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The **GEM**

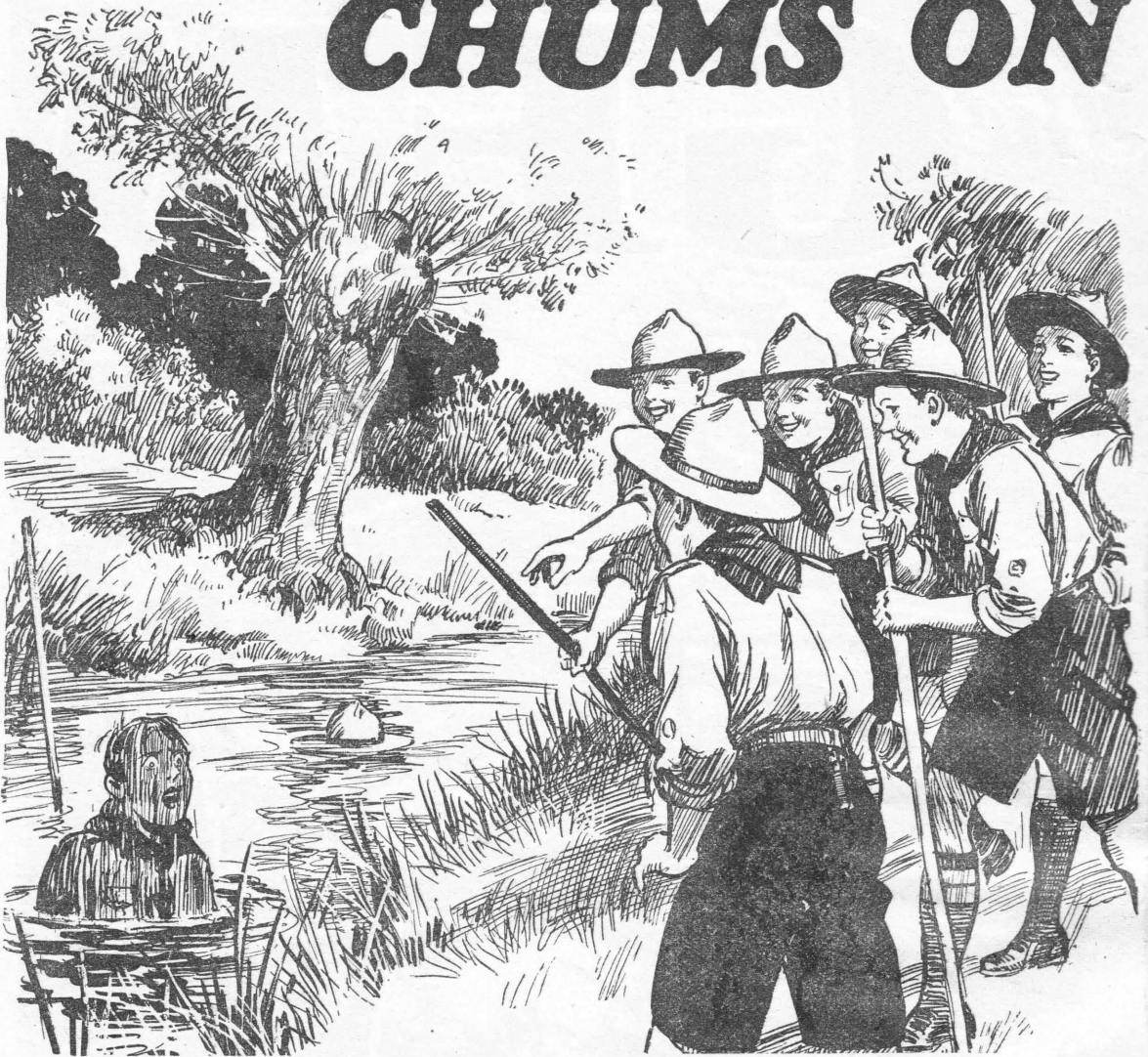
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**THREE SUPERB
PICTURE CARDS
IN FULL COLOURS
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CHUMS ON



"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors as a drenched and dripping head rose from the middle of the stream. "Good old Gussy!" "We've watched you," said Monty Lowther, "but we're not going to do as you do!"

CHAPTER 1.

On the Scent!

"**B**AI Jove! You seem awfully busay!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark as he looked into Study No. 6, his study in the Fourth Form passage.

The fellows in the study certainly did look busy. Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth were seated upon the study chairs. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were sitting on the table. Reilly was sitting on D'Arcy's hat-box, and Kangaroo of the Shell was on the coal-locker. And they were all busily engaged in tearing up paper into tiny fragments. Old exercise-books, old impot-sheets, old newspapers, and all sorts and conditions of papers were being reduced to atoms, and the study carpet was liberally strewn with them. The fragments were being thrown into a couple of large baskets, but a good many of them missed the mark and

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littered the floor. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his famous monocle into his eye and surveyed the busy scene in the study with some surprise.

"What's the little game, deah boys?" he asked.

"It isn't a game," said Tom Merry;

Trapped in a vault, it was fortunate for a Scotland Yard detective that the Scouts of St. Jim's struck his trail. But it was not so fortunate for the crook the 'tec was shadowing!

"it's work! Suppose you come in and lend a hand"

Arthur Augustus came in. "There's room for you on the window-sill," said Jack Blake, glancing round.

"I am not goin' to sit down, deah boy."

"Going to stand to tear up the paper?"

"I'm not goin' to teah up the papah, Blake. I am othahwise occupied," explained D'Arcy. "But you chaps can wun on; don't mind me."

"Lend a hand, you slacker!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "The paper-chase is to-morrow afternoon, and I suppose you want to join it?"

D'Arcy nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! If you're goin' to have a papah-chase, you'll need all the good wunnahs," he remarked. "Pway go on teawin' up the papah, deah boys. I dare say a gweat deal will be required. I am wathah busy just now; I'm doin' my article for the 'Weekly.'"

"Never mind that," said Tom Merry. "The 'Weekly' isn't coming out this week, and the paper-chase is. It's a special paper-chase, with all the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's taking a hand in it for training. Have you done any of the article yet?"

"Yaas, about half. It's a weally

—IN THIS HUMOROUS, EXCITING, AND EXTRA-LONG STORY.

PATROL!

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

wippin' article, on the subject of the latest schoolboy fashions, for the fashion column in the 'Weekly.' I think it will prove to be wathah intewestint'."

"I'll tell you what!" said Tom Merry. "Don't finish the article. Tear it up and add it to this little lot. It will be more useful that way."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"We're running short of paper," said Blake. "We've been tearing up back numbers of the 'Weekly' as it is. Your article will come in quite handy, Gussy."

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!" Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass a little tighter into his eye, and looked round the study, as if in search of something. "Have any of you chaps seen my article?"

"What kind of an article was it?" asked Monty Lowther, with a gleam in his eye which showed that he was going to be humorous. "Definite or indefinite?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah. I left my article on the study table here, when I went down to see Figgins," said D'Arcy anxiously. "Are you sittin' on it, you fellows?"

The Terrible Three did not move. They filled up most of the table, and the valuable article intended for the columns of "Tom Merry's Weekly" might very well have been concealed under their persons.

"I'm sitting on an article," said Lowther.

"Then pway get off it."

"But it's a wooden article," Lowther explained. "A table, in fact."

"Weally, Lowthah, I wish you would not make these wotten attempts at humah on a sevious subject. I have w'ritten about a thousand words of that article, and I want to get it finished. I will take it into some other study to write; I couldn't do litewawy work with you fellows chattewin' wound me. Where is it?"

"Gussy, old man," said Jack Blake, with a solemn look, "I'm awfully sorry. Was the article written on impot. paper?"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy anxiously. "Have you seen it?"

"Yes, I've seen it. You see, I was looking round the study for rubbish to tear up, and I found it among the other rubbish."

Arthur Augustus looked alarmed.

"Blake, you feahful ass! You don't mean to say that you have torn up my article?"

"How was I to know that it was any good?" said Blake argumentatively. "I did look at it, but it didn't seem to be any good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you wuffian! You have destroyed my article!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I spent two hours thinkin' out that article."

"Well, you see, I saw it on the table—"

"You uttah ass—"

"And I was looking for rubbish—"

"You fwightful duffah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. Blake looked at him out of the corner of his eye.

"Will you kindly awise, Blake?" said D'Arcy, with elaborate politeness.

"What for?"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

Blake shook his head.

"Haven't time for it, Gussy. We're awfully busy—got to get all this stuff torn up before tea. Don't interrupt the circus."

"If you do not wise, Blake, I shall have no resource but to dwag you up," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, trembling with excitement and indignation. "You have destroyed my article, and I am goin' to thwash you!"

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Blake yawned.

That yawn was too much for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's patience. He rushed at his chum and seized him by the shoulders, and whirled him off his chair.

"Now, you feahful wottah—"

"Order!" shouted Kangaroo. "No time for ragging, Gussy. We've got to get all this stuff torn up."

"Wats! I am goin' to thwash Blake—"

"Help!" gasped Blake. "He's dangerous! Help!"

"Hands off, you wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Blake, I insist upon thwashin' you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd of paper-tearers suspended their occupation to close round the indignant swell of St. Jim's. Hands seized upon Arthur Augustus from all sides, and in a second he was whirled off his feet, and lowered gently to the floor.

"Now, order!" said Tom Merry severely.

"I wefuse to ordah—I mean—"

"Perhaps it will keep him quiet if we chuck the paper over him," Reilly suggested, in a thoughtful way.

"Hear, hear!"

"Bai Jove! Oh! Ow—gwooh!"

The juniors seized the huge baskets of torn fragments of paper, and up-ended them over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In a second the swell of St. Jim's disappeared beneath clouds of paper. He seemed to have been obliterated by a sudden snow-fall. Paper descended upon

him till he was covered up from view, and only strange and unearthly motions from below agitated the mass.

Figgins of the New House looked into the study from the passage. He had come to lend a helping hand in preparing for the paper-chase, but he was arrested in the doorway by the remarkable scene that greeted him. On the floor was a mass of paper fragments which seemed to be endowed with life.

"M-m-my hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "W-w-w-what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A head came up through the mass of fragments, and a breathless and flushed junior glared round the study, with paper "scent" fluttering all around him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Gussy, by Jove! What's the game, Gussy? What are you doing that for?"

"Ow, you fwightful ass, do you think I'm doin' it on purpose?" shrieked D'Arcy. "I have been tweated with the gwossett diswespct."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled to his feet, fragments of paper flying wildly all round him. The study was thick with them. The swell of St. Jim's breathed fury as he gazed round at the grinning faces. Jack Blake picked up a chunk of impot. paper that the Shell fellows had been sitting on on the table, and held it out to the swell of St. Jim's.

"This what you were looking for, Gussy?" he asked blandly.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"You—you said you had destroyed it, you uttah ass!"

Blake shook his head.

"Oh, Gussy, I didn't! I said I saw it on the table, and that I was sorry."

"What were you sowvy for, then, you ass?"

"Sorry you should write such piffle, I meant," Blake explained cheerfully.

"You uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus clutched the precious manuscript, and dusted down his clothes with the other hand. He seemed undecided whether to take the valuable article away while it was safe, or whether to give the whole company a fearful thrashing all round. Tom Merry pushed him into a chair.

"Fire away, Gussy!" he said. "That's your little bit. Tear it up as small as you can."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked to the doorway. He turned in the doorway to adjust his monocle in his eye and bestow a glare of withering scorn upon the juniors.

"I wegard you as a set of uttah asses!" he said crushingly. "I shall wettee fwom asinine company at once."

"You can't!" chuckled Lowther.

"Eh? Why not, you duffah?"

"Because you must go wherever you go," explained Monty Lowther laboriously. "Wherever you go, you

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go—so how are you to get away from asinine company?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus did not attempt to solve Lowther's problem. He retired from the study, and slammed the door with a slam that was heard the whole length of the Fourth Form passage, if not of the School House. And Tom Merry & Co chuckled and went on tearing up scent.

CHAPTER 2.

Pat for Pat!

ALL the juniors of St. Jim's were interested in the coming cross-country run. School House and New House were joining cordially in the matter. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. and other New House fellows were tearing up paper for scent that evening, so it was likely that the hares would be well supplied.

As to whom the hares were to be, that was a question not yet settled. Tom Merry had decided upon a junior from each House, but not which juniors. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy considered that, so far as the School House representative was concerned, the matter might be looked upon as settled. The best runner would be wanted; and in the Common-room that evening, Arthur Augustus offered himself for the post. The juniors, however, affected to misunderstand.

"The best runner!" Tom Merry remarked. "Well, you see, I was thinking of running with the hounds this time."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass witheringly upon the captain of the Shell.

"I was not thinking of you, Tom Mewwy," he said.

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Not thinking of me?"

"Certainly not."

"But you said the best runner."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, you were thinking of Lowther, then," said Tom Merry. "Monty is pretty good, I admit. Yes, it would do for Lowther."

"I was not thinking of Lowthah."

"Blake, I suppose? What do you say, Blake? Gussy suggested that you should run as hare, because he thinks you're the best runner in the School House."

"I don't mind," said Blake. "I'll run if you like, and I'm much obliged to you for your good opinion, Gussy."

"I was not wefewwin' to Blake!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Never mind, it's settled now."

"I wegard you as an ass. I was wefewwin'—"

"Blake will fill the bill all right, I guess," said Buck Finn, the American fellow in the Shell, "though I wouldn't mind taking it on myself."

"Wats, deah boy! As a mattah of fact, I am willin' to wun."

"The spirit is willing, but the head is weak," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, we've settled on Blake now, owing to D'Arcy's recommendation," said Tom Merry. "The question now is about the other hare."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Have you another good suggestion to make, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry blandly.

"I was goin' to suggest myself to wun for the School House."

"This isn't time for joking, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"You feahful ass, I am not jokin'."

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It is necessary for the hares to be good wunnahs, and I should be able to make the New House wunnah buck up, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Blake cares to wesign it to me, I—"

"Rats!" said Blake promptly.

"You should make your suggestions a bit clearer, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "You said the best runner, so how was I to know that you were referring to yourself. I can't guess these things."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Leave it to Figgy to decide who runs for the New House," suggested Kangaroo. "Another question is, what clobber are we going to run in?"

"As it's a Scout run, we shall be in Scout clobber," said Tom Merry. "The run really isn't a game, but a training for the Scouts of St. Jim's. Of course, the other fellows who haven't joined the Boy Scouts can come, too."

"Everybody welcome; early doors sixpence extra," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Every chap ought to be in the Scouts," said Kangaroo, with a shake of the head. "I punched Levison's head to-day because he said scouting was a kid's game."

Levison of the Fourth came into the junior Common-room while the Cornstalk was speaking. He had a very disagreeable look upon his face. The cad of the Fourth was not popular in the House. He cast a suspicious glance at Kangaroo.

"Talking about me—eh?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Harry Noble cheerfully. "Talking about you. Might have found a pleasanter subject, too, don't you think so?"

The juniors grinned, and Levison scowled.

"And what were you saying about me?" he demanded.

"Only that I punched your head to-day," said Kangaroo.

"Oh!"

The juniors yelled. Levison, looking as if he wished he had not asked the question, retired with a black look upon his face. Tom Merry made a movement towards him. Tom Merry was a victim of good-natured impulses, and he sometimes tried to get on good terms even with fellows like Levison and Mellish.

"You'll come for the run to-morrow, Levison," he said.

Levison sniffed.

"Rotten lot of fag for nothing," he said.

"More good for you than smoking cheap cigarettes in the woodshed!" retorted Tom Merry.

"What do you want me to come for?"

Tom Merry smiled again.

"I don't know that I want you to particularly," he said. "But it will do you good, you know; and the more the merrier."

Levison nodded.

"All right, I'll be along," he said.

"Good!"

Levison left the Common-room, and Tom Merry turned away. Monty Lowther and the other fellows had been whispering together, and grinning among themselves. As Tom Merry returned towards them, Monty Lowther stepped forward and gently patted his Form captain on the back.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, in surprise.

Manners stepped forward in turn and patted him on the back.

"What's the little game?" demanded Tom Merry.

There was no reply, but Kangaroo, with a solemn demeanour, stepped forward and patted him on the back

as Lowther and Manners had done, and in the same place. Tom Merry stared at the chums of the Shell in amazement.

"Look here—"

Jack Blake patted him on the back. Tom Merry swung round, and as he did so Herries and Digby patted him on the back simultaneously.

"You silly asses!" roared Tom Merry. "What are you up to?"

Reilly patted him on the back. Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn reached forward at the same moment to do so, but Tom Merry dodged away. As he dodged, however, Gore of the Shell reached out from another direction and patted him on the back—rather hard. Tom Merry gasped.

"If you're not all gone dotty, what does this mean?" he demanded, backing up against the wall for safety.

"Patting you on the back!" Monty Lowther explained.

"What for, you chump?"

"For being a good little Samaritan!" explained Monty Lowther innocently.

"You have made it up with Levison like good little Philip in the story-book; and after making it up with the naughty Dicky, good little Philip is always patted on the back. Therefore—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"You silly fathead—"

"It touches us, you see," said Lowther plaintively. "It reminds us of 'Eric; or, Bit by Bit.' Come and be patted."

"No; I'll do some of the patting," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

And he rushed at the grinning juniors.

Biff, biff, biff!

"Yow! Owo-o-o-ow-w!"

And Tom Merry walked away, smiling, leaving three or four of the practical jokers sitting on the floor. Monty Lowther caressed his nose.

"Ow!" he grunted. "This isn't in the picture at all! Eric never did that! Ow!"

CHAPTER 3.

Hares and Hounds!

AFTER school next day—which was a half-holiday—there was a big gathering of the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's in the old quadrangle. School House and New House juniors, in their various patrols, gathered together, and a very handsome band they made in the garb of the Boy Scouts.

Blake and Redfern of the Fourth had been selected as the hares, and they had big bags of scent slung upon their shoulders. Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, had come out to start them.

"Six minutes' start," said Blake. "We don't really need it, of course—do we, Reddy?"

Redfern of the New House grinned. "Not at all," he said. "But, as a matter of form—"

"Just so; as a matter of form! We'll give you kids a good run," said Blake condescendingly. "Mind you don't over-exert yourself, Gussy!"

"Wathah think I shall catch you in the first two hundwed yards, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther shook his head.

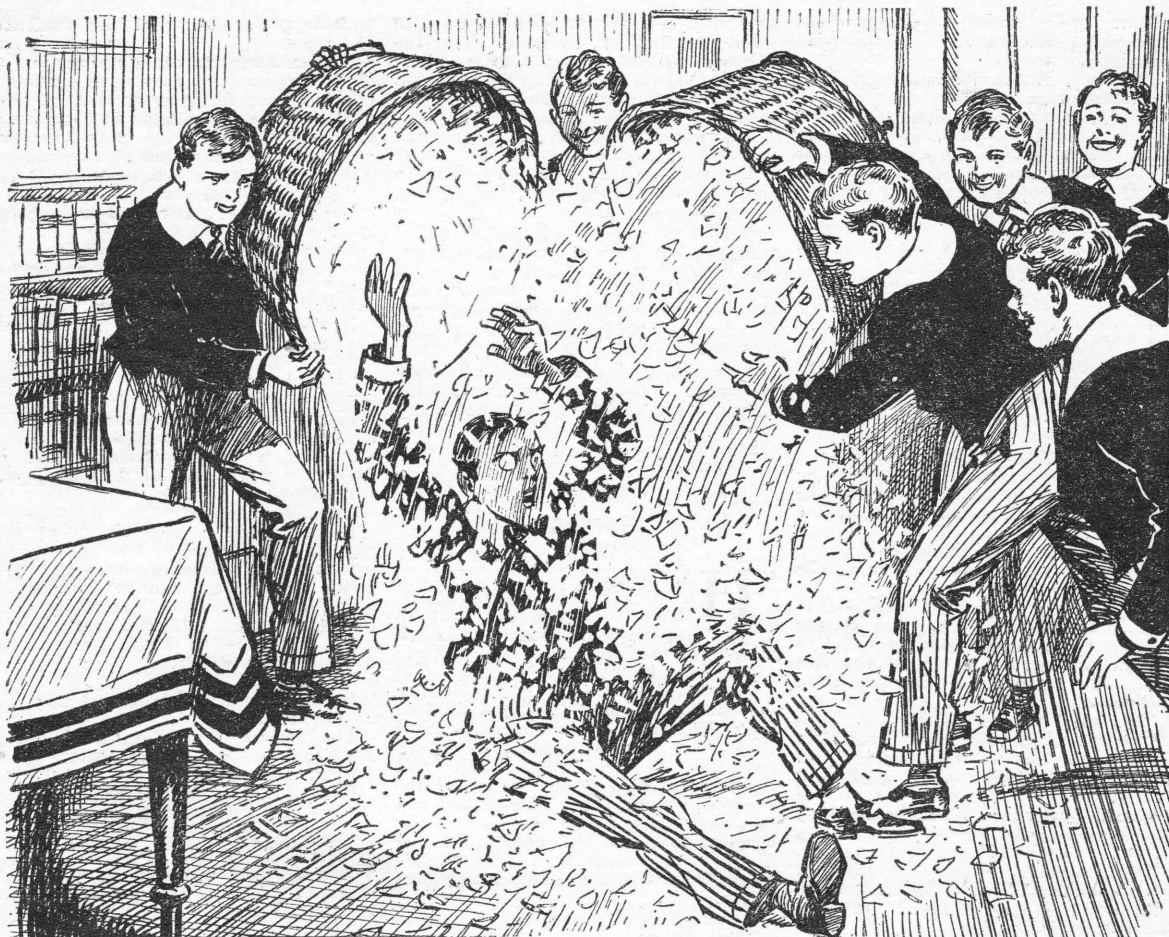
"Can't be done!" he said.

