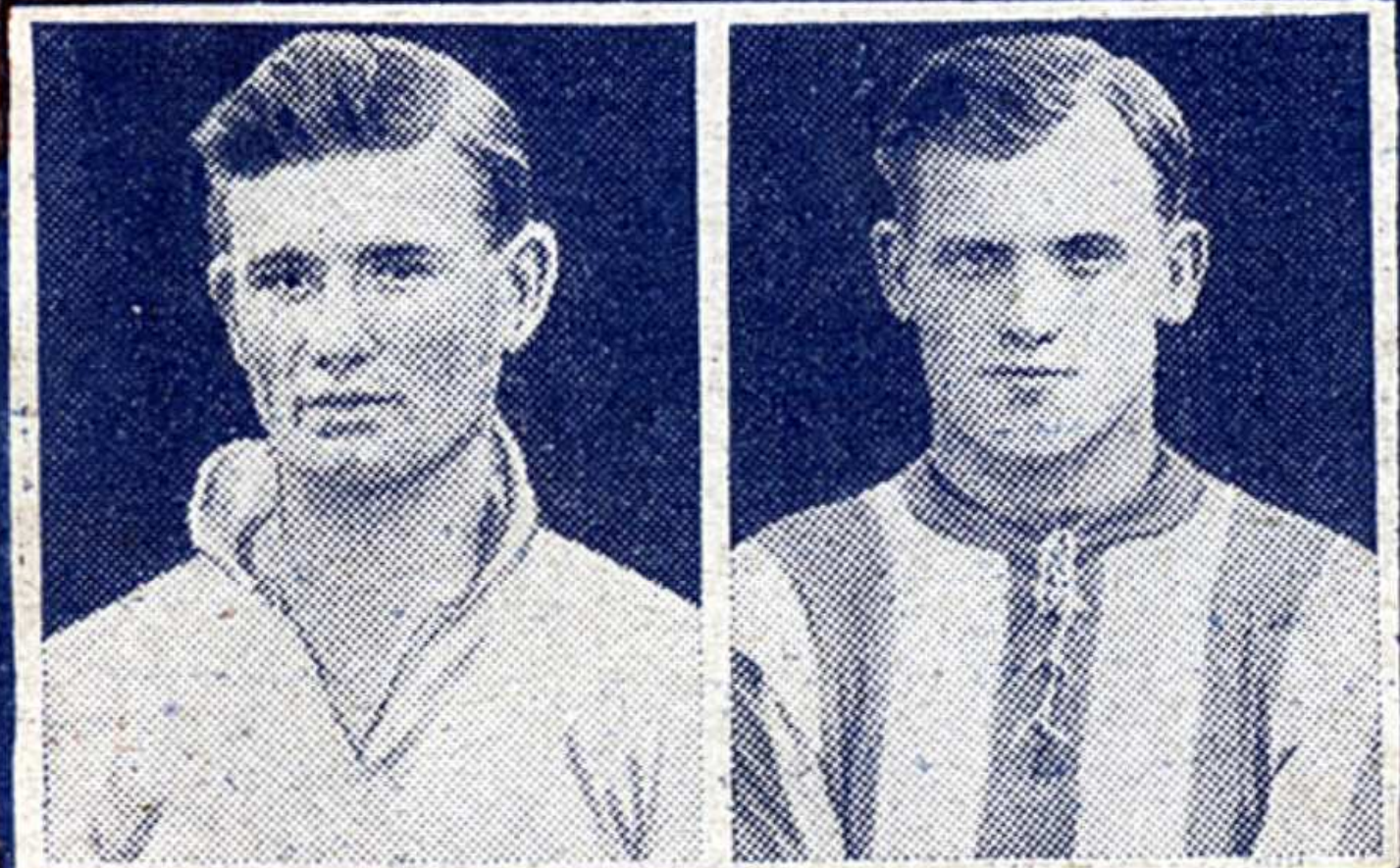


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2^D THESE TWO MAGNIFICENT
**PHOTOGRAPHS OF
FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS**



**GIVEN
AWAY
THIS
WEEK**

The Yellow Grip.

*A Grand, Long Complete Story
of School and Detective
Mystery.*



And then something quite unexpected took place. It seemed that the very darkness itself became darker in three spots near the haystack. The gloom materialised into three grim, silent shapes.

THE YELLOW GRIP!



"The Yellow Grip" is about Yung Ching, a Chinese boy, who comes to St. Frank's in order to flee from the wrath of his countrymen. He is placed under the watchful care of Nelson Lee. But danger lurks ahead, and the famous Schoolmaster Detective finds himself pitted against a powerful, secret Chinese organisation. By the author of "The Mystery of Handforth's Pater," "The Fun of the Fair," "Yung Ching, the Chineese," and many other fine stories.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED
THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER).

CHAPTER I.

FATTY ON THE TRAIL.

FATTY LITTLE, of the Remove at St. Frank's, rolled along the junior passage in the Ancient House, and thoughtfully rubbed some crumbs away from his mouth. - He had just left Mrs. Hake's little shop in the corner of the Triangle, and his last penny was gone.

It was nearly tea-time, and the early May sunshine was streaming in through the windows. It was a glorious afternoon. But Fatty had no thoughts for the weather. He was hungry.

He knew that it was useless going to Study L, which he shared with the Trotwood twins. They were away, having gone out to Bannington immediately after lessons. And Study L was bare.



Strictly speaking, Fatty ought not to have been hungry at all. He had just consumed about three beef pies, half-a-dozen doughnuts, a number of jam-tarts, a few buns and a quantity of biscuits. He had spent his last coin in the tuck shop, and he was still hungry.

Of course, he could go into Hall for tea. But what was there? Bread and butter and a cup of tea! Failing all else, Fatty would resort to this last desperate plan. But there were other chances.

He opened the door of Study E, and looked in. Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey and Timothy Tucker were just sitting down to tea. The table looked inviting. Sardines, cucumber, water-cress, salmon-and-shrimp paste, cakes and jam. Fatty sidled into the apartment.

"Nothing doin, Fatty!" said Pitt briskly.

"Eh? I—I just popped in——"

"Good!" interrupted Reggie. "Now you can pop out again, my son. This grub here is exactly sufficient for three healthy appetites. If we shared it into four, your whack would be a mere mouthful to you, and as good as useless. And we're not sharing. It can't be did!"

"I—I thought you might like me to join in," said Fatty hopefully.

"Oh, rather!" grinned Jack Grey. "We've only got to look away for half a jiffy, and the table will be cleared in one blessed go! Buzz, my lad! Try somewhere else! Plant yourself on Archie!"

Fatty gazed sorrowfully at the table, and departed. He tried Study D, and found Handforth and Co. in the midst of an argument. Edward Oswald Handforth had a big custard in his hand, and his face was red.

"Take that!" he roared. "I'll teach you to——"

Slosh!

The custard arrived in the middle of Fatty's face. Some of it, fortunately, went into his mouth, but the remainder was lost. Fatty staggered and gasped. He had hardly expected to have grub thrown at him.

As a matter of fact, it hadn't been thrown at him at all. Handforth had intended that custard for Church. But Church preferring to take his food in a less violent manner, thoughtfully ducked. The result was that Fatty received the custard with full effect.

"You—you fathead!" snapped Handforth, glaring at him. "Who told you to interfere? Can't I have a row with Church and McClure without you shoving your fat carcass into the study? Clear out!"

Fatty spluttered, and tried to wipe his face.

"Great pancakes!" he gasped. "What's—what's the matter? Have you got too much grub in here? Chucking it about like this——"

"Too much grub!" interrupted Handforth. "Why, you lunatic, that's what we were jawing about! Supplies are short, and these idiots seem to think that they know more about grub than I do! And if Church

thinks he's going to argue, I'll soon teach him better! Everybody knows I hate arguing——"

"What!" said Church feebly.

"And I'm not going to stand any rot!" went on Handforth. "I suppose this fat whale has come here, looking for grub? Huh! He stands a ripping chance of getting some! It was only by accident that he had the custard——"

"I didn't have it!" roared Fatty. "The blessed thing was wasted—a rotten waste of good food!"

"It makes no difference," said Handforth. "Whether it goes inside your mouth or outside, it's wasted just the same! Why, it wouldn't take you two ticks to wolf the whole supplies in this study, and then you'd go out in the passage, give a hollow moan, and say that you were starving!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I am starving as a matter of fact——" began Fatty.

"Good!" said Handforth. "You can go and starve in your own quarters. By George! You're not going to make an exhibition of it, are you? I simply hate to see anybody starving! You want to do that sort of thing in solitude!"

"I—I was wondering if I could share the supplies with you——"

"Certainly!" exclaimed Handforth promptly.

"I can?" exclaimed Fatty joyfully.

"Certainly you can wonder," went on Handforth. "A chap can wonder as much as he likes—it's not my business. But if you think you're going to scoff our tea, you've made a bloomer! Clear out, you glutton! Buzz off, you walking porpoise! Scoot before we shove you in the frying-pan and melt you down!"

Fatty staggered slightly.

"But—but I thought——"

"Go on thinking!" bawled Handforth. "Look here, I'm fed up with this! I've had nothing but arguments with these fatheads, and now you come in and make things worse! Are you going or not?"

Handforth's hand reached round suggestively, and hovered over a plate of doughnuts. Fatty waited. After all, it's better to have a doughnut chucked at you than not to have one at all. But Handforth's fingers finally gripped a book which was lying close to the plate. Fatty's hopes sank.

"All right! Keep your hair on!" he growled. "I'm going!"

He went, and as he closed the door there was a thud, followed by a howl from Church. Handforth had missed Church with the custard but he had secured a direct hit with the book. Handy's aim was always unreliable.

And as Fatty mooched down the passage, he heard dim echoes of continuous strife from within Study D. From a distance it sounded like the commencement of a riot.

Fatty looked into one or two other

studies but he gained no satisfaction. In Study C he found Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West and I just on the point of finishing for we were hurrying in order to get out at the nets on Little Side. Cricket practice had to be attended.

"Sorry, Fatty, too late," I said. "The festive board is bare!"

"Oh, gravy!" groaned Fatty. "What rotten luck!"

He passed on, and looked into the end study as a last resort. This apartment was shared by Solomon Levi, Dick Goodwin, and the latest arrival in the Remove Yung Ching, the Chinese boy.

Nobody was at home.

The study, in fact, was empty, and it seemed that Levi and Co. had not yet partaken of tea, for there were no dirty crocks lying about.

Fatty went further into the study, and hesitated as he closed the door. Not for a moment did he believe that he would "click" in this apartment. And, after all, it was hardly the thing to borrow grub while the owners were absent. Still, there was no harm in just having a look. Then, if supplies were ample, he might be able to join the party at tea.

Fatty saw no harm in glancing into the cupboard. There was quite an excellent chance that grub would be knocking about. It was only the third day of term, and lots of fellows had supplies of cake and other good things which they had brought from home.

Fatty opened the cupboard, and then his eyes glittered. He stood there and instinctively smacked his lips. The first object that caught his eye was a plate containing three large and inviting looking pieces of fried fish. Next to it stood a bottle with some red stuff in it that looked like jam. And there was another jar with some greeny-yellow objects in liquid. These objects resembled cucumbers, only they were strangely small.

Then there was a smaller jam jar close at hand, covered with a piece of parchment. Further back there stood half a small round cheese of a kind that Fatty had never seen before.

"Great bloaters!" murmured Fatty. "There's enough here for a dozen! I reckon they ought to invite me to tea, anyhow! I wonder what that bag's got in it? More grub, I'll bet!"

There was a large bag up the corner which Fatty proceeded to bring forth. And when he looked inside, he was rather surprised to see a number of thin round objects which looked like enormous biscuits. But they were surprisingly light, and covered with little tiny crinkles and indentations.

"Queer kind of biscuits," muttered Fatty. "I'll bet they're rotten!"

He took one out, and sampled it. Rather to his surprise, it tasted good, and he thoughtfully picked up the chunk of cheese, and took a bite at that, too. He found

that the cheese and the large biscuits went together well. And almost before he had realised it, the cheese was gone.

"No harm in just having a sample, anyhow!" murmured Fatty. "I wouldn't dream of raiding the cupboard, but it's quite all serene to just have a taster. Levi and Goodwin ought to be complimented. I expect Goodwin brought most of this stuff from Lancashire!"

He proceeded to take the top off the glass jar containing the red stuff. Then he took a long sniff, and nearly fell over backwards. It was only by a miracle that he saved the jar, for he commenced sneezing violently. His nose tickled with a pungent smell which he recognised at once.

"Great muffins!" he gasped. "Horse-radish! Must be a different kind of stuff to the ordinary! I've never seen red horse-radish before!"

He put it back, and then cautiously took out another jar. This was of earthenware, and the contents were invisible. Fatty removed the cover, and gazed within. He was not particularly impressed.

The jar seemed to contain a kind of preserve. It was drab in colour, with little bits of white, and was finely chopped. He took a sniff, and looked puzzled. It certainly wasn't a sweet preserve. It smelt slightly sour, with fishy twang about it, not entirely unsuggestive of onions. Fatty was fond of onions in any form. And now he looked round and located a spoon.

"Might as well have a little taste," he murmured.

He took a spoonful of the stuff, and placed it in his mouth. He was very careful about this, for he didn't know what he was eating. But that first mouthful fairly set him off. He rolled the stuff round his tongue, and his eyes glittered.

"By chutney!" he murmured. "Gorgeous! Never tasted anything like it before! Well, there won't be any harm in just having a little sample!"

The sample consisted of the entire supply—ably helped down by more rounds of the wafer-like biscuits. Fatty was just feeling in fine form by the time the jar was emptied, and by now all scruples had vanished. He didn't even think of the matter at all. He had forgotten that he was in somebody else's study. He was overlooking the fact that he was raiding a friendly cupboard. All he knew was that grub lay at his touch, and the grub was good.

He proceeded to have a go at the dwarf-like cucumbers. At first he thought they were pickles, but this was not the case. They were not sour enough, but they were crisp and juicy and altogether delicious. They vanished rapidly.

The three pieces of fried fish were more familiar to Fatty, and he demolished these simply as a matter of course. And then, almost before he realised it, he discovered that the cupboard was bare.

Only one or two of the round biscuits re-

mained. With great self-control, Fatty left these alone, and closed the cupboard. He was rather startled. It came to him with full force that he had committed a breach of the junior code. It was all very well to raid the study of a deadly rival; but to deliberately scoff the store of a neighbour was unforgivable.

"Well, after all, there wasn't much, only a mouthful!" murmured Fatty, excusing himself. "Of course, I was wrong about the stuff coming from Lancashire. I ought to have known from the first. I never thought the Chinese had such ripping things! Yung Ching supplied that stuff, of course!"

He glanced guiltily at the door, and then, feeling like a hunted criminal, he sneaked out into the passage, and made his way to his own study. To a certain degree, he was feeling satisfied. Strictly speaking, he ought to have been practically incapable of movement.

And, in the meantime, two cheerful juniors came striding along the Remove passage. They were Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin. They had been into Bannington on bicycles, and were rather later than they had anticipated. Dick Goodwin was bringing a few dainties for tea—cakes and pastry.

"That fish'll do us fine," Levi was saying. "Chinky likes it, too. Believe me, my mother's one of the best! The stuff she sent down with me was enough to feed a dozen. She knows I'm a nusher when it comes to good things."

"A nusher?" repeated Dick Goodwin.

"Sure thing!" grinned Levi. "That means a chap who believes in luxuries!"

"By gum!" grinned Dick. "Then there are plenty of nushers in the Remove!"

Solomon chuckled, and they turned into the end study.

"Hallo! Chinky isn't here!" said Levi. "I expect the young ass is swotting away in the class-room or with Mr. Crowell. He's a young beggar for lessons, never gets tired of it."

Dick Goodwin set his packages on the table, and Levi nodded.

"Now we've got to buck up," he said. "No need for bread, we've got plenty of the motzas left. By my life! I'm glad it was Pasach during the holidays. Mum packed up all sorts of good things for me to bring!"

"Pasach?" repeated Dick.

"Oh, sorry," grinned Solomon. "I mean Passover—that's what you call it, isn't it? Among the jews it's always called Pasach. Same thing, my son. Now for some of that gehuckter herring with motzas."

"Ay, lad, it's queer the things you talk about!" said Goodwin. "I know your people have some champion dishes, but I get mixed up. By gum! I've heard of gefilter fish, but I'm blessed if I know what gehuckter herring is!"

Solomon grinned.

"I don't suppose you'd like it, anyhow,"

he said. "Unless you've been brought up to it, a chap doesn't take to such things—as a rule. Gehuckter herring is gorgeous, believe me! Chopped herring, you know, with onions and eggs and vinegar and pepper and salt! All made into a kind of paste. Some stuff, take it from me!"

"You're welcome to it," said Dick. "Give me a plate of ham!"

"By my life! You won't get any ham from me!" said Solomon, cheerily. "Not that it isn't good, it might be even better than gehuckter herring! But I've never tasted the stuff, and I'm no judge!"

There were practically no squabbles between these two juniors. They always pulled well together. Things had been a little different since Yung Ching joined the study, but the Chinese boy really caused very little trouble.

Levi was anticipating a specially nice tea, consisting of his wonderful chopped herring and motzas, or Passover cakes. These, of course, consisted of flour and water, baked by a patent process. The stuff was the unleavened bread which all Jews are supposed to eat during the Feast of Passover. The feast was long since over, of course, but Levi's people had got in more supplies than necessary, and Solomon had brought some to St. Frank's.

He opened the cupboard, whistling cheerfully. Then, as he reached his hand out, the whistle died away, and he stared before him in blank amazement.

"My goodness!" he gasped. "What—what's happened?"

Frantically, he examined the empty jars, and the dishes, and the bags. And, finally, he held out two motza biscuits.

"This—this is all we've got," he said thickly. "The other stuff's gone! Pinched—raided! Some gunuf has been here during our absence! Believe me, there's going to be trouble!"

Dick Goodwin looked at his chum rather blankly.

"What about your champion herring stuff?" he asked.

"Gone!" said Levi, in a hollow voice. "What have I done that I should have enemies like this? Haven't they got enough food of their own? And they must come here and fress my gehuckter herring and pickled cucumbers!"

"Perhaps it was Yung Ching!" suggested Dick. "He's the only other chap in the study, and he's rather partial to fish. But just fancy the young beggar eating the lot! Ay, lad, but he's got an appetite!"

Solomon Levi clenched his fists.

"Yung Ching!" he said fiercely. "You're right! Wait! Just wait till the lozer shows his nose in here! Believe me, I'll—I'll——"

Levi paused, and stared in a fascinated kind of way at the door. It had just opened, and Yung Ching, the Chinese, trotted serenely into the study.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER THE FEAST, THE RECKONING!



YUNG CHING was smiling all over his yellow face. He was not particularly big, but he was always cheerful and good-natured. It was impossible to tell what was passing in his mind at any given time, but Chingy seemed as harmless as any human being could possibly be.

"Me comee!" he announced brightly. "Allee samee teatime!"

"Oh, you've come!" exclaimed Levi, advancing with a ferocious expression. "You've dared to show your face, eh? 'Me comee,' is it? Very soon it'll be 'me goee'—and, believe me, my boot will help you a lot!"

"Hold on!" said Dick. "It may not have been Chingy after all. His look isn't a guilty one, and he doesn't seem to be particularly inflated. We'd better ask him if he knows anything about it."

"One piecee angly!" said Yung Ching. "You lookee at me heap plentee wild. Me done not'ing. Whatee matter?"

