascination, and he promptly sailed in and monopolised the conversation.

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THE FOURTEENTH

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come, Boys!



The fags round the gates stared in amazement at the approaching figure of Grundy. "My only Aunt Sempronia!" ejaculated Wally D'Arcy. "Look at this! It's Grundy. All dressed up and nowhere to go!" "Ha, ha, ha!" Grundy frowned as he drew near the group of grinning Third-Formers. (See Chapter 1.)

The other juniors let Grundy talk. Grundy's conversation was often boring, particularly when he was talking about himself, as he was now. But sometimes he was amusing, though he himself did not realise that fact. And the juniors thought that he was very amusing now!

In an unbroken stream, Grundy explained carefully that he was the finest cricketer in the junior school, that he was the best all-round athlete, that he could knock the stuffing out of anyone in the boxing-ring, and that Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, was only too glad to ask his advice on most subjects. Grundy did not say that in so many words, but he implied it; and the juniors had difficulty in keeping their mirth silent.

Ethel and Doris were smiling. Lady Peggy stared at Grundy wide-eyed.

"My hat!" she murmured. "I wonder they don't make you captain of the school right away."

"Ahem!" Grundy smirked, well-pleased. He had evidently succeeded in impressing Lady Peggy with his wonderful abilities—a thing which Grundy found curiously difficult with most people. "As a matter of fact, Lady Peggy, I scarcely like to remove poor old Kildare from his job," he murmured in an undertone that was safe from the ears of the other juniors. "He'd be so cut up, you know. No, I couldn't bag old Eric's job."

"I see," nodded Lady Peggy solemnly, her wide eyes upon Grundy. "But it must be ripping to be as clever as you! Fancy being the finest cricketer and footballer and swimmer and gymnast and runner and—and—let me see, what else?"

"I'm pretty good at wrestling, too," murmured Grundy. "And rowing. Of course, it's not my way to swank, but I suppose I could row for Cambridge any day, if only I happened to be at Cambridge."

Lady Peggy gasped.

"Crumbs!" she ejaculated. "Could you really?"

Grundy smirked. That he had made a terrific impression on the new Spalding Hall girl he had no doubt. It would

have been a big surprise for him, however, to have been able to read Lady Peggy's actual thoughts.

By now, Grundy had succeeded in elbowing his way between Blake and Lady Peggy. Blake glared at him. The other juniors were still grinning, but Blake no longer saw the joke. He was getting annoyed.

"You cheeky ass!" whispered Blake hotly. "What do you mean by squashing in between me and Lady Peggy? Hop it!"

Grundy heard the indignant whisper, but he pretended not to. He tucked Wilkins' stick jauntily under his arm, and flicked a speck of dust off Gunn's coat with one of Gunn's gloves, as he strutted along at Lady Peggy's side.

That she was pulling his leg in pretending to swallow all his wonderful information about himself, he never dreamed. He took the dancing gleam in her eyes for the light of admiration. Actually, it was the light of suppressed amusement. Lady Peggy was certainly enjoying Grundy's company, but not exactly in the way that the great George Alfred imagined!

"Fancy being good enough to row for Cambridge!" murmured Lady Peggy dreamily.

"What?" howled Blake.

"Ahem!" Grundy coughed. He had not intended the juniors to hear of that modest claim of his. Even Grundy was not perfectly sure that he was really good enough for that; nearly good enough, of course, but perhaps not quite. "Ahem! Ye-e-es, Lady Peggy, I—"

"You dummy!" snorted Blake. "You couldn't row a boat across a pond!"

Blake's annoyance at the calm way in which Grundy had usurped the place of honour at Lady Peggy's side had put him out of the mood for letting Grundy ramble on unchecked. He glared at the great George Alfred.

"You couldn't row a blessed box across a bath!" growled Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"Br-r-r!" Blake did not want a row in the presence of

the girls. But he was determined to make Grundy eat his words. "If you're so jolly clever at rowing, I'll take you on at a rowing match any day you like, and beat you to a frazzle, you dummy!" he chuckled.

Grundy frowned a majestic frown.

"I could wallop you at rowing, with one oar!"

"Good! We'll try it," said Blake cheerfully.

The other juniors chuckled. Grundy might believe himself to be something of a budding champion at sculling, but in the opinion of his fellow juniors he was likely to provide a good deal of amusement in attempting to demonstrate the fact.

"The race ought to be worth watching," said Lady Peggy, with a thoughtful smile. "My hat, yes!"

She winked at Ethel and Doris, unseen by Grundy. Ethel and Doris smiled. They quite agreed that the sight of Grundy in a rowing match should be well worth watching.

Grundy, however, mistook Lady Peggy's meaning—as she had intended that he should. He smirked.

"I fancy it will be worth watching!" he agreed loftily. "Rather! Not that there'll be any doubt as to the result, of course—"

"You mean, Blake's bound to win?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"No!" roared Grundy, glaring at the fat New House man. "I shall win, of course, you footling ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors chuckled softly. They did not agree with Grundy!

But they were growing a little tired of the great George Alfred now. Grundy was all very well for a short time, for amusement's sake. But they did not want him to accompany them all the afternoon, by any means.

"Can't we get rid of the ass?" whispered Monty Lowther to Blake.

"Wish we could!" grunted Blake.

Monty Lowther gave a sudden chuckle. An idea had come to him. He tapped Grundy on the arm.

"Have you told the girls how good you are at jumping?" he inquired gravely. "You're such a ripping jumper, you know."

"Ahem!" Grundy smiled loftily. "No, I forgot to mention it. But I am, of course."

Monty Lowther turned to Ethel & Co.

"Yes, Grundy is a marvellous jumper," he went on solemnly. "Terrific! See that ditch at the side of the road there? Old Grundy could jump that easily."

"Of course I could!" nodded Grundy unsuspectingly.

The juniors suddenly grinned as they tumbled to Monty Lowther's idea. So did Lady Peggy.

"You really could jump that ditch?" she ejaculated.

It was a wide ditch, and filled with muddy water. It would need a good athlete to clear it. But Grundy nodded proudly.

"I could hop over that on one foot, I dare say."

"Good 'gg!" cried Lady Peggy admiringly. "Let's see you do it."

"Eh?"

"Let's see you jump it!" commanded Lady Peggy. "I should love to see you!"

The little party halted. Grundy coughed. He eyed the ditch doubtfully. It was wider than he had thought.

"Ahem! I—I—"

"Funking it?" inquired Blake.

"No!" roared Grundy.

"Go on, then!" grinned Manners. "Let's see you jump it, Grundy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hem! You see—"

"I believe you do funk it, after all!" cried Lady Peggy, shaking her pretty head sadly. "I'm surprised at you!"

"Oh dear!"

Grundy looked at the ditch, then he looked at Lady Peggy. He eyed the ditch again, and then glared at the grinning juniors and breathed hard.

Lady Peggy's eyes were fixed on him brightly. Grundy smiled a sickly smile.

"Very well," he said feebly. "It's nothing to me, anyway!"

The great George Alfred saw that it was impossible for him to decline to accept the challenge without the wonderful impression he had made on Lady Peggy being ruined in a moment. He glared defiantly at the grinning juniors.

"If you asses think I can't do it—"

"Show us you can, old chap!" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

"I will, by Jove!" roared Grundy.

He clutched Wilkins' stick tightly in one hand and Gunn's gloves in the other. With a grim determination in his rugged face Grundy hurled himself across the road with a rush and sprang into the air.

It was a terrific spring that Grundy gave, but it was scarcely the nimble leap of an athlete. It was more like

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,118.

an elephant on a hot plate than anything else, according to Monty Lowther afterwards. It was by no means a clever enough leap to clear the wide ditch!

Splash! Swish!

"Yarooogh!"

Grundy gave a fiendish howl as he found himself short of the opposite bank. He vanished beneath the surface of the slimy water, and Wilkins' topper floated away merrily upside-down.

"Gerrooooh!"

Grundy's head reappeared with a gasping gurgle.

Ethel and Doris gave little cries of alarm. The St. Jim's juniors and Lady Peggy shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's head and shoulders, festooned with water-weed, protruded from the muddy depths, and Grundy gave vent to a series of remarkable gurgling noises.

"Ooooh! Yugh! Groooooossh! Yah! Gug-gug-gug!"

Grundy blinked at the juniors, still doubled up with mirth, and choked.

"Oh, crumbs! Groooh!"

Blake and Tom Merry hurried across to the ditch, and with helping hands assisted Grundy to drag himself, spluttering and gurgling, from the water. Fatty Wynn rescued the floating cane, and with it fished the soaked remains of Wilkins' topper from the ditch, and dropped it neatly on Grundy's head. Its watery contents streamed down over Grundy's face in muddy streaks.

"Oh, my aunt!" groaned Grundy miserably.

He squelched across the road towards the Spalding Hall girls. They retreated hastily. In his present state Grundy was not a fellow to be near.

"My hat!" gasped Lady Peggy. "You certainly are a wonderful jumper! If you play cricket and football, and row and swim and box and run as well as you can jump, you must be a giddy champion!"

And with a gurgle of helpless laughter Lady Peggy sat down on the grassy bank at one side of the road and gave way to peals of merriment.

All the strut and swagger had departed from Grundy already. But at the sudden realisation that Lady Peggy had been pulling his noble leg, Grundy went scarlet, then purple. He tried to speak, but words failed him. He glared at the chortling juniors and turned away.

Dripping with mud and slime, George Alfred Grundy crept from the scene, for once a really humiliated figure. It was not likely that Grundy would remain humble for long—that was not his nature. But for the moment, at any rate, Grundy felt worth less than twopence.

Tom Merry & Co., Blake, and Fatty Wynn strolled on, chuckling, with Ethel, Doris and Lady Peggy. They were not likely to be troubled by Grundy any more that afternoon. Grundy was squelching homewards towards St. Jim's.

By the time he reached the school most of the mud had dried on him in cakes. He looked anything but the elegant figure that had sauntered out of gates an hour or so before.

A terrific yell of laughter from a number of Shell fellows gathered in the quad greeted his appearance.

"It's Grundy!" gasped Talbot. "Ye gods and little fishes!"

"He's been in a ditch or something!" ejaculated Gore.

"Go hon!" grinned Figgins, of the New House, who was with the group. "Been fishing for tadpoles, Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared, but passed on. All he wanted was a change into dry clothes at the moment. He crawled up the steps of the School House and almost ran into two fellows crossing the hall. They stared at Grundy and their jaws dropped.

They were Wilkins and Gunn. And at sight of Grundy's parlous condition, the mud that caked him and the dreadful state of his clothes—or, rather, their clothes—they could scarcely speak.

"You—you—you—" hooted Wilkins.

"Look at my coat!" shrieked Gunn.

"Look at my bags!" howled Wilkins. "And my topper!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Grundy. "Don't start on that again! You can have your rotten clothes back if you're so blessed keen to!"

Grundy strode on towards the stairs. It was too much for Wilkins and Gunn. They fell upon Grundy and seized him, and whirled him out of the doorway and rolled him down the steps. Grundy bumped from step to step and landed with a crash at the bottom, gasping, after which Wilkins and Gunn felt a trifle better.

For once Grundy was too disheartened to hurl himself at his study-mates. He made no attempt to follow Wilkins and Gunn as they strode off, snorting. He simply crawled back into the House and up the stairs.

Grundy's gallant attempt to "cut out" Blake and Fatty Wynn with Lady Peggy had been a dismal failure indeed. He had had enough! It had brought nothing but disaster upon the great George Alfred Grundy!

CHAPTER 3.

Another Ducking for Grundy!

"READY, Grundy?"

It was after tea on the following evening. Grundy was alone in his study. There was a coolness between Grundy and his study-mates at present, and so Wilkins and Gunn had left Grundy to his own devices.

Grundy glanced up as that question was hurled at his head. He saw Blake standing in the doorway, with the faces of Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy crowding in the passage behind him.

Grundy was not feeling in a very good temper that day. He glared at Blake.

"Ready?" he growled. "What do you mean?"

"The rowing match!" chuckled Blake. "You said yesterday you'd take me on at rowing. Come along down to the river and give me that walloping you gassed about!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, adjusted his celebrated eyeglass and chuckled.

"Come on, Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"You can't get out of it now, deah boy!"

"Rather not!" chimed in Digby.

Grundy, to do him justice, had no inclination to avoid the match. He had forgotten about it, that was all. With his amazing belief in his own extraordinary abilities, Grundy felt sure he could beat Blake at sculling, and he jumped up with a sniff.

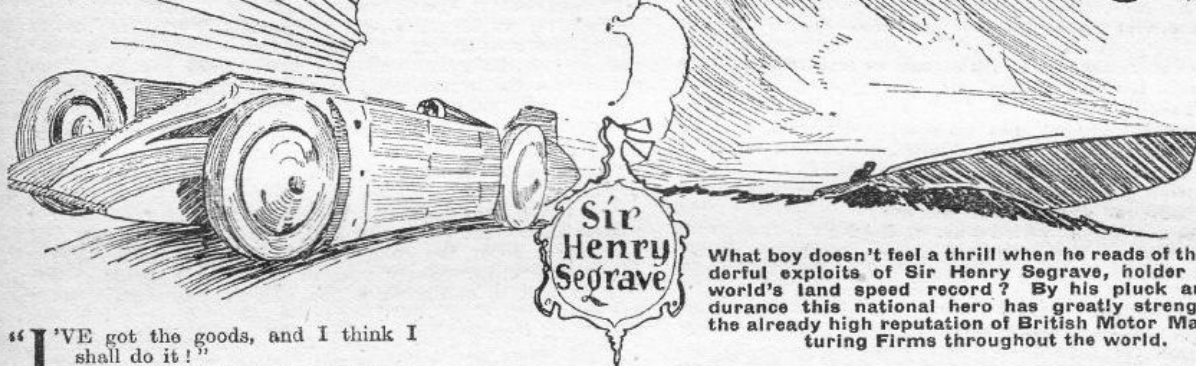
"Good!" he nodded. "I'll show you chaps how to row!"

Apparently the whole junior school knew of the proposed rowing match between Grundy and Blake, for a big crowd of grinning juniors joined them as they left the School House and set off in the direction of the boathouse.

"We ought to have an umpire," grinned Blake.

(Continued on next page.)

# Famous Daredevils!



What boy doesn't feel a thrill when he reads of the wonderful exploits of Sir Henry Segrave, holder of the world's land speed record? By his pluck and endurance this national hero has greatly strengthened the already high reputation of British Motor Manufacturing Firms throughout the world.

"I'VE got the goods, and I think I shall do it!"

Thus spoke Sir Henry Segrave, the famous British racing motorist, on the day he left for America to try and break the world's land speed record of 207.55 m.p.h., then held by Ray Keech.

He did do it! In his wonder car, the "Golden Arrow," as all you fellows know, he travelled faster on land than anyone had ever gone before—231.36 m.p.h. to be exact. Once again he risked his life in the realms of high speed. Once again he won through and returned in triumph to England to be knighted by the King for his great deed. His amazing achievement put Britain's motoring stock, cars and men on a higher and prouder plane than it had ever been.

Sir Henry Segrave is the greatest daredevil of the motor-racing world. At Daytona, at Brooklands, in the world-famous Grand Prix, and in scores of road races in all parts of the globe, Segrave has fought with Death and won through times out of number.

His hazardous life as a professional racing driver commenced soon after he came back from the War, firmly resolved to make his mark in the realms of high speed.

First he bought an old, four-cylinder Opel, with which he won a number of races at Brooklands, and also appeared in the Southend and Southport speed trials.

Soon Segrave got his great chance! The Sunbeam Company entered five cars for the famous French Grand Prix of 1921, to be held at Le Mans. Segrave was allowed to take the wheel of one of these cars, on the understanding that if he managed to complete the stipulated number of laps within the time limit, he would be given a trial in the racing team.

He succeeded in finishing seventh, in spite of innumerable difficulties, trials, and tribulations. For one thing, the road surface was so bad that tyre troubles were legion, and Segrave was obliged to change

wheels no less than fourteen times, with the aid of his mechanic, Moriceau, who later won fame as a driver.

Again, a flying stone fractured the oil tank, while another stone, flung up by a car just in front, smashed through the wire gauze and steel scoop, which was supposed to act as a windscreen, hit the steering wheel, and ricocheted straight at Moriceau's head, knocking him out and inflicting several nasty cuts.

That was Segrave's first step on the ladder of fame! Since then he has experienced many narrow escapes in the pursuit of his hazardous profession.

For instance, in 1923, he escaped disaster and death by a veritable hair's breadth. The incident occurred during the Coupe des Voiturettes, more familiarly known as the Light Car Grand Prix, at Boulogne.

The course was of a decidedly switchback nature, and while travelling at 105 m.p.h., Segrave noticed that at the bottom of one decline the road surface changed from tar macadam to granite.

At such a high speed it was dangerous to take the new surface anything but dead true. Too late, Segrave realised he couldn't. The front wheels slanted across the granite, skidded the car right round, and plunged her helter-skelter towards the telegraph posts at the side of the road.

It seemed all up!

Segrave's mechanic was getting ready to jump for his life, when, by some miraculous means, the tail of the car clipped one of the telegraph posts, which righted her, and sent her roaring ahead along the road, just as if nothing had occurred.

Segrave summed up the incident in a book he afterwards wrote, in these words: "In this race I had the narrowest shave that I have ever known in my whole racing career."

Another narrow squeak was during the Spanish Grand Prix at San Sebastian in

July, 1926. Segrave was travelling at over 100 m.p.h. on the sixth lap when he noticed that one of the front wheels was slewing upwards in a most peculiar manner.

He slowed slightly, but was still doing 90 m.p.h., when the front axle broke. Down came the engine bang on to the road, the wheels nowhere, and the car skidded along for about a hundred yards, tearing up the surface as she went.

Luck was on Segrave's side, however, for he only received a heavy shaking.

Motor-racing has its humorous side, as is illustrated by the following story.

During speed trials at Southport in 1926, Segrave, having completed the distance over which he was being unofficially timed, removed his foot from the throttle in order to slow down, but found that something had jammed, and that the car was still getting her full supply of juice.

In an instant he groped for the dashboard switch to cut off the ignition. But the position of the former had been changed by his mechanics some hours before, without his knowledge. By the time Segrave had discovered the switch, the car had gone two more miles than was necessary.

Along came an autograph hunter and general "nosey-parker," directly after the trial, and asked Captain Irving, the famous designer of the "Golden Arrow," why Segrave was unable to locate the switch.

Irving kept a perfectly straight face.

"Well, it was like this!" he said solemnly. "Major Segrave managed to get out his little book of instructions, but, unfortunately, pages 123 and 124, indicating the position of the switch, were stuck together!"

"I see!" said the inquirer, putting it all down in his book, and went away perfectly satisfied.

(Next week our special contributor deals with Buffalo Bill, the famous Wild West scout.)

"If you like," nodded Grundy. "We shan't need one, really, because I shall win comfortably: but we will, if you like."

Blake turned to Tom Merry, with a grin, and the captain of the Shell agreed readily enough to umpire the match.

Accordingly, Tom Merry, together with Monty Lowther and Manners, took out a boat in which to follow the race when the party arrived at the boathouse. The rest of the juniors gathered along the tow-path, yelling humorous encouragement to Grundy.

