

GREAT NEW ST. FRANK'S STORY STARTS TO-DAY!



The GEM

2d

THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

TREASURE ISLE!



WHO IS THE MYSTERY THIEF AT ST. JIM'S?

FALSELY ACCUSED!



Many times has Percy Mellish, the cad of St. Jim's, been very near to expulsion—but never will he be nearer to this ignominious fate than when, in this grand story, he is suspected of a series of amazing thefts!

CHAPTER 1.

Getting Ready for Gussy!

"KEEP that can steady!"

"Look here—"

"And don't make a row!"

"Who's making a row?"

"If you're going to begin arguing now, Blake, we may as well chuck up the whole affair," said Tom Merry, in a tone of patient resignation.

"Who's arguing?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Monty Lowther. "If Gussy hears a word, he'll dodge us, and—"

"Of course he will, and all our trouble will be wasted," said Tom Merry severely. "That's why I want Blake to shut up for a minute or two."

"Look here—" began Blake again wrathfully.

"Hush!"

"Is he coming?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then what did you say hush for, you ass?"

"Well, it's time for you to shut up, anyway."

Jack Blake glared. He began pushing back his cuffs in a suggestive way.

Digby gently shoved him back.

"Chuck it, Blake, old man—"

"If you think I'm going to be cheeked by a Shell duffer in my own study," began Jack Blake warmly.

"Don't spoil the jape, old son!"

"That's the worst of these Fourth Form chaps," said Manners. "They never can keep quiet. Now—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Blake. "Who's making a row now?"

"Hush!" said Digby.

"Oh, rats!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

"I can hear footprints—I mean footsteps."

"Oh!"

The juniors, gathered in Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's, hushed a little. There were half a dozen of them gathered round the window—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth Form.

Blake and Digby were holding a shallow tin can balanced on the window-sill. The can was filled to the brim with a mixture of water and soot—an inky mixture, evidently prepared by the cheerful juniors for the head of someone passing below.

And that someone was their chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

The juniors were expecting him round the corner, and they were ready for him.

They watched keenly from the window as the sound of footsteps drew nearer. It was necessary to be careful. If the ghastly concoction in the tin can fell upon the wrong head there was likely to be trouble—especially if the head belonged to a master or a prefect.

"Hold on!" muttered Digby.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, swung into view. He strode past the danger spot, without the least idea of what was above, without looking up.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Suppose we had let him have it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There would have been a row!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Do be careful, you Fourth Form kids, and don't make a bundle of it."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Hold that can steady, old chap, and don't jaw," advised Lowther.

Blake breathed hard through his nose.

GET GOING ON THIS GRIPPING YARN OF SCHOOL ADVENTURE!

By Martin Clifford.

"Peace, kidlets—peace," said Tom Merry soothingly. "The stuff will get upset soon, and then we shall have had all our trouble for nothing. We must think of Gussy, too. This is all meant in the way of kindness; it's for his own good."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has been tried and found guilty of being a frabjous ass," said Tom Merry. "We've tried him and found him guilty ourselves. What could be fairer than that?"

"Nothing!"

"While he was in Paris last hols," resumed Tom Merry, growing warm on the subject, "he picked up a blessed slang saying, and he has worked it off on an unoffending school ever since, in season and out of season. Now, I know it's a common custom to talk French slang to show you've been to Paris, but there comes a time when one gets fed-up with it."

"There does," said Lowther emphatically.

"And Gussy overdoes it."

"He does."

"We've warned him, but in vain," said Tom solemnly.

"We've cautioned him as a first offender, and as a hundredth offender, and he doesn't take any notice. Like the chap in the ballad, still he answers with the cry."

"Quite right!"

"Hence this little surprise packet," said Tom Merry, with a nod towards the can of soot and water. "When Gussy gets this on his napper it will make him think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And perhaps we shall be spared 'je ne marche pas' for a time," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "It will take him some time to get the soot off."

"Yes, rather! And serve him right!"

"It's for his own good."

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry looked out of the study window again. The elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not yet in sight.

Yet they knew that he was not far away, and that he was coming. A new fellow had arrived at St. Jim's that day, and D'Arcy, with his usual politeness, had gone to show him round the school.

But the swell of St. Jim's was due in the study for tea, and it was time he came.

He could not be long now, and the juniors at the study window waited with all the patience they could muster.

D'Arcy's offence had been great, and fully justified the juniors in taking drastic measures.

Some time back Tom Merry & Co. had had a holiday in the South of France, and in France D'Arcy had heard for the first time a slang saying of the boulevards which struck his fancy.

Fellows who had never been abroad might be satisfied with saying "I don't think!" But a youth who had spent holidays in Paris and Nice and Monte Carlo naturally felt that it was the correct thing to go one better.

"Je ne marche pas" is the Parisian equivalent of that expressive saying, meaning literally "I don't go," but possessing otherwise a dozen shades of meaning.

And D'Arcy, since his return from his travels, had inflicted that atom of slang upon his long-suffering school-fellows without mercy.

Hence, as Tom Merry said, that can of soot and water, and the party of watchful juniors at the study window. That was the form their remonstrance was taking.

It was impossible for D'Arcy to doubt their meaning

when that flood of ghastly mixture descended upon his head.

Tom Merry made a sudden gesture.

"He's coming!"

Footsteps were approaching once more.

"Quiet!"

"Now then!"

A silk hat, with a junior underneath it, appeared in view, and the can was tilted over.

Swoosh!

There was a wild yell from below as the concoction swished downwards and swamped upon the silk hat and its wearer.

"Ow! What! Oh! Gosh! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Got him!"

"My only hat!" roared Tom Merry. "It's the wrong chap!"

"What?"

"It's not Gussy!"

"Phew!"

A face, smothered in liquid soot, was turned up towards the study window. It was impossible to recognise it, but it certainly was not D'Arcy. The juniors had been a little too hasty, after all.

The sooty water had descended upon the wrong victim.

"My hat!" gasped Digby. "I wonder who it is?"

"Bai Jove!"

That sudden exclamation at the door made the juniors whirl round from the window. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood in the doorway, regarding them through his eyeglasses in considerable surprise.

They stared blankly at the elegant junior.

"Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Where did you spring from?" roared Tom Merry, exasperated. "We were expecting you under the window, you duffer!"

"I came in the othah way, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "But I must remark, Tom Mewwy, that I cannot allow you to chawactewise me as an ass. You see—"

"We've swamped this stuff over another chap instead of you!" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"And you—"

"Weally, deah boys, you couldn't expect to catch me in a twap like that," said the swell of St. Jim's. "You might catch one anothah, pewwaps; but as for me—je ne marche pas."

"Collar him!" roared Lowther.

"I wefuse to be collahed—"

D'Arcy broke off, and dodged out of the study just in time. His flying footsteps died away down the passage.

The juniors looked at one another in exasperation.

"I wonder who that chap is that we've swamped?" said Manners.

"We shall soon know, I expect!" grinned Blake.

Blake was right.

Ten minutes later a ghastly figure presented itself in the doorway of the study. It was the figure of a junior, soaked from head to foot in sooty water, with a drenched silk hat in his hand.

He stared at Tom Merry & Co., and they stared at him.

CHAPTER 2.

The New Fellow!

"HALLO!" said the stranger.

"Hallo!"

"Did you fellows chuck this stuff over me?"

"Ahem!"

"I thought it came from the window of this room."

"H'm!"

"I came up here to slay the chap who chucked it!"

Starts
on
Page 23

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Starring the CHUMS of ST. FRANK'S.

explained the sooty one. "Which of you dangerous man's was it?"

"H'm!"
"Perhaps you were all in it?"
"No, you're in it," said Monty Lowther. "We—ahem!—we've chucked it."

"Well, of all the frabjous duffers, I think you take the cake!" said the sooty one.

"It was a mistake, kid," said Tom Merry. "The dose was intended for another chap."

"Oh, I wish you had made sure of him, then!"
"So do we— Ha, ha, ha! But who are you?" went on Tom Merry, puzzled. "I can't recognise your chivvy in that state, and your voice doesn't seem familiar."

"I'm a new chap."
"Oh!"

"My name's Reginald Leslie."
"Oh!"

"A chap has been showing me round," said Leslie, through the soot. "He said he'd buzz off, and tell his friends that he was bringing me to tea in the study, and I was coming round, when—"

"Is this how you usually receive your guests, Blake?" asked Tom Merry affably.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Blake. "I say, Leslie, I'm awfully sorry! You see, we've been fed-up by that chap who was showing you round, and we got up this little surprise for him, and you got it by mistake!"

Leslie laughed. He was evidently a decidedly good-tempered fellow. The best of tempers might have been ruffled by the experience he had gone through, but the new boy appeared to be cheerful enough and quite placable.

"Well, if it was an accident, let's say no more about it," he said. "But as I'm new here, one of you might show me to the bath-room where I can get this stuff off; and as my box hasn't come up from the station yet, I'll be glad of a change of clothes from somebody."

"What-ho!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll see you through. You're about Gussy's size, and I'll get some of his things."

"I'll show you to the bath-room," said Manners. "Bring the duds there, Blake!"

"Right-ho!"
"Thanks!" said Leslie. "I feel awful, and I shall be glad of a clean-up!"

"You're taking this jolly well!" said Tom Merry. "I think you're a decent chap. What Form are you going into?"

"The Fourth!"
"School House, I suppose?"

"Yes, that is my House. There's another here, I believe."

"Yes, the New House—a horrid den!" said Tom Merry. "A sort of home for duffers and chumps, you know. The School House is Cock House at St. Jim's. We'll take you over to the New House some time and show you the freaks!"

Leslie laughed and left the study. He had been only a couple of hours at St. Jim's, but he had already learned that there was a keen rivalry between the two Houses there; and he took Tom Merry's description of the New House for what it was worth.

"Well, that's a jolly nice chap!" exclaimed Digby, as the new boy went out. "Precious few fellows would take a mistake like that so cheerfully."

"You're right."

"I think we owe him some reparation," said Tom Merry. "Gussy has already invited him to tea. Suppose we make a really jolly feed of it, and do him down in the best possible style. I really think he deserves it!"

"Good egg!"

"We haven't had a decent feed for some days," Tom Merry remarked. "Let's club together and get in something decent."

"Good!"

"Small contributions thankfully received, and larger ones in proportion," said Digby, holding out a coffee-tin. "Walk up!"

Coins clinked cheerily into the tin. There was quite a collection soon, for, as it happened, the chums of St. Jim's were in funds.

"Sixteen bob!" said Tom Merry, counting up the collection. "Jolly good! I'll go down to the tuckshop and negotiate with Mrs. Taggles, while you chaps get the study ready."

"Right you are!"

"By the way," said Digby suddenly, "I wonder what study that chap is going in? They've tried to shove new chaps into this study several times, but we've always been lucky, and they have left. This chap looks like a stayer."

"By George!" said Herries. "That's serious! I like that

chap; but there's four in this study already, and we don't want a fifth. It can't be did!"

Jack Blake came in in time to hear the remark. The chief of Study No. 6 was grinning.

"It's all right," he remarked.
"What's all right—about the study?"

"About the clothes. I've given him Gussy's best Sunday suit, and his fanciest waistcoat, and the giddiest tie I could find in Gussy's box."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"As Gussy was the cause of all the trouble, it's only fair! Besides, Gussy is strong on hospitality to strangers!"

grinned Blake. "Still, we needn't mention the matter to him; leave him to find it out."

"But what about the study?" said Herries. "Where is the new kid going to be put?"

"That's all right!" said Blake reassuringly. "I've asked him; you can bet your boots I thought of that! He's going into Study No. 8, with Mellish."

"Sorry for him—or any chap that has to dig in with Mellish."

"So am I. Mellish is a worm! Still, it may improve even Mellish to chum with a decent chap, and this chap is awfully decent!" said Blake. "Where are you going, Tom Merry?"

"We've made a collection for a feed. I'm going to order the grub!"

"Good! Here's my whack!"

And Jack Blake handed out a two-shilling piece. Tom Merry jingled it into his pocket and walked out of the School House, and made his way towards the little shop on the other side of the quadrangle; the little place kept by Mrs. Taggles within the precincts of St. Jim's, and greatly patronised by the boys when they were in funds.

CHAPTER 3.

The Tuck Raiders!

"TOM MERRY!"

A fat youth in Etons was lounging outside the tuckshop. It was Wynn of the New House—generally known as Fatty Wynn. Wynn was generally with Figgins and Kerr of the New House Fourth; but just now he was alone. He was looking in at some of Dame Taggles' fresh tarts with a longing eye, but it was evident that Fatty was not in funds.

"Tom Merry! Hallo!" said Fatty Wynn affably.
"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"Going in?"
"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Tom Merry, entering the shop.

Fatty Wynn followed him in, with a still more friendly expression upon his plump face.

"I say, Tom Merry, I suppose you're having a feed?"

Fatty Wynn remarked, as Dame Taggles came out of her little parlour and smiled at Tom Merry.

"It's a study feed, and New House bounders are barred!"

"A study feed?" said Fatty Wynn, with glistening eyes.
"That's it!"

"Oh, all right!"
Fatty Wynn strolled out of the tuckshop. Tom Merry gave his orders to Dame Taggles, to an extent that broadened the welcoming smile upon that good lady's countenance.

Fatty Wynn kept up a careless air till he was out of the shop. Then he suddenly broke into a desperate run, and pelted away in the direction of the New House.

He ran right up the steps of the New House, and was dashing in, when two juniors crossed their arms in front of him and brought him to a sudden halt.

"Oh!" gasped Fatty Wynn breathlessly.

"What's the row?" said Figgins, the long-legged chief of the New House juniors. "Any of the School House bounders after you?"

"No!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "It's a wheeze—a raid on the School House! Come on!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Figgins, on the alert at once. "What is it?"

"Tom Merry's in the tuckshop, buying up the whole blessed place!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "He's alone, too, and he may come out any minute. Come on!"

That was enough for Figgins and Kerr. They were as keen as Fatty now. The three juniors dashed away at top speed for the tuckshop. They reached it, but could not enter. Tom Merry's voice could be heard inside.

"And two dozen tarts, I think, Mrs. Taggles!"

Fatty Wynn's mouth watered.

"Two dozen," he murmured. "Oh, I wonder if they are twopenny ones?"

"Quiet!" muttered Figgins. "Get behind this tree. We'll collar him as he comes out, and lift the grub before he can say ginger-pop!"

"Good!"

In the twinkling of an eye the three raiders were ambushed behind the big elm that stood in front of the school shop.

It was some little time before the hero of the Shell emerged.

When he came out he had a cheerful, anticipatory smile upon his handsome face, and a large and well-filled basket in his hand.

"Look out!" murmured Figgins. "Rush him as he passes the tree; I'll give the word!"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry came on unsuspectingly.

"Go for him!" yelled Figgins suddenly.

The New House trio rushed to the attack.

Tom Merry was taken by surprise, but he was on his guard in a second. He dropped the basket, and it over-balanced, some of the contents falling out. Tom put up his fists and met the rush of the New House juniors with them.

"Oh!" roared Fatty Wynn, as a set of hard knuckles crashed upon his nose.

He staggered back, and sat down violently upon the ground.

But Tom Merry had no time to strike more than one blow. Even as Fatty Wynn rolled over, Figgins and Kerr grasped the hero of the Shell and whirled him round and got him down.

Tom Merry bumped on the ground, and Figgins and Kerr sprawled over him. Tom Merry struggled desperately and shouted for help.

"Rescue, School House!" he yelled.

"Quick. Fatty!" gasped Figgins. "Cut off with the basket!"

Fatty Wynn staggered up. His nose was crimson and swelling, but he never heeded that. He bundled the tuck back into the basket, grasped the handle of it, and tore off towards the New House. Once within the walls of that building the loot would be safe.

"Rescue!" roared Tom Merry.

But there was no rescue at hand. Most of the School House fellows were at tea in the House, and the tuckshop was deserted.

"All serene!" grinned Figgins. "Let the bounder go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins and Kerr jumped up and ran after Fatty Wynn. Tom Merry sat up, gasping for breath. He gazed after the retreating forms of the New House juniors in a dazed and uncertain way.

"The—the bounders!" he gasped. "Oh, the rotters! They've collared the grub!"

He jumped up.

Figgins & Co. were too far off for pursuit; Fatty Wynn had already disappeared into the porch of the New House. The basket and what it contained had gone.

Tom Merry hurried back to the School House.

He burst into Study No. 6, looking considerably dishevelled and very excited. The chums were preparing for tea. The fire was blazing, and the kettle singing on the hob. Jack Blake was spreading a cloth on the table; a cloth so white that it was pretty certain that it did not belong to Study No. 6.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Digby. "Got the grub?"

"No!" gasped Tom Merry.

"You've been time enough gone. Why haven't you got it?" said Blake. "Here's Leslie—hungry as a hunter."

The new boy laughed. He was washed and combed now, and quite clean, and dressed in the best suit of clothes belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which fitted him

very well. He was a good-looking, well-built lad, with a pleasant face.

"I'm not so very hungry," he remarked. "Do you want a hand to carry the things in, Tom Merry?"

"It's a raid!" panted Tom. "Figgins & Co. collared the lot outside the tuckshop!"

"What!" roared half a dozen voices.

"The grub's raided!"

"You ass!"

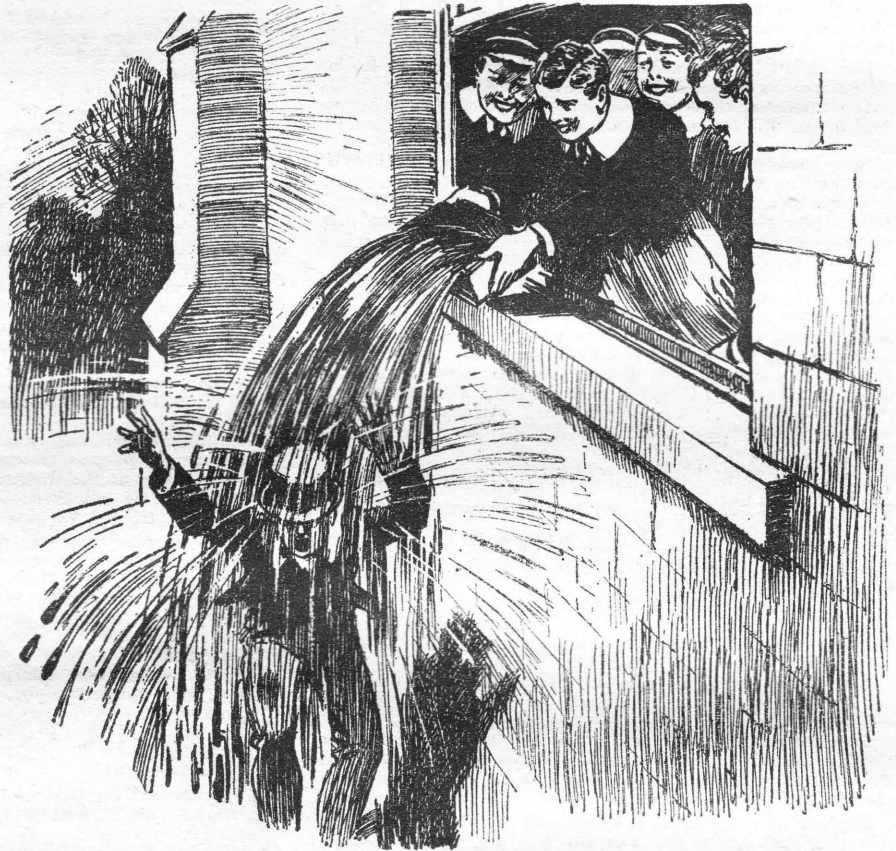
"You duffer!"

