

Back
"THE PHANTOM ROOSTER!" SPARKLING NEW STORY—INSIDE.

THE
GEM
2¢

*The
Black-out
Mystery!*





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEN. STRONG BOOK, Fernington Street, London, E.C.4. He is candid as you like—Jack Blake does a plain speaker, being by nature a *Jack* (Blat) himself! But keep your letter SHORT.

R. Green, of London, W.3, writes:

Who is the fastest runner in the Lower School? And the tallest boy in the Shell? Best at cricket—Merry, Wynn, or Talbot? Please tell the Ed. the Ed. is the best tropical orchid.

ANSWER: 1. Triamble—when pursued by Knave of the South for some misdeed; 2. Grandy has his head highest in the clouds—physically, *Excelsior* with him at 5 ft. 6½ in.; Piggins of the New House Fourth is 2 ft. 7½ in., 3. There at the best! Ed. omitted; guess he thinks so, too! Must be something in it!

O. K., of Gravesend, writes:

But my boots you won't find a longer word than this: PHENYL METHYL PIPRAZOLONAMIDE METHANSULPHONATE. It's genuine, you! Haven't any real favourites; you're all my friends, but will you tell Grandy I don't think he's such a fool as the rest of 'em think? Try this code message: (Indebted!)-Ed.

ANSWER: The word's a gas; seems to go on almost as long as the Ed.'s been running. Scientific words are usually taken in their context, though. Told Grandy about your code message, and he offered to solve it for you. Going to press, however, the Ed. detected slight inaccuracies in Grandy's solution—hence ungentle's cut.

Miss L. C., of Leicester, writes:

Fun out to beat Joy, of Durham; do you think this is the biggest word: Antidisestablishmentarianism? Hoping I got the Gold Challenge Cup!

ANSWER: Hadum, no less than 3,456 readers (well, it seemed like that) picked on your word, but it's already been beaten. You're a good loser! I love as much. What's a Gold Challenge Cup or 100 more or less, anyway?

Eric Haynes, of Edington, Birmingham, writes:

I want to see if your page is a fake. What about Antidisestablishmentarianism as a long word? Who are the conjuring and ventriloquist geniuses at St. Jim's—if any?

ANSWER: Feds, did you say? You must be too big. Here's answering you back, but I'm sorry your long word is no new one. Great words think alike, they say, and a lot of other great words have also sent in *disestablish*, etc., etc. *Olga*—The GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,631.

and *Knave* both do a bit of conjuring—Triamble also "conjures" with words! Nobody chides to "them" their cases—though Grandy can be heard at almost any distance! In fact, his boom gets him "thrown out"!

H. Bussey, of New Malden, Surrey, writes:

Went this—Dinsley(pang)(pang)(pang)(pang)(pang)! What's your highest score at cricket—and how many ties has fancy? Good luck to you!

ANSWER: *Disestablishment* is a "no ball"—scientific words banned! Highest score 2,439 against the Australians in a lovely dream I had last week. Actually, 135 a, Grammaticious but accurate is my best yet. Fancy has roughly, well, nearly as possible, well, can't say exactly, old man. Best of luck to YOU!

Wesley Sedate, of Kaunas, Lithuania, writes:

Who is the best table tennis player at St. Jim's? Could any boy beat me? I warn you, I'm a TERROR! Tom Merry (he's my hero!), Carter, Blake (ahem!), Talbot, and Fatty Wynn are my favourites. Now you have seen my photo, don't you wonder why I didn't break the camera?

ANSWER: Gussy plays a remarkably good game of table tennis; so does Talbot. I passed on your good wishes. One and all said what a charming girl you look! No camera would think of doing anything but "break" into a smile at beholding you! Sorry it is not quite suitable for reproduction.

D. Lyons, of Green Point, Capetown, South Africa, writes:

In which part of Kent is St. Jim's situated? My friends and I have been having an argument. How do you pronounce D'Arcy? Is it two syllables, such as De-Arcy, or one, such as Darcy? Please ask D'Arcy for me. Tell him I think he is very useful and full of judgment.

ANSWER: St. Jim's is situated in Sussex, not Kent; the precise locality is kept rather secret. However, I should be agreeing with the *Knave* Secret's Act by stating that D'Arcy pronounces his name simply Darcy—one syllable. Gussy says: "Thanks, dear boy, for the compliment. I am sorry Blake, Wrensley, and Doy are not of the same mind."

HO GAVE THE CROOK MASTER OF THE FOURTH A BEAUTIFUL BLACK EYE IN
THE BLACK-OUT ?



The BLACK-OUT MYSTERY!

Mosses suddenly felt a rough sack jammed down over his head and drawn tight round his body.

HATS OFF!

"MY hat?"
"Mon chapeau!"
Mr. Linton and Monsieur Morry uttered these exclamations simultaneously. It was a wild and windy day.

The wind blew almost a gale over the Sussex downs. It howled among the leafless elms and roared round the old red chimney-pots of St. Jim's.

Fellows in the quad clutched their caps to keep them on.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, coming across to the School House from the tuckshop, linked arms to brace up against the wind.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, and Monsieur Morry, the French master, came out of the House together to walk down to the gates, and the wind whipped off their hats before they were a dozen yards from the House.

They speculated together and clutched at their hats.

Linton was lucky; he grabbed his hat in transit and recaptured it before it could travel. Mosses

was not lucky; his hat escaped his clutching fingers and flew.

Monsieur Morry stood bareheaded, his scanty locks blowing out in the wind.

"Mon chapeau!" squealed Mosses. "Ze hat! He go! He fly! Ze hat, he lose himself, mon Dieu!"

Tom Merry and his comrades came to a halt. They had had enough of the wind, and wanted to get into the shelter of the House, but they were ready to render first aid in such a case.

"Morry!" called out Mr. Linton. "Please get Monsieur Morry's hat—"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Tom.

He rushed after the hat. Manners and Lowther rushed with him. Monsieur Morry stood gesticulating, his hair standing almost on end. Linton held his hat on with one hand; with the other he caught Mosses's arm.

"The weather is too rough for walking. Monsieur Morry," he gasped. "Perhaps we had better return."

"Mais, le chapeau—but no hat—"

"Merry will bring your hat in?"

"'Oad ca!" agreed

Starring Tom Merry &
Co. of St. Jim's in a
Powerful New Story
by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

Monsieur Merry; and the two masters turned back to the House.

But Tom Merry was not finding it easy to capture that hat. He rushed it down, but a whirl of the wind lifted it again and spun it away.

"After it!" panted Tom.

"On the ball!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Oh crumbs! There goes my cap!" exclaimed Manners.

Manners tore after his cap that flew suddenly from his head. Tom and Monty charged after the hat. It whirled before them like a will-o'-the-wisp.

Again and again it came to rest, and they nearly had it, but every time the wild wind whisked it away again before they could get hold.

"Stop that hat!" shouted Tom Merry, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form leaped into sight ahead.

Mosco's hat was whizzing straight at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yaaa, watah!"

Arthur Augustus rushed at the whirling hat. As he did so the wind caught his own hat, and he grabbed at it with both hands just in time to save it.

Mosco's hat reached him the next moment, but Guss had no hands free to deal with it. He stopped the whizzing hat—with his face.

"Oh corkery!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as the hat banged on his noble nose.

He sat down quite suddenly. Mosco's hat dropped on his knees.

"Hold that tile!" yelled Lowther.

"Oh crumbs!"

Tom Merry and Lowther tore up. They grabbed together. But again a wild whirl of the wind caught that elusive hat and it flew.

"Fathood!" exclaimed Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mowwy—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

The two Shell fellows rushed on, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting in quite a dizzy state, still holding his hat with both hands.

"Stop it!" shouted Tom, as Blake, Herries, and Digby appeared from the direction of the tuckshop.

The three Fourth Formers lined up to stop the hat, but an eddy of the wind whirled it off in quite a different direction. It rose high in the air and sailed back towards the House.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom. "After it!"

The hat dropped again under the Form-room windows. The two Shell fellows rushed it down.

They had nearly reached it when a terrific gust made them stagger. That gust lifted the hat again and whirled it towards the windows.

One of the windows—that of the Fourth Form Room—was open. The whizzing hat shot into that window like a Soccer ball into a goal.

Had the window been shut, probably there would have been a crash of glass. Fortunately, it was open, and the hat sailed in and disappeared.

It dropped inside the Fourth Form Room, rolled under the desks, and came at last to rest after its wild career.

"Blow!" gasped Tom Merry.

"O.K.," panted Lowther. "It's all right now?"

"Rather!" said Tom. "Give me a bunk up."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry stepped to the window-sill. With

a bunk from his chin it was easy enough to climb in and recapture the hat.

Form-rooms were generally locked after class, so it was no use going round to the door. Going to Mr. Silverson's study to ask the master of the Fourth to come and unlock the Form-room was an unnecessary waste of time; moreover, Tom Merry wanted to have nothing to do with James Silverson.

Tom grasped the window-sill to climb in. "Hold on, though," said Monty Lowther. "That's Silverson's Form-room—"

"Blow Silverson!"

"Yes, but—"

"Linton told me to get that hat!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose even that rat Silverson can't object to a fellow getting Mosco's chaparran when his Form-master told him to."

"No, but—"

"Well, give me a bunk, fathood!"

"Oh, all right!"

And Monty Lowther gave his chin the required bunk, and Tom Merry clambered in at the window and dropped inside the Fourth Form Room.

SWIPE!

JAMES SILVERSON stared.

"Merry!" he ejaculated.

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

He stared at the master of the St. Jim's Fourth.

He had been less than a minute in the Form-room when the lock clicked, the door opened, and Mr. Silverson came in.

Mosco's hat had rolled out of sight under the desks, and Tom was looking for it. He would have found it in a few moments more, but as the door opened he stopped and looked round at Mr. Silverson.

"Merry!" repeated James.

He shut the door behind him and came into the Form-room. His thin lips set, and his eyes glinted at the captain of the Shell. James Silverson had always disliked that distant relative of his, and his dislike had intensified since he had become a temporary master at St. Jim's in old Mr. Lathom's place.

The term was drawing towards its end, and James seemed little nearer to success in his scheming against the schoolboy whom he regarded as his rival for old Miss Priscilla Fawcett's money-bags.

James often wished that Tom Merry was in his Form, instead of being in the Shell. That would have given him a good many more chances of making his enemy felt.

But he had a chance now—and James was not the man to let his chances, like the sunbeams, pass him by.

"So you are here, Merry, in my Form-room?" he said gruffly.

"Yes, sir," answered Tom quietly.

It went against the grain with him to speak respectfully to the man he knew to be a scheming enemy. But James was, for the present, a member of the school staff, and a good deal of trouble had come Tom's way for expressing his feelings towards that unpleasant relative. On this occasion he was careful to give James no opening if he could help it.

But it was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again. Two are required to make a quarrel; two, also, to keep the peace! James Silverson was not losing this chance.

"I will not ask you what you are doing here, Merry!" he said, with a bitter sneer. "So many disrespectful and malicious tricks have been played upon me since I have been a master in this school——"

"I——" began Tom.

"That will do!" interrupted Mr. Silverson. "I have not always been able to pin you down—but this time I have caught you in the very act—in my Form-room, which you have surreptitiously entered by the window."

Tom Merry smiled.

He could not help it. James' mistake was, perhaps, a natural one. The Form-room had been locked, as was usual after class; and James, coming to it to prepare some papers for afternoon school, unexpectedly found a Shell fellow in the room.

No Shell fellow, of course, could be supposed to have any business in the Fourth Form Room. Clambering in at a window was a breach of the rules, even had it been Tom's own Form-room.

James had no doubt that he had caught Tom in the act, as he said—if he had done nothing so far, it was because he had been unexpectedly interrupted.

James was seizing on this rather like a dog on a bone! It made Tom smile with the knowledge that he had only to utter a few words to deprive the Worm of St. Jim's or his supposed advantage.

That smile had an exasperating effect on Mr. Silverson. His brow darkened, and he caught up a cane from his desk.

"You got in at that window?" he snapped.

"Yes," said Tom. "But——"

"What have you done in this Form-room?"

"Nothing! I——"

"You have not had time yet!" said James unpleasantly. "No doubt, had I been later, I might have found my desk screwed up, as happened a few weeks ago."

"Nothing of the kind!" said Tom. "If you will let me explain——"

"I shall not listen to falsehoods from you!" said James venomously. "The evidence of my eyes is enough for me."

Tom's eyes flashed.

But he held back the angry words that leaped to his lips. James would have been glad of angry words—the angrier and more disrespectful, the better. Every word would have been repeated to the master of the Shell, to draw down the wrath of Tom's Form-master.

James, to do him justice, believed that Tom had prevarications ready. His own nature was false to the core, and he judged other natures by his own.

As Tom stood with set lips, James' eyes shot round the Form-room. He would have been glad to spot evidence of a rag.

But there was nothing of the kind to be seen.

Tom was not there for a rag, and the hat of which he was in search was out of sight. James had no doubt what he was there for, however, and he rather regretted that he had not dropped in a few minutes later, when he would have had something more tangible to go on.

He wished the cane. Then he pointed with it to the nearest desk.

"You will bend over that desk, Merry!" he said.

Tom simply stared at him.

No Form-master was entitled to cane a fellow

in another Form. Even James, with all his meddling, and all his enmity, had never attempted to take so much upon himself before.

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Mr. Silverson," answered Tom Merry. "It's for Mr. Linton——"

"You have chosen to enter my Form-room secretly and surreptitiously," said Mr. Silverson. "I shall, therefore, treat you as if you were a member of my Form! I order you to bend over that desk!"

"You can order me till you're black in the face!" retorted Tom Merry. "If you will listen to me, I will tell you why I am here——"

"That is enough!"

"If you choose to take me to my Form-master, I——"

"I shall deal personally with any boy I find in my Form-room," said James grimly. "Bend over that desk at once!"

"I won't!"

James' eyes gleamed green, and he came at Tom Merry with the cane lifted. Tom backed round the desks.

Mosco's hat had to be left where it was; he had no time to bether about Mosco's hat now. He backed towards the window to swing himself out.

James made a rush, and the cane swiped. James did not seem to care where it landed, so long as it landed on Tom Merry.

Tom leaped away, barely in time, as it came lashing down. It missed his shoulder by an inch. Crack!

"Oh!" roared James.

The cane, sweeping on, and meeting with no resistances, landed on James' own knee. It landed with a terrific crack!

James Silverson roared, dropped the cane, and leaped on one leg. He clasped his suffering knee with both hands, and fairly bopped.

"Ow! Oh! Oh! Wow!" roared James frantically.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom.

The sight of James Silverson hopping on one leg and embracing the other was too much for him. He yelled.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Ah! Oh!" spluttered James.

James had put a lot of force into that swipe. It would have hurt Tom Merry had it landed on him. Now it had hurt James. He howled with pain as he bopped.

Monty Lowther's head appeared above the window-sill. He stared into the Form-room. James' frantic howls reached him outside, and he wondered what on earth was up.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Monty, as he stared in.

Tom Merry made a jump for the window. James, for the moment, was in no state to prevent his escape. He clambered out with a helping hand from Lowther.

"Got in?" asked Monty. "I say, you haven't got——"

Tom did not answer. James was grabbing up the fallen cane. Tom went almost headlong out of the window, and dropped into the quad.

A moment later the cane lashed on the window-sill from within—too late to reach him.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Come on!" said Tom. "I shall have to go and tell Mosco where his hat is—— Cut, old man!"

And the two Shell fellows cut—leaving James almost raving at the Form-room window!

A SET-BACK FOR SILVERSON!

MR. LINTON raised his eyebrows. The master of the Shell was in his study. He had given up the idea of taking a walk abroad in that wild and windy weather. And he had scolded down in an armchair before the fire in his study to enjoy a quiet hour with that attractive companion, Euripides, before it was time for class.

A knock, or rather a bang, at his door, made him look round from that cheery volume, and he blinked at James Silverson.

Mr. Silverson entered the study limping. His face was almost white from mingled rage and pain. Something evidently had happened to Mr. Silverson's right leg—he limped and hobbled and almost tottered.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Have you had an accident, Mr. Silverson? What is the matter?"

James stood leaning one hand on the study table, putting his weight on his left leg. His right knee was almost giving way under him.

"Merry—" he spluttered, husky with rage.

Mr. Linton frowned. How many times the new master of the Fourth had laid complaints against that member of his Form he could hardly have counted. He knew that he was tired of hearing them.

"Merry again?" he said curly. "What is it now?"

"In my Form-room—"

"You have found a Shell boy in your Form-room! Indeed! Certainly Merry should not have been there!" said Mr. Linton, knitting his brows. It looked as if Mr. Silverson had just grounds for complaint this time. "What was Merry doing in your Form-room, Mr. Silverson?"

"I interrupted him before he had time to carry out his intention, whatever it was—no doubt screwing up my desk again!" gasped James. "He caused me to strike my knee with my cane. My knee is severely hurt! If that boy is not severely punished, Mr. Linton, I shall take the matter before the headmaster."

Mr. Linton rose to his feet.

"I fail to see how Merry can have caused any such accident!" he snapped.

"I was casing him, and—"

"You have no right whatever to case a boy in my Form! Such an act is utterly unarrangeable!" exclaimed the master of the Shell hotly.

"If I find a boy playing tricks in my Form-room, sir, I will case him, to whatsoever Form he may belong, even the Sixth Form!" roared Mr. Silverson. "I will not allow your boys to play malicious pranks in my Form-room, Mr. Linton; and if you cannot keep your Forms in control, others must do so! I have hurt my knee very badly, through that young scoundrel eluding my case."

"You have yourself entirely to thank for such an accident, Mr. Silverson. But if a Shell boy has been playing pranks in your Form-room, you shall be satisfied that he will be adequately punished. Is he there now?"

"He escaped by the window—the way he entered! Will you send for that boy at once and punish him in my presence!" booted James.

"I will certainly send for him and inquire into the matter!" said the master of the Shell coldly. "If Merry entered your Form-room by the window in a serious manner which I shall certainly deal with."

The Gem Library.—No. 1659.

He touched a bell. Toby, the School House page, was dispatched to call Tom Merry to the study.

The two masters waited for him, Linton with a cold, frowning face, James leaning on the table, wincing, and occasionally suppressing a yelp at a pang in his suffering knee.

Tom Merry arrived in a few minutes. There was a faint smile on his face as he entered his Form-master's study. He had been expecting that success.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked, elaborately taking no notice of James Silverson or the glare that James fixed on him.

"Yes, Merry," said the master of the Shell. "Mr. Silverson tells me that he found you in his Form-room, which you had entered by the window."