"Matter enough!" said Levi. "Where's my gehuckter herring?"

"No savvy!" replied Ching, shrugging his shoulders.

"Where are my pickled cucumbers?"

"No savvy!"

"What's become of the motzas?"

"No savvy!"

"And the fried fish——"

"Me gotee you!" interrupted Yung Ching. "Fried fish? Him here allee light one time after lessons. Noee here now? Fried fish gonee? Velly bad! Me wantee piecee fish for tea!"

"Haven't you eaten it?" demanded Levi.

"Me notee seen fish," replied Yung Ching innocently.

He was questioned for some minutes, and it became quite evident that he was guiltless. The Chinese boy, in fact, was hungry, and quite keen after his tea. And if he had eaten Levi's supplies, he would not have wanted anything for twenty-four hours.

"Then some rotters must have been in here and raided the stuff," said Solomon darkly. "Who the dickens could have done that? Most of the fellows don't like my stuff—they can't appreciate good food. This is a mystery, my sons!"

Levi was quite upset, and he had every reason to be. He had been looking forward keenly to this tea, and to find all his precious stuff gone was a bit of a shock. And then Dick Goodwin noticed something.

"By gum!" he exclaimed. "This chair seems weak!"

"You think I care about the chair?" demanded Solomon. "Can I eat chairs? Chocham! You know a lot, don't you?"

"No need to insult me——" began Dick.

"Insult, nothing!" replied Solly. "A chocham is a wise man—and I wouldn't call



Fatty opened the door of Study E and looked in. Pitt, Grey and Tucker were sitting down to a sumptuous feed.

"Nothing doing, Fatty!" said Pitt briskly.

"Eh? I—I just popped in——"

"Good!" interrupted Reggie. "Now you can pop out again, my son."

you that! My grub's gone, and you talk about chairs! Any time will do for chairs! What about tea? We'll starve!"

"You've got no patience!" said Dick. "This may be a clue. The chair was sound enough before we went out. Somebody must have been sitting on it who strained it a lot——"

"Handforth!" said Levi quickly. "He'd strain anything!"

"Yes, or Fatty Little——"

"My goodness! You've got it!" shouted Solly. "Handforth would break a chair, but he wouldn't come here and fress my stuff! Fatty Little would eat anything—and break anything! We'll go along and see him, and find out the truth! If he's been here, we'll slaughter him on the spot!"

Before Dick Goodwin could say anything

further, Solomon Levi hastened out of the study, and went along the passage. He was certain, by this time, that Fatty Little was the culprit. Fatty, indeed, was about the only junior who would perform such an act. And food was food to him—it all came alike. He didn't care what it was, or who it belonged to.

Levi intended visiting Study L at once. Fatty would probably be there, and it wouldn't take the Jewish boy long to discover whether he was the culprit or not. But before he reached Fatty's study, he bumped into an elegant junior who was lounging serenely along the passage.

The elegant junior was Archie Glenthorne, and he was looking particularly smart in a new flannel suit and a straw hat. He swung a light cane in his hand, and his eyeglass adorned his face.

Then Levi bumped into him.

His cane went one way, his hat the other, and his monocle dropped with a jerk. Archie staggered somewhat.

"Sorry!" said Levi briefly.

"I mean to say, what?" gasped Archie. "Dash it all! Sorry, don't you know! After nearly knocking a chappie down, and casting his old belongings to the four winds, as you might say!"

"Nothing to make a fuss about, Archie," said Solomon. "Have you seen Fatty Little about anywhere?"

"Absolutely not!" replied Archie. "But about this other business. I mean to say, rough stuff! Considerable quantities of bashing about, and so forth! I'm not the chappie to complain, but, well—rather beyond the limit, what?"

"Have you seen Fatty?" repeated Levi.

"Absolutely!"

"Good! Where did you see him?"

"In the bally old classroom, during lessons," replied Archie. "The fact is, the dear laddie is most frightfully obvious! You simply can't miss him—the old apartment seems empty without him!"

"Oh, you hopeless ass!" said Solly. "I mean, have you seen Fatty within the last half-hour?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Strange to say, laddie, I haven't trickled forth until now. I've been indulging in forty of the old dreamless, and Phipps advised me to take several samples of sun. I'm just off to try the stuff!"

"You'd better play cricket!" said Solomon tartly. "They're practising outside, I think. Cricket will just about suit you, Archie. It means a lot of running about and strenuous exercise. Just your mark, believe me!"

"What? What? That is to say, by Jove!" exclaimed Archie. "Cricket, don't you know! My dear laddie, the idea is perfectly poisonous! The scheme, as it were, is out of the ques! Not only ridic, but absurd! The old tissues couldn't stand it. A ripping game, and so forth, but not for Archie. Distinctly and absolutely not! I'll

stagger out and watch the lads at play, but there, dear one, I finish. Absolutely!"

Archie wandered on, after recovering his hat and stick. And Solomon Levi opened the door of Study L, and marched in. At his rear came Dick Goodwin and Yung Ching. They had followed him along the passage.

Fatty Little was at home. He was, as a matter of fact, far away in the land of dreams at the same time. The fat junior sprawled in the easy chair, sleeping heavily but apparently in a state of peace. Upon his face there was a smile of happiness, and he snored gently.

"By my life!" snapped Levi. "Do I need to look further? There he is—that's the gunuf! Look at him! He's so full he can't keep awake!"

Levi bent over Fatty quickly. He meant to make sure. One sniff of the fat junior's breath was enough for Solomon. Gehuckter herring may be very nice, but it has an unfortunate habit of betraying itself. Fatty was undone.

Levi was further convinced by the fact that upon the fat junior's ample waistcoat there were distinct traces of the Passover bread. Fatty was not at all careful in hiding his tracks.

Levi took him by the shoulder, and gave him a violent shake.

"Wake up, you fresser!" he shouted angrily.

Fatty Little opened his eyes, and blinked. Then he gave a contented sigh, and settled down again. But Levi was firm. He gave another shake, and this time Fatty fully awakened.

"Why, hallo!" he muttered. "Who—who—Oh!"

He recognised Solomon Levi. And a guilty expression came into his face, and he scrambled hastily to his feet. He had half an idea that some sort of trouble was brewing.

"By gravy! What's the matter?" he asked. "Anything wrong?"

"Yes, there is something wrong!" replied Solomon curtly. "What have you been doing in my study?"

"Doing?"

"Yes!"

"I—I just looked in, you know!" said Fatty lamely. "I wanted to see you chaps, but you weren't at home."

"And you were very glad, weren't you?" demanded Levi warmly. "It made it easier for you to go to the cupboard and help yourself to my gehuckter herring?"

"Your which?" gasped Fatty.

"You heard what I said!"

"Yes, and I didn't touch it!" replied Fatty indignantly. "Come here, accusing me! I haven't seen your blessed tuckered herring, or whatever you call it! There weren't any herrings there at all!"

"How do you know?" snapped Levi quickly.

"I—I mean, I didn't see any— That is to say, I—I—" Fatty paused, at a loss.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he ended up weakly. "Didn't you eat some stuff out of a jar?" demanded Levi. "Everything you took! A taster I wouldn't mind! But you come and munch the whole lot, you greedy lozer! Herring, cucumbers, motzas, cheese and fish! Don't you think I want tea? Am I to starve?"

"But—but——"

"You think I can have my tea of chrain?" roared Solomon. "You leave me nothing else but chrain!"

"I never saw anything of a crane!" retorted Fatty hotly. "And don't be an ass! Who the dickens can eat a crane?"

"Chrain—chrain!" howled Solly. "You don't know what it means, eh? Horse-radish and beetroot mixed with vinegar! I suppose it was too hot for you? Such generosity I never knew! Thank goodness you leave me something!"

"Well, I—I only had a taster——"

"A taster!" yelled Levi. "You call it a taster to eat enough for ten? By my life! You've got a chutzber, believe me!"

"I've got nothing of the sort!" said the fat junior. "There weren't any of those things there!"

Solomon Levi danced up and down.

"A chutzber is a cheek—a nerve!" he explained excitedly. "You've got enough for an army! You come to my study, you come to my cupboard, and you go away and leave me nothing! You think it clever, eh? My life! I'll give you such a putch in a minute that you'll wonder what shlemozzel has fallen on you!"

"You'll give me a putch?" asked Fatty blankly. "What's a putch?"

Biff!

Solomon's fist struck Fatty on the left ear, but the fat junior hardly moved an inch. But he felt the blow considerably.

"Yow—ow!" he roared. "What's that?"

"That's a putch—a whack!" replied Levi grimly. "You think that's all you'll get? I'm going to make you pay for raiding my cupboard——"

"Oh, of course!" interrupted Fatty. "How much interest will you charge?"

"I'll take my interest in a way you won't like!" replied Solly. "The capital as well! You're going to fight, you fresser! You're going to put your hands up, or I'll make face into a pulp!"

Fatty Little backed away.

"No need to get excited!" he said. "After all, I didn't take anything worth speaking of! There wasn't much, anyhow! Only a couple of mouthfuls!"

"When a feller has a mouth like you, he can eat two meals in one second!" shouted Levi warmly. "I'm not bad tempered. I'm not a chap to make a fuss——"

"Not at all!"

"Isn't it a fact?" roared the Jewish boy. "Is it often you see me like this? But when a fellow comes in and takes all my special tuck from home, and swallows it in

one bite—— My goodness! Isn't that enough to make a chap wild?"

"But—but you don't understand!" said Fatty. "I hardly took anything! I went in your study to—to ask you chaps if there was any tea going. You weren't there, and so I just had a look in the cupboard. By chutney! I took one taste—and I lost myself! It was so gorgeous I couldn't stop! I've never tasted such food in all my life! I could have eaten ten times as much!"

Solomon Levi glared.

"You ate enough!" he snapped. "And now you'll pay!"

"I—I say, I'm awfully sorry!" exclaimed Fatty, with genuine regret. "It—it was pretty awful, I know, but—but I simply couldn't help myself, Levi. After that one taste——"

"You don't need to say it again!" snapped Levi. "Put up your hands!"

Fatty protested, but it was useless. The Jewish boy was evidently on the warpath, a most unusual thing for him, for he was generally one of the best-tempered fellows in the Remove. But the loss of his precious food from home had got his rag out. He went for Fatty Little baldheaded.

Biff! Crash! Biff!

Fatty received four or five punches before he realised that peace was at an end. Negotiations, as it were, were broken off. And Fatty, finding this to be the case, entered into the matter whole-heartedly.

With a roar, he simply charged at Levi. It wasn't necessary for Fatty to use his fists. His great bulk struck the Jewish boy fairly and squarely, and Levi shot towards the door like a stone from a catapult. He cannoned into Dick Goodwin, and Dick Goodwin fell over Yung Ching. The three, in fact, sprawled in a mixed-up heap in the passage.

"And for two pins I'll raid your giddy cupboard again!" roared Fatty defiantly.

Levi picked himself up, breathing hard.

"Believe me, I'm buying a lock to-night!" he said grimly.

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING LIKE CRICKET!



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE nodded genially.

"Priceless!" he remarked. "I mean to say, cricket, and all that!"

He was standing just in the playing fields, on the edge of Little Side. A number of white-clad figures were moving about the sunlit green, and I was one of these figures. The members of the Junior Cricket Eleven were at practice. I was getting my men ready for some strenuous games.

Naturally, Jerry Dodd was to the fore. During the footer season, Jerry had been somewhat in the background. But at cricket the Australian junior was absolutely the last word.

We were getting on quite well, most of the

fellows showing excellent form, and I had every hope of doing great things. And just at present Reginald Pitt was at the wicket, testing his skill as a batsman.

We were not using the nets this evening, for the other members of the team were at practice—wicket-keeping, fielding, etc. Jerry Dodd was bowling, and Pitt was naturally very cautious.

Clack!

He sent away a lovely shot almost to Big Side, and there was a round of hand-clapping. Jerry Dodd's bowling was extremely difficult, and for any fellow to make a big hit was praiseworthy. Archie dropped his cane, and proceeded to clap with enthusiasm.

"Topping!" he observed. "Absolutely! Dash it all, the laddie is something of a marvel, what? Simply amazing how he does it. Several consignments of congratulations! Absolutely!"

"Going to have a shot, Archie?"

Archie looked round, and found that the remark had been addressed to him by Solomon Levi—who had just arrived on Little Side with Dick Goodwin and Yung Ching. Solly was now in the best of tempers. He was not the kind of fellow to keep anything up.

"By Jove!" said Archie. "That is to say, by absolutely Jove! A shot? A jolly old go, what? I'm afraid, dear old fruit, that there is distinctly nothing doing. In other words, nix! The old frame was not built for such strenuous stuff!"

"Rats!" said Levi. "You'd make a fine cricketer, Archie. Take my tip, and ask Nipper to give you a trial!"

Archie looked interested.

"But, I mean to say, surely not?" he asked. "Dear old lad, you're absolutely off the old tracks—fairly side-slipped in fact. It couldn't be done!"

"Why not have a try?" asked Solly, with a wink at his chums. "There's nothing in it, you know. You've only got to hold the bat, and give the ball a good whack when it comes up. For all we know you may be a second Jessop, or W. G. Grace re-incarnated!"

"Kindly refrain from being so utterly ridic!" said Archie. "As it happens, I don't know the two chappies you just mentioned. Frightfully remiss, and all that, but there you are! But about this cricket. I mean to say, absolutely about it! What-ho! What-ho! Something ought to be done!"

"Of course!"

"I'm dashed frightful at anything of this sort, but I don't mind having the old trial!" went on Archie. "You grasp the trend, what? Possibly it will help to restore the tissues, and make Archie a new laddie! Cricket, what? A priceless game—absolutely! Shall we trickle on to the battle-field?"

"Absolutely!" grinned Levi.

He was, of course, pulling Archie's leg—but the genial ass was quite unaware of this little detail. He was taking the whole

thing seriously. And, looking round, I saw the four juniors coming across towards the wicket.

"Who told these asses to interfere?" demanded Handforth tartly. "Hi! Clear off, there! You're in the way, you fatheads!"

"Rot!" replied Levi. "Archie's going to bat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean to say, what!" protested Archie. "Why the reels of laughter, old dears?"

"Well, it strikes the chaps as being rather funny, I expect," said Levi. "But you've got to disprove that, Archie. It's up to you to show the chaps that you're the real goods!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "The real goods, eh? Well, dash it all, I mean to do the thing properly. In style, don't you know. First of all I'll have a go with the old mallet!"

"The mallet?" repeated Church, who had joined them.

"The wooden apparatus, dear old top," explained Archie. "The article that the chappies whisk about through the atmosphere."

"Oh, the bat?" grinned Church. "I'm afraid you don't know a great lot about cricket, Archie. Take my advice, and clear off while you're safe. This game is horribly dangerous!"

Archie paused, and adjusted his monocle. "I mean to say, dangerous!" he exclaimed.

"Fearfully!"

"But, laddie, you cannot be speaking the truth!" said Archie. "I fear, old fruit, that you are attempting to have a pull at the old leg!"

Just then I came up, and Solomon gave me a wink.

"Archie wants to have a trial!" he said solemnly.

I kept my face straight.

"Cricket?" I asked briskly. "Certainly!"

"Deucedly good of you, old darling!" said Archie, stowing away his eyeglass, and removing his jacket. "This, I take it, is the stuff to give 'em? Jacket removed, and so forth! What about the old collar? Fearfully awk. to remove it——"

"It's all right, you can keep your collar on," I interrupted. "And to start with, Archie, we'll give you a testing at the wicket. How's that?"

"Ripping—absolutely," said Archie. "But, don't you know, I was thinking of something else, dear old sportsman! I had made up the old mind to wield the chunk of wood—that is, to operate the bat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You funny ass!" said Church. "A testing at the wicket is the same thing!"

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Archie. "Exactly, old bean! I mean to say, absolutely! Well, what about it? That is, when do we start the knocking-about stuff? Kindly say the old word—I'm absolutely prepared."

"We'll start now, Archie," I put in briskly. "Here you are, you'd better grab

hold of this bat. It's quite simple. Just stand in front of the wicket, hold the bat to the ground, and when the ball comes along, swipe at it!"

Archie held up his hand.

"Enough!" he said, adjusting his monocle. "I mean to say, the whole bally thing is simple! I've grasped the idea, laddie! Just stand in front of the old wicket, and slosh!"

"That's it!" I grinned.

"Good!" said Archie cheerfully. "Just stand there and slosh! You know what I mean—give the old ball a frightful whack which will positively send it buzzing away into the offing! Let us proceed, darling!"

Everybody on the pitch was now grinning with huge amusement. The very idea of Archie playing cricket was enough to put a stop to everything else. Even the seniors at practice on Big Side paused to have a look. Archie was a very popular character at St. Frank's—even amongst the fellows of the Upper School.

He had removed his jacket, and now strode forward towards the wicket. There was a grim, determined expression on his face, and a fixed light in his eyes. There was no doubt that he was out for something certain.

His silken shirt sleeves glistened in the evening sunlight, and his monocle reflected the sun's rays now and again. Arriving at the wicket, he took up his stand in an attitude which caused howls of laughter.

Archie stood there, facing the bowler, with the bat held straight down in front of him.

"Proceed, dear laddies!" he exclaimed. "Kindly observe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wait a minute, Archie!" I grinned. "This won't do! You've got to stand quite differently if you're going to make a sound job of it. Look here! I'll show you!"

"I stood in the correct position, and Archie watched me with interest.

"Good enough!" he said. "Thanks tremendously, old tin of fruit! I've got the idea—Archie doesn't need telling twice. Something after this style—what? Gaze upon me, and pass the old criticism!"

He adopted an attitude which was more like the real thing.

"That's better!" I said. "When the ball comes down, hit it!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, that's the idea—what? Hit the old thing! Slosh it, in fact!"

Jerry Dodd was the bowler, and he kept a solemn face as he took a short run. He sent down a dead true ball, exceedingly simple, and one which the weakest batsmen would have sent to the boundary with ease. Archie watched it coming down in a fascinated kind of way, raised his bat, and whirled it round with terrific force.

Crash!

He struck the wicket, and sent it flying to bits, and the ball rolled serenely past, untouched.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Archie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie gazed at the wicket dazedly.

"Gadzooks!" he gasped. "By Jove, and what not! I mean to say, something happened—what? This is simply frightful, you know! I don't want to be unpleasant, but dash it all! Somewhat the limit! Knocking a chappie's wicket down before he can have a fair slosh! Scarcely playing the game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say!" protested Archie. "I say! Why the roars of ribald laughter?"

"You knocked the wicket down yourself, Archie," I grinned. "When you brought your bat up, you knocked—"

"What? I mean to say, what?" exclaimed Archie, blankly. "Is that so, dear laddie? Well, I'm bothered! Well, as it were, I'm dashed! Deucedly ridic.—what? Sorrow, old dears! Apologies in large quantities. What about another old try?"

"All right—but don't bust the wicket up completely!" said Reginald Pitt, with a chuckle. "Take it more easily, Archie."

The next time Jerry Dodd sent the ball down even more slowly. It was a beautiful ball, breaking gently, so that Archie could easily deal with it. He raised the bat again, and swung it round forcibly.

Thud!

Archie's bat hit the turf with a jar which sent it flying out of his hand. He danced about wildly.

