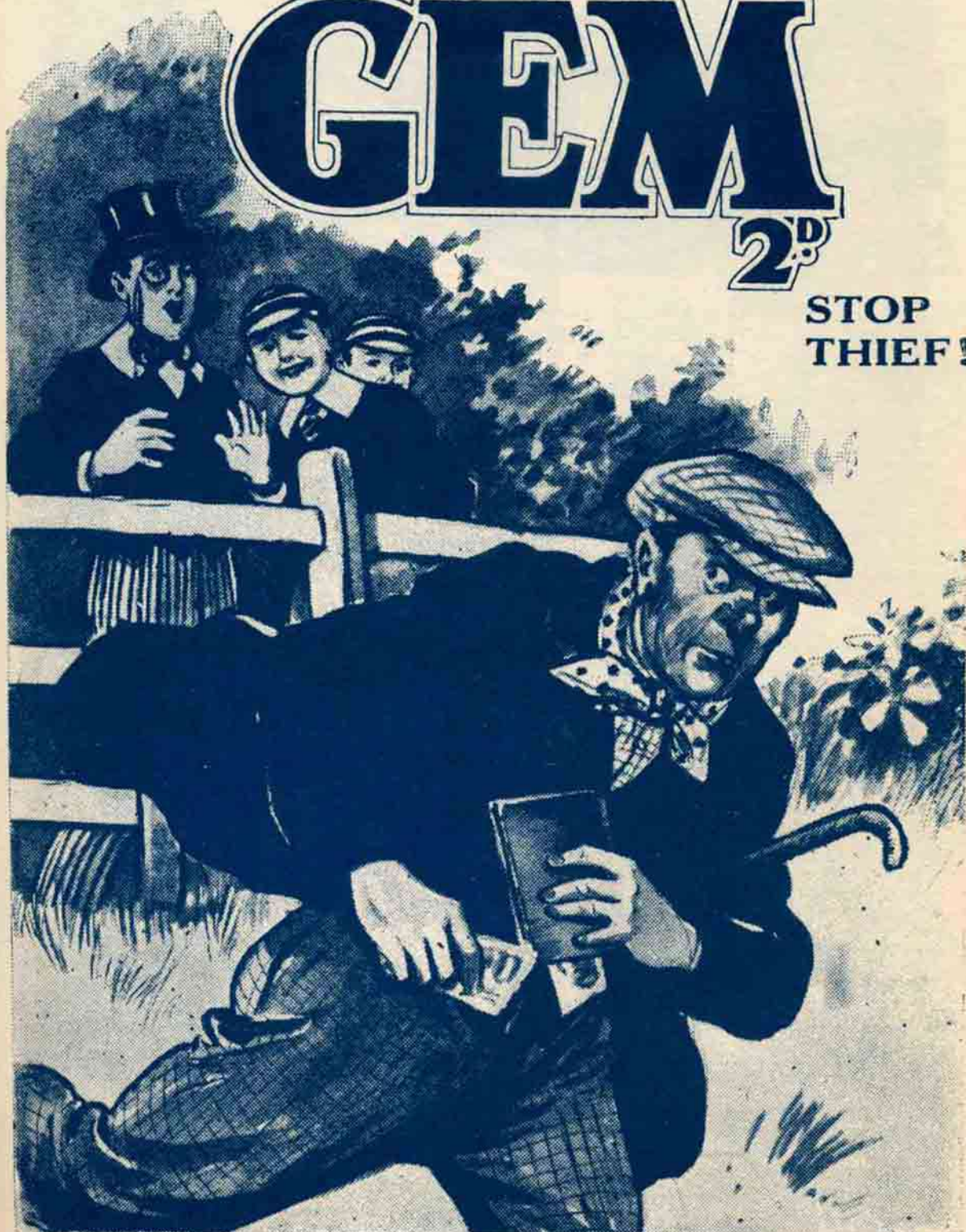


**CHUM UP WITH TOM MERRY & CO.!**

*The*  
**GEM**  
2<sup>D</sup>

**STOP  
THIEF!**



## I'LL BE HEARING FROM YOU, CHUMS—WHAT?



# Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter **SHORT**, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

### ANSWER:

1. Reilly hails from Belfast, Mulvaney from Tipperary.
2. That's telling; Yorkshire is the biggest shire, you know.
3. His ancestors may have lived there, but I believe Kildare's home is now in Dublin.
4. Let anybody tell Wally D'Arcy or any member of the Third he isn't independent, and he'll prove it—probably by force! Unruly, yes—but not ungovernable.
5. Let me confess—the first time I felt every bit as bad as you did!
6. Pretoria is the seat of the Government of the Union, but Parliament meets at Capetown. Bloemfontein is the seat of the principal court of appeal.

*It's a pleasure, madam. I mean it!*

### Richard Holgate, of Bexhill-on-Sea, writes:

Are you any good at games or work? What does Arthur Augustus D'Arcy look like when he's punting a ball? Do you play Rugby at all?

P.S.—Did Racke make any bets on the Derby?

ANSWER: Any good, did you say? Well, I'm not like the fellow who always worked hard at games and played hard at work! Gussy looks just as natty as usual when he's playing footer—but that doesn't prevent him being our best junior outside-left! We've no time for Rigger as well as Soccer, but when "ragging" Figgins & Co., of the New House, we often get in a "scrum." Not "half"!

P.S.—To judge by Racke's lugubrious expression after the Derby, the answer was in the affirmative—and his cash in the bookmaker's pocket!

### Sakkie C. de Wet, of Plumstead, Capetown, South Africa, writes:

Would Montague Lowther, I.M.P., mind if we used some of his jokes in a concert?

P.S.—Please excuse ink blot.

ANSWER: Lowther calling! Radio special to South Africa! Go ahead and use jokes—stop. Hope jokes are a success—stop. If not, keep smiling—stop. It's the hardest job in the world making people laugh—stop—go—stop—stop—go—stop—oh, heck, what's the matter with these lights? STOP!!

(Continued on page 23.)

### B. H. L., of Woodsmoor, Stockport, writes:

Can you beat **ANTIDISESTABLISHMENT-ARIANISM**? Who is the best swimmer in the Fourth and Shell?

ANSWER: Yours is a crackerjack of a word, but "antis" are not quite in order. You can tack the prefix anti on to all sorts of words, as I did myself to equal A. S. W.'s **INTER-COMMUNICABILITY**, but maybe we shouldn't allow it. I'll tell you what. Write me a 20,000-word paper on what antidisestablishmentarianism means, and I'll get Skimpole to pass an opinion on it. Of course, you understand I couldn't possibly print it in the GEM—but the study fire needs lighting occasionally even in the summer! Best swimmer is Tom Merry. Thanks for writing, old fellow.

### "Nom de Plume," of Nottingham, writes:

Another entry for your longest word competition: **ANTIDISESTABLISHMENTERIONISM**.

I won't vouch that it's spelt correctly, but it's as near as makes no difference. Can you beat it? Mr. Walker wants to know!

ANSWER: As another reader sent in the same word, and spelt it right, I'm ruling you out, old chap. Not that I'm down on a fellow for not bothering about spelling. Grundy, of course, is the actual winner of this unofficial competition. He submitted **INEFFECTUALMUCKING-ABOUTDITHERINGWHILEROME'SBURNINGOFFICIALUNMETHODICALITY**. I think he must have made it up. A word like that would have burst Chambers' and split Nuttall's from cover to cover. What do YOU think?

### Miss I. M. C., of Birmingham, writes:

1. From what part of Ireland do Reilly and Mulvaney come?

2. From what part of Yorkshire do you come?

3. Does Kildare hail from Co. Kildare, in Ireland?

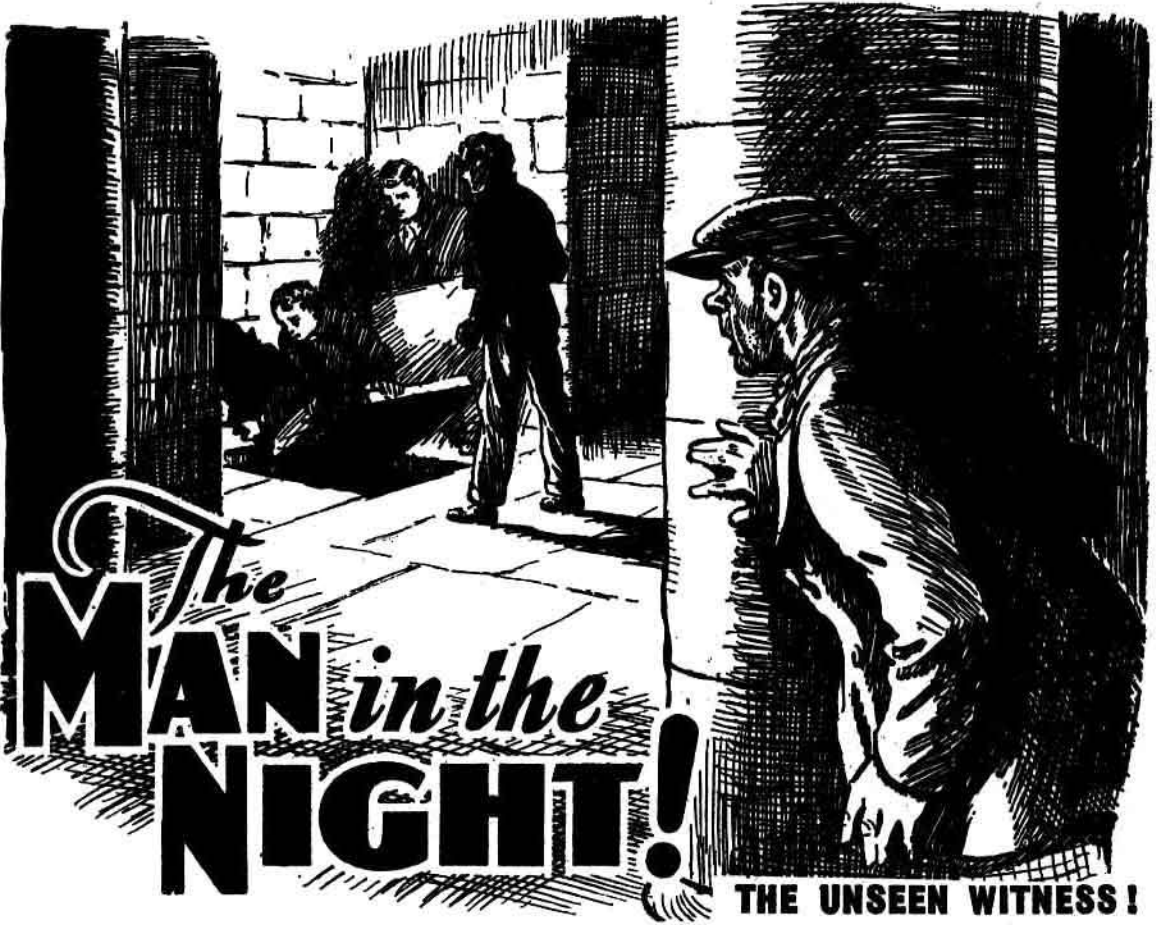
4. Why are the Third looked on as ungovernable? I am in the Third, and we pride ourselves on our independence!

5. Ever been seasick?

6. What is the capital of the Union of South Africa?

Hope this isn't too long!

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## CHAPTER 1.

### Snatch!

"KIND young gentleman—"  
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the St. Jim's Fourth paused.

Blake and Herries and Digby, his chums—or, as Blake sometimes declared, his keepers—paused also.

It was a hot July afternoon.

The chums of Study No. 6 were sauntering, leisurely and at ease, along a field path near St. Jim's when they arrived at the stile on which the stranger sat.

He addressed Arthur Augustus as a kind young gentleman, which, undoubtedly, Arthur Augustus was.

No doubt Blake and Herries and Digby were kind young gentlemen also, but the frowsy man on the stile seemed to pick instinctively on Arthur Augustus, whose kindness of heart and unsuspectingness of mind were clearly written in his aristocratic countenance.

"'Elp a pore man what lost a leg in the War!" said the man on the stile.

"'Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus at once.

Blake & Co. eyed that hero of the War rather suspiciously.

A man who had lost a leg in the War was a man Study No. 6 would have delighted to honour. But they had strong doubts about that hero.

He was not a nice man to look at or to be near. He had a large red nose, which had evidently sustained damage in some scrap of a much later date than 1914-18—probably outside a public-house on a Saturday night. He had a scent of mingled tobacco and beer that was utterly unlike attar-of-roses. He had a sly and shifty eye. But that he had mislaid a leg somewhere was—or, at least, seemed to be—clear; for the right leg of his tattered trousers was folded up at the knee, and he had a big stick, which, apparently, he used as a crutch.

That missing leg was more than enough for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He had no doubts. He ran his hands through his pockets. Blake & Co. noticed that the man on the stile did not look much over thirty. Arthur Augustus noticed only that his leg was absent.

"Hold on a minute, Gussy!" said Blake. "If that chap left a leg on the Somme we'll all rally round; but if he didn't we'll keep our cash for tea in the study."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You joined up pretty early for the War, didn't you?" inquired Blake.

## Super School Story

by

## MARTIN CLIFFORD.

4  
 "You couldn't have been much over ten at the time."

Herries and Dig grinned.

Mr. Nosey Panks turned his shifty eye unpleasantly on Blake.

"Holder then I look, sir!" he said. "Forty-five come Michaelmas, sir."

"Sort of Peter Pan!" remarked Blake. "How do you keep your youth like this? Is it the beer does it, or the 'baccy?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!" said Blake. "That chap was never in the War, and he's pulling your leg!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass reprovingly on Jack Blake.

"It is not vewy easy to pull my leg, Blake," he answered; "and you can see for yourself that the poor chap has lost a leg."

"Unless he's got it tucked up in those baggy trucks!" suggested Blake.

"Wats!"

"Now, look here, Gussy," said Herries.

"Don't be a goat!" suggested Dig.

"Wats!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "I am surprised at you fellows! Where should we all be now if those fellows hadn't gone to the War like the bwicks they were? The least a fellow can do is to stand by an ex-Service man."

"Right as rain!" agreed Blake. "But not by a beery blighter who pretends to be one! Chuck it!"

"Wats!"

"Oh, give him his head!" sighed Dig. "So long as Gussy has got a half-crown about him, anybody's only got to ask for it! Gussy would believe that Baggy Trimble was in the War if Baggy told him so!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, for the third time.

"Well, get on with it!" said Herries. "Cough up the half-crown—I dare say the man's thirsty—and let's get on!"

"I shall certainly not insult a hewo of the War with a half-crown, Hewwies, when I had a fivah ffrom my patah only this mornin'. I am goin' to give him a pound note!"

"Fools and their money are soon parted!" said Blake sententiously.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, for the fourth time.

Mr. Pank's sly eyes fairly glittered as Arthur Augustus' nobby russia-leather wallet came into view.

Gussy opened that wallet.

Within, a crisp five-pound note could be seen, as well as several currency notes. One of those pound notes, Gussy considered, was certainly not too much to help a veteran of the War who had lost a leg. Gussy was so sympathetic about that leg that he declined utterly to realise that the nosey man hadn't been in the War at all, and probably hadn't lost a leg. Arthur Augustus had a large and enviable share of that simple faith which the poet declares to be more than Norman blood.

He proceeded to select a pound note.

The nosey man did not wait for the selection to be completed. Apparently, he preferred notes in bulk.

He made a sudden snatch

Instantly that wallet changed ownership!

In the same instant the nosey man bounded off the stile and ran, leaving the stile between him and the St. Jim's juniors.

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"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

His eye almost popped through his eyeglass as the man ran. It was so surprising to see a man run so fast on one leg.

But that extraordinary circumstance was explained by the fact that the other leg—hitherto missing—shot into sight from the trouser-leg in which it had been tucked up!

The nosey man evidently had not lost that leg in the War. He had not lost it anywhere. He had it about him all the time, ready for use if required.

It was required now, and he used it. With both legs going strong, and his stick under his arm, Nosey Panks covered the buttercups and daisies at a great rate.

"After him!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! He's got my wallet!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! He hasn't lost a leg at all; he has lots of legs!"

"Get after him!" yelled Herries.

Study No. 6 scrambled in haste over the stile. Blake led the pursuit, running like a deer. Herries and Dig were strung out behind; Arthur Augustus brought up the rear.

But the man who hadn't lost a leg had a good start. He was half-across the field in the direction of Rylcombe Lane. Blake put on a desperate spurt. He left his comrades behind, and gained on the running man as Nosey Pank headed for a gap in the hedge on the lane.

The nosey man glared round as the pursuing footsteps drew nearer. He grasped his stick and hurled it at Blake's legs.

"Oh!" roared Blake.

He stumbled under the crash on his knees and went over headlong, almost buried in buttercups and daisies. And the nosey man, with Gussy's wallet still gripped in a grubby hand, ran on to the gap in the hedge and shot through it.

## CHAPTER 2.

### A Hot Chase!

"IT'S up to us!" said Tom Merry.

"It is!" agreed Monty Lowther. "It are!"

"But how——" said Tom.

"Echo answers, how?" remarked Manners.

"We can't let those New House ticks go on ragging our House just at their own sweet will!" said Tom.

"We can't," Lowther agreed again.

"Only——" said Tom.

"Only——" grinned Monty.

"What's going to be done?" asked Tom.

"We are!" answered Monty.

The Terrible Three of the St. Jim's Shell had walked out after class that day like Blake & Co. Now they were taking a little rest, sitting on the grassy bank beside Rylcombe Lane, in the shade of the high hawthorn hedge.

They were discussing a matter which was growing more and more urgent in the School House at St. Jim's.

For weeks past their old foes, Figgins & Co. of the New House, had been ragging the School House and getting away with it every time.

How they did it was an exasperating mystery.

Somehow or other, in some mysterious and unknown way, Figgins & Co. were able to penetrate, unseen and undiscovered, into the rival House. They were able to come and go just as they liked.

In the daytime, of course, raggers from the rival

House would have been collared and made to sit up for their sins. But the enemy came by night! And how the dickens Figgins & Co. got in and got out unseen after lock-up was mystifying and exasperating.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were discussing that mystery as they sat at their ease on the grassy bank by the lane, in the shade of the hedge. That discussion was interrupted by a sound of pounding feet and panting breath behind the hedge.

They looked round at a gap that gave access to the field beyond.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Tom.

Through that gap came a flying figure!

It was the figure of a man in tattered trousers and a ragged cap, with a large red nose, and something clutched in a grubby hand.

He came through the gap in the hedge at full pelt, evidently quite unaware that three Shell fellows of St. Jim's were sitting on the bank.

He did not see them at all, and they barely glimpsed him, before he crashed.

Nosey Panks' knees caught Tom Merry in the neck and he sprawled headlong over the captain of the Shell, his arms flying out wildly, one grubby paw catching Lowther in the eye, the other smacking hard on Harry Manners' ear!

"Ooooh!" gasped Nosey.

"Oh crumbs!"

"What the thump——"

Four figures rolled down the bank together, Nosey mixed up with the Terrible Three. But Gussy's wallet remained tightly clutched in the grubby hand as Nosey rolled. He hung on to that instinctively.

"You howling ass!" roared Tom Merry, picking himself up in the dust of the lane. "What the thump——"

"Ooooh!" gurgled Nosey.

He sprawled, panting for breath.

"What the dickens do you mean by crashing on us like that, you silly fathead?" yelled Lowther.

"Ooooh!"

Nosey sat up dizzily. He was quite as much taken by surprise as the Shell fellows of St. Jim's. They picked themselves up, breathless and dusty, and glared at him. They were breathless, they were dusty, they were bumped, and they were angry and exasperated.