"That is so, sir," admitted Tom. "You will remember, sir, that you told me to go after Monsieur Merry's hat."

"Monsieur Merry's hat!" repeated Mr. Linton blankly. "Yes, I remember that perfectly well, Merry. I suppose you have taken Monsieur Merry's hat to him before this?"

"No, sir; Mr. Silverson interrupted me," said Tom desuavely. "The hat blew in at the window of Mr. Silverson's Form-room."

"Oh!"

"As the Form-rooms are locked after class, sir, I went in at the window after it," explained Tom. "I supposed that I had to get it, as you had told me to do so."

"Oh! Yes! Certainly!"

Mr. Silverson came in and found me, sir, and refused to allow me to explain why I was there," said Tom. "As he was handling his cane I got out of the window again without waiting for the hat."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Linton.

He turned to the Fourth Form master.

"Really, Mr. Silverson, you must admit that this boy was not to blame in any way for having carried out instructions given him by his Form-master. Monsieur Merry's hat blew off in the quadrangle, and if it blew in at an open window—"

"It did nothing of the kind!" roared James.

"If you choose to pay attention to this boy's reckless untruthfulness, sir, I do not! I do not believe a single word that Merry has uttered, sir, and if you do, I can only conclude that you desire to shield this boy of your Form from just punishment—as you have done on previous occasions, sir."

"I think you forget yourself, Mr. Silverson!" said the master of the Shell hotly. "But the matter is easily settled—let us proceed to your Form-room, sir, and if the hat is there—"

"The hat is not there!" roared James. "Is it likely, sir, that a hat would blow in at a window? I have never heard so reckless and palpable a falsehood."

"I have told Monsieur Merry that his hat is there, sir," said Tom Merry. "In the circumstances, I thought Monsieur Merry had better go there for it—"

"Let us go at once to your Form-room, Mr. Silverson," said the master of the Shell. "Follow me, Merry."

And without waiting for an answer from James, Mr. Linton left the study, and Tom followed him. James Silverson, breathing rage, hobbled after them.

They arrived at the Fourth Form Room. Mr. Linton glanced round that apartment.

"Where is the hat, Merry?" he asked.
 "I don't know, sir—I haven't seen it since it blew in at the window," answered Tom cheerfully. "It won't take long to find it."

"Find it at once."
 "Yes, sir."
 Tom Merry proceeded to root among the desks for the hat.

Mr. Linton stood with a grim face, watching him. James, in the doorway, leaned on the doorpost, with his weight on his left leg—beginning to wonder anxiously whether, after all, his usual suspicious distrust had made a fool of him, as it had so often done before.

He was not left long in doubt.
 In hardly more than a minute Tom Merry fished a hat out from a corner under the desks.

"Monsieur Merry's hat, sir!" he said.
 "Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Linton. "Mr. Silverton, you see now that Merry has stated the exact facts."

Even James could not fail to see that. Even the Worm had to realize, and admit, that Tom Merry had not been in that Form-room for a jape, but only in pursuit of an elusive hat which his Form-master had bidden him recapture.

"I trust," added Mr. Linton, "that you are satisfied now, sir?"

"No, sir!" hooted James. "I am not satisfied! That Shell boy, sir, had no right to enter my Form-room by the window, and I insist upon his being punished for such an act!"

"He was carrying out my instructions, sir!" rapped the master of the Shell. "I ordered him to recover the French master's hat!"

"I do not care one straw for your instructions, sir!" James was too enraged and was suffering too acutely in his bruised knee to measure his words. "I will allow nothing of the kind in my Form-room! Unless that boy is punished, sir, I shall take the matter to Dr. Holmes."

Mr. Linton gave a sniff.
 "Merry," he said, "you may go! Take that hat to Monsieur Merry, and that closes the matter."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.
 Hat in hand, he passed James in the doorway. James' eyes burned at him as he passed.

"Mr. Linton," exclaimed Silverton in a choking voice, "this matter will not end here! I repeat—"

"That, sir," said Mr. Linton, "is as you please! If you care, sir, to make a fool of yourself by displaying your distrustful and ungovernable temper before our Chief, I certainly have no objection to make! Please yourself outside."

And Mr. Linton stalked out of the Fourth Form Room, leaving James Silverton to his own devices.

GUSSY ASKS FOR IT!

THE wad's awfully waddy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark in the faintest of whispers. Gussy would not have liked Mr. Silverton to hear that remark.

The St. Jim's Fourth did not need Gussy to warn them that the "wad" was "waddy." James Silverton's speaking countenance told its own tale.

Mr. Silverton entered his Form-room that afternoon limping—almost hobbling.

That terrific crack which he had given himself on the knee had done some damage. There was a big and painful bruise on that knee and it twinged with sharp pangs as Mr. Silverton moved. Like many people who are careless how much pain they inflict on others, James did not like pain himself and could not bear it with anything like fortitude.

In that painful state, his temper, never good, was at its very worst. All the Fourth knew that they had to be careful that afternoon, as Mr. Silverton hobbled to his desk.

James might have found some comfort in taking the matter of Tom Merry to the Head, as he had threatened; but, on reflection, he realized that there was nothing doing. Mr. Linton had warned him that he would be making a fool of himself, and he knew that Linton was right.

He had to let that matter drop—with a painful knee as a constant reminder of it!

Nobody in the Fourth had had anything to do with that matter, so really there was no reason for James to glare over his Form with a baleful eye. But it was one of James' pleasant ways to wreak his temper on any victim that came to hand; and all the Form knew that they were not going to enjoy that afternoon.

They were all very circumspcct—Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, especially so. Mr. Silverton did not like Study No. 6, and they did not want to give him an opening.

Ralph Rockness Cardew, who was often politely impertinent in Form, was careful not to be politely impertinent in this special afternoon. Baggy Trimble, who had a chunk of toffee in his pocket, to regale himself during class, decided to leave that chunk of toffee where it was—after one blink at Mr. Silverton's expressive face.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were really model youths—for the occasion! All the Fourth, in fact, were so much on their best behaviour that James had no excuse whatever for picking up the case—or even for scarifying a fellow with his sharp tongue.

So there was peace—rather a precarious peace—in the Fourth Form Room, till Figgins knocked a book off his desk, quite by accident.

Dropping books was a form of ragging not uncommon in the French class. Sometimes when Monsieur Merry was taking a class, especially a detention class, the constant dropping of books sounded almost like machine-gun fire. But ragging was not a paying game with Silverton—especially when he had his present expression on his face. Figgy did not know that that book was going till his elbow caught it and it went.

"Bang!"
 "Figgins!" thundered Mr. Silverton, as the New House junior stooped to pick up the book.

"Yes, sir! Sorry, sir!" gasped Figgins, quite dismayed at having drawn the baleful eye specially on his hapless self.

"Stand out before the Form, Figgins!"

"It was an accident, sir!"

"I have told you to stand out before the Form, Figgins!" said Mr. Silverton, stepping from his desk, came in hand.

Figgins, breathing hard, stood out before the Form. Kerr and Wynn exchanged expressive

looks. Their chain was for it. It was Silverson's first chance, and he was going to make the most of it.

"I will not allow ragging, as you call it, in my Form-room, Figgins!" said Mr. Silverson, striking the cane. "Bend over that desk!"

"I wasn't ragging, sir!" protested Figgins. "I assure you, sir—"

"That will do! Bend over at once!"

Up rose Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in his place.

Arthur Augustus sat near Figgins, and he had seen Figgins's elbow sweep away that book when Figgins was not looking.

Perhaps it did not occur to Arthur Augustus' noble mind that Mr. Silverson, with an aching knee and a bad temper, just wanted to whop somebody as a relief to his disgruntled feelings. Arthur Augustus weighed in.

"If you please, sir—"

"Sit down, D'Arcy!"

"Yass, sir; but pray allow me to speak! I am sure you would like to know, sir, that I saw Figgins's book drop, and it was entirely an accidental occurrence," said Arthur Augustus.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Sit down, chump!" whispered Herries.

"Weally, Herries—"

"D'Arcy, sit down! If you utter another word, I shall cane you also!" snapped Mr. Silverson.

"Weally, sir—" protested Arthur Augustus.

"I will keep order in this class!" said Mr. Silverson. "D'Arcy, you may stand out before the Form! Figgins, bend over that desk at once!"

Figgins, in grim silence, bent over the desk.

Swope, swope!

"Go to your place, Figgins!"

George Figgins, with deep feelings, went to his place. Mr. Silverson beckoned to Arthur Augustus, who was standing regarding him in mild surprise.

"I have told you to stand out before the Form, D'Arcy!" he snapped.

"Yass, sir. Would you mind tellin' me what for, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I was under the impression, sir, that you would like to know the facts before you administered an unjust punishment, sir."

"Oh crumbs!" growled Jack Blake.

Arthur Augustus was on the high horse now, as his friends described it. The high horse was a rather dangerous mount in Silverson's Form-room.

"D'Arcy," thundered Mr. Silverson, "stand out before the Form this instant!"

"Very well, sir."

Arthur Augustus walked elegantly out. His comrades' eyes followed him in dismay. The Worm wanted a victim, and Arthur Augustus had fairly offered himself like a lamb to the slaughter.

"You utterly impertinent young rascal!"

"I fail to see anything impertinent, sir, in pointin' out the facts," said Arthur Augustus, with calm dignity. "And I can assure you, sir, that our old Form-mistah, Mr. Lathorn, would nevah have caned a fellow for nothin'!"

"Bend over that desk, D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus eyed him. But there was no choice but to obey. Silverson was a worm, and a rat, and a rank outsider, and all sorts of things. There was hardly an end to the list. But he was master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,659.

Arthur Augustus gave him a look. It was a look of calm and lofty scorn which expressed Gussy's feelings, but was hardly judicious in the circumstances. Then he bent over the desk.

Swope, swope, swope!

Arthur Augustus set his teeth. He was not going to utter a sound under that swoiping.

Swope, swope!

"Oh corker!" gasped Arthur Augustus involuntarily.

Swope!

"Yamsooh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the sixth swoipe came down. "Oh crumbs! Owl! Woe! Oh corker!"

"Now go back to your place, D'Arcy!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Arthur Augustus almost crawled back to his place.

Mr. Silverson sat at his high desk again—feeling better. Arthur Augustus sat wriggling on his form.

"Hard luck, old chap!" whispered Dig.

"Dugby!"

"Oh!"

"You are talking in class, Digby! Take a hundred lines!"

There was no more talking in class. By the time lessons were over that afternoon, the St. Jim's Fourth were feeling that lynching was much too good for the Worm, and that something lingering, with boiling oil in it, would not have been too severe.

WHERE IS GUSSY?

"SEEN Gussy?"

"Gussy? No!"

"Isn't he enough to turn a fellow's hair grey?" growled Jack Blake.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat up and took notice. They were in Study No. 10 in the Shell when Blake of the Fourth looked in to inquire for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was past the hour of black-out, and Tom was giving some finishing touches to the curtain at the study window—Manners and Lowther attending to chestnuts baking at the study fire.

"Anything up with Gussy?" asked Tom.

"His number, I expect!" growled Blake. "We can't find him anywhere. He's out of the House."

"Out after lock-up," said Manners.

"Yes; and after Silverson!" growled Blake.

"Gussy got six in the Form-room this afternoon, and he's got his jolly old back up!"

"What did Gussy get six for?" asked Lowther.

"Because Silverson had a 'game' leg!" snorted Blake.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The old ass had to get on the high horse when Silverson whopped Figgins for nothing," said Blake dolorously. "You know Gussy. A horse for idiots is the proper place for him, of course. He just asked for it. Silverson didn't need asking twice. And now—"

"But he can't be on Silverson's trail now," said Tom. "Silverson won't be out of the House in the black-out."

"About a dozen times, or about a hundred, we've stopped him from a petty stunt of getting the Worm at his study window!" growled Blake.

"Of course, he won't pick out Silverson's window in the black-out. But he'll tap at the wrong window, and the wrong man will open it, and Gussy will get the wrong man by the wrong nose."

"Oh crumbs!"

Herries and Dig came up the Shell passage. Both of them were looking anxious.

"Found him?" asked Herries.

"No; he's gone!" sighed Blake. "Well on towards getting sacked by this time, I expect."

"We've got to find him," said Dig.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry decidedly. "If Gussy has got out of the House to play the gliddy ex, we've got to find him, and the sooner the better. Silverson's too dangerous for Gussy."

"Oh, he won't get Silverson!" snorted Blake. "When he gets an armchair, Linsen sits in it; when he sets a booby-trap, Ballton gets it on the napper; and if he grabs anybody's nose at a window in the black-out, I expect it will be the Head's."

"Oh, help!" gasped Tom. "Look here! Come on, and the sooner the better. We cut out by the window in the Form-room passage, and nobody the wiser. All right if we get back before prep."

"Let's," said Manners.

"I've got a flashlight," said Tom. "Get a move on!"

The six juniors went down the stairs together. All of them were equally anxious for Arthur Augustus. Deeply as they sympathised with Gussy, and his natural desire to pull the Worm's nose, they were not going to let him get on with that dangerous game, if they could help it.

Even if Gussy got hold of the right nose, it was altogether too dangerous a game. And they could not help realising that the probability was that Gussy would get hold of the wrong nose. Gussy's loyal pals were far from sharing Gussy's own, unbounded confidence in his tact and judgment.

Singly, in a casual sort of way, the half-dozen juniors slipped into the Form-room passage, which was very dimly lighted by blue A.R.P. lamps.

There was a certain window at the end of that passage, in a very dusky and obscure corner, where it was fairly safe for a fellow to slip out, if he was cautious about it. And Tom Merry & Co. were very cautious.

In getting out of the House after lock-up, they were breaking a very strict rule. That could not be helped, if they were to look for Gussy, and save him from the fate he was rushing on; still, nobody wanted to get six from the Housemaster.

It was a egress window. Tom Merry opened it and peered out into the dark evening.

The wind, that had blown a gale that morning, had completely dropped, and the night was calm and quiet—and black as a bat!

Hardly a star glimmered in the shadowy vault of the sky, and from not a single window came a glimmer of light.

"Not easy to find Gussy in that!" muttered Leather.

"We've got to find him, if we can! If he's heading for Silverson's window, we know which way to look!" said Tom.

"Do we?" granted Blake. "I shall look in the opposite direction! That's the way to find Gussy!"

"Well, we can scatter and look for him!" said Tom. "Quiet!"

One by one, the six juniors dropped from the window. Tom Merry quietly closed the case-moment after the half-dozen were out.

They groped their way round a black looming building into the quad. The darkness was

balling. Tom had a flashlight, but he did not turn it on—a flash of light in the black-out might have caught other eyes. They groped, and stumbled, and bumped, till they were in the quad, on which the windows of the masters' studies looked.

Looking for any fellow in that dingy darkness was like looking for a needle in a haystack, only a little more so. Arthur Augustus IFarcy, it was certain, was somewhere—but really he might have been almost anywhere.

He was not found, at all events, by the masters' windows. Blake declared that, whatever direction Gussy had taken, it was practically certain not to be the right one; and it looked as if Blake was right.

It was not easy for Tom Merry & Co. to pick out the spot in the blackness. But they did pick it out, and groped along from window-sill to window-sill.

Even then, they could not be sure which was Mr. Silverson's.

But Gussy was not found near any of them, so it seemed that the swell of St. Jim's was still in search of his destination.

Evidently, he had not yet got through with his stunt, for had any look, Silverson or not, put his head out of a window and had his nose pulled, there would undoubtedly have been a row going on! And there was not a whisper of a row!

"Not here!" muttered Tom Merry.

He stopped at a window-sill, which he fancied to be that of Silverson's study, though he could not be sure.

"Didn't I tell you?" breathed Blake. "Isn't he the howlingest ass ever? He's wandering about somewhere in the dark—"

"May have wandered over to the New House!" murmured Dig.

"Or down to Taggles' lodge!" grunted Herries. "May be bumping into the tuckshop this minute!" grinned Leather.

"Well, we've got to find him!" said Blake. "One of us had better stick here, in case the howling ass does find his way, and the rest scatter and look for him. You stick here, Tom, and show just a gleam of light if he turns up—we shall spot it, and cut back. And I'll whistle if I get the blitherer!"

"Right-ho!" agreed Tom.

He stood by the window-sill, his back to it, and waited, his hand on the flashlight in his pocket, while the other fellows scattered in various directions to hunt for Arthur Augustus.

He was left alone in deep darkness—listening. It was not much use to watch in the blackness—he could hardly see his hand before his face. But he listened intently for footsteps as the long minutes passed.

Buzzzzz!

Tom Merry started at that sudden sound in the silence. But it was only the hum of the telephone-bell in the study within.

He heard a movement in the study of someone going to the telephone, and the ringing ceased.

The window, like all others in the black-out, was so completely screened that it was impossible to tell whether there was a light on in the room or not. But the sound of the movement within told Tom that the study was occupied.

A moment or two later a voice reached him through the closed window. The telephone was near the window, and Tom could hear the

speaker's voice, though the words were not distinguishable.

But that hard, sharp voice was familiar; it was James'; and Tom knew now for certain that it was Mr. Silverson's window outside which he was standing.

He paid no attention to the murmur of the voice inside the window. But it was raised suddenly, as if in surprise, and he caught a couple of words.

"Mr. Ratcliff!"

Silverson, it seemed, was taking a phone call from Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House.

Tom Merry stepped quickly away from the window. He had no desire whatever to play the eavesdropper.

He moved farther along, out of the sound of the voice. Then, a few minutes later, a voice reached his ears from the darkness of the quad, at a distance.

"Gussy—"

"Hai Jove! Blake, you see—"

"Found you, you chump! Oh, my hat!"

There was a sound of running feet.

Tom Merry grinned. Blake, it seemed, had run into Gussy in the dark—but he had found him, only to lose him again! Gussy was not easy to capture.

And Tom Merry, doubtful whether to remain at his post or join in the chase, peered anxiously into the gloom, and listened with all his ears.

PIE FOR JAMES!

MR. JAMES SILVERSON, in his study, was nursing his knee when the telephone-bell rang. There was a scent of embrocation in the study, with which James had been rubbing that painful knee. Never had the expression on James' face been so bitterly acid.

A reasonable man could hardly have blamed Tom Merry for that "game" knee! James, as he had to admit, had been going to whip the Shell fellow for nothing that morning—apart from the fact that he had no right to whip Shell fellows at all! All that Tom had done had been to dodge an angry and savage swipe; James and his own case had done the rest.

But on the subject of Tom Merry, James was not a reasonable man. Every pang in that troublesome knee was put down to Tom's account, to be paid for with interest when opportunity offered.