"Why not, Lowthah?"

"Private property is barred. The hares are not allowed to enter any yards or gardens!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"That reminds me," said Monty Lowther, who was very difficult to stop when he started being humorous. "There was a hedgehog once who swallowed a foot-rule—"



"Bai Jove! Ow—gwooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus as the juniors seized the huge baskets of torn paper and upended them over him. In a second D'Arcy disappeared beneath clouds of paper as though he were obliterated by a sudden snowfall.

"Imposs., deah boy!"
 "Well, that's how the story goes—"
 "Then it is a ~~stow~~ stow!" said D'Arcy. "I wefuse to admit the possibility of such a thing, Lowthah!"
 "Look here—"
 "It is no good tellin' me that a hedgehog swallowed a foot-wule!" said D'Arcy obstinately. "I decline to cweedit the statement!"
 "Ready!" said Kildare, looking at his watch. "You hares ready?"
 "Quite!" said Blake.
 "Ready and Reddy!" grinned Redfern.
 "Start, then! Don't throw out the scent till you're out of the gates."
 "Right-ho!"
 And the hares started. The crowd of Boy Scouts watched them disappear from the gates, and waited. Some of them watched the big clock in the clock-tower of St. Jim's, and some of them kept their eyes on Kildare. Monty Lowther went on with his funny story. There were six minutes to wait, and surely six minutes was ample time for the funniest story. Monty Lowther thought so. But there were difficulties in the way.
 "When that hedgehog got the foot-rule down—" he began.
 "I wefuse to wegard it as poss., Lowthah!"
 "His owner thought—"
 "His owner couldn't have thought he'd swallowed a foot-rule, Monty," said Manners, with a serious shake of

the head. "It couldn't have been done!"
 "Perhaps it was a tape measure," said Herries thoughtfully. "Are you sure it wasn't a tape measure, Lowther?"
 "Make it a tape measure," said Figgins.
 "I'm sure it was a foot-rule!" yelled Lowther. "Who's telling the story, you silly asses? The hedgehog swallowed a foot-rule—"
 "Imposs.!"
 "Draw it mild, Lowther!"
 "His owner," said Lowther, glaring, "thought that he would die by inches—"
 "Oh!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "But he didn't," said Lowther. "He crawled to a hill, and died by the foot." Some of the juniors laughed, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy assumed a very perplexed expression. He rubbed his aristocratic nose thoughtfully.
 "What foot was it he died by, Lowthah?"
 "The foot of the hill, ass!"
 "Then it had nothin' to do with the foot-wule he had swallowed—not that I believe for a moment that he could weally swallow one, mind."
 "No!" groaned Lowther. "Oh, dear! Gussy, old man, the only way to get a joke into your head would be with a pick-axe!"
 "But I want to undahstand, deah boy. You say he died by the foot of the hill. In that case, it had nothin'

to do with the foot-wule he had swallowed? Then I should like to know what he died of!"
 "Quite so!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "What did he die of?"
 "What did he die of, Lowther?"
 "I don't know," said Lowther. "Perhaps he saw a tailor's dummy with an eyeglass stuck in his face, and died of shock!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah, if you are alludin' to me—"
 "Speaking of shocks," resumed Lowther, "that reminds me—"
 "Oh, don't!"
 "—of a shocking discovery—"
 "Bai Jove! What was that?"
 "The discovery of electric batteries." "Eh?"
 "You see—" began Lowther.
 "Six minutes!" said the St. Jim's captain at last. "Start!"
 And the Boy Scouts started.
 They streamed away towards the school gates, with Tom Merry & Co. in the lead. Most of the juniors of St. Jim's had joined the pack. Wally—D'Arcy minor, of the Third—had come along with a choice band of fags. Wally had confided to Frayne and Jameson and Curly Gibson of the Third that it would be simply ripping to catch the hares, and to make the Fourth and the Shell look small, and his comrades had fully agreed with him.
 Out in the white high-road the scent was thinly scattered, and at the stile,
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half-way to Rylcombe, the fragments of torn paper crossed into the footpath through the wood.

The whole crowd of Scouts went down the footpath at a rush.

The scent lay thick upon the grass in the narrow footpath, but suddenly Tom Merry halted. A crowd of the fellows went rushing ahead, but the knowing stopped as Tom Merry stopped. The scent led off into the trees.

"This way!" shouted Tom Merry. He blew a blast on his bugle, and the scattered hounds gathered in.

Through the wood they went plunging, careless of thorn and bramble.

The trail led them to the banks of the Feeder, the little stream that ran through the heart of Rylcombe Wood, to empty into the river near the village. The trail ended abruptly on the bank.

"They've taken to the water!" shouted Figgins.

"Try along the bank!" said Kerr. "Good!" said Fatty Wynn of the Fourth, sitting down breathlessly on the grass. "Call me when you've found the scent."

Figgins glared at his fat chum. "What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"I'm going to have a sandwich!" said Fatty Wynn. "No good getting hungry on a run, you know. I've always noticed on occasions like this that it's better to lay a solid foundation."

"Get up!" roared Figgins. "Besides, I get so jolly hungry in this August weather!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins prodded the fat Fourth Former in the ribs with the end of his staff, and Fatty Wynn bounced up with a yell.

"Ow! Chuck it!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"No slacking!" said Figgins severely. "Buck up! Have you found the scent, you fellows?"

The juniors had spread up and down the stream. They were quite prepared to find that the hares had waded some distance, and doubled back through the wood. But there was no "sign" on the shore.

"Can't see it here," called out Lawrence.

"They've crossed the stream," said Kangaroo. "Wade in!"

"Bai Jove, we shall make our feet wet, deah boy!"

"Go hon!"
"Wrap them up in your pocket-handkerchief," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know, I object to makin' my feet wet. It will ruin my socks. I wogard it as wisah, in the cirs, to jump ovah the stwam."

"Too wide, fathead," said Manners.

"With the aid of a pole, deah boy, it is quite easy to jump distances which are othahwise quite imposs.," explained D'Arcy.

"You can't jump this," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, by plantin' my staff on this side, and takin' a good jump, you know, I shall go wight acowss," said the swell of St. Jim's confidently.

"No good planting your staff there," said Lowther with a shake of the head; "you couldn't expect it to grow."

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowther. You fellows watch me, and do as I do, and we'll get acowss without wettin' our feet."

"Hear, hear!"
"Go it, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, taking a firm grip upon his scout's staff, retreated from the bank of the woodland stream,

and took a little run. He intended to plant the end of the staff upon the edge of the bank, and with its assistance to take a flying leap which would land him clear across the water, in the reeds on the other side.

But, somehow, it did not quite work out according to calculations.

The swell of St. Jim's came down to the bank with a wild rush, and planted the pole, and leaped.

But he planted it in a bed of rushes which did not form a firm support. The pole, instead of resting on solid earth, slid through the rushes into the margin of the water, and the support failed the jumper at the critical moment.

Arthur Augustus flew wildly through the air, and came down with a terrific splash in the centre of the stream.

"Oh!"
"Splash!"
"Gwooh!"

CHAPTER 4.

Wet!

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
A yell of laughter rang out from the pack as the swell of St. Jim's vanished in the middle of the stream.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Good old Gussy!"

A drenched and dripping head rose from the middle of the stream. Arthur Augustus' pole remained sticking in the reeds. Arthur Augustus himself was stuck in the mud at the bottom of the shallow stream, only his head and shoulders rising out of the water. His eyeglass and his hat were gone, and his face was streaming, and he blinked at the juniors in a way that made them shriek.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove!"

"We've watched you," howled Monty Lowther; "but we're not going to do as you do! No fear!"

"Not good enough, Gussy!"
"Bai Jove! I'm wet! Ow!"

"The water's wet, you know," explained Lowther. "That's how it is! Fellows who tumble into wet water generally get wet. You should have chosen a dry river."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You uttah asses!" gasped D'Arcy.

"There is nothin' whatever to wackle at. Pway help me out of this wotten fix. My feet are stuck in the mud."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you lend me a hand, you feahful chumps?" shrieked the swell of St. Jim's. "I am stuck in the wotten mud. My clothes will be ruined."

"But we can't reach you!" gasped Tom Merry, with tears of laughter rolling down his cheeks. "You're too far."

"Poke out a stick to me, and I will get a gwip on it, fathead!"

"Right-ho!" said Lowther.

Lowther advanced to the verge of the stream, standing knee-deep in trampled rushes, and extended his staff to D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus made a clutch at it, and the humorist of the Shell jerked it back, and Arthur Augustus fell face forwards upon the water. For some moments there was a most terrific splashing and gasping, as D'Arcy beat the stream with his arms. The juniors yelled. Some of them were already crossing the stream at the ford farther up, risking wet feet; but most of them were staying to see D'Arcy through. Even catching the hares was not so interesting as the

aquatic performances of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus came up again, in his former position, gasping and puffing. His feet were firmly embedded in deep mud, and he was unable to drag them out. He recovered the perpendicular, and panted, and glared at Lowther as if he would have eaten him.

"You fwoightful ass!" he spluttered. "What's the matter? I'm helping you!"

"You pulled that wotten pole away just as I was goin' to take it, you awful ass!"

"Well, here you are Gussy."
Lowther gently lunged the end of the pole into D'Arcy's chest.

"Ow! Bai Jove!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop it, you fwoightful duffah!" yelled D'Arcy, as Lowther gave him another poke. "I wefuse to be the victim of wotten pwaactical jokes! I shall give you a feahful thwashin', you silly chump! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
D'Arcy made a wild clutch at the pole as Lowther poked him again, and succeeded in catching it with both hands. He gave a sudden drag on it, and Lowther was not braced in time against the pull. He was dragged forward, and he let go the pole, and threw out his hands wildly.

"Splash!"
Monty Lowther disappeared into the stream head first.

The juniors shrieked as his dripping head came up out of the water.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Even Arthur Augustus cackled.

"Bai Jove! That was funnay! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh!" gasped Lowther. "Ow! What are you cackling at, you silly chumps? Yow! Lemme a hand to gerrout! Grooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"One good turn deserves another!" chuckled Owen. "Let's see you do that again, Lowther."

"We're wasting time!" said Herries. "I'm off!"

And Herries rushed for the ford, followed by most of the hounds.

Tom Merry and Manners stayed to help the others out of the stream. Monty Lowther was nearer the shore, and he was soon landed, and he stood shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog and gasping. Tom Merry and Manners then extended both their staves to D'Arcy, who seized one in each hand.

"Now, steady, deah boys!"
"Come on!"

"Steady—ow!"
"All together!" shouted Tom Merry. "Heave ahead, my hearties!"

The chums of the Shell dragged on the poles, and Arthur Augustus' feet were persuaded at last to leave the clinging embrace of the mud. The swell of St. Jim's was hauled out, and he sank, gasping, on the bank.

"Bai Jove, I'm in a howwid state!"
"What about me?" hooted Lowther.

"You clumsy ass!"
"Serves you wight, deah boy, for playin' wotten pwaactical jokes! I say, Tom Mewwy, do you think you had bettah call a halt while I go back and change my things?"

"Yes—I don't think!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I shan't keep you waitin' more than half an hour, deah boy."

"You won't keep me waiting half a minute, old son," said Tom Merry.

"Come on! They've found the scent on the other side, and we shall be left out of the catch."

"In the cirs——"
 "Tally-ho!" shouted Tom Merry; and he ran on.
 "But I say——"

But what Arthur Augustus had to say was not listened to. The Terrible Three ran down to the ford and plunged through the shallow water and disappeared in the trees on the opposite bank.

Arthur Augustus cast a dismayed glance down at his dripping clothes and muddy boots. His staff was stuck in the mud, his hat was floating down the stream.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wegard this as wotten! But a D'Arcy nevah hangs back."

And, hatless, and squelching out mud at every step, the swell of St. Jim's dashed on the track of the hounds.

The whole pack now were far ahead of him in the trail of torn paper; the youngest fag had got ahead while the swell of St. Jim's was causing delay on the bank of the stream. Arthur Augustus was tail dog now. But, in spite of his elegant ways, the swell of St. Jim's was an athlete, and one of the best junior sprinters in the school, and he was soon up with the pack again.

His muddy appearance elicited a yell of laughter from the hounds as he rejoined them.

"Here comes the mud merchant!" roared Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, you fellows——"

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated D'Arcy minor. "This is a bit too thick, Gussy! What would the girl in

the bun-shop say if she could see you now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wally, you young wascal——"

Arthur Augustus made a rush at his minor, who fled, laughing. It was easier to follow the trail of Arthur Augustus than that of the hares. He shed great chunks of soft mud as he ran, and collected up a great deal of the torn paper upon his sticky boots.

The pack laughed breathlessly as they swept on. Tom Merry forged ahead, with Lowther and Lawrence and Arthur Augustus at his side, and they were soon leading the pack. Tom Merry came first out of the wood on the Wayland side, still on the scent.

Far away down the white road he caught a glimpse of two figures in Boy Scout costume, and he halted by the roadside to wind his bugle. The pack burst forth into a breathless cheer. The quarry had been sighted!

CHAPTER 5.

The Prisoner of the Vault!

TA-RA-RA-RA!

The bugle was answered by a shout from the wood, as the pack came streaming out into the road.

"Sighted them, Tom Merry?" shouted Lawrence.

"Yes—down the road!"

"Hurray!"

"Bwavo! This way, deah boys! Follow your leadah!"

"By George! What are the silly

asses at?" exclaimed Monty Lowther, staring down the white Wayland Road at the two figures of the hares.

Blake and Redfern were standing in the road, and Redfern could be seen offering Jack Blake toffee. They were not a hundred yards away, and a quick run by the pack would have collared them in a minute or two. They certainly must have seen the pack, for Redfern, having handed Blake the toffee, took off his hat and bowed ceremoniously to the pursuers. But the hares did not make any movement to run.

"They're giving in!" growled Owen, in disgust.

"My hat! Chucked it already!"

"Hold on!" said Kerr, grinning. "Don't be in a hurry, Gussy——"

"Weally, Kerr——"

"Can't you see——"

"I can see the hares, deah boy, and I am going to capture them!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started down the road at top speed. With a rush, the hounds followed him. Kerr put his hands to his sides and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" demanded Thompson of the Shell.

"The scent—ass—the scent!"

"My hat!"

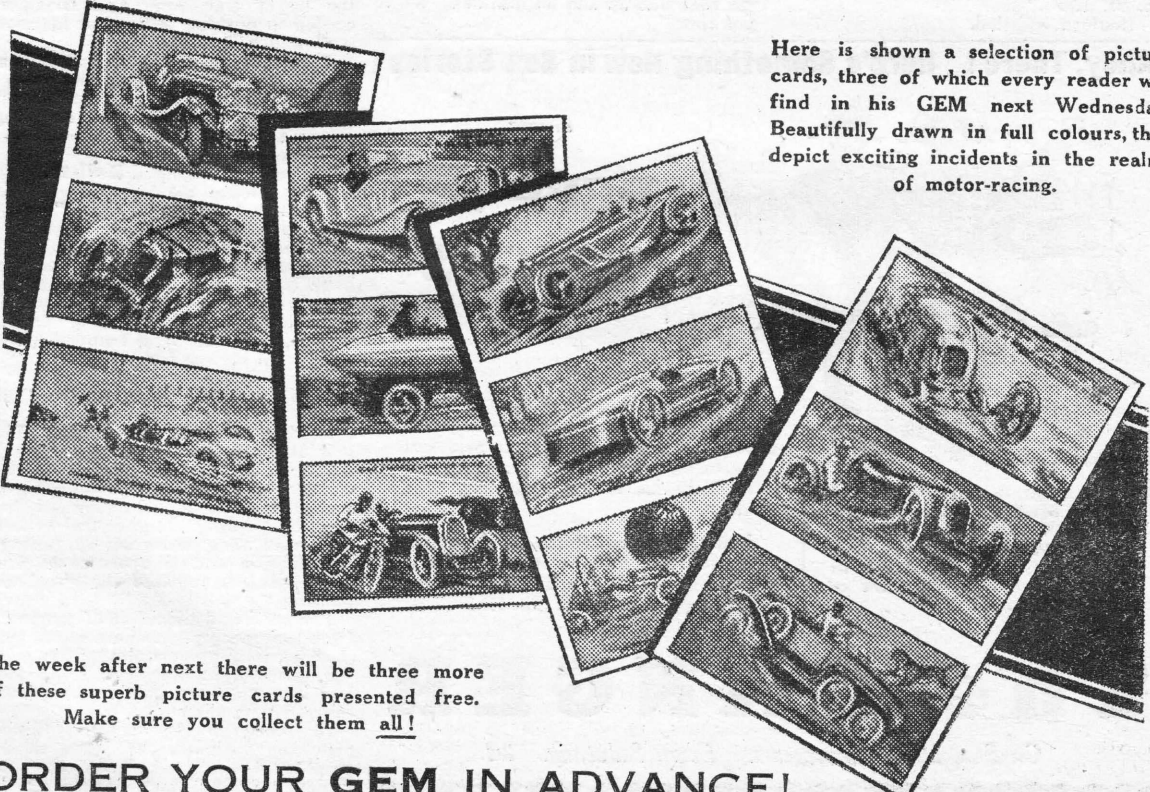
The scent did not lie down the road. It wound away across the road and over the moorland on the other side. Tom Merry blew the bugle, the rallying call.

"Come back, Gussy!" roared Herries. "You're off the track!"

"This way!"

The trail lay across the moor, among

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the brambles and furze. It wound away out of sight of the road, and it was impossible to guess what distance the hares had covered before doubling back to the road. It was a strict rule in the St. Jim's paper-chases that the scent should never be abandoned for sight, and the hares were, therefore, quite secure. They grinned at D'Arcy, who paused in the road, realising that he was off the trail.

"Come on!" yawned Redfern.

And the two hares started on again. They plunged into the wood and made for the ruined castle in a round-about way, scattering the scent as they ran, with a liberal hand. Their bags were growing lighter now, but they had plenty of it left.

Tom Merry's bugle rang in the distance on Wayland Moor. Redfern and Blake reached the slope of the hill where stood the ruined castle, a favourite spot for picnics with the St. Jim's fellows in the summer.

"We'll have a breather here," said Redfern. "They're a good twenty minutes behind, I fancy."

"Quite that!" panted Blake.

And the two juniors entered the old ruin, scattering scent with liberal hands as they went, and sat down to rest on one of the mossy fragments of the old wall.

"Jolly old place, this," Redfern remarked, glancing round with interest at the moss-covered ruins.

Redfern had not been long at St. Jim's. Blake nodded, with the manner of a fellow who knew every crack and cranny for miles around the school.

"Yes; dates from the reign of King Somebody-or-Other," he said lucidly. "Most of this damage was done by Cromwell and his johnnies. They battered it down because the Royalists went to earth here. There's vaults under the castle; Gussy was kidnapped once and kept a prisoner there by a gang of rascals on the make, before you came to St. Jim's."

Redfern whistled.

"Must have been exciting," he remarked.

"Very exciting, for Gussy," grinned Blake. "His clothes were ruined. It's pretty dirty and damp down there."

"How do you get in?" asked Redfern, with interest.

"That stone slab lifts up," said Blake, nodding towards a great slab of stone, with an iron ring in it, near where they sat. "There's a stone stairway underneath, leading down into the vaults."

"No other way out?" asked Redfern.

Blake shook his head.

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Might lay the trail through the vaults, if there were."

"Can't be done. There's only the one entrance," said Blake, "and if that slab got closed when you were underneath, you wouldn't get out again, either. It can't be moved from underneath, you know. I'm blessed if I know who's taken the trouble to close it; it's generally left open, and it would need a jolly strong man to shift it."

Tap!

The two juniors jumped simultaneously.

"What on earth—" began Blake.

"It was somebody knocking."

"They're not up to us yet—"

"No fear!"

Tap! Tap!

Blake gasped.

"Holy smoke! It's under the slab!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's some silly ass got himself shut up in the vaults."

There was no mistake about it. As they listened they could locate the sound clearly; it came from beneath the great stone slab with the iron ring in it.

Jack Blake tapped on the stone with the end of his staff.

Knock, knock!

From below the answer came:

Tap, tap!

"Somebody there, and no mistake!" said Redfern. "I suppose we'd better get that slab up and let him out. We've got time."

Blake grinned.

"Well, I fancy we should have to let him out, whoever he is, whether we've got time or not," he remarked. "A man might be suffocated under there. How on earth did the chap shut himself in? It's not easy to move that stone."

Tap, tap!

"All serene!" shouted Redfern.

"We're coming!"

"He can't hear you," said Blake.

"He must be knocking jolly loud for us to hear that. Lend a hand with this giddy stone."

"Right-ho!"

The two juniors bent over the stone and grasped the iron ring. They tugged at it with all their youthful strength, but the heavy slab refused to budge.

After some minutes of effort that made the perspiration stream down their faces, the juniors succeeded in raising the edge a couple of inches. But then their strength was spent, and the stone fell back with a dull thud into its place again.

"Groo!" gasped Redfern. "It's heavy!"