The course fixed for the race was from the boathouse to an old, empty house standing beside the river half a mile from the school—a grim-looking old mansion called River Grange.

Blake and Grundy, in their shirtsleeves, each seated in a light rowing-boat of similar design, were pushed out into the river for the start. Tom Merry, standing in the boat behind them, lifted his handkerchief.

"Ready, you chaps?"

"Let her go!" grinned Blake.

Tom Merry brought the handkerchief down with a sweep of his arm, and the rival oarsmen dipped their blades into the water.

Blake was grinning as he got away easily and smoothly. He was determined to make Grundy eat his words of yesterday regarding his skill with the oars. But there was a look of grim determination on Grundy's face as he lashed out with his oars, splashing water in all directions. He shot off in a wild zigzag towards the bank.

Crash!

Grundy had rammed the bank. He went sprawling into the bottom of the boat with a yell.

"Oh! Yarooogh!"

Grundy struggled back into his seat breathlessly, looking thoroughly astonished. Talbot, chortling, pushed his boat out into the stream again, with a hefty shove. The great George Alfred glanced up the river, and his face went grim as he saw how far ahead Blake had got.

"Buck up, Grundy!" yelled Kerr of the New House, from the bank. "You'll need a motor-boat to catch up, if you aren't careful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

"I'll soon catch him up!" spluttered Grundy. "You can bet on me!"

Splash!

Grundy lashed the water with his oars, and the boat shot across the river. There was a bump and a thud as he charged the opposite bank.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Grundy, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The onlookers yelled and shrieked. Tom Merry & Co., in the boat behind, were doubled-up with laughter, too. Grundy turned a red face towards them.

"This boat's badly built," he explained breathlessly. "It won't keep straight!"

He shoved off with an oar, and once again he dipped his oars into the water, more cautiously this time. With wild zigzags the boat went careering up the river at last in pursuit of Blake's.

"Now we're off!" grinned Tom Merry. "Pull, ye giddy mariners!"

Splashing and puffing, Grundy tugged at the oars. Now and then he missed the water altogether with the blades. He kept on, however, narrowly missing either bank from time to time.

"Grundy's catching so many crabs he could set up a blessed fish-shop!" chuckled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's efforts as an oarsman were certainly weird and wonderful.

The crowd of juniors running along the towpath beside him were soon breathless with laughing. So were Tom Merry & Co. in the boat behind. Blake, a good distance ahead, and holding his lead easily, was taking things leisurely in order to enjoy the sight of Grundy's antics. There was a broad grin on the face of the leader of the Fourth. Even Grundy would not be able to boast of his prowess as an oarsman after this!

Crash!

Grundy had charged the bank again. He pushed off, and nearly lost his oar in doing so. Soon after that he caught a crab with both oars simultaneously, and went sprawling on his back in the bottom of the boat. One of the oars slipped from his grasp, and went floating down-stream, to be rescued by the grinning Tom Merry, who duly returned it to Grundy.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Grundy. "I—I say, these oars must be short! They're always missing the water!"

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

"What are you cackling at?" hooted Grundy wrathfully.

"The thing is," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle,

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,118.

"the water's not high enough for you. That's why you miss it most of the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy snorted, and plunged the blades in once again, struggling on in pursuit of the leisurely-rowing leader of the Fourth.

Weak with laughter, most of the onlookers had been unable to run any farther, and had dropped out. But there were still one or two fellows on the towpath enjoying the sight of Grundy's style of oarsmanship. At the next bend in the river, however, the towpath ceased, and the great race had to continue without an audience, except for Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners in the boat behind.

But it was quite certain that the other fellows had already seen enough for Grundy never to hear the last of it.

"Buck up, Grundy!" sang out Tom Merry. "You're getting licked!"

"Rats!"

Grundy put his back into it, and the water flew in clouds around him. In the distance the dark pile of River Grange came into view among the trees.

There was a sudden, unexpected sound from behind the boat containing Tom Merry & Co. Tom glanced back, and gave a gasp.

A motor-boat was racing towards them at a tremendous pace, shooting high walls of spray on either side of its knife-edge bows.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom sharply. "Look out!"

Manners, at the oars, did not need telling. He hastily swung the boat aside, in towards the bank. With a roar and a rush the motor-boat shot past. They just had time to glimpse the square head of the man on board it before the boat had raced by.

"The silly ass!" cried Manners hotly. "Fancy scoting along at that speed in a narrow river!"

"Look out, Grundy, you ass!" shouted Tom Merry quickly.

The motor-boat had shot past Grundy, and by now had passed Blake, too. But the high wash from it was sending big waves from the centre of the river to either bank. Manners had turned the nose of Tom Merry & Co.'s boat into it, and so had escaped being upset. But Grundy was not so skilful.

Grundy gave a yell as the heavy wash smote him broadside-on. The boat rocked, and Grundy toppled sideways. The next moment Grundy was in the river, splashing and gurgling.

"Poor old Grundy!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The chap in that motor-boat needs a good ticking-off!" grunted Tom Merry.

Grundy managed to haul himself back into his boat without assistance, and his face was a picture.

"Finishing the race?" grinned Manners.

"No!" roared George Alfred Grundy. "Blow the blessed race! Br-r-r!"

With his drenched clothes clinging to him, Grundy turned the boat and pulled off down-stream, with feelings too deep for words. He vanished round the bend, still catching crabs and splashing tremendously as he went. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

But they could not help feeling sorry for Grundy this time. His upsetting as a result of the motor-boat had been bad luck, and they felt thoroughly indignant with the cause of it.

The motor-boat had vanished now into the mouth of a backwater just beyond River Grange. Tom Merry turned a grim face to Manners and Lowther.

"I vote we follow the rotter!" he exclaimed. "He can't get far in a backwater, and he ought to be told not to travel in this narrow river at that speed!"

"Good egg!" nodded Manners. "We'll tick him off! He jolly nearly upset the lot of us!"

Tom Merry took a couple of oars from the bottom of the boat, and he and Manners between them sent the boat fairly shooting up-stream. Blake, who had also been nearly overturned, snorted an indignant snort, and agreed readily to their plan of following the motor-boat in order to tell its driver what they thought of him.

Mooring his boat under the willows at the edge of the river, Blake joined Tom Merry & Co. in the other boat, and, with Tom and Manners at the oars, the four St. Jim's juniors turned into the backwater in search of the motor-boat.

To their right, the gaunt outline of River Grange rose among the trees. It was a gaunt, forbidding building even in the evening sunlight. Tall trees grew close around it, and the gardens were a tangle of overgrown branches and rank weeds. The house had been unoccupied for years.

To the surprise of the juniors, the backwater turned sharply and entered the gardens of the house, past an ancient board, labelled "Private!" in dingy letters.



"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "That chap in the motor-boat must have gone in there!"

"But it's an empty house!" muttered Tom, in astonishment. "Queer, isn't it?"

"Jolly queer!" nodded Manners.

The churned state of the weed floating on the surface of the water was proof enough that the motor-boat had, indeed, been taken into the grounds of the River Grange. Though why a motor-boat should go to the empty house was a mystery that puzzled the juniors.

Merry and Manners dipped their oars into the dark water, and the boat with the four juniors on board glided noiselessly past the forbidding notice-board into the dim, shadowy light beneath the over-arching trees and entered the grounds of the old riverside house.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### The Mystery Man!

"LOOK!"

The boat had glided out from under the trees to the edge of a rank, overgrown lawn that sloped down from the walls of the house. Blake had flung out a pointing hand.

"Show us if you can jump that ditch," chuckled Fatty Wynn. Grundy looked grim, and made a rush forward, keen to show what a great fellow he was before Lady Peggy. But Grundy's spring did not carry him over the ditch. Instead, he landed right in the muddy water. (See Chapter 2.)



A man could be seen crossing the lawn from an old boat-house, where, without doubt, the motor-boat that had upset Grundy and almost upset Tom Merry & Co. as well, was now lying. And Tom Merry recognised the man in an instant, as being the fellow who had been at the wheel of the racing craft.

"That's the chap!" breathed Monty Lowther.

Then the juniors jumped.

A dark doorway, half-hidden by overgrown bushes, was opposite them across the lawn—the doorway for which the man was evidently making. As they watched, a huge form came bounding out—a great mastiff. The dog barked as if in welcome to the man on the lawn. Then, catching sight of the juniors, it stopped dead, glaring across towards

them. It gave a deep-throated snarl, and the man turned his head sharply.

At sight of the boat with the four juniors the man started and frowned. Again the dog snarled menacingly.

"Quiet, Caesar!" commanded the man.

He strode down the sloping lawn, and halted on the bank. His face was dark as he stood surveying the four juniors, with the dog beside him.

"What are you youngsters doing here?" he exclaimed roughly.

He was a powerfully-built individual, with a broken nose,

and looked something like a professional pugilist. His eyes were gleaming angrily.

Tom Merry & Co. faced him coolly enough.

"We want a word with you!" said Tom Merry curtly. "You upset a pal of ours just now, and jolly nearly upset us, racing up the river at that dangerous speed!"

"Did I?" returned the man. "Well, anyway, you've no right here! This is private ground, and the backwater is private. Didn't you see the notice?" His eyes fell on their school caps. "Don't they teach you to read at St. Jim's?"

"Look here—" began Blake hotly.

"Clear off, I tell you!" cut in the man sharply. "Get out of here quick!"

"I dare say we've as much right in here as you, anyway!" grinned Monty Lowther. "This is an empty house—"

"Get out!" shouted the man. "And don't come here again, or you'll regret it!"

The dog growled menacingly from the water's edge. The St. Jim's juniors were no cowards, but there was a dangerous look about the brute that made them feel they were glad there were several yards of water between them.

"Come on, you chaps!" muttered Tom Merry, with a shrug. "There's nothing to be gained by jawing, I suppose. We've told him what we came to tell him!"

He turned to the man on the bank. The other's evident anxiety to be rid of them puzzled the captain of the Shell.

"Next time you take out that blessed motor-boat of yours, keep to a decent speed-limit!" he exclaimed.

With that parting shot the St. Jim's juniors turned the boat and pulled away. A deep, savage barking followed them.

As they passed under the dark over-arching trees at the mouth of the private branch of the backwater, Manners shivered suddenly.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed. "What a blessed eerie place! It gives you the giddy creeps, doesn't it, that house?"

"What the dickens is that chap doing there, with that whacking great mastiff, too?" muttered Blake. "If you ask me, there's something queer about it!"

"Wonder if he's got any right there?" said Tom Merry slowly. "He seemed jolly keen to get rid of us, anyway!"

"Perhaps he's the caretaker," suggested Monty Lowther. "It's a lonely house, and he might want a big dog with him, in case of tramps."

"He looked as if he could deal with a dozen ordinary tramps himself," chuckled Blake. "Did you see his fists and his broken boko? Looks like a blessed prize-fighter!"

Back in the main stream, Blake returned to his own boat, and the juniors pulled off down the river.

There were thoughtful looks upon the faces of them all.

The presence of the man with the broken nose at River Grange was certainly queer.

If the man was an ordinary caretaker, it was odd that he should own a powerful motor-boat. And there would have been no need for an ordinary caretaker to be so unusually anxious for the four juniors to go away, as this man had shown himself to be.

As they pulled back towards St. Jim's, however, the juniors little dreamed of the strange way in which that mystery was to deepen, or of the strange adventures that were to befall them in connection with the old riverside house!

## CHAPTER 5.

### Lady Peggy's Little Joke!

"COME on, Gussy!"

"Wats!"

Blake groaned.

It was the following Saturday, after dinner. It was an important day, for the school sports were taking place at Spalding Hall, and a number of St. Jim's juniors had planned to go over to watch. Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot of the Shell had just looked in to see if Blake & Co. were ready. But, apparently, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for one, was not.

"Buck up, Gussy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "That pair of gloves is good enough!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus had a box on the table, and the box was full of pairs of gloves. But apparently Arthur Augustus could not find a pair he fancied for the great occasion that afternoon.

"What's wrong with these?" hooted Blake, snatching up a pair at random and thrusting them under the swell of St. Jim's aristocratic nose.

"Pway do not woah at me, Blake! I wesent bein' woahed at!"

"Well, what's wrong with these blessed gloves?"

"Ewevythin', deah boy. There is a slight stain on the fingah of that one."

"These, then?"

"Wats! The colour is quite out of fashion," explained Arthur Augustus. "Pway do not be so impatient—"

Blake breathed hard and glanced significantly at the others. It was clear that Blake & Co. had no intention of waiting another moment for their aristocratic chum.

"Collar him!" growled Blake.

"On the ball!" grinned Herries.

"Yawoooooop!"

Arthur Augustus gave a howl as he was seized and whirled into the air by six strong pairs of hands.

"Yah! Yawooogh! Blake, you uttah wottah! You howwid boundahs! Leggo, you wuff wottahs!"

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But the "wuff wottahs" did not leave go. Holding the swell of St. Jim's firmly in their midst they carried him out into the passage despite his struggles, and away down the stairs. Swinging in mid-air like a sack of potatoes, Arthur Augustus yelled and roared.

"Stop that blessed row!" grinned Blake.

"Wats! I shall administah a fealful thwashin'—"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus yelled afresh as his elegant trousers met the stairs with a dull concussion. By now Blake was holding one arm, Tom Merry another, Talbot one of his ankles, and Digby the other ankle as they marched down the staircase.

"You uttah wottahs—"

Bump!

"Oh! Yawooogh! Leggo, or I shall administah—"

Bump!

Every time Arthur Augustus began his protests afresh he was bumped. And every time he was bumped Arthur Augustus yelled. He was bumped on almost every stair, and by the time he reached the bottom he realised that it was wiser to keep silent.

"Good! He's stopped gassing at last!" chuckled Blake.

"Never forget, Gussy, that silence is golden!"

"Blake, you fwabjous dummay—"

Bump!

"Yooch! Yah! Oh!"

After that Arthur Augustus kept silent as he was borne down the steps into the quad and across towards the gates. The sight of the swell of St. Jim's being carried by his four conquerors, so to speak, brought fellows hurrying up from all sides to see the fun. Arthur Augustus' crimson countenance, with his toppler tilted over one eye, brought a yell of mirth from the onlookers.

"Taking him away to bury him?" inquired Owen of the New House, with a chuckle. "Good men!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Owen—"

Bump!

"Yoooooch!"

"Do remember to stop jawing, Gussy," admonished Blake severely. "We love your dulcet tones, but 'nuff's as good as a feast!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

The procession, with Arthur Augustus swinging helplessly in their midst, passed out of the gates. By now Figgins & Co., of the New House, Levison and Clive, of the Fourth, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glynn, had attached themselves to the party—all of them intent upon going over to Spalding Hall to see the sports.

Not till he had been borne some distance down Rylcombe Lane—where it was unlikely that even Arthur Augustus would go back for his gloves—was the swell of St. Jim's set upon his feet. He glared at the grinning crowd surrounding him, with speechless fury.

"Gweat Scott! I'll slaughtah—"

"Not now, old chap!" chuckled Herries. "Wait till we get back from Spalding Hall."

And Arthur Augustus, realising that the odds were against him, decided that he had better postpone slaughtering anybody till later. Straightening his disarranged tie, and setting his toppler at a more correct angle, the swell of St. Jim's snorted and marched off with his nose in the air, the picture of icy aloofness. He was still breathing hard by the time the St. Jim's party arrived at Spalding Hall.

The green playing-fields of Miss Finch's establishment were gay with flags and pretty faces. Large numbers of relatives had arrived, and Ethel, Doris, and Lady Peggy greeted the St. Jim's juniors brightly.

"How nice of you all to come over!" exclaimed Ethel, with a warm glance at Figgins in particular.

"Rather not!" chuckled Figgins.

"We'll enjoy it no end," grinned Blake, moving to Lady Peggy's side.

"What do they have at girls' school sports?" inquired Levison of the Fourth, innocently. "Egg-and-spoon races, Doris?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" cried Doris Levison.

Lady Peggy glared at Levison.

"Rats!" she exclaimed hotly. "We'll show some of you how to run!"

"Rather!" laughed Ethel.

There was no denying that the Spalding Hall girls all looked very business-like in their running-kit, and when the races began the St. Jim's juniors saw some very good times being put up. Looking down their programme they saw that there was a visitors' race, and they grinned.

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll all go in for it, I suppose?"

"You bet," nodded Talbot. "I told the girls we would."

A race was just over, which, to the huge delight of the St. Jim's party, had been won by Ethel Cleveland. Ethel, Doris, and Lady Peggy joined the juniors. There were rather odd smiles on their faces.

(Continued on page 12.)

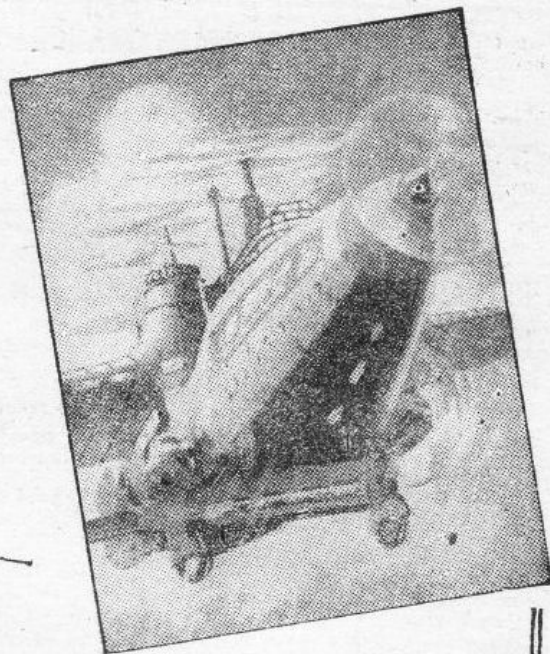
**WHAT NEW AND WONDERFUL MONSTER  
IS THIS ?**

I can imagine your exclamations when you look at the picture on the right. What is it ? Is it aeroplanes or flying submarine ? Actually it is a giant helicopter—such a machine as will be seen in the years to come !

Next week's Free picture card in our "Marvels of the Future" series will deal with the Helicopter. Be sure you do not miss it !



# MARVELS of the FUTURE !



## No. 15.—A Giant Helicopter.

**A** QUARTER of a century is only a "flea-bite" taken out of Time—and it is a good deal less than a quarter of a century since the first successful aeroplane flight was made in Britain. That 'plane managed to fly a quarter of a mile. Now huge, passenger-carrying air-liners fly for thousands of miles, and no one takes much notice of it.

As things are progressing at present, aeroplanes of the familiar type will be pushed right off the earth—and out of the skies—well within another quarter-century. For the helicopter has come !

The British Air Ministry has bought from an Italian inventor the plans for making one—a machine which has a body like that of an ordinary plane, but which can fly straight up into the air without a preliminary run, hover in space like a bird, and come down again on to the spot whence it arose !

It behaves like a lift—only it works at tremendous speed. If this startling invention stands up to its tests, very soon you will be able, if you can afford to purchase a small helicopter, to take to the air from your own backyard, or from the lawn, or from the roof (it would need to be flat, of course), and come down again, after the journey, into a space equally small—no larger than the machine itself !