"Yow! That is to say, ouch!" he panted. "Good gracious and gadzooks! Large supplies of pain! Cricket, dear old tulips, is deucedly fearful, if you know what I mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better give it up, Archie," I said. "You don't seem to get the hang—"

"Absolutely not!" interrupted Archie. "Give it up? Dash it all! I mean to say, nothing doing! Rather not! Can't throw up the old sponge, you know! No exhibition of the bally white feather, laddie!"

"Right-ho! Have a third shot!" I grinned. "It ought to be lucky."

The entertainment proceeded, and Archie once again prepared himself for the fray. He now took up an attitude which was slightly more correct, and when the leather came down he lifted his bat with grim determination.

Clack!

More by luck than anything else, he hit the ball squarely—a perfectly timed hit—and it went soaring away to the boundary.

"Good for you, Archie!"

"Oh, good knock!"

Archie looked round in astonishment.

"Something like the real stuff—what?" he asked. "That's what you might call a really priceless swipe, dear old lads! Right into the next county, and all that! This,

I might say, is absolutely decent. We'll continue!"

"We won't!" I grinned. "You've wasting our valuable time, Archie, and it can't be done. There's not much more daylight left, and we've got to finish our practice. The best thing you can do is to watch for a bit."

Archie looked at me rather blankly.

"But, I mean to say, I've learnt the old stuff," he said. "Say the word, darling, and I'm your man! Absolutely! I'll play in the next match——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

I pointed out to Archie, as politely as possible, that his services would not be required. And I further requested him to remove himself from the pitch, so that we could get on.

Solomon Levi wanted Yung Ching to have a shot, but I told him there wasn't time. The Chinese boy was perfectly at liberty to see what he could do in the field, if he felt inclined. And Yung Ching was quite agreeable. I posted him out near the boundary.

"He'll be out of the way there," I said cheerfully. "It's all very well for these comedians to come here amusing the crowd, but we can't have our practices interfered with. You'd better take the bat, Grey."

"Thanks!" said Jack Grey. "Just what I wanted."

He was soon at the wicket, and I bowled to him. He shaped well, sending the leather away regularly—although my bowling was pretty decent, I think. Twice the ball went to Yung Ching, and the little Chinese returned it with surprising skill and alacrity.

"He's not so bad," I admitted. "He's as quick as a hare, and throws the ball dead true, too. We may make something of him."

A minute later, Jack Grey sent the ball out in Ching's direction once again. It was a grand shot, the leather soaring up, and finally descending into a meadow adjoining the playing fields.

Yung Ching looked round and waved.

"Allee lightee!" he called out. "Me blingee it heap plenty one time. Waitee minute!"

"Buck up, Chingy!"

Yung Ching ran rapidly to the hedge, and dived through it with surprising agility. On the other side the meadow was fresh and green, descending in a slope towards the river, with little clumps of bushes growing here and there.

The Chinese took two steps forward towards the ball, which he could see lying a few yards ahead. Then suddenly he vanished! He descended unexpectedly into a deep hole in the ground, which had been absolutely invisible. The grass seemed to part, and he plunged down.

Then, before he could even utter a sound, strong hands gripped him!

CHAPTER IV.

MYSTERY!



YUNG CHING struggled fiercely, but it was useless.

The hands which held him were strong and sinuous, and a whispered voice came to his ears.

"Struggling will not help you!" it hissed in Chinese. "Remain still!"

Yung Ching was startled, but he showed nothing of his emotions. He knew that he was in the hands of a Chinaman, and it was absolutely obvious that this Chinaman was not a friend.

Ching tried to give a shout for help, but the sound was strangled before he could even start, for one of the strong hands gripped his throat, and held it as though in a vice.

This hole into which he had fallen was not a natural cavity—but had apparently been made for the especial purpose of watching. This Chinaman, no doubt, had been concealed there, on the alert.

And Yung Ching had fallen into the trap by a sheer stroke of ill-luck. It certainly could not have been prepared with the expectation of Yung Ching dropping headlong into it. His capture was more or less of an accident—but none the less serious for that.

And very soon he discovered that although the actual hole was specially made, it was really a kind of continuation of a deep, dry ditch. This ditch was choked with weeds and ferns to such an extent that from a short distance it almost looked solid. And now, foot by foot, Yung Ching was forced along the bed of this ditch—right at the very bottom, so that no movements could be seen from above. If anybody had been as near as twenty yards, he would not have noticed anything except a slight disturbance in the ferns. And this would have been put down to the breeze, or possibly a rabbit.

The Chinaman moved along so cunningly and sinuously that detection was well-nigh impossible. And the distance, after all, was not great. For, just near the edge of the meadow, stood a solidly-built haystack. The rear of this stack, which was quite square, was built close against the ditch, being only separated from it by a narrow strip of banking.

The haystack was untouched—cutting had not been commenced, and the straw thatch was intact. It had stood there for quite a long time, and most of the fellows knew it as a land-mark.

Arriving opposite this haystack, the Chinaman paused, and lay quite still in the bed of the ditch, holding Yung Ching firmly. They were both effectively concealed by the masses of overhanging fern.

"You remain quite still, and make no sound!" whispered Yung Ching's captor. "It will serve you no good if you make an outcry. Do you understand, boy?"

"Yes!" muttered Yung Ching stolidly.

"Then heed!"

After this short breather the Chinaman grasped Yung Ching firmly by the back of his neck, and rushed him out of the ditch with great speed. For an instant they rose above the bank, and then dived headlong at the base of the haystack. The Chinese boy wondered what the game could be, but he was soon to know the truth. The solid looking haystack parted as the Chinaman dived at it head first. There was, in fact, a kind of cavity—which had been concealed by cunningly fixed hay. Even a close examination would have failed to reveal any fake.

could see that the filtered light was coming from a kind of hole in the roof of the hay cavern. It was not a direct hole, but was partially covered with cunningly contrived masses of hay.

The cleverness of this idea was rather astonishing. Working in the night, probably, these Chinamen had burrowed a hole into the centre of the stack, and then they had made this big hollow cavity. What they had done with the hay which had been removed they alone knew. Perhaps they had taken it right away to another meadow—or perhaps they had only concealed it in the deep ditch further along the field. At all events, there was no out-



Then Levi bumped into him. His cane went one way, his hat the other, and his monocle dropped with a jerk. Archie staggered somewhat.

Yung Ching found himself groping amid the hay, which seemed to be choking the life out of him. It was dry and dusty, and there was scarcely any air fit to breathe. But he was pushed forward, and his captor came behind him. They wormed their way right towards the centre of the stack—for this cavity seemed to be a tunnel.

And then, suddenly, the sense of being suffocated left the Chinese boy. He abruptly found himself in a kind of open space—so large, in fact, that he could nearly stand upright. And some filtered rays of light came in from one side. Yung Ching looked about him in wonder.

And then, as he struggled to his feet, he found that he was facing a second Chinaman. This man regarded him without any kind of emotion. The whole affair, in fact, was startlingly unexpected.

The first Chinaman came out of the tunnel, and stood upright. And now Yung Ching

ward sign that the stack had been interfered with.

Yet here was this cavity—a perfect hiding-place. A hundred searchers might go round it a hundred times without knowing that the centre was hollow.

Furthermore, there were spyholes in two sides of the stack—so arranged that a bundle of hay could be removed, thus allowing those within to see out. The instant this bundle was replaced there was no sign whatever that a hole existed.

These Chinamen, in their own mysterious way, had prepared things. They had evidently made the hiding-place so that they could bring Yung Ching into it if they happened to capture him during daylight. And this they had actually done.

"It will be useless for you to attempt any escape," said one of the Chinamen to Ching. "Take it quietly, and all will be well. We mean no harm to you. You are safe."

Yung Ching made no reply. He did not know who these men were, or why they had kidnapped him. It was not in his nature to ask questions. He accepted the position, and showed no emotion. But he was fairly convinced that they did mean harm—very real harm.

It was rather strange the way the three sat in the interior of that stack. No words were spoken. The two Chinese captors squatted back in the close atmosphere and stared straight before them. They said nothing whatever. And Yung Ching, facing them, was equally silent and unemotional.

It was quite clear that they were waiting—waiting for the darkness to descend. Not until then could they venture out. And yet here they were—within sight and sound of the St. Frank's playing fields, and the sun was still shining, and Yung Ching had vanished.

For sheer audacity, this ruse required some beating.

And, in the meantime, the fellows on Little Side became impatient. And I wondered what could be keeping the little Chinee so long. He had passed through the hedge, and we had not seen him since. Yet the cricket ball could not have gone very far into the meadow. I had distinctly seen it drop just on the other side of the hedge.

"Young fathead!" exclaimed Pitt. "Why doesn't he come?"

"Haven't we got another ball to be going on with?" asked Grey.

"Plenty indoors," I replied. "But this one is practically new, and we don't want to lose it—good cricket balls cost money. Some of you chaps had better go and lend Chingy a hand. I don't suppose he can find it."

Pitt and De Valerie and Jerry Dodd ran lightly towards the hedge, and pushed their way through. The sun was very low down, and the dusk would soon be here. Arriving on the other side of the hedge, the three juniors looked about them curiously.

"Where's the little beggar got to?" asked Pitt, gazing round.

"By jings!" exclaimed Jerry Dodd. "I reckon this is queer, chums! There's no sign of him, an' yet he came through this hedge only a minute or two ago."

"There's no telling what these Chinese chaps will be up to!" said De Valerie. "The young ass probably took it into his head to clear off altogether—"

"But that's impossible," put in Pitt. "He hasn't had time to get across the meadow. It's large, and we can see every inch of it from here."

"He might be on the other side of that haystack," suggested De Valerie.

The juniors soon arrived at the haystack, and walked round it. But there was not the slightest sign of Yung Ching, or anybody else. There was nothing to indicate that the missing junior was within call, and only a few feet away. There were even

no loose strands of hay to indicate the truth.

"Well, this beats me!" said Pitt, scratching his head. "I'm blessed if I can make anything of it! Why should Ching clear off? He was as keen as anything on the cricket, and I'm jolly certain he wouldn't take that ball and buzz off. In any case, it would be such a senseless thing to do."

They walked slowly back, searching the meadow with their gaze as they progressed. And just then I came through a gap in the hedge, and caught sight of them. Handforth and two or three others were with me.

"What's all this delay for?" I shouted. "Where's Chingy?"

"Goodness knows!" replied Pitt. "He's vanished!"

"Vanished!" snorted Handforth. "What rot!"

"Well, can you see him?" asked Pitt tartly. "You've got marvellous eyes if you can spot that Chinese kid in this meadow. It's extraordinary! I can't make out where the dickens he disappeared to. It looks like a sample of Eastern magic!"

"Steady on!" I grinned. "Don't be an ass, Reggie. It's a bit queer, I'll admit, but there's probably quite a natural explanation. By jingo! I wonder if the young ass fell into this ditch, and hurt himself? It's pretty deep, you know, and we shouldn't be able to see him, because of these weeds and ferns!"

The other juniors were rather startled by my suggestion—but it certainly seemed to be the only natural one. Yung Ching had vanished with surprising suddenness, and it was practically impossible for him to have got out of the meadow by any ordinary means. This meant, of course, that he was still in the meadow, and as there were no places for concealment excepting the fern-choked ditch, it stood to reason that he must be in the ditch. And, of course, he wouldn't remain in the ditch for choice.

Without delay we commenced to search.

And we had only been at this task for about three minutes when I suddenly came to a stop, and just saved myself from plunging headlong into a concealed opening in the ground.

I had not been prepared for it, because we were a little distance from the ditch itself. I stared down, and caught my breath in. I could see, at once, that this was not a natural cavity.

"By Jove! Look at this, my sons! Somebody's been up to something here! This place has been hollowed out, and covered over with loose sticks and twigs and ferns. You can see it's all broken, and—"

"Yes, and it's exactly opposite the gap where Yung Ching pushed through!" exclaimed Pitt quickly. "He must have fallen into this before he could stop himself. But why? What on earth does it mean?"

I looked grim—and the memory of our first acquaintance with Yung Ching came

to me. He had been kidnapped in the grounds of the Crystal Palace, and we had saved him in the nick of time.

Could it be possible that another attempt had been made to get him away? Had his mysterious enemies followed him down to St. Frank's? But surely they would never have dared to try any such tricks in broad daylight—and within a stone's-throw of the playing fields?

"I don't like this!" I said quietly. "It looks fishy to me—it looks rather suspicious. I've got an idea that Yung Ching has been taken away by force. But we'll soon find out for certain."

"Great Scott! You must be joking!"

"It's all rot!"

"How could the Chingy have been taken away by force?"

"Be sensible, Nipper."

"I am being sensible," I replied grimly. "It may seem a bit tall to you, but there's no telling what might happen—even within sight of the playing fields. And I'm pretty certain that Yung Ching has met with foul play!"

Handforth looked startled.

"By George!" he exclaimed, taking a deep breath. "Foul play! You mean he's been pinched, or something? Here's a chance for me to get on the track! You leave it to me, and I'll locate the young bouncer in no time!"

"Thanks all the same, Handy, but we can't waste time—"

"Waste time!" roared Handforth. "You—you fathead! You babbling ass! By putting the case in my hands, you'll make certain of seeing Yung Ching again! If you ignore me, I'll wash my hands of the whole business!"

"Good!" I exclaimed promptly.

"Eh?"

"Your hands look as if they could do with a wash!" I added.

Handforth glared.

"You—you funny fathead!" he howled. "Do you think I'm going to be choked off like this? I've got just as much right to investigate this mystery as you have! You can go and eat coke! I mean to get on the trail at once, and make careful investigations into the whole affair!"

Handforth dearly loved to use the terms that were familiar in a detective story, and he fondly imagined that he sounded very important. He stood there, looking round with puckered brow, and gleaming eyes.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, after a moment. "It's quite apparent that Yung Ching ran across the meadow, and then disappeared into the wood. Possibly somebody beckoned to him, and he went across. Then, as soon as he arrived, the rotters sprang upon him and captured him! The best thing we can do is to—"

Handforth paused, and snorted when he found that he was alone.

"You awful bouncers!" he shouted. "I was talking to you!"

I glanced back.

"Sorry, Handy, can't stop!" I called. "Go ahead with your own private investigation—you don't want us worrying you!"

But Handforth without an audience, was like a fish out of water. He forsook his own plan, and joined us. I had gone down into the cavity, and was now groping about amongst the twigs and ferns.

And, suddenly, I gave a shout.

"Look at this!" I exclaimed, holding up a school cap.

"Yung Ching's!" said Tommy Watson.

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Dear old boys, this looks frightfully serious, it does, really! I'm afraid that Yung Ching has met with some shockin' accident!"

"We'll soon find out for certain!" I exclaimed.

Working my way along the false hole, I soon found myself in the ditch proper. And here there were many indications that a body had been dragged along the dry bed of the ditch. Either Yung Ching had crawled down the ditch on all fours, or he had been forced by someone else.

I was inclined to the latter view, for the broken twigs and ferns were too numerous for Ching to have caused single-handed.

Yard by yard we went along the ditch. And, at length, we arrived at the rear of the haystack. Here the signs of disturbance came to an end. Past the stack, the ditch remained quite untouched. Yung Ching had not gone past this point.

I climbed out of the ditch, and the others followed. We were now close against the stack, but never for an instant did I think of examining it closely. The very idea of the missing junior being anywhere near the stack seemed quite preposterous.

"There's only one explanation to this," I said grimly. "Chingy was brought along the ditch as far as this, and then his captor, or captors, used the haystack as a means of cover. They dodged out of the meadow as quickly as possible, taking their prisoner with them. We're stuck now—we don't know which way to go. Will you do me a favour, Tommy?"

"Certainly," said Watson. "What is it?"

"Buzz indoors like the wind, and bring Mr. Lee out here. This thing looks serious, and we can't tackle it on our own. Hurry up!"

"Right you are!" said Watson promptly.

He dashed off, and in the meantime we continued our search of the meadow, but with no satisfactory result. The Chinese boy had completely vanished. Within hearing of us, he had been spirited away!

I came back to the ditch, still carrying Ching's cap, and just then Nelson Lee appeared with Tommy Watson. The guy'nor was looking rather grave, and he listened without comment until I had finished telling him of the occurrence.

"What do you make of it, sir?" I asked, at last.

"We don't want to become unnecessarily alarmed, Nipper," replied Nelson Lee. "But there is every indication that Yung Ching has been carried off by his enemies—and we know that he has enemies."

"Then it seems very serious, sir," put in Pitt.

"It all depends, my boy," replied Lee. "I did not imagine for a moment that Ching was in any danger. I knew that he was with you boys in the playing fields, and it naturally did not occur to me that any harm could befall him."

"But we didn't know, sir!" said De Valerie. "We had to hint that——"

"That's quite all right, De Valerie. I am not blaming you boys in any way for what has happened," interrupted Lee. "It was quite unexpected and unlooked-for. The only thing we can do is to find the missing boy as quickly as possible."

"Do you think you'll be able to, sir?" I inquired.

"I am hoping that I shall be successful," replied Lee. "You boys had better say as little as possible. Please oblige me by keeping the matter quiet for the time being; we don't want the whole school talking. I will deal with this."

The fellows were only too willing to do as Nelson Lee suggested. And they went back to the playing fields, discussing the matter amongst themselves. They did not know all the facts as I did, and I could see that the gov'nor was very grave.

He had undertaken to look after Yung Ching at St. Frank's.

And for the little Chineese to vanish in this way was most disconcerting. It had been so unexpected—so dramatically sudden.

I thought it better to go with the chaps, and we left Nelson Lee in the meadow to continue his investigations alone. Handforth, of course, wanted to lend Nelson Lee his valuable aid—and did so. It was declined with thanks.

"Of course—I expected it!" said Handforth bitterly, as he walked away. "Jealousy—nothing else! I thought Mr. Lee was fairer than that! Just because he's a detective himself, he thinks that nobody else is any good at the game!"

Church and McClure thought it a wise policy to remain silent. And they thought it still wiser to get out of their leader's way for the time being. Handy was shockingly unreasonable, and for two pins he would go for them baldheaded—just to relieve his feelings. Church and McClure discreetly retired.

And as we proceeded with cricket practice on Little Side, I knew that Nelson Lee was keenly on the alert—waiting to seize the first opportunity that came to probe the depths of this mystery.

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIOUS GUARDIANS.



DARKNESS descended upon St. Frank's, and the surrounding district. The evening, in fact, closed in somewhat dull, although the early May weather was warm

and fine. The sky became overcast with banks of thin, fleecy clouds, which had the effect of blotting out the stars.

The gloom, therefore, was intense.

By this time the playing-fields had become quite deserted, and even the Triangle was left to itself. In the Ancient House and the College House there were lights gleaming from many windows, and the cheery voices of juniors came out into the open air.

In the meadow which adjoined the playing fields all was silent and still. There was no sign whatever of any human presence. But somehow, that meadow seemed to contain strange, mysterious presences.

Now and again a shadow would lurk against a bush, a mere filmy shadow which was like a will-o-the-wisp. Then it would disappear, and not once was the silence broken.

If any of the juniors had been there, they would have instinctively felt that something was wrong, that something absolutely out of the common was afoot. In this peaceful meadow in the English countryside, there was a hint of sinister Eastern devilry. It was so mysterious that it hardly seemed to exist. Yet it did exist. It was always present.

Down in the village, a dog could be heard howling. It was a fitting accompaniment to the eerie atmosphere of the meadow. And yet, only the previous evening, this very stretch of land had been calm and tranquil, with no suggestion whatever of mystery.

And there, within that haystack, Yung Ching lay concealed.

