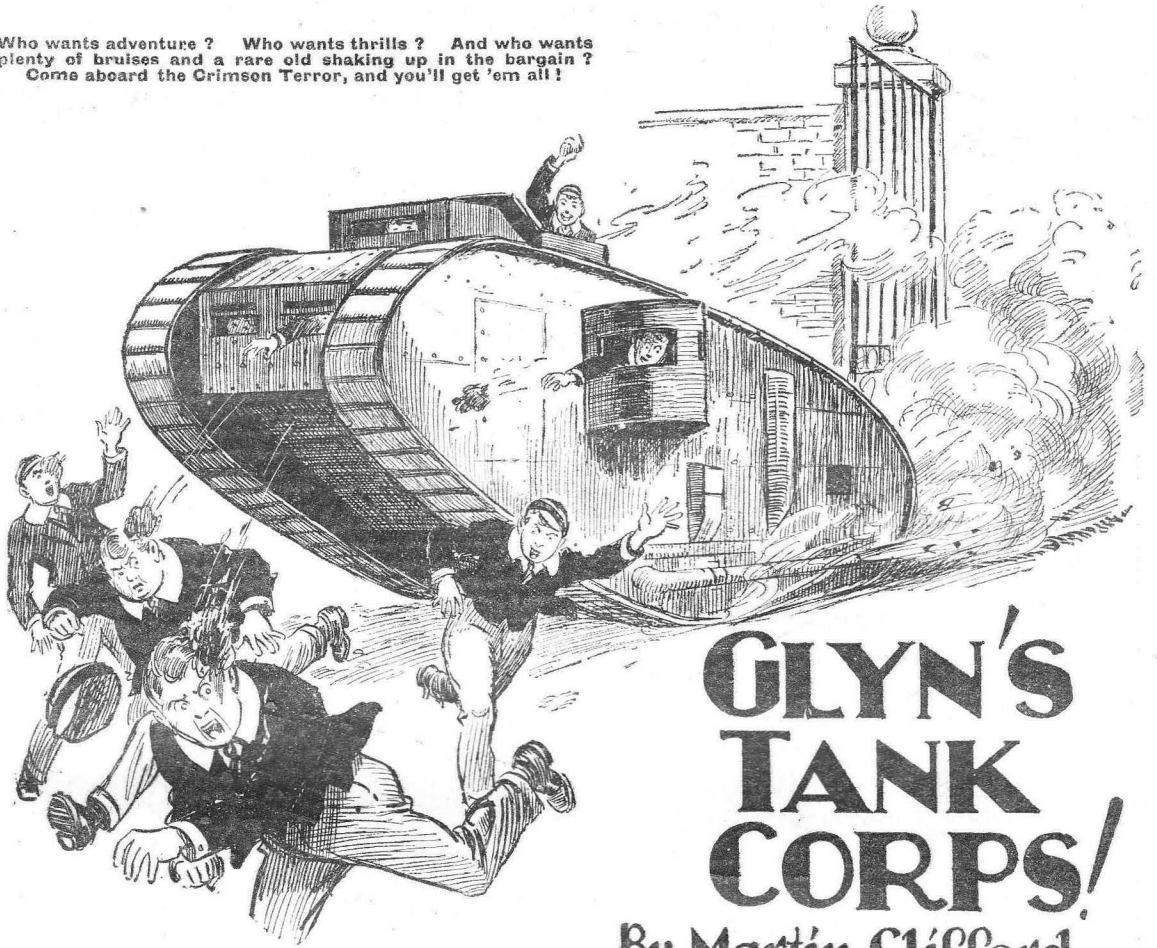


"GLYN'S TANK CORPS!" This week's enthralling complete yarn
of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.



COME ON BOYS! HERE'S A RIPPING YARN OF TOM MERRY—

Who wants adventure? Who wants thrills? And who wants plenty of bruises and a rare old shaking up in the bargain? Come aboard the Crimson Terror, and you'll get 'em all!



GLYN'S TANK CORPS!

By Martin Clifford

CHAPTER 1. Curiosity!

"THAT ass Dane here?"
"No!"
"That idiot, Noble?"
"Nunno!"

Bernard Glyn, of the Shell of St. Jim's, glared. The Terrible Three smiled. Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, was very often hunting for his study-mates, Dane and Noble. They suspected that Glyn's study-mates, as frequently happened, did not want to be found by their chum.

"The rotters! They came this way!" snorted Glyn, staring suspiciously round Study No. 10.

Monty Lowther made a great show of going through his pockets.

"No; they're not on me!" he announced gravely.

"Nor in here!" said Manners, after a careful look into the study coal-scuttle.

"Nor in here," added Tom Merry, solemnly glancing into an inkpot. "Have a look up the chimney, Manners, old man—they may be hiding there."

"You—you silly asses!" gasped Glyn. "Think you're being funny, I suppose?"

"Only helping you look for Dane and Noble!" said Tom Merry mildly. "You seem to think they're here, old chap. If you'd like us to take the carpet up—"

"The rotters have given me the slip on purpose," said Glyn, breathing hard. "I told 'em to be ready the minute lessons ended. Well, they can go to pot! You fellows will do just as well."

"Eh? Us?"

"Yes. Matter of fact, I intended to ask you fellows and Blake's lot to come along. Hallo, here's Blake now! Good!"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, all of the Fourth at St. Jim's, came into the study. They smiled on sighting Glyn's heated face.

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"Hallo! What's that about me, Glyn?" asked Blake affably.

"I want you fellows to come along with me for an hour or so," explained Glyn eagerly. "Just to try my latest—"

"Can't be did!" said Blake. "We're off to Rylcombe—bit of shopping, and tea at Mother Murphy's, you know."

"Then cut that out!" said Glyn at once. "I've got something on much better than that—something that'll make you sit up and take notice. As Dane and Noble have let me down—"

"If you're looking for Dane and Noble—" began Blake.

"I am—they've given me the slip, the rotters! If you've seen them—" asked Glyn eagerly.

"Saw them both—round at the back of the chapel!" said Blake.

"My hat! Hiding from me, I'll bet!" said Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "We'll see about that. You fellows wait here and I'll soon yank them both along."

And Bernard Glyn dashed out, looking grim.

Blake chuckled.

"That's got rid of him," he remarked. "Glyn's an awfully nice chap, but he takes some shaking off as a rule."

"Are Dane and Noble behind the chapel?" asked Lowther. "Blessed if I know," said Blake cheerfully. "They were this morning. Glyn's such a fellow for jumping to conclusions, isn't he? Now what about you fellows coming with us to Rylcombe?"

"Ha, ha, ha! We'll come—especially if you're standing tea!"

"Gussy is—at least, we're taking that for granted," said Blake airily. "If you're coming, let's get off before Glyn returns. I expect he wants us to try one of his giddy inventions. As I'm not insured I'd rather not take the risk, for my father's sake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors soon got ready, the Terrible Three being

—& CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S, IN AMAZING ADVENTURES!



eager enough for a walk to Rylcombe, with a free tea at the end of it. Just by the gates Dane and Noble overtook them, both wheeling their bikes.

"Hallo! Glyn's hunting for you, you cripples!" called Blake.

"I know he is—that's why we're clearing out!" said Dane hurriedly. "I say, don't tell him you've seen us!"

"What's his game?" asked Tom Merry curiously. "He's been jolly mysterious lately—we've hardly seen him at all, except at classes."

"It's a new invention or something," grunted Noble. "Some sort of a car—he won't tell us what it actually is. I believe it's at Wayland, as that's where he's been going every half and every evening. Anyway, he says the giddy contraption's finished now, and he wanted us to go over with him to try it out this evening. But we're not having any!"

"No fear!" agreed Dane feelingly. "I've not forgotten his rocket bike yet—nearly blew us all up. Glyn's an awfully decent sort, but he's a dangerous madman!"

"When he's inventing, anyway," said Noble. "Come on, Dane—oh, my hat! Look out!"

There was a wrathful shout, and a figure appeared round by the gymnasium. It was Bernard Glyn, and he had seen his faithless chums.

"Dane—Noble—hold on, you rotters!"

"Hook it!" gasped Noble.

He leaped into the saddle, and Dane followed his example. Riding in the quadrangle was forbidden, but desperate ills needed desperate remedies in the opinion of Noble and Dane.

Noble pedalled away, and Dane was just doing likewise when Glyn scudded up and made a grab at his saddle.

Dane gasped and thrust desperately at the pedals. The bike shot away, and, losing his clutch, Glyn sprawled on his face on the gravel.

Thump!

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "Vevy hard lines, Glyn! Are you hurt, deah boy?"

He helped the crimson-faced inventor to his feet. Glyn gasped for breath and mopped a cut chin with his handkerchief.

"Oh, no!" he choked. "It's the gravel that's hurt, not me, you burbling chump!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"I'll smash 'em for this!" spluttered Glyn, shaking his fist after Dane and Noble as they vanished through the

gateway. "The—the rotters! It's nothing to cackle at, you idiots!"

"Sorry! We—we were just choking with sympathy, old chap! Cheerio!"

"Here, hold on—"

"Can't stop, old fellow!"

"I'll give you a lift to Rylcombe—"

"And a lift into the next world, too, if we happen to be near your invention when it goes off," said Lowther. "That's why we can't stop!"

"Look here—"

"Good-bye!"

The chums of the School House walked through the gateway, smiling. They were always very interested in Glyn's many experiments and inventions, but they preferred to be interested from a distance—the greater the distance the better; and safer.

Outside the gates a smart touring-car, with a liveried chauffeur at the wheel, had just stopped.

"Hallo, that's one of the Glyn House cars!" remarked Tom Merry, nodding to the driver, whom he knew. "I say, that's what Glyn meant by offering us a lift into Rylcombe."

"Wish I had a pater who lived near St. Jim's and indulged my every giddy wish and want," said Manners.

The chums walked on. They certainly did envy Bernard Glyn in that respect. Glyn's home was near St. Jim's, and his father was wealthy and good-natured to a fault. He was very proud of his hopeful son's inventive genius, and he never refused him the cash necessary to carry out his experiments.

The juniors had not gone a hundred yards along the lane when the Glyn House car, with Bernard Glyn seated beside the chauffeur now, overtook them. It drew up smoothly, and Glyn called to them:

"What about that lift to Rylcombe, you fellows?" he asked. "Gussy, you'll get your bags awfully muddy, walking!"

"Bai Jove! That is vevy twue," admitted Gussy. "I see no reason why we should not accept Glyn's offah, deah boys."

"Give us a longer time in the village," said Blake. "Why not?"

"Yes, but— Oh, all right!"

Though a bit suspicious of the smiling Glyn, Tom Merry nodded after a pause, and he and his chums boarded the car, which immediately glided on again at increasing speed.

"Drop us off at Mother Murphy's, Glyn!" called Tom.

Glyn did not seem to hear, and Tom yelled as the car flashed past the village tuckshop.

"Here, hold on, Glyn! Jones—"

"No good calling to Jones," said Bernard Glyn, looking round coolly. "He's had orders not to stop until we reach Wayland."

"But—but—why, you cheeky owl, Glyn!" spluttered Blake. "You knew we were only going to Mother Murphy's!"

"That's all right!" said Glyn airily. "You see, I want you chaps to come and see my latest. All serene! Let her rip, Jones!"

And Jones opened out the throttle, and the car flashed through the village, bound for Wayland—and Glyn's "latest," whatever that was!

CHAPTER 2.

Glyn's "Latest"!

"**B**AI JOVE!"

"Done in the eye, after all!"

"Glyn, you cheeky rotter—"

"Now, don't get excited!" grinned Glyn, looking round again. "I'm doing more than give you a lift to Rylcombe, aren't I?"

"But we're hungry—we want—"

"That's all right—I'll stand you fellows a good tea afterwards!"

"But we're hungry now!" hooted Herries.

"You'll forget your hunger when you see the surprise I've got for you," said Glyn.

"Blow your surprise! If it's one of your thumping inventions—"

"Not at all!"

"It isn't?" stuttered Tom. "Then what—"

"It's a—a vehicle I've bought!" grinned Glyn. "Wait until you see it! Jones and I have been working on it, getting it into running order. I've christened it the Crimson Terror."

"Oh, my hat! Is it a motor-car?"

"Nunno!"

"Then what—"

"Wait and see!"

"You cheeky owl—" gasped Blake.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Tom Merry, bursting into a laugh. "He's done us; but, after all, we're getting a free run out, and so long as it isn't one of his dangerous inventions I don't mind!"

"Wathah not! Is it dangewous, Glyn?"

"Not at all, old chap! Only a giddy steam-roller would have a ghost of a chance against it!"

"Bai Jove! You are makin' me vewy ewvious, Glyn!"

Glyn had made them all curious, in fact. Their wrath subsided rapidly as the fast car ate up the miles. They had known that the scapegrace inventor was working on something away from St. Jim's, and they had wondered often enough what it could be. Now Glyn's words increased their curiosity. Moreover, they were quite enjoying the run in the clear, keen air.

Instead of entering Wayland, the car skirted the town and came to stop at last before a ramshackle shed by the roadway. By the side of the big shed was a yard, beyond the fence of which they caught glimpses of piles of old iron and relics of rusted, ancient cars. Over the door of the shed was a sign stating that old iron and other materials of like nature were bought and sold there.

"It's Timmins' place—the giddy old iron dealer," said Blake. "What the thump are we stopping here for, Glyn?"

"The Crimson Terror's in the yard there," said Glyn. "Come on, you fellows; no time to waste if we're to land home before lock-up! All right, Jones!"

The chauffeur touched his cap, grinned, and as the last junior left the car he let in his clutch, and the car glided away again.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. "Jones is coming back again, isn't he, Glyn?"

"Eh? Oh, no!"

"Then how are we going to get back?" demanded Tom.

"I'm going to run you back, of course!" said Glyn airily.

"Think I'd bring you out here and leave you stranded?"

"But if Jones isn't coming back—"

"He isn't, old top!"

"Then how—"

"In the Crimson Terror, of course," said Glyn calmly. "That was my idea—to run you back in that! See? Dane and Noble have let me down, and I must have someone to lend a hand."

"Well, you—you—"

"Now, don't start grouching!" said Glyn. "I was determined that you fellows should have the honour of being the first chaps to try my latest. You ought to be jolly grateful really—Here, what's this game? Leggo! I tell you—Yarroooop!"

Bump!

Bernard Glyn smote the hard earth with his person as Tom Merry & Co. showed him what the game was. They had been spoofed into entering the car, and now Glyn's dodge of getting them to try his "latest" was only too clear to them.

"Give him socks!" gasped Tom Merry. "Bump the artful dodger!"

"Yarroooop! Whoooop! Stoppit!"

"I thought he just meant us to look at the blessed thing, whatever it is, and then run us back again after a good tea!" gasped Tom. "Now again! We'll teach him to spoof us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yarroooop! Oh, my hat!" howled Glyn. "Leggo, you silly owls! Yooop! I tell you it's all right—I'm going to run you back!"

"In what?" hooted Blake.

"My Crimson Terror—"

"Crimson Terror be blowed! What is it? Can't you tell us?" bawled Lowther. "Is it a submarine, or a perambulator, you footling ass?"

"Ow! Ow-yow! I'll show you in a minute, you awful rotters! Ow-ow!"

The wrathful juniors ceased bumping Glyn, being breathless. Glyn staggered to his feet—muddy, dishevelled, and more than out of breath.

"You raving idiots!" he gurgled. "Ow-yow! Keep off, and I'll show you, blow you!"

The youthful inventor rubbed himself and limped away. The juniors, very curious indeed to know the type of vehicle that was to "run" them back to St. Jim's, followed him round the rear of the big shed.

They turned the corner, and then they stopped abruptly.

Before them loomed the gigantic proportions of a tank—an old Army tank!

It was newly painted a vivid crimson, which made it seem doubly gigantic.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"A—a tank!"

"A giddy Army tank!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"Gweat Scott! Is—is this weally—"

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"My Crimson Terror!" said Glyn proudly.

"It—it's actually yours, Glyn?"

"Yes, old chap!"

"You've bought it—that thing?"

"Exactly, Blake!"

"But what—who—where on earth have you got it from?"

"I bought it from old Timmins!" grinned Glyn. "He was only too jolly glad to get rid of it, you know. It belonged to the Wayland Town Council. I expect you chaps have seen it many a time. They wanted the site it stood on for building purposes, and sold it to old Timmins as scrap iron. Timmins thought he could break it up and make something on it. But he found it a tougher job than he'd expected, I suppose. Anyway, I happened to come along and spot it in the yard, and I bought it."

"You—you awful lunatic!"

"Eh? I don't see it. We ought to have heaps and heaps of fun out of it, you know!"

"But will it go?" gasped Lowther.

"Of course! Jones and I have been working on it for ages, and we managed to get the spare parts that were needed. Jones was in the Tank Corps during the giddy War, you see, and he knows all about 'em—drove one himself, in fact. It was a tough job to get it going, for the blessed thing was red with rust. Anyway, it looks great now, doesn't it?"

"You—you born idiot!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"What's wrong now?"

"You can't run about the country with a thing like that!" hooted Tom Merry.

"I'm going to, anyway, old bean," said Glyn calmly. "Think I bought it and went to all that trouble just to look at it? Rot!"

"But—but you can't drive it!"

"You'll see if I can't!"

"But you haven't even a licence to drive a car—you're not old enough for one!"

"Well, this isn't a motor-car!"

"But—but—"

"You're like a billy-goat, old chap! Cheese it, for goodness' sake, or we'll never get off!" snorted Glyn witheringly. "Did the chaps have to have a licence to drive a tank in the War? Rot!"

"But look here, you awful—"

"I'm looking at Gussy! Stop leaning against the blessed tank, Gussy, you ass!"

"Or you'll push it over!" murmured Lowther.

"Rats!" said Glyn warmly. "But that tank was only painted yesterday! He'll rub off—"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus, who was leaning elegantly against the crimson side of the big tank, leaped away with a gasp. But it was too late. All down the back of his beautiful coat was a series of smudges of red paint; the once elegant coat now resembled a futurist picture, while Gussy's glimmering topper was smudged at the rear.

Arthur Augustus almost wept as he twisted himself round to examine the damage.

"You—you careless dummy!" hooted Glyn indignantly, pointing to the smudged paint on the tank. "Look what you've done! Look at my tank!"

"And look at my jacket!" shrieked Gussy. "Uttahhly ruined! Why didn't you warn us, you feahful idiot?"

"Couldn't you see it wasn't dry?" said Bernard Glyn wrathfully. "I spotted it the moment I came, you dummy! Well, it can't be helped; I shall have to touch it up again some other time. Better be off—"

"But my coat—"

"Blow your silly coat! Now get aboard, you fellows, or I shan't get you back to St. Jim's before calling-over!"

"You're going to run us back in the tank?" yelled Blake.

"Of course—unless you feel like walking six miles!" grinned the schoolboy inventor. "That'll get you back home an hour or so after calling-over."

"You—you—"

"There's no train until about seven, either!" said Glyn cheerfully. "I think you'd better get aboard, chaps! You needn't be afraid. If we butt into anything it won't be us who'll get hurt."

Blake frowned, and then he chuckled.

"No good!" he said, grinning round at the staring juniors. "Glyn's got us! In any case, it'll be rather a lark!"

"No end of a lark!" said Lowther. "Fancy taking a ride home in a giddy Army tank! I'm having a squint inside!"

And opening the door of the tank, Lowther clambered inside, his youthful curiosity in things mechanical fully roused now. Digby and Manners instantly followed him. Tom Merry laughed. As a matter of fact, he was as interested in Glyn's latest as anyone.

"I'm game, then, if you can make the blessed thing go, Glyn!" he said. "None of your reckless larks, though! I'm not worrying about our giddy skins, but if any damage is done—"

"Right! In you get, and don't gas so much!" snapped Glyn. "Now, Gussy, never mind your thumping jacket! Hallo, here's old Timmins! Did you put plenty of petrol aboard, Timmins?"

A dingy-looking gentleman wearing a rusted white apron came round the shed. He was looking rather anxious.

"Yessir!" he said. "Four tins, Master Glyn. And I hopes as nothin' won't go wrong."

"Don't worry, old chap! This is my funeral! All aboard, you fellows! Right!"

Looking keen and excited, the enthusiastic inventor followed Arthur Augustus as that youth climbed rather apprehensively into the tank. A glance inside the interior had not made the prospect inviting to Gussy at all, but there seemed no help for it; in any case, his clothes could scarcely be made worse than they were now.

So he climbed in after his chums, and Glyn followed, closing the iron door of the tank with a bang.

The interior of the tank reeked of petrol, oil, and grease, and it was very stuffy and gloomy. Moreover, there was hardly any room to move about.

people make their giddy gateposts wide enough for a blessed tank to get through? Suppose I'll have to pay old Timmins for that, too! Take your chivvy out of the way, Gussy! That's the brake lever you've jammed it against!"

"Ow! Gwoooogh! You feahful madman!"

Arthur Augustus staggered up, having been flung forward by the lurch of the tank. His aristocratic features were smothered in oil and dirt from the floor.

"Don't grouse now!" snorted Glyn. "You can't expect to have the comforts of a Rolls-Royce in a blessed tank, can you?"

