

AMAZING STORY OF MYSTERY AND SCHOOL ADVENTURE—WITHIN!
STARRING THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.



The GEM

THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS

2d



The FIRE RAISER!

2
THRILLING! AMAZING! MYSTERIOUS! THIS IS THE YARN—

THE FIRE RAISER!



BY WHOSE HAND? A terrific blaze at the private school near St. Jim's is proved to be the dastardly deed of a fire raiser! Who is the unknown incendiary, and what is his motive? These are mysteries that get everyone guessing—until the fire raiser attempts to burn down St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 1.

A Midnight Mystery!

"GREAT Scott!"
It was dark, very dark, in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's. Midnight had chimed out, and the juniors were all fast asleep. Silence and slumber reigned in the great buildings of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth suddenly awoke.

What had awakened him he hardly knew. He had an impression that a light had flashed upon his face, and he opened his eyes and started up upon his elbow, with his mind still confused by sleep. And as he lay blinking into

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the darkness of the dormitory, there came a flicker of light upon his face again.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy sat up in bed.

That a light had flickered for a moment in the dark dormitory he was certain, but all around him was black now.

What had happened?

The thought of possible burglars did not immediately cross the mind of the junior. He was more inclined to suspect that someone was japing him.

He strained his eyes to look into the gloom.

"I wegard you as a silly ass, whoevah you are!" he exclaimed. "Pway go back to bed, and stop playin' silly twicks!"

There was no reply, but there came a fluttering gleam



By
Martin Clifford.

of light again, and D'Arcy caught the glimmer of it on the windows of the dormitory.

"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Pway stop your silly pwanks! Bai Jove! I suppose it is one of the Shell boundahs—Tom Mewwy, pewwaps! Tom Mewwy, I wegard you as an ass!"

There was a grunt from a neighbouring bed.

"Groogh! What's the row?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Go to sleep!" mumbled Blake of the Fourth.

"Somebody is playin' a twick! I— Bai Jove! There it is again!"

Again that peculiar flicker of light.

"Wake up, Blake, deah boy!"

"Rats!" mumbled Blake.

"Digby, deah boy, wake up!"

Snore!

"Hewwies, old man—"

Snore!

"Bai Jove! Look here, you lazy slackers, wake up! There's somebody playin' a twick!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake sat up in bed.

"Gussy!" he roared. "Go to sleep!"

"Wats! There's somebody playin' a twick! There! You see it for yourself!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, as the flicker of light danced across the dormitory again.

Jack Blake did see it this time. He opened his eyes wide in surprise.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"I wegard it as—"

"Wake up, you chaps!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "There's somebody in the dorm—a burglar or a giddy joker!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake was out of bed in a moment. He had a little electric torch in his jacket pocket, and he groped for it in the dark. He found it in a few moments, and switched the light on.

The little white ray of light gleamed out.

"Good!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Hewwies, Dig, Weally, wake up! Wake up, Kewwuish, you boundah! Jump up, Hancock! Burglahs!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

"Go to bed!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"There's somebody in the dorm," said Blake. "Get up, Herries!" He jerked the bed-clothes off Herries, and that worthy started up with a roar. "Get to the door, Herries, and see that he doesn't get away!"

"Look here—"

"Look alive!" roared Blake. "If it's a Shell bounder, we'll swamp him with cold water for disturbing us! It may be a burglar coming here for Gussy's eyeglass, of course!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buck up!"

Several candles were lighted. The whole Fourth dormitory was awakened by this time, and most of the fellows turned out.

With Blake's electric lamp and half a dozen candles and a bicycle lantern, the dormitory was quite illuminated, and the juniors searched it from end to end, looking under the beds and behind the washstands, and into every corner that could have concealed any intruder larger than a rabbit.

But they found nothing.

There was no trace of a midnight marauder, or a burglar. Blake ceased the search at last and snorted.

"It was some chap here, then, playing a silly jape on us!"

"Yaas, wathah—somebody in the Fourth!"

"Oh, rats!" said Hancock, getting back into bed. "I don't believe there was a light at all—you dreamed it!"

"Weally, Hancock—"

"Faith, and I didn't, either!" said Reilly. "Are ye sure that ye didn't drame it entiorely, Blake, my boy?"

Blake sniffed.

"Don't be an ass!" he replied. "I saw a light of some sort, and so did Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was some giddy ass japing!" said Digby. "That's all. Let's get back to bed!"

Digby had only returned that day from France, where he had been staying for two or three weeks, and he was tired. He scrambled into bed again, and was asleep in a minute.

Blake made a few forcible remarks concerning the damage he would do to the japer's features if he found him out, and then turned in himself.

The lights were extinguished, and the juniors settled down to sleep again.

And then, as Arthur Augustus laid his head upon the pillow, there came that mysterious flicker of light once more, and he started up with an exclamation.

"Gweat Scott!"

"My hat!"

"The light!"

"I saw it then!"

"And I!"

Jack Blake sat up, his heart beating faster.

"You fellows saw the light?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Faith, I saw it reflected on the window!"

"So did I!"

"Are you all in bed?" asked Blake.

An affirmative answer came from every fellow in the dormitory. Blake felt a creepy sensation about his spine. It was almost ghostly, this recurrence of the mysterious light. What did it mean? There was no stranger in the Fourth Form dormitory, and yet the moment the boys were in bed again, that mysterious light began to flicker and dance in the gloom.

CHAPTER 2.

A Little Mistake!

JACK BLAKE sat with his eyes staring into the darkness of the long room. His heart was beating quite painfully. The mystery was oppressive. Unless it was a ghostly visitation, where did that mysterious flicker of light come from?

Then it came again!

Suddenly, from black darkness, a wave of indistinct light seemed to rise and waver and flicker. It gleamed on the high windows, and fell redly for a moment across the white coverlet of Blake's bed.

Then it died away.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Blake caught his breath.

"Listen!" he muttered.

There was a sound of shuffling footsteps in the passage outside the dormitory, and then a faint sound as the door opened.

The juniors listened, with thumping hearts.

Someone had entered the Fourth Form dormitory in the dark!

They sat up in bed, invisible in the darkness to the intruders, and listened, shivering, with hearts going like hammers. They were silent, listening, waiting to hear what might be heard further.

From the gloom came a low, whispering voice:

"They're all asleep!"

Blake started.

He knew the voice. It was the voice of Tom Merry, of the Shell—the junior captain of the School House.

Blake snapped his teeth. He thought he understood. Mutual japing between the Fourth Form and the Shell frequently enlivened things at St. Jim's.

Blake rolled silently out of bed and grasped his pillow. He stepped noiselessly towards the voices.

"Yes, they're asleep!" It was Monty Lowther's voice in reply to Tom Merry's. "Is it worth while calling them?"

"The kids would be of no use!" said a third voice—that of Manners.

"But—" began Tom Merry. "I— Oh! Yah! Yaroooh!"

Blake, guided by the whispering voices, had reached them, and he smote out with the pillow with a mighty swipe.

Tom Merry caught the pillow with the side of his head, and staggered across the dorm, and bumped on the floor.

"Ow!" he yelled. "Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

He swiped out again.

Manners caught the pillow this time, and rolled over with a yell. Monty Lowther was blinking in the darkness, trying to make out what was happening, when Blake smote him in his turn, and he sat down with sudden violence.

"Yow!"

"Yah!"

"Oh!"

Blake yelled:

"Tumble up, Fourth! Collar the bounders!"

The Fourth Formers were already tumbling out of their beds in the dark. Somebody lighted a candle. A crowd of fellows in pyjamas rushed upon the Shell bounders.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were seized in a dozen pairs of hands as they were scrambling to their feet.

"Bai Jove! We've got them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Got the giddy japers!"

Tom Merry struggled furiously. But four or five sturdy Fourth Formers had hold of him, and his struggles were not of much use.

"Bump them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Tom Merry bumped on the floor. Manners and Lowther bumped beside him, and they yelled. The Terrible Three

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were having a terrible time. They were bumpd again, and they yelled once more.

"Stop it!"

"You fatheads!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Now then, you bounders!" said Blake breathlessly. "Now you know what to expect when you come japing in our dorm in the middle of the night! We'll teach you to flicker blessed lights about the place and make Gussy nervous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You chumps!" roared Tom Merry. "We came here to wake you—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You woke us all right!"

"We—we—we—"

"Wee—we—we—we—" mimicked Blake. "Doesn't he sound like a Frenchman or a blessed guinea-pig? Wee—we—we!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We—we came here to call you, because there's a fire!"

"A fire?"

"Yes, ass! A fire, chump—a fire, fathead—a giddy fire, you duffers!" said Tom Merry, with emphasis crescendo.

"Bai Jove!"

"A fire!"

Jack Blake blew out the candle. He thought he understood at last. The candle went out, and the dormitory was in darkness. Blake watched the window.

"Bai Jove, Blake, you've blown out the candle—"

"Ring off, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look!" exclaimed Blake suddenly.

The mysterious light glimmered on the dormitory again. Blake saw it reflecting on the glass of the window, as he had seen it before, but now he understood.

The mysterious light came from without.

As there were no buildings overlooking the big School House, it had naturally never occurred to the juniors that the light came from outside; but when they knew there was a fire all was clear.

The light of the conflagration, reflected in the sky, glimmered on the windows of the dormitory. The fire was undoubtedly at a distance—perhaps as far as Wayland—and only when the flames rose high in the wind would the light be cast as far as St. Jim's. That accounted for the mysterious light rising and falling, and dying away in the darkness.

"Bai Jove! It must be an awfully big blaze!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's in the direction of Wayland," said Tom Merry—"the same direction as Mr Browning-Jones' new school!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It may be the new school—"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Blake. "My hat! Poor old B.-J.!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's wuff if he's bein' burnt out. He was the ownah of the place, you know, and he may lose all his tin."

"How did you know it was a fire?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Looked," he said. "I woke up and found a light shining on the windows—"

"Bai Jove! So did I!"

"And I looked out."

"I nevah thought of that, you know."

"You wouldn't!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"And I saw the blaze over the wood," said Tom Merry. "I saw it only a minute—it only shows when the wind's blowing in this direction, I think."

"We're wasting time here," said Monty Lowther.

"So we are," Tom Merry agreed. "Look here, we're going to see the fire."

"My hat!"

"You'll get into a row, breaking bounds at this time of night," said Mellish.

"Well, this is not an ordinary case. I think we may be able to render assistance—every hand to the mill, you know, at a time like this. I'd call the masters, only—"

Blake chuckled

"Only they mightn't let you go."

"Exactly! Of course, I shouldn't go, only I think I might help. My idea is to call Kildare just as we're going"

"Good!"

"We came to call you chaps, in case you might like to come, too—"

"What-ho!" said Blake emphatically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Get into your duds, then—quick!"

Blake and Digby and Herries and D'Arcy dressed them-

selves quickly enough. Reilly followed their example, but the other fellows went back to bed. A long tramp through a dark wood at midnight, with the possibility of a flogging afterwards for breaking bounds at night, did not tempt them.

Even D'Arcy dressed quickly on this occasion, and did not stop to arrange his necktie before the glass. The juniors were ready in five minutes.

Then they quitted the dormitory. Kangaroo—Harry Noble, of the Shell—joined them in the passage, and the nine juniors hurried downstairs. They stopped outside the door of Kildare's room.

Tom Merry hesitated there for a moment. "I suppose Kildare would like to be called when there's a fire going on," he remarked. "It's a chance for the St. Jim's fire brigade."

"Yaas, watah!"
Tom Merry knocked at the door and opened it.
"Kildare!"

Lifting the insensible lad over the sill, Mr. Browning-Jones leaned out of the window. In spite of the suffocating smoke and heat from the fire, his movements were cool and steady. "Stand firm!" he shouted to the men holding the blanket below. "We're ready, sir!"



There was a sound of steady breathing in the room. The captain of St. Jim's was fast asleep.

"Kildare!" Tom Merry kicked on the door. "Kildare!" A startled voice came from the gloom.

"What's that? Who's there?"

"I'm here—"

"Merry?"

"Yes, Kildare. There's a big fire going on—you can see it from your window. I think it's Browning-Jones' private school that's ablaze!"

"By George! Thank you for calling me, Merry!"

Kildare jumped out of bed at once.

Tom Merry pulled the door shut, and the juniors hurried away. They did not intend to give the Sixth Former time to ask them what they had risen for, and where they were going. They were going to the scene of the fire—only to render assistance, of course.

"Kildare'll wake the masters, and they can decide what to do about it," Tom Merry remarked. "I think somebody ought to go and give help. We shall be the first in the field, that's all."

"Yaas, watah!"

"And we'll be ahead of the New House this time," grinned Kangaroo, as he opened the hall window. "Figgins & Co. aren't awake, I fancy."

The juniors dropped out of the window one after another and ran across the dusky quadrangle towards a well-known spot by the school wall, where a slanting oak-tree made it easy to climb.

The old quadrangle of St. Jim's, in the shadow of its ancient elms, was very dark and gloomy. Half-past twelve rang from the tower as the juniors scudded across in the dim shadows.

They glanced towards the New House—the rival House of St. Jim's. All the windows were dark save when they occasionally caught a red reflection from the distant fire.

The School House juniors chuckled. Figgins & Co., their deadly rivals of the New House, would be left behind this time. The School House fellows would tell them all about the fire in the morning, and Figgins & Co. would feel like kicking themselves for having slept through it all.

"Here's the tree," said Tom Merry, groping in the shadow for the old trunk.

His hand came in contact with something soft and warm, and he gave a jump.

"Wh-wh-what—"

"Ow, you ass!" came a voice from the darkness. "What are you pinching my chivvy for? Owl! Leggo!"

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Yes, ass!"

"Figgins & Co.!"

Three dim figures loomed faintly in the gloom beside the oak-tree. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—Figgins & Co., of the New House.

Figgins burst into a laugh.

"You School House chaps awake, too?" he exclaimed.

"We—we thought you were asleep," stammered Tom Merry. "We were just thinking—"

"Just thinking the New House were left out of it!" chuckled Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you see—"

"Fatty Wynn discovered the fire," said Figgins. "He got up to get something to eat soon after twelve, and he saw the reflection in the sky. We are going to give

assistance. We intended to tell you chaps about it in the morning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get on," said Kerr.

"Yes, come on!"

"Yaas, wathah! We're wasting time, you know!"

The juniors climbed the school wall and dropped into the lane. Tom Merry glanced back from the top of the wall and saw many lights dancing in the windows of the School House. Kildare had evidently thought it advisable to wake the place. Probably there would be numerous contingents from St. Jim's on the scene of the fire before long, but Tom Merry & Co. would be first in the field.

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "Sprint!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors sprinted, flitting swiftly through the darkness of the lane and dashing at a steady trot along the towing-path by the river. And as they ran on the red glare of flamelight grew redder and brighter in the sky. All doubt as to where the fire was was now at an end. It was not so far as Wayland, and a farmhouse would never have made such a conflagration. It was the private school of Mr. Browning-Jones, Master of Arts of Oxford—one of the finest fellows the St. Jim's juniors knew. And in the hope of being able to help him they ran their hardest to reach the scene of the fire.

CHAPTER 3.

The Fire!

RED against the midnight sky the flames blazed up as the juniors of St. Jim's arrived breathless on the scene.

There was a sound of shouting, the tramping of feet, and the crashing of falling wood and brickwork.

The school was in a blaze from end to end.

Mr. Browning-Jones, the master of the private school, was a young man fresh from Balliol, and when he had first opened his little school within a short distance of St. Jim's, the Saints had put their backs up immediately.

They had agreed to regard it as a piece of pure, unadulterated cheek on the part of Mr. Browning-Jones, and they had taken no pains to conceal their opinion from

B.-J.—in fact, they took some trouble to acquaint him with it.

B.-J. had taken it with quiet good humour.

In spite of the resentment of the St. Jim's fellows the young schoolmaster had risked his life to pull Tom Merry and Gore out of the mill-stream on the Rhyl.

That brave deed wrought a change in the sentiments of the Saints towards the hitherto obnoxious Browning-Jones.

From that hour he was a hero.

The Saints agreed to tolerate the private school, and, indeed, it was a very little place, of no pretensions whatever compared with St. Jim's, and they could afford to tolerate it.

Mr. Browning-Jones had less than a dozen pupils, all about the same age, whom he was preparing for exams, and so far as the Saints had seen them they seemed decent enough fellows.

Having made up their minds to forgive Mr. Browning-Jones, the Saints did their best to make up for their previous rudeness to him, and both parties were now on the best of terms.

Much as they had resented the first establishment of the private school, the St. Jim's fellows were sorry enough to see it burning, and they were sorry enough for Mr. Browning-Jones.

The new brick building, which had been standing for so short a time, was belching flame and smoke from almost every window.

There was a crowd in the playground, composed of boys belonging to the school—most of them half-dressed—and country people who had been called out of their beds by the fire.

There was no fire-engine on the scene—the nearest was at Wayland—and probably the news of the fire had not even reached that town yet.

Tom Merry looked round quickly for Mr. Browning-Jones

The young schoolmaster was not to be seen,

"Where's B.-J.?" muttered Figgins.

"Bai Jove! He's not here!"

Tom Merry turned pale.

"He can't be in—in there," he muttered, with a startled glance towards the burning building.

"Great Scott! Surely not!"

"They wouldn't be standing round looking on if a man were inside, I suppose!" Kangaroo exclaimed. "We'll see!"

The crowd glanced round at the sight of the St. Jim's boys. Tom Merry ran up to a slim, pale-faced lad of about sixteen, who was gazing at the fire with fixed eyes, apparently fascinated by the sight. Tom shook him by the shoulder. He knew the boy by name—his name was Ralph Stansen. The lad did not move his gaze from the fire as Tom Merry shook him—he seemed unable to tear his eyes from the terrible sight.

"Stansen!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The lad shook his hand off.

"Where is Mr. Browning-Jones?"

Stansen gave a start. He raised his right hand and pointed towards the house.

"Not in there!"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

Stansen said no more. He seemed to be scared out of his wits by the danger his master was in. Tom Merry looked at him sharply. Stansen was half a foreigner, as his name implied, and Tom Merry, little as he had seen of him, had noticed that he was something different from the other boys. He was the eldest of B.-J.'s pupils, and so might have taken the lead in attempting the rescue of the schoolmaster. But he stood motionless, as if stunned by the catastrophe.

Tom Merry turned from him scornfully.

"Where is your master, Halkett?" he exclaimed, addressing a younger lad.

"He's in there," said Halkett, in a shaky voice. "He's gone in for the last chap—young Walker. We thought everybody was out, and when Mr. Jones called over the names, Walker didn't answer."

"And Mr. Jones—"

"Went in for him," said Halkett, shivering. "He told us all to stay here."