His two captors remained in exactly the same position as formerly. They kept guard over him, and no words were spoken. These three were Chinese, and were not given to excitement or emotion. They remained impassive. Yung Ching appeared to accept his position in a spirit of complete calmness.

He did not protest, he did not inquire why he was held in this way, or what his captors intended. He simply remained on the alert, and apparently oblivious to any danger.

Within the stack, inside that hollowed out space, the air was stuffy and uncomfortably hot. And Yung Ching felt, too, a horrible sense of suffocation. The darkness only accentuated this sensation. Here he was, buried amid all this hay, and he felt that it would be impossible to burrow his way out.

Left to himself, he might attempt to find the exit a dozen times without success. In-

deed, he would only succeed in burying himself in the hay, and bring rapid death.

His whole body felt uncomfortable, for the hay was filled with little atoms of chaff and dust. And these particles had a most persistent way of working into his clothes, and irritating his skin.

But it was in his Oriental nature to accept these discomforts philosophically. He knew well enough that it was impossible for him to escape. He knew that it would be useless to ask questions. He knew that his captors were merely waiting for the darkness to come.

And so Yung Ching remained absolutely passive.

Of what use was it to be otherwise? There was a certain sound logic in the Chinese boy's attitude, and he knew well enough that sooner or later an opportunity would arise for him to take some action.

Until then, he accepted the position with calm.

At the same time, the experience was a most undesirable one. The sense of suffocation, the near presence of his captors, the uncertainty of the whole position, all these things caused Yung Ching to chafe. But he showed no sign of it.

And then, faintly through the oppressive stillness, came the sound of the big clock at St. Frank's striking the hour. As the booming of the gong died away, Yung Ching's captors awoke into activity.

One of them murmured a few words in Chinese, and then cautiously wormed his way out through the tunnel exit. The other Chinaman directed Yung Ching to follow, and warned him against making any break for liberty.

The Chinese junior agreed, and made his way out in the wake of the first Chinaman. He emerged into the open air with a sense of heartfelt relief. It was glorious to be able to breathe in the cool, refreshing atmosphere of the late evening. It was like wine to his half suffocating lungs.

And, after the intense inkiness of the prison, the gloom outside appeared almost bright. Yung Ching could see across the meadow, and the hedges and trees stood out distinctly against the clouded sky.

He stood up, and felt a hand upon him. His captors had no intention of letting Yung Ching slip away. He was an agile youngster, and it was quite possible that he could show them a clean pair of heels in a race for liberty.

And then something quite unexpected took place.

It seemed that the very darkness itself became darker in three spots near the haystack. The gloom materialised into three grim, silent shapes. One of these grasped Yung Ching by the shoulder, and dragged him forcibly away from the Chinaman who was holding him.

A sharp cry rang out from Yung Ching's first captor. It was apparently a warning

to his companion, who was just emerging from the haystack. But the man was too late to draw back. The next moment he was gazing fixedly and with horror-struck eyes at those three grim forms.

For Yung Ching's captors found themselves menaced by three enemies who flashed long, curved daggers in their hands. They spoke no words, they hardly seemed to breathe, so oppressive was their silence. But those flashing knives were deadly evidence of their grim intentions.

And the two Chinamen, instead of putting up a fight, gave little squeals of terror, and ran helter skelter across the meadow in the direction of Bellton Wood. They vanished into the gloom.

Yung Ching, still immobile, looked at his rescuers without a trace of excitement.

"It is good," he said in Chinese.

"We were watching, honourable young master," said one of the black figures, in tones of deep respect. "We waited."

"I was expecting you, Ling Fu," said the Chinese boy. "I knew that you would be near. Take me to the school."

"Your Excellency shall be obeyed!" murmured Ling Fu.

He bowed low, and Yung Ching waved his hand. Then, in the midst of his strange guardians, he walked across the meadow, through the playing fields and then into the little shrubbery which adjoined the Triangle. Here the four came to a halt, and Yung Ching waved his hand.

"It is good," he said softly. "You may go your way!"

"Honourable young master, we obey," said Ling Fu gravely.

The next moment he and his companions seemed to merge themselves into the surrounding darkness. Without the slightest sound they vanished—mysteriously, with amazing abruptness.

And Yung Ching, as though this was quite an everyday occurrence, turned through the trees and made his way into the Triangle. He was calm and self-possessed, precisely the same as usual.

The fact that he had been in the grip of enemies seemed to make little or no difference to him, and his recent experience in the haystack had not affected him in the least.

To any other junior, these adventures would have left him somewhat breathless with excitement and confusion. But everything came alike to Yung Ching. Whatever he thought, no hint of the workings of his mind was reflected in his expression. His face was always the same, always smiling and blandly open.

The Chinese boy walked towards the Ancient House, passed inside, and more by chance than anything else, he arrived at the end study without having encountered anybody. He walked in, and found the study in darkness.

Switching on the electric light, Ching

(Continued on page 25.)

Brief Notes about Our Footballers

Being a short account of the careers of the famous footballers whose photographs we are presenting to readers with this number. Specially written for "The Nelson Lee Library" by "Rover."

J. DIMMOCK.

C. McKAY.

JAMES DIMMOCK, the popular young outside left of Tottenham Hotspurs, though he has not graced the ranks of first class football for more than four seasons, has already risen to the topmost pinnacle of football fame.

Dimmock was born in 1901 at Tottenham, within a stone's-throw of the White Hart Lane ground, and developed his footballing talent as a schoolboy. When he had reached the age of seventeen, Peter McWilliam, the manager of the 'Spurs, recognising in him a footballer above the average, signed him on for the 'Spurs.

He got his chance with the Tottenham first string in the season 1919-20, owing to an injury to Chipperfield, the regular outside left, and so wonderfully did he come on that last season his talents were recognised by the Selection Committee, and he was chosen to play for England against Wales. As ill-luck would have it, however, he sustained an injury just before the game was due to be played, and that, of course, excluded him from taking part in it.

He got his first cap later on, however, for the match against Scotland, and so well did he play on that occasion that many more honours were prophesied for him. In that season, too, he played in both of England's international trial matches.

His crowning glory, however, came at the end of the season when, in the Cup-final against Wolverhampton Wanderers he scored the goal that earned the 'Spurs' victory, and incidentally earned him his first Cup medal. Height 5 ft. 9½ ins. Weight 11 st. 9 lbs.

COLIN McKAY, although he has only been with Huddersfield Town since the beginning of last season, is one of the most popular players of the Leeds Road ground.

McKay may be said, as yet, to be in the stages of development for he has only had three seasons in first class football; but even in that small space of time he has managed to cram in a great amount of experience, having played with both Scottish and English clubs. He was born at Portobello, twenty-four years ago, and at an early age was removed to Fife, where he was brought up, and where, incidentally, he learned his football.

He had a great reputation as a local centre forward when the manager of the Heart of Midlothian Team, scouring the district with an eye to securing possible talent spotted him, and signed him on. McKay stayed with the Hearts for one season, filling both the positions of centre and inside left, then, desiring a change, left for Sheffield, and for the next season played in the ranks of the Wednesday of that town. But with the Wednesday he was none too happy, and so, after he had played in a dozen matches for them, he went back to Scotland, whence, at the beginning of the present season he was secured by Huddersfield Town.

At Leeds Road he seems to have settled down fairly comfortably, and the management of that club value his services very highly. In the forward line he is a brilliant attacker, and in the half-back line a sturdy defender.

He is a pleasant looking youngster, whose sunny disposition and bright smile has endeared him to the hearts of all who know him. Height 5 ft. 9½ ins. Weight 11 st.

Special! "IF DREAMS WERE REAL!"

**By CECIL
DE VALERIE.**

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 24.

THE JOURNAL OF THE REMOVE OF ST. FRANK'S
Edited by Nipper.

May 6,
1922.



THE SCHOOL PORTER'S LODGE
(St. Frank's College)



THE SURPRISE PARTY

PAPA wanted to send me off to school, but mamma sade, "No, he'll be sent back, wot's the use?" coz the citizens wanted me to leve the place.

The nice yung citty feller wot broke his leg, he is abul to be out, witch I am very sorry for, cos I shel miss the good things my sisters sent him to ete. It makes my mouth wotter to reckolet them.

Reverend Mr. Slocum might as well hang his harp on a wilo tree, for Betty she told me last night confidenshal that Bess was dead in love with the citty chap, an' Betty is a good juge—she knows how it is herself.

She has a red-hedded bow who looks like one o' those punkins with a candel inside witch I friten her with on dark nites. I should not think she wood be fritened, they are the perfick immidge of her bow.

Mr. Jennings, whose leg is got well, he called to see my sister Bess last evenin' ;

he said he must go back to town to-moro, but he wood come agane.

Bess whispered to me it wos my bed time, so I said, "Good-bye, Mr. Jennings," and went out as quiet as a lamb, but I crep back into the front par-lour, witch was in darkness, an' lay down on the

sofy coz I was wide awake as a hawk, an' Bess she says :

"Do, Mr. Jennings, stay til Friday ; there's going to be a sirprise party on Thursday nite, and we can't get along without you.

"I wouldn't have little Georgie here about it for the wurd—he'd do some mischief, I'm afrade—that's the reason I didn't tell you til he was gone to bed ; it's goin' to be to Judge Bell's ; we'll have a luvly time."

So he said he'd stay to pleze *her*, an' he squeezed her hand like it was an orange. It must be true wot Betty says, they will make a match.

I wanted to fire a marble at 'em, but I thot Ide better not so's Sue wouldn't kno Ide heard about the sirprise party, an' I lay lo.

He asked her was she engaged to Mr. Slocum. She said she woodn't marry him if he was the last man, she wasn't good enuff to be a minister's wife.

Then he asked her was she good enuff to be *his* wife. I don't kno wat she sade, she spoke so lo, an' I fell aslepe.

All was dark wen I awoke, so I went up as soft as anything, but the stairs creaked, and papa he rushed out and fired his pistol.

The ball took oph a little peace of my rite ear, an' made me fall downstairs, so papa was sertain he had killed the burglar, an' he got a lamp, an' Sue an' Bess locked their door and scremed inside, and he an' mamma come down were I was all curled up at the foot, an' she said :

"Oh, Lord, it's dere little Georgie ! Oh, my sun, my sun !"

Papa he groned like he was hurted. Mam-ma she saw the blood on my face, an' said :



Papa grabbed me by the shoulder and took me out to the stable.

"He's killed."

But I was only wounded, like I was a souldyer, an' I jumped up and sade I wasn't hurt; then mamma had a fit of high-sterics.

Such a time! My! My ear was wrapped in cotton, and I was put to bed wen it was getting dalite. I had my brekfust brot up by Betty, but I didn't let on about the sirprise even to her.

Mamma she cride some more wen she came up to see me. I tezed her to let me get up.

Wen I was dressed, I slipped out unbeknone, an' went over to Juge Bell's, an' asked for Miss Anna, an' told her thare was a big party comin' to her house that night, so she must be surprised as ever was.

She laffed, an' said she wood—she was glad I tole her, cos she woodn't let her krimps out now till evenin, an' she'd put the piller-shams on, and have the girl sweep under the beds.

Then I went an' asked ole Miss Tucker, who goes by the day, to come, an' Johnny Gill, who tends the ralerode switch with one leg, an' wido Robison, who white-washes our kitchen, and the two Green girls who work at tailoring.

They was delited, and promised to go, and not say a word all day.

My peple that I invited all went urly. They were all thare before other folkes came, an' Juge Bell he thot it was a sell, because he was up for offis, and Miss Anna she was that mad she put on her bonnit and went away.

So the sirprise party took thare cake an' creme an' music an' come over to our house, where they had a very nice time.

Papa was awful sorry, cause the juge an' he was friends. He wondered who did it. But I thot wot a pity those poor people went away without cakes or sandwiches like we had!

I gess somebody tole him Georgie did it, fur he looked at me so sharp I thot I wood go out in the back yard and see if the moon had set.

There was a strange cat come in the yard. It was a white and black cat. I said, "Kitty, kitty, kitty!" but it run away. There was an awful owder, so I couldn't stand it, and I went in.

The fokes was in the dining-room havin' their refreshment, so I went in thare. They set up a dredful hu and cry like I was a wild beste.

"O, go away! go away!"

The ladies put up their kankerchers to thare faces as if they had the toothake

Papa grabed me by the shoulder and took me out to the stable, an set me down on some hay, and tole me to sta right thare til the party was over.

It was offal mene. I could here the music plaing, and I hadn't had any supper; it was cold and dark in thare, an' such a smell, I almost dide.

Betty [she come out thare after a wile with a lot of cake. It was moonlite wen she opened the dore, so I saw who 'twas.

"Betty dere, I'm here," sade I, overjoid to see her.

"Oh," sade she, "I could find you if it was ever so dark, Georgie, by my nose," an' she laffed fit to split. But I didn't get mad, cos it was so thotful of her to bring me somethin to ete in that drery place.

I asked her wood she sta with me, but she was too bizzy. She sade she'd bring me out my other close as soon as ever she got time. In about half an hour she brot them out, an tole me when I had put them on I mite come to the house.

Betty is a good girl, I prise her hily. I got back a little wile before the company went away.

"You musn make frens with strange cats, Georgie," sade Dr. Moore.

They oll tezed me. Mr. Jennings he wanted to kno if I sented my hankerchuf with Ess bokay? But papa spoke sternly.

"Georgie," said he, "did you tell that riff-raff to go to Juge Bell's?"

Gust then, before I could anser, there was a fereful racket outside—ole tin pans and drums an' horns and whissles enuff to make you def for life. Evry eye turned on me as if I was the gilty culprit.

"What's up now?" groaned mamma.

For once little Georgie's consunce was free.

"I don't kno, mamma, I gess its the callythumpians, don't you?"

You see, dere diry, I had tole a few fellers round the depot they'd get cake an' cider if they went to Juge Bell's an' sararaded the Sirprise Party, witch they had found out it was to our house and come here.



**So Dr. Moore,
he put me on his
shoulder an'
took me out.**

You never heard such a bedlum as they made—thare was about thre duzen of 'em. If Ide knone the party was to be at our house I woodn't a invited 'em.

Dr. Moore went out to quiet the krowd, wich gust houled an yelled like demons, so he came in with his fingers in his eres.

"You will have to treat them," he said, "to get rid of them."

Mamma went to get them some cake, the Sirprise Party had et it all up, there wasn't time to bake enny that nite, so one chap throwed a stone rite thru the parlour window—the noise got worse—I was so sorry I had sade enny thing to those lo fellows about the saranade.

Then Bess sade there was a big fruit-cake for Thanksgiving in the store-room, she wood get that; so papa sent it out with a lot of sider and his respeks witch they et up and then give "thre cheers for little Georgie," an hollered they wouldn't go away til little Georgie made 'em a speche.

I was fereful fritened. Papa said:

"You've got us into the scrape, my boy—you've got to get us out of it."

So Dr. Moore he put me on his shoulder an' took me out. I xpect I was pale, but wen they set up a laffin and a screeching I got indignant, so I spoke up real loud and sade:

"Fello citizens"—like Ide heard papa down to the hall—"we've had 2 unexpected visitors to our Sirprise Party to nite. One come into the bakyard—it was a stray cat, t'uther came into the frontyard—it was the Callythumpians. I don't know witch I liked the best. Good nite."

"You'll make a stump-speker some day, my sun," said my father, wen they had gone as quiet as lams, an' he laffed so much he got over bean angry with me about the affare, but my best close are ruined, they are burried in the garden, I cannot go to Sunday-skool tomoro.

I'm sorry, for I prommised Harry Hanks I'd bring him my knife if he'd bring me the Ingy rubber lizzord his aunt gave him—I wanted to friten Betty.

Next week is Thanksgiving. I hope an' pra my close won't be berried then, for we expect to have all our relashuns to dinner an' stay over nite.

I shall have a jolly time. Thanksgiving is the best seson of the yere, excepting Christmas, wich is better. Children are very fond of Christmas. I kno somethin' about it that is not true, but I shant let on.

Thare are a good menny things in mince-pies you wouldn't think wen you ete them—mete, apple, suet, razons, sitron, brandy, nutmeg, cinmon, pufpaste—an'

some has snuff. Cook let me see her make them.

I had Johnny's grandmother's snuff-box, which I borrowed without her knowing it. It looked so much like cinmon, I put it all in wen cook was in the pantry. I hope it is good in pies.

This has ben a busy day. Bess took me out in the country with her to spend the afternoon. Thare was a boy thare, and lots and lots of hickory nuts in the woods, and cows. We picked up all we wanted.

He told me about snakes—how they put on a new suit. It is wonderful: I wore my old one cos I was goin' nutting, an' my other was berried.

For once I can close the, my diry, without any sadning axdent to mar thy page. I was told I was a very polite child.

Bess belongs to an archery club in our village. She took her bow and arrow out so as to shoot in the country where there was lots of room. When she was tired of it me an' the other boy we borrowed it.

Bess let us have it if we woodn't shoot tored the house, or at any living thing. We went in the pasture, and we put up a noosepaper on a big tree for a target. But those plagy cows they kep a walkin' about, and most evry time we took ame at the noosepaper they would frisk their tales and walk slowly past that tree like they was possesst, thare want no utther place to promenaid but that.

Finally one o' them arrows hit the boy's father's best Aldernay cow strate in the eye, wot just iade down, kicked once, an' give up the ghost.

I'm afrade, wen the cow don't go to the barnyard to get milked, his father will not think George Hackett is a polite little fello; but I did not mean to—no indede!

I did not ame at a single thing but the noosepaper, and if that fool cow would keep walking past whose fault was it—hers or mine?

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SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS.

Being a series of humorous stories about scholars of various schools throughout the country.



Two Halfpennies or a Penny.

In a North-country school the master had been giving a class of boys a lesson on the nature and value of coins. Presently, in order to illustrate what he had said, he asked :

"Are two ha'pennies of more use than one penny?"

"Yes, sir," replied one of the lads.

"Indeed?" said the master, disappointed at the answer. "Why?"

"Becos," explained the lad, "if I lost my ha'penny I should still have anothe left; while if I lost my penny, I should have nowt at all!"

* * *

His Preference.

Just as shrewd was the answer given by another lad to his teacher on this same subject of coins.

"Which would you prefer me to give you," enquired the teacher, "twelve halfpennies or one silver sixpence?"

"The twelve ha'pennies," answered the lad.

"Why?"

"Because my mother lets me spend th' coppers I get; but the silver, I've allus to gi'e it to her!"

* * *

A Proper Noun.

The following is an amusing example of the folly of cramming the heads of children with a multiplicity of subjects—history and physiology, Scripture and botany, composition and woodwork, etc., etc.

At the close of a Scripture lesson on one of the Parables, the master proceeded to take his lads on the subject of the parts of speech in grammar.

"What is a proper noun?" he asked.

And one of the lads at once replied:

"A earthly story with a heavenly meanin'!"

Sometimes, on the other hand, boys show themselves to be a little smarter than their teachers.

The Manacles of Satan.

"Is it true, sir," asked a lad, who had evidently been reading something on the subject; "is it true that Satan is to be chained up for a thousand years?"

"Well, I think so," replied the teacher, rather taken by surprise.

"And will the chain reach all round the earth, sir?"

"I suppose so," said the teacher, heartily wishing the lad would shut up.

"Why, then, sir," retorted the lad, "he might just as well be loose!"

* * *

Where the Examiner Would Go To.

A schoolmaster at Gateshead had been giving a class of boys a lesson on geography, and had referred particularly to the interesting city of Durham—its cathedral, its castle, and its prison.