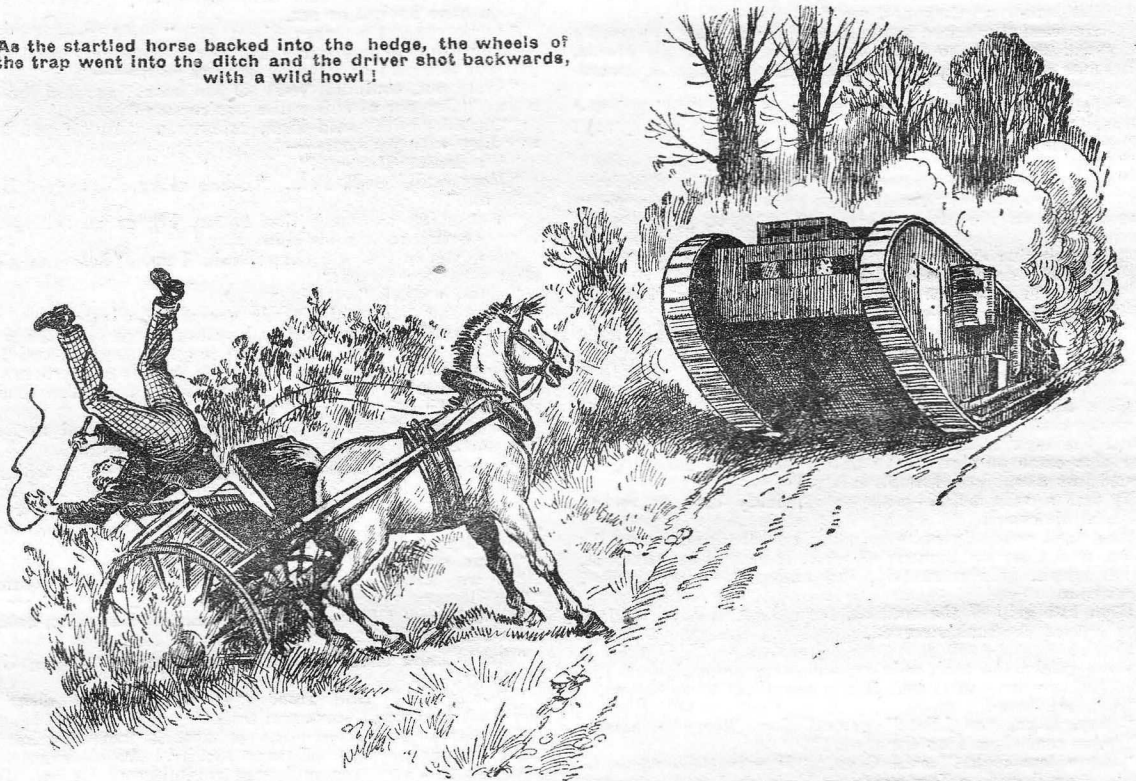
"Gwoooogh! Oh, by dose! Glyn, you feahful wuffian, I ordah you to stop at once and allow me to alight!" shrieked Gussy. "I uttahly refuse to twavel furthah in this feahful—"

"Rot! You'll begin to enjoy it soon, old bean! Wait until I get her going on Wayland Heath. I want to see how she can climb obstacles in earnest then!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I can manage the engines easily enough, but the steer-

As the startled horse backed into the hedge, the wheels of the trap went into the ditch and the driver shot backwards, with a wild howl!



"Bit cramped, what?" remarked Glyn, with a chuckle. "You ought to have left your feet at home, Herries!"

"Look here—"

"Don't gas! Was that your foot, Gussy? Sorry! Now we're all serene! Blake, that's a tin of grease you're sitting in! Now we'll see how she shapes!"

And having seated himself, Glyn grasped the controls and got busy. Nothing happened for a bit, and then suddenly the engines started with a roar that was deafening in the confined quarters of the tank.

Then there was a lurch that sent the juniors sprawling in a heap, and the tank lumbered forward.

"Good! We're off!" said Glyn, with satisfaction.

He had scarcely spoken when from outside came the sound of a crash and a yell.

CHAPTER 3.

Rather Exciting!

"**W**HA—WHAT'S that?" gasped Digby. "That's all right!" said Glyn, peering ahead through the look-out. "Only old Timmins' handcart—knocked the wheel off, I think. I'll make it right with him. Now we're fairly off! Ripping, ain't it? I think we'll— Hallo!"

Crash! Another crash sounded from outside, followed by a sickening lurch of the tank.

"Only the gatepost!" said Glyn. "Why the thump don't

ing's a bit ticklish, you know!" explained Glyn. "And as this is my first turn out with her—"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Haven't you steered the blessed thing before, Glyn?"

"Of course not! But I'll soon get used to it! Hallo, that gee-gee's never seen a tank before. Better slow down!"

Glyn slowed down a bit. Peering through the look-outs, the juniors saw an ancient pony-cart ahead on the narrow road. Between the shafts was a bony and frisky-looking pony, prancing up and down, evidently startled by the sight and the noise of the clanking, lumbering tank. In the trap a man was standing, tugging at the reins with one hand and waving a whip with the other, and he was bawling furiously at the top of his voice.

"Wants me to pull up, I suppose!" snorted Glyn. "Cheek! Hallo, the giddy gee-gee's saving me the trouble!"

The pony had started to back, steadily and with evident determination, despite the urging of its driver. Unfortunately, it turned half round before backing, with the result that it backed the trap into the hedge.

It was only a sparse, low hedge, and the trap backed clean through it. The wheels went down into the ditch, and the sudden, unexpected jolt sent the driver backwards over the seat into the back of the trap with a wild howl.

"No good stopping," said Glyn. "No damage done, I think!"

He increased the speed again, and the lumbering monster

slanked on, the juniors roaring with laughter, when they realised that little harm had befallen the driver.

Fortunately, the road was fairly clear after that, and the juniors began to get more confidence after the tank had been into the ditch twice and got out again without overturning.

"Safe as houses, you see!" said Glyn. "A bit tricky turning corners in these lanes, of course!"

But it was a relief to Tom Merry & Co. when Glyn turned into the rutty lane leading on to Wayland Heath at last. On the heath they could do little damage, at all events, Tom Merry felt. On the whole, they were quite enjoying the novel ride, with the exception of Arthur Augustus, who mourned for the state of his clothes and would not be comforted.

But Tom Merry's relief was short-lived.

Quite suddenly Bernard Glyn gave a chuckle as a small car appeared in sight in the narrow lane ahead of them. There was not room for both car and tank to pass, for on one side was a high bank and on the other a deep ditch.

"Bunkered!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Going to climb the bank, hop the ditch, or back her, Glyn?"

"We're going ahead, old bean!" said Glyn cheerfully. "Those merchants must back, of course! We're farther into the lane than they are, ass!"

There were three men in the oncoming car, and apparently they did not wish to back. They came on, at all events, all three of them staring at the lumbering tank in amazement and anger.

"Well, if they want to run us down, let 'em!" grinned Glyn. "It's the ditch for them if they try to pass, anyway! Nice-looking merchants, aren't they?"

"Glyn, old chap," began Tom, "stop her and—"

"Rats! What the thump are they doing in this lane, anyway?" said Glyn, wrinkling his brows. "Fancy a giddy car coming off the heath! My hat! They're going to try to pass us!"

The oncoming car slowed down to a crawl, and the driver yelled to the occupants of the tank.

"Stop, you fools! Why the thunder can't you get back? What the blue blazes—"

"Sounds excited," remarked Glyn. "We've as much right to the giddy lane as he has! Let him stop!"

"Glyn—"

"Rot!"

Glyn did not stop. At a lumbering crawl the iron-clad monster clanked on, Glyn hugging the high bank on his left until the tank lurched and tilted rather alarmingly. The car also came on slowly, the driver obviously believing he could just about get through safely.

It was a vain belief—with an unwieldy tank to reckon with, at all events.

The tank suddenly came to a big boulder, unobserved by Glyn, and after the manner of tanks it took it in its stride, so to speak. Unfortunately, the unexpected jerk proved disastrous.

Glyn lost grip of the controls for a brief instant, and in that instant the tank swerved.

Crash!

Fortunately, the tank only caught the rear mudguard and wheel of the car, but it sent it into the ditch, nevertheless.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Stop, Glyn, you idiot!" gasped Tom Merry in alarm. "You've sent them into the ditch!"

"Serve 'em right!" said Glyn. "It was their place to back; they'd only a few yards to back, and we had more than a hundred."

But Glyn pulled up, for all that. The scapegrace inventor was not a fellow to run away from trouble. He brought the Crimson Terror to a halt, and flung the side door open and jumped out.

Tom Merry & Co. followed him, only too glad to stretch their legs after the cramping interior of the tank.

"Listen to the language!" murmured Bernard Glyn, as cool as ever. "Might have smashed them all up by the row they're making! Hallo! That mudguard's done in, and the wheel as well, by the look of it!"

The car lay tilted up in the ditch, and the three men were clambering out of it, their faces showing fury. They looked more furious still as they saw that the tank's crew were only boys.

"You infernal little fellows!" yelled the driver, a short, thin man with a sandy moustache. "Look what you've done! What in thunder are you blamed kids doing with that durned thing?"

"Only taking a little ride," said Glyn calmly. "I say, I'm sorry; but it was your own fault, you know. We had the right of the road, and you should have backed."

"Backed be blowed!" shouted one of the other men furiously. "See what you've done—smashed the wheel and mudguard!"

"Well, you've got another wheel strapped on the back," said Glyn consolingly. "And, after all, what's a mudguard? You're lucky not to be smashed up altogether!"

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"You infernal little puppy!"

"It's all right!" said Glyn. "I'll pay for the damage, of course, though it was scarcely my fault. I'll give you my name and address—"

"We don't want your durned name and address!" snarled the fellow, almost beside himself with passion.

"Then perhaps you'll give me yours, and I'll get my pater to write to you," said Glyn cheerfully. "He's a giddy magistrate, and he'll see you get a square deal. Just get the damage repaired and send him the bill, and that will be all right— Ow!"

Bernard Glyn went spinning from a vicious blow from the short man's fist. Evidently Glyn's cheerful calmness had proved a trifle too much for the driver's temper.

"Here, none of that, you brute!" shouted Tom Merry.

He jumped forward, as did Blake and Herries, as the man made another rush at the half-dazed Glyn.

But both the man's companions caught him swiftly and held him back.

"Steady on, Harker, you fool!" snapped the taller of the two, as the driver struggled in their grasp. "You kids clear, confound you—clear while you're safe!"

Tom Merry hesitated. After all, the men had some cause for fury. The tank had done the damage, whether they should have backed or not.

"Look here, I'm sorry about this," said Tom. "But we're willing to pay our share of the damage. We'll give you our address; or if you'll give us yours—"

"Clear out, confound you! D'you hear?" shouted the tall man. "Get out of this while you're safe!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom, colouring. "But if you want any help with your car—"

"We don't! Get out!"

"Very well," said Tom. "Come along, Glyn— Here, hold on!"

"I'm going to smash that rotter, big as he is!" yelled Glyn, ceasing to hug his chin.

"No, you're not, old chap!" said Tom. "Into the giddy tank with him, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake and Tom had already grasped the irate Glyn, and he was hustled, struggling and yelling, back into the tank. The three strangers looked rather tough customers, and Tom and his chums did not want further trouble with them.

They swarmed in after Glyn, and then Tom Merry slammed the steel door and fastened it.

"Look here," hooted Glyn, "that fellow biffed me, and I'm going—"

"You're going home, old chap," said Tom soothingly. "What's a biffed chin against a smashed wheel and mudguard? I'm blessed if I know why those merchants aren't keen on bothering about compensation, but I think we've got off lightly."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"If we have got off!" said Lowther rather glumly. "They'll soon find out who owns this tank; and if we go on at this rate Glyn will about bankrupt his pater, rolling in wealth as he is."

"Rot! Look here, I'm going to smash—" began Glyn furiously.

"You're not!" said Tom. "If you try we'll clear off and walk home and leave you to it!"

The threat had effect—or, perhaps, it was dawning on Glyn that he had got off very luckily. At all events, he gave in, and soon the tank was rumbling on again. Tom Merry glanced back through the rear look-out.

The three men were hard at work raising the car out of the ditch—or attempting to do so.

"Rather queer, that!" said Tom, frowning. "You'd think they'd send for men to the nearest garage to put it right. And why—"

"Why wouldn't they take Glyn's address?" said Blake, nodding. "Jolly queer merchants, I must say! Anyway, let's hope we've seen the last of them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was a vain hope, had they but known it!

CHAPTER 4.

Astonishing the Natives!

TOM MERRY & CO. did not exactly enjoy that "run" across Wayland Heath, thrilling as it was.

The ground was extremely rough and rocky, scattered with big boulders, hillocks, and rocky clefts, not to mention stray streams. But it was just the ground to test the efficiency of Glyn's tank.

And Glyn did test it—rather too thoroughly for Tom Merry & Co. Glyn had a passion for trying experiments; whether they were dangerous or not mattered little to the enthusiastic inventor. And he tried experiments now to his heart's content, climbing little hillocks, big hillocks, crossing streams, and lurching and crashing over boulders. Tom Merry & Co. were too busy, hanging on for dear life where

they could, to enjoy it. At the end of the run they were somewhat bruised and battered, quite dizzy, and almost "seasick."

But the Crimson Terror behaved well, excepting for a rather exasperating trick the engines had of suddenly stopping at the most unexpected and most awkward times.

Each time Glyn had been equal to the occasion, however. He was a born engineer, and he had very quickly mastered the tank's machinery—which was simple enough, as a matter of fact, to anyone acquainted with motors.

"And now for home!" grinned Glyn, wiping a grimy, perspiring face with one hand. "I can see us getting some fun out of this old bus, chaps!"

"And I can see our paters getting bankrupt, and us the sack!" panted Tom Merry. "Give me a Rolls-Royce every time! I'm fairly wallowing in oil and petrol—or I feel like it!"

"Yaas, wathah! My clobbah is uttably wuined!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "You will nevah get me into this feahful thing again, Glyn!"

"You can wear an old suit next time," said Glyn. "Fancy preferring a silly ride in a cushioned Rolls-Royce to an adventure like this! Brrrrr!"

"That's all very well, but with a harebrained lunatic in charge—"

"Rats!"

"And there's one thing you're forgetting, I fancy, Glyn!" said Blake grimly. "Where are you going to house the tank when we reach St. Jim's—if we ever get there? Perhaps you're thinking of using the Head's garage?"

"It wouldn't go in the Head's garage," said Glyn, unheeding Blake's heavy sarcasm. "And I can't take it home as I haven't told the pater anything about the tank yet!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's just handed over cash when I've wanted it," smiled Glyn. "He knows I'm a careful chap with money, and he trusts me, you see!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I've bribed Jones, of course, to keep his mouth shut until I've told the pater, in case he objects before I've had a good run with the tank," explained Glyn ingenuously.

"So, as matters stand, I shall have to hide the old bus in the woods or somewhere. I think I know a decent place. But don't gas so much, you chaps—I shall want all my attention when going through the village. You know how narrow the streets are!"

Tom Merry jumped.

"You're not going through Rylcombe with it, Glyn?" he gasped.

"Naturally! I want to astonish the giddy natives, you know."

"But—"

"Then I'm going to finish up the run with a jaunt round the quadrangle at St. Jim's. Old Taggy will be surprised—what?"

"You—you harebrained lunatic—"

"Safe enough! Keep your chivvies out of sight, of course, and we'll be all right," said Glyn confidently. "In any case, there isn't a school rule, so far as I know, against taking a tank round the quad at St. Jim's. I know we're not allowed to ride a bike round. But this is a tank, not a bike. Anyway, don't gas so much."

"Bai Jove!"

The tank rumbled on, taking the road that led through the Rylcombe High Street. The chums protested, but they protested in vain. Tom Merry & Co. were as fond of an exciting adventure as anyone, but they felt that Glyn was rather overdoing it.

That feeling grew as they rumbled into the narrow, cobbled main street of Rylcombe.

Glyn's tank undoubtedly astonished the natives. It created a sensation, and brought shop-keepers and shoppers to the doors at sound of the juggernaut.

"Hallo, here's old Tonks with his milk-trolly!" grinned Glyn, peering gleefully ahead. "Watch me give him a fright!"

And Glyn swerved in towards the approaching milk-trolly. His intention, of course, was to give old Tonks a start by cutting in close with the tank. But once again Glyn forgot that his control over the iron monster was by no means perfect.

His swerve took him rather closer than he had intended, and with a wild yell of alarm the milkman frantically twisted his trolly round and tried to drag it on to the pavement.

Crash!

His gallant attempt failed.

The iron-clad juggernaut caught the milk-trolly a glancing blow, and over it went with a resounding, rattling crash.

Milk flowed far and wide over the ancient cobblestones.

"Oh, my hat! You raving madman, Glyn!"

"Talk about a lams' slowing with milk, if not honey!" chuckled Lowther. "Oh crumbs! Hark to old Tonks! He'll turn the milk sour if he goes on raving like that!"

"Better not stop!" said Glyn hastily. "I believe Tonks was in the War, and won't be afraid to board us! Oh crikey! Here's the bobby!"

The tank was proceeding at a mere crawl, and Glyn decided to speed up quite suddenly. But the Rylcombe policeman was quite alert and brisk for once.

He came rolling up, his portly features red and grim. Before Glyn realised his intention he leaped out in front of the tank and put up his official hand.

"Stop!" he bawled. "Which I orders you to stop!"

Glyn yelled.

"Out of the way, you old fool! Oh, great pip!"

He worked frantically at the levers, and it looked as if P.-c. Crump had made his last gallant stand against lawlessness and disorder, for pulling up the tank was not the work of a moment.

Fortunately, the constable saved the situation himself. He leaped out of the way with surprising agility, and then he slipped on the milk-flooded cobbles and sat down with a bump.

Leaving him seated amid the flowing milk, the tank rumbled on, Glyn hurriedly putting on speed.

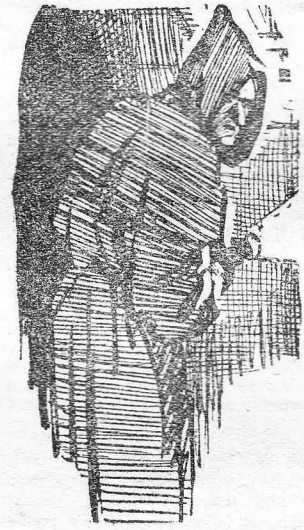
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

They looked back through the look-outs and roared at the ludicrous figure of the Rylcombe policeman, who was shaking his fist after the tank.

The tank rumbled on, clanking and lurching like a run-away steam-roller. Fortunately, it reached the end of the High Street without further mischance, and the juniors breathed their relief as it started along Rylcombe Lane.

Outside the village they overtook Sefton and Knox, of the Sixth, and as those two unpopular worthies looked

(Continued on next page.)



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round, quite startled, Tom Merry & Co. made the most of the happy chance.

Keeping carefully out of sight they hurled handfuls of cotton-waste, soaked in oil, at the two seniors.

Sefton and Knox ducked and dodged and yelled, little dreaming who the tank crew were.

"They'll think it's an Army tank out for a run," chuckled Lowther. "I say, we can have heaps of fun in this old bus! What about raiding the Grammar School to-morrow, chaps?"

"Just what I thought of!" said Bernard Glyn eagerly. "I've got a supply of smoke bombs and stink bombs, and we can make more this evening after prep. We can raid their footer field and give 'em socks!"

"Phew! Good wheeze!" gasped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. Both he and his chums had been vowing that once out of the terrible tank they would give Glyn the bumping of his life, and never set foot in it again. But Lowther's sudden idea raised the most attractive prospect of making Glyn's tank of use in the warfare between St. Jim's and the Grammarians. "Good wheeze! Tophole, Glyn! But we'd better give the quad a miss for this evening."

"Much better! No good asking for trouble!" said Blake. "Wathah not!"

"And I want my tea!" said Herries.

"Rot!" said Glyn.

He had made up his mind to take his tank into the quad, and he meant to do it. And he did!

There was a group of juniors lounging round the old gateway, and they stared transfixed at sight of the approaching tank. They happened to be Figgins, Kerr, Fatty Wynn, and several more New House fellows.

There was no need of a horn on Glyn's tank—the noise it made would have drowned the sound of any horn, in fact. Figgins & Co. leaped out of the way with shouts of alarm as it charged through the gateway.

But though they got out of the way of the tank itself they did not get out of the way of the oil-soaked waste that whizzed through the gun-openings of the tank.

Nearly every lump of waste found a billet, and the New House fellows scattered with still more startled yells.

Outside the lodge Taggles, the school porter, was standing with a bucket of water in one hand and a broom in the other. As the tank rumbled past, Taggles yelled, staggered backwards, and stumbled over the foot-scraper behind him.

The back of his head struck the lodge door, while the water from the bucket flowed round him like an incoming tide.

"Yarroooooocop!" howled Taggles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What happened?" demanded Glyn. "I didn't see it! I say, there's old Ratty ahead! Watch me make him jump!"

Glyn increased the speed of the tank. Ahead of them, ambling along with his quick, irritable steps, was Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the unpopular Housemaster of the New House. He heard the clanking and rumbling behind him just then, and as he looked round he leaped almost a foot into the air.

"G-goo-good heavens!"

Ratty stood for a moment as if rooted to the gravel. Then, with a yell of alarm, he fled for the New House steps, his gown flying out behind him.

"He, he, he!" giggled Glyn. "I bet old Ratty's never hooped it at that rate before! Hallo! There's Railton at his window! Better clear off while the going's good!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah! I weally think we have had enough excitement, deah boys!"

Glyn was beginning to think so, too, and, after circling the fountain, he turned and made for the gates again, the huge tractors churning up the gravel, and now and again cutting slices off the edges of the neat turf.

Figgins & Co. yelled insults at the tank, but they gave it a wide berth this time—as did old Taggles, who bolted into his lodge and banged the door. Then, narrowly escaping taking one of the gateposts with it, the tank thundered out into Rylcombe Lane again.

"Now to find an open-air garage for the old bus!" said Glyn, a note of keen satisfaction in his husky voice. "She's shaped uncommonly well, hasn't she?"

"H'm! Yes—at least, she's altered the shape of everything she's come up against!" admitted Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I shouldn't care to be in your shoes when the bills start to come in, old chap! Anyway, get her moving now, or we shan't be in for calling-over!"

"Too late for tea!" grumbled Herries.

"That's all right!" said Glyn. "It's too late for tea, but you fellows can come along to my study for supper to-night. Then we can talk over plans for the raid on the Grammar School to-morrow afternoon—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

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And in the gathering dusk the iron-clad monster rumbled on. Evidently Glyn had his plans laid, for suddenly he turned the tank into a ratty cart-track that led deep into Rylcombe Woods. There was not a soul about, and the tank lurched on until Glyn brought it to a stop at last in a little glade deep in the heart of the woods. Then, after concealing the monster as well as possible with branches, the adventurers left it and hastened back to St. Jim's. They were hungry, somewhat battered, and smothered in oil and dirt. But thoughts of the raid on the morrow kept them cheery—and also kept them from giving the schoolboy inventor the terrific bumping they had promised him!