Already plans are out for helicopters built on a really gigantic scale, able to fling a challenge at the last remnant of the laws of gravity and do practically what they like in the air ! The utmost speed to which the ordinary racing aeroplane can attain is reckoned as about 400 miles an hour. The giant helicopter of the future will know no speed limits, except where the power of its motors is concerned.

Passengers', drivers', and pilots' quarters will be completely shut in. The machine

will be an aerial submarine, so to speak—an air liner from which there is lacking no comfort known to mortal man.

Propellers worked by air-cooled motors will be fixed above the body of the machine itself, driven independently of the propellers that drive the helicopters along. They will be the lifting apparatus, and these propellers will whirl in opposite directions in order to keep the air liner from spinning round dizzily like a gigantic top—as it would otherwise be strongly inclined to do !

The air screw in the bow, and those on either side of the passenger-carrying body, low down on the hull, will get their power from an entirely separate engine and will be used to drive the helicopter along when the desired height has been reached with the aid of the lifting vanes.

When the pilot wants to stand still in the air, he will simply shut off the engine which provides the forward driving force, and the engine-driven vanes will hold the whole concern steady and motionless in space.

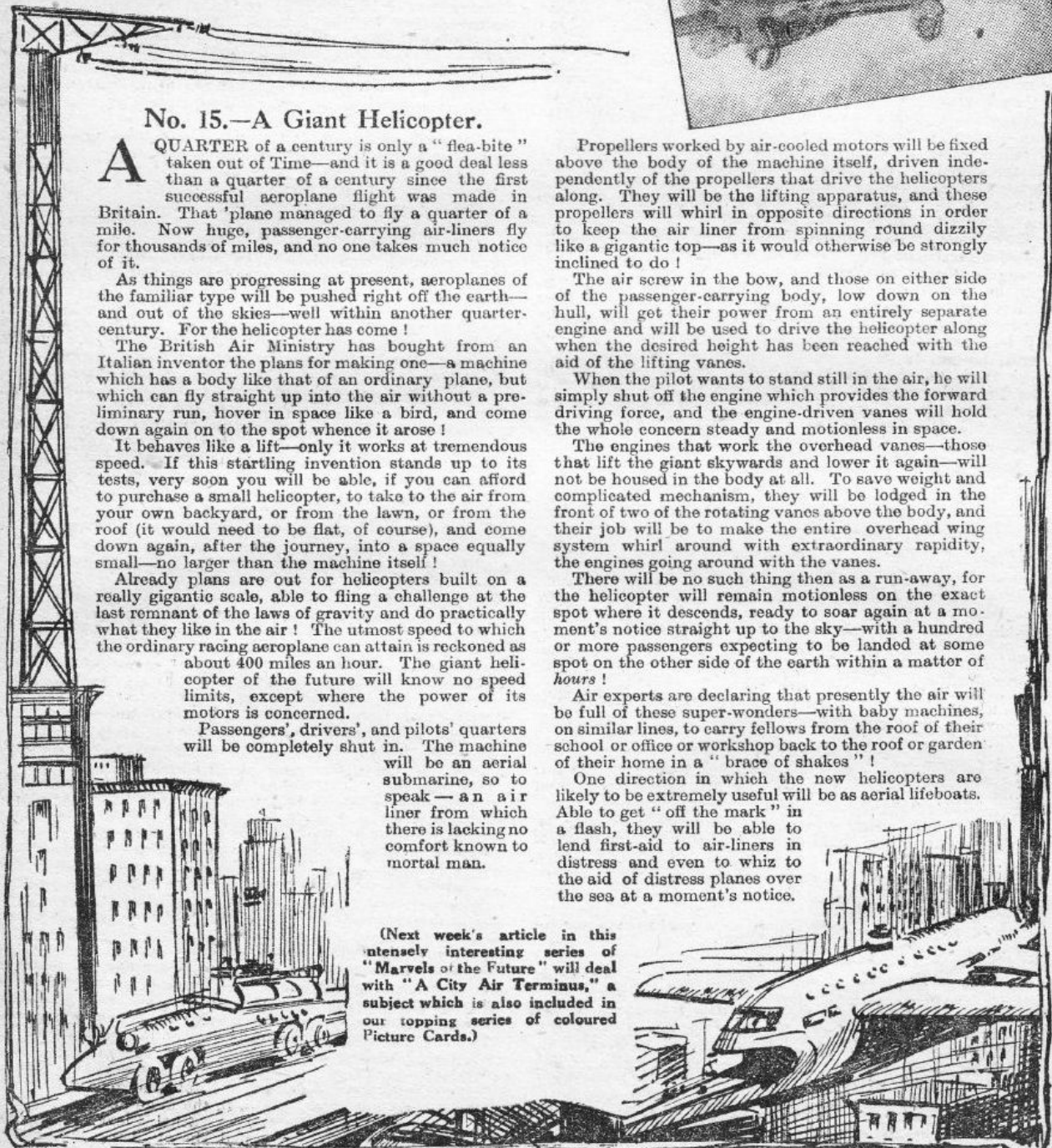
The engines that work the overhead vanes—those that lift the giant skywards and lower it again—will not be housed in the body at all. To save weight and complicated mechanism, they will be lodged in the front of two of the rotating vanes above the body, and their job will be to make the entire overhead wing system whirl around with extraordinary rapidity, the engines going around with the vanes.

There will be no such thing then as a run-away, for the helicopter will remain motionless on the exact spot where it descends, ready to soar again at a moment's notice straight up to the sky—with a hundred or more passengers expecting to be landed at some spot on the other side of the earth within a matter of hours !

Air experts are declaring that presently the air will be full of these super-wonders—with baby machines, on similar lines, to carry fellows from the roof of their school or office or workshop back to the roof or garden of their home in a "brace of shakes" !

One direction in which the new helicopters are likely to be extremely useful will be as aerial lifeboats. Able to get "off the mark" in a flash, they will be able to lend first-aid to air-liners in distress and even to whiz to the aid of distress planes over the sea at a moment's notice.

(Next week's article in this intensely interesting series of "Marvels of the Future" will deal with "A City Air Terminus," a subject which is also included in our topping series of coloured Picture Cards.)



## "THE MYSTERY OF RIVER GRANGE!"

(Continued from page 10.)

"I've just been talking to Miss Finch," announced Lady Peggy calmly, "about the visitors' race."

"Yes?" queried Tom Merry.

Lady Peggy glanced at Levison, and her eyes sparkled.

"I suggested that you kids might like one of these egg-and-spoon races you were talking about," she said, with a dancing gleam in her eyes. "Miss Finch thought it was a good idea. So your race is to be an egg-and-spoon race!"

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Levison.

Doris smiled at her brother sweetly.

"You can show us how to run in an egg-and-spoon race yourself, Ernest," she said gravely; though she was clearly trying hard not to laugh. "You'll like that, won't you?"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Levison, very red in the face.

The Spaldingites had taken a very neat revenge for his disparaging remark. Levison smiled ruefully, but the other juniors were looking a little blank.

An egg-and-spoon race was by no means the kind of race they felt suitable for themselves. But Talbot had already promised the girls that they would enter for the visitors' race, and it would look distinctly ill-humoured to back out now. They glared at Levison, whose unfortunate attempt to be funny had brought this fate upon their heads.

With a rustle of silk Miss Finch approached the group, beaming through her spectacles. The juniors raised their caps.

"Peggy tells me you would enjoy an egg-and-spoon race, my dear boys!" exclaimed the little headmistress of Spalding Hall brightly. "Splendid! It is all arranged. The race is to take place now. Will you go along to the starting-line?"

"Vewy well," gasped the swell of St. Jim's. But to Digby he whispered in horror-struck tones: "Bai Jove! An egg-and-spoon wace! Weally, Lady Peggy is twyin' to make us look widiculous, because of Levison's wemark, I suppose! Oh deah!"

"Oh, rats!" grinned Digby. "It'll be good fun! Come on!"

And the St. Jim's juniors set off rather self-consciously to the start, followed by the soft laughs of Ethel, Doris, and Lady Peggy Brooke!

### CHAPTER 6.

#### Mystery Again!

**T**HERE were rather sheepish grins on the faces of some of the St. Jim's juniors as they lined up for the egg-and-spoon race.

Most of them felt that it was decidedly undignified for them to run in a race of that description; but there was no help for it, unless they wished to appear churlish before the Spalding Hall girls. And some of them were grinning quite cheerfully. Tom Merry & Co. and Talbot, at any rate, thought that the race would be good fun.

But there was a very disconcerted look upon the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as, balancing his egg precariously in a spoon, he toed the starting line between Blake and Fatty Wynn.

"This is weally wathah infwa dig, deah boys," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "Howevah, we cannot wufuse the gals, I suppose—"

"Of course not, you dummy!" grunted Blake.

"Bai Jove! I wufuse to be called a dummay! I—"

Bang!

Arthur Augustus broke off as the starter's pistol cracked out. With a laughing cheer from the Spalding Hall girls lining the track, the St. Jim's party set off with their dangerously swaying eggs held before them. None of the other visitors had entered the race—it was a St. Jim's affair entirely.

"Go it, kids!" sang out Lady Peggy cheerily, her pretty face beaming with amusement.

Crash, crash, crash!

Eggs were dropping all along the line. Bernard Glyn and Digby, Manners and Clive were soon out of it, and retired red-faced from the track, leaving four broken eggs behind them. There was a shout of laughter from the Spaldingites.

There were only a hundred yards to cover, but the juniors soon found that under the circumstances it was anything but easy to get along!

Try as they would, those that tried to run fast could not keep their eggs from toppling out of the spoons, and Kangaroo, who had set out briskly and was well in the

lead, gave an exclamation of dismay as he saw his egg falling to the ground.

Crash! Smash!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the Australian junior, staring down blankly at the sticky yellow mess at his feet.

There was a very grim expression on the face of Jack Blake as he forged ahead.

Both Blake and Fatty Wynn had decided inwardly that since they were in the race, the least they could do was to win it! But Fatty Wynn was already far behind, rolling along a bad last. Blake, however, on the retirement of Kangaroo, was well to the fore. He chuckled inwardly. Here was a good chance to shine before Lady Peggy, at the expense of Fatty Wynn!

In a straggling crowd, the St. Jim's juniors hurried on, their eyes glued anxiously on their wobbling eggs. Tom Merry had dropped out, after his egg had fallen and smashed; so had Herries and Clifton Dane and Figgins. Only six were still in the running. Blake was leading well, then came Monty Lowther, Levison and Kerr in a bunch. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed, with his topper jammed tightly on his head, and his eye fixed glassily through his monocle upon the big white egg that rested in his wavering spoon. Last of all, the fat figure of David Llewellyn Wynn rolled slowly along, hot and gasping.

There was another crash, and Kerr retired, leaving his shattered egg on the ground. A moment or two later Levison and Monty Lowther also succeeded in upsetting their eggs, and there was a shout of laughter from the onlookers.

"Come on, you three!" cried Lady Peggy excitedly, as Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Fatty Wynn forged on.

"It's an easy win for Blake," grinned Tom Merry, who had joined Ethel & Co. "There goes Gussy's egg!"

Crash!

"Gweat Scott! Oh deah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus halted in dismay, and adjusted his monocle to stare down in great astonishment at the shattered ruin of what had been a perfectly good egg a moment before—or at any rate it had looked a perfectly good egg. But suddenly Arthur Augustus' face took on a sickly hue. He took out a silk handkerchief and crammed it hastily to his nose.

"Mmmmmmm! Gwooooh! Oh! Bai Jove—"

In utter horror the swell of St. Jim's surveyed the sticky remains at his feet. Then he tottered from the track.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors and the Spalding girls.

It was clear that the egg deposited by Arthur Augustus on the track had been anything but new-laid! It was quite a while before the swell of St. Jim's face resumed its normal hue.

Blake was nearing the finishing tape now, with a triumphant grin on his face. He glanced back, and chuckled as he saw the solitary figure of Fatty Wynn toiling after him, far behind. It was going to be a distinct triumph for Blake over his rival in front of Lady Peggy Brooke!

At least, Blake imagined it was going to be a triumph for him. But the best laid plans go wrong.

As the leader of the Fourth approached the tape, he tried to finish up in style with a spurt of speed. But that spurt was fatal! Suddenly the egg shot out of its spoon while Blake was still a couple of yards from the tape.

"Oh! Yarooogh!"

Blake had been close to the edge of the track, and the egg had jumped out of the spoon into the startled face of George Figgins, standing by the ropes. Figgins gave a howl as the yellow mess plastered over his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shout of laughter from the onlookers, Spalding girls and visitors and St. Jim's juniors alike; a laugh in which everyone but Figgins and Blake joined.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "Grooooh! Yummmmm!"

Blake's face was a picture of blank consternation. Victory had been snatched from his grasp!

Slow but sure, with a fat grin on his red face, Fatty Wynn rolled along to finish the course, bearing his egg in triumph to the tape! A terrific cheer greeted him. David Llewellyn Wynn chuckled.

"I fancy I win!" he remarked, with a triumphant glance at Blake.

"Good old Fatty!" cried Lady Peggy, and Blake grunted in great disgust.

Fatty Wynn picked his egg thoughtfully from the spoon and slipped it into his pocket.

"That'll do nicely for supper," he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins was pushing his way towards Blake, looking very red and wrathful. Traces of yellow were still to be seen in his ear.

"Blake, you cuckoo—" began Figgy hotly.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Blake, stepping back hastily.

There was a sudden yell from Fatty Wynn.

Blake had cannoned into him, and there had been a curious squelching sound from the pocket of the winner of the great egg-and-spoon race. Fatty Wynn's features took on a look of horror and dismay. He plunged a hand into his pocket, and when he took it out again his fingers were covered with sticky yellow.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

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

Already the yellow stain was beginning to soak through the pocket of Fatty Wynn's coat. But the juniors' laughter broke off abruptly. Hastily they crammed handkerchiefs to their noses.

"Oh! Whew!" gasped Tom Merry. "Ooooh! Get away, Fatty, for goodness' sake!"

The juniors broke and fled, leaving Fatty Wynn alone—very much alone! With a miserable countenance David Llewellyn rolled hastily away towards the school buildings, in search of sponge and water, taking the remains of his egg with him, to the relief of the others.

For the time being, David Llewellyn was not a fellow to be near.

Blake chuckled, and led Lady Peggy away in the direction of the refreshment tent. Tom Merry followed with Doris Levison, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Figgins shared between them the honour of escorting Ethel.

As they were about to enter the big marquee, Blake gave a sudden gasp, and stared across the grass to the railings that bordered the Spalding Hall playing-fields at that point. The figure of a man could be seen standing in the road, staring across towards them.

"Great pip!" breathed Blake. "Look!"

Tom Merry stared in the direction of Blake's gaze, and he, too, gave a quick exclamation.

The man watching them was the man whom they had seen at the mysterious River Grango.

"It's that chap with the broken nose!" ejaculated Tom.

"He seems uncommonly interested in us—"

He broke off, and glanced in sudden surprise at Lady Peggy.

The girl was staring at the man outside the railings with an almost startled look on her freckled face. It was clear that the sight of him was something of a shock to her, though what she could know of the man from River Grango was a bewildering question that startled Tom Merry.

The man seemed to realise that he was observed, so he turned abruptly and strode away, vanishing down the road. Lady Peggy stood as if riveted to the spot, staring after him as he disappeared. Then suddenly she turned away, and quickly entered the tent.

Blake and Tom Merry glanced at one another in utter amazement.

They had both noticed Peggy's queer behaviour at sight of the man in the road. But since she had offered no explanation, neither cared to refer to it.

But it was with wondering faces that Blake and the captain of the Shell followed, with Doris Levison, into the big marquee.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Struggle in the Wood!

"O F all rum things—"

"What the dickens does it mean?"

"It's a blessed mystery!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were strolling back to St. Jim's, and Blake and Fatty Wynn had joined them.

Fatty Wynn was bearing home in triumph the handsome fountain-pen that had been the prize for the egg-and-spoon race. But the pen was tucked away in his pocket, forgotten! The queer puzzle concerning Lady Peggy and the man from River Grango was occupying all Fatty Wynn's thoughts for the present, as it was with Blake and Tom Merry & Co.

The startled look upon Lady Peggy's face as she had stared through the railings at the man from the riverside house dwelt in their thoughts, bewildering them.

There was a troubled look in the faces of Blake and Fatty Wynn particularly. As Lady Peggy's especial chums, they were really deeply worried. That Lady Peggy knew something of the man was obvious. But the fact that she had declined to speak of him was so strange that the juniors could not help but believe that there was something wrong somewhere.

"It is jolly queer!" repeated Manners.

"I hope there's nothing wrong!" muttered Blake.

"Peggy looked so upset for a moment that—"

He broke off sharply.

The little party was passing by the edge of a wood, on the road across the moor. The rest of the St. Jim's juniors were a long distance ahead. The others knew nothing of

the queer happening that was puzzling Tom Merry & Co. and Blake and Fatty Wynn.

As the five juniors were passing the dark trees on their right, a sudden, startling cry had come to their ears from somewhere in the wood. Blake started into the trees, in startled amazement.

"Hear that?" he breathed. "What the thump—"

"Listen!" snapped Tom Merry.

From among the trees could be heard now the trampling of feet. From the sound of it a struggle of some kind was in progress. Again there was a breathless shout.

The St. Jim's juniors did not hesitate! Led by Tom Merry they plunged in among the trees. A few moments later they burst into a shadowy clearing, to find a startling sight awaiting them.

A man was being attacked by two others, and the former was none other than the mystery man from River Grango, the man with the broken nose.

He was lying on his back, pinned down by his two attackers, glaring up at them with helpless fury as one of them ran swift fingers through his pockets. Suddenly he caught sight of the five juniors at the edge of the clearing, and a gasping shout broke from him.

"Help!"

Even as he cried out, one of the attackers—a big, burly man, with a coat almost ripped from his shoulders in the struggle—gave an exultant exclamation. He straightened himself, and he held in his fingers a long blue envelope that he had snatched from his victim's inner pocket.

"Got it!" he cried.

The St. Jim's juniors hesitated no longer.

It was quite clear that the man from River Grango had been attacked with the purpose of robbing him of this blue envelope, and the juniors did not mean to let the two scoundrels get away with their capture if they could prevent it!

(Continued on next page.)



## Murdered for reading a Play

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"Come on!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Pile in, you chaps!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

In a solid bunch the five juniors rushed into the clearing.

The two mysterious attackers of the man from River Grange had released their man now, and were turning to bolt into the trees. One of them, a foxy-faced individual with glittering eyes, turned and lashed out savagely with his fist as Blake sprang at him, and the leader of the Fourth reeled back.

The man from River Grange was scrambling dazedly to his feet.

"The envelope!" he panted hoarsely. "Don't let them get away with it—"

The big man with the blue envelope in his hand was breaking into a swift run, out at the farther side of the clearing. Tom Merry sprang forward.

With an outstretched foot he tripped the fugitive up neatly, and the man went down. The envelope flew from his hand.

"Good lad!" gasped the man from River Grange.

But in another moment the big man was on his feet again. With an angry snarl, he stopped to snatch up the fallen envelope; but Tom Merry was too quick for him. He seized it, and sprang back. The man turned on him desperately, but the other juniors were racing up now, and the would-be thief saw that it was useless to hope to regain possession of the object that he evidently coveted.