"You clumsy ass!" gasped Tom.

"You blithering chump!" howled Manners.

"I—I say——" Nosey staggered up, still clutching his plunder. "Look out—mad bull!"

"Oh!" gasped the Terrible Three.

If there was a savage bull loose in the field that was a good reason for the nosey man's hurried flight therefrom.

They transferred their attention at once from Nosey to the gap in the hedge. They had noticed that something was clutched in the grubby paw, and might have guessed something like the facts. But the alarm of a mad bull concentrated their attention on the gap.

Nosey did not lose that chance. Gasping for breath, he shot away up the lane in the direction of the school. In the other direction lay the village of Rylcombe, and Nosey was not looking for populated places—with that wallet clutched in his hand. The open road lay before him, and Nosey took the open road at a good speed.

Monty Lowther picked up his cap from the grass.

"Better cut, if there's a bull about," he re-

marked. "He could get through that gap as easily as that tramp."

"Oh scissors! Here he comes!" exclaimed Manners, as there was a trampling in the field behind the hedge.

But it was not a bull that looked through the gap. It was the red, excited face of a Fourth Former of St. Jim's!

"Oh! You fellows!" gasped Blake. "Did you see him?"

"See who?"

"That tramp!" gasped Blake. "He's snatched Gussy's notecase!"

Blake came scrambling breathlessly through the gap and down the bank.

"Oh, my hat! Isn't there a bull!" exclaimed Manners.

"Did you see him?" yelled Blake.

"Yes; he cut off towards St. Jim's——"

"He's got Gussy's wallet with pounds and pounds in it!" exclaimed Blake.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The mystery of Figgins & Co. was forgotten. If that frowsy tramp was cutting off with Gussy's wallet with pounds and pounds in it the Terrible Three were prepared to render prompt assistance. They started at a rapid run on the track of Nosey Panks.

Blake, panting for breath, dropped behind. From the hedge-gap came Herries and Digby, and after them Arthur Augustus.

"Put it on!" gasped Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! Wun the wottah down!"

Study No. 6 took up the chase along the leafy lane. But Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were well ahead, doing Rylcombe Lane as if it were the cinder-path. And ahead of them, running hard, panting and puffing and blowing, ran the nosey man, still clutching his plunder.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Any Port in a Storm!

"T-O-NIGHT!" said George Figgins.

Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

"To-night's the night!" agreed Kerr.

"We've got them on toast!" said Fatty Wynn. "Those School House fatheads can't keep their end up! We'll keep 'em on toast all through the term!"

"We've given them a rest for a few days," remarked Figgins. "I mean, a few nights! Time we got on the warpath again, or they'll think we've forgotten them! Fatty, old man, it was the catch of the season when you spotted that jolly old secret passage from the crypt to the School House! Think they'll ever guess how we work it?"

"Never!" grinned Kerr.

"And to-night——" went on Figgins.

"I say, that chap must like getting warm!" remarked Fatty Wynn.

Figgins & Co. of the New House had left the school to walk down to the village. They, like the Terrible Three, were discussing those mysterious raids on the rival House—but from quite a different point of view. Figgins & Co. had the upper hand over their old rivals, in possession of a secret of which Tom Merry & Co. never dreamed. And they were cheerfully planning another nocturnal surprise for the School House when Fatty drew attention to the dusty, breathless, perspiring man who was coming up the lane at a wild burst of speed.

"By gum!" said Figgins, staring at him.

"What the dickens is he racing about like that for?"

Really, it was surprising to see a tramp putting on such speed on a hot July afternoon.

"Somebody after him, I should think," remarked Kerr.

"Hallo! Look!" exclaimed Fatty.

In the distance, behind the running man, three figures came in sight, evidently in pursuit.

"Pinched something!" said Kerr. "Look! You can see he has got something in his fat fist—and Tom Merry and his pals are after him—"

"Stop him!" said Figgins.

Tom Merry, catching sight of the three New House juniors, waved his hand as he ran, and shouted. His shout reached their ears:

"Stop thief!"

Nosey was almost upon them now. They lined up in his path to stop him.

Nosey slackened speed a moment, casting a desperate look over his shoulder.

Behind him came the three Shell fellows; strung out in the lane behind them, the four Fourth Formers!

With seven behind and only three in front, Nosey decided to carry on. He rushed headlong at Figgins & Co.

"Bag him!" roared Figgins.

The next moment George Figgins was reeling under Nosey's charge.

But Kerr and Wynn grabbed Nosey together.

"Got him!" gasped Fatty.

But they had not quite got him. Nosey was desperate. The fist that was clutched on the wallet jammed into the widest part of Fatty Wynn's circumference, and Fatty, with a gurgle, went over backwards.

Kerr closed with the desperate footpad.

They struggled for a moment or two, and then Kerr went spinning, landing with a crash on Figgins as he was getting up.

Nosey staggered and panted.

But he charged on.

Brief as the tussle had been, it had given the pursuers time to cover ground, and Tom Merry & Co. were perilously near now.

Nosey ran desperately on, and passed the school gates, where a dozen fellows stared at him. But he was past before they had time to do anything but stare.

Onward he flew in the shadow of the school wall. But his hopes were at a minimum now. Ahead of him on the road six or seven schoolboys were to be seen, and a shout of "Stop thief!" would be enough to turn every one of them into a clutching enemy.

Then Nosey's desperate eye spotted a narrow lane that seemed to run from the road past some of the school buildings. He shot off the road into that little lane.

From behind came a yell:

"After him! He's turned that corner!"

Nosey charged on. But he knew that the game was up now. In a minute, or less, they would come charging round the corner after him, and his wind was almost gone.

But Nosey was not beaten yet! On his right hand as he ran was a tall fence.

He made a frantic bound and caught the top of the solid wooden fence. With a last frantic effort he dragged himself over and dropped within.

That finished Nosey! With his last ounce of breath gone, he collapsed at the foot of the fence, and lay gurgling feebly.

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Outside that high fence he heard, in a few moments, the tramp and patter of running feet. But they did not stop. They passed on. The pursuers did not guess that Nosey had made that desperate leap. They believed that he was still ahead of them. A voice floated to his ears:

"Come on! We've as good as got him!"

"Put it on!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! went the passing feet. Footsteps and voices died away in the distance.

Nosey panted with relief.

Other footsteps followed. Other fellows were joining in the hunt. But they passed along the high fence that hid Nosey from their sight.

"Coo!" gasped Nosey.

He was safe for the moment!

He dragged himself to his feet at last. There was a possibility that some fellow might climb and look over the fence. It behoved Nosey to get out of sight as soon as he could.

He stared round him, wondering where he was.

In the distance he could see high buildings. But where he was, was a sort of yard, paved with mossy old flagstones, encircling an ancient building that seemed almost wholly in ruins.

Once it had been a tower, but little more than the lowest story was left, and a wide doorway gaped open without a door. It was, in fact, the old ruined tower of St. Jim's, which had long ago been fenced in and placed out of bounds as too dangerous a quarter for schoolboy explorations.

Nosey tottered in at the dusky doorway.

He blinked round the interior. He was out of sight for the moment, but full in view if anyone came and looked in.

An aperture in the old floor caught his eye, with steps leading downward. It was the entrance to the ancient crypt.

That was exactly what Nosey wanted. It was an absolute windfall for Nosey. In great relief and satisfaction, Nosey cut across to the opening in the old stone floor and peered down into the gloom below. Then he stepped in and trod down the stone stair, vanishing below the surface of the earth.

On the stone stair it was black as a hat—black, if possible, farther down. Nosey groped his way, step by step—and gave a startled gasp as his foot slipped over the edge of a step that was only partly there. Before he could recover his balance he was falling—and, with a yell of dismay and fright, he did the rest of the stair in one!

Bump!

"Yurrrrooooh!"

Nosey sprawled on damp old flagstones at the foot of the stair, and the wallet—hitherto clutched tenaciously—flew from his hand with the shock! He hardly noticed the loss for the moment, his interest being centred in that crash on hard stone.

"Oooh! Oh! Crimes!" spluttered Nosey. "Bust my buttons! Oh!"

For a long minute he sprawled. Then dizzily he sat up and blinked round him in the darkness.

He was safe from pursuers. That was all right. He could hide there as long as he liked, and sneak away as soon as he liked. But the wallet, with its five-pound note, its pound notes, and its ten-shilling notes, had shot away into that blackness. And Nosey Panks blinked into that blackness with feelings he could not have expressed in words.



“Stop thief!” Figgins & Co. lined up in the path of the desperate footpad.

**CHAPTER 4.**

**Bright of Baggy!**

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE grinned. The fattest member of the Fourth Form at St. Jim’s was standing in Study No. 6, gazing into the cupboard of that apartment.

The four juniors to whom that study belonged were out of gates Baggy had seen them go, so he knew.

Baggy was interested in their movements for good reasons. Had they gone out after tea, Baggy would not have been interested. But they had gone out before tea, and could not, therefore, yet have disposed of a certain cake that Baggy knew of.

Baggy had calculated correctly, for there was the cake. And almost as soon as his eyes had fallen on it, Baggy’s fat hands fell on it.

He whipped it out of the study cupboard.

Grinning, Baggy cut across to the door. With the cake under one podgy arm, Baggy opened the door with the other hand, and peered into the passage to ascertain that the coast was clear. Then he had the satisfaction—or otherwise—of ascertaining that the coast wasn’t!

Three juniors had just come out of Study No. 9. And Levison, Clive, and Cardew of the Fourth

all stared at the fat face and fat head that was projected from the doorway of Study No. 6.

“Oh!” gasped Baggy, startled.

Levison stared. Clive grinned. Cardew chuckled. Guilt was written all over the podgy features of Baggy Trimble.

He backed into the study, dropped the cake on the nearest chair, grabbed a Latin dictionary from the table, and emerged from the study. Baggy had been seen. But Baggy fancied that he knew how to throw dust in the eyes of the beholders.

“You fat octopus!” said Levison. “What are you up to in Blake’s study?”

“I suppose a fellow can borrow a pal’s dic without asking you, Levison?” retorted Baggy.

Baggy held up the dictionary—proof that that was what he had gone into Blake’s study for.

“Was that what you went in for?” grinned Clive.

“Eh? Oh! Yes!”

“Second thoughts are best!” remarked Cardew gravely. “Stick to the dic, Baggy. If Blake misses anything else from that study, we shall be bound to mention that we saw a fat snail crawling out.”

“Yah!” retorted Baggy.

Levison & Co walked away to the stairs.

Baggy remained, dictionary in hand, till they were gone. Then he rolled back into Study No. 6.

He slammed the dictionary on the table. Baggy had no real use for a Latin dictionary. Dictionaries were inedible. He grabbed up the cake from the chair.

But he hesitated. Three fellows had seen him in that study. Blake & Co., when they missed the cake, were not likely to be satisfied with a tale of a borrowed dictionary. Baggy was uneasy.

Then, all of a sudden, Baggy's little piggy eyes gleamed.

He had the idea!

He stepped to the study table, picked up a pen, and dipped it in the inkpot. On a sheet of impot paper, he wrote in capital letters:

"THANKS FOR THE CAKE!  
FIGGINS & CO."

Grinning, the astute Baggy rolled to the study cupboard, and placed that written message on the dish where the cake had lately reposed.

This was nothing short of a brain-wave!

Time and again, Figgins & Co. had raided the House since they had discovered some mysterious way of getting in and out unspotted.

True, they generally raided after dark; but once, at least, they had raided in the afternoon. Who was to know that they had not repeated that performance?

That written message, indeed, was proof that they had.

Baggy Trimble chuckled a fat chuckle. Blake could put this raid down to Figgins & Co. of the New House. Leaving that message was just one of their tricks.

Once more Baggy rolled to the door with the cake under his arm and peered out. This time the coast was clear.

He emerged from the study, but he did not go to his own study. He hurried up the passage instead. There was a box-room at the end of the passage, and in that secluded apartment a fellow was safe from curious eyes.

He rolled into the box-room, shut the door, and laid the cake down on top of a trunk, the property, like the cake, of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Baggy, grinning, opened his pocket-knife, and sliced.

It was a delicious cake. That slice almost melted in Baggy's mouth. He gobbled ecstatically.

He cut another slice and gobbled on.

Then suddenly he ceased gobbling as footsteps came up the passage, past the studies, to the door of the box-room.

Baggy jumped. If Levison & Co. had come back—if they found him with the cake—that message left in Study No. 6 would not serve much purpose.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Baggy.

Swiftly he opened the lid of D'Arcy's trunk and dropped the cake inside. Swiftly he closed the lid.

He sat on the lid as the box-room door opened. Three fellows entered. But they were not Levison & Co.. They were Mellish and his pals in the Shell.

"O.K.!" Mellish was saying. "Nobody about here! I—why—what—who—you fat bounder, what are you doing here?"

Baggy blinked at him.

"I suppose I can come here for a smoke as

well as you fellows!" he answered. "Have you bought this box-room?"

"Well, get out!" grunted Racke.

"Hook it!" said Crooke.

"I shall please myself about that!" retorted Baggy independently; but he changed his mind as Aubrey Racke lifted his foot.

Baggy retreated from the box-room, leaving the newcomers in possession.

Obviously he could not disinter that cake while they were there! Baggy did not want to divide that cake into four.

He could only wait in the passage till the smokers departed. He was still waiting in the passage when Blake & Co., warm and tired after their unavailing chase of the elusive Nosey, came up to tea.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Bagging Baggy!

"THAT ass—" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"That fathead!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"That goat!" said Dig.

"I entiahly fail to see why you fellows are applyin' these wathah oppwobwious expwessions to me!" said Arthur Augustus with dignity. "I am not awah that I have done anythin'!"

"Passive, not active!" said Monty Lowther. "You've not done—you've been done!"

"We ask these Shellfish to tea," said Blake. "The study is in funds—at least, one of us is, which comes to the same thing! Then you give every penny you've got to a tramp!"

"I did not give anythin' to that twamp, Blake! I was goin' to give him a pound note, thinkin' that he had been in the War—but I did not give him anythin'—you know vewy well that he snatched my wallet and wan—"

"Gussy all over!" said Tom Merry. "Gussy does these things! Blessed if I quite understand how that nosy merchant got clear—we were right at his heels when he vanished."

"And now," said Blake, "we're all stony! We've got absolutely nothing in the study but Gussy's cake! Luckily he never had a chance of giving that to a tramp!"

"You uttah ass!"

"But there's lots of cake!" said Digby. "Trickle in, and let's scoff the cake before Gussy meets a man who tells him that he was in the Peninsular War, and gets it off him!"

"Weally, Dig—"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther trickled in. Blake threw open the door of the study cupboard.

Then he gave a yell.

"Look!"

"What—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh cwikey!"

Seven fellows gazed into the study cupboard. No cake was visible. Instead of a cake, there was a message, apparently from Figgins & Co. of the New House.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Those New House rotters!" yelled Herries.

"They've snaffled the cake!" howled Digby.

"Bai Jove! The feahful wottahs!"

"How do they do it?" hooted Blake. "How do they get in and out of this mouldy House whenever they like—in broad daylight this time!"

"It's getting too jolly thick!" said Monty



Lowther. "Those New House cads are scoring all along the line!"

"Hold on, though!" said Manners. "Did they do it?" Manners was a fellow of few words but much penetration.

"Did they do it?" snorted Blake. "Can't you see they've left a message to say they did!"

"No deception, gentlemen!" said Lowther.

"Well, if they did, I don't quite see how," said Manners.

"Nobody knows how!" said Tom.

"I mean, I don't see how they could be in two places at once!" said Manners. "Figgins & Co. were in Rylcombe Lane when we were there—they joined in chasing that sweep who got away with Gussy's wallet—they hadn't come in when we did!"

"They did it before they went out, I suppose!" grunted Blake. "Anyhow, they did it! Can't you see what's written there?"

"Quite!" said Manners, unmoved. "But I never saw it written—and anybody could have written that in capital letters."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"Setting up to be a detective like Kerr of the New House?" snorted Herries.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't need a detective," he answered.

"Look at that paper. Figgins & Co. are New House bounders, and rank outsiders—but they wash. They don't leave sticky finger-prints when they leave a message."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom again.

"By gum!" said Blake. He scanned that message.

The paper bore traces—rather obvious traces—of having been picked up by a paw that had lately established contact with sticky comestibles. Baggy Trimble had, in fact, left his trade-mark.

"It isn't so very long since class," went on Manners. "If Figgins & Co. got here before they went out, they must have hopped in straight from the Form-room. Plenty of fellows about the studies at that time. They must have been seen. It wasn't Figgins & Co. who did this. It was some chap who wanted a cake. Know anybody in this House who always wants a cake—and always wants a wash?"

Six voices answered in unison.

"Trimble!"

"Bai Jove! If it was that fat wottah Baggy who—" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"He was in the passage when we came in!" exclaimed Blake. "We'll jolly well ask him, anyhow."

Seven juniors rushed out of the study. They almost rushed into Racke, Crooke, and Mellish—coming away from the box-room.

"Seen Trimble?" exclaimed Blake.

"Just passed us," answered Crooke.

"There he is!" roared Herries.

The seven rushed up the passage.

Baggy Trimble spun round in alarm. He was almost at the box-room door. He had waited till Racke & Co. cleared—impatiently. Now they had just cleared, and Baggy was heading for the box-room—and cake! But that rush in pursuit alarmed Baggy.

"You—you fellows want anything?" he stammered.

"Yes, you toad!" roared Blake. "We want a cake!"

"A—a—kik—kik—cake!" stammered Baggy.

"I—I haven't seen your kik—kik—cake! If Levison says he saw me in your study, I only went for a Latin dic—"

"Where's that cake?" roared Herries.

"Look here, you know, draw it mild!" protested Baggy. "Making out that a fellow's scoffed your cake! If you've had a cake scoffed, you'd better ask those New House cads about it—they're always ragging your study. In fact, I shouldn't wonder if they've left a message—"

"A—a—a message!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes—you look in the study, and see whether they've left a message," said Baggy, with great astuteness. "Then you'll know whether it was those New House rotters! I fancy you'll find something of the sort!"

"He—he—he fancies we shall find something of the sort!" gasped Blake. "And he fancies we don't guess that he left it for us!"

"Bump him!"

"Boot him!"

"Burst him!"

There was no doubt on the subject now in any of the seven minds! They all booted together.

"Yaroo!" roared Baggy. "Look here, you know, I never—yaroo!—had the cake! Keep off! I only went into the study for a Latin cake—I mean, a dic! Yow-w! I haven't tasted cake for—wow!—weeks! Oh, jiminy!"

Baggy fled for his podgy life. He raced for the stairs, with seven fellows in pursuit, dribbling him. He roared as he raced. He did the study landing at record speed, and shot down the stairs.

Blake howled over the banister as he flew:

"You fat octopus! You're going to be booted till you cough up that cake! Mind, you've got it coming!"

Baggy vanished.

"Better come along to our study to tea!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've got lots."

And there was tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell instead of Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Not Nice for Nosey!

"CRIMES!" breathed Nosey Panka.

It was a late hour.

Nosey was still in that safe refuge which had saved him from pursuing clutches.

Nosey had not planned to remain so long. His idea had been to remain in cover in that remote and hidden spot till after dark, and then depart under cover of night. But his tumble on the stone stair, and the loss of the wallet, changed Nosey's intentions.

For hours, Nosey had been groping about in the dark for that wallet. He had not found it.

Nosey had a match-box on him. But, alas, only three or four matches in it! It had been a full box when Nosey had found it in somebody's pocket; but he had done a lot of smoking since then, and the matches had gone. Nosey struck his three or four matches, one after another, searching for the dropped wallet. But the brief light gave out, and after that, Nosey groped and scrambled, and scrambled and groped desperately in the dark—with absolutely rotten luck.