CHAPTER 5.

Routing the Enemy!

"HERE we are!" "Forward, the tank crew!" chuckled Lowther. It was the following afternoon, just after dinner.

Luckily, the crew of the tank had managed to get indoors by the back stairs without being seen the previous night, and not a soul at St. Jim's dreamed that they were the tank's crew. With much inward amusement, Tom Merry & Co. had heard the fellows excitedly discussing the sensation. It was known that the Head had written a sharp letter of complaint to the military authorities at Lantham Barracks, and the whole school—excepting the tank's crew—obviously believed the tank had been manned by reckless Tommies from the barracks.

Tom Merry & Co. were quite prepared to let them remain under that misapprehension for as long as they wanted to. Possibly the villagers, including P. c. Crump, believed likewise, though nobody had ever seen any tanks manoeuvring in the district before.

This fact gave Tom Merry & Co. confidence, and they were quite looking forward to tank warfare against the Grammarians. They were chuckling now as they reached the glade in Rylcombe Wood, all of them loaded up with parcels which they carried very gingerly.

As they contained smoke-bombs, stink-bombs, and sneeze-bombs—all harmless, but unpleasant, and all of Glyn's own invention—they did not want them to go off at the wrong time and place.

The tank was just as they had left it, and soon the daring adventurers were aboard, and the tank was rumbling out along the ratty lane, with Bernard Glyn at the controls.

"Now we're off!" said Tom Merry. "Get your ammunition together, chaps! Now, remember, no games, Glyn! We're with you in this raid, but you're to keep clear of the village, and leave non-combatants alone!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho!" grinned the inventor. "Catch me being reckless with a delicate, flimsy vehicle like this! I say, it's rather queer those three merchants haven't reported us to the police! They can't have done, or the Head would have been put wise before this! The brutes must have spotted our caps!"

"By Jove! You're right, Glyn! It is queer!"

All the chums agreed that it was mystifying, but they soon had other things to think about. The tank soon left the ratty cart-track, and Glyn sent it careering over a ploughed field, making a direct bee-line for the Grammar School playing-fields.

As Bernard Glyn always chose the ground with the most obstacles to surmount, thrills were plentiful. Over ditches and through hedges the reckless inventor sent his tank headlong, leaving a trail of churned-up soil and grass and hedges behind.

"All serene!" said Glyn, when Tom Merry protested. "The pater will pay up, you asses! Don't grouse, and don't bother me with silly details like that! You fellows are all gas and grouse!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo! There's the giddy enemy's ground and the giddy enemy, too!" chuckled Glyn, nodding ahead. "Looks as if dear old Gordon Gay's playing a pick up game! We'll soon put more ginger into it! You chaps ready?"

"What-ho!"

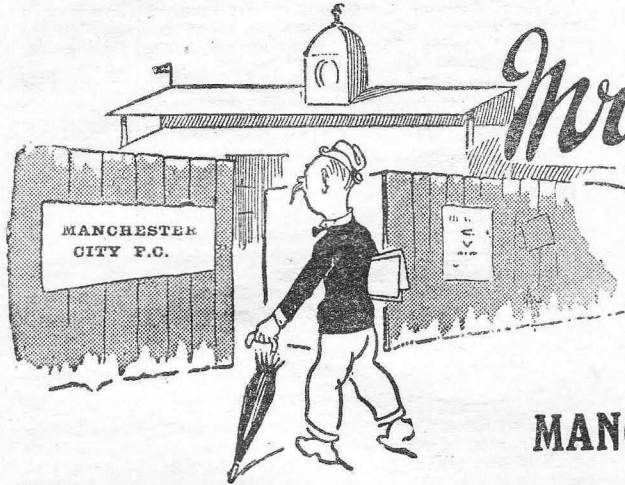
The tank lurched unsteadily over a wide ditch, and rose to the hedged bank beyond. There was a small gap in the hedge, and the tank made it a big gap, and then it rolled down into the Grammar School footer fields.

Almost instantly there was a chorus of startled, incredulous yells from the crowd of Grammarians gathered round the touchline. The players in midfield suddenly caught sight of the tank, and a sultry scrimmage became turned suddenly into a sort of tableau as the players stood and gaped at the oncoming monster.

Glyn chuckled, and drove straight for them.

There was a stupefied silence round the field, and then

(Continued on page 10.)



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE MANCHESTER CITY.

Football fans look forward to this feature every Wednesday, for Mr. "Nossy" Parker knows what his big public wants—first-class inside information.

The "Back-Yard"!

THOUGH many people express the opinion that Manchester is a very good place to "come from," I don't mind saying that, so far as I am concerned, Manchester is a place I don't mind going to on football business. There always seems to be something to learn there.

In the old days when I called on the Manchester City players they were housed at a ground which was popularly known as the "back-yard." Perhaps in a way the old Hyde Road ground deserved that title, because, for one thing, it was the back-yard of a railway siding, from which smoke used to come that—well, we will let bygones be bygones.

But if the old Manchester City ground deserved the title of back-yard, the new one can perhaps be called the front garden. Anyway, it is situated at Moss Side, and is one of the finest football grounds which I have ever visited—up to date in every respect. Of course, the pitch isn't composed of moss, and one might also suggest—judging from my recent experience—that there is a fair amount of mud about.

Perhaps the people who built the ground knew that this would be so; that the players would pick up a certain amount of dirt in playing there. And that, my good friends, may explain why I got a shock when I visited the City ground on a mid-week occasion not so long ago.

The Model Laundry!

GOING into what I thought was the dressing-room or the gymnasium, I got an idea that I wasn't on a football ground at all. Rather were there all the indications of a model laundry. Many things were being washed, and a model laundry it was. But I soon discovered that the things which were being washed were mainly the clothes of the footballers. No laundry bill for Manchester City; they wash their own dirty linen, as one might say—and not a bad motto either! I care nothing for the suggestion—conveyed to me by one of the players later—that it was the laundry on the premises which was mainly responsible for the shirts of the Manchester City players having a very washed out blue impression.

But, to be quite serious, it is a fine ground which they have at Maine Road, Manchester, in these days, and so thoroughly up to date that, so I have heard, seventy thousand people can all leave the arena in about ten minutes. There are so many exits.

I remember one occasion, however, when a big crowd did not leave the Maine

Road ground in a hurry. This was on the very last day of the season of 1926-7. The City were then in the Second Division, and their fate depended on the results of the games of the last day. City won by eight goals to nothing, and the crowd stayed to cheer the return of the side to the top class. Alas, those cheers almost turned to tears, for eventually the news came through from Portsmouth that Pompey had won their match by five goals to one and when pencils and paper were brought out it was discovered that Portsmouth had gained promotion over Manchester City by one-two-hundredth part of a goal!

Out to Win!

BUT the City gained promotion in due course, and have now, according to Manager Peter Hodge, the best side the club has had for years and years. Peter told me that he was quite confident that they would win the championship of the First Division this season, and though that remains to be seen, there can be no getting away from the fact that the City at the moment are one of the most attractive sides in the First Division.

They are attractive because they play the game so fast. And for this their trainer-coach—who is an old player named Alec Bell—must be given due credit. You have to get up very early in the morning to catch Alec asleep. He knows the proper use of all the up-to-date appliances in the gymnasium, and if he should need any advice he goes to Jimmy McMullan for it. Jimmy is the skipper of the side, and as cunning a half-back as you will find anywhere.

He doesn't believe in doing long-distance travelling to get through his training for he lives almost on the Maine Road ground and it is said that his children can tell how the City are going on match days by the cheering.

McMullan has had some bad luck lately owing to injuries, but the City have a very capable substitute in George Heine mann, a young player with a future if I am any judge. There is a game which George loves almost as much as football—lawn tennis on a hot summer's day. When I was at the ground he and Sam Cowan—the big half from Doncaster—were arranging to play each other as soon as the weather got better, and judging from what they told me they were both sure to win. "Anyway," said Sam, "if I can't beat George at tennis I can beat any other two members of the side."

Sam is the talkative member of the eleven, and he does so much of it, and is so full of good stories that, according to forward Tommy Johnson, there is no need

for anybody else to do any talking at Maine Road.

A Great All-Rounder!

TOMMY is one of the quiet fellows, but he can play a fine game of cricket, and has put up big scores in the Lancashire League, where the standard of play, in case you don't know, is very nearly up to county class. Tommy is a great all-round sport, and when it comes to a billiards handicap among the Manchester lads he has to give most of the others a start.

Some of the players were out practising when I was there and one who was standing by asked me if I

noticed anything peculiar about the goal at one end of the pitch. I looked, and then said I couldn't see anything funny.

"Haven't you noticed," he said, "that there are three goalposts instead of two?" Then I saw the joke: he was referring to the long and lean Lewis Barber, who is the goalkeeper of the side. He is real class, even though, according to the prize joker of the club, he resembles closely Euclid's description of a line. You don't remember that? Well, you ought to, but I suppose I shall have to explain—"length without breadth."

Barber lives at Halifax and travels to Manchester daily for his training exercise. There are some City players who have come farther than that—a full-back named McCloy, who has played for Scotland in the past, and is put in the team sometimes because, so I am told, he is the only one who understands the all-Scotch instructions given to the players by their skipper. But I don't believe that yarn.

I Leave Again!

I TRIED to get something out of Bill Felton, and Jack Ridley, who are also capable defenders, but they are both very quiet fellows. Ridley is known as "Micky" to his friends, while others refer to him as the strong, silent member. He is certainly strong, and an expert on physical culture.

Though the City have about the deadliest attack in football to-day, I don't think the manager is quite certain of the combination which is most effective. Tait, the boy of the party, sometimes occupies the centre-forward berth, and has been known to get good goals, too. Then Matt Barrass sometimes comes into the attack. He is an emergency man at football, but the top-notch in the golf line.

Then there is Bobby Marshall, very keen on dogs, and a regular glutton for goals when he has once tasted blood. A recommendation, so far as he is concerned, can be obtained from the goalkeeper of Swindon, too, who had to pick the ball out of the net five times from this player recently.

There is no doubt about the extreme wing men. Toseland has played for England this season, and Johnson and Brook have played together as partners for the Football League. These forwards believe that the shortest cut to goal is the best, and they regard that as their "Maine Road." This was my idea, but when I put it to the players they thought it was too bad. So I had to make a hurried exit. As I explained above, however, there's no difficulty in doing this at the City ground.

"NOSEY."

"Glyn's Tank Corps!"

(Continued from page 8.)

the juniors grouped on the touchline suddenly scattered with wild yells as a hurricane of missiles whizzed from the gun-apertures of the tank.

"Look out!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"What the thunder——"

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

"Yarroooop!"

"Groooogh! Look out! Oh, my hat!"

Wild howls of consternation rang out as the smoke-bombs, the stink-bombs, and the sneeze-bombs began their deadly work. The aim of the tank crew was deadly, and the bombs burst with a smother of white powder and black smoke on the persons of the scared Grammarians.

Then the tank was on the field itself, making a bee-line for the grouped players.

"Look out!" yelled Gordon Gay, his voice shrill with amazement.

Too late, the startled players turned to retreat.

Before they could do so the bombs began to burst among them with terrific execution. They were soon enveloped in clouds of smoke, and they turned tail at last, coughing and sneezing, with tears streaming down their cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co. "What price St. Jim's? Go it! Now, Glyn, there's the ball!"

Glyn slowed the tank down to a crawl, and instantly Tom Merry flung open the side door and sprang out. Then he rushed for the ball, grabbed it, and leaped back into the tank, which immediately put on speed again.

This manoeuvre brought howls from the Grammarians, who had come to a halt at a safe distance.

"Great pip!" howled Gay. "I believe—groooogh!—I—ow—ow!—it's those beastly—atishoo!—Saints!"

Glyn turned the tank towards the touchline, and once again the crowd scattered, many leaving caps and scarves behind in their haste. Once again Glyn slowed down, while Tom Merry and Blake left the tank and hurriedly picked up the caps and scarves as trophies of war.

By this time Gay & Co. seemed to have grasped the position, and their wrath was terrific. With frantic yells Gordon Gay rallied his men, and led them in a desperate charge against the tank.

But by that time Tom Merry and Blake were safe inside, and the doors were slammed and fastened.

The Grammarians might as well have tried to charge a fortress. The tank was moving again now, with the helpless, raging Grammarians charging after it.

It was all they could do. Never had the St. Jim's fellows carried out such an easy raid on the enemy's stronghold.

But Glyn was not finished yet.

"Now for the school!" he chuckled, his eyes dancing with glee. "You fellows sling your bombs as fast as you know how! We'll give 'em something to remember!"

"But they know who we are now——"

"They seem to guess we're Saints, but I don't think they've recognised us. And later we can let dear old Gay know the facts. It'll make him tear his golden hair!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Gay & Co. were nearly doing that now, and it was clear that the leader of the Grammarians did not intend to let the invaders escape without a fight. Heedless of the whizzing bombs, he led his chums alongside as the tank slowed down to turn into the lane.

Glyn himself made a desperate leap for the side doors of the tank, but a well-timed stink-bomb burst on his chest at the critical moment. Before he had recovered from its unpleasant effects the tank was lumbering along the lane towards the gates of the Grammar School—about two hundred yards away.

After it went the yelling, raging crowd of Grammarians, apprehensive of what was to come. Most of them surrounded the Crimson Terror, but one or two made a desperate dash ahead to the gates.

Inside the tank Tom Merry & Co.'s faces were grinning through their grime.

"All serene now!" chuckled Glyn. "I'll just take the old bus once round the quad, and then we'll bid 'em a fond farewell. Jevver see such startled rabbits in your life? Not one of 'em got nerve to—— Oh, my hat!"

Glyn broke off with a startled exclamation, for he had suddenly seen something that filled him with alarm. It was the sight of Gordon Gay and Frank Monk desperately at work closing the gates!

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"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry. "Pull up, Glyn!"

"Rats!" snapped the schoolboy inventor. "They'll open 'em soon enough when they see we mean business." He sent the Crimson Terror charging full-tilt at the gates. "Now watch—— Oh, crumbs!"

But Glyn very soon found out his mistake. Instead of opening the gates as they saw the tank rumbling towards them, Gay and Monk simply yelled and jumped out of the way.

In an instant Glyn saw what was going to happen, but it was too late now to pull up.

Crash!

With a shattering, nerve-wracking crash, the iron-clad monster struck the gates head-on! Bricks and mortar flew, and yells of alarm came from the quad, which were echoed by the Grammarians in the lane.

But the tank went on as if it had merely encountered a cobweb. With it went one of the massive gates, festooned on its prow as if in triumph.

The tank "corps" stared at each other in utter dismay.

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Tom Merry. "Now we've done it!"

Even Bernard Glyn realised that. With a desperate wrench on the steering gear, he brought the Crimson Terror round almost in its own length, and sent it charging back again to the school gateway, scattering the Grammarians right and left. A few moments later the tank was disappearing at top speed down the lane.

"You—you madman, Glyn!" gasped Herries. "This means the sack for us!"

"Oh, don't croak!" said Glyn, some of his coolness returning. "It's a score, anyway. We've done something those giddy Grammarians are never likely to do. I say, we'll stick to this gate—keep it somewhere as a trophy, you know!"

"We jolly well won't!" gasped Tom Merry. "We'll get rid of it as soon as we can, you dangerous madman!"

"Yaas, wathah! Oh deah! This is vewy sewious, you fellows! Hadn't we bettah go back and explain that it was an accident?"

"Ass! You can if you like!" said Glyn cheerfully. "Climb out of the giddy skylight, and drop off at the back, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! You feahful ass, Glyn!"

On reflection, Arthur Augustus decided not to risk either dropping off the tank or going back at all.

"We'd better take the blessed thing back to the woods and park it now," said Digby uneasily.

"Bosh!" said Glyn warmly. "Why, the fun's only just started, and we've half the afternoon to go yet! Rot! I want to take her down the Wayland High Street now!"

"You jolly well won't!" snorted Blake. "I'm not coming if you do, anyway!"

"Nor me!"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not, deah boys! Glyn, you feahful ass——"

"We're not going into any more blessed traffic with this bus!" said Tom Merry firmly. "I'm game for a run on the heath again, but not——"

"Oh, all right! Have your own silly way!" grunted Glyn. "In any case, I want to try the old bus on the Castle Hill. It's a bit steep, but we'll risk a few knocks if she does happen to go over! Anyway, let's get rid of that silly old gate!"

He stopped the tank, and the juniors lifted the gate—which fortunately was scarcely damaged—and placed it against the nearest fence. Then they crowded back again and the Crimson Terror plunged on, taking the road that skirted the village.

They had covered about a mile of the Wayland Road, and Glyn was just about to turn on to the heath when a car passed the tank.

"Hallo, it's those three merchants again!" said Blake. "They've managed to get the spare wheel fitted on all right, then! My hat! They're stopping!"

"Want to have a pow-wow about that bit of damage we did!" said Glyn. "Why couldn't they have let me settle it yesterday, blow them?"

The car ahead had stopped and drawn slightly across the road—enough to make Glyn pull up. He applied the brakes, and Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, and Blake & Co. opened the doors and dropped out on to the road, glad enough of a breath of fresh air. Glyn left his driving-seat and leaned carelessly over the door opening.

"Want to see me about that little accident, what?" he asked the three men as they came up. "Well, you've only got to——"

"Yes," said the taller of the three, quite genially. "But I'll come inside the tank, if you don't mind, and we'll discuss it in private, my boy."

And before Glyn quite knew what was happening, the fellow had pushed him aside and clambered into the tank.

"Here, hold on! What's this game?" began Glyn, taken aback by the fellow's check. "I say——"

He got no further. Just then the man grasped him in a grip of steel, and fairly lifted him into the driving-seat.

"Here, what—" spluttered Glyn. Then, as he turned his head, he gasped aloud as he found himself staring into a pair of hard, steely eyes over the polished blue barrel of an automatic.

CHAPTER 6.

Startling!

BERNARD GLYN'S jaw dropped, and the words he was about to utter died on his lips.

It took a great deal to scare the schoolboy inventor, but he was scared now. The eyes that looked into his were cruel and menacing. They did not waver, and Glyn knew at once that this was no joke—that it was deadly serious and real.

His heart leaped, and he licked his suddenly dry lips. "Look—look here—" he gasped.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Leaving the stunned juniors standing in stupefied amazement and alarm, the car swept away in the wake of the lumbering tank. It slowed down behind it and followed, keeping to the same pace as the Crimson Terror.

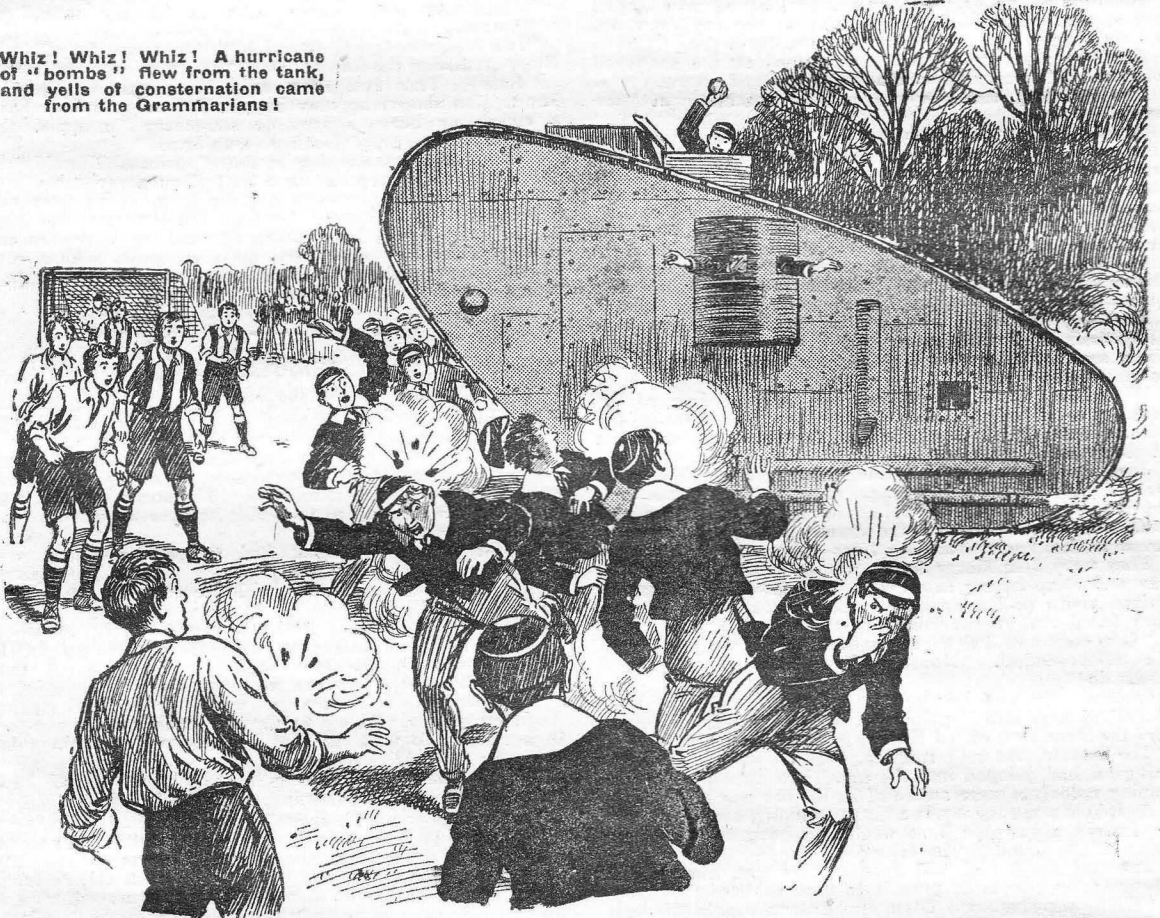
Glyn was letting out the engines to their fullest extent now.