It added to James' bitter chagrin and irritation to realise that opportunity did not seem likely to offer.

All through that term he had schemed scheme after scheme, and plotted plot after plot. He had caused Tom a heap of trouble, but without much benefit to himself.

He was little nearer to his object of cutting Tom out with his old governess and guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and with the term coming to its end, time was getting short. Next term Mr. Latham would be back in his old place at St. Jim's, and the temporary master of the Fourth would be gone. And that would be the end of scheming and plotting.

The buzz of the telephone-bell brought a grant of irritation from James. He put down his damaged leg tenderly and hobbled over to the telephone.

"Well!" he barked into it.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1699.

A cough came from the other end.

James snorted.

Whoever was ringing him up seemed to have a cold. James was not a sympathetic man; he was only annoyed by the sound.

"Urrr! Urrr!" came over the wires.

"Who is speaking!" snapped James impatiently.

"Urr! Urr! Is that Mr. Silverson—urrrr!"

"Speaking!"

"Could you come over to my House, Mr. Silverson? Urrrrrr! I have a communication of some urgency to make to you—urr! If you would care to walk over to the New House—urr!"

"Mr. Ratcliff!" exclaimed James in surprise.

"I suppose you know my voice, Mr. Silverson—urr! A slight cough—urr!" came the husky tones over the wires.

James stared at the telephone. Why Mr. Ratcliff had rung him up from the New House he could not imagine.

He was not keen to walk across the quadrangle in the blackness of a cold night with his game leg.

He had little to do with the New House master, though Mr. Ratcliff was, to some extent, a man after his own heart—being acid-tempered, suspicious and heavy-handed with a cane.

"If you care to walk across, Mr. Silverson—"

"The fact is, sir, I have an injury to my knee," answered Silverson. "No doubt you can tell me what it is on the telephone."

"Urrr!" coughed the speaker at the other end. "I should prefer to see you personally, Mr. Silverson. I do not care to discuss a matter connected with your relative over the telephone."

James gave a start.

He had only one relative who could possibly be known to Mr. Ratcliff—Tom Merry of the Shell. Was this something about Tom Merry?

James was keen at once. Ratcliff did not like Tom Merry, he knew. Only a short time ago he had been scored by a football from Tom's foot, and declined to believe that it was by accident. He was the sort of man to suspect anything, or everything, and make the most of his suspicions. If he had found something out, he—

"Are you alluding to Merry, sir?" asked James; and all the irritation was gone out of his voice.

If Ratcliff was going to give him a helping hand, Ratcliff was a man he delighted to honour.

"Precisely! I understand that the boy Merry is a relative of yours, Mr. Silverson. Urrr!"

"A distant relative," said James. "But I am, of course, interested in anything that concerns him, from a sense of duty."

"In that case, I had better speak to you. Probably you would prefer me to acquaint you with the matter, rather than the boy's Housemaster, as you are related to him."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Ratcliff."

James' voice almost trembled with eagerness. What had Ratcliff discovered about Tom Merry?

James, on his usual system of judging others by himself, had no doubt that Tom was a young rascal. All that was needed was to pin him down.

"Not at all, sir—urr! I feel that—urr!—it would be best to speak to you on such a serious matter—urr!"

"A serious matter, sir!" James' eyes glinted. "The boy is, I am afraid, somewhat reckless and

irresponsible. There have been many distressing rumours about his conduct. If some serious transgression of this boy has come to your knowledge—

"I prefer not to go into details on the telephone, Mr. Silverson. If you will stop across to my study—"

"Most certainly, sir!" said James. "I will come over to the New House immediately, Mr. Ratcliff. I am very much obliged to you. I will be with you in ten minutes, sir."

"Very well, Mr. Silverson."

James put up the receiver. He smiled and rubbed his hands. This was pie to James.

He had almost given up hope of pinning down that young rascal. This telephone call from Mr. Ratcliff came like a windfall.

What it was that had come to Ratcliff's knowledge he did not know yet, but obviously it was something of a serious nature to cause the New House master to ring him up, and ask him to come over and see him about it.

The more serious it was, the better it was for the worthy James. He hoped for the worst.

The wind had fallen, and it was a calm night; but it was cold and damp, and James put on his overcoat to go over to the other House. In his

happy satisfaction, he had almost forgotten his game knee, but in putting on his coat he got a pang in that knee that reminded him painfully of it.

"Ow!" gasped James.

But he was going to be consoled for that pain in his damaged knee when he heard what Mr. Ratcliff had to tell him in the New House. It was worth limping across the quad to hear something serious about Tom Merry.

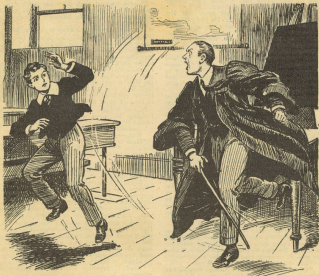
James was limping, but there was a catlike smile on his face as he left his study, and let himself out of the House.

Outside in the quad it was black as a hat. But James had only to walk across to the other House, and he started as fast as his game knee would let him.

But he found the blackness rather more baffling than he had expected, and he soon slowed down, peering about him, and extending one hand before him to make sure of not running into a tree, or the fountain in the quad. Suddenly he paused at a sound of pattering feet in the gloom.

It sounded as if someone was running in the darkness. Some junior out of the House, no doubt.

James listened for a moment or two, but the



The cane, meeting with no resistance as Tom leaped away, swept down and landed on Mr. Silverson's own knee. "Ow! Oh!" he roared.

sound died away. Then, with his hand extended groping before him, he hobbled on towards the New House.

FIGGINS & CO. ON THE WARPATH!

GEORGE FIGGINS of the New House suppressed a chuckle.

"Fatty Wynn grinned from one plump ear to the other.

Kerr rose from Mr. Ratcliff's telephone in Ratty's study in the New House with a cheery smile on his face.

That study was dark. Only a faint red glow came from the embers in the fireplace, glimmering on three grinning faces.

"O.K.!" murmured Figgins.

"He's fallen for it," murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Dada's we know he would!" grinned Kerr.

"You've only got to say 'Tom Merry' to bring Silverson running like a dog."

And there was a suppressed giggle in the study of the Housemaster of the New House.

Mr. Silverson, ever the way, had been greatly bucked by that telephone call from the New House. He had, of course, no doubt that it came from Mr. Ratcliff.

He would have been considerably less bucked had he been aware that it came from George Francis Kerr of the Fourth Form.

Silverson, naturally, did not know that Mr. Ratcliff was out that evening. He had no knowledge of the New House master's occupations or movements.

Figgins & Co., being in Mr. Ratcliff's House, naturally knew more on that subject than Mr. Silverson ever in the School House.

They knew that Mr. Ratcliff was at Wayland that evening, and that his taxi would not come in before ten o'clock. So there was nothing to prevent three young scamps slipping quietly into Ratcliff's study, and borrowing his telephone to call Silverson's leg.

"The roiter!" said Figgins. "He's a relation of old Tommy's, but he's down on him like a ton of bricks."

"It was a sure draw," grinned Kerr. "Silverson would crawl twenty miles on a game leg to get hold of something against Tom Merry. I know it would draw the rat."

"We've got him!" said Figgins. "By gum! I don't mind the whops he gave me so much, but pitching into poor old Gusey for putting in a word for a chap—Silverson's going to be sorry for that."

"And we're going to make him sorry," said Fatty Wynn. "But you poor old Gusey won't be able to sit down to prep this evening! That man Silverson is just a brute!"

"No time to lose," said Kerr. "He said he would be over in ten minutes, and three nice chaps about our size have got to meet him halfway."

Figgins chuckled.

"Jolly good thing this black-out!" he remarked. "Not a spot of light from any blessed window, and a dark night! Silverson won't see a thing. We wait by the fountain; he will have to pass it, crossing over from his House—"

"Got the sack?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Of course I have, see!" George Figgins had a potato sack folded under his arm. "All ready to bung over his napper. It will come down to his waist, and we pull the string tight as soon as we've got it on him!"

The Gem Librarian.—No. 1539.

"Bagging his arms in it," said Kerr. "He won't get it off in a hurry."

"He won't get it off at all," said Figgins. "He will stick inside that bag, howling, till somebody hears him and comes to the rescue."

"And he can amuse himself by wondering who did it," chuckled Kerr. "He will guess it was some fellow who loathes him; but that will give him all the Fourth, and most of the rest of the school to choose from."

"Come on!" said Figgins.

The three juniors moved across to the study window. Figgins cautiously and silently pushed up the lower sash.

Getting out of the House after lock-up was quite an easy proposition to the New House trio, in the circumstances. Mr. Ratcliff's study and his study window were at their disposal.

Nobody was likely to come to that study during the New House master's absence. It was easy to drop from the window and return the same way after they had dealt faithfully with the Worm.

And they grinned gleefully at the idea of leaving Silverson tottering about, with his head in a bag, howling for help till help came. The Worm had asked for it, and the Worm was going to get that for which he had asked.

Figgins dropped from the study window, followed by Kerr and Wynn. The sash was pushed down again from outside, leaving it an inch open till it was wanted.

Then the three groped away in the darkness.

The black-out favoured that scheme for punishing the Worm. But the blackness was a little bewildering, all the same. The three juniors kept close together so as not to lose one another in the dark, and groped their way to the old fountain in the middle of the quad. Silverson had to pass that fountain on his way across to the New House, and if they could not see him, they were sure of hearing him. That ambush in the black-out could scarcely fail of success, so far as Figgins & Co. could see.

It was Figgins who found the fountain—by banging his nose against the solid granite basin!

"Oooh!" gasped Figgins, startled.

"What—"

"Here it is! Ow! I've banged my nose! Look out!" George Figgins rubbed his nose.

"Blow this black-out! Ow!"

"Well, here we are!" whispered Kerr as he groped at the granite. "Quiet—the Worm won't be long now!"

"Listen!" breathed Fatty Wynn.

There was a sound of footsteps, uncertain and groping, in the deep gloom. The three almost suppressed their breathing.

They had hardly expected Silverson quite so soon. They had only got to the spot in time!

Figgins opened the neck of the potato sack. Round the sack's neck was threaded a cord—which could be pulled tight in a moment, closing the neck. Once that sack was over Silverson's head, coming down over his arms, and with the cord knotted, Silverson would be quite helpless—and left to howl!

"Ready!" breathed Kerr in the faintest of whispers.

"Yes, rather!" whispered back Figgins.

They could see nothing! But they could hear those groping footsteps of a man evidently uncertain in the blackness. Those footsteps came

closer and closer to the breathless three hunched against the granite rim of the fountain.

A shadow, darker than the darkness, loomed up.

And as it loomed Figgins & Co. rushed.

FROGGY IN THE DARK!

"**M**ON Dieu!" murmured Monsieur Morny. He peered and he blinked—he blinked and he peered!

Mosco was going out.

He had left the House a quarter of an hour ago, and five minutes should have been enough to reach the gates. Having started at a quarter to six, he was seeking his way at six o'clock.

Whether Mosco was near the gates or not he did not know. A dark night, added to a black-out, bewildered him. He had missed the path, and that was about all he knew.

Not willingly had Mosco ventured forth in the black-out. But duty called. Mosco had a relative at Abbotsford Camp—a French airman, who had been damaged in an accident to his machine. Early that day Mosco had intended to walk over to Abbotsford to see his brother Albert, but the wild windy weather had driven him in, and he had put it off till the morrow.

But after tea Mosco had rung up the camp to inquire for Albert, and learned that Albert was to be moved to a convalescent home the next day.

That was enough for Mosco. Albert was better, but he was going to a distance; and the affectionate little French gentleman had to see him before he went and see him off when he started.

So there was Monsieur Morny—groping in the black-out. He was going to take the train to Abbotsford, and once out in the road he would be all right. But a black-out on a dark night was bewildering, and Mosco rather wondered when, and whether, he was ever going to get out at the gate.

"*Nam d'un nom!*" breathed Mosco as he bumped into a tree.

He backed from that tree, breathing hard. He stared round him in the thick gloom.

Then he groped on again.

His extended hand came in contact with something cold and hard. It was stone. It was circular. And Monsieur Morny breathed more freely with relief.

He had not reached the gate. He was a good distance from the gate. But he knew where he was. It was the granite rim of the fountain in the middle of the quad that he felt in the darkness.

Mosco had got his bearings at last. Now that he knew where he was, he could start afresh and get clear.

He turned his back to the fountain to start.

It was then that a most astonishing thing happened. Mosco had not had the faintest idea that anyone else was abroad in the quad in the black-out. He was apprised of it quite suddenly by a rush of feet.

Dim figures suddenly loomed up and three pairs of hands clutched the French master all together.

Mosco tottered, with a squeak of amazement and alarm.

Who they were, what they were up to, he had not the faintest idea; but he knew that he was clutched in many hands.

His hat went off and something was banged over his amazed and dizzy head. It was a sack! Breathless, almost paralysed with astonishment, Mosco felt a rough sack jammed down over his head and drawn tight round his body.

Then he woke to life, as it were, and yelled frantically:

"*Mom Dieu! Non d'un nom—d'un nom! Vat is all us? Scelerats! Vat is it zat you do! Ze help! A nos! Au secours! Ze help!*"

Three fellows, who heard that muffled yell from inside the sack, jumped as if stung by the same spring!

Up to that moment Figgins & Co. had not dreamed of doubting that it was Silverson.

Now they suddenly learned that it was not!

Inside the sack Mosco wriggled and struggled and gurgled and raved.

"*Allons! Vat is dis! Zat you leave me to go? Crapins! Au secours! Ze help—ze help!*"

"*Oh, scissos!*" breathed Figgins. "That isn't Silverson!"

"Mosco!" gurgled Fatty Wynn in horror. "It—is—it's Froggy!"

"Quick!" whispered Kerr. "It's Froggy—Oh, quick!"

Figgins & Co. had bagged the wrong man in the black-out! Really, they could hardly have helped it. They had been expecting Silverson, due to pass that spot any minute, and they had never dreamed that Monsieur Morny was out of the House or anywhere, at hand.

But they knew now.

The cord was jerked loose instantly. Figgins whipped the sack off the bewildered head of the French master.

Mosco, his head in the open air again, gasped for breath and squeaked and squealed in dismay and amazement.

But he saw nothing of Figgins & Co. He heard, for a moment, a patter of rapid feet—that was all.

Figgins & Co. vanished promptly into space.

They had not meant to bag Mosco. They would never have dreamed of bagging Mosco. But they had done it—and the consequences of bagging any member of the staff were dire. Silverson would have been left tottering in the tied sack, and they would have been safe. But Mosco could not be left tottering in a tied sack—they had to take the risk of releasing him. But, having done so, they had no time to lose!

Ghosts at cock-crow had nothing on Figgins & Co. as they vanished into the black-out. They wanted to get away from Froggy—and get away quick.

Not till they reached the New House did they halt or venture to speak. Then they stopped at last, panting for breath, close by the wall.

"*Oh crumbs!*" gasped Figgins. "Fancy getting Froggy in the dark!"

"What a ghastly sell!" muttered Fatty.

"What the thump was Mosco doing there?" gasped Kerr. "What was the old ass wandering round the fountain in the dark for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"We shall miss Silverson! Can't carry on with another beak on the spot!" said Kerr. "Two beaks is one too many when you're bagging a beak! We're done!"

"For goodness' sake let's get in before Froggy starts raising Cain all over the school!" panted Fatty Wynn.

Evidently there was nothing else to be done!

That great scheme of bagging Silverson had to be abandoned—after all the trouble Figgins & Co. had taken to get him out of the School House!

But it could not be helped—the chief thing was to keep dark who had bagged Messos.

Figgins & Co. lost no time in scrambling in at Mr. Ratcliff's study window, and shutting that window after them, and carefully fastening it. They were safe back in the New House, hardly two minutes after they had bagged Messos—and deeply thankful to find themselves there safe.

Meanwhile, Monsieur Merry was leaning on the granite rim of the fountain in the dark, gasping and gurgling for breath, and in a state of surprise and rage and bewilderment that could not have been expressed in words.

Who had bagged him, why they had done it, Messos could not begin to guess.

But for the fact that he had a train to catch to go over to Abbotsford to see his dear Albert, Messos would have groped back to the School House to raise Cain, as Fatty Wyan expressed it, and set every prefect in the House searching for his assailants.

As it was, he gasped and gurgled and spluttered till he recovered his breath, and then stooped and groped in the darkness for the hat that had fallen off.

It was not easy to find a black hat in blackness. With deep feelings, Messos groped for that hat.

But he found it at last, and rose to his feet, and jammed it on his head.

As he did so he heard a footstep.

He swung round in the direction of that footstep with flashing eyes. They were coming back—it was his assailants again—he guessed that at once!

Messos was not going to be collared again now that he was on his guard. His blood was boiling. His eyes fairly sparkled.

An extended hand in the darkness touched his face. Something dark loomed before him as it touched.

Crash!

Right at that something dark shot Messos's hat.

He could hardly see what it hit—but he could feel that it was an eye that his knuckles landed on.

It was a terrific jolt. Messos was not a powerful man by any means—but he put all his beef into that infuriated punch.

Bump!

An unseen figure went down with a gasping, startled yell.

Messos did not wait.

He had knuckled down the fellow whose fingers had touched him—but there had been three, he knew, and he was not giving the others a chance to grab him in the dark.

As the unseen figure crashed over, Messos scudded.

He vanished from the spot as swiftly as Figgins & Co. had done a few minutes earlier.

Knowing his direction from the fountain, he made straight for the gates, and in less than a minute more he was letting himself out at masters' gate near the great gates.

And as he walked along the road, heading for the railway station, he rubbed his knuckles—which had been a little barked by their crash into an unknown eye—and reflected with grim satisfaction that one of his assailants, at least, had something to remember him by.

The Gem Library.—No. 1,655.

And James Silverson, the most astonished and enraged man in the county of Sussex, sprawled on his back in the darkness by the fountain, with a hand pressed to an eye that was already blackening!

JAMES GETS HIS MAN!

TOM MERRY started and listened.

Standing a few feet from Silverson's study window, Tom was peering into the dark, and listening intently, while he debated in his mind whether to remain on the spot, or join the other fellows in rounding up Gussy, now that Blake had got on his track.

He was still in that uncertain state when from the darkness there came a sudden yell!

"Oh crumb!" gasped Tom.

In the silent quad, that yell, though distant, rang clearly and sharply to his ears, and he could hear the sound of a fall.

It sounded as if someone had been hurt!

"That was Gussy!" breathed Tom.