"My hat, it is!"

The juniors panted from their exertions. From below came a hurried signal—tap, tap, tap! It showed that the prisoner of the vault knew that they were there, and was anxious to spur them on to the work of rescue.

"We can't do it alone," said Redfern. "What about waiting till the hounds come up?"

Blake grunted.

"That means mucking up the run."

"Yes; but—"

"Look here, try again, and jam your stick in as soon as we get it up an inch or so. Then we may be able to prise it up."

"Good egg!" said Redfern.

They bent to the heavy task again. Exerting their strength to the uttermost, the two sturdy juniors dragged at the iron ring. Slowly, slowly but surely, the heavy slab rose, and Blake succeeded in pushing the end of his scout's staff under it.

Then they let it sink on the staff, and rested to recover their breath. A muffled voice came from below, audible now that the stone was no longer jammed in the opening.

"Help!"

"All serene!" shouted Redfern.

"Don't leave me."

"No fear! That's all right!"

"Who are you?"

"Schoolboys of St. Jim's."

"If you cannot raise the stone, get help from the police station in Wayland," came the muffled voice. "Tell them that Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard, is shut up here, trapped here by a criminal he was following."

"Great Scott!"

"We'll have you out, never fear!" said Blake. "It's all right!"

Having rested a few minutes, Blake and Redfern pulled at the iron ring again. The stone rose more easily now, and they guessed that the man below had his shoulders under it, and was helping them by pushing. Higher and higher it came, till they succeeded in rolling it upon its side, and the aperture was free.

The juniors released the great slab, panting.

The head and shoulders of a man rose from the opening. A short, stout, thick-set man, with ginger-coloured beard and very keen, light blue eyes, stepped out. His face was very pale and his clothes covered with dirt.

He stood in the sunlight, blinking after the darkness. He drew in deep breaths of the fresh, keen air. The juniors of St. Jim's looked at him curiously.

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"Thank you!" said the gentleman from Scotland Yard. "I think you have saved my life. I might have died of hunger in that death-trap!"

"You might, by Jove!" said Blake. "Many people don't come through these ruins, excepting in the summer. Have you been in there long?"

"What is the time now?"

"Four o'clock."

"What day is it?"

"What day?" repeated Blake, staring.

"Wednesday," said Redfern.

"Ah, it seemed to me as if I had been days and days in that horrible hole!" said the rescued man, with a shudder. "But it's only six hours. I was shut up there about ten o'clock this morning."

"Six hours in there!" said Blake, shivering. "My hat, you must have had an awful time!"

"I have!"

"And a man shut you up there, sir?" said Redfern.

"Yes."

"Must have been a jolly strong man to heave that stone by himself!" said Blake, with some admiration. "Jolly big athlete, I should say!"

"He is a strong man," said Mr. Fix, snapping his teeth. "Stronger than I am. There are very few criminals stronger than Colonel Jim!"

"Colonel Jim!" repeated Blake.

Mr. Fix smiled.

"He is not a colonel, any more than I am," he explained; "but he has been in the Army, and that is a nickname he has in his gang. I thought I had him for sure, and I had the darbies all ready for him when I traced him here, and he pitched me into the vault there, and closed the stone on me. I might have starved there, for all he cared. Colonel Jim's not particular!"

"The awful rascal!" said Redfern.

"You haven't seen anything of such a man, I suppose?" said the inspector. "Tall, soldierly looking, with a big moustache, ruddy complexion."

The juniors shook their heads.

"No; I don't suppose he would remain in this quarter," said Mr. Fix. "What beats me is what he came down to this country place for; but he had his eye on something, you can bet. I'm much obliged to you, young gentlemen! Lend me a hand to put the stone back, will you?"

"It's usually left open, sir," said Blake.

"Yes; but if Colonel Jim should happen to have stayed about here, I want him to see it closed, if he should come to look."

"Oh," said Redfern admiringly, "then he won't know you're still after him, sir!"

"Exactly!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Buzz it down, Reddy! Then we shall have to hop it. The pack will be along here jolly soon."

"You are paper-chasing?" said Mr. Fix.

"Yes, sir."

"Very lucky for me. Now, then, all together!"

The stone was heaved over, and it sank into its place with a thud. And then, taking a hasty leave of the man they had rescued, the two juniors ran out of the ruins, leaving the trail of torn paper to mark the way they went.

In five minutes or less there was a bugle call in the lonely ruins, and the hounds dashed in. Tom Merry & Co. came streaming in through the shattered gateway of the old castle, and they scattered among the old masonry to pick up the trail. But they saw nothing of the hares, and they saw nothing of Inspector Fix. That gentleman was gone, and

the pack had no suspicion of the strange adventure that had befallen the hares in the ruined castle.

CHAPTER 6.

By a Hairsbreadth!

TOM MERRY & CO. left the ruins behind, and trotted down the hill, and followed the scent over the moor. On the open moor the wind was brisk, and here and there it scattered the scent, and made the trail more difficult to follow. The run was a long one, and by this time a good many of the hounds had tailed off. Wally & Co. of the Third had stopped in the wood, deciding that, after all, they wouldn't rob their elders of the glory of catching the hares.

Fatty Wynn had stopped in a way-side place of refreshment on the Wayland road, and Figgins and Kerr had been constrained to leave him there, bolting sandwiches and jam-tarts at express speed, and washing them down with ginger-beer. Levison of the Fourth had dropped out; his good resolutions not lasting very long.

Still, there were a goodly crowd of hounds still following the lead of Tom Merry. Arthur Augustus was running with the best. He had shed most of his mud by this time, and he had run himself nearly dry.

"They're giving us a good run!" panted Tom Merry. "No sight of the bounders yet!"

"The twail is blowin' away," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I fancy they're cwoassin' the moor by Bwooke's place, you know."

"I'll jolly soon see!"

Tom Merry clambered up a tree, and, standing upon a high branch, holding on by another, he swept the moor with a keen glance. On the moor, near the road which ran into Wayland, was Brooke's house, and Tom Merry could see the rambling old building, partly in ruins, with the big gardens round it. Brooke, of the Fourth, was a day-boy, and this was his home. Brooke was in the pack below.

The captain of the Shell uttered a sudden exclamation.

"See them?" demanded Figgins, from below.

"Yes, rather!"

"Where are they?"

"Standing at Brooke's gate, and Brooke's sister is giving them something to drink!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Come on!" said Brooke, laughing.

Tom Merry scrambled down from the tree and joined in the run again. Some of the juniors were ahead of him now; but Manners and Lowther had waited. The Terrible Three were soon in the lead again, however. They came sweeping up to the house on the moor; but the hares were gone. Amy Brooke was at the gate, and she smiled at the sight of the stream of Boy Scouts panting up.

"They are gone, Dick!" she said.

Brooke laughed.

"Yes I know they have," he said.

"Give us something to drink, Amy."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, putting up his hand to raise his hat to Miss Brooke, forgetting for the moment that there was no hat there.

"Bai Jove!"

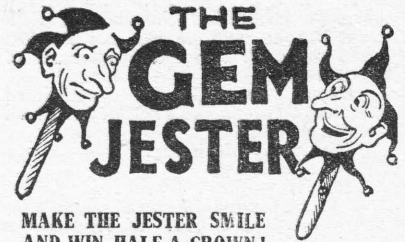
"There's a well in the garden," said Dick Brooke. "You can help yourselves, you fellows."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

And the St. Jim's juniors streamed into the garden, and were soon drinking from the clear, cool, well water.

(Continued on next page.)



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MINDLESS.

Gussy: "And now, Lowthah, deah boy, I'm goin' to speak my own mind."

Lowther: "Ah, silence at last!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to O. Coppen, 320, Burnley Lane, Chadderton, near Oldham.

* * *

YOU'RE "TOLLING" ME!

Willy: "Aren't those bells melodiously beautiful? Such harmony, so inspiring."

Billy: "You'll have to speak louder. Those confounded bells are making such a racket, I can't hear you!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Baxendale, 1, Vincent Street, Openshaw, Manchester.

* * *

A USEFUL WEAPON.

Timkins: "The thief robbed me of everything—my watch, ring, and money."

Simkins: "But I thought you always carried a loaded revolver?"

Timkins: "I do; but he never found that!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Smith, 48, City Road, Grove Hill, Middlesbrough.

* * *

FORTUNATE.

Diner: "Look here, miss! I had a portion of trout, and I've been charged for the whole fish."

Waitress: "I'm sorry, sir, but it's the custom of the establishment."

Diner: "Then it's a good job I didn't order steak!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Thacker, 33, Hough Lane, Leyland.

* * *

UNSELFISH.

Father (reading Johnny's school report): "I see you are at the bottom of your class. How is that, Johnny?"

Johnny: "Well, father, you told me never to be selfish, so I thought I would give the other boys a chance!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Belton, 109, Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham.

* * *

A TONGUE TEASER.

Smart: "What made the butterfly flutter by?"

Hart: "Haven't the faintest idea."

Smart: "Because the dragon fly drained the flagon dry."

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Arthur Augustus entered into an apparently interesting conversation with Miss Brooke, and he was not finished when the pack began to stream out of the garden.

"Come on, Gussy!" exclaimed Herries, clapping the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder.

"No hawwyy, deah boy."

"We're starting."

"It's all right. Bwooke is stayin' you know, and I'm stayin' with him for a bit. He's goin' to lend me a cap."

"My dear chap, you can't chuck it like this!" said Digby. "Don't you want to be in at the death?"

"Not at all, deah boy. I'm goin' to give you fellows a chance," said Arthur Augustus generously. "I shall come along latah, you know."

And Arthur Augustus stayed with Brooke as the pack went on, though whether it was Brooke or Brooke's sister that formed the attraction cannot be said. Tom Merry & Co. ran off across the moor, towards the Rhyl, and later on they picked up the trail on the bridge. The scent led them through the village of Rylcombe, and from Rylcombe home to St. Jim's was a clear run down the lane.

Ta-ra-ra-ra!

Tom Merry's bugle rang out as he sighted the hares.

Blake and Redfern, all their scent expended now, were making straight for home. Tom Merry and half a dozen others, well ahead of the pack, came sweeping out of the village, not thirty yards behind the hares. Blake looked back.

"My hat, Reddy! Put it on!"

The hares dashed on at top speed. They had been trotting, but now they put it on for all they were worth. The pursuers put on a spurt, too, and went down the lane at a pace that could not last, for all of them. Manners lagged, and then Reilly, Dane, and Glyn dropped behind. Tom Merry was well ahead, with Herries and Kangaroo and Lowther level; but Lowther dropped, and then Herries, and slacked down behind.

Without a pause Tom Merry and Kangaroo tore on.

They were yards ahead now, and gaining on the hares, and the intervening distance lessened inch by inch as the chase swept on to the gates of St. Jim's.

The school gates were in sight now, and a crowd of fellows stood there to greet the returning barriers.

Fifty yards more—forty—thirty! The school gateway was home; but the two pursuers were very close now. Only one yard separated the two couples as they ran. Redfern gave a panting gasp.

"I—I'm done, Blake, old man!"

Blake set his teeth.

"You're not!" he muttered, and he gripped hold of Reddy's arm and simply yanked him on. Tom Merry's grasp behind just missed Redfern, and Tom stumbled. That stumble saved the hares.

Blake and Redfern, breathless, spent, staggered in at the gateway, and the loud cheers from the crowd there announced their safe arrival. Tom Merry and Kangaroo were in the next moment, but just one moment too late.

"Done you!" gasped Blake.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip-pip!" panted Redfern. "Done you in the eye, old son! Yah!"

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly. The race was over, and the hares had escaped; but, as Monty Lowther said

afterwards, when he had recovered his breath sufficiently to perpetrate a pun, they had won by less than a "hare's-breadth."

CHAPTER 7.

How Gussy Came Home!

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Here's to the hares, the hounds, and the Boy Scouts of St. Jim's generally—in short, to us!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a merry party were gathered in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. Blake, Herries, and Digby were doing the honours. The Terrible Three, and Figgins & Co., and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, and a good many other fellows, had come in to celebrate the first run of the season. And Tom Merry's toast was drunk with acclamation, in various liquids—ginger-beer and lemonade and tea and coffee.

The study was crowded, and many fellows had come, and looked in, and gone again.

At first there had been, as Lowther put it, standing room only, but the standing room was full up now, and the late-comers had departed disappointed.

The hounds had come in from the run one after the other, and all the pack were at home now, with the exception of Brooke and D'Arcy. Brooke, being a day-boy, was not coming back to the school, and Arthur Augustus was evidently staying late at Brooke's. If D'Arcy had come in just now, he would hardly have found room in his study.

"Gentlemen—" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"As head-cook and bottle-washer of the Scouts of St. Jim's, I am satisfied with the performance of to-day."

"Bravo!"

"The Scouts have run well—very well indeed!" said Tom Merry. "I dare say that you have heard about the scouts over at the Grammar School. The Grammarian Scouts have been reviewed by a distinguished officer, who has seen service in India and Africa. That's what I should like to see done here—it would give the St. Jim's Scouts a leg-up. We could have a review of it in 'Tom Merry's Weekly'—"

"A review in the paper?"

"Yes. A review of the review, I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're getting mixed, Tommy," said Blake. "The ginger-beer is getting into your head! The English language is a wonderful thing when it gets going."

"Speaking of that," remarked Lowther, "reminds me—"

There was a general groan. It was evident that a funny story was coming. But Monty Lowther went on cheerfully:

"There was a French chap who thought that 'c-o-u-g-h' ought to rhyme with 'b-o-u-g-h,' and he pronounced it 'cow.' And he had read in a dictionary that a chest and a box were the same thing. So when he had a cough in his chest he said—"

"Pass the jam-tarts!" said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" said Lowther. "He said—"

"Where's the lemonade?"

"Shut up!" roared Lowther. "He said he had a cow in his box—"

"Yes; and he said it a jolly long time ago, too!" said Redfern. "My dear chap, I was brought up on that story!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" said Lowther warmly.

"By the way, where's Gussy?" exclaimed Digby. "It's time he was in. It's a long way past locking-up."

"Oh, he's playing duets with Brooke's sister!" said Manners. "He goes over there to help Brooke with his work, and plays duets with Amy. He won't notice the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, though, he'll get rowed if he doesn't come in!" said Blake. "It's half-past eight. He ought to have started home before this. I hope nothing's happened to him."

"Why, what could happen to him?" said Tom Merry.

Blake and Redfern exchanged a glance. They knew something that was not known to the rest of the fellows.

"Dangerous character in the neighbourhood," explained Blake.

"Well-known criminal!" added Redfern.

"How do you know?"

"We had a little adventure at the old castle this afternoon," said Blake. "It was a case of beauty in distress. Not exactly beauty, though! I remember, he had ginger whiskers."

"Who had?" demanded Tom Merry in bewilderment.

"The prisoner."

"What prisoner?"

"The giddy prisoner we rescued. He was shut up in the vaults of the old castle," Blake explained. "We let him out. He had been bunged in there by a giddy criminal he was tracking down."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Fact!" said Blake. "Honour bright! Name, Inspector Fix, looking for a cheerful criminal named Colonel Jim—johnny with black moustache. Must have been a pretty desperate kind of johnny, too, to shut up an innocent policeman in a vault. He must have known how hungry policemen are."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we rescued him," said Redfern. "That's a feather in our cap, and one up for the Scouts of St. Jim's. We ought to have a medal or something."

"But if the giddy criminal is hanging about, and Gussy meets him in the dark lane, there may be trouble," Blake remarked. "Gussy goes about loaded with money and gold watches, even in his Scout rig. I hope he hasn't dropped on him."

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Well, he's jolly late," he said. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to go and meet him, if we can get leave. It's a jolly lonely way home here from Brooke's across part of Wayland Moor and through the wood."

"Well, tea's about over—the grub's finished, at any rate," said Kangaroo. "Let's go and look after Gussy."

"We'll ask Taggles if he's come in, and if he hasn't we'll go and hunt for him," said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the crowd of juniors left Study No. 6 and went out into the dusky quadrangle.

The juniors marched across the quadrangle, and Kangaroo delivered a terrific bang at the door of Taggles' lodge.

Taggles looked out, with a grunt. "Has Gussy turned up?" asked Tom Merry.

"Has D'Arcy come in, Taggy?"

"Have you seen the one and only?"

"I hain't seed Master D'Arcy," said Taggles. "Which it will be my dooty to report 'im when he comes in! These goings hon—"

"Ting-a-ling, ting-ling!"

"Hallo, there's a bell!" said Blake.

"Ten to one that's Gussy! Speak of

angels, you know, and you hear the rustle of their giddy wings!"

And the juniors streamed down to the gates, followed in a more leisurely way by Taggles, with a clinking bunch of keys.

Outside the gates, in the dimness of the road, appeared a strange figure. It was a figure in Boy Scout costume, and the juniors, looking through the bars of the gate, recognised Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But the swell of St. Jim's had a very unusual and peculiar aspect. His hands, for some reason, were behind his back, and he was covered with mud. His face, where it was not hidden by splashes of mud, was crimson with exertion.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Open the gate, deah boys!"

"Buck up, Taggy!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Gweat Scott! I've had a feahful time!"

Taggles unlocked the gate and swung it open. Arthur Augustus hopped in. The juniors watched him in blank amazement. Instead of walking in in the usual way, D'Arcy hopped in with both feet, his hands still behind his back.

"Gone dotty?" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove! Pway welease me, deah boys!"

"Why, what—?"

"Untie these howwid cords!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "He's tied up!"

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus certainly was tied up. His feet were shackled, so that he had to hop instead of walking, and his hands were tied behind his back.

The juniors stood round him in an amazed ring, gasping.

"What on earth—?"

"What are you doing that for, Gussy?"

"Is it a new game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I'm uttably exhausted, you know! I've hopped home all the way fwom Wylcombe Wood!" panted Arthur Augustus.

"My only aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughin' mattah, you asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"But what did you do it for?" shrieked Blake.

Arthur Augustus groaned.

"Do you think I did it on purpose, you feahful ass? I've been wobbed!"

"Robbed!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry, feeling for his pocket-knife. "It's all right. I'll have you loose in a jiffy!"

"Bai Jove, I've had an awful time, deah boys!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's, as Tom Merry sawed away at his bonds with the pocket-knife. "I've been wobbed! My gold watch!"

"The gold ticker?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, and all my money—a fivah

that I had fwom my governah this mornin', and some silvah—all gone!"

"Great Scott!"

"Who was it, Gussy?"

"A howwid wobbah, deah boys! He pounced on me in the footpath in the wood—an awfully stwong beast! Of course, I should have been a match for any ordinawy man; but this feahful villain was fwightfully stwong. He stwuck me—"

"He would," said Lowther.

"Eh?"

"He very likely thought you were a match for him," explained Lowther. "And the proper thing to do with a match is to strike it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

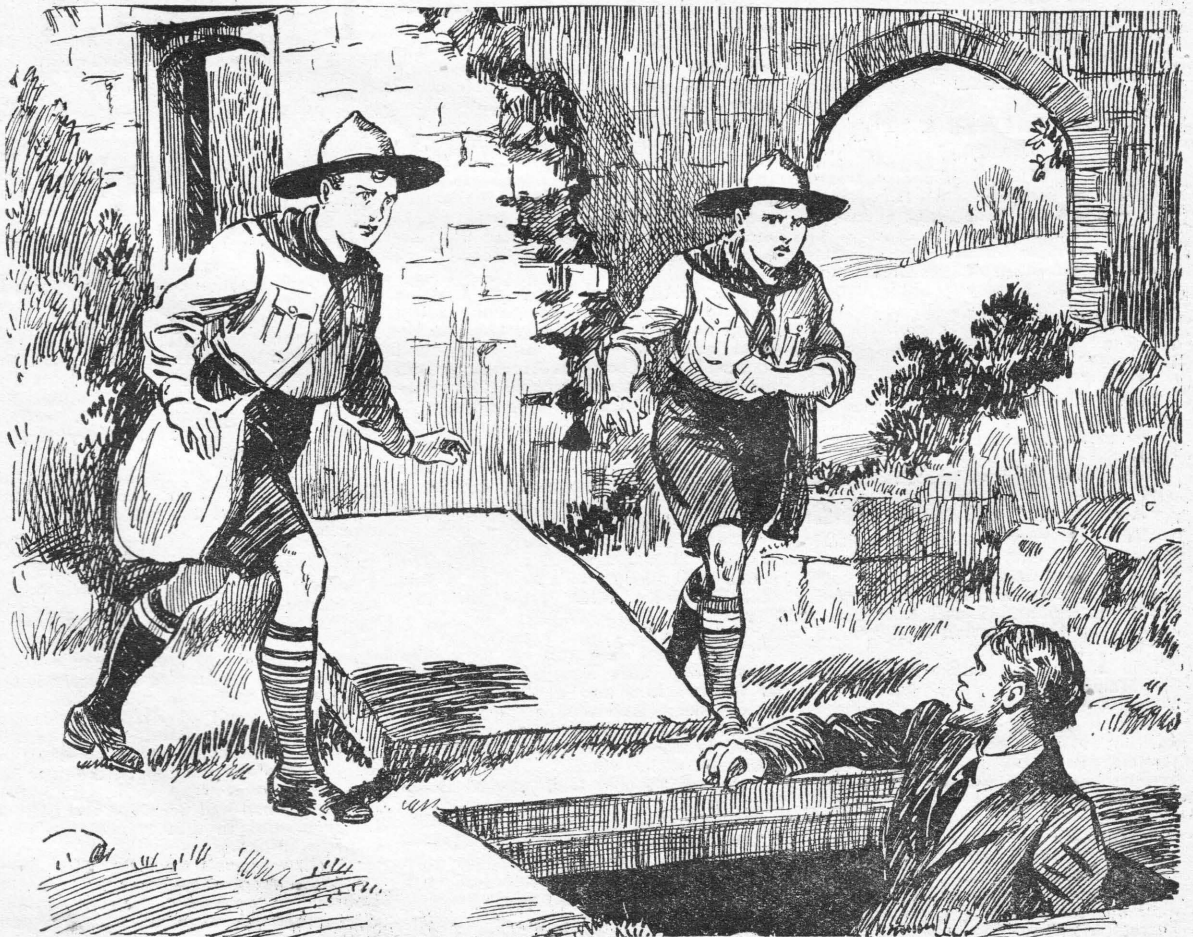
"Don't be funny now, Lowther, old man," said Blake. "Cheese it! Gussy has been through a bad time, and there's no need to add to his sufferings."