The wallet had shot out of his hand when he crashed. It might have been anywhere—near or far!

Nosey gave it up at last, quite tired out.

But he did not go. He was fearfully reluctant to depart without his plunder. He took a rest, and as he had no matches left to light his pipe, he chewed tobacco! He was going to search

again, and yet again, crawling over the damp old flags, groping and fumbling in the gloom, before he made up his mind that there was nothing doing.

And even then he nourished a faint hope of being able to "pinch" a box of matches, or a lamp of some sort, in the adjoining buildings, when the hour was sufficiently late for such an enterprise.

There was one thing that Nosey did not foresee—that he might have a visitor in that dark, damp, remote spot, at a late hour. By that time it was certain that nobody knew he was there; and he could not imagine any reason why anybody should visit such a place at night.

It was the unexpected that happened. From the top of the stone steps came a sudden gleam of light, and a murmur of whispering voices. Somebody was coming—and more than one!

"Crimes!" gasped Nosey.

The wallet was not found. But it was more important that Nosey himself should not be found!

Somebody was coming down into the old crypt, and Nosey, forgetting the wallet, and thinking only of a policeman's hand on his dingy shoulder, crept away in the gloom, his grubby hands extended before him, stumbling over the broken old flags.

He bumped into one of the supporting pillars of the crypt. He made an impolite remark to that pillar, and groped round it, to find concealment on the farther side.

He was only in time. The light—that of an electric torch—was descending the stone stair.

"Careful, Kerr!" came a whispering voice.

"One of the steps is broken, you know!"

"Think I've forgotten that, Figgy?"

"I say!" came a third voice. "We'll begin on Study No. 6, what? D'Arcy had a cake from home to-day—I heard him asking those Shell chaps to tea—"

"Won't be much of that cake left, Fatty."

"Well, you never know!" said Fatty Wynn hopefully.

Nosey, peering cautiously round the pillar, made out three figures—one of them carrying a light.

Nosey did not know a lot about schools, but certainly he would have expected schoolboys to be in bed and fast asleep at that hour of the night.

What they could imaginably be doing in this dim old underground crypt was a mystery to Mr. Panks.

His watchful eye followed the light, crossing the crypt to the farther wall, in which a narrow alcove opened.

The fellow with the light came to a halt at the opening of the alcove, turning the beam on the floor, heedless of his comrade's injunction to get on.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Get on, old bean!"

"Look!"

Something on the floor had caught the eye of the Scottish junior of the New House, in the light.

He concentrated the torch on it, and the three stared down at it. And Nosey, with a sinking of heart, guessed what it was!

With that torch, he would have found it, easily enough. Now these schoolboys had found it. And Nosey wildly debated in his mind what chance he had if he rushed on them, and put up a scrap for that wallet. But there were three of

them—all sturdy fellows. It did not seem much of a chance.

"Well, by gum!" exclaimed Figgins. "How the dickens did that get here! It's a wallet!"

He picked it up.

"It's Gussy's wallet!" said Kerr. "There's his initials on it!"

"Gussy's!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "By gum! Have those School House rotters been down here? Have they nosed it out about the secret passage?"

"Must have been down here, if Gussy dropped his wallet here!" said Figgins. "It's Gussy's all right—and it feels as if there's plenty of money in it! Rather lucky for him that we're on the warpath to-night—we've found his jolly old wallet for him!"

"I don't quite make this out!" said Kerr. "Those School House chaps said that that tramp had snatched Gussy's wallet, and bolted with it! They never got him—and never got it back! This must be the same wallet."

"Then how the thump did it get here?" exclaimed Figgins, in astonishment. "How the thump—"

"It's the same wallet—it must be!" said Kerr, looking at it closely. "No doubt about that! I fancy I know how that tramp got away from us now. He must have got over the fence and dodged in here!"

"Oh gum!" said Figgins. "And dropped the wallet here—"

"Must have—as it's here! He had it—and here it is. I suppose he couldn't find it again in the dark, and had to go without it."

Nosey, crouched behind the pillar, listened. He was glad, at all events, that these schoolboys did not guess that he was still there!

"I suppose that's it," said Figgins. "Well, it's jolly lucky we found it. I'll keep it for Gussy. Get on, Kerr!"

Nosey, watching, saw the wallet slipped into Figgins' pocket. His gaze followed it sorrowfully.

Then Kerr stepped into the alcove, and his two companions followed him in.

What happened next made Nosey wonder for a moment whether he was dreaming. His eyes followed the light, and he saw Kerr reach the extremity of the alcove in the stone wall of the crypt. Then Kerr suddenly disappeared through the floor!

Nosey blinked dizzily at that surprising sight.

But a moment later he saw that the wide flagstone at the end of the alcove was tilted on end. It swung on a pivot through the centre. Then Nosey understood that reference to a secret passage.

Kerr, standing in the aperture in the floor, held the light, while his comrades dropped in one after another.

They ducked their heads and disappeared, and the stone rose to a level again, shutting off the light and leaving the old crypt in utter blackness.

"Crimes!" gasped Nosey.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Raiders!

**F**IGGINS & CO. had gone, leaving blackness behind them, and an astonished Nosey blinking in the dark. And that wallet, with its fiver, its pound notes, and its ten-shilling

notes, was gone with them—which was the unkindest cut of all! Nosey's thoughts followed that wallet longingly.

It did not take Nosey long to make up his mind what he was going to do. He was going to follow on if he could, and if he had half a chance, or a quarter of a chance, of snatching that wallet back, Nosey was not going to lose it.

He groped his way to the alcove, and groped his way into it.

He stepped along cautiously to the end, feeling his way to the tilting stone by which the schoolboys had entered the secret passage below. He found it rather suddenly. It tilted under him and shot him through.

"Ooogh!" gasped Nosey, as he went.

Bump!

It was only a few feet down—fortunately for Nosey. But he had quite a nasty jar as he landed on hard stone.

He sat up and blinked.

A light glimmered at a distance.

Nosey scrambled to his feet to follow on, and gave a howl as his head crashed against hard stone above.

"Oooh! Oh crimes! Oo!" howled Nosey.

He ducked promptly, and rubbed his head. The roof of the secret passage was low, as he now discovered.

Bent double, Nosey followed the light. But at a short distance the roof was higher, and he was able to walk upright. Now he noted that the light had stopped and was gleaming back.

He halted, crouching. If they were coming back, Nosey was spotted! A voice came to his listening ears.

"Did you fellows hear something?" It was Kerr who spoke, and Nosey realised that some sound from him must have floated along the stone passage. He crouched down, silent as a startled rat.

"Can't hear anything, old man!" answered Figgins. "Come on!"

The light turned again, and proceeded onward. Nosey, breathing relief, crept in silent pursuit. Where that stone-walled tunnel led he could not guess; but it had to lead somewhere, as the three schoolboys were following it.

The light suddenly vanished.

"Crimes!" murmured Nosey.

He was left in the dark. But as he groped on he caught the light again, twinkling above. The schoolboys were ascending a winding, narrow spiral stair—the way up to somewhere. Nosey silently clambered up after them.

Up and up and up, till Nosey was feeling quite dizzy. Then suddenly he halted again, crouching behind a turn of the stair as a voice reached him:

"Quiet!"

"Safe as houses this time of night, Figgy!"

"Might be somebody up. There was once before. Show the light while I get the panel open, Kerr!"

Nosey heard a faint click.

There was a faint brushing sound. Then silence, and the last glimmer of light was gone.

Nosey crept up.

At the top of the spiral stair was a sort of cell in the thickness of the ancient wall. It had a doorway—now open.

Nosey put his surprised head through.

He caught the light again. The three schoolboys were at a little distance. They were in a passage on which a number of doors opened, the walls panelled in ancient oak, black with age.

It was one of these panels that had opened like a door. They had left it open.

What it all meant was a deep mystery to Nosey. He knew that this building was a school; but of the two Houses at St. Jim's, and the state of warfare that reigned between them, Nosey, of course, knew nothing. That New House men had discovered that secret passage, and used it to raid the rival House, Nosey could not guess.

He blinked through the secret doorway into the Fourth Form passage in the School House, watching the three.

They entered one of the rooms—Study No. 6, if Nosey had only known it. From the doorway, left half open, only an occasional glimmer of light came.

Nosey stepped silently through the secret doorway.

He crept on tiptoe towards Study No. 6. He peered into the study through the crack between door and doorpost.

The three were in the room. Kerr was holding the light. Fatty Wynn was looking into the study cupboard. Figgins, with a cheery grin on his face, was dipping a small brush into a little can of paint and painting on the looking-glass.

Nosey blinked at the inscription as it grew under the brush. It seemed to be something in the form of a song. Nosey was acquainted with the "Lambeth Walk," and he realised that it would go to that well-known tune:

"When you School House dunderheads  
Are all snoozing in your beds,  
You'll find us here,  
Pulling your silly legs!"

"How will they like that in the morning?" grinned Figgins. "Think it will make them wild?"

"Just a few!" said Kerr.

Figgins put the lid on the paint-pot, rolled the brush in a sheet of paper, and restored both to his pocket.

"Come on!" he said. "That will do for this study! Tom Merry's next!"

He moved towards the door.

Nosey breathed hard.

This was his chance! One knock as they came out would send the torch flying and leave them in darkness. A grab at the long-legged schoolboy, a snatch at a pocket, and the wallet would be his again. Then a swift cut back to the open panel—and flight! Nosey mapped it out rapidly.

"Come on with the light, Kerr!"

Kerr stepped out of the study with the light. The Scottish junior of the New House was wary, but he was taken quite off his guard when a grubby fist shot out suddenly and knocked the torch from his hand.

It clattered on the floor, instantly extinguished.

"Oh!" gasped Kerr.

"What—" breathed Figgins. "Here, hold on! Who's got hold of me— Oh crumbs, they're up, after all! Oh, my hat!"

Figgins struggled in the darkness in clutching hands.

## CHAPTER 8.

Left!

"O H, my hat!"  
"They're up!"  
"Look out!"

"Cut!"

Bump!

Figgins, in clutching hands, went over, while Kerr and Wynn groped wildly in the dark. The sudden surprise was all on Nosey's side. He groped and clutched, and the wallet was in his grasp.

That was all Nosey wanted! Figgins & Co., naturally, jumped to the conclusion that School House fellows had been on the watch for raiders and had collared them in the dark. Escape was their cue if they could get away. Figgins struggled and wrenched to free himself, and as soon as the wallet was in Nosey's clutch he succeeded.

"Hook it!" he panted as he scrambled breathlessly up.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn as Nosey, starting to run, crashed into him.

Fatty punched. It was, he supposed, a School House man attacking—and he punched hard! "Whoop!" spluttered Nosey as a fat fist landed on his bulbous nose, and he staggered and went over, bumping.

"Got one of them!" gasped Fatty. "Where are you, Figgy?"

"Here! Here you are, Kerr!"

The three raiders rushed down the passage. Nosey, behind them, gasped and grunted in the dark, scrambling wildly on the floor.

Figgins & Co. did not lose a second!

How many foes they had to deal with they did not know. Nosey, scrambling and spluttering on the floor, made noise enough for three or four, at least.

The raiders were only anxious to get through the panel and close it before there was a light on the scene.

All was dark, so far, and they were unaware, of course, that their assailant was not a School House man at all, and had no light.

If that panel was seen open Figgins & Co.'s secret was a secret no longer; nocturnal raids on the School House would be a thing of the past. Figgins scrambled through, after him, Kerr, and after Kerr, Fatty Wynn—and the panel snapped shut. It was only a matter of seconds, while Nosey, clasping his damaged nose, still sprawled and spluttered on the floor outside the doorway of Study No. 6.

Figgins gasped for breath.

"We've done with them!" he breathed.

"Safe as houses!" murmured Kerr. "They can't have seen the panel in the dark. We're all right!"

"I say, they must have been on the watch!" whispered Fatty Wynn. "Must have been watching all the time—"

"They haven't got us—that's all right!"

"Who were they? Not one of them said a word—"

"Blake, I expect. I say, though, I've dropped that wallet," said Figgins, groping in his pocket. "Whoever it was had hold of me as grabbing me all over. That wallet's gone—"

"They'll find it all right!" said Kerr.

"Bound to!" agreed Figgins.

"I gave one of them a jolly good jolt!" said Fatty Wynn. "He jumped at me in the dark and I got him on the nose, I think. I believe I've barked my knuckles."

"His nose will feel worse than your knuckles, if you have!" chuckled Figgins. "Come on! Got the torch, Kerr?"

"It was knocked out of my hand—"

"Well, we can get back in the dark; we know

our way well enough by this time. Come on! I say, that was a narrow shave, though."

And Figgins & Co. trod away down the spiral stair, homeward bound for the New House, nothing doubting that Blake & Co., in the Fourth Form passage in the School House, would be wondering how on earth they had vanished so suddenly.

Blake & Co., as a matter of fact, were fast asleep in their dormitory, not even dreaming that anything was going on on the floor below.

Nosey Panks was sitting up outside Study No. 6 in a dizzy frame of mind, clasping a nose that felt as if it had been driven into his head like a nail.

"Oooogh!" breathed Nosey. "Gooogh! Ow! My beezer! Ooogh! Blow 'em! Oogh!"

Nosey staggered to his feet.

He realised that he was alone. The three schoolboys were gone. He groped along in the darkness, feeling the wall for the open panel. It did not occur to him, for the moment, that the three had gone back the way they had come and closed the panel after them.

He groped on till he reached the end of the passage and found himself on the study landing.

"Crimes!" muttered Nosey.

He knew that he had missed the panel; it was not at the end of the passage. He groped back.

His foot knocked against some small object on the floor, and, guessing what it was, he stooped and picked it up—the torch he had knocked from Kerr's hand. But it was in vain that he tried to switch it on. The crash on the floor had broken the bulb. There was no light for Nosey.

He breathed hard through his damaged nose.

Finding the torch apprised him, at least, that he had returned to the spot where the tussle had taken place. He knew what that meant. He had groped over that panel without finding it. It was shut!

"Strike me pink!" breathed Nosey.

Picking out that panel among some scores, especially in the dark, was hopeless enough to think of, even if he could have got it open again when found. Nosey realised that the way of escape was cut off.

He had recaptured the wallet. That was stowed away safe in his tattered pocket. But getting away with it was another matter.

But for that punch on the nose, Nosey might have been first out before the panel was closed. That punch—which, of course, Nosey had never calculated upon—had done it. Instead of being first, he was last—and left!

He dabbed his suffering nose again and groped into Study No. 6. But when he looked from the window of that study, in the July starlight, he quite gave up the idea of attempting to escape by that window. Nosey had only one neck, and he placed, perhaps, an undue value on it! At all events, he preferred to keep it intact.

"Blow!" said Nosey.

He turned back from the window and groped out of the study again. He groped along the passage in quest of a more practicable window.

At the end of the passage was the door of the Fourth Form box-room. Nosey groped over it and opened it. A glimmering window met his eyes. In the hope that it might prove more useful than a study window, Nosey groped across to it.

"Oh!" he stuttered suddenly as his knees came in contact with a box, and he stumbled over.

His nose, already sore, tapped on that box! Mr. Panks hardly repressed a yell of fury.

He scrambled up, clasping his nose. In the glimmer of starlight from the window he could see now that there were a good many boxes and trunks in the room. He threaded his way among them and reached the window.

But the view from that window was not encouraging. There was a jutting roof below—but it was some distance down, and it slanted. Nosey did not like the idea of rolling off it to unknown depths.

There was nothing for it but to take the risk

There was no answer save the sound of regular breathing. At that hour of the night all the School House was fast asleep—excepting Baggy!

Baggy had good reason for being awake.

Several times, it is true, he had nodded off. But he had awakened again every time. And now it was late enough to be safe to stir.

Baggy was thinking of the cake. Every time he had nodded off he had dreamed of it. That cake haunted Baggy.

The smokers in the box-room had prevented him from disposing of his plunder on the spot. And after Racke & Co. had gone, Blake & Co.



Baggy Trimble ceased to gobble as he gazed, in horror and terror, at the face peering round the door!

of creeping downstairs and searching for a downstairs window that would let him out. Nosey crept back across the box-room to the door.

Then he halted, his heart pounding. Soft and stealthy, but easily audible in the silence of the night, came footsteps. Footsteps, coming up the passage, directly to the door of the box-room! Nosey had just time to park himself behind the open door when those footsteps reached the threshold.

#### CHAPTER 9.

##### Baggy's Burglar!

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE sat up in his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory and blinked to and fro in the shadows.

"You fellows asleep?" whispered Baggy.

were on the scene, and Baggy had forgotten even the cake when they dribbled him to the stairs. After that, Baggy had had an exciting and extremely unpleasant time.

Whether Baggy had scoffed that cake, or whether he had scoffed part of it, or whether it was parked, in whole or in part, waiting to be scoffed, its owners did not know. It seemed impossible that even Baggy could have disposed of so extensive a cake at one sitting. If that cake, or a portion thereof, was still in existence, Study No. 6 agreed that Baggy had to cough it up.

This act of restoration they hoped to bring about by the simple process of kicking the fat Baggy whenever they saw him.

How many kicks he had collected during that

hectic evening, Baggy could not have computed without going into high figures.

Blake kicked him, Herries kicked him, Digby kicked him, and D'Arcy kicked him. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, feeling that it was up to them to assist, kicked him also. Kit Wildrake, who had the pleasure, or otherwise, of sharing Study No. 2 with Trimble and Mellish, joined in the game with zest; so when Baggy was driven to his study at last for prep, a boot awaited him there.

Baggy's time having been spent in dodging innumerable boots, he had had no chance at the cake.

But in prep he hoped to be able to sneak away to the box-room while all the other fellows were busy. But when he rose from his chair in Study No. 2, Wildrake asked him pleasantly where he was going, and Baggy sat down again.

After prep, Baggy had to run a boot-gauntlet, and again there was no chance at the hidden cake.

Baggy was driven to his last resource—to go down for that cake after lights out, after all the fellows were safely asleep.

To leave it where it was till morning was impossible—to Baggy! The mere thought of that cake made him hungry. Moreover, eyes would be upon him again in the morning. It was night or nothing.

That was why Baggy's eyes were open when all others were closed; that was why he awakened again, every time he nodded off; and that was why he now crept cautiously from his bed.

The Fourth Form dormitory was buried in slumber. Silently, Baggy drew on his extensive trousers, and snaffed a pair of slippers belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Silently he crept away to the door. Silently he stole out of the dormitory, down the passage, and down the staircase to the study landing.

He blinked uneasily to and fro as he went. All was dark and silent—which was reassuring in one way, but not in another. Baggy did not want to run into a master or a prefect—but still less did he want to run into a possible burglar. In the dark silent hours, burglars seemed probable to Baggy. He remembered, too, that the New House enemy sometimes raided the School House at night; and he did not want a meeting with Figgins & Co. on the warpath.

With his fat heart palpitating, Baggy trod softly up the Fourth Form study passage to the box-room at the end.

The door stood wide open, which was unusual. He rolled in.

He had no light, but he did not need one. He knew exactly where to find his plunder.

He reached D'Arcy's trunk and lifted the lid. He lifted out the cake, closed the lid again, and laid the cake thereon.

In the dim glimmer from the window, Baggy beamed over that cake. He gloated over it. So far he had had only two or three slices from that cake. Now he was going to take cargo aboard in bulk.

He forgot possible burglars and New House raiders. He concentrated on the cake. Sitting on the trunk beside the cake, Baggy cut slice after slice, and gobbled, and gobbled, and gobbled.