Some time later the Government inspector paid one of his visits to the school, and in examining this particular class on the course they had gone through, put the following question:

"If I visited the city of Durham, what large building should I most likely go to?"

"The prison, sir!" promptly answered one of the lads, on whose mind the teacher's reference to that structure had made the deepest impression.

* * *

Too Improbable.

The master of an evening school got an interesting bit of information from one of his boys—a lad of some fifteen years of age.

The teacher was dictating an easy problem in arithmetic, and said:

"If your father had a sovereign, and paid out of it two shillings and threepence for meat——"

"Yes," said the lad, taking it down.

"Four and sevenpence-halfpenny for groceries——"

"Yes," (with a grin, as if he thought the item rather large).

"Eleven and sixpence for rent——"

"What?" said the lad. "Eleven and sixpence for rent? He'd never pay it, sir!"

IF DREAMS WERE REAL!

By CECIL DE VALERIE

(NOTE.—The other night I had a vivid dream, in which all sorts of impossible things happened. If events occurred in real life just the same as they do in dreams, something like the following might be an everyday happening.—C. DE V.)

HANDFORTH & CO. were having an argument in Study D. This apartment seemed bigger than usual, and a huge kitchen-range filled one side of it. Church was busily frying some sausages for tea. The sausages were a foot long, and Handforth was trying to make out that they were cucumbers,

Church persisted that they were sausages and refused to let Handforth go near the frying-pan. Handforth, of course, was determined. McClure barred the way, but Handy merely picked him up and threw him into the coal-scuttle. But Church was determined, too.

He seized the frying-pan, and floated out of the open window with it. Soaring over the Triangle, he unfortunately upset some of the hot fat down Pitt's neck. Pitt happened to be passing just then. Pitt melted at once into a grease spot, and Church grinned unfeelingly.

Then Handforth came charging out of the Ancient House. He was about twice his usual size, and he reached out a tremendous hand to grasp Church. But the latter hurled the frying-pan at Handforth, and the sausages turned into green cabbages. They thudded upon Handforth in a shower.

Church, in the meantime, soared higher and alighted with ease upon the topmost point of the old clock tower. He squatted there, perched on high, and gazed serenely down upon the enraged Handy.

Apparently he thought he was safe. But this was not the case. For Handforth merely reached his hand upwards, and his arm extended like a telescope. His hand grew bigger and bigger as it came up, until it was about twice as large as Church himself.

Church tried to escape, but he was too late!

The enormous hand seized him, and he struggled vainly for freedom. He was pulled down into the Triangle. And Hand-

forth towered up like a building. Just then Morrow of the Sixth came along, and Church appealed wildly for help.

Morrow stopped, and looked round. Handforth shrivelled up like a pricked toy balloon until he resembled a little insect on the ground. He scampered away, and disappeared underneath a flat stone.

McClure came out into the Triangle. He joined Church, and they went to the flat stone and turned it up. Handforth had disappeared, and a little beetle sped away and vanished into a crack in the ground.

Church and McClure seemed startled, but Handforth appeared in their rear. He was smiling broadly, and suggested going on to the playing fields. All thoughts of doing damage had apparently left him.

The three chums of Study D strolled out of the Triangle, and when they arrived on Little Side they discovered that it was really a lake of water, with boats floating about serenely.

Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson and Archie Glenthorne, and quite a number of other Remove chaps, were partaking in a game of cricket. Only it was quite a novel game, for the wickets were fixed in one of the boats, and the ball was like a miniature balloon. It bobbed about on the water, and as Handforth looked at it, the ball suddenly turned into a tiny aeroplane.

It came scudding across the water, growing larger and larger as it approached. Finally it landed on the ground, and it was now a huge machine. The lake was a big aerodrome, and there were several hangars near by. The cricketers turned into blue-overalled mechanics.

Handforth & Co. stepped into the aeroplane, and Handforth seized the steering-wheel. Within a couple of seconds the machine was a thousand feet in the air. And the chums of Study D were gazing down upon St. Frank's. It certainly was St. Frank's, although it seemed different.

There were towers and minarets added, and curious golden domes which glittered in the sunlight. And there were palm trees, and tropical gardens. Handforth touched a lever and the aeroplane dived down. Before it reached the ground, however, the three chums found that they were

in a motor-car. It pulled up in the Triangle.

They jumped out, and Fatty Little came out of the Ancient House. He was wearing flowing robes, and looked like an inhabitant of Bagdad. Behind him came half a dozen fags, all similarly attired, but recognisable as Heath, Owen minor & Co. They were carrying enormous trays containing beef-patties, buns, jam tarts, doughnuts, and dozens of other dainties.

Fatty Little was emptying the trays as fast as he could eat. He stuffed the food into his mouth with extraordinary speed.

It was like a furnace being stoked. And as fast as the food vanished from the trays, it was replaced. The trays never became exhausted.

Handforth & Co. looked on with interest. Fatty Little became larger and larger. He expanded and he rose higher. Within a few minutes the sun was blotted out by Fatty's bulk. Then, suddenly, darkness descended. Handforth and Church and McClure found themselves groping in the intense gloom.

The electric light was switched on, and, strangely enough, the three juniors discovered that they were in Study D.

Everything was just the same as usual, and they sat down to do their prep.

While they were engaged upon this task the door opened. Phipps—Archie's man—appeared, carrying an immense tray. There were bottles on the tray, and the labels on the bottles announced that they contained ginger-beer and lemonade. A big bowl was filled with oranges.

Handforth & Co. stopped their work, and Phipps set the tray down, and poured out three glasses from the bottles. But the glasses were filled with delicious-looking fruit ices. Handforth seized one, and put it to his lips. He was disgusted to find that the glass was empty.

He picked up another, and this was empty, too. Then, glaring at Phipps, the

man suddenly vanished, and Handy discovered that he was in the Form-room. He had been trying to drink out of the ink-well.

The leader of Study D gave a bellow of rage, seized Church and threw him out of the window. Church soared high into the air, and descended in the middle of the River Stowe—which, for some reason, was flowing through the Triangle.

Handforth jumped up and hurried out. He didn't trouble to go through the window, but simply walked through the wall. Church bobbed out of the water, and ran for his life.

He took tremendous strides, his very first step taking him into the middle of the Bannington High Street. He went straight on, casting a glance over his shoulder every now and again.

Handy was following, but he was only running in the usual way. But, somehow, Church found it impossible to outdistance him. No matter how fast he ran, Handforth was always behind. There was no doubt that Handy was determined to catch the runaway.

Church was rapidly feeling exhausted. And, at length, he flopped down in the road—only to find that he was in the

middle of Piccadilly Circus. A motor-bus came charging down upon him, and the whole scene became inky.

Church was in Study D, really, and Handforth was still doing his prep. And everything seemed normal. The bell clanged out, announcing that it was bed-time.

The three juniors threw their books aside and passed out into the passage. At least, it ought to have been the passage, but the door of Study D really led straight into the Remove dormitory.

And the evening was over—and so is this rubbish!

EDITOR'S NOTE.—It really seems to us that Cecil ought to visit a specialist!



While they were engaged upon their task the door opened. Phipps—Archie's man—appeared, carrying an immense tray, containing ginger-beer and lemonade, etc.

'Heap Plentee Fine Placee!'

A Few Minutes with Yung Ching.

(BY OUR SPECIAL INTERVIEWER.)

"ME likee London one piecee fine!" said Yung Ching, in reply to my query. "Heap plentee fine placee! But notee so nicee as St. Flank's. Me velly happy at St. Flank's. Allee samee likee Blitish boys!"

"I have been instructed by my Editor to obtain your views on London, Ching," I said, making a jotting in my notebook. "Of course, you stayed in London for some little time before you came to St. Frank's, didn't you?"

"Plentee week!" said the Chinese boy.

"All right—go ahead!" I exclaimed.

"How did you like London?"

"Muchee confuse!" said Yung Ching.

"Makee my blain go upee and downee! Allee samee plentee noise. Plentee motol-cars ovelywhere. Shootee out and makee people lun one piecee quick. Allee samee scare. Me getee big flight."

"A fright, eh?" I asked. "Why?"

"Evellything so muchee noisee!" replied Ching. "Me allive at station——"

"Of course you were alive!" I put in.

"You no savvy!" grinned Ching. "I meanee allive—getee there!"

"Oh, arrive!" I said. "I've got you now. Go ahead."

"Gleat plentee big tlain!" said Yung Ching. "Muchee better than in my own honourable letched countly. Heapee go quick. Me thinkee allee up. Then we in London, with noisee evelywhere. Me goee in one piecee taxi thlough stleets. Me thinkee big motol-'bus smashee me up evely minute. Poor li'l Chingy muchee frightened. Me thinkee notee live no more."

"So you didn't like it at first?"

"Me too scare," replied Ching. "Then me comee to bigee hotel. Muchee fine. Heap plentee glub—allee samee eat muchee. Then me taken out to see sights. Me goee along Stland, and Tafalgal Square and muchee blight other placee."

"Piccadilly Circus?" I ventured.

"Notee lember—but I thinkee you light," said Yung Ching. "Oh—oh, plentee blight-placee. Gleatee 'lectlic lights

lunning all over sides of houses. Me thinkee allee samee buildings on fire. Velly wondelful. Heap malvellous! Notee seen samee in my own honouable countly. Engleesh people velly clever. One piecee blainy people, me think!"

"Oh, rather!" I agreed. "Anything else?"

"My honouable guardian takee me lound in big motol-car," said Ching. "Me see muchee. Big tlaains lunning about in stleets! Velly stlange! Velly muchee malvellous! Gleat bigee tlaains lunning on lails! Allee samee movee quick likee lightning. No engine—no nothing! Velly muchee milacle!"

"Oh, you mean the electric trams?" I grinned. "Yes, they are rather wonderful when you see them for the first time. I don't know whether you've got electric trams in China, but they couldn't be anything like ours in London. What did you think of the shops?"

"Muchee fine!" said Ching. "One piecee wondelful shops! Plentee light—plentee blight colours—plentee goodde things! Me never see suchee shops in my lifee! Makee me feel likee little insect. So smallee I notee know I alive! Evellything heap plentee big—heap plentee noise. Poor Chingy frightened. Likee St. Flank's muchee better. Velly goodde here."

"Don't you want to go back to China?" I asked.

"Notee on your lifee," replied Ching, firmly. "Me stayee here muchee long years Learnee heap plentee at St. Flank's—learnnee talkee Engleesh, likee you. Then me go Oxford—and leturn to China allee samee like White man. Me velly pleased to be here. Likee evelything. Oh, yes, one piecee goodde!"

And, as I couldn't get very much else out of Yung Ching, I closed my notebook and the interview was officially declared at an end. Besides, the Editor distinctly told me that I couldn't have more than this particular bit of space!

THE END.

(Continued from page 15)

looked round, and then curled himself up in the easy chair with a couple of books on English grammar. He was very keen to improve his English, and availed himself of every opportunity. It was rather curious that he should be able to compose his mind for such work now.

In the meantime, a council meeting was taking place in Study C, just along the passage. And this meeting was a somewhat serious affair. At least, it would have been if Handforth had been absent. But even in the most grave circumstances, Handforth had a habit of creating a ridiculous atmosphere. He couldn't help it—it was just his little way.

"Now look here, you chaps, this thing is serious!" I said, looking round. "Something's got to be done before we go to bed—"

"Why not do it?" asked Handforth tartly.

"Don't interrupt—"

"Rats!" snapped Edward Oswald. "All you can do is to talk about doing something! Jaw—jaw—jaw, all the giddy time! But when it comes to action you're stumped—you can't do a blessed thing! I'm the only chap who can do things!"

"You've done a fat lot so far!" said Pitt.

The meeting consisted of Handforth and Co., Tregellis-West, Watson, Pitt, De Valerie, Levi, and Jack Grey—and, of course, myself. During the last hour or two we had been hoping and expecting that Yung Ching would turn up.

But there had been no sign of the Chinese boy, and only ten minutes earlier I had searched the whole of the Ancient House in an endeavour to find Nelson Lee. But the gov'nor was missing. Apparently, he was still on the trail—or attempting to get on the trail. The fact that Yung Ching had not turned up looked grave. Something serious had happened.

"I've called you chaps together because it's time to get into action," I said. "It's no good Handy saying that nothing has been done. We know that. We haven't had a chance to do anything, we've been waiting for my gov'nor to turn up."

Handforth sniffed.

"Don't blame me," he said grimly. "I offered to get on the track of that Chinese kid, but I was turned down! If I had started on the job, the mystery would have been cleared up by this time, and Yung Ching would be here, with us. It's not my habit to blow my own trumpet—"

"Not at all," interrupted De Valerie. "How absurd! A trumpet isn't big enough for you, Handy—you use a megaphone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No joking now—" I began.

"Joking!" howled Handforth. "Do you call it a joke to insult me? Put up your hands, De Valerie—I'm going to punch you on the nose! I'm going to knock you down, and then kick you out of this study!"

De Valerie grinned.

"Just as loving as ever, Handy," he said. "What an affectionate chap you are!"

Handforth pushed up his sleeve.

"You funny lunatic!" he roared. "I'll show you—"

"Grab him!" I said curtly. "Hold him tight! If you don't dry up, Handy, we'll expel you from this meeting, and bar you altogether! This isn't a time for rowing and squabbling!"

Handforth looked at me in pained surprise.

"You—you'll chuck me out?" he asked dazedly. "Me? Me?"

"Exactly!" I replied. "You!"

"Why, you dotty habbler!" shouted Handforth. "I'm the only one who's any good at detective-work! Just say the word, and I'll buzz out and find Yung Ching in two ticks! It doesn't take me long once I get on the trail!"

"Exactly—once you get on the trail," I agreed. "But there doesn't seem to be any trail to get on! That's what we've got to find out. And when you've done acting the goat, I'll proceed. We've been waiting for Yung Ching to appear, but there's been no sign of him so far. I suggest, therefore, that we form ourselves into two search-parties, and go out in opposite directions."

"How shall we know where to look?" asked Grey.

"My dear chap, we sha'n't know," I replied. "But it's just possible that we might stumble on something, if we're lucky. Anyhow, we can't go to bed leaving the position as it stands."

"Of course not," agreed Pitt. "How shall we divide ourselves?"

"Well, I'll take one lot, and you can be in charge of the other."

"And what about me?" demanded Handforth warmly. "Where's my party?"

"You'd better go with Pitt—"

"He'll be more valuable with your lot!" said Pitt hastily.

Handforth looked round, and curled his lip.

"Oh, so that's it!" he said bitterly. "Jealousy again! I'm being shoved into the background, eh? Instead of letting me lead one of these parties, I've got to stick amongst the rank and file—"

"Oh, my goodness," I groaned. "What an ass you are, Handy! What does it matter who leads? Each party will be on the alert for any suspicious circumstances, and you stand just as much chance of finding a clue as anybody else! And if I take you with me, you'll have to behave yourself!"

Handforth gulped.

"Be-behave myself!" he stuttered. "Why, do you think I'll submit to this sort of rot?"

"Gag him, somebody," groaned Reginald Pitt. "He's like a blessed gramophone! He keeps saying the same thing over and over again! I can't understand how Ching vanished, in the first place. Why was he

taken behind that haystack? Who took him? Where did he ultimately go to?"

"Steady on!" I put in. "We can't answer these questions, Reggie. We only know that Yung Ching disappeared under very mysterious circumstances, and it seems fairly safe to assume that he was taken away by Chinamen."

"That's what I thought," said Church.

"But why should Chinamen take him?" asked McClure.

"Rot!" put in Handforth. "Chinamen! Huh! A fat lot of sense you chaps have got! All you can do is to imagine a lot of sensational piffle! Yung Ching simply fell into the hands of a couple of tramps! I expect they took him into the wood, picked his pockets, and let him go!"

"And he's been over three hours getting home?" I asked.

"Oh, well, they probably sloshed him on the head," said Handforth. "We've only got to go to Bellton Wood, and we shall find him there, hidden away in some gully. You don't need any trail on a case of this kind."

"Right you are, Handy, you can buzz off to Bellton Wood," I said. "That's rather a good idea. Think of the triumph you'll get, too!"

"I shall want about ten chaps with me," said Handforth briskly. "We'll start within five minutes—"

"Look here, if you go, you'll go alone!" I interrupted. "It's quite sufficient for one fathead to go on a fool's errand. But I'm not stopping you, Handy—you're at perfect liberty to go. And this jaw has gone on quite long enough. We're simply wasting time. Are you fellows ready?"

"Of course," said De Valer. "We're waiting for you."

"Wait a minute, I want to fetch my cap," said Solomon Levi. "It's in the study, and I'll be back in a couple of ticks."

He hurried out, went along the passage, and then opened the door of the end study. He saw that the electric light was full on.

"Oh, are you here, Dick?" he asked. "Believe me, there's going to be something doing in a minute or two— Why, what— By my life!"

The Jewish boy paused, staring hard.

For, instead of Dick Goodwin, as he had supposed, the occupant of the chair was Yung Ching himself! It was such a startling surprise that Levi could only stand there, gazing at Ching as though he were a ghost.

It was, indeed, a staggerer.

Levi had just left the meeting which had decided to go out into the gloomy evening in a couple of search parties, to look for Yung Ching. And the Chinese boy was here all the time, calmly and serenely sitting in his own study, learning grammar! It was absolutely the limit!

And there was a certain element of humour in the situation, only Levi couldn't

appreciate it at the moment. The whole thing was quite funny. So much anxiety for Yung Ching, and here he was, as large as life and perfectly safe.

He sat there in just the same way as ever—bland, smiling, and aggravatingly calm. He looked at Solomon Levi with his own peculiarly cheerful expression, and coolly nodded.

"Allee samee good," he remarked. "Me wantee you. Velly hard piecee grammar. Me wantee you tellee me one time—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Levi. "You're here, then!"

"Heap plenty muchee!" agreed Ching, nodding.

"You young boulder!" shouted Levi.

"How did you get here?"

"Walkee thlough door!"

"I know that, you young idiot!" snapped Levi. "But what's happened? What have you been doing?"

"One piecee plentee learn grammar," said Ching blandly. "Velly hard. Me notee know muchee—"

"You—you lozer!" roared Levi. "I know you've been learning grammar—haven't I got eyes? Can't I see? But what did you do before that? What happened to you after you went to fetch that cricket ball?"

"No savvy!" said Yung Ching calmly.

"You—you—" Levi paused, breathing hard. "Look here, I'm not putting up with your nonsense, you rogue! 'No savvy' won't suit me! Where have you been all the evening? Eh? Answer me that!"

Yung Ching smiled more broadly than ever.

"Heap plentee muchee doing!" he replied.

Levi glared at him, and then suddenly dived out of the study, and made his way down the passage. I was just emerging at the same moment, with the other fellows behind me. We looked at Solomon's excited face in some surprise. He came up to us with a rush.

"Hallo?" I asked curiously. "What's wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong, believe me!" replied Levi promptly. "But you fellows needn't break your heads over this searching business. And as for that chocham," he added, glancing at Handforth, "he'd do a lot of good in Bellton Wood you can take it from me!"

"What's that?" snapped Handforth. "What did you call me?"

"A chocham!"

"You'd better not use any of those Chinese words—"

"It's Yiddish!" grinned Levi. "A chocham—"

"You're not going to insult me!" said Handforth fiercely. "For two pins—"

"By my life! Can a fellow breathe?" asked Solomon patiently. "A chocham is a wise person, but I was a bit sarcastic when I called you a chocham!"

