

The 'EMPIRE' LIBRARY, The New Story Book, is Now on Sale.

The **GEM** 1^d
LIBRARY NO. 110. VOL. 4.

Grand Long
Complete
Tale.

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

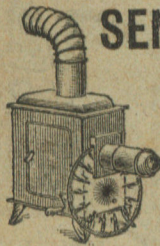
by
MARTIN
Clifford.



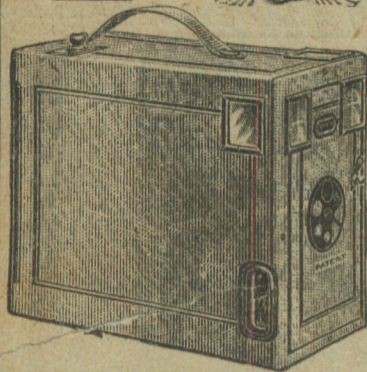
"GWEAT SCOTT, DEAH BOYS, I FEEL HOWWID!" exclaimed the Swell of St. Jim's.

FREE FOR SELLING 12 PACKETS OF KEW SEEDS at 1d. per Packet

SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.



WHY NOT WRITE NOW?

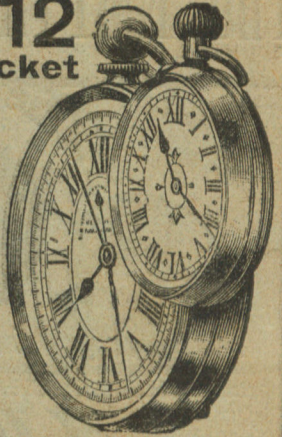


To further advertise our FAMOUS KEW SEEDS, which we have reduced to 1d. per packet, we give every reader of this paper a handsome present simply for selling or using twelve packets of KEW SEEDS at 1d. each. Our special 1910 Prize List contains hundreds of new **Free** gifts to choose from, including **Ladies' and Gents' Hall-marked Gold and Silver Watches, Chains, Rings, Purses, Dolls, Cinematographs, Brooches and Pins, Air Guns, Phonographs, Accordians, Cameras, Steam Engines, Skates, &c., &c.**

All you need do is to send us your name and full address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of KEW SEEDS in Pictorial Packets to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold send us the money obtained, and we will immediately forward Gift chosen, according to the **GRAND LIST WE SEND YOU.** The Collection contains **Sweet Peas** in all the latest variety, **Mignonette, Sweet Williams, Asters, Stocks, Nasturtiums, &c. ; or Radishes, Onions, Mustard and Cress, Lettuce,** and numerous other popular saleable seeds.

Every packet fully guaranteed.
DON'T DELAY! START EARLY. Send a postcard with your name and address to—

THE
KEW SEED CO., LTD.,
(Dept. A), Kew Gardens, London, W.



SIMPLY SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS



FRETWORK

Send us three penny stamps, and we will, as an advertisement, send you a **SHILLING PARCEL** of our novel Art Fretwork Designs, including a 6d. book of 13 dainty small designs, and two 3d. sheets of large designs. Address: Secretary, **NATIONAL FRETWORKERS' ASSOCIATION,** 63, Farringdon Street, London.

SOLID GOLD WATCHES FREE.

12 CARDS WIN A PRIZE.
To advertise our grand new series of Pictorial Postcards, which include real glossy gelatine Cards, best glossy Comics, Love Scenes, etc. (no rubbish), we will give to any person selling or using same at One Penny each a grand free present as per our list. Same includes real Gold Watches, Silverine Watches, etc., Melodeons, Concertinas, Harps, and other Musical Instruments, Ladies' and Gents' Jewellery of all kinds, Cutlery, Toys, Cinematographs, Roller Skates, etc. We give you a present even if you can sell no cards at all. Send a postcard at once with your full name and address. **SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.**

THE CARD CO. (70 Desk), WILLESDEN JUNCTION, LONDON.

BLUSHING.

FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 8, Blenheim Street, Bond Street, London, W.

ROYAL AJAX

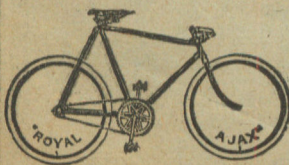
FOR GOOD VALUE.

From 6/- PER MONTH.

CARRIAGE PAID.

From £4 10s. upwards, or 6s. to 20s. per Month.

Write for Art Catalogue, Post Free.



BRITISH CYCLE MFG. CO. (1901), LTD.

(Dept. J.K.), 1 and 3, Berry Street, Liverpool.

Just as an Advertisement

Sent Post Paid to your Door

£2-10 Suit
FOR
20/-



Send us your name and address, and we will forward you **FREE** Patterns of Cloth, inch tape, and fashion plates. You will be delighted with what we send, and you need not return the samples, even if you do not order a suit.

CRAIG, CRAIG & CO.,
Head Office (Dept. 5),
81, Dunlop St., GLASGOW.

7/6 BOOTS
Ladies' & **11/-** Per Week
Cent's
Send size.

VENTRILLOQUISM. Anyone can learn this Art in two weeks with our new amusing dialogues. book, containing nearly 40 pages of easy instructions and amusing dialogues. Post free, 6d.; gift-book included free. Thousands delighted "Mesmerism," Is. — G. WILKES & CO., PRINTERS, STOCKTON, RUGBY.

£5 FOR FOUR WORDS CASH FOR SKILL NO DIVIDING. £5

Here are four simple English words to be found in any dictionary. Do you know them? **£5 Gold** to anyone who fills in the right letters instead of the stars to make the proper words. Remember **£5** in one sum — **no dividing with others.** Absolutely genuine. You can enter free by sending 1/6 P.O. for one year's subscription to our splendid new monthly journal for young and old. **Winners agree to show it to their friends in return for the £5 Gold.** Editor's decision as to correct words final. Official list in bank safe. Result, prize money, and No. 1 of the fine new journal post free not later than April 30. **£5** is worth an effort, so try your skill to-day. Address: **THE MAGAZINE CO.,** West Brompton, London.

ROLLER SKATES 1/- DEPOSIT PUNCH BALLS

Reliable Pair **ROLLER SKATES** or superior **PUNCHING BALL** sent to any address on receipt of 1/4 **DEPOSIT** and on payment of the last of 17 further weekly instalments of 6d. each. Handsome present given free. Send deposit now, and state whether Skates or Punching Ball required.

3/6 CASH. Splendid improved Rink Roller Skates, made from best materials, and guaranteed.

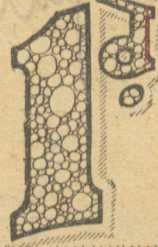
3/6 CASH. Finest Door-to-ceiling type. Punching Balls, complete with case, blades, and books, &c.

BRITISH MANUFACTURING CO. (S 50), GREAT YARMOUTH.

EVERY

THURSDAY

The
GEM
LIBRARY



COMPLETE
STORIES

FOR ALL AND EVERY STORY A GEM!

The St. Jim's Surprise!



A Grand Long, Complete
School Tale of
TOM MERRY & CO.

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

News for Study No. 6.

"HAVE you heard, deah boys?"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question, looking in at the door of Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's, as he did so.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked up from their prep.
"Heard what?" demanded Blake. "If you mean, have I heard a silly ass interrupting a fellow at his prep.—why, yes."

"Weally, Blake—"
Jack Blake gave a sort of snort, and turned to his work again. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fixed a monocle in his eye with great care, and looked in again at his chums of the Fourth Form.

"Have you heard—" he began.
"Yes, more than enough," said Digby. "Buzz off!"
"Weally, Dig—"
"Travel!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"
"Are you going to ring off?" demanded Blake wrathfully.
"How's a chap to work with a howling ass jabbering in the doorway?"

"I wefuse to be called a howlin' ass."
"Well, babbling duffer, then!"
"Weally, deah boy—"
"Oh, buzz off!"

"Vewy well, I will not give you the news," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity. "I thought you might be intwested to know that there was a new chap comin' into the Fourth Form here; but now I will not tell you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I fail to see any cause for wibald laughtah."
"Well, you have told me, duffer. There's a new chap coming, is there?"

"I wefuse to tell you whethah there is or not," said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a wude beast, I wegard Dig as a wude beast, and Hewwies as a wude boast."

"Go hon."
"I wefuse to give you any information at all. I will weteire—"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Come in. You'd better get your prep done, too, or there will be trouble with Lathom in the morning."

"Yaas, wathah! I had forgotten that," said D'Arcy, coming into the study. "But I thought you would be intwested in the new chap, you know. I just heard the news from Kildare. He says the chap is coming into the Fourth."

"What's his name?"
"Thurnel—Wichard Thurnel."

"Oh! Well, Richard Thurnel isn't half as important as prep," said Blake. "And there are so many new kids here in these days that I can't keep count of them. You're a new kid yourself, as a matter of fact."

"I wefuse to be wegarded as a new kid. I have been at St. Jim's almost as long as you have. I think—"

"No, you don't—you can't! Let's get on with the washing."

"Weally, Blake—"
"When is this chap Thurnel coming?" asked Digby.

"He is to awwive to-night."
"Oh! I wonder what study he'll be put into?" said Herries, rather anxiously. "They can't put him in here—we're four already."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"We had a new kid put in here once, only he left again, you remember," said Blake dubiously. "I hope Railton won't play the giddy ox like that a second time."

"If he does, I shall object stwongly."
Blake grinned.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

"So shall we all; but the worst of it is that it won't make any difference. I remember we objected strongly last time. So the kid is to arrive to-night, is he? Then he must be coming by the train that gets into Rylcombe at eight o'clock."

"I pwesume so."

"They'll settle about his study to-morrow. I wonder if we put it plainly to Mr. Railton if he would have sense enough—"

There was a tap at the half-open door, and Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, came in.

Jack Blake turned scarlet.

He had just been speaking of the House-master in a way that could not possibly be regarded as respectful, and it was pretty certain that Mr. Railton had heard him, as he came along to the open door.

Blake could have bitten his tongue out, and he would have given a term's pocket-money for the floor to open and swallow him up.

He sat dumb.

Mr. Railton was not the kind of master to take any notice of words heard by chance. He did not even glance at Blake.

"I want to ask you lads to do something," he said. "There is a new boy—"

"If you please, sir—"

"You are interrupting me, Blake."

"Ye-e-es, sir. I—I was saying just now—"

"It does not matter what you were saying just now, Blake."

"But—but, sir, I know you heard it, and I—I want to say I'm sorry," stammered Jack. "I—I was speaking without thinking, and—and I'm an ass, sir."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I certainly think you are correct in that last statement, Blake," he remarked. "As you mention the matter, I will do so. I was pained to hear you refer to your House-master in such a way."

"I—I—I'm an ass, sir. You—you can lick me if you like."

"Nonsense, Blake."

"I—I was thinking, sir, that you might put the new kid into this study, and whether it would be any good explaining to you that there wasn't room," said Blake. "That's all, sir. I'm sorry I put it like that."

Mr. Railton smiled grimly.

"As a matter of fact, Blake, the new boy, Thurnel, is to be placed in this study for the present, at least," he said.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I hope you boys will do your best to make him welcome, and to make him feel quite at home in the school," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh!"

"But that was not what I came here to say to you. I was about to say, when you interrupted me, Blake, that as the new boy is arriving here in a strange place after dark, I should like you to go down to the station and meet him. As you will be his new study-mates, it is most appropriate for you to go. Don't you think so?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I shall be vewy pleased."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Digby and Herries.

"That is all," said Mr. Railton. "I have brought you a pass out of gates, and will you take care to be at the station before eight o'clock, when the train comes in? You will doubtless recognise Master Thurnel easily enough. You will take every care of him, and bring him to the school without lingering by the way."

Mr. Railton emphasised the last words a little.

"Oh, sir! We should not be likely to linger by the way," said Blake, in a tone of meek protest.

"I hope not, Blake. Here is your pass. You may start at once."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Mr. Railton quitted Study No. 6, leaving the chums of the Fourth Form staring at one another in dismay.

CHAPTER 2.

Bumped!

TOM MERRY, of the Shell, came along the Fourth-Form passage, and put his head in at the door of Study No. 6.

Dead silence greeted the hero of the Shell. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy stood silent; they looked at the Shell fellow, but they did not speak.

Tom Merry looked astounded.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

There was no reply.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

"Is this a Quaker meeting," further questioned Tom Merry, "or are you all off your giddy rockers?"

"Weally, Tem Mewwy—"

"What's happened?"

"Nothing yet," said Blake, heaving a sigh. "But it's going to happen."

"What's going to happen?"

"There's a new kid coming to St. Jim's."

"Well, that's happened before, and no harm done," remarked Tom Merry. "Is it nothing worse than that?"

"But they're going to put him into our study!" howled Blake.

Tom Merry looked sympathetic at once.

"Well, that's rough!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard it as extremely wuff. As a mattah of fact, it is wotten."

"Beastly rotten!"

"Horrid!"

"Yes, it's rough," said Tom Merry. "Of course, it might have been worse—"

"I don't see how," grunted Blake.

"Oh, yes! They might have put him into my study, you know."

Blake snorted. He did not see the humour of the remark at all.

"I jolly well wish they had," he said. "We've no room in this study now, what with us four, and D'Arcy's silk hats and neckties."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Besides, it's a breaking-up of the happy home, a scattering of the giddy family circle," said Digby. "We don't want strange dogs in the kennel."

"That's it," said Herries. "I know what my bulldog, Towser, feels like if he's shoved in with another dog. I feel just the same."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then you'd better get up a round robin to the Head on the subject," he remarked.

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good ideah, deah boys—a wound wobin to the Head!"

"Rats!" said Blake crossly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I looked in to see if you chaps had finished prep., and were coming out," said Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. are having a sprint in the quad, and I thought we might go out and bump them, just for fun, you know."

"Yaas, wathah. Figgins & Co. have been awfully cheeky lately," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins said it was a pity I didn't join the circus for good, you know, because he was sure I was born to be a clown. I wegarded the wemark as in the worst of taste."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I uttably fail to see anythin' to laugh at."

"Ha, ha! Well, are you chaps coming out to bump Figgins & Co., or shall I call some of the fellows in the Shell?"

"Can't," said Blake. "We've got the pleasure of going to the station to meet the new beast."

"Ha, ha! How do you know he's a beast?"

"Well, he's coming into this study," said Blake, rather illogically.

"Railton says we're to go to the station," said Digby. "If you've done your prep., you can come, too. Blake's pass will cover the lot."

"Good," said Tom. "We can bring in a few things from the tuckshop, too. I'll call Manners and Lowther, and we'll buzz off."

"Good."

Tom Merry scudded along the passage to his own quarters. A run down to the village after gates were locked was an event; it broke the monotony, anyway. The Terrible Three thought it even more attractive than the prospect of bumping Figgins & Co., of the New House. They joined Blake and his chums in the hall, and the seven juniors left the School House together.

The moon was coming up over the clock-tower, and a silver glimmer fell in the wide quad of St. Jim's, save where the heavy shadows of the trees lay in blackness.

There was a faint patter of footsteps in the silence of the night.

Tom Merry paused half-way to the gates, and held up his hand.

"Hark!"

"It's Figgins & Co.," said Monty Lowther. "They're having their evening trot."

"Exactly," Tom Merry gave a soft chuckle. "This way, and collar them."

"What-ho!" murmured Blake.

Kindly little attentions like this were always passing to and fro between the fellows of the rival houses at St. Jim's.

IS NOW ON SALE

The New Complete Story-Book. Price One Halfpenny.



"This way," said Mellish. The cad of the Fourth led the way across the dark quadrangle, with the new boy following closely.

Tom Merry & Co. stepped softly into the path, and three figures in running clothes loomed up in their view.

Figgins, long-legged and wiry, Kerr, medium-sized and hard as iron, and Fatty Wynn, short and stout—they were the three known in the New House as Figgins & Co.

The three runners did not see the waiting juniors till it was too late.

Then, as they slackened down, they were seized in six or seven pairs of hands, and brought with a bump to the ground.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins.

"Yah!" gurgled Kerr.

"Ooooh!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Gerroff me chest! Ooooh!"

"Got 'em!" said Tom Merry. "Now, then, Figgy—"

"Yah! School House cads!"

"Now, then, Figgy—"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Now, then, Figgy, which is cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"New House!" gurgled Figgins defiantly.

"Bump him!"

And Figgins was duly bumped. Bumping consisted of lifting the victim bodily, and bringing him down hard in a sitting posture.

Figgins gasped as he was bumped.

"Yah! School House cads!"

"Is School House cock-house?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yah! No."

"Bump him!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Now then—"

"Yah! New House is cock-house."

"Obstinate ass!" said Blake. "Bump him! Bump all of them!"

"What-ho!"

"Yah! Cads!"

"Bump 'em!"

Figgins & Co. were bumped hard. But all the bumping in the world would not get them to admit that the School House was cock-house at St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. bumped them, and kindly left them sitting in a puddle, and walked on to the gates.

The school clock chimed out.

Jack Blako gave a start.

"My only hat! It's a quarter to eight."

"Bai Jove!"

"We shall be late for the train."

"Let's sprint," said Tom Merry.

And they sprinted.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S CARNIVAL."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.
By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 3.

Something New in New Boys.

"RYLCOMBE!"