That the box-room had another tenant Baggy, of course, did not guess. When the door creaked slightly, it did not occur to Baggy that someone had stirred behind it. He gobbled happily.

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But suddenly, in the middle of a happy gobble, Baggy stopped dead.

From where he sat, he could see the door, wide open against the wall—dim to the view, but discernible in the starlight from the window. And Baggy ceased to gobble, and his heart jumped almost into his fat neck as he saw something projected round the edge of the door!

It was a face!

Nosey had been parked in those close quarters for a good ten minutes. He was getting cramped. He peered round the door to see who it was, what he was up to, and whether he was going.

Baggy was not going—at least, he had not intended to go before finishing the cake—far from finished yet. But he changed his mind on the spot as he saw that face peering round the door.

For one spellbound moment Baggy gazed in horror and terror at that face. Then, with a howl of fright, he leaped up from the trunk and bolted for the doorway.

He had had only a brief glimpse of that face. But that stubbly face, with its bulbous red nose, was not that of a St. Jim's fellow, that was certain—it was not a New House raider—it was—must be—a burglar! Baggy did not stay for another blink. Baggy flew!

He went through the doorway like a bullet from a rifle. He did the passage at about 50 m.p.h., yelling with terror as he went. He was gone before Nosey could even think of whipping from behind the door and grabbing him. His voice floated back on its top note as he flew.

"Help! Help! Burglars! Yaroooh! Oh crikey! Help!"

Baggy's voice fairly rang and pealed through the silent House. And Nosey Panks, in the box-room, ejaculated in utter dismay:

"Oh crimes!"

## CHAPTER 10.

### A Near Thing for Nosey!

MR. RAILTON, Housemaster of the School House, started, frowned, and laid down his pen.

Railton was sitting up late that night.

He had two reasons; one, a pile of Greek papers to correct for the Sixth; the other, a strong suspicion that, of late, juniors had been larking out of their dormitories at late hours.

Twice of late Kildare of the Sixth had turned out at night for that reason. So Railton sat up and corrected Greek papers with his study door open, so that any sound of disturbance in the House would reach him.

Once already he had fancied that he heard something, and had risen, stepped to his study door, and listened. But if sounds had floated down from the Fourth Form quarters, they had ceased; and Mr. Railton, after listening a few moments, went back to Greek.

Now, for the second time, he heard—not some faint distant sound, but a terrific hullabaloo!

It was no fancy this time. It was real—there was no doubt about that. A roaring voice upstairs woke all the echoes.

Railton laid down his pen, picked up his cane, and jumped for the door. He ran for the staircase.

Some fellow was out of his dormitory—that was certain. That fellow was kicking up a tremendous row—that was another certainty. And the Housemaster went up the stairs two at a time

to catch him before he could dodge back to his dormitory and escape.

He switched on the electric light as he reached the study landing. He stared across the landing at a fat figure that came bolting and yelling out of the Fourth Form study passage.

He made a stride and grasped that figure as it headed in frantic flight for the dormitory staircase.

"Yoo-hoo!" roared Baggy Trimble, as he was grasped. "Let go! Help! Mercy! Spare my life! Yaroooh!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Trimble—"

"Mercy!" shrieked Baggy. Having left one burglar behind him in the box-room, Baggy had no doubt that he had run into another of the gang on the landing; he was too terrified to recognise his Housemaster. "I say, leggo! Oh, spare my life!"

"You utterly absurd boy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, shaking him. "Be silent, Trimble—you will wake the whole House! What do you mean by this disturbance? What are you doing out of your dormitory?"

"Oh!" Trimble realised at last that it was his Housemaster and not another burglar. "Oh! Help! Keep him off, sir! Help!"

"Who—what—"

"The bib-bib-bib—" stuttered Baggy.

"You absurd boy! There is no burglar! You—"

"In the box-room, sir! I saw him!" spluttered Baggy through his chattering teeth. "A horrible ruffian, sir— Oh jiminy!"

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Railton. "I will, however, look in the box-room! Come with me, Trimble!"

Mr. Railton strode rapidly up the Fourth Form passage.

Baggy Trimble went with him because an iron grasp was still on his shoulder.

"I say, sir he's in the box-room!" groaned Baggy. "I—I say, suppose he's got an automatic?"

"Silence, you stupid boy!"

"Suppose he sis—sis—springs on you, sir—" burred Baggy. "Had—hadn't I—I—I better go and call for help, sir—"

"If you make another sound, Trimble, I shall cane you!"

"Oh jiminy! But—b—b—but—"

"Be silent!"

Mr. Railton strode on, accompanied by the reluctant Baggy. And his rapid footsteps in the passage brought dismay to the heart of Nosey Panks.

Railton did not believe for a moment that there was anyone in the box-room. But Nosey, of course, knew there was—Nosey Panks! And he glared round him in desperation for a hiding-place.

Now that the light was on in the passage, he dared not emerge. He would have been seen at once! And in a minute or two the man whose deep voice he had heard would arrive, and switch on the light in the room. It was a pressing and desperate moment for Mr. Panks!

Hiding behind the door was no use—after an alarm of burglars. The man would look behind the door.

Then Nosey had a brain-wave. That big trunk, on which Baggy had placed the cake, stood prominent in the glimmer of the starlight from the window. Nosey was not a big man. The

trunk was big—Nosey was not! In sheer desperation, Nosey Panks lifted the lid of Gussy's big trunk, and—taking care that the remaining half of the cake did not roll off—squeezed himself inside.

The trunk was empty—till Nosey squeezed in. Then it was full. But there was room for Nosey. He curled up in the big trunk, and let the lid fall softly.

He hardly breathed.

He was safe out of sight. The cake remained on top of the trunk—as good as proof that it hadn't been opened. That, added to Mr. Railton's disbelief in a burglar, was all Nosey had to rely upon.

A minute later, footsteps were audible in the box-room.

A faint glimmer penetrated a keyhole of the trunk, warning Nosey that the light was switched on.

Almost holding his breath, he listened. Footsteps came directly towards the trunk. Then he heard a voice:

"What is this—why, what—"

Nosey ceased to breathe.

"A cake—"

Nosey breathed again.

"Trimble! Is it possible that you left your dormitory, at this hour of the night, to consume a cake?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Oh! No! Yes! No! I—I—"

"Were you sitting here in the dark, Trimble, eating this cake, when you were frightened by some shadow?"

"I—I saw him, sir—he was behind the door—he—he glared out at me—an—an awful face, sir—"

"There is no one behind the door, Trimble! There is no one in the room at all! The window is fastened—no one can have entered. Trimble, answer my question—you came down from your dormitory to eat this cake—"

"I—I—I—"

"I will not cane you at this hour, Trimble—"

"Oh! Thank you, sir—"

"I shall cane you in the morning!"

"Oh jiminy!"

"Now I shall take you back to your dormitory, Trimble. That cake—what remains of it—will be confiscated. I shall take care that you do not leave your dormitory for it again, Trimble. I shall lock this door, and take away the key!"

"But—but the bub—bub—burglar, sir—"

"There is no burglar, you stupid boy! It was a frightened fancy. Come with me at once!"

The light was shut off. The door closed. There was a click of a key outside, and a scrape as it was withdrawn from the lock.

That click and that scrape sounded rather like the knell of doom to Nosey Panks!

There was no help for it—he dared not reveal himself till the Housemaster was gone. And as soon as the Housemaster was gone the door was locked on the outside.

"Oh crimes!" groaned Nosey.

He pushed up the lid of D'Arcy's trunk. The cake rolled off with a thud to the floor, unheeded now. Nosey's frowsy head emerged, and he blinked with dismay at the locked door, and crawled out of the trunk.

"Oh crimes!" repeated the wretched Nosey.

There was no escape by the window! There was no escape by the door! Nosey sat on the trunk and groaned. Then, as he noticed the cake again, he remembered that he was hungry.

In these harrowing circumstances, there was only one thing that Nosey Panks could do, with any satisfaction.

He did it. He ate the cake!

## CHAPTER 11.

### Who?

"**B**AI Jove! What—"

"Who—"

"Railton—"

"Baggy—"

"What—"

Most of the Fourth awoke as the light flashed on in the dormitory, and Baggy Trimble trundled dismally in, followed by the Housemaster.

The juniors sat up in bed, staring.

"Trimble!" rapped Mr. Railton.

"Oh jiminy!"

"Go back to bed at once! I shall deal with you in the morning! My boys," added Mr. Railton, "I am sorry to disturb you at this hour—"

"Pway don't mention it, sir!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

Mr. Railton gave him a look, and went on:

"If you have heard a disturbance, there is no occasion for alarm. This foolish boy, Trimble, went down to the Fourth Form box-room to eat a cake—"

"A cake!" breathed Blake. He did not need telling whose cake it was. He could guess that one.

"And fancied that he saw a burglar," said Mr. Railton. "Trimble will be caned in the morning for causing this disturbance."

Baggy crawled into bed. Mr. Railton's glance shot up and down the dormitory, to ascertain whether there were any other absentees. But all the beds had their occupants.

"Good-night, my boys!" said Mr. Railton.

"Good-night, sir!"

The light was turned off, and the door shut. A minute was allowed to elapse for Mr. Railton's footsteps to die away towards the stairs. Then four voices spoke together:

"Trimble, you toad—"

"Baggy, you bloated blighter—"

"Trimble, you pincher—"

"Twimble, you feahful wottah—"

"I guess I could name the owner of that cake," chuckled Kit Wildrake, "and I'll say it isn't Trimble!"

"So that's where he parked it—in the box-room!" said Blake.

"Have him out of that bed!" growled Herries. "Let's kick him up and down the dorm, and swamp him with a jug of water, and—"

"And strew the hungry churchyard with his bones!" suggested Cardew.

"I—I—I say, it wasn't your cake, you fellows!" exclaimed Baggy. "It was another cake—I had it from Trimble Hall! Look here, you know, don't you fellows start ragging—Railton's going to whop me in the morning—"

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps we can let the fat boundah off as he is gettin' it from Wailton in the mornin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "But if Wailton wasn't goin' to whop you, Twimble, I would turn out and give you a feahful thwashin'."

"I—I say, suppose one of you fellows gets out and—looks the door!" said Trimble, with

a quaver in his voice. "It ain't safe to go to sleep with burglars in the House."

"You fat ass!" said Levison. "The shadow you saw in the box-room won't come up here."

"It was a burglar!" gasped Baggy. "Railton wouldn't believe that I saw a burglar hiding behind the door in the box-room—"

"Hardly!" chuckled Clive.

"But I did!" howled Baggy. "And as Railton's locked the door, he must have locked him in. I jolly well know he never got out."

"Well, if he's locked in the box-room, he's safe till morning!" chuckled Dick Julian. "No need to lock the dorm!"

"What was he burgling?" asked Blake. "There was one burglar there, after a cake—what was the other after?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I saw him!" said Baggy. "Of course, I didn't see him very clearly, as there was only a spot of starlight. But I saw him—a fearfully ugly-looking face like—like a gorilla—"

"Is there a looking-glass in the box-room?" asked Cardew. "That might account for it—from the description."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" hooted Baggy. "But he's there all right. He couldn't have got out, we should have seen him in the passage. Railton turned the light on. He must have hid among the boxes, or something. He was hiding behind the door, and he looked round at me. I bolted and—"

"That sounds like a fact," sounds Cardew. "We can believe that you bolted, Baggy. You bolted the cake, and then you bolted yourself."

"Yan! He's been there, all right. Perhaps Railton will let me off in the morning, when he's found. He might have robbed the House and—"

"I wonder whether the fat ass did see anybody, though," remarked Levison thoughtfully. "If those New House sweeps have been here again, Baggy might have seen one of them and taken him for a burglar—"

Blake jumped.

"Oh, my hat! If Figgins—"

"Bai Jove! Figgins—"

"Was it Figgins, or Kerr, or Wynn that you saw, you benighted ass?" demanded Blake, sitting up in bed again.

"No. I—I don't think so! He looked to me like a—a burglar. He had a red nose, I noticed that, and I—I think he was unshaven—"

"Figgins is unshaven," remarked Cardew. "Never heard of a chap in the Fourth shaving."

"You silly ass! I mean he was all stubbly! I'm sure it wasn't a St. Jim's man, nor a New House chap. A—a burglar—"

"Oh, rot!" said Blake. He was beginning to believe by this time that Baggy had seen somebody in the box-room, and if Baggy had seen somebody, Blake had no doubt that it was a New House raider. "One of those rotters from over the way, of course!"

"Bai Jove! If Figgy is locked up in the box-woom, he is in wathah a bad box!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "They will find him missin' fwom his House in the mornin'."

"Oh, gum!" said Herries. "That will mean a fearful row for Figgins—if it's Figgins!"

"It wasn't Figgins; it was a burglar—"

"Oh, dry up, you fat chump!"

Jack Blake slipped out of bed. His friends heard him hurrying on his clothes in the dark.



"Where are you goin', deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"I'm going down to see if there's a New House fathead in the box-room," agreed Blake. "Can't leave Figgy to it, if he's there. He would get a flogging for getting out of his House at night."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Mind Railton don't cop you!" said Dig anxiously.

"Railton won't cop me. I shan't yell at the top of my voice, even if I see a shadow move," said Blake. "I leave that to Trimble."

"I tell you it was a burglar—"

"And I tell you that I'll biff you with a pillow if you don't leave off talking rot!"

Blake crept quietly to the door, opened it, and listened. Mr. Railton had had plenty of time to get clear, but it was necessary to be very cautious. Blake did not want to join Baggy in the Housemaster's study in the morning and bend over in Baggy's company.

All was quiet, and Blake crept on tiptoe from the dormitory.

If Figgins were there he had no doubt that the long-legged New House junior had raided his study—for which he was prepared to slaughter him to any extent, personally, but, at the same time, he was prepared to help him escape discovery by the beaks.

Beaks were not wanted to take a hand in the warfare between the rival juniors of St. Jim's. The penalty for getting out of one's House after lights out was severe. Blake did not want Figgy to be caught in the wrong House in the morning and marched back to the tender mercies of Mr. Ratcliff, his Housemaster.

He tiptoed down the dormitory staircase to the study landing. All was dark; Railton had either gone back to his study or gone to bed.

Blake tiptoed along to Study No. 6 and looked into that celebrated apartment, flashing on a pocket torch. If the New House enemy had been raiding he expected to find evidence of the same in that study.

He saw the evidence at the first glance. He glared at the inscription Figgins had painted on the looking glass.

Evidently the New House raiders had been there that night!

That settled it. Blake had no doubt now that Baggy had seen someone in the box-room, and that it was one of the New House Co.

He crept along to the box-room.

He made no sound, but as he reached the box-room door he heard a sound from within.

It was the sound of munching!

Blake grinned.

Obviously, someone was there; and equally obviously, he was finishing the cake that Baggy Trimble had had to leave unfinished!

He groped over the lock. The key was gone! Baggy had not mentioned that Railton had taken away the key after locking the door. But evidently Railton had.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Blake.

The occupant of the box-room was a prisoner, and it was impossible for Blake to let him out.

He gave a light tap at the door!

He heard a sudden gasp within, and the sound of munching ceased. Blake stooped to the keyhole.

"Is that you, Figgins, you owl?" he whispered through the keyhole.

No reply.

"It's Blake here! Answer me, you ass! I've come down to get you out of this, if I can, you

New House fathead!" whispered Blake. "Is it Figgins there, or Kerr, or that fat ass Wynn?"

Silence!

Nosey Panks, sitting on the trunk, with the remnant of the cake in his grubby hands, stared at the door, glad, at that moment, perhaps, that it was locked! He was not likely to speak and betray himself.

"Will you answer, you dummy?" hissed Blake. "I tell you I know you're there, you fathead! I heard you!"

There was no answer.

"Oh, you blithering chump!" breathed Blake. "Can't you understand that I want to keep you out of a row with your House beak, if I can?"

Nosey Panks could understand, from what he heard, that the schoolboy outside the door fancied that there was another schoolboy locked in the box-room, and wanted to help him out. But a reply from Nosey would have enlightened the fellow outside at once, and Nosey uttered no word.

"Idiot!" came hissing through the keyhole. "Chump! Fathead! Gone dumb, or deaf, or what?"

Silence!

"Railton's taken away the key! Do you understand, you New House noodle? Look here, can I do anything?"

Silence!

"Will you answer?"

Silence!

"Oh, all right! Stick there and be blown!" hooted Blake through the keyhole; and he left it at that.

He tiptoed back to the Fourth Form dormitory. Every fellow in the dormitory was awake, and there was a chorus of whispering as Blake came in and shut the door.

"Was it Figgins?"

"Have you let him out?"

"Who is it?"

"What—"

Blake gave a snort.

"I couldn't let him out—Railton's got the key. That goat, Trimble, couldn't tell me that Railton had taken the key, of course! I heard him there, but he wouldn't answer me. There's somebody in the box-room, but he wouldn't answer—not a word—"

"A burglar wouldn't answer," said Trimble.

"If you say burglar again I'll bump you out of that bed and burst you all over the floor!" hooted Blake. "It's some New House fathead, of course! They've been in our study and scrawled a lot of cheek on the looking-glass! We shall have paint to clean off in the morning! One of them must have dodged into the box-room, and he's there now. And if he doesn't choose to answer a fellow who comes down to help him out, he can go and eat coke!"

And Jack Blake went back to bed.

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Prisoner of the Box-room!

**T**OM MERRY jumped.

The bright sunrise of July was streaming in at the windows of the Shell dormitory, but the rising-bell had not yet clanged in the dewy morn. It was not the clang of the rising-bell, but a shake that awakened the captain of the Shell, and he opened his eyes with a jump.

"Blake, you ass!" he ejaculated, staring at the fellow who was shaking his. "What the dickens are—"

"Wake up!" grunted Blake.

Tom sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes.

"What the thump's this game?" he demanded. "It isn't rising-bell yet. What have you turned out before the bell for? And what the dickens have you woke me up for, you ass?"

"Those New House sweeps were here again last night!" growled Blake.

"No need to lug me out of bed, if they were!"

"Ass! One of them is still in the House—all of them, for all I know! Do you want them caught?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry made one bound out of bed. Manners and Lowther sat up. Several other Shell fellows awakened, and stared.

"How—" exclaimed Tom as he clutched at his trousers.

"Sure?" exclaimed Lowther.

"They've painted up a lot of cheeky rot in my study!" snorted Blake. "Serve them jolly well right to be copped, too! But do you want them copped?"

"No fear!" said Tom. "That isn't in the game! We'll cop them ourselves—we don't want the beaks to cop them! But how—"

"That worm Trimble had our cake parked in the box-room," explained Blake. "He went down for it in the night, and as far as I can make out, they must have got alarmed and dodged into the box-room. That blithering funk saw one of them and fancied he was a burglar, and howled, and Railton came up. He locked the box-room door, I suppose, to keep that fat worm from wriggling down after what was left of the cake, and locked the New House man in."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Manners.

"I went down and heard him there!" said Blake. "He wouldn't answer me, so I went back to bed. But—"

"I see!" said Tom.

"I've turned out early to see if anything can be done," said Blake. "If he—or they—get missed from the New House, there'll be a fearful row! I thing there's only one of them from what I could hear—Figgins, most likely. It means a flogging—Ratty will take him to the Head for getting out of his House at night."

"We've got to stop that somehow," said Tom. "Turn out, you chaps—let's go down and see what can be done!"

The Terrible Three dressed quickly, and left the dormitory with Blake. They found Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus waiting for them on the landing.

Seven juniors trod softly down the staircase. The House had not awakened yet; but from the regions below sounds could be heard of early housemaids. They made no sound as they went up the Fourth Form study passage.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus as he looked into Study No. 6.