What it all meant he was too dazed yet even to wonder. But that the man was in deadly earnest he did not doubt—the automatic and the gleam in the cruel eyes told him that. It could not possibly have any connection with the accident of the previous day. Yet what could the man want with the tank?

More than once the schoolboy inventor moved as if to stop the tank, but each time that cold circle of steel was rammed into the nape of his neck, and his sudden resolution failed him.

There was nothing for it but to drive on and obey the scoundrel, whoever he was and whatever his object.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! A hurricane of "bombs" flew from the tank, and yells of consternation came from the Grammarians!



"Drive on! And shut your trap!"

The words were curt and the voice harsh and chilling. The icy circle of the automatic's barrel pressed into the nape of the schoolboy's neck.

"You hear, confound you!" snarled the man. "Drive on, and do exactly as I tell you!"

Hardly conscious that he was doing so, Glyn started the engines. Under the menacing compulsion of those steely eyes his own will seemed powerless.

"Now make a move, you young nound!" rasped the man. "Any monkey-tricks and I'll drill you as I would a rat!"

Glyn fumbled dazedly with the controls. The tank rumbled on.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. had also experienced a startling shock. Even as they stood staring at the tall man's action in entering the tank a harsh voice drew their attention.

"Put them up—lively!"

Like Bernard Glyn, they found themselves staring down the ugly barrel of a snub-nosed automatic. Before they had recovered from the shock of surprise the tank began to move away.

Tom Merry gasped and made a movement towards it, but the menacing automatic stopped him. Next moment the tank had rumbled away, gaining speed, and as it did so both men suddenly leaped into the car.

Glyn was a sensible fellow as a rule, and he saw no sense in arguing with an armed and desperate man.

He drove on steadily, a shiver going down his spine every time that chilling circle touched his neck. They reached the outskirts of Wayland at last, and very soon the tank was rumbling and clanking through the High Street.

The tall man's curt voice roused him.

"Now," he snapped "do exactly as I tell you! Another twenty yards and you'll see a jeweller's shop on your left. The moment I say 'Now!' you'll pull round your wheel and charge full-tilt at the window! Get ready!"

Glyn's heart leaped. He understood all now. So that was the game! He set his teeth hard.

"I—I won't!" he panted. "Shoot me, if you dare!"

His hand fell on the clutch, his intention obviously being to pull up.

But the man did not wait to see—he was taking no chances.

He muttered a deep curse, and, grabbing the junior by the collar with his free hand he fairly hurled him away from the controls. Then, ignoring the boy, he grabbed the wheel.

The tank had lurched and swerved alarmingly, but he had it under control the next instant, and then—

The tank came almost opposite the window of Hilton & Moss, the Wayland jewellers.

Without a second's hesitation the man wrenched round the wheel and sent the thundering juggernaut full-tilt in the direction of the window.

The tank mounted the pavement, lurched, and then went with an appalling crash of smashing glass and splintering steel against the window.

There were no shutters covering the window, but a strong steel grating protected it—a grating that would have resisted any normal blow.

But it did not resist the charge of the Army tank.

The glass was shattered to atoms, and the steel rails twisted and smashed like matchwood.

The sudden impact shook the tank considerably, and sent Glyn, who was just staggering to his feet, thudding against the iron sides of the monster. But the man was prepared for it. Instantly he reversed the engines, and the tank backed away and was stopped, its prow taking part of the broken grating with it.

Headless of the half-stunned junior the tall man leaped out of the tank. At the same moment the car drew up, swiftly turned and backed against the kerb.

The two men jumped out and rushed at the shattered window, both carrying canvas bags, opened in readiness. The tall man stood by the car, his automatic at "the ready."

"Look lively!" he rapped.

It was early-closing day in Wayland, and all the shops were closed. Scarcely a soul was in the High Street at the time, but that tremendous crash of shattering glass and steel brought several loungers hastening to the spot.

They pulled up and kept their distance on sighting the menacing automatic. Windows above some of the near-by shops went up, and heads were poked out—only to be withdrawn hastily as that ugly weapon was waved in their direction.

Skilfully, and with lightning-like rapidity, the two men filled their bags with the contents of the window. Almost every scrap of glass was shattered, and there was nothing to stop them.

When Bernard Glyn staggered to the side door of the tank and looked out the desperadoes had cleared the window save for sundry articles of jewellery that were out of their reach.

Just then a laundry-van came tearing along the quiet street. A determined-looking, sandy-haired youth was driving the van, and he pulled up opposite the car and tank, and leaped out on to the street. At the same moment seven juniors came swarming from the van behind.

They were Tom Merry & Co., who had commandeered the van and come racing in pursuit. But they and the sandy-haired youth pulled up short with remarkable celerity as they faced that unwavering automatic.

"One step and I'll thundering-well drill you!" shouted the tall scoundrel. "Now, you two—look lively! That'll about do!"

Instantly the two men raced for the car and flung their well-filled bags into it pell-mell. Then they leaped aboard, and the short man called Harker grasped the wheel.

The engine was still running, and an instant later the tall man had jumped into the car. Then almost before the gaping onlookers were aware of it, the car was moving.

As it shot away there was a sharp, startling crack, followed an instant afterwards by a deafening bang as one of the tyres of the laundry van exploded.

The tall jewel-thief had fired at the tyre, obviously to prevent any chance of pursuit in that vehicle.

"Great pip!" gasped Glyn, the first to regain his wits. "After them, you fellows—quick!"

He set his teeth and raced after the car, making a wild, reckless leap for the footboard.

He landed on it, and his clutching fingers grabbed the hood. But they did not hold. A fist shot out, catching the plucky junior full in the face. His grasp relaxed, and he fell back. His feet touched the road, were swept from beneath him, and he sprawled with a thud in the street.

The car leaped ahead and went roaring down the High Street.

"Good heavens!"

The juniors rushed towards Bernard Glyn. But he was already scrambling to his feet, bruised, but not injured seriously. Fortunately the car had not gained speed, or the fall would have been a serious one.

"Hurt, Glyn?" panted Tom Merry. "My hat! You might have—"

"Ow-ow!" groaned Glyn, rubbing his bruises dismally. "Done in the eye! Ow! Look here—quick! We're going after the crooks."

"But, you ass—"

"Into the tank!" yelled Glyn furiously. "I'm going to smash that long-legged rotter for that! I'll teach him to knock me about! We're going after them!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,149.

He raced for the tank and hurled himself inside. Thrilled by his excited yell, Tom Merry and the other juniors followed him pell-mell. In the excitement of the moment it did not occur to them that their chances of catching up with the speedy car were more or less hopeless. They tumbled aboard, and Glyn let in the clutch savagely.

The cumbersome monster backed slowly in a half-circle, and then it went lumbering in pursuit—though the racing car had vanished from sight now.

Somewhere a police-whistle was blowing, and amidst shouts the tank started off on its pursuit. From a side-street a policeman suddenly appeared and jumped right in the path of the thundering monster, his hand upraised.

"Look out, Glyn!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Let that silly ass look out!" grunted Glyn. "He'll soon shift!"

Glyn's words were prophetic. The tank roared down on the constable, who, deciding wisely that discretion was the better part of valour, leaped back with an angry yell.

The tank thundered on, and Glyn chuckled grimly.

"Surprising how people funk facing my tank," he murmured.

"It's madness trying to catch that car up, Glyn," said Blake, realising the fact at last. "Might as well chuck it!"

"Rats! They can show us a clean pair of heels, I know. But something may happen to 'em—they may have a smash, or burst a tyre or something!" snapped the optimistic inventor. "Don't give up hope!"

"Well, there's something in that!" grinned Tom Merry. "Anyway, we'll keep on for a bit! You never know!"

So the tank kept on—but not for long. They were out in the open country now. To their left stretched the wide heath. Ahead, the long ribbon of road lay bare—the car had vanished long ago. And quite suddenly, with a sort of coughing complaint at being driven so hard, the engines stopped, and the tank lumbered to a halt.

CHAPTER 7.

On the Trail!

"**B**LOW!" hooted Glyn.

Tom Merry could not help chuckling.

It was not the first time that the tank had come to an unexpected stop by any means. The engines were old and unreliable. The annoying part was that they always seemed to decide to give up work at the most awkward moments.

At all events, the tank had stopped—something was wrong.

Glyn struggled desperately with the controls, but it was no good.

"That settles it!" said Blake decidedly. "We'll have to leave it to the bobbies to catch those merchants! If they're quick on the job they'll do the trick. I say, if the tank's busted how are we to get home?"

"Bai Jove! I refuse to walk!" remarked Arthur Augustus grimly. "I am bwised all ovah, and do not feel in a condish to walk all that beastlay way! I am goin' home by twain!"

"Who's talking about going home?" hooted Glyn. "I'll soon get the old bus running, fatheads!"

"Let's hope you will, then!" said Digby.

But from Digby's tone it was plain that he hoped he wouldn't get the tank running soon. He was not the only one. The juniors, in fact, were fed-up with Glyn's tank. There was just a bit too much excitement connected with it for their liking. The startling end to their afternoon's adventures—if it was the end—had quite damped their enthusiasm for adventure. They wanted to part from the unlucky tank lest worse evils befell them.

But Glyn didn't. And the inventor of St. Jim's could be very stubborn when he liked.

"You—you footling old women!" hooted Glyn, as the chums swarmed out of the tank. "D'you mean you're going to leave me in the lurch here?"

"Not at all—unless you intend to stay!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Look here, Glyn, if you'll take my tip you'll toddle off home now and lose the tank—forget you ever had it, my lad!"

"Wha-what?" yelled Glyn.

"Just that!" said Tom. "We shall be blamed for that jewel robbery—at least, we shall be blamed for giving those brutes the chance to make such a haul. It's plain enough now what they are—rotten crooks, of course!"

"I guessed there was something queer about them yesterday!" said Blake. "That's why they didn't want Glyn's address, and why they haven't kicked up any fuss; they daren't, of course! I bet they were just going to carry out the raid yesterday when we barged into them and mucked up their plans. No wonder they were savage!"

"Just what I think!" said Tom Merry seriously. "Then when they spotted the tank this afternoon the idea must

have struck them to make use of the tank to smash in the window! And it came off!"

"Yaas, wathah! It is vewy unfortunate, deah boys! This w'etched tank—"

"This rotten white elephant—"

"Go on!" snorted Glyn, glaring at them out of the side door of the tank. "Blame it on my innocent tank! Just like you! I suppose you blame me, too!" he added bitterly.

"Oh, no!" said Tom Merry, with heavy sarcasm. "You're as innocent as a lamb, aren't you? It isn't your fault, or the tank's fault, that your pater will have a hefty bill to foot—that heap of damage has to be paid for, and most likely we're booked for the sack! You're as harmless as a lamb, and your giddy tank's as harmless as a pram!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Still, we joined you, and we're backing you up, of course!" added Tom hastily. "We'll all face the music together—it's bound to be a full-sized orchestra, too! We shall all get the sack, and I shouldn't be surprised if you didn't land in Borstal, Glyn!"

"Now, don't rot about it!" said Glyn anxiously. "I can't manage the old bus by myself! Besides, I've heaps of ripping wheezes yet. We can go back and raid the Grammarians again, and collar their goal-posts and nets—we never thought of that. Or we could run the tank up Colonel Bland's front drive, and rag the old chap no end. Or we could try to tame old Farmer Clegg's bull—it would be no end of a lark, wouldn't it? Or we could—Here, hold on!"

"Good-bye, old chap!"

"Hold on!" yelled Glyn, as they started to walk away. "You're not going, blow you! Wait!"

"We're going before we're tempted by your new wheezes!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We're hoofing it back to Rylcombe, and home. We can get a wash and brush up at the railway station—unless we're collared and yanked off to the police station. I shouldn't be surprised at that. We're not risking going back to Wayland, anyway!"

"Why, you—you—"

Glyn tumbled out of the tank and rushed after them. "Coming with us, then?" asked Tom. "Sensible chap! Leave the old tank to look after itself, Glyn! Forget it! It's not got your name or address on, and it hasn't a number, so you can easily lose it!"

"You silly owls!" roared Glyn. "I'm not leaving it, you idiots!"

"Then stay behind and get locked up by the bobbies!"

"Look here, I'll soon get her going again! Hold on, you asses!"

And Glyn grabbed Tom Merry by the arm, and held on. "Collar him and yank him along!" snapped Tom.

Tom's chums obeyed—Glyn was collared on all sides and hustled along. But it was easier said than done. Glyn struggled and hit out wrathfully when he realised Tom Merry & Co. were in earnest about it. At last they gave it up as helpless, and after bumping him soundly to show him how they felt about it, they left him strewn in the roadway, and tramped on, turning their faces towards the wide heath—and St. Jim's.

"I knew it would end in something like this!" groaned Blake, as they tramped on to the heath. "We were asses to go with the raving madman. I like a lark as much as anyone, but Glyn goes too far! There's trouble enough ahead for us, without hunting for more."

"Yaas, wathah! Glyn is weally the limit!"

"Still, we backed him up, of course!" said Tom glumly. "We came with him this afternoon willingly enough, anyway. But we've had enough, and—Hallo, hallo! Down, chaps—quick!"

Tom Merry, to the amazement of his chums, suddenly ducked down behind a furze-bush, pulling Arthur Augustus and Blake down with him. For an instant his other chums stood and stared—and then they did likewise in wondering perplexity.

"Who is it? Grammarians?" whispered Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I can see—"

"Look between those two hillocks on the right there!" breathed Tom, lying flat on the grass and peering in that direction. "See anything?"

They looked, and Lowther gasped as he caught sight of three figures on a rutty cart-track that showed between the hillocks. They were men, and from their strange movements, they appeared to be sweeping.

"It's those crooked merchants, or I'm a Dutchman!" whispered Tom Merry.

"What the deekens are they up to?" breathed Blake.

"Let's scout round!" murmured Tom Merry, his eyes glinting. "I fancy I can guess what they're doing."

He began to worm his way over the scrub, wet as it was. His chums followed—they were all trained Scouts,

like Tom, and they moved with the skill and quietness of Red Indians on the warpath.

Slowly and cautiously they worked round, and started to crawl up the hillock that was nearest. They reached the top at last, and Tom Merry, who was leading, peered over the brink, parting the tough grass carefully to do so.

He found himself looking down on to the cart-track in which the tank had met the car so disastrously the previous afternoon. Indeed, it was almost the very same spot where the accident had occurred.

His chums joined him, and then they soon understood what the crooks were doing. All three were there, and they were armed with bundles of brushwood, with which they were sweeping the track.

"Brushing away the tyre-marks!" breathed Tom softly. "I thought as much! See the game? They're taking refuge on the heath—plenty of places there where they can hide the car and themselves until the hue and cry is over. They knew they'd stand a good chance of being collared by keeping to the roads."

"The crafty brutes!" murmured Lowther, with a soft chuckle. "I bet that's the first bit of real work they've done for years!"

"Shush!"

Tom Merry gave a warning murmur. In silence the hidden juniors watched the men below them. They worked with desperate haste, obliterating all traces of tyre-marks on the muddy chalk of the track as they went on towards the heath.

Scarcely exchanging a word, they kept steadily at their task, little dreaming of the sharp, youthful eyes that watched them.

At Tom's muttered advice the chums remained where they were until the men reached the spot where the cart-track led out on to the open heath and was lost.

Then, as the three men discarded their roughly improvised brushes and hurried away, Tom Merry gave the word to move.

"After them now!" he said, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "Carefully, chaps! If they spot us we're done!"

They followed the three figures, taking advantage of every clump of gorse and of every shrub and boulder. The ground was rough, and tracking the rascals was a comparatively simple matter to Tom Merry & Co.

"Making for the quarry!" remarked Tom, at last. "I

(Continued on next page.)

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"Glyn's Tank Corps!"

(Continued from previous page.)

guessed as much. The beggars must know the place, and they know nobody's likely to go there in a month of Sundays!"

"But where's their car, and the plunder?" demanded Herries.

"Hidden in the quarry already, I bet!" said Tom. "They've had plenty of time for that. There's that old shed in the quarry, and a car could be hidden in heaps of places in the old quarry workings."

"Phew! That's so!"

"And there's the old workmen's cottages there above the quarry!" said Tom, staring ahead. "They've all been empty since the quarry stopped working, donkey's years ago. But anyone could live in one of them for ages without being discovered!"

"They're making for them now!" muttered Blake. "You've hit it, Tommy!"

The old quarry was in sight now, with the ruined workmen's cottages above the hollow. The place was utterly deserted, and presented a dismal, desolate appearance at any time. The cottages were in one row, and four in number, and their windows were shuttered and doors hanging off their hinges. The weather, aided by neglect, was rapidly bringing them to ruin.

The three men were seen to approach the cottages and vanish inside the first one.

"A very pretty scheme!" remarked Tom Merry, with a grim chuckle. "They mean to lie low there until the rumpus dies down, of course. But we'll put a spoke in their wheel!"

"Yaas, wathah! Let's wush them, deah boys!"

"Fathead! If you want your topper riddled with bullets you can, old chap!" said Blake kindly. "We'll promise you a nice wreath for your funeral. But we're not seeking sudden death, Gussy!"

"Rather not!" said Tom. "I think we'd better buzz off now, and get the bobbies on the job!"

"Rot!" said Blake derisively. "I vote we sneak round the back of the cottages and see if we can trap the beggars. We're seven to three, and if we can only pinch their weapons we'll have 'em beaten!"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

Tom chuckled. He had known perfectly well that his chums were not likely to sneak off and leave it to the police—wise as that plan would undoubtedly have been. Like them, he was thirsting to turn the tables on the crooks.

After a quick consultation, the chums scattered, and began to worm their way through the grass and scrub, intending to approach the cottages from the rear and join again there.

It was easily done; most of the time they were out of sight of the cottages on the brow of the quarry. Since the men had vanished indoors they had not glimpsed a trace of them.

Within five minutes the chums had gathered together again in a hollow behind the row of ruined dwellings.

"Leave the next move to me, chaps!" said Tom softly.

"I'll scout round and see how the land lies!"

He left his chums without waiting for a reply, and vanished amid the rough hummocks and heaps of bricks that were scattered about.

Cautiously, with eyes and ears on the alert, Tom Merry crawled and wormed his way towards the nearest cottage. He reached it at last, not having seen or heard a sound to alarm him.

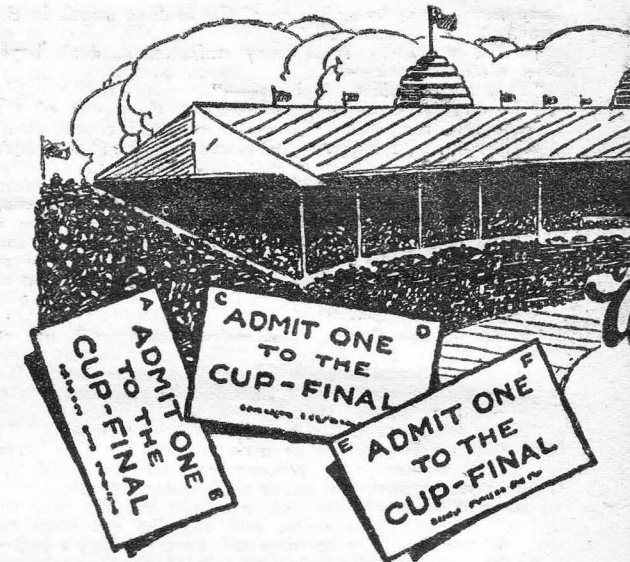
He waited a few long minutes without moving, and then he got up and scudded at a crouching run to the shelter of an outbuilding at the rear of the end cottage.

Reaching it, he waited again, with thumping heart. Had he been seen? Rough boards had been nailed across the small back window of the end cottage; but for all that it was possible that someone, watching from between the cracks, had seen him.

But he could hear no sound, and nothing happened. He beckoned in the direction where his chums were hiding, and after a few seconds they joined him swiftly and quietly.

"They're jolly quiet," breathed Tom. "But they must be at the front somewhere. We'll take them on the hop nicely if we go carefully. Let's shift these boards and sneak inside. But not a sound, mind! We're taking a big risk!"

(Continued on page 16.)



Now then, lads, have you all come into the stunning competition Bicycles—all ready for the road! And then there are the Twelve-wants to see These are the grand prizes we are offering you, and I opportunity to pass over. But if any of you did miss the opening week's GEM (dated February 15th) so that you can start in right away

This is what you have to do to win one of the prizes. In the g circles, and in each of them is a picture-puzzle representing the name

We have no doubt that you will be able to answer them all equal for everybody, we give, on this page, a list of Footballers' Names

As you find the solutions write them IN INK against the correct which you should then sign, also in ink. Cut out the Form and keep until next week, when the third set of puzzles, and the list of names

The competition will last for four weeks only, and with the final in of your entries.

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which you see here, are the Second Set of eight well-known footballers. Can you solve them? Easily, but to make the contest absolutely fair and no one contains the answers to all this week's puzzles. Numbers on the Entry Form given on the right, you—together with the one given last week—coming to them, will appear.

shall give you full instructions for the sending

OUR COMPETITION RULES.

The Six "Mead" Bicycles will be awarded to the six readers whose solutions of the four sets of puzzles are correct or most nearly correct, the other prizes of Twelve Cup-Final Tickets following in order of merit.

In case of ties, the Editor may divide the prizes, or their value, as he considers necessary, but in any case the full value will be awarded.

Any number of entries may be sent, but each must be made out on a separate set of the "Who Kicked Them?" Entry Forms (Nos. 1 to 4, inclusive, that is). No responsibility can be taken for entries lost, mislaid, or delayed in the post, or otherwise, and no correspondence will be allowed.

The Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative solutions will be disqualified. Employees of the proprietors of GEM, and of "Nelson Lee," whose readers are also taking part in this contest, must not compete.

YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWERS HERE.