A diminutive individual sitting in a corner of a railway-carriage rose to his feet, and threw open the carriage door as the name of the station was called out.

Rylcombe was the station for St. Jim's, and the diminutive person was the new boy for the school.

He stepped out upon the platform, with a rug over his arm, and a bag in his hand. He stood in the station lights, and he was an odd-looking person.

In stature, he was shorter than most of the fellows in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, but his figure seemed to be developed and filled out very much more than was usual with a junior. His face was quite smooth, but there were traces about the chin that seemed to hint that the youth had had a narrow escape of having an early crop of beard. His eyes, which were very keen, were somewhat sunken. His nose was somewhat long and thin, and his hair, which was of a pale colour, was thin, too. He was a curiously old-looking boy, and had he been dressed in a man's clothes, would certainly have passed for an under-sized fellow of over twenty.

But he was dressed in Etons, with a broad collar, and a silk-hat in the usual style.

He glanced up and down the platform, and walked down the train. A porter was shoving a large trunk on a trolley.

"That's my trunk," said the stranger. "Put it on a cab or something for the school—St. Jim's. I suppose you know where that is?"

The old Rylcombe porter grinned and touched his cap.

He knew a great deal about St. Jim's, as a matter of fact, and there was hardly a fellow there, from Kildare the captain down to the fags of the Third and Second Forms, whom he did not know by sight, if not by name.

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anybody here from the school to meet the train?"

"I dunno, sir. I hain't seen nobody."

"Good," said the stranger. "Is there a place in this station where one can get anything to drink?"

"Yes, sir. You can get a ginger-beer at the buffet, sir, when it's open," said the Rylcombe porter. "It's closed now."

Master Thurnel snorted.

"It's closed, is it? Then what's the good of it to me. And do you think I can guzzle ginger-beer?"

The porter stared.

"Most of the young gentlemen like ginger-beer, sir."

"Rats."

And Master Thurnel walked out of the station. The porter stared after him. He had seen all sorts and conditions of boys arrive at St. Jim's, but he had never seen any new arrival quite like Dick Thurnel before.

The porter shook his head, and wheeled the trolley down the platform. The trunk was placed on the station hack, and the driver waited for Master Thurnel to mount into it.

"You can wait," said the new boy. "I want to get something to drink."

"Pass the tuckshop, sir, on the way," said the driver.

Master Thurnel sniffed.

"Bless the tuckshop."

There was a refreshment establishment of a very different sort next door to the station. From behind the glass doors there came the sound of the clinking of glasses and a chorus. Master Thurnel's eyes lighted up as he glanced in that direction, and he walked over to it, pushed open the swing door, and entered.

The driver and the porter looked at one another in helpless astonishment.

"Wot do you think of that, Jim?" gasped the old porter.

The driver shook his head.

"He's a rum 'un!" he remarked.

"Hallo! kids!" exclaimed a cheery voice, as a bunch of juniors came tearing up to the station. "Hallo! Is the train in?"

The porter touched his cap.

"Yes, Master Merry."

"Is there a chap for St. Jim's knocking about then?" asked Jack Blake breathlessly. "We've come to meet him."

"Yes, he's here, Master Blake."

"Bai Jove! here's his twunk on the cab," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's all wight. He can't be gone yet."

"He's not gone, Master D'Arcy."

"Good. Where is he?"

The porter pointed to the glass doors of the public-house a dozen yards away.

"He's there, Master Merry."

"Oh, don't be funny! Where is he?"

"It's the truth, sir."

Tom Merry stared.

"He's gone into that public-house?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

"Yes, sir."

"What for?"

"To get something to drink, he said."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Blake. "They don't sell ginger-pop or lemonade there."

"That's what he said, sir," said the Rylcombe porter stolidly. "Which he's an odd-looking boy, sir. He's much smaller than you young gents, but he looks a lot older."

"We'd better look into this," said Tom Merry abruptly.

Blake nodded.

"I don't understand it," he said. "Come on."

The juniors hurried towards the public-house into which Master Thurnel had disappeared a few minutes before, and Tom Merry pushed open the glass doors and looked in.

He saw the new boy at St. Jim's. Thurnel was standing at the bar, stirring a liquid in a glass, from which the steam was rising. There was no one else in that division of the bar. A barman was leaning across the counter, grinning and talking to the extremely precocious new boy.

The juniors stared at the scene dumbly for a time.

There were many kinds of boys at St. Jim's, good, bad, and indifferent; but they had never seen one like this before. Some of the "smart" fellows in the Sixth Form indulged in the luxury of whisky-and-water in the strict privacy of their studies, with the knowledge that they would be expelled from St. Jim's if they were discovered. But even the smart seniors never did this sort of thing. They would never have ventured to do it. The new boy might lack morals, but he did not lack nerve.

"The young rotter!" muttered Blake at last.

"The uttah wapsallion!"

Tom Merry strode into the bar.

His face was flushed with indignation. The new boy was a disgrace to the school, but Tom Merry didn't intend to let him disgrace St. Jim's in public.

Thurnel was just raising the glass to his lips as the indignant Shell fellow strode in.

Tom Merry stepped quickly towards him, and struck the glass with his open hand, sending it whirling through the air.

Thurnel gave a startled cry.

Half the liquid splashed over his waistcoat and shirt front, and the rest was lost in the sawdust. The glass crashed on the bar, and fell to the floor in a hundred pieces.

Thurnel whirled round towards Tom Merry, who faced him with flashing eyes.

CHAPTER 4.

Chucked Out.

THURNEL clenched his fists, and he seemed for a moment as if he would spring upon the hero of the Shell. But Tom Merry was so evidently ready for him that he hesitated. The other juniors, too, were crowding in behind Tom. They were ready to seize Master Thurnel, and dust the sawdust off the floor with him, and they would have been glad of half an excuse to do it. And the new boy read it in their faces, and retreated a step towards the bar.

"What—what do you mean?" he exclaimed savagely.

"The question is, what do you mean?" said Tom Merry. "How dare you act like this! You are the new junior for St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Richard Thurnel?"

"That is my name."

"Then what do you mean by this, you cad? You belong to St. Jim's, and here you are drinking in a public-house!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The barman had no right to serve you. Get out of this at once!"

Thurnel gritted his teeth.

"I won't!"

"You won't?"

"No."

Tom Merry's face set grimly.

"I'll give you two seconds to get out," he said. "Then if you don't go on your feet, you'll go on your neck."

Thurnel hesitated a moment.

"Now, are you going?"

"No!"

"Collar him!"

The juniors had only been waiting for the word. They rushed at the new boy, and collared him promptly.

Thurnel struggled savagely.

From his diminutive form, and his thin, sallow face, no one had expected him to show much strength, but there was something of a surprise for the juniors of St. Jim's in this extremely peculiar new boy.

He fought like a tiger, and half-a-dozen of them had plenty to do to drag him to the door. His strength was unexpected and surprising. But they got him to the door, and Tom Merry held it open while they hurled him through.

IS NOW
ON SALE.

The New Complete Story-Book.
Price One Halfpenny.

Master Thurnel went spinning into the street.

He staggered across the pavement, and collapsed into the road, sitting down in a puddle left by the late rain.

The panting juniors followed him more slowly.

"By Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What a stwong beast! I should weally nevah have expected it, f'rom his looks."

"Nor I," said Blake.

Thurnel staggered to his feet. His jacket was splashed, and his trousers caked with mud. His face was red with rage.

"You hounds!" he yelled. "What do you mean by this? Who are you, and what do you mean by interfering with me?"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. He had not explained that he belonged to St. Jim's; he had assumed that the new boy would guess that.

"We're from the school," he said. "We've been sent to meet you."

"Oh, you needn't have come!"

"I'm jolly glad we did come," said Tom. "We've saved you from acting like a blackguard, and disgracing the school you're going to join."

Thurnel laughed sneeringly.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" he said. "I suppose I can drink what I like, without asking your permission."

"That's just what you can't do," said Tom. "You would never be allowed to enter St. Jim's at all, if I reported what I saw just now."

Thurnel's expression changed.

"I suppose you're net going to tell tales?" he said hastily.

Tom Merry smiled scornfully.

"We're not likely to sneak," he said. "You needn't be afraid of that. But I warn you that you'd better be careful. Besides the caddishness of the thing, you can't do this sort of thing without being found out. And if a prefect spotted you in a public-house, you would be expelled."

"Yaas, wathah, and serve you jolly well wight!"

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it's no good asking you to mind your own business," he said. "I'd better get to the school. Are you fellows coming into the hack?"

"No, there isn't room for so many, and we don't particularly want your company, either," said Tom disdainfully.

"We shall see you safely off and follow."

"Do as you like."

Thurnel stepped into the hack, and told the driver to start. He pulled out a cigarette-case, and the juniors saw him lighting up as the hack rolled away.

They looked at one another in surprise and consternation.

"My only hat!" said Jack Blake. "What sort of a critter is it? He's coming into the Fourth Form, and he drinks whisky and smokes cigarettes."

"That's what makes him look so jolly old, I suppose," remarked Digby. "He's got a face that might be any age."

"And he's coming into our study!" said Herries.

Jack Blake snorted.

"Oh, it's just our luck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But there's one thing that's a dead cert.," said Jack, "and that is, that he won't play any of his Smart Set tricks in Study No. 6. Let me catch him smoking there!"

"What-ho!"

"I can foresee a high old time for that merchant," said Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if I know what to make of him!"

And the juniors looked very thoughtful as they strolled after the hack in the direction of St. Jim's. It was hard, indeed, to know what to make of the new boy, and the rest of the School House was soon in the same state of doubt.

CHAPTER 5.

Master Thurnel Arrives.

MR. RAILTON came into the hall as the new boy, alighting from the hack, entered the School House at St. Jim's. Master Thurnel glanced at the House-master, and the House-master glanced at him, and then looked at him fixedly. The somewhat unusual countenance of Master Thurnel attracted his attention.

"You are Richard Thurnel?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"I am Mr. Railton, your House-master. This will be your House here," said Mr. Railton. "I suppose you are hungry after your journey. Noble!"

A handsome, sturdy junior came up at Mr. Railton's call. It was Harry Noble, otherwise called Kangaroo, the Cornstalk junior.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you take Thurnel to the dining-room, where I have directed supper to be laid for him. Do anything you can for him, please, and show him his quarters. He will share Study

No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage, with Blake and the others. Taggles, that trunk is to be taken up into the Fourth-Form dormitory."

And Mr. Railton retreated into his study.

Noble glanced at the new boy. He was rather struck by his appearance, and didn't much like the looks of Master Thurnel; but he was good-natured, and prepared to do anything he could to make a new boy comfortable.

"This way," he said.

"All right."

Thurnel followed the junior to the dining-room of the School House. The gas was alight over the Fourth-Form table there, and in one place a cold supper was laid. The new boy sat down at the table.

"Hungry?" said Kangaroo.

"Yes, a little. I had a smoke in the train, though."

Kangaroo stared.

"You had a what?"

"A smoke."

"You'd better not talk about it here, then," said Kangaroo. "Juniors are not allowed to smoke at this school—nor seniors either, for that matter, though some of them do. You'll get into a row."

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes, I know I shall have to keep anything like that dark."

"You'll do better to drop it altogether," said Kangaroo warningly. "It's not considered form here to do anything of the sort."

"Oh, rubbish!"

The Cornstalk's eyes gleamed.

"I'm not in the habit of having my remarks called rubbish," he said quietly. "You'd better be a little more careful, or—"

"Or what?" asked Thurnel.

"Never mind," said Kangaroo, appearing to swallow something with difficulty. "I won't hammer a new boy on his first night at school."

"You won't hammer me!"

"I've said I won't," said Noble, keeping his temper with difficulty. "Have you come to St. Jim's to look for trouble? It looks like it."

"Not at all," said Thurnel, attacking the cold viands with a good appetite, "so long as I'm left alone, I sha'n't trouble anybody. I suppose a fellow can have a smoke in his own study if he likes."

"It's against the rules."

"I suppose you always carefully obey all the rules of the blessed school, don't you?" observed Thurnel, with a sneer.

"Well, no. I suppose I break as many as most chaps," said Kangaroo. "But there are some rules one doesn't break, and there's an unwritten law, too, that a fellow isn't to do anything caddish. Smoking in secret is caddish."

"Thank you!"

"Besides, you can't do it. You won't have a study to yourself, you know. You will share No. 6 with four others—four decent chaps, too—and they wouldn't stand it."

"They may have to."

Kangaroo laughed.

"Well, I don't think I can see them doing it, that's all. If you smoke in No. 6, Jack Blake is just the chap to send you out on your neck."

"We shall see."

"Now, be a sensible chap, and don't begin by getting your study-mates against you," urged Kangaroo, kindly enough. "That's a bad start to make."

"They had better let me alone, then."

"Well, you'll get hurt, I expect, that's all."

Thurnel laughed.

"You think I cannot take care of myself?"

Kangaroo surveyed the thin, wiry form, the sallow face with its curiously-old expression, with a look of disdainful disfavour.

"Well, you don't look like an athlete," he said.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive," said Thurnel. "I would undertake to put you on your back in two minutes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo's hearty laugh rang through the dining-room. Thurnel's eyes glinted green, but he went on quietly eating his supper.

"That amuses you, does it?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"You think I couldn't do it?"

"I know you couldn't," said Kangaroo impatiently. "What's the good of taking rot? It's as much as Tom Merry can do to put me on my back."

"Let's try."

"Oh, rot! You couldn't touch me."

Thurnel stood up.

"Let's try!"

CHAPTER 6.

No Smoking Allowed!

Kangaroo gave a shrug.
 "Well, we'll try if you like, but what's the use?"
 Thurnel did not reply. He faced Kangaroo, and they grasped one another. They closed, and struggled for a few seconds, and then the Cornstalk's feet were swept from under him, and he was laid with a bump on the floor.

Thurnel sat down and went on with his supper. Kangaroo sat up, and watched him with a dazed expression.
 He had been put down with the greatest of ease, and the new boy had not turned a hair. He was eating calmly, without his breath coming in the least faster.

Noble staggered to his feet.
 "Well?" said Thurnel, looking up.
 "I—I don't know how you did it!" said Kangaroo heatedly.
 "I'd like to try that over again!"
 "Oh, all right!"

Thurnel stood up, and stepped away from the table. Kangaroo grasped him more carefully this time, and they wrestled.

The Cornstalk put all he knew into that tussle. His blood was up now—all he could do, he did. And the Cornstalk was a tough customer. He was one of the finest athletes in the Lower School, and the only fellow who could hold his own against Tom Merry. But he could not hold his own against the surprising new boy.

He was forced backwards, resisting desperately but unavailingly, till he collapsed, and his head was rapped on the floor.

Then Thurnel rose lightly, and left him there.
 Kangaroo scrambled up.
 His face was red with exertion and mortification. Kangaroo could take a defeat like a man; but to be defeated by this thin, under-sized, smoking, and unfit-looking new boy—that was galling.

Thurnel grinned.
 "Like to try again?" he asked.
 Kangaroo shook his head.

"No; it's no good. You're stronger than I am."
 Thurnel sat down to finish his supper. Kangaroo sat on the edge of the table and watched him. He could not understand it. He realised clearly that he was no match for this fellow, and he could not understand it at all.

Thurnel finished his supper. Then he drew a leather cigarette-case out of his pocket. He caught Kangaroo's glance and replaced it.

"It won't do here, I suppose?" he remarked.
 "Nor anywhere at St. Jim's," said Kangaroo.
 "Oh, rot!" Thurnel rose to his feet. "Where's my study?"

"This way."
 Kangaroo led the way in silence up the stairs to the Fourth-Form passage. He stopped at the door of No. 6, and pushed it open.

The study was dark and deserted.
 Blake and his chums had not returned yet. They were walking back to the school from Rylcombe.

Kangaroo stepped into the study and lighted the gas. There was a low fire still burning in the grate. Thurnel followed him in, and cast a decidedly disparaging glance round the study.

"Is this the room?" he asked.
 "Yes, this is it."
 "And there are four other fellows besides myself here?"
 "Yes. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy."
 "Pretty close quarters?"
 "Some of the studies are smaller."
 "Well, I suppose a chap must put up with what he can get," said Thurnel.

Kangaroo did not reply. Thurnel raked the fire together, and piled on more coal. Then he dragged the armchair to the hearth, sat down, and put his feet on the fender. Then out came the cigarette-case.

"I don't want to force my advice upon you," said Kangaroo quietly. "It's really no business of mine. But I warn you once more to quit smoking here."

"Thank you for nothing."
 "If the fellows find you smoking when they come in, there will be trouble."

"Oh, hang the fellows!"
 "Very well; it's your business."

Kangaroo quitted the study. Thurnel grinned, stretched himself in the chair, and lighted his cigarette. He lighted another when it was smoked, and then another. A haze of tobacco-smoke filled the study. The new boy was still smoking, in a haze of blue smoke, when Tom Merry & Co. returned.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY opened the door of Study No. 6.
 "Bai Jove!"

And then, after a moment's pause of stupefaction, the swell of St. Jim's ejaculated:

"Gweat Scott!"
 He peered into the blue haze of the study.
 Blake, Herries, and Digby were a little behind him. They saw the swell of the Fourth stop and stare, and heard his amazed ejaculation, without knowing the cause.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Anything wrong in the study?"
 "Look!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his monocle, and stared into the study. He was too amazed for words. The others joined him, and they stared in too. Thurnel turned his head in the armchair, and glanced at them.