Manners flung himself at the man in a desperate attempt to prevent his escape. But a smashing blow between the eyes dropped him to earth, and the next moment the fugitive was vanishing among the trees on the heels of the foxy individual, who had already made good his escape.

The man from River Grange was still dizzy from the blows he had received when attacked. The juniors themselves could never hope to overtake the long legged scoundrels disappearing into the heart of the wood.

"They've got away!" panted Fatty Wynn, in deep chagrin.

Monty Lowther was helping Manners to his feet. Manners grinned ruefully.

"Whew! That chap had a punch like the kick of a blessed mule!"

The juniors turned back into the clearing. Tom Merry held out the blue envelope he had rescued to the man from River Grange.

"This is yours, eh?" said the captain of the Shell quietly.

The man nodded, and crammed the envelope hastily into his pocket, with a breath of relief. He held out his hand to Tom Merry, with a grim smile.

"Shake, young 'un!" he muttered.

Tom Merry felt his hand gripped in a vice-like grasp.

"Those two hounds would never have got me down if they hadn't come up from behind," went on the man from River Grange. Again he smiled grimly. "Well, it was mighty lucky you youngsters turned up when you did! I seem to recognise most of you, too," he added. "Aren't you the boys I warned off from River Grange?"

"That's right," nodded Blake curtly.

Blake and Tom Merry & Co. had by no means forgotten the rough remarks they had received from the man they had now rescued! But now the rugged face of the mystery man from the riverside house broke into a grin.

"Well, I'm sorry if I gave you the rough side of my tongue that day young 'uns," he said awkwardly. "But, you see—well, visitors aren't wanted at River Grange!"

There was a grim significance in his voice that caused the juniors to glance at one another. The man's queer words bore out so strikingly their conviction that there was some mystery in connection with the old riverside house.

And again they wondered what possible connection there could be between this mysterious individual and Lady Peggy, of Spalding Hall!

It was on the tip of Blake's tongue to ask the man direct what he knew of Lady Peggy. But he checked the question on his lips.

It was no business of his. Lady Peggy had not chosen to explain her surprise at sight of this man earlier in the afternoon. So Blake felt that it was up to him to quash his curiosity.

But as the juniors and their burly companion strode together back to the road, the mystery of it all revolved in Blake's mind—this man and Lady Peggy, and the queer, blue envelope that the attackers had tried to steal. It was a baffling problem.

"Well, good-bye, young 'uns, and thanks again," muttered the man from River Grange, as they reached the road. "You've done me a real good turn I shan't forget in a hurry."

And with a nod the man turned and hurried away across the moor, leaving the five St. Jim's juniors staring after him in puzzled bewilderment.

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"What on earth does it all mean?" cried Blake.

But that was a question that neither Fatty Wynn nor Tom Merry & Co. could answer, and the little party turned with thoughtfully frowning faces in the direction of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

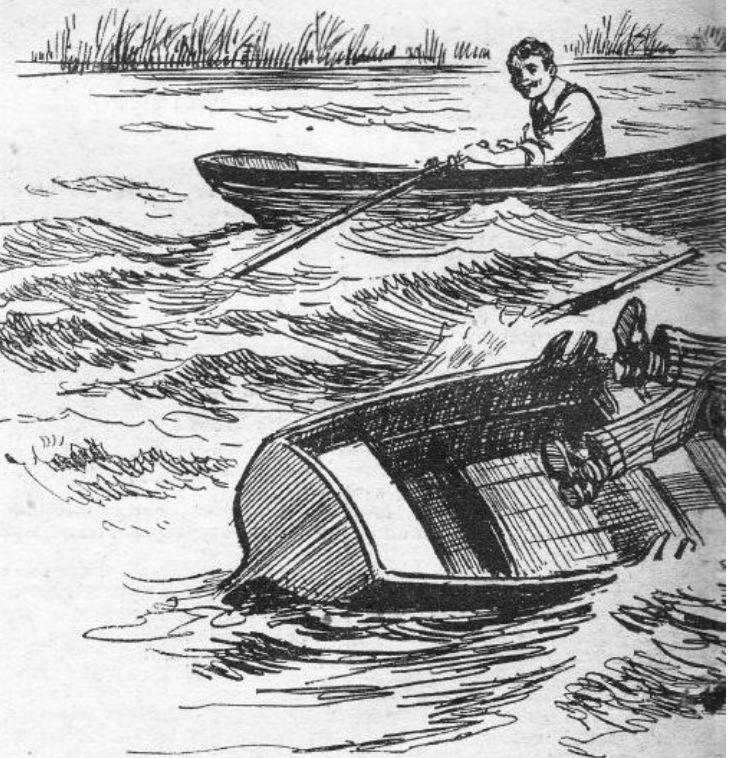
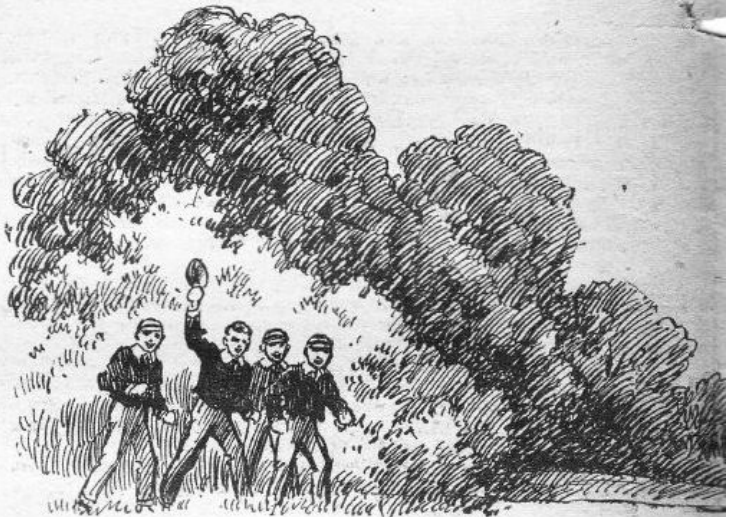
The Mystery Deepens.

"PUFFFFFF!"

It was Fatty Wynn who puffed.

David Llewellyn Wynn was clad in running-shorts and vest. But David Llewellyn was not running.

He had been running—hence his weary puffs. But the



Falstaff of the New House was by no means fond of running, and at last he had given it up as a bad job, and allowed the rest of the New House juniors in the cross-country run to vanish far ahead.

It was the Wednesday following the day of the Spalding Hall sports, and Figgins had organised a cross-country hare-and-hounds run for the New House. Figgins was one of the "hares," and Redfern was the other. Fatty had been a "hound." But now he was fed-up! The other hounds were still hot on the heels of the elusive hares, but so far as Fatty Wynn was concerned the whole thing was over.

"Grooooff!" gasped Fatty Wynn, mopping his moist forehead wearily. "Wuff! Oh, I'm puffed!"

He groaned as he realised that there was a mile or more separating him from St. Jim's—and Dame Taggles' little tuckshop! With weary steps, the Falstaff of the New House turned to plod off down the road, back the way he had come.

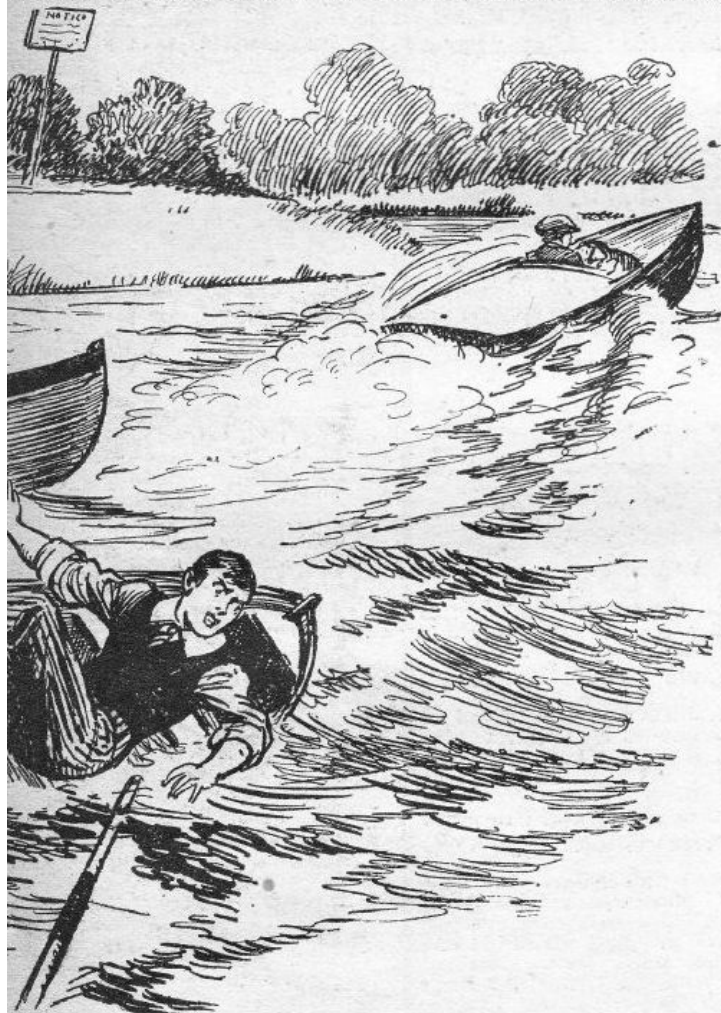
"Blow the blessed hares!" growled Fatty, as he limped along. "Groooh! Puff!"

Then suddenly his face brightened as an idea came to him. The road he was on led by the big estate of Colonel Bland, a crusty old gentleman who was one of the governors of St. Jim's. Fatty Wynn had noticed that the high fence beside the road was broken down at one point, as a result of some recent winds, and offered an easy access to the colonel's grounds. By cutting across the big estate Fatty Wynn could save a quarter of a mile at least on the road home.

It was true that Colonel Bland was liable to "cut up rough" when St. Jim's juniors were found trespassing on his land. There had been trouble over such little matters many times in the past, and many juniors had been "whacked" for taking the risk. But in his present weary state Fatty Wynn felt that the risk was well worth taking!

He peered cautiously round. There was no one in sight. A moment or two later the fat figure of David Llewellyn Wynn had crawled through the broken fencing into the trees of the colonel's estate, and was setting off warily in the direction of the school.

The motor-boat shot past Grundy, and he gave a yell as the heavy wash smote him broadside-on. The boat rocked, and Grundy toppled sideways. The next moment he found himself in the river! (See Chapter 3.)



He was in the heart of the forbidden territory when a sudden loud shout almost froze the blood in his veins.

"Good gad! What the deuce—" yelled a furious voice. "Oh, my hat!" breathed Fatty Wynn.

He turned his head and saw a red, choleric face glaring at him through the trees. It was Colonel Bland himself, and from the look upon his crimson countenance the gallant colonel seemed to be about to have a fit.

It was quite clear that it was the sight of Fatty Wynn that was troubling Colonel Bland! His eyes seemed almost to pop from their sockets as he glared across a dozen yards of intervening bushes at the fat figure of the Falstaff of the New House.

"A—a St. Jim's boy, begad!" hooted the colonel, brandishing a heavy-knobbed stick he carried. "Good gad! You young scoundrel! How dare you trespass here? You—you—"

The crusty old warrior broke off with an incoherent splutter, and came thundering through the bushes in the direction of David Llewellyn. David Llewellyn did not wait, however. He did not stand upon the order of his going, but went at once!

With a speed of which he had not known himself capable, Fatty Wynn bolted through the trees with the furious old gentleman hot upon his heels.

"Come back, you young scoundrel!" roared Colonel Bland in a breathless voice. "I'll teach you to trespass here!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Fatty Wynn, and doubled his efforts. He knew that a hogging would be his lot if he were caught—either at the hands of the angry old soldier, there and then, or at the hands of Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, when he was hauled up before him by his captor!

But Fatty Wynn did not mean to be caught. Colonel Bland might have been an excellent soldier, but he was certainly no champion of the racing-track! Neither was Fatty Wynn, for that matter, but at any rate he could give points to Colonel Bland, spurred on as he was by the prospect of the results if he failed to escape.

Twisting and doubling through the trees, Fatty Wynn plunged wildly on, with the furious snorts of the colonel gradually receding into the distance behind him.

But he was not out of danger yet, by any means. The colonel might be dropping behind, but he was still hot on the heels of the fat fugitive, and his superior knowledge of the grounds enabled him to keep up, to some extent, by taking short cuts. So it was with a gasp of relief that Fatty Wynn found himself at last beside a tall hedge that obviously marked one of the boundaries of the angry old warrior's estate.

There was a hole in the hedge, and Fatty Wynn wasted not a moment in crawling through. He crouched down, puffing and gasping, on the other side, and heard Colonel Bland go blundering by a minute later, little dreaming that his quarry was only a couple of yards from him.

Fatty Wynn chuckled. As the trampling footsteps of his pursuer died away the fat New House fellow rose cautiously to his feet. He had no idea of his whereabouts, but his only object at the moment was to put as big a distance as possible between himself and the grounds of Colonel Bland! So he stole off cautiously through the over-grown wilderness of trees and bushes that faced him.

The trees grew thinner at last, and suddenly a gaunt building came into view ahead of him, beyond a rank lawn.

"My hat!" Fatty Wynn stared ahead in great surprise. For he had recognised the forbidding-looking building, with its uncurtained windows staring across the wilderness of neglected gardens like blind eyes.

He was in the grounds of River Grange! There was consternation in Fatty Wynn's face, and alarm. He remembered very well what Blake had told him of the huge, savage mastiff that the mystery man of the old riverside house had there.

"I'll jolly well get out of this quick!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

But before he could move again he heard footsteps. He crouched down among the bushes, and then a low exclamation of utter amazement broke from him.

Two figures had come into view round the corner of the house.

One was the man whom Fatty Wynn and the others had rescued from his attackers in the wood on the day of the Spalding Hall sports; the man with the mysterious blue envelope; the man at sight of whom Lady Peggy had behaved so queerly!

But it was not upon this man that Fatty Wynn's eyes were riveted in wide-eyed bewilderment, but upon his companion, with whom he seemed deep in talk.

For the man's companion was none other than Lady Peggy herself!

## CHAPTER 9. Perplexing!

**P**EERING out from the concealment of the bushes at the edge of the lawn, Fatty Wynn stared in breathless amazement at the girl chum from Spalding Hall.

"Peggy!" he breathed. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes for the first few moments.

That Lady Peggy knew something of the mystery man of the riverside house Fatty Wynn had known, as did Blake and Tom Merry & Co. They had all been puzzled by that

obvious fact. But to find the girl actually in the man's company, at the mystery house itself, was staggering to Fatty Wynn.

"Great pip!"

Lady Peggy and her companion had halted, still deep in talk, on the grass-grown terrace. The girl's face was deeply troubled.

Fatty Wynn scarcely breathed as he watched them.

He was too far away for anything of their conversation to reach his ears. He had no wish to eavesdrop; but he would very much have liked to know what it was that the strangely assorted pair were discussing so earnestly.

What could Lady Peggy possibly have in common with this rough-voiced, rugged man?

It was a staggering mystery!

Then Fatty Wynn started. The man had pulled from his pocket an object that the fat New House junior recognised—the blue envelope that Tom Merry had rescued from this man's attackers on Wayland Moor! He held it out to Lady Peggy, who took it as if reluctantly, and slipped it into the pocket of her coat.

"What the thump——" muttered Fatty Wynn.

The two turned and vanished into the house through a dark doorway, leaving Fatty Wynn staring along the now empty terrace from his place of concealment, his mind in a whirl of bewildered thoughts.

For a moment he wondered whether to make his presence known to Peggy.

But he decided not to. She knew this man well, it was clear. Yet she had told the juniors nothing about him that day at Spalding Hall. So it seemed that she did not wish them to know anything about it; it was not likely, therefore, that she would want any of them to know of her mysterious visit to the old riverside house!

Utterly bewildered, and troubled, too, Fatty Wynn stole back among the trees and worked his way to the road. He found a hole in the hedge, and crawled through, and turned in the direction of St. Jim's.

He was terribly worried.

If his girl chum were in trouble, Fatty Wynn would have given a good deal to be able to help her. But it was impossible for him to do so, it seemed. He felt that he could not ask her to tell him what it all meant; unless she gave him that information voluntarily he could not do otherwise than respect her reticence.

It was with a deeply troubled frown on his face that the Falstaff of the New House rolled in through the gates of St. Jim's and turned his weary steps in the direction of Dame Taggles' little tuckshop.

It was seldom indeed that Fatty Wynn entered the tuckshop without a smiling face. The fact that he did so now revealed only too well his anxiety over the strange problem of Lady Peggy and the mystery man.

"Hallo, Fatty!"

It was the cheery voice of Jack Blake that greeted him as he rolled into the tuckshop.

Blake was alone, indulging in a glass of lemonade at the counter after a strenuous afternoon at the nets. A hit on the elbow by a ball had put him temporarily out of action, so he had retired from the cricket practice before his chums.

"Hallo!" answered Fatty Wynn eagerly.

Blake was just the fellow the Falstaff of the New House wanted to see. Fatty Wynn pulled up a stool beside Blake's, gave his order for a glass of ginger-beer and a dozen tarts to Mrs. Taggles, and turned an excited face to the leader of the Fourth.

Fatty Wynn would not have spread the story of Lady Peggy's queer visit to River Grange to any other fellow than Blake, because in Blake he felt he could confide; the School House junior being Lady Peggy's other favourite at St. Jim's.

Between munches, Fatty Wynn told his story. Blake listened wide-eyed.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, when the New House junior had finished. "Peggy at River Grange! What on earth does it all mean?"

"That's what I'd like to know!" grunted Fatty Wynn.

"And you say that chap with the broken boko gave her a blue envelope—like the envelope Tom Merry rescued in the wood?" muttered Blake, with puckered brows.

"Yes!"

"Well, this just about beats the band!" breathed Blake, a troubled light in his eyes. "I'm blessed if I like the look of things!"

"Neither do I!" grunted Fatty Wynn, cramming another tart into his mouth. "That chap with the busted boko seemed decent enough on Saturday; anyway he did, after we'd saved his giddy bacon from those two other chaps who'd gone for him. But he's not the sort of chap with whom I like to think of Peggy with anything in common!"

"Rather not!" growled Blake.

"What are we going to do about it?" queried Fatty Wynn. "I don't want to spread the story round——"

"Rather not," answered Blake again. "We'll keep this to ourselves. I wonder if we could ask Peggy to explain——"

"No," said Fatty Wynn decidedly. "We've no right to go poking our noses into her bizney unless she asks us!"

"That's so; but——"

"If anything's wrong, maybe she'll tell us before long," put in Fatty Wynn hopefully. "She's the sort of girl who can look after herself, anyway."

But there was very little comfort for either of them in that thought.

Lady Peggy might be able to look after herself under normal circumstances; but both Jack Blake and David Llewellyn felt that if their girl chum was in any trouble, as seemed highly likely, they would like the chance of looking after her themselves!

But unless Peggy explained, it was difficult to see what they could do.

There were worried frowns on the faces of Lady Peggy's two staunch friends as they left the tuckshop and parted in the direction of their respective Houses.

But one thing, at any rate, was certain. If Lady Peggy needed help she had only to ask Jack Blake and Fatty Wynn, to have two loyal chums ready to sacrifice themselves to any extent to save her from so much as a pain in her little finger.