His ears told him that the sounds came from the direction of the fountain in the quadrangle. Gussy, he knew, had been running. A fellow running in that blackness was liable to run into anything that was in the way. Whether it was Gussy, or not, Tom had no doubt that one of the fellows had crashed into the granite fountain, and that yell sounded as if he had had a hard knock.

He did not hesitate any longer. Leaving his post, he ran across to the fountain.

He ran with an extended hand, for the fountain was invisible in the blackness, and he did not want to run into it, as he supposed that the other fellow had done.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Ooooooh!"

He heard a gasping splutter—evidently from the fellow who had been damaged. The next moment he was stumbling over a figure that lay on the earth. And as he stumbled over it, a hand whipped up and grasped him.

It was a fierce, savage grasp—using on his arm like a steel vice; the grip, he knew at once, of a man, not a schoolboy. It was not one of the juniors who was sprawling there in the dark.

"Who are you?" came a pating, infuriated voice. "I have caught you—who are you, you young scoundrel!"

Tom gasped.

"Let go my arm!"

"Merry! Is that Merry's voice?"

"Yes! I—"

"Merry! I might have guessed it!" The iron grasp closed harder, and the voice came in a snarl.

"Is that Mr. Silverson?" gasped Tom.

"You young scoundrel!"

"I—"

"You shall suffer for this! You have struck me!" James choked with rage. "Rascal—young ruffian—scoundrel!"

Tom struggled in the savage grip on his arm.

He was quite bewildered. He had not had the remotest idea that Silverson was out of the House—hardly ten minutes ago he had heard him at the telephone in his study. But he realised now that it was Silverson whose yell he had heard—Silverson who had come to grief at the fountain. He still supposed that Silverson must have collided with the fountain, being utterly unaware of the activities of Figgins & Co. and Monsieur Merry in the black-out.

"Let me go!" he panted. "I came to help you—"

"What?" howled James. He had dragged himself to his feet now, still grasping Tom's arm with a grasp that almost made the bones crack.

"I did not know it was you—but I heard a cry!" panted Tom.

"You lying young knave!"

"Will you let go my arm, Mr. Silverson?"

"Not till I have taken you back to the House!" said James, between his teeth. "You shall have no chance of eluding me, and selling falsehoods, you young scoundrel! You are going to answer at once for what you have done!"

"I've done nothing! It's not my fault you banged into the fountain, is it!" exclaimed Tom, panted and angry.

"Is that the lie you are going to tell?" hissed James. "We shall see whether it is any use, you unscrupulous young scoundrel, when my eye must be already black—"

"Your eye?" gasped Tom.

"We shall see!" James was almost fainting.

"You struck me in the eye, you young villain—you were lying in wait for me—we shall see whether your falsehoods will avail! Come!"

"I tell you—"

"Come!" roared James.

"I have done nothing!" roared Tom. "I am out of the House after lock-up, but that is Mr. Linton's business, not yours! Let go my arm!"

James did not answer. He dragged Tom Merry in the direction of the School House.

"I tell you I never touched you!" panted Tom.

"If somebody struck you, it was certainly not I! I came because I heard you howl out, and thought somebody had run into the fountain—"

"You may tell your headmaster that!" snarled James. "We shall see whether he believes you."

Tom ceased to wrench at his arm, and allowed James to walk him back to the House. It was impossible now to keep secret the fact that he was out of the House after lock-up.

He could not see James, but from what the master of the Fourth had said, somebody had hit him in the eye. Tom wondered, in dismay, whether Gussy, or one of the fellows hunting him, had come on Silverson in the dark, and hit out.

James groped before him with one hand, the grip of the other never relaxing on Tom Merry's arm.

His visit to the New House was put off now. Neither was he so keen to hear what Mr. Ratcliff had to tell him—it was, in fact, immaterial now. Tom Merry had struck him and blacked his eye; that was more than enough. Tom Merry was going to be expelled—he was not going to have another day at St. Jim's. That was enough for James Silverson!

Not for a moment did a doubt cross his mind that it was Tom Merry who had struck that blow!

He had lain dazed, half-stunned by the sudden and unexpected jolt; then Tom Merry had stumbled over him, and he had grasped the Shell fellow, and discovered his identity. Who had struck that blow in the dark if Tom Merry had not? James did not dream of doubting—and certainly he did not want to doubt.

They reached the School House at last, and James hurled the door open, and tramped in, panting, with Tom's arm in his grip.

Dozens of eyes turned on them as he marched on to Mr. Railton's study—Tom Merry at his side, in that savage grasp.

Tom Merry caught his breath as he glanced at James' face, now visible in the light in the House. James' right eye was black and swollen—black as the ace of spades!

Whoever had hit James in the eye had given him a terrific jolt. As James bobbed on to the Housemaster's study every other eye in the office turned on that eye. A master with a black eye was an uncommon sight at St. Jim's, and James' eye was the blackest of black eyes.

"Oh, jimmie!" gasped Baggie Trimble. "Tom Merry's done it this time! I say, he's blacked Silverson's eye!"

"Tom"—Talbot of the Shell came up—"what—"

"Nothing!" said Tom. "Mr. Silverson seems to think that I punched him in the eye. I haven't."

"Silence, you lying young knave!" snarled James. "How dare you utter such falsehoods! Come!"

He tramped and bobbed on to Mr. Railton's door, banged at it, threw it open, and marched Tom Merry into the School House master's presence.

STARTLING NEWS!

"**W**RELEASE me!"

"You clump!" hissed Jack Blake.

"Blake, you ass!"

"You born idiot!" howled Herries.

"If you do not release me—" gasped Arthur Augustus, in breathless indignation.

His cheeks were not likely to release him, having had the luck to bag him in the black-out. Blake and Herries had got him, and they kept him, grabbing him by either arm.

"You cuckoo!" growled Blake. "Kim on! You're coming back to the House!"

"I refuse to come back to the House, Blake! I am going to wag at that wet Silverson's window, and pull his cheeky nose when he puts it out!"

"I don't think!" grunted Herries.

Blake gave a low, clear whistle—the signal that Gussy was caught. Sounds of approaching footsteps followed from various directions.

"You utah ass! Be quiet!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Do you want to alarm Silverson? He will beat you makin' that wuv!"

"Eh!" ejaculated Blake. The chase of Arthur Augustus had led him round the gym, far from the masters' studies in the School House. "You clump! Silverson would have jolly long ears to hear me from here!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Where do you think you are, Gussy?" grinned Blake. It dawned on him that Gussy supposed that he was somewhere near his intended destination.

"We are vevy close to the House, Blake—only a few steps from the beaks' studies, I think."

Blake and Herries chuckled.

"I told Tom Merry I'd look for you as far from Silverson's window as I could get," remarked Blake. "That was the way to run you down."

"Weally, you ass—"

"You're about a hundred yards from Silverson's window."

"Wubbish."

"That wall you can see isn't the House; it's the gym."

"Wais!"

"Hallo!" came Dig's voice, as he groped up. "That you? Get the silly idiot! What did he come round the gym for?"

"He thought Silverson's window was in the gym!" explained Blake.

"You astah ast! I thought nothin' of the kind!" booted Arthur Augustus. "If that buildin' is the gym I seem to have been on the wrong track; but it was all through you cheeky asses washin' astah a chap!"

"Got him?"

Manners and Leather came groping up together; they had heard the whistle from a distance.

"Yes; here's the one and only," said Blake. "Now we've got to cart him back to the House."

"I refuse!"

"Tom here!" asked Manners, peering round. "No. He wouldn't bear a vehicle from where we left him," answered Blake. "One of you Shellfish cut back and tell him."

"We'll both go," said Leather. "You can get that dangerous mannik back into the House."

"I repeat that I refuse!"

Manners and Leather disappeared into the gloom again, to return to Silverson's study window and collect Tom Merry. They were quite unaware that, more than ten minutes ago, Tom Merry had been marched into the School House with James Silverson's grip on his arm.

Blake & Co. proceeded to lead Arthur Augustus away.

The swell of St. Jim's did not go willingly. That six in the Form-room had aroused Gussy's deepest ire, and he was determined that the Worms should be made to sit up for the same.

But there was no choice in the matter for Gussy. His three friends walked him off by main force, wriggling and splotching as he went.

"You wotahs!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Will you release me? I repeat that I am goin' to pull that wat's nose!"

"Too jolly dangerous, old man," said Dig. "Come on!"

"Wubbish! I repeat!"

"It will be prep soon," said Herries. "You've wasted a lot of time wandering around in the black-out, Gussy."

"Bethah prep! I repeat!"

"Oh, buck up!" said Blake. "Do you want to be missed at prep, fathead? Want Silverson to know that you were after his professor? Come on, no!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came on, not willingly, but because there was no help for it. Study No. 6 arrived in a lurch at the window in the Form-room passage, by which the juniors had left the School House, one of them wriggling wrathfully in the grasp of the other three.

Blake pushed the casement open.

"Now, roll in, Gussy!" he said.

"I utahly refuse to roll in!"

"Chuck him in!" said Blake.

"You fearful suffans— Whooop! Oh cwiky! Leggo! Oh crumb!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he was heaved bodily in at the low window and dropped on the floor inside.

Bump!

"Yawwooop!"

"Quiet, you ast!" hissed Blake. "Do you want to bring all the prefects here? Shas up, you sissy?"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Quiet, fathead!"

Blake climbed in, followed by Herries and Dig. Arthur Augustus stood breathing wrath, and rubbing places that had hit the floor when he landed.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,624.

"I have a great mind to give you three fellows a fearful thrashin' all round, head and toes!" he breathed.

"Dry up, ast! Here come the Shell chaps!" muttered Blake, peering from the window into the blackness without.

Two heads bobbed at the window, Manners and Leather looked in.

"Tom got in?" asked Manners.

"Haven't seen him. Didn't you find him where we left him?"

"No; he wasn't there."

"Well, he ought to have been," granted Blake. "We arranged for him to stick there, in case that ass Gussy got in the right direction by some miracle."

"You cheeky ast!"

"If he's gone wandering in the black-out, goodness knows where he is!" said Blake. "If he'd heard my whistle he would have turned up. Better get in and leave the window unfastened for him; we much good hunting him."

Manners and Leather clambered in. As Tom was not to be found where he had been left, it was impossible to guess where he was; and, as Blake said, it was not much use hunting for him. The casement was left unfastened for Tom, and the juniors moved quietly up the Form-room passage, Arthur Augustus emitting a series of fierce and ferocious whispers, unheeded by his comrades.

Arthur Augustus, left to his own devices, would undoubtedly have cut back to that casement and dragged out, to carry on with his interrupted campaign.

But Arthur Augustus was not left to his own devices. His friends walked him to the junior day-room, where a crowd of fellows looked round at them as they came in.

"You fellows heard!" squealed Baggy Trimble, in great excitement.

"Anything happened?" yawned Blake.

"He, he! I should jolly well say so!" chuckled Baggy. "Tom Merry—"

"Tom Merry?" repeated Manners and Leather together. "What about him?"

"He, he! He's blacked Silverson's eye!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the thump's happened!" exclaimed Manners.

"Nobody knows exactly," answered Lexison of the Fourth. "Silverson walked Tom Merry into the House about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Silverson did!"

"Bai Jove! Wasn't the wat in his studey, astah all!"

"But what—" gasped Blake.

"Silverson had a black eye!" said Cardow. "Black but not comely."

"A black eye!" breathed Leather. "Oh crumbs!"

"He's taken Tommy to the Housemaster!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "It seems that Tommy blacked his optic! Scree him jolly well right, if he did—but it will mean a fearful row! They're with Railton now—but it will have to go before the Head, of course."

"I say, he's got Tom Merry this time, and no mistake!" said Trimble.

"Oh crumbs!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to pull the wat's nose—but blackin' his eye—oh crumbs!"

It was startling and dismaying news for Tom Merry's friends. Evidently this had happened

utterly without their knowledge while they were hunting Casey in the dark, round the gym.

"Tom still with Railton?" asked Manners.

"Yes!"

Manners and Lowther hurried away at once to the Housemaster's study to wait for Tom to come out.

From that study they could hear a murmur of voices. They waited in dismay.

If Silverson's eye had been blacked, it was a matter for expulsion—there was no doubt on that point! Whatever Silverson might have done—and they did not doubt that there had been plenty of provocation—it was the sack for such an action!

"The cur!" muttered Manners. "He's got Tom at last!"

"The rat!" said Lowther between his teeth.

It seemed an age to them before the Housemaster's door opened. Mr. Silverson came out—and they jumped as they saw him. His black eye fairly leaped to their own.

James went to his own study.

From the half-open door they heard the voice of Mr. Railton, in cold, stern tones.

"You may go, Merry! In the morning you will be taken before your headmaster, and you know what to expect."

"I never touched that man, sir!" came Tom's steady, quiet voice.

"You need say no more, Merry! Leave my study."

Tom Merry came out with a pale, set face and set lips. Manners and Lowther joined him at once.

"Tom——" muttered Manners.

"What——" breathed Lowther. "What have you done, Tom?"

Tom Merry laughed—a hard, bitter laugh.

"Nothing!" he answered. "Somebody seems to have given that cur a black eye—and he says I did it! I think he fancies so—it's not his lies this time. I suppose he never saw the chap in the dark, and, of course, he would jump at thinking that I did it—the cur knows what he deserves!"

Those words were as audible in the Housemaster's study as in the passage. Mr. Railton looked out of the doorway, with a knitted brow.

"Merry! How dare you!" he exclaimed.

"I dare tell my friends the truth!" answered Tom coolly. "Why shouldn't I?"

"Go!" rapped Mr. Railton.

Manners and Lowther drew their chums away before he could speak again.

UP FOR THE SACK!

TOM MERRY was the exposure of all eyes at St. Jim's the next morning.

Everybody knew that he was up for the sack. All the School House had known it over night, and the New House heard it early in the morning.

Tom had been a good deal in the public eye that term. He had landed more trouble than generally fell to any fellow's lot. His trouble with the new master of the Fourth had been incessant; but he had had trouble, too, with his Form-master and his Housemaster, and he had even been sent up to the Head!

A good many fellows had surmised that the captain of the Shell was on his way to the long jump already. Now he had arrived there!

Blacking a beak's eye was the limit.

Not that fellows in the Lower School, and especially in Silverson's own Form, the Fourth, regarded it as a grievous offence.

There was not a fellow in the St. Jim's Fourth who would not have been glad to give James a jolt.

But the views of the Lower School were not shared by the beaks. None of the staff liked Mr. Silverson much, but all were horrified at such an occurrence. And there could be no doubt at all as to the view that the headmaster would take.

"By gum! It's rather thick!" remarked Figgins, when the news reached the New House. "We were going to bag the rat and tie him up—but punching him in the eye—ghow!"

"Bet you he asked for it!" said Patty Wynn.

"Bet you he did!" agreed Kerr. "He's been on poor old Tommy's track ever since he barged in here! But—you can't black a beak's eye!"

"You can't!" said Figgins, shaking his head. "Lots of fellows would like to give the Worm a good one—but really, you know, you can't!"

In the School House Tom was regarded with deep interest, and by the lags with admiring awe at breakfast.

He was quite cool.

He was to be taken to the headmaster when the school went in to class, and he had little hope of rejoining his friends after seeing the Head.

True, he had not blacked Silverson's eye. But he could not make the remotest guess at who had.

Silverson believed that it was his fist that had struck the blow. And, for once, Tom Merry could hardly blame him for believing so. For if Tom had not hit him in the eye, who had?

He had wondered whether one of the other fellows in that unfortunate excursion in the black-

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out might have run into Silversen, and perhaps given him a job in getting away. But he soon discovered that that was not the case. Manners and Leather, Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, had seen nothing of Silversen, had not even known that he was out of the House at all, and had known nothing of the occurrence until they got back into the House and heard the news in the day-room.

Plenty of fellows loathed Silversen. Someone with a deep grudge had waylaid him in the black-out and punched him—that seemed plain.

And everybody knew that Tom Merry had a feud on with him. If it was some other fellow, that fellow was keeping it dark. Tom Merry certainly could not begin to guess who it was.

His own friends believed that he had not done it, as he had said so. Few other fellows did! The thing seemed to speak for itself.

After breakfast Tom walked out into the quad with Manners and Leather—still quite cool and calm. He knew what he had to face, but he was not losing his nerve, and if he was going, he was going with his chin up.

Figgins & Co. cut across as soon as they spotted him.

"Brough luck, old man!" said Figgins sympathetically.

"What did you punch the rat for?" asked Kerr. Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"Any good telling you I didn't?" he said sarcastically.

Figgins & Co. looked at him.

"If you say you didn't, you didn't!" said Figgly quietly. "We've heard that you did!"

"Well, I didn't!"

"Who did, then?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Goodness knows!"

"We were after the rat last night!" said Figgins. "We speafied him into coming out of the House—but we missed him in the dark."

"Did you black his eye?"

"No hear! Never saw anything of the brute, as it happened—you see, we collared Froggy by mistake, and out off!" explained Figgins.

"Couldn't see a thing in the black-out, I say, has Froggy been doing a song and dance about being collared in the quad last night?"

"Haven't heard!" answered Tom. He was not interested in Froggy.

"Well, it's pretty queer if he's said nothing about it—I thought he would be raising Cain!" said Fatty Wynn. "But I say, who the dickens punched Silversen, if you didn't?"

"Ask me another!" said Tom.

"Everybody loathes the brute!" said Kerr. "Might have been almost anybody, I suppose. Look here, they can't fit it on you if you never did it."

"Silversen seems to think he can!" said Tom bitterly. "Railton thinks so, too—he lapped it up like milk! I don't know what the Head will think—but if he thinks the same, my number's up here!"

When the bell rang for class, Manners and Leather lingered in the quad with their chum. They were loath to leave him.

"Cut in, you fellows!" said Tom, with a faint smile. "You'll have Linton on your trail."

"To think that that rat's got by with it, at last!" muttered Manners. "This is what he's been after all through the term!"

"All through the term," said Leather, "and now some fool has done the trick for him! Who the dickens—"

The Gem Library—No. 1,639.



"Go to your dormitory, Merry, and pack your box!" ordered the Head, "to take you to the station in ten minutes."

"The game's not up yet," said Tom. "The Head's got to judge. I'll see you fellows in break, anyhow. Cut in!"

Manners and Leather went slowly in, and Tom was left alone with a clouded brow.

Ten minutes later he was called in to the Head's study. He went with a firm step, and his chin up, but his heart was heavy as he went.

SACKED FROM ST. JIM'S!