"Oh, come in!" he said.
 "My only hat!"
 "My respected Aunt Selina!"
 "Gweat Scott!"
 Thurnel grinned.
 "Oh, come in, and shut the door!" he said.
 "Come in!" said Blake abruptly.

The juniors entered the study, coughing in the smoke. Blake closed the door. He had no desire for the new boy's strange manners and customs to attract attention from without. Blake felt quite up to dealing with Master Thurnel himself. He crossed to the window and pulled it down to its fullest extent.

Then he turned upon the new boy and regarded him wrathfully.

"Now, what does this mean?" he demanded.
 Thurnel yawned.
 "I don't quite follow you," he said. "If you mean, what does my being here mean—why, this is my study. I have been told that I'm to share it with you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! We know that!"
 "That's bad enough!" said Blake. "It's horrid enough to have to share a study with a worm like you!"
 "Oh, draw it mild!"

"But what I want to know is, what do you mean by turning the study into a filthy pot-house?" demanded Blake fiercely. "Don't you know the juniors are not allowed to smoke at this school?"

"I've just heard so!"
 "And even if they were allowed, do you think we want our study reeking of tobacco?"

"I really haven't thought of it," said Thurnel.
 "Then it's time you did!" burst out Blake wrathfully.
 "Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"My dear chap, I smoke—it's my way. I don't want to interfere with you, but I'm not going to change my habits to please anybody," said Thurnel.

"You jolly well are!" said Blake. "Throw that cigarette into the fire!"

"Bosh!"
 "Throw it in, I tell you!"
 "Rubbish!"

Blake wasted no more time in words. He ran straight at Thurnel, and jerked him out of the armchair. Thurnel was hardly prepared for that attack, and he rolled out of the armchair on his back.

The next moment there was a choking yell.
 The cigarette had slipped into the new boy's mouth, and he was choking and spluttering wildly.

"Groo—oo!—yah!—yow!—oooh!"
 He spat and spluttered. The cigarette came out; but it had burnt the inside of Thurnel's mouth, and he danced with pain.

There was a yell of laughter from the chums of the Fourth. The cigarette had avenged them on the smoker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow!"
 "Ha, ha!"
 "Yow-ow!"

"Bai Jove! I wegawd this as aw'ly, funnay!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! You rotters!" yelled Thurnel.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The new boy rubbed his mouth. Jack Blake was waving a newspaper to and fro to waft the smoke out of the window.
 "You frabjous ass!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you think it's jolly manly to play the giddy ox like this? You wouldn't look so jolly manly if a prefect collared you, and laid a cane round your legs!"

"Ow!"
 "If you're hurt, it serves you jolly well right! If a senior

ANSWERS

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

THE EMPIRE LIBRARY

IS NOW
ON SALE.

The New Complete Story-Book.
Price One Halfpenny.

came along and found this study reeking with smoke, he'd think we were all in it, and it would mean trouble all round."

"Ow!"

"You don't appear to have much acquaintance with the manners and customs of civilised people," went on Blake, glaring at him. "For your information, I may tell you that boys are not allowed to smoke at decent schools. It checks their growth, spoils their wind, and makes silly young duffers of them!"

"Groo!"

"And especially, firstly, and seventhly, no one is allowed to smoke in this study, because it spoils the atmosphere."

"Yow!"

"And sixthly and lastly, you'd better stop making that row, and chuck all your smokes into the fire, and try to be decent."

"Yaas, wathah! I should stwongly wecommend you to twy to be decent, Thurnel, deah boy."

The new boy rubbed his mouth and glared at them.

"Mind your own business!" he growled.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"I shall smoke, if I like!"

"You jolly well won't," said Digby.

"And I won't throw my smokes into the fire!"

Jack Blake's face set hard.

"Won't you?" he said. "Now, look here, we'd better have a clear understanding to begin with, Thurnel. You've been put into this study against our will. But we know it's no good kicking, and were prepared to make the best of it, and we're ready to chum with you if you like to be decent. But if you don't, you'll have to look out for squalls. That's plain English."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"In the first place, no more drinking in pubs; and in the second, no more smoking in the study," said Blake. "If you like to smoke behind hedges, or in the box-rooms, as some of the silly young cads do, it's the biznay of the prefects to spot you and lick you, and I shall leave it to them. But in the study, I'm chief. You're a new fellow, and you've got to toe the line."

"Rats!"

Blake's face went scarlet with anger.

"So that's how you take it, is it?" he said. "Very well—we'll begin the discipline now. Throw your cigarettes into the fire!"

"I won't!"

"Then we'll jolly well do it for you! Collar him!"

Four pairs of hands were laid simultaneously upon Master Thurnel.

He resisted savagely, and hit out. Digby dropped on the floor, dazed, and Herries rolled over him. Then Blake closed with the new boy, hooked his foot behind Thurnel's leg, and brought him to the floor with a heavy crash, that made the furniture in the study jump.

"Got him!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! What a stwong beast!"

"Let me up!" yelled Thurnel.

"Sit on him!"

"Pin him down!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You hounds!" gasped Thurnel. "I'll fight any two of you!"

Blake snapped his teeth.

"You shall fight any one of us, any time and any place you choose," he said. "But this isn't a fair fight at present—it's a punishment. We're teaching you discipline."

"Ow!"

"Sit on him, Herries. Now, then, which pocket are your cigarettes in, Thurnel?"

"Yah!"

"Which pocket—do you hear?"

"Find out!"

"That's just what I'm going to do," said Blake coolly.

"Hold him down, you chaps, while I turn out his pockets." Thurnel changed colour.

"Stop!" he yelled. "Stop! I—I won't have my pockets turned out! You spying cad! Don't you dare to go through my pockets."

Blake's eyes blazed.

"Well, of all the worms!" he ejaculated. "Do you think I want to spy into your things, you cad? I'm going for the cigarettes."

"Let me get up—"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah, wats, and many of 'em, deah boy!"

"I tell you—"

"We've got him!"

Jack Blake went through the new boy's pockets in search of the cigarette-case. He turned the pockets out one by one, depositing the articles contained therein on the floor.

All kinds of things were turned out, including a matchbox, two or three loose cigars, and letters. Thurnel was resisting all the time. The idea of the St. Jim's junior going through his pocket seemed to strike him with an unaccountable terror.

"My hat—plenty of tin, anyway," said Herries, as two or three sovereigns and some loose silver jingled out on the floor.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Not just yet, my pippin. I want the cigarettes."

"They're in my breast pocket."

"Hallo! What's this?"

Blake had dragged a paper out of one of the inner pockets.

The juniors could not help looking at it in their surprise.

It was a sketch plan of a building, and fellows who knew St. Jim's so well were not at a loss to recognise it.

It was a plan of St. Jim's.

"Let it alone!" howled Thurnel.

The juniors stared at him.

"My hat!" said Blake. "You must take an interest in the school when you bring a plan of the place along with you!"

"What on earth were you doing with that, Thurnel?"

"Mind your own business."

"Weally, Thurnel—"

"Oh, where's the cigarette-case?"

Jack Blake dragged the case out to the light. He opened it, took out the cigarettes, and threw them into the fire in a heap.

The flame blazed up, and the valuable smokes of Master Thurnel were speedily consumed. The new boy, helpless in the grasp of the juniors, watched the sacrifice with a sullen brow.

"That's done," said Blake. "They'll do you more good taken that way, Thurnel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let the beast get up now," said Blake.

The new boy was released.

He rose gasping to his feet, and then collected up the various articles that had been removed from his pockets, and stowed them back where they had been taken from. His eyes were glittering with anger.

The juniors watched him curiously. They wondered how he was going to take the rough handling he had had—not that they much cared. They were quite able to deal with Master Thurnel if he cut up rough.

Thurnel turned to them at last.

"Now, then," he said, between his teeth, "which one of you is going to be licked first?"

CHAPTER 7.

A Tough Customer.

JACK BLAKE grinned.

"Perhaps you'd better begin with me," he remarked. "It would give me a great deal of pleasure to dust up the floor with you."

"Put up your hands, then."

"Pway hold on a minute, deah boys. Undah the circs, I wegard it as my place to give this uttah boundah a fealful thwashin'."

"Dry up, Gussy."

"I wefuse to dwy up. As the pwincipal person in the studay—"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Blake—"

"Well, I did say rats to you."

"Then I shall have no wresource but to administah a little cowvection. Pway put up your hands, and I will thwash you before I thwash Thurnel."

"Ass!"

"I decline to be called an ass. Pway—"

"Are you going to take off your jacket?" asked Thurnel. "I warn you that I mean business. You kids have got to understand your place in this study."

Blake stripped off his jacket, and turned back his cuffs.

"I'm ready," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Stand aside, Gussy."

"I wefuse to stand aside. I—"

"Collar him!"

"I decline to be collared! I— Oh!"

Herries and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's and whirled him to the armchair, and sat him down in it with a bump. Then Herries sat on his knees, and Digby on his shoulders, and the elegant junior struggled in vain to rise.

"Ow! Yow! Leggo! Gerroff!"

"Keep quiet, then."

"I refuse to keep quiet."

"Sit on him," said Blake.

"We're sitting on him," grinned Digby. "Now, then, go ahead, and show that new cad how you can box, Jack."

"I'm going to."

The study door opened, and Tom Merry looked in. He glanced in surprise at the junior in his shirt-sleeves and at the angry face of Thurnel.

"Hallo! Trouble?" he asked.

"Just a little argument," said Blake. "We're just going to begin."

"Good. I looked in to ask you chaps to come along to our study. Manners is baking chestnuts, and there's a lot of them."

"We'll come in a minute," said Digby.

"Right-ho. I'll stay and watch."

"Ready, kid?" said Blake, advancing towards the new junior.

Thurnel nodded savagely.

"Yes, come on."

"Here you are," said Blake cheerfully.

And he led off by an attack. Blake was one of the best boxers in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, and almost a match for Tom Merry of the Shell. That the sallow-faced new boy would be able to stand up against him for two minutes, he never imagined. But a surprise was waiting for him, as for Kangaroo in similar circumstances.

Jack's attack was met grimly, and to his surprise, his guard was swept away, and a heavy fist crashed upon his jaw.

He staggered back, and sat down with a bump that raised the dust from the study carpet, and brought an ache into his bones.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove!"

Blake sat looking dazed, holding his jaw in his hand.

Herries and Digby jumped up in their surprise, and ran to help him up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose from his armchair. He was looking very concerned now.

"Bai Jove, Blake, deah boy!"

"I'm all right," muttered Blake.

But he did not feel all right.

His jaw was aching horribly, as if it had received a drive from a hammer, and his head was a little dizzy. Where did the sallow new boy get the strength from that he had put into that blow?

Tom Merry stared. There were several things about Master Thurnel that surprised him, but this exhibition of strength surprised him more than anything else.

"Well, get up," said Thurnel. "I suppose you haven't had enough yet?"

Blake staggered to his feet with the assistance of Herries. "Not much," he said. "I shall take a little more knocking out than that."

"Come on, then."

A thin, narrow face with sly eyes peeped in at the door—it belonged to Mellish, of the Fourth, the cad of the School House. He had heard the row in Study No. 6, and, having seen Tom Merry enter, he imagined that the hero of the Shell was engaged in strife with the Fourth-Formers, as was not uncommonly the case.

He stared in astonishment at the new boy and Jack Blake. Mellish would as soon have tackled a lion in its den as have faced Jack Blake, of the Fourth. And what he saw made it clear that Jack was getting the worst of the tussle.

"My only hat!" said Mellish, in amazement.

"Get out!" said Herries brusquely.

Mellish shrugged his shoulders. He was up against the chums of Study No. 6 all the time, and he was not likely to miss an opportunity like this if he could help it. He came in and closed the door.

"Why shouldn't I see the fun?" he demanded.

"Stay if you like," said Thurnel, with a glance. "This is my study, and you can stick here if you like."

"Thanks," said Mellish.

Herries made a wrathful movement towards the cad of the Fourth, but Blake signed to him to let Mellish alone. One row at a time was enough.

"Well, are you coming on?" asked Thurnel, with a sneer. Blake's eyes blazed.

"Yes, you cad!"

"Well, I'm waiting."

And Jack Blake came on, his eyes gleaming, and his teeth set. Blake intended to lick the new boy, or to be licked himself, and he wouldn't give in as long as he had strength enough to keep upon his feet.

"Go it, Jackie."

The new boy met the attack with a sneer upon his face. As they sparred, it was seen that he was considerably THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

longer in the reach than Jack Blake, and this gave him a great advantage.

For a couple of minutes they boxed fiercely, and Blake succeeded in putting in two or three good blows upon the sallow face of the new boy.

Then came Thurnel's opportunity.

He drove in his right under Blake's chin, and as the Fourth-Former whirled and staggered he followed it up with his left, catching the boy on the temple.

Blake fell like a log.

He did not rise again.

Digby and Tom Merry ran to to him at once. Blake blinked at them dazedly. His head was swimming, and he could hardly see them with his dancing eyes.

"Blake!"

"I—I'm all right!" muttered Blake.

He could not realise that he was defeated. He made a gallant effort to stagger up, but he sank back again, his head whirling.

"Keep still, Blake," muttered Tom Merry.

"I—I—"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Don't twy to wise."

"I—"

"Leave it for a bit, Blake," said Digby. "You can tackle him again another day. You'll have to chuck it now."

Blake gasped painfully.

"I—I won't chuck it! I'll lick him! Help me up."

"You can't—"

"I tell you I will!"

Blake tried to scramble up, but it was in vain. As he stood on his feet his senses swam, and Tom Merry helped him to the armchair. He sank into it with a gasp.

Thurnel looked on with a sneering smile.

"Well, are you finished?" he asked.

Tom Merry glanced at him with a flash in his eyes.

"Blake is finished for the present," he said. "But this won't be the end of it."

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm willing to give him another licking whenever he likes," he exclaimed.

"Oh, don't crow, you cad!"

"And I'm ready to give you one, too, for that matter," said Thurnel.

"I'll remind you of that to-morrow," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't think I ever saw a fellow I should more enjoy licking."

"I'm ready any time."

"Licked!" said Mellish, looking at Jack Blake in wonder and satisfaction. "Licked, by George!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Digby savagely.

"Licked!"

Mellish went grinning out of the study. It was an item of news to be retailed in the common-room with infinite relish by the cad of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 8.

Licked!

"RATS!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

"Tell that to the marines!"

Such were the polite remarks that greeted Mellish when he announced in the junior common-room in the School House that Jack Blake had been licked by the new boy.

Mellish and his yarns were well-known, and nobody believed for a moment that the tale was true, and they expressed their opinion with Lower-School frankness.

"Well, you can jolly well see for yourselves!" said Mellish spitefully. "Go and look at Blake, and you'll see that he's doubled up."

"Rot!"

"Well, go and see!"

"Bosh!"

"Hallo, here's the new kid!" exclaimed Clifton Dane of the Shell.

Thurnel came into the common-room.

He glanced about him, and strolled over towards the fire, where Mellish immediately joined him. Mellish meant to lose no time in making up to the new power in the Fourth. The prospect of seeing the reign of Blake come to an end was delightful to the junior. And if he succeeded in becoming the toady and chum of the new fellow he could hope to repay some of the little debts he owed Study No. 6—with interest, too.

"Hallo, Thurnel!" said Glyn of the Shell. "Is it true you have been fighting one of the chaps in Study No. 6?"

"Yes," said Thurnel.

"Licked?"

"Do I look like it?"

"Well, no," said Bernard Glyn, looking at him. "You



The new boy bent over the end of the Fourth. "Are you asleep, Mellish?" he whispered. Mellish breathed regularly.

chivvy looks a little hammered, but not so very much. How is Blake?"

Thurnel laughed.

"Better go and look at him."

"Hang it, it can't be true!" exclaimed Hancock. "You haven't licked Blake?"

"What did I tell you?" said Mellish triumphantly.

"Faith, and I can't understand it, for one!" said Reilly of the Fourth, with an extremely disparaging glance at the new boy. "Thurnel doesn't look as if he could lick a mouse!"

"He's licked Blake," said Mellish, "and he could lick you."

"Faith, and I—"

"Go and look at Blake."

"Well, I will for one," said Kerruish. "I'll ask Blake if he's been licked, and if it's a yarn I'll tweak your nose, Mellish."

And Kerruish and a dozen more juniors rushed off to Study No. 6 to look at Jack Blake, and ascertain whether he really had been licked or not.

But Study No. 6 was drawn blank.

It was in darkness, and the Fourth-Formers were gone.

"Nobody's here!" exclaimed Kerruish, looking in.

"Oh, they'll be in Tom Merry's study," said Mellish.

"Come on, then!"

And the eager seekers for knowledge rushed away down the passage and turned into the Shell quarters, and Reilly kicked at Tom Merry's door.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Tom Merry from within.

But Kerruish opened the door instead of buzzing off. The chums of Study No. 6 were in the room, along with the Terrible Three.

Blake was sitting in the armchair with his face turned towards the fire, looking very silent and gloomy. He did not look up as the juniors crowded in at the doorway. Mellish grinned insolently at Tom Merry & Co.