"A wise person," said Handforth. "H'm!"

Well, that's not so bad. But what was that about sarcasm—"

"For goodness' sake dry up," I put in. "We can't hear ourselves think! Now then, Levi, what's the cause of your sudden excitement?"

"Yung Ching!" said the Jewish boy promptly.

"What do you mean?"

"He's here."

"Here," I repeated, staring.

"Sitting in my study, learning grammar!" said Levi grimly.

"What!" roared the juniors, in one voice.

They stared at Levi blankly, and I must admit that I was completely bowled over for the moment. I had not been expecting anything of this nature. The idea of Yung Ching returning quietly and unobtrusively had not occurred to me.

"You funny ass!" said Handforth. "Trying to pull our legs, eh? If you can think you can work that fatheaded dodge—"

"Come and look for yourselves!" interrupted Levi.

We crowded along to the end study, and burst in. And there, sure enough, was Yung Ching, calmly proceeding with his reading.

"Well I'm blessed!" I said, striding forward.

"Great pip!"

"He's here all the time!"

"The awful young bounder!"

"The artful little rotter!"

Yung Ching turned his head, and regarded us with his usual open air.

"Me plentee glad!" he remarked. "You comee just lightee! Me wantee you explain one piecee word—"

"Never mind the one piecee word!" I interrupted. "Do you know that we were just preparing to go out searching the fields and meadows for you?"

"No savvy!" said Ching calmly.

"Well, you'd better savvy now!" I went on. "It was only by chance, apparently, that you were found here. When did you get back, Ching?"

"Me comee plentee long timee!"

"What happened to you?"

"Muchee!"

"You exasperating young ass!" I said. "What's the good of saying that? We want to know exactly what took place. You went after that cricket ball, and then suddenly disappeared."

"Allee samee light!" agreed Ching.

"I know I'm right!" I said. "But where did you disappear to?"

"No savvy!"

"How did you manage to vanish in that way?"

"No savvy!"

"Did somebody take you away by force?"

"No savvy!"

Just for a moment I felt like picking the smiling Chineese up and giving him a terrific

shaking. He understood perfectly well what I was talking about, and it was only too obvious that he had no intention of giving any explanation. In his quaint, Chinese way, he meant to tell me that he was keeping his adventures to himself. His smile was just as child-like and open as ever.

"By Jove!" I said, at last. "You young beggar!"

"Me muchee solly," said Ching. "No wantee you be angry!"

"Angry!" I repeated. "You're enough to make a saint wild! Will you tell us what happened to you after you were dragged out of that ditch in the meadow? Were you captured by somebody, or did you go off on your own?"

Ching shrugged his shoulders, and smiled wider than ever.

"No savvy!" he said calmly.

"Let me get at him!" roared Handforth, forcing his way forward. "No savvy, eh? I'll soon show him how to savvy! I'll jolly well punch him—"

"No you won't, Handy," I put in. "You can't punch Ching. One slosh from your fist, and he'd be finished! It's no good trying to force him. If he doesn't want to speak, there's an end of it!"

"Rot! I'll soon make him talk—"

"I don't reckon you will!" put in Solly. "Believe me, we've had some experience—Dick and I. That yellow smiler is about the limit! If he doesn't want to talk, you can say good-night! I've made myself hoarse trying to make him answer sometimes. Believe me, he's a caution!"

"Well, it's a jolly good thing he's come back!" I declared. "It's saved us the trouble of searching, and I'm relieved, too. By the way, Ching, what did you do with that cricket ball?"

"No savvy!" said Ching blandly.

And we gave it up—the Chinese boy was hopeless.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT NELSON LEE DISCOVERED!



AND while these events were taking place at St. Frank's, Nelson Lee was by no means idle. I had been wondering what had happened to the guv'nor, and I was just a little bit anxious. But I need not have been.

For Nelson Lee was making a few discoveries.

He had acted with precision and certainty—at a critical moment when hesitation would have been fatal. And, as a result of that action, he was now congratulating himself upon the events of the evening.

Before darkness had finally settled over the district he examined the meadow carefully and thoroughly. And he came to the conclusion that Yung Ching had not been taken very far away. Nelson Lee believed,

in fact, that the Chinese boy was concealed somewhere within a radius of a few hundred yards. But the concealment was so cunningly contrived that the detective could know nothing for certain. That he had certain suspicions was obvious, for he returned to the meadow after darkness had fallen—like a shadow, silent and unobtrusive.

And he took up his stand, practically in the hedge, only a short distance from the innocent looking haystack. Nelson Lee did not actually believe that Yung Ching was hidden there, but he was quite certain that the missing junior was not very far off.

He knew something of the Chinese mind, and he was quite convinced that Ching had been taken away by Chinese. But they would not be so foolish as to move while daylight lasted.

It was Nelson Lee's theory—and this theory was absolutely correct—that the kidnappers had been lying in wait for hours—probably throughout the day—with that characteristic patience of the Oriental.

These Chinamen were strangers in the neighbourhood. Their very appearance would have given rise to widespread gossip if they happened to be seen by any of the villagers. Nelson Lee took it as a certainty that the yellow men would not allow themselves to be seen.

They had come to this district in the darkness, and it stood to reason that they would take action in the darkness. In other words, they would not move away from the meadow until night fell. To be seen taking Yung Ching away would be absolutely fatal.

Exactly how the yellow men had effected their object, Nelson Lee did not know. But he, too, could be patient. And when he took up his stand in the meadow unseen against the hedge, he remained like a part of the hedge itself.

And his eyes were accustomed to the gloom. He could see with a fair amount of distinctness in all directions. And there he waited, motionless and silent, as the time ticked by.

Any movement on his part now would probably mean discovery. He instinctively felt that eyes were watching out of the darkness. He had a conviction that he was not the only human being within that meadow.

And, late in the evening, after his weary vigil, he was rewarded.

He thought he saw a movement further down the meadow, close against a clump of willows. He concentrated his attention upon this spot. And then, five minutes later, he saw three dim forms coming silently and stealthily forward. They might have been ghosts, for all the sounds they made.

And they were creeping along the hedge towards the haystack—which now became doubly interesting to Lee. And these three dim figures would have to pass within a yard of him. He didn't stir an inch. He was effectually concealed by the hedge, and he remained as motionless as a mummy.

Not that he had any particular fear of

these Chinamen. They were not practised in woodcraft to the same extent as he was. He knew that he could beat them any day at that game. Had they been Red Indians, he would have felt slightly uncertain—for the Red Indian can detect the presence of an enemy in the most uncanny manner. These Chinamen were not to be feared in that way.

But they were very cautious. They crept on inch by inch—so stealthily that it hardly seemed possible that they could be human beings. And, as it happened, they paused for a few moments when they were exactly opposite the spot where Nelson Lee stood concealed. He could see their outlines against the sky. They were Chinamen right enough—big fellows, dressed in black clothing, to match the darkness. And they whispered one or two words—which Nelson Lee could not understand.

Then they passed on, and, finally, came to a halt exactly opposite the rear of the haystack. And there, like three grim sentinels, they took up their stand. There was something very sinister about this business.

Only a short period of time passed. And then came quick movement on the part of the Chinese. Yung Ching's captors had just emerged from their burrow, and they found themselves menaced by these black figures.

I have already described what took place. Yung Ching found himself among friends, and his two enemies took to their heels, squealing with fright. They made their way across the meadow in the direction of Bell-ton Wood.

And this was the moment which called for instant action on Nelson Lee's part.

There was no time for hesitation or delay. Either he had to remain, and see what happened to Yung Ching, or he had to follow the fugitives. And Nelson Lee, without a second's pause, took the latter course.

*The very facts, as he had seen them, were significant. Yung Ching was safe now—these three black figures were not enemies. For they had rescued Ching from the other Chinese. They were his friends.

But the two men who had fled were obviously men of a different calibre. And Nelson Lee keenly desired to find out what they were up to—where their headquarters were, and whether they were alone in this enterprise.

His only course, therefore, was to follow them—swiftly.

From the direction they took across the meadow he could see that they were bent upon entering the wood. And the spot where they were making for was just that section of the wood where a footpath led through the dense trees.

A swift calculation told Nelson Lee that he had the advantage. The fleeing Chinamen had to cross the widest part of the meadow. And Lee, by running quickly along the hedge, and taking a cut across the end of an adjoining field, could arrive in the wood first.

Once there, it would be a simple matter for him to reach the footpath and work his way forward in such a manner that he would head the Chinamen off. But even a minute's delay would make this plan impracticable.

And so, leaving Yung Ching to the care of his rescuers, he hastened off.

He carried out his plan to the letter, and, as he had anticipated, he had not crouched beside the footpath in the wood for more than three minutes before the two defeated Chinamen came along.

They were talking rapidly together in their own language. Here, in the deep recesses of the wood, they felt themselves to be perfectly safe. This was not private property, and there were no gamekeepers to beware of.

The Chinamen passed along the footpath, quite unconscious of Nelson Lee's presence. They went on their way—not hurrying now, but taking the walk easily. Nelson Lee shadowed them. His work was perfect. Even if the two yellow men had been on the alert—even if they had been expecting pursuit—they would never have known that a grim shadow was dogging their footsteps.

And so they progressed until they reached the far edge of the wood. Emerging, the ground sloped gradually away down on the vast expanse of Bannington Moor. The great heath stretched out, dark and forbidding, to the far horizon. Not a light showed anywhere. For this spot was uninhabited and forsaken.

By this time Nelson Lee had begun to suspect the ultimate destination of the men he was tracking. They had come to this district in the darkness, and it was clear that their headquarters were situated in some place that was not likely to be visited by any of the local inhabitants.

And what better place could be found than the old disused quarry, which lay only a short distance across the moor, and within sight of the wood? A more fitting spot for such mysterious happenings as these could not be imagined. And a better place of concealment would be impossible to find.

The old quarry had been used on other occasions—by other criminals. But this was the first time that Chinamen had visited the district. Instinctively, they had selected this old quarry as their base. Indeed, it was really the only spot that was at all suitable.

And Nelson Lee's assumption turned out to be correct.

The two figures stole across the moor, and then vanished over the lip of the quarry. When Nelson Lee arrived, he could faintly see them descending the steep slope. The quarry was like a great gash in the moor, the bottom of the gash being fifty or sixty feet below the moor level. And down there the scene was desolate and ugly in the extreme.

Great boulders, choking masses of weeds,



Fatty opened the cupboard, and then his eyes glittered. He stood there, and he instinctively smacked his lips.

and a wilderness which looked depressing enough even on the brightest day.

Enshrouded in the gloom of night, the spot was forbidding and almost uncanny. The two Chinamen were like sinister spectres as they picked their way between the boulders, and at last vanished utterly.

Nelson Lee knew the geography of the quarry as well as he knew every door and window at St. Frank's. And he recognised that particular section at once. The two Chinamen had made their way into a cave-like opening which led into one of the old quarry workings.

It was not the tunnel which led to the

old vault under the ruined monastery near St. Frank's. This working was quite a different one, and ended after penetrating into the ground for about a hundred yards. There were no branch tunnels of any kind. Lee knew that the men could not emerge into the open by any other means.

And he crept up silently and with extreme caution. He felt that he was about to make some further discoveries. It would be foolish for him to show his hand now. Indeed, he realised that his position was fraught with peril. If he fell into the hands of these yellow men, it was doubtful if he would ever survive.

At last he arrived at the very entrance to the cave. And here he paused, wondering exactly what his plan of action was to be. To a large extent he must be guided by circumstances, but he was very anxious to go into this tunnel.

He knew the dangers, but he did not hesitate. He was armed, and he had always been well capable of taking care of himself. These Orientals, however, had strange ways. They were not likely to give him much chance of using the ordinary methods of self-defence. Nelson Lee knew from previous experience that to deal with Chinese criminals, was like dealing with serpents.

However, he was not going to be foiled.

Having come so far, he had no intention of turning back. And he edged his way forward into the cave entrance. He was on the lookout all the time for the least sign of a possible sentry. For it was on the cards that one of these invaders had been placed on guard.

However, this did not seem to be the case, and Nelson Lee was not exactly surprised. For they had no suspicion that their movements were watched, or that their hiding-place was known.

At last Nelson Lee found himself right inside the cave. The rough walls were irregular and full of crannies and crevices. This was all to the good, for he could easily slip back into one of these places in the event of a sudden surprise. The uncomfortable thought struck him that these self-same crevices offered excellent lurking-places for the enemy.

But he did not pause because of this.

At the rear of the cave the disused tunnel of the quarry working started. It was narrow and irregular, propped up here and there with rotten beams. And there was a turn near the end. Reflected from this turn there was a flicker of yellow light.

Inch by inch, Nelson Lee worked forward, feeling that every step took him into greater peril. And at last he found himself in such a position that he could project his head round the rock, and look upon the scene beyond. He crouched to the ground until he was lying nearly full length. Then, gradually, he slid forward.

The scene he gazed upon was very much as he had expected.

At the end of the tunnel two candles were burning on a ledge. And there was a kind of brazier, glowing warmly—and this, apparently, was provided for cooking purposes. Even Chinese villains must eat. The two men he had followed were squatting stolidly near the brazier, partaking of supper. They were eating a kind of stew mainly composed of rice, by what Nelson Lee could see, and they were manipulating their chop-sticks with characteristic ease.

But it was not upon these two men that Nelson Lee chiefly gazed. There was a third man, squatting at the rear, and partially hidden by the brazier. He was older than the others—a Chinaman with a wizened yellow face which looked like old parchment. His eyes glittered with a kind of fire in the glow. And he was talking rapidly in Chinese. His voice seemed to have a menacing tone, and Nelson Lee judged that he was angrily upbraiding his followers for having failed in their mission.

For perhaps five minutes Nelson Lee remained still, watching. Then, having seen enough, he edged his way back. At last he emerged into the open air, and like a shadow he stole away. There was a puzzled frown on his brow. He was thinking of the incident which had occurred only a few nights earlier—when a Chinaman had attempted to get into the Remove dormitory. Obviously, this fellow had had designs upon Yung Ching. Nelson Lee was convinced that the man had meant to kill the Chinese boy.

But he had been frustrated at the last moment by a dart which had entered the back of his neck, causing unconsciousness, and apparently death. And yet, in some mysterious way the body of this Chinaman had vanished by the time Nelson Lee arrived on the scene.

Was that man connected with this group?

It was a puzzling question. If they had wanted to kill Yung Ching, why had they kept him a prisoner in the haystack? Why had they not finished him outright, and left him there? Somehow Nelson Lee did not believe that these men were intent upon murder.

In that case there must be others! The whole countryside, in fact, appeared to be teeming with Chinese! And yet the local inhabitants knew nothing. These yellow invaders moved stealthily and secretly.

The thought was a disconcerting one, and Nelson Lee, having completed his present task, realised that the hour was getting late. It was his duty to get back to the school with all haste.

Somehow, he knew that Yung Ching needed protection more than he had ever needed it before!

CHAPTER VII.

LOOKING AFTER CHINGY!



"NEARLY bedtime!" said Tommy Watson, with a yawn. "Yes, and you look ready for bed, too!" I remarked. "Must be the cricket. Not that I'm feeling particularly used up."

Watson sniffed.

"You didn't do all the leather chasing," he said. "Some of us were running about for hours, and getting ourselves properly exhausted. It's a pretty good idea being a crack batsman or a bowler! He escapes all the hard work!"

I grinned.

"Does he?" I said. "It seems to me, Tommy, that a bowler does more strenuous exercise than any fieldsman—and I've been bowling a good bit this evening. Still, we won't start an argument."

"Begad! Rather not, dear old boys!" said Sir Montie. "Arguin' is a frightful bore, an' shockin'ly exhaustin'. It's really a wonder to me how Handforth manages to keep up his strength, considerin' the amount of arguin' he does!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, looking round. "What's that?"

"Nothin', dear fellow—nothin'!" said Sir Montie hastily.

"Of course not!" exclaimed Handforth, pushing up his sleeves. "I'm going to put a stop to this kind of thing! My back can't be turned for two ticks without somebody jawing about me! They're afraid to say things to my face. And when I tax the rotters, they simply say 'nothing'! I've had enough of it!"

"There you are—there's an example!" I grinned. "You see, Montie. He's quite ready to start an argument on the spot, and to keep it up until he's got you rocky. The best thing is to studiously ignore him!"

"Rather, dear fellow," said Sir Montie.

We walked out of the common-room, leaving Handforth glaring after us. Handy was still feeling a bit sore about Yung Ching. The leader of Study D had made up his mind to do a few wonderful things in connection with getting on the track. And the discovery of Ching safely in his own study had made Handforth snort with disgust. Personally, he would have preferred the Chinese boy to be still missing—and, for choice, in the hands of a desperate gang of scoundrels. This would have given Handy a chance to rescue him. But Chingy's chances would have been slim.

It was very close to bedtime, and I sauntered along the Remove passage with my chums, and we looked into the end study. The lights were out, and the room was empty.

"Not here!" I said, frowning. "Levi and Goodwin distinctly told me they'd keep their

eye on Ching for the rest of the evening. I wonder where the bounders have got to?"

I had no misapprehensions. Within the school itself there was surely no necessity to have the Chinese boy watched every minute. At the same time, I knew that he was in some mysterious kind of danger.

Although he had told us nothing of what had happened to him during the evening, I was quite certain in my own mind that Ching had passed through a startling experience of some kind. The fact that he would say nothing of it was rather significant. He evidently did not want us to know the nature of his peril. And so, for the moment, we were in the dark. As soon as Nelson Lee turned up it would be different. I was certain that the guv'nor knew a great deal.

And I did not forget some instructions that Nelson Lee had given me.

Owing to that experience, a night or two earlier—when the mysterious Chinamen had attempted to get into the Remove dormitory—Yung Ching had been removed into Nelson Lee's own bedroom. The guv'nor, in fact, had decided to have the little Chinese with him during the hours of the night. In this way he could safely assure Ching of certain protection.

And Lee had told me that if ever bedtime came and he was not in the school, I was to accompany Ching upstairs and remain with him until Lee himself arrived. It was up to me, therefore, to find out things.

It didn't take me long to ascertain Nelson Lee was not in the Ancient House. In fact, he had not returned from his expedition. This meant that I should have to look after Ching until he turned up. And Ching was evidently with his study chums, somewhere.

I was just thinking in this way when I ran across Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin coming out of the junior laboratory, grinning hugely. Levi had a small bottle in his hand.

"What's the game?" I asked, pausing.

"Just been making some patent elixir to shove in Fullwood's tea at breakfast-time to-morrow," grinned Levi. "Believe me, it's pungent! I reckon that gunuf will be a bit sorry for himself! We'll teach him to make insulting remarks about Petticoat Lane and Whitechapel Road!"

I chuckled.

"I didn't know you came from Whitechapel Road!" I said.

"I don't," said Levi. "My people live in Maida Vale—but that's no reason why I should let Fullwood insult Whitechapel! I've already knocked him down, but I want to improve on that——"

"Do it by all means," I interrupted. "I'm not interested. Where's Yung Ching?"

"In the study, isn't he?"

"No."

"By gum!" said Goodwin. "That little beggar is a rare champion for disappearing! We left him asleep in the chair——"

"You oughtn't to have left him at all!"

I broke in. "Didn't you promise me that you'd keep your eye on him until bedtime?"

"Hang it all, we're not the kid's keepers!" said Solomon. "He was safe enough, and there was no reason why we shouldn't leave him in the study for a bit. He was dozing, and so we thought we'd leave him in peace."