#### NEXT WEEK'S WINNER!

Well, chums, the wonderful series of Free Gifts you've been collecting with your copies of the GEM for many weeks is coming to a finish—all too soon, in your opinion, I know. But there's one consolation I can offer you—the final two of the fascinating set of full-colour picture cards showing Mechanical Marvels of the Future will round off your sets in really spanking style. Right at the beginning I assured my readers that the high standard of excellence established by No. 1 would be kept up right to the end. Proof that this was not an idle boast, if any proof is needed, will be found in next week's issue of the GEM, which will contain a free coloured picture of an amazing air machine—A HELICOPTER. Don't spoil your sets by missing it, chums, so—

#### ORDER NEXT WEDNESDAY'S "GEM" TO-DAY!

Exciting things happen at St. Jim's next week! And no wonder, for the South African cricketers are booked to play a match not far from the school. The fact that Eric Kildare, the popular captain of the school, has been chosen to play for the English side, makes Tom Merry & Co., and Figgins & Co. determined to see the game at all costs, and in which

#### "UNCLE DOES THE TRICK!"

What do you think of our new serial, chums? Just drop me a line and let me know! Next week's full-o'-thrills instalment of THE ROBOT MAN is certainly the best yet, anyway. Then there's another gripping article in the FAMOUS DAREDEVILS series, and a further batch of replies from our tame answer man, the ORACLE. Don't hesitate to bombard him with any posers you may have.

Here's good news for any "Gemite" who's away on holiday. A representative of the good old paper is touring all the principal holiday resorts and keeping a keen eye open for anyone displaying prominently his or her copy of the GEM. The lucky reader whom he spots will receive a topping free gift from a selection including kites, balloons, flags, mystery packets, windmills, etc. Now then, chums! Keep the good old GEM well in view, and here's wishing you the best of luck!

Cheerio, chums, till next week!

YOUR EDITOR.



CHAPTER 10.  
A Letter from Peggy!

"PENNY for 'em!"  
"Eh?"  
Jack Blake had been pacing to and fro under the elms in the quad, deep in thought. The mystery of Lady Peggy's unexplained connection with River Grange and its occupant had given him a bad night, and now, after breakfast, he had sought solitude to wrestle with the baffling problem again.

But he had not been left alone for long. Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had found him, and it was Digby who had offered him a "penny for 'em!"

"Eh?" repeated Blake absently. "Penny for what?"

"Your thoughts, of course, you ass!" grinned Digby.

"What's on your chest, old boss?" queried Herries.

"You appear to be in a regular bwown studdy, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, eyeing Blake curiously through his celebrated eyeglass.

Blake grinned faintly.

"Do I?" he answered, colouring a trifle. "It's nothing."

"Not wondering how many beans make five?" asked Digby.

"Or what's wrong with old Gussy, since he's not bought a new topper for nearly a fortnight?" grinned Herries.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's nothing, you asses!" repeated Blake shortly. "I was only thinking!"

"Then there must be something badly wrong!" exclaimed Digby, with great concern. "Fever, or something—"

Blake glared at his humorous chum. But before he could retort a uniformed figure appeared across the quad heading for the School House.

"Postman!" exclaimed Herries. "Let's see if there's anything for us!"

Blake & Co. turned to intercept the postman. Other fellows were hurrying up, too. Baggy Trimble well to the front.

"Letter for me?" inquired Baggy eagerly. "I'm expecting a postal-order from a titled relation, and—"

"Liar!" said Cardew of the Fourth cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Cardew—"

"Nothing for you, Master Trimble," announced the postman.

"Oh, that's rotten!" grunted Baggy. "I say, Blake, old chap, can you lend me a bob till to-morrow? My postal-order is bound to turn up then—"

"I've not got a bob on me," answered Blake. "Would twelve stamps do?"

"Oh, rather!" nodded Baggy Trimble eagerly—he knew that Dame Taggles would be perfectly willing to cash stamps for him. "Thanks awfully, Blake, old chap!"

"Not at all," murmured Blake. "Here you are, then!"

Crash!

"Yarooooogh!"

Blake had brought his foot down on Baggy's toe, and Baggy howled.

"Eleven more coming," grinned Blake, raising his foot again.

But Baggy was not waiting for any more. He fled, and Blake turned with a chuckle to the postman again.

"Yes, there is a letter for you, Master Blake," the man told him; and handed a neatly-addressed envelope to the leader of the Fourth.

Blake started.

"Hallo!" he breathed. "From Peggy!"

He recognised the handwriting at once. Slipping the letter into his pocket he left his chums gathered round the smiling postman and hurried off into the Close to read it. The note within was brief.

"I want to see you at dinner-time to-day," he read. "Can you bike over? I'll be waiting by the cross-roads outside Spalding village, at half-past one. It's frightfully important—frightfully! Cheerio! "PEGGY."

"My hat!"

Blake stood staring down at the hastily-scrawled letter with wide eyes.

What could it be that Peggy wanted to see him about that was so "frightfully" important? Instinctively his mind went to the mystery of Peggy's strange connection with the old house on the river.

Only yesterday Fatty Wynn had suggested that if Lady Peggy were in trouble she would probably call upon them for aid. It looked to Blake as though that call had come.

He slipped the letter into his pocket, and with slow steps turned back towards the School House.

He could not help but feel a little elated that it was he and not Fatty Wynn to whom Peggy had written. Though they had buried the hatchet the two were still something in the nature of rivals, naturally enough. But Blake soon dismissed that thought impatiently from his mind.

(Continued on next page.)



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If Peggy wanted help she should have it from both of them, and Blake himself would be the first to call in the aid of Fatty Wynn if that were needed.

Morning lessons seemed to drag even more than usual that morning. Blake could keep his mind neither upon Latin nor French nor arithmetic—with the result that both Mr. Lathom and Monsieur Morny, the little French master, handed out several hundred lines to the leader of the Fourth between them before the morning was over.

But Blake did not care. All he wanted was to be free of class-rooms. But after what seemed an eternity he was at last able to hurry off to the cycle shed and wheel out his machine.

As he jumped on, a sudden harsh voice hailed him.

It was Gerald Knox, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth. Knox's brow was black.

"Oh, blow!" grunted Blake.

He remembered that Knox had awarded him fifty lines for ragging in Hall on the previous evening, and that the lines were to have been delivered by dinner-time that day. Blake had intended to dash them off after breakfast that morning, but the problem of Lady Peggy had occupied all his thoughts, and all memory of Knox's lines had escaped him.

"Where are those lines?" rasped Knox harshly.

"Sorry, Knox! I—I forget 'em!" mumbled Blake.

Knox smiled a twisted smile.

"Really?" he snapped. "Well, they're a hundred now, and you shan't go out of gates till they're done! See?"

Blake's face took on an expression of dismay. Then his eyes gleamed.

"Rats!" he answered, jumping hastily on to his bike.

"What?" roared Knox, his face growing crimson.

"Get out of the way!" said Blake fiercely.

"You—you—you—"

Words failed Knox. But he did not move. He was barring Blake's path out of the gates, and it was clear that he meant to stay where he was and prevent the junior from getting out in defiance of his order.

"Stand aside!" panted Blake, balancing on his scarcely-moving cycle.

"You cheeky little hound!" cried Knox savagely. "You shan't go out till my lines are done, I tell you—"

Blake did not wait to argue further. Whatever the consequences—which would probably be a licking—he was not going to fail Lady Peggy! He drove the pedals round and charged straight at the angry prefect.

"Oh! Yow! Whoops!"

Knox gave a yell as the front wheel struck him on the shin. He danced wildly, lost his balance, and fell sprawling. Blake chuckled and swept on out of the gates, head well down, and disappeared into the lane.

"Ow!" gasped Knox, scrambling up dazedly. "Oh! Groooh!"

And rubbing his painful shin, the unpopular Sixth-Former hobbled off towards the School House. Blake was in for a hot time when he returned to St. Jim's, without a doubt!

But Blake was not worrying. Pedalling hard, he was racing on his way to answer the strange summons of his girl chum.

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Blue Envelope!

"PEGGY!"

Blake had arrived at the cross-roads to find Lady Peggy waiting. He dismounted quickly, leaning his cycle against the hedge, and turned to the girl with questioning eyes.

Lady Peggy was looking troubled; he saw that at once, and his own face went troubled too. She was without a hat, and her jolly-looking mop of red curls gleamed in the sun. She smiled at Blake. But it was not the usual happy grin that he was accustomed to. It was rather an unsteady smile.

"I say, it's jolly decent of you to buzz over," she exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" answered Blake lightly. "I'm only too jolly glad to, as you know. I say, there's nothing wrong, is there?"

"Well, not exactly—"

"Tell me what's up!"

"It's nothing much," answered Lady Peggy, looking at

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,118.

the ground. "I want you to look after something for me, that's all. Will you?"

"Of course I will! But—"

"It's this!"

From the pocket of her coat Lady Peggy drew out something that caused Blake to give an involuntary exclamation.

"M-my hat!"

For Lady Peggy was holding a blue envelope—the very envelope, it seemed to Blake, that the man from River Grange had nearly lost at the hands of his mysterious attackers on the afternoon of the Spalding Hall sports!

He remembered that Fatty Wynn had described how the man had given such an envelope to Lady Peggy, when David Llewellyn had seen her at the riverside house only yesterday.

"Why-why do you look like that?" Lady Peggy faltered. "I—I—"

Blake broke off. For a moment he felt an impulse to tell her all he knew, and ask for an explanation of the mystery. Then he realised that he could not betray Fatty Wynn's secret without permission. Lady Peggy might imagine that her chum in the New House had been spying on her!

"I think I've seen that envelope before," he said quietly.

And he told her of the curious happening in the wood, when he and Fatty Wynn and Tom Merry & Co. had arrived at such a critical moment for the man from River Grange.

When he had finished, Lady Peggy nodded slowly.

"Yes," she said, "it is the same envelope. I—I do

know that man, as you must have guessed. I saw you wondering what was the matter when I spotted him through the railings, on the day of the sports."

She smiled faintly. Her eyes were troubled.

Blake did not speak. He was expecting some kind of explanation to come.

"I'm sorry I cannot explain anything," went on Lady Peggy abruptly. "But—well, I simply can't, that's all! Will you look after this envelope for me, Jack?"

Blake was taken aback by her refusal to explain. It

amazed him. He recovered himself with an effort.

"Yes, of course!" he stammered, and took the envelope, thrusting it into his pocket. "But—"

"You're wondering why I can't explain?" said Lady Peggy. "I'm sorry, but honestly I can't. It must be frightfully puzzling to you. But I know you'll do as I ask, and look after that envelope like grim death!"

"Rather!" nodded Blake. "It's safe with me."

"You must promise never to let it out of your possession for even a moment!" breathed Lady Peggy earnestly.

Blake was startled by the tenseness of her tone; but he nodded.

"I promise!"

"Good egg!" murmured Lady Peggy, with a sigh of relief. "It really is frightfully important—more important than you can guess!"

"Don't you worry about it!" nodded Blake, trying hard to conceal his bewilderment. "I'll never let it out of my possession till you want it back."

"That's just ripping!" cried Lady Peggy, and for the first time during the interview she smiled her old happy grin. "Thanks frightfully! And now I must buzz back, or I shall get it in the neck. Miss Finch thinks I've gone out to post a letter, I think. Cheerio!"

She turned and broke into a run, glancing back at the corner to wave a cheery hand.

Blake watched her vanish, with a troubled look.

It was all so utterly bewildering!

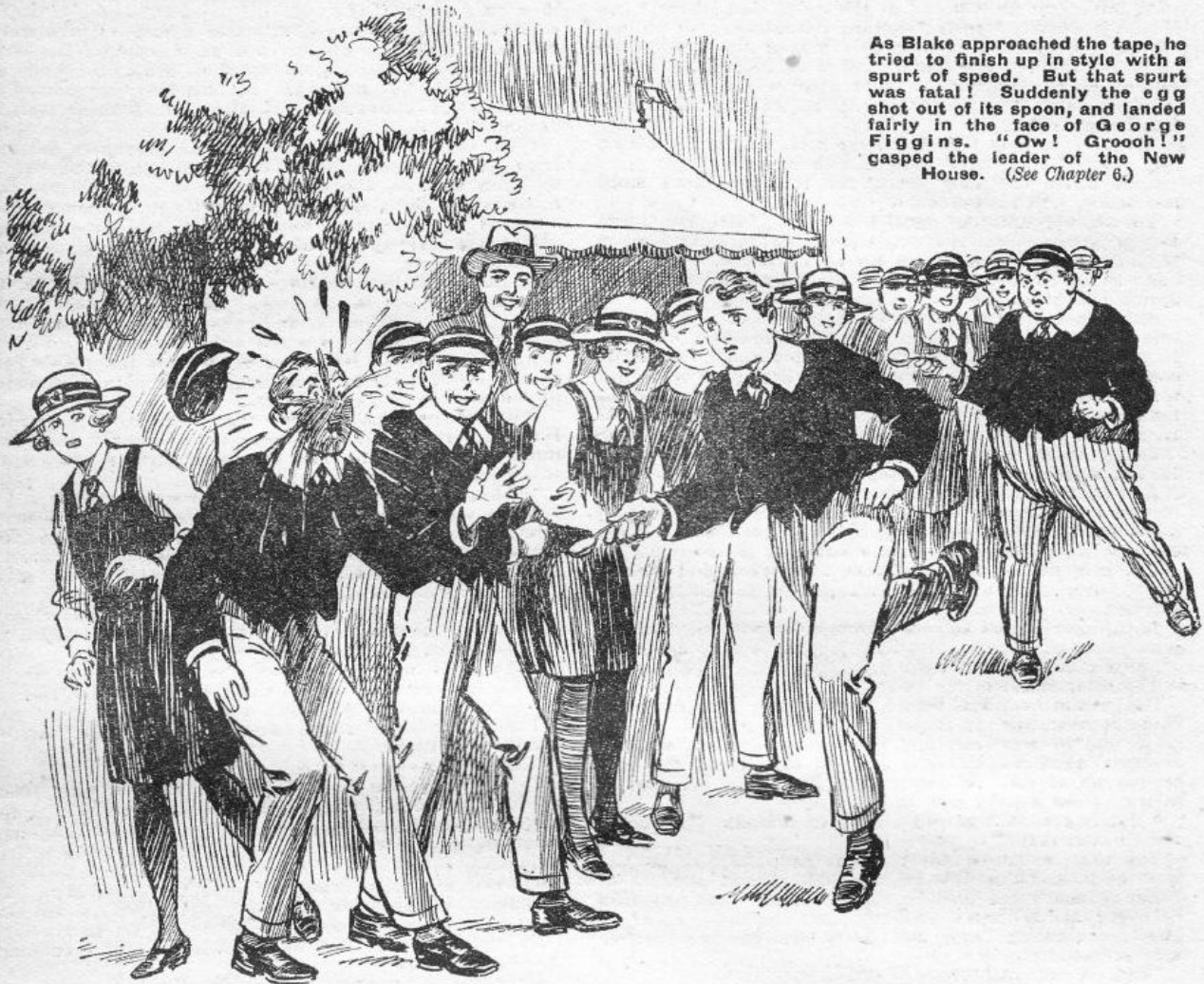
He took the blue envelope from his pocket and stared down at it with puckered brows. What could it contain, to be the centre of so much mystery? Blake would have given a good deal to know the answer to that question.

"Well, I'm jolly sure Peggy wouldn't be mixed up with any rotten business, so I suppose it must be all right," he muttered. "But why was she so jolly worried about it? And why the dickens should she want me to look after this for her?"

He slipped the mysterious envelope back into his pocket. As he did so, he heard a faint sound on the farther side of the hedge against which he was standing; he imagined it to be a rabbit.

## WHAT! HAVE YOU MISSED THE OTHERS?

Readers of the "Gem" who missed the last thirteen issues which contained Free Picture Cards can still obtain them by applying to "Back Number Dept.," Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4, and enclosing 3d. in stamps FOR EACH NUMBER REQUIRED, to cover cost of postage.



As Blake approached the tape, he tried to finish up in style with a spurt of speed. But that spurt was fatal! Suddenly the egg shot out of its spoon, and landed fairly in the face of George Figgins. "Ow! Groooh!" gasped the leader of the New House. (See Chapter 6.)

Jumping on his cycle, the leader of the Fourth turned his machine in the direction of St. Jim's.

As he vanished round the bend of the road, a man's figure came climbing through on to the road from behind the hedge. Blake would have been considerably startled, had he been there to see, to recognise this man who had overheard all his conversation with Lady Peggy as the foxy-faced individual who had been one of the attackers of the man from River Grange, in the wood on Wayland Moor!

But Blake was in blissful ignorance of the fact that anyone save Lady Peggy herself knew that the mysterious blue envelope was secreted in his inner pocket.

True to his promise, Blake did not intend to let that envelope out of his hands for a moment, as long as it was his to guard.

But he would have given a great deal to know what that strange blue envelope contained!

## CHAPTER 12.

### In the Dead of Night!

**B**OOM! Boom! Boom!  
Three o'clock had struck in the silence of the night.

St. Jim's was sleeping.

At any rate, most of St. Jim's was sleeping! But one fellow in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House was wide awake.

Baggy Trimble lay sleepless, gasping and groaning in the dark, with his hands clasped over his podgy middle. The fat junior of the School House had dined not wisely but too well that evening. He had managed to "raise the wind" out of Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, and the borrowed five shillings had been spent in one fell swoop in Dame Taggles' little shop. Ginger-beer and meringues had formed the chief item on the menu, and now Baggy Trimble was feeling the effects of his gorge.

"Grooooh!"

Baggy groaned.

His eyes rolled in their sockets as a shooting spasm tortured his tubby frame.

From all sides, the snores of sleeping fellows could be heard. Almost opposite, Jack Blake could be seen lying sleeping in a shaft of moonlight, breathing quietly and easily.

The spasm passed, and Baggy breathed again. His eyes fell on Blake.

"Wonder what it was that Blake was so jolly careful to shove under his pillow when he turned in?" he asked himself. "Looked like a blessed bit of blue paper. P'raps it's a letter from Lady Peggy! He's dotty on her! He, he, he! Oh! Yah! Yarooogh!"

Baggy broke off in his snigger to gasp and groan as the spasm returned.

Baggy was only receiving his deserts for his greediness, as in his heart he must have known. But that was little consolation to the fat Fourth-Former.

Then suddenly Baggy pricked up his ears. He stared across at one of the long windows through which the moonlight streamed.

"What the dickens was that?"

Baggy fancied he heard a faint sound among the ivy outside.

"Some blessed sparrow, turning over in its sleep," grunted Baggy sleepily. "Wish I could drop off! I think that rotten grub must have been whangy—"

The muttered words froze in his throat.

Black against the moonlight, a fantastic shadow had suddenly fallen across the floor of the dormitory. Baggy raised his eyes to the window opposite in breathless terror. A face was staring into the dormitory, the head and shoulders sharply outlined. Even as Baggy lay goggling across the dormitory at the shape outside, he heard a scraping sound on the woodwork of the window. A moment later the lower sash was being noiselessly raised.

Quivering with terror, Baggy eyed the black shape on the window-sill in alarm.