"The cheeky sweeps!" grunted Herries.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther chuckled. They seemed to see something amusing in that inscription on the looking-glass.

"That shows they've been here!" said Dig.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

They pushed on to the box-room at the end of the passage. Tom Merry turned the door-handle. The door was locked and immovable.

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But as the door-handle rattled there was a sound of movement within.

"Hear him?" muttered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

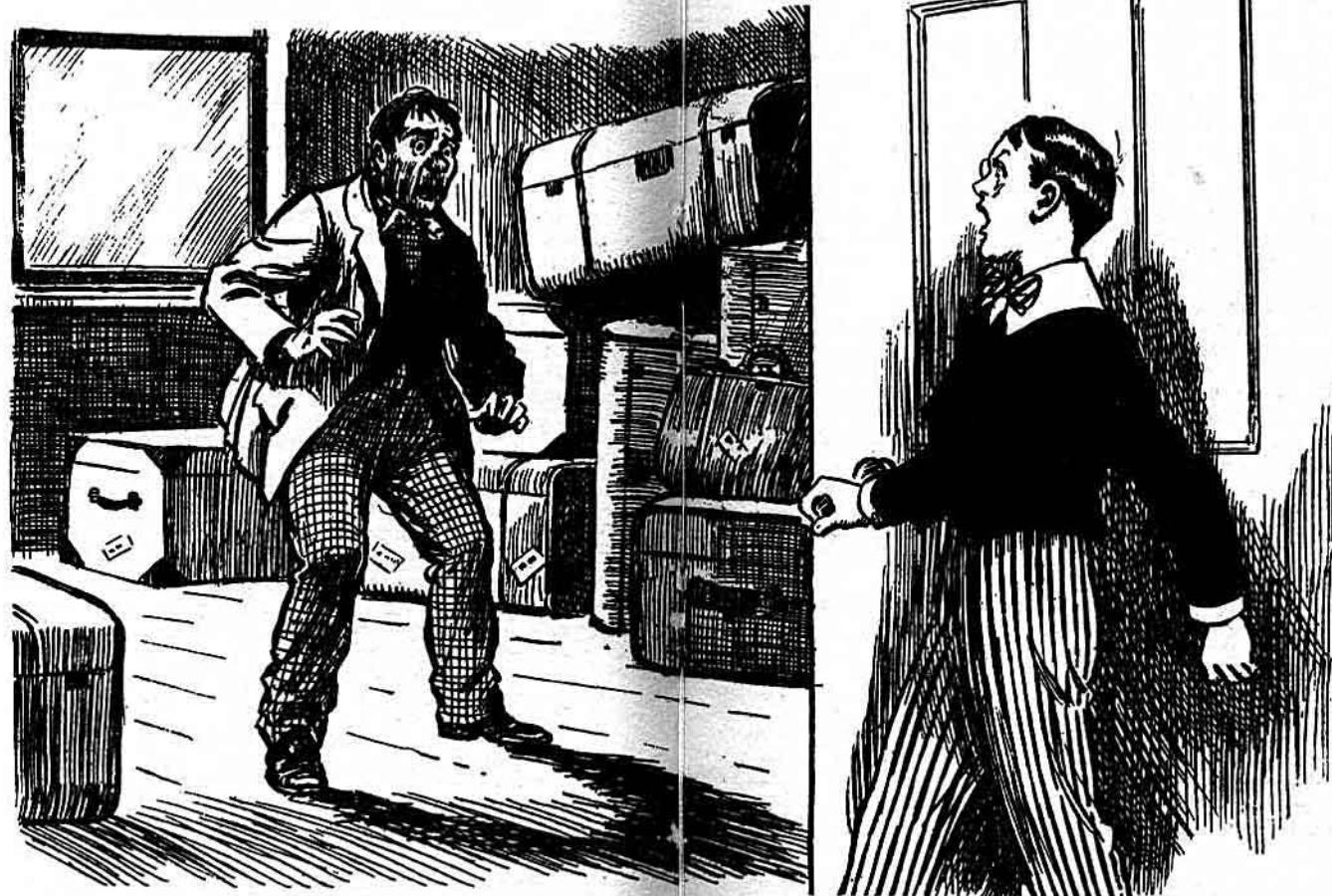
"Blessed if I know how we're going to help him out!" said Monty Lowther. "We can't open the door without the key."

Tom Merry whispered through the keyhole.

"Is that you, Figgins?"

No reply.

"He wouldn't answer last night!" grunted Blake. "The silly owl doesn't seem to understand that we want to help him out."



"Oh cwumbs! Oh cwikey!" D'Arcy's noble eyes almost popped through his eyeglass at the sight of the rascal who had snatched his wallet.

"Figgins, you chump, why don't you answer?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've come down early to get you out if we can."

Silence.

"Bai Jove! It is vevy odd that Figgins doesn't ansawah, deah boys! Pewwaps Twimble was-wight, and it is a burglah, aftah all."

"Think a burglar would stick there all night?" hooted Blake. "Burglars can pick locks—this lock wouldn't have kept a burglar in!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Do you ever think of anything?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Why doesn't the silly cuckoo answer?" asked Manners.

"Goodness knows!"

"Look here, Figgins, or Kerr, or Wynn, or

whichever silly idiot you are, answer!" hooted Tom through the keyhole. "We want to help you. You'll be missed from your House at rising-bell—it's not long now! How can we help you out of that?"

Nosey Panks did not answer.

He had had a most uncomfortable and distressing night in the box-room. He had the most unpleasant anticipations now that day had dawned. Only too gladly would he have been helped out of that.

But it was evident that Tom Merry & Co.'s desire to help him out of that would have faded

"Bai Jove! I have an ideah, dear boys!" "Cough it up!" said Tom Merry. "I don't suppose it's any good—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But get it off your chest! Buck up—we may hear the rising-bell any minute now!"

"Suppose I go to Waitton as soon as he goes to his stoday, and ask for the key of the box-woom to—"

"And tell him you want to let a New House sweep out?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"Not at all, deah boy! I will tell him I want to get somethin' fvwom the box-woom, which will be stwictly twue!" Arthur Augustus chuckled. "Waitton won't guess that what I want to get is a New House boundah, see?"

"By gum!" said Tom. "Right on the wicket!"

"Good egg!" agreed Blake.

Tom Merry bent to the keyhole again.

"Figgins, you blitherer—we're going to get the key, if we can! You'll have to wait a bit—but we've lost no time that can be helped. Come on, you men!"

And the seven went downstairs as the rising-bell began to ring—and while six went out into the quad, Arthur Augustus stationed himself near the Housemaster's study to wait for Mr. Railton to appear—to get that key, if he could, and cut up to the box-room and let the prisoner out.

### CHAPTER 13. Surprising!

TOM MERRY, for the second time that morn-  
ing, jumped.

And he stared!

"Figgins!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake.

Until they came out into the early July sunshine in the quadrangle, the School House fellows had not entertained the slightest doubt that the prisoner of the box-room was George Figgins—or, if not Figgins, either Kerr or Fatty Wynn.

So the sight of Figgins & Co. coming out of the New House in the sunny morn was astonishing.

There they were—Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn; and as they glanced across at Tom Merry & Co., they grinned.

"Top of the morning, Blake!" called out Figgins. "Looked in your study yet this morning?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Wynn.

"Anything happened in your House overnight?" continued Figgins. "From what I heard, things keep on happening in your House o' nights! By the way, ever heard of that new version of the 'Lambeth Walk'?"

And Figgins & Co. began to chant:

"While you School House dunderheads  
Are all snoozing in your beds  
You'll find us there,  
Pulling your silly legs!"

"It's not one of that lot in the box-room!" exclaimed Tom Merry blankly. "One of the others, I suppose—Redfern, perhaps. They don't seem to care much about the chap being caught!"

He hurried over to Figgins & Co.

"Ratty missed any of your crowd yet, Figgins?" he asked.

"Eh? No. Nobody missing, that I know  
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away at once had they learned that it was not a schoolboy in the box-room, but a tramp with a stolen wallet in his pocket.

Nosey had little hope of getting out of this scrape. But while there was life there was hope—and he remained silent.

"Bai Jove! I think the sillay ass must be off his wockah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We know he's there all wight, so why doesn't he ansawah?"

"Oh, bother the silly owl!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Anyhow, we've got to get him out if we can! He's got to get back to his House, if we can manage it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But how?" grunted Blake.

"How the dickens—" said Manners.

of," answered Figgins, staring. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! One of you never got back last night. We thought it was one of you three, but it must have been somebody else, and he's still locked up in a box-room at our House!" said Tom.

"Dreaming?" asked Kerr.

"Look here, who is it?" exclaimed Blake. "Railton locked the box-room door on him, whoever he is, and Gussy's waiting to see Railton to try to get the key off him. One of your crowd must be missing—"

"Nobody's missing in our House!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Look here, don't rot! Who is it?"

"But it's a fact, nobody's missing," said Figgins, in astonishment. "The three of us paid you a visit last night, as I expect you can guess from what we left in Study No. 6. Nobody else did. And we got home all right. Which of you stopped Fatty's fist with his nose?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Was it Gussy that Fatty got?" chuckled Figgins. "Poor old Gussy!"

"What's his nose like this morning?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry & Co. could only stare. All this was Greek to them.

"I suppose you've found Gussy's wallet?" added Figgins.

"Gig-gig-Gussy's wallet?" gasped Blake. "What the merry thump are you talking about? That tramp got away with Gussy's wallet yesterday, and nobody's seem him since."

"Haven't you picked it up in your passage?"

"How could it be in our passage, you blitherer?" yelled Blake. "I tell you that tramp got away with it. You know he did, as you ran after him with us when he got away—"

Figgins chuckled.

"You see, that tramp dropped it, and we found it," he explained. "I brought it to your House with me last night. I was going to step up to your dorm and drop it on Gussy's nose in bed."

"You found Gussy's wallet?" yelled Blake.

"We did."

"Where?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, lying about," said Figgins vaguely. "Sort of lying around generally—never mind exactly where. But we found it all right—at least, Kerr did. But look here, if you haven't picked it up you'd better cut in and look for it. It's lying about near your study, Blake—"

"It isn't!" howled Blake. "I've been to my study, and I should have seen it."

"Well, that's where I dropped it," said Figgins. "Either it was grabbed out of my pocket, or else it slipped out when you collared me in the dark."

"Who collared you in the dark?" shrieked Blake.

"You did—or some of you!" said Figgins. "Jumped on us as we came out of your study and knocked out the light and—"

"Gone mad?" asked Blake.

"Absolutely potty?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Herries. "Nobody was up in the night, except Trimble, and Trimble jolly well never collared you. Catch Trimble collaring anybody."

"Oh, come off!" said Figgins. "Who bagged us at your study doorway, if you didn't?"

"Nobody did!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,639.

"Well, it felt as if somebody did, when he slammed me down on the floor," grinned Figgins. "And Fatty barked his knuckles on somebody's nose. Look at his paw now!"

Fatty Wynn, grinning, held up a fat hand. His knuckles looked as if they had hit something hard recently.

"Somebody's nose is feeling a pain this morning," remarked Fatty.

"I tell you nobody went down, except Trimble!" howled Blake. "Trimble fancied he saw a burglar—but he never collared anybody, and never had a knock on the boko—"

"Somebody did!" said Fatty, grinning.

"Look here," gasped Tom Merry, "somebody's locked up in that box-room this very minute, and if it isn't a New House man, who is it?"

"Well it's not a New House man," said Figgins.

Kerr whistled.

"I fancy you'd better cut in and see," he said. "If it wasn't some of your crowd that collared us, somebody was there. Of course, we couldn't see who it was in the dark, but we took it for granted that it was some of you. But if it wasn't, and if Trimble fancied he saw a burglar, it looks to me as if Trimble fancied right!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Somebody's in the box-room. He won't answer. Is that why he won't answer? Oh, my only hat! Come on, you fellows!"

Tom started for the School House as if he were on the cinder-path.

Manners and Lowther, Blake and Herries and Dig raced after him.

Somebody was in that box-room. Somebody who was not a New House man—somebody, evidently, who did not belong to the school at all! And Arthur Augustus was getting the key to let him out!

Tom Merry & Co. hardly let their feet touch the ground as they raced back to their House and burst in at the doorway in a breathless crowd.

"Gussy!" panted Blake.

He stared round for Arthur Augustus, but Arthur Augustus was not to be seen.

"He's gone!" gasped Tom Merry. "If he's got the key—"

"Must have—"

"Come on!"

Six juniors raced up the staircase.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Something Like a Surprise!

**N**OSEY PANKS breathed hard. Nosey stood just within the box-room door, listening. Footsteps were coming up the passage to that door.

Nosey clenched his hands desperately. He was not going to be collared, if he could help it. He still nourished a faint hope of getting away with that wallet!

From what Tom Merry & Co. had said at the door Nosey knew that they had gone for the key. Nosey's one hope was to take them by surprise when the door was unlocked and get through with a sudden rush.

That spot of hope brightened as he discovered, from the sound of footsteps, that only one fellow was coming. Nosey's narrow eyes glistened. One of them was coming back with the key—and one jolt would clear the way. Nosey crouched at that door like a tiger ready to spring.

There was a light tap on the door—from the key in the hand of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Got it, deah boy!" he called out cheerily. "Do you heah me, Figgins, you ass? I asked Wailton for the key, and it was all wight. I told him I wanted somethin' fwom the box-woom. I didn't mention that it was a New House wottah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus laughed.

Nosey gritted his teeth. Arthur Augustus had quite a pleasant voice and quite an agreeable laugh, but Nosey did not want to listen to either. He wanted that door open!

But Arthur Augustus was a leisurely youth. He was seldom in a hurry. He was not in a hurry now.

He tapped again with the key.

"Do you heah me, Figgins? The wisin'-bell has gone, old bean, but if Watty hasn't missed you yet it will be all wight. I am goin' to let you out now, though you weally do not deserve it aftah the feahful cheek you scwawled up in my studay last night."

Nosey could have howled aloud with impatience as Arthur Augustus talked, instead of unlocking that door.

However, the swell of St. Jim's inserted the key in the lock at last. It turned and clicked.

Arthur Augustus threw the door open.

"Now, you New House boundah— Oh cwumbs! Oh cwikey!"

Arthur Augustus' noble eye almost popped through his eyeglass as he saw in the box-room not a New House junior, but a tattered, bulbous-nosed tramp—the very rascal who had snatched his wallet the previous day!

He gazed at him. He gaped at him.

Nosey did not give him much time for gaping, however. Nosey came at him like an arrow from a bow!

He crashed into Arthur Augustus, and Arthur Augustus spun over and bumped on the floor!

"Yawooh!" roared Arthur Augustus as he bumped.

Nosey flew past him.

The long passage lay before him to the study landing and the staircase. But just as Nosey was about to hurtle down the passage six figures flew across the building and came up that passage full pelt.

"Oh crimes!" gasped Nosey.

He halted in dismay.

Six howls of astonishment blended into one as Tom Merry & Co. saw him.

"Look!"

"That tramp!"

"That nosey blighter!"

"Great pip!"

"The tramp who pinched Gussy's wallet!"

"Collar him!"

Tom Merry & Co. crashed the next moment, and Nosey went spinning back into the box-room. He sprawled on his back among the boxes and trunks, and two or three of the juniors sprawled over him.

Arthur Augustus tottered to his feet.

"Gwab him, deah boys!" he gasped. "It's not a New House wottah at all; it's that twamp who snatched my wallet! He had the feahful cheek to knock me ovah when I unlocked the door! Gwab him!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not need telling to grab him. They were grabbing Nosey already.

Nosey struggled wildly.

"Git orf!" he gurgled. "Git orf a bloke! Take your blooming knee out of a covey's weskit! You're a-winding of me! Git orf! Urrrrggh! 'Ook that blinking knee out of my blinking weskit, will yer?"

Herries and Dig and Manners scrambled off. But they immediately added their grasp to that of the other fellows. Six pairs of hands were on Mr. Panks. There was no doubt that he was well held.

"We've got him!" grinned Blake.

"Sort of!" agreed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "And the wottah has got my wallet! Hand ovah that wallet, you wascal!"

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Nosey. "'Ow's a bloke to 'and over a blinking wallet when he can't move a 'and or a foot! Oh crimes!"

"We've got him!" gasped Monty Lowther. "But how the thump did he get here? How did you get into this House, my frowsy friend?"

"Bai Jove! Twimble weally saw a burglah, aftah all, and that wottah is the burglah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"I ain't no burglar!" moaned Nosey. "That fat young covey took me for a blooming burglar, but I ain't no burglar! I'd 'ave been out of this pretty quick if I was a blinking burglar!"

"Then how did you get in?" demanded Tom Merry.

The discovery of Nosey in the School House was utterly amazing to the juniors. Evidently, he was Baggy's burglar; equally evidently, it was he who had collared Figgins in the dark, and they had no doubt that the wallet was on him. But how he came to be there at all was quite a bewildering mystery. A burglar certainly could get in; but, then, a burglar could get out—and

## TANK OPERATIONS

"Squirt" knocked three times on the door of the old army tank in the school quad, jumped inside and tucked himself into the driving seat. "Stinker" switched on and "Beefy" at the engines gave the starter a heave. The engine fired suddenly . . . Read of the adventures of Squirt & Co., that follow in this great story

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Nosey had not been able to get out. It was really mystifying.

"I wasn't doing no 'arm!" gasped Nosey. "I jest follered them young fellers in the way they came, and I couldn't find the way out ag'in, worse luck! I ain't done nothing, 'cept snatching that there wallet—and the young gent fairly asked for that!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Right on the wicket!" grinned Blake. "So you did, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Here's the wallet!" said Manners. He hooked it out of a frowsy pocket. "This sportsman must have got it off Figgins; he must have known that Figgy had picked it up! Here you are, Gussy!"

"Now we'd better walk him down and hand him over to Railton," said Herries. "He can phone for a bobby for him!"

"Oh crimes! Give a bloke a chance!" moaned Mr. Panks. "I've 'ad a 'ard time of it, and so I tells yer—and the young gent's got his wallet back!"

"Hold on a minute!" said Tom Merry. His eyes were gleaming. "He says he followed somebody into the House. He can't have followed anybody in except—"

"Figgins & Co.!" breathed Lowther.

"Oh!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Whom did you follow in, my frowsy friend?" asked Mouty Lowther.

"Three young blokes!" gasped Nosey. "And I wish I 'adn't! But one of them picked up that there wallet what I dropped and couldn't find in the dark in that there underground cellar!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Every face was excited now. All the juniors

realised that they were on the verge of a discovery. Obviously, Nosey had followed Figgins & Co. into the School House when they came to raid. Nosey knew the secret of that mysterious means of ingress which Figgins & Co. had so jealously guarded.

"Look here," said Tom, "Gussy's got his wallet back, and this chaps looks as if Fatty Wynn put some beef into punching his nose last night. I think we can call it a day—"

"Give a covey a chance!" urged Mr. Panks eagerly.

"Tell us exactly how you got into this House, and you can cut," said Tom. "You'll have to take your chance of getting clear; but we won't stop you if you explain—"

"Won't I just!" said Nosey.

And he explained.

Tom Merry & Co. listened in amazement. From Nosey's description, they knew that it was the crypt under the old tower into which the tramp had dodged for refuge. His description of the tilting stone, of the secret passage, and the opening panel in the wall was amazing, and it let in light on the mystery of the New House raids.

"By gum!" said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "So that's how!"

"That's how, by gum!" said Blake. "We know now—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Who'd have thought it?" said Herries. "By gum, this will put paid to Figgins & Co.!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Not a word to those New House rotters about this!" he said. "They've been keeping it dark; now we'll keep it dark till they come again! Next time they are going to be sorry for themselves!"