"I say, Merry, isn't it a fact that—"

"Get out!"

"That Blake has been licked by the new kid, Thurnel?"

"Buzz off!"

"Is it true, bedad?" asked Reilly.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"Ask Blake," sneered Mellish.

"Blake, Blake!"

"Is it true?"

"Have ye been licked entirely?"

Jack Blake looked up.

"Yes," he said quietly, "I've been licked, if you're particularly interested to know."

"Licked hollow!" said Mellish.

Blake was silent.

"By the new kid?" asked Kerruish.

"Yes."

"He doesn't look as if he could lick a giddy grasshopper," said Hancock. "What were you thinking about, Blake?"

"Faith, and ye're going to try it again, Blakey, darling?"

"Yes."

"Sure, I—"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Tom Merry. "You're bothering us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Faith—"

"Get out!"

"Yes, let's get out," said Mellish. "You're satisfied now, I suppose? Blake simply couldn't stand up to the new fellow. He had no chance."

"I could stand up to you, Mellish, as easily as ever," said Blake, with a dangerous look. "I should recommend you to keep your mouth shut."

Mellish hastily retreated into the passage.

Manners slammed the door after the wondering juniors, and they returned to the common-room to discuss the startling news.

Hitherto, in the Fourth Form, Blake had disputed with Figgins of the New House the leadership of the Form, but there had been no rival in the Fourth excepting Figgins. Now the new boy had come all was changed.

Blake's reign was over.

Dick Thurnel was to be cock of the walk in the Fourth, and from what the fellows had already seen of him it did not seem likely that he would be a particularly pleasant fellow to get on with.

Jack Blake turned his gaze upon the fire again as the door of Tom Merry's study was closed.

His expression was gloomy.

He had been licked, and there was no getting out of it, and the licking a peculiarly rankling one.

The juniors were eating chestnuts as they sat round the fire, but the usual cheery chat of the study was lacking.

Blake's depression cast a shadow over the group.

"It's no good bothering about it," Lowther remarked.

"After all, everybody gets a licking every now and then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Buck up, Blake, old man!"

Jack looked up.

"It isn't the licking," he said. "I suppose I can take a licking as well as anybody. But to be licked by a worm like that! He is a rotten worm!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It might have been Figgins, or Kerr, and I wouldn't have minded a bit," said Blake. "That would have been different—they're decent chaps. But to be licked by a dirty, low-down cad—a fellow who drinks and smokes, and looks like a worm—well, that's enough to make any chap feel beastly."

"Yaas, that's twue enough, deah boy!"

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"It's a curious thing," he remarked. "There's a lot I don't understand about that new chap. He's a puzzle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He doesn't look so strong, and yet he's as strong as a horse. He must have heaps of muscle. I couldn't give a drive like the one he gave you—and I can punch hard, too. One would almost think that he was an undersized man masquerading as a boy," said Tom Merry, with a slight laugh.

Blake nodded.

"I can't understand it either," he said. "I am going to tackle him again, but I know I've got no chance. I shall be licked again. But he'll have a fight on his hands every day regularly if he tries to be cock of the walk in Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah! I shall make it a point to give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"You'd better let him alone, Gussy. He'd walk over you," said Lowther.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther—"

"And we don't want your beauty spoiled," said Monty Lowther. "It won't stand much spoiling, you know."

"I considah—"

"Have some more chestnuts, Blake?"

Blake shook his head, and rose.

"No, thanks! I think I'll go and bathe my chivvy. It aches."

And Jack Blake left the study. Tom Merry & Co. glanced at one another without speaking. All of them were feeling decidedly gloomy.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

CHAPTER 9.

The Safe.

MELLISH looked round for Thurnel as he came into the common-room. The new boy was standing by the fire, looking into it, with a shadowed expression on his face. Perhaps he was a little surprised that no one appeared inclined to pay court to him. As a matter of fact, no one liked him at all. He might be feared in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, but he was not likely to rouse much friendly regard. And Jack Blake was a general favourite, and his defeat was not pleasing to anybody but Mellish.

Thurnel glanced up at Mellish as the cad of the Fourth came up, with an ingratiating smile upon his narrow and cunning face.

"I'm jolly glad you licked Blake," Mellish remarked, by way of beginning. "He's a rotter, and I've never pulled with him!"

"Oh!"

"You'll be cock of the walk now in the Fourth."

"Oh!"

"You may have to lick Figgins—Figgins, of the New House, you know; but if you can lick Blake you can lick Figgins. They're much of a muchness."

"Oh!"

Thurnel's monosyllabic replies were hardly encouraging, but Mellish was not easily beaten.

"You'll find Study No. 6 down on you after this," he remarked.

"I suppose so," said Thurnel, with a slight laugh.

"They all stand together, you know, as thick as thieves," said Mellish, encouraged. "You won't get much friendship there."

"I don't want any."

"Of course you don't. A chap like you can find friends anywhere," said the cad of the Fourth. "I'd like to chum with you myself, for that matter. I say, would you like to have a stroll round the school, as it's your first day here?"

Thurnel nodded.

"I should, very much," he said.

"Then come with me."

Thurnel followed him from the common-room.

The part of cicero to a new boy was a novel one to Mellish, but he was willing to take any amount of trouble for the sake of ingratiating himself with the fellow who had licked Jack Blake.

He showed Thurnel over the interior of the School House, explaining to him the plan of the various quarters, the passages, the studies, and the Form-rooms.

"I'll show you round the outside to-morrow," he remarked. "It's too late to-night now. You'll like to see the gym., and the New House, and the ruined chapel, and the old tower. Everybody goes and looks at them, you know. A scientific chap came here to look at the old tower once, and they say he's writing a book about it. It's awfully interesting."

"Oh, rats!" said Thurnel.

"Well, yes; it's rats, and no mistake," said Mellish. "A lot of rot, I call it, making a fuss over chunks of old bricks and stones not fit for an owl to live in. Would you like to see the school library? It's in the School House. You see, most of the school buildings are in this House. The New House is just a boarding-house that was built about a hundred years ago, when St. Jim's was growing too big for one House."

"The library?" said Thurnel, with a yawn. "Oh, yes! By the way, where do they keep the school silver, and things?"

"Oh, you've heard about the St. Jim's plate?"

Thurnel coloured a little.

"It's famous, isn't it?" he asked. "You see, I—I've been told a lot about the school before I came here. My father knows fellows who were here."

"Oh, I see!"

"The St. Jim's plate is famous, so I've heard."

"I should think it is," said Mellish. "Why, the plate is more valuable than that belonging to any other public school in England! Part of it has belonged to St. Jim's from time immemorial, and part has been presented to the school at different times, by governors and so on. They say that the whole lot is worth over five thousand pounds."

Thurnel's eyes glistened.

"That's a great deal of money."

"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose it's kept in a safe place?"

Mellish grinned.

"You may be sure it is."

"I should like to see it. Have you ever seen it?"

"Yes, rather. I had a peep at it on the occasion of a big feed given to the governors," said Mellish. "It's only

used on state occasions like that. You jolly well can't see it, though!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's kept safely locked up, of course!"

"I'm curious to see it. I've heard such a lot about it," said Thurnel. "Where do they keep the stuff?"

"Oh, it's in the library!"

"Well, let's go and have a look at the library, then."

"This way!"

Thurnel followed the cad of the Fourth into the library. It was a long, lofty apartment, with the high walls covered with bookcases. Thurnel looked up and down the room. He was not interested in books, but he wondered where was the receptacle in which the plate was stowed away.

Mellish watched him with a grin.

"Well, where is the silver?" asked Thurnel.

"Guess."

"In one of those cabinets?" asked Thurnel dubiously.

"They don't look strong enough to keep valuables in."

"Ha, ha! No. They only contain manuscripts and antiques and things," said Mellish. "Look here!"

He led the way to a bookcase, in no way dissimilar in appearance from the rest, upon the top of which stood a bust of Shakespeare.

"Well?" said Thurnel, puzzled.

"This is the place."

"This bookcase?"

"It's not a bookcase really," said Mellish, with a grin.

"It's an imitation, you see. There are only the backs of the books there, but as it's always kept locked, nobody can find out the difference. I only knew by watching the butler when he was putting the silver away after it had been used."

Thurnel looked at the dummy bookcase with great interest.

It was designed to look exactly like the rest of the cases that lined the walls, and the only thing that distinguished it from the rest was the bust above.

"Is it well fastened?" he asked.

"I should say so. There's a Yale lock on it, and another on the iron door inside, opened by a different key."

"I suppose the butler keeps the keys?"

"That's where you're wrong! The Head keeps them."

"About him?"

"I don't know. I should think so."

"I should awfully like to see the silver," Thurnel remarked regretfully. "It must be worth seeing."

"What-ho!" said Mellish. "Gold and silver plate, and big flagons, you know—heaps of things, worth a fearful lot of money!"

"It would be jolly good fun to get the keys some day, and have a look at the things," Thurnel remarked, with a side-glance at Mellish.

The junior shook his head.

"It couldn't be done."

"Why not?"

"Well, one doesn't know where the Head keeps the keys, for one thing; and then there's the risk."

"It would only be a licking if one was found out."

"I don't know. It might mean being expelled. The Head wouldn't like to risk having the keys get into anybody's hands," said Mellish. "I know jolly well that I sha'n't try to do anything of the sort!"

"Nor I," said Thurnel, laughing. "Of course, it was only just an idea that passed through my mind. It would be too risky altogether."

"I should say so."

"I suppose there has never been any attempt to steal the silver?" Thurnel remarked, looking at the hidden safe with a curious eye.

"Yes, there has—twice, I think. But they can't get at this safe, you know. It's made of iron, and sunk in the solid stone of the wall, and the door's of iron, too, under this dummy bookcase."

"Not much chance for a burglar, then, unless he could get the key?"

"You're right."

Thurnel took a last glance at the bookcase door, and then turned away, and followed his guide from the library. There was a very thoughtful expression upon the new boy's face. He listened in an absent-minded fashion to Mellish's description of other objects of interest; but it was pretty clear that his thoughts were running upon the hidden safe behind the bookcase and the treasure it contained.

"Well, it's supper-time," said Mellish, a little later. "Do you eat supper?"

"Yes."

"There's bread-and-cheese in the dining-room for those that want it. Come along!"

They went into the dining-room. There was a new airiness about Mellish's manner as he walked in with Thurnel. He was evidently proud of his new friend, and pleased with his friendship with the fellow who had licked the champion of the Fourth. Mellish did not leave the new boy to himself. He chatted to him during supper, and linked arms with him as the juniors went up to the dormitory afterwards. Mellish meant to make the most of his new friend.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for Figgins.

THE next morning Thurnel made his appearance in the Form-room with the rest of the Fourth, and the New House juniors had an opportunity of seeing him. Figgins & Co. had heard about the new fellow who had licked Jack Blake, and they were very anxious to see him. Figgins looked at him the moment he came into the Form-room, and was disappointed.

"Is that the new kid, Blake?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Jack shortly.

"My hat! You let that thing lick you?"

Blake smiled faintly.

"I didn't do it on purpose, Figgy."

"I suppose not. But, hang it, he doesn't look as if he could lick a white rabbit!" said Figgins in astonishment.

"He's jolly strong. Kangaroo told me that he got the better of him, too," said Blake. "There's more in the cad than meets the eye."

"A cad, is he?" said Figgins.

"Well, I think him one—not because he licked me," added Blake hastily. "I've other reasons. But I expect you'll see for yourself."

Mr. Lathom looked round, and the talk ceased.

The other fellows paid Thurnel a great deal of attention during morning lessons, a fact to which the new boy seemed quite indifferent.

He had proved himself to have unexpected qualities as a fighting-man; but as a pupil the new Fourth-Former did not shine.

He knew about enough to scrape into the Fourth, and that was all, and he was soon at the bottom of the class, with a strong probability of staying there.

But that did not seem to trouble him, either.

He got through the morning's work, and listened with indifference to some caustic remarks from Mr. Lathom on the state of his knowledge.

When the Fourth Form left the room after lessons, Mellish joined the new fellow in going out. The cad of the Fourth evidently intended to cultivate his friendship with the new junior. Nobody else showed any desire to do so, though most of the fellows were civil enough to him.

In the passage Figgins paused, with Kerr and Wynn, to take a good look at the new boy in the free and easy manner natural to Figgins.

Figgins & Co. planted themselves in Thurnel's path, and stared at him.

The new boy stopped.

"Well, you'll know me again," he remarked.

"I was wondering how you did it," said Figgins. "Blessed if I can see much of the fighting-man in you."

"You can try if you like."

Figgins waved his hand admonishingly.

"None of your cheek, my son, or I will," he remarked. "You'll find a New House chap a tougher customer to tackle than a School House fellow."

"Oh, rats!"

Figgins turned pink.

"Did you say rats to me?" he asked, in measured tones.

"Yes," said Thurnel. "I suppose you're not deaf?"

SANDOW'S BOOK FREE!

Just published, a new book showing how Sandow won Health and Fame, beautifully illustrated, and explaining how every man and woman can obtain robust health and perfect development by exercise.

SPECIAL OFFER.

To every reader who writes at once a copy of this book will be sent free.

Address: No. 17, SANDOW HALL, BURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.

"My hat!" said Kerr, "of all the cheeky sweeps, I think this new kid takes the cake. It will be a friendly action to knock some of the sauce out of him."

"Just what I was thinking," said Figgins.

"Hold on," remarked Fatty Wynn. "He's a cheeky beast, but perhaps it would be rather rough to hammer a new kid. Suppose we make him stand a feed at the tuckshop instead."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I think it's a jolly good idea," persisted Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry, and dinner will be some time yet. What do you say, Kerr?"

"Rats!"

"Now, look here, you chaps—"

"Would you mind getting out of the way?" said Thurnel. "You're blocking my path."

"You can go round, I suppose," said Figgins.

"Get aside!"

"Bosh!"

"Move, I say."

"Rubbish."

"Then I'll jolly soon move you!" said Thurnel fiercely.

"Right-ho! Start, then!"

Figgins did not move. The new boy strode at him, and grasped him. Figgins returned his grip with interest, and they closed.

There were few juniors in the school who could have successfully tried conclusions with the sturdy, long-limbed Figgins. Even Tom Merry would have had plenty to do. But the new boy was a surprise in every way.

Figgins felt himself in a grasp, harder and stronger than his own, and he was swept off the floor almost before he knew that the struggle had commenced.

"My hat!" gasped Kerr.

"Phew!" said Fatty Wynn.

Fair play held the two chums back, though they would gladly have gone to Figgins's assistance. For it was perfectly plain that Figgins had no chance. Though he was nearly a head taller than Thurnel, Thurnel handled him as if he had been an infant.

Round went Figgins, swept off the floor in the grasp of the new boy, and he was hurled away across the passage.

He bumped against the wall, and dropped to the floor in a heap, completely knocked out.

At the same moment Mr. Railton came down the passage from the direction of the Sixth Form room.

He stopped and stared at the scene in blank amazement.

"What—what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

Thurnel did not reply.

Kerr ran to his chum, and helped him up, and Figgins stood dazed and tottering, with one hand on the wall, and the other on Kerr's shoulder.

He blinked in an extremely uncertain way at the amazed House-master. Figgins hardly knew yet what had happened. Mr. Railton glanced from one boy to the other.

The amazing exhibition of strength on the part of the new boy had not escaped him, and he could not conceal his astonishment.

"Thurnel! What do you mean by this?" he almost gasped.

"Sorry, sir," said Thurnel.

"Figgins began it," said Mellish eagerly.

Mr. Railton did not take the least notice of the cad of the Fourth. He was the last man in the world to encourage sneaking.

Figgins passed his hand over his brow. He was beginning to collect his wits.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir," he gasped. "I—I started it, sir. I wouldn't let the new kid pass. I began it."

"You will take fifty lines, Figgins."

"Yes, sir."

Figgins walked away dazedly with Kerr and Wynn. Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon the new boy. Thurnel looked at the floor.

"I hardly understand this, Thurnel," said Mr. Railton. "You appear to be possessed of extraordinary strength for a lad of your years. What is your exact age?"

"Fifteen, sir."

"You look older."

"Do I, sir?"

"You seem to be remarkably strong for your age," said Mr. Railton. "I should recommend you to be careful how you use your strength, or it may cause trouble."

"Yes, sir."

"As Figgins assured me that he began the quarrel, I have nothing to say on the present occasion, except that your action was brutal, whether Figgins began it or not. You have hurt him severely."

Thurnel looked sullen.

"I advise you to keep a guard over your temper and over your actions," said Mr. Railton. "This school is not a place for hooligans."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton walked on. As soon as he was gone an ugly sneer came upon the sallow face of the new boy. It showed exactly how much respect he felt for the opinion or the counsel of the School House-master.

"It was jolly good," said Mellish, in a low voice, as he walked on with his new friend. "You've licked Figgins now. He won't dare to tackle you again after that."

"I rather think not."

"You'll be cock of the Fourth now," said Mellish, with an eager chuckle. "I'm jolly glad you came to St. Jim's. It will take those rotters down a peg or two. I say, will you come to the tuckshop and have some ginger-pop."

"No thanks."

"They've got some jolly good jam-tarts there, too."

"I don't like them."

"Don't like them?" said Mellish, in amazement. "I say, I mean to stand treat, you know. I've got some tin."