"Oh lor'!" breathed Baggy. "Oo-er!"

He wanted to plunge his head under the bedclothes, but he was incapable of movement. He would have screamed, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

In dumb terror he watched as the man's dark shape came climbing, catlike, into the sleeping dormitory.

That the midnight visitor had gained the window by means of the ivy was clear. But what he wanted in the Fourth Form dormitory at that hour was a mystery so inexplicable to Baggy Trimble that he scarcely asked himself that question.

All he knew was that a strange man was in the dormitory. And Baggy fairly quaked with terror.

Once inside the long room, the shadowy figure stood motionless, peering round.

To all appearances, each bed held a sleeping form. Baggy Trimble was the only fellow awake, and he was lying as still as a stone, in his abject terror. Only his heart-beats, thumping against his ribs seemed to Baggy Trimble to break the awful silence.

Suddenly the bright ray of an electric torch shot through the gloom. From face to face the torchlight wavered. Baggy closed his eyes hastily, scarcely breathing. He could see, though his eyelids were closed, the light as it rested for a moment on his own white face. But the man flashed the light on the next face without suspecting for a moment that Baggy was not as fast asleep as he appeared.

Baggy would not have moved a muscle for the world. He had a feeling that if he did, his last hour would come.

A soft, triumphant exclamation came to his ears. He opened his eyes, and saw that the dim figure of the midnight marauder was standing beside Blake's bed, staring down at the sleeping face of the leader of the Fourth.

The man slipped his torch into his pocket, and stooped swiftly over Blake's clothes, arranged on the chair beside the bed.

With eager fingers he went through the pockets. But the search seemed to prove fruitless, judging by the mutter of chagrin that Baggy heard.

The man turned to the bed.

Baggy watched, spellbound. The man was sliding a cautious hand beneath Blake's pillow, inch by inch. It was clear that he was searching for something, and suddenly Baggy remembered, with a thrill of excitement, the mysterious object that he had noticed Blake put beneath his pillow before getting into bed.

"My only aunt!" gasped Baggy to himself. "I wonder if he's after that?"

The man withdrew his hand as cautiously as he had inserted it, and this time he was holding something.

Baggy heard the gleeful, hissing breath that the man drew between his teeth. And at that moment a spasm of pain shot through Baggy's fat body. He gave an involuntary exclamation.

"Oh! Yow!"

In an instant the man by Blake's bed swung round, staring across at Baggy, with startled face.

Baggy felt that his last hour had come. What if this daring villain had a knife, or a pistol? Visions of himself being slaughtered there and then rose in Baggy's mind. He found his voice, and a wild yell of terror rang through the dormitory, waking every junior there.

"Ow! Help! Murder! Help!"

## CHAPTER 13.

### At Grips!

"WHAT the dickens—"

"Baggy! What's up?"

"Gweat Scott! What evan 's the twouble?"

Fellows were sitting up in their beds on all sides.

But there was no further information to be had from Baggy Trimble. Baggy had plunged beneath the bed-clothes, and was cowering there in abject terror.

Not that he was needed any longer.

Half a dozen fellows had already caught sight of the dark figure standing by Blake's bed. Even as the man turned and sprang for the open window by which he had entered, Herries and Levison, Clive, Wildrake, and Hammond tumbled out of their beds and rushed at him. Others were not far behind.

Blake had given a startled cry on opening his eyes to see the shadowy shape near his bed. Instinctively his hand had shot to his pillow, where the precious envelope that Lady Peggy had entrusted to his care should have been lying.

His fingers came away empty, and Blake gave a choking cry as he realised the truth.

"Stop him!" he yelled.

He flung the bedclothes from him, and leapt out on to the floor.

Shouts and tramping feet were echoing through the dormitory now. Nearly everyone was out of bed. Some of the fellows were still uncertain as to what was happening; but all were excited, and the din was terrific.

There was a crash as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gorgeous

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in a pair of purple-striped silk pyjamas, stumbled into a washstand and sent a jug of water flying. There was a yell from Mulvaney minor, over whom most of the water had poured as he scrambled out of his bed.

"Oh! Groosh! Begorra, an' I'll slay ye entoirely!" roared Micky Mulvaney. "What is it? A Shell raid, me darlints?"

Then, as he wiped the water from his streaming face, the Irish junior caught sight of the tall figure of the man by the open window, and his jaw dropped as he realised that this was something far more serious than a dormitory raid.

Nearly a dozen juniors were crowding round the midnight visitor now. He swung round, his back to the window, and hit out savagely.

Digby reeled back as the man's fist caught him on the jaw, and dropped to the floor. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sprang forward valiantly, and received the same treatment as Digby. But Blake was not after the man himself, but the blue envelope. He snatched it from the man's hand with a lightning grab that took the scoundrel completely by surprise.

With the precious envelope once more in his possession, Blake felt a wave of relief surge through him. He sprang nimbly aside as the man dashed at him to regain the envelope.

"Collar him, you chaps!" yelled Levison, excitedly.

There was a rush at the snarling figure, and the man's attention was diverted for the moment from Blake. But the next instant there was a shout of alarm; the moonlit dormitory as something gleamed suddenly in the man's hand. An automatic!

"Keep back, you young cubs!" hissed the scoundrel; and before the menacing shape of his snub-nosed weapon the juniors fell back white-faced.

Automatics were not exactly common objects at St. Jim's! The Fourth-Formers had pluck galore but they did not feel like arguing with such a weapon.

The man glanced round with glittering eyes. He was looking for Blake.

Blake felt his heart go cold.

Before the threat of that levelled weapon, what should he do if the man demanded the blue envelope?

He glanced desperately round. The door of the dormitory was standing open. Tompkins, the timid junior from Study No. 4, had slipped away unnoticed as soon as he had awakened to find a strange man in the dormitory. But Tompkins' timidity was useful for once. Had not the door been already standing open, Blake could never have escaped from the dormitory before the man with the automatic intercepted him.

Clutching the mysterious envelope, Blake sprang for the open doorway, and raced through.

Normally Blake would have been one of the last to make a bolt! But it was the precious blue envelope that Lady Peggy had entrusted to his keeping that was at stake, and all Blake cared about was to ensure its safety.

A look of hideous rage passed over the man's face as he glanced round just in time to glimpse Blake vanishing from the dormitory. But he realised that pursuit was impossible. He turned a snarling face to the dumb circle of pyjama-clad juniors who had fallen back from before him.

"Stay where you are!" he breathed. "I'll shoot any of you that moves!"

He half-turned, keeping them covered with the automatic. He swung out over the window-sill, finding a foothold among the thick old ivy stems that covered the wall. From outside the window, clutching to the sill with one hand while he still kept the weapon levelled in his other hand, he glared in.

"I can shoot while I'm climbing down," he growled fiercely. "If one of you so much as puts his nose out of this window for the next few minutes he'll have it blown off!"

He vanished, climbing down hastily with one hand. The juniors gasped. Clive made an instinctive rush for the window. But Ralph Reckness Cardew grasped him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"No good gettin' your nose shot off, dear man!" murmured Cardew coolly. "He'd do it right enough, I dare say. Gad! Who says life isn't pretty excitin'?"

No one ventured to contradict Cardew on that point!

Running feet sounded in the passage. The tall figures of Kildare and Darrell raced into the dormitory, followed by Blake, and after a few moments by the trembling figure of Clarence York Tompkins.

But Kildare and Darrell had come too late!

Ignoring all warnings, the captain of St. Jim's ran to the window when the amazing situation had been hastily explained to him. But the mysterious midnight visitor had gone! Evidently he had reached the ground in safety, and by now was making good his escape from the school premises.

"What on earth is happening here?"

Clad in a dressing-gown the figure of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, had appeared at the doorway, staring in with astonishment. Kildare turned to him.

"An extraordinary thing has happened, sir!" he cried. "An armed man! In here! Climbed in at the window—"

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Railton incredulously.

"I can hardly believe it—"

"It's true enough, sir!" cut in Blake.

"Yaas, bai Jove!" nodded Arthur Augustus D'Arcy excitedly. "A most howwible wuffian with a wevolvah!"

"He must be caught!" cried Mr. Railton hastily. "Quick, Kildare—rouse the prefects—"

The Housemaster and the two Sixth-Formers hurried from the dormitory, leaving the Fourth-Formers to crowd to the windows. But if they hoped to see an exciting chase, as the fugitive was hunted from some hiding-place among the dark shadows below, they were disappointed. They saw prefects and masters searching among the school buildings in vain for a while, then Knox appeared and roughly ordered them all to their beds.

The juniors had no choice but to obey. But when Knox had gone an excited babel of talk broke out.

Everyone seemed to be talking at once—all but Blake.

No one but he realised the true purpose of the man's visit to the Fourth Form dormitory that night. No one had noticed the blue envelope that he had snatched from the scoundrel's hand, and they all imagined that Blake had left the dormitory merely to bring the prefects on to the scene.

Baggy Trimble, in his excitement, had quite forgotten

about the blue envelope, too. All Baggy wanted at the moment was a little honour and glory!

"Lucky I had the presence of mind to rouse the dorm," smirked Baggy in the darkness. "I was going to fling myself at the rotter and grapple with him, when it occurred to me it was only fair to let you fellows see the fun!"

There was a yell of laughter. Baggy blinked wrathfully.

"Oh, really, you chaps! We Trimbles are as brave as lions, and it would have been nothing to me to tackle the villain single-handed. I tell you it would have been a sorry day for him if I'd set about him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Baggy!" growled Herries. "All you did was to grovel under the bedclothes after you'd yelled like a dying donkey!"

"Oh, really, Herries—"

Biff!

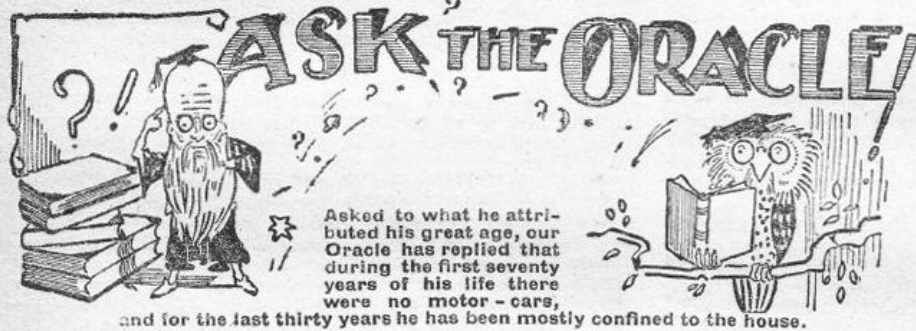
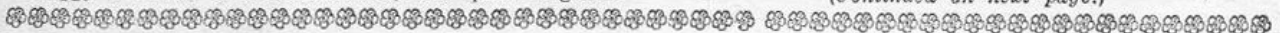
A pillow sailed through the air and caught Baggy in the face, knocking him backwards with a gasp. After that, Baggy thought it wiser to keep quiet concerning his bravery, lest a boot should follow.

And at last, one by one, the juniors dropped off to sleep. All but Jack Blake.

Blake lay awake a long while, thinking.

He had said nothing about the blue envelope, and he did not intend to mention it for the sake of satisfying the curiosity of the Fourth, or even of Mr. Railton himself. The visit of the mysterious scoundrel to the dormitory that

(Continued on next page.)



Asked to what he attributed his great age, our Oracle has replied that during the first seventy years of his life there were no motor-cars, and for the last thirty years he has been mostly confined to the house.

Q. What is the Giant Synapta?

A. It is a member of the sea-urchin family, Charlie, of Chigwell, and three species are found around the coasts of Britain. By the specimen illustrated by the GEM special artist you will see a thing which looks like a rope with a frayed end. But the best looking Synaptas are more handsome than that, indeed they appear rather like glorified worms although, except for their shape, they have nothing in common with any of the worm families. A Giant Synapta may grow to six feet in length, and it has a cunning way of making its

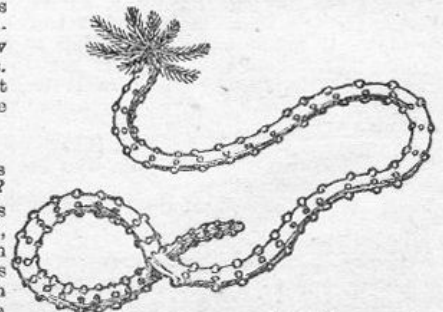
escape from an enemy—a large fish, for instance. When it is gripped, it forces fluid in its body toward that part until it is too bulky for its enemy to hold on to. An ingenious laddie!

Q. Who wrote the poem beginning, "O Work, how sweet the name of Work!"?

A. Dunno, "Charlie M." Some silly ass. I advise you to write to the various homes for the mentally afflicted if you really want his address.

Q. How many legs has a flea?

A. You've lost your lucky lobster-claw to the pal you were so foolish as to bet with, "Cute Cuthbert"—I do know. From a microscopic examination of a fully fledged specimen of the order Aphaniptera, or Pulicidae, unkindly supplied by the office boy, I am able to asseverate with the utmost assurance that the limbs of propulsion in this genus number exactly half a dozen.



There are urchins and urchins, and this is a sea-urchin. Actually it looks like a knotted rope, but the Oracle assures us that it has been drawn to order.

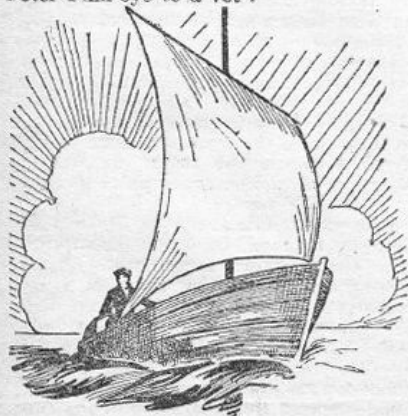
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Q. What is agar-agar?

A. A kind of seaweed used for the making of jelly, glue and silk dressings. Also doctors engaged on research work use it for cultivating microbes.

Q. What is the All-Red Route?

A. It is a term applied to a trading route which passes through no alien territory but is British throughout. For example, George Sampson, if you travelled from London to Liverpool, thence by a British steamship line to Canada, and then via a Canadian Pacific railway train and liner to Australia, you could say you had travelled on the All-Red Route to the Commonwealth. Got me? Am afraid I can't answer your other question respecting the mysterious internal ailment of the guinea-pig without a personal investigation into the innards of your pet. Why not take Peter Pink-eye to a vet?



The curious feature about this boat, a coble, is the bows which ride so high above the water.

Q. What is a tawse?

A. You're jolly lucky, Sam Small, of Carlisle, not to know what this is! I dare say a good many chaps of your tender age from across the Scottish Border could tell you! It is just a leathern strap, often fringed at the business end, still used by some schoolmasters especially in the North Country for the chastisement of obstreperous juniors.

Q. What is a coble?

A. A type of craft of curious appearance and common on the Northumbrian coast. The first feature that strikes the eye is that the bows are very sharp and high out of the water, while the after part of the boat is flat and shallow. The rudder is deep-set, which makes the coble very sensitive to the tiller. The usual rig is a standing or dipping lug-sail.

Q. What is a sponge?

A. Now don't all shout at once! A whole heap of you would be off the rails although you've seen the common or bathroom sponge so many times that you know it better than your own bright chivvies. How many can truthfully say, though, that you knew that the natural sponge is the skeleton of a marine animal?

Q. Who made the remark "Après nous le deluge," and what does it mean?

A. This remark, "Sixth-Former," is attributed to Madame de Pompadour, favourite of Louis XV.; the interpretation from the French, as you know, is "After us the deluge." It is supposed to have been made when the Pompadour noted the general discontent of the French people, and by "the deluge" she referred to the coming Revolution. A Greek poet made a similar sort of remark many centuries before.

night would no doubt be put down to intended robbery if no better explanation were forthcoming.

"But what on earth does it mean?" he asked himself again and again as he lay staring at the dark. "Goodness knows how the chap knew I had it, for one thing. But why does he want it so badly? What's in it? And what's it got to do with Peggy?"

That the blue envelope was a dangerous thing to have in one's possession was clear! When it had been in the possession of the man from River Grange, he had been attacked, and had almost had it stolen from him. Now the men who wanted the envelope with such strange intensity had even come to St. Jim's for it, now that they had learnt it was in Jack Blake's possession.

"I'll have to look out," Blake told himself grimly. "But if it's as dangerous as all this I'm jolly glad I've got it and not Peggy. She'll think the rotters, whoever they are, don't know I've got it. I'd better not let her know about to-night's bizney."

Blake turned over restlessly under the blankets.

"If only I knew what it all means!"

It was with that baffling thought in his mind that Blake at last fell asleep.

## CHAPTER 14.

### At the Mystery House!

"HALLO, old hoss!"

It was David Llewellyn Wynn who spoke. Fatty Wynn was rolling along Rylcombe Lane after tea on the following day. His two chums,

Figgins and Kerr, had tried to persuade him to join them at cricket practice at the nets, but the Falstaff of the New House had declined.

He had wanted to be alone, to ponder over the mystery of Lady Peggy and River Grange. He had done so for half an hour without being any nearer a solution of the problem, when he had turned a corner to meet Jack Blake.

The meeting was unexpected, but Fatty Wynn was glad to see the leader of the Fourth just then. Here, at any rate, was someone with whom he could discuss the riddle that was troubling him.

There was a frown on Blake's face the moment he caught sight of Fatty Wynn.

Blake had taken the bull by the horns and gone over to Spalding Hall immediately after afternoon classes. There he had asked Lady Peggy point-blank if she could not change her mind and give him some explanation of the blue envelope and her connection with the man at River Grange.

Though she had been obviously troubled to refuse, she had told him quite definitely that she could explain nothing. Blake, who had not mentioned the midnight visit of the scoundrel to the Fourth Form dormitory, had returned towards the school no wiser than when he had set out.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed at sight of Fatty Wynn.

His gloomy expression faded away somewhat. He, too, was glad to meet the only other fellow with whom he could discuss the mystery. Though Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell had some inkling of it, they were in ignorance of the bigger facts of the case.

Blake turned and fell in at Fatty Wynn's side.

"I've just been to see Peggy," he said.

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn, perhaps a trifle jealously. Then he added quickly: "I suppose she hasn't told you anything? About River Grange, and that blessed blue envelope, and all that?"

"No," frowned Blake. "As a matter of fact, I asked her outright. She told me she couldn't explain at all. She said she would if she could, but that she wasn't at liberty to, because—because of a promise—"

"My hat!"

"But I can tell you something, anyway," went on Blake grimly. He felt that, seeing what had happened during the night, it would be a good thing to confide in Fatty Wynn. "That blue envelope you saw the chap at River Grange give to Peggy—she gave it to me yesterday, to look after for her."

"Wha-a-at?"

"She gave it to me," repeated Blake, with clouded brow. "And it was that that the chap who broke into the dorm last night was after!"

Fatty Wynn gasped again, and stared at Blake wide eyed.

Blake laughed grimly.

"He jolly nearly got away with it, too! I had it under my pillow, and he bagged it, but I snatched it back, and it's safe enough now. I put it in a money-box, and gave it to the Head to lock in his safe. He thinks it's saved-up pocket-money, of course."

"I say, that's a good wheeze!" cried Fatty Wynn. "But look here, old hoss, I'm blessed if I like the look of things!"

