

“THE THOUSAND-DOLLAR TRAIL!”—All-Thrilling Tale of Texas School Adventure by FRANK RICHARDS—INSIDE.

The GEM

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*The
Menace of
the Red
Triangle!*

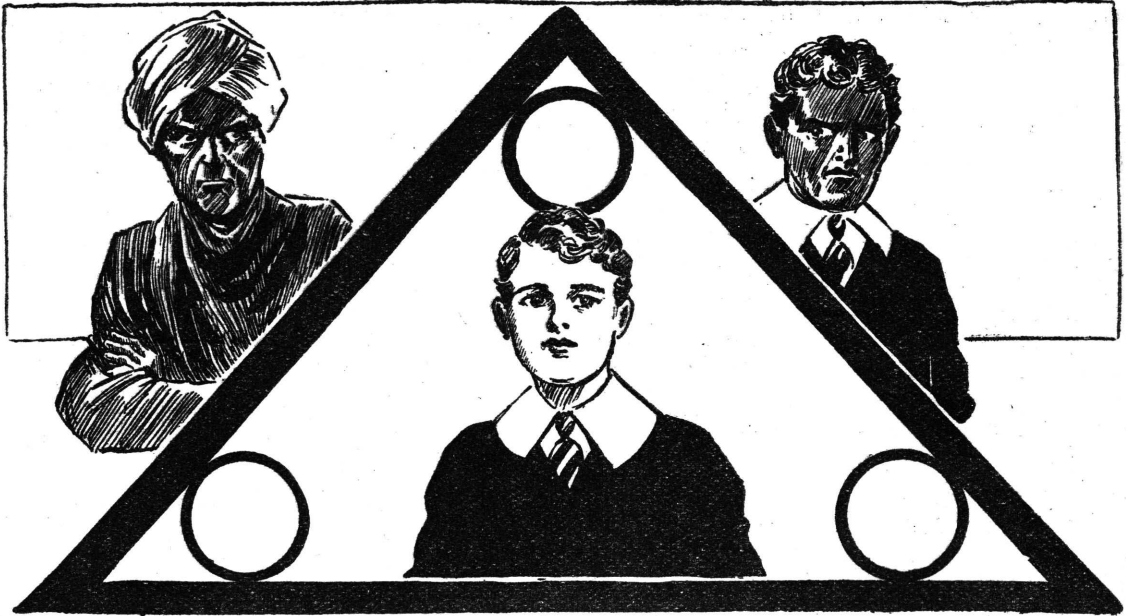
AN EXCITING INCIDENT FROM THE GREAT ST. JIM'S YARN WITHIN.

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

Week Ending April 6th, 1935.

THE SYMBOL OF DEATH THAT WAS TAKEN FOR A JAPE!—



THE MENACE OF THE RED TRIANGLE!

CHAPTER 1.

The Letter From India!

TOM MERRY!"

Tom Merry of the Shell Form at St. Jim's was too busy to reply as his name was called. He was punting a footer about.

"Tommy, you chump——"

Tom Merry glanced round at last and stared at the juniors who were calling him. They were Manners and Lowther, his chums of the Shell.

"Tommy, my boy, there's a letter for you!" called out Manners.

"Keep it!" said Tom Merry. "I'm busy now, and haven't time to read letters."

"But it's from India!"

"I don't care if it's from China——"

"But I say, Tommy——" called out Lowther.

Tom Merry grunted, and then walked in the direction of his two chums.

"We were watching for the postman, you see," Manners explained. "We rushed him as soon as he got inside the gates. Nothing for me, and nothing for Lowther, and only this for you. It must be from your uncle there. And it stands to reason that a chap's uncle wouldn't write to him from India without sending him a tip."

Tom Merry took the letter from Manners. It was addressed to him in a small, fine writing: "T. Merry, St. James' Collegiate School, Sussex, England," but the writing was nothing like the big, heavy hand of his soldier uncle.

"This can't be from my uncle," he said. "It isn't his writing."

"Oh, he may have got somebody else to address it!" said Lowther. "Don't nip our hopes in the bud. I tell you we're all stony, and if there isn't a remittance in this letter, we shall have to

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have tea in Hall instead of in the study!"

"His khitmutgar, or whatever you call him, may have addressed the envelope," Manners suggested.

Tom Merry laughed and slit the envelope with his penknife. He felt inside for the letter, and drew his fingers out again, with an expression of amazement.

"There isn't any letter inside," he said.

"What?"

"There's no letter," said Tom Merry. He opened the envelope wider and looked into it.

"Hold on, there's something," said Lowther. "Oh, it's a card!"

Tom Merry drew a triangular fragment of cardboard from the envelope. Upon the cardboard was traced a triangle in red ink, and in each of the three corners of the triangle was a red circle.

Tom Merry looked into the envelope again. There was nothing else there. The cardboard triangle was all that the envelope had contained.

The chums of the Shell gazed at the fragment of card that Tom Merry held between his finger and thumb, in utter astonishment.

"What on earth does it mean?" said Tom Merry, in perplexity.

"Your uncle must be off his giddy rocker to send you a thing like that!" said Monty Lowther blankly.

"It's not from my uncle," said Tom Merry decidedly. "It's not his writing, and he wouldn't play a silly trick like this, anyway. It's a practical joke, I suppose—though why anybody living in India should play a trick like that on a schoolboy in England is a giddy mystery."

"It beats me," said Manners.

A crowd of juniors gathered round, and all of them were looking in curiosity and amazement at the mysterious card.

"What on earth is it?" asked Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form.

"Looks like the sign of some giddy secret society," said Digby.

Tom Merry smiled.

"I don't suppose an Indian secret society would take the trouble to send this to me, especially as I don't know what it means," he said.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's. "It's a mystewy!"

"It's some idiotic lark," said Herries.

"Did it really come from India at all?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry showed the envelope. The stamps and the postmarks proved that the mysterious missive had come from India. There were several Indian postmarks upon it, and Tom Merry distinguished the names of Bundelore and Bombay.

"Know anybody in either of those places?" asked Blake.

"My uncle, General Merry, is, or was, stationed at Bundelore," said Tom Merry. "I suppose the letter comes through Bombay, and that accounts for the Bombay postmark."

"It's a lark, of course."

"It must be; but I don't understand it," said Tom Merry. "It beats me. Well, we shan't get any tea in the study out of this, you chaps."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"It's rotten," he said. "I was quite expecting a remittance, and it turns out to be a rotten practical joke. I should like to be within easy punching distance of the joker. Chuck the rotten thing away!"

Tom Merry was about to do so; but he paused.

"No; I think I'll keep it," he said. "I may find out some time what it means."

And he slipped the card into his waistcoat pocket. Then he went back to the practice; but he was thinking

—FULL-OF-THRILLS YARN OF A GRIM MENACE THAT HANGS OVER ST. JIM'S.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

more of the mysterious letter from India than of the practice now. Was it a practical joke? Why should someone he did not know, thousands of miles away, play a practical joke on him? How did that someone know anything about him, or where he lived? But if it was not a joke, what was it?

Tom Merry was utterly perplexed; and, though he strove to drive the strange matter from his mind, it would not go. He was still thinking about it when the practice was over, and the juniors went in to tea.

CHAPTER 2.

The Face at the Window!

TOM MERRY'S peculiar letter from India was the talk of St. Jim's that evening. It was so strange, and so mysterious, that it appealed to the imagination of the juniors.

Even the seniors, when they heard of it, were interested. Tom Merry's preparation that evening was subject to many interruptions. Fellows came from all quarters to ask to be allowed to see the letter from India. Even Kildare, the head of the Sixth, looked into Tom Merry's study to see the red triangle, and stared at it in amazement.

"And you don't know what it means, Merry, or if it means anything?" he asked.

"I haven't an idea," said Tom Merry.

"Nor who sent it?"

"I can't even guess."

"It's jolly queer," said Kildare.

"And it's a queer coincidence, too!"

"What's a coincidence?"

"That you should get this extraordinary letter from India at the same time that a new boy—an Indian—is coming to St. Jim's," said Kildare.

Tom Merry started.

"An Indian chap coming here?" he asked.

"Yes; Mr. Railton told me so today," said the captain of St. Jim's. "He's a Hindu from Bombay; his name's Kalouth Das. It's strange that this letter should reach you at the same time."

"Jolly queer!" said Tom Merry. "When he comes, I'll ask him if he's ever heard of this giddy red triangle. A chap from India may be able to throw some light on the matter!"

"Yes; that's a good idea!"

And Kildare, looking very perplexed, quitted the study.

After prep was over, Tom Merry went down to the Common-room with Lowther and Manners for a chat with the fellows before going to bed.

Levison, the cad of the Fourth, came up to him as he entered the Common-room. Levison was not on good terms with Tom Merry, but he assumed an extremely cordial manner just now. He wanted to see the triangle.

"May I see the card, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes, if you like," said Tom. "I suppose you're about the only fellow who hasn't seen it," he said. "Here it is!"

He handed the mysterious card to Levison.

The narrow, keen eyes of the Fourth Former scanned it carefully. Some fellows gathered round to hear Levison's opinion. Levison was not liked

at St. Jim's; but he often saw things that other fellows could not see.

But even Levison was puzzled by the mysterious sign on the card.

"It must mean something," he said.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I suppose it means something," he said. "But I can't make out what it may mean!"

"I've read a lot about India," said Levison, "and there was an Indian chap at my old school, Greyfriars, I used to talk to sometimes. India's crammed with secret societies, and they have queer symbols, and this might be one of them. Perhaps your uncle out there has got mixed up in some secret society!"

"What rot!" said Tom Merry. "Besides, if he had, why should they send this thing to me?"

"Might be some sort of vendetta," said Levison. "I've heard of such things. If I were you, I'd write to your uncle and ask him if he knows anything about the matter. It may be important for all you know."

"It's not worth bothering about! Besides, he's up country in India—it would take weeks to get an answer!"

"You can cable."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Cable to a man on the Indian Frontier, because a silly ass has sent me a card with a triangle inked on it? He would think I was off my rocker!"

The red triangle with a circle in each angle was a symbol that meant nothing to Tom Merry when he received it from far-off India. But it was a warning of death—the "visiting card" of the Red Triangle Society, whose activities of menace and assassination in India had been crushed by Tom's uncle!

"Do as you like," said Levison. "If I had had a thing like that sent to me from India, I shouldn't feel so jolly cool about it!"

"Oh, I'm not feeling nervous!"

Tom Merry laughed as he spoke, yet Levison's words had made some impression upon his mind.

Was it possible that that strange missive was a hint of danger? Yet what danger could threaten him, safe in England, within the walls of St. Jim's?

He dismissed the thought with a smile at its absurdity; but it returned. When he went up to bed with the other fellows, and turned in, he did not sleep easily; and when at last he fell into slumber, it was to dream of the red triangle.

His sleep was broken, his dreams strange and troublous. From the dimness he seemed to see a dark and threatening face that looked at him, and a sense of danger oppressed him and held him in thrall, and he stirred uneasily in his sleep. Then suddenly, with a start, he awoke, with a feeling of nervousness.

He lay wide awake, glancing about the dusky dormitory with the uneasiness born of the nightmare. The other fellows were sleeping soundly; there was a sound of steady breathing in the dormitory, but no other sound.

Creak!

Tom Merry looked quickly towards

the window as the sudden, almost inaudible sound came to his ears.

Outside there was starlight, and it glimmered upon the panes; but across the pane a dark shadow lay.

Tom Merry's heart thumped wildly. Was it the shape of a human head he saw there, blotting the starlight on the pane, or was it fancy?

He sat up in bed with an inarticulate cry.

In an instant the shadow was gone from the window.

Tom Merry jumped from the bed, dashed towards the window, and threw open the sash. He looked out. Below the window the ivy rustled in the night breeze, the leaves glimmering in the starlight.

The quadrangle was silent and dark.

"Hallo!" came a sleepy voice from Monty Lowther's bed. "What's that?"

Tom Merry closed the window, laughing at his own fears. It had been a shadow, he told himself—a shadow cast upon the glass by the swaying branches of the big elm outside.

"It's all right, Monty," he said.

"What on earth are you out of bed for?"

"I—I had a dream."

"Poof! Go to sleep, and let me," grunted Lowther.

Tom Merry turned in again, and slept soundly until the morning.

CHAPTER 3.

Kalouth Das!

MR. LINTON, the master of the Shell, was taking that Form in Latin the following afternoon, when Toby, the page, tapped at the Form-room door and put his head into the room.

The Shell, not at all displeased to have a rest from the Gallic War, bestowed a grateful glance upon Toby. Mr. Linton did not seem too pleased.

"What is it?" he rapped out sharply.

"The noo boy, sir," said Toby. "I was told to tell you when he came, sir."

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Linton.

"Take Master Kalouth Das into my study, and tell him to wait till I come."

"Yes, sir."

And Toby disappeared.

The Shell looked interested. A new boy always excited some interest, and when the new boy happened to be of a foreign race, the interest was proportionately increased. It was not known yet which Form he was going into; but from the fact that Mr. Linton had been specially informed of his arrival, the Shell fellows guessed that he was probably coming into their Form. They already knew that he was to belong to the School House.

Mr. Linton turned to his class.

"I shall send a prefect to take charge of you for last lesson," he said, "and when school is dismissed, I want you, Merry, to come into my study."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

And classics being finished, Mr. Linton quitted the room, and Langton, the prefect, came in to look after the Shell till they were dismissed.

The Shell was very pleased. Langton was a good-natured fellow, and his taking charge of them meant that they were to have an easy time for the rest of the afternoon. The hour of dismissal came at last, and the Shell trooped out.

"Don't let Linton keep you long, Tommy," said Monty Lowther; "we want to get some practice before tea. We've got to beat the New House next Saturday."

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Tom Merry nodded.
"I'm blessed if I know what he wants me for," he said. "But I'll get out as soon as I can. Something to do with the new chap, very likely."

Monty Lowther looked suddenly alarmed.

"Don't let him be put into our study!" he exclaimed. "We've had several narrow escapes this term. We don't want a fourth in the study."

"Not if I can help it," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Gore's study is next to ours, and he has only Skimpole with him," said Manners. "If Mr. Linton says anything about studies, you can suggest that."

"I'll remember."

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Gore wrathfully. "I don't want a blessed nigger stuck in my study."

"He isn't a nigger; he's a Hindu."

"I don't care what he is; I don't want him."

"There won't be any choice about that if Mr. Linton says so," said Monty Lowther. "Dash it all, be reasonable; you are only two, and we're three."

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry walked away to his Form-master's study. He tapped and went in. Mr. Linton was there with the new boy, and Tom Merry glanced at the latter with some curiosity.

The Hindu was a lad apparently his own age; but he might have been older—it was difficult to tell. He was very slim and slightly built, and did not look strong. But Tom Merry's keen eye noted that he was wiry-looking. His face was extremely dark, and his eyes were brilliant, and never still. They flashed upon Tom Merry as he entered, and seemed to take him in at a glance. Then he looked away; but Tom Merry remained with the impression that the new boy was watching him out of the corner of his eye.

Tom Merry's first impression of the Indian was decidedly not favourable. But he would not allow himself to feel any unreasonable repugnance towards the fellow he did not know.

"Merry, I am glad you have come," said Mr. Linton. "This is the new boy, Kalouth Das. He is coming into the Shell."

"Yes, sir."

The Indian gave a start.

"Merry!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Linton glanced at him.

"Yes, this is Tom Merry. Do you know the name?"

The Indian's face was impassive again in a moment.

"No, sir."

He spoke excellent English.

"I imagined from the way you spoke that you had heard the name before," said Mr. Linton, glancing curiously at the Indian boy.

"I have heard the name of General Merry in India, sir," explained Kalouth Das. "That was why the name struck me for the moment. It is not a common name."

"He is my uncle," said Tom Merry.

"I want you to look after Kalouth Das a little, Merry; that is why I have sent for you," said Mr. Linton. "He is a total stranger in England, and quite new to English schools. As you are head of the Shell, it is your duty to take some care of him."

"I am quite ready to do so, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Thank you, Merry. He will be put in the study next to yours—there are two boys there at present; Gore and Skimpole."

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry, much relieved.

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"You may go with Tom Merry now, Kalouth Das, and he will show you your study, and the other things necessary."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Linton made a gesture of dismissal, and the two juniors left the study. In the passage Tom Merry paused for a moment. The Indian boy's bright eyes were upon him.

"You've just arrived in England?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yesterday," said Kalouth Das. "I came on from Southampton to-day."

"You speak English jolly well," Tom Merry said admiringly.

Kalouth Das showed his white teeth in a smile.

"Yes; I have spoken English from my childhood," he said.

"Come up to the Shell passage, and I'll show you your study. You'd better have your books and things put in there, and your box can be taken up to the dorm."

They ascended the stairs. Kalouth Das looked round with interested eyes that seemed to miss no detail of the place. Tom Merry knocked at the door of Gore's study and opened it.

A youth in a large pair of spectacles was sitting at the table, and he blinked and nodded at the newcomers.

"Hallo, Skimmy!" said Tom Merry. "Where's Gore?"

"I really don't know, Merry; he is not here."

"I can see that. This is your new study-mate, Kalouth Das. Tell Gore when he comes in that Kalouth Das belongs to this study, will you?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Skimpole.

Tom Merry piloted his new charge on his way, and showed him the dormitory and the Form-room and other things that he cared to see. The Indian seemed to take a great interest in all he saw, and he thanked Tom Merry for the trouble he had taken.

"Rot!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I'm bound to look after a new chap a bit. I hope you'll be comfortable here."

"Thank you so much!"

"If you don't mind I'll buzz off now; the fellows are waiting for me on the ground," Tom Merry explained.

"All right."

And Tom Merry, leaving the new boy in Gore's study with Skimpole, hurried away.

CHAPTER 4.

Ungracious!

MANNERS and Lowther were waiting for Tom Merry in the big doorway of the School House. They were both curious to know what Mr. Linton wanted.

"Well?" said Manners laconically.

"It's the new boy—the Indian," said Tom Merry.

"What about him?"

"Mr. Linton suggests that we might take him up and look after him a bit, and so on."

"Oh, rot!" said Manners, and Monty Lowther grunted disapprovingly.

"Well, I know it's a bit thick," said Tom Merry; "but it's true enough that he must be feeling pretty rotten here all by himself. I think it would be only decent to do as Linton wants, and I've said I'll do it. We'll cheer him up by inviting him to tea."

"Oh, just as you like! You're always letting us in for something of this sort, with your blessed good nature."

Levison came up and joined the Terrible Three.

"About that giddy red triangle of yours, Merry—" he began.

"Oh, blow the triangle!" said Tom Merry. "I'm fed up with it!"

"I was going to suggest that you should ask Kalouth Das if he knows anything about it. If it's some Indian symbol, he might be able to explain it to you."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Monty Lowther. "If we're going to have him to tea, we may as well see if he can tell us anything about it!"

Levison's eyes narrowed in the peculiar way he had when he was curious or interested.

"You're having him to tea?" he asked.

"Yes."

"May I come?"

The Terrible Three were silent. They did not like the cad of the School House, and he never joined them in a study feed. But they did not like actually to refuse a point-blank request.

"Well, I suppose you can come," said Tom Merry at last.

"Thanks; I will, then!" said Levison, apparently not noticing the half-heartedness of Tom Merry's assent, and he walked away.

"Nice collection we're getting for tea!" growled Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed in his cheery way.

"Oh, don't grouse!" he said. "Let's ask the Indian before we go down to footer practice."

Kalouth Das was not hard to find, for at that moment he came out into the quadrangle by himself. He seemed quite satisfied to be left alone, and his dark, inscrutable face revealed nothing of what he thought. He stared at the chums of the Shell as they came up, like a bronzed image, as Monty Lowther said afterwards.

Tom Merry infused as much affability into his manner as he could, in spite of the forbidding looks of the Indian. He felt sorry for the lonely junior, and he would have been glad to take a great deal of trouble to make him easy and comfortable in his new surroundings.

"Will you come and have tea with us in our study, Kalouth Das?" he asked.

"Thank you, no!" replied the Indian. Tom Merry bit his lip.

"Are you having tea in your study?" he asked.

"No."

"In Hall, then?"

"Yes!"

"Tea in the study is much more cosy, and we get a better feed when we stand it ourselves," said Tom Merry. "We all feed in our studies here when we've got the tin. And Lowther had a postal order this morning, and he's standing a good tea."

"I will not come!"

There was an awkward pause. The Indian's manner was so ungracious that it was almost impossible to press the invitation; but Mr. Linton came by at that moment. The Shell master paused and nodded to the juniors.

"Ah, I'm glad to see you boys are so friendly!" he remarked, with an obtuseness which the juniors considered was only to be expected of a master, but which perhaps, was not wholly unintentional. "You will soon grow accustomed to your new surroundings, Kalouth Das."

"Yes, sir," said Kalouth Das.

"Are you going to have tea with Tom Merry in his study?" said Mr. Linton.

"I am sure you will find it very pleasant."

"If you please, sir—"

"And you will make more friends when you have been here longer," said Mr. Linton. "I am sure you will take every care of your guest, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry awkwardly.
And the master of the Shell nodded and passed on.

There was a short silence among the juniors when he was gone.
"Well, are you coming, then?" asked Manners.

The Indian frowned.
"I must come," he said. "That is an order from the master."

"Six o'clock, then," said Tom Merry, as cheerfully as he could.

The Indian nodded without replying.
"Of all the queer bounders, I think he takes the cake!" Monty Lowther burst out wrathfully. "He won't get a second invitation in a hurry!"

"I suppose Linton can see that he's an unfriendly sort of chap, and wants to draw him out and make him decent," Manners said reflectively.

Tom Merry smiled ruefully.
"And he's using us to do it," he said. "Well, it's no good grumbling."

"Oh, let's get to the football!" growled Monty Lowther.

Half an hour on the footer ground restored the chums of the Shell fully to good humour, and they walked down to the tuckshop afterwards in the best of spirits, to lay in a supply of provisions for the feed. Funds had been very short in the study; but Monty Lowther's postal order had come providentially and saved them, as Lowther said pathetically, from the danger of cannibalism.

A raid was made upon Dame Taggles' stock to the extent of seven-and-sixpence, and the Terrible Three, laden with their purchases, returned to their study in the School House.

Tom Merry looked in at Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

"You fellows come to tea?" he asked.