"Bai Jove!"

"How long ago?" asked Tom Merry.

"Two or three minutes."

The St. Jim's fellows looked at one another in horror. The house was a mass of flames, and Mr. Browning-Jones had been in there for two or three minutes.

What had happened to him?

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! Poor old B.-J."



IF Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars ever disgraces himself again, his millionaire father has threatened to disown him and pass on his great fortune to a "poor relation." When the Bounder decides to mend his ways, he little dreams that the new Form-master of the Remove is that "poor relation," and that he has set his heart on possessing the Vernon-Smith millions by hook or by crook! This week's story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., written by popular Frank Richards, is thrilling, dramatic, and exciting. Make a point of reading it in

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"In there—in the fire!" said Figgins. "Why—?"
 "Look!"
 There was a wild shout.
 Through the volume of smoke from a high window, a face glimmered, and a hand waved. The St. Jim's fellows burst into a shout.

"B.-J.!"
 "Hurrah!"
 Mr. Browning-Jones had a boy in his arms. From the still, inert look of the latter, it was easy to see that he had fainted, or been overcome by the smoke.

He lifted the insensible lad out over the window-sill, and waved his hand again. Four or five sturdy countrymen ran to the spot with a blanket in their hands. They held the blanket firmly by the corners for the boy to drop in.

Mr. Browning-Jones leaned out of the window. Smoke was belching out thickly round him, and flames could be seen penetrating the black volumes of the smoke.

The heat where he stood must have been terrific. His face was black with smoke, and rolling with sweat. But his movements were firm and steady.

"Stand firm!" he shouted.
 "Yes, sir!"
 "We're ready."

The insensible lad came shooting down, and was caught in the blanket. The blanket sagged down and almost touched the ground with the impact, but not quite. A dozen hands grasped the lad and moved him to safety.

Tom Merry gasped.
 "Good old B.-J.!" he cried. "That was splendid! Now, what about yourself, sir?"

The blanket was held in readiness once more and the schoolmaster took a flying leap to safety.

Somewhat exhausted, Mr. Browning-Jones rubbed his eyes and looked towards the burning school. The roof was falling in on all sides now, and myriads of sparks were shooting towards the stars.

The young schoolmaster knitted his brows as he looked. It was a terrible sight to all; but it was more so to Mr. Browning-Jones than to the others.

For the burning school represented very nearly the total of Mr. Browning-Jones' worldly possessions; and the flames that were soaring skyward spelled ruin for the Balliol man.

CHAPTER 4.

By Whose Hand?

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, came up at a run. There was crash on crash from the burning house now, and showers of sparks were falling. The fire had passed its zenith. It was beginning to die down. The school was gutted.

Kildare paused, panting.
 "Can we do anything to help you, sir?" asked Kildare.
 "That's what we've come over for; and there are a good many of our fellows on the road."

Mr. Browning-Jones shook his head.
 "Thank you! I fear it is past help. The place will burn itself out."

"I'm afraid it looks like it, sir. The fire seems to have got a hold on the whole show from end to end."

"Yes," said Mr. Browning-Jones, looking puzzled. "It is very remarkable, too; I cannot imagine in the least how it happened."

"Do you know how it started, sir?"
 "Not in the least. I was suddenly awakened by the alarm of fire. The smoke had wakened a boy in bed. The fire started in the box-room close to the dormitory, I think. There was none too much time for the boys to get out; and one of them was overcome by the smoke, and had to be fetched out. It is an astounding happening. There are, of course, no fires in the school at night, and I cannot in the least imagine how it came to be started."

And Mr. Browning-Jones looked hard at the dying fire as if he would penetrate the mystery that was concealed by the volumes of smoke.

"Must have been an accident, sir," said Kildare.
 "Oh, of course! Anything else is unimaginable. Thank Heaven there have been no lives lost!" said the young master.

"What are you going to do now, sir? Can we be of any assistance, I mean? We should all like to help."

"I must get some shelter for my boys. I suppose we shall have to walk into Wayland, and knock them up at the inns—"

Kildare interrupted.
 "Don't do anything of the sort, sir. Come to St. Jim's. They will be glad to welcome you there; and Mr. Railton told me specially, before I left, that anything we could do would gladly be done."

Mr. Browning-Jones hesitated.
 "It is making a very great demand upon Dr. Holmes," he said.

"Not at all, sir. Dr. Holmes is away now, but Mr. Railton, our Housemaster, is acting Head in his place, and he will welcome you just as Dr. Holmes would. I am sure he will be disappointed if you should tramp all the way into the town instead of coming to St. Jim's. Take my word for it, sir."

"You are very good. If you are sure Mr. Railton—"
 "I am certain of it, sir."

"Then I will bring my boys to St. Jim's for the remainder of the night," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "I am only anxious to get them under shelter as soon as possible. My boys, we are going to St. Jim's for the night. You are all here?"

"Yes, sir," said Halkett.
 The boys fell in to march to St. Jim's, accompanied by Tom Merry & Co., and, needless to say, the Saints were kindness itself to the refugees. Now that the excitement

THE ADVANCE GUARD!



Passenger: "I say, porter, how much longer have I to wait for the next train? I've waited an hour already!"

Porter (gazing along line): "All right, sir; it won't be long now. Here comes the driver's little dog along the line!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Fitzsimmons, Vice Regal Lodge, Phoenix Park, Dublin, Ireland.

was over, the B.-J. boys, as the juniors called them, were inclined to regard the whole affair as something in the nature of a "lark."

To be burnt out, and to march through a wood in the middle of the night afterwards, was an experience that did not fall to the lot of every schoolboy.

"Where will you shove us?" Halkett asked, as he walked along between Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 "There are eleven of us, you know."

"We'll let you have our beds, deah boys, and we'll wuff it," said D'Arcy. "I don't mind wuffin' it. I can sleep on a sofa, so long as it is a large and comfy sofa, and there are chairs awanged all round it, and there are plenty of cushions and pillows and things, and lots of blankets. I have wuffed it before, and I can wuff it again. I don't believe in a chap being soft."

Halkett chuckled.
 "We'll look after you all right," said Tom Merry. "We'll make you more comfy than you'd be in the inns at Wayland, anyway. But, I say, it's a queer thing about that fire."

"Yes, ain't it?"
 "Some of you chaps having a midnight brew in the studies?" asked Kangaroo. "I knew a fire started that way once—though it was put out again."

Halkett shook his head. He was a fair-haired, pleasant-faced youth, with a very frank and pleasing way of speaking.

"No," he said. "We were all in bed and fast asleep when the alarm was given. I forget who gave it. One of the fellows sat up in bed and yelled out that there was smoke in the room—"

"It was I," said Price; "it was nearly choking me when I woke up."

"But how did it start?" asked Blake.
 "Nobody knows."

"I think B.-J. said it started in a box-room near the dorm," said Price. "But how, nobody knows. It's a giddy mystery."

"Awfully queeah!" said D'Arcy.
 "Yes, it is awfully queer."

"It's impossible to imagine that anybody set the fire going on purpose," Figgins remarked. "I suppose the insurance people will want to know all about it; so it's bound to come out, whatever the cause was."

"I never heard that it was insured," said Halkett.
 "Not insured?"

"I don't believe it is."
 Tom Merry whistled.
 "That will come mighty rough on your master, then," he said.

Halkett nodded.
 "I suppose it will—and it's a rotten shame, for B.-J. is

one of the best fellows breathing," he said. "He's simply ripping. You saw the way he saved young Walker—not that young Walker was worth the risk—"

"Oh, rats!" put in young Walker.

"It's a rotten shame if he has to cut," said Halkett, "and we shall never get a master again half so decent."

"Oh, rot!" said Stansen. "And I dare say Browning-Jones has got the loss pretty well covered, too."

Halkett looked at his schoolmate unpleasantly. It was easy for the Saints to see that there was no love lost between the two.

"You don't know anything about it, Stansen!" said Halkett tartly. "And if you say a word against B.-J., I'll knock it back down your throat, and some of your teeth with it, you ead!"

Stansen muttered something in reply, and fell back to the end of the line.

Halkett turned rather apologetically to Tom Merry.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I can't stand that chap! He's a rank outsider—a beastly worm! He's the only chap at our school who doesn't like B.-J."

"Why doesn't he like him?" asked Blake.

"Oh, because he's a worm, I suppose!" said Halkett. "He's mean, and a liar, and B.-J. is down very heavy on lies. Then he smokes. You see, he's had a bad training before he came to us, and I believe B.-J. took him in hand to try to reform him, at the special request of his father. His father's an awfully rich Swedish merchant in London—a Swedish chap who settled and married in England, you see, and I dare say he's very decent; but that chap is a rank rotter. Nobody can stand him!"

"He's an outsider!" said Walker.

During the walk to St. Jim's Tom Merry glanced curiously several times at the half-foreign lad. He caught more than one savage look from Stansen to Halkett, though the latter did not appear to observe them. Whatever other qualities Ralph Stansen had, there was no doubt that he hated Halkett, and that he was a very thorough hater.

CHAPTER 5. New Fellows!

MR. RAILTON stood at the doorway of the School House at St. Jim's as the weary party arrived.

The stalwart Housemaster of the School House was acting as Head during the absence of Dr. Holmes, and he—as Dr. Holmes would have done, had he been there—gladly extended the hospitality of St. Jim's to the refugees.

"Quite right, Kildare—quite right!" he exclaimed. "I am very glad you have brought our friends here."

He shook hands with Mr. Browning-Jones, and made the boys welcome in a few words. The Balliol man was looking somewhat subdued. He could not help thinking of what the fire meant to him.

But he thanked Mr. Railton warmly. The Housemaster rapped out orders quickly. The half-clothed B.-J. boys were taken at once upstairs, and they tumbled into the beds left vacant by Tom Merry & Co., and several other fellows turned out to make up the number. That the St. Jim's juniors were only too willing to do; their hospitality to the fellows who had been burnt out was unbounded.

For the juniors who were displaced, extra beds were made up at more leisure. The special guest-chamber in the Head's house was assigned to Mr. Browning-Jones.

Half an hour after the arrival St. Jim's was quiet again.

Far along the Rhyl, the last flicker of the fire was dying out, and the ruins of the little school was sending up a column of thick smoke to the stars.

At St. Jim's the refugees slept, though it is probable that it was some time before sleep closed the eyes of Mr. Browning-Jones.

At dawn the young schoolmaster was up, and he strode away to the scene of the fire before anybody else at St. Jim's had left his bed. He returned in time for breakfast, and he breakfasted with Mr. Railton in his study.

Mr. Railton was very kind and sympathetic; but there was little he could say to console the young schoolmaster for his terrible loss.

"I suppose little has been saved?" he asked.

The young man shook his head.

"Practically nothing," he said. "The place was too far from the town for any assistance to be rendered in time. A few articles of light furniture were taken out, and that is all. Even my papers have been destroyed."

"It was a most remarkable thing. You have no idea how the fire started?"

"None whatever."

"And you were not insured?"

"Not for a shilling!"

"That is very unfortunate."

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"I don't know," said Mr. Browning-Jones thoughtfully. "The outbreak is so utterly inexplicable that, if I had been insured, I am afraid unpleasant suspicions would have arisen."

Mr. Railton started.

"You mean?"

"I mean that it seems almost impossible that the fire can have broken out accidentally," said the young schoolmaster. "Of course, it must have done; but if a motive had been possibly assignable for incendiarism, I fear that incendiarism would have been suspected."

"But as there was no insurance—"

"As there is no insurance, and as I am totally ruined by the occurrence, there can be no suspicion," said Mr. Browning-Jones, with a painful smile.

"Not so far as you are concerned," said the School House master; "but is there no one whom you could possibly suspect?"

"Impossible! Who should set my school on fire?"

"Certainly it would be difficult to say."

"Besides," added Mr. Browning-Jones, "the fire certainly started in the box-room near the dormitory. It started within the house. If there was incendiarism, it was the work of an inmate."

"And that is impossible?"

"Quite. Only my boys, and myself, and three servants occupied the house. The servants were perfectly reliable, commonplace persons, attached to me. And one would hardly look for an incendiary among boys of fifteen."

"I suppose not."

"No; the fire was an accident," said Mr. Browning-Jones thoughtfully. "How the accident happened, I cannot say—the police may discover. They are there now, and some of them, I think, suspect incendiarism—though able to assign no possible motive for it. The fire was so sudden and complete that it really seems to have been planned. Of course, it was chance only."

"Of course," assented Mr. Railton.

He was looking very thoughtful.

"And now what are your plans?" he went on. "Excuse my asking, but I want to be of some help to you, if possible."

"I suppose I must send my boys back to their homes," said the young man, with a sigh. "My school is burnt down, and I have no prospect of building another. Even so, the delay would be too great—my pupils, by that time, will be scattered far enough."

"You might hire a building, and continue your teaching while the place is being rebuilt," Mr. Railton suggested.

"Possibly; but the rebuilding is an impossible thing. All the money I had was sunk in that place, and all is gone."

"It is terrible!"

"I have friends who will help me; but—"

"But do not be in too great a hurry to send your pupils home," said Mr. Railton. "You have acquainted their parents of their safety?"

"By this morning's post, certainly. The parents will receive the information of the fire from my letters, in the first place. But—"

"Then let them remain here."

"Here?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Railton. "Let the boys remain here at St. Jim's, for a few days at least, while you are considering what to do. They can be put into the Forms that suit them, so that their studies need not be interrupted; and it will be an easy matter to arrange for their accommodation between the two Houses. If, after a week or so, you think you have no resource but to send them back to their parents, you can do so. But if any good fortune befriends you, here they are, ready for you."

Mr. Browning-Jones' face showed the emotion he felt.

"You are very, very kind," he said.

"Not at all. I am only making an offer which I am certain Dr. Holmes would make if he were here."

"It is trespassing too much upon your kindness."

"Nonsense!"

"I can only say that I accept your offer, and I am grateful," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "I accept it for a week, in the hope that I may be able to pull round."

And after he had breakfasted, Mr. Browning-Jones sought his boys, and explained to them the arrangement he had made with Mr. Railton.

The boys had breakfasted in the dining-room of the School House with the St. Jim's fellows, and they were looking little the worse for their alarming experiences of the night before.

Only Stansen was still very pale, and seemed haunted by the memory of the terrible scenes of the night. But even he looked much better than when the juniors had seen him by the light of the conflagration the night before.

"You will stay here for a week, my boys, unless your parents write and express a wish for you to return home," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "You will take your places

in the Fourth and Third Forms, according to your age. Stansen will go into the Shell, as he is too old for the Fourth. I trust you will do your very best to keep on good terms with the boys who will be your companions, and will be very careful to do nothing to make Mr. Railton regret his kindness and hospitality."

"Certainly, sir," said Halkett cheerfully.

And then Mr. Browning-Jones left. He was wanted over at the burnt school.

The B.-J. boys went in to morning lessons with the juniors of St. Jim's.

Ralph Stansen was the only one of them who was put into the Shell. He was older than most of the Shell fellows, and he could have been put in the Fifth, but Mr. Browning-Jones had explained that he was not up to the work. The half-foreign lad had a keen, almost cunning face, but he certainly did not look as if his intellect was of a high order.

And Manners nodded assent.

So Tom Merry asked Stansen if he would care to share their study, and Stansen accepted in a careless offhand way that made the junior captain of St. Jim's half sorry he had asked him.

Stansen evidently did not know, or care, what an effort the offer had cost the Terrible Three.

CHAPTER 6.

A Curious Character!

STANSEN had not seemed particularly keen about sharing Tom Merry's study, but as soon as he was an inmate he proceeded to make himself quite at home there.

He had brought very few possessions from the burnt school; but he seemed to have plenty of money, and he



"Let me go—let me go!" Stansen screamed and struggled violently as Tom Merry & Co. swept him off his feet. But the foreign boy was helpless in the grasp of the Terrible Three, and he was borne bodily down the box-room stairs.

The Terrible Three made up their minds to be kindness itself to the stranger within their gates, though they certainly wished that it had been any fellow but Stansen. But although they did not like the boy they felt that it was their duty to look after him and do all they could to help him.

And with that idea in their minds they made a great effort, and determined to have him in their study.

It was Tom Merry who proposed it, after morning school, when the Terrible Three were in the cosy study in the Shell passage.

"Stansen will have to have a study," Tom Merry began.

"Hem!" said Monty Lowther.

And Manners, who was deeply interested in printing out photographs, did not appear to hear, and made no reply at all.

"Stansen will have to have a study," Tom Merry repeated, "and it would be only decent to ask him in here."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"We ought to, you know," said Tom Merry. "Better make up our minds to it. After all, it won't be for long. And I dare say the chap's decent, if we rub him down the right way. What do you say?"

"Oh, all right!" said Monty Lowther.

did some shopping in Rylcombe the same day, and a great many things were delivered at St. Jim's for him during the afternoon.

After last lesson, when the Shell came out of their Form-room, Tom Merry spoke to the half-foreign junior.

"Coming down to the footer?" Tom Merry asked.

Stansen looked at him with a slight sneer.

"Football?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Tom. "You play, don't you?"

"No," answered Stansen curtly.

"You don't like it?"

"No."

"What do you play, then—what game, I mean?"

"None."

Stansen walked away, perhaps to avoid further questioning. Blake looked at Halkett in a puzzled way.

"Blessed if I understand that chap!" he said. "Doesn't like footer! What sort of a mercant is he anyway?"

Halkett laughed.

"He always was a queer customer," he said.

"Well, coming down to the footer?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors went down to the football ground, and forgot

all about Ralph Stansen. It was an hour later that the Terrible Three came in, a glow of ruddy health in their cheeks.

Tom Merry opened his study door in the Shell passage, and then started back with an exclamation of astonishment. The scent of tobacco assailed him as the door opened, and as he looked in he saw that the study was blue with tobacco smoke.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"Great Scott!"

"Who's here?" exclaimed Manners. "It can't be Gore up to his old tricks—in our study, too!"

"It's Stansen," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Stansen, the cad!"

The Terrible Three went into the study and closed the door behind them. The smoke was so thick that it was rolling out in clouds into the passage.

"Open the windows, for goodness' sake!" gasped Lowther.

"It's like a blessed tap-room!"

Tom Merry threw the window up.

There was a rush of fresh air into the smoky room, and the chums of the Shell breathed again.

They all looked at Stansen. The boy was seated in the armchair with his feet on another chair, and a cigarette was between his lips. On the hearthrug and in the grate were numerous cigarette-ends. He was still smoking, and he looked at them with the dull, glazed eyes of the inveterate smoker.

The Terrible Three understood now clearly the cause of the fellow's dull eyes, his yellow skin, and his shivering, trembling hands. He was a confirmed smoker, and the habit, carried to a dangerous excess, had thrown him into a constant state of nerves.