"Why, you ass—"

"I have had an awful time, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus pathetically. "The feahful villain was as stwong as—anythin'. He stwuck me down, and put his howwid knee on my chest while he wobbed me. I told him I would give him a feahful thwashin', but it didn't make any difference. He cleahed me out of my pwoperty, and then he tied me like this, so that he could have time to get away, you know, before I could thwash him!"

The juniors chuckled.

"Before you could get help, you ass!" said Blake. "I don't suppose a man of



When Redfern and Blake had rolled the great slab aside the head and shoulders of a bearded man appeared in the aperture. "Thank you," said the Scotland Yard detective. "I might have died of hunger in that death-trap!"

that sort was much afraid of your thrashing him."

"Weally, Blake, I suppose I ought to know, as I was there."

"What did he do, then?" asked Redfern.

"He left me in this howwid state, and bolted. I think he was wathah fwightened."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anythin' to cackle at. Anyway, he bolted, and I had to get here in this extwemely awkward condish," said Arthur Augustus. "I did not meet anybody in the lane, and I had to jump along all the way like a wotten kangawoo. I wegard the whole affair as howwid. I twust the police will be able to capture the wottah!"

"Did he have a black moustache?" asked Blake excitedly.

"I don't think he had a moustache," said Arthur Augustus. "I wemembah I gave him a blow on the mouth, and I don't wemembah hittin' a moustache." "Not Colonel Jim, then," said Redfern.

Tom Merry finished cutting the cords, which had been tied very securely, and the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's stood free.

"Pway lend me a hand to get to the School House, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I am feelin' uttaly exhausted, you know. This unpleasant occurence has thwown me into a fluttah."

"No wonder," said Blake, as he took his chum's arm, Tom Merry taking the other. "I hope the police will get hold of the cad. This way, Gussy."

And, leaning heavily upon Tom Merry and Blake, the swell of St. Jim's was marched into the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

No Solo!

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy & Co. as they came in. The Housemaster looked at the swell of St. Jim's in astonishment. Arthur Augustus presented a very pitiable appearance.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "What has happened to you, D'Arcy?"

"I have been wobbed, sir."

"Chap cleared him out of cash and gold watches, sir, in Rylcombe Wood, as he came back from Brooke's," said Blake.

"Only one gold watch, Blake, deah boy."

"And a fiver," said Monty Lowther.

"This is very serious," said Mr. Railton. "Come into my study, D'Arcy. You shall give me a description of the man, and an account of the whole matter, and I will telephone at once to the police station in Rylcombe." "Yaas, sir."

Tom Merry and Blake walked into the Housemaster's study with Arthur Augustus. He was in a very fatigued state, and needed their assistance. Mr. Railton rang up Rylcombe Police Station, and asked for particulars. Arthur Augustus described the robbery once more, and gave a description of the man.

"Tall, with an overcoat, and clean-shaven," repeated Mr. Railton. "It was not a common tramp, then, like the two footpads who were arrested the other day for attacking a gentleman on the footpath?"

"Oh, no, sir; he looked quite respectably dwessed," said Arthur

Augustus. "I should not have taken him for a twamp at all."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, as he hung up the receiver. "The police will look for him at once, and I hope they will recover your property. You should not have come back through the wood at such a late hour, D'Arcy. You had not a pass for staying out, I believe?"

"No, sir. I've been helpin' Bwooke with his work, sir."

"You will take fifty lines for missing call-over."

"Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus left the Housemaster's study. Tom Merry & Co. marched him up to the dormitory, and helped him to rub down and change his clothes. Arthur Augustus' elegant Boy Scout costume was in a dreadful state. The swell of St. Jim's breathed more easily when he was in clean clothes once more. Then the juniors took him down to Study No. 6, where Digby had been busy making coffee for his refreshment. Arthur Augustus drank hot coffee, and revived considerably.

"Thank you vevy much, deah boys," he said. "It's vevy good of you to look aftah me like this. I have had a wotten time."

"This is what comes of staying behind to play duets, instead of finishing the run with the others," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther, I have played only three duets with Miss Bwooke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She is a vevy good playah," said D'Arcy. "She can accompany wippingly. I sang two of my tenah solos at Bwooke's."

"That's what you ought to have done when the chap in the wood was robbing you," said Monty Lowther. "He would have bolted."

"You uttah ass!"

"You should have given him 'La Donna e Mobile,' or 'Am Stillen Herd,' in your well-known style," said Lowther blandly. "Then we should have seen something like this in the papers next morning: 'An unknown man was discovered dead in Rylcombe Wood.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, forgetting that he was tired, rose to his feet and made a clutch at the poker. Monty Lowther retired gracefully from the study and slammed the door. D'Arcy sank into his chair again and regarded his grinning chums with a frowning brow.

"I wegard Lowthah as an ass," he said. "I twust the police will find that wottah, you know. That gold watch was a pwesent fwom my patah on a birthday, and I don't want to lose it. I've lost it before and wecovahed it."

"More than once!" grinned Tom Merry. "I've got an idea, kids. The police most likely won't be able to find that footpad. What price the Boy Scouts?"

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll hunt him up, or track him down," said Tom Merry. "It's up to us to find him and get Gussy's gold watch back. And there's the fiver. If we recover that, we can use it to stand a feed to all the Boy Scouts. We'll let Gussy have the watch."

"Yes, that's only fair," agreed Blake heartily.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"It's a good idea," said Herries thoughtfully. "We'll take Towser with us. You know how Towser follows a scent."

"Bai Jove! It's a good ideah; but we won't take Towzah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That beastly bulldog has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs. I'll lead you to-

mowwow to look for the wottah, deah boys!"

"That you jolly well won't," said Tom Merry promptly. "I'm patrol-leader."

"Oh, wats—"

"It's worth trying," said Blake, with a nod. "Though I expect we shall have to follow the trail to a pawnbroker's if we want to find Gussy's watch."

"Ha, ha, ha! Vevy likely!"

"Bai Jove! I feel evah so much bettah now," said Arthur Augustus, stretching himself comfortably in the chair. "I sang 'E lucevan le stelle' at Bwooke's this evenin', deah boys!"

"Any casualties?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus glared. "I could sing it without an accompaniment," he remarked.

"Time to get our prep done!" said Blake hastily.

"It's a wippin' solo!"

"Yes; help me clear the table, Dig."

"I shouldn't mind singin' it to you chaps now—"

"You're too tired!" said Blake.

"Not at all!"

"Well, we are, then!" said Blake. "Take a rest."

"Weally, you ass—"

"If Gussy sings a solo, Herries, you accompany him on your cornet."

"Right-ho!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus did not sing the solo.

CHAPTER 9.

Not for Gussy!

THE next day Tom Merry & Co. carried out their idea, and after morning school the Scouts of St. Jim's set out to track down the mysterious person who had robbed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Pressure was brought to bear upon Herries to leave Towser behind.

Exactly what the schoolboy Scouts expected to find when they began to search for the footpad they could not perhaps have told themselves. At all events, they did not succeed in finding the man. Arthur Augustus led them to the spot where the robbery had taken place, and they found his handkerchief there, which he had dropped in the tussle. But there was no trail that was discernible to the Boy Scouts, and after roaming in the wood until dinner-time, they gave up the search. Whether the local police would succeed or not in finding the rascal was a question; but it seemed pretty certain that Tom Merry & Co. would not succeed.

Most of the Scouts had lines for being late for dinner when they came in, and that was the net result of the search.

Whether the man who had robbed D'Arcy, and the man who had shut up Inspector Fix in the vault below the old castle were one and the same was an interesting question, which the juniors could not decide. The rascal at the old castle had been a man with a moustache, according to Inspector Fix's description, and the man who had robbed the swell of St. Jim's was a clean-shaven man. But, as Blake remarked, moustaches could be used in disguise, as the amateur dramatists of St. Jim's knew very well. Both the men concerned had been big and powerful men, and in that respect the description tallied.

"Well, we shan't see either of them—or him—about here again," Monty Lowther remarked. "Never mind, Gussy; watches were made to go, you know. And yours has gone."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"It's wotten!" he said. "It was a birthday pwesent fwom my gwernah,

and I don't like losin' it. And then there was the fivah."

"And we shan't have that feed, as we haven't recovered Gussy's money," said Blake regretfully. "You'd better make it a point of playing duets in the daytime in future, Gussy, old man."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Pity you didn't take Towser, after all," said Herries sarcastically. "I'll guarantee that Towser would have nosed the man out, and chance it."

"There would have been a lot of chancing it, certainly," agreed Monty Lowther. "I remember that Towser tracked down a kipper once splendidly. The question is, did the man who robbed Gussy have any kippers in his pockets?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Otherwise," said Lowther argumentatively, "I don't see what Towser could have done in the matter."

Herries did not argue the point. He snorted and walked away. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wearing a very thoughtful expression.

"I'm in wathah a difficult posish, deah boys!" he remarked. "I don't want to tell my patah about that wobbewy, so long as there's a chance of gettin' the watch back. But I am stony bwoke now. While the police are lookin' into the case—"

"Are they looking into the case?" said Lowther.

"Yaas, you know they are, Lowthah."

"Then they must have found the watch?"

"Eh?"

"Unless they've found the watch, how can they look into the case?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, pway don't be funnay, deah boy! I am wefewwin' to the case of wobbery, not the case of the watch, you ass. While the police are lookin' into the case, I can't go on without any money. But if I write to my govannah, I should have to explain to him how the fivah's gone. But I can't get any more tin without communicatin' with him. I weward that as a vewy difficult posish."

"Wire to him," suggested Blake.

"Why a wire?" murmured Lowther.

"What do you mean by wire-wire, you ass?"

"I didn't say wire-wire; I said why a wire—"

"Oh, pway wing off! It's not a bad ideah to send my patah a wire," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "That will save goin' into explanations, as a chap can't explain at a penny a word without wunnin' up the expense feahfully. How shall I word it?"

"Dear pater,—Please telegraph cash immediately!" suggested Blake.

"That would be wathah abwupt. He will wondah what has become of the fivah, and will vewy likely waise some objection to sendin' me anothah."

"Very likely," grinned Tom Merry. "I know I should, if I were your pater."

"Suppose you wire: 'Cash wanted for a very meritorious object'?" suggested Lowther. "'To feed the hungry.'"

"Yaas, but I don't want it to feed the hungwy, deah boy."

"Yes, you do; you can stand us all a feed. We shall be hungry after lessons."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am afwaid that would be a pwevawication, Lowthah."

"Go hon!"

"Pewwaps I had bettah be quite fwank about it, and say that the money is lost," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "If I say it in a telegwam, I needn't mention the watch. Anybody got a telegwam-form?"

"There's one in the study."

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling



Hallo, everybody! Football's coming! THUD! Did you stop it? I warned you! Did you hear about the centre-forward who "feinted" with the ball, and then "passed out"? I hear they are not going to have goalposts any longer. They are long enough already. A newly invented handbag sounds a siren if it is "grabbed." So the owner doesn't care a "hoot"! The Wayland Council have banned a brick-laying competition. They've "dropped a brick." A Chinese was blown eighty feet by an explosion, but was unhurt. Just another Chinese puzzle. There is a lake of soap in U.S.A. Of course, you can take it with a grain of salt. D'Arcy says it's expensive to dine in the Rue de la Paix. You dine first, and "rue" it afterwards! "I've been on the Chinese station!" said the globe-trotter boastfully. "Waiting for a train?" inquired his listener. Yes, it was "Curly" Gibson who thought Columbus was the man who invented the gramophone. "You say the prisoner gave you a soft answer?" asked the Scots magistrate.

"Vewy good."

The juniors accompanied Arthur Augustus to Study No. 6 to help him write the telegram. Arthur Augustus took a form and a pen, and proceeded to gnaw the handle of the pen.

"Dear pater," he wrote, at last.

"That's all right for a beginning," said Monty Lowther. "It will cost twopence, but something is due to filial affection."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please send me another fiver," wrote D'Arcy.

"Good!"

"I am stony broke, owing to an unfortunate occurrence."

"Oh, good! That's really diplomatic," said Tom Merry. "It's quite true, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's not quite enough, though," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"What else is required, deah boy?"

"You can add: 'Please send Blake a fiver, too.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, you ass—"

"He's sent you a tenor already, and you're not pleased with him," remarked Monty Lowther. "Suppose you wire to him, 'Please send me a fiver, and we'll send you your tenor back'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed. He finished writing his telegram, and departed in search of Toby, the House page. Toby solemnly promised to take the telegram to the post office and dispatch it, and then Arthur Augustus went in to lessons.

When the school was dismissed the swell of St. Jim's hurried out of the Fourth Form Room to inquire for his telegram. But the answer had not yet arrived. Arthur Augustus frowned a little as he stood at the door of the School House and looked out into the quadrangle, in the hope of seeing the telegraph-boy from Rylcombe. But

"Yes, your honour. He bunged a plate of porridge in my face!" "Nother: "Are you a guest at this hotel, sir?" asked the porter. "I'm no guest!" snapped the visitor. "I'm paying ten guineas a week!" Oh, young Gibson again! He thought a metaphor was a thing you shouted through. Then there was the trombone player who complained that when the conductor had finished the overture, he still had two more bars and a crochet to go! "And what are you getting now?" asked the listener of his friend whose wireless set just wouldn't work. "Extremely annoyed!" snapped the friend. Soon the Government will control everything, we read. They'll have a tough job with some St. Jim's fags! A boxer has been offered £50,000 to fight. Every clout has a silver lining. Herbs are being brought by air to England. Ah, "thyme" flies! "Private Murphy," roared the angry sergeant, "what is a blank file?" "Sure, sergeant," beamed the recruit, "it's the place where a man is when he isn't!" A scientist claims to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion. Slacker Mellish has already discovered the secret of perpetual "no-motion." Want some good holiday books? Try "The Hungry Boy," by Mustapha Bite; "The Explosion," by E. Rose High; or "The Cliff Tragedy," by Eileen Dover. How's this to finish? The passenger took a run, and, with a desperate leap, landed on the ferry-boat. "Good jump, sir!" beamed the ferry-boat man. "But the ferry's coming in—not going out!" All the best, lads!

that ever-welcome youth was not in sight.

"It's wotten," D'Arcy remarked. "The govannah has had heaps of time to weply, and he must know that I am hard up, after my wire."

"Might be hard up himself," Monty Lowther suggested sympathetically. "You must give him time. He may have run out to pawn some of the family plate."

Arthur Augustus did not deign to take notice of that suggestion. He fixed his eyes upon the distant gates. Then he uttered an exclamation.

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

The telegraph-boy had entered, and he was crossing towards the School House. A smile of satisfaction wreathed the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It's all wight!" he exclaimed. "The govannah is playin' the game this time, at any wate. He has telegwaphed me a fivah, deah boys."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "Mine's ginger-pop and jam tarts."

"Mine's champagne and oysters," murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus extended his hand for the telegram as the boy from the Rylcombe Post office mounted the steps of the School House.

"It's all wight," he remarked.

"You'll take it in, sir?" asked the lad.

"Yaas, certainly."

Arthur Augustus slit open the envelope without glancing at the superscription. He unfolded the telegraph-form inside and looked at it, and a puzzled expression overspread his face.

"Bai Jove, this is vewy wemarkable!"

"No cash?" asked Blake.

"No. But I don't undahstand this. The govannah must have sent me the y'ong telegwam," said Arthur Augustus, in amazement. "Wead it!"

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He held out the telegram, and the juniors read it. It ran:

"Arriving early morning to review Boy Scouts.—COLONEL RAKE."

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That telegram can't be for you."

"Eh?"

"It's for somebody else."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the torn envelope. The address upon it was:

"Dr. Holmes, Headmaster, St. James'."

"B-b-bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It's for the Head!"

CHAPTER 10.

Levison Has an Idea!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at the other fellows in dismay, and they looked almost equally dismayed.

It had never even occurred to the swell of St. Jim's that this telegram might not be the telegram he was expecting.

He had opened a wire addressed to the Head, and he had a very painful explanation to make to the Head of St. Jim's.

He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and fixed a glare upon the telegraph-boy, who had been regarding his action open-mouthed.

"You young ass!" he exclaimed.

"You've given me the w'ong wire!"

"I—I—"

"Give me my wire at once."

"There ain't another one, sir."

"Bai Jove! Haven't you a wire for me at all?"

"No, sir. That's the only one."

"What did you give it to me for, then, when it was addressed to Dr. Holmes?" demanded Arthur Augustus severely.

"You took it, sir. You said you'd take it in," said the boy. "I didn't know you was going to open it."

"It's a case of being too much in a hurry, Gussy," grinned Monty Lowther. "You should try to cultivate the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, you know."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It will be a bit difficult explaining to the Head," said Tom Merry. "You'd better take it in to him at once, Gussy."

"Ya-a-a-as, I suppose so."

"It will be all right," said Monty Lowther consolingly. "The Head knows what an ass you are, Gussy."

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus carefully folded the telegram, and replaced it in the envelope. He signed to the telegraph-boy to follow him, and made his way to the Head's study, in a very uneasy frame of mind. Accidents will happen, of course, but the accidental opening of a communication intended for another person was a very unpleasant accident to have to explain.

Arthur Augustus tapped timidly at the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!" came the deep voice of Dr. Holmes.

D'Arcy entered, followed by the telegraph-boy. Dr. Holmes glanced at them. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was in the study with the Head.

"What is it?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"Telegram for you, sir," said the post office messenger.

"I am sowwy, sir—" began D'Arcy.

"Dear me, it has been opened!" said Dr. Holmes, as Arthur Augustus laid the telegram upon his writing-table.

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"Yaas, sir. I am vewy sowwy—"

"Did you open it, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir. I am vewy sowwy, I opened it by mistake," said Arthur Augustus penitently. "I was expectin' a telewgram fwom my patah, sir, and I opened this one thinkin' it was for me. I wead it before I dis-covahed the mistake, sir."

Dr. Holmes frowned.

"You should be more careful, D'Arcy," he said.

"Yaas, sir."

"However, it does not matter. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

Arthur Augustus quitted the study. Dr. Holmes glanced at the telegram, and a look of surprise came over his face.

"Thank you; there is no reply!" he said to the messenger-boy.

Then he turned to Mr. Railton.

"Read it," he said.

The School House master did so.

"Dear me! Colonel Rake!" said Mr. Railton. "I have heard the name—a retired officer who has served in the Great War, and takes a great interest in the Boy Scout movement."

"And he is coming here," said the Head.

"To review the school Scouts," remarked the Housemaster. "It will be necessary to allow the boys freedom from lessons tomorrow, if you consent to this, sir."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"I shall certainly consent," he said. "I hope the boys will make a good show and satisfy the colonel. I approve very strongly of the Boy Scout idea."

"This will encourage the lads very much," said the Housemaster.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to put a notice on the board, Mr. Railton, to this effect," said the Head.

"Certainly, sir; I will do so at once. The boys may as well have time to prepare for the review. It will be a most interesting sight."

And Mr. Railton left the Head's study.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had rejoined his comrades. They looked at him inquiringly as he came up, expecting to see him rubbing his hands.

"Licked?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Wats!"

"Not licked?"

"Certainly not! Dr. Holmes accepted my assuance, of course, that the telewgram had been opened entirely by accident," said D'Arcy stiffly; "but I say, deah boys, as I wead it, I can't help knowin' what's in it—"

"No; not even you could help that," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pwaw don't be an ass, Lowthah! What I was goin' to say is, Colonel Wake is comin' down to vewiew the Scouts. Have you evah heard of Colonel Wake?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I know the name," he said. "He's an officer who served in the Great War. He's been mixed up with Boy Scouts



Taggles unlocked the gate and swung it open, Arthur Augustus stared in blank amazement. "Bai Jove!" gasped

for many years, and takes an interest in the thing."

"It's an honour for the school Scouts," said Blake. "I wonder what he will think of us?"

"I twust all you fellows will play up, and make a good impresson upon him," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I tell you what, I had bettah put you through your paces to-night, as a kind of weahersal."

"You!"

"Yaas. At a time like this we cannot afford to waste time, you know; and Tom Mewwy won't mind cheppin' aside in ordah to give me a chance of lickin' you into shape a bit, weady for the colonel to vewiew you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"It's a good idea to get ready," Tom Merry remarked. "Of course, Gussy couldn't review a corps of white mice—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But I can. I suppose the Head will let us know about the telegram. We can't very well act upon it while we're supposed not to know what's in it. We can't take advantage of Gussy's surreptitious ways of getting information."