"Corn in Egypt!" ejaculated Blake.

"We're down to our last sardine."

"Yaas, wathah! This is weally good of you, deah boys," said Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglasses benignantly upon the Terrible Three.
"I have wired to my patah for a fivah, but somehow or the othah he hasn't come up to the beastly scwatch, you know."

"We'll feed with you when he does," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Come on!"

And quite a crowd poured into Tom Merry's study. The fire was lighted, and the table was spread, and tea was ready when the hour of six boomed out from the clock tower. Promptly to time Levison arrived. Blake, Digby, and Herries and D'Arcy all glanced at the cad of the Fourth, surprised to find him a guest in Tom Merry's study; but they made no remark, of course. And Levison did not appear to notice their surprise.

"All here now?" asked Blake.
"All excepting Kalouth Das."

"Oh, is the Indian coming?"
"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"It's vewy decent of you to take him up, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy genially, "and we will treat him well."

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry. "He seems a queer beggar; but if we're all kind to him, he may thaw out."

Jack Blake laughed.
"We'll try to thaw him, anyway," he agreed.

"Here he is."

CHAPTER 5.

Not a Cheerful Tea!

KALOUTH DAS, with his silent footsteps, entered the study. He greeted his hosts with a deep Indian salaam.

"Welcome, my son!" said Tom Merry, with more heartiness in his tones than in his heart. "Hungry, I hope?"

"I am not hungry."

"Here's your chair," said Monty Lowther, pulling out a chair near the

fire. "I dare say you find England cold after India?"
"Yes; that is true."

"Well, sit down."

Levison's eyes were upon the Indian, and indeed they hardly left the dark face from the moment Kalouth Das entered the study. Tom Merry poured out the tea, and Manners lifted the big dish of toast from the fender, and Monty Lowther turned out a saucepan full of eggs. Jam tarts and cakes graced the table, and altogether it was a very respectable feed.

The juniors all looked contented as they gathered round the table, with the exception of Kalouth Das. His dark face expressed nothing.

"Pile in, my sons!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"What-ho!" said Blake.

Kalouth Das allowed his plate to be filled. Levison was watching with keen and curious eyes.

"You're not eating anything, Kalouth Das," he said suddenly.

"Fire away, kid!" said Manners hospitably. "Don't you like the toast?"

"Yes."
"You eat eggs in India, I suppose?" said Digby.

"But I am not hungry."

"Come! Take just a mouthful!" said Tom Merry.

"Thank you! But I do not care to eat."

Tom Merry coloured. It was absurd for a fellow not to be hungry at tea-time, and it was as if he meant purposely to be offensive.

"Better take something," said Levison, in his cool tones. "You haven't any enemies in this study, have you, Kalouth Das?"

The Indian started, and his sharp eyes rested upon Levison's face for a moment with keen and anxious scrutiny.

"What do you mean?" he asked abruptly.

Levison laughed easily.
"I've read a lot about the East," he



As Kalouth Das stood by the open window, a long beam of light suddenly flashed into the quadrangle. Tom Merry watched breathlessly as it was repeated twice. Who was the Indian junior signalling to? Was it some desperate assassin he intended to admit to the Shell dormitory?

said. "You have a custom in your country of not eating bread or salt with a fellow you hate. If you eat with a chap, you can't be his enemy afterwards. Isn't that it?"

"That is all nonsense," said Kalouth Das.

But there was a new glow of colour under his dark skin, and his eyes snapped at Levison with a strange glitter.

"Oh, cheese it, Levison!" said Tom Merry. "Kalouth Das can eat or not, as he likes."

"We eat little in India," said Kalouth Das. "I am not hungry. In time, perhaps, I shall learn to eat as you English do. But now I eat little."

"But just a taste of something to show that you're friends with everybody here," said Levison persistently.

"I have said that I'm not hungry," said the Indian touched nothing.

"Don't bother him, Levison," said Tom Merry, with a note of command in his voice.

And the Fourth Former let the subject drop.

It was not a cheerful meal. With the dark, immovable face of Kalouth Das at the board, no one felt cheerful, or much inclined to talk. The Indian was certainly not likely to add to the gaiety of any study he should enter. His presence hung heavily upon the juniors, accustomed to being merry and unrestrained at a study feed.

"You haven't shown Kalouth Das your letter, Tommy," said Monty Lowther presently, more to break the awkward silence that had fallen upon the party than for any other reason.

"Ah, look at this, will you, Kalouth Das?" said Tom Merry.

He took the card from his pocket, and showed the red triangle with the three little red circles to the Indian.

Kalouth Das looked at it with unmoved features. If he had seen anything of the kind before, his face did not betray him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I don't know; but it came to me in a letter from India," said Tom Merry.

"Indeed! And you do not understand it?"

"Not the least in the world, and I

don't know who sent it. Have you ever seen anything of the kind in India?"

"Never!"

"Then you can't enlighten me?" said Tom Merry.

"It is quite strange to me. I do not understand it," said Kalouth Das. "Perhaps it is what you call a practical joke."

"Yes; I suppose it is."

And Tom Merry returned the card to his pocket.

Kalouth Das rose from the table. "You will excuse me," he said; "I have letters to write."

And, without waiting for a reply, he quitted the study. There was silence for some minutes after he had gone. Levison rose; he had finished his tea.

"I suppose you won't take any notice of what I say, Tom Merry," he said quietly; "but that fellow is your enemy."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Whether he's really seen that queer sign before, I don't know, but I know that nothing would have made him eat at your table," said Levison, "and that means a jolly great deal in the East. I should advise you to keep an eye on that chap. I shouldn't feel quite safe if I were you."

Tom Merry laughed.

Levison left the study. Tom Merry was still laughing, but he was the only one who laughed. The other fellows were strangely grave and quiet. Tom Merry looked round at their serious faces, and his laugh died away.

"My dear chaps," he said, "surely you don't think there's anything in what Levison said?"

"Well, I—I suppose not," said Blake, after a pause. "But it's queer, as he said. Why didn't the Indian eat anything here?"

"Oh, he's a queer beggar, that's all."

"I don't quite like such vewy queeah beggahs myself," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy very thoughtfully.

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther.

And the other fellows nodded assent.

"Oh, it's all rot!" said Tom Merry.

But, in spite of his words, there was a curious feeling of uneasiness in his heart. Was it possible that the coming

of the Indian junior to St. Jim's had some connection with the mysterious sign of the triangle and the red circles, and that either, or both, meant danger to Tom Merry? He laughed at the thought, and yet it would not leave his mind

CHAPTER 6.

A Startling Discovery!

GEORGE GORE was grinding away at lines when the time came for the Shell to go to bed. Five hundred lines was a large imposition, and Gore was not a quick writer.

The Shell junior had not taken kindly to Kalouth Das being placed in his study, and, in consequence, he had received the Indian boy on anything but friendly terms. Gore was prone to bullying, and he had hoped that by ragging Kalouth Das he would soon get him to shift out of his study. But, unfortunately for Gore, it had not worked out quite like that.

The Indian boy had complained to Mr. Linton of Gore's bullying, with the result that Gore had been given five hundred lines. This had had the reverse effect of making the Shell junior more kindly disposed towards Kalouth Das, and as he scribbled away at his lines he was muttering threats of vengeance against the Indian junior.

Skimpole looked into the study at half-past nine, blinking benevolently through his big spectacles.

"Are you finished, my dear Gore?" asked Skimpole.

Gore looked up with a scowl.

"No!" he growled. "More than a hundred to do yet."

"It is bed-time."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"My dear Gore—"

Gore rose and laid down his pen. He placed an inkpot upon the sheets he had written, by way of a paper-weight. He was tired out with his unaccustomed exertions.

"I'll make that nigger pay for it!" he said, between his teeth.

"Indeed, he does seem a rather unpleasant person," said the mild Skimpole. "But would it not be better to leave him alone, Gore? If he complains to Mr. Linton again—"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Gore.

"Ahem!"

Skimpole left the study, and Gore followed him, turning the light out. He had spent a good part of the evening grinding at his lines, and he was very tired and ill-tempered. He was the last in the Shell dormitory. Kalouth Das was undressing to go to bed, and he did not look at Gore. But Gore looked at him with savage eyes.

"Finished, old chap?" asked Crooke sympathetically.

"No!" growled Gore. "I've wasted my evening over that rotten nigger! I'm going to make him sit up for it now."

The juniors undressed, and Langton came to see lights out; but when lights were out, and the prefect had retired, Gore sat up in bed.

"Anybody got a candle?" he asked. "Oh, go to sleep!" growled Monty Lowther.

"I'll go to sleep when I've licked the nigger!"

"Shut up!" said Kangaroo.

"Rats!"

"I've got a candle," said Crooke. A match was struck in the gloom of



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the dormitory, and Crooke lighted his candle. Gore slipped out of bed. The wakeful eyes of the Indian watched him, but Kalouth Das did not move. Gore tramped to his bedside.

"Get up!" he said roughly. The Indian watched him like a cat. "I shall not get up!" Gore laughed savagely. "I'll soon have you out!" he exclaimed.

He grasped the bedclothes and dragged them off the Indian. Kalouth Das jumped up in bed, breathing hard through his nose. Gore grasped him off the bed, with a bump to the floor.

"Now, then, you black brute—" "Stop that row!" called out Bernard Glyn.

"Go and eat coke!" replied Gore. "Now, then, you nigger— Oh!"

The Indian was fighting like a wild-cat, and Gore had no breath left for words. He was much bigger and heavier than the Indian, and he had had no doubt of licking him with the greatest of ease. But Kalouth Das was not particular in his methods of fighting. He fought with hands and feet, teeth and nails.

Gore shrieked as the Indian's nails clawed down his face, leaving a red track on the skin behind them.

He gritted his teeth, and hurled the Indian with a crash to the floor, and then staggered back, gasping for breath, and pressing his hands to his face. There was red upon his fingers as he drew them away.

"The— the savage!" panted Gore. "Look what he's done!"

The Indian looked, indeed, like a savage beast as he crouched upon the floor, panting, his white teeth showing, and his eyes gleaming.

The Shell fellows looked on grimly. They were disgusted at the Indian fellow's method of fighting.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther under his breath. "We've got a splendid specimen of a wild-cat in the Shell this time, and no mistake!"

"By Jove, we have!" said Tom Merry.

Gore plunged a sponge into water and dabbed it over his face. He was badly scratched, and he knew that the mark would remain for a long time. He was wild with rage, but he hesitated to tackle so savage an opponent again.

Gore advanced upon the crouching, panting Indian, and paused. Kalouth Das watched him with scintillating eyes.

As the Shell bully's eyes rested upon the Indian, he uttered a sudden cry.

"Great Scott! Look!"

His strange and startled tone caused the Shell fellows to stare at him in amazement. Gore was pointing to the Indian's arm. In the struggle the sleeve of Kalouth Das' pyjamas had been torn from wrist to elbow, and the long, slim forearm, deep bronze in colour, was revealed as he half-stood, half-crouched, waiting for Gore's attack. The arm was thrown forward to defend himself, and the candle-light glimmered upon the bronze skin.

"The red triangle!" shouted Gore. There was a shout from some of the Shell fellows as Gore pointed.

There it was, clearly visible, now that they looked. Tattooed upon the bronze skin was the same mysterious symbol as that upon the card so strangely sent to Tom Merry from far-off India—the triangle, with a circle in each of the angles.

A strange pallor swept over the

Indian's dusky face, and he hurriedly caught the torn sleeve together and covered up the bronze skin with the tell-tale mark upon it.

There was dead silence in the dormitory for some moments.

Tom Merry broke it. "What does that mark on your arm mean, Kalouth Das?"

Kalouth Das did not reply. "When I showed you the card in the study, you said that you did not understand the symbol and that you had never seen it before," said Tom Merry sternly.

Still the Indian was silent, breathing hard.

"He was lying," said Monty Lowther. "He must have seen the sign before when it's tattooed on his arm."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "And that shows that he knows something about that letter being sent to you, Tommy."

Tom Merry's face was very hard and stern.

"Have you anything to say, Kalouth Das?" he asked.

"I have nothing to say," said the Indian sullenly.

"How did that mark come on your arm?"

"It is nothing—a mere trick when I was a child," muttered the Indian.

"But you knew it was there."

Kalouth Das was silent.

"Yet you told me you have never seen such a sign."

"I had forgotten."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed with scorn. It was plain to all that the Indian was lying. What was the strange mystery of the red triangle? Why had it been sent to Tom Merry, and why had the Indian the same brand upon his arm?

Tom Merry was completely baffled.

Kalouth Das stepped back into bed. Gore did not interfere with him again—he had had enough of the wildcat fighting.

And he had effected more than his purpose. He had intended to thrash Kalouth Das; he had not done so, but he had shown him up to the whole Form as a liar, and perhaps something worse. Gore was not dissatisfied as he turned into bed again.

Crooke blew the candle out, and the dormitory was in darkness again. One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep, but Tom Merry did not sleep. He could not. That strange and mysterious symbol was still before his eyes, and he could no longer laugh at Levison's hint of danger. He remembered the face he had fancied that he had seen at the dormitory window the previous night. Had that fancied face at the window been real, after all? Had the Indian come to St. Jim's to do him some injury, and had he an accomplice at hand to aid him?

It seemed a wild and improbable theory, for he could imagine no motive for it all. Yet he could not sleep.

And as the night grew older Tom Merry was glad that his startled nerves had kept him awake. As he lay silent in bed, thinking ceaselessly, his eyes were turned in the gloom towards the bed of Kalouth Das. In the dusky gloom of the dormitory he could just make out the form of the bed. Mid-night had tolled out from the clock tower, and all St. Jim's was asleep. Some minutes after the last stroke of twelve had died away there was a

sound of a movement, and Tom Merry's heart leaped within him as he saw the Indian junior rising from his bed.

CHAPTER 7.

The Midnight Signal!

KALOUTH DAS stood beside his bed, his head bent a little, listening. The attitude and the low, quick breathing showed plainly enough that he was straining his ears to listen, to know whether his rising had awakened anybody in the Shell dormitory.

Tom Merry lay perfectly still. Kalouth Das remained motionless for some moments more, and then moved towards the window at the end of the dormitory—the same window that Tom Merry had opened the previous night when he had fancied that dark face against the starlit pane.

Tom Merry watched him breathlessly. Kalouth Das began to open the window. He opened it with slow caution, to make no sound, and it was five minutes or more before the sash was fairly raised. A faint chill breath of air from the quadrangle stole into the dormitory. Then the Indian junior leaned out of the window and scanned the dark quadrangle below.

Suddenly there was a gleam of light. Kalouth Das had in his hand an electric torch.

A long, thin beam of light shot from the dormitory window into the quadrangle.

It was repeated twice. Then the light shone no more.

Kalouth Das stood silent at the window, looking out.

Tom Merry set his teeth. It was only too clear that the Indian junior was making signals to someone outside the School House.

Who was it—if not the dark figure Tom Merry had seen for a brief moment the previous night?

Was the Indian junior about to admit a thief to the school? That he intended to admit someone, to whom he had signalled, was certain to Tom Merry's mind.

He shuddered as he realised all that it might mean. If he was in danger, was it some desperate wretch, with murder in his heart, whom the Indian intended to admit to the Shell dormitory?


Was it really, as Levison had surmised, some strange Indian vendetta—in which his uncle had become concerned in India, and which was thus transferred to England, because he was the blood of General Merry?

Whatever it might mean, it was evidently impossible to wait longer in silence until the Hindu had accomplished his object. Whoever was the unknown man outside, he must not be allowed to enter.

Tom Merry sprang from his bed. At the sound he made, the Indian turned his head from the window.

"Kalouth Das!" Tom Merry's voice rang through the dormitory.

He heard a gasp from the Indian at (Continued on the next page.)

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the window. The terror of discovery was upon the dark junior.

"Kalouth Das, what are you doing there?"

Tom Merry ran along to the window. Several fellows had been awakened by his voice, and they were sitting up in bed, asking what was the matter.

Tom Merry did not heed them. He ran to the Indian, grasped him, and dragged him from the window.

"Kalouth Das, what does this mean? To whom were you signalling from the window?"

The Indian was silent. In the gloom his eyes seemed to burn.

There was a sound without, as of the wind rustling in the ivy. Or was it the rustle made by a climber?

Kalouth Das heard it; and suddenly wrenching himself free from Tom Merry's grasp, he sprang to the window and slammed it shut, with a slam that rang out in the silent quadrangle.

Then he turned and stood facing Tom Merry, his eyes burning strangely.

"It is nothing!" he stammered. "You do not understand!"

"What's wrong there?" came Lowther's voice.

"I saw this chap signalling with a light from the window," said Tom Merry. "There is someone in the quadrangle, and he was signalling to him."

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It—it is false!" gasped the Indian, and his voice was dry and husky. "I mean, it is a mistake. It was not a signal. There is no one there. You do not understand."

"But I mean to understand!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"It—it is nothing! I will explain. It is in connection with my religion," stammered the Indian.

"Your religion?"

"Yes. You do not understand."

Kalouth Das was regaining his nerve. "I will explain—I will explain to the Head, if you wish, to-morrow. It is my religion—the worship of the stars. You do not understand, and you have no right to interrupt me!"

Tom Merry looked at him long and hard.

It was a plausible explanation. There were many religions in the strange land of India that he had never heard of, he knew that. Whether star-worship was one of them he did not know; but it was probable enough.

There came a chuckle from Monty Lowther's bed.

"You're offside, Tommy! Let his giddy religion alone and turn in."

"I don't believe him," said Tom Merry hesitatingly. "But—"

"It is true!" said Kalouth Das.

"I believe you slammed the window to signal to your confederate outside not to come, as someone was awake!"

"Ah! You are dreaming! Why should I make signals to anyone from the window?"

That was a question Tom Merry could not answer. Truly his suspicions seemed wild enough, when he was called upon to explain them.

"I cannot believe you," he said.

Kalouth Das shrugged his shoulders. He had recovered all his coolness now.

"You may please yourself," he said.

"You can report this to the Housemaster to-morrow, if you like, and I will explain to him. To you I will explain nothing further."

He walked to his bed and turned in. Tom Merry stood hesitating.

"Better go to bed, Tommy," said Manners. "It must be as the Indian

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said. I can't imagine that he came here to let burglars into the school."

"I don't trust him," said Tom Merry.

He secured the catch of the window, and then returned slowly to his bed. But he did not sleep again that night; and when the morning came, he was still very wakeful, and very pale and fatigued. When the morning sun streamed into the windows of the dormitory, Tom Merry glanced at the bed of Kalouth Das. The Indian junior was sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER 8.

Dark Suspicions!

TOM MERRY rose as the rising bell clanged out on the morning air. He was looking, and feeling, very much out of sorts, a natural consequence of losing his night's rest. Kalouth Das rose with his face as calm and inscrutable as ever.

Tom Merry had thought the matter over during those sleepless hours, and he had made up his mind. The Shell fellows all wanted to hear of the happenings of the previous night, and Tom Merry told them, and the Indian listened with an expressionless face.

"It may be as Kalouth Das says," Tom Merry concluded. "I don't want to be hard on him, but I can't believe what he said, and that's flat. We all know that he lied about the triangle when he said he had never seen it before."

"And he's lying now!" said Gore.

"We can't be sure of that, and we can't find him guilty without proof; but he has offered to explain to the Housemaster, and I'm willing to leave it to Mr. Railton to decide the matter. Kalouth Das will have to come with me, and let Mr. Railton hear the whole story after breakfast. Are you willing to do that, Kalouth Das?"

"Quite willing!" said the Indian coldly.

"Very well, that settles it!"

The Shell went down to breakfast, and after the meal, Merry signed to Kalouth Das as they left the dining-room, and they followed Mr. Railton to his study. The master of the School House glanced at the two juniors as they stood in his doorway.

Mr. Linton had come into his study to speak to him, and he, too, looked curiously at Tom Merry and the Indian.

"What is it?" the Housemaster asked. Tom Merry came to the point at once.

"I want to tell you something, sir, that I think you ought to know, and then you can hear what Kalouth Das has to say," he replied. "I think it is important, and I want you to decide whether anything ought to be done."

Mr. Railton looked surprised.

"Very well," he said, "go on!"

Tom Merry laid upon the Housemaster's table the card he had received in the letter from India.

"Will you look at that, sir?"

Mr. Railton's brow grew a little stern.

"Is this a joke, Merry?"

"It is not a joke, sir. I can't help thinking now that it must be something serious, though I didn't think so at first. Here is the envelope I received that card in. It came to me the day before yesterday, from India."

Mr. Railton looked at the envelope, and passed it to Mr. Linton, who examined it carefully, putting on his glasses to do so.

"Was there nothing else in the letter, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Nothing else, sir."

"You do not know who sent it?"

"No, sir."

"It is very strange."

"The postmark shows that it was posted first in Bundelcote, sir, where my uncle is stationed. But, of course, my uncle could not be the person who sent it. I showed it to Kalouth Das last night, and he said he had never seen anything of the kind before. But last night, by accident, we discovered that he had a similar mark tattooed upon his arm."

"That is very singular! Show me the mark, Kalouth Das."

Kalouth Das' dark eyes burnt for a moment, but he obediently pulled up his sleeve, and revealed the curious sign.

"How did that come there, Kalouth Das?"

"It was done in play, sir, when I was a child, and I had forgotten it," said the Indian.

"Is that all you have to tell me, Merry?"

"No, sir."

And Tom Merry related the happenings of the previous night. The two masters listened with the deepest attention.

"How do you explain this, Kalouth Das?" asked Mr. Railton sternly.

The Indian's explanation was ready.

"It is in connection with my religion, sir," he said respectfully and quietly.

"I belong to the sect of star-worshippers. It is part of my religion to perform certain rites at midnight, when the stars are shining. I am sorry that Merry was alarmed, but I imagined that everybody in the dormitory was asleep."

"I don't believe a word of his explanation," said Tom Merry. "It's all rot. Kalouth Das was signalling into the quad with an electric torch."

"Patience, Merry," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I am not surprised that you were uneasy and alarmed. But Kalouth Das came to this school with the best possible recommendations from two gentlemen in Bombay—one a clergyman, and the other an Army officer. I cannot believe that there was harm in what he was doing. The incident of this peculiar card is certainly astonishing, but I cannot see that it proves anything against Kalouth Das. But certainly, if this boy's religion requires the performance of such strange rites, he cannot continue to share the dormitory with the rest of the Form. I will speak to the Head about the matter, and it shall be arranged that Kalouth Das is to have a room to himself, and he will not sleep in the dormitory again. I suppose that will satisfy you, Merry?"