"Good egg!" grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove! We'll give those boundahs a surprise next time!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"There goes the bell for prayers!" said Manners. "Come on! We shall have to let this sportsman cut now he's told us."

Tom Merry pointed to the door.

"Hook it!" he said.

Nosey did not wait to be told twice.

Like the guests in "Macbeth," he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. He did the Fourth Form passage at about fifty miles per hour, and the staircase at about sixty.

Tom Merry & Co., following at a more leisurely pace, heard a shout from the quad as a frowsy figure darted out of the House.

They looked from the landing window. Down in the quadrangle fifty fellows or more stared at a frowsy figure that covered the ground at racing speed. An arrow in its flight had nothing on Nosey Panks as he made for the nearest wall, and he was over that wall before a hand could get near to stop him. On the other side of the wall, Mr. Panks did not linger; he departed for parts unknown, and St. Jim's had seen the last of him.

Nosey departed swiftly, but in a far from satisfied frame of mind. But he left satisfaction behind him. Tom Merry & Co were wise at last to the secret of the New House raiders, and the tables were going to be turned on Figgins & Co.

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**BLAKE ANSWERS BACK***(Continued from page 2.)*

Mary Waterworth, of East Ardsley, nr, Wakefield, Yorks, writes:

I think the serial stories about Gussy & Co.'s holiday are thrilling.

Is there a girl you particularly care for? Sorry no photograph!

ANSWER: *I'm pleased to know you enjoyed our holiday-adventure series. I admire several of the Cliff House girls. You might send your photograph. Now, please don't misunderstand me, Mary!*

"Quien Sabe," of Roscommon, Ireland, writes:

What age is Kildare? Why doesn't the Editor print "Tom Merry's Weekly" in the GEM? Where could I get back numbers of the GEM, the "Magnet," and the "Schoolboys' Own Library"? Have you ever had a fight with Tom Merry? If so, who won? All the best, Jack!

ANSWER: *Seventeen years, eight months. No space at present for "T. M. W." Back Number Department, Fleetway House, will supply your needs. Tom Merry was victor when once we met. Don't say I can't take it, fellows! All the best to you, "Quien Sabe"!*

"Don Juan," of Hunts, writes:

Why do you and the other asses in the Junior School blush and stutter in the presence of girls? You ought to get Gussy to give you a few lessons! I've fallen in love myself almost as many times

as Gussy, and I'm still going strong. Oh, can you tell me—how often does Baggy Trimble wash?

P.S.—Can't stop, I've got a date!

ANSWER: *Allow me to state clearly, and without stammering or stuttering, that we in the Fourth don't go "red," or feel "blue," or become "white" about the gills when confronted by a specimen or specimens of the female species? Without jalling head over heels in love every time we see a comely face, as Gussy is apt to do, we enjoy the company of the opposite sex. If Trimble ever washes—which I doubt—he keeps the time and place a deep, dark secret. I'll make inquiries, however.*

P.S.—Can't stop, got a date to field for Kildare at the Sixth Form nets. Do you ever "chase" anything but girls yourself?

T. Andrews, of Barnehurst, Kent, writes:

Just a few:

1. Best cricketer in the Shell? 2. Can you play football? 3. Are you a better boxer than Sidney Clive? 4. How tall is Tom Merry?

P.S.—No photo, couldn't find one. So long!

ANSWER: 1. *Tom Merry or Talbot, take your choice. 2. CAN I play footer? Really, I'm too indignant to reply! Question definitely "off-side"!* 3. *Possibly, on points—but he's a tough handful. 4. Five feet, five and a-half inches. No photo? I wish some of you chaps would make an effort and send along something really big, for reproduction. Have a postcard taken on your next birthday, will you? Remember, please—"big" photos, with "big" smiles will make things go "big" all round!*

**A SCHOOL STORY YOU'RE BOUND TO ENJOY!****THE GREYFRIARS IMPOSTOR !****By Frank Richards.**

As like two peas in a pod are Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Greyfriars Remove, and his cousin and rival, Herbert Vernon, who has come to the school to take his relation's name, place, and inheritance, when the time comes. Vernon-Smith has played the part of Vernon with success. Now comes the time for Vernon to play the part of the Bounder—a very unwelcome task. Read all about it in: "THE GREYFRIARS IMPOSTOR!" Frank Richards' super 35,000-word COVER-TO-COVER story of HARRY WHARTON & Co., the famous chums of GREYFRIARS, appearing in this week's issue of

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# ROUNDED UP!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## Last Chance Camp!

**P**OSY PETE, proprietor of the Pine Log Hotel of Last Chance, was standing in his doorway in his shirt-sleeves when Frank Richards & Co. rode into camp.

Posy Pete wore a cheerful smile on his fat, rubicund face.

The sun was setting on the Cascade Mountains, and the "boys" were coming in from the gulches after a day's work on the placers. There was a tramp of feet in the rugged, unpaved street, as brawny miners passed, pick on shoulder. Posy Pete nodded genially to the "boys" as they trod by. He was in a cheery mood.

After the day's quiet, the Pine Log was about to wake up to its usual evening liveliness, when the miners came in from the claims with "dust" in their pockets.

Behind the fat landlord, as he stood smiling into the street, sounded the musical clink, clink, as the Chinese bartender washed the glasses in the bar.

Down the middle of the street came Frank Richards & Co., riding, followed by their pack-mule, and Posy Pete glanced at them curiously.

"Halt!" sang out Bob Lawless, as they reached the hotel.

"Hotel" the Pine Log was, and the only one in camp; but it was only a rough structure of log and lumber of the most primitive kind. Guests at the Pine Log had to do their own washing and sweeping, and to provide their own bedclothes if they wanted any.

Frank Richards & Co. dismounted, eyed by the fat landlord. A schoolboy party was unusual enough at the mining-camp in the mountain wilds of North-West Canada.

There were five in the party—Frank, Bob, and Vere Beauclerc, and Chunky Todgers and Yen Chin, the Chinese, all on holiday from Cedar Creek School, in the far-off Thompson Valley.

"I guess this is the hotel," remarked Bob Lawless.

"I guess you've hit it," said Posy Pete. "You're a new outfit in these parts. What are you children doing hyer?"

Bob Lawless grinned.

"I guess we're on holiday, and doing the North-West," he answered. "Business, too. We want to know where to find the sheriff. I reckon there's a sheriff in this camp?"

"Correct!"

"Where does he hang out?"

"Hyer."

"In this hotel?" asked Frank Richards.

"Yep."

Posy Pete chuckled.

"You see, I'm the sheriff," he explained, "likewise, landlord of the Pine Log. Do you want the landlord or the sheriff?"

"Both," said Bob, smiling. "We want the landlord to give us a couple of rooms, and fodder for our horses; and we want the sheriff

to take down a charge against a rustler named Carson, otherwise Handsome Alf, who belongs to this camp, I guess."

"Right!" answered Posy Pete. "This is Handsome Alf's home, if anybody wants him. But I guess I'd advise you youngsters not to quarrel with him. He's a bad man to quarrel with."

"We've done that already," answered Bob. "We charge him with trying to steal our horses, and some other things."

Posy Pete whistled.

"That's your business, as sheriff of the camp," said Vere Beauclerc.

"Correct! But—" The sheriff paused.

"Take your hosses round, my sons," he went on.

"You'll find fodder for them. I guess I can give you two rooms, and I reckon there's grub for you inside. About Handsome Alf—you'd better think it over again and call another time."

"But—" began Frank Richards.

"Coming!" called out Posy Pete in answer to an imaginary call from within; and he disappeared into the hotel.

"Oh, my hat!" said Frank

"That galoot doesn't want trouble with Handsome Alf," remarked Chunky Todgers sagely.

"Looks like it," agreed Bob. "But we've come here for trouble with the rascal, and we're going to have it. Bring along the gees."

The party led their horses round to the corral at the back of the lumber hotel, the corral answering the purpose of a stable.

The horses and the mule having been rubbed down and fed, the chums washed off the dust of the trail at the pump in the yard—that being the place where residents in the hotel performed their ablutions in public.

Then they entered the Pine Log. A Chinese servant showed them to their room, a large apartment on the ground floor at the back of the house. There was no choice about being on the ground floor, as the Pine Log had only one story.

The beds consisted of planks, and any covering had to be provided by the guests themselves, but they were prepared for that.

"Well, there's room for the lot of us," said Bob Lawless, "and it's just as well to keep together. If Chunky snores we'll get up and brain him!"

The five schoolboys then proceeded to the dining-room. There were a good many guests there, and a meal was going on. Frank Richards & Co. secured places at the long board-table, and found that the meal, though roughly served, was decidedly "square."

There was enough and to spare, and even Chunky Todgers was fully satisfied. A good many glances were cast at the schoolboys by the other diners, most of whom wore red shirts and big, muddy boots, and had their hats on the back of their heads. They did not stand on ceremony in Last Chance Camp.

A good many inquiries were directed to them, too, all of which they answered cheerfully.

After the meal, Frank Richards & Co. looked for the sheriff. But the sheriff had vanished, and the landlord had taken his place, so to speak. Posy Pete was only playing one half of his double turn at present.

He was in the bar-room, busy helping his Chinese barkeeper to serve his many customers, the "boys" having apparently come in from the gulches with a very powerful thirst.

But the chums of Cedar Creek were determined to interview Mr. Posy Pete in his capacity of sheriff, and they waited for an opportunity. When, in a lull of business, the landlord went into his own room, and they saw him through the half-open door eating his supper, they followed him in.

"Can we speak to you now?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"I guess you can, if you like," answered the landlord.

"It's about Handsome Alf——"

"Think again!" urged the sheriff. "Carson's a bad man to run against. I'm warning you."

"Look here," said Bob Lawless warmly, "I suppose there's some law in this town, isn't there?"

"Heaps!"

"And you're the sheriff?"

"Yep."

"Then you're bound to take our charge against that rascal."

"I guess you can run on, if you won't learn sense," answered Posy Pete. "Go ahead, my son, and cut it short!"

"I'll cut it as short as you like," said Bob.

"We ran on Carson in the foothills, and saved him from being chewed up by a grizzly. He owed us an old grudge, because we prevented him from robbing a miner named Bill Lomax who belonged to this camp, a while back. He tried to kill two of us, and steal our horses. We're prepared to swear in court. We want the villain arrested and tried."

Posy Pete wrinkled his brows.

"I guess Handsome Alf will deny it," he said.

"Most likely he will," agreed Bob. "But something's got to be done."

"I guess you can leave it in my hands," said the sheriff, after a long pause. "I'll see what Handsome Alf has to say in the morning. I reckon you never expected to find law courts and judges all complete in this camp, sonny! Galoots generally settle their differences between themselves, excepting horse-thieves and claim-jumpers, who generally get stretched on the branch of a tree. I guess I'm the only law officer in this hyer town, and I guess I was set up by the boys. I ain't appointed from New Westminster!" Posy Pete grinned. "But I'm taking notice of what you say, and I reckon I'll see what can be done. That's your way out."

And leaving the worthy landlord-sheriff to finish his supper, Frank Richards & Co. left him.

But Bob turned in the doorway.

"I think you said Carson is in camp now?"

"Yep."

"Where's he to be found?"

"He runs the faro-bank at the Flare-Up," answered Posy Pete.

"Where's the Flare-Up?"



Framed in the open window was Handsome Alf—the enemy of the Cedar Creek chums.



"Across the way. I guess the lamps are alight now, and you'll find it easy."

"Right-ho!"

"But it won't be healthy for you youngers to call on that galoot," added Posy Pete warningly.

"We shall see."

And the chums of Cedar Creek left.

### Handsome Alf at Home!

**F**RANK RICHARDS & CO. emerged from the Pine Log Hotel into the street.

Darkness had fallen now. Across the streets lamps lighted up the dusk, and they easily picked out the saloon which bore the expressive name of Flare-Up. That evidently was the headquarters of Handsome Alf, the "sport" of Last Chance.

Frank Richards & Co. were a little puzzled how to proceed.

"Well, I guess this lets us out," remarked Bob Lawless. "I reckon that fat galoot is more land-lord than sheriff, and he doesn't want trouble with a rustler of Carson's kidney."

"That's plain enough," agreed Vere Beauclerc.

"You see, there isn't any court in camp, except when the sheriff calls the boys together to deal with a case," said Bob thoughtfully. "He doesn't feel inclined to do that on the strength of our yarn of what happened in the foothills. If he did, I guess Handsome Alf's got friends of his own sort, who'll swear that he was in camp at the time he was tackling us in the hills. But"—Bob's brow grew grim—"we're not letting up on Carson."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Frank Richards warmly. "He's got to be prevented from doing any further harm, anyhow."

"I say—" began Chunky Todgers.

"Well, what do you suggest, Chunky?"

"Why not go to bed?" asked Chunky, with the air of a fellow propounding a really brilliant suggestion.

"What?"

"We're tired, you know—at least, I am. Let's go to bed."

"You silly jay!" howled Bob. "What about Handsome Alf?"

"Oh, never mind him! I'm sleepy!"

"Chunky had better go to bed," said Beauclerc, laughing. "And Yen Chin had better go with him."

"Me sleepce allee light," assented the Chinese.

"Vamoose, then!" grunted Bob.

Chunky Todgers very willingly made for the bed-room, and Yen Chin went with him.

But Frank Richards, Bob and Beauclerc remained in the street, debating what was to be done in the affair of Handsome Alf.

"I guess we're going to call on the galoot," said Bob Lawless at last. "Come on!"

And the three chums crossed the street to the Flare-Up Saloon. They had their rifles on their backs and their hunting-knives in their belts; but that equipment was not at all unusual in the street of Last Chance.

Passing through the flare of the lamps, they entered the saloon.

Frank Richards looked round him with a great deal of interest. It was the first time he had set foot in such a place. In the unsettled mountains of the North-West matters were on a very different footing from what he had been accustomed to.

The camp of Last Chance had grown up like

a mushroom round the claims when a "gold-strike" had been made in the valley. Cabins stood here and there with hardly any attempt at order. The main street itself was simply the old trail that had run through the valley, marked only by tramping hoofs and heavy boots.

After the gold seekers had come those who lived by ministering to their wants—the hotel-keeper, and Chinese laundryman, and the professional gambler.

The Flare-Up Saloon was built of lumber from the nearest timber, thrown together, as it were, to last but a little while. When the "placers" petered out, the camp was likely to cease to exist, leaving only decaying cabins to fall to pieces in the wind and weather.

Then such characters as Handsome Alf would seek fresh fields and pastures new to ply their calling. On the other hand, if more permanent gold discoveries were made the camp would grow into a town. Stores would be opened, the log hotel would grow into a handsome building, the street would be paved and lighted, enterprising agents would appear, and sales of "town lots" would set in, and law and order would prevail.

In that case, too, Handsome Alf & Co. would have to leave town and find other quarters.

Last Chance was at present in the doubtful stage of existence.

Meanwhile, Handsome Alf and his confreres were making hay while the sun shone.

There was a good crowd in the Flare-Up when Frank Richards and his chums entered. At the end of the long room was a bar, where two Chinese were kept very busy serving out the potent fire water. A good half of the patrons of the establishment were gathered there. But there was a good crowd, too, round a table in the middle of the room, where Handsome Alf kept the faro bank.

Carson was seated at the table. The schoolboys recognised at once the dark, rather handsome face of their old enemy.

Handsome Alf did not observe them as they mingled with the crowd round the table. He held a silver box in his hands containing the cards, and was pronouncing the familiar formula of the faro banker:

"Make your game, gents!"

Coins, notes, and little bags of gold-dust dropped on the table as the "gents" made their game. Carson proceeded to deal the cards.

The result of the deal was profitable to the gambler, who raked in a good many coins and notes on the table. As he was doing so, he glanced over the crowd. He started as his eyes fell on Frank Richards & Co.

### Face to Face!

"**W**E'VE run you down, Alf Carson!" said Bob Lawless quietly.

The gambler stared at them, his black eyes gleaming. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you mean? I don't know you, I guess," he answered. "If you're here to play, put your money on the table, and don't chew the rag!"

"I guess we're not here to play," said Bob Lawless.

"Then vamoose the ranch!"

"Not just yet. We're here to settle with you, you scoundrel!"

Carson's swarthy face became almost livid.

His hand for the moment strayed to the six-shooter that was strapped to his side.

Frank Richards shoved his rifle forward at once. Across the corner of the faro-table the barrel was directed straight at Alf, with Frank's finger on the trigger.

"Don't touch that gun, Carson!" said Frank, very quietly.

There was a buzz in the crowd round the table.

Handsome Alf sat with a face like a demon, but he did not venture to drop his hand upon his revolver. A bullet would have been through his arm before he could have drawn the weapon, and he knew it. His black eyes were scintillating at the chums of Cedar Creek.

"Look hyer! What's the rumpus?" exclaimed a big-bearded miner. "You're holding up the game with this hyer!"

"Let up!" said several voices.

Some of the fellows moved forward, and it was plain to see that they were friends, and probably confederates of Handsome Alf.

Bob Lawless faced them coolly, while Frank's rifle never faltered for a moment as he watched Handsome Alf.

"Gents and citizens," said the rancher's son, in a clear, cool voice, "we've come here to look for Handsome Alf Carson, and we've found him at home. We accuse him of attempted murder and horse-stealing."

"It's a lie!" said Carson, between his teeth. "I've never seen you before!"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Frank Richards indignantly. "It's only three days since you tried to kill me by rolling down a rock on the mountain trail!"

"I've never seen you before!" said Carson doggedly. "You've mistaken me for some other man, I guess."

"Let that be tried before a camp jury," said Bob Lawless. "Gentleman, that man is a horse-thief and claim-jumper!"

There was a buzz of voices. The word horse-thief was quite enough to cause excitement.

Handsome Alf was a little pale now under his dusky skin. His glance wandered over the crowd, and he was making almost imperceptible signs to several men of his own stamp, who gathered about him at the head of the faro-table. There was every prospect of a lively "shooting match," and the three chums were on the alert.

They had taken a bold step in denouncing Handsome Alf in public before a crowd of citizens of Last Chance, but they had only the choice between that and letting the matter drop.

"We're ready to swear to the truth of what we say, and there are witnesses," continued Bob Lawless. "This man has got to answer to the charge. Isn't that fair play?"

"You bet!"

"I guess that's so."

"It's the sheriff's duty to call a jury and try the case," went on Bob Lawless. "That's what we want."

Carson rose to his feet, his teeth hard set.

"I guess I'm ready to face the sheriff, and any man in Last Chance," he said. "I'll ask Posy Pete to call a jury in the morning, and have it out before all the camp. I can't say more than that. Now let up, and let the game go on!"

Bob Lawless exchanged glances with his chums. The crowd of miners round the table evidently agreed with Carson, and they were anxious for the faro to be resumed.

Bob nodded.

"That's good enough," he said. "I've had all my say, and all the camp knows what you're accused of, Carson. If you don't stand your trial they'll know what to think of you, anyhow."

He stepped back. The three chums moved off from the table, keeping a wary eye open, however.

Handsome Alf dropped into his seat again and took up the silver box containing the cards.

"Make your game, gents!" he said.

Some of the onlookers laughed, and the game of faro continued. But Handsome Alf's eyes, calm as he looked, were burning. His glance rested once or twice on the chums of Cedar Creek, and the gleam of them told of the rage within.

Frank Richards & Co. quitted the saloon. There was a grim smile on Bob Lawless' sunburnt face as they came out into the street.

"I guess that does it," he remarked. "It'll be the talk of the camp, and Mr. Posy Pete will be bound to take the case in hand, whether he wants to or not."