JAMES SILVERSON was with the Head. His eye that morning looked even blacker than it had looked the evening before. It was quite a startling eye to look at. Tom Merry, entering the study, could not help giving a little start at the sight of it. And he was not surprised to find Dr. Holmes' face wearing its grimmest and sternest expression. That black eye was simply horrifying, in the view of the headmaster. Whoever had struck the blow that had blacked the eye of a member of the staff had no mercy to expect.

James' round eye glistened at Tom.

James was not feeling comfortable that morning. With a game knee and a black eye he was not in a happy state, physically.

But, in spite of these discomforts, he was in a mood of satisfaction, all the same.



er box!" ordered the Head. "I shall request Mr. Railton station in two hours from now."

All his scheming had failed. And now Tom had, as it were, delivered himself bound and foot, into the hands of his enemy.

Painful and disfiguring as that black eye was, James would not have parted with it. That black eye meant the finish for Tom Merry at St. Jim's—it meant returning home in disgrace—it meant, James hoped, the end of rivalry for old Miss Pricilla's favour and fortune—it meant triumph for the schemer and plotter. That black eye was, in fact, a windfall for James, as Tom Merry had given it to him.

"Merry"—the Head spoke quietly—"Mr. Railton has made a report to me of last night's occurrence. You will understand, of course, that you leave the school by an early train to-day. But Mr. Railton has stated that you deny having inflicted this injury upon a member of my staff."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"From Mr. Railton's report there appears to be no doubt in the matter," said Dr. Holmes. "But I shall, of course, hear what you have to say. You deny having struck Mr. Silverson in the black-out?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have no doubt on the subject, Mr. Silverson."

"None, sir," said Mr. Silverson.

"Does Mr. Silverson say that he saw who struck him, sir?" asked Tom Merry, with cool

assurance. "If he saw anybody in the black-out, his eyeight must be much better than mine."

Dr. Holmes gave Tom a keen look. He did not like the junior's tone; but he was aware of the possibility of error in black darkness, in which nothing could be seen.

"Mr. Silverson, please tell me exactly what occurred before I hear this junior," he said.

"I was tricked into leaving the House during the black-out, sir," said Mr. Silverson. "At the time, I believed I had received a telephone call from Mr. Railton at the New House, who desired me to call there to see him. But I have spoken to Mr. Railton this morning, and learned from him that he did not ring me up at all—that he was, indeed, absent from the school at the time.

The telephone call was a trick, sir, to cause me to leave the House in the black-out."

Tom Merry stood silent.

From what Figgins had told him in the quad he knew that the New House juniors must have been responsible for that spoof telephone call. But, in view of what had happened afterwards, it was natural enough for James to put it down to Tom Merry.

"Merry succeeded in causing me to leave the House," went on James.

"One moment, sir!" said Dr. Holmes. "Is there any evidence that it was Merry who spoke on the telephone? The voice, I presume, must have been disguised, if you believed that it was Mr. Railton speaking."

"The speaker affected to have a cold, and to speak in a husky voice," said Mr. Silverson. "Otherwise, of course, I should not have been deceived."

"But you say that it was Merry—"

"I can scarcely doubt that it was Merry, sir, in view of the fact that he waylaid me in the quadrangle."

"Do you admit this, Merry?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

The Head pursed his lips.

"We must keep to what is actually known, and can be proved," he said. "Such a practical joke might have been played by any boy in the school. Let us pass on to what actually happened to your own knowledge, Mr. Silverson."

James' wound eye glinted again. He was not quite so keen as the headmaster that strict justice should be done. But he went on quietly:

"Very well, sir. It was extremely dark in the quadrangle, and I could see nothing till I reached the fountain, which I had to pass on my way to the New House. I made out the fountain very dimly, of course, and walked with my hand extended before me, and my hand suddenly touched a face. I was greatly startled, having no idea that anyone was on the path by the fountain; but before I could speak, or even think a sudden blow was struck—a fist crashed into my eye, and I was knocked down."

"You saw no one?"

"The nearest shadow in the darkness, sir. But as I was struggling up I felt my assailant stumbling over me, and grasped him. I did not know who it was till he spoke, and then I recognized Merry's voice at once. I retained my hold on him till I had taken him in to his Housemaster."

Dr. Holmes nodded slowly.

Tom Merry listened with keen attention. James was telling what he believed to be the truth, and what he wanted to be the truth, which helped him to believe it so implicitly.

From his description of the episode there could hardly be a doubt. Certainly there was none, in his own mind, and it seemed that there was little or none in Dr. Holmes'.

"What have you to say, Merry?" asked the Head. "In the first place, you were out of the House after lock-up in the black-out, which is strictly forbidden. Why were you out of the House?"

"I admit that, of course, sir," said Tom. "I was out of the House."

"For the purpose of waylaying Mr. Silverson?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Then why?"

Tom hesitated a moment, and coloured. "I was told that another fellow was out of the House, sir, and I went out to look for him and fetch him in," he said.

James' lip curled.

"I can prove this if you wish, sir," said Tom quietly. "Now it has come to this, my friends would not object to coming forward, and telling the whole story. I never dreamed of coming upon Mr. Silverson while I was out of the House. I believed all the time that he was in his study."

"Do you mean that it was by chance that you came upon Mr. Silverson near the fountain? That makes little difference to your action—"

"If you will let me explain, sir—"

"I am waiting for you to do so, Merry."

"I was at a distance—a good distance—from the fountain, sir, when I heard a cry and a fall. I know now that the sounds must have been made by Mr. Silverson when he was knocked down. I did not know it then, believing that he was in his study. I thought some fellow had crashed in the dark, and ran up to help him."

James' sound eye opened wide as he heard this. He did not, of course, believe a word of it.

"I did not see Mr. Silverson," went on Tom. "I stumbled over him in the dark, and he grabbed hold of me. I did not know who it was till he spoke."

"You say that you did not strike Mr. Silverson?"

"I did not, sir."

"You ran up from a distance?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then some small space of time must have elapsed between the blow, and your arriving on the spot?"

"At least a minute, sir," said Tom.

"Mr. Silverson—"

"I do not think I have ever listened to such barefaced falsehoods, sir!" said James bitterly.

"Merry stumbled over me in the dark, after knocking me down, and I grasped him."

"Immediately!"

"Immediately, sir!"

James, to do him justice, did not realize that this was untrue. He had been so utterly dazed by that sudden crash in the eye that he had been almost half-stunned by the shock, and did not realize that he had been sprawling on the ground well over a minute before Tom Merry stumbled over him.

Dr. Holmes' face set.

"I have heard enough," he said. "Merry—"

"Let me speak, sir," said Tom. "What Mr. Silverson says is not correct. He is making a mistake. Whoever it was that knocked him down was gone before I came up. I saw and heard nothing of him. At the very least, it was a minute before I reached Mr. Silverson—"

"Not one second!" said James.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,632.

"You are absolutely certain of this, Mr. Silverson?"

"There is not the slightest doubt on the point, sir! What actually happened, I think, is that Merry lost his balance in striking a blow with such force and fell over me!"

Tom's eyes flashed.

"You know that that is not true, Mr. Silverson!" he exclaimed.

"Silence!" rapped the Head.

"I will not be silent!" exclaimed Tom passionately. "That man believes that I struck him in the dark—I can see that! But he knows that what he has just said is not true—he knows that he did not seize me immediately the blow was struck!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Merry, this is the culmination of your rebellious and mutinous conduct all through this term. This is your last reckless and headstrong action in this school. You leave to-day!"

"I did not—"

"Leave my study! Go to your dormitory and pack your box! I shall request Mr. Railton to take you to the station in two hours' time from now! Now leave my study at once!"

Tom Merry gave his enemy a last look, catching the glitter of triumph in James' sound eye. Then, without a word, he left the Head's study.

LIGHT AT LAST!

"**M**ON cher Railton!"

Mr. Railton was standing at his study window in break that morning, looking out into the quad with a thoughtful, knitted brow.

In the distance he could see three juniors—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell. One face of the three was dark, angry, and bitter—the other two long and dismal.

The blow that had fallen on the chums of the Shell had come like a bolt from the blue. It was not this time a cunning scheme of an enemy that they could hope to defeat—as they had defeated James' schemes more than once.

Someone, it was certain, had blarked James' eye in the black-out, and all the evidence—overwhelming evidence—was against Tom Merry. James himself believed it—almost everybody else believed it—and the few fellows who did not believe it were hopelessly puzzled—as Tom himself was!

Nobody, it was clear by this time, was going to own up to it! Tom Merry was going—his box was packed—and when St. Jim's went in to third school he was going to the station with his Housemaster.

Mr. Railton, looking from his study window, with his eyes on the three juniors, hardly noticed a taxicab drive in and stop at the House and Monsieur Moray descend from it.

But a minute or two later the French master came into his study, and the Housemaster turned from the window.

"Mon cher Railton! Maintenant, je suis de retour—now sat it is I have come back, here is something of so most urgent!" said Monsieur Moray. "Is it, sir, sat I shall be bag in a bag!"

Mr. Railton blinked at him. The French master, he knew, had stayed at Abbotsford Camp overnight, so see his airman brother off in the morning. Now he had returned to the school. But what his extraordinary remarks

incident was a deep mystery to the School House master.

"Bag in a bag!" repeated Mr. Railton blankly. "I do not quite follow, Monsieur Morry. What—"

"I am bag in a bag, sair—in a black-out!" said Monsieur Morry. "I see nothing—I know am not—but say bag me in one bag, sair—ovair as head—and I demand, sair, is it zat I call be bag in a bag?"

"Will you tell me precisely what has happened, Monsieur Morry?"

"Mais oui, sair! Hier soir—last evening—I go to catch one train—sere is black-out—it is verree dark—and in a dark I am seize—"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Mais si, sair si! Three of em, I sink, say seize me in the dark, by a fountain—say bag me in a bag—"

"By the fountain!" repeated Mr. Railton. "I lose me as say in a dark," explained Monsieur Morry. "I sink I make to go to a gate, and it is to a fountain zat I make to go. Zen I know where I am, and I sink, how I find zat gate—and zen, all of one sudden, I am seize—sere is a bag ovair my head!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "This shall be very strictly inquired into, Monsieur Morry. Have you any knowledge of your assailants?"

"I see nothing in a dark," said Monsieur Morry. "But one of em, sair, I shall know—mais oui! I shall know him so easy as never was, sair! Parceque—because—I sink he have as eye tres noir—verree black, I sink, sair!"

Mr. Railton jumped.

"A black eye!" he ejaculated.

There was one black eye at St. Jim's that morning—a black eye that had been stared at by every other eye in the school! There was, so far as Mr. Railton knew, no other black eye at St. Jim's, certainly not in his House. He gazed at the French master.

"I sink, sair, zat he have a eye black," said Monsieur Morry, "because I hit him right in a eye, sair! Regardez!"

Morsey held up his right hand. Railton stared at it. The knuckles showed traces of having hit something very hard.

"Zat one," said Morsey. "I sink he will be verree easy to find! Even if a eye is not black, it will be bruise—oh, yes, verree brains! I hit him so hard, sair, zat he fall ovair viz himself!" Mr. Railton caught his breath.

"Please tell me exactly what occurred, Monsieur Morry!" he exclaimed. "You struck someone in the dark and think that his eye was blacked—"

"Mais si, I sink! Zere are three, and say bag me in a bag," said Monsieur Morry. "I cry out—I call—I exclaim—I 'oul verree loud—and say pull off a bag—and zat you call bunk! I am leave verree helpless—I pant—I grasp—I know not if I am on a head or a foot—I lose a hat—but I find a hat—and zen vun of em seize back—"

"One of the three persons—"

"Oui, zat! I hear him to come, and I sink a's time you do not bag me in one bag, zat is vat I sink—and when zat his hand touch my face, I hit him verree hard—"

"Bless my soul!"

"I feel a knuckle in a eye!" said Monsieur Morry. "It make to pain zat knuckle! Now I sink, sair, zat if it make to pain a knuckle, it make to pain a eye verree more—and aye is

mask, I sink—I sink one black eye—and so, sair, as may be find—"

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Housemaster. "This—is in most extraordinary, sair! This occurred by the fountain in the black-out last night—"

"Mais oui?"

"At what time?"

Monsieur Morry reflected for a moment.

"Six heures, I sink," he said. "I leave a House—it is five and three-quarter—"

"A quarter to six?"

"Oui! Zen I lose me as say—I walk in a dark, it is many minutes—un quart d'heure, I sink—mais oui! Zat is a time I reach a fountain, sair. Six heures, ou comme ca."

"About six o'clock!" said Mr. Railton, with a deep breath.

He glanced from the study window again at the three Shell fellows, Steady No. 4 had joined them—all with long faces. Mr. Railton looked at the excited French master again.

"Vun of em, at least, you find, sair—it is only to look for a damage eye!" said Monsieur Morry, "and if you find vun, zen you find as ovairs, sair! I demand if my head call be bag in one bag, sair—"

"One moment, Monsieur Morry!" said the Housemaster. "You say that three unseen persons assailed you and then ran away!"

"Parfaitement."

"Then you heard one of them returning—?"

"C'est ca!"

HAVE YOU MET GHARKA, KING OF THE GIANT APES?



"But are you sure, Monsieur Morry, that the person you heard was actually one of your assailants returning? You did not see him?"

"I see not in so dark, sir, come on chat—like one cat, said! But I sink certainment it is one of *me*—who else call it be?"

"Mr. Silvester was crossing the quadrangle at precisely that time, sir—passing by the fountain—"

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated the French master. "I know not *not*—I see nothing! But not one in so dark, sir, he stick out so hand and touch me so face—"

"Mr. Silvester was walking with his hand extended in the dark, and he certainly scowled a face—"

"Mon Dieu!" Monsieur Morry's jaw dropped in his dismay. "I sink and it is sun of *me* was come back—*not* else I sink ven a hand touch me so face in so dark—Oiel! Ent-il possible—is it possible and it is le pauvre Mistrar Silvester and I hit in so eye!"

"I fear so!" said Mr. Bailton. "You did not remain on the spot?"

"Mais non! I have so train to catch, also I sink now *others* perhaps my *some* me more time in so dark—I hurry—I rush—I whir—I am to make to go *verree* quick—"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bailton. "If I had been aware of this— Monsieur Morry, at six o'clock last evening, Mr. Silvester was struck in the dark, close by the fountain, and his eye blacked—"

"Mon Dieu!"

"No other person in the school shows any such sign—"

"Ce pauvre Silvester!" gasped Monsieur Morry. "I will demand *assured* pardon—I sink *not* is one of *me* *not* come back—" Monsieur Morry gesticulated with both hands, and almost with his legs, in his distress. "Where is *not* pauvre Silvester! I will demand him *assured* pardon—"

"Please come with me to the Head, Monsieur Morry," said Mr. Bailton. "A junior has been found guilty of this action, and is now under sentence of expulsion from the school in consequence!"

"Vrai!" gasped Monsieur Morry.

"Please come to Dr. Holmes at once!"

And Mr. Bailton marched the French master off to the Head without delay.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR!

"WOTTEN!" growled Arthur Augustus.

"Beastly!" said Blake.

"And you never did it?" said Herries.

"No!" said Tom Merry. "I rather wish I had, as it turns out—might as well have the game as the name! But I didn't!"

"But who did?" said Dogby.

"Yess, wataah! If we could spot who did, dash boys—"

Tom Merry shook his head. He had little hope of that.

Manners and Lowther gave Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rather expressive looks. But for the wretched Gussy, Tom Merry would not have been out of the House at all in the black-out, and James could not have put it on him. But they forbore to rub it in. Gussy was deeply distressed enough already.

"Tom Bailton collected me!" said Tom Merry, with a bitter laugh. "I'm due to go for my

train when you fellows go into Form! Blessed if I can quite believe it's going to happen now!"

"It's fearfully rotten, old chap," mumbled Arthur Augustus. "We'll jolly well make that wat it up for it!"

"Here comes Linton!" said Manners dismally. "I suppose he wants you, Tom!"

Mr. Linton came out of the School House, glanced round him, and came across to the group of juniors. His face was very grave.

"Merry!" he said quietly.

"I'm ready, sir!" said Tom. "I know I've got to go, sir—but I hope you will believe that I was not telling lies about what happened in the black-out—"

"I am quite aware that you were stating the exact truth, Merry—and so, fortunately, is your headmaster now!" said Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry blinked.

"The Head—" he stammered. "But—but I'm *sacked*, sir—"

"That is rescinded, Merry—now that the facts have come to light!" said the master of the Shell. "You will go into Form with your friends."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Have they found out, sir?" exclaimed Manners.

"They know who it was!" gasped Lowther.

Mr. Linton smiled faintly.

"It proves to have been an accidental occurrence," he answered. "The facts would have been known before had not Monsieur Morry stayed the night away from the school!"

"Monsieur Morry!" repeated Tom blankly. He could not imagine what the French master had to do with it.

"It was transparent," said the master of the Shell, "that a foolish trick was played on Monsieur Morry during the black-out; and, not seeing who it was in the dark, he struck at Mr. Silvester, believing him to be one of his assailants, and—"

"Oh *swiker*!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Froggy!" gasped Blake.

"This was discovered when Monsieur Morry returned to the school this morning," said Mr. Linton. "The matter is now perfectly clear, and I am glad to tell you that you are completely exonerated, Merry."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Tom.

"But you may bear in mind, Merry, that had you not been out after lock-up, this could not have occurred!" added Mr. Linton. "If you had regarded the rules of the House more carefully—"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

The bell for third school was ringing.

"I—I'm to go into Form, sir!" asked Tom. He was not quite able to believe it yet.

"Certainly!" said Mr. Linton smiling. And Tom Merry's face was merry and bright as he went with Manners and Lowther to join the Shell going in.

The Fourth Form had to wait for their Form-master a little. James Silvester was in the Head's study—and enjoying life! Everybody else had been glad to hear that elucidation of the black-out mystery. Not so James! To James it came like a thunderbolt!

But that was not all that James had to hear! The Head pointed out to him quietly, but very

(Continued on page 26.)

THIS SPARKLING STORY WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH!

TOLD IN THE TUCKSHOP!



CHARLIE PASSES ON!

"I NOTICED" old Farmer Bell up at the school this morning," remarked Dawson of the Fifth at Greystones. "Judging by the look of him, the old bird was properly on the war-path. Has somebody been trespassing again, or what?"

"No; my kid brother and young Spencer have been shooting at his chickens with a catapult," explained Russell major, picking up his ginger-beer from the tuckshop counter. "They've clocked for a fortnight's gadding, a caning after afternoon school to-day, and a kick in the pants from me."

"They're lucky," said in the voice of Goffin, the new boy at Greystones.

"What do you mean—lucky?" demanded Russell major, surveying him coldly.