Tom Merry drew a breath of relief.

"Yes, sir!" he replied at once.

"Very well." Mr. Railton took the card in his hand again. "Will you allow me to keep this, Merry? I am curious about it."

"Certainly, sir."

The two juniors quitted the study. They did not speak in the passage, but went different ways.

Tom Merry disliked and distrusted the dark junior, and he did not attempt to conceal it.

After the door had closed behind the juniors, Mr. Railton looked at the master of the Shell. Mr. Linton's face was very grave.

"This is very peculiar," said the School House master, after a pause.

"Very peculiar indeed," said Mr. Linton. "I cannot imagine why the card was sent to Merry, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless it is a threat or a warning of danger. I have read deeply in Indian history and Indian customs," said Mr. Linton gravely. "India is a hotbed of secret societies, and their ways are

strange to us. The Hindu is a natural dramatist. If he is going to deal a blow, he must make a parade of his intentions. If this symbol had been received by a white man stationed in India, he would know that it was a threat, perhaps to be followed by action. But here in England—"

"Tom Merry has an uncle in India, who may have made himself unpopular among the natives," said Mr. Railton musingly.

Mr. Linton nodded.
"Yes; and the vendetta may embrace all his family," he said. "Such things are probable in India. It seems too much to connect this boy, Kalouth Das, with a scheme of vengeance, however—yet the mark upon his arm points to a strange conclusion. Is it possible that there is anything amiss with the recommendations with which the boy was sent here? Hindus are past-masters of the art of forgery. To forge such papers would be merely child's play to thousands of native scribes in Bombay."

Mr. Railton looked serious.
"I shall certainly consult the Head about the matter," he said, "and it might be advisable to cable to the two gentlemen in Bombay who are concerned. But it is very difficult to believe that there is harm in a mere lad like this. However, I shall see that he has a separate room, at all events, and I shall keep an eye upon him."
"I shall do the same," said the master of the Shell.

And the matter dropped.

CHAPTER 9.

Bernard Glyn Gets Busy!

THE strange happenings of the night in the Shell dormitory excited much interest among the juniors of St. Jim's.

After morning lessons the juniors talked the matter over, and the whole school knew about it. Figgins & Co. came over from the New House for all particulars; and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence cornered Tom Merry in the quadrangle, and made him tell the story all over again.

Levison was inclined to be triumphant. He had told Tom Merry in advance that the Indian junior was not to be trusted, and that he had come to St. Jim's as Tom Merry's enemy.

Tom Merry more than half believed it now, and a great many fellows in the Shell agreed with him.

"I wouldn't sleep in the same dorm with that black bouncer for anything!" said Levison emphatically. "I should be afraid of not waking up again!"

"He is going to have a separate room in future," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Railton is arranging that."

"Good for you!" said Levison. "And I suggest locking the dormitory door of a night, too."

"Good idea!"

"And it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to get Bernard Glyn to fix up that giddy burglar alarm of his in the Shell dorm," said Levison shrewdly.

Tom Merry's face brightened.

"Thanks for the suggestion," he said. "We'll do it."

"And you'll admit that I'm right sometimes, now?" grinned Levison.

"Well, you're generally wrong," said Tom Merry. "But in this case I admit it seems as if you were right all along!"

"Well, I'm glad you admit that, anyway."

Tom Merry sought out Bernard Glyn. Glyn of the Shell was an amateur inventor, and some of his inventions were

fearful and wonderful. The juniors still chuckled sometimes over the recollection of the mechanical figure Glyn had made in the exact likeness of Skimpole of the Shell.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's, as it was a Wednesday, and Tom Merry found the schoolboy inventor busy in his study. The study was shared by Clifton Dane and Kangaroo, but they were not there now. When Glyn was making his experiments he was not a comfortable neighbour, and just now the other fellows were gone down to the footer ground.

Glyn was standing at his table, with inky fingers and a smudge of ink on his nose. He looked round rather irritably as Tom Merry came in.

"Don't speak!" he said.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Why not?"

"I shall be finished in a minute. If this goes all right I've got it."

"Got what?"

"The invisible ink. Wait till this is finished."

Tom Merry waited patiently. Glyn was finished at last, and he turned from the table with a sigh of satisfaction and fatigue, and inkier than ever.

"I think it will be all right," he remarked. "Now, what is it?"

"I want to make use of one of your giddy inventions," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "I want a burglar alarm."

Bernard Glyn was interested at once. "Good!" he exclaimed. "I don't mind leaving the invisible ink over for the present, and making a burglar alarm. In fact, it's a rest to turn from one invention to another for a time. I suppose you're thinking of that queer beggar last night?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I feel almost certain that he was pointing out the window of my dorm to somebody in the quad, and opening it for the man to get in. He's going to sleep in a room by himself to-night, and I'm going to lock the door of the Shell dorm. But now that his confederate knows the dorm window he can get into the Shell dorm without help. I'm certain that it was he I saw at the window on Monday night."

"Before Kalouth Das came to St. Jim's?"

"Yes; the man was hanging about the school ready for Kalouth Das to arrive," said Tom Merry, with conviction. "He was probably spying round the school, and I don't suppose he knew that was my window. He may have looked into a dozen others. But now that Kalouth Das has signalled to him from the window he knows."

"And you think he may come to-night?"

"Quite likely. I think the rascals won't lose any time now that they've made us suspicious. I'm sure Mr. Railton will make some inquiry into Kalouth Das' antecedents, and may find out something about him. I was thinking of staying awake all night again, but that would knock me up."

Bernard Glyn whistled.

"I should say it would," he replied. "But it's all serene. I'll have the burglar alarm all ready, and get it into the dorm ready to fix up after we go up."

"And not a word about it. Kalouth Das is all ears."

"Not a syllable!" agreed Glyn.

And Tom Merry left the study, feeling more easy in his mind.

He stopped in his own room to pick up a footer, and then hurried out of the School House to join the footballers.

(Continued on next page.)



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TIMES HAVE CHANGED.

American Tourist (to Indian): "White man glad to see Red man. White man hopes big chief is well this morning."

Indian (to companion): "Hey, Jake, come and listen to this big bozo! He's crackers!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to I. Cormack, 66, Eastwood Mains Road, Giffnock, Glasgow.

HIS WATERLOO.

Boy: "Hi, porter, there's a man gone barmy in the compartment. He declares he is Napoleon!"

Porter: "Don't worry, son; the next stop is Waterloo!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss J. Keeley, 10, Briset Road, Eltham, London, S.E. 9.

SUSPENSE.

Old Lady (to parachutist): "I really don't know how you have the courage to make a descent with a parachute. The suspense must be terrible."

Parachutist: "No, madam; it's when the suspense isn't there that it's terrible!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to P. Thomason, 19, Raincliff Avenue, Longsight, Manchester.

CAUGHT

Lowther (dramatically): "It occurs twice in a moment, once in a minute, and not once in a century."

Gussy: "What, dear boy?"

Lowther: "The letter M!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Holmes, 9, Park Road, West Timperley.

THE VANISHING POINT.

Editor: "Your story would be all right if it were two thousand words shorter."

Author: "Why, it was only two thousand words long."

Editor: "Yes, that's just it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Days, The Bungalow, Gorse Farm, Broadway, Worcestershire.

EXPANSE.

An urchin was sniggering at a portly, red-faced man propping a post up.

"Boy," exclaimed the man suddenly, "are you having a joke at my expense?"

"No," replied the urchin: "I'm havin' a joke at yer expense!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Atkinson, 13, Furness Park Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire.

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There was a practice match on that afternoon among the School House boys—Fourth Form against Shell—and Tom Merry was wanted to captain the latter. He found Levison standing on the School House steps, with his hands in his pockets.

"Seen Glyn?" asked Levison.

Tom Merry paused.

"Yes," he said; "it's all right."

"Better say nothing about it, if you want to catch your bird."

"We're keeping it dark."

"Good!"

And Tom Merry went on down to the playing fields.

CHAPTER 20.

Trapped!

WHEN the Shell went to bed that night, Kalouth Das did not accompany them. The Hindu had been assigned a bed-room at some distance from the Shell dormitory, and he turned in alone.

If he had any mysterious religious rights to perform that night he was not likely to be interrupted in the performance of them. It was a relief to all the Shell fellows not to have him in the Shell dormitory. His dark, forbidding face had a chilling effect upon them, apart from the suspicion he had drawn upon himself by his peculiar conduct.

Kildare saw lights out in the Shell dormitory, and when he was gone, Tom Merry slipped out of bed and locked the dormitory door. So far as Kalouth Das was concerned, the dormitory could not be entered now; and as for the windows and the unknown man whom Kalouth Das was suspected of having signalled to, Bernard Glyn's invention would take care of that.

Glyn's contrivance was simple enough, and the Shell fellows had seen it work, and knew that it would answer the purpose. A powerful dry battery was concealed under a bed, and from the battery a wire ran to the windows, and another to an electric bell fastened to the head of Tom Merry's bed. To each of the windows a short wire was attached to the lower sash. If the lower sash was raised, the wire was pulled, and that made the necessary connection, and the bell rang.

The terminals attached to the bell required only a slight pressure to bring them together. If a window was opened the electric buzz would begin at once, and would continue until the sash was closed down again.

Tom Merry was especially sleepy that night, having had no sleep the night before; indeed, he had nodded off once or twice during the day.

But he would probably not have slept but for the contrivance which made it safe for him to do so.

Many of the Shell fellows had brought cricket stumps and bats to the dormitory, to be ready in case of trouble. Tom Merry had his bat under the mattress of his bed, and if the enemy came and Tom Merry was awakened, the unknown was likely to receive a warm reception.

The juniors settled down to slumber and the hours of the night wore away. The last door had closed below; the last light had ceased to gleam from windows of the School House.

One!

The deep boom of the hour from the clock tower sounded dully through the night.

Slumber reigned unbroken in the Shell dormitory of the School House.

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Then, if anybody had been awake and listening in the School House, a sound might have been heard.

It was a faint sound, but steady and long continued. Tom Merry did not hear it—the hero of the Shell was deep in slumber. He was dreaming—a strange and broken dream, in which were mingled strange symbols of red triangles and circles, and dark, threatening faces, and dusky hands that menaced him from lowering shadows. And suddenly, in the midst of his heavy, troubled sleep, he started into broad wakefulness.

Buzz!

It was the bell.

With steady, raucous persistence the electric bell was buzzing at the head of his bed, and a shiver ran through him as he sat up in the darkness, for he knew that the dormitory window must be open—that it must have been opened by a hand from without.

His eyes swept towards the window.

A cold breath came from the open air; the sash was raised, and a dark figure in a turban appeared in the opening.

There was no doubt now.

In the pale glimmer of the stars Tom Merry's eyes made out a dark face—as dark as Kalouth Das'—and two eyes that gleamed like precious stones.

"Wake up!"

Tom Merry shouted the words.

The Hindu—for such he evidently was—had been prepared to leap into the dormitory through the open window, but the sudden buzz of the electric bell breaking upon the stillness had arrested him.

He had remained struck motionless, as it were, in vague alarm.

Buzz!

The bell was still buzzing away, and every fellow in the dormitory was awakened.

Crooke, and perhaps one or two others, crouched under the bedclothes in alarm.

But almost all the dormitory leaped up at the sound, and there was a roar of voices.

"There he is!"

"He's come!"

"It's a nigger!"

The head disappeared from the window.

Twice before the unknown had come and gone, and now for the third time he had been baffled.

Tom Merry dashed towards the window, his cricket bat in his hand. But the man was gone.

The ivy was rustling and shaking under his hurried descent. In the starlight Tom Merry could see the man, a dozen feet below, scrambling downwards.

From deep down in the quadrangle came a sudden, furious barking.

Tom Merry shouted from the window: "Fangs—Fangs! Seize him!"

Taggles' mastiff was loose in the quadrangle. Lowther had turned on the electric light in the dormitory, and the flood of it beamed out into the darkness. That, and the noise, had alarmed the mastiff, and the great dog was now bounding towards the spot, barking loudly and furiously.

"Seize him, Fangs!"

Gr-r-r!

The descent of the housebreaker ceased.

The mastiff was below.

The dog had sighted his quarry now, and was running up and down below the dormitory windows, barking furiously, and waiting for the burglar to descend.

The man's black eyes looked down, and he saw the great dog with his teeth

showing, his eyes blazing, and he ceased to descend.

To reach the ground was to throw himself into the grip of the mastiff, and the huge animal was quite capable of holding a man, even a powerful one. And the man who was clinging to the ivy was neither big nor powerful. He was a slightly built Hindu, lithe, quick, nimble, but by no means powerful.

"We've got him!" yelled Tom Merry. "The dog's guarding him; he can't get away! Wake the House!"

The House was already awake.

The mastiff's furious barking rang through every recess of the old school, and over in the New House doors were opening, and lights were flashing.

The big door of the School House opened, and light blazed out upon the quadrangle. Mr. Railton, half-dressed, rushed out, followed by Kildare.

"Fangs! Good dog! What is it?"

The dog barked louder than ever.

Mr. Railton and Kildare came running towards the dormitory window. The moon sailed out from behind a cloud, and shone upon the scene. Tom Merry leaned out of the window.

"Mr. Railton! Kildare!"

The Housemaster and the Sixth Former looked up.

"He's here!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Good heavens!"

The master and the prefect caught sight of the dark figure clinging to the ivy at the same moment.

"He is caught!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

"It's a Hindu, sir!" muttered Kildare. "I see that it is. You scoundrel! Come down and surrender yourself!"

It seemed that the rascal had no alternative. Fellows were crowding out into the quad now, and gathering upon the scene, some carrying sticks or cricket stumps.

There was a roar of excited voices.

"Come down!"

"We've got him!"

The dark, despairing face was turned upon the crowd. The man did not descend. Descent meant instant capture. Villain he undoubtedly was, but he had presence of mind. He turned again, and began to climb up the ivy once more.

"My hat! He's coming up!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Go in, and close that window, Merry!" shouted Mr. Railton. "Go in; I command you!"

Tom Merry reluctantly obeyed. He had his bat ready, and would have been glad of a chance at the midnight intruder. But he did as he was told. He slammed the window shut, and pushed the catch to, and the Shell fellows stood inside, with their bats and stumps ready. If the Hindu had attempted to escape the crowd below by forcing an entry into the Shell dormitory they were ready for him.

A dark face was pressed to the window-pane, and two fierce black eyes gleamed into the room.

"Come in, if you like!" yelled Monty Lowther, brandishing a stump.

But the wretch saw that it was hopeless. He dared not enter, and he dared not descend. He remained for some moments, and then climbed higher, and disappeared.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "He's climbing on the roof!"

It was the man's last desperate resource. Probably he had a hope of being able to escape across the roof, and descend in some unwatched spot, and yet escape. But there was little chance for him. All St. Jim's was buzzing like a hive of bees now, and both Houses had turned out to join in the hunt.

CHAPTER 11.

A Terrible Fate!

TOM MERRY hurried on his clothes, and dashed out of the School House. The Shell fellows crowded out with him. All the Sixth had turned out, with some weapon or other in their hands, to hunt down the burglar. That the man was a burglar was the general impression.

But Tom Merry knew that it was something more than that. It was not for the purpose of robbery that the Hindu had tried to enter the Shell dormitory.

Tom Merry could not repress a shudder as he thought of the only possible conclusion. Yet why should a man whom he did not know, and whom he had never seen before, have designs on his life? It was a mystery.

Fellows were crowding over from the New House, with electric torches and sticks in their hands. Redfern of the Fourth caught Tom Merry by the arm.

"What on earth's the row?" he asked breathlessly.

"Burglars!" gasped Jack Blake.

"Or something worse," said Tom Merry. "A Hindu tried to break in—and he's on the roof now—and we'll have him!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Figgins. "He can't get away!"

It certainly looked as if the ruffian could not get away. There were more than two hundred fellows looking for him, as well as the masters, and, as if to banish his last chance, the moon came brightly through, and shone with silver light over the rambling buildings of the School House.

Many eyes scanned the walls and the

with unflinching energy and presence of mind.

There were so many fellows joining in the search, that it was easy to surround both Houses and all the buildings connected. All the windows, too, were watched from inside, so that the man could not have entered at any one of them without the alarm being immediately given.

Every light in the school was turned on, and all the buildings were ablaze with illumination.

Even the fags had turned out to join in the fun, as they had deemed it, and the wildest excitement reigned.

The man was cornered, and it was only a question of time before he was captured.

Some of the more excited fellows were for clambering on the roofs and seeking the ruffian there, but that Mr. Railton sternly forbade. He would not allow a life to be risked in the hunt for the rascal.

In the midst of the din the window of Kalouth Das' room opened, and the face of the Indian looked out. A dozen pairs of eyes spotted him at the window immediately, and there was a shout from Tom Merry's friends in the Shell.

"We're after your friend, Kalouth Das!"

"We'll have him in a minute, you black bouncer!"

Kalouth Das looked down at them, and his face was pallid.

Mr. Railton interposed.

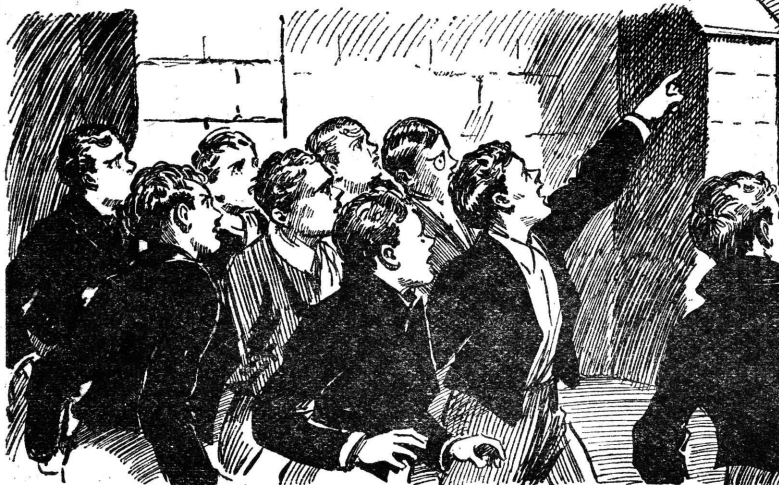
"Silence!" he exclaimed. "There is no reason to imagine any connection between Kalouth Das and the burglar, although the man is a Hindu. I forbid you to say a word like that again.

"He's on the New House!" yelled Figgins.

There was a rush to look.

In the rays of the moon a dark figure appeared upon the New House, clinging to the red-brick chimney-stack. Dangerous as the task was, the fugitive had escaped from one House to another by clambering over a succession of roofs at unequal altitudes. But he had not bettered his position by so doing. For the New House was as keenly watched as the School House, and every window was fastened, and watched from within as well as without.

The man's dark face could be dimly seen as he glared at the crowd below.



"There he is!" yelled Figgins. "He's on the New House roof!" A dark figure had suddenly appeared on the roof, holding to the red chimney-stack. The fugitive had escaped from one roof to another. But he was cornered—he could not descend without being captured!

sloping red roofs of the old buildings in quest of the desperate fugitive.

The School House at St. Jim's was a large and rambling building. It occupied almost a whole side of the great quadrangle, with the Head's house, which was part of it. At one end were other buildings, which connected it with the New House across the way.

A daring climber could have climbed from roof to roof, and reached the New House, but it would have been at the risk of his life. And if the Hindu did that it would avail him little. Mr. Railton had taken every measure to prevent his escape. The School House master had risen to the occasion at once

Silence, I say! Kalouth Das, go in and close your window."

The dark junior obeyed.

"I jolly well know he's a friend of the burglar, all the same," Levison muttered.

"Yaas, watah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for once in complete accord with Levison. "I fully agree with you, deah boy!"

"Where is the rotter?" asked Tom Merry, scanning the roofs as far as he could see them. "He's hiding among the chimney-stacks, I suppose."

There was a sudden roar;

"There he is!"

A yell went up to greet him, and it rang far into the night.

"We've spotted him, sir!" shouted Kildare.

Mr. Railton hurried up.

"Where is he?"

"There—by the chimney-stack!"

"We could get out by the fire escape in the roof, sir, and seize him!" exclaimed Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, eagerly.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"Life must not be risked, Monteith, and his capture is only a question of hours. I have already sent for the police."

"Fancy P.-c. Crump climbing over the roofs after that johnny!" murmured Jack Blake. And the juniors chuckled at the thought.

They could not imagine P.-c. Crump of Rylcombe doing anything of the sort. "He will have to come down sooner or later" said Langton.

"And then we'll have him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Langton's prediction was terribly fulfilled. The Hindu stood upon the roof, looking down upon the excited crowd, and something in the man's attitude caused Tom Merry to utter a sharp cry.

"He's going to jump!"

"Good heavens!"

"He will be killed!"

"Stand clear!"

"Oh, heavens!"

"He's falling!"

There was the scraping of a falling body sliding on the slates, and a whiz in the air as it rushed down, and then—

Thud!

It was a soft, sickening sound, but it reached every ear, and it sent a shudder to every fellow there. For a moment no one moved, no one spoke. Then Mr. Railton said quickly:

"Lights here!"

Kildare and Monteith advanced with lights. Mr. Railton bent over a dark, huddled form on the ground. Fellows gathered round, white, shuddering, horrified. The light gleamed upon a dark bronze face, from which all expression was gone.

"He is dead!" said Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 12.

Under Lock and Key!

DEAD!" The word was echoed by a hundred hushed voices. The excitement had died away now—every face was pale and strained.

The man had been a villain; it could hardly be doubted now that his intent was murderous in entering the school; but he had paid for his intended crime.

"The poor wretch!" muttered Tom Merry, white to the lips. "I—I never looked for this!"

"He jumped down!" whispered Figgins. "That wasn't a fall! He knew he had to be taken, and he preferred—that!"

"I—I suppose so! He may have fallen, though."

"He jumped," said Levison. "That shows how much he had to fear from the police. Let me pass, you fellows. I want to see his arm."

"His arm! What for?"

"To see if there is a sign on it!" said Levison quietly.