NOTE.—This list is for use with this week's puzzles only, a separate list being given with each picture-set.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| Armitage | Lambert |
| Armstrong | Langford |
| Astley | Lennox |
| | Low |
| Barkas | Mee |
| Bastin | Messer |
| Bell | Miller |
| Bestall | Mills |
| Briggs | Munro |
| Bryant | Murray |
| Carr | Nairn |
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| Crooks | |
| Curtis | Payne |
| | Phillips |
| Davies | Pierce |
| Dimmock | Porter |
| Dominy | |
| Duncan | Robinson |
| | Robson |
| Earle | Rouse |
| England | |
| Eyres | Seddon |
| | Seed |
| Fitton | Stage |
| Forbes | |
| Foster | Tate |
| Fraser | Temple |
| | Troup |
| Goodwin | Tunstall |
| Grimsdell | |
| Grozier | Varco |
| | Vials |
| Harkus | Vidler |
| Hicks | |
| Hoat | Wake |
| Houghton | Wallace |
| Hunter | Walters |
| | Waring |
| James | Weale |
| Jamieson | Weston |
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| Knox | Yews |

"Who Kicked Them?"

FREE ENTRY FORM No. 2.

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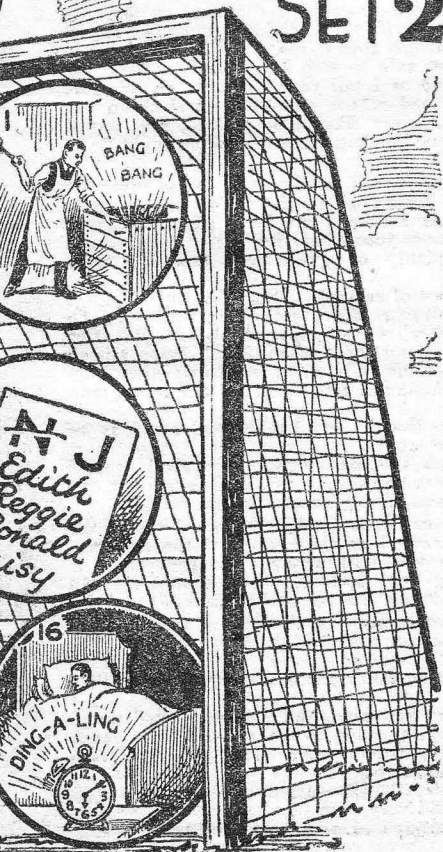
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"GEM"

Competitor's Name

2

SET 2



"Glyn's Tank Corps!"

(Continued from page 14.)

"You are!" came a sudden, rasping voice. "And you'll suffer for it, my lads!"

"Oh!" panted Tom.

Like his chums he whirled round, his heart in his mouth. Behind them, having appeared round the end of the outhouse, was the tall leader of the gang. At the same moment the rickety door of the cottage was wrenched open, and Harker appeared, an ugly grin on his sharp, evil features. A moment later the third man appeared round the other end of the row of cottages.

"Trapped!" breathed Tom Merry. His jaw suddenly set, and he gave a sudden, impulsive yell. "Go for 'em, chaps! On the ball!"

"I shouldn't, kids!" snapped the big man, and the automatic appeared in his hand like lightning.

Tom Merry, who was about to charge full-tilt at the man, reeled back with a gasp. He knew the type of men he had to deal with, and he had the good sense not to ignore the curt warning. The men were crooks of a dangerous type—crooks who would not hesitate to shoot if their liberty was in any way endangered.

"Chuck it, Tommy!" breathed Manners. "They've got us!"

"Yes, we've got you!" hissed the leader, his eyes glinting with sudden rage. "You young fools! We saw you trailing us across the heath; you weren't so smart as you thought you were, durn you! We waited until you walked into the trap!"

"Oh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you hadn't come right here; if you'd tried to rush off for the police, we should have followed and nabbed you," sneered the man. "Well, now you've shoved your noses into what doesn't concern you, you can stay here, and thank your confounded interference for it! Tie 'em up, Burke! You stand by and watch them, Harker!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Resistance was foolish—hopeless! With feelings too deep for words, Tom Merry & Co. allowed themselves to be trussed up like chickens. Then they were flung down on the brick floor of the kitchen in the end cottage.

CHAPTER 8.

Glyn Takes a Hand!

"ROTTERS!"

Bernard Glyn fairly seethed with wrath as he picked himself up from the muddy roadway and glared after Tom Merry & Co.

He was indignant as well as angry.

It seemed to him the basest ingratitude, after all he had done for the crew of his tank. To begin with, he had given them the honour of being the first to try out his tank; certainly they had not wanted the honour, but that was a detail that did not interest Bernard Glyn. He had also given them the opportunity of taking a leading part in the greatest and most sensational raid ever made on the rival school—a raid that, in Glyn's view, had been a terrific success.

Someone would have to pay the piper for that success, of course. The smashed gates of the Grammar Schaal would want explaining away, if nothing else did. Dr. Monk, the headmaster of the Grammar School, would insist upon someone paying in more ways than by mere cash for damage done. Still, what was a bit of trouble in view of the tremendous score over their rivals, Gordon Gay & Co.?

That was how Glyn looked at it. As for the matter of the raided jeweller's shop—well, that was the affair of the police and Messrs. Hilton & Moss. It was not his fault. After all, he had refused to obey the chap at the critical moment. He had risked a bullet rather than do so.

All the same, Glyn's eyes gleamed as he thought of the tall man, and that punch on the face—even yet Glyn's face showed signs of the brutal blow. If only to repay that buff Bernard Glyn would have gone through fire and water to meet the giver of it again.

He glared after Tom Merry & Co., and then turned and glared at the troublesome tank. His glare was not likely to affect the tank in any way, for Glyn himself had said that nothing short of a six-inch gun or a steam-roller was likely to trouble it.

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Still, it relieved his feelings, and, after glaring at it, the schoolboy inventor approached it and began to examine the works again. For all his knowledge of machinery, he found himself baffled now. But he took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and set to work with a will.

For ten minutes and more he wrestled with spanners and tools, until the perspiration streamed down his greasy, blackened features. But it was no good. For the time being, at all events, the Crimson Terror had lost its terrors; it was not a going concern.

"Blow!" panted Glyn, breathing hard. "Likewise, hang and dash!"

He had another few minutes at it, and then he gave it up at last. It was risky staying by the tank longer; indeed, Glyn wondered, with a sudden start, why the police had not been along before this. Slow as the local police were, they should have been in pursuit of the crooks long ago, Glyn reflected, until he suddenly realised they would not follow the Rylcombe Road, believing the crooks unlikely to risk going through Rylcombe.

"Queer, they took this road!" mumbled Glyn to himself. "Anyway, I'm dashed if I'm going to mess about any longer with the thing! Can't see anything wrong myself, and it beats me hollow. I wonder—"

A sudden thought came to Bernard Glyn, and he examined the petrol-tank. One glance at the indicator was enough. It was empty!

Glyn could have kicked himself.

After all his work and worry, the machine had stopped just because there was no petrol in the big tank! Glyn remembered that there had been plenty of petrol in the tank when they had started that afternoon. Obviously there was a leak somewhere.

He soon found that there was—though a very slight one—and he managed to plug it with cotton-waste. But he was in no better case now. He had no petrol on board.

There was nothing else for it but to trudge across the heath. He would go to Glyn House for a supply, and get Jones to come back to help him get the tank into hiding somewhere.

Growling with wrath at his helplessness, Bernard Glyn donned his coat, wiped his grimy features with cotton-waste—which made them grimmer than ever—and set out across the heath at a trot.

His course led past the brink of the old quarry, and it was sheer chance that took him there at the moment. For suddenly he saw three figures walking in the quarry below him—three familiar figures.

Glyn fairly jumped as he recognised the three crooks.

They were walking swiftly and talking savagely—apparently quarrelling amongst themselves.

"I tell you it's not safe to stop here now!" snarled the tall man. "You'll do as I tell you; I'm boss on this job, Harker! Those blamed school kids have mucked up our chances of lying low here. They'll be missed, and they'll have search parties out hunting for them before night."

"But the risk—"

"It's riskier staying here!" snapped the leader savagely. "We're going while the going's good. We've got the stuff, and we've got to make a durned run for it now and chance it. Confound those nosy young hounds!"

"But we've got plenty of grub here, and it's safer than—"

The three passed out of earshot.

Glyn was thunderstruck. Finding the men here when he imagined they were miles away was shock enough. But what did they mean about the "school kids" being missed and hunted for? It could only mean one thing—that Tom Merry & Co. had blundered into them on the heath, and had been captured.

Glyn drew a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed as he stared after the three crooks.

He saw them reach the low, tumbledown shed against the rocky wall of the quarry. One of them flung open one of the double doors, and Glyn glimpsed the car inside.

They stood by the car while Harker examined one of the wheels; and Glyn grinned as he recollected the accident. Evidently something was still wrong with it—though it couldn't be anything very serious, unless something had happened to it since it had entered the heath.

After talking for some minutes two of the men left the shed and started back along the rough track leading out of the quarry.

Glyn crouched in the damp gorse as they passed below him.

He waited until they had gone, and then he started round the back of the quarry, meaning to make a detour to reach the cottages where they had vanished. That his chums were imprisoned there he did not doubt.

Using all his scoutcraft, the inventor wormed his way nearer and nearer, and very soon he was crouching against the wall of the end cottage. He had not been seen—he was sure of that. He moved carefully round to the front

window—which, like the rest, was void of glass, but covered with rough boards.

There he halted, his heart thumping.

To his ears came the sound of voices—men's voices. He recognised the harsh, cold tones of the tall crook, and he gritted his teeth.

He risked a peep through the cracks of the boarding.

The two desperadoes were standing round a blackened, dusty packing-case, on which was piled a heap of gleaming jewellery. Gold watches, rings set with precious stones, bracelets, and all manner of valuable articles were among the heap. Both men were examining the pile with eyes that glistened with greed and satisfaction.

"A snug little haul!" the big man was saying. "That tank came in thundering useful! We couldn't have got away with a quarter of this stuff if we hadn't smashed the window in like that. Anyway, we'll make our get-away at dusk, with a bit of luck."

"Will you?" murmured Glyn to himself. "We'll see about that, my pippins!"

He moved softly away from the shattered window. It was Tom Merry & Co. he wanted to get a glimpse of. They had not been in the room with the crooks, and he meant to discover where they were.

He soon found them. He could not see into the kitchen through the cracks in the boards there, but a whispered word soon brought an answer from within the gloomy apartment.

"Who—who's that?" came in a whisper from Tom Merry. "Little me!" breathed back Glyn, with a soft chuckle. "Quiet! Just keep your peckers up, and I'll have you out of that somehow!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Quiet!"

Glyn gently tried the back door. The lock had gone, but the door would not move. It was secured from the inside—probably wedged with a peg of wood. Glyn tried the boards of the window. But a moment's examination showed that even if he managed to get the boards away without rousing the crooks he could never get through the narrow framework.

"Blow!" he panted. "What rotten luck!"

He looked up at the upstairs windows but they were far out of reach, and there was no window above the outhouse.

What should he do? He could wait until the rascals had gone when dusk fell. But then they would get away with the plunder—and Glyn had no intention of allowing them to do that if he could help it.

Then a daring scheme came into Glyn's reckless mind. He hurriedly whispered his plan to the prisoners inside the kitchen, and then he hurried back to the quarry below, this time entering the quarry itself.

The rough ground offered plenty of shelter, and as he came in sight of the shed, Glyn dropped to the ground and began to worm his way forward, eyes and ears open.

The sound of the engine of the car starting suddenly broke the silence, and, peering over the grass, Glyn saw the car just backing out of the shed, with Harker at the wheel. It stopped, and then turned.

"Blow!" muttered the junior in disgust. "I was hoping to catch the rotter napping. Still—Hullo!"

The car stopped, and Harker jumped out. Evidently he was only getting the car out in readiness for the "get-away." And then, to Glyn's joy, the fellow left the car and began to walk out of the quarry.

"Good man!" grinned Glyn.

Scarcely able to contain himself, the schoolboy inventor waited a few seconds, and then he started with a rush for the car.

His eagerness and impatience caused him to stumble, however, and he crashed down, amid a rattle of loose stones that brought Harker round with a jerk.

The luckless Glyn heard his yell of alarm, and, though badly winded and half-dazed, he instantly scrambled up and made a blind rush again for the car.

With a curse, Harker came in pursuit, fury on his unpleasant features. But Glyn had a good start, and he made the most of it.

He leaped into the car and started the engine—which fired at once, fortunately. Then, after ramming the clutch home, he twisted the wheel round desperately.

The car leaped forward with a jerk. Harker, still cursing, came pounding up, and made a blind jump as the car moved. With his free hand Glyn flung an empty petrol-tin that was on the seat full into the scoundrel's face.

Crash!

Harker's howl was enough to waken the Seven Sleepers of old.

He fell backwards with a crash. Glyn accelerated, and the car went lurching and pounding up the incline and out of the quarry.

It almost ran into two men who had just turned round a rocky boulder that stood at the far end of the track.

They were the tall man and his accomplice, and both

carried heavy bags, which they dropped, with shouts of alarm, at sight of the junior in the car.

"What the thunder—Stop you young hound!"

"Rats!" was Glyn's reckless answer.

The car lurched on Glyn turning it out on to the open heath.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

A bullet whizzed unpleasantly close to Glyn's head, and then another and another. The desperado rascals were firing at him. Glyn had known that Harker did not carry a gun, but he had not quite bargained for this.

It troubled him little, however. He crouched low over the wheel and let the engine out for all it was worth. The rascals came after him, yelling furiously, and firing wildly. Glyn laughed aloud in the exhilaration of the adventure—an adventure he had scarcely expected. But suddenly his laughter ceased as there came the sound of an explosion.

One of his tyres had burst, and the car lurched sickeningly, skidded round, and all but overturned on the rocky ground.

But Glyn had it under control again in a flash, and without a glance round he drove on recklessly.

A wildly-aimed bullet had struck the tyre, and now the car was bounding and behaving in a decidedly unpleasant and alarming manner. In the ordinary way Wayland Heath was scarcely a place for motoring, for it was a mass of hillocks and gullies, and tough gorse and brambles. But with a burst tyre it was rough going indeed.

But after the tank it was almost comfortable to Glyn, and the constant banging and thumping did not trouble him. Moreover, he had nearly reached the roadway now, and the men were far behind.

He chuckled as the tank came into sight.

The junior's intention had been to drive the car to the police station and get help—quite a wise decision for the reckless Glyn. But the burst tyre had settled that idea for him. Moreover, another scheme, and a more reckless one, had occurred to Glyn's fertile brain. The sight of two cans of petrol—a kick at each showed him they were full—that rested on the floor at his feet had given him the new idea.

He drove straight to the tank, pulling up at the sparse hedge lining the roadway. Without a glance behind he leaped out of the car and dragged out the petrol cans.

The tank was just as he had left it, and the road was still deserted. If anyone had passed that way they had not interfered with it; though it was not the main road, and few vehicles ever used it.

It took Glyn a very few seconds to fill the empty tank of the Crimson Terror. And then he became aware of shouts, and jumped as he sighted two figures pounding over the heath towards him.

It was the enemy; they had evidently stuck to the trail, believing the burst tyre would bring the car to a halt sooner or later. At all events, here they were, and Glyn gasped as a shot rang out.

He worked madly at the controls, and his heart leaped with joy as the lumbering monster leaped forward with a jerk and started to move again. He let the tank roll on until it gained speed, and then he sent it climbing the bank like a bull at a gate.

The revolving tractors took it up, and it crashed through the sparse hedge, rolling down the far side with a sickening motion like a ship in a rough sea.

Bullets were spattering on the armour of the tank now, but Glyn could afford to laugh at them. He stood little chance of being hit, for no bullet could penetrate the steel.

He heard someone scrambling at the closed iron doors, and then he heard a fall and a howl, and he chuckled. Evidently one of the enemy had tried to scramble up and board the tank, but a sudden roll of the iron monster had flung him off.

Hoping it was his tall enemy, and that he had had a hard bump, Glyn drove on all his attention being given to the heath ahead of him. At top speed the tank careered onwards, crashing through bushes, mounting hillocks and boulders, and rolling and lurching madly. Then above the rumbling roar of the tank he heard another sound, and glanced behind.

Through the rear loophole he caught a glimpse of the car. It was following him, and even as he looked he saw the tall man scramble aboard it.

"Blow!" muttered Glyn in disgust. "What an ass I was not to put the blessed car out of action!"

But the tank was well ahead now, and Glyn hoped devoutly that he would be still well ahead by the time the cottages were reached.

The quarry came in sight, and he drove up the steep hill towards the cottages, the revolving tractors of the tank climbing it with remarkable ease. A glance back showed him that the car was still a couple of hundred yards behind,

and he knew his pursuers could never get it up that steep and slippery slope.

A glimpse into the quarry had shown him also that Harker was there and not in the cottage.

He pulled up the tank and leaped out. Then he rushed for the front door of the cottage. It was fastened, and though he flung himself at it again and again, it did not budge an inch. He looked through the window—the room beyond was empty. Another glance, and he saw that besides being boarded the window was barred with rusty bars.

Glyn raced back to the tank. He was going to give his imprisoned chums a startling shock—though he knew they could not have failed to hear the tank's thundering approach up the hill.

In a moment he was at the controls again. The engines were still running, and, letting them full out, Glyn sent the Crimson Terror charging straight at the front of the cottage.

Crash!

CHAPTER 9.

The Tank Corps' Triumph!

THE sound of that thunderous crash went rolling across the heath, and echoed round the rocky walls of the quarry below.

There followed the rumble of falling debris, and a hurricane of bricks and mortar rattled on the iron roof of the tank, while the air became thick with dust.

The sudden terrific jolt sent Glyn lurching forward, but he regained his balance in a flash, and swiftly he backed the tank a few yards, bricks falling all round it as he did so.

Then he stopped it and leaped out again.

The air was still thick with dust, and Glyn chuckled as he saw a great gaping hole where the small window had been—a hole that almost stretched across the cottage.

Without a glance round Glyn rushed forward, scrambling desperately over the mass of rubble, and tearing his pocket-knife out as he went. Across the front room he dashed, and into the kitchen beyond.

White, strained faces met his anxious glance, and in a moment he was slashing at the bonds round the ankles and wrists of his imprisoned chums.

"Quick—no time for gassing!" he rapped out, as Arthur Augustus opened his aristocratic mouth to express his amazed curiosity. "I've busted the happy home up! Cut out and board the tank—sharp! Never mind your aches and pains—you'll have more if those merchants catch us!"

"Bai Jove!"

The last strand of rope gave way before Glyn's slashing knife, and Glyn hustled and rushed his half-dazed, limping chums out over the mass of rubble into the open air.

"Good man, Glyn!" panted Tom Merry. "My hat! I guessed that—"

"Don't gas! Get aboard!" yelled Glyn. "Here they come!"

There sounded furious yells, and the two men came pounding up the hill. One after the other the juniors, cramped and aching as they were, tumbled aboard the tank, and Glyn slammed the iron door and leaped to the controls, Tom Merry jumping to help him with the two engines. As one started the tank rolled round, and then the other started, and the Crimson Terror jerked forward.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Once again bullets began to spatter against the iron sides of the monster, and Glyn gave a jeering yell.

"Stop that, you silly owls! You're knocking spots off my new paint!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Glyn, you are a feahfully cool boundah—"

"Don't gas so much!" said Glyn. "Blessed if you aren't always working your jaw, Gussy! Now hold tight, my hearties!"

They had every need to hold tight. Glyn sent his iron monster lurching and rolling down the hill at a speed that sent the startled juniors sprawling on top of each other.

"All serene now, Glyn!" called Tom Merry, scrambling up and glancing anxiously back through the rear loopholes. "They'll never catch us up! Let her rip across the heath, and we'll soon show them a clean pair of heels!"

"And leave 'em with the giddy plunder—not likely!" snorted Glyn witheringly. "We're going after that plunder now—if we can only keep ahead!"

"But where the thump—"

"It's down in the quarry!" yelled Glyn. "That chap Harker's guarding it! I'm going into the quarry now, so mind your eyes! The moment I pull up, you chaps jump out and go for Harker! He hasn't a gun, and you can bowl him over and collar the plunder! Got the idea?"

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"Great Scott! Right, we're with you!"

The bullets ceased to rattle on the tank as they drew out of range and turned at the bottom of the hill on to the cart-track, the sudden swerve making the juniors hang on with might and main where they could.

"Hold on!" shouted Glyn.

There was a startled shout ahead as Harker saw the approaching juggernaut. It thundered down the rutty track, lurching and rolling sickeningly, and Harker stood and stared as if rooted to the ground.

But he soon moved as he realised that it was coming straight for him. With a yell, he grabbed two big bags at his feet and leapt to one side of the track.

Glyn slowed up, reversed one engine, and then, as the tank circled round, grinding the gravel into pulp, he pulled up.

"Now, you fellows, sharp's the word!" he yelled.

Tom Merry & Co. were ready. They were out of the tank in a flash, tumbling out one after the other. Tom Merry was first and he flung himself at the dumbfounded Harker, who cursed and sent a heavy fist flying into the junior's face.

Tom Merry reeled back, but the next instant Blake and Herries had flung themselves at the fellow. While they struggled desperately, Arthur Augustus and Lowther grabbed the two bags, and, helped by Digby and Manners, sent them whirling into the tank.

"All clear!" yelled Lowther. "Quick! The other merchants are coming! Quick!"

Crack! Crack!

The two other men were not only pounding up, but they were firing. Whether they really aimed to frighten or to hurt, the juniors could not tell, but many of the bullets came unpleasantly close.

But the task was accomplished now!

Herries had wrenched Harker's feet from under him, and as he went crashing down the juniors leapt for the safety of the tank.

They swarmed aboard, and as the steel doors clanged fast, Glyn sent the tank moving. It went lurching up the incline, and only just in time did the two rascals leap out of the way.

"Done 'em!" chortled Bernard Glyn, turning a flushed face to his excited and breathless chums. "Let the rotters pot away as much as they like now. Pull those shutters over the rear loopholes, chaps!"

"Huwwah! St. Jim's for evah, deah boys!"

"Good man, Glyn!"

"You don't deserve to be rescued after deserting me like you did!" chuckled Glyn. "By jingo! I wish I'd had the chance to biff that tall merchant in the chivvy. Still, I think I've had my own back!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're not out of the wood yet, though!" warned Blake, taking a quick glance through the rear loophole. "They're coming after us! They're tumbling into that blessed car now!"