"I don't want any blessed jam-tarts or ginger-pop," said Thurnel. "I don't mind having a smoke if there's a quiet spot where a chap can be safe from prying."

Mellish grinned.

"I can show you a place—Gore and I used to smoke there; but Gore has chucked it now. Come on."

And in a corner of the old tower of St. Jim's, the two juniors were soon consuming the forbidden cigarettes, with enjoyment affected on Mellish's part, but apparently real on the part of the new Fourth-Former.

CHAPTER 11.

Tom Merry Takes a Hand.

"BLESSED if I understand it!" Tom Merry made that remark. Monty Lowther, who was making toast in the study, glanced up with a ruddy face.

"What is it you can't understand?" he asked—"I mean, which is it?—as I suppose there are about a million things a bit too steep for your intellect."

"It's about that new chap."

"Oh, Thurnel! What's fresh about him?" said Monty Lowther. "I've heard about his chucking Figgins across the passage as if he were a sack of potatoes."

"Yes," said Tom Merry reflectively, "and that's curious enough. He's licked both Blake and Figgins, and he's cock of the Fourth."

"He'll be cock of the whole Lower School if he's not put down a bit," said Manners, looking up from the interesting task of extracting jam from a nearly empty jar with a table-spoon. "Mellish is trying to egg him on to tackle you, Tom."

"I'm ready, if he wants to."

"Do you think you could lick him?"

"I don't know, but I jolly well know I'd try hard," said Tom Merry. "I don't like the airs he gives himself any more than the Fourth Form do; but I don't much like being put in the position of going for a new kid. Let him begin it, though, and I'll see what I can do. But there's another thing—"

"The thing you can't understand?" said Lowther. "What is it?"

"I've just heard it from Reilly. He says he went into the dorm. just a few minutes ago, and Thurnel was there."

"Nothing remarkable in that."

"No, ass. It was what Thurnel was doing that was remarkable."

"What on earth was it?"

"Shaving."

"What?"

"Shaving!"

Monty Lowther jumped up, and dropped the toast he was making in the grate. Manners paused with the jam spoon poised in the air. Both of them stared in blank astonishment at the hero of the Shell.

"Shaving!" ejaculated both together.

Tom Merry nodded.

"So Reilly says. He saw him."

"Reilly must have been romancing."

"Well, I thought so at first, but I asked him, honour bright, and he said yes. So he was telling the truth."

"Shaving!" repeated Monty Lowther. "But what on earth was he shaving for? A fellow of fifteen!"

"I remember noticing that he had a sort of hairiness about his chin," Manners remarked. "It was just as if he had a beard on the way. I know some chaps grow hair on their faces early. There was a fellow in a circus once who had a big beard at sixteen."

"But it's amazing."

"Yes, rather, there's no doubt about that."

"Reilly says that Thurnel was doing it secretly. You see,

just at tea-time, it was not likely that anybody would be going to the dormitory," Tom Merry remarked. "It was a safe time for Thurnel to choose if he wanted to keep it secret. But I don't see why he should want to keep it secret. If he's bothered with an early beard, there's nothing to be ashamed of in it. Most fellows, in fact, would feel rather cocky about having a moustache coming at fifteen."

"I imagine so."

"But he was keeping it dark, because he gave a jump when Reilly came in, and cut his face," said Tom Merry. "Then he bundled Reilly out, and kicked him down the passage."

"My hat!"

"Now, what do you make of that?"

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," said Manners, resuming operations on the jam jar. "Is it possible that there's some swindle?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, suppose a chap was going to enter for a prize, or an examination or something, with an age limit," said Manners. "He might make out that he was younger than he really was, you know, especially if he was an undersized chap. I know that sort of thing is sometimes done."

"But I don't see what a fellow could have to gain by it in this case," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "There's no prize to be won in the Fourth here, except the usual school prizes—not money ones. Of course, he might be going to enter for one of the junior scholarships, but—"

"Well, that's possible."

"He doesn't seem the kind of chap who swots for a scholarship," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "You see, he doesn't know more than enough to just scrape into the Fourth. He's not a studious chap. He's been in hot water with Mr. Lathom this afternoon. Dig told me, for inattention to his lessons. He's about the last chap in the world to swot for a scholarship."

"Then what could be his motive for pretending that he's only fifteen, if he's really older?"

"I can't say."

"It's more likely that he's really the age he says, and afflicted with an early crop on the chin," remarked Manners. "Reilly says he cut himself when he was caught shaving."

"Yes."

"Well, I'll take a squint at his chivvy next time I meet him, and see whether he's cut. I can't help thinking Reilly may have been romancing."

The subject was a puzzling one. The Terrible Three settled down to their tea, but the new boy was still in their minds. After tea the chums of the Shell left their study, and they looked round for Thurnel. The new fellow was in the quadrangle, chatting with Mellish, who was the only boy with whom he had made anything like a friendship as yet. The Terrible Three looked at him.

"Look at his chin!" murmured Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

On Thurnel's chin there was a cut such as might have been made by a razor hastily jerked. It was pretty clear that Reilly's story was true. The new fellow was in the habit of shaving himself.

It was astonishing, but undeniable. The new Fourth-Former had been a puzzle from the first; he was a greater puzzle than ever now.

"I give it up," said Tom Merry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "It's no good trying to make him out."

There was a shout from the quad, which was growing dusky. Three fags of the Third Form came racing along after a football. Wally D'Arcy, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, was punting the ball about in the dusk with Jameson and Gibson. The footer came bounding along towards the School House steps.

"Get out of the way!" yelled Wally.

Thurnel did not move. The footer passed close to him, and the next moment Wally had shoved against him, unintentionally, but rather roughly.

The new boy's eyes blazed with sudden temper.

He reached out after Wally, caught him by the ears, and swung him back. The scamp of the Third Form yelled.

"Here, leggo!"

"You cheeky young cub—"

"Leggo, you ass, or I'll kick your shins!" gasped Wally.

"Do you think you're going to pull my blessed ears out! Leggo!"

"I'll—"

"Take that, then, you beast!"

And Wally kicked out. Wally was about the last fellow at St. Jim's to submit quietly to having his ears pulled by a Fourth-Former.

Thurnel uttered a cry of pain.

"You whelp!"

He grasped Wally savagely, and rained angry blows upon him. Wally yelled and struggled. The toughest specimen of

a Third-Form fag at St. Jim's could have given a good account of himself in a tussle with most of the Fourth-Formers at St. Jim's. But in the grasp of the new boy he was as helpless as a baby.

"Stop it!" he howled. "Rescue! Ow!"

Jameson and Gibson rushed back.

"Let him alone!" shouted Jameson.

"Stand back, you cub!"

"Ow! Rescue! Yow!"

Tom Merry, with a face set and angry, ran up.

"Let him alone, at once!" he cried.

Thurnel looked at him savagely.

"Mind your own business!"

"This is my business! Let him go, instantly!"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!"

And Tom Merry grasped the new fellow, and simply tore him away from Wally. Wally staggered away with towzled hair and burning face, gasping for breath.

"The beast!" he panted.

Tom Merry whirled the new boy back towards the School House steps. Thurnel caught at the stone balustrade in time to save himself from falling.

"Now then," said Tom, between his teeth, "if you want this to go further, I'm ready!"

CHAPTER 12.

A New Development.

THURNEL clung to the balustrade for a few moments, breathing heavily. Tom Merry had not handled him gently.

Wally rubbed his ears, and grinned as he looked on. There was a rush of other juniors to the spot.

"Very well, said Thurnel, between his teeth. "I'll give you what I've given Blake. I'm ready!"

"Not here!" muttered Mellish hastily. "You're right under the Head's windows!"

"I don't care!"

"But I do," said Tom Merry. "Come into the gym."

Thurnel hesitated, but Tom Merry walked away towards the gymnasium, and the new boy followed. Mellish walked with him, while the others crowded round Tom Merry. There was no doubt as to which side the general sympathy was upon.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, met the crowd in the doorway of the gym. The big Sixth-Former glanced curiously at Tom Merry's set face.

"What's wrong, Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry looked a little uneasy.

"Nothing," he said.

Kildare laughed.

"Nothing—but—but a fight, I suppose."

"Well, you see—"

"The new kid is looking for trouble," explained Monty Lowther. "It seems a pity to disappoint him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare shook his head. He tapped Thurnel on the shoulder, and the new junior looked at him sullenly.

"Just a word to you, Thurnel," said Kildare quietly.

"You've been in too many rows since you came here. You've not been at St. Jim's twenty-four hours yet, and you have been fighting all the time."

"Well?"

"Well, you've got to stop it!" said Kildare sharply. "I don't interfere in these matters among juniors, as a rule; but you are too quarrelsome, and it's got to stop. Merry, you are not to fight Thurnel to-day."

"But—"

"You heard what I said?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry resignedly.

"Thurnel, if you are mixed up in a fight again to-day, I shall look into it, and if you are in the wrong, report you to your House-master to be caned!"

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right!" he said.

"Remember what I have said."

And Kildare walked away.

Thurnel looked at Tom Merry with a sneer.

"That saves you from a licking just now," he remarked.

"Possibly," said Tom. "But the fight will come off all the same. We can't have it out to-day."

"Why not?"

"You heard what Kildare said?"

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Captain of the school."

"Well, he won't know, anyway; and we're not bound to fight in the gym," said Thurnel. "If you're not afraid, we can fight now."

Tom Merry reddened.

"You shall see to-morrow whether I'm afraid or not," he said. "But I shall not fight you to-day."

"Bah!"

Tom Merry's hands clenched hard, but he turned away without a word. Thurnel shrugged his shoulders again, and his brows lowered as he found himself left alone with Mellish. He made only that one friend at St. Jim's, and his manner was not likely to make him more.

"He's glad enough to crawl out of it," said Mellish in-gratiatingly. "Of course, you will lick him to-morrow?"

"I suppose so," said Thurnel carelessly.

"You'll be cock of the Lower School if you keep on like this," said Mellish, with a grin. "Of course, the other fellows don't seem to take to it much. But they will come round, when they see you mean business."

"I don't want them to come round."

"I mean, you will be more popular."

"I don't want to be popular."

Mellish looked puzzled.

"Well, I naturally supposed you'd like to be head of the juniors, as Tom Merry is now; and you could, if you liked—"

"Stuff! I don't care for anything of the sort!"

"Then what do you care for?"

"I only want to be left alone."

Mellish reddened.

"If that's meant for me—"

"Oh, rats! When I've had enough of your company I'll tell you so," said Thurnel. "I think we shall get on very well."

"Good!" said Mellish. "But, look here, it would be a good wheeze to put those rotters in their place, and become cock of the walk, you know. I should like it immensely. You could make Tom Merry put you in the footer eleven."

"I don't play footer."

Mellish whistled.

"Oh, that makes a difference, of course! Why don't you play?"

"I think it's rot!"

"Well, I think so, too, as a matter of fact," said Mellish, with a grin. "But it doesn't do to say so here, you know."

"No, I suppose not."

"But what do you do to amuse yourself, then?" said Mellish curiously. "My idea of spending a half-holiday is to keep as far away from the footer-field as possible, and to get to a place where one can have a smoke and perhaps a game of nap."

Thurnel's face brightened up.

"That's the idea," he said. "You're just the sort of chap I wanted to meet here. When is there a half-holiday?"

"To-morrow."

"Good! Then we might arrange a little excursion of that sort."

"With pleasure—especially if you've got any tin," said Mellish. "Of course, there is the football."

"Hang the football!"

"Willingly, if I could; but footer practice is compulsory here, for juniors, you know. You'll have to put in at least half an hour to-morrow afternoon."

"I jolly well won't."

"Mind, it's the business of the prefects to see that you do," said Mellish. "It's no good trying to get out of it."

"Well, we'll see."

"Better make up your mind to it, and—"

"Never mind that now. Look here, I dare say you've noticed that I'm a studious sort of chap—"

Mellish stared.

"Well, I hadn't," he remarked. "From the way you went on in class to-day, I should say you weren't anything of the sort."

"I mean, I've a taste for historical research," said Thurnel. "I like digging into old manuscripts, blackletter, and that sort of thing."

"My only hat! What a taste!"

"Well, it's mine, and I've heard that there are lots of old manuscripts in the school library here," said Thurnel.

"Yes, that's so—cases full of 'em," said Mellish, with a yawn. "You can bury yourself neck deep in 'em if you choose. Chaps like Manners go digging into them at times, you know—blessed if I know what for. Why, I can't read the things, and I wouldn't give twopenny to be able to do it."

"Tastes differ," said Thurnel. "What I'm trying to get

at is, can a junior get permission to study the manuscripts in the library?"

"Oh, yes! You have only to ask one of the masters!"

"Good!"

"Tell him which particular dry rot you want to dig into, and he'll give you permission, and the key of the cabinet," said Mellish, with a yawn. "But what on earth—"

"What are the manuscripts about?" asked Thurnel.

"Oh, some of them are about the early history of St. Jim's—some rotten records kept by the old monks who used to dig here before Henry the Eighth turned them out."

"Interesting, I suppose?"

"Can't read 'em, and don't want to."

"What time do the fellows usually study those things?"

"I don't know—any time—in their spare time, I suppose," said Mellish, more and more puzzled. "You can get into the library any time out of school hours."

"I like to be quiet and undisturbed over my studies," said Thurnel. "I should like to know some time when the library would be empty."

"Oh, I see! Well, it's always empty in the mornings—you would be pretty sure of having it to yourself if you went there immediately after morning school, for instance. No one would be likely to be in the room between morning school and dinner."

"Thanks."

"Blessed if I guessed you were going to be a swot," said Mellish, in some disgust. "I thought in class this morning that you were anything but that."

"Let me see," said Thurnel, without heeding Mellish's remark, "if I tell Latham I want to go through the manuscript records of St. Jim's, he'll give me permission to use the library, I suppose?"

"Yes. He takes an interest in that sort of rot himself, and it's an easy way of getting into his good books," said Mellish. "If that's your game, it's a rather good dodge, but it means being stuck in the library when you might be enjoying yourself."

"That's all right. I'll ask him."

And Thurnel strolled into the School House. Mellish gazed after him with an expression of great disgust. He had, as he had said, expected Thurnel to prove anything but a swot, from his exhibition in class that morning; and the new development on the new boy's part was a surprise and a disappointment to him.

CHAPTER 13.

Plans for the Night.

TOM MERRY carefully avoided Thurnel that evening. The fight between them was to come off on the following day, and Tom had no desire to avoid it; but his promise to Kildare kept him from finishing matters with the new boy that day. He kept clear of Thurnel, and, during the evening he put in half an hour doing some boxing practice with Lowther and Manners in turn. He was boxing with Lowther in the study when Manners came in and stood looking on. Tom Merry and his chum were in their shirt-sleeves, sparring away actively, all the advantage on Tom's side. Lowther was no mean antagonist, but there was no doubt that Tom Merry was far and away the better boxer of the two.

"Good!" said Manners. "You're in jolly fine form, Tommy."

Tom Merry paused for a moment, and nodded.

"Yes, and I feel jolly fit," he said. "I really think I shall be able to give Thurnel a tussle to-morrow."

"What-ho!" said Lowther. "He's a strong beast, I know; but he can't box better than you do, Tom, I'm sure of that. Why, you'd make a regular pug!"

"I shall give him a tussle, anyway."

"He's a curious beast," said Manners. "I've just heard the latest about him. Blessed if I know what to make of it!"

"What is it?"

"He's taken a studious turn."

Lowther gave a whistle.

"I heard from Dig that he was the biggest dunce in the Fourth Form," he said. "He claims to have had a private tutor before he came to St. Jim's; but Dig says his tutor must have been a humbug. The chap only scraped into the

Read
the Long,
Complete
Tale of

GORDON GAY

THE
SCHOOLBOY
ACTOR, in

EMPIRE
LIBRARY.

Now on Sale.
ONE
HALFPENNY.



A dark form loomed at the open window, and the new Fourth-Former helped the climber in. Mellish crouched into the gloom and watched breathlessly.

Fourth Form by a miracle. And Dig says he's a slacker, too."

"Yes, I heard that Lathom was down on him, and he's got lines, too," remarked Tom Merry.

"That's so," said Manners. "But you never can tell."

"But what's the news? You don't mean to say he's swotting?"

"That's just what he is doing!"

"Phew! That makes it look as if there was something in the scholarship theory. But what particular form of swotting is he doing?"

"He's got permission to study the manuscripts in the library."

"My hat!"

"Now, you know, I do that," said Manners. "I have a half-hour in the library three times a week, digging into the manuscripts. I have a taste for that sort of thing, and, besides, I need it, to go in for the Craven prize. But that chap—"

"He's the last chap I should have expected to see interested in antiquarian knowledge," said Lowther.

"Exactly."

"It must be a dodge for getting into Lathom's good books. You know Lathom is a great deal of a bookworm."

"Yes; but Thurnel has obtained permission to use the

library for half an hour every day, immediately after morning lessons. Lathom told me himself. He has charge of the St. Jim's records, you know, and I was asking him about some of the manuscripts, and he told me I should now have a kindred spirit in my researches. I thought at first it was some other chap going to swot up knowledge for the Craven. Then he told me it was Thurnel, the new chap."

"It's odd!"