"Oh, I understand!"

Levison's nerve seemed to be of iron. While the other fellows shrank shuddering from the terrible sight, Levison pressed forward, and bent beside the still form. Mr. Railton called out sharply:

"Levison, stand back!"

"Yes, sir; but look here!"

Levison, touching the silent form with a hand that did not tremble, pushed back the sleeve, and the light of Kildare's torch fell upon the dark, bronzed skin of the arm. Upon it a tattooed mark showed plainly in the light—the sign of the red triangle and the three circles in the angles.

Mr. Railton started violently.

"Good heavens!" he muttered.

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"It's the same mark that's on Kalouth Das' arm, sir!" said Levison.

"I know. Go back, Levison!"

"Yes, sir."

Levison rejoined the juniors. The strangeness of his discovery banished to some extent the horror that had seized upon the fellows. They were amazed. That the man's presence at St. Jim's had something to do with the mysterious symbol Tom Merry had received from India all were sure. And the same brand was upon the arm of Kalouth Das, the Indian junior in the Snell. What did that mean?

The juniors talked in hushed tones as they returned to their dormitory. Tom Merry touched Bernard Glyn's arm as he went into the School House, and the Liverpool lad looked at him in silence.

"Your burglar alarm has been useful, Glyn, old man!" said Tom Merry, in a strained voice. "I believe it has saved my life to-night!"

"I believe it has," said Bernard Glyn, with a shiver. "That man must have come from India to—to—"

He did not finish.

"It's something my uncle has got mixed up in India," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "And they have included me in it. That's the only explanation." "That's what it looks like."

The fellows returned to bed, though not to sleep. The body of the Hindu was carried into the toolshed, to remain there until the police should arrive. After that Mr. Railton and the Head proceeded to the room occupied by Kalouth Das.

The two masters entered, and found the room in darkness, and the Indian junior in bed. Mr. Railton turned on the light.

Dr. Holmes looked towards the bed. Kalouth Das was there, lying quite quiet, his face resting upon one arm on the pillow, and breathing quite regularly. He was asleep, or he was feigning sleep with great skill.

"He is asleep, Mr. Railton," said the Head in a low tone.

"Kalouth Das!" said the School House master, in his deep tones.

The Indian junior's eyes opened.

He gazed at the two masters with an expression of surprise.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Do you want me?"

"Were you asleep?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Even in all this excitement?" asked Mr. Railton, with a searching glance at the dark, impassive face of the Indian. "You ordered me from my window, sir," said Kalouth Das submissively, "so I returned to my bed, sir, and fell asleep."

"A Hindu tried to break into the school dormitory, Kalouth Das, by the window that Tom Merry suspected you of signalling from last night," said the Head.

"Indeed, sir."

"He has fallen from the roof of the New House and was killed."

The dark face did not move a muscle. "That is terrible, sir," said Kalouth Das. And his voice did not shake.

If the two masters had hoped to discover anything from the face of the Hindu they were disappointed. It was expressionless, and if the terrible news caused Kalouth Das any emotion at all he showed not the slightest sign of it.

"You know nothing about the matter, Kalouth Das?" asked the Head.

"I, sir?" exclaimed the Indian in astonishment. "What should I know about it, sir?"

"You should, of course, know nothing," said the Head quietly. "But

the suspicion is very strong that you do know something, Kalouth Das. You have upon your arm a strange mark, which was sent to Tom Merry in a letter from India inscribed upon a card, and the same mark has been found upon the arm of the dead man."

"Indeed, sir."

"Can you account for that, Kalouth Das?"

The Indian shook his head.

"No, sir. You surprise me very much. The mark upon my arm was a childish trick, as I have already explained to Mr. Railton, and I did not know that it was to be found anywhere else."

"It is not a sign, then, of any secret society in India?" asked Mr. Railton, bending a very keen and searching glance upon the Indian junior.

Kalouth Das answered with perfect composure:

"No; that I am aware of, sir, certainly."

"You know nothing of the man who tried to enter the Shell dormitory to-night?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"You were not signalling to him from the window last night?"

"No, sir. I have already explained my action, which Merry misunderstood, owing to his ignorance of Indian customs."

There was a short silence. The Indian had answered with perfect coolness, and it seemed incredible that he could have been concerned in what had happened and yet retain his impassive composure.

"Very well," said the Head at last.

"If you are innocent of all complicity in this affair, Kalouth Das, I am very sorry that suspicion has fallen upon you. There will be a searching inquiry, I need not tell you; the matter will pass into the hands of the police now."

"I have nothing to fear from the police, sir."

"I hope not," said the Head. "We will say no more about it now."

And the two masters quitted the room, the Head, as an afterthought, turning the key in the outside of the lock.

"What do you think, Mr. Railton?" asked Dr. Holmes.

The School House master shook his head.

"I do not know what to think, sir. But we must take all precautions until we get the answers to the cables to Bombay."

"Quite so."

In his room Kalouth Das heard the key turn in the lock. He extinguished the light, and went back to his bed; but he did not sleep. Through the long hours of darkness the Indian junior lay there with wide-open eyes that seemed to burn in the gloom.

CHAPTER 13.

A Hindu Vendetta!

ST. JIM'S hardly slept again that night.

In the morning the whole school was in a hushed buzz of excitement. The fearful happening of the night was the one topic.

The police had visited the school, and the dead Hindu had been taken away.

Inspector Skeat, of Wayland, had the matter in hand. He told the Head that nothing whatever leading to identification had been found upon the dead man. His pockets were perfectly empty, save for a handkerchief of red Indian silk, which the inspector brought into the

Head's study to show him. Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton were there, and the latter gentleman examined the silken scarf with careful attention.

"It is such a silken scarf as the Thugs in India use for strangling their victims," said Mr. Linton quietly. "They call it the Roomal. This was evidently not carried as a handkerchief by the Hindu. It is the noose of the strangler."

The Head shuddered. "Then the man's intention must have been—"

"It is terrible to think what his intentions must have been," said the master of the Shell, with a shiver.

"And you have learned nothing about him?" the Head asked, turning to the inspector.

Mr. Skeat shook his head.

"No, sir. His pockets were absolutely empty, excepting for this. It's pretty clear that he intended to have nothing in his pockets to identify him in case of a capture. Of course, every inquiry will be made. The mark on his arm may lead to a clue."

"I trust so, inspector."

Dr. Holmes had acquainted the inspector with the whole story, and before leaving St. Jim's, Mr. Skeat interviewed Tom Merry and Kalouth Das. Tom Merry told him everything he could, with perfect frankness. The Indian junior appeared to be equally frank, and if he had anything to conceal he concealed it marvellously well.

The dead man was taken to Wayland, where the inquest was to be held, and Mr. Railton and Tom Merry were warned that they would be required at the inquest, as was Kalouth Das. The Indian received the intimation with perfect composure.

Some of Tom Merry's friends obtained permission to accompany him to Wayland for the inquest, and they were present. The inquest revealed nothing that was not known already.

The Hindu's motive in visiting the school by night could only be guessed at. Kalouth Das, in reply to searching questions from the coroner, stated that he knew nothing whatever of the Hindu. And, indeed, it was hard for anyone to believe that a mere schoolboy could have a hand in so terrible an affair.

Inspector Skeat, more than a little pleased to have so striking a case in hand in his quiet country district, promised the Head of St. Jim's that every possible inquiry should be made, and warned him to keep an eye on Kalouth Das—which the Head had already resolved to do.

Lessons were over for the day at St. Jim's when the party returned from the inquest at Wayland.

A crowd of fellows greeted Tom Merry warmly. The hero of the Shell was very quiet and grave. The shadow of deadly peril was upon him, and he knew it. The midnight intruder had paid for his attempted crime with his life; but there might be others. And the thought of it was enough to make Tom Merry unusually grave. He had already written to his uncle, but it must be a long time before he could obtain a reply, and he was very anxious to hear from General Merry, for he was certain that the explanation of the mysterious happenings at St. Jim's was to be found at Bundelore, in far-off India.

Kalouth Das was locked in his room that night, a proceeding to which he did not raise the slightest objection. All the St. Jim's fellows avoided him, but it did not seem to ruffle the Indian's composure in any way. In fact, he seemed better pleased at being left entirely to himself.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! Why do the Chinese have long finger-nails? Because they don't cut them. Why does a stork stand on one leg? To get a "balanced" view. Why do frogs croak? Because they haven't learned to croon. An expert declares the 500-year-old oak in Rylcombe Wood is in perfect condition. It's "oke." Then there was the cracksman who twiddled the knobs at the safe for half an hour and then found he had got Radio Paris! "You'll never get anywhere by letting things slide," says Mr. Lathom. But what about the trombone player? We hear somebody broke a gramophone record over a crooner's head. A real song "hit"! As the Scotsman said: "Show me your largest toothbrush—there are fourteen in our family!" "When are you going to pay me for mending your shed?" asked the odd-job man. "All in goot time," responded Gluckenstein. "I haven't paid the man who built it yet!" A cousin of Lefevre's says he was stunned by Hollywood's magnificence. He saw "stars"! "Never take a bone from a dog," says Herries. Unless, of

In the Shell dormitory the door was locked, and Bernard Glyn's burglar alarm was put into its place. But the electric bell did not ring that night in the Shell dormitory. The night passed without incident of any sort.

In the morning Kalouth Das took his place in the Shell Form Room as usual, and there was a wide space left on either side of him as he sat in the Form. Mr. Linton treated him exactly as usual, but the Shell fellows kept as far from him as they could. He was under suspicion, and they could not help showing that they feared and distrusted the dark, silent, impassive Hindu.

Third lesson was proceeding when Toby's shock head was put into the Form-room. Mr. Linton looked round.

"If you please, sir, the Head wants Master Merry in his study, sir."

There was a movement of interest in the Form. Tom Merry rose in his place at a sign from Mr. Linton.

"Go to Dr. Holmes' study, Merry," said the Form-master.

"Yes, sir."

All eyes in the Shell Form Room followed Tom Merry as he went. The juniors felt that there was some new development. Kalouth Das alone kept his eyes upon his desk, as if he alone were uninterested in the matter.

Tom Merry made his way to the Head's study, wondering what he was wanted for. Inspector Skeat was in the study, and Dr. Holmes was seated at his desk, with a newspaper before him.

"Come in, Merry," he said gravely. "Close the door. Inspector Skeat has brought me this paper, and I think it only right that you should see it. As you see, it is a copy of the 'Bombay Gazette,' and two months old. Inspector Skeat considered it advisable to examine all the Indian papers that could be obtained from the district

course, the bone happens to be in your leg! The burglar ran like a hare. Ah, because he didn't want to be "jugged." Heard this? "I have a car that will climb any hill," said the garage proprietor. "I don't doubt it," agreed the motorist. "The one you sold me tried to climb a tree!" Referring to a relative of the matron's, Mr. Selby said: "Any boy who is passing her cottage might drop in and see how old Mrs. Murphy is." Curly Gibson returned to say: "Mrs. Murphy says it's none of your business how old she is." "If I divide a tomato into fifty-seven parts, and each of those parts into three parts, what shall I have?" asked Mr. Selby. "Tomato salad," responded Wally D'Arcy. "An affair of honour used to be settled in five minutes," says D'Arcy. Yes—and a couple of seconds. "Old Ratcliff's not such a big fathead as he used to be," said Pratt. No—he's getting thinner! A detective says every criminal he has arrested has worn the same expression. Ah, that "pinched" look! "How do you make Russian tea?" asks Digby. The answer's a lemon! "Tea" hee! Buck Finn says he has heard a singing ghost in America. One of those "haunting" refrains? "Can't you hear him saying he's had enough?" demanded Kildare of Wally D'Arcy, who was pummelling young Piggott on the ground. "Yes," replied Wally, "but he's such a cad that you can't believe a word he says!" Third Form flash: "I'd like to be an eagle and fly out of the window," sighed Gibson. "I'd sooner be a lion," said Wally D'Arcy, looking hungrily at Mr. Selby. See you next Wednesday!

where your uncle is stationed, and this discovery proves that he was right."

Tom Merry, in wonder, took the paper the Head handed to him and looked at a paragraph which had been heavily scored round by the inspector. His face grew paler as he read it. It was brief enough—merely an item of news—but it meant much to Tom Merry, and to those who were investigating the mystery of that strange night at St. Jim's.

"The execution of Chandra Dal took place at Bundelore yesterday. He was condemned to death for the murder of General Merry's native servant. The assassin's object was to take the life of the general, and the khitmutgar, who surprised him in the attempt, perished in saving his master. It will be remembered that General Merry had succeeded in breaking up, and almost extirpating a secret society of thieves and assassins, whose symbol was a red triangle with three circles in the angles—a symbol of peculiar significance in the sect to which the assassins belonged. The society had twelve members, who were discovered by means of information given by a native, and the fact that each member had the symbol of the society branded upon his arm rendered the work of law more easy. Ten members of the secret society have now been accounted for, and the remaining two, one of whom is a mere boy, the son of Chandra Dal, have disappeared, but the police hope to discover them yet. The secret society has existed for many years, and was the terror of the Bundelore district. It was a custom of those wretches to send the symbol of the society to their victims before the blow fell, and on receiving the sign of the red triangle the victim knew that his days were numbered. In some cases, it is understood, victims thus

terrorised were able to purchase safety by the payment of heavy ransoms, but in other cases where the society had cause to fear or hate the victims, they were thus warned of their intended doom, and left in all the torture of fear and doubt until the blow fell, perhaps weeks afterwards. Fortunately this association of criminals is now broken up for ever, though it is well known that many other such societies exist in India at the present day, under the very eyes of the authorities."

Tom Merry looked up from the paper. "I thought you should know it, Merry," said the Head. "It is clear that you were the intended object of that man's attack, and I feared that the matter might weigh upon your mind. Now you know that all is safe. It is quite clear that the man who perished by falling from the roof of the New House was the last member of the secret society. The sign upon his arm proves that clearly enough."

"But one more is mentioned, sir—a boy, the son of Chandra Dal."

Dr. Holmes nodded. "Yes, a boy. And there is a boy at this school whom we have suspected of connections with the dead Hindu, and who bears upon his arm the symbol of the fearful society."

"Kalouth Das," murmured Tom Merry. "Kalouth Das is the son of Chandra Dal, the man who tried to kill my uncle."

"No doubt about that in my mind," said Inspector Skeat confidently. "It looks to me pretty clear, Dr. Holmes. Of course, he would change his name in coming here, and the recommendations you had from Bombay are forged."

"I think you must be right, inspector."

"If it were not for the danger to Master Merry from the boy remaining here, I would suggest leaving him here till I have certain information from India," said the inspector; "but in the circumstances, I think it will be better for him to be detained."

"I think so, too," said the Head gravely. "The sooner he leaves the school the better. If it turns out to be a mistake, and that he is really what he represents himself to be, then he can return."

"Quite so, sir!"

"Merry can send him here when he returns to his Form-room," the Head suggested, "then you can take him away with you while the boys are still at lessons, and so avoid any excitement."

"Very good, sir!"

"Tell Kalouth Das to come to my study, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry returned to the Shell Form Room. The fellows all looked at him eagerly, and Kalouth Das raised his dark eyes, and they dwelt searchingly on Tom Merry's face for a moment. Then they dropped again.

"Dr. Holmes wishes Kalouth Das to go to his study, sir," said Tom Merry to the master of the Shell.

"Very well, Merry. You hear, Kalouth Das?" said Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir," said the Indian. He rose and quitted the Form-room without a change of his dark, impassive face. The door closed behind him, and the lessons went on in the Shell Form Room. Monty Lowther leaned towards Tom Merry, and whispered excitedly:

"What does the Head want the black bounder for, Tommy?"

"Inspector Skeat is there. Kalouth Das is going to be detained on suspicion."

"Good!" said Lowther.

In whispers the news ran through the

Form. Mr. Linton frowned and called his class sharply to order, and the juniors concentrated their attention as well as they could upon the ancient battles which Cæsar had waged against the Gauls and the Helvetians.

CHAPTER 14.

Kalouth Das Disappears!

TOBY, the School House page, tapped at the door of the Form-room five minutes later, and opened it, and the lesson was again interrupted. Mr. Linton looked round irritably. He did not like these constant interruptions.

"What is it?" he said sharply.

"If you please, sir, Dr. Holmes wants Master Kalouth Das in his study, sir. He told Master Merry to tell you, sir."

Mr. Linton stared.

"Master Kalouth Das has gone to Dr. Holmes' study five minutes ago or more," he replied. "Please return and tell Dr. Holmes so."

"Yessir!"

Toby retired.

The door had not been closed one minute when it was thrown open again, and the portly form of Inspector Skeat strode into the room. Mr. Linton looked at him in annoyance.

"What is it, Mr. Skeat?" he asked.

"Kalouth Das did not come to Dr. Holmes' study!" exclaimed the inspector. "I was waiting there for him."

"Then he is loitering by the way, I suppose, and I shall cane him for it!" said Mr. Linton, his eyes gleaming angrily.

Inspector Skeat grunted.

"I don't think you'll have a chance of caning that bright youth again, sir," he said.

"Indeed! Why not?"

"Because he's bolted, sir, that's why!" said the inspector. And he dashed out of the Form-room.

There was a buzz in the Form.

"Bolted!"

"My hat!"

"He guessed what he was wanted for," murmured Tom Merry. "He guessed that the inspector was there. Listened outside the Head's study, very likely, and heard his voice. He must have been expecting this."

"Bolted! By Jove!" said Manners. "But they're bound to catch him."

"Good riddance, I say!" said Gore. "Good riddance to bad rubbish! I'm jolly glad to have seen the last of the black bounder! Blessed if I liked having him in my study!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"The lesson will continue. Silence at once!"

But, in spite of Mr. Linton's frowns, the Shell gave but little attention to the remainder of the morning's lessons. They were too keenly interested in the flight of the Indian junior, and in wondering whether Inspector Skeat would succeed in running him to earth. The inspector, at all events, was losing no time. He realised that he had been

a little lax in giving the Indian his chance, and yet he was not wholly dissatisfied, for the flight of the Indian was a proof of his guilt.

That the dark junior had indeed "bolted" was soon clear. Inspector Skeat dashed down to the porter's lodge at once. Taggles was at his door.

"A dark boy—Kalouth Das—has he passed?" he gasped.

"Yes, he went out more'n ten minutes ago," replied Taggles. "He said he had an important message to take for the 'Ead."

The inspector snorted.

"Important message be blowed!" he said emphatically. "The young villain's bolted!"



On the very edge of the deep pit Tom Merry was crushed to throat, and savage eyes glared at him with venomous spite. "Understand, you dog! You ha"

"Bolted! My heye!"

"Which way did he go?"

"I dunno. I ain't in the 'abit of watching which way junior boys go," said Taggles, with considerable dignity.

The inspector snorted again, and rushed out into the road.

There was no sign to be seen of the Indian.

He had probably taken to the wood immediately after quitting the school, in order to gain cover, and although he could not yet be far away, there was no trace of him left to guide the inspector.

Mr. Skeat hurried on to Rylcombe, and within twenty minutes the telegraph was at work, flashing a description of the fugitive up and down the countryside.

Inspector Skeat returned to Wayland fully satisfied that within a few hours,

or by the next day at the latest, the Indian boy would be seized.

When the St. Jim's fellows were dismissed after morning lessons, the whole school heard the news.

Kalouth Das had bolted!

From the head of the Sixth to the youngest fag St. Jim's discussed the matter with undying interest and excitement.

Kalouth Das had been a confederate of the man who had sought to enter St. Jim's at night; the suspicion the boys had of him had been well founded.

Levison was triumphant; and, indeed, on this occasion there was some excuse for his satisfaction. He had been the

it," said Levison. "Skeat was an ass to let the chap slip through his fingers like that, and he won't find it so jolly easy to capture him, I can tell you that."

And Levison was right again on that point. Inspector Skeat did not find it easy; in fact, he did not find it possible. At first, it had seemed certain that the Indian junior would be caught in a few days at the most. His complexion marked him out for recognition, and he could hardly have obtained a change of clothes without the fact becoming known to the police sooner or later. Yet the time passed; and no news of his arrest was received

Saturday and Sunday passed, and then Monday; but still no news had been received of the Indian junior who had fled.

"He's left the neighbourhood, of course," said Jack Blake, with a sage nod. "He wouldn't stay near St. Jim's. I'll wager he made a bee-line for Southampton, where there are plenty of fellows his colour about the docks, and I expect he's on board a ship for India before this."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

Levison, who heard Blake's remark, shook his head decidedly.

"I don't think so," he said.

"Where do you think he is, then?" asked Tom Merry, who had come to have some regard for Levison's judgment—in this matter, at least.

"I believe he is sticking to his game, and if I were in your shoes I'd keep a jolly sharp look-out for him!" said Levison.

Tom Merry laughed carelessly.

"I don't think he could hurt me, even if he had the pluck to try," he said. "And we're still keeping the burglar alarm going in the Shell dorm. And I don't quite agree with you, Levison; I think he's gone."

Levison shook his head. And Levison's opinion had a startling confirmation when the juniors came out of the Form-room after school that day. A shout from Jack Blake drew

Tom Merry's attention to the letter-rack. Tom Merry turned quickly towards the Fourth Former.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

"Another letter from India?"

"No; it's a postcard. Look!"

Blake had taken the postcard from the rack.

"The address is in Kalouth Das' handwriting," he explained.

"My hat!"

"What's on it?" asked Blake. "Look—quick!"

A crowd of fellows gathered round excitedly. Tom Merry turned the postcard for them all to see what was on the back. There was no writing. In red ink was traced the symbol of a triangle, with a circle in each angle.

The juniors gazed at it, their voices dying away in silence. A kind of chill crept over them as they looked upon the fatal sign—a sign which told that

Kalouth Das had not fled, and that he was lurking near at hand to execute the vengeance which had been planned in far-off India.

CHAPTER 15.

Hunting the Hindu!

G R-R-R-R!
"Weally, Hewwies——"
"Steady, Towser! Gussy isn't the fellow! Hold on!"

Herries dragged on the chain, and Towser, who seemed to have taken a fancy for sampling D'Arcy's beautiful trousers with his teeth, reluctantly abandoned his design. The swell of St. Jim's jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Towser with great disapproval from a safe distance.