The disgust in the faces of the Terrible Three might have brought a flush to any fellow's cheeks. But Stansen did not seem to notice it.

He nodded sleepily.

Tom Merry bent over him, took hold of the cigarette, and jerked it from his lips. He was really inclined to box Stansen's ears at the same time, but he restrained that inclination.

He threw the cigarette out of the open window.

Stansen started up with an angry cry, or, rather, a scream. His colourless face was twisted with anger.

His hands were trembling, and it was evident from his look that his nerves were all in a twitter.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed.

"You can't smoke here."

"Isn't this my study now?"

"Yes; if you choose to be decent in it," said Tom Merry. "But it's our study, too, and you're not going to smoke in here!"

"You—you fool! You fool!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"Better language, please!" he said curtly. "I'm not used to being called a fool, and I won't take that sort of thing from a putty-faced cad like you!"

"I will smoke if I like!"

"You ass!" said Monty Lowther. "What do you think will happen if a prefect puts his head into the room? He'd think we'd all been having a smoking-party, and we would be hauled up before the beak in no time."

"I don't care!"

"You mayn't care, but we do!" said Manners. "You won't smoke in this study, and that's flat!"

"Hang you!"

"You need not get excited," said Tom Merry. "We can pass over your cheek, as any one of us could lick you hollow with one hand. You young duffer! Look at the state you've got into with your rotten smoking! You're all nerves! Any kid in the Third Form here could knock you into a cocked hat!"

Stansen's hands were clenching and unclenching. He seemed to be in a state bordering on hysteria.

"I will not stay in your study!" he exclaimed. "I will do as I like wherever I am! Mr. Browning-Jones has tried to bully me, as you have done, but he has reason to be sorry for it!"

"You've walloped him, I suppose?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

And the chums of the Shell grinned.

Stansen did not reply. He was gathering up his cigarettes on the table and cramming them into his pockets. He seemed to have an enormous supply of them.

Stansen strode to the door. The chums of the Shell looked after him. They felt that they would have given a term's pocket-money to take Stansen in hand just then and give him the hiding he deserved.

But civility to the stranger within the gates had to be considered. They could not lay hands upon one of Mr. Browning-Jones' boys.

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Stansen turned at the door and gave them a savage look. "I hate you!" he exclaimed in his excited, foreign way. "I hate you! I hate this school as much as I hated Mr. Browning-Jones' school!"

And he went out and slammed the door.

CHAPTER 7.

The Mystery of the Fire!

"INSPECTOR KNOWSEY, sir, wishes to see you, sir!" said the School House page.

Mr. Browning-Jones was chatting with Mr. Railton in the latter's study. They were standing by the window, looking out over the wide, green old quadrangle as they talked.

B.-J. looked a little surprised.

"The inspector—from Wayland, Mr. Railton," he exclaimed. "I do not know what he has come over here for; something has been discovered, I suppose."

"Show him in here, Toby," said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir."

"I will leave you," said the Housemaster.

"Please don't," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "I should like you to hear what the inspector has to say. I am afraid there is something wrong, and I want you to give me your opinion, if you will. The inspector was looking very mysterious when I saw him this afternoon at the scene of the fire."

"Does he suspect—?"

"I fear so; yet what he can suspect is a mystery. It is impossible that the fire can have been the work of an incendiary."

A fat little inspector, with a very ruddy face, came puffing into the study, and he removed his cap and wiped his bald, perspiring forehead.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen!" he said. "I thought I had better come over at once to see you, Mr. Browning-Jones, about what we have found."

"Thank you, Mr. Knowsey! Pray sit down."

The fat inspector sank into a chair.

"I'm afraid there's something more in this matter than appeared at first, sir," he said. "We have been making an exhaustive examination of the ruins, sir, with the firemen from Wayland, and we have found—"

"Yes; what have you found?"

"The fire was not an accident, sir."

"What makes you think so?"

"There is clear proof that it was started by an incendiary," said the inspector. "There is no doubt that it broke out in the box-room adjoining the dormitory."

"Yes; I told you so myself."

"There is no fire-grate in that room, so there can have been no fire to spread by accident. There was nothing in the room, I understand, but old boxes, so even a spark dropped from a candle would not be dangerous there. It is absolutely impossible to believe that a fire which began in such a place could be the result of an accident—absolutely!" said the inspector. "But that is not all."

"What is there—?"

"We have found a number of paraffin-cans in the ruins of that room—cans which, your porter has told me, were usually kept in a shed outside the house," said the inspector. "They had been carried into the house and placed in that room—for what purpose?"

Mr. Browning-Jones looked astounded.

"Paraffin-cans!" he said.

"Yes, sir. You may be aware—"

"I am aware that the oil was kept in the shed," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "But under no circumstances whatever should the cans have been carried inside the school house."

"Well, there they were, sir," said Inspector Knowsey; "burnt and twisted, you know, but it was easy to recognise them. Search was made in the shed, and they were missing there. They were the same cans, sir—six of them, each holding two gallons of paraffin. For what purpose were they conveyed to the box-room?"

"For only one possible purpose, I suppose."

"To set the fire going, sir," said the inspector solemnly.

"Your porter tells me that the cans were in their places when he locked up for the night. They were removed afterwards, and taken into the house. The lock on the shed was forced—it was a padlock, as you, of course, know—and the chain had been broken by means of an iron crowbar—and the crowbar was lying near the door. Someone during the night broke into the shed, took out the cans of paraffin, and carried them into the house—into the box-room where the fire started."

"Good heavens!"

"The blackened remains of the cans are there to prove it. Whoever did this, sir, was as great a fool as he was a rascal, I should say, for he seems to have taken no precaution against discovery."

"Apparently not."

"So I want to know, sir, who was the party?" said Inspector Knowsey. "I have already ascertained that the house was not insured, so—" The inspector paused, and coloured a little.

Mr. Browning-Jones smiled a little bitterly.

If his school had been insured, he knew that the inspector would not have thought of looking further than himself for the incendiary.

But a man could not reasonably be suspected of having burnt down his own property, and endangered his own life, for mere amusement.

The inspector was clearly puzzled, therefore.

"Do you suspect anyone, inspector?"

Mr. Knowsey shook his head.

"No, sir; I don't know whom to suspect. But it was someone in the school who set the blaze going."

Mr. Browning-Jones looked very troubled.

"I should have said so myself at first," he said, "only it seems impossible to think so, inspector. Who could have done it?"

"That's what we've got to find out, sir."

"Besides myself, there were only the housekeeper and the maids and the boys—"

"I've questioned the housekeeper and the maids, sir. It is no use looking in that direction."

"You do not mean that—that—"

The inspector smiled.

"I don't suspect you, sir. I should hardly come to tell you so if I did."

"I suppose not, but—"

"The boys, sir."

"But a boy—it is impossible!"

The inspector shook his head ponderously.

"Not at all impossible, sir. There was a fire some time ago at a very famous Public school, and it was proved to have been the work of a boy belonging to the school."

Mr. Browning-Jones started.

"You are right, inspector. I remember it."

"In the absence of any other possible solution, sir, I can only suspect that it was one of the boys," said the inspector.

"Of course, I am sorry to say so, but there it is. Was there any boy who had a very great spite against you, sir?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Any boy who had punished very severely?"

"I never punished any boy severely."

"Any boy who had a dangerous propensity to practical jokes, then—for that might be the solution," said Mr. Knowsey.

"I think not."

"Then, last, was there any boy who wasn't quite right in his head?" the inspector suggested.

"I am sure not!"

"Not one of the boys who was strange in any way—say, excitable, hysterical, or anything of that sort?"

Mr. Browning-Jones paused.

"I hardly know what to say," he replied. "Perhaps you would like to see all the boys yourself, inspector, and question them?"

"I was going to suggest it, sir."

The young schoolmaster looked at Mr. Railton.

"Could you lend me a Form-room to muster my boys?" he asked. "Lessons are over here now, are they not?"

"Certainly!" said the School House master. "I will send a prefect to call the boys into the Shell-room."

"Thank you so much."

"This way, inspector."

There was a deep shadow on Mr. Browning-Jones' face as he followed the Housemaster from the study—a deep shadow, growing deeper and darker. However the inquiry turned out, there could not be much doubt upon one point—that the fire in the private school had been deliberately started by an incendiary.

CHAPTER 8.

Stansen's Wanted!

"ALL Mr. Browning-Jones boys are wanted in the Shell class-room!" said Kildare.

Halkett and several others of the B.-J. boys who were chatting with Blake & Co. after the football, turned round in surprise. The captain of St. Jim's had come out to call them in.

"We're wanted?" asked Halkett.

"Yes; at once."

"Any trouble?" asked Owen.

"I don't know. Your master wants you. Get the others, and all go on," said Kildare.

"Oh, right you are!"

Kildare walked away. The St. Jim's visitors looked surprised and uneasy.

(Continued on the 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.

NOT THAT WAY.

Teacher: "If you want to learn anything properly the only way is to start at the bottom."

Boy: "That wouldn't help me, sir."

Teacher: "And why not?"

Boy: "Because I want to learn how to swim!"

A football has been awarded to E. Dyer, 105, Elthorne Park Road, Hanwell, London, W.7.

HE SAID IT!

American (stopping near monument of George Washington): "Do you know, a lie never passed that man's lips."

Englishman: "Well, I suppose he was like all Americans—talked through his nose!"

A football has been awarded to J. Dewson, 5, Vearage Street, Oldham.

ASKING FOR IT.

Old Gent (after poking navy with walking-stick): "I say can you tell me the quickest way to the hospital?"

Navy: "Yus, gov'nor; poke me ag'in with that there stick!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Ward, 139, Portland Street, Waltham, London, S.E.17.

AMONG THE BULLETS!

Sergeant (to recruits): "A brave soldier is always to be found where the bullets are thickest. Now, Smith, where would you be in battle?"

Smith: "In the ammunition wagon, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Burke, No. 8, "C" Block, Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffs.

EGGSACTLY!

Tom: "My hen laid a four-inch egg."

Ted: "I've got something to beat that."

Tom: "Well, what is it?"

Ted: "An egg-beater!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Dabby, 3, Leicester Avenue, Rathgat, Dublin.

OPTIMISTIC.

The bricklayers had just begun on the building of a new housing estate, and a man with a ladder on his shoulder had stopped to watch. One of the bricklayers looked up and noticed him.

"Hurry up, mates," he exclaimed to his pals, "it's waiting to clean the windows!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Brownrigg, 12, Higher Bank Street, Blackburn.

ADDITION!

Scotch Teacher: "If I gave you sixpence in one hand, Jones, and threepence in the other, what would you have?"

Jones: "Two fits and a nightmare, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Cuthbert, 8, Kirkwell Place, Globe Road, Bethnal Green, London, E.2.

A READY RETORT.

Police Sergeant (to loiterer): "We don't get these stripes for hanging about street corners, you know."

Loiterer: "No; if you did you'd look like a blooming zebra by now!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Meadows, 153, Holden Road, Leigh, Lanes.

"Some blessed row, I suppose," said Halkett. "I'm sure I've been trying to keep the peace, for one."

"So have I," said Price.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm sure you chaps have been playing the game all along the line, you know. I trust there is goin' to be no wow."

Halkett gathered the other fellows to go into the Form-room. Stansen was not to be found, and after looking for him for a few minutes Halkett decided to go in without him. He did not want to keep his master waiting.

Ten lads made their way to the Shell-room, and there they found Mr. Browning-Jones and Inspector Knowsey and Mr. Railton.

They came in quietly, wondering what was the matter. The fat inspector rolled his eye over them.

"All of them here?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "One is not here. Where is Stansen, Halkett?"

"I couldn't find him, sir."

"All of them must come," said the inspector. "It's absolutely necessary."

"I will have him searched for," said Mr. Railton. "Perhaps he has gone into some quiet corner with a book."

He quitted the room.

After a moment's thought, the Housemaster ascended the stairs and knocked at the door of Tom Merry's study and opened it.

A smell of tea and hot buttered toast greeted him as he stepped in. The Terrible Three were getting their evening meal, and the study was very warm, in spite of the wide-open window and the breeze from the quad.

The smell of tea and toast almost killed the late scent that had clung about the study, but there was enough of the odour of tobacco left to make Mr. Railton sniff.

The three juniors jumped up at once as the Housemaster entered.

"I want Stansen," said Mr. Railton. "I understand that he was to share your study, Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

"But he is not here."

"No, sir."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I'm afraid I don't, sir. The—the fact is," said Tom Merry haltingly, "the—the fact is, sir, that—that Stansen won't be sharing our study after all, sir."

"Why not?"

"We don't seem to get on, sir."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"I trust you have not been quarrelling, Merry, with a boy who is a guest under this roof!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry flushed.

"Not exactly that, sir," he said. "We shouldn't have pulled together—that's all, sir; and I don't think Stansen cared about staying, either."

Mr. Railton sniffed slightly.

"Someone has been smoking in this study," he said.

The Terrible Three stood silent and confused.

"I am waiting for an answer," said the Housemaster.

"Well, sir—"

"Was it you, Merry?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Was it you, Manners?"

"No, sir."

"Lowther, was it you?"

"It was not, sir."

"Then I can only conclude that it was Stansen," said Mr. Railton. "You may tell me in confidence, Merry. I shall not report the matter to his master; and Stansen is not in my charge."

"Well, sir, he was the chap, if you put it like that."

"Is that why he does not remain in the study?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well. But his master requires him now," said Mr. Railton, changing the subject. "I want him found and brought to the Shell-room."

"Shall we look for him, sir?"

"Please do, and bring him to the Shell-room. It is most important; a gentleman is waiting to see him."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Railton went downstairs. The Terrible Three cast a glance at their hot buttered toast and the fragrant tea. But they were prepared to make the sacrifice; Mr. Railton was a popular master.

"Come on," said Tom Merry. "Let's find the chap."

"Oh, all right!"

"I fancy I know where to look for him," said Tom Merry as they quitted the study. "My impression is that he's gone off somewhere to smoke."

"I think so, too."

"We shall find him in one of the box-rooms, most likely." The Terrible Three ran up the stairs.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,363

As they reached the little landing outside the box-rooms, a well-known scent assailed their nostrils.

Tom Merry gave a kind of snort.

"Tobacco!" he said.

"The cad's here," said Manners.

He opened a door.

There, seated upon an empty trunk, his eyes half-closed, his face as pale as chalk, was Stansen, smoking his eternal cigarettes.

He glanced up angrily at the sight of the chums of the Shell.

"What do you want?" he cried shrilly. "Leave me alone."

"You are wanted," Tom Merry explained. "Mr. Railton has sent us to look for you. You are wanted in the Shell-room; somebody's waiting to see you."

"I will not come!"

"What!"

"I tell you I will not come!" cried Stansen. "Go—and leave me in peace."

"You're off your rocker, I should think," said Monty Lowther in amazement. "Don't you know that you have to go when a master wants you?"

"I will not."

"Look here—"

"Leave me alone."

"You've got to come!"

"I won't, I tell you."

"Look here, Stansen," said Tom Merry quietly. "Don't play the giddy ox. Be a sensible chap, can't you?"

"I will not come."

"Mr. Browning-Jones wants you, and a man is waiting to see you. Are you out of your senses?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I won't come."

"You must come. Do you think we're going back to tell Mr. Railton you won't come?" Tom Merry demanded wrathfully.

"You can say what you like; but I will not come."

The chums of the Shell exchanged glances. There was the same thought in all three minds. It was impossible to return to Mr. Railton and say that Stansen would not come; such a proceeding would be unheard of. If Stansen would not go, he would have to be taken; there was nothing else to be done.

"Now, look here," said Tom Merry, as gently as he could. "You've got to come, Stansen; cheek of that sort isn't allowed at St. Jim's."

"Better come quietly," Manners suggested.

"We don't want the trouble of carrying you, but we shall have to do so if you don't come, Stansen!" Monty Lowther remarked.

The half-foreign lad jumped up from the box. His eyes were glaring like a wild animal's, and for the moment he seemed to be quite beside himself.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He watched Stansen's eyes as he would have watched the eyes of an opponent in a boxing match, and ran forward. His strong arms were thrown round the half-foreign junior, pinning Stansen's arms down to his sides.

Stansen screamed.

"Let me go—let me go!"

"I won't, you young ass! Chuck it!"

Stansen struggled and kicked and tore with his nails. A red streak showed down Tom Merry's face.

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "That's got to be stopped."

Manners and Lowther grasped Stansen's wrists.

The boy struggled still, but Tom Merry slid his grasp down to Stansen's ankle, and he was swept off the floor.

Thus the Shell fellows carried him out of the box-room. Stansen screamed and struggled as they bore him bodily down the box-room stairs, and past the dormitories.

But the Terrible Three had him tightly now, and he had no chance. They were strongly tempted to frog-march him; but that they refrained from.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, meeting them in the Fourth Form passage. "Bai Jove! Is that a new game, death boys?"

Tom Merry panted.

"Mr. Railton wants him," he said, "and he won't go."

"Bai Jove!"

"Come on, you chaps!"

"What is the matter here?"

It was the deep voice of the Housemaster. The Terrible Three halted, their prisoner still wriggling and squirming in their grasp like an excited eel.

"We—we're bringing Stansen!" stammered Tom Merry.

"Carrying him, sir," said Monty Lowther. "He—he wasn't inclined to walk, sir."

"Set him down."

(Continued on page 14.)

GATHER ROUND, CHUMS, FOR A CHAT WITH YOUR EDITOR.



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

HALLO, chums! You remember I told you last week of the great series of St. Jim's stories that are on the way? Well, next Wednesday you will have the first yarn of this series in your hands, and if you only get half the enjoyment in reading it that I did, you'll all be saying to yourselves: "What a story! The best I've read for a long time." And like *Oliver Twist*, you'll be asking for more of the same sort. They will follow.

I cannot praise too highly this series. Mr. Clifford has surely "hit the high spots." But as I have said before, our author is thoroughly "at home" with any type of story, and you can always be sure of getting the maximum of entertainment from every yarn that flows from his inimitable and versatile pen.

"THE MENACE OF THE DWARF!"

This is the unusual and intriguing title of the first yarn in our grand series. You may well ask, "Who is the dwarf?" He is a Spaniard named Pablo Lopez, who, though but an ungainly dwarf, is possessed of considerable strength—as Tom Merry discovers when he first meets him. Tom is naturally amazed when he is accosted by the sinister figure, but it is not until later that he learns of the grim purpose that has brought the dwarf from distant parts to the peaceful Sussex countryside around St. Jim's. Lopez is trailing an English seaman to rob him of the treasure chart he has—and the dwarf will stop at nothing to get it!