"Jolly odd!" said Manners. "I'll jolly well tackle him on the subject, I know that, and see whether he knows anything about it. I'd bet two to one that he couldn't read blackletter. It's a dodge to curry favour with Lathom, I suppose. It makes me like the chap less than ever. I'll catch him in the library when he's on the job, and make him own up if he can't read the things."

"Serve him right," said Tom Merry. "It's a rotten, caddish trick to take advantage of Lathom's simplicity. But now put the gloves on, kid—Lowther's had enough!"

"Right you are."

Manners donned the gloves, and the two Shell fellows sparred in the study, Monty Lowther sitting on the table and looking on, swinging his legs. There was a knock at the door, but the chums of the Shell did not hear it in the noise of the trampling of feet and bumping of furniture.

The door opened, and Wally D'Arcy, of the Third, put his head in.

"Hallo, I see you're going it!" he remarked.

"Yes; get out," said Lowther.

"Rats!"

"No room for infants. Travel!"

"I've called to speak to you kids," said the hero of the Third cheerfully. "Stop that rot for a minute, and listen."

Tom Merry paused, and dropped his hands, laughing.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"In the first place, I'm much obliged to you for stopping that new beast ragging me, as you did," said Wally.

"Oh, that's nothing!"

"We're going to give him a lesson about cuffing Third-Formers," said Wally mysteriously. "Now, I suppose you chaps have noticed that he is altogether too fresh, haven't you?"

"Well, rather."

"He's got to be put up to a wrinkle about laying his paws on the Third," said Wally. "We're going to do it."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Then you'd better keep it dark, Wally."

"I thought you chaps might like to have a hand in it," explained Wally. "My scheme is to give him a good ragging to-night."

"I'm to fight with him to-morrow," said Tom. "I sha'n't touch him till then. But you'd better be careful, kid. He's not a safe chap to jape."

"Neither am I; but he japed me," said Wally. "I'm not going to take that sort of thing lying down, you know."

"Better leave him alone."

"Rats! I thought you Shell chaps might like to take a hand; but if you won't, you won't. You'll keep it dark, though?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Mind, mum's the word."

"Right you are!"

And D'Arcy minor quitted the study, satisfied that he could rely upon the discretion of the chums of the Shell, if not upon their assistance.

Tom Merry and Manners finished their boxing, and descended later to the common-room. Thurnel was there, chatting near the fire with Mellish, and he glanced at Tom Merry, who was careful not to glance at him. He did not want any further dispute with the new boy till the time came for meeting him in a fair and square fight on the morrow.

"Careful," muttered Mellish, as the Terrible Three came by.

The chums of the Shell heard the word, and they noticed that Thurnel stopped speaking till they were out of hearing. They exchanged glances. Thurnel and Mellish were evidently discussing some matter that they wished to keep secret from the rest of the juniors. Thurnel did not speak again till there was no chance of being overheard.

"Right," he said. "But I suppose those fellows would not sneak?"

"Probably not; but it's safer to keep anything like this dark," said Mellish.

"Quite right."

"It will be easy enough to get out of the dorm.," said Mellish. "We've only got to wait till the other fellows are asleep, and then sneak out quietly."

"But getting out of the house—"

"Is all right—the little window at the end of the passage opens on to a safe place for getting down the ivy."

"Good!"

"We can get over the school wall at the slanting oak," said Mellish. "It's a place where Tom Merry has been over often enough. But I say—"

"Well?"

"You must have a jolly good nerve, breaking bounds the second night at the school."

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders.

"And I don't quite see it, either," said Mellish. "What's the good of going down to the village for cigarettes to-night, when to-morrow's a half-holiday, and you can go down without any risk or trouble?"

"Well, I want them to-night—and then, it's partly the fun of the thing. If you don't want to come with me—"

"Oh, that's all right—I'll come!"

"Good. That's settled, then; and now, mum's the word."

And no more was said on the subject. But the cad of the Fourth was very much puzzled, and several times that evening he looked very curiously at the new boy.

CHAPTER 14.

Gussy Gets the Soot.

"QUIET!"



"Quiet yourself!"

"Don't make a row, young Jameson!"

"Who's making a row?"

"You are!"

"Rats!"

Wally breathed hard through his nose. Three shadowy forms had stolen along the corridor in the School House, and stopped outside the door of the Fourth Form dormitory.

They were D'Arcy minor, Jameson, and Curly Gibson, of the Third.

The three fags were half-dressed, and Wally D'Arcy carried a bag in his right hand, which he was taking extraordinary care of.

"Will you shut up?" he demanded, in a fierce whisper. "It would make too much row to bang your napper against the wall now."

"It would take too much trouble, too," said Jameson.

"Anybody that tried it would get hurt."

"Dry up!"

"Well, don't you jaw then."

"If we weren't on a raid," said Wally, in concentrated tones, "I'd take you by the scruff of the neck, Jimmy, and damage the door with your cokernut."

"Poof!"

"Why, you—you—"

"My Aunt Matilda!" said Gibson. "How long are you going to stand here while you two duffers slang one another? I'm going back to bed."

"Hold on!"

"Well, come to business, then."

"Jameson says—"

"Wally says—"

"Oh, rats! I'm off!"

"Stop, you ass!" said Wally, making a clutch at his discontented follower, and banging the bag against him. "There! Now you've made me spill some of the soot!"

Gibson gave a howl.

"You dangerous lunatic! Have you spilled it over my bags?"

"Well, I suppose some has gone over your bags," said Wally. "I think some must be in Jameson's slippers. Never mind; there's a lot left."

"Never mind!" breathed Jameson. "Oh, you frabjous ass!"

"Don't make a row."

"You burbling jackass!"

NOW ON SALE

THE BEST LIBRARY

No. 12 The BOY EDITOR
A GRAND TALE OF A YOUNG JOURNALIST

No. 13 SAHIB and SEPOY
A THRILLING NEW TALE OF THE INDIA MUTINY

No. 14 The WAR of the MILLS
A STORY OF LANCASTIRE LIFE
By David Goodwin

THE "BOYS' FRIEND" 3^D LIBRARY
COMPLETE

"Look here——"

"I'm smothered," said Gibson—"smothered!"

"Well, I don't see why you can't be smothered quietly," grunted Wally. "I never saw such a chap for complaining! I——Hallo!"

"Cave!"

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and a glimmer of light. It was half-past ten, and all the boys ought to have been in bed. The three fags guessed at once that it was a master going his rounds.

For a moment they stood dismayed.

There was no escape from the wide, long corridor, and the footsteps were coming towards them. But Wally was seldom nonplussed. He quickly and quietly opened the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, and dragged his comrades in.

Then, as quickly and quietly, he closed the door behind them.

"Hush!" he whispered.

"Hush yourself!" whispered Jameson.

"You ass!"

"You duffer!"

The footsteps approached the door, and passed. The juniors breathed more freely. Wally had been afraid that the passer might notice the spilt soot, but apparently he had not done so.

"All serene," muttered Curly Gibson.

"Good! Now, which is Thurnel's bed?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"Better find out for certain," said Jameson. "We don't want to bung the stuff on the wrong chap by mistake."

Wally chuckled softly.

"No; that would be rough."

"Don't cackle, young D'Arcy. You may wake them up."

"You cheeky ass——"

"Well, I was only warning you."

"I'll jolly well warn you soon, with a dot on the boko," said Wally. "We shall have to strike a match to see which is which of the Fourth Form asses."

"Got a match?"

"Of course I haven't. I thought you would have sense enough to bring a match."

"I haven't one."

"Have you a match, Gibson?"

"No."

"Well, of all the frabjous idiots——"

"Shut up!" whispered Jameson. "I can hear somebody moving."

The three fags remained still and breathless.

There was a sound in the dormitory of somebody moving in bed, and a grunt as a sleeper settled down into a more comfortable position.

"It's all right," whispered Wally. "He's not awake."

"Hush!"

"I say——"

"Hark!"

A voice came through the gloom—a voice the fags knew well. It was that of D'Arcy major—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

"Who's that talkin' there?"

The fags made no sound.

"I heard somebody movin' about. Is it a burglar?"

Wally chuckled silently. There was something very curious in D'Arcy's apparent expectation that a burglar would be kind enough to announce his presence.

"Well, don't make a wow!" said D'Arcy drowsily. "I believe somethin' woke me up."

And he breathed deeply and regularly again.

The fags did not dare to move for some minutes.

Then Wally groped through his pockets carefully in search of a stray match. He found one at last, a wax vesta adhering to a chunk of toffee. He separated the match and the toffee, and struck the former, with some difficulty. It flared up, and the light glimmered in the long, dark dormitory.

Wally hastily looked up and down for Thurnel.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo! What's the row?"

"There's a bed empty—and another!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove! I am sure I can hear somethin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sitting up in bed. "I am quite certain of it, Blake."

"Gr-r-r!"

"Blake, deah boy!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Blake! I wathah think there are some burglahs here. Wake up, deah boy!"

There was a grunt from Blake's bed. The match was out, and the three fags were as silent as mice.

"Oh, go to sleep, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to go to sleep. There is somebody movin' about in the dorm."

"Well, let 'em move."

"It may be a burglar."

"Oh, bother!"

"Weally, Blake, you wemembah that an attempt was made to burgle the school silvah once, and we cannot be too careful, you know."

"Rats!"

"Well, I intend to investigate, anyway."

"Investigate, then, and shut up!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Arthur Augustus rose silently from his bed. He was convinced that somebody was moving about in the dormitory, and as that somebody had refused to speak, D'Arcy was inclined to think that it was a burglar. The fags stood silent and dubious. If they were discovered there would be no chance of carrying out the jape on Thurnel.

Arthur Augustus groped for a matchbox, but did not find one. He felt his way through the dark towards his washstand, where he remembered there was a box, and ran right into Jameson, who gave a gasp.

"Oh!"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus fastened upon the fag at once.

"I've got him, Blake!"

"Got who?"

"The burglar!"

"Then keep him!" said Blake. "Don't bother me!"

"Help!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"I tell you I've captured the burglah! Help!"

Jameson made a desperate effort to tear himself loose, and dragged Arthur Augustus over, and went down sprawling with him. D'Arcy gave a yell.

"Ow! Oh! Help! Burglahs!"

There was no doubt that there was somebody in the dormitory, and a dozen Fourth-Formers turned excitedly out of bed.

"Look out!"

"Jump up!"

"A light! A light!"

"Got a match!"

"Help, deah boys!"

"Rescue!" gasped Jameson.

Wally and Gibson groped towards him in the darkness. Wally seized a pair of ears, to drag D'Arcy off the fag, but a fiendish yell from Jameson revealed the fact that the ears belonged to him.

"Leggo!" he shrieked.

"By George! I thought——"

"Wally!" gasped D'Arcy, recognising his brother's voice.

"Yes, ass!"

"Weally, Wally——"

"Cut it, Jimmy!"

D'Arcy, in his amazement, had relaxed his hold upon Jameson. The fag wrenched himself away, and leaped clear of the Fourth-Former. D'Arcy made a wild grasp after him, and grasped Wally. They staggered and fell together; and there was a fearful yell from Arthur Augustus as the bag of soot banged upon his head and burst open.

"Ow! Groo-o-o-o-oh!"

"My only Aunt Jane!" gasped Wally.

He tore himself away.

The jape was evidently "up" now; lights were being struck on all sides, and the three young rascals had barely time to escape.

"Sorry, Gussy!" gasped Wally. "It was meant for Thurnel, but you will shove your silly head into things!"

"Groo!"

"Hook it!" exclaimed Jameson.

"What-ho!"

The fags made for the door. They darted out of the dormitory, and scudded away down the passage, before a hand could be stretched out to seize them.

Jack Blake lighted a candle, and Digby had lighted a bicycle lantern. The light streamed upon Arthur Augustus as he staggered to his feet.

For a moment the Fourth-Formers gazed at him in the silence of utter astonishment.

Then there was a wild yell of laughter.

Arthur Augustus was simply smothered with soot.

Had the juniors not known who it was they would never have recognised the swell of St. Jim's.

His head, his face, his elegant pyjamas all had disappeared under a coat of blackness.

D'Arcy had disappeared.

A wild figure of African blackness had taken his place. From under the clouds of soot came a gasping voice.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT

"TOM MERRY'S CARNIVAL."

"Gweat Scott! Oh! Bai Jove! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-wow!"

"I feel howwid!"

"Ha, ha! You look horrid!" gasped Herries. "My hat! Where did you get that soot?"

"Ow! It was that young wascal Wally brought it here to throw ovah that new wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and ye got out of bed to look for thrubble, and found it!" said Reilly.

"Ow!"

"Better clean yourself down," said Hancock. "You can't get into bed again in that state. Ha, ha, ha!"

"A lucky escape for Thurnel," grinned Blake. "He—Why, where is he?"

He glanced towards Thurnel's bed.

It was unoccupied.

The glances of a dozen juniors followed Blake's. Thurnel's bed was empty, the clothes turned back where the junior had crept out of it. Mellish's bed, which was next to it, was empty also.

Both of them were gone.

The juniors forgot even the sooting of Arthur Augustus in their surprise. Where were the new boy and the cad of the Fourth gone together at that hour? They had left the Fourth Form dormitory surreptitiously, and their absence would never have been discovered but for the Third Form raid.

What did it mean?

CHAPTER 15.

A Mysterious Meeting.

"MIND how you drop!"

"All right!"

Mellish whispered the warning as he stood at the foot of the wall in the shadow of the thickly-hanging ivy.

Thurnel had just clambered out on the window-sill.

He took a strong grasp of the ivy, and swung himself down to the ground much more actively than the cad of the Fourth had done.

He joined Mellish on the ground, and laughed slightly.

"Nothing much in that."

"Well, this way," said Mellish.

"I'm following you."

Mellish led the way across the dark quadrangle.

There were but few stars showing in the deep, dark sky, and not much moon.

From the windows of several of the masters' studies the light shone, and from one or two of the Sixth Form rooms. But the great mass of the School House was dark on the facade that fronted the quadrangle.

Thurnel walked quickly, following Mellish without a pause through the darkness, never losing sight of him for a moment. As a matter of fact, the new boy seemed more at home getting about in the dark than Mellish was, though he was a stranger to the place.

The cad of the Fourth halted abruptly.

"Here's the wall."

"Good!"

Thurnel peered about him in the gloom. Close to the wall grew a thick old oak with a trunk slanting towards the wall, over which the branches hung, shadowing the road outside.

"You see?" whispered Mellish. "You have to climb up between the trunk and the wall—you squeeze your way up. Do you think you can do it?"

"Oh, yes; that's easy!"

"Shall I wait for you?"

"No need, now you've shown me the way," said Thurnel. "You can go back, only leave the window unfastened for me."

"Right you are!"

Thurnel clambered up between the tree trunk and the wall. Mellish stood watching him, the darkness hiding the cunning smile on his face.

Mellish was suspicious by nature, and he flattered himself that few fellows could succeed in pulling the wool over his eyes.

Thurnel's expedition to the village that night, at so much risk, for the simple purpose of smuggling cigarettes into the school, seemed to Mellish's keen mind not exactly to square with the probabilities. True, he knew that Jack Blako had destroyed the new boy's "smokes." But that was not a sufficient reason for Thurnel running this risk and taking so much trouble.

There was more in the new boy than met the eye—Mellish knew that. He was quite convinced that Thurnel had some

motive for leaving the school at night with which he had not acquainted him.

What that motive might be Mellish could not guess, but he had a dim suspicion that the new boy had already formed undesirable acquaintances in Rylcombe, and intended to visit them—perhaps to spend a jolly time.

But whatever might be the new boy's motive for going out at that hour, the Paul Pry of St. Jim's meant to learn what it was.

Mellish had no scruples about spying and listening, and he was only waiting for Thurnel to get fairly over the wall to follow him.

He heard the new boy clamber over and drop into the road, and then he himself climbed quickly to the top of the wall.

He peered over in the darkness, and caught a glimpse of Thurnel's figure disappearing in the gloom, but Thurnel was not going towards the village. He had started off in the exactly opposite direction.

Mellish chuckled softly, greatly admiring his own sagacity. He had bowled the new boy out in his falsehood at the very start.

As the new boy disappeared up the road, Mellish dropped silently from the wall, and crept after him.

On the other side of the road was a ditch, separating the road from the borders of a wood, and crossed at some distance by a plank bridge.

Mellish heard the creaking of the planks as the new boy crossed it into the wood.

The cad of the Fourth was decidedly puzzled.

What Thurnel could be penetrating into the deep, silent wood for at that hour was a mystery to him. The wilder spirits at St. Jim's had sometimes indulged in poaching, but that was hardly likely to be Thurnel's aim.

Mellish was more intensely curious than ever.

He stole along the road to the bridge, and crept silently over it, and found himself in the darkness of the footpath under the trees.

He was about to feel his way forward when a voice fell upon his ear, and he stopped dead, his heart beating like a hammer.

"Is that you, Dick?"

Mellish hardly dared breathe. Dick was Thurnel's name, and he understood in a flash now what it all meant. Thurnel had come out to meet someone in the shadows of the wood—a man, to judge by the voice, and not a particularly desirable acquaintance for any boy, to judge by the aroma of brandy that was wafted to Mellish with the breath of the speaker.