"Pway keep that feahful beast away from me, Hewwies. The wotten bwute has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Ready, you fellows?" asked Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three came out of the School House, each with a thick stick in his hand.

"Yaas, wathah! I was pointin' out to Hewwies——"

"Quite ready," said Blake. "You are intewwuptin' me again, Blake——"

"Yes, come on!"

"Weally, you ass——"

"We're all ready," said Herries. "Towser will nose the boulder out. I've shown him a boot belonging to Kalouth Das, and he will track him down like a giddy bloodhound."

"I don't think!" murmured Blake.

"Look here, Blake——" began Herries wrathfully.

"Well, we'll give him a chance," said Tom Merry, hastily pouring oil upon the troubled waters, as it were. "Towser won't do any harm, if he doesn't do any good."

And the juniors started. The chums of the School House had decided to spend their half-holiday in hunting for the Hindu junior. If the masters had known of their intention, they would certainly have forbidden them to do anything of the sort, and perhaps for that reason they forgot to mention their project to anybody. Kildare glanced at them as they quitted the school gates.

"If you kids are going out, keep all together," he said. "We never know whether that Hindu chap is hanging about or not till he's caught."

"Yaas, wathah! I'll look after them," said D'Arcy reassuringly.

And the juniors tramped on, glad that the captain of St. Jim's had not thought of questioning them. No one but Herries had much faith in the powers of Towser, but the big bulldog would be a useful ally if there should be any fighting, and no one raised any objection to his presence; though, as Jack Blake remarked, Towser might be equal to tracking down a herring or a mutton chop, greater things were not to be expected of him. Towser also had a gift for shaking rabbits, as he proved as soon as the juniors entered the wood.

Towser scented or sighted a rabbit within the first five minutes, and with a sudden jerk he freed himself from Herries and dashed away into the underwood.

"Towser!" roared Herries, dashing after the bulldog. "Towser! Stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's gone!"

"Towser! Towser, old boy!"

But Towser was gone, his loose chain

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the ground by his assailant. Two dusky hands were at his
"At last!" said Kalouth Das. "I've got you! Do you
but a few moments to live!"

first to "spot" the rascal, and his predictions had been borne out by events.

"What did I tell you?" Levison remarked at least fifty times that day.

"Yaas, so you did, deah boy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rejoined at last; "but don't tell us any more. Enough's as good as a giddy feast, you know."

"Quite so!" said Blake. "Besides, it isn't such a giddy success for you, Levison. You suspect everybody of everything, and so you are bound to spot a winner if you keep on."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Oh, rats!" said Levison, who did not like having his cleverness minimised in this way. "It was jolly lucky for Tom Merry I bowled him out, anyway."

"Pity you didn't foresee that he was going to bolt, too," remarked Monty Lowther. "Might have saved a lot of trouble."

"Well, anybody might have guessed

whisking and clinking behind him through the thickets.

Herries came back, panting and disgusted.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's on the track," he said. "Anyway, he'll turn up again."

"Like a bad penny!" grinned Blake. "Oh, rats!"

Minus Towser, the School House juniors searched through the wood. The postcard Tom Merry had received from the Indian made them assured that he was lurking somewhere near St. Jim's, and the wood was full of recesses where he might have hidden. But as they searched they realised that the hunt was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The old hut in the wood and the ruined castle on the slope of Wayland Hill were drawn blank, and as the afternoon wore on the juniors came out upon the wide expanse of the moor.

Among the abandoned quarries upon the moor Monty Lowther suggested that the Indian might have found a hiding-place, and so the search was extended in that direction.

"The police have searched the moor once already," Manners remarked.

"It would take weeks to search it thoroughly," said Digby. "There are dozens of those old quarries. You remember, you tumbled into one once, Tom Merry."

"Not much good our spending an afternoon on it, then," said Kangaroo.

"Well, we can do our best, anyway," remarked Blake. "So long as that Hindu brute is at liberty, Tom Merry isn't safe. It's worth any amount of trouble to lay him by the heels, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shan't cover much ground if we stick together," said Kangaroo, after a pause. "Look here, let's separate, and keep in sight of one another. We needn't lose sight of each other, you know, if we keep about a hundred yards apart. We're more likely to hit on some traces of the fellow that way, if there are any here."

"Good egg!"

It was evidently the only way to make the search with any prospect of success. The juniors were soon strung out in an irregular line, keeping sight of one another, and occasionally calling across the heathery moor. Sometimes, in the rough hollows of the ground, they vanished from each other's view for a few minutes, only to emerge again.

Suddenly there was the sound of a bark and a clinking chain in the distance.

"Hallo! That's Towser again," said Blake.

The bulldog could not be seen in the heather, but he was evidently not far away. Herries dashed off in pursuit of him.

In this place the moor was honey-combed with deep rifts and chasms, the remains of old quarries long since abandoned. Some of them were filled up with the rain and transformed into lakes and ponds, but some were empty and cavernous—great black gaps opening in the ground, unfenced and dangerous after dark. But the juniors of St. Jim's knew the ground well, and they were not likely to meet with any accident among the old quarries.

Tom Merry paused by the edge of one of the deep rifts in the earth, and turned from the line he had been following to pass along the edge till he came to the farther end. He descended a slope into a hollow of the moor, and was lost to sight by his comrades. He hardly noticed the circumstances, for he

expected to emerge from the hollow in a few minutes, when he would have caught sight of his chums again.

Little did he dream that from the thick gorse a pair of dark eyes were watching him with a savage gleam in their depths. Tom Merry had come upon his enemy, but he did not know it. He walked carelessly along, glancing to right and left from habit, but not really thinking that the heather and gorse concealed a foe. He heard a rustle, and paused, but even then it was only with the thought that Herries' bulldog was coming towards him. He turned his head, and as he did so he was seized from behind and hurled upon his face.

Then he realised the truth!

He twisted himself over, and came face upwards; but the weight of his foe was upon his chest, and he was crushed heavily into the ground, on the very edge of the deep pit. A foot more to one side, and he and his assailant would be over the verge. Two dusky hands were at his throat, and two savage eyes glared down at him with venomous spite.

"At last," said Kalouth Das, "I've got you!"

Tom Merry looked up at him.

In the dark, bronze face of the Indian he read no mercy; only hard and relentless revenge. There was bitter hate and triumph in the face of the Indian. The dark face showed, too, want and hunger; it was emaciated, and the Indian's clothes were torn and muddy. The dark junior had suffered since he had fled from St. Jim's. But only triumph and hate blazed in his eyes now. His dusky hands compressed Tom Merry's throat, and choked back the cry the junior would have uttered.

A chill of horror crept into Tom Merry's heart.

Round them the gorse and heather waved thickly, and hid them from sight. Tom Merry was invisible to the eye, and the Indian was crouching low over him, and was not to be seen by anyone looking into the hollow unless he came very close. And within a foot of them yawned the terrible pit, extending deep into the earth.

Tom Merry realised the savage purpose in the face of the Hindu, and his face went very white.

"You dog!" The Indian's voice was low and grating and harsh. "You dog! All have perished excepting myself, but a new Society of the Red Triangle will arise in Bombay to defy the power of the British raj! You dog! The Sahib Merry destroyed us, but he and his kin shall perish in their turn! The man who perished at the school was my uncle; the Chandra Dal, who was shot at Bundelpore, was my father! My name is not Kalouth Das; the papers I brought from Bombay were forged. Do you comprehend now? I was sent from India to complete our vengeance—my uncle and myself. My uncle failed, but I shall not. Do you understand, you dog? You have but a few moments to live!"

Harder grew the grip upon Tom Merry's throat.

The junior struggled desperately. The dark face bending over him, the glittering eyes, seemed to dance before him as his senses reeled. His consciousness was going; his struggles grew feeblier and feeblier. A red mist swam before his eyes. As his senses swam he heard a sound in the heather—the sound of a metallic clinking. The Indian heard it, too, and he turned his head for an instant, and involuntarily his grip relaxed for the moment.

Tom Merry made a wild effort, and a cry burst chokingly from his dry lips:

"Towser—Towser!"

The great bulldog came leaping from the heather. Kalouth Das gave a cry, and swung half-round. In a second the bulldog was upon him, with flaming eyes and gleaming teeth. The noble animal knew at once Tom Merry's peril, and he leaped at the Indian with open jaws.

Kalouth Das jerked away to escape him, forgetful of the terrible gulf that yawned at his side. He remembered as his foot stumbled on the crumbling edge—that he remembered it too late. For a single moment he hung there, over the edge, striving wildly, frantically, to recover his balance and throw himself back upon the firm earth. But it was in vain, and the struggle lasted only a moment.

Then he sank out of sight away from Tom Merry's horrified eyes, and a faint cry echoed up from the depths of the chasm.

Tom Merry did not hear the terrible thud that followed far below, for he had fainted.

The juniors, attracted by the barking of the bulldog, came hurrying to the spot. They found Tom Merry insensible, and the faithful Towser licking his face.

The crumbled edge of the gulf, the footmarks to be seen there, and the cruel thumb-prints on Tom Merry's throat, warned them of what had happened.

Sick with horror, they gathered round Tom Merry and restored him. The hero of the Shell opened his eyes at last; his head was resting upon Monty Lowther's arm, and Manners was bathing his face with water he had brought in his cap. Tom Merry gave a low, shuddering breath.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!" said Blake, with a shiver. "You found him?"

Tom Merry nodded without speaking. "And he—"

Blake hesitated.

"Yes, I saw him go over. Towser saved my life. But for Towser I should have gone over instead of him!"

Herries fondled the huge head of his favourite.

"You saved Towser's life once!" he said in a whisper. "You remember? Good old Towser! And now he's saved yours! And Kalouth Das—"

"We shall never see him again!" The juniors shuddered, and were silent.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to St. Jim's, pale and subdued, to tell there what had happened. The body of the Indian was searched for, but it was not recovered. In some deep recess of the old quarry it rested, and it was never found.

It seemed as if a shadow rested upon the school for days after the terrible occurrence. But the menace on Tom Merry's life was gone, and in time the juniors ceased to think of the terrible events that had followed the coming of Kalouth Das to the old school. But it was likely to be a long time before Tom Merry forgot the dark, sinister face of Kalouth Das and the Menace of the Red Triangle.

Next Wednesday: "THE OUTCAST OF ST. JIM'S!"—a powerful long yarn of real human interest. Don't miss it.



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! On Saturday all roads around London will lead to that part of Old Father Thames which lies between Putney and Mortlake, for once again that great annual event, the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, is due to be staged. No purely sporting contest arouses such nation-wide interest as does this popular race. The banks of the Thames over the four and a quarter miles course will be thronged with thousands of people, and many thousands more who cannot be there will be listening-in to the running commentary of the thrilling contest over the wireless. The battle of the Blues has always been a big attraction since it started over a century ago—in 1829. There can be few finer sights than to see the eight selected oarsmen of each crew, trained to perfection, putting every ounce of energy and stamina into their task of getting their boat first past the finishing-post.

Oxford will no doubt make a supreme effort this year to put a stop to their run of defeats. Cambridge have won the last eleven races, and now lead by forty-five victories to Oxford's forty. The Light Blues also hold the record time for the course, which they put up last year. This race was so hotly contested that both crews broke the existing record of 18 minutes 29 seconds! Cambridge finished in 18 minutes 3 seconds and Oxford came in fifteen seconds later.

There has been an epidemic among the Dark Blues of oar-breaking during practice this year. It is proof enough that their crew are not lacking in strength. Is the breaking of oars a happy augury for Oxford that they will also break their succession of defeats? The Dark Blues and their supporters hope so. But on the other hand they hope that there will not be a recurrence of what happened in 1877, when the race ended in a dead heat—the only one ever recorded. It was perhaps the most thrilling finish in the history of the Boat Race. Oxford were leading at Barnes Bridge, and as they were on the inside bend of the river, it looked as if the race was all over bar cheering. But

suddenly fickle Fate took a hand. Their bow's oar broke and he became a "passenger." Seeing what had happened, the Cambridge cox urged his men to a final effort, and they drew level with Oxford right on the post!

We all wish for as thrilling a finish on Saturday, but not at the expense of one crew's bad luck. May good luck attend the efforts of both crews!

"THE OUTCAST OF ST. JIM'S!"

In a letter I received recently from a reader the writer pointed out that what he liked about the St. Jim's stories was that nearly every week a different character was featured, in addition to popular Tom Merry & Co. I think this is one of the reasons for Martin Clifford's tremendous popularity. He exploits to the best possible advantage every character he has created at St. Jim's. It has been said that variety is the spice of life. That also applies to stories. No one can deny that variety of character and story are not big features of GEM programmes.

Next week you will be reintroduced to a character who has been in the background for some time. He is Dick Brooke, the day boy of St. Jim's. Dick, who lives near the school, is a quiet, studious junior who has won his place in the Fourth Form by his own scholastic efforts. He is popular with everyone in the school, but in next Wednesday's great yarn you will read how Dick, in a few short hours, suddenly finds himself plunged into disgrace, despised by his Form-fellows, and expelled from the school. How it happens is a mystery to the day boy—but he doesn't know that he is yet another victim of the cunning scheming of Ernest Levison. Such is the cad of the Fourth's revenge when Dick falls foul of him. This powerful and intensely interesting story will appeal to every reader. Tell your pals to look out for it.

PEN PALS COUPON

6-4-35



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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Anthony Yeomans, 3, Dickens Square, Normanton, Derbyshire, wants correspondents; age 12-13; England, France, Australia; books, plays, photography.

H. Hall, 61, Besson Street, New Cross, London, S.E.14, wants a pen pal; age 12-13; stamps.

HE "COPPED" HIMSELF!

Louis de Martini was a conscientious traffic "cop," and in the Chinatown of San Francisco, where he had his "beat," he was kept very busy dealing with motorists who broke the law in parking their cars in the narrow streets. The method in parts of America for handling car-parking offences is for the policeman to fix a tag on the car, so that when the motorist returns he knows that he is due for a summons. The policeman also has a duplicate entry of each tag in his record book. One day Louis had quite a long list of law breakers, and when he returned to his own car he discovered that in the rush he had put a tag on it, too. He tore it off, but that wasn't the end of his mistake. For a few days later he received a summons to appear in court, and his hard day's work tagging cars set him back five shillings. He was fined along with the other offenders. Louis had forgotten to erase his own number from his record book.

THE DOUGHNUT CHAMP!

From time to time many amazing wagers are made, and perhaps the most amazing come from the other side of the Atlantic. The latest is a bet made between Alfred Howes, an undergraduate, and four friends, that he couldn't beat the record of eating twenty doughnuts in 29 minutes 26 seconds. The wager was for twelve doughnuts aside—not very tempting. But Howes set to work and easily beat the record. Only 18 minutes 50 seconds had elapsed when he swallowed the last mouthful of the twentieth doughnut! It is not stated whether he then got busy on the stakes!

"TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD!"

This is the title of next week's complete yarn of the Texas cow town school, and it's a story that you will enjoy immensely. When Bill Sampson, the headmaster of Packsaddle, loses his tobacco pouch and offers one dollar reward for its discovery, Steve Carson, the bully, hits on a wheeze for getting his own back on Bill and Dick Carr & Co. But the best-laid schemes sometimes go wrong—as Steve discovers to his cost, literally!

To round off this grand number there is another instalment, which is the most thrilling yet, of "The Secret World!"—our popular serial. And Monty Lowther and readers' prize jokes will supply all the best laughs of the week.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Before I conclude let me give you my weekly laugh.

Mother: "Now, Tommy, you mustn't eat too much cake. Remember the boy who went off pop through over-eating."

Tommy: "Ah! But there wasn't enough boy!"

THE EDITOR.

Miss Rosina Hill, 6, Oatlands Rise, Walthamstow, London E.17, wants girl correspondents; age 18-20; New York, New Zealand, India, Scotland; films, dancing, sports.

Arthur Moody, 2, Kingsfield Road, Basford, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, wants to hear from stamp collectors. Also wants to hear from a fisherman.

John Brophy, Ballon Hill, Ballon, Co. Carlow, Ireland, wants pen pals; age 19-21; England, Ireland, Italy, U.S.A.

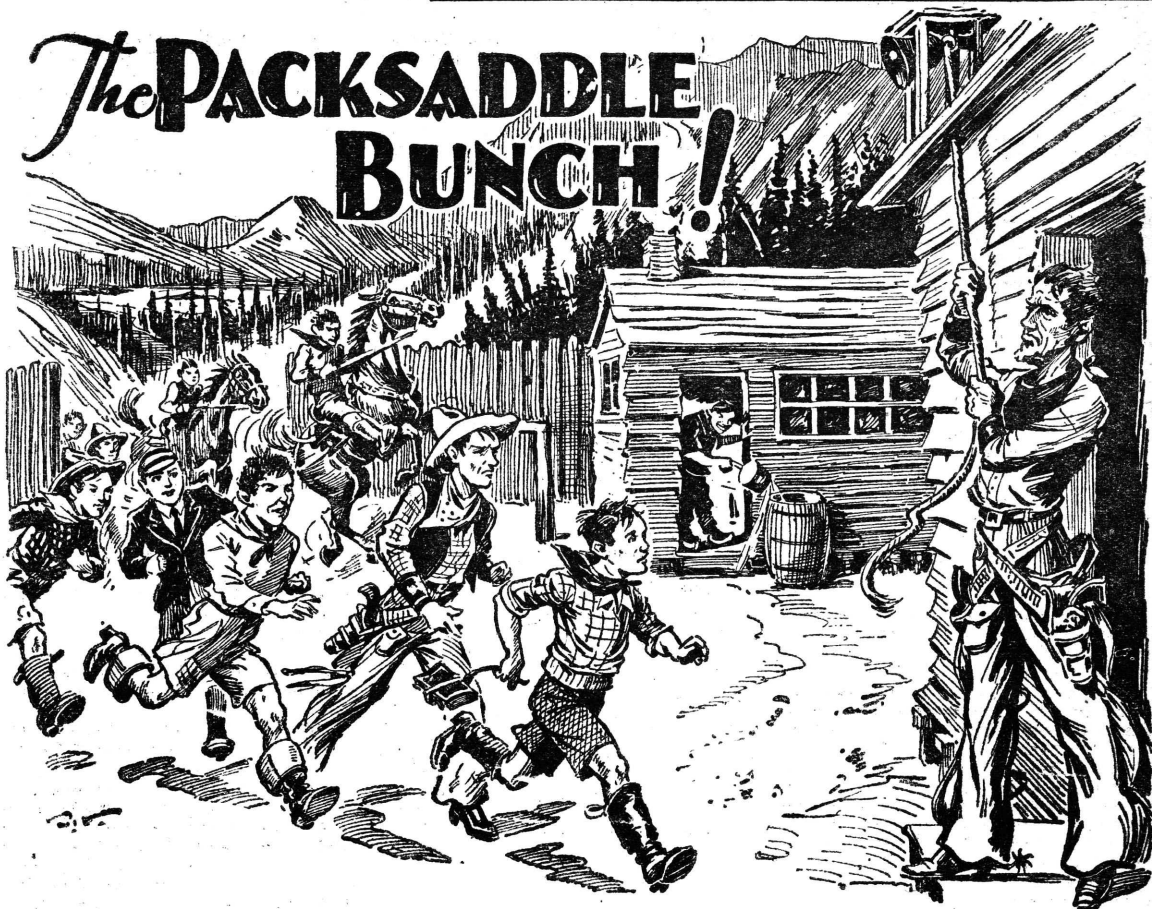
Fred Williamson, 502, Hemphaw Lane, Stockport, Ches., wants correspondents; age 14-16; Gems, films, stamps.

Laurence Bradbury, 69, Cemetery Road, Beeston Hill, Leeds 11, wants correspondents: age 12-14; art and architecture.

(Continued on page 22.)

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The PACKSADDLE BUNCH!



Breaking Herd!

"I GUESS we'll work the raffle!" whispered Slick Poindexter. "You said it!" murmured Mick Kavanagh.

Dick Carr stood listening.

It was near midnight, and Packsaddle School was sleeping. Faintly through the silence came the murmur of the waters of the Rio Frio, rolling under the high grassy bluffs. The moon, round and white, sailed high over the river and the rolling prairie.

The playground at the cow town school was almost as light as by day. Silvery beams crept in at the shuttered windows of the school bunkhouse.

Three of the Packsaddle bunch were out of bed and dressed—Dick, Slick, and Mick. Slick had opened the door, letting in a flood of moonlight.

There were fifteen or sixteen boarders at the cow town school. All were in their bunks, excepting the three.

But Dick Carr was not sure that all of them were asleep. His keen ear had caught a faint sound of stirring from Steve Carson's bunk.

Slick crept back from the door.

"O.K.!" he whispered. "Not a guy awake! I guess Bill's snoozing some over in the schoolhouse. We got to beat it soft. Bill would sure quirt us if he spotted us breaking herd this time of night!"

"Carson's awake!" muttered Dick.

"Aw! Doggone him!" muttered Poindexter, and he stepped towards the bunk occupied by the bully of Packsaddle.

He knitted his brows as he discerned

Big Steve, in the deep shadow, sitting up in his bunk. Steve grinned at him. "Say, what's this game?" he asked. "You guys beating it in the middle of the night? I guess Bill would like to know."

Big Steve did not subdue his voice. But the bunch were sleeping soundly, and nobody woke.

Slick set his lips.

"Pack it up, you goob!" he muttered. "You aiming to wake the bunch and give us away to Bill?"

"I guess I don't care a continental red cent!" answered Steve coolly. "Bill would sure get his mad up if he

glared at him. They wanted to get out quick and quiet. If Bill Sampson, sleeping over in the schoolhouse, spotted them, the game was up. If Small Brown, in his cabin next to the bunkhouse, woke, his alarmed squeal would soon bring Bill on the scene. And Carson was not to be trusted.

"Look here," whispered Dick Carr, "keep quiet, Carson! If you want to know, we're going after Painter Pete's horse on the prairie. You know that he held up the hack from Hard Tack this afternoon, and got away with a bag of a thousand dollars in his saddlebags. His horse got loose when Slick roped him in, and we're after it—"

"And the bag of dollars!" said Slick. "Now you're wise to it, Steve, and you don't want to spill anything."

Steve laughed scoffingly.

"Aw, beat it, if you like!" he jeered.

"I guess you won't have got your cayuses out of the corral afore Bill is cavorting around. It's you for Bill's quirt!"