This drama of a desperate dwarf's greed for gold hidden on a Pacific island, with only a seaman barring him from getting

it; of how the chums of St. Jim's find themselves involved in it; and the thrilling adventures that are the outcome of it, will grip and hold your interest as no story has ever done before.

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Since telling you last week that a brand new serial story of the St. Frank's chums is on the way, I have read Mr. Brooks' latest effort, and, gosh! if it doesn't lick creation for mystery, thrills, and gripping adventure, I'll eat my hat! It's a powerful story staged in the Wild West—Arizona, where Justin B. Farman, of the Fourth Form, has inherited a ranch. All sorts of strange and nerve-tingling things are happening out there, so Farman decides to go out and investigate, taking with him half a dozen fellows from St. Frank's.

Chums, you're in for the fiction treat of a lifetime with this ripping serial, which starts in three weeks' time. Give all your pals the tip about our magnificent coming programmes—and don't forget to give your newsagent that regular order for the GEM.

"TREASURE ISLE!"

Our present and popular serial is drawing to a close now, but it promises to be as thrilling a conclusion as any serial could possibly have. Haynes is in a tight corner, and he is prepared to go to any lengths to save himself, without counting the cost of life, as his attempt to fire the *Sky Wanderer* clearly shows. Will he succeed? In any case, only Willy Handforth can save the airship from the fate that

threatens it! Make sure you read next week's all-thrilling chapters.

"Tom Merry's Weekly" continues to come in for much praise from readers. Personally, I think it fully deserves all of it, for it is a bright and amusing way of bringing readers into closer touch with their favourite characters, as well as giving all the facts of the minor events at St. Jim's. There will be another tip-top number next week, and all our other popular features will appear as usual.

"THE WIZARD OF ST. FRANK'S!"

By the way, those readers who are keen to read more about the chums of St. Frank's should read the amazing book-length yarn of mystery and adventure which appears in the "Schoolboy's Own Library," No. 217, now on sale, price 4d. This grand story features the sinister character, Ezra Quirke, the schoolboy magician, whose startling feats of mysticism will hold you spellbound. Ask your newsagent for this book to-day.

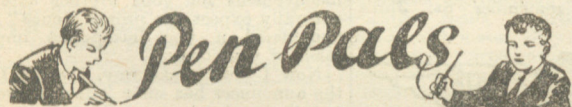
JOSEPH THE SHEEP.

Meet Joseph, of Southampton. Joseph is a sheep, but not an ordinary one, for he is very intelligent. He belongs to a Mrs. House, and every day when she goes out shopping, Joseph goes with her. He goes on a lead attached to his collar, and his constant companions are four sheep-dogs. Joseph walks into the shops and if anyone gives him a present of a sweet or a cake, he says "baa" most politely. He is one of the nicest of pets.

A RECORD CATCH!

George Hardham, of Nottingham, has written asking me a most awkward question. He wants to know what is the biggest fish ever caught on a rod and line. It seems to me that George wants to discover whether I am as adept at inventing "fishy" stories as most fishermen are supposed to be! Well, George, let me say straight away that I do not claim to hold the record myself, though once I did—but perhaps you wouldn't believe that one! The record is said to be held by Mr. C. G. Schultz, of Australia, who caught a sun-fish weighing three thousand pounds at Bondi Beach. Now, George, if you have ever caught one bigger than that in the canal, write and let me know about it!

THE EDITOR.



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.

Les Naylor, 144, Raydale Road, Bulwell, Nottingham, wants a pen pal interested in rowing and swimming.

Ronald Galliard, 5, Coppice Road, Willaston, Nantwich, Cheshire, wants a pen pal in Texas; age 15-16; aviation, science, boxing.

Eric Boothman, 2, Bushey Road, Liverpool, 4, wants to hear from readers who are extra keen on the old stories in GEM and "Magnet."

Nathan Kaplan, 224, Schoeman Street, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wants a pen pal who is keen on football, cricket, billiards and snooker; age 14-17.

F. Linsdell, 67, Balfour Road, North End, Portsmouth, wants pen pals interested in sports; ages 17-20.

Miss Eleanor Smith, 23, Riverton Road, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, wants girl correspondents; age 20 upwards.

Miss Mariette T. Fortier, 368, St. Valer Street, Three Rivers, Province Quebec, Canada, wants girl correspondents; ages 17-20.

Billy Jones, 5, Grasmere Crescent, Winton, Monton, Eccles, nr. Manchester, wants a pen pal; age 12-14.

A. Ross, 23, Rosamund Street, Walsall, Staffs, wants a pen pal interested in shorthand.

E. Barr, St. John's Vicarage, Blackpool, Lanes, wants a pen pal; age 10-13.

E. Brown, 17, Tixall Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, wants correspondents.

P. Thompson, 14, Spray Street, S.3, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants to hear from readers who are specially keen on the old stories.

Miss Mary Suffrad, 4, Bowls Building, Fly Dragon Terrace, Causeway Bay, Hongkong, wants girl correspondents; Europe, England, the Empire; interested in cycling, football, tennis, baseball, swimming and music.

Ted Ridge, 21, Surrey Road, Keswick, South Australia, wants pen pals who will exchange stamps; ages 12-15.

James Sanham, 273, London Road South, South Lowestoft, Suffolk, wants a pen pal in Africa or India.

James Armstrong, 218, Queen's Drive, Liverpool, 13, wants a pen pal interested in mechanism; age 12-15; America and Spain.

P. L. S. Bell, 167, Dorchester Road, Weymouth, wants to hear from stamp collectors overseas; age 13 upwards.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,363.

The Fire Raiser!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Certainly, sir."

Stansen was set upon his feet.

He stood before Mr. Railton, trembling and shivering with rage, the colour coming and going in his face, and his eyes like live coals.

"You are wanted in the Form-room, Stansen," said Mr. Railton quietly. "Kindly go there at once!"

Stansen looked at him, and his fierce, hysterical glance quailed. Without a word he turned away and made his way to the Form-room. He had evidently recognised the fact that Mr. Railton was not the kind of man to be trifled with.

The Housemaster, with a wrinkled brow, followed him.

CHAPTER. 9

Suspected!

MR. BROWNING-JONES looked startled.

"I am sorry I could not bring the boy before," said Mr. Railton quietly. "It seems to have taken the boys some time to find him."

"I hope he has given you no trouble," said the young schoolmaster, with an expressive look at the Swedish boy.

"Very little."

"Stansen, take your place with the others!"

Stansen sullenly obeyed.

Inspector Knowsey was looking at him very curiously. He had been chatting with Mr. Browning-Jones, but all the time his little bright eyes were upon the waiting juniors; but as soon as Stansen came in the inspector gave him all his attention.

"They are all here now, Mr. Knowsey," said the young schoolmaster.

Mr. Knowsey took out a fat notebook.

"Eleven boys," he remarked.

"Just so!"

"They are all your pupils at the private school?"

"Yes—just eleven."

"Very good!" The inspector turned to the row of waiting juniors, who were beginning to look somewhat anxious. "Now, my boys, I have a few questions to ask you."

"Yes, sir," said Halkett.

"Was any boy among you awake when the fire broke out?"

"I think not, sir. I wasn't."

"Who was the first to wake?"

"I—I think I was, sir."

"You! What is your name?"

"Price, sir."

"You woke up first?"

"I believe so, sir. But when I called out some of the fellows were awake, I think. The smoke was jolly thick in the dorm."

"I should say Stansen was the first, though," Halkett said. "Weren't you awake first of all, Stansen?"

"I don't know," said Stansen sullenly.

The inspector started a little.

"Why should you think that Master Stansen was the first awake?" he asked.

"Well, he was the only chap who had all his clothes on in the playground, sir," Halkett explained. "We all bolted out with half our things on. One chap only had his pyjamas, and young Walker hadn't time to get out at all."

"But Stansen was fully dressed?"

"Yes, sir."

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No. 7. Vol. 1 (New Series).

Flying Squad Reports

FATTY WYNN'S EASTER EGG

Figgins challenged Merry. If New House could bring off raid on School House before Easter hols, New House to be acknowledged Cock House. Agreed. Figgins led dorm raiding squadron to School House at dead of night. New House surprise victory—one up! Tom Merry and School House Flying Squad went into conclave. Next evening Fatty Wynn of the New House received immense Easter egg by carrier. Fatty had giant egg carried up to dorm, away from Mr. Rateliff's gaze. Figgins & Co. no sooner asleep than giant Easter egg fell apart, for Chief Air Marshal Merry to emerge—cramped but elated at getting behind New House lines! Tom Merry hastily gathered up "Etons," leaving Figgins & Co. nothing to wear! "Etons" thrown out of window to waiting School House Flying Squad. Tom Merry followed via window, clambering down rope ladder flung up to him. Next morning, whole of St. Jim's roaring with laughter at spectacle of Figgins & Co. in all sorts of odd garments, hastily procured! School House "corner" in "Etons" made School House Cock House—thanks to members of Flying Squad!

FAG'S UNLUCKY DIP

Mysterious raids on study cupboards set Shell and Fourth in uproar. Jars of jam, cakes, tarts, and fruit—missing! Nobody knew who could have needed such vast quantities of tuck. Flying Squad organised inquiry, but without result. Deadlock—till D'Arcy casually dropped information that his cheeky minor, Wally, was holding a "lucky dip" in a big Easter egg in the Third Form Room. Chief Air Marshal Merry suspicious, knowing fags hard up. Flying Squad zoomed to Third Form Room—discovered Wally & Co. gathered round huge egg "lucky dip"—free, prizes: jam, cakes, and fruit! Flying Squad recognised raided tuck—descended on fags with heavy bombs! Fags scattered—will long remember St. Jim's Flying Squad attack!



Cut out the Flying Squad badge and mount it on cardboard. This makes you a full member of Tom Merry's Flying Squad, and entitles you to carry out flights and organise a squadron.

When you have got three of your chums to become members of the Flying Squad, you rank as a Squadron-Commander, and to signify it you are entitled to colour the centre of the badge yellow.

When you have got four chums to join, you rank as an Air Commodore, and you are entitled to wear the badge with the centre coloured green.

When you have got five of your chums to join, you rank as an Air Vice-Marshal, wearing the badge with the centre coloured blue.

When you have got six chums to join, you rank as a full-fledged Air Marshal, and you

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

MONTY LOWTHER SPEAKING



Let me step right up to the televisor and wish you plenty of laughter this Easter!

Listening to me in the "Monty Lowther Calling" feature you probably get the impression that I'm a jester pure and simple, out for a laugh and nothing else. Perhaps I ought to tell you that, like all conscientious humorists, I'm serious at heart. I really study humour, with the intention some day of becoming world-famous on the stage, or the films, or maybe the radio.

After all, it would be a grim old world if we all went about with long faces and mumbled nothing lighter than remarks about the fat-stock prices or the probable depression centring over Iceland—now, wouldn't it? I think if a fellow sets himself quite seriously to looking on the funny side of life, making a jest out of anything and everything, he's doing a lot more good and being a lot more use to his fellow-men than the dismal jimmies who shake their heads and growl that the country is going to the dogs! How does it strike you fellows?

Humour, of course, as any stage or film comedian will tell you, is a very serious business indeed. It isn't easy to win a reputation for saying amusing things on the stage or the films, and it's harder still to keep that reputation once you've earned it! Humorous effects have to be planned, just as much as dramatic ones—excepting in very rare cases such as the famous Drury Lane comedian, Dan Leno, whose gags were, they say, frequently enacted on the spur of the moment. If you are acting on the stage this is most inconvenient for your brother actors, who naturally expect the proper "cues" and are nonplussed if you interpolate impromptu jokes of your own.

Now I must make way, because I believe the announcer has some "deep depressions" to tell you about, or a talk on the upbringing of artichokes, or something. If you ever want to go on the stage, come and have a chin with me—I've heard a lot of things which you might like to know!

are entitled to colour the centre of the badge red.

All members of the Flying Squad greet each other with this salute: Raise the right arm, bent, so that the hand comes level with the head. The hand should be presented edge-wise to your fellow member, parallel with the side of your head, and should be brought into position smartly. Try it!

The unbreakable rule of the Flying Squad is:

Be ever ready to fly to the assistance of your friends.

(Signed) TOM MERRY
(Air Marshal in Chief)



Week Ending March 31st, 1934.

**STAND BY FOR
RADIO ST. JIM'S**

**YOUR FAVOURITES
BEFORE THE "MIKE"**

Here's Jack Blak: Get plenty of footer—that's my advice, fellows!

Now Figgins: Hallo, chaps! Just keep your eye on the New House, as usual, and you can't go wrong!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy: Whatever you do ova the hols, deah boys, pway wewembah that a neat appearance always commands respect—unless there are any cheeky fags like my minah about!

Don't announce me—I'm Wally D'Arcy! Whoopee, boys! Hotcha! Get all the rags you can—especially if you meet any old fogies like Tom Merry & Co.!

Mr. Railton speaking: By all means get plenty of fun this Easter. The holiday is meant to do you good!

Now George Herries: Hiking is the best sport—preferably with a dog like old Towser!

And Harry Mannors: I hope it won't rain, but if it does there's nothing like a game of chess before a roaring fire. Try it!

Here's Fatty Wynn: As long as you get plenty to eat and don't forget to exercise it off, you'll be as O.K. as I am!

And Monty Lowther: Coming last, but I hope not least, may I suggest that if any reader fails to find good advice in the foregoing, Easter blame ('E's to blame). Well, you asked for it! Cheerio!

ST. JIM'S NEWS REEL

Fatty Wynn says he wishes Easter came more frequently. He is particularly fond of big chocolate Easter eggs filled with marzipan!

A. A. D'Arcy says the big problem at Easter, as at all other times, is exactly what a fellow should wear. With the dawning of brighter days he feels it necessary to buy at least a dozen new ties. However bright the weather, it will have a job to beat Gussy's ties!

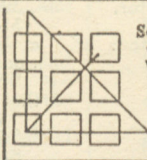
Wally D'Arcy suggests that Easter should be celebrated by a free distribution of large Easter eggs to all fags. We can imagine Dr. Holmes handing out chocolate eggs to a line of fags!

Mr. Philip Lathom says he finds Easter affords a pleasant though brief relaxation from the worries of controlling the Fourth. Mr. Lathom approves of high spirits in boys, but he likes a quiet rest with a novel.

Ephraim Taggles says he always looks forward to a good crop of tips at Easter. (There's no harm in looking forward, Taggy. May you be as lucky as you deserve!—Ed.)

Last Easter, 1,200 hot cross buns were consumed at St. Jim's. This works out at about six for each boy; but, as the seniors don't go in for buns, some of the fags must have got into double figures!

**CALIBAN'S
PUZZLE
CORNER**

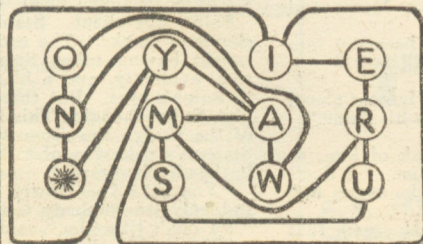


Solution of last week's puzzle.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had planned a cycling tour over the Easter holidays. They were consulting a road map, as shown below, the circles representing towns and the lines indicating roads. Starting from the town marked with a star, they wanted to visit each of the other towns once, and only once, completing their tour at the town marked E.

That was the difficulty. Figgins said: "I'm certain we can find a way of doing it!" But Kerr, the canny Scot, replied: "No way, I'm sure."

Now, which of them was correct? Take a pencil and see if you can find any way of doing it. Keep to the roads indicated, of course.



**CURIOUS
EASTER
COINCIDENCE**

The attention of the Fags of St. Jim's is hereby drawn to Two ANNOUNCEMENTS OF GREAT INTEREST, namely:

1. GRAND PERFORMANCE OF "MACRETH," by the newly-formed New House Thespians (George Figgins & Co.).
2. GRAND SALE OF EASTER EGGS at Gum-midge's, the Rylcombe grocer.

NOTE.—These eggs are offered at one penny per dozen, to clear! It should be remarked that these are not chocolate eggs, but genuine hens' eggs, laid at EASTER—LAST YEAR!

"Yes, I remember—even to his boots and necktie," said Owen.

The inspector fixed his keen little eyes on Stansen.

"In that case, Master Stansen, you must have been the first up," he said.

"I dressed very quickly," said Stansen. "Did you awake before or after the room was full of smoke?"

"After, sir."

"You were not up already?"

"No, sir."

"You had not got up for anything—say for a feed, or anything of that sort, or to play a trick of any kind?"

"I had not."

"You were, in fact, in bed when the fire broke out?"

"Yes, sir."

"And asleep?"

"Fast asleep, sir."

"Yet you had time to dress yourself fully before you ran out of the house?" the inspector remarked. "You stopped even to put your necktie on while the house was in flames."

Every eye was turned upon Stansen now. The Swedish junior was flushing very red, and his eyes sank before the inspector's piercing glance.

"Answer the inspector, Stansen!" said Mr. Browning-Jones.

Stansen raised his eyes.

"I was so frightened I did not know what I was doing," he said. "If I put the necktie on—I don't remember—it was from force of habit, I suppose, without noticing what I was doing."

The inspector nodded.

"Who was the first out of the house?" he asked.

There was no reply.

"Come, come—tell me!" said Mr. Knowsey.

"It was Stansen, sir," said Halkett.

"Ah, it was Stansen!"

"He was out of the house when I got out," said Halkett. "I saw him as I ran out of the smoke. Didn't you, Price?"

"Yes, I did," said Price.

"I'm! So Master Stansen had time not only to dress himself properly, but to get out of the house first of all as well," the inspector remarked.

Stansen did not speak.

"Isn't that a little curious, Master Stansen?" said the inspector.

"I don't think so, sir," said Stansen.

"I ran out as soon as I could, of course. Now I come to think of it, I think I took out some of my clothes under my arm, and finished dressing outside. I don't remember clearly. I fainted afterwards in the playground, and I was so upset altogether that I hardly know what happened."

"That would be very natural, under the circumstances," Mr. Browning-Jones remarked, with a look at the inspector—a look of keen distress.

"Possibly so," was the dry rejoinder. "Can any of you boys tell me any more?" the inspector added.

There was silence.

"Very well," said Inspector Knowsey, "I think I have finished with the boys, gentlemen."

"You may go," said Mr. Browning-Jones.

The boys filed out in silence.

The door of the Form-room was closed behind them, and then the three men stood in silence for a moment. Inspector Knowsey was gnawing the end of his pencil.

"My dear sir," broke out Mr. Browning-Jones at last, "you do not mean to say—"

"I mean to say nothing at present, sir."

"You suspect that boy?"

The inspector shrugged his plump shoulders.

"Somebody set the school on fire, Mr. Browning-Jones."