"Weally, you ass—"

"No lessons to-morrow morning," said Herries, rubbing his hands. "This will be ripping. The chaps who have kept out of the Scouts will be ready to kick themselves."



Augustus hopped in, with his feet and hands tied, and the Gussy. "Pway welaase me, deah boys. I've been wobbed!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I expect they'll be forming new patrols this evening," grinned Tom Merry. "There will be a rush on the Scouts, if it means a half-holiday to-morrow morning, to belong to them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that?" asked Levison, pausing as he passed. "A review of the Scouts to-morrow morning?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Who's going to review them?"

"Colonel Rake."

"My hat! Is he here?"

"Coming to-morrow morning," said Tom Merry. "If the Head consents—and he's certain to—all the Scouts will have to be let off morning lessons."

"Good egg! I'll join your patrol, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Full up!" he replied.

"I'll join yours, Blake."

"Full up!"

Levison grunted.

"Then I'll jolly well make up a patrol myself," he exclaimed.

"I can suggest a name for the patrol," said Monty Lowther blandly. "The Rat Patrol, or the Worm Patrol, or the Rotter Patrol!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Levison.

And he walked away, full of his new idea. If there were any half-holidays going, Levison did not mean to be left out of them.

A quarter of an hour later a crowd of fellows were gathered before the school notice-board, reading a notice pinned up there, in the handwriting of Mr. Railton. A similar notice had been posted up in the New House:

"NOTICE TO THE SCHOOL SCOUTS!

"The Boy Scouts of St. Jim's will be reviewed in the quadrangle to-morrow by Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O. All members of Boy Scout patrols will be excused lessons.

"H. RAILTON,
"Housemaster."

CHAPTER 11. Levison's Lions!

MR. RAILTON'S notice caused considerable excitement at St. Jim's, especially among the fellows who were members of the numerous patrols.

The name of Colonel Rake was talked up and down the House.

"A real giddy colonel!" said Tom Merry. "It's a honour to the school Scouts, and we've got to play up and make a good impression."

"A V.C., too," said Blake. "That's Victoria Cross. I wonder what he's done?"

"And a D.S.O.," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That means Distinguished Service Order. An uncle of mine is a D.S.O. He saved the guns somewhere, I think, or saved somebody's life or somethin'. It's a gweat distinction."

"I wonder what he's like?" said Manners.

All St. Jim's wondered what the colonel was like.

The Scouts compared notes on the subject—many of them had heard the name of the famous officer. To be reviewed by a gallant officer who had won the V.C. and a Distinguished Service Order was a great honour to the schoolboy Scouts, and they fully appreciated it.

That evening the Scouts were excited and busy.

Scout clothes that showed signs of wear and tear were renovated equal to new, so to speak, by industrious juniors, who left over their preparation for that purpose.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seriously debated whether it would be possible to telegraph to his tailor in town, and get down a brand-new uniform in time. Blake's assurance that Colonel Rake wouldn't see him among the others did not satisfy him at all.

"Distinguished chaps are always seen among the othahs, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "In all probability Colonel Wake will notice me at once. And, besides, we shall have to make wathah a fuss of him, and p-waps it will be necessary to make a speech to him, and, in that case, of course, I shall be called upon. If there is a speech to be made, you fellows had better do the sensible thing, and leave it to a chap like me, who has some tact and judgment!"

"If you get making speeches to the colonel, Gussy, you'll get scragged!" Blake promised him.

"I should wefuse to be scwagged, deah boy!"

Having decided, with great regret, that there was not time to get a new uniform from his tailor, Arthur Augustus furnished up his old one, and spent most of the evening in making it presentable.

The adventures he had been through in the paper-chase and afterwards had certainly not improved it. But careful dusting and brushing and stitching worked wonders, and Arthur Augustus was pretty well satisfied with his efforts. He had lost his Scout hat in the paper-chase; but, fortunately, he had another, and he did not deign to reply to Monty Lowther's suggestion that, upon such an occasion, a topper would be the proper caper.

Other fellows were busy as well as D'Arcy. Levison did not mean to be left out, and the existing patrols did not want to take in the cad of the Fourth; but Levison was equal to the occasion. He intended to form a patrol by himself, and Mellish of the Fourth was his first recruit.

Mellish, certainly, was about the last fellow in the world to take up scouting, or any other manly occupation, and he received Levison's suggestion at first with a sniff.

"I'm going to form a Scout patrol," Levison announced, coming into the study which he shared in the Fourth Form passage with Mellish and Lumley-Lumley.

"What rot!" said Mellish.

"You?" said Lumley-Lumley, in surprise.

"Yes. Why not?"

"I guess it's a new departure for you," said Lumley-Lumley. "But better late than never!"

"I want you fellows to join," said Levison.

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"I'm a member of the Wolf Patrol already," he said.

Mellish shook his head more emphatically.

"Rot!" he replied.

"Look here, Mellish——"

"Rats!"

"There's a half-holiday to-morrow morning for all Boy Scouts!"

"Oh!" said Mellish.

"And you can chuck it afterwards, if you like!"

"Oh, I see!"

"You'll join?"

"What-ho!"

"Good!" said Levison. "You're a member of the Lion Patrol. Nothing like having a good name. I want four more chaps."

"You won't get 'em!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess you're not built for a patrol-leader, Levison, old man!"

"We'll see," said Levison.

"Besides, this is a rotten thing you're doing," said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess you oughtn't to take up the thing at all, unless you mean to stick to it."

"Rats!"

"If you're only doing it to get a half-holiday, I guess it's pretty mean!"

Levison yawned.

"I didn't come here for a sermon," he remarked, and he quitted the study.

He made his way to Crooke's study in the Shell passage. Crooke of the Shell was not doing his preparation, as he should have been. He was reclining gracefully in his armchair, with his feet on the table, smoking a cigarette. That was one of the favourite amusements of the cad of the Shell.

He started as the door opened, and
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the cigarette slipped into his mouth as he jumped up suddenly. If a prefect had caught Crooke smoking, it would have been very bad for Crooke, and the sudden opening of the door alarmed him. He gasped and spluttered wildly as the cigarette went into his mouth.

"Yow-w-w-w-w! Gro-ro-ro-ro-o-oh!" Levison stared at him in astonishment!

"What the dickens— Crooke—"
 "Gro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-o-o-oh!"
 "What's the matter? What—"
 "Grug-grug-ug-g-g-gh!"
 "My hat!"

Crooke spat out the cigarette into the grate, and gasped.

"You silly fathead!" he roared.

"You made me jump!"

Levison grinned.

"Sorry," he said. "I say, Crooke, have—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Crooke, still coughing.

"Have you seen the notice on the board?"

"Yes. Groo-hoo!"

"What do you think of it?"

"Lot of rot! Buzz off!"

"You're not in a patrol, Crooke?"

"And I don't mean to be!" growled Crooke. "No tramping about the country with a broomstick for me! Rats! Gro-o-oh!"

"I'm making up a patrol—"

"More fool you!" said Crooke politely.

"And I want you to join."

"Piffle!"

"Half-holiday to-morrow morning for all the Scouts at the school," Levison explained. "We don't want to be left out while the other fellows are having a holiday. Needn't keep up the Scout bizny any longer than the holiday, you know."

Crooke chuckled.

"Oh, I see! That's all right! I'm on!"

"Good!" said Levison. "That makes three—Mellish, you, and me! I'll try Gore next. He isn't a Scout, but he'll take it on for a holiday, I expect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison called upon Gore of the Shell. Gore and Skimpole were in their study, and there were loud voices proceeding therefrom, announcing an argument. They were both talking at the top of their voices as Levison came in recruiting.

"You silly ass!" roared Gore.

"My dear Gore," said Skimpole, blinking at the bully of the Shell through his big spectacles. "If you listen patiently—"

"Shut up!"

"I am sure that a chapter from Professor Balmyrumpet's great book on the subject of Determinism, and the Inherent possibilities of Impossibilities, will improve your mind—"

"Shurrup!"

"And you must admit that it needs improving, my dear Gore," said Skimpole, wagging his forefinger at his study-mate in a reproving manner.

"You burbling fathead!"

"My dear Gore—"

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Levison.

"This chortling chump wants to read aloud a lot of gurgling rot from a fat-headed book on some silly scientific subject!" howled Gore. "I'm going to slaughter him if he does. That's all!"

"My dear Levison, I'm seeking to improve Gore's mind."

"I'll improve your features if you begin!" growled Gore.

"Yes, cheese it, Skimmy!" said Levison. "I want you two fellows to join

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my patrol—the Lion Patrol. I'm getting up a patrol of Boy Scouts."

Gore snorted.

"The Liar Patrol, did you call it?" he demanded.

"No, I didn't!"

"Well, you should have. It would be suitable, if you're leader of it," said Gore, who was evidently more given to being truthful than polite.

"Half-holiday to-morrow morning for all Boy Scouts," Levison explained unmoved. "This is your last chance."

"Oh, count me in!" said Gore.

"You, too, Skimmy?"

Skimpole shook his head.

"I am afraid that my scientific investigations do not leave me time to take an interest in more frivolous matters, my dear Levison," he said.

"Otherwise, I should be glad to take charge of the matter for you."

"I don't want you to take charge of it," said Levison. "I want you to join the patrol, that's all. It means a morning off."

"My dear Levison—"

"As patrol leader, I shall excuse you from duty, and you can take the morning off in any way you like," said Levison.

"Ah, that alters the case, my dear Levison! I will certainly join you!"

"Good!" said Levison. "I want you to turn up in the Common-room. We want to show Tom Merry & Co. that we can form a patrol quite as well as he can, and have a whack in what's going."

"Good egg!" said Gore.

Later in the evening Levison of the Fourth appeared in the junior Common-room with his patrol, having succeeded in getting his sixth member. He found most of the juniors there, all busily discussing the review of the morrow morning.

"Sorry for you chaps," Blake remarked, as Levison & Co. came in. "You should have joined a patrol while you had a chance. You'll be left out of this now."

"Who's going to be left out?" demanded Levison.

"Why, you are!" said Blake, in surprise. "Only Boy Scouts are going to be reviewed. The other fellows will go into the Form-room, as usual."

Levison sniffed.

"But I'm a Boy Scout!" he said.

"You are?"

"Certainly! Here's my patrol—the Lion Patrol!"

"My hat!"

"I suppose we're as good as any other patrol," said Crooke, with a sneer.

"What about clobber?" said Monty Lowther. "You haven't got any Boy Scout duds?"

"That's not essential," said Levison.

"If a chap hasn't the clobber he can wear his ordinary clothes."

"Course he can!" said Mellish.

"I fancy we're as good as any other giddy patrol, and we're jolly well taking our whack in the half-holiday!" said Levison.

Tom Merry frowned.

"That isn't playing the game," he said. "You're only taking this up for the sake of the half-holiday, and you don't mean to keep it up."

Levison nodded coolly.

"No fear!" he agreed. "But we're Boy Scouts, all the same, and we're jolly well going to have the morning off, same as you fellows do."

"What-ho!" said Gore.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came into the Common-room.

"Bed-time, you kids!" he said, in his pleasant voice. "All Boy Scouts can get up in the Scout rig to-morrow morning. They won't be wanted in classes."

"Fellows who haven't got a Scout-rig will wear everyday clothes, of course?" said Levison.

Kildare looked at him.

"All the St. Jim's Scouts have Scout-clothes," he said.

"Not the newly-formed patrols."

Kildare smiled grimly.

"Oh," he said, "there are newly-formed patrols, are there? Formed when?"

"I've formed one this evening."

"Then you can uniform it again, as soon as you like," said Kildare. "No patrols formed since Mr. Raitton put the notice on the board will be allowed to take part in the review. And all boys who do not take part in the review will turn up in the Form-rooms as usual."

Levison's jaw dropped.

"Look here, Kildare—" he began.

"That's enough."

Kildare strode away. The juniors chuckled as they prepared to go up to the dormitory. The expression upon Levison's face was distinctly amusing. The members of the Lion Patrol looked most unpleasantly at their patrol leader.

"You ass!" said Gore.

"You fathead!" said Crooke.

"You silly chump!" said Mellish.

"My dear Levison, you appear to have made a singular mistake," said Skimpole, beaming benevolently at Levison through his spectacles. "You have evidently laboured under a misapprehension."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "A little too clever, as usual, Levison. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly fathead," said Gore, "bothering us for nothing! We might have guessed this. Bump the silly ass!"

"Look here— Oh—ow!"

Bump!

The patrol leader of the Lion Patrol descended heavily on the floor and yelled, and the Lions walked away grinning. No more was heard of Levison as a Scout after that. The short career of the Lion Patrol had come to a very sudden end.

CHAPTER 12.

A Stitch in Time!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was still very busy in Study No. 6 when the Fourth Form went up to bed. Blake, Herries and Digby called for him on their way to the dormitory. Arthur Augustus was laying out the Scout uniform on the study table, and surveying it with considerable satisfaction.

"Bedtime, Gussy," said Blake.

"Yaas, deah boy. I'm finished. I wathah think this will look all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "I want to make a good impression upon Colonel Wake, you know."

"Of course, he will single you out at once," agreed Blake sarcastically.

"Immediately he starts the review he will ask Raitton, 'Who is that distinguished-looking ass?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Bring your clobber with you, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, looking into the study; "we've got to get up as Scouts to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus carefully folded up his clothes to carry them up to the Fourth Form dormitory.

(Continued on page 18.)



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! I bet the first thing you looked for in this grand number was the free gifts. That was only to be expected when such ripping coloured picture cards were being given away. Well, having seen the free gift pictures, how do you like them? Topping, don't you think? They'll look splendid in your picture card album, providing picturesque souvenirs of the age of flying—souvenirs that will always have an interest.

Next Wednesday you will find three more picture cards in the GEM. These cards show famous racing-cars at speed and other colourful incidents in the world of motoring. They are fine pictures to add to your collection, so make sure that there's no risk of missing them.

"THE BLACK HAND AT ST. FRANK'S!"

Have you read yet the opening chapters of this wonderful new serial? If not, then you have that treat in store. If you have, then you must be eagerly awaiting the next gripping instalment. And, take it from me, you can expect another thriller. Handforth & Co.—having found the sinister house, Gallows Mere, all is set now for the boys of St. Frank's to carry out their pledged word of delivering the unknown airman's package. But you can be sure that the eight juniors will be eager to discover more about the strange affair in which they have become involved. Who is the mysterious "No. 1," into whose hands the package has to be given? What lies behind the murder of the airman, and the disappearance of his black assassin? The latter problem is partly solved in the next chapters, when there is a dramatic development in events.

"THE OUTSIDER'S DARK HOUR!"

As I fully expected, the first extra-long St. Jim's story has been received with rousing cheers. Readers are overwhelming me with letters of praise and

thanks. There is no doubt that the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. have an even greater appeal to-day than when they first started years ago.

The big feature of next Wednesday's programme is another special, extra-long St. Jim's yarn. It is the type of human-interest yarn that always brings out the very best qualities of penmanship in our popular author Martin Clifford. Once again, readers will be delighted to know, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley is the star character. The story revolves on a secret plot to disgrace the one-time Outsider, and it succeeds inasmuch as Lumley is sentenced to expulsion. It is then that the Outsider, in his dark hour, begins a fight to save his own honour—a fight in which he has all St. Jim's against him. Look out for this powerful yarn—and don't forget that there will be three more picture cards in this tiptop issue.

THE SCHOOLBOY PILOT!

How many fellows still at school have piloted a plane? Very few, if any. Yet that was the proud achievement of fourteen-year-old John Lipton recently. I should imagine that many air-minded boys of to-day would give a lot for the chance of emulating his performance.

Mr. Lipton senior had entered his machine—which, by the way, once belonged to Mrs. Amy Mollison—in a race from London to Newcastle. John was to act as second pilot, the machine being fitted with dual control. During the race he relieved his father several times, and although flying conditions at the start were not too good, he handled the plane quite skillfully and kept up a steady speed. The Lipton's plane, however, was just beaten on the post, for only a minute separated them from the winner. He was Flight-Lieutenant Wilson, and won at an average speed of

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over 140 m.p.h. The flight was a thrilling experience for John, who hopes one day, when he has reached the age to obtain a licence, to pilot a machine of his own in a race. Good luck to him!

STRANGLER IN MIDAIR!

Not such good fortune attended the efforts of another youthful aviator. Dennis Smith, who is only eighteen, never wants to experience again the nerve-racking ordeal he went through the other day while being tested for his parachute-jumping certificate. Dennis already holds a pilot's licence, and he had made three previous parachute descents. With his instructor, he went up to make his fourth descent. At an altitude of 1,200 feet, he climbed out of the cockpit on to the wing, ready to make his jump. It was then that he had a very narrow escape from death, and it is due to the pilot's presence of mind in an emergency that he is alive to-day. As Dennis was tensing himself against the wind pressure, his tie was suddenly whipped out from beneath his flying suit. In a moment it was wrapped tightly round a wing strut, and the young parachutist felt himself being throttled. He signalled to his instructor, who, seeing what had happened, immediately gripped hold of Dennis' parachute harness. He was only just in time, for the young aviator lost consciousness. The pilot then hauled him half into the cockpit, and, holding him in that position, brought the plane one-handed safely to earth. Artificial respiration brought Dennis back to his senses after a quarter of an hour, and he was not long in fully recovering. He will take good care his necktie cannot blow loose the next time he makes a jump, which he intends to do again, in spite of his awful experience. Dennis has certainly got the "nerve" for chute-jumping, which is everything.

MATCHSTICK MARVELS!

One can do a lot of things with matches, but a policeman in Sydney, New South Wales, wants a bit of beating when it comes to putting them to a novel and excellent use. Making things with matches is his hobby, and he has made some splendid articles of furniture with them. He has even turned out a grandfather clock, every bit of the woodwork being formed with matchsticks. For all the furniture he has made, which includes a tray and table, he estimates that he has used over a quarter of a million matches. He is now going to get busy on his biggest job—making a dining-room suite, and it will take a million matches!

TAILPIECE!

Smith (to friend): "I never have any words with my wife."

Little Willie (his son): "No, mother has them all!"

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Frank Cockley, 6, Holmes Street, Cheadle, Ches; age 13-15; stamps, cycling, etc.

Fred Hall, 141, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W.5; age 14-15; sport, livestock; overseas.

Billie Lloyd, Albemarle Hotel, Brighton; stamps; age 13-15.

J. W. Van Rooyen, 17, Logan Road, Penang, Straits Settlements; stamps, snaps.

John Bradley, 108, Summerhill Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; age 12-15; stamps.

Neal Jones, 117, Sydney Road, Moreland, N.13, Victoria, Australia.

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He had succeeded in making them look very neat and clean. Monty Lowther glanced at the clothes, with a grin, as they went upstairs.

"Sewed up all the holes?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You haven't sewn up the bags so that you can't get into them, I hope."

"I should not be likely to do that, deah boy."

"I shouldn't wonder if you did. I'll bet you a feed at the tuck-shop that when you come to put on your bags to-morrow morning you'll find that you can't get your tootsies into them!" said Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"

"I'll bet you—"

"Wats, deah boy! I decline to make bets, as I wogard it as a wotten pwactice. But I am willin' to stand you a feed at the tuck-shop if it should pwove to be as you say, and, if it doesn't, you stand me the feed."

"Done!" said Lowther. "You're witnesses, you fellows. Gussy bets—"

"I do not bet, Lowthah. I wufuse to bet."

"Well, wagers, then—"

"Not at all. I wogard a wagah as bein' as wotten as a bet."

"Well, you undertake to stand me a tuck-shop feed if you can't get your feet into your bags to-morrow morning because they're sewn up," said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho! And all these chaps are witnesses. I shall have rabbit-pie and jam tarts and ginger-pop!" said Lowther.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus carried his garments into the Fourth Form dormitory and

folded them carefully upon a chair beside his bed. The Shell fellows went on to their own dormitory, and Tom Merry and Manners looked inquiringly at Lowther.

"You'll lose that wager, Monty," said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"But Gussy can't have been such an ass as to sew up the legs of his trousers!" exclaimed Manners.

"I didn't say he had," said Lowther coolly.

"But if he hasn't—"

"If he hasn't, that's no reason why anybody else shouldn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Needles can be borrowed, and cotton is cheap," Lowther remarked. "And a stitch in time saves a feed at the tuck-shop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the scheme that was working in the mind of the humorist of the Shell, went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

It was a good hour later that the door of the Fourth Form dormitory opened slowly and cautiously, and a dusky figure appeared.

Steady breathing came from all the beds. The Fourth Form were all asleep.

Monty Lowther entered on tiptoe.

In a couple of minutes he had captured the carefully-folded clothes on the chair beside D'Arcy's bed. He took them under his arm, and retired into the passage. By the glimmering light at the window at the end of the dormitory passage Monty Lowther began to sew, putting in plenty of stitches with double cotton.

It did not take him long.

In ten minutes he returned to the Fourth Form dormitory, and the clothes, carefully folded once more, were replaced upon the chair.

Then Monty Lowther returned to his own dormitory. He groped his way to his bed in the dark, and turned in.

Clang! Clang!

The rising-bell roused the St. Jim's fellows to a new day. Jack Blake sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory and yawned.