"One of the blessed tyres is busted!" grinned Glyn. "But even if they do catch up to us they can't do much!"

As the tank thundered over the heath he hurriedly told his chums of his adventures.

"You nerry bounder!" chuckled Blake, as he finished.

"Well, we've done 'em and got the swag—I suppose the jewellery's here?"

The juniors opened the two bags, and a glance was enough. The bags were full of the plunder from the Wayland jewellers' window. The glasses of several of the watches were smashed, but beyond that nothing seemed to have suffered seriously from the rough handling of the bags.

"We'll take the lot to the giddy police station, and chance being locked up ourselves!" grinned Tom Merry. "I fancy, though—Hallo, here the beggars come!"

"The car?" asked Glyn.

"Yes, it's just passing us now. They're trying to get ahead!" yelled Herries, after a glance through the look-out at the side. "My hat! The beggars look mad as hatters!"

"It's rather annoying being followed like this!" snorted Glyn. "Why can't they take a licking like good little men? Hallo, I spot 'em! They've stopped, and it looks as if they're going to fight the giddy tank! What hopes!"

"Here they come!" yelled Herries again. "Stand by to repel boarders!"

"Here we are!" suddenly shouted Blake, and he picked up a parcel from one of the lockers of the tank and tore it open, disclosing a little pile of bombs. "What price these—they were left over from the Grammarian raid this afternoon!"

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My hat!" yelled Glyn. "Just the chance I wanted. I'm going to give the car a gentle biff, just to see they don't get away with it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The car was ahead of them now. It had pulled up, and the men had jumped out and were racing towards the tank. Glyn sent the Crimson Terror straight for the car.

The three men yelled in alarm and jumped out of the monster's way. Then—
Crash!

The tank, skilfully steered by Bernard Glyn, gave the car a glancing blow that buckled up one wheel, and almost overturned the car itself.

"That's put that out of commission for a bit!" said Glyn coolly. "Hallo, now for the giddy boarders! Give 'em those bombs, chaps!"

And the juniors let fly, as fast as they could fling, the smoke and stink bombs.

There were not many left, but what there were the three yelling rascals got the full benefit of.

They burst all over them, covering them with black and white powder, and pulling them up abruptly, gasping and coughing and sneezing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Give it 'em hot and strong! Hallo, here's the big chap coming! Oh, my hat! Look out!"

Lowther's voice ended on a note of alarm. The big man, almost beside himself with fury, was making a rush at the tank, his automatic in his hand. His eyes glinted dangerously, and it was only too clear that he meant serious mischief this time if he had never meant it before.

He made a desperate leap for the tank's side door, which had been opened slightly to aid the "bombers" in their deadly work.

Tom's face became grave, and as the tank slowed down close to the man, he opened the door and jumped out.

In his alarm he had quite forgotten the other two men, but he was soon reminded of them.

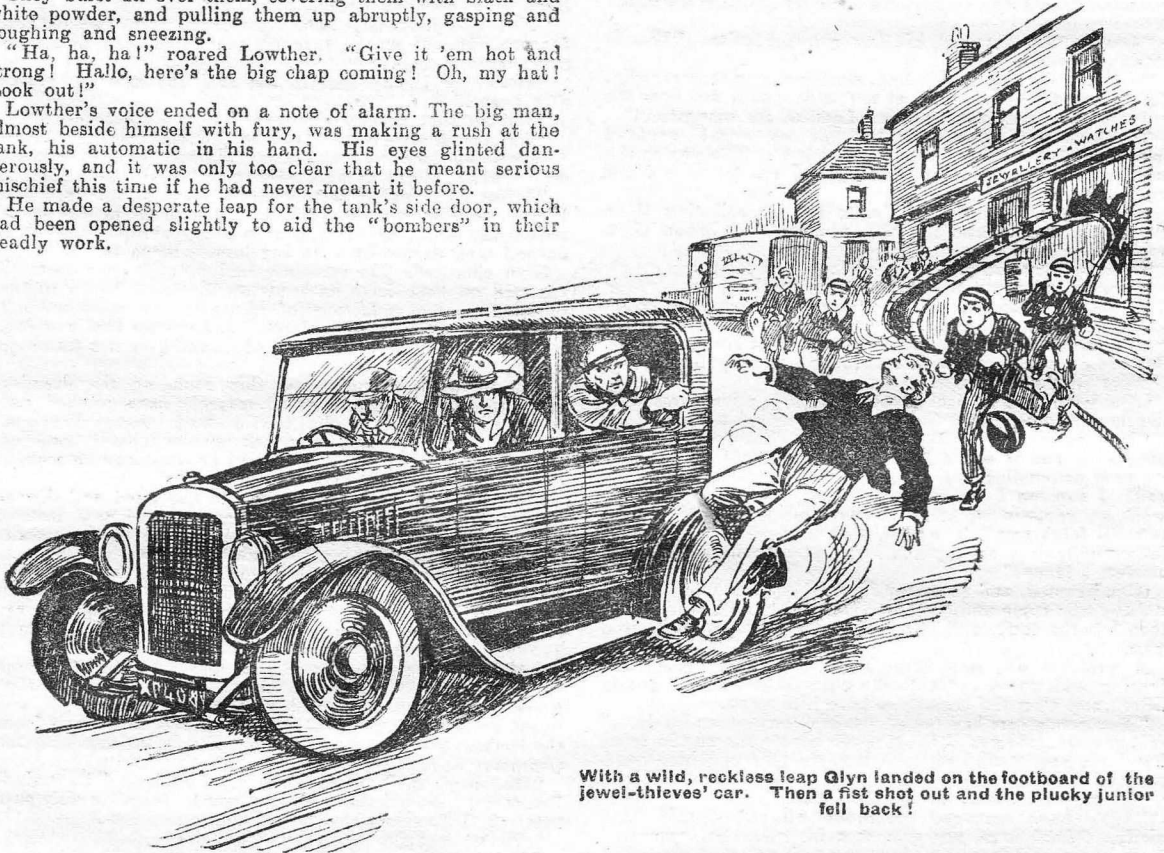
There came a husky shout, and the leader of the gang, tears still streaming from his blackened face, came charging up, his automatic raised.

"Look out, Tom!"

Crack!

The automatic barked viciously, but in the act of firing, something struck the man's wrist. It was a spanner that had whizzed from the interior of the tank, and the blow deflected the course of the bullet by jerking the man's wrist in the nick of time.

The automatic flew from the rascal's hand and whirled yards away. He did not get the chance to recover it. As



With a wild, reckless leap Glyn landed on the footboard of the jewel-thieves' car. Then a fist shot out and the plucky junior fell back!

but a smoke-bomb burst full in his face even as he jumped and clawed at the iron bolts of the door. He fell sprawling, gasping and choking in a smother of thick, black smoke.

Luckily the tank was only moving at a crawl, Glyn having been anxious that the enemy should make close and certain acquaintance with his deadly, but harmless bombs. But now Tom Merry gave a grim shout.

"That's enough, Glyn! Get her moving—quick!"

Glyn accelerated, but even as he did so, the second man, a burly, stockily-built fellow, made a determined rush at the tank. He actually got grip and foothold on the moving tank and tore at the door. It flew open, and, jerking an automatic from his pocket as he hung on with one hand, he fired into the tank.

"Look out!" shrieked Manners.

But Tom Merry was equal to the occasion.

He was at the door in a flash, and his fist shot out, taking the fellow clean under his bristly chin. His head jerked back, and the automatic flew from his hand and exploded harmlessly on the ground. Then the rascal lost grip and crashed heavily to earth.

The tank was moving quite fast, and Tom Merry glanced anxiously out, knowing that the man might easily have been injured by such a dangerous fall.

He saw the man lying motionless, and he gave a shout.

"Hold on, Glyn—pull up! That fellow's injured!"

Risky as it was, Glyn heeded the cry, but instead of pulling up he turned the tank and went back.

The man was moving now, but it was clear that he was badly injured. His leg was doubled up under him, and Tom Merry guessed that it was broken.

he stood holding his wrist and cursing, the juniors tumbled out from the tank in a swarm.

Glyn, who had flung the spanner so timely, was the first, and he leapt straight at the rascal. His fist snacked home, though Glyn had to jump to reach the man's face.

But it was a hefty blow for all that, and it gave Glyn a great deal of satisfaction, and the rascal a nasty jolt.

The next instant half-a-dozen of the juniors were swarming over the man.

He fought like a wildcat. But Glyn, Tom Merry, Blake, Herries, and Arthur Augustus were a little too much for him, and he went crashing down at last.

Meanwhile, Digby had thoughtfully recovered the automatic and tossed it out of harm's way into the tank.

The injured man's weapon was somewhere amid the gorse, but nobody had time to think of that just then. Harker was rushing up now, and Lowther and Manners tackled him gallantly.

A moment later Digby joined them, and a furious struggle followed. But the leader of the gang was on his back; and, leaving his chums to deal with him, Tom Merry rushed in to help Digby, Lowther, and Manners.

They badly needed help, for Harker was a handful. Fear and rage made him like a madman, and the struggle was long and desperate.

And then came a sudden and utterly unexpected interruption.

A distant shout made Tom Merry look round, and he caught a glimpse of uniformed figures running across from the roadway.

"Oh, my hat! Bobbies!" he gasped. Inspector Skeat, of the Wayland police, came pounding up, his face red and perspiring. Behind him were two constables and a man in plain clothes—obviously an officer, too.

"Right, youngsters!" he panted. "Leave these beauties to us!"

There was a brief struggle, a torrent of curses, and then the clink and click of handcuffs. It was followed by the same sound again as the handcuffs fastened over the wrists of the tall crook as he lay on the ground.

The inspector strode over to the injured ruffian. "He's broken his leg, I think!" gasped Tom Merry, joining him. "He tried to board the tank, and I knocked him off. He fell heavily. I had to do it, or he would have put a bullet into one of us!"

The inspector whistled, and he whistled still more as the constable picked up an automatic from the gorse and handed it over to him.

"Loaded!" he snapped, his face growing grim. "Was it used, you lads?"

"Just a trifle!" grinned Glyn, strolling up unconcernedly. "And if you'd take a peep at my tank, you'll see how the beggars have been potting at it. Look at the new paint!"

"It was the tank that brought us here!" grunted Inspector Skeat, giving Glyn a hard look. "So you're the owner of it, Master Glyn. I'm afraid you're booked for trouble, young man!"

"If that's all the thanks I'm to get for collaring these merchants and recovering the plunder——" began Glyn warmly.

The inspector jumped. "You've recovered the stuff?" he snapped.

"Yes; it's in the tank there. Come and have a squint!"

The inspector, frowning, followed Glyn into the tank. It was clear he did not approve at all of the Crimson Terror. But his eyes gleamed with satisfaction as they fell on the plunder in the two bags.

Glyn gave him a brief account of their adventures with the men, and Inspector Skeat's eyes twinkled a trifle.

"You young rascals!" he gasped. "You might have been shot, and it would have served you right if you had, for your astounding nerve, young men! But—but— Good gad! I suppose I ought to arrest all the lot of you; but we'll let you run off home for the time being. If I want you I'll fetch you," he added, with a chuckle. "But your father will want an explanation, and so will your headmaster, I fancy!"

Glyn grunted, and Inspector Skeat shouted out to the constables, who came and took over the plunder. The inspector then left the tank, and joined the group round the injured man.

A stretcher was soon brought to the scene, made from fencing and gorse. On it the injured crook was gently lifted, and then the constables bore him away.

"You youngsters had better get back now—soon be dark," said Inspector Skeat. "We'd never have come on the scene but for a cyclist who saw the tank on the road here unattended. He reported it to us, and I brought these men along to look into it. Good job, I did!"

"We'd have managed the brutes all right," said Glyn airily. "Look here, you owe us a bit over this, inspector! You—you might keep our share mum—I mean, don't report us to the beaks at St. Jim's. We shall get it hot, and there's one or two things——"

"More than one or two, I fancy!" said Inspector Skeat, with a grunt. "But I can't promise you that, Master Glyn. You'd better get back to school at once, and leave that confounded contraption here. Nobody will walk off with it!"

He marched away, evidently taking it for granted that his orders would be obeyed to the letter.

But they weren't.

"Leave the blessed tank here—no fear!" snorted Bernard Glyn. "I said I'd go home in it, and I'm going home in it. Oh crumbs! What beastly luck! Now the bobbies know it belongs to me they'll put a stopper on all my wheezes!"

"Jolly good job!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats! Get aboard, and we'll clear off!" said Glyn. "Anyway, it's saved us from a visit to Wayland, and we've had the fun of it all! You fellows must admit that my tank's come in useful."

"Oh, rats!"

It was the turn of Tom Merry & Co. to say that, and they said it emphatically. But they had no desire to tramp back to St. Jim's, so they followed Glyn into the tank. They had the feeling that it would be their last trip in the Crimson Terror.

Possibly Glyn had the same feeling, for he was very glum as he started the engines and the tank began to move away. There came a shout behind them, and, looking back, Tom Merry saw Inspector Skeat waving and shouting,

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evidently ordering them to stop. But Glyn put on speed instead, and the tank rumbled on over the dusky heath, with its crew of tired and grimy adventurers.

But their adventures were not ended yet!

CHAPTER 10.

A Narrow Escape!

"ROT!"

"But look here, Glyn——"

"Rats!"

"But——"

"Piffle!"

Bernard Glyn was in charge of the tank, and he was determined that his word should go.

It was useless to argue with him. Tom Merry breathed hard. But he tried again.

"Now look here, Glyn, you born idiot, we've had enough for one day. If we go through the village it's bound to mean more trouble!"

"Rubbish! I can handle the old bus now as easily as a pram!"

"But in that narrow street——"

"Narrow street—piffle!" snorted Glyn, peering ahead through the forward look-out. "Blowed if I ever knew such funks! Might as well make a day of it!"

"I feel as if we've been making weeks of it!" groaned Blake, rubbing various bruises. "I've been at sea on a rough day, and I've been up in a giddy aeroplane. But a dashed tank driven by a raving lunatic beats the lot!"

Glyn chuckled. He certainly had put his crew through the mill on that drive back across Wayland Heath in the dusk. Glyn had a fairly good idea that he would not get much chance to drive his "latest" again after that evening, and he meant to make the most of it, and give it a thorough testing.

And he did! A rudderless ship rounding the dreaded Horn in a terrific storm could scarcely have pitched and rolled and lurched as did Glyn's tank across Wayland Heath. Glyn kept a sharp watch for the biggest boulders, the largest hillocks, and the deepest hollows, and he seemed to find them all easily enough.

The ride was like a nightmare to the tired and dismal juniors, though Glyn seemed to enjoy it. And now, instead of taking a short cut for the parking place in the woods, Glyn insisted upon going through Rylcombe.

"I'll promise to take the greatest care, you fellows!" grinned Glyn. "I shan't even run down old Crump, if I see him. No good grousing about a bit of a shaking up, either! What we want in this tank, of course, is Baggy Trimble, or Fatty Wynn, to act as ballast!"

"And what you want," said Tom Merry bitterly, "is some sense in that silly napper of yours! Can't you realise that we're bowled out now, and that our number's up? Old Skeat knows who we are, and he refused to keep it from the beaks. We've earned the sack, if only for smashing the Grammar School gates!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Glyn impatiently. "Blessed if I ever knew such fellows for grousing! What's a silly game matter? I'll explain that it was a pure accident!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"In any case, the pater will stand the racket," said Glyn confidently. "I'll explain the facts to him, and get him to send along a cheque and a letter of apology. Hallo! Here we are in Rylcombe. Now, you fellows, stop grousing, and give a chap a chance!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Glyn——"

"Dry up! Hallo! The Rylcombe populace have spotted the circus already! I say, are there any bombs left?"

"Yes: a few. But you're jolly well not——"

"I mean to keep the crowd from following us!" said Glyn crisply. "Just biff one amongst 'em now and again if they do follow! We don't want—— Hallo! Isn't that Gay and his pals ahead there?"

It was a glance showed the juniors that Gay, Frank Monk, and the two Wootton brothers were just emerging from Mother Murphy's little tuckshop. They were looking rather glum, and their faces grew suddenly excited as they saw the tank lumbering slowly down the High Street.

Bernard Glyn gave a chuckle.

"Don't the dear little fellows look depressed! I say, what about slinging them a few bombs just for luck?"

But Tom Merry & Co. had already thought of that. The sight of the enemy roused them to quick action. It was a chance not to be missed—a chance that was not likely to happen again.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Tom Merry & Co. got busy with a will. There was a terrific howl from Gordon Gay as Tom Merry got a bullseye with his first shot.

"Yarrooooh!"

It happened to be a stink-bomb—that much was clear

from the anguished face of Gordon Gay as he staggered back. The next moment his chums became just as excited as they received the bombs sent at them with deadly aim.

Then the ammunition gave out, and Glyn increased the tank's speed again. It lumbered on down the village streets amidst much yelling and excitement of the villagers. Tom looked back and grinned as he saw that the Grammarians were following, hot-foot, and evidently after vengeance—if they could get it!

But by the time the tank had reached the end of the village street it had out-distanced the Grammarians, for Glyn was taking no chances, and he went at full speed.

Luckily, the street was clear, and Glyn had no opportunities of proving how close he could steer to a vehicle without upsetting it. They emerged into the open at last, and Glyn took the tank along Rylcombe Lane.

It was growing dusk now, and the juniors were hungry as well as tired. It was a thousand to one that the Head knew who the tank adventurers were by this time, and all they could hope for was that they would be able to sneak in and get some tea before the Head sent for them.

Tom Merry was just pondering this possibility when a glance through the forward look-out made him start.

"Here, Glyn, you ass, where the thump are you making

for?" he yelled. "You're not taking her over the old stone bridge?"

"Of course! Think I'm going all the way back and over the new one? Rot!"

"But it's narrow, and it was bad enough this afternoon when there was plenty of light. You jolly nearly—"

"Now, don't start all that again!" grumbled Glyn. "The old bridge will stand our weight all right; and as for knocking a bit of paint off the old bus, I don't mind that now!" he added bitterly. "It's lost enough paint to-day, goodness knows!"

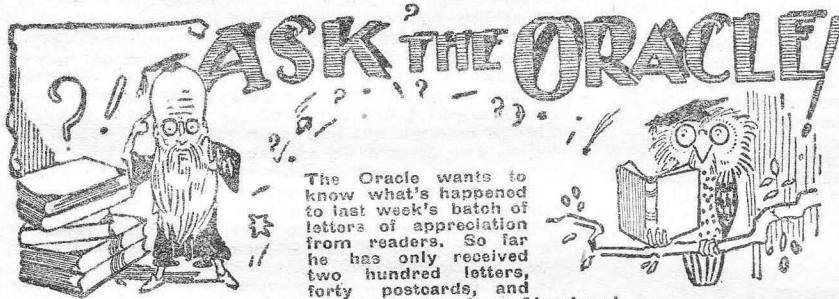
And Glyn kept on his course, heedless of criticism. Tom said no more—he knew it was useless to argue. But he hoped for the best.

Unfortunately—or, perhaps, fortunately—it turned out to be the worst.

The old stone bridge spanning the Rhyl loomed up ahead. To reach Rylcombe Wood they would either have to cross it or cross the more modern bridge higher up the river. It was not built for modern traffic by any means, and it was rarely used excepting by farm-carts and such like.

But Glyn had driven the tank safely over it once, and he meant to do it again.

(Continued on next page.)



ASK THE ORACLE!

The Oracle wants to know what's happened to last week's batch of letters of appreciation from readers. So far he has only received two hundred letters, forty postcards, and seven unstamped letters from Aberdeen!

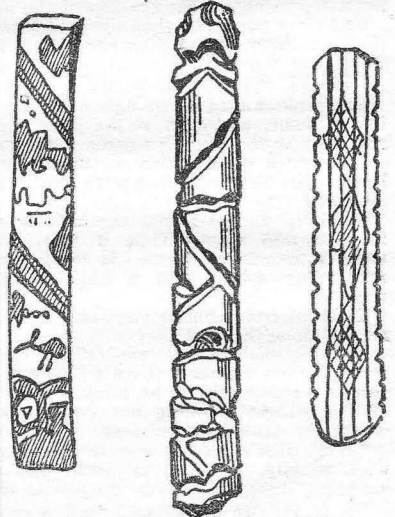
"avoirdupois" weight, which has 16 ounces to the pound. Gold, however, is weighed by "troy" weight (as is also silver and gems) and in troy weight 12 ounces go to the pound. So a pound of feathers is heavier than a pound of gold.

Q.—How do Pine-apples grow?

A.—Ned Hammond, of High-bury, wonders if they grow like apples on trees. No, Ned, the name is mis-leading. The fruit we call a pine apple is really a cluster of flowers which have become fleshy and consolidated. The pine itself is a broad-leaved plant that grows on the surface of the ground, like a cabbage. At one time they were grown in large gardens in this country, but, nowadays, the pine-apples as we see in shops come from the West Indies, the Azores, and the Canary Islands.

Q.—What are message sticks?

A.—Message Sticks, Sammy Stillowing, of Wigan, are notched pieces of wood—



Message sticks of Central Africa.

three examples of which our artist has drawn for you—used by Australian natives to aid their memories when conveying verbal messages to a distance. I am thinking of giving our office-boy one!

Q.—What is a derringer?

A.—A type of pistol, "Sonny," so-called after its American inventor.

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Q.—Who invented ventriloquism?

A.—Sam Light, of Lewisham, sends me this with a note to say that he has developed a sore throat trying to make his young sister believe there was a black man in the chimney. I gather he wants to find the original offender, and give him a piece of his mind. The trouble about "throwing the voice" is that other people throw things that are much harder. All I can tell you, Sam, is that the trick is a very ancient one. A gentleman named Eurycles, who lived in Athens, was a celebrated "turn" in ancient Greece, and the Greeks had a long word for their ventriloquists—Engastrimanteis—which meant belly-prophets. The word itself, ventriloquism, means "belly-speaking" in Latin, as it was mistakenly supposed at one time to be produced by a peculiar use of the stomach. The Greeks no doubt used it in their oracles and speaking statues to bewilder people. The Zulus, Maoris, and the Eskimos are said to be adepts at this particular form of entertainment.