Mellish thought for the moment that he had been seen and mistaken by the stranger for Thurnel, and he stood trembling, but the next moment he was reassured. Thurnel was near him in the darkness, though he could not see him.

"I'm here!" said Thurnel's voice.

He was so close that Mellish could have touched him by holding out his hand. The cad of the Fourth, hardly daring to breathe, and with his heart thumping painfully, backed away. The blackness of the path completely hid him from sight, but he was afraid that his breathing would betray him.

But he did not go too far to hear the voices of the two speakers. Mellish was more curious than ever, and he did not mean to lose a syllable if he could help it.

"Good!" went on the harsh voice Mellish had first heard.

"I've been waiting for you ten minutes, Dicky."

"I came as near half-past ten as I could."

"Oh, all serene; I don't mind! But I've been anxious, Dick."

Thurnel chuckled softly.

"There wasn't so much for you to be anxious about, dad, as for me."

Mellish could hardly avoid an exclamation.

Then this was Thurnel's father!

The mystery was deeper than ever. Why should the new boy's father follow him to St. Jim's and meet him in this surreptitious way, at such a time and place, instead of coming up to the school in the light of day?

"Well, we're both in it pretty deep, Dick, though I admit you ran most of the risk. But it went off all right!"

"Yes."

"Nobody suspects you're older than you make out?"

"No one, as far as I'm aware."

"Good! How have you got on with the boys?"

"Oh, that's all right! I've licked some of them—they were astonished to find a chap like me lick them so easily." And Thurnel chuckled.

The other uttered an exclamation.

"That was a bad move, Dick—a very bad move!"

"I don't see it," said Thurnel sullenly. "I wasn't going to stand any cheek from the young brats, I suppose?"

"Yes, but you must have attracted attention now, and caused remarks to be passed upon your strength," said the other. "You make up wonderfully well as a boy on account of your small size, but your face looks older, and if you give



"Hush!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It's Figgins & Co. having their evening trot." "Exactly!" Tom Merry gave a soft chuckle. "Get ready to collar them, chaps!"

away the thing like this you will be found out. It would have been wiser for you to avoid all rows and put on a pretence of being weaker, not stronger, than the others."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"It's not all right!" said the other irritably. "It was a false move. You must keep clear of rows in the future."

"Oh, all right, but—"

"But what?"

"I've got a row on now—I'm to fight to-morrow with a chap named Merry, in the Shell."

"Then don't!"

"But I must—it's arranged."

"Make it up with him."

"I can't."

"You must. Don't be a fool, Dick. It won't hurt you to eat humble-pie. Remember how short your stay here is to be and how much there is at stake."

Thurnel was silent for a moment.

"Oh, very well!" he said at length. "I'll do my best. I suppose I can arrange it, and, as you say, it's best not to attract too much attention at first if it can be helped. I'll make it up with Merry somehow."

"That's better. All the game would be up if they dis-

covered that you were a man of twenty-two instead of a boy of fifteen."

"Ha, ha?"

"It was a great pity that you weren't educated up to it, Dicky, and you might have gone to a higher Form and run less risk of detection. There are fellows of more than seventeen in the Sixth Form, for instance—though it would have been difficult to send you into the Sixth direct. But it's all right as it is so long as you play your part well."

"It's as much as I can do to keep my place in the Fourth. All the cramming I did for the last four weeks has only just enabled me to scrape in."

"But it's all right now?"

"Oh, yes, I can hold my own now."

"Good! And you won't have to stick it long."

"I can't stick it long," said Thurnel abruptly. "The class work is a horrible grind to me, and I show my ignorance at every turn. A month's cramming was enough to give me a start, but I can't take to kids' studies at my age, and I can't do the work. I'm supposed to be a lazy slacker already. I don't mind that; but there may be trouble when it's found out that I'm a regular spoofer."

"Well, it won't last long; it all really depends on you."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

NEXT

"TOM MERRY'S CARNIVAL"

Have you discovered what you went to the school to find out?"

"Yes."

"Already?"

"Yes. I haven't let the grass grow under my feet, you may be sure," said Thurnel. "They're kept in the library."

"Good!"

"I've got permission to spend a half-hour in the library every day, at a time when no one else is there, to study the old manuscripts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, it's rather good, isn't it?"

"Extremely good. I——"

"Hark!"

"What is it?"

"I thought I heard a sound of breathing."

"Impossible! We are alone here."

"I'm not so sure," muttered Thurnel, breathing hard.

"Until the game is over, and I'm out of the school, I'm afraid of every shadow."

"Yes, but——"

"Let's part now. I——"

"But you haven't told me about——"

"I've drawn a sketch of it on paper," said Thurnel, groping in his pocket. "Here it is. You'll learn from that all that I've learned. I'll see you again to-morrow night. I'd better come to the Golden Pig, I think. It will take longer, but it will be safer than meeting near the school. By to-morrow night I hope to have the whole thing in working order. Now go."

"Right! You can't be too careful. But I didn't hear anything."

"Good-night!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Thurnel stood alone, his eyes straining in the gloom. The man he had met was gone. The last sentences had been spoken in a faint whisper, which would not have reached the ears of a listener a few feet away. But was there a listener? Thurnel's eyes were gleaming, and he stood with bent head, listening with the straining attention of an alarmed wild animal.

The crackle of a twig caught his ear. The sound was between him and the road, and therefore could not have come from the man who had just left him, who had gone in the opposite direction.

Thurnel's eyes gleamed green in the dark.

He stepped quickly along the path, and his outstretched hands came in contact with a form stumbling along in the gloom. His grasp closed upon that form with a grip like that of a vice, and there was a vain struggle, and a gasp of affright.

"Let me go!"

"Mellish!" said Thurnel, between his teeth.

CHAPTER 16.

A Secret to Keep.

MELLISH wriggled in the powerful grasp of the new boy.

"Let go! Let go!"

"You have been spying!"

"I—I haven't heard anything—not a word!"

Thurnel gritted his teeth. He dragged Mellish out of the shadow of the trees to the less dim gloom at the end of the plank bridge. Mellish was white with fear.

Thurnel still held him fast, and glared at him with burning eyes.

"You followed me?"

"I—I——"

"Tell me the truth."

"Ye-es," muttered Mellish, scared by Thurnel's expression. "I—I——"

"You have heard all that I said?"

A lie trembled on Mellish's lips, but he caught the glitter of Thurnel's eyes, and dared not utter it.

"Yes," he muttered.

Thurnel released him. Mellish staggered to his feet, trembling in every limb. He was horribly afraid of Thurnel at that moment, he hardly knew why.

"Stand there," said Thurnel. "Don't go."

"Yes."

Mellish stood shivering.

Thurnel was silent for some minutes, his eyes fixed upon Mellish. His brows were wrinkled in an effort of thought; he was evidently trying to recall exactly what he had said, and which Mellish had overheard.

"You cad!" he said at last. "You—you spying worm!"

"I—I won't say a word."

Thurnel laughed grimly.

"You'd better not. You saw how I dealt with Blake

and Figgins. If you dare to say a word to give me away, I'll use you worse than that."

"I—I promise."

"So you know," went on Thurnel quietly, "that I'm older than I pretend to be—that I'm older than the oldest fellow in the Sixth—that I'm playing a part in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's?"

"Yes," stammered Mellish.

"Have you guessed why?"

"No."

"What is your idea on the subject?"

"I—I haven't any," said Mellish. "I—I'm astonished. I can't understand it. I don't know why you should play such a trick."

Thurnel looked at him searchingly, as if he would read his very soul.

"You are sure of that?"

"Ye-es."

"I suppose you're very curious about it?"

"Oh, no, no!"

"Don't tell lies!" said Thurnel abruptly. "You know perfectly well that you won't be easy in your meddling mind till you've found out the truth."

Mellish shifted uneasily. He was beginning to recover his courage now, however. After all, Thurnel could do no more than lick him; and he had Thurnel in his power now, and could make terms.

"Well, if you like to explain to me——" he began.

"I will," said Thurnel. "I've come into the Fourth Form at St. Jim's for a certain purpose. I'm going to enter for a prize—a money prize."

"Oh!"

"It's a prize of a hundred pounds, and it's offered by an Old Boy at St. Jim's, and is only for competitors in the Fourth Form."

"Which prize is it?" asked Mellish. "I know most of them, I think, but I don't remember one that answers to that description."

"It's not offered yet; it's going to be made known on Governors' Day. My father knows the man in question, and so we have information about it. We're hard up—though we're keeping it dark—and that hundred pounds may be more to us than you can imagine. Do you understand?"

"Oh, it's a new prize!"

"Yes."

"I see. It's plain enough now."

"You will keep the secret?"

"Of course! I don't want to give you away," said Mellish; "only no more of your bullying, please. I'll keep the secret out of friendship, not because I'm afraid of you. If you like to stand my friend, I'll keep your secret."

"You had better be careful."

"You'd better be careful yourself," said Mellish, with growing confidence. "I'm not going to be under your thumb. If I said a word you would be kicked out of St. Jim's, and you know it. Here, hands off!"

Thurnel had suddenly seized him.

With a powerful grip, he forced the cad of the Fourth down towards the deep flowing ditch by which they had been standing.

Mellish was completely helpless in the grasp of the powerful junior. He was forced down till his face was close to the silent, glimmering water.

"Leggo!" he gasped hoarsely. "You mad idiot, I shall be in a minute! Let me go!"

"Do you see the water?" said Thurnel, between his teeth. "One shove more and you would be under it, and then——"

Mellish shuddered.

"Don't—Thurnel—for mercy's sake! Are you mad?"

"Will you be silent?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Mind, I should think no more of shoving you under the water now than of wringing the neck of a chicken," said Thurnel, in low, concentrated tones. "You won't find it a paying game to play with me, Mellish. Do you understand?"

"Let me go!"

Thurnel released him. Mellish rose, shaking in every limb, and looking at the new junior in unsuppressed terror.

"Now let us get back to the school," said Thurnel.

"Ye-es," muttered Mellish thickly.

"And mind—not a word!"

"Yes, yes."

Mellish was trembling in every limb as he followed Thurnel. He did not speak a word. A strange and terrible fear of his companion was tugging at his heart. They entered the House in grim silence, and ascended the stairs to the dormitory. In the passage outside the Fourth Form dormitory Thurnel stopped, muttering something under his breath, and grasped Mellish by the arm.

(Continued on Page 22.)

A Popular Feature

IN THE

NEW Complete
Story Book,

THE

EMPIRE Library

IS THE

WORLD-WIDE Postcard Exchange.

Get a copy of

The **EMPIRE** Library,

NOW ON SALE,

And read the long, complete tale of

GORDON GAY,

The Schoolboy Actor.

Price - - One Halfpenny.

The cad of the Fourth shrank back.
 "Let me alone! I——"
 "Fool! Look there!"
 Thurnel pointed to the dormitory door. There was a gleam beneath it from within.
 Mellish started.
 "A light there!" he muttered.
 "Then they're awake."
 "I suppose so."
 "Hang them! What can it mean?"
 "It may be a master going his rounds, you know," said Mellish maliciously. "If a master found a chap was out, he would wait there for him."
 "Hang him!"
 Thurnel hesitated some moments, and then strode on.
 "It's no good hanging about here," he said; "we've got to go in."
 "That's so, but——"
 "Come on!"
 And Thurnel pushed open the dormitory door and entered.

CHAPTER 17.

D'Arcy is Indignant.

TWO or three candles and a bicycle lantern were burning in the Fourth Form dormitory. There was no master present, as Thurnel had feared; and there was only one fellow out of bed. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was standing at his washstand, busily engaged in scrubbing his head and face. He was striving to remove the soot which had been deposited upon him by mistake, and he was succeeding, but it was a long and weary task.

Several juniors were sitting up in bed, to keep D'Arcy company while he washed his sooty head, but most of the Fourth had gone to sleep again.

D'Arcy raised his head from the basin, and wrung his hair out, and began to towel it, as Thurnel and Mellish came in.

"I think it is all wight now, deah boys," he remarked.
 "Well, it looks better," said Blake chivalry. "There's still a smudge or two on your aristocratic chivvy."

"Bai Jove!"
 "But it's all right. How many times have you washed your topknot?"

"Five times, deah boy, in fwesh watah."
 "Then it ought to be getting clean. You're soaking your towel. It won't be very fit to use in the morning."

"Oh, that's all wight!"
 "Well, if you think so——"
 "I think it's all wight. You see, it's not my towel."

"Ha, ha! Whose is it?"
 "Yours, deah boy."

"Mine!" howled Blake. "Why, you frabjous ass——"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Digby.
 "What are you cackling at, Dig, you ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's funny!"
 "Yaas, watah! I wegard it as funnay," said Arthur Augustus. "I have already used Dig's towel, too, and that is quite wet and gwimy."

"What!" yelled Digby.
 "Isn't it funnay, deah boy?"
 "No, it isn't, you ass! You——"

"Yes, it is!" said Blake. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, stop your cackling!"
 "Bai Jove, here are those wottahs!" exclaimed D'Arcy, turning to look at Thurnel and Mellish. "They've come back!"

Jack Blake glanced across at the returned juniors. Thurnel and Mellish were going to their beds without a word. Blake noticed how pale and troubled Mellish looked, and he caught the cloud on the new boy's brow. Thurnel and Mellish had evidently not had a very pleasant excursion.

D'Arcy suspended his towelling for a moment, felt for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and fixed his glance upon the two juniors.

"Where have you been?" he inquired.
 There was no reply.

"I twust you have not become suddenly afflicted with deafness, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I asked you where you had been."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Thurnel.
 D'Arcy coloured with anger.

"You uttah cad!"
 "Oh, shut up!"
 "Weally, Thurnel——"

Thurnel grunted, and kicked off his boots. He was not in a good humour. He had bound Mellish to secrecy, and he thought that he had scared the cad of the Fourth sufficiently to make him keep the secret; but he was still uneasy.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

There was more at stake than he had explained to Mellish. He was not in a humour to be questioned, and his naturally savage temper was easily provoked.

D'Arcy surveyed the new boy through his monocle with a stare of contempt.

"You uttah cad!" he remarked. "You are a disgwace to the school! I am convinced that you have been out on some disreputable excursion which would bring disgwace on the School House, if it were known!"

"Oh, dry up!"
 "I wefuse to dwy up. I wegard you as a wank outsidersah. I have several times thought of givin' you a feahful thwashin'——"

Thurnel laughed scoffingly.
 That laugh finished the matter. D'Arcy laid down his towel, and came over towards the new boy.

"Pway put up your hands, deah boy," he said.
 "Oh, go to bed!"
 "I decline to go to bed. I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Chuck it, Gussy!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "He's going to fight Tom Merry to-morrow, you know; and one fight at a time is enough."

Arthur Augustus paused.
 "Yaas, that's wight enough," he remarked. "I don't want to be hard on the chap, although he is such an astoundin' wottah!"

"Get to bed, old chap," said Blake, who was, as a matter of fact, anxious for D'Arcy, not for the new boy. From his own experience, he knew how D'Arcy was likely to fare in a fight with the new boy.

"Vewy well. If Thurnel will withdraw his wude expwensions——"

"Oh, get away!" said Thurnel.
 "I wefuse to get away!"
 "Leave me alone, you fool!"

"I uttably decline to be called a fool. Undah the cires, I have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin' Pway put up your hands."

"You'll be sorry if I do," said Thurnel.
 "I shall stwike you wuffly if you don't."

"Oh, all right, then!"
 Thurnel jumped up and put up his hands.

"There is still time to apologise," said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"Oh, rats!"
 "Vewy well. I will give you a feahful thwashin'!"

And Arthur Augustus sailed in. Thurnel met him with a drive that took effect upon his chin, and laid the swell of St. Jim's on his back on the floor. He went down with a bump that seemed to shake the whole dormitory, and woke up half a dozen of the sleepers.

"Faith, and what's that?" ejaculated Reilly.
 "It's only Gussy flopping on the floor," grinned Mellish.

"Bedad!"
 Arthur Augustus lay dazed. His head was singing from the terrible blow. Jack Blake jumped out of bed and ran to him.

"Gussy, old man——"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "How do you feel?"

"Wotten! It is most wemarkable!"
 "Get to bed, chappie."

D'Arcy sat up, and shook his spinning head.
 "I am not goin' to bed till I have given that wottah a feahful thwashin'. I——"

"Cave!" breathed Digby.
 But the warning came too late.

The door opened, and Mr. Railton looked into the dormitory. The House-master had evidently heard the fall of the elegant junior, and had come up to inquire the cause of the disturbance at that late hour.

He gazed in amazement at the scene in the dormitory.
 "Boys, what does this mean?"

"Bai Jove!"
 "You are fighting—at this time of the night, too!" exclaimed the House-master sternly. "I am surprised and ashamed!"

"I am sowwy, sir; but——"
 "Go to bed at once!"
 "Yaas, sir; but——"

"That is enough, D'Arcy. Get into bed!"
 "Yaas——"

"Not a word more!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.
 Blake dragged his chum towards the bed. Arthur Augustus reluctantly turned in, and Thurnel did the same. Of the late excursion of Thurnel and Mellish the House-master had no suspicion.

"You will take a hundred lines each for this unseemly breach of the rules," he said. "I shall expect the lines to-morrow afternoon."

And he left the dormitory.