"You chump!"

"It wasn't my fault!" exclaimed Tom Merry, rather staggered by the general attack. "I didn't know they were waiting for me behind the tree."

"Ass!" said Blake. "Where's the grub now? What have they done with it?"

"Taken it into the New House."



As a silk hat, with a junior beneath it, passed under the window, Jack Blake tilted the can of sooty water over. Swoosh! There was a wild yell below as the silk hat and its wearer were swamped. "Ow! What—ooch! Yaroooooh!" "My only hat!" roared Tom Merry. "It's the wrong chap!"

"They're jolly well not going to keep it there!" said Blake resolutely. "Let's go and get it back."

"Phew!" said Digby. "A raid into the New House! We shall have dozens of them on our necks in a shake of a lamb's tail!"

"I don't care—"

"They'll be at tea, most of them," Tom Merry said quickly. "We may be able to get up into Figgins' study quietly and raid them before they can give the alarm. It's a chance, anyway; and we're not going to take this lying down, I suppose?"

"Rather not!"

"Come on, then!"

"Are you coming, Leslie?" asked Blake. "It's a chance for you to show that you're going to stand up for your House."

Leslie laughed and nodded.

"What-ho! I'm on!"

Leaving the preparations for tea just where they were, the juniors hurried out of the study. In the passage they met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was approaching the study cautiously, as if not quite certain what sort of a reception he was likely to meet with there.

At the sight of the whole body of juniors bearing down upon him, Arthur Augustus stopped and backed quickly away.

"It's all right, Gussy!" sang out Tom Merry. "We're——"
"Je ne marche pas," said Arthur Augustus, and he dodged into another passage and was gone.

"The bouncer! We'll make him 'marche' presently!" said Tom Merry. "No time now. Come on!"

And the School House juniors hurried out of the House and dashed across the quad at a run, to get to close quarters with Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 4.

Rivals in Conflict!

"RIPPING!"

"Splendid!"
"First chop!"

Such were the exclamations of Figgins & Co. as they examined their prize in Figgy's study in the New House.

The basket lay upon the study table, and Figgins & Co. were unpacking Tom Merry's recent purchases.

The extent of them delighted the heart of Fatty Wynn. And he gave a sort of purr of delight as he took out each fresh article.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "They were going to have a feed, and no mistake! This little lot must have run them into nearly a pound."

"Awfully thoughtful of them to lay in a feed like this when we're broke," grinned Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And to think that I was going to sell my diamond pin to raise the wind, too!" said Figgins.

Kerr looked at the diamond pin which lay on the table, and grinned. The diamond was a very questionable one, and the gold of the pin could not be called first quality. Figgins had bought that pin as a great bargain for ten shillings. Kerr had declared that the chap who sold it had made the bargain; but Figgins had warmly asked him what he knew about diamonds, anyway, and the subject had been dropped.

"We shall save that," Kerr remarked.

"Light the fire, someone," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm so hungry that I think I will begin with the cake; but we'd better get the eggs poached, too."

"I wonder how those School House bounders will take this?" Kerr remarked. "No chance their trying to get even with us, I think?"

Figgins shook his head.

"Well, even Tom Merry wouldn't venture right into the House," he said. "He jolly well wouldn't get out again very easily—not with the basket, at any rate."

"We'll see," said a voice at the door.

"My only hat!"

"Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry walked quickly into the study, followed as quickly by Lowther and Manners, Digby and Herries, and the new boy Leslie. Blake was not to be seen. Leslie closed the door quickly, and Lowther put his back against it.

Figgins & Co. stared at the intruders in amazement. Such a daring invasion as this was not according to their calculations. The New House fellows mostly being at tea, either in Hall or in their own studies, the intruders had been able to enter undiscovered, but getting away was another matter.

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Figgins.

"The nerve!" said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn grasped the basket.

"You'd better jolly well get out, you School House wasters!" he exclaimed. "If you think you're going to raid our grub——"

"Your grub!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes, ours! Get out!"

"Look here——"

"Nuff said!" interrupted Figgins, with a majestic wave of the hand. "We give you kids one minute to get out of the House! Otherwise——"

"I expect it will be otherwise," remarked Digby.

"Otherwise," said Figgins, frowning, "we shall raise the House, and you will be snatched bald-headed, and bumped down every blessed stair before you're let go!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Lock the door, Leslie!" he said.

"Right you are!"

Figgins made a rush.

"Rescue, New House!" he roared. "School House bounders! This way!"

There was an answering shout from the passage immediately.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

"Collar them!" said Tom Merry briefly.

The School House fellows closed upon their foes. Figgins & Co. put up a good fight, shouting for rescue all the time. Hammering blows fell upon the door of the study, and voices shouted without, but the door was locked, and would not budge. And Figgins & Co. had no chance of opening it.

The odds were too great.

Figgins went sprawling on the hearthrug, and Digby and Herries sat on his chest, and Kerr was pinned against the wall in an iron grasp by Manners and Lowther. Fatty Wynn rushed for the door to unlock it, and was bumped over promptly, and Tom Merry sat on him and kept him down.

"Hurrah!" gasped Herries. "They're done!"

"Rescue!" bawled Figgins.

Hammer—hammer! came at the door.

"What's the row in there?" yelled Pratt, through the keyhole.

"School House bounders!" yelled back Figgins.

"Open the door, then!"

"Can't! It's locked!"

"Unlock it!"

"They've got me!"

"Well, make 'em let go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That's not so easy, Pratty!"

"Bust the door in!" shrieked Kerr. "Get a key from somewhere!"

"Quick!" exclaimed Tom Merry, who had plenty to do to keep Fatty Wynn down. "Pack the grub into the basket Leslie and send it down to Blake."

"You bet!" said the new boy.

He was already busy at the table packing in the provisions. Then he drew a long and strong cord out of his pocket, and fastened the end of it to the handle of the basket. Figgins gave a whoop as the new boy carried the basket towards the window, and opened the latter. He understood the scheme now. Tom Merry & Co. did not intend to attempt to get the loot down the stairs of the New House.

The passage without was crowded with New House juniors, ready to pile themselves upon the School House fellows as soon as the door was unlocked, but the raiders did not mean to unlock it.

"Rescue!" bawled Figgins. "They're going— O-o-ch!"

It was necessary to gag Figgins in time or a crowd of New House fellows would have cut round to the window outside, where Blake was alone. There was nothing handy but an egg which Fatty Wynn had taken out ready to poach. Digby clutched it, and jammed it into Figgy's mouth.

"O-o-o-ch!"

Figgins gasped and spluttered wildly.

"Shut up!" gasped Digby.

"O-o-o-och!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, Leslie!"

"Right you are!"

Leslie lowered the basket out of the window. Jack Blake was waiting for it, and he grinned as he received it and detached the cord.

"All right!" he called out.

"Cut off, then!"

"I'm off!"

And Blake dashed away. Leslie turned back from the window with a grin.

"Blake's gone!" he exclaimed. "The grub's safe."

"Then it's time we were gone, too!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Lowther, as a key grated in the lock of the study door. "They've found a key to fit."

"Keep that one jammed! Oh, the ass!"

If the key had been turned sideways in the lock the new key could not, of course, have been inserted from the outside. But Leslie had not thought of that in locking the door. The new key from outside sent the inside one from the aperture, and it fell with a clang to the floor.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Leslie.

"You duffer!"

"I never thought——"

"Quick! Feet against the door!" shouted Tom Merry.

He ran to pick up the key, releasing Fatty Wynn. The junior jumped up and grasped him promptly. Tom Merry tore himself loose, and tried to insert the key into the lock, but it was too late. The key outside was already filling the keyhole, and there was no room for another.

The key grated as it turned.

"Line up!" shouted Tom Merry. "Rush for it!"

"Right you are!"

The idea of descending from the window had to be given

up now. There was no time for it. The School House juniors had barely time to line up before the enemy were upon them. Pratt unlocked the door and hurled it open, and a swarm of New House fellows rushed in.

"Where are they?"
 "Go for them!"
 "Rush for it, you chaps!"
 "Hurrah for the School House!"

Tom Merry & Co. made a desperate rush. In a moment the rival juniors were mingled in a wild and whirling conflict.

CHAPTER 5.

Tea in Study No. 6.

"GO for 'em!"
 "Give 'em socks!"
 "Yah! New House cads!"
 "School House rotters!"
 "Hurrah!"

Tom Merry & Co., hitting out furiously on all sides, fought their way out of the study and along the passage to the stairs. But there the New House juniors made a concentrated rush, and the School House phalanx was broken and scattered.

"Run for it!" shouted Tom Merry.
 And they ran for it.

Leslie, Digby, and Herries went headlong down the stairs and gained the quadrangle. Lowther and Manners were seized in innumerable hands, frog-marched down, and hurled forth amid shouts of laughter.

Tom Merry was seized by Figgins & Co., and soon reduced to helplessness. Figgins & Co were vengeful.

"Bring him along to the bath-room."

"Duck him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Here, let me go!" roared Tom Merry, struggling.

"Leggo! I—"

"Yank him along!"

"Boys!"

A thin, acid voice broke upon the disturbance. The juniors released Tom Merry as suddenly as if he had become red-hot. Tom reeled against the wall. Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, came down the passage, with a severe look upon his thin face.

"What is all this noise about?" he exclaimed.

"We—we—" stammered Figgins.

"Merry! Ah, I need not ask who is to blame when I see you here!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "You are the cause of endless disturbances. Return to your own House at once, Merry!"

"If you please, sir—" began Figgins.

"Silence, Figgins!"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Go into your own study at once, Figgins! Merry, leave the House!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom Merry.

He turned to go downstairs, bestowing a wink upon Figgins & Co. as he did so. He was glad that Mr. Ratcliff had chosen to blame him, as it saved Figgins & Co. from punishment. As a matter of fact, he was glad, too, that the New House master had appeared on the scene at that moment. He had come very opportunely for Tom Merry.

Tom Merry, very dusty and dishevelled, walked out of the New House. He found his comrades already returning. They had discovered that Tom had not escaped, and were about to make a desperate attempt to rescue him.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Lowther, in great relief.

"Here I am," assented Tom Merry. "Buzz off!"

They hurried back to the School House. Before they reached it, Figgins & Co. and a crowd of New House juniors were in pursuit.

Figgins & Co. pursued them to the very steps of the School House. But in the doorway was a swarm of School House fellows, and it was impossible to come farther. The School House juniors yelled defiance, and hurled catcalls at the enemy, and Figgins & Co. paused, hesitated, and finally beat a retreat.

"This is where we smile!" ejaculated Digby. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House crowd.

"Who's Cock-House at St. Jim's?"

"School House! School House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Figgins & Co. drifted away disconsolately.

Tom Merry and his comrades, ruffled and dusty, but triumphant, crowded up to Study No. 6. Blake was already unpacking the basket.

"All serene?" he asked.

"Right as rain!"

"You look a jolly well ruffled lot!" said Blake, eyeing them critically.

"So would you if you'd been through the same row as we have!" said Lowther warmly. "Shut up and poach the eggs, while we dust ourselves!"

"Yaas, wathah! You do need dustin'," said Arthur Augustus, looking into the study.

"You'll get dusted, too, if you don't look out!" said Blake. "None of your marching pah here, you know!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Cheese it, and make the tea!" said Blake.

"I wefuse to cheese it! I—"

"Poof!"

D'Arcy sniffed, and made the tea. Tom Merry & Co. dusted themselves down, and restored their clothing to some

SPOKE TOO SOON.

The squad of raw recruits was looking very footsore and weary after doing ten miles of a route march, so the bullying sergeant called a halt.

"Any man too tired to march any farther," snapped the sergeant, "take three paces forward!"



Instantly every man except one obeyed the order.

"You're a credit to the Army," said the sergeant to the remaining recruit. "But I must ask you to fetch a lorry to carry these lazy dumb-bells back to barracks."

"Gosh, sergeant," replied the recruit, "I'm that tired I couldn't even take the three paces forward!"

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degree of tidiness and order. There was a savoury smell in the study as Blake poached the eggs.

The juniors, still a little breathless, but very cheerful over their victory, sat down round the table to tea. There was a tap at the door, and Mellish of the Fourth put his head in.

He met with a universal stare.

Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, was not popular, and his face was seldom welcome anywhere. But Mellish did not mind that very much. He would seek to ingratiate himself with anybody, in spite of the plainest rebuff, if it suited his purpose. Leslie, of course, knew nothing of the character of the sneak of the School House so far.

Mellish looked in, with a smirking grin.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said very affably, his eye scanning the tea-table with keen appreciation. "I've just looked in—"

"And now you can just look out again," said Blake.

Mellish wriggled.

"Well, you see, I—I was just looking for the new chap, Leslie. He's to share my study, No. 8, and I wanted to get him a bit of a feed to welcome him. I'm in funds to-day. Have you seen Leslie?"

"I'm Leslie," said the new boy.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Mellish, pretending to notice him for the first time. "Good! I'm Mellish, your study-mate!"

"Glad to meet you!" said Leslie.

"I hope we shall be chummy," said Mellish. "Will you come and have a bit of a feed in the study?"

Leslie was nonplussed for a moment. He could see that the other fellows did not like Mellish, and that they made no bones about showing their dislike. But Mellish was to be his study-mate, and this welcome was certainly cordial enough on the part of the School House cad.

"Sorry," said Leslie, "I'm having tea in here; but—"

He glanced questioningly at the others. There was only one thing they could do, and they did it.

"Come in, Mellish," said Blake, with an effort. "Have tea with us."

Blake knew very well that that was what Mellish had come there for, and that he had no more intention of standing a feed to the new boy than the man in the moon. But he could not very well get out of asking the cad of the Fourth to tea, all the same.

"Thanks awfully, Blake!" said Mellish. "If you're sure I shan't be in the way—"

"Oh, come in!"

Mellish grinned, and shut the door, and came to the table. Leslie made room for the cad of the Fourth beside him.

"Sit down here," he said.
 "Thanks awfully!"
 "Blake, deah boy, I will twouble you for anothah cup of tea. The tea has been made vewy well this time."
 "That's a wonder, considering who made it!" retorted Blake.
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "Pass the jam, Gussy," said Monty Lowther.
 "I was just speakin'—"
 "Pass the jam."
 "You are intewwuptin' me—"
 "Exactly. Pass the jam."
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "Pass the jam."
 And Arthur Augustus sniffed, and passed the jam.

CHAPTER 6.

The Missing "Diamond" Pin!

THE tea in Study No. 6 was a very cheerful and cosy meal. With a bright fire in the grate, a well-spread table, and a jolly set of fellows, it could not fail to be a success. Even Mellish was in a cordial temper, and did not make any of the sneering remarks which generally earned him dislike wherever he went.
 "Pass the cake, please, Mannahs," said D'Arcy presently.
 "Here you are, Gussy."
 "Pway pass the knife also," said the swell of the School House with dignity. "I twust you do not expect me to bweak it off in chunks with my fingahs, Mannahs."
 "Blessed if I can see the knife," said Mannahs, looking round the table. "Have you eaten the cake-knife, Gussy?"
 "Weally, Mannahs—"
 "Well, where is it, then?"
 "Pway, look wound—"
 "It was here a minute ago!" said Mellish.
 But it was gone.

The juniors looked up and down and round about, but the cake-knife was not to be found. It was a handsome knife, with a silver handle, which Miss Fawcett had presented to the study, and was of considerable value—though the juniors valued it chiefly because it would cut. It had cut many things besides cake in its time.

Blake looked on the floor, but the knife was not there. He was considerably puzzled. What could have become of the knife was a mystery.

"Some ass is hiding it for a joke!" said Tom Merry. "I call upon the silly duffer in question to produce it!"

There was no reply.
 "It does not mattah," said D'Arcy. "Dig will get up and get me anothah knife fwom the dwawah!"

"Dig jolly well won't," said the owner of that name with great promptness.

"Weally, Dig—"
 "Here's a knife!" said Blake. "Cut the cake, and be quiet, Gussy!"

"I wefuse!"
 "Cheese it! Hallo—who's that?"
 The study door opened.

Three familiar faces presented themselves—they belonged to Figgins & Co. The School House juniors were on their feet in a twinkling. The appearance of the New House trio naturally looked like a renewal of the raid.

But Figgins held up his hand in sign of peace.
 "Pax!" he exclaimed.
 "Oh!" said Tom Merry. "What's the trouble?"

"We had to make it pax to get into the House," said Fatty Wynn, with a yearning glance at the table. "Otherwise we'd rush you baldheaded!"

Tom Merry laughed.
 "Sit down, Fatty, and wire in—eh, Blake?"
 "Yes, rather!" grinned Blake. "It would be cruelty to animals to keep Fatty off the feed. Here you are, Fatty!"

He gave his chair to the fat Fourth Former. Fatty Wynn did not need a second bidding.

He sat down and started.
 Figgins frowned a little.

"We didn't come here to cadge a tea!" he exclaimed, with a severe glance at Fatty Wynn. "It's about another matter—a rather important one."

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry.
 He could see by the expression of Figgins' face that something unusual had happened. Figgins was looking curiously grave and quiet. Tom Merry wondered what was the matter.

"We were stony this afternoon, and I was going to sell my pin," said Figgins. "I dare say you chaps have seen me wearing a diamond pin—"

"I've seen you wearing a pin," said Lowther. "Was it a diamond?"

"Yes, it was a diamond!" said Figgins emphatically. "I

bought it as a big bargain for ten shillings. The chap who sold it to me—chap named Isaacs—said it had cost twenty pounds."

"Well, Isaacs was understudying George Washington at the time, that's certain," said Lowther. "But go on with the harrowing story. Have you lost the pin?"