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What if Peggy's in danger from these scoundrels, whoever they are—"

Blake suddenly gripped Fatty Wynn's arm. There was an excited gleam in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what!" he exclaimed. "Let's go along to River Grange now, this evening, and tackle that chap there, and ask him if he'll tell us something. We'll tell him what we know. When he realises we know so much, perhaps he'll be willing to tell us a bit more!"

"Rather!" agreed David Llewellyn eagerly. "The quickest way's by boat!"

It was not far across the fields to Dimmock's boathouse, and ten minutes later the two juniors were pulling upstream in a light, four-oared craft.

Lady Peggy might not be able to tell them the answer to the riddles that puzzled them; but perhaps the man at River Grange might be willing to do so, if only from the gratitude for their rescue of him in the wood on Wayland Moor!

Blake and Fatty Wynn meant to find out the truth if they could, and to help their girl chum in her troubles despite herself!

It did not take them long to reach the backwater that turned in under the over-arching trees and led into the grounds of the old riverside house. With softly-splashing oars they directed the boat past the old notice-board that grimly announced that branch of the backwater private, and a minute later they were drifting by the overgrown lawn that sloped up to the gaunt house.

A mist was creeping up over the grass from the river. It was quite thick, writhing white and eerie round the lonely Grange, blotting out parts of the house from their view.

"I say, it's a creepy sort of place, isn't it?" breathed Fatty Wynn, as they turned in towards the bank.

He shivered.

A deathly silence brooded over the place, broken only by the faint ripple of water under their bows as they made the boat fast to an ancient, rotting, wooden landing-stage. Blake stepped out on to it, and muttered a warning to Fatty Wynn.

"Look out! Half these blessed planks are rotten!"

More than once the wood gave way beneath their feet as they crossed the rotten planks. But they reached the lawn in safety, and stood staring doubtfully at the mist-enshrouded house.

Suddenly Blake gave a startled exclamation.

"Good heavens! Look!"

Fatty Wynn stared in the direction of his pointing finger. He jumped at what he saw.

The figure of a big mastiff was lying in the wet grass, dead, with a bullet wound showing plainly the manner of its end.

"M-my hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Dead! Shot—"

He broke off sharply.

From the direction of the house had come a sudden shrill scream. It died away abruptly, and the silence that followed was deathly. Fatty Wynn and Blake stared at one another for a moment with set, pale faces.

"Come on!" breathed Fatty Wynn. His voice was hoarse.

"You—you recognised that cry? That voice—"

"Yes," said Blake, in shaking tones, as he broke into a swift run at Fatty Wynn's side. "It was Peggy's voice!"

## CHAPTER 15.

### To the Rescue!

THE juniors' footsteps were soundless on the grass as they raced towards the house. Blake drew a little ahead, but Fatty Wynn was not far behind, despite his bulk, by the time they reached the foot of the steps leading up to the terrace.

"Now, quiet, for Heaven's sake!" breathed Blake. "Goodness knows what's happening here! But if we're heard, we're done!"

Fatty Wynn grunted assent. Side by side he and Blake stole up the moss-grown steps on to the terrace, where weeds and grass sprouted from between the worn flagstones. River Grange was a picture of gaunt desolation, if ever there was one.

Crouching by the broken stone balustrade at the top of the steps, the two juniors listened, scarcely breathing. Not a sound came from the shadowy house now. After that sudden nerve-wracking scream in the voice of Lady Peggy, the sinister silence that brooded over the place had remained unbroken.

"Come on," whispered Blake, with set face. "We've got to get into the house—"

"Yes, come on," echoed Fatty Wynn coolly.

They hurried noiselessly across to the shadow of the damp, bleached wall of the house itself. A door was standing half open not far away, and they stole towards it. Blake pushed it open cautiously and peered in.



Blake and Fatty Wynn reached the open doorway at last, and scarcely breathing, they peered into the room. They saw three figures bound to chairs. One was the mystery man of River Grange. The other was an elderly man, and the third was Lady Peggy! (See Chapter 15.)

A gloomy passage met their gaze. Giant cobwebs hung on the ceiling, and the floor was thick with dust. But footprints in the dust showed that it was not unused.

Noiseless as a shadow Blake stepped into the passage, with Fatty Wynn at his heels.

Their hearts were beating fast, and their faces were rather white. That cry in Lady Peggy's voice had shaken them both. But they were cool enough as they stole along the passage in search of the key they knew not what.

Suddenly they halted, frozen in their tracks.

A voice had come to their ears from a room opening from the far end of the passage. It was a man's voice, harsh and menacing in its tone.

"I'll make you tell!"

The words were followed by an ugly laugh. Then came another voice, quiet and steady and defiant:

"You scoundrels! You never will!"

Blake and Fatty Wynn did not hesitate for more than a moment. They stole on, their footsteps noiseless in the dust. At the end of the passage a door was standing wide open, and it was from the room beyond that the voices had come.

They reached the open doorway at last, scarcely breathing. From the concealing shadows of the passage they stared in.

Blake's lips opened soundlessly. Fatty Wynn drew a hissing breath between his teeth.

For in the room were three figures bound to chairs, while three others confronted them. One of the bound figures was the mystery man of River Grange. Another was a white-faced elderly man whom they had never seen before.

The third bound figure was Lady Peggy!

Her pretty face was set in defiant lines. But she was

very white. Her eyes were fixed on the elderly man tied in a chair beside her.

And facing them were three men, whom Blake recognised instantly. One was the man who had broken into the dormitory at St. Jim's on the previous night in his desperate attempt to gain possession of the blue envelope. The other two were the men who had so nearly succeeded in stealing the envelope from the Mystery Man on the day of the Spalding Hall sports.

It was the first of the trio who was speaking.

"I think we can find ways to make you speak, Lord Clavendon!" he was saying, in ironical tones. "Have you ever had a lighted match held between your fingers, I wonder?"

There was a sobbing cry from Lady Peggy. But the elderly man beside her faced his captors calmly.

"No," he answered, in cool tones; "but I doubt if it could make me tell you the secret you want to know!"

"You're very sure—at present!" shouted one of the other scoundrels threateningly.

"If one of you dare try such a fiendish thing—" began the man with the broken nose hoarsely; but the leader of his captors turned on him with a snarl.

"That's enough from you, Markham!"

"You brutes!" cried Lady Peggy, in a sobbing voice.

The leader chuckled cruelly. He was standing beside a table, part of the scanty furniture that occupied the room. By his hand on the table lay a gleaming automatic. Blake's eyes were fixed on it with a desperate gleam.

If only he could gain possession of the weapon he and Fatty Wynn might yet turn the tables on the three scoundrels.

The same idea had come into Fatty Wynn's mind as he

crouched at Blake's side in the shadows. And a sudden desperate plan occurred to the Falstaff of the New House.

He took from his pocket a heavy pocket-knife. Rising to his full height, he drew back his plump but brawny arm, and flung the knife across the room at the window.

David Llewellyn Wynn was a demon bowler, and when it came to anything of that nature he was deadly! The knife hit the centre pane with a crash, and vanished through a shower of breaking glass. The three scoundrels in the room gave startled shouts.

For the moment Blake was utterly astounded at Fatty Wynn's unexpected action, which seemed certain to do nothing more than betray their presence.

But as the three men turned and rushed instinctively across to the window, imagining that something was happening outside, Blake understood Fatty Wynn's daring plan.

Already Fatty Wynn was bounding swiftly into the room towards the revolver that lay on the table. By drawing the three scoundrels to the window by his clever ruse, the chance had come for David Llewellyn to gain the coveted automatic!

But Blake was the quicker of the two. He darted into the room and snatched up the weapon, even as the men, hearing them, turned with startled shouts.

There were cries of fury and dismay as they found themselves confronted by the grim figure of Blake, the levelled revolver in his fist.

"Keep back!" panted Blake hoarsely. "And hands up!"

## CHAPTER 16.

### The End of the Mystery!

**T**HERE were gasps of amazement from Markham and the elderly man. Lady Peggy gave a sobbing cry. "Jack and Fatty!" she breathed. "Oh, good egg!"

For a moment or two it looked as though the three men by the window meant to rush Blake. But the sight of his steady finger on the trigger caused them to change their minds!

If they rushed Blake they could doubtless overpower him between them. But one of them was certain to receive a bullet before that happened; and none of them dared take the risk of being the unlucky one!

"Good man!" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

He rolled coolly across to the three chairs where the prisoners were bound. With hasty fingers he unfastened the cords that bound them, while Blake kept the three scoundrels well covered.

"Bless you, my boys!" gasped the man who had been addressed as Lord Clavendon, as he rose unsteadily to his feet. "Markham, what about trussing up these—er—gentlemen with their own cords?"

And the old gentleman actually smiled.

Only when the three sullen, defeated scoundrels had been firmly fastened into the chairs—"To take their turn!" as Fatty Wynn remarked, with a chuckle—did Blake lower the weapon he held.

Lady Peggy was laughing, but there were bright tears in her eyes. She grasped Blake's hand and Fatty Wynn's, and then, to their great embarrassment, she impulsively kissed them both.

They each went crimson; but neither of them looked as though he really minded!

"You're great!" she cried. "Just great! My hat, yes!"

"Oh, nunno!" mumbled Fatty Wynn modestly.

"It was Fatty's wheeze, anyway, busting the window to get the gun!" explained Blake quickly.

"But you got the gun, you ass!" growled Fatty Wynn.

"Rats! It was all thanks to you, you idiot—"

"Look here, Blake—"

Lady Peggy laughed happily.

"Oh, stop arguing, you idiots!" she exclaimed. "Come and be introduced to daddy!"

The next moment Blake and Fatty Wynn found themselves shaking hands with Lord Clavendon, while Markham stood guard, with grim face, over the three bound scoundrels. Markham was taking no risks!

But it was in a room upstairs, a pleasant, cosily-furnished apartment that Blake and Fatty Wynn at last learnt the truth about the mystery of River Grange from Lady Peggy's father himself.

Lord Clavendon, though an earl, was anything but rich. He was, in fact, quite hard-up. But he was something of an inventor, and he was busy perfecting an entirely new design for motor-boat engines. When the invention was completed he expected not only to make a fortune out of it, but to win for England the speed record on water. Markham, his faithful manservant, an ex-pugilist, who was helping him in his invention, had been out testing an engine in connection with the new design, when he had upset Grundy

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into the Rhyll, and caused Blake and Tom Merry & Co. to visit River Grange with such indignation!

Markham was really a good sort, but he had orders to prevent anyone from trespassing at River Grange, for Lord Clavendon knew that his enemies were searching for his secret hiding-place, where the invention was to be completed, safe from prying eyes. Hence Markham's curt command to the St. Jim's juniors on that occasion to clear off quick!

Lord Clavendon had deliberately chosen an apparently empty house for his retreat, hoping to throw his enemies off his track. But in that he had failed. As soon as he knew that the three scoundrels were in the neighbourhood he had given the plans of his invention, so far as they were completed, into his daughter's keeping, thinking that they would be safe with her, since the scoundrels did not know that she was his daughter.

But the crooks had learnt of Lady Peggy's relationship, and had suspected that the plans had been entrusted to her. As soon as her father realised this, he had agreed, at her suggestion, that the envelope containing the plans should be passed on to one of her friends at St. Jim's for safe-keeping. Lord Clavendon and Lady Peggy had both been convinced that they would be safe enough then.

And Blake, with the aid of other St. Jim's juniors, had certainly upheld their conviction, despite the fact that one of the scoundrels had seen Lady Peggy actually hand the precious envelope to Blake!

Lord Clavendon had also made Peggy promise absolute secrecy about everything, including his presence at River Grange, lest any indiscretion on the part of any possible confidant of hers should have helped to put his enemies on his track.

It seemed that the three scoundrels had arrived at the house, and made Markham and Lord Clavendon their prisoners, only a short while before Lady Peggy had arrived on the scene, having come over from Spalding Hall to visit her father.

"They jumped on me before I knew where I was!" she exclaimed, with a rueful smile. "I didn't half yell—"

"We heard you," nodded Blake.

"And they shot poor old Cæsar!" she went on. "I say, you see now why I couldn't tell you anything, don't you? It wasn't that I wouldn't, but because daddy had made me promise to tell nobody at all!"

Blake reddened.

"I'm sorry I was beastly inquisitive," he said awkwardly, "but I couldn't help feeling jolly puzzled—"

"Of course you did!" cried Lady Peggy. "Both of you. Well, it's lucky you did, or I s'pose you wouldn't have come here to-night!"

"And if you hadn't come here to-night, the villains might easily have succeeded in forcing the details of my invention out of me," put in Lord Clavendon, with a smile. "So your curiosity was really very fortunate! Not that I should call it curiosity, however. I can see that you were simply anxious to help Peggy, realising that she was troubled about some mysterious thing—"

"That's it, sir!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

Peggy jumped to her feet.

"I must buzz back to Spalding Hall!" she exclaimed hastily, "or I'll be late. Even Miss Finch doesn't know about daddy being here, you know," she added. "Nobody knew. But now I suppose we can tell?"

"Certainly," nodded her father, his genial old face beaming. "Now that the three villains downstairs are as good as in the hands of the police there is nothing more for me to fear from people knowing of my presence in this house."

After a warm farewell to Peggy's father, Blake and Fatty Wynn set off with their girl chum to accompany her back to Spalding Hall. On the way they visited Wayland Police Station, and themselves saw the carload of men in blue that drove off rapidly to River Grange to arrest the captured scoundrels.

At the gates of Spalding Hall Lady Peggy said good-bye with all her old cheerfulness. Her troubled looks were over for good now!

Though neither Blake nor Fatty Wynn said a word at St. Jim's about their own part in the happenings at River Grange, Lady Peggy did! And the pair found themselves the heroes of the day.

But Jack Blake and David Llewellyn Wynn did not take much notice of the cheers of their schoolfellows.

All they were glad about was that they had been able to banish the trouble from Lady Peggy's face, and restore her to her usual happy self, by their wonderfully successful clearing-up of the mystery of River Grange!

THE END.

(There will be another rousing long story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "UNCLE DOES THE TRICK!" Don't miss this treat, chums!)



OUR ROUSING TALE OF ADVENTURE ABROAD!



# The Robot Man!

By H. J. ALLINGHAM

The prisoner of a madman! That's the position in which Jack Carter finds himself this week; enough to make the bravest quake. But Jack, though he fully realises the peril of his situation, is resolved to face it with all the fortitude and pluck of a true Briton!

## Something Goes Wrong with the Works!

AT the same instant two dark figures leaped apparently from nowhere and flung themselves on Jack Carter. They were natives, tall, sinewy fellows, with muscles of steel, and Jack was like a child in their hands.

At the same time the switchboard emitted a volley of crackling sounds, while electric sparks and flames leaped all over it like living things.

Out of the gloom came the professor's panting voice. He said something in Spanish which Jack did not understand.

Instantly the boy was lifted off his feet and hurried across the room towards another door.

Feeling that his doom was sealed, he began to struggle violently. But as he was borne past the illuminated table he caught one last glimpse of the scene outside.

What he saw sent a wild thrill of excitement through him. He ceased to struggle, his grey eyes flashed with joy, and he gave a great shout of triumphant laughter.

"Look! Professor, look at your Robot! Look!" he cried excitedly.

And still shouting and laughing wildly, he was rushed by his captors out of the gloomy room into an impenetrable darkness.

"Where's Jack?" exclaimed Harry Frobisher, suddenly becoming aware that his chum was not with them.

"Trying to put a bit of salt on a dicky-bird's tail," replied Teddy White drowsily.

"Don't rot! Where is he?" demanded Harry.

"It's a fac', Mr. Harry. I ain't kidding," replied Teddy, sitting up. "I seed him stalking one of them rum-looking parrots jest now. That's where he went."

He pointed to a mass of dwarf palms, the mighty fronds

of which sprawled to the ground and made a kind of screen at one end of the clearing where the chums were resting.

Harry stretched himself and lounged lazily forward in the direction indicated. He was not yet alarmed, and in the steaming heat of the forest he felt as limp as a rag.

"Jack!" he called, as he parted the leafy barrier with his hands and peered into the bush.

When there came no answer he called again, raising his voice to a shout.

Still no answer.

Harry yelled again, and this time there was a note in his voice which brought Teddy White to his side.

They dived into the bush together, shouting in unison for all they were worth.

Then suddenly they stopped and stared at one another, and there was alarm in the eyes of both.

"I don't like it," said Teddy in a hollow voice.

"Oh, I bet he is all right," replied Harry, anxious to reassure his companion, who was growing properly scared. "He has lost his way, and finding he could not get back to us he has gone back to camp."

Teddy shook his head dolefully.

"I doubt it. Something's 'appened. I got a feeling something's 'appened," he said, while his teeth began to chatter.

"Don't be an idiot," retorted Harry unsympathetically; "Jack can look after himself! Just think it out. What would you do if you lost your way in this jungle? You would climb up the hillside till you got clear of the bush, and then work your way round till you came to the plateau where we made our camp. That is what Jack has done, you may bet your life. We shall find him waiting for us."

But although Harry Frobisher spoke so confidently he was very far from feeling happy about the sudden and mysterious disappearance of his chum.

It was not like Jack to get lost, or to desert his comrades without making a determined effort to find them.

Why had he not shouted out to them? There was something uncanny in the silent, almost stealthy way, in which he had vanished. It was as though he had been spirited away by some magic power.

Harry could not get rid of this feeling, and the gorgeous, tropical forest began to assume an ugly and sinister aspect.

"Let's get out of this," he said; and Teddy White was only too glad to fall in with the suggestion.

They journeyed back more or less by the way they had come, and after a weary tramp through the prickly bushes

and tangled vines came out with a sigh of relief upon the rocky plateau.

"Hallo, Jack! Are you there?" shouted Harry, with a very perceptible note of anxiety in his voice.

When no answer came he darted to the mouth of the cave and peered in. Seeing no one, he entered, but came out again almost at once.

"He ain't there?" said Teddy.

"No, he isn't," replied Harry.

"Something's 'appened!" said Teddy hoarsely. "I knowed it. Something's 'appened. I never oughter hev left me 'appy 'ome in 'ammersmiff. Foreign parts ain't 'ealthy for the likes of me. I knows wot's going to 'appen. I feels it in me bones. First Cap'n Storm was took, now it's Jack Carter. Next it'll be you, Mr. Harry, and then I'll be left alone."

"Oh, cheer up!" said Harry. "Perhaps you'll be the next to be taken, and I shall be the one left alone. Always look on the bright side. Look here!" he added, with a change of tone. "The best thing we can do is to light a fire. If Jack is really lost in the forest he will climb a tree and have a look round, and a column of smoke is the best signal we can give him."

The suggestion was sensible for more reasons than one. It gave the chums something to do, and in the present state of their nerves this was important.

They began to collect armfuls of dead brushwood from the edge of the forest and pile it in a heap.

Harry was just returning with a load when he heard a startled cry from his companion.

It was a cry more of astonishment than fear, but it made Harry drop his burden and run forward.

Teddy White was standing on the edge of the plateau gazing out across the rolling plain.

"Jumping Jehosophat, wot's that?" he exclaimed, as Harry came up.

Harry followed the direction of the little man's gaze, and a stifling sensation caught him by the throat.