I said no more, but hurried away. I couldn't altogether blame Goodwin and Levi for not remaining constantly with Ching. After all, they didn't understand the nature of the peril—and for that matter, neither did I! And it was a bit thick to expect them to remain constantly by Yung Ching's side.

After what had happened earlier in the evening, however, I was quite anxious concerning the Chinese junior. And I immediately instituted a search. I went from study to study; I went into the common-room; I visited the gymnasium, and I examined the Triangle.

Once again, Yung Ching had vanished!

As it happens, it was left to Archie Glen-thorne to find him—and he wasn't so very far away, after all. Archie's study was the only one I had missed, and I hadn't thought of looking there. For one thing, it was in the Fifth Form passage, and for another thing, I couldn't quite picture Yung Ching visiting the noble Archie.

The Genial Ass. to be quite exact, had been upstairs with Phipps. Archie's valet had

been making certain alterations in the bedroom—for Archie not only had a man to himself, but a bedroom as well. He was a privileged person—although, of course, his pater had to pay for these privileges. The other Remove fellows didn't mind. Archie was an exception.

While upstairs, Archie had discussed the subject of clothing with Phipps, and he had made arrangements about what suit he should wear on the morrow—exactly which silk shirt, and so on. Phipps himself fairly gloated in this kind of thing, and Archie never got tired of talking about clothes.

Now, however, Archie had come down to spend a few minutes in his study before the bedtime bell clanged out. There were one or two notes which Archie wanted to make concerning dress.

He entered his study, and switched on the electric light. Then he advanced into the apartment, and suddenly came to a halt. A somewhat pained expression came into his eyes, and he gazed at the soft lounge with a kind of reproachful look. He adjusted his monocle carefully.

"I mean to say!" he murmured. "Deucedly thick, what?"

For there, coiled up in the deep cushions of the lounge, lay Yung Ching, the Chinese, apparently sound asleep. There were two or three comfortable pieces of furniture in

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(Continued from page 32.)

Archie's study—all of them tremendously expensive and luxurious to a degree. But Yung Ching had chosen the softest and deepest of them all. He evidently knew a thing or two.

And, as Archie had remarked, it was certainly somewhat thick for a fellow to invade his study, and calmly go off to sleep on his best lounge.

"This, as you might say, is dashed awk!" exclaimed Archie, gazing at Yung Ching, and regarding him as though he were some strange animal. "I say, you know! I say! Awaken, old tulip! Kindly come to life, and all that!"

Yung Ching remained sound asleep.

"What-ho! What-ho!" said Archie, striding forward, and giving the Chinese boy a gentle jab in the ribs. "I mean to say, what about it? Pray be good enough to realise, old darling, that you have committed several large slices of intrusion! Frightfully rotten to mention the fact, but there you are! I say! I say! Dash it all, the chappie's dead, or something!"

Yung Ching certainly failed to respond.

"This is ghastly—absolutely!" went on Archie, scratching his head. "Dear old laddie! I urge you to pay a large amount of attention! I mean to say, Archie is speaking! Positively allowing the old flow to come forth!"

But still Yung Ching slept on. He appeared to be doing so, at all events. And Archie, having failed to arouse him, became somewhat alarmed. He looked round helplessly, and then dashed for the bell-push.

"The bally old S.O.S.!" he murmured. "Phipps required in chunks!"

He pushed the bell, and waited, regarding Yung Ching askance every now and again. And, after a few moments, the door softly opened and Phipps appeared.

"Ah! Good lad!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, rescue has arrived! The good old S.O.S. has been answered, what? Phipps, dear old pineapple, kindly gaze upon the old goods and chattels!"

Archie indicated the lounge, and Phipps frowned.

"It appears to be the young Chinese gentleman, sir," he said.

"Absolutely!"

"Did you invite him into the study?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"In that case, sir——"

"That is to say, absolutely not!" added Archie hastily. "I'm feeling hot and bothered, Phipps! Anything like this fairly puts me off my bally stroke, don't you know! Makes me deucedly nervy. The chap has positively intruded! Converted the old lounge into a bed!"

"I gather, sir, that Master Ching entered during your absence and made himself at home?"

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Brainy lad, Phipps!"

"What is it you require, sir?"

"What do I require? Well, I mean to say!" said Archie. "Fairly ob, what? The idea, Phipps, is to remove the obstruction! Please get to work and awaken the sleeping beauty!"

Phipps strode across to the lounge, and shook Yung Ching's shoulder. He didn't use the gentle methods that Archie had adopted. He shook the Chinese boy vigorously. And Yung Ching opened his eyes, and smiled with all his customary childlike geniality.

"Allee samee much thanks!" he said. "Wakee me up goodee!"

"What are you doing in this study, Master Ching?" asked Phipps.

"Sleeppee!"

"Well, dash it all—rather frank and so forth!" said Archie. "Sleeppee, what? The dear lad doesn't mind admitting the old truth and all that!"

Phipps looked at Yung Ching doubtfully.

"You do not appear to realise, Master Ching, that you have no right in this study," he said. "Will you be good enough to return to your own quarters?"

"Absolutely the right stuff!" murmured Archie.

"Allee samee sleeppee!" said Yung Ching blandly.

Archie adjusted his monocle.

"Well, as it were, I'm dashed!" he exclaimed. "The fact is, Phipps, this young chappie is rather too much for us, what? Quite imposs to deal with him, and all that! Absolutely!"

Phipps frowned.

"I am certain, Master Ching, that you understand what I am saying," he exclaimed coldly. "It is quite true that you have been sleeping in this apartment. But will you kindly depart at once?"

"No savvy!" said Yung Ching softly.

"Gadzooks!" said Archie. "How frightfully exasp!"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps. "But the young gentleman need not think that we shall deal lightly with him. Having failed to depart after being politely requested to do so, there is only one method to adopt."

"I mean to say, a scheme?" asked Archie. "Has the old bean grasped something, Phipps? In other words, have you clicked an idea?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good man," said Archie. "You know, Phipps, you're a deucedly brainy cove!"

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps. "I shall be compelled to use force——"

"What? I mean to say, what!" interrupted Archie, startled. "Force! Dash it all, Phipps—that is to say, kindly apply the old brake! Force, what? Scarcely dig, and all that! Hardly the thing, you know!"

"Nevertheless, sir, it is the only method that we can adopt," said Phipps firmly. "Much as I dislike the application of force, it seems that the only way in which we can remove Master Ching is to expel him bodily from the study."

Archie polished his monocle nervously.

"On the old neck, what?" he asked. "The order of the hoof, and what not! A priceless scheme, Phipps, but most dashed rotten I mean to say, not quite pally, and so forth! However, proceed! Get busy on the old stuff, and remove the obstruction as quickly as possible. Get the awful deed over!"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps.

He advanced towards the lounge, and Yung Ching regarded him calmly.

"Now, then, Master Ching, if you please!" said Phipps grimly. "Will you be good enough to walk quietly out, or must I carry you?"

"No cally!" said Yung Ching.

"You will, I take it, walk out quietly?"

"No walkee!"

"That, as it were, has bent it!" observed Archie softly.

"Since you will not walk, Master Ching," said Phipps, "the only alternative is for me to carry you. I greatly dislike such a procedure, but your obstinacy compels me to take such a course."

"Plentee muchee talkee!" said Yung Ching. "Me allee light here. No wantee go. Velly comfortable—oh, yes! One piecee stopee, I think!"

Phipps didn't think so. He bent down, seized Yung Ching firmly and lifted him clean off the lounge. Contrary to his expectations, the Chinese boy made no attempt to struggle, but submitted calmly enough, smiling as blandly as ever. And as he was carried towards the door the bell clanged out for bedtime.

"How frightfully rotten," said Archie. "Time to trickle away to the old dreamless! This dashed chappie has wasted all the bally evening, don't you know. I must remark, Phipps, that life is deucedly strenuous!"

He opened the door, and Phipps passed out. And as the valet carried Yung Ching into the passage, I came into view round the corner. I was immensely pleased to see Yung Ching in Phipps' arms. For, to tell the truth, I had been worrying about the Chinese boy. But now I grinned.

"Run to earth!" I said, as I came up. "What's the idea, Phipps?"

"The young gentleman persisted in remaining in Master Glenthorne's study, sir," said Phipps. "Our only alternative, in the end, was to apply force. I shall be obliged if you will take charge of the young gentleman now."

"Certainly," I said. "Hand him over."

"Bally decent of you, Nipper—in fact, dashed decent!" exclaimed Archie warmly. "Several yards of self-sacrifice, and all that

sort of rot! Kindly accept a large quantity of gratitude, old tulip!"

"Don't mensh!" I grinned. "That's all right, Archie—only too delighted. Now then, Chingy, you've got to come up to bed with your uncle!"

"You notee my uncle!" said Yung Ching cheerfully.

"Well, I'm going to look after you—and that seems to be a pretty tough proposition," I said. "Come on, my son!"

"Me notee your son!" said Chingy. "You notee got son. Too youngie. Velly strange talkee. No speakee likee that in my honouable countly. You wantee me come to bed? allee lightee—me comee heap plentee good!"

We went off together, and Archie gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, that, as it were, is that!" he observed. "But I'm scared, Phipps. Absolutely! I don't mind admitting that the jolly old wind is up in considerable gusts! Gales, and what not!"

"Is that so, sir?" asked Phipps. "May I venture to inquire why you have—ahem!—got the wind up?"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "Inquire, laddie! I have a most priceless idea that the chappie with the lemon-coloured face will stagger around on the old morrow. What? Further trouble, if you know what I mean!"

"I do not think you need concern yourself on that point, sir," said Phipps. "If Master Ching comes into this study again be good enough to ring for me, and I will soon deal with the matter."

Archie looked intensely relieved.

"Brainy lad!" he said. "Dashed if I know what I'd do without you, Phipps! Always on the spot—always rallying round when there's trouble in the old offing. Good man! Absolutely!"

In the meantime, I was conducting Yung Ching up to bed. He did not go into the Remove dormitory with the other juniors, but was directed by me straight into Nelson Lee's own bedroom.

This, of course, was a most unusual proceeding, and, indeed, quite unprecedented. For a junior schoolboy to sleep in a master's room was unheard of. But Nelson Lee was something more than a schoolmaster; he was the greatest detective in the country. And he had undertaken to protect Yung Ching from unknown perils. And experience had shown that it would never do to leave the Chinese boy in the Remove dormitory. The only safe course was to have Ching in his—Lee's—own bedroom.

But Nelson Lee was still absent, and I was in temporary charge. This business entailed a certain amount of inconvenience for the gov'nor, since it made it necessary for him to retire unusually early or else leave Yung Ching unprotected.

The Chinese boy undressed, and got into bed. He was just the same as ever—took everything as it came, and never showed the slightest trace of surprise or, in fact, any other emotion.

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I was just wondering how long I should have to wait when the door opened and Nelson Lee came in.

"Ah, Nipper, good boy!" he said approvingly. "I thought I should find you here." I regarded the gov'nor curiously.

"Where have you been all this time, sir?" I inquired.

"Oh, I was delayed," said Nelson Lee vaguely.

"You don't seem a bit surprised to find Yung Ching here," I went on. "How did you know he'd come back, and——"

"I was quite certain that I should find Yung Ching at St. Frank's," replied Nelson Lee. "An inquiry downstairs told me that my conviction was correct. I am satisfied, Nipper, that certain grim events are being prepared. I must remain constantly on the alert if I am to frustrate the designs of this boy's enemies!"

"Why, is something going to happen to-night, sir?" I asked quickly.

"Most probably."

"Can I help?"

"Well, I hardly think so, Nipper," said Lee. "However, if you are very keen you may come to my bedroom at about eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock. But make no sound, and show no light."

"Good enough!" I said eagerly. "I'll be here. What's the danger, sir?"

"I cannot tell you."

And so I went—knowing nothing of what was to follow. But I was quite satisfied that Nelson Lee was anticipating something of a particularly sinister nature.

And, in all truth, his suspicions were justified!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THING OF HORROR.



NELSON LEE stood for a moment or two in deep thought after I had gone. His keen grey eyes were extra bright this evening, and there was a tense, alert expression on

his lean, clean-shaven face. The set of his jaw was firm, and his very attitude was one of a man who knows that an ordeal is coming.

He crossed over to Yung Ching's bed at length, and bent down.

"Ching?" he said softly.

"Me sleepee!" said Yung Ching, opening his eyes.

"You will sleep soon, but not for a moment or two," said Nelson Lee. "Listen to me. I want you to get out of bed, go to the window, pull up the blind and lean out for a few seconds. Do you understand?"

"Me savvy heap plentee," replied Ching readily.

He sat up in bed, and commenced smiling. It was a smile that came slowly, continuing

until it was so infectious that Nelson Lee was obliged to respond. The Chinese smile is unlike the smile of the European. It grows, and when fully developed is a very real smile.

"Whatee idea?" asked Yung Ching. "Me plentee savvy, but notee know why lookeo out window, most honouable sir. Me velly curious, noble mastel!"

"Perhaps you are curious, Ching, but I cannot satisfy you," said Nelson Lee. "Go to the window, as I have said, and follow my instructions. Do not remain for more than a few seconds."

The Chinese boy jumped out of bed, and went to the window. He pulled up the blind, raised the lower sash high, and then leaned out into the cool air of the night. The full light of the room played upon him, showing him up very clearly. Nelson Lee took care to remain in such a position that he could not be seen.

"All right, Ching," he murmured. "That will do."

Without a word, the little Chinese lowered the sash, pulled down the blind, and then ran lightly back to his bed. This was a small one placed opposite to Nelson Lee's own bed, on the other side of the room.

The detective made no attempt to undress, but extinguished the electric light almost at once. Having done so he raised the blind, and left it raised. The clouds had passed away by now, and the stars were twinkling brightly in the deep purple of the heavens.

In the Remove dormitory, I had got into bed with the rest of the fellows, and most of them were now slumbering with all the soundness of youth. And by the time that ten-fifteen chimed out there was not a fellow awake, with the solitary exception of myself. I made no attempt to sleep. I did not want to sleep, and so I lay there, waiting for the time to pass. It seemed interminable. Each quarter-hour of silence, between the chiming of the school clock, seemed like a full hour. But, at length, eleven o'clock boomed out. And the next half-hour seemed only about three minutes.

For I dozed off in spite of myself. And I suddenly realised, with a bit of a shock, that I had been sleeping, and that I might have gone off into a sound slumber.

I hopped out of bed quickly, and slipped into my clothes. I only donned my socks and slippers, trousers and coat, over my pyjamas. Then I was ready, and I crept like a shadow out of the dormitory.

The whole school was now silent and still. By this time the latest of the masters had retired, and no lights were showing anywhere. St. Frank's lay in complete darkness—a sleeping building.

Arriving at Nelson Lee's bedroom door, I seized the handle, and turned it noiselessly. Then, like a ghost, I crept in. I closed the door after me, and stood there, just inside the room.

The silence was heavy, and only slightly

broken by the steady breathing of both Yung Ching and Nelson Lee. The starlight came in through the window, the blind of which was completely raised. I could dimly make out Yung Ching's bed, with the form of the little Chinese coiled up under the blankets.

On the other side of the room Nelson Lee lay in his larger bed. I was surprised. Had the gov'nor fooled me, or what? Why had he requested me to come here if there was no necessity to be on the alert? Then I realised that he might have been relying upon me to awaken him.

I tip-toed over to his bed, bent down, and touched him lightly on the head. Then I received a fearful shock. His forehead was as cold as ice! No living man could have such icy skin.

A choking sound came up in my throat, but I stifled it. For in that second I remembered that I had heard the gov'nor's steady breathing, and this figure in the bed was not breathing!

I bent closer, and then felt like kicking myself.

The thing was a dummy!

The "body" was probably made up of rolled blankets and pillows, or something of that sort. The head was merely a plaster bust from the art section, with a wig on the top. No wonder the forehead had been icy cold!

"Gov'nor!" I breathed softly.

"If you were deceived, Nipper, I think we may safely assume that any possible intruder will be equally hoodwinked," came Nelson Lee's soft voice. "Come over here with me. I am in the recess just by the wardrobe, quite hidden by this very convenient curtain."

I padded silently across the room, taking care to steer clear of the window. There was a light curtain fixed up there, just against the wardrobe. Pushing this aside, I found Nelson Lee beyond. He was fully dressed, and I could feel that he was smiling at me with mild amusement.

"You boulder, sir!" I whispered. "You gave me an awful scare!"

"Nonsense," chuckled the gov'nor. "Your nerves are made of better stuff than that, Nipper. Now that you are here I am not altogether sure that I was wise in allowing you to come. Your presence, let me say, is quite unnecessary."

"Thanks awfully, gov'nor," I said. "There's nothing like being blunt!"

Lee chuckled again.

"Never mind, young 'un, you may possibly come in useful," he breathed. "But am I justified?"

"Justified in what, sir?"

"Exposing you to a horrible danger," said Lee gravely. "Joking aside, Nipper, I am convinced that a terrible peril will be let loose in this bedroom before another hour has passed."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I cannot say more now, because there is

just a faint possibility that I may be wrong," replied Lee. "If this peril actually does materialise you must obey me on the instant, whatever I order. For the present, you will remain still. It will be far wiser for us not to talk."

I was filled with intense curiosity.

"You might, at least, give me a hint, gov'nor," I said. "I can guess a few things, of course. You are expecting a Chinaman to come through the window, I suppose, after Yung Ching."

"Something like that."

"How will these Chinese rotters know that Ching is here?"

"A shrewd question, Nipper, but I took very good care that the enemy should know that Ching has been placed in different quarters," whispered Lee. "I made the boy stand at the window."

I was rather startled.

"You mean that you want these Chinks to come?" I asked blankly.

"Yes."

"But why?"

"To get this ghastly business over," replied Lee grimly. "It has got to come, that is certain. I have made up my mind that it shall come to-night. The suspense is too great, Nipper. It must be settled without delay."

"But wasn't it risky to expose Ching at the window?" I asked.

"No, these enemies have other plans."

I was more mystified than ever, and I could not question Nelson Lee any further, because he forbade it. And we stood there, behind that curtain, absolutely silent and motionless.

We were waiting, but waiting for what?

Nelson Lee knew, but I was in the dark. Later on, I was immensely glad that I had been in the dark. If I had known what was coming, I should not have stood there so placidly and calmly.

The time ticked away. Midnight boomed out, and then another half-hour passed until the solemn chiming of the old clock sounded. And one o'clock came and passed, and still we remained at our vigil—waiting.

But the zero hour, so to speak, was drawing near. It could not be delayed much longer. If these mysterious Chinamen were to act, they must act soon. The school was now in a state of deep slumber.

I felt that the air was charged with grim and terrible possibilities. Nelson Lee's very reluctance to tell me of his suspicions was significant. It told me that the expected peril was of a particularly horrible nature.

Both the gov'nor and I had had previous experience of Chinamen, and we knew that nothing could be too gruesome, nothing too ghastly. The Chinese are an astonishing race of people. Some may be kindly, good-tempered and genial, but even these are so deep that a European cannot probe them to the inner depths. And when a Chinaman is wicked—when he is a criminal, he is an

arch criminal. He is a demon who sticks at nothing, and who adopts methods which a white man would shudder to think of.

What, then, was the nature of this mysterious peril to-night?

In spite of myself, I was thrilled through and through. It was as much as I could do to keep myself still. I wanted to move, I wanted to go to the window and peer out. It was an absolute agony to remain behind that curtain. I knew nothing. I had to stay there and think, think all manner of terrible things.