"Yes," said Figgins. "I had put the pin out on the table, and then we raided your feed, and I gave up the idea of selling it. Then the grub went—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, then, I thought of selling the pin again, but it was gone."

"Gone!"
 "Yes. Before the row it was on the table. After the row it was—gone!"

Tom Merry stared at him.
 "I suppose it got knocked down, and it's somewhere on the floor of the study," he said.

Figgins shook his head.
 "It was lying there beside the inkpot," he replied. "The inkpot wasn't upset—but the pin was gone. It wasn't knocked down. It was moved."

"What on earth do you mean?"
 "To make sure, we hunted all over the study," said Figgins, "and I questioned all the fellows who came in to kick you chaps out. Nobody's seen it!"

"My word—"
 "Mind, I'm not hinting anything!" exclaimed Figgins hastily. "Don't think I mean for a second that I think one of you chaps might have boned the pin."

"Bai Jove!"
 "But somebody took it off the table," said Figgins. "I suppose it was taken for a lark. I hope it was, anyway. If one of you chaps has hidden it for a joke, I'd like you to tell me where it is!"

The juniors looked at one another.
 "I never even saw it," said Tom Merry.

"Nor I," said Digby. "Are you sure it was there, Figgy?"
 "Quite sure. I had drawn Kerr's attention to it only a few minutes before you chaps rushed in—hadn't I, Kerr?"

"You did!" said Kerr, with a nod.
 "Blessed if I understand it!" said Tom Merry. "Anyway, I haven't seen the pin. Any of you fellows seen it?"

There was a general shaking of heads. Leslie was looking considerably perturbed. It was not a pleasant affair to be involved in on the first day of his coming to St. Jim's.

"You're quite sure, you chaps?" said Figgins at last.
 "Quite sure!"
 "You haven't taken it for a lark?"
 "Of course not!"
 "Well, it's been taken."
 Tom Merry's face hardened.

"Look here, Figgins, do you mean to say that you're going to accuse somebody of stealing that blessed pin?" he exclaimed sharply.

Figgins looked decidedly worried. He exchanged a glance with Kerr, and did not reply for a minute or two.

"Well," he said, at length, hesitatingly, "the pin was taken. I wouldn't say a word about it—I don't want a scandal through my inquiring after the pin."

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Blake. "The fellows will be saying there's a thief in the school!"

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Figgins quietly.
 And then there was grim silence in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for Gussy!

TOM MERRY was the first to break the silence.

"This is rotten!" he said.
 Figgins nodded.

It certainly was rotten, but Figgins did not see quite what was to be done. Reginald Leslie rose from the table and stood looking out of the window into the dusk of the quad. Tom Merry glanced at him, and felt very uncomfortable.

"I'm sorry this has happened your first day here, Leslie," he exclaimed. "It won't give you a very good impression of St. Jim's, I'm afraid!"

"Wathah not," agreed D'Arcy. "Howevah, I assuah you, Leslie, deah boy, that Figgy is makin' a wewulah howlah, as usual, and the pin is pwobably in his pocket all the time."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Manners.
 Figgins grunted.

"I told you fellows how the facts stand," he said. "I'd like to know your opinion on the matter, as to what's to be done. The pin's gone."

"But what is to be done?"
 "I don't know," Figgins confessed.

The juniors looked at one another in dismay. It was about the most unpleasant thing that could have happened. Where was the diamond pin?



"Go for him!" shouted Figgins. Tom Merry dropped the tuck basket quickly and met the rush of the rival juniors with his fists. A set of hard knuckles crashed upon Fatty Wynn's nose and he sat down violently. But the next moment Figgins and Kerr had grasped the Shell junior.

"Well, the thing ought to be looked for!" said Tom Merry at last. "But I don't think it should be hinted in public that it has been taken. Better put it that the pin is lost—that's true enough—and ask the fellows to keep their eyes open for it—"

"They'll be saying there's a thief in the school, I'm afraid."

"Well, if the pin's been taken, there must be a thief," said Blake. "But I'm blessed if I know why a thief should take that pin!"

"Why, to sell it, of course!"

"Yes, but how could he possibly hope to find a buyer for it?" argued Blake. "The chap named Isaacs palmed it off on you, but there isn't another fellow at St. Jim's who would be done like that—"

"Why, you ass—"

"Therefore—"

"You frabjous duffer, the list price of that pin was twenty pounds—"

"Twenty rats!"

"Look here—"

"Twenty cents more likely—"

"I jolly well—"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, pushing between the two juniors, who were both growing very excited. "No good rowing now—there's something more serious to think of. The pin's got to be found—and until it's found I think the less said about it the better."

"Oh, it's all right!" exclaimed Figgins.

"It's a curious happening, though," remarked Mellish, with a glitter in his eyes. "Where can it be gone to?"

Tom Merry grunted expressively. He had forgotten for the moment that the cad of the Fourth was in the study. The story was not likely to be kept dark now that Mellish was in possession of it.

"Look here, Mellish, you can keep your mouth shut about

this!" he exclaimed abruptly. "Don't spread it through all the Form-rooms!"

Mellish looked injured.

"Of course, you can rely upon me, Tom Merry—"

"Yes, to blab it all up and down St. Jim's!" exclaimed Blake angrily. "It's a rotten bisney altogether, and I don't see what Figgins wanted to have a rotten spoof diamond at all for!"

"Look here—"

"Do shut up, Blake!" said Tom Merry. "What's the good of a row? That won't find the blessed pin!"

"We'll buzz off," said Figgins. "I thought we ought to come and tell you, that's all. I thought one of you might have been ass enough to take the pin for a lark. Come on, Fatty; you'll make a famine in the School House at that rate!"

"I think I'd better have another tart," said Fatty Wynn.

"I think you hadn't!" said Figgins. "Come on!"

"Yes; but—"

"This way!"

And Figgins fastened an iron grip upon Fatty's ear and led him from the study. Kerr followed, and the door closed behind Figgins & Co.

They left general dismay and discomfort behind them.

"Well, of all the rotten business!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The pin's lost, somehow, of course," said Blake. "Perhaps somebody hasn't been able to resist the impulse to tread on it and make an end of it. I felt like that once when I saw Figgy wearing it."

"Yaas, wathah! It was an outwageous thing, you know."

"Oh, it's lost!" said Digby. "There's a way things have of getting lost. That cake-knife, for instance, that's just disappeared."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"That's curious," said Mellish.

"It's a wotten thing, and that's the twuth," said D'Arcy. "I suggest that we dwoop the subject."

Blake looked at his elegant chum in great admiration.

"What a jolly good idea!" he exclaimed. "How do you think of these things, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

Mellish rose to his feet. The feast was over, and Mellish had no reason for lingering. He had news for the Common-room, too.

"I think I'll be getting along," he remarked.

No one spoke, and Mellish left the study. D'Arcy glanced after him through his eyeglass as he went, and then looked at Leslie.

"I am sowwy you are shawin' a study with that chap," he remarked. "We should be vevy pleased to have you in here, only we are full up."

"I'd have been glad to come," said Leslie, with a smile. "Still five in a study of this size would have been rather a crowd."

"It's a pretty good-sized study," said Blake.

"Oh, yes! But—"

"I wegard you as a chap I could chum with, too," said D'Arcy, looking at Leslie with growing interest. "There are vevy few fellows at St. Jim's who have much taste in dwess. Even in the Sixth most of the fellows leave vevy much to be desired. You must permit me to wemark that you are dwessed in a weally elegant way, much above the avevage of the juniahs here. I twust you do not considah the wemark as impertinent."

Leslie grinned, and the other fellows chuckled.

"Not at all," said the new boy. "Go on. How do you like the cut of my jacket? I should like your opinion on that."

He stood up to be viewed, and D'Arcy turned his monocle with great attention on the jacket.

"It is a vevy good cut," he said. "It does not fit you exactly, but it is a vevy good cut indeed, and I can see that you have an excellent tailah."

"And the trousers?"

"The twousahs are a twifle long for you, which, I suppose, is the weason why you turn them up. I do not wholly approve of a chap of your age turnin' up his twousahs," said D'Arcy. "Of course, with a fellow like me—"

"Why, you're not older than I am!" exclaimed Leslie.

"Pewwaps not in years, but in expewience and so on, you see," explained D'Arcy.

"What about the waistcoat?"

"Wippin'! I weally wegard that waistcoat as a work of art," said D'Arcy, looking at it closely. "I had a waistcoat vevy like that myself—in fact, exactly like it. It is the waistcoat I like best of all I have. I designed it myself, and the tailah cawwied out my instwuctions in a vevy intelligent mannah. It is wathah wemarkable that you should have a waistcoat so like it in pattern."

"And the necktie?"

"Vevy good taste," said D'Arcy. "Quite in keepin' with the waistcoat, which is a vevy important point. You sometimes see chaps lookin' as if their waistcoat belongs to one person and their collah and tie to quite anothah."

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

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them in mild surprise.

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see any cause for this unseemly mewwiment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leslie laughed as loudly as the rest.

"Weally, you know—"

"You see," explained Blake, "as you had spoiled Leslie's duds—"

"I did nothin' of the sort. It was you duffahs—"

"Well, it was your fault—"

"Nothin' of the sort. I'm—"

"And as it was your fault," resumed Blake, unheeding,

"I borrowed a suit of your clothes for Leslie, as his box hasn't come from the station—or hadn't then. See?"

"What!"

"They fit him pretty well, don't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, na, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of wottahs. I wegard this as nothin' short of sacwilege."

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

Arthur Augustus surveyed them in great wrath. He was very particular about his clothes, and to have one of his most elegant suits ravished in this manner was too bad.

"Bai Jove! Of all the wascally twicks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, as Leslie is a guest in this study I shall say no more," said D'Arcy, after a pause. "Otherwise I should give you all a feahful thwashin'."

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To which the juniors responded with a fresh roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thanks to Mellish, the story of Figgins' missing diamond pin was all over St. Jim's the next day. It was too unpleasant an item of news for Mellish to think of keeping it dark. But, contrary to Mellish's expectation, nobody took the loss of the diamond pin very seriously.

Nobody but Figgins believed in the diamond, and that anybody should go to the trouble of stealing a piece of glaring paste set in a glaring "spooof" gold pin, seemed unlikely to the St. Jim's fellows.

It was more likely that the pin had been swept down somehow in the tussle in Figgins' study, and trodden under-foot, or destroyed in some way or another. What should anyone want to steal it for? That was what the fellows asked.

Tom Merry & Co. were only too glad to see that view taken of the matter.

CHAPTER 8.

Accused of Theft!

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, looked out of his study with a very red face, and called "Fag!"

The captain of St. Jim's was generally the most even-tempered fellow in the school. It was very seldom that he was angry, and he seldom allowed himself to be even annoyed. But he looked both angry and annoyed now.

"Fag!"

As a rule there was a scuttling of feet in different directions when that very word was heard along the Sixth Form passage. Juniors who were quite close at hand would develop a sudden deafness and fail to hear, or would have pressing business in another part of the building.

But there was an exception generally made in favour of Kildare. The big, athletic captain of the school was as popular among the lowest fags as among the high and mighty seniors of the Sixth.

It was an honour to fag for Kildare, and even Shell fellows were quite willing to do it, though, as a rule, the Shell claimed to be exempt from fagging duties.

When Kildare called "Fag," instead of the usual exodus there was generally a gathering of willing juniors to obey his commands.

"Fag!"

From up the passage and down the passage came pattering footsteps.

Jack Blake of the Fourth came from one direction, and D'Arcy minor—Wally D'Arcy—from another. The Fourth Former and the Third Former raced up, and met just outside Kildare's door, and bumped into one another.

"Oh, you ass!" roared Wally, as he staggered against the wall.

"You young duffer!" growled Jack Blake, catching at Kildare to save himself. "What do you mean by racing about the passages like that?"

"Why, you're doing the same, you ass!"

"I was comin' to fag for Kildare."

"So was I."

"Rot! You've got too much cheek, you Third Form fags," said Blake. "Clear off, and go and get washed!"

"You can jolly well clear off yourself!" retorted Wally.

"My only Aunt Jane! I—"

"Drop that!" said Kildare. "I don't want any fagging done."

"You called 'Fag,'" said Blake, with an injured look.

"Yes, but I want the junior who was fagging for me to-day—only to speak to him, though."

"It was Mellish."

"Well, find him, will you, and send him to me?"

"Nothing I can do?"

"No; only that."

Kildare went into his study. Blake started towards the stairs, and Wally went with him. There was a curious expression upon Wally's face.

"Kildare's waxy, Blake," he remarked.

"Yes; he looked it."

"What's Mellish been doing. I wonder?"

"Oh, he's always up to something," said Blake crossly.

"If he's been playing any of his mean tricks on old Kildare, we'll jolly well rag him!"

"Blessed if I know how Kildare can stand you Fourth Form chaps," said Wally. "We're all willing to fag for him in the Third, but—"

Wally scuttled off in time to escape a kick from Blake, and the Fourth Former went on alone. He looked in the quadrangle for Mellish, but the cad of the Fourth was not there, and Blake went up to the Fourth Form passage, to Study No. 3.

He knocked at the door and entered.

Mellish was there with Leslie, the new boy in the Fourth. Leslie was roasting chestnuts at the grate, and Mellish was watching him, with an evident expectation of being asked to dispose of the roasted chestnuts.

Both the juniors looked round as Blake came in.

"Hallo!" said Leslie. "Have some chestnuts?"

"Certainly!"

"They're good!" said Mellish.

"Kildare wants you, Mellish," said Blake, sitting on a corner of the table and accepting the chestnuts. "He's just sent me to look for you."

Mellish looked a little uneasy.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Well, is anything the matter, I mean?"

"I think so. Kildare looks waxy."

Mellish gave Blake a far from pleasant look, and quitted the study.

Leslie grinned.

"What do you think is the trouble with Kildare?" he asked.

Blake shook his head.

"I haven't a notion. But Kildare never gets ratty for nothing, so I suppose Mellish has been playing the giddy ox in some way. These are prime chestnuts. How do you get on with Mellish in the study?"

"Pretty well."

"Glad to hear it," said Blake. "I dare say you've noticed that nobody likes Mellish. It's because he's not to be trusted. You remember we arranged for nothing to be said about Figgy's diamond; but Mellish spread it all over the place that the diamond had been stolen. That's his way."

Leslie nodded.

Blake went on chatting cheerily, but the new boy was very silent.

Mellish was looking and feeling decidedly uneasy as he made his way towards Kildare's study. He was so often guilty of playing ill-natured pranks, that he was never secure from punishment. And now he was only wondering which of his delinquencies had come to the knowledge of the St. Jim's captain.

He tapped at Kildare's door nervously.

"Come in!" rapped out the senior.

Mellish entered reluctantly.

Kildare was standing up, evidently expecting him.

He fixed his eyes on the cad of the Fourth as he entered.

"Mellish, you were fagging for me at tea?"

"Yes," said Mellish uneasily.

"Then I have a question to ask you," said Kildare.

"Close the door."

The junior obeyed.

"Look here, Mellish," said Kildare, "I don't want to accuse you, if there's a chance of your being innocent."

"What do you mean?"

"Where is my watch?"

"Your—your watch!" stammered Mellish.

"Yes."

The Fourth Former stared blankly at him.

"I—I don't know, Kildare," he said. "How should I know where your watch is? I haven't seen it."

"I hope you haven't," said Kildare; "but somebody has seen it and taken it, too—and I want to know who it is."

Mellish turned pale.

"Do you mean to say that your watch has been stolen?" he exclaimed.

"It has been taken away, at all events."

Mellish's jaw dropped.

"And you—you think I took it?"

"I want to know whether you know anything about it or not," said Kildare. "To be quite frank, Mellish, you don't bear a very good reputation in this school."

"Oh!"

"My watch is gone. I left it out on the table, to take it to the watchmaker's in Rylcombe to be repaired, and was wearing a gun-metal watch Darrell lent me," went on Kildare. "I left the watch lying there when you came into the study, and it was there while you were getting my tea. I couldn't have been out of the study many minutes before you came in, I think."

"Five minutes, I believe," said Mellish. "You went to speak to Darrell. I happened to see you go into his study as I came up to get your tea."

"Then it could only have been for a minute or so, or you wouldn't have seen me going to Darrell's study," said Kildare. "The watch was lying there. When I came in here again it was gone."

"I didn't move it."

"You noticed it lying there, I suppose?"

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER" 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4, (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

PROFITING BY EXPERIENCE.

Tramp: "Buy one, lady?"

Lady: "What! You're not earning an honest living at last?"

Tramp: "Yes, lady."

Lady: "What are you selling?"

Tramp: "Dog chains!"

A football has been awarded to S. Heeley, 31, Bridge Terrace, Mitton Road, Whalley, Lancs.

THE PARTING GIFT.

Two-gun Pete: "When I was with my gang in New York I was the best singer, yes sirree! The boss gave me a gold watch when he sent me away."

Slick Sam: "You don't say!"

Two-gun Pete: "Yeah, and he said if I come back I'd 'get the works'!"

A football has been awarded to S. Gillingwater, 180, Trafalgar Street, Walworth, London, S.E.17.

TEARFUL.

Eager Playwright: "I wish I could think up a strong situation that would fill the audience with tears."

Theatre Manager: "I'm looking for one that will fill the tiers with audience!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Mentha, 4, Grove Road, Hoylake, Cheshire.

IRISH.

Pat: "You're just a coward, Mike. I could foight you wid wan hand tied behind my back."

Mike: "Begorra, you couldn't fight me wid two hands tied behind your back, let alone one!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Surtees, 72, Fordfield Road, Ford Estate, Sunderland.

HARD TO HIT.

Tommy: "Four pounds of moth-balls, please."

Chemist: "What—four pounds? That is enough to kill all the moths in town."

Tommy: "Ah, but I can't always hit 'em with the first ball!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Trimmer, Old Park, Warwick.

QUITE SO.

Jack Blake: "Why is the Shell the most miserable Form at St. Jim's?"

Gussy: "Bai Jove, I give that one up, deah boy."

Jack Blake: "Because it contains only one fellow who is Merry!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss D. Cornell, 19, Stanley Road, Manor Park, London, E.12.

BUTTON-HEAD.

Rastus: "Yo' ain't got no sense, Sambo."

Sambo: "No sense, eh? Den what's dis head ob mine for?"

Rastus: "Dat ain't no head, Sambo. Dat's just a button on top ob your body to keep yo' backbone in place!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Dickinson, 19, View Terrace, Victoria Garesfield, Rowlands Gill, Co. Durham.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

"Yes," said Mellish, looking very scared.

"I have hunted all over the study, in case it might have got shoved away," said Kildare. "It is not to be found."