"I mean, they've got off lightly," replied Goffin, gazing round the company with his lowest blue eyes. "I know a gentleman who once shot at some poultry and didn't get off half as lightly. As a matter of fact, it's one of the most astounding occurrences you've ever heard. I'll tell you about it."

At the time of which I'm speaking (said Goffin) my Uncle Ferdinand—or Ferdy, as he was affectionately known to all of us—had a chicken farm there in the country near a place called Turtleshury Parva.

It was a rattling good chicken farm, and Uncle Ferdy had lots of prize poultry there, but the apple of his eye was a rooster named Charlie.

By GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

This Week's Story:

THE PHANTOM ROOSTER!

Charlie was a magnificent bird. He'd taken prizes all over the country, and by the proud way in which he used to strut about, his feathers gleaming in the sun, you could tell that he knew he was the goods.

Every morning round about dawn Charlie would fly up on to a ledge and greet the day with a ring-

ing cock-a-doodle-dee! as loud and clear as a bugle call. Uncle Ferdy would hear him and turn over in bed, with a happy smile on his face, murmuring:

"Good old Charlie!"

Charlie acted as Uncle Ferdy's alarm clock, you see. In fact, he was better than an alarm clock, because he was absolutely reliable, never required any winding up the night before, and always went off to time.

He acted as alarm clock to other people besides Uncle Ferdy, because lots of people living in the neighbourhood would hear his loud, clear clarion call pealing far through the stillness of early morning, and whilst some would say sleepily: "That's Charlie!" others would founce angrily over in bed, crying awfully: "Drat that bird!" or words to that effect.

Amongst these latter people with cursed Charlie's early morning heartiness was a Mr. Moses Gugglebaum. This gent had only recently taken up residence in the neighbourhood. He was a fat, vulgar, loudly dressed man, and was simply cooing with money. From the first he had made himself thoroughly unpopular with everyone in and around Turtleshury Parva, for not only had he closed the field in which the villagers

The Great Lumber.—No. 1,038.

played cricket and football, but he had also squashed an annual camp which was held on his land for lads from the slums of London.

"You 'ave a lot of sickly brats camping on my estate!" he had exclaimed, with a scornful laugh, when the ladies and gentlemen interested in the camp had protested to him about his squashing it. "Not me. I don't care 'out the previous owner did. I'm not going to 'ave 'em on my land, so you can clear off and find some other place for 'em to camp."

All of which shows you very clearly the sort of gentleman Mr. Moses Guggelbaum was. He didn't care a haat for anybody else in the world except himself, and he was so chouse-paring and mean that he couldn't keep any servants, with the result that half the big house in which he lived was shut up.

This house was situated very near to Uncle Ferdy's chicken farm, and every morning without fail Mr. Guggelbaum was roused from slumber by Charlie's enthusiastic greeting to the dawn, and he would bounce furiously about in bed and curse Charlie as Public Enemy No. 1.

Sometimes he would vary the procedure, and instead of bouncing about in bed he would bound to the window, fling it angrily up, lean out, and, shaking his fist at Charlie, would bawl at him to shut up and stop it and all that sort of thing.

Not that Charlie ever took the slightest notice of him, for apart from anything else Charlie was much too well-bred to take any notice of a vulgar man like Mr. Moses Guggelbaum.

So Charlie would just sit there on the fence, crossing away, and after a time Mr. Guggelbaum would get so noarse with bellowing that he couldn't shout any more, so, with his fingers in his ears, he would do a wild sort of dance round the floor, kicking savagely at everything which came his way as though that could hurt Charlie.

At length, however, there came a morning when Mr. Guggelbaum could stand no more. He swore that if the noise went on he'd go clean crazy; so, after breakfast, which he belted like a ferocious wolfhound, he rushed round to see Uncle Ferdy.

"You!" said Uncle Ferdy pleasantly, meeting him on the doorstep.

"It's about that beastly rooster of yours!" exploded Mr. Guggelbaum. "It's got to be stopped!"

"What has?" inquired Uncle Ferdy.

"The confounded row it makes every morning!" shouted Mr. Guggelbaum. "I can't get any sleep—nobody can't get no sleep—so I'll thank you to wing the beastly thing's neck for it!"

"What?" ejaculated Uncle Ferdy as though he couldn't believe his ears as, indeed, he couldn't. "Wing Charlie's neck? My dear, good sir, you're joking!"

"Do I look as if I'm joking?" yelled Mr. Guggelbaum, dancing with rage on the doorstep. "I was never farther from joking in my life. It's 'ideaas, the din 'out that bird makes—perfectly 'orrible—and if you don't make 'im stop it, I will!"

"Oh, will you?" said Uncle Ferdinand sharply.

"How?"

"Never you mind 'ow!" raved Mr. Guggelbaum. "I'm warning you, if I so much as 'ear another chirp from that bird I'll make 'im sorry 'e ever opened 'is mouth—and you as well!"

With that he took himself off, striding furiously away. Of course, his threats had as much effect on Uncle Ferdy as water on a duck's back, and

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the following morning the dawn was ushered in to Charlie's clear and ringing:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Uncle Ferdy heard it and smiled drowsily, Mr. Guggelbaum heard it, and said savagely:

"All right, that's settled your 'asn, my lad!"

The day passed uneventfully, as did the night. Again morning dawned, and again came Charlie's:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Then came another sound, a-roaring, frightening sound—the sound of a gun being discharged. The sinister roar shattered the morning stillness, then all was hushed and quiet again.

Uncle Ferdy, a dreadful, numbing fear at his heart, lay motionless in bed, raised on one elbow, and listening with straining ears. But he listened in vain. Not a sound disturbed the stillness which had followed that single cannonade. All was silence, deathly and profound.

With a cry, Uncle Ferdy bounded from his bed. Pausing only long enough to whip on his trousers and a pair of carpet slippers, he dashed down-stairs, let himself out, and rushed to the fence on which Charlie always perched.

And there he pulled up short, his worst fears realised. Next instant, with a choking, inarticulate cry, he dropped on his knees to gather in his arms the pitiful bundle of bloodstained feathers which had been Charlie, but which, alas! was now only the corpse of Charlie.

"Poor, poor Charlie!" gulped Uncle Ferdy. "Poor little fellow!"

Slowly, reverently he laid the corpse on the ground. Then, rising to his feet with hands clenched and face set, he cried in a ringing voice:

"I know who did it, and, by George, I'll make the villain pay for this—the rotten, murdering beast!"

UNCLE FERDY IN A FURY!

RETURNING to the house, Uncle Ferdy dressed as quickly as he could, being somewhat hampered by the fact that his fingers were trembling with anger, as was the rest of him.

It was still very early in the morning, but that didn't deter Uncle Ferdy. His blood was up, and he meant to have an immediate reckoning with the scoundrel who had shot poor Charlie. So the moment he was dressed he quitted the house and set off for the residence of Mr. Moses Guggelbaum.

Arriving there, Uncle Ferdy saw that the bedroom blinds were still drawn, and there wasn't the slightest sign of activity anywhere about the house. However, it would have taken a lot more than that to stop him, and, seizing the bell-handle, Uncle Ferdy set a raucous peal echoing through the house. He didn't wait to hear if the ring was being answered or not, but kept up a deafening and prolonged peal on the bell, until suddenly a bed-room window above him shut up, and the head of Mr. Moses Guggelbaum popped out.

"You the blamee d'you vant, ringing like that?" roared Mr. Guggelbaum. "Ave you gone mad, or not?"

"You come down, and I'll show you whether I've gone mad or not!" shouted Uncle Ferdy, stepping back and glaring up at him in a towering rage. "I'll teach you to shoot my rooster, you rotten, low-down blackguard!"

"You d'you mean, shoot your rooster?" snarled Mr. Guggelbaum. "I've never seen your beastly rooster. I've been in my bed all night, and 'ave

only just got up now, 'aving been awakened by you ringing my bell."

"It was you who did it, so don't deny it!" shouted Uncle Ferdy. "You said the day before yesterday that if I didn't wring his neck for him you'd do it yourself, or words to that effect. I didn't believe you. I didn't think any man could be such a cruel and callous scoundrel as to shoot a beautiful, harmless bird like Charlie, or injure him in any way. But I'll make you pay for it, you rascal! Come down, and I'll give you the thrashing of your life!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" bellowed Mr. Gugglebaum. "I tell you I've never touched your rotten rooster, and if you keep saying I 'ave I'll 'ave the law on you for slander! I've never stirred from my bed all night—I'll take my oath on that! And if you say it was me you shot your rooster, then you'll 'ave to prove it, or I'll sue you for damages!"

"You scoundrel!" said Uncle Ferdy, his voice quivering with passion, for he could see pretty clearly that unless someone had actually seen Gugglebaum shoot the rooster, it was going to be jolly difficult to prove that it was he who had done the foul deed.

"Hard words break no bones!" jeered Gugglebaum. "You get off to bed and get some more sleep, and don't let's 'ear any more about me shooting your rotten old rooster, or else you'll be sorry—"

"No, it's you who'll be sorry, Moses Gugglebaum!" cried Uncle Ferdy. "Murder will out, as one day you will find to your cost, and if you had the slightest grain of conscience at all—which I know jolly well you haven't—your brutal crime would haunt you for the rest of your days!"

"Why not 'ope the rooster 'imself 'aunts me like the ghost of the turkey in the radio song?" jeered Gugglebaum. "Gobble, gobble, gerucker, oh! Go on, get away home, you silly old fool, and let me get back to my bed!"

With which Mr. Gugglebaum slammed down the window and retired, leaving Uncle Ferdy raging on the doorstep, wondering whether or not he should commence another assault on the bed.

Deciding against the assault on the grounds that it would get him nowhere, Uncle Ferdy went furiously off home. Sleep was out of the question, of course, and having solemnly interred the pathetic remains of Charlie, Uncle Ferdy returned to the house and paced savagely up and down the dining-room, wondering how he could bring the insufferable Gugglebaum's crime home to him.

"It would serve him jolly well right if poor Charlie did haunt him!" he burst out miserably.

With the words he halted abruptly, a sudden wild gleam in his eyes. Then, with a cry, he rushed into the drawing-room, where he had left the previous day's copy of the local paper. Snatching up the newspaper, Uncle Ferdy skimmed the pages until he came to the "Situations Vacant" column in the advertisement pages.

Running his eye down the column until he came to a certain advertisement, Uncle Ferdy studied it intently. Then, dropping the paper with an ejaculation of triumph, he bounded to the telephone and put through a long-distance call to London.

He was some time getting the number he wanted, but eventually a sleepy voice came testily over the line:

"Hallo! Who are you, and what the dickens d'you want?"

"Is that you, Eustace?" babbled Uncle Ferdy. "This is your Uncle Ferdy speaking from Tuttlebury Parva. Look here, I want you to pop into your car and come down here right away."

"But what on earth for?" demanded Eustace, in astonishment. "What the dickens has happened? It's the middle of the night, and I'm still in bed—"

"It's not the middle of the night," cut in Uncle Ferdy. "It's nearly breakfast-time, and you ought to have been up ages ago. I'll tell you what's happened when you get here. I want your help, my boy, and I want it badly, so come down at once!"

"Yes, but look here," began Eustace irritably. "I've got some appointments in town this morning—"

"Cancel 'em and come at once!" cut in Uncle Ferdy firmly. "This is an S O S from your Uncle Ferdy, my boy. I know you won't fail me, and I'll be right here waiting for you when you arrive."

With which Uncle Ferdy replaced the receiver, thereby cutting short any further argument.

EUSTACE GETS GOING!

THIS fellow Eustace whom Uncle Ferdy had rung up (continued Goffin) was my Cousin Eustace, who had only recently left the 'Varsity. He arrived down at Tuttlebury Parva about an hour before lunch, and wringing him heartily by the hand, Uncle Ferdy cried:

"So here you are, my boy! I'm glad to see you, 'pon my word, I am!"

"Yes, but what's the trouble?" demanded Eustace, as Uncle Ferdy piloted him into the sunny morning-room.

Uncle Ferdy frowned. "I'll tell you," he said. "You know that prize-winning rooster of mine named Charlie? Well, he was shot this morning by a scoundrelly rascal named Moses Gugglebaum."

"Good for!" exclaimed Eustace in wrath and dismay, for he'd known Charlie very well indeed, and had always admired him. "What the dickens did this rascal Gugglebaum, or whatever you call him, shoot him for?"

"He objected to Charlie crowing in the early morning," explained Uncle Ferdy.

Eustace's hands clenched and his face flushed with anger.

"I'll give him a dashed good hiding!" he exclaimed. "That's what I'll do!"

"Good lad, good lad!" beamed Uncle Ferdy, patting him on the shoulder. "Spoken like a true Goffin. But I've got a better idea than giving him a dashed good hiding. I could give him a dashed good hiding myself, but it wouldn't do any good, because he'd have us up for assault. No, my boy, I've got a much smarter scheme than that. Look, read this!"

He thrust the local newspaper into Eustace's hand. It was folded at the "Situations Vacant" column, and following the direction of Uncle Ferdy's pointing finger, Eustace read as follows:

"WANTED smart man to act as butler and valet. Apply M. Gugglebaum, The Limes, Tuttlebury Parva."

"Well, what about it?" asked Eustace, looking inquiringly at Uncle Ferdy.

"You're going to apply for the job," said Uncle Ferdy.

"Me!" ejaculated Eustace in blank astonishment. "What the dickens for!"

"I'll tell you," said Uncle Ferdy.

He did so, and Eustace listened in amazement.

"Well, you get the idea!" chuckled Uncle Ferdy, when he'd finished telling Eustace about the smart scheme which he'd hatched.

"Oh, yes, I get it!" gasped Eustace. "But it's absolutely impossible, uncle. In the first place, what guarantees have we that I'd get the job?"

"You'll get it all right, if you ask a low enough wage," said Uncle Ferdy confidently. "I know Gugglebaum. And as for references, you know plenty of the young landed gentry who'll be only too pleased to rally round and supply you with references, if Gugglebaum wants them."

"But I've never acted the part of a beastly butler-cum-valet in my life before," protested Eustace.

"No, but you've acted plenty of other parts, and this one'll come dead easy to you," put in Uncle Ferdy quickly. "Nobody can touch you at amateur theatricals, Eustace, my boy. You know that. You're better than heaps of professional actors that I've seen. You will do it, my boy, won't you? Come, say you will!"

In his anxiety to get Eustace's consent he took him by the arm and commenced to lead him up and down the room, saying pleadingly:

"Think of poor Charlie brutally shot down, and with hope to avenge him save you and me. Think of me left lonely and bereft. I feel as though I've lost a dear friend—more than a friend. And think of that rascal Gugglebaum laughing up his villainous doings and sneering and jeering at us. Is he to go unpunished? Is he, my boy?"

"No!" exclaimed Eustace, coming to a sudden halt, his eyes flashing. "I will do as you ask, uncle, and help you avenge poor Charlie!"

Uncle Ferdy wrung him by the hand.

"Thank you, my boy, thank you!" he said. "You will never regret it, I'll promise you that. And now let us discuss the details. You must purchase some suitable clothes. We can get those over at Market Warbling some twenty miles from here. And you'd better ring up some of your friends in case this Gugglebaum scoundrel requires references!"

The upshot of all this scheming and planning (continued Goffin) was that towards evening of that same day Eustace walked up the drive towards Gugglebaum's house and rang the bell. He was very soberly dressed in a neat dark suit and a bowler hat, quite different from the spotty get-up in which he'd reached Uncle Ferdy's that morning.

In response to his ring a young and untidy-looking housemaid answered the door and stared at him inquiringly.

"I've come in response to Mr. Gugglebaum's advertisement for a butler and valet," said Eustace pleasantly.

The girl withdrew, to return a few moments later to say:

"Will you please come in?"

She conducted Eustace into a large and garishly furnished drawing-room, where Gugglebaum was standing with his back to the mantelpiece, a big cigar in his mouth.

"So you've come about the job as butler and valet, 'ave' you?" said Gugglebaum, giving Eustace the once-over. "You's your name?"

"Perkins, sir," replied Eustace civilly.

"William Henry Perkins."

The Gem Library.—No. 1,535.

"You speak very well for a butler," said Gugglebaum, staring at him hard. "You've got yet I'd call a wrank-pot's voice."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Eustace apologetically. "I'm afraid it comes through my being so long in the service of the Honourable Cyril FitzGeorge."

"Ah, you've been with 'im, 'ave you?" said Mr. Gugglebaum, little dreaming that Eustace had been at the 'Varsity with young FitzGeorge. "I've read about 'im in the newspapers. A proper skylarking young cove, ain't he?"

"I'm afraid that is a matter I can scarcely discuss, sir," replied Eustace quietly.

"Well, yet are you leaving 'im for, anyway?" demanded Gugglebaum.

"He is giving up his rooms in London and joining his father in India, sir, and does not require my services any longer," explained Eustace.

"Oh, so that's the way of it, is it?" said Gugglebaum. "Are you got a reference from 'im?"

"He will be ready to supply any reference you might require, sir," said Eustace, who had already fixed this with young FitzGeorge over the telephone. "If you care to write to him or to ring him up at his rooms in London, he will be only too pleased to answer any inquiries you might care to make concerning both my character and my capabilities."

"I'll ring 'im up in a minute," said Gugglebaum. "You wages if you want?"

"I leave that entirely to you, sir," said Eustace. "After the late hours I have been obliged to keep in town I am only too glad of the opportunity of acquiring a post in a quiet country residence such as this, and wages are entirely a secondary consideration."

On hearing this, Mr. Gugglebaum beamed all over his fat face. He wasn't half in luck's way, he thought, getting at his own price a man-servant who had been in the service of a nob like the Honourable Cyril FitzGeorge.

To cut a long story short (continued Goffin) Eustace got the job, and when Gugglebaum asked him when he could start, he said he could start right away, as, although he had come down from London on spec, he had brought his luggage with him and left it at the station.

So it was arranged that Eustace should start on his new duties at once, and later that evening, in his butler's togs, he waited on Mr. Gugglebaum at dinner, a meal which that gentleman took alone.

It was when Eustace was removing the soup that a peculiar thing happened. Without warning there suddenly rang through the room a strident:

"Cook-a-doodle-doo!"

Mr. Gugglebaum was so startled that he almost leapt out of his chair.

"Perkins!" he choked.

"Sir!" said Eustace.

"Did you crow?" demanded, Gugglebaum, glowering at him.

"Crow, sir?" repeated Eustace, in astonishment.

"Why, no, sir. I am not in the habit of crowing, sir."

Gugglebaum glared at him in silence for a moment, then burst out:

"But you heard a crow? You 'eard a cock crow, didn't you?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid I didn't," said Eustace.