Out from behind a clump of trees at the far end of the plain there had just emerged the terrible Thing he had seen once before—the mechanical monster which had seized and carried away Captain Storm to some frightful, unknown doom.

The boy became sick with fear.

"Wot is it?" repeated the little man, still in the incredulous tone of one who cannot believe his eyes.

"It's—it's the Thing!" replied Harry, shuddering. "The Thing we told you about when you thought we were lying."

His voice trailed off into silence, and it is doubtful whether his companion heard what he had said.

The Thing striding towards them across the waste of brown, parched grass seemed to be getting bigger and bigger and more fearsome in its aspect.

Moreover, it appeared to be inspired by a terrible and definite purpose.

It was coming straight for them, and yet they could not move.

Palsied with terror, they stood motionless, staring.

"Let's—let's get to the cave," said Harry faintly, trying to drag his companion away; but even as he spoke Teddy collapsed and lay in a shivering heap at his feet.

Then the monster was upon them, towering above them, and in a voice of thunder began to speak.

Dazed and stupefied, his ears deafened by that prodigious voice, Harry only caught a phrase here and there.

"White men, your hour has come. . . . Secrets not meant. . . . You must die. . . . Cause of science."

Harry stared at the monstrous Thing as one spellbound. He had no power to move, or even to think.

He saw the great arm sweep upwards, and he felt that the end had come.

And then an amazing thing happened.

The mighty arm with its clutching hand, just as it was about to make its downward swoop, gave a convulsive jerk and then described an aimless circle in the air.

The whole monstrous body of the Thing seemed to shiver from head to foot. Then it lurched, swayed, and with a

thunderous rattle of machinery began a wild, impossible, fantastic dance on the hillside, for all the world like a double-jointed Christmas toy at the end of a string.

This lasted only a few seconds, and then the amazing monster leaped into the air, turned a complete somersault, and then, with a noise that echoed like thunder through the rocky hillside, crashed to the ground, and lay there disembowelled, a still throbbing, whirring mass of broken machinery.

Harry awoke as from a hideous nightmare, and heard someone laughing hysterically, and then discovered, to his astonishment, that it was himself.

At the same time tears of relief were streaming down his cheeks.

Teddy White had remained with his head buried in the ground; but, finding he was not dead, he looked up.

"Wot's up?" he asked, his eyes big, and his little, wizened face white as a sheet.

Harry could only point to the great heap of shattered machinery lying on the hillside beneath them.

Teddy stared, and then slowly rose to his feet.

"Rum!" he said. "Precious rum! But wot we got to do is to keep our nerve. I'm a older man than you, Mr. Harry, and you kin take it from me there ain't no good in getting flustered. We got to use our 'eads, and keep calm. I never was one to go 'opping around when danger threatened. Use your 'ead to save your skin. That's my motter."

It was curious to see that the little man, now that the danger was past, recovered his self-control more quickly than Harry. He was alive and unhurt, and that was enough for Teddy until the next danger threatened.

Harry could not so easily forget the awful experience through which they had passed.

He felt sick and ill, and there was no strength in any of his limbs.

He could only stare at what remained of the Thing.

It was quite still now. The intricate machinery, with its wheels and cogs and levers, which reminded Harry of the inside of a gigantic watch, now had no movement.

The Thing was dead, and the boy could scarcely believe that a minute ago it had seemed so hideously alive.

What was the force which had given the appearance and the power of life to that man-made monstrosity, and what had become of that force now?

The mystery of it appalled Harry, and then another thought came to the boy and chilled his blood.

He put the dreadful thought into words as he looked up at Teddy White, who was now surveying the wreckage with more of curiosity than fear in his sharp, little Cockney face.

"Teddy," he said, in a voice that trembled in spite of himself, "do you think it got Jack before—before it came for us?"

"No!" declared the little man contemptuously. "Why, it's only a blessed machine! Look at it! It's got innards like a Waterbury."

"But—but you saw it—you saw it just now!" exclaimed Harry impatiently.

"I saw something. I was that flummoxed, I 'ardly knows wot I did see. Anyways, I ain't 'feared of no blinking machine. Pull yourself tegever, Mr. Harry, pull yourself tegever! Be a man! Wot we got to do—Hallo! Wot's that?"

His voice changed abruptly, for at that moment he perceived something gliding swiftly and silently towards them across the plain.

#### THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

*Reports having been received to the effect that Professor Rollins, who went to South America to explore the unknown regions through which the Amazon flows, is held in captivity, Captain Storm, a broad-shouldered man, in company with Teddy White, a middle-aged Cockney, and two youngsters named Jack Carter and Harry Frobisher, set off in search of the missing scientist. Headless of the dangers and perils ahead, the four plucky adventurers push on into the unknown regions until they reach a cave in the hillside where they make camp. They are aroused from their slumbers, however, that night by a startled cry. Rushing to the mouth of the cave they are horrified to see a huge steel monster formed like a man, but of such prodigious height that its mighty hand over-tops the tallest tree. Seizing Captain Storm by the waist, this enormous monster lifts him high above its head, writhing and struggling helplessly, and carries him away. When searching for food later, Jack Carter comes face to face with Professor Rollins, the inventor of this strange monstrosity, who insists on the youngster accompanying him to his quarters in the rocks—a large and brilliantly-lit chamber fitted out with the finest electrical plant in the world. Convinced that the professor must be mad, Jack deems it wise to humour the unfortunate man until a chance comes his way to escape. In consequence of this he is gazing into a camera obscura contrivance watching a demonstration of the professor's power over the Robot when Rollins informs him that he is about to kill Jack's chums with the aid of this huge monster. Before he can carry out his murderous act, however, Jack lunges out with his foot, catches the professor fairly in the ribs, and sends him crashing to the floor.*

(Now read on.)

#### How the Robot Went Home— The Hidden House!

THE two friends were standing on the very edge of the rocky shelf which had been cut in the hillside.

Peering down, they watched the thing that was gliding towards them so noiselessly through the brown, rank grass of the plain.

And then suddenly it came out of the shadow of the hill, and they perceived to their astonishment that it was an enormous truck, or lorry, laden with men.

Two of the men were dark

fellows, and they sat quite motionless, like wooden figures in a mechanical toy.

"Chummy," said Teddy, in a hoarse whisper, "this is where you and me hev got the same name, and thet's Walker! We ain't staying 'ere. If that there party of 'andsome strangers is a'comin' to pay us a afternoon call, they'll find yours truly not at 'ome, hevving a himportant engagement elsewhere. This is where we scoot, skeddaddle, and likewise vamoose. Kim on!"

"Wait a bit!" said Harry. "Let us get behind here and watch them, till we see what they are up to."

He retreated from the edge of the plateau, and concealed himself behind the heap of dead brushwood they had gathered for the fire.

Teddy did likewise, and squatted down by his side, and from their position they could still see the ruins of the Robot, and the enormous lorry

which now seemed to be bearing down upon it. "I'd feel 'appier, Mr. Harry, if we was back there in the forest. I allers did like a bit o' cover. Mark you, I ain't a-thinking of meself. But you being so young and innercent, I feels as 'ow I'm responsible, if you get my meaning. I'd never fergive meself if anythin' 'appened to you. Kim now, wot about making a bolt for it?"

"Shut up!" said Harry unceremoniously. "I don't believe they have come for us at all, and I want to see what their game is. If they begin to climb the hill we shall have plenty of time to run. Look, look, they've stopped!"

Sure enough, the lorry had come to a halt alongside the heap of shattered machinery, and the men began to descend.

Harry noticed that their movements were slow and awkward, and then he gave a gasp of surprise as he perceived the reason.

To the left leg of each man, just above the ankle, a short chain was fastened, and at the end of each chain was a weight.

Harry turned a white face to his companion. "Slaves!" he murmured, in an awed whisper. "My word!" responded the little Cockney, with an uncomfortable wriggle. "This is a country, ain't it? Gimme ole England. She may hev 'er faults. I ain't denying that, but— Hello! Wot are they up to now?"

The men, numbering more than twenty, and every one of them carrying some tool or other, had swarmed round the fallen mechanical giant, and were busy taking the monster to pieces.

They worked very rapidly and apparently with great skill, and as they dislodged sections of the Robot they carefully piled them up on the lorry.

For nearly an hour the two comrades knelt behind their screen of dead brushwood and watched the strange scene.

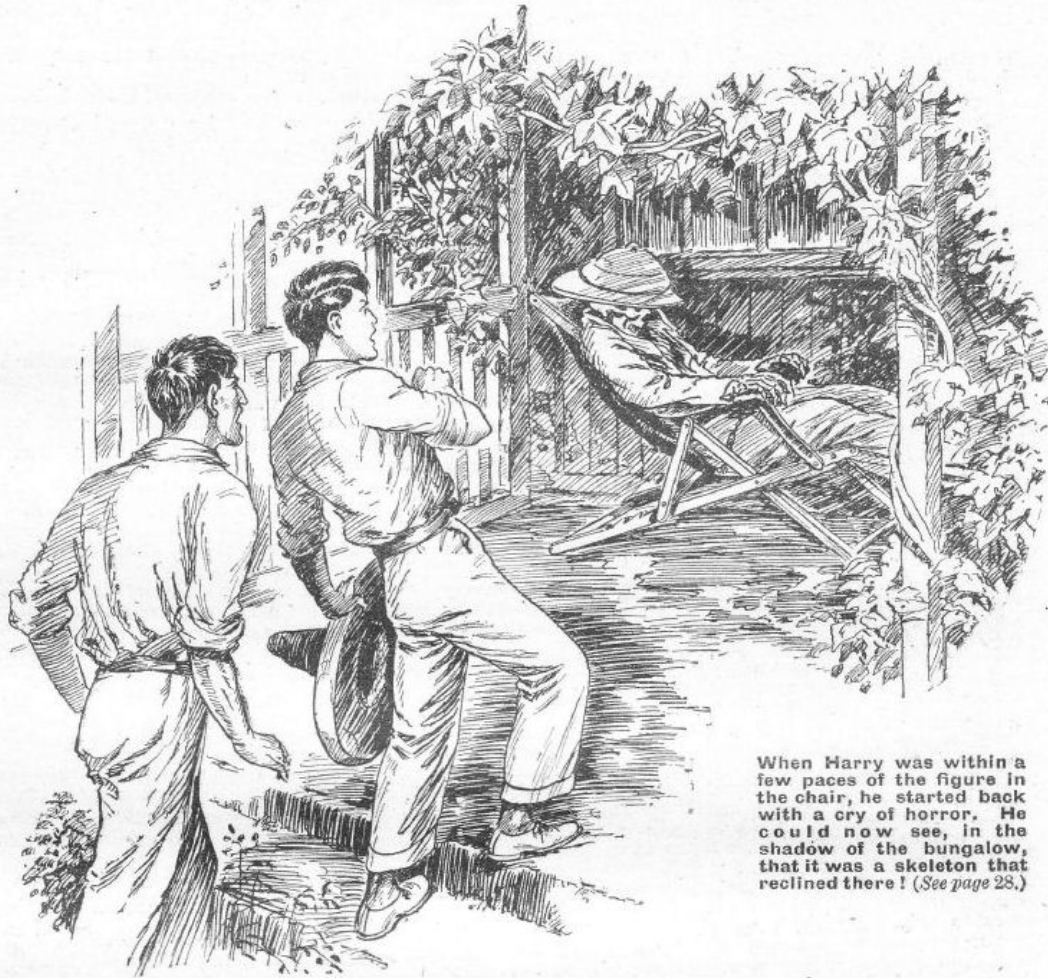
"They knows their job, anyways," said Teddy, "and my, 'ow they works. They are on piecework, I reckon."

"Or the eye of their master is on them!" suggested Harry significantly.

"Their master? Who's he?" asked Teddy in surprise.

"That's what I would like to know," replied Harry. The indefatigable workers down there on the plain completed their task at last.

Every scrap of wreckage was loaded on to the lorry. The men then laboriously clambered on top, dragging their weighted chains with them, and the next moment the



When Harry was within a few paces of the figure in the chair, he started back with a cry of horror. He could now see, in the shadow of the bungalow, that it was a skeleton that reclined there! (See page 28.)

ponderous lorry glided away through the rank grass as swiftly and noiselessly as it had come.

Harry and Teddy White watched it without speaking until it had disappeared in the distance behind that great clump of trees from which the Robot had emerged little more than an hour ago.

"And that's that!" said Teddy with a sigh, as though he had been holding his breath for a long time.

"I believe they are alive!" was Harry's unexpected remark, and Teddy noticed that his eyes were very bright.

"Hey? Who's alive?" asked Teddy.

"Jack and Captain Storm."

"Oh! I dessay. Why not? Then I reckon we better get busy and light this fire to give 'em the signal."

But Harry shook his head.

"No," he said, "that's no good. Even if they saw the smoke they would not come here."

"Why not?"

"Because they can't. If they are alive they are prisoners."

"Prisoners?"

Harry nodded.

"Slaves!" he said bluntly.

"Wot!" exclaimed Teddy, his little face aglow with indignation. "Englishmen can't be slaves! It's agin the law."

Harry gave his companion a queer look.

"I am afraid, old fellow," he said, "that the people who are working this stunt care for the law just about as much as the wild cats in the forest. We have run up against something pretty big and ugly, and if we win through it will be by our own efforts. The law won't help us."

He spoke with unusual gravity, but at the same time not with that hopelessness and despair which Teddy expected.

In fact there was something almost cheerful in Harry's demeanor.

"You ain't down'erted, chummy?" said Teddy, looking at the boy curiously.

"Not quite," replied Harry. "You see I thought both Captain Storm and Jack were dead, and I didn't seem to care what happened. But now I believe they are alive. It is pretty rotten to think of old Jack going about with a chain on his ankle, but still while there's life there's hope."

The beasts who are behind this magic business are not out for murder, but for getting people to work for them."

Harry stared out over the now deserted plain. He knew very well that he must now take command, and he tried hard to think what Jack Carter would suggest if he were here.

At last he rose to his feet. Right or wrong he had made his decision.

"We will get away from here anyway," he said. "This seems to be a danger spot and a favourite hunting ground for the slave-hunting magic-workers. We will light a fire and make them think we are still here and then we will clear off."

Teddy heartily agreed with this proposal. The fire was lit, and as the column of smoke rose to the cloudless sky, the two comrades turned their backs on it and fought their way down the hill-side through the thick and tangled undergrowth.

The heat was terrific.

At the coast, before coming up country, Harry Frobisher with boyish pride, had provided himself with a big Mexican high-crowned hat.

This was a good protection from the direct rays of the blazing sun, but in the steaming heat of the forest it served but little purpose except to make him feel he was in a Turkish bath.

They reached the river at last and followed the bank down stream for some distance.

When they had trudged for some two miles, however, they were brought to a halt by a stream which flowed out of the main river into the dense jungle.

Teddy, in his eagerness to get on, was for plunging in and swimming across, but Harry objected.

"Let us follow the stream inland a bit and cross it when it gets narrower," he said.

This suggestion was prudent, for when they had proceeded more than three or four hundred yards, Harry, who was slightly in advance, stopped abruptly and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Hallo! Look at this!" he cried.

Teddy hurried up and both peered down at the stream.

What they saw was a canoe fastened by a rope of twisted grass to a stake driven in the bank.

There were two paddles in the canoe, and it looked serviceable, but it had obviously not been used for some time, for creeping plants from the river bank had spread over it and wound themselves round the seat.

"Corn in Egypt!" said Teddy. "That'll suit me all right. I've had about enough of this 'ere jungle. Now for a life on the ocean wave!"

"Wait a bit," replied Harry. "Perhaps the thing has got an owner. Let's have a look round. The forest isn't so thick here. It looks as though—"

"Strike me pink, you are right!" cried Teddy. "Someone has been busy here."

He went forward a few paces and Harry followed him; they came out of the jungle into a sunlit clearing of considerable size.

The next moment they had another surprise, for they beheld, standing back some fifty yards from the water's edge, a well-built bungalow.

It was surrounded by what had once been a well-laid out garden. The jungle had invaded the place and luxurious weeds abounded, but distinct traces of the garden remained.

A veranda extended along the whole front of the bungalow, and the house in spite of its deserted aspect had a homely, picturesque appearance.

"May as well see if anyone's at home," suggested Teddy. "It don't look like it, but no 'arm in leaving our card."

Harry nodded. A solemn feeling had taken possession of him in the presence of this deserted and neglected home-stand.

He wondered what kind of people had lived here and what had become of them.

They had evidently loved the place. He could see that by the laying out of the garden, which had almost an English look in spite of the tropical blooms which now sprang over it.

With a certain timidity, Harry led the way along the overgrown path towards the house.

When within a few paces of it he stopped abruptly and seized his companion's arm.

"There's someone here!" he said, in a whisper. "Look!" He pointed, as he spoke, to a corner of the veranda which was in heavy shadow.

There, in a low hammock chair, reclined the figure of a man apparently asleep.

He was wearing white ducks, and his sun hat was pulled forward, concealing his face.

"Adn't he better 'ook it?" whispered Teddy.

"No, we can't go back now," replied Harry, and advancing, he stepped on to the veranda and approached the sleeping figure.

When still half a dozen paces from it, however, he stopped again, and a cry of dismay escaped his lips.

He had come near enough to see that the figure in the hammock chair was a skeleton!

And it was evident that the two comrades were the first to visit the place since this lonely dweller in the forest had breathed his last.

"He must have died alone," murmured Harry, in a low voice. "How awful!"

"It may be our luck any day, seems to me," said Teddy gloomily. "Come on, sir, let's hev a look indoors. I don't expect he'll mind now as he can't see us. I reckon he'd hev made us welcome if he had bin alive."

Harry made no reply, but he followed his friend in through the open door of the bungalow.

They found themselves in a room neatly and tastefully furnished, and quite startlingly English in its appearance.

The pictures on the walls were landscapes of homely English scenes, and even the books on the shelves were mostly English, though there were a few in Spanish.

Harry felt like an intruder, and stood awkwardly watching his companion, who was busy examining everything with the keenest curiosity.

When Teddy went to explore the other rooms, Harry did not follow him, but remained in the room they had first entered.

There was a book on the table, and he picked it up and opened it. It was in English, but Harry could not make much of it, for it was a learned medical work on tropical diseases.

On the fly-leaf, however, was written: "To Doctor Henry Slater from his old friend and colleague, Ronald Kerr."

Harry put down the book as his companion returned.

"Look here, Mr. Harry," said the little man, "this isn't half a bad crib. Wot do you say to making this our headquarters for a bit?"

Harry, who had taken off his high-crowned hat as soon as he had realised the nature of that tragic figure on the veranda, and had been carrying it ever since, now put it down on a small table in front of the window and turned to his friend.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it does not seem to belong to anyone else now, does it?"

"Whoever it belongs to doesn't seem to have much use for it, anyways," replied the Cockney. "Seems to me it's made for us. It's cosy and it's quiet, and it's hid away nice and snug, and I reckon we'll be as safe 'ere as—"

He was interrupted by the sharp crack of a rifle. Harry's hat spun round as though it were alive, and then toppled to the floor. At the same moment a bullet buried itself in the wall opposite.

(You'll all agree that this ripping serial is full of gripping situations; but these are nothing to compare with what is to come. No reader should miss a line of this powerful adventure serial.)

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