"You keeping your bully-beef trap cinched?" growled Slick savagely.

"I guess I'll shout as loud as I like, and you can chew on that!" answered Steve coolly.

The three exchanged glances. It was a stroke of ill-luck that Big Steve, their enemy, should have awakened and spotted them. All three realised that as soon as they were out of the bunkhouse Steve was going to open his mouth wide.

He would not, perhaps, actually call up Bill Sampson or Small Brown. But he was going to wake the bunch, and the buzz of excitement and chin-wag in

THE THOUSAND-DOLLAR TRAIL!

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

was wise to it. You geeks breaking herd to go down to Packsaddle and paint the town red?"

"Aw can it!" snapped Slick. "We ain't guys of your heft, Steve! No poker game at the Red Dog is ours." "Sez you!" sneered Steve. "What's the game, then?"

The three comrades of Packsaddle

—STARRING THE CHUMS OF THE COW TOWN SCHOOL.

the bunkhouse at that unaccustomed hour would soon give the alarm.

But Slick was the man for the occasion. Whether Steve gave them away openly or in an underhand way, it came to the same thing. Steve was not going to give them away at all!

With a sudden swift movement, Slick Poindexter pounced on the grinning fellow sitting up in the bunk.

Before Steve Carson knew what was happening, he was squashed down in the bunk, with a blanket over his head.

"Pronto!" panted Slick.

Dick and Mick jumped to his aid at once. Steve, struggling fiercely, was pinned down by three pairs of hands.

Poindexter held the blanket close and hard over his face. His attempted shout was muffled into a faint gurgle. Dick Carr grasped his arms, and Mick Kavanagh secured his legs. Big Steve was helpless in their hands.

"I guess we're cinching this ornery galoot, and keeping him from spilling the beans!" breathed Slick. "We ain't getting Bill on our trail with his dog-goned quirt jest to please this big stiff!"

Steve wriggled and gurgled. But the sounds were faint under the muffling blanket, and did not awaken any of the sleeping bunch.

Mick grabbed Steve's belt from the hook beside the bunk, and buckled it round his legs. Dick Carr got his wrists together, and tied them fast with a twisted neck-scarf.

Then Slick groped for his mouth and clapped a hand over it, while the blanket was removed. Bound hand and foot, Steve wriggled wildly, striving to yell.

But the hard grasp over his mouth choked back any sound.

"Plug his yaup-trap!" breathed Mick.

Slick "plugged" it. As the grasping hand was removed, Steve opened his mouth for a yell. A crumpled handkerchief was driven into it at the same moment.

Steve gurgled.

The next moment he could not even gurgle. Slick jammed home the gag, and fastened it securely in place, with a string round the bully of Packsaddle's head.

Then Steve was released. He was powerless either to stir or to call. His eyes, glittering like a snake's, glared fury at the three. But Slick was not taking chances of the Packsaddle bully rolling out of his bunk when he was left. He sorted out Steve's lasso, and tied him to the bunk.

"I guess that's a cinch!" breathed Slick. "I'll say that that ornery stiff ain't throwing us down none. Beat it!"

They trod softly to the door and crept out.

Poindexter drew the door shut quietly after him. The bunch were left to sleep and Steve Carson to wriggle. If there was going to be an alarm before they got clear, it was not coming from Big Steve!

But there was no alarm. In the glimmering moonlight they led their horses from the school corral down to the gate, unfastened the gate, and led them out on the school trail. Slick grinned as he closed the gate.

"O.K.!" he remarked.

Mick Kavanagh chuckled.

"You said it!" he agreed. "But I'll say Bill will be hoppin' mad when he misses us at sun-up! He sure will cavort a few."

"Not if we come back with Rancher Dunwoody's bag of dollars!" said Dick Carr.

"I guess we ain't coming back without it, if we have to trail that grey bronco over Squaw Mountain as far as the Staked Plain!" said Poindexter determinedly. "Vamoose the ranch, you'uns!"

And they mounted and rode away in the moonlight. The thudding hoof-beats died away over the prairie, and Packsaddle School was left to silence and slumber once more.

Sign!

"SIGN!" said Slick Poindexter briefly.

The prairie was light, a sea of silvery waving grass under the soaring moon.

Two miles from the cow town and the school, the Packsaddle trio had stopped and dismounted. At that point, the stage trail from Hard Tack, down the Frio, turned from the open plain through a dip in the bluffs, to follow the bank of the river for some distance.

It was at that point, on the previous afternoon, that Dick, Slick, and Mick had trapped the man in the flour-sack coming up from the Frio after robbing the hack of the bag of dollars.

They had cinched Painter Pete, but his horse had fled into the open prairie

The pals of Packsaddle who had to trail a runaway bronco for the evidence of a road-agent's guilt!

when he was roped in, and no eye had fallen on the grey bronco since.

In the saddlebags of the lost cayuse was the buckskin bag containing a thousand dollars in greenbacks. But it was not merely on that account that the three schoolboys were on the trail.

Painter Pete had got rid of the flour-sack before they roped him in. He had denied that he was the road-agent who had held up the hack; and as the plunder had vanished with his lost horse, there was no proof against him. His comrades of Kicking Mule had rescued him from the town marshal at Packsaddle, and taken him back to the ranch—standing by a comrade of their outfit with mistaken but passionate loyalty. It left Dick, Slick, and Mick in the position of having made an accusation against a man, against whom there was no proof.

The proof was on Painter's bronco, now loose on the plains. And now that Painter Pete was a free man, it was certain that he would lose no time in getting after that bronco for the plunder. If that happened, the matter would be left in doubt—which was not good enough for the comrades of Packsaddle.

Slick Poindexter was as good a man on a trail as any puncher on Kicking Mule, or any Apache or Navajo in Texas. If the grey bronco had left enough sign for a Redskin to follow, Slick figured that he was going to pick it up.

Dick and Mick sat their horses, waiting while Poindexter searched for sign. He was not long in finding it. The trail of the grey bronco, coming up from the river, was clear to Slick, and in

two or three places where soft mud had retained a distinct impression, he carefully measured the hoofmarks. And there was a gleeful grin on his face as he announced "sign."

"I guess I know that critter's sign by heart," he remarked, as he climbed into the saddle again. "This way, you'uns." They rode westward from the river.

Slick's eyes were keenly on the ground, as the waving grass slid under the horses' feet. They were going at a trot. Slick led, the other two riding behind him.

Here and there Dick's eyes picked up sign of the lost horse—a broken tuft of bunch-grass where a hoof had trodden, a trampled cactus plant. But to him the signs were few, and he wondered how Slick kept on at a trot, reading the trail by moonlight.

But Poindexter never faltered and never halted. A mile, two miles, three miles slid under the trotting ponies. The trail was wildly irregular; the unguided bronco had constantly changed direction, as the spirit moved him. But there was always sign for Slick, and the three rode on. The leading rider suddenly raised his quirt, and pointed to a clump of pecans and post-oaks ahead in the moon glimmer.

"I guess we'll pick up more sign there!" he remarked. "That's water!"

They rode up to the clump of small timber.

It was a water-hole in the prairie—a spring oozing up and spreading in a muddy pool.

Round it the mud was trampled by the hoofs of steers of the Kicking Mule herds. But amid these countless footprints, Slick easily picked out the hoofmarks of the grey bronco. And he picked up other sign, too, that made him jump and stare round uneasily over the moonlit prairie.

"I'll buy it!" said Mick, staring at him.

"Say, you'uns, we ain't in the first crush!" said Poindexter with a whistle. "I guess a cowman's boots have been stepping here. Who'd you figure would be ahead of us arter that cayuse?"

"Painter Pete!" exclaimed Dick Carr.

"You're shouting!" agreed Slick.

The three examined the traces of a heavy cowman's boots. It was possible that they had been left by a puncher in charge of the herds. But the schoolboys did not think so. That track in the mud hinted that Painter was ahead of them on the trail of a thousand dollars.

"I guess," said Mick Kavanagh slowly, "that guy hit the trail as soon as they was snoozing in the bunkhouse to look for his cayuse."

"I suppose he would," said Dick Carr. "Barney Bailey and his men saved him from the marshal, but they'd string him up like a shot if they found out that it was he that robbed Mr. Dunwoody. He dare not let the horse be found by anybody but himself, with the dollars on it."

"I'll say he's honing to cinch them dollars, too!" grinned Slick. "With a thousand dollars in his rags, Painter won't stay punching cows on Kicking Mule—he will sure hit the horizon while he can hit it safe. They sure seen the last of him at Kicking Mule, if he ropes in that bronco."

"Let's get on!"

"Watch out," said Slick as he remounted his horse. "Painter packs a gun, and if he sees us on his trail, we shall sure go over Jordan so fast we shall want to know how we got there."

The three were looking serious as they rode on. The trail of the grey bronco led westward, towards the distant slopes of Squaw Mountain, and here and there Slick picked up the tracks of another horse with it. It looked as if Painter had guessed that his lost bronco would make for the water-hole, and had ridden there direct from the ranch to pick up the trail. Anyhow, it was certain that some rider was ahead of the schoolboys, and they could hardly doubt that it was Painter. They rode warily, watching for an enemy. They were unarmed, and they had not the slightest doubt that Painter Pete would burn powder if he sighted them.

They had not counted on that when they rode out of Packsaddle School on the thousand dollar trail. But it would not have stopped them—and it did not stop them now.

Mile after mile—the trail easier now, with the second horse's hoofprints added to those of the lost bronco. The moon was going, and a faint flush of sunrise came up in the east. The distant summit of Squaw Mountain caught the rays, and glimmered in the rising sun. Suddenly, from the silence of the plains came an echoing report.

Bang!

"I guess that's a six-gun!" said Slick. "But what—" exclaimed Dick Carr, startled.

"Sure, it's Painter!"

Dick rose in his stirrups, and stared across the plain, glimmering between the sinking moon and the sunrise. They were south of Squaw Mountain now, and illimitable prairie stretched before them to the west. It was barred here and there by belts of timber, blotting the view. But the echoing pistol-shot showed that some rider was not far away.

Bang! came the report again.

"It's sure Painter, burning powder," said Slick. "I guess we'll spot him when we hit them cottonwoods. Watch out for the pizen skunk, or Bill Sampson will sure miss three good men from his tally at Packsaddle."

With beating hearts, the three schoolboys rode on towards the belt of cottonwood trees, beyond which, they knew now, was the man who had worn the flour-sack, gun in hand!

Hunting the Horse!

PAINTER PETE loosed off another shot, and swore savagely. There was bitter rage in his bronzed, hard-featured, bearded face. Sitting his horse he fired again, and missed. The uncertain light and the swift movements of his target beat the man with the six-gun. He cursed as he jammed it back into the holster, and put spurs to his horse's flanks again.

Like a shadow in the uncertain light, the grey bronco flitted before him. His rope was ready as he rode.

But it was not easy to rope the bronco. The grey was a half-tamed, fierce buck-jumper, and Painter had not been a gentle master! The animal had tasted freedom, and was wise to the rope! He was leading the trail-thief an unexpected dance on the prairie.

And Painter knew that he had no time to cut to waste. He had slipped quietly out of the bunkhouse at Kicking Mule while the outfit were sleeping to take the trail of a thousand dollars. He was not likely to be missed till sun-up. But when Barney Bailey and the punchers missed him, what were they going to think? Barney had given orders for half a dozen of the outfit to ride in search of the lost bronco at sun-up, believing that when the grey was found,

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Painter would be cleared of suspicion. Painter, knowing only too well what would be found in the bronco's saddlebags, was not likely to wait for that!

He had picked up and followed the trail, and come on the grey bronco, sleeping in the grass, ten miles from the spot where he had been lost. But the sound of his horse had been enough for the wary buck-jumper, and Painter had no chance of getting within the cast of a forty-foot rope.

The grey fled before him, elusive as a shadow in the moonlight. In sheer desperation Painter loosed off his six-gun to bring the animal down. The grey was worth fifty dollars of any guy's dust, but it was worth shooting him down to cinch the thousand dollars packed in the saddlebags, and hit the horizon with it. But successive shots had failed, and the enraged cow-puncher took up the trail again, driving on his horse with whip and spur.

"Doggone him!" snarled Painter, as he galloped. "Aw, doggone the pesky critter! I guess I'll sure make a colander of him, once I get a bead on him, goldarn his pesky hide!"

The sun was coming up over the Frio. By this time he was missed at Kicking Mule. What was Barney Bailey going to think? He was going to guess that the Packsaddle schoolboys had been right—that Painter was the man in the flour-sack who had held up Andy Butt's hack on the river-trail. Little cared Painter, if he got the buckskin bag of greenbacks and hit the Mexican border with his prize safe. But he had not got it yet.

The horse he had taken from the Kicking Mule corral was a good animal, but not equal to the grey bronco. In a race he had no chance of running the grey down. All he could do was to keep on the track, watching for a chance to bring the fugitive down with his six-gun. His only comfort was that the chase led him farther and farther to the open west, away from the Kicking Mule Ranch. If Barney Bailey followed him he was well ahead. That three Packsaddle schoolboys were closer behind did not occur to Painter for a moment.

He had forgotten the Packsaddlers, except to give them an occasional curse as the cause of his present trouble.

Bang!

He fired again as he rode, but he might as well have fired at a will-of-the-wisp. The grey, galloping fast, was far ahead, evidently determined not to be recaptured if it could help it. But suddenly, to Painter's surprise and relief, the shadowy bronco slowed down and swerved.

For a moment or two, glad as he was to see it, he did not see the reason. Then he understood. The runaway bronco had run into a herd of cows sleeping on the prairie. The galloping hoofs, and the ringing shots from Painter's revolver, had startled them, and they heaved up from the grass, hairy backs billowing right and left, long horns glimmering.

The bronco swerved from the startled herd, and swung off on a new course, almost at right angles. Painter Pete, cutting across, saved distance. It was a stroke of sheer luck for him, for it brought him within a lasso-cast.

His coiled rope circled round and flew. Pete was a good hand with a rope. But the grey bronco was wary. He had been roped before, and perhaps he remembered more than one savage quivering he had received from Painter after giving trouble. The rope was touching him when he swerved and eluded it, and dashed on free, Painter sputtering oaths as he rode after him,

coiling in the rope. With flashing heels the grey bronco was heading for the belt of cottonwoods, winding back the way he had fled—and the enraged puncher was now chasing him back in the direction of Kicking Mule Ranch—the last direction he would have wished the runaway to take.

Bang! roared the six-gun.

There was a shrill squeal from the grey. The bullet had gone closer this time, clipping a strip of skin from its haunches. For a moment Pete hoped to see the bronco pitch over. But it was only a graze; though the pain of the cut had the effect of startling the grey into still wilder flight.

"Doggone him!" panted Painter, as he drove on his sweating horse with whip and spur.

The grey bronco dashed among the cottonwoods. Desperately, Painter Pete dashed after him, gripping his gun, rage and fury blazing from his eyes.

For Life or Death!

DICK CARR gave a yell.

"Look out!"

"Gum!" gasped Slick.

The three schoolboys, riding on to the belt of cottonwoods, were not a hundred yards from the nearest trees, where there was a wild thudding of hoofs. From the trees, with tossing head and streaming mane, burst a wildly-galloping horse—saddled and bridled, but with no rider on his back.

"The bronco!" yelled Mick.

It was the grey bronco, mad with excitement and terror, galloping like the wind—almost directly towards the Packsaddle three.

For a second they stared at it in amazement.

From the sound of firing beyond the timber, they had guessed that the man hunting the horse was trying to shoot it down. Evidently he had not succeeded, though a red streak on a grey flank showed that one bullet at least had gone very close. What had turned the runaway back the schoolboys could not guess; they were amazed to see it break suddenly from the cottonwoods, coming back almost on its own trail.

But amazed as they were they were quick on the uptake. Slick's lasso was swiftly in his hand.

The maddened runaway came swooping on, and then sighting the three riders, swerved to elude them. But as he swerved, Slick dashed at him, and the coiled rope circled.

This time the grey did not dodge the falling loop. The riata caught him as he swerved, and settled over the stretched neck.

"Cinched!" roared Poindexter.

The grey thundered on, striving to break away. But the end of the lasso was fast to Slick's saddle-bow, and there was no escape for the roped bronco.

The drag on the rope tightened the noose round his neck, half-throttling him. Squealing, the grey reared and cavorted, with lashing heels and flaming eyes.

But he was safe on the rope. Slick Poindexter gave a breathless chuckle.

"We got him! I guess Painter ain't handled him yet—the dust is still in them saddlebags, you'uns! We sure got back them thousand dollars."

"Look out!" roared Mick Kavanagh. A horseman, wildly spurring, burst from the cottonwoods.

That the trail-thief had not yet cinched and handled the grey was certain, for it was Painter Pete, still in pursuit. He came thundering from the trees, gun in hand, eyes ablaze—a man mad with rage, and the fear of



The maddened runaway, sighting Dick, Mick, and Slick, swerved to elude them. But as he swerved Slick dashed at him, and his coiled rope whizzed through the air. The loop settled over the bronco's neck, and the animal reared as the riata was drawn taut. "Cinched!" roared Poindexter. The thousand-dollar runaway was roped in!

losing his prey. He had jammed fresh cartridges into his six-gun as he rode through the trees, and he was still hoping to riddle the grey with bullets, and capture the buckskin bag of dollars from its dead body.

At the sight of the Packsaddle schoolboys, Painter Pete's jaw dropped in his astonishment.

"Them young geeks!" he gasped.

The next moment he was firing.

"Beat it!" yelled Poindexter. "Burn the wind for Packsaddle."

He spurred his pony.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the six-gun, as Dick, Slick, and Mick rode for their lives, the captured grey galloping behind Slick's pony.

The Packsaddle boys had ridden hard many a time on the prairie. But never had they ridden so hard as they rode now.

Thud, thud, thud; rang the galloping hoofs. With whip and spur they rode for their very lives. They were barely out of range of the roaring six-gun, and a moment's loss of time was sudden death. Painter Pete, mad with fury at seeing his prize snatched away under his very eyes, was shooting to kill. He rode like a madman, firing as he rode. Dick Carr felt the wind of a bullet as it sped.

"Attaboy!" yelled Slick. "Burn the wind, you'uns, burn the wind!"

They were burning the wind! But the maddened ruffian behind them was burning the wind, too, and it was a race for life or death.

Dick Carr glanced back. His pinto was forging ahead of his friends, and he checked its speed, to keep pace. The grey, at the end of the forty-foot rope, galloped ahead, and led in the wild race. After it thundered the Packsaddle schoolboys, riding abreast, heads bent

low, the wind rushing past them like a whirlwind.

Either the grey or Dick's pinto could have beaten Painter Pete hands down. But he was as well-mounted as either Slick or Mick, and it was the slowest that set the pace for the party. Spurring his horse with savage cruelty, lashing it fiercely with his quirt, the trail thief tore on in pursuit, his eyes gleaming with fierce hope. The schoolboys had had the luck to rope in the runaway, but it looked like luck for Painter, also, for the grey bronco's speed was checked by the rope; his pace had to be that of Slick's pony. And Slick's pony was no faster than Painter's mount. He did not gain, but he did not lose, and he rode desperately, knowing that the slightest accident or delay would bring the schoolboys within range of his gun.

They knew it, too. A slip of a foot, the plunge of a hoof into a gopher hole, meant death. They fled over the rolling prairie, under the streaming rays of the rising sun. Bang! roared behind them again; and if the lead dropped short, it was only by yards.

Gallop, gallop! Dick Carr looked over his shoulder again. In the clear sunlight he could see the savage, scowling, bearded face, the glittering eyes under the stetson hat, the smoke from the six-gun.

"Attaboy!" panted Slick.

They rode on, wildly, fiercely. Bang! the gun roared again, and Mick gave a yell. The lead had grazed his hat. Was the pursuer gaining? If he was, was he still too far for effective shooting. But when the six-gun roared again the bullet came closer, clipping Dick's stirrup leather. The trail-thief's horse, savagely spurred, madly lashed, was lessening the distance in a wild burst of speed.

"Aw! Look, you'uns!" roared Poindexter suddenly.

Dick Carr could have shouted with joy. Ahead, bobbing over the waving grass, were stetson hats.

"Punchers!" gasped Mick.

"Kicking Mule guys, you bet!" said Slick, with a gasping chuckle. "Say, I guess they won't stand for Painter this time, like they did yesterday in Packsaddle. I'll say nunk!"

The three schoolboys headed for the bobbing stetsons. They counted six as they drew nearer. It was a bunch of Kicking Mule punchers riding towards them. As they came in nearer sight they recognised Barney Bailey, foreman of the Kicking Mule, riding at their head. The punchers had evidently sighted them and heard the shooting, for they came on at a gallop.

Bang! Once more Dick Carr looked back, and the wind of a bullet fanned his cheek as he did so.

But it was Painter Pete's last shot. He had spotted the stetsons, and he knew what to expect from the Kicking Mule outfit when the bag of dollars was found on the grey bronco. And Painter Pete, gritting his teeth with rage, wheeled his sweating, panting horse, and rode for the Mexican border.

Barney Has to Believe!

BARNEY BAILEY reined in his horse.

Three breathless schoolboys came to a halt. The grey at the end of Slick's rope struggled to escape, but the throttling noose held it fast. The Kicking Mule punchers surrounded the schoolboys, eyeing them curiously, and rather grimly.

"I guess you're fur enough from your school, you young ginks!" growled THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,416.

Barney. "Say, that looks like Painter's bronc you've got on your rope!"

"I guess it looks a whole heap like it, seeing that it's that very cayuse, Barney," grinned Slick. "And if you give the saddlebags the once over, I'll tell a man you'll raise the bag of dollars that was taken from Andy Butt's hack yesterday."

"Aw, forget it!" snapped Barney.

Dick Carr laughed.

"You stood by that trail-thief yesterday, Barney," he said. "You got him away from the marshal of Packsaddle. But—"

"Ain't you missed him off'n the ranch yet, Barney, you gink?" grinned Mick Kavanagh.

Barney grunted.

"I guess we missed him, and the saddled up to come arter him, looking for that pesky bronc," he growled. "I guess, Painter was in a powerful hurry to get arter that bronc, but that ain't no proof—"

The schoolboys chuckled. The Kicking Mule foreman was hard to convince that a Kicking Mule man had cinched the rancher's bag of dollars from the Hard Tack hack. But there was plenty of proof on hand to convince even Barney.