"The rotter will have to stand up to his trial now, or else clear out of the place overnight," said Frank.

"Yes, or else——"

"He can't do anything else," said Beauclerc.

"He might," answered Bob quietly. "He doesn't want to leave Last Chance. He seems to be doing good business here. And I guess he doesn't want to stand up before a jury who'll hear his evidence. We're not going to sleep to-night, my pippins!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

"Unless I'm jolly well mistaken, Handsome Alf's thinking of a third way out of the trouble," said Bob. "We shall see."

The three chums returned to the Pine Log Hotel in a thoughtful mood. They were satisfied so far, but the matter had not ended yet by any means. In the dark hours of the night, when the camp was sleeping, it was only too probable that Handsome Alf would take measures to silence the awkward witnesses who had turned up against him.

Posy Pete met the three schoolboys as they came in, and gave them a fat grin. They could see that he had already heard of the scene in the Flare-Up.

"I guess you young antelopes have been looking for trouble," he remarked.

"And we've found it," smiled Bob.

"Want your hosses?"

"Eh—no."

"You ain't leaving camp?"

"I guess not."

"You'd better," said the landlord sheriff. "You take my advice and light out. I tell you Handsome Alf's a bad man to have trouble with."

"Thanks!" said Bob. "We're going to bed. Good-night!"

And the chums of Cedar Creek went to their room.

### Caught in the Act!

**C**HUNKY TODGERS was snoring serenely when Frank Richards & Co. came in. Yen

Chin was fast asleep, too. A single candle was guttering in the room, shedding a dim light.

Bob Lawless closed the door and shot the bolt. Then he crossed to the window and examined it. A wooden shutter closed the window, which was quite innocent of glass. The window was secured

by a single wooden bar, which kept the shutter fastened.

"I guess that's easy enough to open from the outside," remarked Bob in a low voice; "and I guess we'll make it easier."

He removed the bar.

"What's that for?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"In case of visitors," said Bob coolly.

"You want them to come in?"

"I reckon."

"Phew!"

Bob Lawless tapped the coiled trail-rope which he had taken into the bed-room.

"I shall be awako," he whispered, "and a galoot who gets in at that window won't get out so easy."

"Oh!" said Frank.

"It's a bit close in here," went on Bob in a louder voice. "I guess we'll have the window open."

He blew out the candle and threw the wooden shutter wide open. The window was only a couple of feet from the ground outside, and Bob stood in the darkness, looking out.

Behind the hotel stretched the waste ground as far as the claims on the creek, two or three hundred yards distant. Beyond lay the dark mountains, clothed in pine, with a glimmer of starlight here and there breaking the gloom.

The night was warm, high up in the mountains as they were, and a soft breeze brought the scent of the pines in at the window.

Bob Lawless turned from the window, and in the darkness of the room examined the rifles and placed his rope ready.

"I guess you galoots can snooze," he remarked. "I'll wake you up if I want you."

"I guess not," answered Frank.

"No fear," said Beauclerc quietly.

The three schoolboys stretched themselves on their beds to rest, but not to sleep. The open window and the patch of glimmering starlight without were quite sufficient to banish all desire for slumber.

The night grew older, and the many noises of the Pine Log Hotel died away. In the main street the lights of the Flare-Up Saloon were extinguished at length, and darkness reigned. The last footsteps had died away, and Last Chance Camp lay in silence and slumber under the stars.

But there were three at least who did not sleep. It was two hours past midnight, but Frank Richards & Co. had not closed their eyes. They had removed their boots in order to be able to move without sound, and that was all.

Frank Richards felt a soft touch on his arm in the darkness, and started.

"Only li'l Chinese," murmured Yen Chin. "Me tinkes heal somet'ing. You wakee. Bad man comee."

"Quiet!" whispered Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards & Co. made no sound. Invisible themselves in the darkness of the room, they watched the faintly glimmering square of the open window tensely. A dark shadow blotted the starlight.

Frank felt his heart throb. Outside the window a man was standing, his head and shoulders silhouetted clearly against the glimmer of starlight. He was peering into the room. But within there was complete darkness, and he could see nothing.

Several minutes passed without a movement.

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Then a faint whisper was heard without. But, faint as it was, the listening chums recognised the tones of Handsome Alf.

"It's a cinch, I reckon. Sleeping sound."

"I guess so," came another whisper.

The gambler was not alone.

Still the chums of Cedar Creek made no movement, no sound. They waited grimly for Carson to proceed. The two figures receded cautiously, and the silhouette disappeared from the window.

Bob Lawless, rope in hand, stepped nearer to the window and bent his ear to listen. There was a faint whispering without. He counted five dim forms in the starlight, close by the lumber wall near the window.

"No noise!" It was Carson's sibilant whisper. "We don't want the whole camp buzzing round us. There's five in the crowd. I guess the Chinese doesn't amount to much, but he's got to go with the rest. Follow me in without a sound, and when I turn on the lantern, each of you collar your man. Knock them on the head if they try to yell!"

"You bet!"

"Rope them up and gag them," went on the soft whisper. "We can carry them as far as the creek, and get the horses there. Last Chance will find them gone in the morning. The boys'll reckon they lit out because they were skeered. Nobody will look for their bones at the bottom of the canyon a mile away, I reckon!"

There was a whisper in return that Bob did not catch. He smiled grimly in the darkness. Handsome Alf's rascally scheme was not likely to work out according to programme, cunning as it was.

The minutes passed, and there was a faint sound without, and several dark heads were visible outside the window.

The chums were still as mice. A swarthy hand was laid on the window-frame, and, with the stealthy softness of a panther, the lithe Carson drew himself into the room, his companions waiting till he was inside before they attempted to follow.

Handsome Alf stepped down inside the window. All was dark and silent. Carson, cautious as a cat, stood inside the room, listening intently, before he made his comrades a signal to follow.

In the darkness, only a few feet from him, Bob Lawless' hand was already raised, with the noosed rope in it.

Whiz!

The sudden sound in the gloom made Carson start and quiver. But before he knew what was happening, the noose was over his head and Bob Lawless was dragging fiercely at the rope. Handsome Alf went to the floor with a crash, the noose tight round him, and Bob Lawless dragging it tighter.

A gasping cry left Handsome Alf's lips as he fell.

There was a sudden buzz without, and a dim figure clambered in at the window, to receive a fierce thrust from Frank Richards' rifle-barrel, and fall with a crash and a loud yell outside. The next instant Vere Beauclerc slammed the wooden shutter and jammed the bar into place. There were loud exclamations of surprise and rage outside, and a heavy blow was struck on the shutter. The chums did not heed it.

Handsome Alf was rolling on the floor, struggling furiously to escape from the grip of the rope, but struggling in vain. His arms were

pinned by the tightened noose, and Bob Lawless was on him, knotting the rope.

Frank Richards struck a match and lighted the candle.

Fiercely as he struggled, Handsome Alf was a prisoner, and he had no chance of escape. His black eyes blazed as he rolled and wriggled.

Crash!

Outside, heavy blows fell on the shutter.

"Give them a shot, Franky!" called out Bob Lawless, without even looking up from his prisoner, whom he was securing.

Frank Richards put his rifle-muzzle to a crack in the shutter and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

There was a wild howl outside, and a sound of hurrying footsteps. The crashing blows and the shot had awakened the whole building, and voices could be heard on all sides.

Handsome Alf's gang evidently did not consider it prudent to remain longer, and one of them carried away Frank's bullet in his arm as he ran.

"They're going!" panted Frank.

"Gone!" smiled Beauclerc. "All except this beauty."

Handsome Alf was still struggling breathlessly and uttering savage curses.

Unheeding his wild words, Bob Lawless knotted the rope about his legs as well as his arms, and then his struggles ceased.

There was a loud knock on the room door.

"What's this hyer rumpus?" demanded the voice of Posy Pete. "Open this hyer door, you galoots!"

Frank Richards threw open the door.

**The Last of Handsome Alf!**

**B**OB LAWLESS rose breathlessly from Carson, who lay on the floor a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot.

Posy Pete, who held a candle in the neck of a bottle in his hand, stared blankly into the room. Behind him appeared several guests of Pine Log Hotel, in shirts and trousers, and with weapons in their hands. All eyes were turned upon Handsome Alf.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Posy Pete. "I reckon this hyer beats the hull deck! What sort of a circus do you call this hyer?"

"Can't you see for yourself?" asked Bob Lawless. "What do you think Handsome Alf is doing here at this time of night?"

"Oh Jerusalem!" was the sheriff's reply.

"The rest of the gang have cut," said Bob. "We don't want them. But this galoot walked into the trap as pleasant as you please. He didn't calculate that we were sleeping with one eye open."

Handsome Alf did not speak. There was despair now in his haggard face. He had been outwitted by the chums of Cedar Creek, and it was of little use for him to speak.

"There was a gang of them," said Bob. "They've got the horses by the creek all ready to run us out of camp—if we'd been asleep, as they reckoned. And Mr. Carson thought nobody would look for our bones at the bottom of the canyon. I guess our bones won't ornament the canyon bottom just yet."

"Oh Jerusalem!" repeated Posy Pete. "Sport, I reckon the game is up for you. Boys, you keep the galoot tied up till morning."

"We're going to," said Bob.

Posy Pete, with a last look at the bound man, turned away and tramped back to his room.

Frank Richards closed the door.

The Pine Log Hotel was soon quiet again. The chums of Cedar Creek did not think of slumber, however.

Needless to say, there was no sleep for Handsome Alf.

Frank Richards & Co. were watchful for the remainder of the night lest Handsome Alf's "pard" should attempt a rescue. But those worthies did not return. An open attack was a little too desperate a venture for them, and they were content to leave their leader to his fate.

The schoolboy chums were glad enough when morning dawned on the valley and the sun rays stole into their room. Bob Lawless threw open the door as the daylight strengthened. In the early sunshine miners were already turning out to tramp down to their claims.

A good crowd, however, turned in at the Pine Log for breakfast. The meal was later than usual that morning at the Pine Log; there was another matter to be attended to first.

Posy Pete and a couple of bearded miners came to the room, and Handsome Alf's legs were released, and he was marched out into the street before the hotel.

The proceedings were short and simple. Legal proceedings in Last Chance were innocent of formality or red tape. A dozen men were called up by Posy Pete, who was all sheriff for the nonce, to act as jury.

Round them a thick crowd gathered to look on, and to take a hand in the proceedings if the spirit moved them to do so.

Posy Pete, seated on a cask in his shirtsleeves, called upon Frank Richards & Co. to make their charge.

There was a deep murmur from the crowd of miners as the accusation was made. Handsome Alf stood in sullen silence. He had no defence to make, having been caught redhanded. He could only thank his good fortune that he was in Canada, where lynch law was not in favour.

*(Continued on page 36.)*

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**"Good-bye, yo' black man!"** shouted Tin Tacks, as Mr. Wellington went hurtling overboard.

### Back to the Benbow!

**O**H gad! What a crew!" Egan of the Shell made that remark as he looked over the side of the Benbow, swaying at anchor in the harbour of Port of Spain. Tuckey Toodles, who was beside him, burst into a fat chuckle.

Classes had been dismissed on the school ship; the red sunset glowed on the wide waters of the Gulf of Paria. Drake and Rodney of the Fourth, and Daubeny of the Shell, had been absent from classes that day—a circumstance that excited the envy of the juniors and the wrath of the Form-masters.

Mr. Packe was saving up some very severe remarks on the subject, to be delivered when the absent juniors arrived—and the severity of his remarks was not likely to diminish by keeping.

"What a crew!" repeated Egan, with a derisive grin. "Look at that little lot, you fellows!"

His remark brought a crowd of the Benbow juniors to the rail to look.

An Indian skiff, with a mat sail, was coming along from the open gulf, with a battered-looking boat in tow.

In the skiff sat a copper-skinned Arrowac Indian, with a grave and stolid face. In the towing-boat behind were four figures—and it was that quartet that Egan designated as a "crew."

Some of the juniors grinned as they looked at them. The boat had evidently suffered in the hurricane of the previous night—its mast and sail and tiller were gone. Its occupants looked as if they had roughed it very severely. One was a big negro; three were white youths—sun-scorched, hatless, untidy, with their jackets twisted over their heads to keep off the blaze of the sun. Three more dishevelled-looking tramps it would have been hard to find in Trinidad or all the West Indies.

"They've been through the storm," remarked THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,639.

# A SCHOOLBOY'S TEMPTATION!

*Tip-top yarn of Jack Drake & Co., chums of the school ship Benbow.*

**By Owen Conquest.**

Sawyer major of the Fourth. "They look it, too!"

"I've seen that nigger before," said Torrence. "That's the nigger who guided us at the Pitch Lake yesterday—Solomon Wellington his name is—where Drake and Rodney and Daub were left behind, you know."

Tuckey Toodles gave a howl of sudden surprise.

"It's Drake!"

"What!"

"Drake!" howled Toodles, pointing to one of the untidy, sun-scorched youths in the towing-boat. "That's Drake!"

"My hat!"

"So it is!" exclaimed Egan, with a laugh. "What a state to come home in! And the others are Rodney and Daub, of course!"

"What a crew!" grinned Raik of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Undoubtedly it was Jack Drake & Co. in the towed boat.

They stood up as they saw the crowd of faces lining the Benbow, and Drake waved his hand. He shouted to the Indian in the skiff, and as the Arrowac looked round, he pointed to the school ship.

The copper-skin changed his course a little, bearing down on the Benbow.

The side of the ship was crowded with grinning faces, as the sorry-looking boat and its occupants came up. Even Poynings of the Fifth condescended to come up on deck and look on.

The return of the wanderers was causing quite a thrill of excitement on the Benbow.

Mr. Packe heard the exclamations of the juniors and hurried to the scene.

"Did I hear that Drake had returned?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" chuckled Tuckey Toodles.

"That is very odd. The steamer is not in from La Brea," said Mr. Packe. "Bless my soul! That cannot be Drake in the boat—"

"It is, sir!" grinned Toodles.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

The Arrowac struck his mat sail, and the towed boat glided up to the anchored ship. Mr. Piper, the boatswain, threw a line to Drake, who caught it and made the boat fast.

Then the juniors came on board, followed by Solomon Wellington.

Mr. Packe frowned at them severely. Certainly their appearance did not do credit to the school ship.

"Daubeny! Drake! Rodney! What—what does this mean? How dare you present yourselves on board in this disgraceful state?" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

"Sorry, sir—" began Jack Drake.

"And why did you remain behind yesterday at La Brea?" demanded the master of the Fourth.

"Daubeny hurt his ankle, sir, and we had to carry him down the hill," said Dick Rodney. "That's how we came to miss the steamer."

"Awf'ly sorry, sir," murmured Daub.

"But how came you in this state? Is this a fit state to appear in?" snorted Mr. Packe. "Are you not aware that you are a disgrace to your school?"

"We've been in the hurricane, sir, and the boat capsized!" said Drake. "We were jolly nearly drowned!"

"Upon my word! What were you doing in the boat at all? I left instructions for you to follow me by the next steamer."

"We—we thought we'd better get back, sir. We were afraid of missing lessons," murmured Drake.

Some of the juniors on deck chuckled. Missing lessons was not generally considered a hardship by the Benbow fellows.

Mr. Packe uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Nonsense! You should not have run the risk! You might have been drowned in the hurricane—"

"We didn't know there was going to be a hurricane, sir," explained Dick Rodney demurely. "We—we're not weather-prophets, sir—"

"Nonsense! Who is this Indian?" Mr. Packe glanced down at the Arrowac who was standing in his skiff.

"His name's Taro Niom, sir. He gave us a tow in," said Drake. "We were drifting towards the South American coast when we fell in with him."

Mr. Packe gave another snort. He was angry at the risk the juniors had run; and, in his eyes, their offence was in proportion to that risk.

"You will come to my cabin as soon as you have put yourselves into a state fit to be seen!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Packe strode away.

Jack Drake, unheeding the eager questions showered on him by his Form-fellows, turned to Solomon Wellington. The black boatman of La Brea was waiting to be attended to.

"You'd better go down to the galley," he said. "You want some tommy. Here, Tin Tacks, look after this fellow, will you?"

Tin Tacks, the coloured gentleman of Barbados, came up with an expansive grin.

"Yes, Mass' Jack," he answered, and he added, rather distantly to Mr. Wellington: "You come 'long of me."

Solomon Wellington followed Tin Tacks below. Tuckey Toodles caught Drake by the arm.

"Tell us about it, old chap!" he exclaimed.

"Too jolly hungry!" answered Drake. "Sheer off, Tuckey!" He stepped to the side and called to the Indian in the skiff. "Taro Niom!"

The Arrowac looked up. Drake made signs to him to come on board, and the copper-skin clambered lightly on board the Benbow. The juniors gathered round him with keen curiosity. They had seen plenty of Indians in Trinidad, but this was the first real "wild" Indian they had met.

"I suppose nobody here can speak Arrowac?" asked Drake, looking round.

"Ha, ha! Not likely."

"I want to thank him, but how the thump can a chap do it without knowing a word of his language?" said Drake.

"What about Slaney?" asked Tuckey Toodles. "Peg Slaney has been up the Orinoco, and he may know the lingo."

"Good idea! Fetch him along, Toodles!"

Tuckey Toodles cut off in search of the one-eyed seaman. Taro Niom stood like a bronze

statue in the midst of the curious juniors. He was clad only in linen trousers and a huge grass hat, and he made a savage but rather imposing figure. Raik of the Fourth ventured to touch the coral ornament in the savage's nose, and Taro Niom's hand flew to the knife in his waistband like lightning. Raik jumped back with a howl of alarm.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Drake, springing in front of Taro Niom as he grasped the knife.

The Arrowac smiled and relinquished the weapon at once. Drake gave Raik an angry look.

"Clear off, you silly ass! What the thump do you want to irritate him for?"

"What the thump do you want to bring a dashed wild beast on the Benbow for?" yelled Raik, who was nearly white with fear.

And Raik scuttled below. He had had enough of the savage of the Orinoco at close quarters.

### Taro Niom's Farewell!

PEG SLANEY came up with Tuckey Toodles. He squinted curiously at the Redskin with his single eye. Drake overcame his repugnance to the slouching, one-eyed steward's mate; he wanted very much to speak a word or two with the Indian.

"What's wanted here?" asked Slaney in his sullen way.

"This chap is an Arrowac Indian—" began Drake.

"I reckon I can see that."

"Can you speak to him in his own lingo?"

"Sure!"

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Drake in relief. "I want you to interpret for me, then, if you will."

"I reckon I will if you make it worth my while," answered Slaney coolly. "Make it a bottle of rum, sir!"

"I'll make it a dollar if you like," said Drake curtly.

"Done!" said Slaney, with a grin. "What do you want me to say to him?"

"Tell him we are very thankful for the help he's given us."

"Right!"

Peg Slaney began to speak in a language that was Greek to the Benbow fellows.

Taro Niom started as he heard his own tongue spoken, and fixed his black eyes gravely on the one-eyed seaman; then he turned to Drake and nodded and smiled.

"Anythin' else?" asked Slaney.

"Ask him what reward he would like."

Slaney spoke again in the Arrowac dialect.

Taro Niom listened and frowned and made a lofty gesture, interrupting the interpreter; then he began to speak rapidly.

"He doesn't want any reward," said Rodney, guessing from the Indian's look and gesture.

"What does he say?" asked Drake anxiously.

He was fearful of having hurt the savage's feelings by the offer of a reward.

Slaney chuckled.

"He says he's Taro Niom, an Arrowac chief, and that he served Yak Dak—that's you, sir—because Yak Dak saved him from a shark, and he is insulted by the offer of a reward."