"I—I—"

"If you have taken it, Mellish, you had better give it to me at once, and I will see what can be done in the matter," said Kildare.

"I—I haven't taken it."

"It was gone when I came in."

"Well," said Mellish, plucking up courage a little, "I left before you came in—I don't know how long—and anybody might have nipped in and taken the watch."

"Nobody was likely to know that it was there."

"Well, a fellow might have come in for anything—to speak to you, for instance—"

"And taken the watch?"

"I suppose so."

Kildare looked at him harder than ever. He was evidently frightened, and yet somehow it did not seem to be the fright of guilt. But Mellish was so habitually false that Kildare could not believe a word or look of his. In judging Mellish, it was only possible to judge by the evidence, without considering anything that Mellish himself said on the subject.

"When did you leave the study, Mellish?" the captain of St. Jim's asked at last.

"I—I don't remember."

"You did not notice the time?"

"I—yes," said Mellish abruptly. "The clock was striking six—I remember now."

"And I came in here at five minutes past six," said Kildare.

Mellish was silent.

"You ask me to believe that in five minutes some fellow, who could not have known that the watch was there, came into the study and stole it?"

"I—I—"

"Come, you had better confess—"

Mellish burst into tears.

"I—I didn't take it! I swear I didn't! What should I want to take your watch for?"

"Come, don't blub!" said Kildare. "I don't know whether you're acting or not. If you're suspected unjustly it's your own fault—you are a known liar, and I cannot believe a word you say."

"I didn't take the watch."

"Then where can it be?"

"I—I don't know. I didn't take it."

Kildare's brows contracted.

"I should like to give you the benefit of the doubt, Mellish," he said, "but I cannot afford to lose the watch; and, besides, I could not allow a thief to pass unpunished. If you will not, or cannot, give me back the watch I shall have to place the matter in the hands of Mr. Railton, and there will be an inquiry."

"I can't help it! I didn't take the watch!"

"You stick to that?"

"Yes!"

"Very well. I cannot help thinking that you did take it—any other supposition seems so unlikely. But I will give you a chance. I will say nothing about the matter for one hour. If, in that time, the watch is returned I will do my best to save you from being expelled."

"I—I—"

"That's enough! You can go."

"I tell you—"

"Enough, I say!"

Kildare opened the study door, and Mellish had to go. He went blindly out into the passage, and Kildare closed the door after him. Mellish almost staggered away. He made his way towards the Fourth Form passage, hardly seeing where he was going. For once in his life the cool, calculating junior was utterly upset and thrown off his balance.

He almost walked into Tom Merry as the hero of the Shell came in from the footer field.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Where are you going?"

"Eh?"

Tom Merry looked at him curiously. He did not like Mellish; but the look of the junior made him feel concerned.

"Anything the matter, Mellish? Are you ill?"

"N-n-no."

"Well, you look it! You look jolly seedy!"

"I—I'm all right!" muttered Mellish. "I—I suppose you believe it, too. You're all against me—every one of you."

Tom Merry stared at him.

"What are you talking about?"

"I—I don't care! I—I didn't do it, and you can all go and be hanged! You've always been against me, and you'll believe it at once, of course!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

"You're ill," said Tom Merry quietly. "Let me give you a hand to your room."

He slipped his arm through Mellish's and led him to his study. The cad of the Fourth went without a word. He seemed too dazed and overcome to think or speak. For once Mellish was utterly terrified. Innocent or guilty, he realised that his long record of deceit and unscrupulousness would tell against him when the inquiry was made—innocent or guilty, there would be few to believe in his innocence.

CHAPTER 9.

A Startling Discovery!

TOM MERRY opened the door of Study No. 8 and entered the room with Mellish. Blake and Leslie were eating chestnuts, and Blake was chatting cheerily, while the new boy in the Fourth stared at the fire.

"Hallo!" said Blake, looking up. "You're just in time for the last chestnut, Tom Merry! Here you are! Catch!"

"Oh, you ass!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as he caught the chestnut—on his nose.

"Ha, ha, ha! You are clumsy!"

"What's the matter with Mellish?" asked Leslie, glancing at the cad of the Fourth.

"He's seedy."

"He was all right ten minutes ago," said Blake suspiciously. "What little game are you playing now, Mellish?"

It was curious how nobody, for a moment, believed that anything Mellish said could possibly be true. But he had only himself to blame for that.

He scowled savagely at Blake.

"He's really seedy, I think," said Tom Merry, as Mellish threw himself into a chair and covered his face with his hands. "I don't see why he should be malingering now."

"Kildare been pitching into him?" asked Blake. "How many, Mellish?"

"I don't think he's been licked."

"Then what's the matter with him?"

"I don't know."

"I haven't been licked," said Mellish, looking up, very white. "Kildare says I have stolen his watch—that's all!"

"What!" exclaimed Blake and Tom Merry together.

"That's all!" said Mellish defiantly. "I suppose you'll believe that I'm a thief! I don't care!"

"Then you ought to care!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Do you mean to say that Kildare has missed his watch and accused you of stealing it?"

"Yes."

"Then you jolly well did it, or Kildare wouldn't say so!" said Blake. "And that explains how things have been vanishing lately, if Mellish has taken to supplementing his income by a little private burglary."

"Shut up, Blake! I suppose you deny it, Mellish?"

"Yes. That's not much good, though. Kildare doesn't believe me!"

Tom Merry ran his fingers through his curly hair in the way he had when he was perplexed.

"Well, you're such a blessed prevaricator," he remarked. "I don't see how anybody is to take much stock in what you say."

Mellish gritted his teeth.

"Of course, you're against me—I knew you would be! Kildare left his watch on the table; his study was empty for five minutes after I left it. Anybody might have gone in. But, of course, he thinks I took it."

"Well, if it was taken, you were the most likely person to take it," said Tom Merry bluntly. "But I hope there's some mistake."

"There was a scare about a thief in the School House some weeks ago," Blake remarked. "That was before you came, Leslie—Where's Leslie?"

"He's gone out," said Tom Merry.

"It's beastly for him," said Blake. "He'll think he's been sent to a blessed den of thieves if this sort of thing goes on. But, as I was saying, there was a scare about a thief in the School House, and some of the fellows set their silly ears up at me, as you remember—and then the missing banknote was found in the foolscap that ass Skimpy had borrowed from Gussy's desk. I dare say this will turn out to be a bungle of the same sort."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"This isn't the first thing that's been missed, Blake. Kildare's watch is gone, but so is Gore's penknife and the cake-knife in your study, and Figgins' pin; it was the first thing to go."

Blake whistled.

"You think—"

(Continued on page 14.)

GRAND NEW FEATURE COMING SOON!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS!—Last week I gave you a hint of a new feature that is starting in the GEM soon. Having done that, it is up to me to tell you more about it to-day, for no doubt you are all wondering what the new feature can be. Well, to begin with, it starts in a fortnight's time, and it will take the position now occupied by "Mick o' the Mounted!" which, after a successful run, ends next Wednesday.

The title of our grand new feature is

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" (New Edition),

and it is in response to repeated requests from readers that this ripping, up-to-date edition of the journal run by the chums of St. Jim's is once again included in the GEM programme.

"Tom Merry's Weekly" will, week by week, tell you all the latest news in bright and breezy style about St. Jim's and its characters, and in addition there is a special feature in it which is run by Tom Merry himself, that will interest every reader personally. Next week I will tell you more about this grand new feature.

Meanwhile, how do you like the first exciting instalment of our powerful new serial? It's a winner all the way, isn't it? But wait till you read the following instalments—they get more and more thrilling every week. In the next chapters of

"TREASURE ISLE!"

you will read of the further nerve-tingling adventures of the St. Frank's chums who have fallen into the hands of the cannibals. It is hardly likely that they will be content to remain the prisoners of the Tao-Tao islanders, and they soon get busy on a daring scheme to escape. See what happens next week.

Once again Martin Clifford has "turned up trumps" with his latest yarn of the Chums of St. Jim's, which is entitled:

"FATTY WYNN'S THIN TIME!"

The story starts off on a very exciting note, for a bull gets loose and chases Gussy and Fatty Wynn right into the quadrangle at St. Jim's! Fatty Wynn, who has, as usual, been gorging, is absolutely "blown" by his run to escape the bull, which is all the time gaining on him, and unless something desperate is done quickly, the fat junior will be gored by the bull. On no account must you miss reading all about this thrilling incident, and the amusing events that are the outcome of it. See your newsagent to-day about next Wednesday's GEM, and make sure of reading this great story.

SUPER CAMERAS.

A man in a Brazilian city was suffering from some obscure eye disease, and the specialists there were completely baffled by the matter, but they realised that if something was not done quickly the man would lose his sight. And this is what they did. They got hold of a special camera, took photographs of the man's eyes, and sent the photos to Berlin by wire. A specialist there examined the pictures, discovered the trouble, and cabled the treatment to Brazil. The man's eyesight was thus saved.

Another very ingenious camera is one that has to be swallowed by the patient! It is a cylinder two inches long and five-eighths of an inch in diameter, and carries two tubes, one with a cable for electric current to light a flashlamp bulb and the other with a wire to operate the shutter. It takes sixteen pictures in twenty seconds, and the pictures are enlarged and show the doctors exactly what is happening "inside."

ALL IN A DAY'S DUTY

The weather is not exactly ideal for bathing, but a heroic policeman had a bathe the other day. In Green Hill Park lake, at Barnet, there is an island, and on this island a little dog somehow became stranded. Police-Sergeant Riches heard the little dog's cries and tried to induce him to swim to the mainland, but the little dog was frightened. So the sergeant fetched his bathing costume, got into it, and swam twenty yards to the island, and got the dog safely back. Then he dressed and went back to his duty.

ONE UP FOR THE BOYS!

Here's great news from Canada, where a government statistician has stated that a boy is worth twice as much to the country as a girl! He says that at birth a boy is worth £1,800, while a girl is only worth £900. By the time he has reached the age of twenty-five the boy is worth £6,000, while the girl is worth only £3,000. Tell that to your sister!

AN AMAZING SUBMARINE.

A wonderful submarine was recently demonstrated to French naval experts by its inventor, M. Julien Guillaume, and if this amazing invention proves to be really successful, it will revolutionise the submarine altogether. The demonstration was made with a small submarine weighing a quarter of a ton, and the inventor filled the ballast tanks and sent the submarine to the bottom. He then proceeded to raise it to the surface without discharging the water from the ballast tanks! The experts were amazed and were quite unable

to make out how it was done, and the inventor would not disclose his secret. What it comes to is that one of these submarines cannot be sunk beyond recovery.

A BOY WHO MADE GOOD.

Axel Wenner-Gren is a Swede, and he is now also a millionaire. He was a poor boy, and rose to his present position entirely through his own hard work. Near his home, when he was a boy, were many factories that tinned herrings for export, and the boy noticed that they threw away the strips of tin that remained when they had made the tins. Although he was only nine years old at the time, Axel saw the possibilities of this tin, and made ash trays and things with it, and soon he was doing a thriving business.

Before long he had organised his school-fellows to help him in the manufacture of these things. That was his start; now he is a millionaire!

WARRIOR, THE WAR-HORSE.

Lord Mottistone who, until he recently received a peerage, was General J. E. B. Seely, has an old horse called Warrior, of which he is very proud. Warrior is twenty-three years old and he still hunts with the hounds, despite the fact that during the war he spent four years up in the front line and was in many battles.

General Seely took him to France with him early in August, 1914, and he was still riding him in 1918. The general rode him in March of that year in a desperate British advance, when eight hundred horses were killed in an hour, but Warrior came through untouched. He never shied from the sound of a shell, but he always swerved away from a stream of bullets, for he knew they were meant for him. Sometimes General Seely rode another horse up to the front line, but if he did Warrior would come out of his stable unsaddled, and follow the general about like a dog.

Warrior also has another great distinction, for Sir John French rode him at the battle of Ypres, and addressed his troops from Warrior's back.

And now, when he goes out hunting, Warrior always insists on being up with the leaders.

AN INTERESTING LETTER.

Bernard P. Caplin, of Totton, Hants, writes to me telling me that a Jewish ship with a Jewish crew recently entered Southampton harbour flying the Jewish flag. Bernard says that this is the first time that this flag has been flown on a ship for two thousand years. I cannot personally vouch for this statement, but no doubt Bernard has good reason for making it, and it is certainly very interesting.

GOOD DOG!

Here is a story of a clever dog. Ross is an Airedale, and he lives at Ham Common. Recently he saved the lives of Mr. Somers, the dog's owner, and his family by his prompt action. Mr. Somers was awakened in the night by the sound of Ross scratching at his bed-room door. He followed the dog downstairs and found that one of the ground-floor rooms was on fire. He immediately summoned the fire brigade, and the fire was confined to the one room, but disaster would almost have been certain had it not been for Ross. Good dog, Ross!

THE EDITOR.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

Falsely Accused!

(Continued from page 12.)

"I think the lot of them all went in the same collection," said Tom Merry firmly. "I don't see that it's any good trying to believe that there's not a thief in the School House any longer. There is one."

"My hat!"
"The question is, who is it?" said Tom Merry. And his glance was very dark and suspicious as it rested upon Mellish. Mellish looked up with a haggard face.

"I don't know anything about it," he said. "I know that you'll all believe that I'm guilty. I can't help it. I'm innocent."

"Honour bright?" said Tom Merry.
"Yes, honour bright! I—I don't deny that I've done some things which weren't quite—the thing," stammered Mellish. "You know I have. But I've never stolen—and I don't know what's become of Kildare's watch. Besides, if I were to become a thief, do you think I should be idiot enough to take Kildare's watch? It's a watch everybody in the school knows, and it's got his monogram on it. I couldn't sell it or pawn it without being found out."

Tom Merry nodded.
"Something in that," he remarked, looking at Blake. "I wouldn't answer for Mellish's honesty, but he's too deep to put his foot in it like that, I think."

"Somebody's done it, though."

"Yes; that's the puzzle."
"What's Kildare doing about the matter?" said Blake. "Is he going to lay it before the Head?"

"He's given me an hour to return the watch," said Mellish.
"And then?"

"Then he's going to Mr. Railton."
"Then if you've taken the watch you'd better jolly well take it back at once," said Blake. "It's a good chance for you."

Mellish bit his lip.
"But I haven't taken it."
"Well, if you stick to that you'll have to take your chance," said Blake. "I don't like to suspect any chap of being a thief, but you're more likely to steal than any other fellow in the House, and that's plain English."

"You're jolly glad of a chance to be down on me!" said Mellish venomously. "You'd be glad if I were expelled!"

"I shouldn't be sorry," said Blake frankly. "You're no credit to St. Jim's. But the Head won't expel you unless you're guilty—you can bet on that!"

The door opened, and the eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glistened into the room. Arthur Augustus himself followed it.

"I was told I should find you here, deah boy!" he remarked. "Leslie told me you were here. Leslie was lookin' vevy upset. Is anythin' the mattah?"

"Yes, rather! No wonder, when he's found his study-mate is a blessed thief—or suspected of being a thief, anyway," said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"
"I'm not a thief!" said Mellish.
"There is a thief in the School House, howevah," said D'Arcy. "That's what I was lookin' for you for, Blake—to consult with you about it. My notecase has disappeared."

"What!" yelled Blake.
"My little notecase that I usually carry

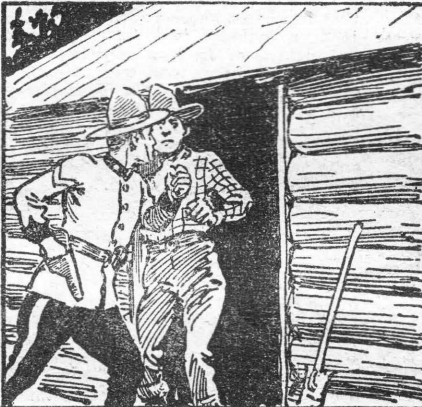


"Faster, boy, faster!" Mick urged his galloping horse to even greater speed, for he was hot on the trail of Jake Durand, a badly wanted outlaw. Crack, crack! Now Jake had turned and was firing at Mick.



The firing was wild, however, and Mick escaped injury. Then, just when it seemed that he would capture the outlaw, his horse stumbled. Down to the ground crashed Mick, while Durand raced on to freedom.

"Of a Mountie no more was lame chase, t



Immediately Mick's suspicions were aroused. "In the name of the law I'm going to search your cabin!" he snapped to the man, and pushing that now startled individual aside, strode into the hut.



But no sooner had he crossed the threshold than a leg kicked out from behind the door. A heavy boot smashed against Mick's wrist, numbing it, and his revolver clattered to the floor of the cabin.

"Hand jeered a hand, st moved to tricks an



Mick now found himself attacked by the outlaw's accomplice, while Durand took the opportunity to escape. Thud! Desperate to get after his quarry, Mick knocked out his opponent with a smashing blow.



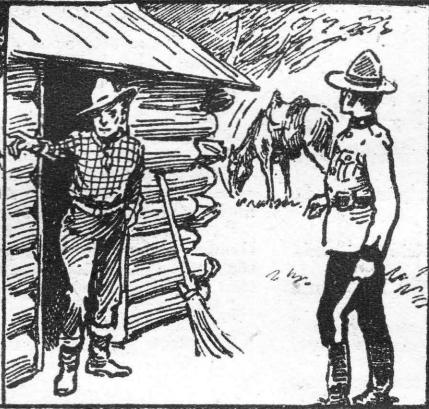
By that time, however, Durand had reached his horse and was scrambling into the saddle. "Out of the way!" he snarled, as he saw Mick running towards him, and deliberately charged down upon the Mountie.

Just in but as th self at th waist, h both me

(Don't miss the final exciting adventu

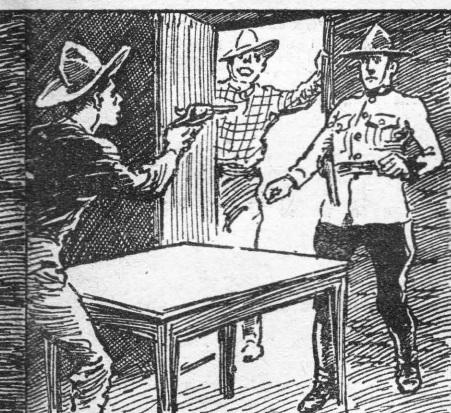
HE MOUNTED!

—STORY OF THE WILD WEST!