"You!"

"No, sir, I did not hear a cock crow," reiterated Eustace firmly.

Gugglebaum stared at him, then stopped at his fat face with his serviette.

"Well, I could 'ave sworn I 'eard a cock crow, and right here in this very room, as well!" he growled, looking uneasily about him. "Oversee, it don't matter. I must have fancied it, I suppose. Get on with the grub!"

Eustace placed the next course in front of him. It was roast chicken. Mr. Gugglebaum surveyed the bird with ill-concealed distaste for a moment, then, spurring his shoulders, he tackled it in the manner of a man swallowing something he doesn't relish.

Dinner over, Mr. Gugglebaum told Eustace to bring the coffee into the drawing-room. Eustace did so, and as he was setting down the tray by Mr. Gugglebaum's elbow, there came from out in the hallway a low and plaintive:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

The crow ended in a gurgling gasp, and, leaping to his feet, Gugglebaum grabbed Eustace so fiercely by the arm that Eustace upset the tray.

"There it is again!" cried Gugglebaum hoarsely. "You 'eard it, didn't you?"

"Heard what, sir?" demanded Eustace.

"The crow—that cock crowing!" gulped Mr. Gugglebaum.

"No, sir, I didn't hear anything," said Eustace. "Perhaps it is a bird in some near-by farmyard, sir."

"Farmyard, be blowed!" cried Gugglebaum hoarsely. "It's in the 'ouse!"

Releasing Eustace's arm, he rushed to the door and whipped it open. His gloowering gaze swept the hallway, but there was nothing there to account for the crowing which he'd heard. With an expression of mingled fear and rage on his face, Mr. Gugglebaum charged into the kitchen, bursting in on the cook and housemaid like a tornado.

"Who's brought a live rooster into the 'ouse!" he roared. "Come on, which of you's done it!"

"There's no live rooster in this house!" retorted cook sharply, whilst the little housemaid blanched with fear at the sight of Gugglebaum's furious face. "What makes you think there's a live rooster in the 'ouse?"

"I 'eard it crow!" cried Gugglebaum. "I 'eard it crow distinctly out there in the hallway and in the dining-room while I was 'aving dinner! By jinty, if you went on savagely, if any of you are 'aving a game with me, I'll give you something you're not wanting, I'm telling you!"

"Nobody's having a game with you!" snapped cook. "Who if you think would want to have a game with you? You and your roosters! We never heard no cock crow, did we, Annie?"

"N-no!" stammered the little housemaid fearfully.

Gugglebaum glared at the pair of them in baffled silence for a moment, then, pulling out a handkerchief, he mopped at his perspiring brow with a trembling hand.

"Well, it's a queer thing—a blessed queer thing!" he said unsteadily. "I could 'ave sworn I 'eard a cock crow twice in this house to-night!"

"It's imagination, that's what it is!" said the cook comfortably. "Either that or noises in the ears. I've heard of folks being taken that way before."

"So have I, if I may say so, sir," said Eustace, with a deferential cough, having followed Gugglebaum into the kitchen. "I knew a gentleman once

who was always imagining he could hear a cat misroving. The delusion became so persistent that eventually it drove him mad, and his friends had him put away in a house. But, of course, his was an isolated case, sir. The circumstances were somewhat peculiar."

"How d'you mean—peculiar?" demanded Gugglebaum.

"He had killed a cat, sir," replied Eustace. "He had deliberately run over it with his car."

"And if you mean to say he kept on thinking he 'eard it misroving after that?" gasped Gugglebaum throatily.

"Yes, sir," said Eustace.

Mr. Gugglebaum stared at him glassily for a moment, then, thrusting him aside, he made his way unsteadily to the dining-room, where he splashed himself out a large brandy. He felt he needed a-bracer.

GUGGLEBAUM GIVES IN!

I WILL not dwell on the days which followed (over on Goffin) or on the nights, either.

Suffice to say that they were extremely unpleasant ones for Mr. Gugglebaum, for he never knew at what moment he would hear the crowing of the ghostly rooster which had come to haunt his waking hours—and his sleeping ones as well, for he had commenced to dream about the wretched bird.

Sometimes he would hear it crowing in the room in which he was sitting, sometimes out in the hall or upstairs, and at other times the crowing would seem to come from outside the house or from the roof.

There was one thing, however, for which Mr. Gugglebaum was profoundly thankful, and that was he rarely heard the ghostly crowing when he was away from the house, either taking a walk or else in his car.

Sometimes he did hear it when outside, but on these occasions he could never be sure whether or not the crowing emanated from some distant farmyard or from the phantom rooster. One thing was very certain, however, and that was that Gugglebaum's nerves were rapidly going to pieces. So much so, in fact, that one night at dinner he burst out at Eustace:

"Look 'ere, Perkins, I can't stand no more of this! I've 'eard that beastly bird three times today, so to-morrow we're off to London, you and me. I'm going to close this 'ouse up, that's vot I'm going to do!"

"Why don't you take my advice and see a doctor, sir?" asked Eustace deferentially.

"Doctor be blowed!" retorted Gugglebaum savagely. "There ain't no doctor can help me. I only wish you could 'ear this cursed rooster once, then you'd know!"

"That's what the other gentleman used to say," said Eustace, shaking his head. "The one who used to hear the cat misroving. He used to say if only his friends could hear it they'd know he wasn't suffering from delusions."

"Neither am I suffering from delusions," said Gugglebaum hoarsely. "I'm not that sort of fool. I tell you I 'ear that rooster as plain as plain. Listen, Perkins, d'you honestly think things like cats and roosters and—and them sort of things can 'aunt people?"

"I wouldn't like to express an opinion, sir," said Eustace hesitatingly. "It may be possible, or—"

"It ain't possible!" roared Gugglebaum, in a
THE GUN LAMBERT.—No. 1,658.

sudden paroxysm of rage. "Ow can it be possible? There's some explanation and I'd give a thousand pounds to find out *what* it is! Anyway, we're off to London to-morrow, and I'll let the cursed thing won't follow me there!"

That, however, is where Mr. Gugglebaum was quite wrong. The ghostly rooster did follow him to his London flat, and he'd wake up in the night and hear it crowing outside his rooms, or else he'd be sitting at breakfast, or reading the paper, and it would suddenly crow right behind his chair, or somewhere equally close.

The only way Gugglebaum could escape from it was either by walking the streets, or else sitting in his club; but as he could neither walk the streets all day, nor spend every minute of his time in the club, he found his escape was only temporary. The infernal bird was always waiting for him when he got home at night.

"It seems to make me home wherever I make mine," he said bitterly one night to Eustace, when the latter brought him in his night-cap in a valet. "It's just crowded at me from the mantelpiece. I can't stand much more of this, Perkins—honest, I can't!"

He looked so utterly miserable and dejected that Eustace admitted later that he felt quite sorry for him.

"Would you consider it presumption on my part, sir, if I were to ask you a question?" inquired Eustace deferentially.

"No; not in it!" demanded Gugglebaum, raising his head from his hands to stare at him.

"I am thinking of the gentleman who used to hear the cat misowing," said Eustace. "As you know, he had deliberately killed a cat. Is it possible, sir, that in some idle moment, or in some moment of mental aberration, you deliberately killed a rooster?"

"No!" roared Gugglebaum, leaping to his feet, his face convulsed with rage. "No, of course it ain't! Not the blame d'you mean by asking a silly fool question like that? Not for would I want to kill a rooster, you blithering ass!"

"I don't know, sir," said Eustace steadily, standing his ground. "But if you had, I am in the position to suggest a cure whereby you may be able to rid yourself of these unhappy visitations. I would have mentioned this before, sir," went on Eustace, "but I have hesitated to do so, because I couldn't think that a gentleman like yourself would deliberately kill a rooster."

"Neither have I," said Gugglebaum fiercely. "I am happy to hear it, sir," said Eustace, picking up the tray.

"Ere, but wait a minute!" exclaimed Gugglebaum. "Not is this cure you're talking about?"

"It is one which was given by an eminent mystic of the Far East to the gentleman who killed the cat," explained Eustace.

"But it didn't cure that fellow who killed the cat," said Gugglebaum sharply. "You said 'e went daft, and was put away in a home for the dotty."

"So he was, sir," said Eustace. "But I must add that he never tried the cure. He was a very stubborn gentleman, sir, and he spurned the cure, and kicked the eminent mystic downstairs."

"Oh, did 'e?" said Gugglebaum, staring hard at Eustace. "Well, not was the cure?"

"It was this, sir," said Eustace. "The gentleman had to seek out the owner of the cat which he'd killed, admit his misdeed, and agree to obey the first demand which the owner of the cat might make of him."

"Rot!" snorted Gugglebaum. "Absolute rubbish! I'm surprised at you believing such piffle!"

"I'm not saying I believe it, sir," returned Eustace. "I am merely quoting the eminent mystic. He explained the matter by saying that the ghost of the cat could never rest until reparation for its death had been made by the person responsible. He said that was why it was always misowing. He also said, sir, that if people would only realize that a dumb animal can have a ghost the same as a human being can, they'd be more careful how they treated them."

"Push! Rot!" burst out Gugglebaum. "I don't believe in ghosts!"

Abruptly he broke off, and wheeled as from behind him came a devilish:

"Cock-a-doodle-deo!"

The crowd ended in a choking gurgle strangely like satanic laughter, and with a groan Gugglebaum collapsed on to a chair.

"That's done it!" he groaned. "I can't stand no more of it! Listen, Perkins! I did kill a rooster—a nasty, 'orrible crowing rooster!"

He broke off with a start as though suddenly mindful of what he was saying, then went on hastily:

"It was an 'andsome and as good-'carted a bird, Perkins, as not ever you did see, but its crowing annoyed me, poor thing, and one morning I laid in wait for it behind the fence on which it used to crow, and I killed it with my gun. I'm sorry. I shouldn't 'ave done it. I can see that now, and to-morrow I'm going down to Tuttlebury Parva to admit to Mr. Giffin that it was me not that his rooster."

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"You mean, sir, that you are going to try the cure pronounced by the eminent mystic?" inquired Eustace.

"I am!" said Gugglebaum desperately. "I must! I've got to do something, or else go daft! I can't go on this way!"

"You will remember, sir," pointed out Eustace, "that you must agree to obey the first demand the owner of the rooster makes of you."
"I'll obey a dozen demands, if only it'll stop this awful 'aunting'!" said Gugglebaum fervently.

The following morning he motored down to Tuttlebury Parva. Thoroughly chastened, he admitted to Uncle Ferdy that it was he who had shot the rooster.

"I knew it was you, and I'm very glad indeed that you've had the manliness to come forward and admit it," said Uncle Ferdy. "So far as I am concerned, we will say no more about it. I think, however, that you should make some little reparation."

"I'll do anything—anything!" promised Gugglebaum desperately.

"It is a very small request which I have to make," said Uncle Ferdy, looking at him curiously. "It is merely that you give permission for the city lads' annual camp to be held on your estate as usual, and give the villagers permission to play cricket and football in the field which you closed against them."

"They can have the field for good and all," gulped Gugglebaum. "And, as for the poor lads' camp, they can make it double the size, and bring their pals with them, and I'll pay for it."

"Mr. Gugglebaum, you're a gentleman," said Uncle Ferdy, holding out his hand.

"I'm not," gulped Mr. Gugglebaum. "I wish I was. You—you don't know why I'm doing this. You think I'm doing it out of kindness of heart, but I ain't."

"You mean you don't want to do it?" demanded Uncle Ferdy.

"Yes, I do—honest, I do!" cried Mr. Gugglebaum desperately. "I'll do it even if I wasn't forced to do it, because I can see now what a beastly sort of rave I've been. I've been through an awful time this last week, and it's brought me to my senses, and made me see 'ow selfish and rotten I've been. Oh, if only I could make you understand! But if I was to tell you, you'd laugh."

"I can assure you I wouldn't laugh, and perhaps I understand better than you think," said Uncle Ferdy quietly. "Mr. Gugglebaum, I'm afraid I have misjudged you. You are a better man than I took you to be, and, that being so, I have both a confession and an apology to make to you."

"What d'you mean?" asked Mr. Gugglebaum.

"I mean that your manservant, Perkins, is none other than my nephew Eustace," said Uncle Ferdy. "What is more, he is an expert ventriloquist, and an absolute wizard at farm-yard imitations—particularly at imitating a rooster."

Mr. Gugglebaum stared at him in blank bewilderment for a moment. Then sudden, dazzling illumination broke in on him.

"So that was it!" he roared, stamping wildly about. "It was 'im—'im all the time! Oh, the rascal! Oh, the young varmint—"

He broke off, glaring red-faced at Uncle Ferdy. Then suddenly throwing back his head, he let out a great guffaw of laughter in which was embodied great relief.

"Oh, my!—Caught stone cold!" he exclaimed. "The first time I've ever been caught in my life! But I'm glad I wasn't really 'aunted'—"

"You deserved to be haunted," put in Uncle Ferdy.

Mr. Gugglebaum looked at him, and abruptly sobered.

"Mr. Goffin, you're right!" he said earnestly. "I did deserve to be, and I can see it now. Will you—will you forget it all, and be friends?"

"With all my heart," said Uncle Ferdy, holding out his hand again.

"And that," said Goffin, drifting towards the door, "is how Gugglebaum learnt his lesson, and in time became quite a popular figure in Tuttlebury Parva and district. Well, a—long!"

"Here! But wait a minute!" exclaimed Dawson. "I haven't quite got the hang of this. You say it was your cousin Eustace who kept crowing like a rooster, and throwing his voice about?"

"I do," said Goffin, passing in the doorway. "What about it?"

"Well, why didn't other people hear him besides Gugglebaum?" demanded Dawson.

"Because, as I've already tried to explain, he never threw his voice around when there was anybody else but Gugglebaum to hear him," said Goffin patiently. "Well, ta, ta!"

The door closed gently on his retreating form.

"A peculiar story," commented Dawson, picking up his ginger-beer. "Like the ghost of the turkey, I feel almost like saying, 'Gobble, gobble—getcher!'"

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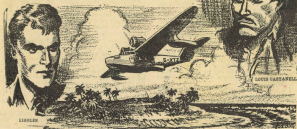
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OUT OF THE DEPTHS:

MAJOR JAMES BIGGLESWORTH and his companions, the Hon. Algernon Lacey, Ginger Hebblethwaite, and Sandy Macaster, are in the South Seas on a pearl-diving expedition, Sandy having discovered a rich pearl-bed.

His discovery is known to Louis Castanelli, the creek skipper of a schooner trading among the islands. But in the *Scud*, a flying-boat, Biggles & Co. are first on the scene, and they make a rich haul of pearls, which they hide for safety in a cave on Sandy's Island.

Ginger Hebblethwaite and two Polynesians with the party—*Shell Breaker* and *Full Moon*—go for a bath and discover a secret cave. A hurricane then strikes the island. Biggles & Co. are compelled to take off to save the *Scud*—having failed to find Ginger—and they land safely on *Motuna* Island.

The hurricane passes, leaving Ginger and the two Polynesians still safe on Sandy's Island. Ben Castanelli arrives in his schooner, and Ginger falls into his hands.

Later, Castanelli finds the pearls, and, having no further use for Ginger, throws him overboard with a weight tied to his feet.

Meanwhile, *Shell Breaker* has rowed to *Rotuma* in a dinghy and told Biggles & Co. what has happened, and, accompanied by a party of warlike natives, they set out to the rescue.

When Ginger had been dragged down to the bed of the lagoon he knew that nothing short of a miracle could save him, and, although he struggled to free himself, he felt that it was hopeless. From the moment he had realised Castanelli's intention he had given himself up for lost, and he can hardly be blamed for that. But

The *Gene* Liberator.—No. 1,629.

there is an old saying, "While there is life there is hope," and never was the truth of it better demonstrated.

Ginger's senses were fast leaving him when his outflung arms collided with something soft. It would seem that, with death imminent, his fear could not be greater than it already was; but at the touch of that unseen body his fear became blind terror, which, in the circumstances, is hardly to be wondered at, for he knew only too well what horrors dwell in the warm waters of that sapphire sea.

Again came the touch. Ginger struggled violently; but, nevertheless, something long and soft wrapped itself about his legs, gripping them firmly. That it was an octopus he had no doubt whatever. It was the culminating horror, and, as far as he was concerned, it was the end.

His next sensation would be difficult to describe. It was perhaps more curiosity than anything else. He was quite sure that he was now dead; he did not see how it could be otherwise; but death appeared to be taking a form so strange that he was amazed. In the first place, he was still conscious of his body, for his stomach hurt him excruciatingly. And he was still able to think, although his thoughts were vague and disjointed.

Where was he? What was happening? Ginger wondered. It was all very confused. But presently he found himself able to think more clearly, and he discovered that his eyes were open—or he thought they were; he was by no means sure.

As far as Ginger could make out, he was lying head downwards on a shelving slope of coral. That seemed natural enough. But what was his face doing out of the water? He was sure it was out of the water, but not more than an inch or two. Phosphorescent wavelets were lapping against the coral just below his eyes. He could hear them as well as see them. Water was also running down the coral and dripping into the

wavelets. Ginger noticed with surprise that it was coming out of his mouth and nostrils; but, on thinking it over, he realized that there was nothing strange about that, after all, for he must have swallowed vast quantities of water.

Ginger could see the wavelets more clearly now, and discovered that the waves around him was becoming more solid, and at the same time the pain in his stomach became more intense. He realized that it was due to a heavy weight on his back, a weight that rose and fell regularly. He was lying face downwards, and every time the weight fell the pain in his stomach became almost unbearable.

At last it became so bad that Ginger groaned. He knew that he had groaned because he distinctly heard the sound, and it added to his anguish. Instantly the weight on his back occurred again with increased violence, and at the same time something seized his arms and dragged them upwards. It had the result of sending more water gushing from his mouth. His arms were lowered, and then raised again, as if someone was using them as pump handles; and all the time the dreadful weight was on his back, forcing his stomach against the hard coral. He groaned again with the agony of it.

At last Ginger could stand it no longer. Not even in death could he endure such agony. With a sudden wrench, he tore his arms free from the grip that held them by the wrists, and, with a tremendous effort, flung the weight off his back. Clutching at the coral, he dragged himself back from the water, and at the same time twisted into a more horizontal position. He looked up. At first he could see nothing except a star-spangled sky and the black silhouette of rocks against it. Then, close at hand, a dark form moved like a shadow.

"You plenty better bynasty," said a small voice.

Again it would be difficult to describe Ginger's sensations at the sound of that well-remembered voice. For a moment he could do nothing but swim like a fish in a fearful fit of roasting, but when the spasm passed he felt more normal, and he looked again at the dark figure.