"Mighty proud for a blessed savage!" said Tuckey Toodles, with a sniff. "If you like to hand it to me, Drake, I won't refuse it. I ain't proud."

"Tell him I'm sorry, and didn't mean to wound his feelings, Slaney," said Jack Drake.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Ask him if he will accept this knife as a present, in remembrance of our meeting," added Drake.

He held up a handsome, silver-handled clasp-knife, which he carried on a lanyard round his neck, sailor fashion.

Slaney spoke again in Arrowac; and the Red man's face cleared, and he nodded.

Drake held out the knife; and the Indian, removing the big, plaited grass hat, slipped the lanyard over his neck, and replaced the hat; then he fumbled at the coral ornaments in his ears and detached them, the juniors watching him in wonder.

Taro Niom held out the corals to Drake, speaking in his own tongue. Peg Slaney, grinning, translated.

"He wants you to take his ear-plugs as a present in return," he said. "He's no end of a big chief. I heard of him when I was up the Orinoco afore."

Drake hesitated a moment, and then allowed the Indian to place the corals in his hand.

Taro Niom saluted him gravely and turned to the side.

"Adios!" he said in Spanish, and then he ran on again in Arrowac, Drake listening with a puzzled face.

"What does he say, Slaney?"

Slaney was chuckling.

"He says he's Yak Dak's friend for life, and if Yak Dak—that's you—ever comes to his village up the Orinoco he will make him welcome and give him some wives——"

"Oh, my hat!"

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

Taro Niom stared round him, puzzled by the laughter and a little angry.

"Tell him I thank him very much," gasped Drake.

The Indian listened while Slaney translated, and smiled at Drake again and repeated:

"Adios!"

"Adios, Taro Niom!" said Drake.

"Adios!" repeated Daubeny and Rodney.

The Redskin clambered down lightly into his skiff and cast off. The mainsail was hoisted and caught the breeze, and in a minute more Taro Niom's little skiff was dancing away over the sunny gulf.

"I guess you owe me a dollar, sir," remarked Slaney.

Drake handed the one-eyed seaman a dollar, and Peg Slaney slouched away.

"What the thump did you give him that silver knife for, Drake?" grumbled Tuckey Toodles. "I asked you once to give it to me, but you wouldn't."

"Rats!"

Drake watched the Indian till he was out of sight, and then went below. The three castaways were hungry, but first they wanted a bath and a change of clothes. Cold "tubber" made them feel better, and then there was a feed in the canteen, with a large company of juniors all wanting to know what had happened since the parting.

"I wonder if we shall ever see Taro Niom again?" remarked Dick Rodney thoughtfully.

"Not likely!" answered Drake.

"We're going up the Orinoco in a week or two——"

"Not among the Indians, though," said Drake, with a smile. "I don't suppose Packe will let us explore Indian villages. The Arrowacs are a bit too wild, and they use poisoned arrows. Taro Niom seems a decent sort, but I fancy he's rather handy with his knife when he's at home. I'll keep his corals, anyhow."

Having finished his feed, Jack Drake examined the ear-corals the Indian had given him. They were rudely carved to represent the head of some animal, probably a jaguar, the tiger of the South American forests. Whether they had any value, Drake did not know—and certainly did not care. His views were quite different from Tuckey's. He slipped the ear-corals into his pocket-book for safety. He little thought at that moment under what circumstances he was to meet the Arrowac again, and how Taro Niom's present was to serve him in an hour of peril of which he did not dream.

"Now I suppose we'd better go and see Packe," yawned Rodney. "I hope it won't be a licking."

"Flogging, perhaps," said Tuckey Toodles comfortably.

"Oh, dry up!"

The three juniors went aft—Daubeny to his Form-master, Mr. Vavasour; and Drake and Rodney to Mr. Packe.

The chums of the Fourth found Mr. Packe in a very severe and magisterial humour, and they noted, with some misgiving, that a cane lay on the table.

Fortunately, the Form-master allowed them to explain exactly how they had been left behind at the Pitch Lake, and how they had thought it best to hire Solomon Wellington and his boat to bring them back to Port of Spain, without waiting for the next steamer.

Having heard their meek and respectful explanation, Mr. Packe gave them a severe lecture, which they endured with great fortitude, glad that the Form-master did not introduce his cane into the lecture.

Then they were dismissed.

Outside the cabin they found Daubeny, who greeted them with a nod and a grin.

"All serene?" he asked.

"Right as rain!" replied Drake cheerfully.

"How did the Vavasour bird cut up?"

"Five minutes' jaw," said Daubeny. "Luckily, he was playing chess with Monsieur Plon, and hadn't time for more. He chucked it as soon as Mossos made his move."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's jolly lucky!" added Daubeny. "I was afraid the half-holiday would be stopped. But he was too busy on chess to think about detention. I don't want leave stopped on Saturday; it's the races, you know."

"The what?"

"Races on the Savannah. I suppose you fellows are going?"

Drake looked rather grave.

"Will it be allowed?" he asked.

"Well, a chap has to see the sights," said Daubeny, avoiding Drake's eyes. "No harm in seein' a race, I suppose?"

"Not in seeing it," said Rodney.

"Egan's arranged for me to go with him and Torrence," remarked Daubeny. "It will be fun, you know."

And with a nod the dandy of the Shell sauntered away. He left both the Fourth Formers looking rather grave.

## The Pot and the Kettle!

"PUSSON to see you, Mass' Jack!"

Tin Tacks made the announcement at the door of Cabin No. 8.

Drake looked up from his books with a smile. "Trot him in!" he said.

The person whom Tin Tacks announced was Solomon Wellington, the black boatman of La Brea. Jack Drake had, as a matter of fact, forgotten all about Mr. Wellington. But he remembered now that he owed him thirty-five dollars for the passage in his boat.

Mr. Wellington came into his study with his hat on. He had lost his own hat in the hurricane, but a hat is an indispensable article in the West Indies—in the sun-blaze more indispensable than any other article of attire—and Mr. Wellington had obtained a new headgear by bargaining in the fore-castle. He kept it on as he came into the study, apparently to prove that he was as good as any white man there—a weakness to which some of the West Indian blacks are subject.

Jack Drake did not mind whether Mr. Wellington had his shabby hat on or off, but Tin Tacks did. Tin Tacks, as a Barbadian, felt himself immensely superior to any other kind of coloured gentleman, and he looked on Mr. Wellington as a "nigger." And the last thing Tin Tacks would have thought of permitting was cheek from a nigger towards Mass' Jack.

As Wellington did not remove his hat, Tin Tacks slipped his hand into his pocket for the hammer he always carried there. He gave Mr. Wellington's hat a tap with the hammer, and the headgear flew across the cabin, Mr. Wellington uttering a startled howl.

Drake and Rodney burst into a laugh.

Solomon Wellington turned wrathfully on the Barbadian.

"What yo' mean, yo' nigger?" he exclaimed.

"You no call me nigger, yo' black man!" snorted Tin Tacks. "Yo no fit to speak to free Barbadian coloured gentleman. You put dat hat on again in Mass' Jack's presence, me jolly soon knock him off, and p'r'aps your nigger's head, too! Yo' savvy dat?"

And Tin Tacks flourished his hammer in a way that made Mr. Wellington jump back.

"Never mind his tile, Tin Tacks," said Drake, laughing. "How much do I owe you, Solomon?"

"Three hundred dollar," answered Solomon.

"What?"

"We agreed on thirty-five dollars for the passage," said Dick Rodney, with a stare. "That's a lot of money, too."

"Daub stands half," said Drake. "What the thump are you asking three hundred dollars for, Solomon?"

"Boat damage in de hurricane," said Mr. Wellington. "S'pose you go to sea in hurricane, yo' pay for damage."

"Nothing of the sort!" said Drake warmly. "You ought to have known there was a hurricane coming, if anybody ought. Still, your boat's been damaged, and I think we ought to stand you something."

"You pay two hundred dollar," suggested Mr. Wellington.

"My dear man, I'm not made of money," said Drake. "How much ought we to give the boulder, Rodney?"

"We're not bound to give him anything," growled Rodney. "He oughtn't to have put to sea with us with a blow coming on. But if he's poor—"

"Me berry poor!" said Mr. Wellington pathetically. "Wife and 'leven small children at La Brea."

Drake looked puzzled. He was not short of money, and he felt bound to indemnify the boatman to some extent for the damage sustained in the hurricane. At the same time, he did not mean to be swindled, if he could help it. He turned to the Barbadian.

"Tin Tacks, you've been a ship's carpenter, so I suppose you know all about boats," he said.

"You bet your life, Mass' Jack. Tin Tacks debblish cleber ole feller."

"Take a squint at the man's boat, then—it's alongside—and see what it would cost to put it shipshape. The mast and sail and tiller are gone."

"Yes, Mass' Jack."

Tin Tacks left the cabin, with a glance of disdain at the black man, leaving Mr. Wellington with the juniors.

While he was gone Solomon urged his claim with great eloquence. He came down from two hundred dollars to one hundred and fifty, and then to one hundred and twenty-five. Drake and Rodney went on with their prep, in the meantime, allowing Mr. Wellington to waste his sweetness on the desert air. Solomon was still going strong when Tin Tacks came back.

"Well, what's the verdict, old bean?"

"Dat nigger know nothing about it," said Mr. Wellington.

"You shut up, you black man!" said Tin Tacks disdainfully. "You no talk to free Barbadian gentleman. You gib dis black man ten dollar, Mass' Jack."

"You gib me hundred dollar, and no listen to dat nigger!" howled Mr. Wellington.

"Thirty-five for the passage," said Drake, taking out his pocket-book, "and ten for the damage."

"You ruin poor man with fifteen small childer," said Mr. Wellington.

"Fifteen!" said Drake. "That's a sudden increase from eleven, ten minutes ago, isn't it?"

Perhaps Mr. Wellington blushed; but if so, his complexion did not allow it to be seen.

"You gib dat black man ten dollar, Mass' Jack."

"Yo' no take notice of dat nigger, buccra!"

"I'll make it twenty dollars for the damage," said Drake. "There you are—fifty-five in all. Take it and clear!"

Mr. Wellington's black hands eagerly gathered up the money. He was well paid, and he was aware of it, but he was not satisfied.

"Now you gib me forty more dollar," he said.

"Rats!"

"You gib me—"

"I think I shall give you a thick ear if you don't scuttle!" said Drake impatiently.

"Yo' no gib me any more?" demanded Mr. Wellington.

"No, bother you!"

Solomon Wellington snorted and turned to the door. He glanced back in the doorway to snap his black fingers at the juniors.

"Yo' cheap white trash!" he said scornfully. "Yah! Cheap white trash! Yo' hear me, young buccra? White trash! Yah!"

With that polished valediction Mr. Wellington strode out of the cabin.

He took only one stride, and then Tin Tacks was after him. The Barbadian coloured gentleman's wrath was not to be restrained. He gripped Mr. Wellington by the collar and the seat of his



pants and ran him headlong away, to the accompaniment of fiendish yelling from Mr. Wellington.

"Yo' let go, yo' nigger!" shrieked Solomon.

"Yo' no lay yo' black hands on me!"

"Yo' go overboard, yo' black man!" snorted Tin Tacks.

Drake jumped up.

"My hat! Tin Tacks, old sport—" He rushed from the cabin in pursuit. "Stop it!"

But Tin Tacks did not stop. He ran Mr. Wellington, struggling, and wriggling, and howling, on deck and swung him bodily to the side in his powerful arms.

"Great Scott!"

"Yo' let go, yo' nigger!" roared Mr. Wellington.

Tin Tacks grinned and let go, and Solomon Wellington dropped into his boat with a bump and a howl.

Tin Tacks cast off the rope, and the boat rocked away, with Mr. Wellington sitting dazedly in the bottom.

"Good-bye, yo' black man!" shouted Tin Tacks derisively.

The boat floated up the harbour before the breeze.

Mr. Wellington struggled to his feet and shook an ebony fist at the Barbadian coloured gentleman.

"Yah! Yo' nigger!" he roared.

"Go away, yo' black man!"

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

The sight of two Africans, both as black as the ace of spades, calling one another nigger and black man, tickled the Benbow fellows.

Jack Drake returned to his study, laughing.

Tin Tacks put his head in a minute later.

"All right, Mass' Jack!" he said. "Dat black feller gone!"

And Tin Tacks walked away satisfied, leaving Cabin No. 8 chuckling.

### The Evil Genius!

A NOTE was brought to Jack Drake on the Benbow on Saturday morning.

He glanced at it on the deck, and turned to Rodney with a cheery smile.

"It's from Arthur Cazalet," he said. "He's a brick! He's asked us to come ashore to lunch, and drive to the races with him, if we care to. Let's go."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Rodney.

Drake gave a message to the negro, who was waiting, and the messenger took his departure as Tuckey Toodles rolled up. Tuckey had heard Drake's words, and he was interested.

"I'm coming, too," he said. "Lunch at Mr. Cazalet's house beats dinner here hollow! That's the important point. I'll come!"

"Bow-wow! I'm afraid you'll have to wait till you're asked, old top," said Drake. "You made yourself too much of a thundering nuisance when you were landed on Cazalet last time."

"The fact is, I want to go to the races," said Tuckey, lowering his voice. "I've heard Egan talking about it to Torrence. The bucks are going to have a bit of a splash, you know."

"Are they?" growled Drake.

"Yes, and so am I. I'm a bit of a goer, you know, when I get started," said Tuckey fatuously.

"There's permission for the fellows to see the races in the presence of an elder. That's all rot! I'm not hanging around Dr. Pankey or Monsieur Plon on shore, I know that. They wouldn't let a fellow bet, and I want to make some money."

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"You silly ass!" exclaimed Drake. "Let me catch you betting on races! I'd burst you!"

"Look here, Drake—"

"Go and eat ccke!" growled Drake; and he walked away with Rodney, leaving Tuckey Toodles frowning.

Toodles was quite taken with the idea of bagging some winnings on the Trinidad races, but there was a difficulty in the way. He was short of cash. That was not the only difficulty in the way, as a matter of fact; but it was the only one Tuckey considered. He had nourished a hope of raising the wind from Cabin No. 8, but the outlook did not seem promising.

"I suppose Egan and Torrence are going to get out of sight and act the goat as they used to at St. Winifred's," said Drake, in a low voice to his chum. "I'm sorry Daub's going with them. I hope he'll keep clear of any rot of that kind."

Dick Rodney nodded, without replying. Although he believed that Vernon Daubney was doing his best to keep straight, he could not help having some doubts as to the lasting effect of his reformation.

After lessons, having obtained the necessary permission from Mr. Packe to visit the Cazalet villa, Drake and Rodney hailed a shore boat to go to the quay. At the same time, three Shell fellows came down the side of the Benbow to row ashore. They were Daubeny, Egan, and Torrence, and Egan's eyes had an evil glint in them as he glanced at Drake.

Tuckey Toodles came speeding to the side as the boats pushed out.

"Stop for me, Drake!"

"Good-bye, Tuckey!" called out Drake, laughing.

"I say, old fellow! You rotter! Look here! Yah! I say, Daub, give me a lift ashore, will you? I've got an important appointment."

"Bow-wow!" answered Daubeny.

"Come back for me, you beast!"

"I don't think!" grinned Torrence.

And the boats rowed away from the Benbow, leaving Rupert de Vere Toodles disconsolate. It looked as if he were not going to make a fortune on the races that afternoon, after all.

The juniors landed at the same time, and Daub, with rather an awkward nod to Drake, made a movement to follow Egan and Torrence, who walked away at once.

"Hold on, Daub!" called out Drake.

Daubeny paused irresolutely, and Egan looked round.

"Come on!" exclaimed Egan. "We've got to get lunch in town before we drive to the Savannah. No time to lose."

"Wait a minute, Egan. What is it, Drake?"

"You're going to the races?" asked Drake.

Daubeny nodded.

"I know what Egan's going for," said Drake dryly. "You're not going to be led into that game, are you, Daub?"

Daubeny shifted uneasily.

"I'm not going to bet," he said. "It would be too risky, anyhow, if Dr. Pankey is going to be there. I—I'm just going to look on, that's all."

"Are you comin'?" shouted Egan.

"I'm comin'!"

"Suppose you come along with us, Daub," said Drake. "If you're not going to play the goat, Egan and Torrence won't miss you. Come along to Cazalet's with us."

"I'm not asked there."

"They won't mind my bringing a friend with me—that's all right. You know Arthur Cazalet."

(Continued on page 36.)



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**ROUNDED UP!***(Continued from page 29.)*

"I guess the case is clear," was Posy Pete's comment when the accusation had been made. "This hyer galoot is charged with hoss-stealing, attempted, and murder, also attempted; and he's caught no-eying into the boys' room in the middle of the night. There ain't no doubt what he meant to do. Gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

"Lynch him!" shouted a voice.

"I guess there won't be any lynching hyer," said Posy Pete. "Handsome Alf is sentenced to be rid on a rail out of town, with the warning that he'll be strung up on the nearest tree if he shows his nose within ten miles of Last Chance again. You hear me, Mr. Carson?"

The sport did not answer. He had no defence to make, and he was fortunate to escape so cheaply. Only his black eyes glittered at Frank Richards & Co.

Sentence having been pronounced, it was carried out without delay. A rail was brought from the nearest fence, and Handsome Alf was freed from the rope and ordered to take a seat upon it.

Frank Richards & Co. looked on quietly. It was the first time they had seen that peculiar

Western punishment of riding on a rail carried out. Three or four brawny men grasped the rail, and the sport was forced to sit astride it, grasping it with both hands to keep his position.

Shoulder high the rail was borne along, in the midst of a shouting, booing crowd. To keep a seat on the rocking rail was impossible, and Handsome Alf was soon clinging to it like a cat with arms and legs to save himself from a fall.

From the Pine Log, Frank Richards & Co. watched his progress down the street until he disappeared from sight.

The crowd returned at last without Handsome Alf. He had been set down half a mile outside the limits of Last Chance, with the stern warning to "hoof it" for new quarters, on pain of being strung up if he were seen again.

"I guess we've seen the last of that galoot!" remarked Bob Lawless, as the chums went in to breakfast.

And the chums of Cedar Creek were glad enough to know that they had seen the last of their bitter enemy.

Far away in the foothills, Handsome Alf was tramping away, his face set southward, not again to trouble Frank Richards & Co. during their holiday in the North-West.

*Next Week:*

**"THE STRANDED SCHOOLBOYS!"**

**A SCHOOLBOY'S TEMPTATION!***(Continued from page 34.)*

Vernon Daubeny hesitated again. Egan came striding back.

"What are you keepin' us waitin' for?" he demanded.

"I—I'm thinkin' of goin' with Drake," said Daubeny, "if you fellows don't mind."

Egan's eyes gleamed.

"But we do mind!" he exclaimed angrily. "You've no right to throw us over at this time of day."

"Oh, if you put it like that—"

"Well, I do. Come along!"

"Sorry," Drake; you see how it is," said Daubeny, and he nodded and walked away with his friends.

Jack Drake compressed his lips for a moment.

"Egan means mischief," he said. "Well, I've

done my best. I wish Daub would come with us."

"I don't think Egan can afford to part with him on such an occasion," said Rodney dryly. "Daub has the cash, you know. If he's led into playing the goat it's his own fault."

"If he does, and it gets out on the Benbow, there will be an awful row," muttered Drake. "Well, I suppose we can't do anything." He hesitated, looking after Vernon Daubeny, who was disappearing in the crowd with his two companions. "Well, come on, we've got to turn up to lunch."

Drake hailed a cab, and the two juniors drove away into the town, a shade of thought remaining on Drake's brow. He could not help thinking of Vernon Daubeny, and what was likely to happen that afternoon.

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