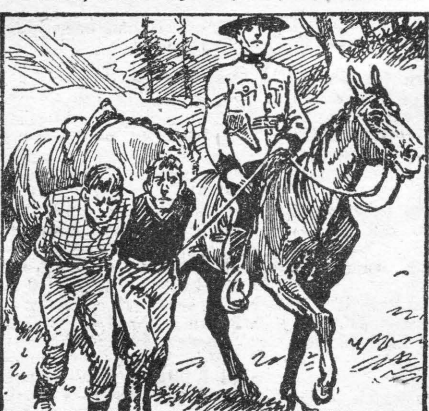
"Of all the cruel luck!" groaned the Mountie bitterly. Mick himself had suffered no more than a few bruises, but his horse was lame in one leg, and to continue the chase, therefore, was out of the question.

"Seen anything of a fellow named Durand?" Mick asked the question of a man standing in the doorway of a log cabin. The man explained where he had seen him; then Mick suddenly saw the outlaw's horse.



"Hands up, Mister Interfering Mountie!" jeered a voice, and Jake Durand, gun in hand, stepped from behind the door and moved to the middle of the room. "Try any tricks and I'll plug you!"

What happened next was swift and dramatic! Mick grabbed hold of the table that stood between him and the outlaw, heaved upwards and hurled it at the outlaw. Durand, taken by surprise, toppled over.



Just in time Mick dodged the flying hoofs, but as the horse rushed past he hurled himself at the outlaw. Grabbing him round the waist, he pulled him from the horse, and both men rolled to the ground.

Half an hour later Mick hit the trail—with his two subdued prisoners tied helplessly together. "It's a long walk back to headquarters, but you'll have plenty of time to recover in the cells!" said Mick.

ing adventure of Mick next week.)

in my waistcoat pocket," said D'Arcy. "I took it out to fill it with notes when I changed a fivah, and I was called away and left it in the study. Somebody took it while I was fetchin' a book from the school librawy for Wushden."

"Look here, Gussy, none of your rot!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Do you mean to say that your notecase has gone?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What was, in it?"

"Five pound-notes!"

"You ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You deserve to lose the money for being so careless with it," said Tom Merry. "But this finishes it, Blake. There's a thief in the School House, and there's no doubt about that."

"Not a bit, I suppose."

"Wathah not!"

Mellish looked haggard.

"I suppose you'll be suspecting me of stealing D'Arcy's notecase as well as Kildare's watch!" he exclaimed.

D'Arcy turned his monocle on the cad of the Fourth.

"Who's suspected you?" he demanded.

Tom Merry explained.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, when he had heard. "Mattahs do look wathah black against Mellish, and no mistake!"

"I have not touched any of the things!"

"We have only your word for that, deah boy, and your word isn't worth much, you see."

"That's how the matter stands," agreed Tom Merry. "We all know that Mellish's word can't be taken."

"You can believe me or not, as you like," said Mellish, with a livid face. "But I don't know anything about the thefts, that's all."

He rose to his feet as he spoke, and moved away from the armchair. Blake uttered a sudden exclamation.

"My hat!"

"What—"

"Look!"

Blake pointed to the seat of the armchair which Mellish had left only a few seconds before. There, half-imbedded in the deep cushion, where the back joined the seat of the chair, was something that glittered in the gaslight. It was the case of a watch.

Tom Merry sprang forward and jerked it out to view. He turned it over in his hand. On the back was the monogram "E. K."

Eric Kildare!

It was Kildare's watch!

CHAPTER 10. Hidden Loot!

TOM MERRY held the watch up to view. The light gleamed upon it. The face of Tom Merry was stern and accusing.

Mellish staggered against the mantel-piece, white as a sheet. He seemed unable to take his terrified eyes off the watch.

"Good heavens!" he stammered.

"Thief!" said Blake.

Mellish gave a strangled cry.

"I—I don't know anything about it! I didn't know it was there!"

"It's a bit too late to tell us that," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "I don't think anything could be clearer than that."

"Wathah not!"

"It's been put there!" panted Mellish. "It's—it's a plot to ruin me—to drive me from the school! You all hate me, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,355.

and want to get rid of me! This is a plot of you fellows to get me expelled!"

"Oh, shut up, you cad! Do you think anybody at St. Jim's would be fool enough to believe that?"

"I didn't know the watch was there!"

"I don't believe you—I can't!"

Mellish stared at the chums, his face perfectly ghastly. He seemed to be almost overcome by the horror of the situation.

Strong disbelief was written in each of the three faces looking at him. How, indeed, could they believe him?

"Kildare gave you one hour, you say, to take the watch back," said Blake, after a pause. "You'd better take it!"

"He'll think I stole it."

"Well, you did steal it!"

"I didn't!"

"What's the good of keeping that up now?"

"Oh, hang you!" shrieked Mellish. "I know it's a plot! I'll go to the Head—I'll go to Mr. Railton. I—"

"Go, then!" said Tom Merry.

Mellish took a step towards the door, and then stopped. He was trembling in every limb.

"They wouldn't believe me any more than you do," he said hoarsely and brokenly.

"What can you expect?"

"You had better take the watch back to Kildare," said Blake quietly.

"He—he'll think—" Mellish's voice trailed away into silence.

"If he keeps silence it will be better for you, Mellish," said Tom Merry. "If it's possible that you are innocent,

A READY RETORT.

A traveller entered a village with a dog, and meeting him, an Irishman asked what breed the dog was.

"It's a cross between an ape and an Irishman!" said the dog's owner insolently.



"Faith," retorted the Irishman, "then we're both related to the animal!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Ghasles, a Pirou-Plage, Manche, France.

that will give you time to find out how the watch really came there."

Mellish took the watch in his trembling fingers.

"You're right. I'll take it back to Kildare. But, mind—I don't confess anything! I don't know how the watch came there!"

And he staggered rather than walked from the study.

The chums of the School House stood silent and dismayed when he was gone.

"This is an awful business," said Blake, breaking the silence at last. "Mellish has always played pretty low down, but I never thought he would come to this!"

"Wathah not!"

"I suppose there can be no doubt?" said Tom Merry hesitatingly.

"What doubt can there be? All the evidence was against him, and now we've found the watch—almost in his pocket!"

Tom Merry nodded.

It really did seem as if there was no room for doubt, and yet something in the white, wretched face of the Fourth Form sneak had appealed strangely to Tom Merry.

"As a matter of fact, Mellish is entitled to the benefit of the doubt, but I don't see where the doubt comes in," Arthur Augustus remarked. "The watch must have slipped out of his pocket on to the chair."

"Yet that's curious, too," said Tom Merry. "I don't really see how the watch could have slipped out of his pocket."

"But if it had been on the chair, deah boy, we should have seen it."

"It may have been poked into the cushions to hide it."

"Poss—but not pwob," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Besides, as this is Mellish's study, who could have hidden it but Mellish?"

"Yes, that's so; but—"

"Let's look, and see if there's room for the watch to be hidden in the chair," said Jack Blake.

They examined the chair. Where the padded back joined the seat there was a rent in the leather covering, in the very place where the watch had been taken. Tom Merry inserted his fingers into the rent.

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"Plenty of room here to hide a watch," he remarked. "The bump Mellish gave when he dropped into the chair may have jolted it half out, you know, and that's how we came to see it when he got up."

"Poss—but—"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as his fingers touched something hard. "There's something else in here besides padding!"

"Phew! What is it?"

"It feels like a knife!"

"My hat!"

"I've got it! Look!"

Tom Merry drew out a small penknife with a pearl handle.

Jack Blake uttered a sharp exclamation.

"That's Gore's knife!"

"Ah, he said he had lost one!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"See if there's anything else there, Merry. You may fish out the cake-knife and Figgy's pin—to say nothing of Glyn's dry battery!" exclaimed Blake excitedly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

Blake examined the rent in the chair, but there was nothing more to be discovered—nothing but padding.

"Bai Jove, it's wathah cleah now!" said D'Arcy. "I shouldn't wondah if we find the west of the things if we search the study! I don't pwopose doin' so, of course, as that would be a wathah mean pwoccedin'!"

"Mellish is guilty!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The three juniors left the study with frowning brows.

CHAPTER 11.

Disbelieved!

"WELL?" Kildare uttered that monosyllable grimly as Mellish presented himself in his study.

Darrell of the Sixth was with Kildare, and he turned to the window. Mellish cast an uneasy glance at Darrell.

"You can speak before Darrell," said Kildare coldly. "I shall consult with him about what I do in the matter, anyway!"

"All right!"

"Have you found the watch?"

"Yes."

Kildare smiled grimly.

"I thought you could manage to do so if you tried. Where is it?"

"Here!"

Mellish laid the watch upon the table.

"And now, what have you to say for yourself?" asked Kildare. And Darrell turned round from the window and fixed his eyes upon the wretched junior.

"Nothing!" said Mellish desperately. "Only—only I didn't take it!"

Kildare stared.

"You didn't take the watch?"

"No!"

"Yet you have brought it back?"

"It was found."

"It was found? By whom?"

"Blake saw it—in the armchair—in my study!"

"In your study?" said Kildare, with emphasis.

"Yes. It had been hidden in the lining, I think."

"By you?"

"No."

"By whom, then?"

"I don't know."

"You are lying, Mellish!"

"I thought you'd say so," said Mellish sullenly. "It's a plot to ruin me, I believe."

"A plot? Nonsense! Who should plot against you?" said Kildare testily.

"Tom Merry, and Blake, and the rest!" said Mellish viciously. "They hate me. They'd like to see me kicked out of St. Jim's!"

"It would be all the better for St. Jim's, I think, if you were kicked out!" said Kildare sternly. "How dare you make such an accusation against Tom Merry and Blake, without a shred of evidence?"

"Somebody put the watch there!"

"Yes, and I have very little doubt as to who it was," said Kildare. "Well, you have restored it, and I told you that if you did so I would do the best I could for you. I will do so. I—I'll give you another chance. I will say nothing—but mind. This is your last chance. If I hear of anything missing from the School House again, I shall know where to look for the thief!"

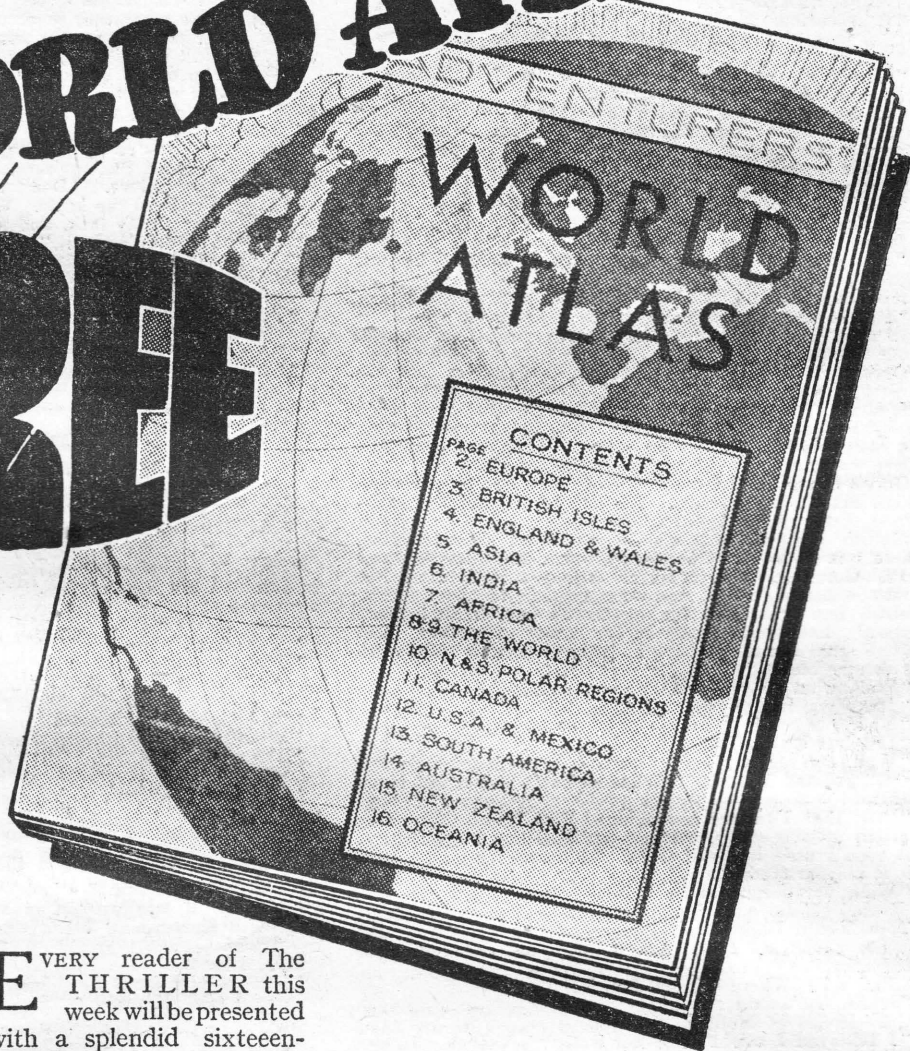
"I tell you—"

(Continued on page 18.)

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16 Page

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"That's enough. Get out of my study!"

Mellish went out with a spiteful scowl.

"That's the meanest and rottenest waster in the School House, Darrell!" said Kildare. "I don't know whether I've done right in giving him another chance."

"It's a curious business," said the prefect slowly.

"Oh, it's plain enough! He was hard up, and he took the watch with the idea of pawning it, of course."

"It is curious that he should still protest his innocence, in the face of such overwhelming evidence," Darrell said slowly.

"That's his nerve. He would lie for lying's sake, I believe, if he had no other motive."

"I suppose it's not possible that there's some mistake—that some fellow planted this on him for a lark," the prefect suggested.

"Well, it's possible, I suppose."

"But you don't think it likely?"

"No, I don't! A fellow who would play a trick like that would be a meaner rat than Mellish himself—and such a fellow would be hard to find in St. Jim's!"

"He gave me an impression, somehow, that he was speaking the truth!"

Kildare shook his head.

"I've bowled him out in too many lies to trust a word he says now," he replied. "It's pretty certain that he was lying this time!"

Darrell nodded, but as if not quite satisfied, and the subject dropped.

Mellish went away in a more collected mood than when he last quitted the captain's study. His face was still white, but very spiteful. His eyes were gleaming with malice. There was a curious "catty" expression on his face.

Gore's heavy hand fell upon his shoulder as he came out of the Sixth Form passage. The burly Shell fellow stopped him.

Mellish stopped, but with a grunt of dissatisfaction. There was no love lost between Mellish and Gore in these days. Gore had been trying for a long time to turn over a new leaf, and Mellish had done his best to prevent him. Mellish had failed, so far as that went; though Gore certainly had many lapses in his career of reform. But he had sense enough to have as little as possible to do with his former crony.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Mellish.

"Have you seen my penknife?"

"Your penknife? No!"

"I've lost it!"

"Well, I'm not a blessed detective, or an inquiry department," grunted Mellish. "What on earth has it got to do with me?"

"Only that I've just remembered that I was sharpening a pencil in your study, while I was speaking to you there, last time I used it," said Gore. "I thought I might have left it in your study."

"Well, you didn't—at least, I haven't seen it."

"Gore! Hallo! Is this your penknife?"

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy came up, and Tom held out the penknife. Gore took it, with an exclamation of satisfaction.

"That's it. Where did you find it?"

"In Mellish's study."

Gore looked at Mellish.

"I told you I might have left it there, Mellish. It was mighty queer that Tom Merry should find it there, and you hadn't seen it!"

"Those who hide can find!" said Mellish, with a bitter sneer.

Tom Merry, who was turning away, swung back, with a very red face. He had intended to say nothing of the circumstances of the discovery of the penknife, but Mellish's remark could hardly be allowed to pass unchallenged.

"What did you say, Mellish?" he exclaimed.

"You heard what I said."

"You said that those who hide can find," said Tom Merry, with flashing eyes, "in reference to my finding that knife in your study."

"Yes," said Mellish defiantly.

"Which is as good as saying that I put it there."

"Oh, Gore says he left it there," said Mellish, a little alarmed by Tom Merry's look. "I don't say you put it there."

"It was hidden there, as a matter of fact," said Tom angrily. "It was hidden in the padding of the armchair."

"Phew!" said Gore. "How did you come to find it?"

"I was looking there. Something else had been found there—I needn't say what," replied Tom Merry. "I found the knife."

"Well, as I said before, those who hide can find," said Mellish savagely. "Yes, you can lick me if you like, Tom Merry, and I'll say it! I'll yell it out before the whole school, if you like."

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Tom Merry's fists had clenched, but he unclenched them again.

"I won't lick you," he said scornfully. "You're not worth it. If you had the pluck to put up a fight, I'd take you into the gym this minute."

"I'm not going to fight you," said Mellish sullenly, "and I'm not going to have a charge of stealing fastened on me."

"Stealing!" said Gore.

"Yes, that's what they're accusing me of, stealing your knife, and hiding it in the armchair. If it was hidden there, I didn't hide it."

"Then who did?" demanded Gore.

"Somebody who wanted to fix this thing on me, I suppose," said Mellish, with a savage look at Tom Merry.

"Rats!" said Gore.

"Oh course, you're against me, too——"

"You'll find all St. Jim's against you if you talk piffle like that," said Gore. "Don't be a fool. I don't believe you wanted to steal the knife. Why don't you own up that you did it for a silly lark, and have done with it?"

"Because I didn't do it."

"Oh, rats!"

Mellish walked away, his face dark with rage and hatred. Gore slipped the penknife into his pocket.

"Thanks for bringing it to me," he said. "But, I say, you don't suppose that Mellish meant to steal it, do you?"

"I hope not," said Tom Merry.

And he said no more on the subject.

CHAPTER 12.

Kerruish's News!

"KERRUISH says so!"

"Rats!"

"Well, he says so!"

"Where's Kerruish?"

"Hallo!" said the Manx lad, rising from the armchair in front of the fire in the Junior Common-room. "Who wants me?"

"Tom Merry."

"Well, here I am," said Kerruish.

"I don't want you," said Tom Merry. "Hancock has just told me a yarn, that's all, and says he had it from you."

"So I had," said Hancock.

"What's it about?" asked Kerruish.

"The new chap."

"Oh!"

"Tell him what your cousin said in his letter, Kerruish," said Hancock.

"Oh, all right! I've got a cousin at Freshfield School," explained Kerruish. "I know the new chap here came from Freshfield——"

"How do you know?" asked Tom Merry.

"Because it was written in a Latin grammar he lent me," said Kerruish. "There was his name and school on the flyleaf."

"Oh, I see!"

"I asked him about Freshfield, and whether he knew my cousin," said Kerruish. "He didn't seem to like the subject."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"I don't know. I only know he didn't. That's how I came to mention him to my cousin when I wrote. And in return my cousin said——"

"Well?"

"I don't want to spread it round the school——"

"You've done that already," said Tom, half-laughing.

"You may as well out with it now, you young ass!"