"Full Moon!" was all he could say in a voice heavy with wonderment.

Full Moon knelt down beside him.
"You feelin' better bynasty," she whispered.
"One time I reckon you plenty dead!"

"But where have you come from?" asked Ginger, sitting up, and feeling his stomach tenderly. He saw that a jagged piece of coral, pressing into it, had caused the pain.

"Me on schooner all long time," answered Full Moon.

Ginger sat silent for a moment, trying to force his aching brain to assimilate this piece of information.

"On the schooner?" he got out at last. "You mean you were on the schooner when they threw me over?"

"Yes. I stay on schooner all day; hide under sail."

Ginger shook his head. The business was becoming more and more unbelievable.

"Where is Shell Breaker?" he asked suddenly.
"He take dinghy and go Hutuona plenty quick," returned Full Moon.

"But how did you get on the schooner?"

"Full Moon explained.
"When you get hit on head by Atanelli, Shell Breaker swim fast under water. He tell me. We

go back. Shell Breaker take dinghy. I stay, see what Atanelli do. Me hide in sail, see everything. See Solomon boys throw you overboard. Me swim down, but you kick like debil-debil. I cut rope, but reckon you die plenty quick, so I pull you on reef."

Ginger was still inclined to believe that the whole thing had been a ghastly nightmare, but he saw that the rope was still round his waist, with a short end hanging to it, and he knew that it must have happened. For a little while he was so overcome by the simple devotion of the two Marquesans that he could not trust himself to speak.

"Full Moon, one day I'll thank you for this!" he said at last brokenly. "I think you're wonderful!"

Full Moon laughed.
"What for wonderful?" she asked naively.
"Me no run away when plenty trouble. Me glad when you go overboard, no longer wonder how save you from schooner."

"Well, I reckon you're a brick!" declared Ginger.

"What is brick?" inquired Full Moon curiously.

Ginger could not find an adequate answer.
"Never mind," he said, and stood up shakily.
"We stay here," said Full Moon. "Shell Breaker, he come back bynasty with long canoe."

Ginger looked around.
"Did you say we were on the reef?"
"Yes, on reef."
"Atanelli gone?"
"Yes, he make sail."

"One day I'm going to give myself the pleasure of shooting that wonderful!" declared Ginger.

"Yes, me kill, too!" answered Full Moon cheerfully.

Ginger had to kneel down again, as he was shaken by another spasm of retching. He still felt very ill as a result of all the salt water he had swallowed; but after a time he got up, and announced that he was able to get to the island.

The moon had just come up, and Ginger looked along the reef, which hitherto he had not examined very closely. He had a horror of slipping the water again, but, examining the reef, he saw that it was possible to get to the island without swimming. He suggested this to Full Moon, who agreed that it was the best way.

"Any feke on these rocks?" asked Ginger cautiously.

Full Moon saw nothing unusual in the question.
"Maybe," she said, eyeing the reef with professional eyes. Then she shook her head. "No feke," she decided. "Plenty crab. No crab if feke here."

"Well, that's something to be thankful for, at any rate!" muttered Ginger, to whom an octopus was one degree worse than a shark.

"We walk now," suggested Full Moon. "You drink plenty coconut water, you feel better bynasty."

"Yes, I could do with a drink," agreed Ginger, whose mouth was parched from swallowing salt water.

Full Moon cut the remains of the rope from his waist. Then they walked slowly up the second coral to the top of the reef, where they pulled up dead, staring unbelievably. Instead of finding only the sea stretching to the horizon, they saw a schooner standing straight towards the entrance to the lagoon. It was not more than a hundred yards away.

Full Moon recovered her presence of mind first. "Atinelli! He come back!" she hissed, and dropped behind a large piece of coral.

HUNTED!

GINGER was too stunned to speak. It was the very last thing he expected. Taking his cue from Full Moon, he dropped behind another large piece of coral; but, quick as he had been, he was too late. A yell on the schooner told him that they had been seen.

Full Moon sprang to her feet.

"We run plenty quick!" she said tersely, and set off along the reef towards the island, jumping from rock to rock with the sure-footedness of a mountain goat.

Ginger followed as fast as he could, but he had by no means recovered from his recent terrible experience, and his legs tottered under him. Seeing his condition, Full Moon waited and helped him over the most difficult places; but they were still some distance from the place where the reef joined the island when a rifle barked, and a shot tore away a piece of coral unpleasantly close to them.

Looking back, Ginger saw that the schooner was already passing through the entrance to the lagoon, and, although it was moving slowly, the longboat was swinging over the side. Another shot ripped viciously into the coral as he ran on. He knew all about the difficulty of shooting accurately by moonlight, but he took no chances. Actually, he was more concerned for Full Moon than for himself.

Jumping from rock to rock, they sped on, taking advantage of such cover as was available. Ginger's weakness almost forgotten in the face of the new peril.

Castanelli—for Ginger had no doubt as to who was doing the shooting—continued to fire from time to time, and although some of the shots came close they did no damage. But by the time the two fugitives had reached the island the longboat was racing across the lagoon, the rowers bending to their oars under Castanelli's furious encouragement.

Ginger and Full Moon did not stop. The reef joined the island at its narrowest end, and it was clear that if Castanelli and his crew reached the island in time to cut them off from the wider end, their capture was only a matter of minutes. The far end of the island was not only wider, but more rugged, and offered better hiding-places.

Ginger now led the way, making for the far side of the ridge, where they could not be seen from the lagoon, and were, therefore, out of the danger of Castanelli's rifle. The going was not easy, for debris flung up by the hurricane lay everywhere—palm fronds, piles of seaweed, and masses of coral—and detours had often to be made.

However, they reached the wide end of the island, where Ginger, taking a peep over the ridge, saw the longboat being hauled up on the beach. Castanelli was already standing on the white sand, his rifle under his arm.

"Confound the fellow! What the dickens does he want to come back here for?" muttered Ginger angrily. "I wish to goodness I had a rifle!"

Full Moon made no comment. Perhaps she knew the futility of wishing.

Ginger thought rapidly. To remain hidden—*The Gem Library*.—No. 1428.

indefinitely on the island was clearly impossible. They might climb up into one of the few remaining palms or find a place among the coral that would offer them cover for a little while; but once daylight came discovery would only be a matter of time.

Had their presence on the island not been known to Castanelli the matter would not have been so difficult. In that case there would be no deliberate search. But now that it was known that they were there, it was obvious that the schooner captain would search every nook and cranny, and he would not desist until he had found them.

The Corsican had already revealed himself to be a cold-blooded murderer, so, in the event of capture, Ginger knew what to expect. Castanelli would make certain next time.

On the whole island there was only one place where they would be safe, and that was in the grotto. Even the Solomon Island boys might search for weeks without finding it. It was their only chance, and he told Full Moon so in a low voice. She had already realised it, and now set off towards the cave, picking up coconuts on the way.

Ginger, perceiving the wisdom of this precaution, did the same. He knew that they might have to stay in the grotto for several days.

He expected no trouble in reaching the cave; his only fear was that the shark might still be there—a contingency he preferred not to contemplate. But again he was to be disappointed; for, just as they reached the cave, a mosp-head rounded a corner of the coral, the swimmer actually landing at the spot where Ginger had climbed up many times.

It was one of Castanelli's crew. Why he had chosen to swim ashore and choose that particular place Ginger did not know; he could only suppose that the fellow had suspected what they would do, and saw a way of putting himself in his master's good graces by outflanking them.

Ginger and Full Moon were just inside the tiny, semicircular cave when the native pulled himself ashore, and they could only crouch back into a depression in the coral, trusting that they would not be seen.

For a minute the native stood where he had come ashore, water dripping from his black body; then he let out a yell which made Ginger flinch. At first he thought that the native must have seen them, but when he made no move in their direction, and the shout was answered by another not far away, he realised that this was not so. The man was merely letting the others know where he was.

Ginger hoped that he would go. If he would disappear only for a minute or two it would give them all the time they needed to reach their grotto refuge.

The man did, in fact, move a few paces forward to the edge of the cave, but it was only to climb up on the highest point of the coral, from where he could command a view over the whole of it and some distance beyond. And there he evidently intended to remain, while the others, spread out across the island, drove the quarry towards him—so he imagined.

Ginger could hear their shouts as they drew nearer. He felt Full Moon reach for her knife, but he pressed her back, knowing that it was absolutely out of the question to get anywhere near the man without being seen. And if once they were seen the end was a foregone conclusion. So they remained where they were, Ginger

hoping that the search would presently be abandoned—at least, for the time being.

A minute passed—five minutes—and then footsteps could be heard approaching. A second native appeared, followed shortly afterwards by Castarelli, conspicuous in a dirty suit of white ducks, and a rifle under his arm.

"You no see?" he said to the waiting boy.

"No see, boss."

Castarelli sat down on the coral.

"They not far away," he said confidently. "We wait daylight."

Ginger's heart sank. His luck seemed to be absolutely dead out, but there was nothing they could do about it. He had lost all count of time, one reason being that he had no idea how long he had been unconscious. The moon passed its zenith and began to sink, and still they crouched in their narrow hiding-place.

A deadly weariness began to creep over Ginger. That some of the natives were still carrying on the search he knew, for he had often heard them shouting to each other. All the time Castarelli sat on the rock, smoking interminable cigars. Ginger had never hated anyone quite as much as he hated the smooth-tongued Corsican. He hated him so much that, had he possessed a weapon, he would have shot him and risked the consequences.

At long last the moonlight began to fade. A lavender streak, swiftly turning to pink, flushed the eastern sky, and Ginger knew that discovery was now only a matter of minutes. He looked again at Castarelli still sitting on his selected seat; it was obvious that he had no intention of moving. He was, however, looking the other way, presumably watching the boys who were still carrying on with the search. One only remained with him, and he, too, was looking in the same direction.

Ginger put his lips close to Full Moon's ear.

"We no stay," he said. "If Atanelli turns he see us plenty quick. We make for grotto."

Full Moon nodded to show that he understood. Slowly, for he was as still as a rat, Ginger moved from his cramped position, ready to bolt. Full Moon joined him, and in another moment they were both creeping silently towards the water.

Half-way, neither of the two men on the rock had turned. They were now only a few yards from their objective, and Ginger was just beginning to hope that luck was favouring them at last, and that they would reach the water undetected, when the Solomon Islander turned. There appeared to be no reason why he should. It was almost as if his instinct had warned him that something was moving. He spoke swiftly, touching Castarelli's arm, and then pointed to the fugitives.

Out of the corner of his eye Ginger saw the Corsican reach for his rifle, and he waited for no more. Even as he made a dash for the water, Full Moon passed him like a brown streak, but they were practically side by side as they went head-first into the water.

As he turned to follow Full Moon to the cave, Ginger distinctly felt the sharp concussion of a bullet striking the surface. The next moment they were in deep water, swimming through a dim twilight, as the sun was not yet up.

Ginger swam by feel as much as anything. Had he not been to the cave before he would never have found it, but he knew where it was, so he dragged himself in and struck out through the ink blackness. Gasping for breath, he came to

the surface inside the grotto, to find Full Moon waiting for him. They climbed out and sat on their customary ledge, where Full Moon produced a single coconut from under her arm, and again Ginger marvelled at her foresight and ability.

There was just enough light in the grotto for them to see each other. Full Moon smiled, and Ginger smiled back, but in his heart he felt far from smiling. He knew that their escape could only be a brief respite. It was merely a matter of time before Castarelli's boys found the cave, and—well, he did not know what would happen then. He only knew that the Corsican would not go away and leave them there.

"I reckon we stay here long time," remarked Full Moon philosophically, cracking one end of the nut against the coral.

Ginger nodded. He said nothing, for the simple reason that he could think of nothing to say. He sat and watched the water turn from grey to mauve, and from mauve to blue. Full Moon handed him a piece of coconut, and he munched it mechanically, for he was too weary to be hungry.

The girl drew her knife and laid it on the coral beside her.

"I kill Atanelli by-and-by," she announced casually. "Maybe I'll eat him," she added presently, as an afterthought.

In his overwrought state, the picture of Full Moon eating the fat Corsican made Ginger laugh immoderately. The grotto echoed with his laughter.

"You no laugh that way," scolded Full Moon sharply. "You laugh that way you get debl-debl in head."

"I shouldn't wonder at that," returned Ginger, and for a while they remained silent.

TRAPPED!

FOR nearly an hour—or what Ginger judged to be an hour—he and Full Moon sat on the ledge in the grotto, waiting for what they knew not. There was nothing they could do except wait.

There was no sign or sound to indicate that their enemies were outside, but Ginger did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew that Castarelli would not leave the island while he and Full Moon were alive, so he waited with what patience he could muster for the Corsican's next move. That something would happen presently he was certain, but what it was he could not remotely imagine.

He looked at Full Moon. She was sitting with her feet dangling within an inch or two of the water, apparently quite content, her simple mind oblivious to danger.

Ginger was about to warn her to get higher on the ledge in case a shark or an octopus should seize her feet—for after his recent experiences these dangers were ever in his mind—when with hardly a ripple the water parted, and a brown hand appeared. It closed round the girl's ankle. An instant later the reap head of one of Castarelli's islanders broke the surface.

Full Moon, caught off her guard, was nearly pulled into the water as the islander's first tug, but by a convulsive twist of her body, she managed to seize a piece of projecting coral and hang on to the ledge. The scream she gave reverberated through the cave.

After the first shock of surprise had passed, Ginger moved swiftly. He stretched up Full

Tom Cox Lumsden.—No. 1,658.

Moon's knife, and, without the slightest hesitation, drove it down with all the strength of his arm into the brown shoulder. The hand relaxed its grip on Full Moon's ankle immediately, and the native pushed himself clear of the ledge in a swirl of discoloured water. For a moment his right eye disappeared from sight; then it reappeared, gripping a knife. At the same time he made a rush for the ledge. Ginger saw that if the man once gained his objective, their plight would be desperate indeed, and he ran forward with his own knife upraised to meet the attack.

But the attack did not materialise. A little heavier body slipped past him. It was Full Moon, with her arms raised above her head. In her hands she held a piece of coral rather larger than a coconut.

The native saw his danger, and twisting away, prepared to dive; but before he could carry out his intention, the coral came down on his head with a thud that made Ginger wince. The islander's body went limp, and then sank slowly in the blue water.

"Me brush him pretty quick," announced Full Moon in tones of satisfaction.

Ginger stared at her, for the casual way she treated life and death never failed to amaze him. In his heart he knew that he himself would have hesitated to do what she had done.

With a smile on her face Full Moon stood looking down at the body, now lying on the white sand at the bottom of the pool. In a way it pained Ginger to think that she was capable of such an act, although he realised that he had little cause for complaint. It was, he supposed, all a matter of environment. All the years of her life had been spent in danger, real and ever-present, so it was unlikely that she would be disturbed by the sight of death.

Sandy had once told him that death was held to be a thing of no account in the islands, where people took a pride in preparing their own coffins and graves, prizing them highly until such time as they fulfilled the purpose for which they were made.

Ginger continued standing on the ledge with his back to the wall, gazing down at the black figure exposed on the bottom. The thing that concerned him was the fact that the islander had discovered their retreat. Did those outside share that knowledge, he wondered, or had the man only just discovered the cave, and sworn to explore it?

Full Moon took the knife from his hand. Looking to see why she wanted it, he saw her prising off another large piece of coral, presumably for ammunition in case there should be another attack. She sang to herself in a queer minor key as she did so, from time to time glancing over her shoulder at the water. During such a glance, her song came to an abrupt end, and she uttered a little cry.

Ginger, following the direction of her eyes, thought for a moment that the islander had come to life; but the dead man still lay in the same place, and he realised that it was a second figure under the water, swimming strongly. It reached the dead man, lying spreadeagled on the sand, and passed as if to examine the body.

Full Moon stepped forward, with a piece of coral, which she had torn off, raised above her head. Ginger, too, stood ready. But the islander did not come up. Apparently, he had learned what he wanted to know, for, after a glance towards the ledge, he twisted like an eel and shot back into the cave. Ginger would have

prevented this had it been possible, but it was not. He knew that the islander would be able to explain to Castanelli just where they had taken refuge.

"They know where we are now," he told Full Moon.

"Maybe Atanelli come," suggested the girl hopefully, balancing the lump of coral in her hand with eager anticipation.

"Not he!" declared Ginger. "He no come. He please afraid; send black boys."

Full Moon nodded.

"Am?" she muttered. "We kill black boys all same—eh?"

Ginger smiled, in spite of himself.

"You bloodthirsty little wretch!" he admonished her.

"No bloodthirsty; just kill, that's all!" protested Full Moon.

The minutes passed, but the islander did not reappear. Ginger would have given a lot to know what was going on outside. Whatever it was, he would have preferred to know the worst. But time went on, and nothing happened.

The pool was now a blaze of blue light, and Ginger knew that it was broad daylight outside. As is usual in such cases, the inactivity frayed his nerves, but there was nothing he could do. He fell to wondering what Biggles was doing all this time, but conjecture did not help him.

Full Moon, seeing him look often towards the cave, offered to swim through to find out what was happening in the cave, but he would not hear of it.

"What Atanelli he do, you reckon?" she inquired cheerfully.

"I don't know, but you may be sure he is up to some devilment!" replied Ginger. "I wish something would happen! This standing here doing nothing is awful!"

His wish was speedily fulfilled. Hardly had the words left his lips when he was flung backwards by a violent explosion that rocked the entire grove. Acid fumes and coral dust filled the air, while the water surged over the ledge with such force that he was nearly swept away. Pieces of coral began dropping from the roof into the water, and it was obvious that the whole place might collapse at any moment.

After her first scream of fear Full Moon clutched Ginger's arm.

"What Atanelli do?" she gasped.

"I'm afraid he is going to blow the place to pieces with dynamite," replied Ginger, coughing as the fumes of the explosive reached his lungs. "I suppose he has had to go to the schooner to get it; that's why there has been a delay," he explained.

"What we do? You say?" questioned Full Moon plaintively.

Ginger did not know what to do. To swim out through the cave would probably mean that they would be shot by Castanelli, who was doubtless waiting for their heads to appear above the water. To remain where they were would invite the Corsican to fire another charge of dynamite and bury them for all eternity in the ruins of the grove. The walls were already cracking. One more charge would certainly cause the whole place to fall in.

Either way they were doomed, but of the two deaths Ginger preferred to remain where he was, if only to deny Castanelli the satisfaction of shooting him.

"We stay here," he told Full Moon, in-

(Continued on page 35.)

"GEM" and "MAGNET" PEN PALS

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