Slick pulled on the rope, and the squealing, cavorting grey was pulled in. Two or three of the punchers dismounted to hold him, and soothe him, while Barney Bailey, still with incredulity in his obstinate face, groped in the saddlebags.

He drew forth a buckskin bag.

The expression on Barney's bronzed face, as he revealed it, was so extraordinary that it made the schoolboys burst into a roar of laughter, and all the punchers grinned.

Slowly Barney unfastened the bag.

Within was a roll of dollar bills. In silence, and with his grim face growing grimmer, the foreman of Kicking Mule counted the bills. They totalled precisely a thousand dollars. Still silent, Barney shoved the bag into his own saddlebags.

"Got it now, Barney," grinned Slick. "You figure that that's Rancher Dunwoody's thousand bucks, or you reckon that Painter picked up that roll playing poker down to Hard Tack?"

"Aw, can it!" grunted Barney. "I guess it's a cinch. You git your rope off'n that bronc, young Poindexter—that's a Kicking Mule cayuse. I guess you want to beat it for school."

He turned to the punchers.

"We got it clear now. Painter was sure fooling us when we got him away from the marshal. We was played for suckers. I guess it was Painter, and no other guy, what held up Andy Butt's hack. And I'll tell all Texas that he's going up on a rope for it, if we get him! Ride, you geeks!"

A stetson hat had vanished to the south. It was Painter Pete's turn to ride for his life, and he was burning the wind for Mexico. With a clatter of hoofs, and a jingle of spurs and bridles, Barney Bailey and his men galloped off southward, taking the grey bronc with them. And Dick, Slick, and Mick were left sitting their horses, looking at one another.

Slick burst into a laugh.

"I guess Barney ain't best pleased to get wise to it that it was a Kicking Mule guy that robbed Old Man Dunwoody," he said. "I sure reckon he will make Painter pay for it if he gets him. I'll say that galoot, Painter, is riding for his neck!"

They followed the riders with their eyes till the bunch of stetson hats vanished in the waving grass. Then they hit the trail for Packsaddle.

Mad!

BILL SAMPSON, headmaster of Packsaddle, rose from his desk as three dusty fellows came into the school-room.

School was going on when Dick and Slick and Mick arrived. Bill had his skirt ready across his knees.

Bill was hopping mad!

The expression on Bill's face that morning was quite agreeable to Steve Carson. It boded trouble for the three truants who had ridden out at night, and failed to turn up when the bell rang for school. Grimmer and grimmer grew Bill's brow as the morning passed.

Steve Carson had been released when the bunch woke that morning. He had told Bill why the three had tied him up. So Bill knew why they had gone. But that did not abate his wrath. Not for a moment did he figure that they would ride down the runaway, and rope in the bag of dollars. When they came Bill was going to put them wise to what he thought of young ginks who broke herd without leave. And when the three came into the school-room they found Bill ready.

"You ornery, doggoned, piefaced young piecans!" roared Bill, in a voice that woke all the echoes of the cow town school. "What sort of a game do you call this? Say! You figure you can break out of this herd jest when you want, like you was ornery steers? You want to forget it, and you want to forget it quick! You hear me whisper?"

"It's all right—" began Dick Carr.

"I guess—" started Poindexter.

"We're sure telling you!" Mick got going.

But they got no further. They had expected Bill to be mad—hopping mad! But they had hoped to placate him by explaining that they had recaptured the bag of dollars belonging to Mr. Dunwoody at Kicking Mule. No doubt

that explanation would have placated Bill—if he had heard it. But he gave them no time to speak. Before they could get it out, Bill waded in with the quirt.

"Whack, whack, whack, whack!"

"Oh crumbs!" yelled Dick Carr, dodging frantically.

"Wake snakes!" roared Slick.

"Howly Mike!" shrieked Mick Kavanagh.

Three hapless schoolboys jumped and hopped and dodged. Grinning faces watched them from the class. Small Brown blinked approval through his horn-rimmed spectacles. Steve Carson chuckled gleefully. Wild howls rang from the three as they hopped and skipped and jumped.

Up and down the school-room of Packsaddle they went, twisting and dodging, jumping over benches, scrambling over desks—Bill behind them all the time, with the lashing quirt. Not till Bill was breathless did he quit handing it over.

"Now you squat down, and let Mister Brown teach you jobrafy!" roared Bill. "I guess that will see you through!"

"You piefaced gink!" yelled Slick. "You ornery old piecan, can't you give a guy a chance to speak? I'm telling you we got after that bronc of Painter's, and—"

"Can it!" hooted Bill.

"We roped in that cayuse, you doggoned bull-dozer!" roared Mick.

"And we got back the bag of dollars!" growled Dick Carr. "Wasn't that worth going on the trail for? We've not even had any breakfast."

Bill Sampson stared at them.

"You cinched that cayuse, and got back Old Man Dunwoody's dollars!" he ejaculated.

"Yep, you ornery old geek, and handed them to Barney Bailey!" hooted Slick. "We was on a thousand-dollar trail, you doggoned old hoodlum, and we got the goods!"

"Waal, carry me home to die!" exclaimed Bill. "I guess if I'd knowed that, I wouldn't have quirted you! Nope!"

"I guess that don't cut much ice now you've done it!" groaned Mick.

Bill grinned.

"You said it!" he agreed. "It don't. Vamoose the ranch, you young geeks, and ask Tin Tung to fix you up some eats. No school for you this morning."

Which the wriggling three were glad to do. Mister Brown taught geography without them that morning, while they took a well-earned rest after riding on the thousand-dollar trail. But they wriggled a good deal while they rested. Bill had a heavy hand with a quirt.

(Next week: "TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD!" Look out for this grand yarn of the Packsaddle pals.)

PEN PALS

(Continued from page 17.)

Norman Swainston, 29, Oakleigh Road, Whetstone, London, N.20, wants correspondents; age, 11-13; Australia, New Zealand; football and Test cricket.

Derek Boswell, 87, Abbey Road, Warley, Birmingham, wants correspondents; age, 10-15; sport, stamps, cigarette cards, weekly papers.

John K. Knowles, 5, Connaught Road, New Malden, Surrey, wants correspondents; age, 11-13; exchange newspapers and stamps; British Empire.

Lewis Making, Lower Quinton, nr. Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, wants a correspondent; age, 13-14.

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D. Keidan, 14, Loudon Grove, Princes Park, Liverpool, 8, wants a correspondent in France; age, 18-20.

Miss J. Neath, The Raggatt, Lutterworth Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, wants girl correspondents; age 14-15; India, China, Shanghai especially; Africa, Japan, and New Zealand; photography and art.

Hilton Anderson, 45, Pretoria Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors; interested in animals.

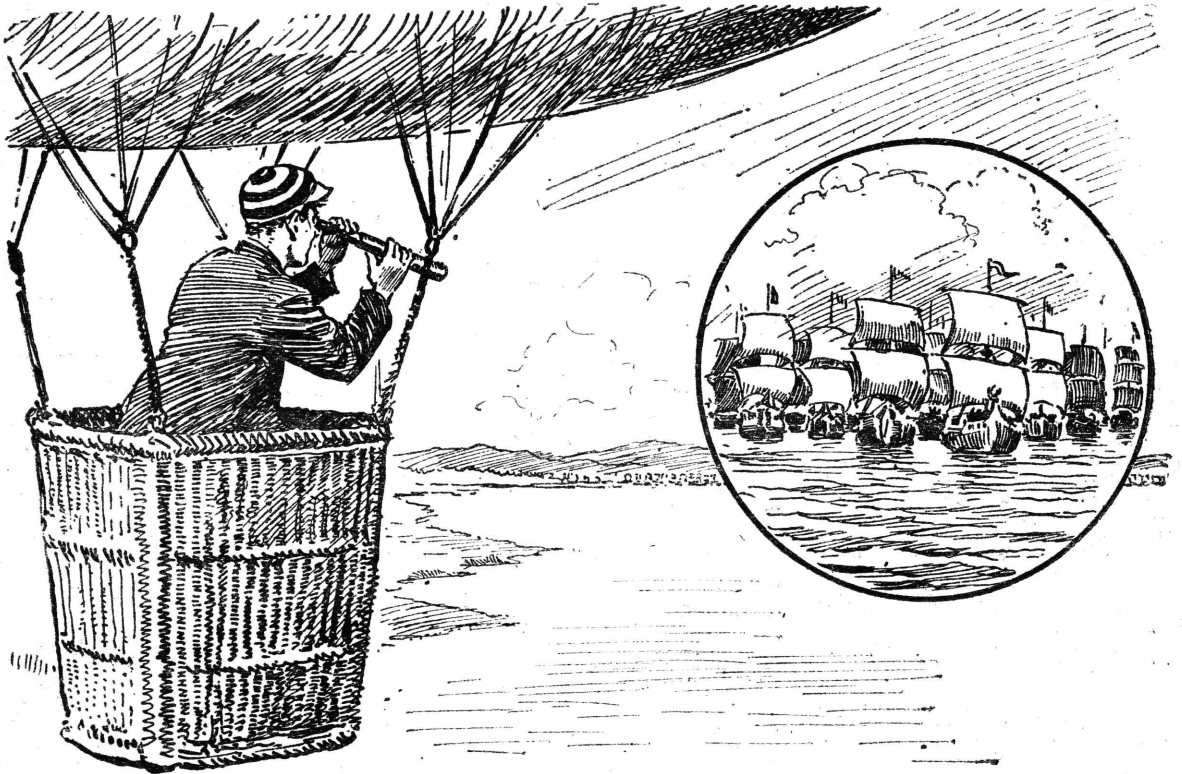
Richard Crew, 3, Bentley Road, Lupton, Wakefield, Yorks, wants a correspondent in Canada.

J. Watson, 11, Bolton Avenue, Hampton, S. 7, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents in Africa, Canada, and the Pacific Islands; stamps; age 15-16.

Clive Errington, 22, Byron Road, Black Forest, South Australia, wants correspondents in U.S.A., South Africa, Canada, and Nigeria; stamps; sports; age 16-18.

WAR BREAKS OUT IN—

The SECRET WORLD!



"Hallo!" exclaimed Willy with a start. The telescope suddenly brought into view a large fleet of ships putting out from the Gothland coast. The raiders were on the way to the attack!
"Crumbs!" murmured Willy. "It's here—The Day!"

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Willy, the Scout!

THE call to arms sounds all over Northestia, for war is imminent with Gothland, their enemy country! And chief among those who are rousing the Northestrians to their danger are Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's, who were stranded in the hidden medieval world when their airship crashed.

Under the direction of Nelson Lee, whom Princess Mercia, the girl ruler, has made commander-in-chief of the Northestrian army, active preparations are going on apace to repel the Gothland raiders when they attack.

PRINCESS MERCIA took an active interest in all these preparations.

She knew well enough that the transformation of her people was due to the enterprise and energy of her visitors. They were responsible for the awakening of her country. The menace of the Gothlanders was now known to be a very real danger. At last the Northestrians were alive to the truth.

The princess' active participation in the preparations was like a spur to everybody. The recruits were still pouring in, and by this time several regiments of volunteers had been formed. To give them any kind of real

training was out of the question. But they were, at least, taught a certain amount of discipline, and their love for their country would turn them into grim fighters when the moment came.

Kassker the Grim meant to rule over the entire oasis—but it seemed that he would not gain his end without a terrific struggle. His invasion of Northestia was not to be the walk-over that he fondly believed.

When the St. Frank's fellows returned from their recruiting campaign, tired but victorious, they were amazed to see the great changes round the capital. Their work for the time was over, and they had plenty of opportunities to go round inspecting the various activities. They were full of enthusiasm for the tanks, and Nipper was responsible for another idea.

He and a group of juniors were walking round the remains of the airship.

"Something ought to be done about this," said Nipper thoughtfully.

"About which?" asked Pitt.

"Well, look at those forward balloonettes," said Nipper, nodding. "All the after section is a mass of tatters, but up forrard the old hulk appears to be pretty well whole. Those gasbags are full of gas still."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "At the same time, laddie, I don't quite gather the good old trend."

"These dirigibles, as you know, aren't just filled with gas—but they're built in sections, as it were," replied Nipper. "The gas is contained in lots of different compartments, or balloonettes. It seems to me that that forrard one is not only intact, but as full of gas as over it was."

"Well, supposing it is?" asked Pitt curiously.

"Well, it's only got to be disentangled from the outer fabric, and there you are," said Nipper. "A ready-made observation balloon. A small basket can easily be faked up."

"Ods brain spasms!" ejaculated Archie. "A somewhat priceless wheeze, old genius. I mean to say, one of those dashed sausage thingummys—what? One of those things which soar up into the middle distance, as it were, with a stout lad dangling underneath with sundry binoculars and telescopes?"

"That's the sort of thing," nodded Nipper. "But this won't be a sausage balloon, even if they get it up. There's plenty of cable. Anyhow, I'll have a word with the gov'nor, and see what he says."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Put it to the good old C.O.!"

Handforth paused as he was passing. "What's that?" he asked. "What do you want to put to me?"

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"Do you happen to be the C.O.?" grinned Nipper.

"Yes!" retorted Handforth promptly. "The C.O. of the bodyguard, anyway! Who dug out the greatest number of recruits? I did! Who went through the country like a tornado, rousing the people to a patriotic frenzy?"

"Browne?" said Reggie Pitt blandly. "Eh? You silly fathead!" roared Handforth. "You know as well as I do that I gathered more recruits than anybody! And I'm the C.O.—whatever Browne likes to call himself!"

Nipper gently pushed him aside. "I want to have a word with Mr. Lee, if it's all the same to you," he said. "We're thinking about rigging up an observation balloon. Better than sending out scouting boats. The air's jolly clear here, and from a height of a thousand feet an observer ought to be able to see right across into Gothland."

"By George!" said Handforth. "You mean— Why, I was going to suggest something like that, only I didn't think there was any observation balloon here. So I dismissed it. It was like your nerve, to keep an important fact of that sort away from me!"

Nobody thought it worth while to explain, and Nipper hurried off to put his little scheme before Nelson Lee.

"Yes, it's a good idea, young 'un," said Lee promptly. "I'll send Wilcox over at once, with two or three of the men. If there's anything in the suggestion, we'll soon have the balloon aloft."

Nelson Lee was quite pleased, in fact—for, as matters stood at present, it was impossible to gain any exact knowledge of what was taking place on the other side of the lake.

There were no high hills from which observations could be taken, and a captive balloon would provide the very medium.

While Wilcox and two or three of the other men busied themselves with the balloon, a number of Northestrians were set to work on the manufacture of a light basket.

Things were accomplished rapidly under Lee's orders.

Within four hours, the balloon was ready. But Captain Waring was rather doubtful about its lifting capacity. And there was no further supply of gas, either.

A trial proved disappointing.

It was Wilcox who went up on the first trip aloft, but there was hardly sufficient gas to support the load. The balloon almost failed to rise, and Nelson Lee gave orders for it to be drawn in.

"I'm afraid it's not much good," he said, shaking his head. "You're right, Waring—the lifting capacity is insufficient."

"Why shouldn't I go up, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Or me, sir?" said Handforth eagerly. "It's my job! I've got a keen eye, and I shall be able to—"

"No, boys, it's no use," said Lee. "You are only about a stone lighter than Wilcox, and I doubt if you could ascend more than two or three hundred feet. Yet we can't reduce the rigging, and the basket is as light as it can possibly be."

Willy Handforth grinned.

"That's all right sir—I'm the man for the job!" he said cheerily. "I'm three or four stone lighter than Mr. Wilcox, and—"

"By Jove, the kid's right!" said Captain Waring. "This balloon will easily support a youngster of his size."

Nelson Lee considered.

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"She's quite safe?" he murmured, looking at Wilcox.

"Bless your life, sir, it's safer in that basket than in an armchair," replied the young officer, grinning. "This cable is strong enough for two balloons."

"So that's that, sir," said Willy. "You can't refuse now. I promise not to climb on to the top of the gasbag, or to do any stunts."

"All right, Willy—take these binoculars, and have a shot," said Nelson Lee, smiling. "I rely upon you not to start any of your tricks. This is a serious job, and you must report everything you see."

"What about fixing up a telephone, sir?" asked Willy.

"A good idea—but that'll do later," replied Lee. "First of all, get into that basket, and we'll see if the balloon will lift you."

The Enemy Armada!

FIVE minutes later Willy was aloft.

The experiment was a complete success, for his comparatively small figure was an easy load for the improvised observation balloon. At a height of a thousand feet up, the gasbag was anchored, and Willy sat up there in his basket, highly pleased with himself.

Below, Nelson Lee was no less pleased.

"We'll leave him up there for half an hour, and then haul him down," he said. "And you'd better be preparing a telephone, Wilcox. It will be a great improvement for Willy to have a phone, so that he can make his reports direct."

Dorrie was staring upwards.

"He's up a good height," remarked his lordship. "Don't you think this gasbag will be seen from the enemy's camp?"

"It's quite possible, but we needn't worry about that," replied Lee. "The Gothlanders have no telescopes, and they'll only see a tiny object in the sky, at the best. They won't know what to make of it, whatever they think."

This was true enough. The Northestrians had an immense advantage over their enemies—the advantage of modern instruments which the airship had brought. And they needed a few of these advantages, too!

It was only because of the aero-engines, the machine-guns, and other devices, that Nelson Lee entertained any hope of holding the enemy off.

Far above, Willy was already getting busy.

The view from this height was a wonderful one. He could see far over the capital, right into the rural districts of Northestria—far away into the rugged foothills, and to the mountains and glaciers beyond. In the other direction the lake stretched out in a placid sheet of blue—a veritable inland sea.

Notwithstanding the dense mists which entirely encircled the oasis, and the everlasting fogs which hung like a pall overhead, reflecting the volcanic fires, the lower air was crystal clear.

Willy could see far across the lake, and the Gothland shore stood there like a smudgy strip.

Midway across the lake there was a little island, with a number of isolated rocks grouped about. But Willy gave very little attention to these. He put the powerful binoculars to his eyes, and focused them on the Gothlander shore.

"By jingo!" he muttered, in astonishment.

If he had needed any proof of the clear atmosphere, he had it now.

Through those glasses the enemy coastline sprang into sharp relief. He could see the forests, the coloured blotches which denoted towns or villages. He could pick out bays and inlets where rivers flowed.

The observation balloon was a great success. For Willy could keep a constant watch on Kasker's country, and make an instant report in case of any activity. But he was rather disappointed to find that there was nothing suspicious in view. There was not even a ship over on that far section of the lake. Everything seemed to be at peace.

The work was by no means easy—partly on account of the fact that the captive balloon was only an improvised affair and was constantly swinging round. And Willy soon found that it was an arm-aching job, holding the binoculars to his eyes, and keeping the coastline under close observation.

His report was encouraging when he was hauled down. And when he went aloft again, an hour later, a telephone was provided, and this time he took up a telescope.

Willy was on duty for six hours, and during the whole course of that time he had nothing to report.

Chubby Heath relieved him—for these Third Formers were the only members of the party who were light enough to be carried up.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were eager for the task, without any promptings from Willy; they agreed to divide the watch into three eight-hour shifts daily, so that observations could be kept continually—with only a brief spell on land, every two hours, so that they could stretch their legs. Besides, food was an all-important point, as Willy took care to point out.

And so it went on.

Three days passed in this way—three days and nights according to ordinary reckoning, although here the "daylight" was continuous. And during this period no sign of enemy activity had manifested itself.

But Nelson Lee was not fooled by this. He was convinced that Kasker the Grim was pushing his preparations forward with all rapidity, and when the invasion came it would probably be swift and sudden.

Kasker's armies were being prepared inland, and would not show themselves until the crucial moment.

Lee was grateful for the respite. For those three days had given him a chance to make many improvements to the defences.

All down the shores of the lake trenches were prepared, and men were stationed at their posts constantly. Other troops were being prepared continuously—and the Northestrian army grew and grew.

Hundreds of officers were commissioned, the majority of them being the overlords or their sons. And it was now unnecessary for Nelson Lee to give any instructions; the natives had grasped the nature of his methods, and were fired with enthusiasm of their own.

A totally different feeling had arisen in Northestria.

The old lethargy had gone, and everybody was imbued with determination and enterprise.

There were some, perhaps, who shrugged their shoulders, and said that all this preparatory work was unnecessary—some who predicted that there was no fear of any invasion of Gothlanders.

But they were not heeded. The vast majority had listened to Nelson Lee's

warnings, and the one cry in the land was to prepare, so that Kassker could be crushed and beaten when he struck his blow

Handforth was chafing, and even the other St. Frank's fellows were beginning to feel just a little impatient.

There was no special work for them now, and they were anxious for something to happen. And they were rather disappointed, too, because no results had been obtained from the wireless.

An aerial had been rigged up, and everything seemed to be in perfect order; but although constant messages were sent out into the ether, there was no indication that they were being picked up

For no replies came!

Was it possible that they would all be bottled up in this Arctic basin for the rest of their days?

It was a worrying point, and one that gave Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore much more concern than the boys. Fortunately there were so many other things to attend to that there was hardly any time left for worrying.

Then four days after Willy had commenced his observations, came a shock.

And it really was a shock, for nothing had happened for so long that many people were beginning to believe that Kassker's threatened invasion would not develop for some weeks. Northestia had heard of this invasion for years, and had regarded it, until now, as a myth. They were at length convinced that it was coming, but scarcely anybody believed that it would arrive as soon as Nelson Lee had been predicting.

Willy had been up for several hours, and he was making his usual systematic examination of the Gothland coastline. After these days of close watching, he knew every inlet and promontory by heart

Occasionally his gaze would wander, and he would find himself looking down upon the busy scenes of activity round and about the capital. And, farther along, all down the Northestrian coast. The activity was beginning to slacken up a bit now.

"Hallo!" said Willy, with a start. He held his telescope still. Something was moving on that distant shore. "Only a flock of sheep or cattle," he muttered, with a grunt. "For half a tick I thought— By jingo, though! I'm not so sure—"

He broke off, catching his breath in. No, that dark mass he could see was no flock of sheep. There were men gathering—masses of them. And now that he had seen one evidence of activity he could see many others. It was as though Gothland had sprung to life during the past hour.

Ships were putting out from the main river, a broad stream which led into the heart of Gothland and to the capital. Not three or four ships, but a fleet of them. They were coming round the headland and into the open in a kind of formation.