"Well, I suppose he can explain it, if it's explainable," said Kerruish. "My cousin said there was a chap named Reginald Leslie at Freshfield for three days, and then he left suddenly."

"Why?"

"Nobody knew," said Kerruish. "My cousin said that Freshfield wasn't Leslie's first school, either, and that nobody knew why he had left the previous one."

"There you are!" said Hancock.

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Oh, it's all rot!" he said. "I know this much—Leslie's a decent chap, and if he left a school he had good reasons for it."

"I don't say he hadn't," said Kerruish. "I'm not saying it against Leslie. I'm not up against him in any way. I like him. Only that's how the matter stands, that's all."

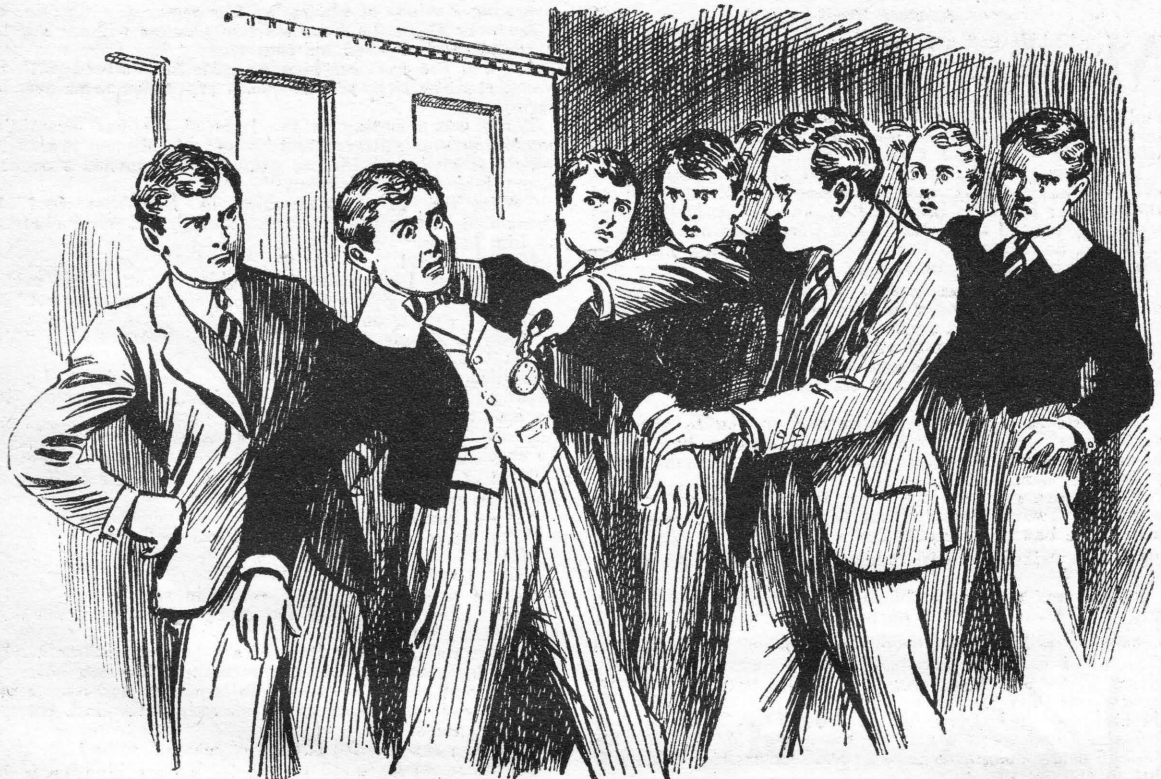
"I expect your cousin's barking up the wrong tree in some way."

"Look here, my cousin——"

"Oh, blow your cousin!" said Tom Merry.

And he walked away. Kerruish looked a little disconcerted, and Hancock broke into a chuckle.

"Tom Merry has taken a big fancy to Leslie," Hancock



"Turn out your pocket, Leslie!" ordered Kildare. "I won't!" exclaimed the new boy. "Then I will!" And the captain of St. Jim's grasped Leslie, slipped his fingers into the junior's pocket and drew out what it contained. It was the gold watch stolen from Kildare!

remarked. "They all seem to like the new chap. He's got a pleasant way with him that I like myself."

"So do I," said Kerruish. "I was only just mentioning this. I didn't mean it as anything up against Leslie in any way."

"Of course not."

"I don't see why you wanted to go and tell Tom Merry!" exclaimed Kerruish.

"Well, you told me," said Hancock.

"Well, anyway, I don't see that it matters."

And Kerruish sat down and opened his book again.

Tom Merry, however, seemed to think that it mattered a great deal, and his brow wore a frown as he left the Common-room.

The thoughtless juniors who had chattered over the little item of news had not considered it deeply in any way; but, as a matter of fact, if Kerruish's information were correct, it certainly told against the new Fourth Former.

And Leslie was popular in the school already.

He was kind and obliging, good-natured to a fault, and he never bore malice. He was pretty fair at class work; sufficiently so to keep him in the good graces of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form.

All the chums of the School House liked Leslie.

Even his study-mate, Mellish, who liked nobody but himself as a rule, rather liked the new boy in the Fourth.

Leslie did not chum up with him—few fellows could have endured to really chum up with a chap like Mellish—but he was always civil to him, ready to oblige him, and to help him or go with him anywhere.

The new boy seemed happy enough in his new school; though sometimes there was a shade upon his brow which seemed to indicate that he had matters for reflection that he did not share with his friends. But no one was inclined to pry into his private concerns.

Tom Merry left the School House with a thoughtful expression upon his face. He did not like the information he had just received from Kerruish.

As it happened, he almost ran into the fellow he was thinking about as he came out upon the stone steps. Leslie was standing there, watching a foot race on the gravel path between Blake of the School House and Kerr of the New House.

He tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder and stopped him. "Penny for your thoughts," he remarked in his cheery way.

Tom Merry laughed.

"You can have them for nothing," he said. "They're about you."

"Good!" said Leslie. "Go ahead!"

"I may as well speak about it," said Tom Merry. "It's none of my business, of course, and I dare say you will tell me so."

"I'm not likely to do that, Tom Merry."

"Well, as most of the fellows will soon know about it, I may as well mention it right off," said Tom. "It's about your last school."

Leslie coloured.

"What about my last school?"

"You were at Freshfield, weren't you?"

Leslie hesitated a moment and looked at Tom Merry hard.

"How do you know?" he asked abruptly.

"A fellow saw it in one of your books."

"Well, I was there; there's no secret about it, that I know of."

"You left suddenly?"

"Rather suddenly."

"Will you say why?"

Leslie laughed.

"Is this a catechism?" he asked. "What are you driving at, anyway?"

"Don't think I'm curious," said Tom Merry; "I'm not. Only the fellows have the story that you left Freshfield suddenly, and some of them will want to know why. If you explained right away it would be all the better, that's all. A chap is supposed to be perfectly frank about his antecedents here."

"I left Freshfield because—well, because the place didn't suit me, and I didn't suit the place," said Leslie.

"I see. That's what you'll say if you're asked?"

"I have nothing to say. I've answered you because you're a friend; but if anybody else asks me, I shall tell him to mind his own business."

"Well, I suppose you know your own affairs best," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps I oughtn't to have mentioned it, but as you're new here, I thought I'd say a word."

"It's all right, old man—thanks!"

And the subject dropped.

CHAPTER 13.
Another Theft !

MELLISH had gone out into the quadrangle, and he walked about there by himself for some time. Nobody seemed to want to speak to him. Some of the fags called out to him when they saw him; and Mellish writhed as he had to endure the taunts and insults he had himself heaped upon Jack Blake at a time when Blake was under a cloud of suspicion.

It was justice at last for the cad of the Fourth. The evidence against him was convincing enough to most of the fellows; but only because they knew that Mellish was what they termed a "rotter." His word could not be relied upon, in any case; so how could one pay any attention when he protested his innocence?

The story of the unpleasant discovery in Study No. 8 might have been kept a secret but for Mellish himself. He had blurted it out recklessly before Gore, and it had, of course, spread; but that very blurring out was a sign of innocence, Tom Merry thought. But the general opinion was that Mellish could account for all the late thefts, if he chose to do so.

As Mellish's study-mate, Leslie was spoken to about it a great deal. But the new boy in the Fourth firmly declined to enter into any discussion of the matter. It seemed very painful to him.

Mellish came in at last from the dusky quad with a scowling brow. A Second Form fag put his head round the corner and bawled "Thief!" and vanished.

Mellish walked on with burning ears, and went slowly upstairs.

Mellish had a quiet, catlike tread—a tread which fellows said he cultivated for the purpose of overhearing things he

wasn't expected to hear. It was quite possible, for eavesdropping was one of Mellish's little ways.

He went along the Fourth Form passage without making a sound, and reached his own study. The door was half-open, and the gas was burning. Mellish entered with his quiet, stealthy step, and a curious expression came over his face.

Leslie was standing in the light of the gas, examining something that glittered and shone. He slipped it into his waistcoat pocket as Mellish came in, and turned a sudden, angry look upon the junior.

"What do you come sneaking in like that for?" he demanded, with a passionateness Mellish had never observed in him before.

Mellish stared.

"I suppose I can come into my own study?" he said.

"You've no right to sneak about spying on people!"

"Who's spying on people?"

"You're always doing it!" said Leslie savagely. "You ought to be kicked out of the school!"

Mellish could only stare. The change from Leslie's usually pleasant manner was so sudden, so unexpected, that he was taken utterly by surprise.

Leslie seemed to realise that he was saying too much, and he checked himself suddenly, and turned towards the door.

"But, I say!" exclaimed Mellish. "What is it—what have you got there that I mustn't see?"

"I— Nothing!"

"You have something in your hand—"

"Rats!"

"But, I say—"

"Mind your own business, confound you!"

And Leslie went out of the study and banged the door after him.

Mellish was left in a state of absolute astonishment. He did not know what in the least to make of the new boy.

Leslie had always been civil to him and had maintained that he believed Mellish to be innocent of the dark charges brought against him.

What did this sudden change of manner mean?

Mellish could not make it out; but he had his prep to do, and he dismissed the matter from his mind at last. He sat down to his work, and did it badly and wretchedly enough. No one came into the study while he was at work.

Mellish was feeling very lonely when he had finished.

He left the study, to go down to the Common-room. The chances were that nobody would speak to him there, unless to insult him, or answer him if he spoke. But human companionship was something, even if unfriendly.

Mellish went slowly and heavily down the stairs.

As he entered the Lower Hall there was a sudden exclamation in Darrell's voice, and a rush of feet.

Kildare and Darrell grasped the junior, one by either shoulder.

"Here he is!" said Kildare grimly.

Mellish wriggled and looked scared.

"Wh-what's the matter?" he panted.

"You know well enough," said Kildare. "I warned you that if it happened again, you'd get no mercy. Come along!"

"Where?" shrieked Mellish, in terror.

"To the Head!"

Mellish's knees knocked together.

"To—the Head?" he stammered.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Come, come!"

"Stop!" shrieked Mellish, as the two prefects walked him along, without giving him a chance to resist. "Stop! What's it for? Tell me; I've a right to know! I—"

"Very well," said Kildare, without stopping, however. "It's for stealing Darrell's watch."

"What!"

"Darrell's watch has been stolen."

"I—I—"

"It was taken from the drawer in my room," said Darrell.

"I—I didn't take it—"

"That's for you to prove," said Kildare. "I dare say it will be found in your room, as my watch was—and Gore's penknife, as I've heard since. Anyway, it's the Head's business to look into it, and you're coming to Dr. Holmes now."

"I—I—"

"Shut up, and come on!"

"Stop!" cried Mellish. "I—I tell you I'm innocent, and—and I believe I know who the thief is!"

"Nonsense!"

"Kildare! Give me fair play!" gasped the wretched



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junior. "You're always fair to the other fellows—why can't you be fair to me? For mercy's sake—"

Kildare paused irresolutely. In spite of his strong conviction of Mellish's guilt, there was something in the despairing tones of the junior that went to his heart. He stopped, and Darrell did the same.

"Well, Mellish, what have you to say? Quick!"

"I—I believe I know the thief."

"Who—quick?"

"The new chap, Leslie!" panted Mellish. "Oh, I know it now—I—"

"You young cad!" said Kildare wrathfully. "I haven't seen much of Leslie, but he's a decent-looking chap, and the fellows all like him."

"Listen to me—only listen! Was there anything stolen before he came to St. Jim's?" panted Mellish.

"Oh!"

"The first thing stolen was Figgins' pin," went on Mellish feverishly. "It was stolen during a raid on the New House. I wasn't there—any of the fellows will tell you that I wasn't there. Leslie was."

Kildare and Darrell exchanged glances.

"The things have been found in my study," went on Mellish, with a gasp. "But it's Leslie's study, too. You know that."

Kildare hesitated.

"What has made you start this yarn now?" he exclaimed. "It's all true as far as it goes, but it was just as true when you were first accused. Why couldn't you suggest then that Leslie did it—if it isn't a yarn you've thought out since to meet the case?"

"Because—because—"

"Well?"

"Because when I went into my study this evening Leslie was there, and—and he had something in his hand that was gold—and glittered in the light. He flew into a fearful temper when he saw me, and I—I wondered. Now I know."

Kildare compressed his lips.

"Where is Leslie?"

"I—I don't know; but—"

"Better see him before we go to the Head," said Darrell. "Right!" said Kildare shortly. "This will have to be looked into. If Mellish is lying—as usual—he will have to suffer for it. It's his last chance, anyway—if he's a thief he leaves St. Jim's."

"Here, Tom Merry!" called out Darrell, sighting the hero of the Shell in the passage. "Do you know where Leslie is?"

"Yes; in the Common-room."

"Thanks!"

Kildare and Darrell strode away towards the Junior Common-room with the trembling Mellish. Tom Merry stared at them and followed. It was clear that something was about to happen.

CHAPTER 14.

Amazing!

LESLIE was in the Common-room. He was playing a game of chess with Monty Lowther, and playing very well. His good-looking face was very calm and cheerful, and he seemed to have no trouble on his mind, excepting that of keeping his king out of check. It seemed impossible, looking at him, to imagine that he was the thief of the School House.

"Check!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, all right! I—"

"Leslie!"

The new boy looked up. Other fellows in all parts of the room looked round, too. The sight of the white and trembling Mellish between the two prefects was enough to attract general attention.

"Hallo!" said Leslie, in surprise.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There's goin' to be a wow, deah boys. I wathah think Mellish is bowled out at last."

"Serve him right," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare looked keenly at the new boy, as he rose to his feet. Leslie was looking surprised and startled, but not at all frightened. His glance passed from Kildare to Darrell, and from Darrell to Mellish.

"Anything wrong?" asked Leslie.

"Yes," said Kildare abruptly, "very wrong. Darrell's watch has been stolen from a drawer in his study."

Leslie turned red.

"What is that to do with me?"

"Mellish suggests—"

"Oh, Mellish!" said Leslie contemptuously. "I suppose no one takes any notice of what Mellish says."

"Rather not!" exclaimed a dozen voices. "Mellish is a thief!"

The cad of the Fourth cast a haggard glance round.

"Give me a chance!" he exclaimed.

"Mellish has a right to be heard!" exclaimed Kildare. "He is suspected of being the thief who has been pestering us lately. If he's guilty, he will be expelled from the school."

"And a jolly good thing, too!" said Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

"Silence! Leslie, Mellish suggests that the stolen articles found in your study were placed there by you, and not by him. He declares his belief that you stole Darrell's watch from his study. Mind, I'm not saying I believe a word of it. Only I want to hear what you have to say."

Leslie was silent.

"It's all lies!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Leslie's all right."

"Is he?" shrieked Mellish. "Look in his pocket—see what you will find there!"

Leslie's hand flew to his waistcoat pocket.

The action was unconscious; but it betrayed him. Monty Lowther had been about to exclaim that, if the watch were in Leslie's pocket, Mellish had slipped it in. But Leslie's action confounded him, and the words died on his lips.

Silence fell upon the excited juniors.

Leslie's action had been seen by a score of pairs of eyes, and it simply dumbfounded all who saw it. If the stolen watch proved to be in that particular pocket, Leslie stood condemned before them all.

Kildare knitted his brow.

"Which pocket, Mellish?" he asked curtly.

Mellish's eyes were blazing now.

"That pocket!" he exclaimed. "The one he has put his hand on."

"Look here—" began Leslie.

"Turn out that pocket!" said Kildare.

"There's nothing in it."

"Then turn it out."

"I won't!"

Kildare's face set hard.

"He's a thief!" shrieked Mellish. "He's a thief! Why won't he turn out his pocket? He knows the watch is there."

"Dry up!" muttered Manners.

"I won't! I won't! He's the thief!"

"Turn out your pocket, Leslie."

"I—I—"

"Well, I will," said Kildare.

He grasped the junior in his strong hand. Leslie struggled, but his wrists were jerked together, and held in an iron grip in Kildare's right hand. Then the captain of St. Jim's slipped his fingers into the waistcoat pocket and drew out what it contained—a gold watch!

There was a buzz of surprise and horror from the crowd of juniors. Leslie's face was pale.

"Is that your watch, Darrell?"

"Yes."

The prefect took the watch. Then all eyes were fixed upon Leslie. His own eyes sought the floor, and the colour came and went in his cheeks.

"Search him!" exclaimed Mellish exultantly. "Search him! Very likely he's got the other things on him, too!"

"Have you any other stolen articles on you, Leslie?"

Leslie looked up. He was recovering his coolness now, and there was even a ghost of a grin upon his face.

"I'll see!" he said calmly.

And the juniors gasped.

Was this Leslie—this cool, unblushing thief—was this the fellow they had learned to like and admire in the few days they had known him?

"He's mad," muttered Tom Merry, who was very pale.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Turn out your pockets!" said Kildare sternly.

Leslie made no further demur. He turned out his pockets, and Figgins' wonderful diamond pin came into view, and then Arthur Augustus' notecase. The new boy tossed it over coolly to the swell of the School House.

"You'll find the cash in it all right," he remarked.

"Bai Jove!"

"The cake-knife is in my hatbox," said Leslie calmly.

(Continued on the next page.)

TELL FATHER



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WRITE TO-DAY FOR FREE ART LIST.

"You'll find a good many other little things about my study, too—in my boxes—tins of blacking, and bits of string and sealing-wax, packets of stationery, and so on—things that haven't been missed."

"What!"

"That's about all."

There was a hush. Kildare fixed his eyes upon the new boy.

"I suppose you know you will be expelled from the school?" he said.

"I know I shall have to leave."

"Have you any explanation to make—any excuse to offer?" said Kildare.

"Lots!"

"What do you mean? Why did you steal these things? You are not poor. You did not need them."