"But the boy had no conceivable motive for such a reckless, such a wicked action."

"Neither had any of the other boys. But certainly someone among them did set fire to the school," said Mr. Knowsey calmly.

"But—"

"There is no doubt about it, sir—absolutely!"

Mr. Browning-Jones looked greatly distressed.

"I can never believe it of one of my boys," he said.

"I hope the matter will be proved, sir," said Mr. Knowsey. "A reformatory is the proper place for the guilty boy, with a very strong dose of the birch. By the way, I observed that that boy—Stansen, I think, is his name—"

"Yes; he is only half English."

"I observed that he is a somewhat peculiar boy. Is he in normal health? His looks don't seem to imply so."

"He is not a normal boy," said Mr. Browning-Jones slowly. "I had better tell you the whole facts about him, I suppose."

"It would certainly be better to do so."

"He is the son of very rich parents, and has been completely spoiled at home," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "He has fallen into bad habits, and his father sent him to me in the hope that I might be able to cure him. But for his father's sake I should have sent him away from my school. He has almost wrecked his health by excessive smoking, and he is a very passionate and cruel boy. But I have not despaired of leading him into better ways."

"Did he greatly desire to leave the school?"

"I fear that he was not attached to the school, or to his schoolfellows, or to me," the young man confessed.

"He wished to be sent home?"

"Oh, no! He disliked his home. He was on the worst terms with his father, owing to his obstinacy and wilfulness. It was due to his want of training, but he had made himself quite intolerable."

"H'm! Then we cannot take it that this might have been a desperate step to get sent home from school?"

"I am sure not."

"Had you punished him severely? Might such an action have been attributable to revenge?" the inspector asked.

"I had punished him certainly, and he is a revengeful boy; but burning down a school and risking a dozen lives is hardly the act of a revengeful boy. A hardened criminal might stop short of so terrible a revenge."

"True!"

"In short, I cannot suspect Stansen."

Inspector Knowsey nodded.

"We shall see," he remarked.

"Meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile, I suppose the boy will remain here, and will be found if I should need him," said the inspector.

"Oh, certainly!" replied Mr. Railton.

"Very good. Then I need trouble you no further at present," said Inspector Knowsey.

And he took his leave.

CHAPTER 10.

Too Thick!

SNIPER of the Fourth looked into his study, and, seeing that Mellish was there, entered and closed the door.

Mellish looked at him inquiringly. There was an expression upon Snipe's face that interested him.

"What is it?" asked Mellish.

"I rather think we're in for a good thing," said Snipe. Snipe was an unpleasant youth who had lately become very friendly with Mellish. "Things have been rather quiet here since Gore became such a good person."

Mellish grunted.

"But there's a chap come to St. Jim's who can liven things up a bit," grinned Snipe.

Mellish looked interested.

"One of the B.-J. boys?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Which one? I don't like any of them," said the cad of the Fourth. "They get on too well with Tom Merry and his crowd to be of much use to me."

"I don't mean any of the fellows who have been put into our Form. I mean the chap who's in the Shell now."

"Oh, that blessed alien!"

"Yes, that blessed alien," agreed Snipe. "He goes ahead of anything I've ever seen at school. Stansen's his name."

"I've seen him—a sickly looking cad."

"That's the chap; only mind how you speak of him, as he's going to be a friend of ours," said Snipe. "I don't want him to hear anything of that sort when he comes in."

"What do you want him here for?"

"Because he'll be of use," said Snipe. "It seems that

Tom Merry has kicked him out of his study because we found him smoking there. He can smoke here and welcome, so long as he shares out the smokes."

Mellish grinned.

"Yes, rather!" he said.

"And he's simply rolling in money, too," said Snipe. "His father's a rich Swedish merchant, so I hear. The chap looks to me as if he's half off his rooker; but I suppose that's no business of ours. We're going to take him up. Hush!"

There was a knock at the door, and Stansen came in.

He was carrying a little package in his hand, and he laid it on the table. He nodded to Mellish.

"Oh, here you are!" said Snipe hospitably. "Give Stansen the armchair, Mellish, old man. We've got to make him comfy."

"Certainly," said Mellish, "with pleasure!"

Stansen sat down in the armchair. Snipe closed the door. The two cads beamed upon Stansen. As Snipe had said, things had been dull of late. Even Gore, after his many relapses, seemed to have determined to stick to the right path. There was little likelihood that Mellish or Snipe would reform, but they were certainly feeling rather lonely on the crooked path, so to speak.

"What have you got in there?" asked Mellish, with a glance towards the parcel on the table.

"I'll show you," said Stansen.

He opened the parcel.

A bundle of cheroots and a box of cigarettes tumbled out.

"Phew!"

"You must have plenty of money to chuck about, I should think," said Mellish.

"I have as much money as I want," said Stansen arrogantly. "And I do as I like. They will not coerce me here, any more than Mr. Browning-Jones could."

"You don't mean to say that B.-J. allowed these things?"

Stansen laughed disagreeably.

"Oh, no; it was in secret! When he found anything out he caned me. But I have made him sorry for that."

"What did you do?"

Stansen bit his lip.

"Nothing—never mind that. Look here, if you choose to be my friends, I will make you enjoy yourselves. These are splendid cheroots. I have quarrelled with Tom Merry because he would not allow me to smoke in his study."

"You can smoke here as much as you like," said Mellish.

"Yes, rather!" added Snipe. "We don't get on with Tom Merry any better than you do. I say, do you ever play banker?"

The Swedish boy shook his head.

"I don't play cards," he said.

"I'll teach you, if you like."

"Bah! Let us smoke!"

"Oh, all right!"

Mellish and Snipe lighted cigarettes. Stansen lighted up a thick, black cheroot, and the other two watched him in wonder.

"You don't mean to say that you smoke things like that?" Snipe exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"It'll make you sick."

Stansen laughed.

"I can smoke twenty a day, if I choose," he said. "It is many years since smoking made me sick."

Snipe started.

"Years!" he said. "You don't mean to say that you've smoked for years, and you can't be more than sixteen."

"I am sixteen."

"And you say—"

"I've always done as I've chose," said Stansen, with a curl of the lip. "My mother would never let me be balked. She is dead now, and my stepmother does not like me. She was not content till I was sent to school."

"Blessed if I wonder at that," murmured Snipe.

"What did you say?"

"I said that was jolly hard cheese, old chap."

"I hate her," said Stansen. "I hate a great many people. I will be revenged upon them all some day."

Snipe was silent. Stansen was blowing out great thick clouds of smoke. The cad of the Fourth was beginning to repent having taken Stansen up at all. The fellow was rich, evidently, and a blackguard; two great qualifications in Snipe's eyes. But there was such a thing as drawing a line. Snipe thought. This thick smoke would never clear out of the study; the room would smell of it for hours. And Stansen's wild way of talking made Snipe vaguely uneasy; he hardly knew why.

"You hate Tom Merry as much as I do?" Stansen asked suddenly—so suddenly that it made Snipe start.

"I don't like him," said Snipe.

"You would like to put one over on him, what?"

"Yes—perhaps! What do you mean?"

"Then help me, and I will help you," said Stansen, taking the cheroot out of his mouth in his eagerness. "I know the way."

"What are you getting at?"

"I shall be sleeping in the Shell dormitory to-night, as I have been put in that Form," said Stansen, lowering his voice. "In the middle of the night I will let you two into the dormitory—"

Snipe and Mellish stared at him. The Swedish boy's eyes were glinting and glittering, and his mouth looked like a wild animal's. They began to doubt if the boy was quite in his right senses.

"What are you getting at?" asked Mellish.

"There will be three of us," said Stansen. "We shall be too many for him. You will bring cricket stumps with you. We will suddenly attack him while he is in bed, and in the dark he will not know us."

"My hat!" said Mellish.

"You rotten cad!" said Snipe.

Stansen glared at him.

"What! What do you say?"

"You howling cad!" he shouted.

"What! You—you—"

Snipe was red with anger. He was the least scrupulous fellow in the School House at St. Jim's; but the villainous proposal of the foreign junior made even his blood run cold. Even Mellish was looking savage at the idea that anybody should imagine he would act in the way suggested. It was a little "too thick" even for Mellish.

Snipe threw open the door.

"Get out!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, get out!" said Mellish. "You're not fit to be in any room, unless it's a convict's cell at Dartmoor. Get outside."

"You asked me here—"

"I didn't know you were a blessed criminal, though," said Snipe. "I don't want to have anything to say to you. I'm sorry I ever spoke to you! Get out of this study, or I'll sling you out on your neck!"

Stansen started to his feet, his eyes flaming. He caught up a poker in his fury, and made a savage blow at Snipe with it. Mellish struck up his hand, and the poker flew out of Stansen's grasp, and crashed against the wall of the study.

Crash!

Snipe turned white.

If the wild blow had reached its mark, he would have been stretched stunned on the floor of the study. He was petrified for a moment. Stansen, panting with passionate rage, was looking about for another weapon. But Snipe gave him no time.

He leaped at the foreign junior and grasped him by the collar.

Snipe was not an athlete, but he was stronger than the puny, weak-limbed alien. He swung Stansen round, and sent him whirling through the doorway.

"Now, get off!" he shouted. "By gad, I'll—"

Stansen stumbled to his feet. Snipe rushed at him and kicked him hard, and the foreign junior dashed down the corridor. Snipe pursued him as far as the end of the passage, and then returned to the study, gasping.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "What a giddy scorpion!

What do you think of him, Mellish?"

"I think you're a silly ass to bring him here."

"Well, I didn't know he was a mad idiot like that! Look here, he's simply dangerous—blessed if I don't think he's half insane."

"He looks it."

"He might get up to-night and thrash Tom Merry."

"Well, it's no business of ours, after all."

"Isn't it?" said Snipe. "I'm jolly well going to give Tom Merry a word of warning! Why, the villain might injure him for life!"

"But—"

"He ought to be sent to a lunatic asylum!" said Snipe, panting. "That's the proper place for him. Blessed if I feel safe with him in the House."

And Snipe, having calmed down a little, went to look for Tom Merry. There was no love lost between them, certainly; but Snipe felt that he had to put the hero of the Shell upon his guard.

CHAPTER 11.

Danger!

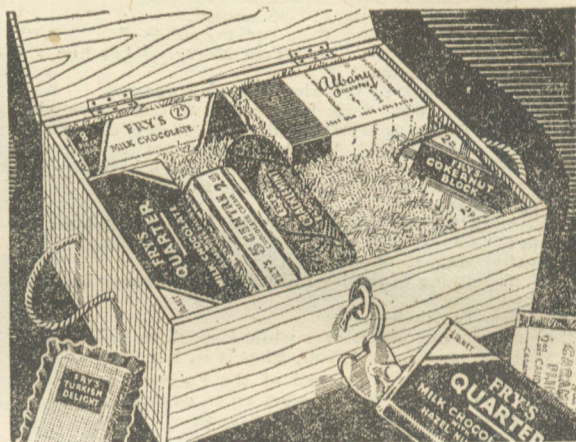
TOM MERRY and his chums had finished their preparation, and had come down into the Junior Common-room. There Snipe found the Terrible Three, talking footer with a group of Shell fellows and Fourth Formers.

Tom Merry wanted to play some of the B.-J. boys in
(Continued on the next page.)

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the junior Eleven at the next junior match, and they were considering who should stand out for the sake of courtesy to the guests of St. Jim's.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Tom Merry?" asked Snipe.

"Go ahead!" said Tom Merry tersely.

"I've got something to tell you—"

"Fire away!"

"Going to give up smoking," asked Monty Lowther sarcastically, "or have you decided not to play banker any more? It would be a day worthy to be marked with a giddy white stone if Snipe ever became decent!"

"Mind your own business!" said Snipe.

"If you're looking for a thick ear, my son—"

"Oh, shut up, Monty!" said Tom Merry. "Let him get on! What is it, Snipe?"

"I'd rather speak to you alone," said Snipe.

"Undah the cres, deah boys, we had bettah wetiah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity.

"Rats!" said Blake. "What Snipe's got to say can wait! We've got to settle about the footer! I suppose Gussy will stand out to make room for Halkett?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Certainly!" said Manners. "The least useful must be left out!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"To say nothing of the least ornamental!" Monty Lowther remarked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You chaps can jaw it over while I speak to Snipe," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Now, what is it, kid?"

He drew aside with the cad of the Fourth. Snipe was looking very angry. But he went on to explain.

"It's about Stansen!" he said abruptly.

"What about him?"

"He's been talking to us," said Snipe. "I don't want to say much, but—well, I believe the chap is partly off his rocker, and he's got his knife into you. He was suggesting to us that we should lay into you with cricket stumps while you were in bed to-night, and give you an awful hiding!"

Tom Merry jumped.

"My hat! What did you say?"

"Something that wasn't polite," said Snipe, "and the beast tried to brain me with a poker. I kicked him out of my study. Look here. My view is that he isn't safe, and I thought I'd better speak to you, so that you can be on your guard to-night. I wouldn't sleep in the same dormitory with him for toffee!"

Tom Merry looked startled.

"My sainted aunt!" he said. "I never thought of anything like that. Look here, you're not romancing, are you?"

"If you don't believe me—"

"I believe you," said Tom Merry, with a searching look at Snipe's face. "It's a curious case; I can't make the fellow out myself. I shall be on my guard, of course; I don't think he's quite right in the head. I'm very much obliged to you for telling me this, Snipe. I suppose there's no objection to my telling Manners and Lowther?"

"No; I suppose not."

"Thanks very much!"

Tom Merry returned to his friends. They all looked at him very curiously.

"Well, have you decided about the footer?" asked Blake.

"Blow the footer!"

"What!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm sorry! I've got something else to think about just now," said Tom Merry. "We'll let the footer stand over for a bit."

"Oh, all right!"

The Fourth Formers strolled away. Manners and Lowther remained with Tom Merry; they could see that he had something to say to them.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Monty Lowther. "What was it the giddy black sheep of the Fourth had to impart to your august ear?"

"It's rather a serious matter, Monty."

"Explicate, then!"

Tom Merry explained.

"I knew he was rocky in the top story," said Monty Lowther, "but I never expected he would develop like this. What a dangerous beast!"

"The question is, whether he's likely to try anything of the sort without anybody to help him," said Manners. "He seems to have been afraid of tackling it alone."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Exactly," he said. "I suppose, after the reception Snipe gave to his wheeze, he's most likely to drop it like a hot
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,363.

brick. But, all the same, he might take the idea into his silly brain—"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I'm not a coward, I hope," said Tom Merry; "but no chap would want to sleep in the same room with a fellow who might get up in the middle of the night and bash him with a cricket stump."

"My hat! I should say not!"

"It's not good enough!"

"Blessed if I know what to do, though," said Tom Merry. "I don't feel like telling any of the prefects about it—it would be sneaking."

"Well, I don't know about that, considering that he's such a dangerous beast," said Monty Lowther. "Might tell the police, I should think."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It would be rotten for B.-J. to make a complaint like that about one of his boys," he said. "He would feel it a lot."

"Well, it's true enough."

"Besides, I believe Snipe meant well in warning me; but—but, well, he might have exaggerated, and, besides, Stansen may only have been pulling his leg all the time," Tom Merry said. "I don't say I think so, but it's possible. At the same time, I don't feel safe at going to sleep in the same room as Stansen."

"But what's to be done?" said Manners. "You can't sit up all night in your study; and Stansen will be here more nights than one. I've no doubt."

"I suppose I shall have to stay awake to-night, that's all."

"Phew!"

"Well, I shan't be much inclined to go to sleep, especially if I see the chap take a cricket stump or a poker into the dorm with him," said Tom Merry, with a rueful smile. "I think he's dotty enough for anything, if you come to that."

"We'll keep an eye on the beast, anyway!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded. Without being in the least nervous or alarmed, Tom could not disguise from himself the fact that there was very real danger. The more he saw of Stansen, the more he believed that the foreign lad, if not actually insane, had been reduced to a mental state by his bad habits, which were little short of actual insanity. When he had himself well in hand it was different; but he had shown himself to be capable of bursts of passionate fury which made him far from safe.

The Terrible Three saw nothing of the foreign junior until bed-time. Then Stansen was not ready to go to bed with the rest, and when he was looked for he was discovered coming up from the kitchen stairs.

"What on earth have you been down there for?" asked Gore of the Shell.

"Mind your own business!" said Stansen.

Gore clenched his fists.

"You cheeky cad—" he began.

Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder.

"Let him alone, Gore!" he said, in a low voice.

"Look here—"

"Remember he's a guest here, old chap!"

It was seldom that Tom Merry had called Gore "old chap." It seemed to have a great effect upon Gore, for he nodded, and turned away from Stansen at once.

The Shell went up to bed. Monty Lowther was keeping an eye upon the foreign junior, and more than once he saw a strange, cunning smile pass over his thin face.

What was in the boy's wild mind?

Mischief, evidently.

And Monty Lowther determined that, as well as Tom Merry, he would be on the watch that night, and Manners came to the same resolution.

CHAPTER 12.

Under Suspicion!

STANSEN did not speak a word to any of the fellows in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

Although he had been a day at St. Jim's, he had contrived to make himself thoroughly disliked in the Form, and out of it. Nobody in the Shell wanted to talk to him; and the Terrible Three, who had started by being extremely courteous to the stranger, were naturally not much inclined to speak to him now. They were more inclined to watch him, after what Snipe had said to Tom Merry.

"Do you see that cad's not undressing?" Monty Lowther murmured to Tom Merry.

Tom Merry nodded.

He could not help observing it.

Stansen took off his outer garments, and folded them up in the usual way; but he did not take off his underclothing. He slipped his pyjamas on over it. He could have no other motive but that he intended to get up again.



Tom Merry gasped as he saw Stansen lift the big bag from under his bed. The next moment the foreign junior moved silently towards the door of the dormitory. What was he about to do? Tom was completely amazed and puzzled by Stansen's actions.

But what did he intend to get up for? What intention could he have, save to carry out the plan he had sketched to Snipe in the latter's study? Yet the chums of the Shell could see nothing of any weapon. They would have expected Stansen to bring a cricket stump into the dormitory, but he did not. But Monty Lowther's keen eyes after a time detected something that had escaped him at first. It was a bag under the end of Stansen's bed. That it belonged to Stansen was certain, and Monty Lowther meant to know what that bag contained before he went to bed. He would not have been surprised to see an Indian club or a life-preserver. "What have you got there, Stansen?" asked Monty Lowther, stepping close to the bed, and tapping the bag with his foot. "Nothing!" was the sullen reply. "Isn't that bag yours?" "Yes." "What's in it?" "Mind your own business!" "Hallo!" said Kangaroo cheerfully. "What's that? Is that a dormitory feed you're going to stand, Stansen, my son?" "No, it isn't!" "Oh, we'll stand the feed if the stuff's there!" said Bernard Glyn. "Yank out the bag, and let's see what's in it!" "Right you are!" Stansen sprang before the bag as several juniors moved towards it. There was a savage expression on his thin, colourless face. "Stand back!" he said fiercely. "Oh, rats!" said Monty Lowther. "What's in that bag?" "I will not tell you!" "Then we'll look!" "Stand back, I say!" screamed Stansen, in his wild way. "It is my property—it is my own! I tell you that I will not have it touched!"