"Crumbs!" murmured Willy. "It's here—The Day!"

Kassker on the Warpath!

LORD DORRIMORE lighted a cigarette languidly.

"Well, we're ready for the visitors, whenever they like to barge in," he said, with a smile. "If Kassker ever sets foot in this part of the country he'll be a livin' marvel!"

"I wouldn't be so sure, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee, with a frown.

"Man alive, you're not doubtful, are you?"

"I am not only doubtful, but I view any possible conflict with apprehension," replied Lee gruffly. "It may seem to you that we have done some very remarkable things during this past week—"

"There's no seeming about it—we have," interrupted his lordship. "Or, at least, you have. I've just been lookin' on!"

"Well, I'll grant that Northestia has awakened itself," said Nelson Lee, "but we mustn't be fooled into any sense of complacency, Dorrie. Do you realise that Kassker's armies are not only numerically superior to ours, but they have other advantages, too?"

"We're ready with those tanks, and the machine-guns—"

"Useful toys," broke in Lee impatiently. "When Kassker strikes he'll strike with an overwhelming force. And those Gothlanders are not only powerfully built savages, but they're trained. They've been training for years! If only we can keep them out in the lake—turn them back before they can land—all will be well. But if the main invading forces effect a real landing there'll be no hope for Northestia. Neither you nor I, Dorrie, can do anything then to save them."

"Well, they haven't shown up yet," said Dorrie mildly. "I'm beginning to think they're a lot of frauds—"

Wilcox came running up breathlessly.

"Enemy coming out, sir!" he reported, his eyes glittering.

"Great glory!" ejaculated Dorrie.

"What's that?"

"Look-out has just telephoned down, sir—enemy fleet in sight!" went on Wilcox, with a kind of joyous intentness. "Can you come, sir?"

Lee needed no second asking. He

hurried to the telephone at the foot of the cable which held the observation balloon.

"Well, Willy?" he asked sharply.

"Enemy coming out in strong force, sir!" came Willy's voice down the wire. "About a hundred ships are sweeping out into the lake, and spreading out into a kind of armada. Massed troops are visible ashore, too—probably reserves, to be shoved on other ships later."

"Can you see the entire fleet?"

"No, sir; they are still coming out." "Is it possible to judge their speed, young 'un?"

"They're only making three or four knots, sir," replied Willy confidently.

"By what I can see, they look like galleys—and they're heavily laden. They're right down in the water. Bunged full of troops, I expect. Looks pretty lively, sir. I suppose Dorrie will buzz off in the plane and drop a few Christmas boxes?"

"Report every five minutes, Willy," said Lee briskly.

He turned to Dorrie and Captain Waring, who were near by.


"They're coming!" he said grimly.

"Gosh!" muttered Waring. "Then you were right, sir."

"Willy declares that an armada is setting out, and I'm sure he hasn't exaggerated," went on Lee. "Not a score of boats, Dorrie, but hundreds of them. Kassker is making one big attempt to transport his army."

"The beggar doesn't know what's waiting for him," smiled Dorrie.

"Yes, he believes that he can land his men at any point he chooses," said Lee. "Nevertheless, we can't take any risks. We must get our wonderful navy



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to sea, and you'd better get the plane ready."

"I'm your man!" said his lordship, with satisfaction. "Action at last, by gad! Thank goodness there's something 'doin'! I'd better take a load of bombs, eh?" he added. "I don't quite like the idea of blowin' the poor beggars to smithereens, though. It seems so one-sided."

"You had better drop your bombs in the open water," said Lee. "If we can scare these brutes back, so much the better. I'm just as much against bloodshed as you are, Dorrie, but if things get really serious you'll have to drop your bombs where they'll take grim effect. We can't be squeamish at a time like this. By hook or by crook those savages must be kept out. Otherwise there'll be bloodshed neither you nor I can possibly prevent."

"Shall I start right off?" asked Dorrie.

"You'd better—as quickly as possible," replied Lee. "At a rough estimate, this fleet will take nearly eight hours to get here, and that gives us some time, thank goodness. If you can swoop over the fleet in the plane it will delay things and give us still more time. You can be across the lake in less than forty minutes, Dorrie."

His lordship hurried off. His aeroplane was all ready—in fact, it had been standing at the appointed spot for days, the engine tuned up, the petrol tanks filled. It was a fast scouting machine, provided with a machine-gun, to say nothing of a well-filled rack of bombs.

Nelson Lee, in the meantime, got into immediate touch with his Northestrian staff, and sent word down the long lines of defences that the hour was at hand. And it seemed that a quiver ran right through Northestria. The news travelled with the speed of lightning, although, so far, nobody on land had seen any sign of the invading fleet.

Having given his orders, Lee immediately sought an audience with the Princess Mercia and Ethelbert the Red. In the Royal castle, he briefly explained the situation.

"Your Majesty, there is danger," he went on. "According to the latest reports, the enemy is making for this section of the coast, the obvious inference being that Kassker is aiming to seize the capital. Several days ago I advised you to leave, but you thought fit to resist me."

"It is my duty to remain with my people," replied the young princess quietly.

"It is a greater duty for you to preserve your life," replied Lee. "If there is to be bloodshed, your Majesty, I urge you to—"

"Marry, but thy words are wise!" interrupted Ethelbert. "The hour is at hand, fair Majesty, and I beseech thee to depart for a zone of safety. I add my voice to that of Lee the Lionheart."

"'Tis not my wish to play the coward," replied Mercia, with a sudden toss of her head.

Lee looked at her grimly. "You have placed me in supreme command of your country's defences, and it is my wish that you should respect my desires," he said. "I do not like to insist, but if you force me I—"

"Nay, thou art right," interrupted the princess quickly. "'Tis foolish of me to set my will against thine, brave Lee. Thou art doing wondrous things for my people, and 'twould be a poor return if I should attempt to resist thee. I will do as thou sayest."

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"Good!" exclaimed Lee with relief. "My lord, you once suggested a place known as Westwold Castle—"

"Ay, but 'tis too late for such a journey," said Ethelbert, shaking his head. "The old moated castle is indeed wondrous safe, but there are mountains to be crossed—"

"'Tis possible to get there by water," interrupted the princess. "Fifteen miles down the lake, and then into the gorge—"

"The Royal galley shall be ready within the hour!" broke in Lee crisply. "By skirting the shore there can be no danger, for it will be several hours before the first Gothlander vessels can reach these waters."

"'Tis agreed," said Ethelbert. "The gorge is safe—it can be guarded with ease, owing to its natural defences. And Westwold Castle is impregnable. Our sweet Majesty will be safe there."

Refugees!

THE princess was looking excited. "'Tis against my inclinations that I should flee in this way, but I will obey," she said rather wistfully. "'Twas my desire to stand on the battlements above and watch the progress of the fighting. My brave soldiers will hold off these invaders."

"A plague take them!" growled Ethelbert. "Never fear, they will be held off!"

"I hope so—although we can take nothing for granted," said Nelson Lee quickly. "That is why I am anxious for you to leave at once, your Majesty. If Kassker's men gain a footing here their first task will be to attack the castle."

"Thinkest thou that such a thing might happen?" asked Mercia in wonder.

"It is possible, and therefore you must go," replied Lee. "Everything possible will be done to fling the Gothlanders back, but we cannot be certain that we shall succeed. I desire you to take your ladies-in-waiting and such members of your suite as may be necessary. The Royal bodyguard will also accompany the barge."

Ethelbert the Red gave a quick little smile.

"A wise decision, thou crafty one!" he said. "All the young people of thy party, I perceive. 'Tis thy wish that they should be in safety, too, and I do not blame thee for such precautions."

The St. Frank's fellows, when they received their instructions, were not in the least impressed, however. In fact, they were disgusted. Handforth's complaints were bitter and caustic.

"It's too thick!" he burst out. "We're to be sent up to this rural retreat in charge of the Royal barge, and it's only a ruse to get rid of us."

"That's all," said Nipper sadly. "There won't be an atom of danger up there, and we shan't even see the fighting. The Gothlanders can't get here for another six or seven hours, and by that time we shall be in the gorge, nicely tucked away in safety."

"Are we going to stand it?" roared Handforth. "Are we going to be pushed off with the girls and the princess, like a lot of china dolls? I think we ought to go to Mr. Lee and put it to him straight!"

William Napoleon Browne shook his head.

"While my own emotions are distressingly akin to yours, Brother Handforth, we must remain level-headed," he said smoothly. "We have received our orders, and we must obey. Would you advocate mutiny at the hour of crisis?"

"Mutiny be blowed!" roared Handforth. "Are we going to miss all the fun?"

"Alas! I fear there is no alternative," said Browne. "But duty is duty, and the bodyguard, after all, is the bodyguard. Our very mission is to protect the princess from harm, and our place is by her side. Let us go forth with brave hearts and resigned spirits."

Nipper grunted.

"It's no good, you fellows; Browne's right," he said. "After all, it's the bodyguard's job to escort the princess."

"But it's only a stunt!" snorted Handforth. "We all know that this trip is as safe as going down the Stowe in a punt. It's only a dodge to get us out of harm's way."

"Yes, we know that," agreed Nipper, with a wry face. "But the gov'nor wants to be on the safe side. We know what these Gothlanders are—we've seen 'em. If we're on the spot when those beggars land, they'll kill us the first of anybody. So Mr. Lee wants us to be well out of it."

"But they won't land, you blithering ass!" bellowed Handforth. "What about the aeroplane? What about those tanks? Kassker's armies will never get a footing on these shores, and it's all rot to talk about sending us—"

But Handforth was silenced. Orders were orders, and it was no good kicking against them. And, although the fellows were keenly disappointed at being sent off in this way, they instinctively felt that Nelson Lee was acting for the best.

The hastily prepared defences looked stout enough, and those tanks would strike terror into the hearts of the invading hosts if they ever came ashore. But, when all was said and done, there were only two of the things, and they could not be everywhere at once. While they were holding off the enemy at one spot a vast army could land at another. It was no good blinking at the fact that the Northestrian defences were actually feeble. Everything would depend upon the airship party. If this invasion was held off, it would be their doing. True, there were thousands of Northestrians ready to fight, but if it came to a land battle the Gothlanders had an overwhelming advantage. They were brutes by nature, and they were trained men. On the other hand, the new Northestrian armies were composed of raw recruits.

Nelson Lee's scheme for getting all the boys and girls into a place of safety was a clever one, and he saw to it that there was no delay. The Royal galley was already at hand; Lee had arranged that days earlier. The boys themselves had put in some training at the oars, and were now to take full charge. During the past two or three days they had taken the galley out more than once, little dreaming that Lee had had an ulterior motive in getting them thus accustomed to the sweeps.

The only St. Frank's fellow who didn't take his place on the craft was Willy, and it was assumed he could not be spared from his important post. As a matter of fact, Lee was so full up with other important matters that he had overlooked Willy. Otherwise, the Third Form skipper would have been packed off with the rest.

The Royal galley was a rather wonderful craft.

She was not particularly big, but in comparison to the other Northestrian vessels she was imposing and stately. There were private cabins for the princess and her suite, and there were many great sweeps, each propelled by

three men. As there were not sufficient juniors to man all the sweeps, several of them were left idle. For there was no particular hurry. The gorge was only fifteen miles down the coast, and this could be reached, even at a leisurely pace, long before the enemy armada came into sight.

"We're simply turned into galley-slaves—that's what it means!" grunted Handforth, as he sat at one of the sweeps. "I'll get my own back on Mr. Lee for this! After I'd decided to lead a regiment into battle, too!"

"We all have our trials, Brother Handforth," said Browne, with a shake of his head. "We make plans, and then Fate deals us a jab in the back. Let us be consoled with the thought that we are acting as knight-errants."

"A fat lot of consolation in that!" said Reggie Pitt. "If we had to fight our way through a crowd of enemy ships it would be a different thing. But we're buzzing off before the beggars even come into sight! Oh, well, we can't expect Mr. Lee to see the thing from our point of view!"

But the St. Frank's fellows were a very sorry-looking crowd as they commenced their work at the sweeps.

The Royal galley moved slowly and sedately off, taking the course down the lake, with instructions to hug the shore. The princess herself would act as guide, and once the friendly gorge was reached, the up-river trip would be simple. Several miles beyond the outer gorge the river wended its way through a deep canyon, with Westwold Castle beyond. There could be no fighting up there, since the place was more or less of a death-trap for any enemy ships. They would avoid that gorge like the plague.

Even Irene & Co. were disappointed, for they, too, had hoped to see some of the excitement. The girls were by no means anxious to see any bloodshed, but they never for a moment believed that there would be any. They were convinced that the invaders' fleet would be turned back in confusion and disorder, and they had hoped to witness this welcome spectacle.

"There's Willy, too!" growled Handforth, glaring. "By George! Think of it! There he is, up there in that basket, with a bird's-eye view of the whole giddy scene! Isn't it enough to make you boil?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Church. "Don't make it worse!"

"There goes old Dorrie!" shouted Nipper, pointing.

Dimly in the distance an aggressive roar had made itself apparent. And now with a leap the little whippet aeroplane had taken the air, soaring up steeply, and banking round under Lord Dorrimore's expert hand.

Dorrie was off into the battle—and the St. Frank's crowd felt more out of it than ever. The tiny aeroplane came sweeping overhead, no higher than two or three hundred feet.

The Princess Mercia was watching with wide-open eyes. In fact, she was feeling just a little frightened. For it seemed to her that this noisy little wisp was something unbelievable. The modern aeroplane was an awe-inspiring sight to the Northestrians, even though they were now familiar with it, for Dorrie had made more than one test flight.

The machine banked round as it passed over the Royal galley, and Dorrie cheerily waved his hand.

"Hurrah!" roared the juniors. "Smash 'em, Dorrie!" yelled Nipper. "Good luck!"

The aeroplane swung off, straight out to the lake, rising higher and higher as

SAINTS versus ITALIANS.

Storming Match With a Lightning-like End.

By Wally D'Arcy.

Was this a match? I'll say it was! Rodrigo Torrini and his team of Italian schoolboys had been touring the South of England with great success, and as they were unbeaten, claimed the school-boy football supremacy of the world. Tom Merry & Co. certainly found them strong and skilful opponents. The Italians used storming methods from the very first kick. Though scrupulously fair, they gave no quarter, and they deserved the lead which they secured through their flying centre-forward, Scala. St. Jim's attacked in slower style, but with grim purpose, and got on terms through Jack Blake. One each at the interval. Italy went away like greyhounds again, and Torrini headed a great goal. Leading 2-1, the Italians looked capable of adding still further goals. St. Jim's, ever resolute in defence, managed to weather the storm, however, and a raid by their forwards showed the Italians some "lightning" shooting. D'Arcy

Dorrie opened out the powerful engine. And while the stately galley continued her peaceful journey down the coast, Dorrie went out into the thick of things.

The First Skirmish!

"BY the Lord Harry!" said Dorrie blankly.

He was at a height of two thousand feet, cruising at the little aeroplane's easiest speed. And from this altitude, in midlake, his lordship had a perfect view of the oncoming armada.

He had expected to see a large number of enemy vessels, for Willy's report had been quite definite.

But even Dorrie was startled by the actual sight.

The Gothlander fleet was enormous—almost unbelievable.

There were hundreds of ships, and as they advanced across the lake they were spreading out fanwise. And they stretched as far as the eye could see. Ships were still coming out of the wide river-mouth on the Gothland coast.

"Glory, there's somethin' uncanny about old Lee's predictions," muttered Dorrie. "He warned us about this, but we wouldn't believe him. The whole tribe must be in these ships! Old Kasser means to do the thing properly, or not at all."

He throttled down his engine, and the machine glided downwards fairly slowly. Dorrie was watching closely, taking note of everything he saw.

Every ship was packed with men. There were archers, soldiers in chain-mail and armour, hundreds of barges filled with horses, and every possible requirement for war. At the very first glance Dorrie could tell that this armada had taken many years to prepare. And Kasser had kept it secret. That was the most astonishing fact of all. Even the most well-informed Northestrian had had no conception of Kasser's actual resources. Indeed, no Northestrian would have believed that so many ships were in existence. They must have been built in secret, and hidden away up the Gothland rivers during the past years—waiting for the arrival of The Day.

equalised, and in the last few seconds Tom Merry flashed home a regular thunderbolt of a shot to give St. Jim's the victory, 3-2.

ST. FRANK'S FRIENDLY GAME.

Tables Turned on Village Team.

By Clarence Fellowe (the Rhyming Reporter).

With no League match this day to play, St. Frank's a busman's holiday enjoyed against a village team held by their friends in high esteem. The match for charity was played—but in their first swift lightning raid, the villagers no mercy showed—and, oh, how their supporters crowded! One down, St. Frank's with backs to wall, played up, and, to their foemen's gall, completely turned the tables round with two smart goals, right at a bound. The village team put all they knew into the game, but full-backs true, with Handforth cool and safe in goal, quite mortified "The Village's" soul! Nevertheless, no sportsman true will ever a licking really rue, and though their high hopes sank to nil, "The Village" cheered us with a will.

And now the armada was coming across the lake!

Lord Dorrimore's former complacency deserted him. Indeed, he was beset with a vague uneasiness when he thought of the hasty defences on the Northestrian shore. Nelson Lee had done his best—but what could any man do with only a few days at his disposal? How could those untried recruits—simple, country workers—hope to repel these grim, trained soldiers of Kasser's army?

Dorrie thought of the aeroplane he was piloting—of those great tanks which had been contrived. Excellent weapons of war, no doubt—but how could they, alone, hope to smash up this invading horde?

"Oh, well, we've got to do our best!" he muttered. "But, by gad, it's goin' to be touch an' go by the look of things! I'll just give them a taste of these fireworks an' see how they like 'em!"

Dorrie himself was not in the slightest danger. In that modern aeroplane he was perfectly safe. He could swoop down upon these medieval ships with impunity. But it rather went against the grain. Dorrie was a fighter, and he liked to be battling against odds. This bomb-dropping business wasn't in his line at all. No matter how necessary it was to send back these enemies, he couldn't bring himself to the point of dropping bombs on them. In a fight on land, with a rifle in his hand, Dorrie would cheerfully shoot to kill—knowing that it was his life or the other man's. But now all the advantage was with him, and he simply couldn't make use of it.

But he could certainly do his best to scare the beggars.

He dropped lower, and by this time the foremost of the Gothlander ships were immediately beneath him. He could see the upturned faces, most of them wearing expressions of fear and awe. This was the very first time the Gothlanders had seen an aeroplane, and they were stricken with apprehension.

But they were helpless. Each boat was packed with soldiers, so heavily laden that the craft moved sluggishly. Other men were at the sweeps, and their commanding officers allowed them no respite. Probably the officers were as

scared as the men, but they managed to keep up a pretence of bravado.

Dorrie could see much clearer now. Many of the barges contained horses, and these latter were causing trouble. When Dorrie opened up his engine for a moment, and the exhaust barked out its shattering roar, many of the horses reared up. On one barge a number of the steeds got beyond control, and several men were pitched overboard by the plunging animals.

Dorrie made mental notes. The majority of the soldiers were in chain-mail, and they carried battle-axes and swords. The archers were less numerous. But it was really impossible to make any attempt to estimate the numbers. The fleet stretched right out across the lake, and every boat was packed. There were thousands upon thousands of men.

"Well, it's got to be done," muttered Dorrie.

He opened the throttle wide, and soared off in advance of the fleet. A quarter of a mile beyond the foremost ship he sent the first bomb plunging into the lake, and there was a dull, reverberating explosion. A great column of water shot up.

Two more bombs followed, and Dorrie shut off his engine, and swung round to note the effect.

He smiled grimly. There was no mistaking the effect. The entire Gothlander fleet was in disorder. Sweeps were stilled, the formation had been lost; ships were plunging into one another, and there was general confusion. The enemy had had its first taste of high explosive! This taste had been at a distance, but it had nevertheless been effective.

Perhaps Lord Dorrimore was rather careless. At all events, he continued to glide downwards over the disorganised fleet, and he was no higher than fifty or sixty feet as he bent over the cockpit,

and took a look at the enemy at close range.

Phut, phut, phut! Something hissed through the air against Dorrie's ear, and his startled eyes beheld a dozen arrows sticking into the wing, immediately in front of him. One of the ships beneath had loosed off a flight of arrows. The archers had seized their opportunity.

"Well, that's a bit steep!" growled Dorrie, opening the throttle.

He shot upwards at a steep angle, fully aware of his danger now, and another burst of arrows hissed harmlessly into the air behind. Lord Dorrimore took care to fly higher now. He had forgotten all about the archers—or, at least, he had not believed that they would lose off their shafts at him.

He cast rather an anxious eye over his machine as he mounted higher. Fortunately, the arrows had done no harm—they were just sticking into the underplane. No vital part of the machine had been touched. But Dorrie realised that the propeller might easily

have received one of those arrows. And a smashed propeller would have meant disaster for him. He could imagine his fate if he fell into this lot, even if he survived the plunge into the water.

"Hanged if the brutes aren't gettin' shipshape again," he muttered, as he took a survey from a higher altitude. "H'm! It'll take more than an explosion or two to scare them back, it seems."

The leading vessels were sorting themselves out, and Dorrie could easily see that the officers were bullying their men into order. The great fleet was taking its former shape, and was once more moving onwards—slowly, but with a grim, inexorable purpose.

Dorrie had another three bombs left in his rack, and he hesitated. But then he shook his head. He couldn't bring himself to drop them upon the helpless men. If they were peppering him with anti-aircraft guns he would have dropped his bombs cheerfully. But it was too one-sided to appeal to his sporting nature. He dropped the bombs two or three hundred yards away from the nearest ship, and they exploded harmlessly in the water.

Boom! Boom! Boom! And it was rather significant that the armada never flinched. This time there was no disorder. The sweeps were still plied, and the ships continued on their course. The Gothlanders had learned, from the first experience, that this little whipper had a bark that was worse than its bite.

Perhaps they thought that Dorrie could do them no harm. At all events, it is certain that the Gothlanders had no idea that Dorrie could have sent hundreds of them to eternity had he chosen.

His lordship grunted, opened up his engine, and sped towards Northestria.

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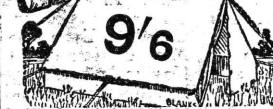


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