"Exactly."

"Then why did you steal them?"

"Because I couldn't help it."

"What do you mean? Do you mean to say that you couldn't help stealing?"

"Just so."

"Are you mad? Why couldn't you help it?"

"Because I'm what is called a kleptomaniac!"

CHAPTER 15.

Leslie Leaves St. Jim's.

"A KLEPTOMANIAC!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

"Rats!" said Mellish. "It's a lie!"

"Hold your tongue, Mellish!" said Kildare sharply. And the cad of the Fourth was silent.

The captain of St. Jim's fixed his eyes keenly upon Leslie. The new boy seemed to be quite undisturbed by the sensation his statement had caused.

"What do you mean by saying that you are a kleptomaniac, Leslie?"

"I mean exactly what I say," replied Leslie coolly. "I'm a kleptomaniac—that's a chap who can't help stealing. It came on me before I could walk. I used to steal the ribbons out of the nurse's cap. I used to steal bits of wood and bits of coal, and crusts of bread, and hide them away. I used to be jolly well licked; but it was no use.

"I couldn't stop it, and they couldn't stop me. The physicians assured my pater that it couldn't be helped. I stole the same as other chaps breathed, because it was my nature to. Because I was a kleptomaniac."

The fellows stared at him.

Leslie did not seem to be ashamed of his extraordinary announcements; doubtless because years of life as a klepto-

maniac had hardened him, and rendered him insensible to the normal feelings on the subject.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I have heard of kleptomaniacs, you know, but I have nevah seen one before. It's amazin'!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "But I believe him."

"So do I," said Tom Merry.

Kildare was staring hard at the new boy. He could hardly doubt what Leslie said. Besides, proof for or against his statement would be so easily forthcoming, that it would have been absurd for Leslie to lie. In any case, he would have to leave St. Jim's. Thief or kleptomaniac, there was no room for him there.

"It's true," said Leslie quietly. "I'm sorry; but I can't help it. I picked the pocket of a stout old specialist who came to examine me, and he never knew it till my pater sent his watch back afterwards."

"My hat!"

"I suppose I shall have to leave St. Jim's," said Leslie. "I'm sorry; I like the place, and I like the chaps. I had to leave my last school, Freshfield, for the same reason. I was bowled out in three days there."

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, my pater is a hopeful sort of person, and he always hopes I shall get cured, by being placed in new surroundings and making a fresh start," said Leslie, with a faint grin. "I try awfully hard, but it's no use—it breaks out. It's horrid! I always steal things that are of no use. I've stolen pounds and pounds, but I've never spent a penny of it. I'm not dishonest—I'm a kleptomaniac. My pater has had to make restitution scores of times. All the things I've taken here would have been given back in the long run. They weren't in any danger."

"I suppose I must believe you," said Kildare. "It's a strange story."

"Oh, the headmaster of Freshfield would bear it out, if he were asked, and so would three or four other headmasters in various parts of the country, and half a dozen private tutors I've had," said Leslie. "I'm sorry. It's a horrible thing; but there it is, it's in my blood, and I can't help it."

"You are a most unfortunate lad, if that's true," said Kildare. "But you allowed Mellish to be falsely accused of—"

"Well, it wasn't my fault. And I said all along I believed him innocent," said Leslie. "It's because Mellish was a mean cad, and quite capable of such a thing that he was suspected. It was his own fault, and I don't see that I was to blame. He couldn't expect me to get myself turned out of the school for him."

(Continued on page 28.)



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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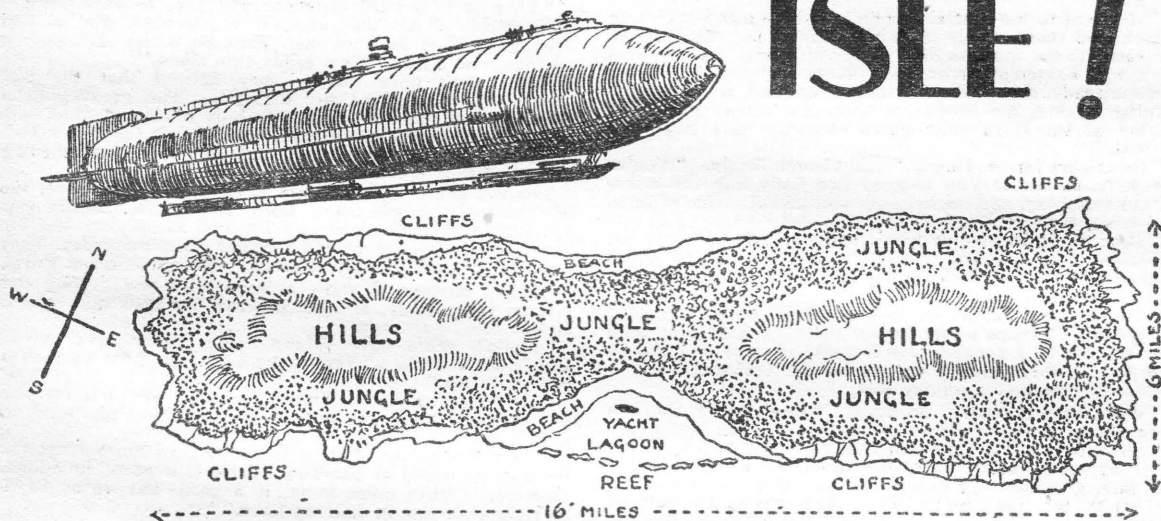
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OPENING CHAPTERS OF A POWERFUL NEW SERIAL OF THE ST. FRANK'S CHUMS!

TREASURE ISLE!



Captured by cannibals! Adventure comes swiftly to the Chums of St. Frank's when the Sky Wanderer, their flying school, lands on a Pacific treasure island.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Flying School!

"HANDFORTH, you are talking!" said Mr. Wilkes, rapping his desk.

"Who, sir? Me, sir? No, sir!"

"But I heard you!"

"Well, that's funny!" said Handforth, in surprise. "I wasn't talking, sir. I was only whispering."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Junior Form tittered with laughter, and this time Old Wilkey, for all his accustomed geniality, frowned heavily.

"You will take fifty lines, Handforth, for impudence," he said sharply.

"Oh crumbs! I didn't mean—"

"And if you speak again I will double the imposition," added Mr. Wilkes.

Edward Oswald Handforth subsided into silence. He had long since learned that nothing but trouble resulted from an argument with a Form-master. He had no particular wish to be detained, for afternoon lessons were nearly over.

It was a strange class-room, for the floor, walls, and ceiling were all of metal; even the desks and the seats were of metal. Light was admitted by means of three big circular windows which looked rather like portholes.

A bell sounded, and Old Wilkey gave the order for books to be put away. There was a general sigh of relief, and a sound of orderly shuffling.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Wilkes.

Nipper, the popular Junior skipper, was first out of the room. With Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, he emerged into an electrically lit corridor. The fags, who were presided over by Mr. Beverley Stokes, had just been released, and they were streaming down the passage, yelling.

"Just a minute, Handforth minor!" came a sharp command.

The redoubtable Willy, scudding along with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, skidded adroitly to a standstill.

"Yes, Fenton?" he asked innocently.

Fenton of the Sixth was standing in the door of his study. "I've told you more than once, Handforth minor, about making a din in this corridor," said the head prefect.

"Don't forget I shall want you at half-past four to get tea ready. I'm having visitors."

"O.K.!" said the fag cheerfully. "I'll be there, Fenton."

Nipper & Co., meanwhile, had reached the end of the corridor which led into a spacious electrically lit carpeted lounge. A moment later the three Removites were out upon

the metal-floored starboard promenade deck. Blazing tropical sunshine slanted upon the rail, but the atmosphere was cool and fresh. Three thousand feet below stretched an endless expanse of blue sea.

"Not a ship in sight!" remarked Tommy Watson.

"And not likely to be," said Nipper. "I had a word with the guv'nor before lessons, and he says that we're hundreds of miles from any shipping route, and thousands of miles from land."

The famous St. Frank's Flying School, in fact, was making serene progress across the Pacific, bound for Australia. Aboard this wonder craft the boys spent their daily lives almost exactly as they would have done at St. Frank's itself—their parent school, many thousands of miles back in wintry England. The routine was the same; the hours of work and leisure and sleep were the same; the discipline was the same. But the boys of the Flying School had the glorious privilege of seeing new scenes every day—of seeing the world.

The mighty Sky Wanderer, queen of the clouds, the biggest and most wonderful airship ever built, had been completely repaired and refitted after her recent adventures and misadventures in the astonishing Land of the White Giants. She was on her way again now, and Sir Hobart Manners, her commander, had assured Nelson Lee, the headmaster of the school in the air, that the vessel was as good as new.

It was a splendid life for the boys; such travelling as this widened their outlook, and the educational advantages were considerable. At times the great airship would come to earth at some famous Empire city, and remain stationed at her moorings for a week. During such periods the school routine would go on in the ordinary course, but in leisure hours the boys would go sight-seeing, they would play football or cricket—whichever game was in season according to the climate. Then off again, to see other lands, and increase their world knowledge at first hand.

"You can stay here if you like," said Church rebelliously, "but Mac and I are going to the upper deck."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Handforth. "Who's the leader of this study, I should like to know?"

"Churchy's right, old man," said McClure persuasively. "No sense in staying in this stuffy old cabin during daylight, and we don't need to get tea ready for another half-hour."

The celebrated chums were in Study D—a smallish cabin which Handforth & Co. had rendered, by their personal effects, into a surprising replica of its namesake at St.

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Frank's. Actually, it was their dormitory, too; but the beds, during the daytime, were cunningly concealed by patent devices. Room space on an airship is necessarily limited, even on such a great craft as the Sky Wanderer. All the boys slept three in a cabin, and these rooms, during the daylight hours, were used as studies. Efficient stewards looked after the necessary alterations every morning and every night.

"All right, then," said Handforth, climbing down. "We'll go on the upper deck, and we'll have a little cricket practice."

They went to the central lounge, and here a self-operating lift carried them swiftly upwards through the vast body of the vessel to the spacious deck on the airship's "roof." This deck was a recreation ground. Quite a crowd of fellows were already there, some strolling up and down, others leaning against the chromium rail, still others practising cricket at the stern end, where elaborate nets had been erected.

"No cricket for us, Handy," said Church firmly. "You're too jolly reckless! You slogged two balls into the atmosphere yesterday, and cricket balls cost money. One of them was mine, blow you!"

"They ought to give us better nets," retorted Handforth. "Rats! The nets are all right," said Mac. "You're not supposed to slog here. What if a cricket ball fell on a ship's deck? It might kill somebody."

"There's not a ship within a thousand miles!" snorted Handforth. "I don't suppose we shall see a ship or land until we get to Australia. By George! I hope we shall be able to stay there so that we can see the Test matches."

Church gave him a pitying look.

"What Test matches?" he asked. "Don't you know, you chump, that this year's Tests are to be played in England?"

"Oh crumbs! I'd forgotten that."

"They don't start until the summer, anyhow," said McClure, grinning. "I wonder what those chaps are staring at over there? Let's go and look. It might be a ship."

They walked across to the starboard rail, where Nipper, Vivian Travers, Archie Glenlithorne, and a few others were standing in a group. In all that vast expanse of sunlit ocean, anything which was even slightly out of the ordinary attracted their immediate attention.

"What's the excitement?" demanded Handforth.

"Absolutely no excitement, old thing," replied Archie languidly. "It's too frightfully hot to get excited, even at this height. But there's some sort of smudge, or something of that sort or other, over there in the fathomless blue."

Where the sky met the sea there was a strange haze, caused, no doubt, by the heat. In one particular spot there was a smallish dark smudge, vague and indistinct. Everywhere else the blue of sea and sky was uninterrupted.

"Looks like the smoke of a ship to me—hull down," said Travers, with a yawn. "Who's going to start cheering? A ship, my bonnie boys—a ship!"

"Cheese it, you ass!" said Jimmy Potts. "Supposing it is a ship. It wouldn't be the first one we've seen."

"Sorry! I thought somebody wanted to work up some enthusiasm," replied the imperturbable Travers. "Things have been pretty slow for a day or two, and even the sight of a lone tramp steamer would give me a thrill."

"If that black smudge is caused by a ship, it must be making a tremendous lot of smoke," said Nipper. "Besides, the gov'nor told me that we're not likely to see any ship in these latitudes; land, either. To-morrow or the next day we shall be passing over all sorts of South Sea Islands—probably the Marquesas—or the islands of the Low Archipelago. We might spot Tahiti, and, later on, the Tonga Group; but we're many miles away at present."

"The geographical lecture is now concluded," said Handforth, with heavy sarcasm.

"Rats!" grinned Nipper. "Who's lecturing? I'm only telling you that there's no land, not even a tiny coral island, within a thousand miles—"

His words were directly contradicted by an interruption which came at that moment. In the middle of the great upper deck reared the searchlight tower, and on the top of this a look-out man was stationed. In front of him there was a microphone, and it communicated directly with the control cabin, far forward in the very nose of the vessel.

"Land-ho!" came the look-out's voice. "Land on the starboard quarter, sir!"

The Message in the Sand!

"WELL I'm jiggered!" said Nipper, who was rather put out of countenance.

"So much for your giddy lecture!" said Handforth. "A fat lot you know!"

"But the gov'nor said—"

"Then he knows less than you do," said Edward Oswald, with relish. "All the same, if that's land, I'm a Fiji Islander! That look-out man must be dotty. It's only a smudge, and I'll bet it's a giddy rain cloud."

While they were talking they noticed that the Sky Wanderer had altered her direction. The great hull, a thousand feet in length, was gracefully swinging round. On her original course she would have passed the "smudge" without getting any nearer, but now she was heading straight for it.

The lift came up, and from it emerged Nelson Lee, the Sky School's headmaster, Lord Dorrimore, the famous sporting millionaire, who had financed the cruise, and Sir Hobart Manners, the vessel's designer and commander. They were all dressed in white flannels, with open-necked shirts.

"Here, gov'nor, I want a word with you!" sang out Nipper indignantly, as he ran across the deck and caught Nelson Lee by the arm.

"Hallo! What have I been doing, young 'un?" asked Lee, with a smile. "You sound as if you want to pick a bone with me."

"So I do!" retorted Nipper. "Didn't you tell me this morning that there was no land within a thousand miles of us?"

"Sorry," chuckled Nelson Lee. "I had quite forgotten the isolated island of Tao-Tao. There it is now," he added, pointing. "Fifty miles away, if a yard—but we ought to be right over her in half an hour."

"Fifty miles!" ejaculated Nipper. "By jingo! I never thought it was as far off as that!"

"At the height we're flying, and with good visibility, it is possible to see for enormous distances," said Lee. "That black smudge must be the island of Tao-Tao, for there is no other land at all. I had overlooked it because it is not generally recognised; there is no white settlement, and ships never go there."

"I went there once—in the old Wanderer," said Lord Dorrimore reflectively. "As a matter of fact, I was lucky to get away alive. I went ashore with some of my men."

"What's the matter with the place, then, sir?" asked Handforth, in surprise. "Is it volcanic, or something? Are there a lot of poisonous fumes?"

"No poisonous fumes—but heaps of poisonous humans," replied Dorrie calmly. "Oh, Tao-Tao is not a mere coral islet; it's not an uninhabited atoll. It's a genuine, honest-to-goodness island, with reptile infested jungles an' a tribe of savage blacks which are not only one hundred per cent cannibalistic, but as fierce an' untamed as they make 'em!"

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Handforth. "I thought all these South Sea Island savages were tamed by now."

"So they are—in the main," said Nelson Lee. "But Tao-Tao is so far distant from shipping routes that the natives have never had the opportunity of coming in contact with white men. The island contains no valuable minerals, or other commercial assets—so some of the Great Powers have ever taken the slightest interest in the place. Thus, while the other South Sea Island Groups have become more or less civilised, the savages of Tao-Tao have remained—well, savage."

By this time the smudge was no longer a smudge, but had assumed definite shape. For some time the great airship had been dropping lower and lower, so that she was now no more than a thousand feet above the sea. At this height she continued to fly onwards, on a level keel.

As she approached nearer to the island, other boys came up on the top deck—and the masters, too. Everybody was keen to catch a glimpse of this lone, savage island as the airship flew directly over it.

"It's a tidy size!" remarked Handforth presently.

"Not big, as islands go," said Lord Dorrimore. "About seventeen miles long by six or seven miles wide. To us, approaching from the southward, it looks bigger than it is—for we are seein' only the broad side."

Tao-Tao was, in fact, a typical Pacific island. There was a mountain ridge in the centre, but the rest of the interior was dense, solid forest and jungle. To the west and east, precipitous cliffs rose sheer from the sea, but in the centre of the southern shore there was a placid lagoon, with a coral reef guarding it. There was a beach of silvery sand, with the jungle descending to its very edge. Here, too, there was a cove of semi-circular formation.

"By the great Lord Harry!" ejaculated Dorrie abruptly, and in much astonishment. "Do you see what I see, Lee?"

St.
Franks
STAMP
WHO'S
WHO



Chubby Heath W. Handforth. T. Armstrong.

(Three more portraits next week.)



The St. Frank's juniors were enjoying the game of cricket immensely when, as though by magic, out of the jungle growth which lined the beach came scores of yelling savages! So sudden was the attack that the boys could only stare at the charging cannibals in amazement.

He had binoculars to his eyes, but now he lowered them and stared at Nelson Lee in wonder.

"There's a ship there!" he went on. "A ship anchored in the lagoon!"

"Let me see," exclaimed Lee quickly.

He focused the glasses, and the boys, crowding round, stared hard with their naked eyes. Now that they had been told they, too, could see, in that distant cove, the ship.

"She's a private yacht, by the cut of her—a steam yacht," said Lee. "Quite a small vessel painted white with a single funnel. This is very remarkable, Dorrie!"

"Some pleasure-seekin' chump who doesn't realise the danger, I suppose," said his lordship. "I did the same fool thing myself once. I wonder what nationality she is? Any flag flying from her mast-head?"

"Yes," replied Nelson Lee. "She's flying a British flag!"

There was fresh excitement among the boys. Here was something interesting—a lone island in the vast waters of the Pacific—and a British owned steam yacht at anchor in the lagoon.

Nearer and nearer drew the Sky Wanderer; and so rapid was her progress, although she seemed to be flying slowly, that the boys against the rail could now see the beach clearly. The yacht was at anchor in mid-lagoon, and on the beach itself an elaborate camp had been made, with well constructed wooden shacks. The main shack, indeed, with its wide veranda, was almost dignified enough to be called a bungalow. And on the white sands men in white trousers and open shirts were standing, staring up at the magnificent queen of the clouds as she flew so gracefully overhead. Some of the men were waving; and with one accord, the St. Frank's juniors waved back, yelling at the top of their voices at the same time.