"Rats!" "Bosh!" "What's the giddy mystery, anyway?" "That's my business. Let my bag alone!" The juniors looked at him in amazement. None but the Terrible Three had any idea why he should show so much excitement over what seemed to be a trifle. "The chap's mad," said Clifton Dane. "What on earth does it matter if we look into his blessed bag?" "Oh, he's off his rocker!" "You shall not see it!" shouted Stansen. "I will not have it!" "Oh, rot!" "Collar the bag!" "Chuck him out of the way!" Stansen stood and hit out as the juniors rushed forward. At that moment the door opened, and Darrell of the Sixth came in to see lights out. "Hallo! Hallo!" he called out. "What's the trouble?" The row ceased at once. "They are trying to take my bag," shrieked Stansen. "I will not allow it. They shall not meddle with my property!" The prefect frowned. "What's the trouble?" he repeated. "He won't let us see what's in the bag," said Monty Lowther. "He's got something there, and he's making a giddy mystery about it." "What have you got there, Stansen?" asked Darrell. "Only some things of my own." "Let his bag alone, if he doesn't want you to touch it," said the prefect. "You have no right to touch his property." "What's he making the mystery about, then?" "I don't see that it matters. Let his things alone. Mind, you hear what I say—no one is to touch his bag if he doesn't want it touched," said Darrell. "It's all right, Stansen; they won't touch it." Stansen panted.

"They will when you are gone!" he exclaimed.

"I have ordered them not to," said Darrell curtly. "No one here will disobey my orders, I think."

"Of course we won't," said Monty Lowther. "If Stansen wasn't a rotten outsider, he would know that, too!"

"Remember, Stansen is a guest here," said Darrell.

"Oh, all right!"

"His things are not to be touched, and he is not to be interfered with in any way," said Darrell. "Remember what I say. Now tumble in!"

The juniors turned in.

Stansen seemed to be still anxious about his bag, for he moved it up to the end of his bed under the head, and his glance dwelt upon it several times with uneasiness as he turned in.

Darrell looked at him curiously more than once. He did not in the least understand the strange excitability of the

NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY!



Golfer: "Look here, my man, we can't have you lying about the course!"

Tramp: "Oh, and 'oo are you?"

Golfer: "I'm the secretary of the club."

Tramp: "Well, that ain't the way to be 'ave to get new members!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Tubby, 271, London Road, South Lowestoft, Suffolk.

foreign junior, but he attached no great importance to the matter.

The juniors were soon in bed.

"Good-night, lads!" said Darrell, as he turned out the light.

"Good-night, Darrell!"

The door closed behind the prefect.

There was the usual buzz of voices in the dormitory following the departure of the prefect, but in that cheery chat Stansen's voice was not heard.

He lay silent and morose.

There was a glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows of the dormitory, and it showed up the great room with a vague, dim illumination.

One by one the voices slackened down, and the boys dropped off to sleep.

The last good-night was said, and slumber reigned in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

But there were at least three who did not sleep.

They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. The Terrible Three were in no humour for sleep.

After Snipe's warning, they could draw only one conclusion from the anxiety Stansen showed to have his bag undisturbed.

Why that keen anxiety, unless the bag contained some weapon with which he intended to do injury to Tom Merry during the hours of darkness, as he had proposed in the scheme he had communicated to Snipe and Mellish?

There was danger in the air, and the chums of the Shell felt it.

They lay awake, and listened to the chiming of the clock as the quarters elapsed, and they listened, too, for any sound from Stansen's bed.

The moon sailed higher in the sky, and the light in the dormitory was clearer, showing up objects in the long, lofty room with dim uncertainty.

And as eleven o'clock struck Monty Lowther's eyes began to grow very heavy. He did not intend to sleep, but his faculties were no longer very clear. He remembered that Tom Merry was keeping awake; and, after all, what was the use of his keeping awake as well? If there was any disturbance, he would hear it and wake at once. These thoughts passed dimly through his mind, while he tried to keep his heavy eyelids open. They fell, and Monty Lowther slept.

From Manners' bed came a deep and steady breathing. Manners had fully intended to watch all night; but he had dozed off for a moment, and that moment was prolonged.

He did not wake.

But Tom Merry's eyes never closed. To Tom's mind was ever present the thought of a cricket stump crashing down upon him in the darkness, if he slept, and that thought was sufficient to banish sleep effectually from his eyes.

Twelve!

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Tom Merry started, still broad awake, as midnight rang out from the clock tower of St. Jim's. Midnight!

The last heavy stroke died away, seeming to leave a deeper silence than before, and Tom Merry began to wonder whether after all, it was worth while to keep awake.

The thought was passing through his mind, when he heard a faint sound in the tense silence of the dormitory.

It was the sound of moving bedclothes—of someone cautiously, almost silently, creeping from his bed.

CHAPTER 13.

The Mystery of the Night!

TOM MERRY raised his head from the pillow.

His eyes were wide open and gleaming; his heart was beating in quick and painful throbs, so quickly, so heavily, that it seemed to dim his sense of hearing for a moment or two.

But he calmed himself with an effort.

What had he heard?

He listened with tense, straining ears. Yes, there it was again—the faint swishing sound as bedclothes were pushed cautiously back, and someone stepping from a bed. Someone was out of bed in the Shell dormitory.

Who was it?

There could be but one answer to that question. Tom Merry strained his eyes in the direction of Stansen's bed.

In the dim, uncertain moonlight that glimmered in the dormitory, he could see a faint figure beside Stansen's bed.

The foreign junior was up. Undoubtedly he believed that all the Shell dormitory, with the exception of himself, slept.

What was he doing?

Tom Merry saw the dim figure move and heard slight sounds. It was a minute or more before he realized that Stansen was dressing himself.

Tom Merry lay quiet, listening, watching, puzzled.

Why was Stansen dressing? If he intended to make a brutal attack upon the hero of the Shell, surely it would be his game to dive back into bed again, and lie there in the hope of escaping detection as the assailant?

He did not need to dress himself for the sake of moving a dozen paces along the dormitory and attacking the boy he supposed to be asleep.

Did he intend something else? But what? Tom Merry was mystified; but more than ever the thought forced itself into his mind that the foreign junior was not fully responsible for his actions.

Stansen was dressed now. What was to be his next move? Tom Merry's eyes were so accustomed now to the half-light, that he could watch every movement of the shadowy figure.

Stansen was kneeling down at the head of his bed. He was going to his bag—the bag he had so determinedly concealed from the scrutiny of the Shell fellows. What was he taking from the bag?

Tom Merry gasped as he saw Stansen rise with the bag in his hand. He had lifted it out bodily from under the bed.

What was he about to do?

Tom Merry was ready to spring up if Stansen came towards his bed. But he did not. He moved away from his own bed, but it was towards the door of the dormitory.

Tom Merry, wondering whether he was dreaming, heard the door open and heard it click faintly shut behind the foreign junior.

Stansen had left the dormitory.

For some seconds Tom Merry lay silent, lost in astonishment. Stansen's actions completely amazed and puzzled him.

Then the hero of the Shell, recovering himself, sprang out of bed and groped for his trousers.

"Manners! Lowther!" he called out cautiously.

Monty Lowther started up at once.

"Anybody call?"

"Yes. Get up!"

"Has Stansen—"

"He's left the dormitory."

"What?" said Manners' voice.

"Stansen's gone, and taken the bag with him."

"My hat! What the—"

Manners and Lowther were out of bed in a twinkling. "I—I think I fell asleep," murmured Manners. "I say, what can the fellow be up to? He—he can't be going to smash at some other chap instead, can he?"

"Maybe Snipe, perhaps. Snipe kicked him out of his study."

"My word!"

"I'm going to see, anyway," said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "The chap's not safe, that's a dead cert. Come on!"

"We're on."

The chums of the Shell, in their pyjamas and trousers, crept quietly to the door. They did not want to wake any more of the Form. Tom Merry opened the door cautiously and the Terrible Three passed out into the passage, and Tom closed the door.

In the passage they paused and listened.

Where was Stansen?

There was no sound to guide them. Tom Merry knew that the foreign junior had put his boots on, but there was no sound of footsteps.

Which way had he gone?

"The Fourth Form dorm, as sure as a gun!" whispered Lowther. "He's going for Snipe instead of you, Tommy."

"It must be so!"

"Let's go there and see, anyway."

"Come on, then!"

They ran silently along the passage. The door of the Fourth Form dormitory was shut, and the room was quite quiet; but the Terrible Three knew well enough that Stansen might be inside, preparing for his murderous attack.

The chums of the Shell were trembling with excitement now. There was something strangely weird and uncanny in this ghostly, silent hunt through a sleeping House for one whom they believed to be in part, if not wholly, insane!

Tom Merry opened the door and looked in. The moonlight glimmered in at the windows, and showed the row of white beds undisturbed.

There was no sign of anyone moving, but Tom Merry did not mean to leave anything to chance. He crept in, and made his way to Blake's bed, and shook the bed slightly. It was enough to wake Jack Blake.

Blake started up.

"What the dickens—"

"It's all right, Blake."

"Tom Merry!"

"Yes. There's something wrong, Blake, old man. Don't make a row, for goodness' sake! Stansen has dressed and left our dorm, and I believe he's cranky. I was afraid he was coming here, so I came."

"My hat!"

"Don't make a row; but keep awake, on the watch, in case he comes. I've an idea that he means to bash Snipe with a cricket stump, or something of the sort."

"Bai Jove!" came a startled voice from the bed occupied by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Keep awake, you chaps, and watch for him, while we look round," whispered Tom Merry hurriedly.

"Right you are!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry rejoined his comrades in the passage.

"He's not there," he whispered. "Blake and D'Arcy are awake, so they're safe enough now. But we must find Stansen. He may be up to some awful mischief—we don't know. Where can he be?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"He may have gone down to the studies."

"Let's look."

They descended to the Shell passage. The studies were all dark, and there was no sound to be heard in the passage. Very grim and sombre it looked, and its well-known and familiar outlines lost in the darkness.

The chums paused again.

Where was Stansen? What was he doing? What was the meaning of this strange, puzzling mystery? The juniors felt their hearts beating like hammers with a vague, unformed dread of they hardly knew what.

"He must have left the dorm for something," Lowther muttered. "What on earth is he going to do?"

"And what was in the bag?"

"It's a horrible mystery," muttered Tom Merry. "I believe he's mad—mad as a hatter! What can he be doing? Where can he have gone?"

"The—the kitchen," muttered Lowther, struck by a sudden thought. "You remember, he had gone down in the kitchen when it was time to go to bed. What was he exploring down there for?"

"He can't be gone to rob the larder, I suppose?"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"I wish I could think that it was something as innocent as that," he muttered. "But I'm feeling uneasy—horribly uneasy."

"So am I."

"He may have gone down to discover the lie of the land, so as to be able to get at the larder," Manners muttered. "Of course, he couldn't have a chance before the maids went to bed."

"No; but—"

"It isn't the larder," said Tom Merry. "But he may be in the kitchen. Let's go and see, anyway. If he isn't there, I don't know where he can be."

They hurried silently downstairs.

At the top of the kitchen stairs was a door, which was usually closed at night, though not fastened. Tom Merry groped in the dense darkness for the door, and found it was open.

Below, in the blackest darkness, lay the kitchen stairs.

The stairs curved farther down, and there might have been a light in the kitchen and the adjacent rooms without the chums seeing it. So far as Tom Merry could see, all was blackness below.

But as he peered down the black staircase, though he could see nothing, hear nothing, there came a scent to his nostrils—a smell that made him reel back with a gasping exclamation:

"Lowther! Manners, old man, do you smell that?"

"Yes. It's—it's—"

"Paraffin!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Good heavens!"

CHAPTER 14.

The Fire Raiser!

THE chums of the Shell were petrified for a moment. Bitter and penetrating, unmistakable, the smell of paraffin came up that staircase from the lower floor.

And the chums knew that a great quantity must have been spilt there, for the smell to be so strong.

What did it mean?

It was impossible to suppose that the maids had upset a great quantity of paraffin in the kitchen, or on the kitchen stairs, and left it there when they went to bed. Mrs. Mimms, the House dame, would never have allowed anything of that sort.

But if that was not the case, whence came the smell—whence came the paraffin? What did it mean? Upon what horrible mystery had the chums of the Shell stumbled?

"Good heavens!" muttered Manners. "What—what—"

"It's paraffin!"

"Somebody's put it there—on purpose!"

"Stansen!"

"But why," muttered Monty Lowther, "in the name of all that's terrible—why should he come down here in the middle of the night and spill paraffin?"

Tom Merry grasped his arm.

"Why," he muttered—"why? Don't you remember the fire at Mr. Browning-Jones' school? Nobody knows how it was started."

"Tom!"

"Unless it was by a madman," said Manners, with a strangled voice.

"Oh, it's horrible!"

"I'm going down," said Tom Merry.

"We're with you."

"Quiet!"

Tom Merry groped his way cautiously down the stairs.

(Continued on the next page.)

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The smell of paraffin was overpowering as they descended. They understood why; the stairs were drenched in it. Paraffin had been poured over the wooden stairs, and over the banisters, and splashed upon the walls.

A match dropped there, and the staircase would have been a mass of seething flame. And was it not intended that a match should be dropped? For what other purpose was the staircase drenched in paraffin?

Tom Merry reached the bottom of the stairs.

The kitchen door was directly in front of him now, and he saw, as he expected, a light gleaming under it.

Stansen was there!

What was he doing? As Tom Merry listened in the tense silence he heard a low, faint sound—the sound of a chuckle. And if over there was a madman's chuckle, it was that which the hero of the Shell now listened to with shuddering nerves.

Tom Merry stepped on towards the door. It was several inches open, and he could see into the kitchen.

He looked in, setting his teeth.

A torch stood on the table. It cast a dim glimmer upon the great kitchen of the School House.

Stansen was there. His bag lay open upon the kitchen table. Beside it stood a large can, showing what the bag had contained. That, doubtless, was among the things the foreign junior had bought during the extensive shopping he had done that day. The large, well-packed bag he had concealed in the Shell dormitory contained cans of paraffin, and the wretched boy was showing now the use he intended them to be put to.

One can he had used in drenching the stairs. He had now piled a great heap of the kitchen furniture together—chairs and benches and wooden articles—and was drenching the heap with the inflammable oil.

The kitchen windows had been set wide apart. The draught was blowing across the great room, and it blew past Tom Merry as he stood at the door.

All was clear enough now to the watching juniors.

Stansen was the fire raiser!

One look at the boy's wild, white face was enough to show that he was not in his right senses. He was not what would have been termed mad, but the wreck of his health by incessant smoking had reduced him to a state of hysteria, in which all his evil impulses had free and unchecked play. He was grinning and chuckling like a madman now as he drenched the furniture with paraffin.

Tom Merry turned almost sick at what he saw.

This, doubtless, accounted for the mysterious fire at Mr. Browning-Jones' school. It was the work of the wretched boy who was now seeking to destroy the house that had given him shelter.

Once a match was applied to this heap of furniture there would be a terrible blaze. The draught from the open windows would fan the flames, and the staircase, drenched in paraffin, would catch at once. It would be impossible for anyone to descend to deal with the fire.

The whole underpart of the School House would be ablaze. Tom Merry shuddered.

The grand old building, which had withstood storms of centuries, would perish, to gratify the mad whim of a malignant, half-insane degenerate.

Stansen laid down the empty can, and fumbled in his pockets.

Tom Merry knew that he was fumbling for a box of matches.

The moment had come.

There was not a second to lose. Tom Merry threw open the door and rushed in.

Stansen whirled round towards him.

He glared at Tom Merry in wild fury.

"You—you!" he gasped.

The matchbox was in his hand. He knew that he was no match for the hero of the Shell once Tom Merry's grasp should be upon him, and he made a wild effort to strike a match, to hurl it at the drenched furniture, before he could be seized.

Scratch!

The match flamed as Tom Merry leaped upon him.

"You madman! Stop!"

Tom Merry's strong grasp closed upon the incendiary, and as they closed, the match dropped to the floor. It dropped into a little pool of paraffin, and there was a curl upwards of bluish flame.

Crash!

Down went Stansen in the sturdy junior's grasp, and he fell fairly upon the flame, and blotted it out with his weight. St. Jim's was saved!

But Stansen was fighting madly. With the fit of insanity strongly upon him now, he seemed to have the strength of a full-grown man.

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At any other time Tom Merry would have dealt easily with his puny opponent, but now Stansen seemed a match for him—more than a match.

Once he almost tore himself loose.

"Help!" gasped Tom Merry.

Manners and Lowther were already springing to his aid. They grasped Stansen, and grasped him hard, for the frantic junior did not cease to struggle.

He fought and bit and scratched and tore like a wild beast, shrieking with rage as he fought, and the Terrible Three had all they could do to hold him.

They shouted for help as they struggled with the maniac.

"Help—help!"

There were sounds of voices above—voices calling—and hurried footsteps. Blake and D'Arcy came dashing down the stairs in their pyjamas, and they hurled themselves at once into the fray.

With five strong juniors grasping him, Stansen was secured at last and held so that he could not struggle.

He was still quivering and trembling with rage, and there was foam upon his panting lips. An incessant stream of fierce cries poured from his lips, till the juniors shuddered to hear it.

"Bai Jove!" muttered D'Arcy. "He's mad, you know—mad as a hatah!"

"Mad, by Jove!"

"Good heavens, what has happened?"

Mr. Railton ran down the stairs, and Mr. Browning-Jones was close behind him. Kildare and several more of the Sixth followed them up.

"Blake, Merry, what has happened?"

"It's Stansen, sir—"

"Stansen?"

"He's mad!" said Tom Merry. "Mad—or jolly near it! He was trying to set fire to the House, sir!"

"Good heavens! Is it possible?"

Mr. Browning-Jones advanced towards Stansen. It was curious to see how the mad junior's fury changed to fear and submission as the strong schoolmaster came near. There was no doubt as to Stansen's guilt; the drenching paraffin, all proved what he had been doing when he was captured.

Mr. Browning-Jones dropped a hand upon his shoulder.

"Stansen, look at me!"

Stansen covered before him.

"You were acting the incendiary here, Stansen! Then it was you who set my school on fire last night?"