"I believe that ass Taggles gets earlier and earlier with the giddy rising-bell every morning!" he growled.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his eyes. "But we're goin' to have a wippin' mornin' to-day, deah boy. I'm sowwy you're out of it, Levison, old chap."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Levison gratefully.

"Wecally, Levison—"

"Oh, rats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stepped out of bed with the intention of inflicting summary chastisement upon the cad of the Fourth. But he relented, as he remembered that Levison had to turn up at classes that morning, while the other fellows were being reviewed by a distinguished officer.

Instead of going for Levison, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reached for his clothes, and sat on the bed to pull on the short lower garments.

He succeeded in getting them on as far as his ankles, and there they stuck.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

Jack Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! You've sewn them up, after all!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus made a great effort to drag on the bags. But his feet would not go through.

"This is a wotten joke!" howled D'Arcy. "Somebody has sewn up my bags while I've been asleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth Formers were yelling with laughter. The dormitory door opened, and the Terrible Three looked in on their way down.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Did you find the bags all right, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus swung round.

"No, Lowthah, I did not. They have been sewn up."

"Then I win the feed?"

"Bai Jove! No—yaas, I suppose you do. But I did not sew them up; they have been sewn up in the most weckless way for a wotten pwactical joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

Arthur Augustus gazed at Lowther as a sudden suspicion shot into his mind.

"Gweat Scott! Was it you, you feahful wottah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" sobbed Lowther. "I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my little hatchet! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth Formers yelled. Arthur Augustus stood petrified for a moment, and then rushed towards the door.

Lowther backed into the passage.

"Mind, I've won that feed!" he smiled.

Then he beat a retreat.

It was impossible for Arthur Augustus to follow him in the present airy state of his attire. He shook his fist after Monty Lowther, who kissed his hand in return from the end of the passage.

Arthur Augustus turned back into the dormitory, breathing wrath. It was almost breakfast-time before D'Arcy appeared that morning. His trousers had given him quite a lot of bother.



"THE ST. JIM'S HIKERS!"

by Martin Clifford

"We're happy when we're hiking!"—that's the "theme" song of Tom Merry & Co. who are off on a holiday jaunt on "shanks' pony." And they're happier still when they bump into Horace Coker, the prize duffer of Greyfriars. Horace prefers to do his "hiking" in a caravan. There are lots of other things he prefers, too, but some of them come "unstuck" when he tries to lord it over Tom Merry & Co. If you're looking for ideal holiday reading this bright and breezy story is *the* thing.

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CHAPTER 13.

The Colonel!

"THE colonel!"
 "Here he is!"
 "Here's the giddy V.C.!"
 "Here's the noble D.S.O.!"
 "Hurrah!"

The schoolboy Scouts had come out from breakfast, and the first person they saw as they streamed out of the dining-room was a tall, soldierly looking man talking to Mr. Railton in the Hall.

They did not need telling who it was. Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O., had evidently arrived, and the juniors looked at him with great admiration.

He was not exactly the man they had expected to see. He was a very powerfully built man, clean-shaven, with keen, piercing eyes—but if he had not been Colonel Rake, V.C., D.S.O., fellows might have thought that his eyes were shifty. But, of course, that was impossible in the V.C., and the juniors were determined to make a hero of him, whatever he was like.

He was speaking to Mr. Railton in a deep voice, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a little start as he heard it.

"Bai Jove! I've heard that chap speak somewhere before!" he exclaimed.
 "Rot!" said Herries. "He's only just returned to England from abroad."

"Yaas; but it seems to me—"
 The colonel turned towards the crowd of Scouts with a smile.

The Scouts saluted him. He acknowledged their salute, and then followed Mr. Railton to the Head's study. The Boy Scouts crowded out into the quadrangle.

Arthur Augustus was still looking very puzzled. Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder as he stood with wrinkled brows.

"Thinking of your instructions for the review, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus started out of his reverie.

"No, deah boy. I'm thinkin' of Colonel Wake."

"Fine-looking chap!" said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas!"

"What's the matter, Gussy?" asked the Shell fellow, looking curiously at the swell of St. Jim's. He could see that something was working in D'Arcy's mind.

"It's a wemarkable coincidence, deah boy."

"What is?"
 "About his voice."
 "Whose voice?"
 "The colonel's."

"What's the matter with his voice?" asked Tom Merry, in amazement.
 "It is vewy like anothah voice I have heard."

"Well, such things have happened before," said Tom Merry. "I've known chaps who had noses alike—"

"And I know two chaps who had bicycles of exactly the same make," said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah! If his voice had wesembled some othah person's it would not have been so wemarkable, but—but—"

"Well, whose does it resemble?"
 "The chap's who wobbed me in the wood."

"My hat!"
 "It's most wemarkable," said D'Arcy. "The voice is wemarkably like that of that bouncer who wobbed me! Of course, it is only a coincidence!"
 Tom Merry laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I suppose it is, Gussy. They could hardly be relations, could they?"
 "No; I pwesume not."

And Arthur Augustus dismissed the matter from his mind, though it puzzled him very much. Meanwhile, the distinguished officer was speaking to the Head in his study. Dr. Holmes greeted very cordially the big, soldierly man who had won so many distinctions on the field of battle.

"I hope I am not causing any inconvenience here," the colonel said.
 "The fact is, my time is limited; I am making a tour of the schools where the Boy Scout movement has been taken up; these reviews are of great use to the movement, I think."

"I am sure of it," said the Head cordially. "You will find the whole school will give you a most enthusiastic welcome, Colonel Rake. All the members of the Scout patrols are free from lessons so long as you require them."

"Good; very good, sir!"
 Mr. Railton left the study; he discerned that the gallant colonel had something to say to the Head alone. Colonel Rake coughed.

"A most singular thing occurred on my way here," he said, his hand toying idly with the V.C. on his broad breast. "It would hardly be believed that a man who has been through my experiences in South Africa and the Great War would fall a victim to a common pick-pocket—but such is the case."

"I am very sorry," said the Head, looking very much concerned.

The colonel smiled.

"It is easier to guard against the enemy than to keep on the alert against a clever pick-pocket," he remarked. "At all events, I have found it so. In the train coming to Rylcombe I was cleared out—pocket-book, watch, and everything. They have not even left me my return ticket to Aldershot."

"Dear me!"
 Colonel Rake coughed again.

"It is very unfortunate," he said. "I am reduced to the necessity of borrowing a small sum for my needs until I get back to my quarters. I hardly like to ask you, Dr. Holmes, a stranger to me, but—"

"Not at all!" said the Head cordially. "No stranger to your reputation, at all events, colonel. I shall be most happy to oblige you in this little matter; it will be a pleasure to me."

"Of course, I shall send you a cheque the moment I reach my quarters," said the colonel. "If you

could lend me five pounds until then, my dear sir, I should be extremely obliged."

"With pleasure, my dear colonel."
 And the Head immediately did so. Colonel Rake slipped the money into his pocket with an embarrassed smile.

"It is a most ridiculous occurrence," he said. "I—I would rather that it was not mentioned to anyone. My brother-officers would chaff me about it a little too much if it got about the mess."

"Not a word, of course," said the Head, smiling.

"Could you lend me a watch while I am here?" asked the colonel. "That, of course, I shall return to you when the review is over."

"Most certainly!"
 And the Head detached his own watch and handed it to the colonel.

"Thank you very much, sir."
 And Colonel Rake proceeded to the quadrangle.

CHAPTER 14.

Under Review!

TOM MERRY & CO. were all in the quad now, and all in their garb as Boy Scouts, ready for action. They looked a very handsome and fit crowd as they



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mustered in the middle of the old quadrangle. Colonel Rake came out upon the steps of the School House, with Mr. Railton, and stood in the shadow of the porch, looking out over the scene.

"A very fine set of boys, Mr. Railton," said the colonel.

Mr. Railton nodded, gratified by the praise from so good a judge as Colonel Rake, V.C.

"Yes, I think the St. Jim's patrols compare very well with others," he said. "Probably you will see the Boy Scouts of Rylcombe Grammar School while you are down here, sir?"

"Yes, undoubtedly. But may I mention a most embarrassing matter to you, Mr. Railton. In the train, as I came down this morning, my pocket was picked."

"How unfortunate," said the Housemaster unsuspectingly.

"Yes, it was most unlucky. After escaping the ambushes of the enemy, to fall before a pickpocket at home is a little too humiliating," said the colonel, with a smile. "I do not wish the matter to become known; I feel very sensitive about it. But I am placed in something of a difficulty by the occurrence. If it is not asking too much, could you make me a small loan, to be returned, of course, as soon as I reach my quarters in Aldershot? A couple of pounds would see me through. The rascal even took my return ticket, as well as my watch."

"I should be only too happy," said Mr. Railton; and two pounds changed hands.

"Perhaps you could lend me a watch to use during the review," suggested the colonel. "That, of course, I shall return to you as soon as the proceedings terminate."

"Pray take mine."

"Thank you very much. Now we are ready."

And the colonel descended into the quadrangle with his long stride.

The Boy Scouts of St. Jim's greeted him with a ringing cheer.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The colonel acknowledged the cheer with a smile and a nod.

The Boy Scouts were arrayed in the quadrangle, and they really presented a very businesslike appearance, and fully deserved the encomiums of the distinguished visitor.

There were more than a hundred fellows at St. Jim's in the garb of Boy Scouts, most of them juniors, but some in the Fifth.

Envious fellows tied down to lessons in the Form-rooms wished that they, too, had joined the patrols.

Colonel Rake greeted the boys with a few cheery words, and then proceeded at once to business.

That he knew his business was soon clear.

He rapped out short, sharp orders and put the Boy Scouts through their evolutions with great precision. The Scouts showed, too, that they knew their business. Dr. Holmes looked on from his study window; but Mr. Railton retired into the School House, where he was needed in the Sixth Form Room.

After about half an hour the colonel approached the Head's window, the Boy Scouts standing at attention.

Dr. Holmes pushed up the window as he saw that the colonel wished to speak to him.

"A very fine set of young fellows, sir," said the colonel in his deep voice. "They would do any school credit, Mr. Holmes."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, colonel."

"I should like to take them out into

the wood, with your permission, sir, to go into the thing a little more thoroughly," said the colonel. "I am curious to see whether they have made the same progress in actual scout-craft."

"Exactly as you like, my dear sir."

"Then I will bring them back in an hour or so."

"Quite so; and then I hope you will lunch with me."

"Thank you, I will!"

The colonel turned back to the waiting Scouts.

"My lads," he said, "I have your headmaster's permission to take you out into the woods for an hour or so. I shall divide you into two corps, and put you through regular manoeuvres, and you shall show me what you are made of."

"Bravo!"

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' ideal!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"March!"

The Boy Scouts marched.

They formed in column-of-fours, and marched out of the school gates into the long white road that ran past the wood to Rylcombe.

Colonel Rake signed to Tom Merry and Figgins and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to walk with him at the side of the marching column. Greatly pleased at the distinction, the two leaders of the Scouts and the swell of St. Jim's walked along beside the striding officer.

Arthur Augustus bestowed a lofty smile upon his comrades. Tom Merry and Figgins were entitled to the distinction from their rank; but Arthur Augustus had apparently been selected only for his distinguished appearance.

The colonel chatted in a very cordial way to his three companions as they walked beside the steady column of Scouts.

"I had a very peculiar adventure as I came down this morning," he remarked. "I am afraid I shall sink in your estimation when I tell you that I have been victimised by a common pickpocket."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Is it possible, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, indeed," said the colonel, smiling. "I was cleared out—completely cleared out—in the train by a pickpocket, who got away with the plunder. Rather an unhappy experience for a man who has been through two wars in different parts of the world. I did not expect to meet my Waterloo in a local train in Sussex."

The juniors laughed.

"Must have had an awful nerve to tackle you, sir," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I wondah if it was the same chap who wobbled me?" said D'Arcy.

The colonel glanced at him quickly.

"You!" he said.

"Yaas, sir. I was wobbled on Wednesday evenin' in this vevy wood by a disgustin' wuffian!"

The colonel started.

"Pewwaps it was the same chap, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Very likely; there was a suspicious-looking man in my carriage," said the colonel. "What was he like?"

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I don't know, sir. You see, he tackled me in the dark. But he was a big, powahful chap—much stwongah than I am."

"Indeed."

"Yaas. A chap about your build, sir."

"Oh!"

"And the remarkable thing is, sir, that his voice was somethin' like yours, too!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The colonel laughed.

"That is rather unflattering to me," he said. "But I think it was probably

the same man who robbed me; there certainly was a passenger in my carriage who was a tall, strongly built man. I did not notice that my property was missing until after he had left the carriage, unfortunately."

"The awful rotter!" said Figgins.

"Yes; it is very unfortunate," said the colonel, in his easy way, "because he took my watch, and my return ticket to Aldershot. I wonder whether one of you lads could lend me a watch until we return to the school, as I do not want to be too late."

Three watches came out immediately. Arthur Augustus' was his second best; the famous gold ticker being still on the list of the missing.

"Pway take mine, sir!"

"Mine!" said Figgins.

"Mine!" said Tom Merry.

Colonel Rake glanced at the watches. Figgins' was a big silver watch of the turnip variety, which kept excellent time, but was not worth more than a pound at the most. Arthur Augustus' was also silver, though more valuable. Tom Merry's was a gold watch, presented to him by his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Tom Merry generally wore a serviceable gunmetal watch, but he put on the gold one on special occasions. This was a special occasion.

The colonel accepted the loan of Tom Merry's watch. The fact that it was a gold one could not be supposed to appeal to a practical soldier; but, after all, he could not take all three, so he had to decide upon one. He slipped Tom Merry's handsome watch into his pocket.

"This one will do," he said. "Thank you very much. Remind me to return it to you when we get back to the school, my lad, in case I should forget."

"Certainly, sir."

"But I say, sir," said Figgins diffidently. "How are you going to get home, sir, if you've lost all your money and your return ticket to Aldershot?"

"That is a difficulty," said the colonel. "I shall have to ask your headmaster for a small loan. Only I feel so really absurd at having allowed my pocket to be picked that I hardly like to mention the matter to him."

"Pewwaps you would allow us to make you a tempoway loan, sir, and then you needn't mention it to the Head," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be a gweat honah to us, sir."

The colonel hesitated.

"You are very kind and thoughtful," he said; "but—perhaps—"

"Pway say the word, sir!"

"Well, if you should have some cash with you—"

"I had a tip fwom my governah this mornin', sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I had wired to him for a fivah, because I had been wobbled by that howwible wascal, you know, and instead of sendin' me a fivah, he sent me two pounds. I wogard that as wathah stingy of the governah. Howvah, here it is, at your service, sir, if you will do me the gweat honah to accept a loan fwom me."

"Thank you very much."

"But that won't be enough, sir," said Tom Merry. "I have a quid. What have you got, Figg?"

"Ten bob," said Figgins.

The pound note and the ten shillings disappeared into the colonel's pocket.

"Thank you," he said. "That will see me through; and when I get back to Aldershot this afternoon, I will send a cheque immediately to your headmaster, and he will return this to you. Is that satisfactory?"

"Quite, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

The Scout column had reached the stile that gave access to the footpath

through the wood. The Scouts halted. "This is where we get into the wood, sir," said Monty Lowther, saluting. "Good!" And the Boy Scouts plunged under the old trees, tramping in the thick, fallen leaves.

CHAPTER 15.
Foiled at the Finish!

THE schoolboy Scouts were in great spirits. To study scout-craft, under the experienced eye of a distinguished officer who had won the V.C. on the field of battle, was an honour that did not fall to the lot of every troop of Boy Scouts.

the main body of the intended surprise. It was the business of the New House to prevent them from getting through, and Figgins posted his men very carefully for that purpose. Tom Merry was in command of the main position. The detached Scouts were Lowther, Glyn, Kangaroo, and Reilly, of the School House.

Colonel Rake led them away to the road, while Figgins was posting his men in a long circle through the wood to keep guard. "Now, you understand what you've got to do," said the colonel. "One of you, at least, must get through the attacking party's lines, and warn the fort." "Right-ho, sir!" said Monty Lowther. "It is a Scout's duty never to be taken

junior boys' watches at school. Will one of you lads lend me one?"

Four watches came out in a twinkling. Glyn's one was a very valuable one. Bernard Glyn, the Liverpool boy, was the son of a millionaire, and he had a very valuable watch. Colonel Rake selected that one, and thanked Glyn for the loan as he slipped it into his pocket. "How will you get home, sir, if you've lost your ticket and your money?" asked Kangaroo. "Really, I had not thought about that," said the distinguished officer, with a smile. "I shall have to borrow a few pounds from someone. Very awkward for me to have to mention the matter to your headmaster, too." "No need for that, sir," said Bernard



The colonel was stepping into the compartment when Inspector Fix sprang forward, grasped him by the back of the collar, and dragged him back on to the platform. "The game's up!" exclaimed the inspector.

And Colonel Rake entered into the thing as keenly as the boys themselves. He divided the Scouts into two parties, assigning them their positions. The juniors had informed him of the distinction between School House and New House at St. Jim's, and he seemed to understand, and to enter into their feelings, immediately. A contest between School House and New House was exactly after the boys' own hearts, and the colonel arranged it upon those lines. The School House brigade was placed in possession of a section of the wood, and the New House fellows had to surprise them. School House Scouts, detached from the main body, had to get through the New House lines to warn

by surprise," said Colonel Rake. "Not that I have much right to preach on that subject, as I have been taken very much by surprise this very morning." "You, sir," said the four juniors together. "Yes. I had a most unpleasant adventure in the train coming down," said the colonel. "My pocket was picked—purse, watch, return-ticket, and everything taken." "Oh, sir!" "How rotten!" "You saw me borrow Merry's watch, perhaps," said the colonel calmly. "He has kindly lent it to me. Unfortunately, I have made the discovery that it does not go. I suppose accidents happen to

Glyn promptly. "We should be delighted, sir." "Faith, and it's delighted we shall be!" said Reilly. "Thank you, my lads. You are very good." "Not at all, sir." "Sure, I've only got a shilling myself," Reilly remarked. "But Glyn is rolling in money." Bernard Glyn laughed, and took out his pocket wallet. He took out six pound-notes. "Please take them, sir; you can send the money to me when you get home." "Thank you; that will be excellent." And six pound-notes disappeared into THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,436.

the colonel's pockets, where he must have been accumulating quite a collection by this time.

Then, after giving the Scouts some further instructions, the colonel bade them set to work.

"You have an hour to work in," he said. "I shall wait for you by the stile, and you will join me there at twelve o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

And the Scouts plunged into the wood, to carry out their difficult mission of penetrating the New House lines and reaching Tom Merry's position.

Colonel Rake walked away towards the stile.

He disappeared from the view of the juniors.

The distinguished officer reached the stile and stepped over it into the road. He gave a glance back into the wood; the trees had swallowed up all the Scouts of St. Jim's from sight.

He smiled.

The expression upon his face was very different now, and it might have surprised the Scouts of St. Jim's if they had seen it. They might have been surprised, too, if they had known that he was striding away at a good rate towards the village, instead of waiting at the stile as arranged.

The colonel was, in fact, walking so fast that it was almost a run.

He took out one of the watches—it was Tom Merry's watch, and it seemed to be going excellently now—and glanced at it.

"Just time to catch the eleven-fifteen," he murmured. "Good!"

And he hurried into the village.

He reached the railway station, and as he entered it a stout gentleman with ginger whiskers looked at him fixedly, and made a slight movement.

It was Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard, the gentleman whom Blake and Redfern had rescued from the vault under the old castle.

The inspector smiled to himself and followed the distinguished officer into the station.

Colonel Rake took a ticket for Wayland Junction, and hurried upon the platform.

The train was just coming in.

Inspector Fix followed him, stopping a few moments to whisper to the porter of the station, who regarded him with an open-mouthed stare.

The train drew in and stopped.

Colonel Rake opened the door of a first-class carriage, and was stepping in, when the stout inspector made a sudden spring forward from behind a slot machine.

The colonel was taken entirely by surprise.

The inspector's fat hand grasped the back of his collar, and he was dragged back upon the platform with a heavy bump.

The sudden fall dazed him for the moment.

As he lay gasping, the stout gentleman from Scotland Yard bent over him, and there was a quick, metallic click.

The next moment the colonel leaped up furiously. But his hands were fastened together; the handcuffs were tight on his wrists, and he was helpless.

Inspector Fix smiled sweetly, and clapped a hand upon his shoulder. The colonel's face was convulsed with fury. He did not look very much like a distinguished officer at that moment.

"The game's up!" said the inspector calmly. "Better take it quietly."

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The colonel made a last effort at dignity.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed. "Are you aware that I am an officer in his Majesty's Service? My uniform should have told you as much."

The inspector chuckled.

"I don't think I'm aware of it, Colonel Jim," he replied.

"Sir, I am Colonel Rake!"

"And Colonel Jim, and Pete the Dandy—and Major Hunt—and Clobber Bill—and several other persons," said the inspector. "I arrest you, Colonel Jim, on the charge of attempted murder!"

"Sir!"

"That's what it comes to, shutting a detective up in a vault, and leaving him there to starve," said Mr. Fix, with a nod.

"You are making a mistake—"

"No; you made the mistake when you thought I had stayed there," said the inspector agreeably. "I have been looking for you ever since. I saw you leave the train here this morning, and you gave me the slip; but I've been waiting for you. What little game have you been up to here?"