"By George! They're white men—Englishmen!" yelled Handforth. "Aren't we going to land, sir?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Why should we land?" he asked. "I see no reason to interrupt our voyage, Handforth. It seems to me that this is some pleasure party, and by the look of things they have established friendly relations with the supposedly hostile blacks."

"I'm disappointed," said Dorrie, in disgust. "I've always had the idea that the Tao-Tao blacks were really untamed. Another illusion gone west! I doubt if there's a savage tribe in the whole world nowadays that doesn't possess bicycles an' wireless sets an' false teeth an' electric light!"

By this time the airship was right overhead, and Lee saw that some of the men had made a dash for the bungalow, as though in frantic haste to get something,

They soon came out, only to find that the airship was rapidly passing inland.

"That's strange, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee, in a low voice.

They were standing apart from the boys. The beach scene was now well astern, and directly below there was nothing but a solid mass of foliage, proving clearly that the jungle was tremendously dense.

"What do you mean?" asked his lordship, surprised by Lee's tone.

"You saw those men dash into the bungalow, didn't you?" asked Lee.

"Yes."

"Did you see what they carried when they came out again?" went on the detective. "Rifles!"

"What on earth are you getting at?"

"Two of the men, at least, brought the rifles to their shoulders—and they took aim upwards at us," continued Lee, frowning. "Why? What possible reason could they have for such an extraordinary action? The only reason they didn't fire, I believe, was because they saw that we had already passed out of range."

"It's mighty queer," admitted Dorrie. "Are you sure you're right? It sounds incredible."

"I suppose you saw the blacks, too?" remarked Nelson Lee. "There were any amount of them near the forest fringe at first—but they scuttled under cover like frightened rabbits."

The sporting peer shrugged his athletic shoulders.

"I think you must have been mistaken, old man," he said cheerfully. "Sorry to disagree with you, an' all that, but it's my opinion that the men only fetched the rifles out so that they could give us a kind of friendly salute."

Lee made no reply; he was very thoughtful. The Sky Wanderer by now was sailing right over the island's central ridge. Once over the ridge, the long northern shore came within sight. From the centre of the island, the slopes were steep at first, and then for a mile or two the jungle lay in an almost flat expanse. The ridge was curiously broken in the centre, the hills dipping down sharply, so that there was a central strip of forest which joined the two jungle belts.

"Look—clearings!" said Nipper, pointing. "I didn't spot any on the other side of the island, but there are several here. Look at the native huts, too!"

There were several such clearings, and they passed directly over one of them. It was a native village, with conical-shaped huts, and in the open spaces, under the blazing sun, scores of scantily clad savages ran hither and thither, panic-stricken by the unexpected sight of the Sky Wanderer as she appeared as though from nowhere.

"Frightfully rough on the poor blighters," commented

Archie Glenthorpe. "I mean to say, it's a bit pricelessly thick, putting a scare into them like this."

Rapidly, the native village passed astern; the airship reached the long northern coast of the island, and then was once again over the blue sea.

There was one lagoon on this side; nothing but barren, precipitous cliffs against which the restless sea ever thundered, with the long rolling breakers of the Pacific.

Yet there was one small stretch of sand, perhaps half a mile in length, at the back of a shallow bay. As on the other side of the island, the trees of the jungle grew thickly to the very edge of the beach.

"Hallo!" said Lee sharply. "What does this mean, Dorrie? There's another encampment."

Until now, the bulk of the airship had hidden two stained tattered tents which had been set up on the sands. There were men, too—four of them, dressed, apparently, in stained white suits.

"White men—and they're waving with rather extraordinary violence," said Nelson Lee. "By Jove, Dorrie, there's something very peculiar about this."

The boys, too, had noticed the frantic behaviour of the men on the beach. They were not waving in the ordinary friendly way, but they were dancing up and down, gesticulating wildly with both hands. Occasionally they would change their tactics, and cup their hands to their mouths, and yell at the top of their voices. But it was impossible to hear what they shouted.

"I say, Lee, what do you make of this?" asked Sir Hobart Manners, striding up. "Don't you think it's strange that these four men should be separated from the rest of the party like this? There's not even a small boat on this beach. They seem to be cut off completely."

"They're doin' somethin' else," interrupted Lord Dorrimore. "They're dashin' up to a pile of rocks and carryin' the rocks over the sands."

The airship had now passed out to sea, leaving the island astern. But Sir Hobart gave rapid instructions to the look-out man—who transferred the orders to the control-room. Gracefully the Sky Wanderer swung round, so that she was soon flying parallel with the island. When, at length, she reached the western extremity, she came round again—and this time she flew back straight down the coast, so that she would be carried immediately over the shallow bay with its half-mile strip of sand. The airship's manoeuvre was visible to the main party on the southern shore, owing to the low-lying central bulk of the island, which intervened.

"Look!" yelled Lord Dorrimore, his eyes blazing.

Below them the white sands were visible, and now there was something else. Black rocks had been placed side by side so that they formed rough, irregular lines, some at right angles to the others. And the black lines formed a word.

It stood out on the beach in sharp contrast to the silvery sands: "Help!"

The Modern Pirates!

THAT mute appeal came as a surprise and a shock to all the excited St. Frank's boys. They had been puzzled by the behaviour of the men on the island; but there was nothing puzzling about that dramatic word, so roughly and hastily formed on the white sands. It was an appeal for help—an SOS from the ground to the sky.

"This is beginnin' to look ugly, old man," said Dorrie. "We shall have to descend, of course. We can't fly off, callously leavin' those poor beggars unanswered."

"Yes, we must descend," agreed Nelson Lee, without hesitation. "I think it will be easy enough, don't you, Manners? That strip of beach will prove quite long at close quarters, and our grappling hooks will secure a firm hold in the soft sand."

Sir Hobart hurried away at once. He went to the lift, and soon he was in the control-room, directing the operations. The airship had flown straight on, but now she turned again, dropping lower and lower.

The boys were agog with excitement, for this was an unexpected thrill.

"We're going to land, you chaps!" said Handforth exultantly. "By George! Look at that white beach! What a chance for a game of cricket, eh?"

"Never mind cricket," said Nipper. "I wonder what's the matter with those men down there? I'm jiggered if I can understand why they are separated from the rest of the crowd on the other coast. Still, we'll soon find out."

When the Sky Wanderer was directly over the strip of beach, her engines were stopped; she was manoeuvred so that she descended vertically. Like a feather she dropped, and when at length she was comparatively near the ground, one of her officers yelled to the men on the sands to stand

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clear. Four great grappling claws of the airship telescoped out of the hull, and they went gliding downwards and outwards to reach the sand, clutch at it, and obtain a firm hold. Less than a minute later the mighty vessel was rigid at her moorings.

As though by magic, stairways stretched down from the landing deck, and Nelson Lee and Dorrie were the first to run down the metal steps to the ground. They found the four white men waiting there, and their faces were flushed with excitement and wet with perspiration.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed a voice, harsh with emotion. "We were afraid that you would not answer our signal."

Lord Dorrimore uttered a shout.

"By the good glory!" he ejaculated, thrusting out his hand. "Beverton! Haven't seen you for years! What sort of a mess have you got yourself into here?"

"I thought I recognised you, Dorrimore, as you were leaning over the rail," said the foremost of the strangers. "Gad! I'm glad it's you! When we saw the airship sailing over we were hopeful at first, and yet half afraid—"

He broke off, his voice trembling. Indeed, all four men were almost incoherent with the emotion of relief. It showed itself in their faces, in their eyes.

Mr. Mitchell Beverton himself was a tall, lean, powerful looking man with a square-cut, clean-shaven face. A strong man, a fighter, and a leader, Nelson Lee knew the name well, for Beverton was an explorer who had blazed the way in many far corners of the world. His eyes opened with astonishment when he was introduced to Nelson Lee.

"I think we've met before, Mr. Lee—many years ago, in London," he said warmly. "This is Captain Bridges, of my private yacht, and these two gentlemen are Mr. Hollins and Mr. Stanton, the yacht's officers."

"You have come to our rescue, gentlemen, literally out of a clear sky," said Captain Bridges huskily.

He was an elderly man, mahogany-featured and grizzled, and his eyes were as steady as a rock. The two officers were young men, eager-faced and stalwart-figured.

They walked towards the back of the beach where the tents were pitched. The men of the airship were quite glad to be on solid ground, for it was a change. Lee's eyes were observing everything keenly; he noted the denseness of the jungle near at hand, and he saw that there was no opening—no recognisable pathway. On one side the sea, on the other the festering tangle of tropical vegetation. And both ends of the beach were closed by the sheer rocks. At close quarters, indeed, the beach was larger than it had looked from the air, and there was ample anchorage for the Sky Wanderer, and plenty of smooth white sand to spare.

The boys, more eager than the men to feel the ground beneath their feet, raced up and down gleefully. Somebody suggested cricket, and in next to no time, other fellows had produced stumps and bats and a ball. The juniors, to tell the truth, were a bit disappointed at the "rescue," for, in their opinion, it had turned out tamely. Mr. Beverton and his companions were well-fed, well-groomed, and perfectly healthy.

"There's nothing in it," said Handforth. "Now that we're on the ground, let's have some cricket, you chaps. Remove versus Fourth, eh? Come on! I'll bet these people only want some supplies, and we can leave Mr. Lee and Dorrie to attend to 'em."

Plenty of the juniors agreed, but there was "something in it." Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Sir Hobart were startled, in fact, by the grim but simple story Mr. Beverton had to tell.

He had a big audience, for two or three of the airship's officers, and a number of the St. Frank's seniors gathered round, too. Nobody took any notice of the juniors as they prepared to play the "scratch" cricket.

"You came across the island from the south," said Mr. Beverton, a hard expression coming into his face. "No doubt you saw, then, my yacht anchored in the lagoon?"

"Yes," said Dorrie. "The yacht's all right, Beverton. No need to worry about her. What I can't understand is why you four have chosen to maroon yourselves on this desolate strip of beach."

"Maroon is the right word!" said the explorer, with rising wrath. "Here, on this beach, we are as surely marooned as though those infernal scoundrels had taken us a hundred miles away and left us stranded on a barren atoll!" He waved his hand dramatically. "Look at our camp! Just a couple of tents, some cooking utensils, and food. Not a weapon amongst the four of us. No boat. Nothing!"

"I take it that the crew of your yacht mutinied?" asked Nelson Lee.

"I'll give you the facts—briefly," replied Mr. Beverton, breathing hard. "I don't know whether you know it or not, but Tao-Tao is the island on which the famous and fabulous treasure of Don Manuel Alvarez was supposed to have been buried in the seventeenth century by pirates."

"A treasure hunt, eh?" said Dorrie, with relish.

"That was my object," said the other grimly. "Literally,



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a treasure hunt. Other expeditions had come to this island in the past, but they have all failed, owing to the murderous hostility of the natives. In fact, many white men have been murdered here, and there have been tragedies innumerable. Some say that this old Spanish treasure is cursed. But I'm not so superstitious, although, Heaven knows, bad luck has attended my enterprise. But the only bad luck I have had is the dastardly treachery of the men I trusted.

"I fitted out the expedition because I secured the services of a man named Doc Haynes. I don't suppose you'll have heard of him, but he's a swashbuckling, piratical fellow well known up and down the Queensland coast, and amongst the islands. He's living a couple of centuries out of his time, for, in spirit, he is nothing but a pirate. He's as hard as nails, and he has spent all his life in the South Seas trading, pearling, and even indulging in mild piracy. Well, I was fooled by him; I thought he was straight. He told me that he was the only white man living who was on friendly terms with the Tao-Tao savages. He could handle them—he could keep them peaceful whilst we searched for the treasure. We came; but no sooner had the yacht dropped anchor in the lagoon than Doc Haynes showed his true colours."

"He turned against you, eh?" asked Dorrie. "But why? You were paying him well, weren't you?"

"He means to get this treasure for himself—and his piratical companions," replied Mr. Beverton. "It was he who selected the crew—saying that it would be far better to have men aboard who understood the Tao-Tao lingo. They are all men of his own stamp—South Sea adventurers. Well, there you have it in a nutshell. The whole crowd mutinied, and we four were bound up, dumped into a boat, and brought round to this side of the island. We were marooned—and we've been here for five weeks now. Every week Haynes sends a boat round with fresh supplies."

"H'm! It seems to me we ought to do something with this fellow, Haynes," said Dorrie, with a glance at Lee. "I'll admit you can't get round to the other side of the island by sea; but what's wrong with goin' overland?"

"What's wrong?" repeated Beverton, pointing. "See that jungle? At this very moment scores of Tao-Tao savages are lurking in the undergrowth, watching. They watch day and night, and if we make the slightest move towards the trees, they show themselves. Oh, yes, Haynes is friendly with the savages, but he is using them for his own villainous purposes."

Lee looked suddenly anxious.

"You ought to have told me about these savages before, Mr. Beverton," he said, almost sharply. "I don't quite see what we can do to help you—unless you come aboard the airship. We'll take you to Australia with pleasure—"

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Lee," interrupted Beverton. "But I don't want to go to Australia. I want to stay here—I want my yacht back. I was hoping that you would be

able to see this infernal Haynes, and tell him that his game has failed. I'm not vindictive; I'll forget what he has done if he'll hand over the yacht. Tell him that unless he agrees you'll give information to the British authorities—"

"If Haynes is the kind of man you describe, I doubt if he will take any notice of threats," said Lee, who was still frowning. "Do you know that he and his men were preparing to fire rifles at us as we flew overhead? We'll talk about this later, Mr. Beverton. I did not quite realise—until now—what a hornets' nest we had dropped into. Dorrie, we'd better get aboard—and quickly. Mr. Wilkes—Mr. Stokes! Do you mind gathering those juniors at once? We'll have to put a stop to that cricket match."

Nelson Lee's tone was decisive, and in it, too, there was a shade of annoyance. Repeatedly he glanced at the fringe of jungle—but no sign of human life could be seen.

The juniors, meanwhile, were enjoying themselves immensely. The sands were hard, and cricket of quite a fair quality could be played. Handforth, bat in hand, was slogging gloriously, thoroughly enjoying himself. Buster Boots of the Fourth was bowling to him.

Clack!

Away went the ball, and Handforth grinned.

"Another boundary!" he yelled. "No need to run, Travers! These Fourth Form fatheads can't play cricket!"

"Looks as if we shall have to stop," said Nipper, shading his hand against the evening sun. "Old Wilkey and Mr. Stokes are running—"

"Boys—boys!" came the urgent voice of Mr. Stokes. "The Head has given orders—"

And then Barry Stokes broke off abruptly; for something of a very startling nature happened.

Out of the jungle growth which lined the beach, as though by magic, came scores of yelling savages. They swept out into the open as though from nowhere, and the cricketing juniors stood stock still, staring in amazement.

"Run!" yelled Barry Stokes.

"They can't be serious!" gasped Handforth. "It's a joke of some kind, isn't it? I can't believe—Hi, what the— Why, you—you—"

Repulsively ugly blacks had seized him, and in spite of his struggles he was carried off. All about him other juniors were struggling; the white sands were black with the swooping Tao-Tao savages. Near the airship Lee was yelling orders; members of the airship's crew were racing down the stairs with rifles.

But the whole sensational incident was over before Lee could take any drastic action. Not all the boys were seized, for some, running at the first alarm, had escaped. About a dozen, however, including Nipper, Handforth & Co., Archie, and Travers, were whirled up and carried away. As dramatically as the savages had appeared, they vanished back into the jungle—carrying their prisoners with them.

Fenton of the Sixth, who had watched it all, blinked. The beach was empty; the jungle looked lifeless.

"They've gone!" muttered the captain of St. Frank's. "Great Scott! Over a dozen of our chaps—bagged by cannibals!"

And then, before he could utter another word, his jaw dropped. Out from the jungle came an extraordinary procession. The leader was a swaggering, arrogant white man, with a bronzed face, and wearing soiled white drill clothing. On his head was an enormously wide native hat, stuck jauntily at an angle. Round him was a cartridge belt, with an enormous revolver jutting out at his hip. Just behind came four other whites, as villainous looking as the leader, and in the rear a column of painted Tao-Tao blacks.

"Doc Haynes!" said Mr. Mitchell Beverton, between his teeth.

"Doc Haynes in the flesh, gentlemen," growled that modern buccaneer, with a leer in his voice. "This is my island, and you are my prisoners."

The man made no display of arms, and his big hand never wandered in the direction of his gun. Rather was it engaged in manipulating an enormous cigar. Not one of

the islanders carried a weapon, and they had come to a halt some distance back, allowing their white leaders to advance.

"You adopt a despotic attitude, my friend," said Nelson Lee grimly. "This island is no more yours than it is Mr. Mitchell Beverton's—or ours. We have as much right here as you. The crew of this airship has modern arms—"

"But you won't use any arms, mister," interrupted Doc Haynes insolently, as he removed his cigar and spat with reckless indifference. "I've got the upper hand, and you know it. A crowd of your kids is back in that jungle—and if you don't do as I say, you'll never see 'em again. See? I'm boss of this island, and you don't leave it until I give you the word! Looks like there's no more argument, gentlemen!"

Nelson Lee was at a loss, for the seizure of the St. Frank's juniors had placed this twentieth century pirate in a position which had, for the time being, got the headmaster of the flying school guessing.

(Nelson Lee is in an awkward position now. What will happen? See that you don't miss next week's thrilling chapters of this great new serial.)

FALSELY ACCUSED!

(Continued from page 22.)

"You cad—" began Mellish.

"If he had been called up before the Head to be punished, I should have owned up," said Leslie. "I meant to, if it came to that."

"I believe you," said Kildare. "It's a curious story, but I believe you. You'd better come to the Head now. He must know all about it."

Leslie nodded.

"I suppose so. Good-bye, you chaps! I suppose I shan't see you again. I'm sorry. I've had a jolly good time, my few days here. I suppose you won't shake hands with me?"

Tom Merry held out his hand frankly enough.

"I will," he said. "There's my fist."

And many of the juniors—all whom the new boy had become intimate with—followed his example. In spite of Leslie's light manner, they could see that the strange curse which hung over him was a deep tragedy in his life.

"Thanks!" said Leslie, a little huskily. "I hope you'll always believe that I've told you the exact truth. It's a kind of mental disease, and I'm not dishonest. I've never kept anything I've stolen, or made use of it. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, old chap!"

Leslie followed Kildare and Darrell from the room, and then went away to the Head's study.

The Junior Common-room was left in a state of excited comment.

"It's a swange stow," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm awfully sowwy for the chap!"



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