Stansen panted.

"I hated the place!" he muttered. "I hated you! I meant to make you sorry for caning me—and I did! I burnt you out! I don't care!"

"And you were going to do the same here?"

"Yes!"

"Why?"

"I hate them all here!" broke out Stansen passionately, savagely. "They don't like me! I said I would make them suffer! I don't care!"

"The boy must be mad!" said Mr. Railton.

"I fear that he is mad," said Mr. Browning-Jones. "I knew that he was greatly affected by his bad habits; but I never dreamed that it had gone to this extent—that he was quite mentally unbalanced. Thank mercy that these boys succeeded in stopping him in time! I can hardly forgive myself for having brought this terrible danger upon the school!"

"It was not your fault," said Mr. Railton. "You could not know. As for that wretched boy—"

"I shall take charge of him for the rest of the night in my room," said Mr. Browning-Jones, and there was a quiver in his voice which showed how deeply distressed he was. "Come with me, Stansen. You may let him go now, my boys."

The juniors released Stansen.

Mr. Browning-Jones took him away, with an iron grip on his shoulder, and the wretched youth passed the remainder of that night locked up with the young schoolmaster in his room.

Mr. Railton turned to Tom Merry & Co. when he was gone.

"I need not say how I thank you for this!" he said, in a low voice. "You have prevented what would have been a fearful catastrophe. Thank Heaven you succeeded! I hardly dare think what would have happened if that wretched boy had carried out his intention. You shall explain it fully to me to-morrow. Go back to bed now."

"Yes, sir."

"Good-night, my boys! And Heaven bless you!" said Mr. Railton.

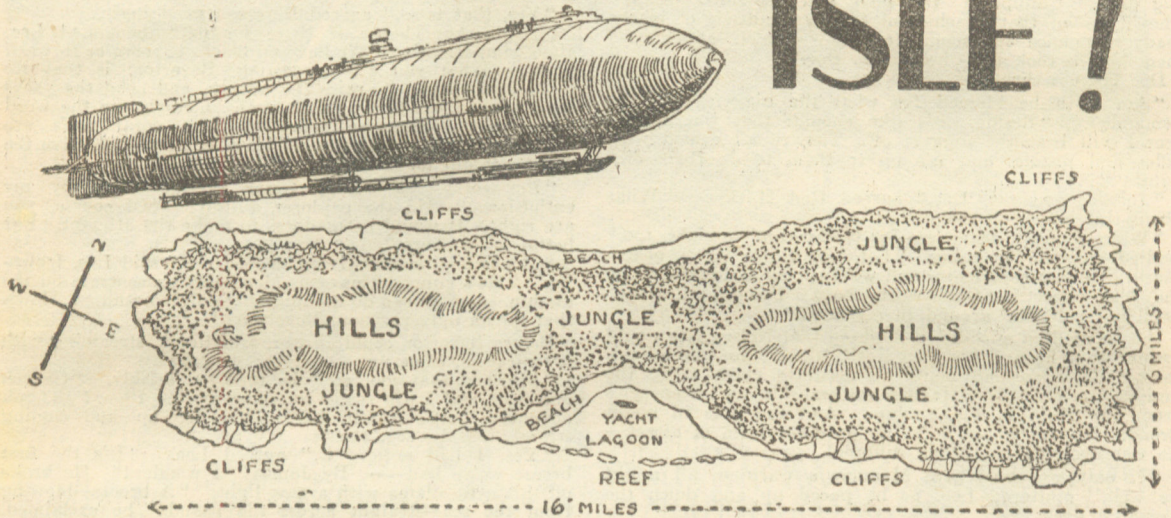
And Tom Merry & Co. went slowly back to bed.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked, as they reached the Fourth Form dormitory. "Bai Jove, I knew that chap was a wottah, but I nevah expected this! Let this be a warnin' to you fellows—"

(Continued on page 23.)

ANOTHER THRILL-PACKED INSTALMENT OF OUR POPULAR SERIAL.

TREASURE ISLE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

The *Sky Wanderer*, the airship school of the St. Frank's chums, lands on Tao-Tao Island, in the Pacific, in response to a message for help from Mr. Beverton, an explorer treasure-seeking on the island. It transpires that Doc Haynes and most of the crew of the explorer's yacht have mutinied to seek the treasure. To ensure his own safety from the airship school, Haynes, who is friendly with the cannibals, captures twelve of the St. Frank's boys. But they are rescued by Nelson Lee. The party then capture the Corsair, Mr. Beverton's yacht, from Haynes, and successfully hold it against an attack by the cannibals. Haynes, now in danger of defeat, decides to attempt to destroy the *Sky Wanderer*!

Grim Preparations!

TAO-TAO ISLAND stifled under the blazing noon-day sun. But on the sandy beach, and on the yacht Corsair, at anchor in the lagoon, there was considerable activity.

Through his binoculars Nelson Lee, on the yacht's deck, was able to see that Doc Haynes and his modern buccaneers were working mainly in two of the big store shacks built close to the main bungalow. More than once Lee had seen petrol cans being carried, and on one occasion a party of Tao-Tao blacks had taken several full cans into the jungle, which grew densely to the very beach's edge.

"Dorrie, those natives can't have any legitimate use for petrol," said Lee grimly. "That stuff is being carried into the jungle by Haynes' orders, and it's any odds that the petrol is going right across the island to the northern beach."

Lord Dorrimore, with one arm in a sling—for he had suffered a wound in the overnight fight—looked sceptical.

"You don't think that Haynes is planning to set fire to the airship?" he asked. "Man alive! It's impossible! Have you forgotten that Manners and his men are on the alert? They're guardin' the airship night and day. They've got rifles and machine-guns. No enemy can get within strikin' distance."

"I believe that Haynes will time his attack for to-night—when darkness has completely fallen," said Lee.

"What of it? The airship's searchlight is switched on at dusk, and it floods the whole jungle," replied Dorrie. "No livin' thing can emerge from the jungle without bein' spotted. Really, old man, I think that you are unduly alarmed."

"Better to be that way than over-confident of our safety, and the safety of all those aboard the *Sky Wanderer*," replied Lee. "It's my own helplessness which irritates me, Dorrie. There are just sixteen of us aboard this yacht—four men and twelve boys. We seized it because it was our

only haven of refuge, and so far we have succeeded in holding it against Haynes' attacks."

"An' we can continue to hold it," added Dorrie.

"I believe we can; but we can't get away," said Nelson Lee. "That's the point Dorrie. We can't even get a message to Manners on the airship. We can't warn him to be specially vigilant." He broke off, frowning. "Yet there ought to be a way," he muttered. "If only I could think of one, Dorrie!"

"There's another thing," put in his lordship. "If any danger to the airship crops up Manners could have her in the air in a couple of minutes."

"In a couple of minutes—yes," agreed Lee grimly. "Haynes knows that, too, and I can't get the conviction out of my mind that he is plannin' some form of attack which will take the airship utterly by surprise."

"Boys, our only chance is to do the thing by surprise," Doc Haynes was saying, curiously enough, at that very same moment. "If we let those airship guys know that any kind of trouble is brewing, they'll up-anchor and get away. That's why we've got to do things secretly. No good relying too much on the blacks—this is a job for us."

The modern buccaneer was sprawling in an easy-chair in the central room of the bungalow. A meal had just been concluded, and a greasy-faced Chinaman was clearing the dishes from the table.

"What if the stunt works, Doc?" asked Red Harker. "Like as not, most of them men and boys aboard will be burnt to death."

"Goin' too far, if you ask me," said Bill Button, shaking his grizzled head. "I ain't squeamish, boss, but there's times when you don't seem like you was human!"

"What's it to be, then?" demanded Haynes unpleasantly. "Shall we just cave in and let these swabs take everything? Do you want to serve the rest of your life in an Australian prison?"

"You're getting morbid now, boss," said Bill mournfully. "I'm telling you what's going to happen if we don't gain the upper hand—and gain it quickly," retorted Haynes, thrusting a long cigar between his strong teeth and lighting it. "We can't reckon ourselves safe until that airship is destroyed. Them aboard her might get word that the kids have got away from us. Then they'll take to the air. What then? What do you reckon we can do?"

"I'm all for crippling the airship, boss," said Bill Button.

his mahogany face full of earnest gravity. "It's the killin' I don't like—"

"We can't afford to be squeamish," said Haynes. "Besides, who's talkin' about killin'? If that gasbag goes up in flames, there'll be plenty of time for the men and the kids to jump down to safety. She is lying at anchor on the northern beach, with staircases all ready, and the sea not twenty yards away. I'm going through with this plan."

"Have ye thought of what'll happen arterwards?" asked Big Ben. "Supposin' the men and the kids escape? They'll be on that beach—and there's hundreds o' blacks ready to pounce on them. You know what'll 'appen once them kids is took into the jungle, Doc."

Doc Haynes shrugged.

"Am I to be blamed for what the niggers do?" he demanded. "Besides, it's like enough that the airship crowd will beat the niggers off. They're all armed with rifles and pistols, and it's up to them to do their own fightin'."

"Just as you say, Doc," agreed Red Harker. "What about this bunch on the yacht?"

"We're going to leave 'em for to-day—and to-night, too," replied Haynes, grinning. "Let 'em think we're beat—that'll give 'em confidence, and we'll spring a surprise when they least expect it. Don't worry, boys! I've got all sorts of swell ideas driftin' around in my head."

But he made a mistake in thinking that Nelson Lee would assume that he and his men were "done," for the school-master detective had made an accurate guess as to the activities ashore. Doc Haynes was transferring his energies from the yacht to the airship. And Lee was in secret dread. Haynes would make no ordinary form of attack—he was evolving something different.

"If only we could give Manners a warning, all might be well," muttered Lee, as he paced up and down the Corsair's deck.

Mitchell Beverton was with him, and the yacht owner was looking eager, even excited. Farther along the deck Nipper and Handforth and some of the other boys were busily engaged upon the erection of barricades.

Nelson Lee was determined that there should be no second attack like that of the previous night. Steel doors from below had been unhinged and carried on deck; gratings from the engine-room, set end to end, were being placed along the deck rail. Behind them the defenders could crouch in perfect safety.

Other measures were being taken, too. Nelson Lee had examined the yacht's fire-fighting equipment, and hosepipes had been run out on all sides, ready for action. Lee was also thinking of raising steam in the boilers, so that he could evolve some method of using steam in the hosepipes. A search of the yacht had brought to light, much to the detective's satisfaction, no less than eight magazine rifles and a good supply of ammunition.

"If there's an attack to-night, you chaps, we'll be ready," said Nipper contentedly. "The gov'nor will have the searchlight going, too, so there'll be no chance of us being taken by surprise."

"The thing I can't understand is why we're still here," growled Handforth, staring out towards the reef, where the breakers were converting the blue water into creamy foam. "Why don't we get steam up and sail round to the other side of the island?"

"Better ask the gov'nor," said Nipper.

It was a question which Mr. Beverton himself was raising. "I really don't see, Mr. Lee, why we should remain here," he protested. "As you say, there is no way of communicating with the airship unless we go ourselves—and the only way we can go is to take the yacht. Why shouldn't we do it? It might be a desperate chance—"

"Too desperate, Beverton," broke in Lee.

"But why?" persisted the explorer. "Haynes had no difficulty in getting the yacht into the lagoon. She came in easily enough, and, after all, it is our one chance of escape."

"I believe it might be done—but the odds are a hundred to one against success," replied Nelson Lee steadily. "Is it worth the risk, Beverton? One hundred chances that we send the vessel to certain doom on the treacherous rocks which lie only just beneath the surface. One chance that we find the clear channel. If I thought there was a reasonable hope of getting away I would have had steam up long ago."

Beverton was silent, for his enthusiasm was dampened. He loved this little yacht of his, and he certainly had no wish to see her piled in wreckage on the reef.

"You have given me an account of your entry into the lagoon," continued Lee. "You engaged Haynes, in the first place, because he knew Tao-Tao Island—he knew the

natives, was friendly with them, and he knew how to get the vessel to her anchorage."

"Yes, that's right."

"When you first arrived here the yacht lay off-shore until a number of native canoes had come out to her—until Haynes had made a bargain with the chief," continued Lee. "Then certain of the canoes took a zigzag course through apparently deadly breakers. Haynes, at the wheel, piloted the yacht through the channel. In other words, he was guided by the blacks."

"Yes, that is so," agreed Beverton grudgingly.

"Then what chance is there for us?" demanded Lee, almost impatiently. "We have no blacks to serve as forward pilots. What you are suggesting, Beverton, is that we should get steam up, raise the anchor, and head the yacht for the apparent break in the reef. I emphasise the word 'apparent' because so many of these coral reefs are deceptive. It is practically certain that we should drive the yacht straight on to the rocks."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Lee; I was carried away by my enthusiasm," said the explorer quietly. "Of course, you are right. It would be madness to make the attempt. Far better to stay here."

"Meanwhile, Haynes is up to mischief," said Lee, frowning. "He's going to leave us alone and concentrate on the airship. And we can do nothing—absolutely nothing! How's that for an ugly position, Beverton?"

Before Beverton could answer, Handforth, streaming with perspiration, came up.

"Finished that job, sir," he reported briskly. "Church and Mac and I are ready for more work. Phew! Thank goodness there's a stiff breeze blowing up—and coming straight off the sea, too."

"Yes, I had noticed it," agreed Lee. "It's the first breeze we've had—By James! I wonder!" He broke off, his eyes aflame with a new light. "A breeze—blowing from the sea—straight across the island!" he exclaimed. "Why, there's an idea there! Bed-sheets might do if there's no light, silky material aboard."

"What on earth are you talking about, Mr. Lee?" asked the amazed Beverton.

"I have thought of a possible way of sending warning to the airship," replied Nelson Lee crisply. "Come, Beverton—I need you below! You, too, Dorrie. There'll be work for all of us."

"What are we going to do?" asked Dorrie.

But Nelson Lee had already gone.

The Warning!

"HANDFORTH MINOR!"

Mr. Alington Wilkes spoke patiently. He was sitting at his desk in the junior class-room aboard the airship school. It was very hot in there, in spite of the open windows. The afternoon was indeed stifling.

"Speaking to me, sir?" asked Willy Handforth, standing up in his place.

"Yes, young man, I am," replied Old Wilkey. "You have something in your desk, I believe. Bring it to me, please."

The leader of the Third wore an expression of innocent astonishment.

"Something in my desk, sir?" he repeated. "What is it you want? A book of some sort? I've got all sorts of books in here," he went on cheerfully. "There's my French grammar, and the No. 2 arithmetic, and an old copy of the 'Schoolboys' Own Library.' One of those?"

"I'm not talking about your books, Handforth minor," interrupted Mr. Wilkes patiently. "There's something else in your desk. For quite a little time I have heard curious squeaks, and I have at last located them. Come along, young man! You don't expect me to come to you, do you?"

"Oh, well!" said Willy resignedly.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, who were sitting at the desks near by, grinned. They had been expecting this for some time—in fact, had warned Willy of what would happen before they came into the class-room. But nowadays none of the juniors were particularly animated, for they were all affected by the shadow of tragedy which overhung the party. In their hearts was the fear that Handforth & Co. were dead—that Nelson Lee himself was dead, too. They were somewhat rebellious because they were obliged to carry on with lessons as though nothing exciting had happened.

Willy took a furry object from his desk, and, fondling it to his chest, went out in front of the class.

"May I inquire what this—er—object is?" asked Old Wilkey mildly.

"Mickey Mouse, sir," said Willy.

"Mickey Mouse?"

"That's what I call him, sir—because he's so small and funny," replied Willy. "Don't you think he's a corker? I caught him yesterday at the edge of the jungle, and he's



"By thunder!" came the voice of Red Harker. "The arrows'll make a nice blaze as they go soaring towards the airship!" As Willy Handforth heard the words a cold horror gripped him. The giant bow was set up to send flaming arrows into the great bulk of the Sky Wanderer!

a friendly little beggar. He knows me already—as though I'd been his master for years."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Wilkes.

Mickey Mouse was, in actual fact, a monkey. A very small monkey, with a wizened little face and bright, intelligent eyes.

"He's tame enough, sir," said Willy, placing the animal upon Mr. Wilkes' desk.

"Take it away!" commanded the master. "Handforth minor, how dare you bring that animal into the class-room! If it comes to that, how dare you bring it aboard the airship at all!"

"I've made a pet of him, sir."

"I am fully aware of your fondness for animal pets; but such a thing as this cannot be allowed," said Old Wilkey firmly. "You'll take this animal to the ground at once, Handforth minor, and let it run back into the jungle."

"You don't mean that, sir!" said Willy, in alarm.

"I do mean it—and, what is more, I will see that a prefect watches you," retorted Mr. Wilkes, as he rang a bell. "I'm not going to allow any monkeys aboard the airship. You know very well that if Mr. Lee were here he would say the same thing." Old Wilkey's voice trembled slightly. "Unfortunately Mr. Lee is not here—and Heaven alone knows if we shall ever see him again. No, Handforth minor, you need not argue. I am quite firm on this."

He was, too. In answer to his ring, Morrow of the Sixth arrived, and Willy Handforth, much to his dismay, was obliged to carry the monkey down the airship's stairway. With Morrow in close attendance, he went across the glaring, scorching sands towards the jungle. Not a living thing was in sight, and it was difficult to believe that watchful Tao-Tao savages were hidden in the undergrowth.

"This will do," said Morrow, with a grin.

Sadly Willy put Mickey Mouse on the sands, and the little monkey, for some moments, looked at Willy uncertainly. But at a sudden "shoo" from Morrow the animal streaked off to the jungle edge, leapt at a tree, and vanished.

"Well, that's what I call a dirty trick," said Willy indignantly. "It took me nearly an hour to persuade the little beggar to come out of the jungle—and since then I have tamed him and trained him."

"Rubbish," said Morrow. "You couldn't have trained a monkey in so short a time."

"Couldn't I?" said the fag. "Would you like to put it to the test? Look here!"

He put a couple of fingers to his mouth, and an extraordinarily thin whistle sounded—so faint that it was hardly

audible. It was more like a throbbing in the ears. Within ten seconds, Mickey Mouse came streaking out, and he rushed across the sands, leapt upwards, and perched himself on Willy's shoulder.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said the prefect. "You certainly have a way with animals, you young beggar!"

"Have a heart, Morrow," protested Willy. "Let me take him aboard again. Old Wilkey won't know."

"Do you suppose I'm going to Old Wilkey with lies—just for the sake of this monkey?" said Morrow. "Nothing doing, my son! Back he goes into the jungle, and you'd better not whistle him again."

And back Mickey Mouse went, much to Willy's disgust. Willy, however, was not the kind of junior to suffer an injustice tamely, and he certainly considered that he had been unjustly treated. During the rest of afternoon lessons, however, he was a model of good behaviour, and nothing more was said of the monkey.