"This is a mistake—an absurd mistake; if you gave me time, I could—"

"You could have chucked me half the length of the platform and bolted," smiled the inspector. "I know, Colonel Jim; I'm not giving you the chance a second time. Better shut up, my man, and take it quietly. Anything you say may be used in evidence against you. You are coming with me to the local police station now, and when I've found what you've been up to down here, I shall take you to London. The game is up!"

The man burst into a laugh.

"You've got me, Fix!" he said.

"Yes," said the inspector cheerfully. "I've got you."

"You may as well take these things off—"

"Not this afternoon," said the inspector, "some other afternoon."

"I'll go quietly."

"I know you will; I'm going to keep the darbies on to make you," said the inspector. And with a cheery smile he marched his prisoner off.

CHAPTER 16.

A Surprise for the Scouts!

TOM MERRY put his hand to his watch-pocket, and, remembering that he had lent Colonel Rake his watch, withdrew it again.

"What's the time, Glyn?" he asked.

The scouting was over. The School House scouts had not succeeded in penetrating the New House lines; one after another they had been captured by Figgins & Co. as they attempted it; and then the New House had assailed Tom Merry's position. In that, however, they had been worsted, and most of the New House fellows were prisoners by the time twelve rolled over the woods from the church steeple in Rylcombe. At twelve the Boy Scouts were to meet Colonel Rake at the stile to return to the school, and in ten minutes they were there.

But they did not find the colonel.

They clustered round the stile, and in the road and the footpath and waited; but the colonel did not appear.

Such unpunctuality on the part of the distinguished officer surprised them, and they watched the road to and fro in vain

for his returning figure. The juniors were getting hungry now; it was near their dinner-time. They wanted to report to the colonel, and they wanted to get back to dinner, and some of them grew restive as the minutes passed on, and the great officer did not appear.

Glyn shook his head as the captain of the Shell asked him the time.

"Can't tell you," he replied.

"Why not?"

"I've lent my watch to the colonel. He lost his—had his pocket picked in the train down."

"Why, I lent him mine."

"Yours didn't go."

"It was going all right when I gave it to him," said Tom Merry. "So he's told you fellows about the pickpocket? I thought he wanted to keep it dark."

"I suppose he needed the cash to get home," said Glyn.

Tom Merry stared.

"The what?" he asked.

"Cash for his ticket home."

"But you didn't lend him that?"

"Yes, I did."

"You."

"Yes, why not?" asked the Liverpool lad, in surprise.

"He must have wanted a jolly lot to get home, then," said Tom Merry, in astonishment. "He borrowed some of us—two quid of Gussy, a quid of me, and ten bob of Figgins."

Bernard Glyn whistled.

"Seems to be a borrowing sort of johnnie," he remarked. "He borrowed six quid of me."

"Bai Jove!"

"And my watch," added Glyn.

"He seems to have a fancy for gold watches," remarked Kerr. "I suppose there's nothing fishy about the colonel, is there?"

"Fishy!"

"Well, it's jolly queer his borrowing money of two different chaps for the same purpose and not turning up here," said Kerr. "It seems that there was nothing but his telegram to show that he was Colonel Rake. Anybody can send a telegram. Looks fishy to me."

"Bai Jove!"

The Scouts looked at one another in doubt and dismay. They searched along the road with their eyes, but there was no sign of Colonel Rake. Fatty Wynn granted.

"I say, it's dinner-time," he said. "You fellows can wait for the giddy colonel, if you like; I'm going back."

"Same here," said Redfern. "We'll leave our giddy leaders to wait for him; and the rest of us can go back and feed. Two will be enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Some of the Boy Scouts were already starting down the road towards the school. Others followed them. It seemed useless to wait for the colonel; he was nearly an hour late already. Tom Merry and Figgins stayed, and Jack Blake and D'Arcy stayed with them. The rest departed, and were soon lost to sight down the road.

"He can't be coming," said Figgins.

"Bai Jove, it's weally remarkable!"

"Perhaps something happened to him," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we go to the police station in Rylcombe and inquire? If there's been an accident, they'll have heard of it, and—"

"And if there's something fishy," said Blake, "the sooner the police know about it the better."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys; let's go!"

And the four juniors walked away slowly towards the village, still keep-

(Continued on page 23.)

The BLACK HAND at ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Oath of Eight!

LOOK!"
 "He's in trouble!"
 "Great Scott!"
 Eight schoolboys stood on the footpath midway in the big meadow which divided the River Stowe from the St. Frank's playing fields. Eight faces were turned upwards towards the dark sky of the September evening. Eight pairs of startled eyes watched the erratic evolutions of a light aeroplane a thousand feet above. The machine, a mere black spot in the sky, was twisting and turning, diving and zooming. Then suddenly the engine cut right out and the only sound was the subdued roaring swish of the idling propeller.
 "The pilot of that plane is either a fool or a lunatic," said Nipper, with conviction.

The popular junior skipper knew what he was talking about. Despite his youth, and by reason of his association with Nelson Lee, he was the proud owner of a special pilot's certificate of his own.

"Why a fool or a lunatic?" asked Tommy Watson. "The man's simply stunting, as far as I can see."

"If he is, then he must be a fool," retorted Nipper. "It's pretty nearly pitch dark this evening, and there are woods all about— By Jove! He's switched on again."

With a splutter and a dull roar the plane's engine had come to life. The machine zoomed again, circling so unsteadily that there was quite obviously something seriously amiss.

It was only by chance that the eight St. Frank's fellows were together. Nipper and his two chums, Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson, had been visiting at the River House, and, strolling home, they had encountered the celebrated chums of Study D—Handforth, Church, and McClure—who had been for a walk. Then they had been joined by Archie Glenthorne and no less a person than William Napoleon Browne, the long, lean, urbane skipper of the Fifth. The latter now gave voice.

"Correct me if I am wrong, Brother Glenthorne," he said, "but didn't I hear you saying, this morning, that Brother Bertram was home on leave?"

Archie Glenthorne stiffened. He jammed his monocle into his aristocratic eye and surveyed Browne with unutterable scorn.

"A frightfully poisonous suggestion, dash you!" said Archie coldly. "Good gad! Do you think for a moment that my brother Bertram, one of the finest pilots in the Air Force, would fly over St. Frank's at night and do stunts?"

"No need to show your ignorance, either, Browne," said Edward Oswald Handforth, with a sniff.

"Ignorance, Brother Handy?"

"Well, any ass can see, with half an

"Draw it mild, Handy!" protested Church.

"Cheese it!" said McClure.

"I tell you it was a pistol shot!" insisted Handforth. "You can't mistake a sound like that. Look! He's diving like a madman now, completely out of control!"

"The trouble with you, Handy, is that you've got a melodramatic mind," said Nipper. "That was only a back-fire. Seems to me he switched on and the engine wouldn't take it—I say, he's going to crash, you chaps!" he added in alarm. "Look at that dive! He'll never pull out of it, and he's hurtling straight into Bellton Wood!"

"Begad! How shockin'ly awful!" muttered Sir Montie.

Silence fell among them. They stood as though rooted to the ground, staring with fascinated horror. They could do nothing. The mysterious plane, her engine idle, was diving earthwards, completely out of control. Lower and lower— The boys watched and held their breath. They knew there was no earthly chance now.

Cra-a-a-ash!

The sound was sickening; a tumult of cracking and splintering and tearing. Then ghastly silence. The juniors expected to see flames leap upwards, but there was not a glimmer. The plane had crashed, as near as they could judge, in the treetops at the edge of Bellton Wood.

"Poor devil!" muttered Nipper, breaking the silence.

"Think he's killed?" muttered Tommy Watson.

"I should imagine so," said Nipper. "No living airman could survive that crash."

"We've got to see, anyhow!" shouted Handforth, suddenly awakening into activity, and running. "Come on, you chaps! This way!"

One or two of them hesitated, fearful of the sight they might see; but then they ran with the others. They could not very well hang back. The school-boys, being so near, were naturally first on the scene of the crash. Indeed,

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*The crashing of a mystery plane
 —the discovery that the dying
 pilot has been shot! So begins
 the most thrilling adventure in
 the lives of eight St. Frank's boys.*

eye, that this machine isn't a Service one," replied Handforth. "It's an old D.H. Moth type, by the sound of her. Haven't you ever studied the different sounds of aeroplanes?"

"I confess it is a hobby which has escaped my notice," said Browne, with regret. "However, I shall in future—"

"Hanged if he hasn't cut out again," interrupted Nipper. "Look! He's still bang overhead, too, twisting and turning— There's something wrong up there, my sons! I can't understand it. It's not a case of engine trouble, because when he switches on the engine fires perfectly. Can't be anything wrong with the controls, either, or he'd have crashed before now."

Crack!
 It was a sharp report from the sky, staccato and dramatic.

"Great Scott!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "A pistol shot!"

nobody else seemed to have seen it, for the countryside all about was broodingly quiet.

Nipper, Handforth, and Browne, in the lead, spotted the wreckage some distance before they reached the wood. The plane, as they had supposed, had dived into the treetops. Racing up, the boys saw that an extraordinary thing had happened.

The plane, in crashing through the trees, had been shorn of its wings; and this had broken the force of the crash. The fuselage, in some miraculous way, had slithered down between two trees, and was wedged there, hardly damaged at all. The propeller was shattered, and the nose was half-buried in the ground; the tail, minus rudder and controls, was sticking upwards at an acute angle. A crumpled figure was visible in the forward cockpit.

"Great Scott! I expected to find nothing but splintered wreckage!" exclaimed Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "But the wings must have taken most of the shock. Come on, you chaps! The pilot's only stunned by the look of it. We've got to get him out!"

"Phew! What an awful whiff of petrol!" said Church. "Better be careful, you chaps."

They were too excited to give any thought to danger. Nipper and Handforth climbed up over the fuselage, and Nipper's electric torch flashed out. The light fell upon the figure in the cockpit.

"Oh!" muttered Nipper. The sight was not a pleasant one. For as they gently eased the crumpled figure back, the helmeted head rolled sideways. The man, foreign looking, with a small-featured, sallow-complexioned face, was breathing noisily, and there were bubbles on his mouth—crimson bubbles. His face was like death.

"Internal injuries," muttered Nipper, setting his teeth. "Lend a hand, you fellows. We've got to get him out. He's not strapped in. Easy does it. There might still be a chance for him if we can rush him to hospital—or even a doctor."

Others had climbed up, and were clinging precariously to the wreckage, and to the trees. Broken branches and masses of foliage were festooned everywhere. And the atmosphere reeked with the sickening smell of hot oil and raw petrol.

Nipper and Handforth got their hands under the arms of the injured airman, and with a great effort they hoisted him clear of the slanting cockpit. Willing hands took his feet, and so, gently, carefully, the man was lowered to the ground and laid on the grass, amid the splintered fragments of his plane.

"Nothing we can do here," panted Nipper. "Better improvise a stretcher and carry him—"

"Mio amico, sentirmi!" The words came thickly, painfully, from the stricken man's lips. "Perdonatemi! I must speak your language, si? It is the end. I am dying. You are friends, si? You will do something for a poor man who dies?"

"Yes, of course, anything," said Nipper quickly.

"Grazie molto! It is good!" The boys knelt on the ground, four on either side. They felt utterly helpless. There was not even water at hand, by which they might alleviate the man's sufferings. They could see, too, that he was indeed dying. The look of death was in his glazing eyes.

"What happened?" asked Handforth impulsively. "Did you lose control, or something?"

"No matter, bambino," gasped the

Italian—for this was obviously his nationality. "There is no time. I speak of the important thing. You will help me, si?"

He was struggling painfully with his clothing, and at last he produced, with difficulty, a package which seemed to be wrapped in oiled silk, and secured by three great seals. The man was frantic, and he was breathing with greater difficulty than before. The sounds which came from his lungs were awful to hear. Nipper had seen, too, that blood was coming from some injury in the back, and was forming a pool on the ground.

"Andare subito!" gurgled the dying man, his voice bubbling horridly. "Consegnare questa lettera—" He broke off, realising that he had fallen once again into his native tongue. "Perdonatemi! Take this letter. You understand?"

"Yes, yes," said Nipper. "Take it where?"

"Deliver it Gallows Mere—give it only into hands of No. 1." He struggled desperately, and his eyes were brilliant with an unearthly fire. "You understand? Repeat, bambino—repeat!"

"Gallows Mere," said Nipper deliberately. "Give this package into the hands of No. 1."

"Si, si! Swear you will do this," insisted the Italian, and now his voice had suddenly cleared, and was steady. He seemed, all in a moment, to gather the strength of a fit man. "I do not know you, but you will do as I say, si? You swear? It is the wish of a dying man."

"I swear that I will do everything in my power to deliver this package into the hands of No. 1 at Gallows Mere," said Nipper. "But you must tell me where to find this place called Gallows Mere—"

"There are many of you?" asked the man. "How many? Quick! Tell me!"

"Eight," said Nipper.

"Then you will all take the oath, yes?" It was a piteous appeal, an entreaty so urgent that it could not be ignored. "I die peacefully, English boys, if you will swear by all you hold sacred that you will deliver this package and say no word to any living soul. You will keep my secret. Swear!"

"We swear!" said every one of the eight.

The oath could not be avoided. It was the last wish of a dying man. The boys, indeed, scarcely gave the matter a thought, for to them it seemed fantastic and unnecessary. The poor man was only raving.

"So! You have sworn." The pilot's voice had sunk to a mere whistling whisper. "Grazie molto. I die content."

He gave a long sigh, the dreadful noise from his lungs ceased, and he went limp.

"He's dead," said Nipper quietly.

"Good god!"

"Poor beggar!"

"He'd have been dead sooner, only his anxiety over this package kept him alive," went on Nipper, looking at the oiled silk packet. "I've never known anything like it. He was practically dead when we got him out of the plane. It was nothing but sheer will power which kept him alive just long enough to force that oath out of us."

"I'm jiggered if I can understand it," said Handforth, his rugged face very grave. "It's—it's all so mysterious! What the dickens can the package be—to be so important? How can we find Gallows Moat?"

"Gallows Mere," said Nipper. "Don't forget it, you chaps."

"Sounds eerie and mysterious in itself," went on Handforth, his expression brightening. "By George! You heard

what he said, didn't you? We've got to deliver it into the hands of No. 1! Who can No. 1 be?"

"Sounds like a lot of delirious rubbish to me," said Watson, practically. "What are we going to do now? Better dash to the school and tell somebody, hadn't we? Ugh! Switch that light off for goodness' sake, Nipper! I can't bear to look on that awful face."

But Nipper did not switch the light off; he allowed the beam to play on the dead man's features.

"It's a queer business altogether," he said grimly. "I don't claim to be an expert, but I've helped the gov'nor to investigate so many cases that I think I can tell a crook when I see one. And this man's face is the face of a hardened criminal."

"What!"

"Ods, shocks, and horrors!"

"Draw it mild, Nipper!"

"It's an evil face," continued Nipper impressively. "Look at it for yourselves. Look at the cruel mouth and the narrow forehead and the closely-set eyes."

Handforth was trembling with excitement.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "He must be a member of a crook gang! By George! Doesn't it all fit? We've got to take this package to No. 1! I'll bet it contains stolen diamonds, or something."

"Cheese it, Handy," said Nipper sharply. "There's nothing in this package but papers."

"Banknotes, then—forged banknotes!"

"Well, whatever it contains, it's no business of ours," said Nipper. "We've given our word that we'll do our best to deliver it—and we've got to keep our pledge. What's more, we've promised to say nothing to anybody else. Remember that, you chaps. It was an oath to a dying man, and whether he was a criminal or not, we've got to keep it."

"What killed him?" asked McClure suddenly. "There seemed to be no wreckage in the cockpit itself."

"Hold this light, Tommy," said Nipper. "We'll soon find out what killed him. Hallo! What the dickens is— Good heavens!"

"What is it?" asked Watson quickly.

"Look at this hole in the back of his flying jacket!" said Nipper tensely. "Look at the blackened, scorched edges of it! A neat, round hole. The man wasn't killed by the crash at all. He was shot through the back!"

"Oh!"

"Shot through the back!"

Horried at first, the boys could do nothing but repeat Nipper's dramatic statement. Then Handforth gave a shout.

"What did I tell you?" he asked triumphantly. "You laughed at me when I said that sound was a pistol shot. It was a pistol shot! Don't you see how it explains everything? That's why the machine came down out of control—the pilot, shot, couldn't do anything to prevent the crash."

"But—but—" began Nipper helplessly.

"I think, brothers, that it explains other things, too," observed Browne, nodding. "Some time before the shot was fired, the plane, you will remember, was behaving in a most remarkable fashion. Clearly, then, a struggle was taking place in midair. We knew nothing of it at the time, but I venture to state, without fear of contradiction, that the diving and zooming, and other aerobatics were caused by the pilot's frantic efforts to save himself from the hands of the murderer."

"It looks like it," agreed Nipper.

"But there's one big snag. There's no second man in the machine."
 "What!"

"Yet there must have been a second man," went on Nipper. "The pilot could not have shot himself in the back."

"By George! I wonder—"
 Handforth broke off, turned and stared at the wreckage, and then swarmed up one of the shattered trees. Nobody had thought of looking into the rear cockpit, which was perched high, and at an angle, half-hidden by tangled foliage. Perhaps—

"Look!" screamed Watson suddenly. Already unnerved by what had happened, the others jumped half out of their skins.

"Begad! You frightful ass—"
 began Montie.

Then the words froze on his lips. Tommy Watson was pointing. Montie turned and stared, and the others did the same. What they saw stupefied them with horror. A figure had materialised out of the surrounding gloom, and was standing towering over them.

It was the figure of a negro, as black as night, with hideous features, and eyes which burned like live coals. In his hand he held a pointed automatic.

Nelson Lee Investigates!

"UGH!"
 The black man's cruel lips parted, revealing uneven gaps in his teeth. It was not a word he spoke, but a savage grunt. With his free hand he was pointing at the oil-silk package which Nipper still held, and his meaning was obvious. He was demanding the package at the point of the gun, and meant to have it. Nipper's grip instinctively tightened, and his jaw squared itself. The stranger's eyes were full of unspoken threat.

Then—swish—crash!
 The thing which happened was as unexpected as it was dramatic. In the tense excitement of the moment everybody had forgotten that Handforth had climbed into the tree, to reach the plane's rear cockpit. Handforth now hung himself downwards. It was a reckless, impulsive act, characteristic of the burly Removite. He gave no thought to the danger; he only knew that he was in a position of advantage, and he used it. He landed fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the powerful black man, and they rolled over together.

"Grab him!" gasped Handforth.
 "Quick, chaps! Lend a hand!"
 "Mind the gun!" panted Nipper.
 "He's still got it!"

They leaped on the rolling, struggling figures. Nipper, and Browne, and Archie secured a hold; but the black man, cursing in a strange language, heaved himself to his feet, and threw the boys off in all directions. For a moment he had gained his freedom, and he decided to keep it. He must have realised that they were too many for him. He ran off into the darkness.

"After him!" roared Handforth.
 "You fatheads! Don't let him escape!"
 He was on his feet now, and they all raced after the fugitive.

Crack!
 In the darkness ahead a stab of fire appeared, something droned like a wasp, and Tommy Watson gave a gasp.
 "Oh!" he exclaimed. "I'm hit!"
 "Down!" shouted Nipper. "Down—everybody! That fiend is dangerous!"
 They dropped into the grass, and for a moment Nipper saw the fugitive running in the gloom. Then he was



Menacing the St. Frank's juniors with the gun, the black man pointed to the package in Nipper's hand. His meaning was obvious. But at that moment Handforth flung himself downwards on to the shoulders of the enemy!

lost in the shadow of the opposite hedge. Slowly, cautiously, the boys rose to their feet.

"Well, he got away," said Nipper grimly. "Couldn't help it. Not worth risking our lives. Tommy, are you hurt much?"

"Only a graze—just above the wrist, here," replied Watson shakily. "Gave me a turn, though. I thought for a moment that my arm was broken. It felt just like being hit by a bludgeon."

A quick examination proved that the injury was only slight. A handkerchief was wrapped round it, and then the St. Frank's fellows looked at one another very seriously.

"That ugly devil meant mischief," said Nipper. "He was after the package, of course. If you hadn't jumped on him, Handy, I expect he would have had it, too. Good work, old man."

"But—but what does it all mean?" asked Handforth, open-eyed. "A nigger! Where did he come from? How could he possibly know anything about the accident?"

"In the first place, it wasn't an accident," replied Nipper. "The pilot of that machine had a struggle for life in midair, he was shot through the back, and the plane crashed. I don't think the man with the gun was a nigger, either. He wasn't absolutely black, although he looked it. I should say he was an Abyssinian—By Jove, that's queer, too," he added, with a start.

"What's queer?"
 "The dead pilot an Italian—and the man who tried to steal the packet an Abyssinian!" said Nipper. "Just now, things aren't particularly friendly where the Italians and the Abyssinians are concerned. It may be only a coincidence—"

"Coincidence be blowed!" interrupted

Handforth. "It's as clear as daylight! That black chap was an Abyssinian spy, and the Italian—"

"We don't want to waste any time in a lot of talk," broke in Nipper. "Save it, Handy. There's nothing more we can do here. We'd better go straight to the school, and get help. Come on!"

But they had scarcely gone a dozen yards before Nipper halted. He was staring at something whitish which was moving in a strange, ghostly manner away to the right.