Mr. Micawber, "waiting for something to turn up."

Q.—Who was Mr. Micawber?

A.—Mr. Micawber is a character in Charles Dickens' novel, "David Copperfield," noted for his alternate depression and elevation of spirits.

Q.—What canal joins the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans?

A.—The Panama.

Q.—What was the origin of the name "buccaneers"?

A.—Jack Holt, of Deal, reads pirate yarns. So do I, Jack, and very good they are, too. Jack wants to know how the bad, bold men called buccaneers got their name. Well, Jack Holt, you'll get a jolt when I tell you. The old buccaneers came from Santo Domingo, and in the island of Tortuga, where they thrived. Their principal food was the smoke-dried flesh of wild pigs. The Carib name for this food was "bucan," or what we call bacon. So the bold pirates were just bacon-eaters—rash men who often ate a "rasher." What?

Q.—What is a chamois?

A.—A goat-like species of antelope, Lucy Eggston, which inhabits the Alps and other high mountains of southern and central Europe. The name is pronounced rather like "sham-wa."

Q.—What white man earned for himself the title of "The Uncrowned King of Arabia"?

A.—Colonel T. A. Lawrence.

Q.—Have bluebottles a language of their own?

A.—On your behalf, "Bowled Out," I consulted my entomological old pal, Professor Batty, of Bee-in-Bonnet, notorious as the inventor of the gumless fly-paper. He, after removing two imaginary flies from the wall with successive sweeps of the hand, solemnly stated that decidedly bluebottles have a language of their own: and, in fact, only the other day he heard one tell another to "buzz off!" Do likewise, my fly chum!

Q.—Is a pound of feathers as heavy as a pound of gold?

A.—I think this is a catch. The questioner signs himself "Curious"—perhaps he's just curious to see if I will say, "Of course they both weigh the same." I happen to remember, however, that feathers are weighed by

He had the good sense to slow down, but that was all the good sense Glyn showed. It would have been more sensible, in fact, to have taken Tom's advice and gone the longer way round, for dusk was already settling over the river, and the light was bad for such tricky work as steering the lumbering, awkward tank over a narrow bridge.

At the entrance to the bridge was a large stone with a rounded top. It had possibly been used in earlier days to enable horsemen to mount their steeds, and it rested against the stone walls of the bridge.

Glyn quite failed to see it in the deepening gloom—and then it happened!

One of the revolving tractors of the tank struck the stone and mounted it, and the sudden, unexpected lurch of the tank sent the juniors sprawling sideways.

Glyn was no luckier than the rest on this occasion, and he lost control of the steering, with the result that the tank lurched and went crashing against the opposite wall of the bridge.

Old as the stonework was, it was stoutly built. None the less, it had not been made to stand the onslaught of a gigantic tank.

There was a terrific crash, and a terrific lurch as the tank tried its best to climb the wall. Fortunately it couldn't, and it came to a sudden, grinding halt half-way over it.

It hung there, swaying in a horrifying manner.

The crew had been sent tumbling backwards, with wild yells of alarm, but Glyn kept his head.

He could feel, from the sickening motion of the tank that they were in terrible danger. It swayed backwards and forwards amidst a horrid grinding of stonework, and Glyn realised at once that if the stonework crumbled under the terrific weight, the tank would topple over and plunge into the river below.

Nothing could save them—they would be trapped like rats within the iron hull of the tank at the bottom of the river!

Glyn's heart was in his mouth, and his tongue suddenly went dry.

"Steady, you fellows!" he shouted desperately. "Keep cool, and don't disturb her more than you can help. Get out of it—quick! She'll be going over soon! Quick! For Heaven's sake get out!"

He flung up the shutters of the skylight—as Lowther humorously termed the double trapdoor in the roof of the tank. It was an easy matter as the tank was still more or less pointing skywards with its prow.

Tom Merry was already tearing open the side door nearest to him. He helped Arthur Augustus through it, and then, seeing the others were escaping through the roof, he himself clambered after Gussy.

Both dropped on part of the shattered wall, and Tom could not restrain a shudder as he glimpsed the gleaming waters down below. Then he jumped to the ground after Arthur Augustus, and whirled round to aid the rest in their hurried scramble from the top of the swaying tank.

One after the other they dropped down, and Tom Merry dragged them clear. Glyn came last and as he appeared Tom gave a yell of warning.

"Quick! She's going, Glyn!"

The tank swayed alarmingly amid a grinding and smashing of stone, and even as the prow dipped, and the stern rose high in the air, Glyn made a desperate leap for safety.

He landed on all fours on the bridge, and Tom Merry hauled him clear with desperate haste. And then—

Crash!
Crashing and grinding, the tank seemed to thrust itself forward into space. Then it went plunging downwards amid a shower of stones. It went into the river with a resounding splash and a huge fountain of water shot upwards.

Then the iron monster vanished, raising a tidal wave that surged along the bank.

The stupefied juniors stood where they were, helpless to move for the moment. Glyn's face was chalk-white, but he forced a sickly grin as he blinked over the broken parapet of the bridge. Nothing but swirling eddies now showed where the tank had vanished.

"Well, that's good-bye to the Crimson Terror!" gasped Glyn shakily. "All that work and all that red paint wasted! But—but perhaps it's just as well!"

"It is just as well!" said Tom Merry soberly. "We've just had a narrow escape from a rotten sort of death, Glyn!" He paused, and then added abruptly: "Let's shove something in that gap in case anyone falls through in the darkness. We dare not leave it unprotected."

In silence the juniors hunted about. There was a shout from Herries as he sighted a pile of new fencing in a field by the bridge, and soon they were busy filling the great gap in the bridge wall. It was not a difficult matter, for the fencing was in lengths, ready made, and after the gap was covered they piled further hurdles in front of it.

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"That'll do for now," panted Tom Merry at last. "We'll report to Railton or someone when we get back, and they'll phone the police and warn them. Phew! That's good-bye to your blessed tank, Glyn!"

"It's a water-tank now!" said Lowther, trying to liven himself with a bit of humour. "Never mind, Glyn, your loss is a gain for the giddy fishes; they'll be able to use it as a shelter from the rain!"

"Oh, dry up, Lowther!"

Glyn did not seem in the right mood for Lowther's humour.

The loss of the tank was a severe blow to his high spirits, and the chums felt sorry for him, though they felt sorrier for themselves.

"You ought to be jolly glad it's gone, Glyn!" said Blake glumly, as they started back the way they had come. "After all, it was a white elephant, and what good would it have been to you now? You couldn't take it to your next school with you!"

The inference in Blake's words was not cheering, even to Glyn. He began to think about expulsion himself now. After all, he had rather overdone it that afternoon—he admitted that to himself.

"Oh, chuck it!" he grunted. "I—I'll own up that I've been rather an ass, and I'm only sorry that I've dragged you fellows into it. Still, I'll take the blame, if I can!"

"You jolly well won't!" said Tom Merry. "We're all in this—up to the neck! But don't let's start moaning yet. Perhaps the Head will see the funny side of it all—though I'm blessed if I can myself just now! Anyway, the tank's gone, and we needn't fear any more trouble from it!"

But Tom had spoken too soon.

Though the tank was gone from mortal eye, its evil was fated to live after it, so to speak. Even as Tom spoke, footsteps sounded in the dusky lane, and then a sudden yell rang out in a familiar voice.

"Here they are! Got them!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay!"

It was the leader of the Grammarians, and he was not alone. With him were Monk, Carboy, the two Wootton brothers, and at least half a dozen other Fourth-Formers from the Grammar School.

In a flash the dismayed St. Jim's fellows were surrounded and made prisoners.

"Got 'em!" shouted Gay gleefully. "I knew we'd collar either the thumping tank or them if we followed up the tracks. Look at the dirt and oil on their chivvies and clobber! Ever see such a gang!"

"It's proof it was them!" chirruped Carboy. "Put them through the mill, chaps! And where are our caps and things, you cheeky owls?"

"You can go after them, if you want them—the thumping tank, too!" said Tom Merry. "Promise to let us go, and we'll tell you where to find the tank!"

Gordon Gay hesitated, his eyes gleaming. The thought of getting the tank into his power was an enticing one. If the Saints could manage to run it, then surely they could?

"Are the caps and things inside it?" he demanded.

"Yes!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are vewy welcome to them, deah boys!"

"Oh, are we?" said Frank Monk, eyeing the juniors suspiciously. "You seem a bit too keen for us to accept your giddy offer for my liking. Hold on, Gay!"

CHAPTER 11.

Facing the Music!

TOM MERRY & CO. gave Arthur Augustus deadly looks. As usual, the swell of St. Jim's had overdone it in his eagerness to follow Tom's lead.

As Tom knew well enough, Gordon Gay would far rather get the tank in his hands than take vengeance on the tank's crew. Vengeance would be sweet, but the tank would be a great capture—not to mention the recovery of the caps and things the Saints had captured as trophies of war. It would be something more practical and satisfying than mere vengeance.

But now Tom's hopes sank again.

He knew they were in a tight corner! It was the most appalling luck to fall into the enemy's hands like this! It was, in fact, the last straw for the hapless, dismal tank corps!

But Tom need not have worried.

Gordon Gay, in his eagerness to get possession of the tank, was not as cautious as usual. He had noticed the sad state of the Saints, and their dismal looks told him a lot.

"You dry up, Monkey!" he told his chum. "Leave this to me, old bean! Now, my pippins! You realise that we've got you, and that we're justified in putting you through the mill after what you did this afternoon!"

"Oh, cheese it, and get on with the washing, then!" said Blake dispiritedly. "We're fed-up to the chin! We've had an awful time—perfectly beastly! Do your worst, and let us go home, blow you!"

Gay chuckled.

"What about the tank?" he asked cheerfully.

"Blow the tank and blow you! We're fed up to the chin with the rotten tank!" said Tom Merry. "We're masses of bruises, and we've got into enough trouble with the rotten thing."

"Then tell us where it's hidden, and we'll let you off!" said Gay grimly. "I—I'm a bit interested in tanks!"

"You mean that—you'll let us go if we tell you?"

"Yes!"

"Honour bright!"

"Of course!"

"Right! You're welcome to the blessed thing!" said Tom savagely. "It's just over the bridge, and I hope you'll enjoy it when you get it!"

"Just over the bridge?" gasped Gay eagerly.

"Yes, right over it!" said Tom, omitting to add that it also lay in twenty feet of water. "Now let us go, blow you!"

Gay hesitated a brief instant, and then he nodded, his eyes gleaming. He could afford to let his prisoners go free now. With the tank in his power he would be able to exact his revenge easily enough later on.

"Right-ho, kids!" he said quite genially.

"You've saved yourselves from the ragging of your lives, my pippins. You can let 'em go, chaps. Ta-ta, my grubby little tankers! Mind you wash your faces and scrub your necks when you get home. Come on, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

The Grammarians scudded for the bridge, whooping at the thought of the prize they believed was in their grasp. Tom Merry gave a deep chuckle.

"Hoof it!" he said.

"Let's go while the going's good! It won't be for long!"

It wasn't! From the bridge came a sudden chorus of yells. Gordon Gay had seen the smashed wall of the bridge, and it told its own tale. He did not need to be told where the tank was. Only a tank or a steam-roller could have made that gap. He did not even trouble to look over the bridge.

But by the time the Grammarians had grasped the position Tom Merry & Co. were far away, going great guns. Tired and fagged out as they were, the St. Jim's juniors fairly flew in the gathering dusk.

The grey, dusky pile of St. Jim's rose up before them at last.

They were safe now!

The sounds of pursuit died away, and Tom Merry & Co. felt as a hunter must have felt on escaping from a pack of hungry wolves.

They trudged across the darkened quadrangle. As they entered the lighted hallway, a shout went up, and their brief joy disappeared at the thought of what lay before them. From the scared and staring faces they knew the facts were known, and they realised that they were the sensation of the hour.

It was not an honour they wanted, however.

Mr. Railton rustled into the hallway, attracted by the commotion. His brow darkened as he sighted the dismal apparitions. The crowd were too scared to laugh at the blackened, oily faces of the scarecrows. Obviously matters were serious for the tank adventurers.

"So you have returned!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

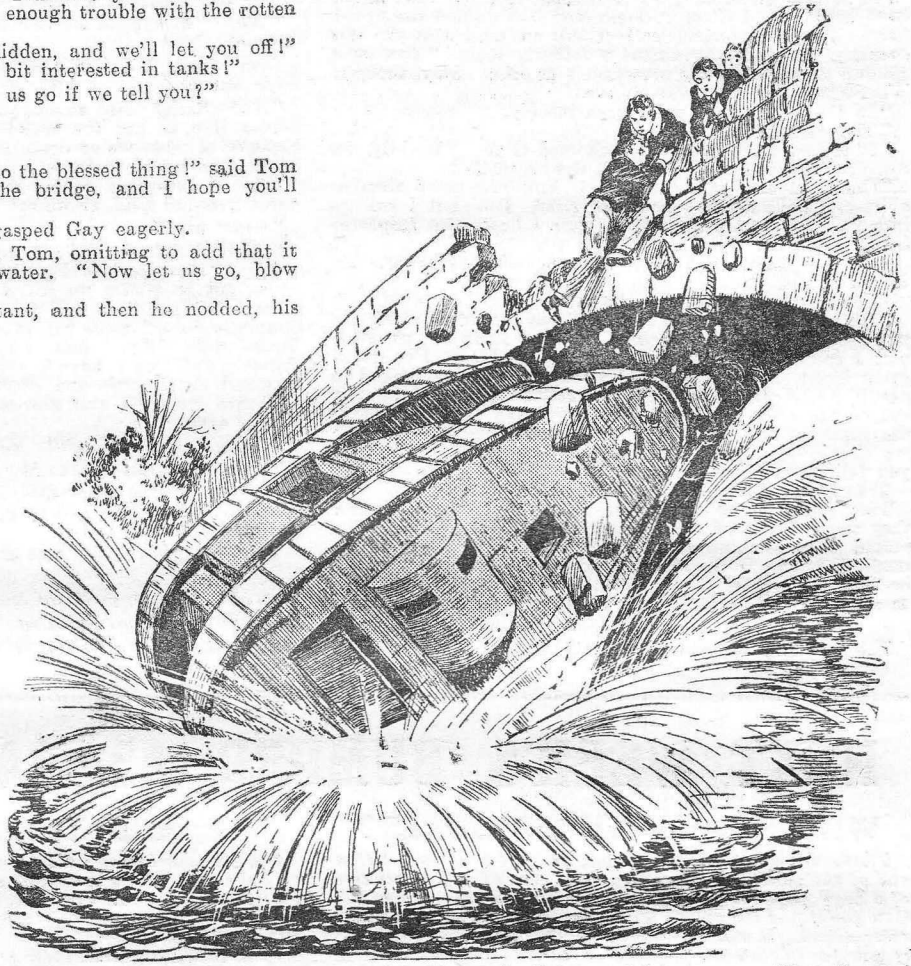
"Y-e-es, sir!" mumbled Tom Merry.

There was nothing to do but admit the soft impeachment.

"Wretched boys!" said the Housemaster. "Your disgraceful appearance condemns you as the miscreants who have alarmed the neighbourhood and brought the school

into disrepute. You have also caused alarm and commotion within the precincts of the school by bringing that dangerous and absurd vehicle into the quadrangle. You have also caused the porter grievous bodily hurt; worst, you have made Mr. Ratchiff, a Housemaster of this school, an object of ridicule. Never in my whole career have I known such reckless defiance of law and order."

"Oh, sir!"



Crashing and grinding, the tank seemed to thrust itself forward into space. Then it went plunging downwards to the river amid a shower of stones!

"You will follow me at once to Dr. Holmes!"

"May we—we have a bath and a change of clothes first, sir?" gasped Tom.

"No; you may not!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Come!"

They went—trailing along after the Housemaster dismally.

As they reached the door of the Head's study, they heard the faint tinkle of a telephone bell. Dr. Holmes turned away from the telephone as Mr. Railton followed the juniors into the room, and then closed the door.

"G-good heavens!" articulated the Head. He placed his spectacles on his nose and inspected the lost lambs in horror. "So—so they have returned, Mr. Railton! Bless my soul! What a dreadful state they are in!"

"They are, sir!" said the Housemaster grimly, for there was no denying it.

Dr. Holmes coughed.

"Really, this is a most—most alarming affair!" he gasped. "I—I had intended to order these wretched boys to pack their boxes this very evening. Mr. Railton! The outrageous raid on the Grammar School was grave enough alone to merit extreme punishment. But—but I have just had a call from Inspector Skeat of Wayland, Mr. Railton."

"Inspector Skeat!" gasped the Housemaster. "Then the police are after these boys? Good heavens! What a disgrace—"

"Bless my soul! Nothing of the kind, Railton! Inspector Skeat was most amiable, and he is coming here in the morning to explain! From what he stated I gather that

these boys have had an astounding adventure—a most dangerous adventure! They have captured the jewel thieves, and they have succeeded in recovering the whole of the stolen property! Boys—

"Y-es, sir?"

"You appear to have had a terrible experience, and have been in grave danger! I shudder to think what might have happened if those ruthless men had gained the upper hand. In the circumstances I—I will not deal with you this evening," he added in almost a fatherly tone. "You must go and make yourselves presentable at once. Stay, though! Where have you left that vehicle?"

"In the river, sir!" said Glyn meekly.

"The—the river!"

"It fell over the bridge!" exclaimed Glyn. "Luckily, we managed to jump clear just as it went over!"

"Good heavens! My dear boys! You have acted abominably, and have taken unheard of risks. But—but I will go into the matter in the morning after I have seen Inspector Skeat. You may go!"

And the juniors went, not knowing whether to feel relieved or not.

Glyn, however, was quite cheery.

"It's all right!" he said confidently as they went along the passage. "It's not going to be the long jump for us, after all; I spotted that in the Beak's optio! I say, I've got a great idea! If we got a good strong rope and managed to get it round the blessed tank somehow, we could haul it out of the river perhaps. We could dive down and hook the rope on, and by breaking the river bank down a bit, we should be able to haul the old bus ashore. What do you fellows think of the idea?"

Tom Merry & Co. did not tell him in words!

They grabbed the scapegrace inventor as one man, and they strewed him on the passage floor. Then, leaving him seated there blinking about him dizzily, Tom Merry & Co. made their way to the nearest bath-rooms. Apparently they had had enough of Glyn's talk, and his ingenious scheme to raise it from the bed of the Rhyl did not appeal to them.

The morning came at last, and at nine o'clock, eight

juniors—seven of them apprehensive and inwardly trembling—presented themselves before the headmaster of St. Jim's. The interview was not a long one. Dr. Holmes was a busy man and he had already wasted a lot of his valuable time with Inspector Skeat that morning. The delinquents went in with serious faces, and they came out smiling—greatly to the amazement of a scared crowd waiting in the passage.

"Well?" demanded Levison of the Fourth. "It's—it's not the sack, then?"

Tom Merry & Co. seemed too dazed to answer yet. But Glyn was not.

"Eh? Sack? Not at all, you asses! Why should giddy heroes like us get the sack! The Head didn't seem to approve of what we've done, and he's given us a whacking impot, and gated us for a fortnight! Nice, ain't it? Still the giddy insurance people are handing us the reward of three hundred quid, so we can't grumble!"

"Great pip!"

"Three hundred quid's quite a decent sum!" said Glyn airily. "How much is that divided among eight? Of course we've got to stump up for all the damage done! That blessed bridge alone will take a tidy bit of it, and the Grammar School gates will take a bit, too, and then there's Tonks' milk-trolley, beside a lot of fences and hedges and things. Still, we'll have a good bit left, and my idea is to stand the Fourth and Shell a whacking great feed to celebrate the brief and glorious career of my tank. You fellows agree?"

"Oh crikey! Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

"What-ho!" gasped Tom Merry.

And for once, at all events, the chums of the School House at St. Jim's were in hearty agreement with the schoolboy inventor.

THE END.

(Watch out next week for another rollicking fine story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "GUSSY'S 'TALKIE'!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)

NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER ATTRACTIONS!

WHO SCORED THOSE GOALS?

That's not a conundrum, chums, but just a reminded that one of the most golden opportunities ever offered to readers of a boys' paper is yours for the taking. In this copy of the GEM you'll find the second set of puzzles in our spanking new competition. It will be running for only two more weeks, so if you haven't already entered it, turn to pages 14 and 15 and see what a good thing you're missing. There's nothing hard about it, is there? Of course not! It's quite simple, and interesting, too! And then look at the prizes—

SIX "MEAD" CYCLES AND TWELVE WEMBLEY CUP-FINAL TICKETS.

Six really tip-top "jiggers"—machines of which any fellow would be proud, and a dozen tickets for the Cup-Final, one of the greatest and most exciting sporting events of the year! Don't they make your mouth water? Well, don't be content with wishing you had one of these wonderful prizes, and thinking all the time that you don't stand a chance. You DO! So pile in and make up your mind to put your name in the list of prizewinners.

By the way, if any of your pals are missing this opportunity of a lifetime, do them a good turn by telling them all about it. They can get the first set of puzzles easily enough by asking their newsgate to get them a copy of last week's GEM. Thank you, chums!

Next week's programme of stories and articles is well up to standard. First there is—

"GUSSY'S 'TALKIE'!"

a really splendid yarn of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. As you can guess, it's the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who takes the leading role in his own inimitable style. Can you imagine Gussy as a film actor, rescuing damsels in distress at the risk of his noble life? You can't! Well, anyway, there are enough thrills, fun, and excitement, blended by Martin Clifford's masterly hand, in next week's ripping story to make half a dozen super-films. Whatever you do, don't miss: "GUSSY'S 'TALKIE'!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,149.

AND THE SERIAL!

No. 2 on our list of attractions is a further long instalment of John Sylvester's gripping story, "THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!" Our three plucky adventurers have faced countless perils since they set foot in Brazil; perils that might well have daunted the bravest of the brave. But despite everything that their enemy, Pedro Lopez, may do, the daredevil trio have made up their minds to win through to the fabulous treasure that lies ahead of them. My readers certainly won't have any cause to grumble at a lack of thrills where next Wednesday's instalment of our serial is concerned. Nuff said!