But when lessons were over Willy went on deck with Chubby and Juicy, and he looked longingly towards the jungle fringe.

"Don't be an ass," said Chubby. "You can't get that monkey back, Willy. We told you, in the first place, that you wouldn't be allowed to keep it aboard."

"It only shows you," said Willy sorrowfully. "You try to do a thing openly and the beaks jump on you. Well, it's taught me a lesson. When I get Mickey Mouse back, I'm going to keep him hidden away in secret, and Old Wilkey can boil himself."

"A sentiment, Brother William, which hints that you have been up to a bit of no good," remarked William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, who happened to be passing.

"I didn't know you were listening," said Willy.

The elegant Browne winced. "It can never be truthfully said that a Browne listens," he exclaimed severely. "I overheard your remark by sheer chance, brother. Enough. Let it drop."

"You look a bit peeved, Browne," said Willy.

"And who would not be peeved?" demanded William Napoleon Browne. "Aren't we all? Day follows day, and we remain here, affectionately attached to this blistering beach. Were I in command, I would be up and doing."

"It's about time you put on another record, old man," said Horace Stevens, joining the group. "That one's just about worn out. You know jolly well why Sir Hobart won't move the airship."

"Because of the threat to harm our unfortunate brethren?"

said Browne. "But times have changed, Brother Horace. According to all accounts, Brother Lee is dead. Brother Dorrie is also dead—to say nothing of Brother Umlosi. But do I believe these rumours?"

"If you don't, you ought to," said Stevens gruffly. "Everything's gone to pot. All we know is that Mr. Lee and the others went off in that rubber boat the other night—and we haven't seen them since. Haynes comes and tells us that he found the boat floating, bottom upwards in the sea. Some of our men have seen the boat since then—"

"All of which does not prove that there has been sundry deaths," interrupted Browne. "Knowing Brother Lee as I do I am convinced that he was never cut out to die by drowning. I believe that exciting things are happening on the other side of the island. And what do we do? Stick here! Life, Brother Horace, is becoming tiresome."

He was not the only St. Frank's fellow to talk in that strain. Most of the boys were becoming impatient; their sadness and anxiety had changed to this impatience. They wanted to be "up and doing." But Sir Hobart Manners, after consulting with his officers and the St. Frank's masters, had deemed it advisable to remain at anchor. For Haynes himself had declared that he still held nine St. Frank's boys in his power; and he had already threatened that if the Sky Wanderer took the air he would hand the boys to the cannibals.

"There is nothing we can do, gentlemen," said Sir Hobart, after one of these conferences. "We can only wait—in the slim hope that Mr. Lee is still alive. Sometimes, I get a fixed conviction that he is not only alive, but working actively towards the rescue of those unfortunate boys. So, from every point of view, it is better that we should have patience—and wait."

Thus, time drifted on, and the Sky Wanderer remained at her moorings—her schoolboy passengers fretful and impatient, her crew constantly on the alert.

"What in thunder's that?" asked Red Harker suddenly.

He was standing on the beach, staring out across the lagoon towards the anchored Corsair.

"By cripes!" ejaculated Bill Button, scratching his grizzled head.

He, too, had seen that which had attracted Red's attention. And it was sufficiently surprising.

A drunken, bloated-looking, uneven-shaped object of many colours was rising straight into the air from the yacht's deck. There was a queer kind of basket underneath, and trailing from this, some links of cord. The thing swayed in the wind, rising rapidly all the time, and its sides were billowing and surging in the most comic manner. But Bill Button and Red Harker were not amused. They were instantly suspicious.

"Them swabs is up to more of their tricks!" yelled Red. "Hey! Where's Doc! Hi! Doc! Doc! Come and look here!"

Other men, in addition to Doc Haynes, came in answer to Red's violent shouts. Haynes emerged from the bungalow with some impatience.

"What's bitin' you, Red?" he asked, shading his eyes against the sun.

"Gosh!" shouted Red Harker. "It's a blistering balloon!"

"A what?" roared Haynes, leaping from the veranda.

He half expected to see the Sky Wanderer herself, so startled was he. What he actually saw brought him relief—for the first moment. Undoubtedly the thing was a balloon—a crazy contrivance, patched together out of odd pieces of bed sheeting and silks. Even in the evening sunlight the men on the beach could see the glow in the balloon's basket. Charcoal embers, perhaps, or something equally fiery. Whatever the basket contained, the object of it was apparent.

Hot air!

The home-made contrivance was being lifted straight upwards by the hot air which surged out of the basket. Already it was several hundred feet up, and drifting straight across the beach, rising all the while.

"What are they trying to do?" demanded Haynes suspiciously. "There's something almighty queer about this,

boys! That blamed thing can't hurt us, and yet— Gosh! Look at that!"

A steamer, attached to the trailing rope, had spread itself out in the breeze; and the men on the beach could easily read the following sensational legend:

"BEWARE HAYNES—TAKE SHIP UP—LEE."

The message could be read with ease, for the steamer was drifting straight out on the wind—like an advertisement trailing from a box-kite at a summer-time fair, or on Derby Day at Epsom.

"Quick—rifles!" yelled Haynes, beside himself with anxiety and rage.

Meanwhile, on the yacht's deck, cheers were going up. The boys, wildly excited, were dancing up and down. Many of them had helped in the manufacture of that crude hot-air balloon, and now, to see it aloft and proving to be a complete success was very satisfying.

Nelson Lee had been rather anxious, for he was certain that the breeze would die away at sunset. Apparently, he was just in time, for the balloon, rising higher and higher, was drifting in the right direction—straight across the beach, and thence over the island.

Nelson's Lee's object was apparent. He was hoping that the balloon would continue drifting until it reached the northern shore. The distance was only about six miles, and the balloon's buoyancy should easily last. The look-out men on the Sky Wanderer could not fail to see the object—neither could they fail to read that grimly informative message.

"She's clear—she's sailing straight on!" shouted Nipper.

"Oh, gov'nor, it's worked!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Wait!" said Nelson Lee, almost curtly.

There could be no mistaking the reports which sounded from the beach. Haynes and his men, with rifles to their shoulders, were firing, shooting at the hot-air balloon.

"What's the good of that?" asked Handforth, with a sniff. "Even if they hit the thing, they can't bring it down. It won't explode. There's no gas in it."

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Frantically, the modern pirates were continuing their fire, but they had no method of knowing whether their bullets had found the mark. The balloon continued to sail over the jungle, swaying, rising constantly, the steamer sailing out in proud defiance.

"They've failed!" shouted Church excitedly. "The thing's out of range now—and they haven't harmed it."

"By George! Within an hour, the old Sky Wanderer will be round here," said Handforth exultantly. "Think of it, you chaps! Sir Hobart will know by that message that Mr. Lee is alive—and he'll take the airship up, too. As soon as it appears round this side of the island, Mr. Lee is going to signal with the searchlight—a Morse message, you know. Everything's coming right!"

"Hurrah!"

Nelson Lee turned to Lord Dorrimore. "Well, we've done all we can, Dorrie," he said quietly. "If this fails—as it might—we have no other method of communicating with the airship. And Haynes is certain to take action as soon as darkness falls."

"But it won't fail," said Dorrie, still staring across the island. "Look at it! Soarin' along beautifully. You were right about the wind, old man. It's blowin' straight across the island—an' that means that the hot-air balloon will miss the high peaks, and take its course straight over the jungle belt."

"My one fear was rifle fire," growled Lee. "I was hoping that the balloon would rise higher when it crossed the beach. But there seemed to be a down current at first, which kept it low. That upset my calculations."

"But look at it," protested Dorrie. "What are you grumblin' about?"

"Yes—look at it," agreed Lee tensely.

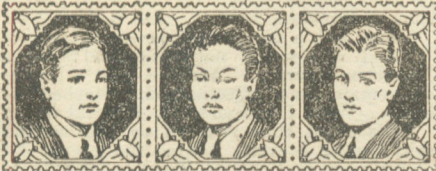
The air balloon was drifting, certainly—but Lee had noticed that it was no longer rising. It was keeping to its course serenely, well above the jungle, and carrying straight on towards the other side of the island. But was this good enough?

On the shore, Haynes had dispatched two of his men to the high, rocky ground, which could be reached through Death Valley. These men were to report what happened to the balloon—if they were in time to reach the high ground before it was out of sight.

But those on the yacht's deck had a clear view all the time. The Corsair, well out in the lagoon, was in an ideal position for observation.

There was silence aboard now. Even the boys were mute, they, too, having seen that the contrivance was no longer gaining height. Indeed, it was acting erratically, apparently hovering still for minutes on end, and then

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(Three more portraits next week.)

drifting to westward, or to eastward instead of maintaining a steady course.

"There are side currents, caused by the rock formations, to west and east," muttered Lee. "She's not carrying straight across, as we had hoped— By James! Look at that."

He had binoculars to his eyes, but the others could see clearly enough—although the balloon was now a smallish object in the distance. Yet they could see that one side of it had caved in, and then the streamer, which had been flying so proudly, seemed to droop and act as a drag.

"She's dropping!" shouted Handforth, his voice hoarse with dismay.

Nelson Lee sighed. There was not a doubt of it. The balloon, only midway across the island, was unmistakably drooping, and, with a sudden crazy movement, it slithered sideways, sagged downwards, struck against the treetops and vanished.

The high hopes of the gallant band aboard the captured yacht died.

Willy on the Warpath!

"THAT was a close thing!" said Doc Haynes, with an oath.

The news had just been brought to him that the air balloon had failed. His two observers had seen it drop into the jungle.

"No chance that the blamed thing was seen from the other side, I suppose?" asked Red.

"Not a ghost of a chance," said Haynes. "Leastways, they might have seen something in the distance—but they couldn't have read that streamer. Think what it would have meant to us if they had read it. All our plans for to-night would have gone west—and the airship would be in the air. Gosh! That Lee bird is full of ideas!"

"Well, before he gets the next one, it'll be too late," said Harker savagely. "We're movin' soon, ain't we, Doc? Night will clap down presently."

"Yes, we'll be moving," said Doc Haynes grimly.

He took all the credit for the disaster to the air balloon—and, undoubtedly, he deserved some of it. The air currents, alone, could not have so affected the balloon. There was no doubt that the rifle-fire had torn many great rents in the fabric, and the loss of hot air had meant a loss of buoyancy.

It had been a splendid attempt, on Nelson Lee's part, to communicate with the airship. But the luck was out.

Doc Haynes was free to do his work.

When it came to determination, even in trifling matters, there were very few people who could have beaten Willy Handforth. Not that he regarded the loss of his new pet as a trifling matter. To him, it was something of paramount importance.

He was quite prepared to defy Old Wilkey—for Willy held that Old Wilkey was unreasonable and unjust. Therefore, according to Willy's philosophy, he would be quite justified in getting that monkey back.

He could do nothing by daylight—so he didn't try. He appeared to be quite resigned to his loss. Actually, he was only biding his time.

He even refrained from taking Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon into his confidence, though, as a general rule, they shared all his secrets. But this one, he considered, was far too precious to be entrusted to them. In the mistaken idea of protecting him from danger, they might well have "sneaked" on him. Not to a master, of course—for Chubby and Juicy did not do that kind of sneaking—but certainly to the fellows of the Remove, and perhaps Browne of the Fifth.

Willy was determined on no less a course than to make a jaunt, entirely on his own, to the edge of the jungle. And if that project had got to the ears of the "beaks," he would have been very distinctly for it. For it was well known that the Tao-Tao blacks were watching, and there was always the chance that Willy would get captured. He was ready enough to risk this chance on his own account, but it is doubtful if anybody else would have seen eye to eye with him.

So he said nothing. In the art of keeping a still tongue, the wily young skipper of the Third was an adept. This matter, of small importance to everybody else, meant a great deal to him. He had taken a liking to Mickey Mouse, and he meant to get the monkey back.

He was curious, too, to see if his training was any good. There was just a chance that the monkey, back in its natural element, would rapidly forget. Its period of training had been very, very short. On the other hand, Willy was an exceptional trainer. He had a "way" with him where animals were concerned, which was almost uncanny.

He was quite certain, moreover, that the animal would not wander far from its original home in the treetops close

to the beach. It was any odds, therefore, that the monkey would remain close at hand.

Willy's plans were simple. An hour after darkness had fallen he put them into effect. To leave the airship by the ordinary means was impossible, for the ladders were raised. Also, members of the crew—two of them—were on sentry duty on the entrance deck.

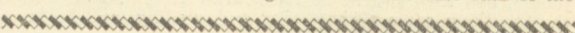
Other men, rifles in hand, patrolled the promenade decks amidships. Still others were on the upper deck—on the Sky Wanderer's "roof." Here, too, the searchlight man was constantly on the job during the hours of darkness.

Willy had already noted, with satisfaction, that the searchlight beam was not kept constantly in one place. The beam was kept moving all the time—sweeping the jungle fringe from end to end—and then back again. Only for a brief minute was any part of the beach in darkness at one time. Any attack on the part of the natives would thus be instantly detected—and easily frustrated. For the Sky Wanderer was literally an armed camp—with men ever ready to open fire.

Willy left Chubby and Juicy in the lounge, making some remark to the effect that he was going to have a wash. Instead, he locked himself in the wash-room, opened the porthole, and threw out a coil of thin rope—which he had previously acquired on the strict q.t.

No sooner had he made the upper end of the rope fast than he slid out of the window, grasped the cord firmly, and silently swung down. Having lowered himself some feet, he waited until the searchlight beam swept round; then he slithered down like a monkey. He knew there was very little chance of being seen by the sentries on the entrance deck, for this particular wash-room was well forward, and the sentry would have to be looking in one fixed direction to see him at all.

He landed on the sand right beneath the vast bulk of the



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Sky Wanderer, and instantly half-buried himself in the white, loose sand.

"So far," he murmured serenely, "so good."

He was enjoying himself. He hadn't "kicked over the traces" for quite a long time, and the experience was exhilarating. But little did he realise how fate was making him an instrument of the first importance!

He had no thought but for the harmless little monkey, and he regarded the whole adventure as a "spree" as he watched the searchlight beam swing along the edge of the dense jungle, not far distant. The beam illuminated the nearest trees dazzlingly, then passed slowly on, lighting up the other trees. When it had almost reached the extremity, Willy took action.

Leaping up, he ran like a rabbit over the sands—making a bee-line for the jungle, where all was pitch black. In order to escape detection, he had to "make it" before the searchlight beam came back.

He timed it nicely, for as soon as he plunged into the jungle he flung himself flat, hidden by the undergrowth. Then the searchlight beam came back, dazzling him as it percolated through the leaves before passing on. But no warning shouts came from the decks. He had done the trick successfully. The sentries had seen nothing.

Whether the watchful Tao-Tao blacks had seen anything was a different matter. Willy knew the risks that he was running, but he was in no way dismayed. "If anything, he was thrilled. There had always been the chance that he would plunge straight into the arms of a cannibal. Fortunately, he had not done so; but there might be one within a few yards of him.

So he took instant precautions. His first move, as soon as the light had passed, was to creep silently deeper into the jungle, and then swarm up the nearest tree. As he neared the top there came a chattering and rustling, and he knew that he had disturbed a nest of monkeys.

And then his heart nearly leapt into his mouth, for he heard a human voice—a voice, moreover, speaking English!

"Best be careful, boys!" came the voice. "Them durned monkeys hear everything, and they'll give us away!"

Willy gulped. It was the voice of Doc Haynes himself! And Willy suddenly realised that he had accidentally hit upon something of importance. Why should Haynes be here—skulking at the edge of the jungle in the darkness?

Willy clung to the tree and made no sound. His eyes, accustomed to the darkness, were staring down into a clearing. He saw dim figures moving about, for the starlight penetrated here.

He saw something else, too—a crude contrivance which Haynes and his men were putting into position. It was made of wood, and at the back of it there was a great bow, with a strong cord stretched tautly across. There were only two white men there—Haynes and Harker. There were three other men, but they were Tao-Tao blacks.

"I'll slip along and see how the others are gettin' on," said Haynes, after a while. "Remember, Red, nothing's going to happen until we can all work together—all four of these patent bows of mine. Gosh, they can't fail!"

"I'll be soaking the 'arrow heads' with petrol!" said Red Harker exultantly. "By thunder, they'll make a nice blaze as they go soaring towards the airship." And them curses won't know anything until it's too late!"

A cold horror gripped the fag in the tree. For in that second he knew exactly what Doc Haynes was preparing. Giant bows which would send flaming arrows to the great bulk of the Sky Wanderer! There could be no possibility of the plan going wrong, for the airship was so huge, so vast, that it would be impossible to miss her. The flaming arrows, hurled with great force, would penetrate her fabric, set her alight.

Willy Handforth went as cold as ice, for he knew that it was up to him—to him alone—to avert the appalling disaster!

(What hope has Willy of preventing this catastrophe? See what happens in the next nerve-tingling chapters of this great serial.)

Out of St. Jim's Stansen was the next morning. Mr. Browning-Jones took him away at daylight, and the Saints never saw him again.

The other B.-J. boys remained at the school a few days longer, but Stansen did not return.

The half-insane youth was taken to a private home, where he could be cared for and kept under strict supervision, and there was no danger of his repeating his attempts at incendiarism. Inspector Knowsey had the satisfaction of knowing that his suspicions had been well founded; and Mr. Browning-Jones, as soon as the truth was established, had, of course, a claim for compensation. That claim Mr. Stansen, the wretched boy's father, met generously enough; and ere the week was out Mr. Browning-Jones had taken temporary quarters for his little school, while he was looking out for a suitable establishment in which to settle.

But, with the exception of the affair of Stansen, which had so nearly proved a terrible tragedy, the St. Jim's fellows retained very pleasant recollections of the B.-J. boys and their stay at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Wonderful series of treasure-seeking adventures starts next Wednesday. Make sure you don't miss the first gripping story, "THE MENACE OF THE DWARF.")

THE FIRE RAISER!

(Continued from page 22.)

"What?" howled Blake. "Are you beginning that again?"

"I was addressin' Tom Mewwy. Let this be a warnin' to you, Tom Mewwy, not to take to smokin'—Ow!"

Tom Merry took the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulders and sat him down suddenly on the floor. Then the Terrible Three walked on to their dormitory.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Let that be a warning to you!" grinned Blake.

"Oh, pway don't be an ass!"

And D'Arcy went to bed. The Terrible Three reached the Shell dormitory, and found half the Form awake and eager for information as to what had happened. Nor were the chums allowed to go to bed till they had explained.

"My hat!" said Kangaroo, with a long breath. "What a giddy escape! I shall feel safer when that chap is out of St. Jim's."



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