Nelson Lee remained like a statue. He was calm, immobile and perfectly certain of himself.

And then, just as the school clock was about to chime the three-quarters, there came the first indication that something was about to happen. My muscles grew taut and tense. I instinctively clenched my fists, and it was as much as I could do to breathe silently. My heart thumped.

It was just a tiny sound from the window. It was so imperceptible that it might have been nothing. But I knew differently. Nelson Lee was peering round the curtain, and he could see the window. I was not to be outdone. It was, in fact, physically impossible for me to remain there without looking at something. And, crouching beside him, I peered round the curtain, too.

The window was dimly outlined against the faint starlight. There was nothing to be seen. But then, as I watched, a kind of black shadow passed across the window. Then, inch by inch, the lower sash was raised.

At any moment I was expecting the governor to burst out of his concealment. But he did not do so. He remained perfectly still. The window opened more, so slowly and silently that at one time I thought my eyes were deceiving me. But this was not the case, for at last the sash was fully up, and a dim figure came silently through into the bedroom.

It stood there like a ghost for a second, gazing at one after the other. Then, without making a sound it crossed towards Yung Ching.

Now, surely, the governor would act?

He didn't!

He remained just the same as before. And the intruder bent over Yung Ching's bed and stood there. I nudged the governor in a fever of impatience. Why didn't he act? This man would probably stick a knife into Yung Ching in a flash, and then it would be too late.

But Nelson Lee nudged me back, and still did nothing else. The figure by Yung Ching's bed walked away, returned to the window, and passed out into the night. This was more mysterious than ever! But now, at last, Nelson Lee took action, when to me it seemed too late.

He slid down on all fours, and then across the room with the agility of a monkey. He

had done this, I knew, so that he should not be seen from the window. He reached Yung Ching's bed, reached up, and seemed to take something from the pillow. Then he crept back and rejoined me. But he held nothing in his hands now! Whatever he had picked he had left on the floor, just inside the window.

"The instant my light flashes out jump on my bed and remain there!" breathed Lee in my ear. "Act on the instant, Nipper, or you may pay for delay with your life!"

This was not very cheering news, but I accepted the warning. Then, again, came the dark shadow at the window. It was followed instantly by a curious kind of "plop" which sounded on the floor. Then to my ears there came a faint kind of clicking noise, as though something moved upon the polished linoleum.

Snap!

A brilliant beam of white light shot out from Nelson Lee's hand. At the same second I dashed on to the bed, obeying the governor's instructions to the letter. Heaven only knew what ghastly thing was in the room. It was almost more than I could bear. But this sudden relaxation from dead silence and secrecy was a stupendous relief.

I absolutely panted with excitement, and I watched Nelson Lee with staring, fixed gaze.

In one hand he held the electric torch, and in the other a strong, pliable cane. Considering the tenseness of the moment, the steadiness with which he held the torch was amazing. The beam of light made a circular patch on the floor near the window which illuminated the linoleum as clearly as daylight.

In that circle something moved, which made me turn as white as a sheet and my skin contracted, and I felt revoltingly sick.

It was only a flash that I had received, but one which burned itself into my mind's eye. Most prominent was a bunch of flowers—smallish flowers with red petals, I had seen some before. A bunch similar to this had been left by the Chinaman who had attempted to get into the Remove dormitory a night or two earlier.

But there, going round and round this bunch of flowers there was something black and shiny, something with legs and feelers and a horny kind of body. It was eight or nine inches long, a stupendous thing.

And, although I nearly fainted with the shock of it, I knew that this horrible thing was a scorpion. But such a scorpion as neither Nelson Lee nor I had ever seen.

It was of unheard-of proportions.

What happened next took place in a flash. Whizz—crash!

In one movement, the cane in Nelson Lee's hand descended. His aim was dead true, and the cane fell with fearful force upon the ghastly giant insect's head. That one blow crushed the venomous life out of it.

"The electric light, Nipper—switch it on," said Lee steadily. "Thank Heaven this business is over!"

As he spoke he pulled down the blind, and I switched on the electric light. Nelson Lee, although pale, was far steadier than I. And we both stared down at that fearful insect and the bunch of flowers.

"Good Heavens, guv'nor," I panted. "What does it mean? Did—did you know this thing was going to be dropped into the room?"

"I did not know that it would be a giant scorpion, but I anticipated something of the kind," replied Nelson Lee, wiping his brow. "The devils! I am thankful that we were on the alert, my boy!"

"But—but what about the man who put the thing here——"

"It would be idle to make any attempt to catch him, Nipper," said Nelson Lee, "and extremely dangerous, too. It is not worth the risk, for we should never succeed. He has fled, but he has failed."

"I—I don't understand even now, sir," I said breathlessly.

"You will remember that some similar flowers to these were left behind on a former occasion," said Nelson Lee. "I gathered that Ching's enemies were trying to work some scheme which would remove their victim without leaving a trace. They intended this scorpion to bite him, and thus cause death."

"But how, sir?" I asked, horrified.

"It is obvious that the horrible thing has

been trained in a special way," replied Nelson Lee. "The Chinese are cunning enough for anything. Evidently, they always fed this vile insect amid these pungent smiling flowers. Then they starved it, and let it loose in this room. Naturally, its first object would be to make a dash for Ching's pillow, where it undoubtedly would have bitten him on the instant. As you can see, it has a thin line attached to it. Having performed its deadly work, it would have been drawn back, and taken away. Yung Ching's death would have been utterly unaccountable."

"Good heavens!" I muttered huskily. "What a terrible thing, sir! I—I didn't know that scorpions grew to such a size."

"They don't," replied the guv'nor grimly. "This thing is apparently a special breed developed by these Chinamen. Its bite, no doubt, would mean instant death. I thought it far better to let the thing come in, and kill it. We do not want such a menace hovering over us, Nipper. It is most unlikely that the enemy should have any more of the creatures."

The danger was past, and we felt rather washed out after all the terrible suspense. And Yung Ching slept soundly on, knowing nothing. Not another soul in the school knew anything, either. But both Nelson Lee and I had seen, and we understood the nature of the peril.

Yung Ching was truly beset by terrible dangers!

THE END.

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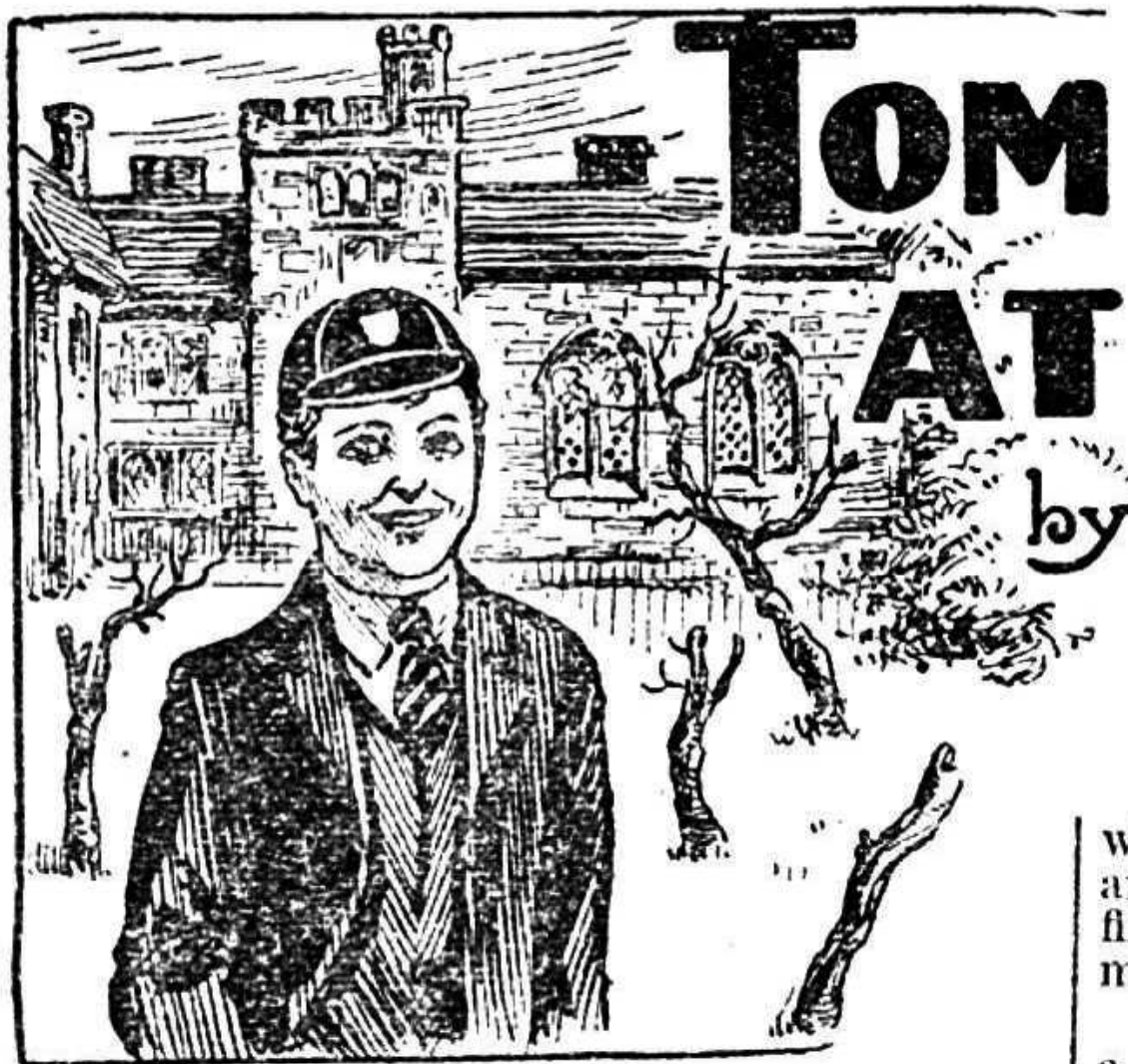
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(Now read on.)

CHAPTER LIV.

The Robbery.

"THIS is getting horrible," said Mr. Wrasper shuddering. "What makes you suspect him of that?"

"Well, sir," said Tom, "this is how I worked it out in my mind. Powner and Diggles were in solitary. Foster Moore took them away. Diggles left Powner, or was cast off by him and returned here to levy blackmail or hide again. He was lured down to the chalk-pits and killed. Who here save that one man had cause to do it?"

"There is something in what you say, Tartar."

"I have an inward feeling that I am right," said Tom. "Foster Moore is as cunning and treacherous as a wolf, and will be hard to get at."

"I will try what I can do to trap him," said Mr. Wrasper.

"Very well," said Tom. "I have done all I can, sir, for you, and the rest remains with yourself. By and by I hope to see you re-installed as head of the school. When that is done I shall go away—at least for a time."

"Why should you go, Tartar?"

"That we can leave for the present, sir," Tom said. "I have something on my mind

which I hope to carry out with Turrell, Smith, and McLara. But my father's consent must be first obtained. I think I shall get that if I do my share in bowling Foster Moore out."

"In any other case," said Mr. Wrasper, after a pause, "I should hesitate to conspire against another, but I think we are justified here."

"I have no doubt about it, sir," said Tom, with a smile. "I have felt all along that open warfare with a secret, skulking foe would never succeed."

"Tartar," said Mr. Wrasper, as he took Tom's hand, "when you first came to this school I disliked you entirely, as I now believe, because you were so honest and open. Then I was a different man to what I am now—never mind all that. Whatever be the issue of the struggle, you will have my gratitude and respect. You are a noble lad, and your father ought to be proud of you. Good-evening, Tartar."

"Good-evening, sir."

Tom sought and found his friends. A few minutes sufficed to let them know all that had passed between him and Mr. Wrasper.

"Good!" commented Sam Smith. "Every dog has his day, and Foster Moore's is closing in."

Peddleton may be a small and obscure village, but it has at least one claim to distinction, inasmuch as it holds two "feasts" every year.

In innumerable English villages the annual "feast," though shorn of its old-time glories, still survives. But Peddleton goes one better. It has its "Spring Feast" and its "Summer Feast." From time immemorial it has been so, and Peddleton is proud of the fact; for no other village in the county—nor, for all we know, any other village in the kingdom—holds more than one in the course of the twelve months.

The day of the Peddleton spring feast dawned, and fortunately the weather was all that could be desired. This latter fact rejoiced the hearts of the boys of Wrasper's—or, perhaps we ought to say, Foster Moore's school. For, in accordance with custom, the occasion meant a half-holiday, and the boys would be allowed to participate in whatever fun was going. The domestics of the establishment, too, would have an afternoon's liberty.

Thus it happened that as soon as dinner was

over at the school, there was a general exodus to Peddleton.

The afternoon passed, and evening came. Wooden Jerry was the first to return, and as Mrs. Wrasper was known to have taken the key of the door with her, he naturally concluded, on finding the door open, that she had come back.

He entered the house, and hurried to the kitchen, the door of which stood wide open.

No fire was lighted, and there was no sign of Mrs. Wrasper.

But every drawer and cupboard was open, and their contents tossed about in confusion.

"Precious queer!" muttered Wooden Jerry. "Some o' them young rips have been up to their larks, I s'pose!"

He glanced at the clock, and saw that it was just on seven. The boys had been told that they need not come in till half-past.

"Mrs. Wrasper ain't likely to have come back afore time," muttered Jerry. "What do it mean?"

He left the kitchen, and hurried to the study. And there, too, every drawer had been ransacked!

Wooden Jerry was staggered.

"Blow me if it ain't a burglary!" he exclaimed.

From the ground-floor he went cautiously upstairs, and as soon as he reached the landing he saw that the burglars had been there also.

A peep into the dormitories showed that all the boys' boxes had been opened and searched for anything of value.

At the end of the corridor was Foster Moore's room, and the door being open, Jerry went thither. That apartment had also been visited and treated in the same manner.

Mr. Wrasper now slept on the next floor, and Wooden Jerry, after a moment's hesitation, decided to go up and see if that had been favoured in a similar way.

The staircase was a winding one, and very gloomy, even in the day-time. When evening set in it was soon wrapped in darkness.

With some feeling of fear, but braced up by the day's potations, Wooden Jerry went upstairs with his ears upon the stretch.

As he neared the top he saw the door of Mr. Wrasper's room open.

In all probability the burglar had visited that also.

Curiosity prompted him to creep up, and awkwardness induced him to stumble on the top stair.

He fell at full length upon his face, so that his head was level with the open door.

Inside that room he heard a quick movement, and strove to rise to his feet and flee.

But ere he had well raised his head he received a violent blow with some heavy weapon, and was stretched senseless on the floor.

When he came round he found that he was still on the top floor, and Mr. Wrasper was holding his head, while Foster Moore was giving him some brandy and water from a glass.

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)



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(Continued from page 40.)

Mrs. Wrasper stood a little aside, with a look of anxiety on her face.

"He is better now," she said.

"Try and stand up," said Foster Moore curtly.

"I can't," replied Jerry, with a moan. "My head's broken."

"The skin is, but the bone is all right," replied Mr. Wrasper. "Who hit you?"

"I don't know," returned Jerry.

"Did you see any one?" asked Foster Moore.

"Nobody," replied Jerry.

"Can't you give me the faintest description of the fellow?"

"I never set eyes on him at all!"

"Finish what is in this glass!" said Foster Moore, "and then get up. You have the sort of head to stand a stillish knock, so don't try any shamming."

Wooden Jerry groaned and declared—a bit of truth, for a change—that he had received such a blow that his head felt as big as a balloon.

"Get up," was all Foster Moore said.

So Jerry arose, and with many sighs and moans was proceeding downstairs, holding on by the balustrade, when he stopped and said:

"The whole house has been robbed."

"Thank you; I am aware of it!" replied Foster Moore drily.

It was indeed true.

The whole house had been thoroughly ransacked, and everything of the least value, and at the same time portable, had been taken.

Although nobody in the place was very rich, nearly everybody had a few articles of value, and the haul was a considerable one.

Rings, watches, pins, small sums of money, had been taken from the boys' lockers and Mr. Wrasper's room.

Foster Moore declared he had been robbed of over a hundred pounds, and there was no reason for disbelieving him.

From Jane's box the savings of two years had been stolen, and the nefarious business was an all-round, complete job.

Mr. Wrasper's suggestion that the police should be sent for was received by Foster Moore with some asperity.

"What is the good of sending for the police?" he asked. "They never find out anything!"

"They can but try," Mr. Wrasper replied. "If you don't send for them, I will."

"Do as you like," said Foster Moore.

Supper, under the circumstances, was, of course, late, and the boys had a long talk over the unexpected termination of the day's events.

All sorts of speculations and theories were afloat, and those who knew least talked most.

Tom, Pubsey, Sam, Laurence Turrell, and Cautious Johnny got together, and each and all saw the hand of Powner, the poacher, in the business.

"Where is he hiding?" asked Sam.

To this none of them could furnish an answer.

It was growing dusk when they saw Detective Clark coming leisurely across the grounds just as if he had dropped in on a friendly visit.

He turned his head here and there, and stooped once to pick up some small object from the ground.

Whatever it was, he considered it of sufficient importance to put into his pocket.

"There's the man who will get at the bottom of it, if anybody will," Tom said.

"But will he?" asked Sam.

"I don't know," replied Tom. "The more I think of it, the less I like it. If Powner is the thief, how did he know that all of us would be out to-day?"

"Have you lost much?" asked Lawrence.

"About two pounds and an old coin," Tom replied, carelessly.

"What coin is that?" asked Pubsey.

"A Queen Anne shilling."

"Rather scarce, are they not?"

"I should think so, and I could tell mine in a moment. It has T.T. cut under the head. My father cut it years ago, before I was born."

"Supper's ready!" bawled Wooden Jerry, from the doorway.

Tom and Sam were pretty well the last to leave the schoolroom, and as they were going through the hall, they caught a glimpse of the detective through the half-open door of the study.

He was examining the marks on a drawer which Foster Moore was showing him.

(To be continued.)

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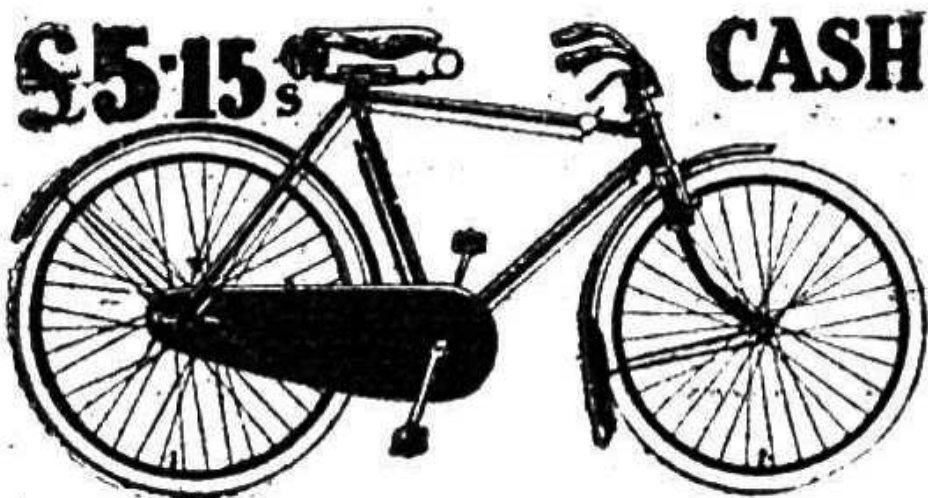
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