Our whisky old wonder, THE ORACLE, is conducting his query corner next week, as usual. If there's any knotty problem troubling you, don't let it trouble you any longer, but buzz it along to our walking encyclopedia and get it off your mind. The Oracle simply thrives on brain-teasers, so the more you send him the better he'll like it!

Mr. "NOSEY" PARKER follows his nose again, and it leads him into the headquarters of the famous Northampton Footer Club, where he discovers lots and lots of interesting information. He's going to pass it on to you next week, chums, so make sure of reading his article by ordering your GEM now. Saves a lot of worry!

THE OFFICE-BOY'S LATEST!

When Tommy came home from school he was in tears.

"What's the matter?"

asked his father.

"Teacher caned me because I was the only boy in the class who could answer his question."

said the boy.

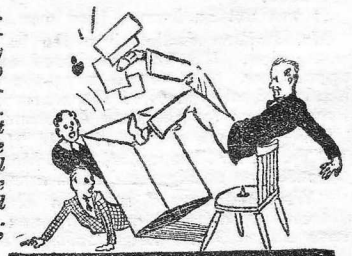
"I'll see him about that!"

jumped the father.

"What colossal cheek! What was the question?"

"He asked me who put the drawing-pin on his chair!"

said the youngster.



REMARKABLE STORY OF DARING BRITISH ADVENTURE ABROAD!

THE VALLEY of FORTUNE!

By JOHN SYLVESTER.

Dom Lopez, the cunning and merciless adventurer, proves a handful for our gallant band of radium seekers!



Escape!

"AM I to trust you to help me rescue my companions, or are you going to shoot them in the back?" asked Dick. "I don't think your word is much good, Dom Lopez, and if I thought you meant to play false—I've got you covered from where I stand!"

"You don't need to trust my word," retorted Lopez impatiently. "We need every pair of hands that can hold a gun if we are going to get out of here alive. I've called a truce and if you have any sense in your head you will see its to my interest to keep it, but for no longer than it takes to get away from these savages. If we can pass over some of these guns to the rest of your party, all the better."

"I'm not letting you out of my sight all the same," said Dick, as he groped on his left and touched another rifle.

Lopez was also groping, but for the time being he seemed to intend to keep the truce.

"Here's a useful Mauser," he said, under his breath.

Dick had come across a box of cartridges practically at the same time, which he proceeded to strap round his shoulder like a knapsack. They were more than worth their weight in gold. It was a truly wonderful find. For even if they could have escaped before this, they would have had to face the thousand dangers of the jungle with no other weapons than sticks and stones. They could never have survived.

"Do you smell anything?"

It was Lopez speaking. He had stopped searching among the stores, and was now standing, half turned towards the door, his head thrust forward like an animal scenting the air suspiciously.

"I'm not sure," replied Dick, also starting up. "The hut was filled with acrid fumes after the shooting."

"I believe they are going to smoke us out," continued Lopez, a minute later. "If so, that's going to be awkward. These thatch walls will burn like celluloid. And we are surrounded by explosives."

A wave of smoke rolled towards them as he spoke.

"By Jove, I believe you are right!" Dick exclaimed.

"Then there's only one thing—"

He got no further. A sheet of orange flame shot across the doorway. The heat made them start back. The brilliant light that flooded the hut revealed the vulture-like face of Lopez, his eyes glowing like live coals. He shouted something incoherent. It sounded like an oath in his own language. Then, without even glancing at Dick, he did the only thing possible in the circumstances. He ran forward and leapt through the flames.

The whole place was ablaze by this time. To hesitate even would be certain death. With three rifles and a heavy box of cartridges on his back, Dick also started forward. He was

dazzled by the glare. In front of him was a roaring wall of fire, but he knew he must plunge through it.

It was a terrible moment. His legs and face were scorched. An agonising pain went through him. He thought for an instant that his clothes were alight.

Then he felt a different sort of pain—a stab in his left calf. He was blinded with smoke, but he reached down and touched the feathered shaft of an arrow. He nearly screamed as he tore out the barb.

More arrows were falling. They dropped like red-hot shafts, bathed in the lurid light of the blazing hut. A few yards ahead Lopez threw himself to the ground, and Dick thought he had been wounded, but he commenced firing; and, unslinging one of his rifles, Dick imitated him. He lay flat on his stomach, his face and hands blistered, and his leg throbbing excruciatingly.

The smoke helped to conceal him, and through the shifting rifts he could glimpse moving figures—bronze, half-naked men—flourishing spears, drawing their long bows, yelling and pointing, and some of them disappearing after the relentless crack of Lopez' gun.

"They'll get a surprise presently, when the whole caboodle blows up," he thought. "I'm too dashed close to it myself for my liking!"

However, he started to follow the example of Lopez, and fired. Neither of them wasted their ammunition. They took careful aim, and found a human target every time. The rain of arrows slowed down, and those that fell were wide of the mark. Ordinarily, this would have been completely

satisfying, but the Indians did not constitute the entire danger. An ominous crackle from behind made Dick stiffen.

The fire had reached some of the cartridges. Exactly how much ammunition was in that burning hut he didn't know; but as he glanced up Dick saw Lopez scramble hastily to his feet and start to run. Lopez decided it was better to face the arrows of the enemy in front than to wait for the inevitable explosion behind.

Dick half stood, and, bending double, he followed in the wake of the other man through the crimson smoke. He exchanged his gun for a revolver, and he was just about to break into a clear patch when the earth rocked. There was a flash and a terrific detonation. He didn't have to fling himself to the ground—the ground rushed to meet him! For a minute he was deafened and blinded. Then he became aware of myriad objects falling around him. A lump of blazing straw rested on his arm,



TRENT, the leader of the Radium Seekers.

HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED.

Convinced that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, has stolen their map which holds the key to the whereabouts of a fortune in radium. Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. Misfortune soon befalls the three explorers, for on reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, their Indian carriers, bribed by Lopez, mutiny, and bolt with everything they can lay their hands on. In an attempt to cut off the Indians, Dick is captured by Lopez and afterwards offered as human sacrifice to the God of the Shreking Pit. He is saved at the critical moment, however, by Chica, a faithful Indian, who, to revenge the murder of his father, dynamites the caves and puts Lopez and his villainous crew to rout. Aided by Chica's knowledge of the mountains, Dick succeeds in rejoining his companions, only to fall into the hands of a Huascarán tribe of head-hunters. Escaping from his prison Dick once more comes face to face with the cunning Lopez, who, calling a truce, fights side by side with Dick against the savages.

(Now read on.)

burning it before he could jerk away. Bits of steel and wood came crashing like hail. Something grazed his head, momentarily stunning him. The revolver he was gripping was knocked out of his hand by a bullet.

He stared stupidly at his hand, which felt as though it had been kicked. His brain was still partly numbed by the shock; he had no sensation of time passing. Abruptly, like a douche of cold water, the sound of a voice brought him back to the full consciousness of his position.

"Come on, Dick! We can break through now."

He looked up, and, to his bewilderment, he saw Trent standing over him.

"What's wrong?" Trent's voice changed to concern as he hastily bent down. "Are you badly hurt?"

"No," gasped Dick manfully; "just peppered a bit!"

"Can you walk?"

"You mean run!" said Dick, grinning feebly. "I'll have a try!"

Trent helped him to rise, but Dick was no sooner on his feet than he staggered, and would have fallen if the other had not caught him.

"It's these darn things I'm carrying!" he faltered.

"Don't worry, son," said Trent gently. "You've done your bit. I'll just take that revolver. Now up with you on my shoulder!"

It was useless for Dick to try to protest. He could no longer conceal the weakness which had attacked him. But whether it resulted from the wound in his leg or the blow he had received on the head, or some more insidious injury, he couldn't tell. The extraordinary part was he felt sleepy. He had a confused sensation of being carried and then of another explosion in front of him. After that he ceased to remember.

To Trent it was all utterly astounding. The three of them—Trent, West, and Chica—were in the middle of a vortex of dancing savages when the first shot rang out. Their hands were not bound but spears were pointing

towards them, and if they had made the slightest false move they would have been impaled.

"Well, we've had a run for our money," he was remarking dryly to West, who was watching the witch-doctor waving a two-edged sword. It was at this point they were both electrified by the muffled report of a revolver.

"Good gad, that must be Dick!"

"But it wasn't a gunshot."

"Sounded to me more like an automatic. I can't make head or tail of it. But it's causing a commotion. Look at those blighters racing towards that other hut!"

They had both stared in amazement, and then things began to happen. There was more firing; more men left the circle of dancers; the dance itself stopped. A rifle barked; a miniature battle seemed to be in progress.

"Can it be Dick doing all that shooting?" West declared.

"No; he'd require both hands and his toes. It's a rum business! Good heavens, they are setting the hut alight!"

The hut from which the shots proceeded was now ablaze. It had become the focus of all attention. Only a handful of startled guards remained by the prisoners.

The explosion which followed, and which was the most inexplicable part of all, dispersed the guards that remained. They were free to run to the palisades.

But the biggest surprise of all was to come. As he sprinted forward, in the direction of the fire, Trent ran full tilt into another European. The impact robbed him of his breath, and the sight of the man's face robbed him of speech.

Lopez! Their arch-enemy alive, gaping at him, revolvers stuck in his belt, and a rifle in each hand!

The Brazilian was the first to recover himself. Instead of trying to shoot Trent at sight, he actually thrust one of the rifles into his hand.

"Take this!" he urged hoarsely. "For the present we are fighting the common enemy."

"You mean—" gasped Trent.

"The boy's somewhere behind. I think he's wounded. I'll keep the natives back while you fetch him."

Trent didn't exchange another word.

What was happening was altogether beyond reason. But there would be time enough for talking if they got through. He ran towards the smouldering debris, and when he caught sight of Dick he realised anyhow why Lopez was so interested in his safety—for Dick was lying on the ground beneath the weight of a heavy box of cartridges.

Lightning action was the first necessity. The Indians were demoralised by the turn of events. The mysterious explosion and the gunfire that followed had already inspired them with a superstitious alarm. A fantastic rumour was spreading that the prisoners had invoked magical assistance.

The great thing was to get away before they rallied. With Dick unconscious on his shoulders, Trent ran a gauntlet of arrow fire. He managed to join West and Chica who each secured a rifle for himself. A group of Indians, whose courage was being whipped back by a frenzied witch-doctor, rushed to the gates to cut off their retreat.

"Let 'em have a volley!" Trent shouted, coming to a standstill.

There was the quality of command in his voice. Even Lopez felt it. All three dropped to their knees and took deliberate aim. The Indians were veiled by shadow, but they were so close together that it was impossible to fire and miss. The yells from the other end of the village were suddenly drowned by screams of terror from the men huddled in front of the gate. Those who were lucky enough to escape injury hurled their spears wildly and fled.

"Now run!" Trent bellowed.

They ran, spurred by the knowledge that their lives depended on it. The gates were closed, but Chica, who reached them first, burst them open.

"To the jungle!" he shouted back. "They won't follow there!"

They tore along, through the soft tropical darkness following a path through a bamboo thicket, until a black



Lopez leaped forward, and plunged through the sheet of flame and smoke!

wall of mammoth vegetation reared up. When they halted, panting and exhausted, no sound of pursuit reached their ears.

"Everyone here?" demanded Trent, as he set Dick down, laying him very cautiously underneath a tree. Dick was opening his eyes in a stupefied fashion, but for the moment Trent did not speak to him. He straightened, and looked around.

West was standing on his left, wiping the sweat from his brow with his arm. On his right stood Chica, staring with sinister stillness at the other man who had come into their midst, and to whom—paradoxically enough—they partly owed their escape.

Lopez was standing rolling a cigarette between his fingers; and he seemed the coolest of them all, although his lips were twisted in a satirical smile.

"Well, gentlemen," he began, "I suppose you are waiting for an explanation?"

Lopez Bargains!

THE moon was rising above the trees, splashing the creepers and overhanging branches with golden light, yet deepening the shadows from purple to black. The moonlight fell straight on the face of Dom Lopez, which looked the colour of ivory, save where it was smeared by smoke. It had never looked more evil or more self-possessed.

There was no trace of fear in his manner, no sign that he regarded himself as a prisoner, or that all his plans and ambitions had collapsed. He struck a match and lighted his cigarette; then, with his arms folded, as though he had complete mastery over the situation, he looked from one to the other.

"Go on!" said Trent slowly. "Let us hear what you have to say! Not that it's going to matter greatly."

"I think I can guess what you mean by that," replied Lopez.

"And I think you've guessed right," answered Trent grimly.

"We last heard of you in the cave," put in West, who had been watching him intently. "Did you get out the same as we did—by the waterfall?"

"I was wiser. You see, I had the old document to guide me. I knew about the falls, and how to avoid them. There is another exit higher up. It involves a very steep climb to get down into the valley, and with all my equipment that would have been difficult. But I no longer had any equipment."

"Then your carriers were killed in the explosion?" West continued.

"Whether they were killed or not, I cannot say. At any rate, they completely vanished. Perhaps some of them are shut in there now, going mad with terror. Before we leave this point—will you tell me how the explosion occurred?"

"I did it!" broke in Chica, his face twitching with some powerful emotion as he remained staring at Lopez.

The latter was nearly betrayed into a movement of surprise. His eyes glittered, and he removed his cigarette.

"That is interesting. I shall not forget it. One of these days you will be sorry you played with fire."

With a cry of rage, Chica ran forward; but Trent caught him in time.

"Not that way!" he said, under his breath.

Lopez did not move. There was contempt in his expression. He went on without referring to the incident.

"I had nothing but a rifle and a few rounds of ammunition when I emerged from the cave. My chances of getting much farther looked, I must admit, rather slender. They reached vanishing point shortly afterwards, when I found myself surrounded by Huascarans. Resistance was out of the question. My weapons were taken away, and I was led down to the village. It occurred to me, however, that you might be following, so I warned them I expected friends. That was why you found them waiting for you."

"You blackguard!" cried Trent. "You stand there and boast—"

"All is fair in war. It seemed to me a convenient way of getting rid of you. The trouble was the same fate seemed likely to overtake me. Luckily, in the excitement



With a cry of rage, Chica ran forward; but Trent caught him in time. "Not that way!" he said.

caused by your arrival, I managed to break out of the hut in which I had been shut up. I made my way to that other hut where, as you know, the weapons of all the victims for many years were piled. For what reason I do not know. Perhaps," he shrugged, "they fancied some magical property resided in the thunder pipes—as they picturesquely call them."

"I suppose," said West, "your intention was to take what you could and creep away while we were being butchered?"

"Exactly. You have a neat turn of phrase, Mr. West. But with that in my mind, picture my astonishment when I encountered, in that very hut, the boy who has all along been so troublesome to me. I thought that at least I had settled with him. And I am afraid I lost my head. That is unusual. I pride myself on being able to control my feelings in any circumstances. But this was too much for me. I realised that as soon as he recognised me he would try to revenge himself—"

"Which is where you were wrong," interrupted a shaky voice. Dick was sitting up, and had overheard most of what had been said. "You were a bit too clever, Senor Lopez. I wouldn't murder you; I wouldn't soil my hands—although I'm not sure that I'd stop anybody else."

"I was wrong; I acknowledge it. I acted in the uncontrollable heat of the moment. It very nearly proved my undoing. Fortunately, I had presence of mind to get the situation in hand again. I had no alternative but to join forces with you."

"If only I had been there—" muttered Chica.

"It's fortunate you weren't," said West dryly. "However, you have been frank, Lopez. You have satisfied us we are not under any obligation to you. In fact, you only helped us because you were helping yourself."

"Naturally."

"The only question that remains is what to do with you."

"May I offer a suggestion?"

"You are wasting your time—which is short enough!" snapped Trent.

"My suggestion is that you give me a rifle and several rounds of ammunition and let me go my own way."

"And my suggestion," said Trent harshly, "is that I take a rifle and stand at ten paces. That's more merciful than you deserve. You murdered Professor Sparling—one of the finest men who ever lived—and you did your level best to murder young Vernon and Dick. If you'd had your way we should all have been slaughtered by the Huascarans."

Heaven knows what other crimes you have committed. But you have forfeited all right to live. I vote"—he turned to the others—"that we take the law into our own hands."

West nodded.

"I think you are right."

Dick felt vaguely startled. He hadn't quite expected this would be the decision. West, he knew, was hard and unsentimental; but somehow it seemed one thing to fire at a man in the passion of fighting, and quite another to shoot him in cold blood. Yet what else could they do?

"You forget," said Lopez quietly, "I have the trump card."

"We can take that from you easily enough," retorted Trent, "after a little diet of lead. It's no use bluffing, you skunk!"

"But I assure you it isn't bluff. If you agree to my conditions I will hand you over the manuscript, and you can find your way without further trouble to the Valley of Fortune. Without it you will never get there."

"Do you mean," asked West, the truth beginning to dawn on him, "that you haven't got the plan on you?"

"I had until a short time ago. But as we entered the jungle I took the precaution of dropping it under a tree. I foresaw something like this would arise. You may find it by looking; but there are a good many trees in the forest. It will be much simpler if you give me your word to release me, so that I can take you to where the plan is hidden."

"How do you know we will keep our word?" demanded Trent, angered by the cool audacity of the man.

"One of the points that has helped me considerably," was the reply, "is that whereas—Heaven knows for what reason—you are obliged to keep your word, I am under no such compulsion."

They were helpless. It was unthinkable to risk losing the plan. Yet to be beaten like this was what infuriated Trent. It was not that he thought Lopez need be seriously regarded as a source of danger again. He turned to West, and the scientist nodded briefly.

"Better let him go. He can't do any more damage. He'll be lucky if he comes out of this alive."

"Very well," said Trent curtly. "Lead us to this tree."

"I knew," murmured Lopez, drawing a breath of satisfaction, "you would listen to reason. That you should think for a moment you have anything further to fear from me is highly flattering. I only wish it were true."

He turned, and they followed him into the glade from which they had emerged. They came to a towering tree, surrounded by a tangle of thorny shrubs, into which Lopez inserted his hand. He drew out a slender package—a document in a waterproof case.

"You win," he said ironically. "In exchange I want a rifle."

The rifle and ammunition were handed to him, and he bowed with mocking politeness.

"Adios, señors. Hasta mañana! Hasten the morrow!"

The ambiguity of this phrase struck the party as they watched Lopez turn and disappear along the narrow, moonlit path.

Chica watched him, breathing hard, his hand forcing his knife back in its sheath.

Great Snakes!

A WEEK passed, and Dick recovered from his injuries, although he still walked with a slight limp. Chica did not stop brooding over the chance of vengeance that he had missed, but on reflection the others decided that they did well to exchange their prisoner for the precious document translated by the murdered professor. His directions were explicit, and, as instructed, they skirted the forest and came to a vast marsh. It stretched as far as the eye could see, and without the plan they could not even have attempted to cross it. It was, in reality, an immense bog, receiving the drainage from those mountains

streams which did not feed lakes and rivers. Frequently they were confined to walking along a narrow ridge of hard ground, and a false step would have precipitated them into the green slime on each side.

"It'll be dark soon," said West, frowning, as they halted towards the end of their first day's experience of crossing the swamp. "How are we going to camp?"

"There's some rising ground ahead," Trent suggested. "Let me go forward and explore."

They drew aside, and Trent walked gingerly along the edge of the bubbling mire. For several minutes he disappeared from sight, swallowed up by the tall marsh grasses.

"Poisonous spot!" West muttered. "Keep a look-out for snakes, Dick!"

Dick glanced a round him uneasily, and then something altogether unexpected occurred. There was a frenzied yell, and as he looked up he saw Trent running back. His face—surely for the first time in his life—registered sheer terror.

"Run for your lives!" he screamed hoarsely.

There was no time to ask questions. Trent knew what he was about. It was obvious common-sense to obey.

"Come on!" snapped West, fearing that Dick was going to do something foolhardy.

West led, followed by the bewildered Dick, and then Chica, and finally Trent, who kept looking back across his shoulder as he ran. It was not at all easy to make any speed on those narrow ridges of firm land branching through the bog. West took a wrong turning in his haste, and instead of following the route they had already traversed, they plunged towards a cul-de-sac.

The tortuous path ended in a piece of dry ground, shaped like a horseshoe. It had a fringe of tall, grey grass, beyond which bullrushes rose from sheer mud.

"Confound it!" exploded West. "I wonder—"

Trent came panting up. The real terror that had distorted his face had been mastered, but he still looked shaken.

"Can't we get any farther?" he demanded.

"Afraid the way is blocked, old man. We could go back, of course. But what—"

"That's too cisky. Although it may prove equally dangerous to stay where we are. The trouble is it will be dark presently."

"What did you see?"

"Wambas!" was the reply. "It wasn't one or two, or even a dozen. There are hundreds!" He paused, and drew his hand across his brow. "We've seen some darned ugly pictures together, and I'm not easily upset. But I've got to admit that fairly knocked me off my balance. When I got around that corner I came to another such place as this, a patch of dry ground above the level of the water, only five or six times as big. For a minute, as I stood there, I couldn't believe my senses. There was more than an acre of ground, and it was black with snakes. Every inch of it was occupied. They were twisting and rolling and stretching—hundreds of them. I believe the whole of this swamp, for miles and miles, is nothing but a gigantic breeding-ground. There are thousands of poisonous snakes living in these reeds. I doubt if it really matters whether we go backward or forward."

His hand, Dick noticed, shook slightly as he removed his rifle. West was looking at him with a sombre, thoughtful expression.

"A rifle isn't going to be much use."

"No," agreed Trent, in a queer, lowered voice. "But I'll shoot the first man to get bitten. I once saw a native die from the bite of a wamba. It's worse than hydrophobia."

West gave an appreciable start.

"Did they see you?"

"I'm not sure. If they didn't we may be safe for a little while. But sooner or later it's got to be faced!"

(There are thrills galore in next week's moving instalment of this serial, boys, so be sure and read it. The safest way is to order next week's "GEM" Now!)

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