"Look!" he muttered. "What on earth's that?"
 "My goodness!" breathed Church. "It's—it's alive—it's coming towards us—"

"No, it isn't," said Nipper. "Don't get fanciful. It looks like a half-erected tent, or— Why, of course! A parachute!"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth.

They ran to the spot. Nipper was right. The whitish moving thing was, indeed, a silken parachute, and it was billowing lazily in the soft breeze. There was something else, too. A flying-suit and helmet.

"Well, here's one of the mysteries explained," said Nipper grimly. "There was a man in the rear cockpit, and he was our Abyssinian acquaintance with the gun!"

"What!"

"Clear enough, isn't it?" continued Nipper. "First of all he struggled with the pilot, and tried to get the oiled silk package. But he failed, so he resorted to desperate measures. He shot the Italian in the back, dropped out of the plane, pulled the rip-cord of his parachute, and saved his own life. Then he located the wreckage—and you know the rest. Of course, he wasn't expecting to find anybody there, and he

thought it would be easy enough for him to rifle the dead man's pockets and secure the package. We've dished him."

"But—but I still can't understand it," growled Handforth. "A man like that couldn't be a stowaway. And if the Abyssinian was an enemy of the Italian, why did the Italian take him up in the plane?"

"The Italian must have believed that his passenger was a friend," replied Nipper. "This trouble only happened on the last lap, so to speak. There's another thing, you chaps. We might as well get it clear straight away—before we meet anybody, or before we get to the school. We shall have to be careful what we say."

"How do you mean—be careful?" asked Browne. "Make that a little clearer, brother."

"We can tell people that we saw the plane in difficulties, that we heard a shot, and that we saw it crash," replied Nipper. "We can say, too, that we rushed to the wreckage and dragged the pilot out. The pilot only said a few unintelligible words, and died."

"What do you mean—unintelligible words?" asked Handforth, staring. "He said all sorts of things, and asked us to—"

"We know he did, but we're pledged to silence," said Nipper grimly. "That's what I mean. We gave our oath that we would keep the secret—all of us, and that we would do our best to deliver the package to Gallows Mere. So all that part of it we must keep to ourselves. Do you understand?"

"Yes, of course."

"Absolutely!"

"There is no doubt, brothers, that Brother Nipper is right," said Browne. "Having pledged our word, we must stick to it. Therefore, not a word to the world at large about Gallows Mere or the secret package. Brother Handy, let me add a special word of warning to you."

"Why to me?" asked Handforth aggressively.

"You have, I fear, a regrettable habit of allowing your tongue to become loose in the socket," said Browne. "I do not blame you for this. We are not all perfect. I only advise you to give your tongue a double hitch and keep it under control."

"Rats!" retorted Handforth. "I can keep a secret as well as anybody, you long-legged Fifth Form fathead!"

They all realised the obligation they were under. The mysterious Italian pilot was dead, and the very least they could do was to respect the pledge they had given him. But Browne was quite right; it would be difficult, indeed, for Handforth to keep such a thing to himself. Fortunately, Church and McClure were constantly with him, ready to shut him up if his tongue should become "unhitched."

As it happened, the boys ran into Nelson Lee as they were skirting the St. Frank's playing fields. The famous schoolmaster-detective was accompanied by Mr. Wilkes, of the Ancient House, and Fenton of the Sixth.

"Where have you boys come from?" asked Lee abruptly. "I've just heard an extraordinary story of an aeroplane crashing—"

"It's true, gov'nor!" said Nipper. "We've just come from the spot. The pilot's dead! And there's something queer about it all. The pilot's an Italian—and he was shot in the back."

"By a beastly Abyssinian, who tried to shoot us, too, sir!" chimed in Handforth. "This awful rotter— Eh? What's up with you, Church, you ass?"

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What's the idea of treading on my feet?"

"Nun-nothing!" gasped Church.

"Oh, I see!" said Handforth, with a start. "By George, I didn't mean to say—"

Fortunately, Nelson Lee had taken very little notice of Handforth. He was listening to Nipper. The eight "pledged" boys could talk freely of the mysterious Abyssinian, but there was no necessity to say that he had threatened them with a gun. For that would lead to the question—why had he threatened them with a gun? And they could not very well answer it without revealing the existence of the oiled-silk package.

"Certainly, an extraordinary affair," said Lee, at length. "Obviously, the two men had a fight in the air which resulted in the fatal shot. It ought to be comparatively easy to identify this unfortunate pilot—and his machine, too. Mr. Wilkes, do you mind going back and telephoning to the police? The sooner they know, the better. I'll go along to the wreckage."

"Certainly," said old Wilkey obligingly.

Nipper and the others wanted to accompany Nelson Lee, but he would not hear of it. It was within a minute or two of calling-over, and they were

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Next Week!

required in the Ancient House. More over, it was no place for them.

"All the better, perhaps," said Nipper, in a low voice, after they had parted from Lee, and were in the Triangle. "After calling-over, you'd better all come to my study. We must get this thing absolutely clear."

"You mean—the oath?" murmured Watson. "But does it really bind us? We were all very excited, and we hardly knew what we were saying—"

"Really, old boy, what difference does that make?" put in Sir Montie. "A chap's word, after all, is a chap's word."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "Absolutely! Noblesse oblige, what?"

"Yes, we've got to take the oath seriously," said Nipper. "There may be nothing in it—or there may be a lot. I can't help thinking that we've let ourselves in for a big pile of trouble—but time will show. Anyhow, there's no need to worry at the moment."

So they were not present at the investigations which presently took place at the edge of Bellton Wood. A police car, in charge of Inspector Jameson, soon arrived on the scene from Bannington. The inspector drove it right into the meadow, so that the powerful headlights played dazzlingly on the wreckage. Nelson Lee, by this time, had made a thorough investigation of the body.

"Is this true, what we hear, Mr. Lee?" asked the inspector. "There's a report that the airman was killed by a revolver bullet. Surely that's absurd? Wasn't he killed in the crash?"

"Better look for yourself, Jameson," replied Lee. "He was shot right enough—in the back. The bullet, I think, went very near to the heart, and it was fatal. He only lived a few minutes."

"But it's a fantastic business!" protested the inspector.

"More fantastic than you imagine," replied Lee grimly. "Several of our boys were on the spot quickly, and they tell of a black man—supposedly an Abyssinian—who approached the wreckage. He was carrying a gun, but at sight of the boys he bolted. This man was evidently a passenger in the machine, for his flying-suit and parachute were found in the meadow. There's not a doubt he shot the pilot, jumped out of the doomed plane, and thus saved his own life."

"But why? It seems so pointless."

"The whole affair bristles with peculiarities," continued Nelson Lee. "I'd like you to have a look at the wings of the machine. They are smashed into hundreds of fragments, but one thing is quite clear. The fabric is painted black, and there is no sign whatever of the customary identification marks. This machine has no mark whatever—nothing. That proves that it was engaged on some secret enterprise—and it probably only flew after dark."

"Are you suggesting that it might have been engaged in something criminal?"

"Well, what other inference is there to be drawn?" said Lee. "I'd like you to come and have a look at the dead man. I've taken the liberty of searching his pockets, but they are completely empty. Identification might not be so easy as I had at first supposed."

The inspector had a look at the body, and he could not help averting his gaze.

"Ugly-looking devil!" he muttered.

"You see only ugliness?"

"He looks downright vicious, even in death," said the inspector. "By heavens! What a face! I've had a few criminals through my hands in my time— Oh, I see! So that's what you meant? By Jove, you're right, sir! This fellow looks like an absolute thug!"

"Men of his type do not usually choose the air as a profession," said the great detective, nodding. "He cannot be a licensed pilot, or he would be carrying his licence on him. There's something very deep behind this business, Jameson. I strongly advise you, in fact, to lose no time in notifying Scotland Yard."

"If I think such a step necessary I shall certainly take it," replied the inspector, with a show of coldness. "For the moment, I shall conduct a personal investigation."

As a commencement, he went through the dead man's pockets, but, like Nelson Lee, he drew blank. Further examination revealed the surprising fact that the clothing contained no maker's tab, or initials. Even the underclothing was innocent of any laundry mark or label.

The most elaborate precautions had been taken to render identification practically impossible. A further singular fact was revealed when Nelson Lee took a look at the wrecked plane's engine. Lee, a skilled airman himself, was familiar with every type of engine used on light aeroplanes. But this one baffled him. He had never seen an engine of quite the same type. And when he looked for the customary engine number he made the surprising discovery that it had been completely effaced. The maker's numbers on the magneto had been filed away, too. There was not even a clue as to the plane's country of origin. It was a mystery machine in every particular.

"I think you were right about informing Scotland Yard, Mr. Lee," admitted

Inspector Jameson, at length. "This beats me completely. Never seen anything like it. Can't understand head or tail. There's no doubt the man was murdered—and that alone makes it a case of the first importance. But this effacement of identification marks makes the whole business queer in the extreme. Can you suggest any reason for such precautions?"

"Only the reason that I voiced when we first met," replied Lee dryly. "As I look at it the machine was engaged by criminals, on some criminal enterprise. Night flying is always risky, especially when the machine thus engaged is debarred from landing at any recognised airport. There's always the risk of a forced landing, and a forced landing, at night, on strange ground, means a crash."

"Yes, that's true."

"Well, the people behind all this have no intention of being betrayed by a possibly crashed aeroplane," continued Lee. "That's why they have effaced the customary numbers from the engine and the other mechanical parts. The pilot, in the event of surviving, was presumably instructed to abandon the machine—or, if injured, to keep his mouth shut. Whichever way you look at it, you come back to the same conclusion. The plane is an unlawful one, and that leads us to the inevitable supposition that it was engaged in unlawful practices."

While the investigation had been going on Jameson had spread his net. Every policeman over a radius of fifty miles had received special instructions. Others were searching the neighbourhood of Belton.

But the murderer, after his brief appearance before the startled St. Frank's boys, had apparently vanished into thin air.

The Withered Hand!

"**A**NYTHING fresh, guv'nor?" It was the next morning, and everybody in the Remove was down early. Nipper and Handforth and the other boys who had seen the plane crash were, in fact, the most important people in the school, at the moment. Nipper had managed to extricate himself from a crowd as he caught sight of Nelson Lee.

"Nothing new at all, young 'un, except that the mysterious Abyssinian—if such he was—is still at large," replied the detective. "And that in itself is strange."

"Why?"

"A very thorough search has been made during the night," replied Lee. "We know that this black man—a conspicuous figure in such a countryside as this—could not have escaped from the net which was drawn round the entire county of Sussex. Yet, strangely enough, not a single report has come in of this man having been seen. There is, therefore, only one inference to be drawn. He has gone into hiding."

"You mean, the police think he is lurking in the wood?"

"That's the most likely explanation, but there is also the possibility that he is being sheltered in some house," replied Lee. "The latter theory, however, is not probable."

"No, sir," said Nipper thoughtfully.

A sudden idea had come to him, and he was startled. He put it aside for the moment.

"Anything else, guv'nor?" he asked eagerly. "Have you found out where the machine came from, or anything like that?"

"The plane, at the moment, is a com-

plete mystery," replied Lee, and he told Nipper of the effaced numbers, and of the lack of the usual identification marks. Nipper whistled when he heard this.

"By Jove! It looks thundering queer, sir," he said. "That pilot, too! I know we didn't see him to the best advantage, but if his photograph isn't to be found in the Rogues' Gallery of some foreign police headquarters, I'm no judge!"

"You've noticed it, too, then? I think you're right, Nipper. The dead pilot is a man of the criminal class—of the very worst type. I confess I am quite interested in the case, although it is really no concern of mine."

They talked for some minutes longer, and then Nipper turned to go. Then, as though he had had an afterthought, he faced Lee again.

"Ever heard of a place called Gallows Mere, guv'nor?" he asked casually.

"It sounds sinister, at all events," smiled Lee. "What is it? A house?"

"I don't know."

"What made you ask?"

"Oh, somebody was talking about a place called Gallows Mere, and I was wondering if you'd ever heard of it," replied Nipper. "It doesn't really matter."

He walked away, unwilling to be questioned further. Ten minutes later he had gathered Watson and Tregellis-West, Handforth & Co., Archie Glen-thorne, and Browne, into Study C. He closed the door tightly.

"No loud speaking, you chaps," he warned. "I think it's time we had a council of war."

"That's the stuff!" said Handforth eagerly. "We're going to investigate, eh?"

"No, we're not," replied Nipper. "But I've just been having a word with the guv'nor, and he put an idea into my head. He said the murderer is probably hiding in the woods—or is being sheltered in some house. Don't you think it's likely that he has found refuge at Gallows Mere, wherever it is?"

"You're dotty!" said Watson. "That's the last place he'd go to. Wasn't he trying to pinch the letter—that one wrapped up in the oiled silk? We promised to take the letter to Gallows Mere."

"Yes, but you've forgotten something," said Nipper. "The Abyssinian, as I take it, was a spy. The people the Italian is mixed up with accepted him as one of themselves. The Italian himself looked upon the black man as a colleague—or he would never have permitted him to occupy the rear cockpit of the plane with a gun in his pocket."

"Brother, your reasoning is perfectly sound," said Browne approvingly. "Proceed. This is good!"

"It therefore follows that the people of Gallows Mere, whoever they are, look upon the Abyssinian as one of themselves," continued Nipper. "He can easily take them a story that the plane crashed, that he escaped, and then made for the rendezvous."

"Then what we've got to do is to spread ourselves over the countryside and search for Gallows Mere," said Handforth promptly. "By George! It's a half-holiday to-day, and we can start the search. I've got my little Morris Eight, and some of you chaps have got motor-bikes. We can scout about the countryside—"

"Not this afternoon," said Nipper.

"Eh? Why not?"

"It may have slipped your memory, but it so happens that the St. Frank's Junior Eleven has a fixture over at Helmford this afternoon."

"Football!" ejaculated Handforth,

in disgust. "My only sainted aunt! What does football matter at a time like this? Here we are, in the thick of a criminal investigation, and all you can do is to babble about football! Blow the match! Scratch it!"

Nipper laughed.

"Yesterday you were saying that the Helmford match is one of the most important of the season, Handy," he said. "No, we can't scratch a match at the last minute like that."

"But we've got to deliver that letter," insisted Handforth. "It might be important—vitaly important. I'm keen on football in the ordinary way, but when something a thousand times more important crops up—"

The others let him babble on. For Edward Oswald, when anything in the nature of detective work cropped up, was difficult to handle. In the end, of course, he was firmly squashed, and during the course of morning lessons he resigned himself to the inevitable. As he told Church and McClure, if the rest of the team went, he would have to go. For who could keep goal if he dropped out? Church and McClure mentioned several chaps who could keep goal, and there was nearly a fight. For Handforth was under the impression that he was indispensable.

"Football!" said the burly Removite, in a disgusted voice, as he drove away from St. Frank's in his Morris Eight, with Church and McClure accompanying him. "Football is all right in its place, but it's idiotic to go over to Helmford this afternoon. Look at the time we're wasting!"

"I've noticed it," said Church. "We're wasting a lot of time, for example, taking the wrong road. Don't you know the way to Helmford yet? You're so jolly absent-minded, and—"

"Rats! Think I don't know what I'm doing?" interrupted Handforth scornfully. "We're not taking the ordinary road to Helmford. Why keep to the main road at a time like this?"

"Why not?" asked McClure reasonably. "Because that murderer might be lurking about in the lonely rural lanes," replied Handforth, with relish. "Think what a triumph it'll be for us if we nab him! If you chaps had only shown some spirit last night, he would never have escaped!"

Church was about to say something, but he checked himself. What was the use? With Handforth in this mood, talking to him was a waste of breath.

Extraordinarily enough, a very strange thing did happen. As the little car climbed a steep rise, something came through the air as though from nowhere, dropped on the bonnet, and then slid down to the wing.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth, treading on both foot pedals. "Did you see that? Somebody's severed hand!"

"Oh corks!" groaned Church, in despair. "A bit of a dead tree falls down, and he thinks it's a severed hand! Don't be an ass Handy! What are you stopping for?"

"I'm going to have a look!" replied Handforth grimly, as the car jerked to a standstill, and he got out. "Here! Quick! What did I tell you? Oh, my goodness!"

Church and McClure scrambled out, thoroughly convinced that Handforth was fooling. But when they saw what he held gingerly between his thumb and finger, they jumped about a foot into the air.

It was the dried, wizened, mummified black hand of a human being!

"Black hand!" said Handforth, gulping. "This can't be coincidence, you chaps! Somebody threw it at the car—somebody who knew we were three of the chaps who were at the scene of the plane crash last night. It's a kind of symbol—or a warning!"

"Let's—let's drive on," said Church huskily. "Perhaps you were right about that murderer, after all."

They looked about them, but they seemed to have the whole countryside to themselves. They even broke through the hedges, and looked into the fields and meadows. But there was not a living soul in sight. Even Handforth was subdued after that. He wrapped that grisly relic in an old duster, and put it in the tool locker.

"Yes, I think we'd better be going," he muttered, shivering. "Ugh! This business is beginning to give me the creeps."

He drove on hurriedly, but half a mile had scarcely been covered before he pointed to a gaunt, rambling old house which stood far back from the road in its own grounds. Midway between the road and the house, with a weedy drive winding round it, was a slime-covered lake.

"I say!" said Handforth, with a start. "See that? A lake is really a mere, isn't it? I remember seeing this old house before, but it's always been empty. I've never known its name. Think there's any chance that it might be Gallows Mere?"

"It can't be," said Church uneasily.

"It's empty still. There's no smoke coming out of the chimneys. Here, what the dickens—"

The little car had suddenly jerked to a standstill again. They had just come opposite the gate of the drive, and Handforth, poking his face out of the window, was staring. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes; but on the gate, in faded letters—so faded that Handforth would never have identified them unless he had been looking for them—were the words "Gallows Mere."

(The mystery house is discovered! What will Handforth & Co. do now? See next Wednesday's powerful chapters for more thrills from this super serial).

CHUMS ON PATROL!

(Continued from page 22.)

ing their eyes open for the colonel. They did not see him. They entered the village, and stopped at the little police station in the High Street. The first person they saw when they entered was Inspector Fix, speaking to the officer in charge. The inspector glanced at them, and gave Blake a nod, recognising one of his rescuers.

"Mr. Fix!" exclaimed Blake. "Yes," said Mr. Fix, with a smile. "I am still down here, and glad to say that I have found my man."

"Found the man who shut you up in the vault, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr. Fix, rubbing his plump hands. "He has been up to some rascality in this quarter. I arrested him at the station, and when he was searched here, we found his pockets full of money and gold watches. Where he got them seems to be a mystery."

The juniors looked at one another. "Gold watches!" murmured Tom Merry.

"And money! Bai Jove!"

"M-m may we see the watches, sir?" asked Blake. "We—we've come here about something of the kind."

"Yeas, wathah!" "Was—was the man got up as an officer, sir?" asked Blake.

"Yes," said Mr. Fix. "He had a colonel's uniform, and seems to have been calling himself Colonel Rake—"

"Anything else?" said Blake. "He had a V.C. and several orders on his chest," grinned Mr. Fix. "He has been swindling somebody."

"Bai Jove! He has been swindlin' us!"

"You!" ejaculated the inspector. "Must be the same man," said Tom Merry.

"You'd better tell me all about it," said Mr. Fix.

Tom Merry did so. Inspector Fix listened to the story of the telegram, the review of the Boy Scouts, and the borrowing of the watches and the money, and when Tom Merry had finished he burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The inspector wiped his eyes. "Excuse me, young gentleman, but this is very rich, even for Colonel Jim! He has passed himself off as an Army man before, but I never heard of his reviewing Boy Scouts before. You had better see if you can identify the watches."

The juniors looked at the stolen property. Tom Merry knew his own watch at a glance, and he knew Glyn's. But to their amazement the juniors recognised also the Head's watch and Mr. Railton's watch, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered a cry of amazement and satisfaction at the sight of his own gold tucker.

"Bai Jove! Did you find that on him?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Fix.

"It is mine! I was wobbled in the wood on Wednesday night, and that watch was taken, and a fivah, too!"

"There's a five-pound note among the stuff," smiled the inspector. "It's all clear now. Colonel Jim has made quite a haul; and he would have got clear away with it all, too, if he had left me shut up in that vault as he had intended. Your paper-chase, young gentlemen, and two of you happening to get me out of the trap, knocked his little game on the head. I have been waiting and watching for him ever since—and now I've got him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm very glad your property has been recovered," said the inspector. "I cannot hand it to you now, but it is safe, and will be returned in due course. I shall want some of you to give evidence against our friend in the cells." He broke into a laugh again. "This was really too rich, even for Colonel Jim! But it is his last little caper for a very long time, I think."

Tom Merry and his comrades had amazing news to tell when they arrived at St. Jim's.

When the story was out the Head and Mr. Railton compared notes, and they understood why the colonel had been so anxious that his little loans should not be mentioned. He had made a very good haul at St. Jim's—sixteen or seventeen pounds in money, and four gold watches, to say nothing of what he had stolen from Arthur Augustus in the wood, on the occasion when the swell of St. Jim's had returned home in such ridiculous guise.

St. Jim's had been taken in, but as Blake pointed out, the chap was captured—and he wouldn't have been captured if Mr. Fix hadn't been rescued from the vault—and he was rescued by Boy Scouts out on a paper-chase; therefore, it was demonstrated that the arrest of a dangerous criminal had been brought about by the schoolboy Scouts. And Blake's logic was admitted as conclusive by all the Scouts of St. Jim's.

THE END.

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