He had extinguished the lights, and the juniors were left in silence and darkness. The silence was unbroken for a minute or more. Then Arthur Augustus's voice was heard.

"Bai Jove!"

"Lines and lines and lines," said Blake. "Well, it serves you right, and serves Thurnel right, so that's one comfort."

"It certainly serves Thurnel wight, Blake; but I wufuse to admit that it serves me wight."

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"I cannot go to sleep vowy wapidly with an ache in my jaw, deah boy. Thurnel, I cannot give you a thwashin' to-night, as Mr. Waitton has intewupted us. I am goin' to give you a thwashin' to-morrow."

Thurnel only replied with a contemptuous grunt. The dormitory sank into silence again, and all slept but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was long kept awake by the ache in his jaw. But even he slept at last.

CHAPTER 18.

Caught in the Act.

TOM MERRY was looking serious as he came out of the Shell Form-room after lessons the next day. The afternoon was a half-holiday, and, under ordinary circumstances, the chums of the Shell would have spent a considerable part of it on the football-field, making the most of what was left of the season. But there was another matter now that claimed the attention of the Terrible Three. Tom Merry's fight with the new junior was fixed for that day.

"I suppose we'd better see Thurnel, and fix up the time?" Monty Lowther remarked, as the chums went down the passage.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. The sooner it's over the better!"

"Not feeling uneasy, Tommy?"

Tom laughed.

"Well, I don't feel very confident, Monty, in tackling a chap who has licked Blake, and chucked Kangaroo and Figgins about. But I'm not nervous, if that's what you mean. I shall stand up to him till I can't stand any longer, anyway."

"That's the tune."

"The Fourth Form are out," said Manners. "I don't see Thurnel, though."

"Where's the new kid, Blake?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake, "or care either, for that matter! Gussy's got a fight on with him now, and he's looking for him."

"Gussy?"

"Yaas, wafah! He was wude to me last night, because I pointed out to him that he was actin' disreputably in bweakin' bounds at night."

"Oh, he breaks bounds at night, does he?"

"Yes; he went out with Mellish," said Blake. "I don't know what they were up to—nothing that would bear the light, I expect."

"Well, we know Mellish. I expect you're right. But where is the new kid now?"

"I wealdy do not know. He disappeared immediately aftah the fellows came out. I suppose we shall see him at dinnah, though."

The juniors strolled out into the sunny quadrangle.

"Let's have a run out," said Lowther. "The row can wait till after dinner. We shall see Thurnel then."

"Right you are!"

"I'm off," said Manners.

"Where are you off to?"

"The school library."

"But you don't go there till the afternoon," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to have an extra dig into those blessed old manuscripts, surely?"

Manners chuckled.

"Not much. But I imagine that's where Thurnel is. You remember I told you he had asked permission to study the manuscripts for half an hour in the morning after lessons?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, that's where he is now, I suppose."

"Oh, I shouldn't wonder," said Tom Merry; "but we don't want to disturb him. After dinner will do for our little interview."

"Yes, but I'm going to see him at work. I'm curious. I know jolly well that such a duffer as he is at lessons doesn't care twopence for all the manuscripts in St. Jim's. He's either fooling Lathom to curry favour, or he's got some dodge on. I'm going in early to my studies to-day, you see, and I shall do my work on the manuscripts in the library while he's doing his. Savvy?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Go ahead, then; but I don't see what his little game can be unless he really wants to study the blessed things. It's no joke to shut yourself up for half an hour a day in the library unless you really want to study."

"That's what puzzles me," said Manners. "I know jolly well that his swotting over manuscripts is all humbug, anyway."

And Manners walked away in the direction of the school library, while his chums went out into the spring sunshine. Manners was a studious lad, and a haunter of the old dusky library of the School House. A great deal of leisure time that the other fellows spent on the river or in the woods, Manners spent within the walls of the library, turning over old manuscripts and rare volumes. And Manners, hardly consciously, felt that sense of annoyance which a quietly studious lad feels at seeing a slacker and a dunce attempt to assume the credit of studiousness.

Manners swung open the big, heavy oaken door, and stepped into the library. The sun was shining in at the windows of the long, lofty apartment.

Manners glanced round idly for Thurnel.

He expected to see the new boy sitting at one of the little tables near the cabinets, studying or affecting to study.

But Thurnel was not so occupied.

He was standing at a bookcase between two windows, upon the top of which glimmered a bust of Shakespeare.

Manners looked at him in surprise and amusement.

The Shell fellow had not meant to enter the room in a stealthy manner at all, but his foot had made no sound on the deep carpet, and Thurnel had not heard the door open. He had his back towards the door, and was as yet quite unconscious of Manners's presence.

Manners watched him with a grin.

He knew that the bookcase the new fellow was examining was a dummy one, merely an ornamental outer covering of the iron door of the hidden safe. There were rows of dummy shelves, with dummy book covers over them, and glass outside, and the appearance was the same as that of the other cases. Manners's natural thought was that Thurnel supposed the case to be a real one, and that he wanted to take one of the books out of it.

Thurnel was making a careful examination of the case.

He felt over it with his hand carefully, and paused at the lock; and then he felt in his pocket, and drew out something which he inserted into the bookcase door lock.

There was a faint click.

The glass door swung open.

Manners gazed on in astonishment. He knew that that door was always kept locked for the purpose of concealing the door of the safe beneath. How did it come about that Thurnel had a key?

With the glass door, the apparent bookshelves came open, too, and revealed the fact that there was nothing inside the glass but rows of imitation backs of books.

Within an iron door was disclosed.

Thurnel examined it with glittering eyes.

He did not show any sign of surprise at the appearance of an iron safe door in a place where rows of books should have been, and it dawned upon Manners that the new boy knew as much about the safe as he knew himself.

The Shell fellow caught his breath.

This, then, was the explanation of Thurnel's desire to study old manuscripts in the library at an hour when the room was certain to have no other occupant.

It was not the manuscripts, but the hidden safe that he was curious about. How did he know of it, and what was his interest in it?

Manners could only stare at him. Thurnel was examining the door of the safe with the most intense interest. Manners strode suddenly forward.

"What are you doing, Thurnel?" he exclaimed.

Thurnel gave a sudden cry.

He whirled round and faced Manners, with a face so ghastly pale that the Shell fellow thought for a moment that he was going to faint.

He could not speak. He could only stare blankly at Manners, with terror in his eyes. So evident was his fear that Manners almost pitied him.

"Oh, it's all right," he said. "You haven't been caught by a master. Buck up!"

"I—I—" stammered Thurnel.

"Better close that bookcase," said Manners. "If anybody came in and found it open, you would be asked what you meant by it."

Thurnel nodded, and turned to the dummy bookcase without a word. He closed it, and locked it, and it resumed its former appearance. Then he looked at Manners again, still without speaking.

Manners fixed his eyes upon the new boy's white face. The terror he had read in Thurnel's eyes had roused strange suspicions in the Shell fellow's mind.

"What were you doing, Thurnel?" he asked.
 "I—I was looking at the safe," stammered Thurnel, beginning to recover himself.
 "How did you know it was there?"
 "Mellish told me about it. I was curious to see it," said Thurnel. "I hear that the school silver is kept there, and I wondered what the safe was like; that's all."
 "Oh, that's all, is it?" said Manners suspiciously. "Then how did you get a key to open the outer door?"
 "I haven't a key."

"Rats! You opened the door. Look here, you must have stolen that key from the Head's study. I wonder you didn't steal the safe while you were about it," said Manners scornfully. "You've got to take it back."
 "I—I—"

"Come on. You've got to put the key back where you found it, and I'm going to see you do it," said Manners determinedly.

"I—I haven't a key, I tell you."
 "Then how did you unlock the bookcase door?"

"I—I opened it with a wire."
 "A wire!" exclaimed Manners, in astonishment. Thurnel nodded.

"I don't believe it. You couldn't."

"Well, I did."
 "Show me the wire, then."
 Thurnel hesitated a moment, and then drew a twisted wire unwillingly from his pocket. He held it out for Manners's inspection.

"You opened the lock with that?"

"Yes."
 "Then let me see you do it again," said Manners incredulously.

"Oh, rats! I will if you like."
 Thurnel unlocked the case again. Manners watched him closely. There was no doubt that the new boy at St. Jim's could pick a lock with the ease and skill of an accomplished crackman.

"Can you open the safe door too?" asked Manners.

Thurnel shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Of course not; it's a patent lock."

"Oh, I see! Close the door again and lock it."

Thurnel did so.
 "Now," said Manners, "you'll get out of this room. You won't come back here to study any more manuscripts, either."
 Thurnel looked at him fiercely.

"I'll please myself about that."
 "No, you won't!" said Manners coolly. "You'll please me. I don't quite know what to make of you; but I know this much, that if you ever enter this room again, I'll go straight to the Head and tell him exactly what I saw you do here."

Thurnel changed colour again.

"Look here—"
 "I don't promise to keep it dark in any case," added Manners; "but one thing's certain—if you come into the library again, you'll have to answer for your little game just now to the Head. Now, get out."

Thurnel looked at him. The desire was strong upon him to hurl himself upon the Shell fellow, and it showed plainly in his eyes. But he knew that he was in Manners's hands. He went quietly out of the room without a word.

Manners stood for many minutes in deep thought when he had gone. The new boy was a surprise in every way. But of this latest development, Manners had not the faintest idea what to think. What did it mean?

CHAPTER 19.

A Gold Mine for Mellish.

TOM MERRY was chatting with the chums of the Fourth while they waited for the dinner-bell, when Manners came out of the School House. Manners joined the group of juniors in the quad, and his grave expression at once attracted their attention.

"Have you seen Thurnel?" asked Tom Merry.

Manners nodded.

"Was he in the library?"

"Yes."

"Not swotting over manuscripts, I'll bet my hat," said Jack Blake. "He was making blunders this morning in class that made Lathom open his eyes. He's a dunce and a slacker; and he cares as much for study as a parrot does."

"Yaas, wathah."

"He wasn't studying," said Manners.

"What was he doing, then?" asked Lowther. "Not smoking there, I suppose? Even he wouldn't have the cheek to do that in the library."

"No. He had picked the lock of the dummy bookcase with a wire, and was looking at the door of the safe."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

"What!"

"That's what he was doing."

The juniors stared blankly at Manners.

"You're serious?" asked Blake.

"Quite serious."

"What on earth was he doing that for?"

"That's what I want to know."

"Bai Jove! Picked the lock, too!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "I don't understand this at all, and I don't half like it."

"Didn't he give you any explanation?"

"Only that he was curious to see the safe. Mellish had told him about it."

"It's very curious."

"Jolly curious," said Digby. "I don't like it."

"Picking a lock is a serious business, and I don't see how he could know how to do it," said Blake. "It's awfully odd."

"There's a lot of things about that chap we don't quite understand," said Manners. "The more I see of him, the more certain I feel that he's years older than he pretends. Though why he should make out that he's a kid, and come into the Fourth Form here, is a mystery to me. I've been over the list of all the St. Jim's prizes, and there isn't one that he could be supposed to take all that trouble to go in for. Besides, he doesn't know anything—he couldn't pass into the Upper Fourth, let alone take a prize of any sort."

"It's a blessed mystery."

The dinner-bell cut short the discussion. The juniors trooped into dinner, and took their places in the School House dining-room. Thurnel came in, looking as cool and unconcerned as usual, and took his place at the Fourth Form table. Many of the juniors looked at him curiously, but he did not appear to notice it.

After dinner, Thurnel left the dining-room as quickly as he could, and went out into the quadrangle. The Terrible Three followed him. Thurnel was walking very quickly towards the gates.

Thurnel stopped with an impatient look.

"What do you want?"

"A word with you."

"I'm in a hurry."

"That doesn't make any difference," remarked Monty Lowther. "It's a rather important matter, you know."

"Well, what is it?"

"You've got a short memory," said Manners, with a grin.

"Have you forgotten that you are to fight Tom Merry this afternoon?"

Thurnel started.

"Oh, that!" he said.

"Yes, exactly that," agreed Tom Merry. "I want to get it over, as I have other things to do this afternoon as well. What time will suit you?"

Thurnel hesitated.

"I don't know that I want to fight," he said slowly. "I—I'm willing to drop it, if you are. I'm in a hurry, for one thing. And—and I don't want a row. Will you let the matter drop?"

The Terrible Three stared at Thurnel.

It was the last suggestion they had expected to hear from him; and they could not understand it. It could hardly be that he was afraid, after the way he had dealt with Blake and Figgins. What was the cause of his sudden desire to avoid a fight?

Two or three juniors strolled up, under the impression that the fight was about to begin. Mellish was among them.

"Faith, I'll be your second, Merry!" said Reilly.

"And I'll be yours, Thurnel," exclaimed Mellish. "Better get into a quieter place than this, though, or you'll have some of the prefects down on you."

"The fight's not coming off," said Thurnel.

"What?"

"Faith, and sure I—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bernard Glyn. "We've been looking forward to it."

"Well, it's not coming off," said Tom Merry. "I've no particular desire to go on with it, if Thurnel wants it to be dropped."

"I do," said Thurnel.

"Very well; it's settled, then."

And Tom Merry strolled away. Mellish was grinning. He remembered what had been said at the secret interview the previous night, and understood. The rest of the fellows were utterly puzzled by the sudden and unexpected change in Thurnel's bearing.

"Faith, and it's rotten!" said Reilly, in tones of great disappointment. "I was lookin' forward to the best fight of the term."

"So was I!"

"And I!"

"It's rotten!"

"Shame!"

Thurnel took no notice of the pointed comments of the juniors. He walked away very quickly towards the gates. A groan from the disappointed juniors followed him, but he did not turn his head. Mellish walked after him, and overtook him as he passed out into the road. He tapped Thurnel on the sleeve, and the new boy looked at him angrily.

"Don't bother me now!" he said snappishly.

"Have you forgotten our plan?"

"What plan? What do you mean?"

"I was going to show you a place in the village where we could have some fun," said Mellish. "We arranged it yesterday."

"I'd forgotten—I've no time now, anyway. I've got something else to attend to. Another time."

"Yes, but—"

"I can't stop now."

Thurnel hurried on, and Mellish, with a curious expression upon his face, kept pace with him. He was determined not to see that the new boy wanted to be rid of his company. A dozen paces down the lane Thurnel stopped, and turned fiercely upon the cad of the Fourth.

"Will you leave me?" he said. "I don't want your company. Is that plain enough for you?"

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, it's plain enough."

"Then cut off!"

"Certainly. I've no desire to intrude upon a teaching interview between father and son," said Mellish, with a disagreeable smile.

Thurnel started.

"I suppose that's what you're going for?" said Mellish, with a grin. "Hands off, please! It isn't midnight, and a lonely wood, now—if you touch me, I'll yell for help, and tell the whole story to the prefects."

Thurnel glared at him with suppressed rage. Mellish meant what he said, and Thurnel saw it, and kept his clenched hands down at his sides.

"What do you want?" he said, in a suppressed voice.

"Now you're talking," said Mellish. "I don't want to come with you, particularly. But—can you lend me a half-sovereign?"

Thurnel looked for a moment as if he would spring upon the cad of the Fourth. But he controlled himself. He dived a hand into his pocket, and produced a handful of silver, and dropped it into Mellish's hand.

"Thanks!"

Thurnel strode on without a word. Mellish gazed after him with a sneering smile, and then counted the money in his hand. There were twelve shillings and sixpence. The cad of the Fourth grinned gleefully. It seemed to him that a new and abundant source of revenue had been opened to him, and he had no scruples about taking advantage of it.

CHAPTER 20.

Arthur Augustus Looks for His Enemy.

"WEALLY, Blake—"

"Oh, stuff!"

"I tell you—"

"Rats!"

"If you say wats to me, deah boy—"

"Well, I do say rats to you, and many of 'em!"

"Then I shall have no wresource but to—"

"Hallo! What's the matter here?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming up as the argument reached an exciting point.

"Wherefore this thushness?"

"I am twyin' to make this ass undahstand—"

"I'm trying to explain to Gussy—"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake."

"I'm quite aware of that, Gussy. I'm trying to explain to the duffer that he can't fight Thurnel this afternoon, because the new chap has a previous engagement with you, Merry."

"I wefuse to admit—"

"Exactly," said Digby. "Under the cires, it would be very forward of D'Arcy to thrust himself into the lime-light."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Just how it strikes me," said Herries.

The Terrible Three laughed. An expression of dubious uneasiness came over the face of the swell of St. Jim's.

"If you weally look at it in that light, deah boys, I am willin' to forego my wights," he remarked. "What do you think, Tom Mewwy? Do you wegard yourself as havin' a pwior claim?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Certainly!" said Manners.

"Indubitably!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"And you fellows think the same, you know?"

"What-oh!" said Blake, Digby, and Herries together.

"Vevy well, then, I wesign my claim," said D'Arcy graco-

fully. "I yield to the voice of the majowity. I will give Thurnel a feahful thwashin' on anothah occasion."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "But, as a matter of fact, my fight is not coming off."

"Bai Jove!"

"Thurnel asked me to drop the matter," said Tom. "I don't understand his motive, but I'm quite willing to do so. So there it stands."

Jack Blake looked puzzled.

"I don't understand, either," he remarked. "Not to put too fine a point on it, I think that Thurnel had a better chance of the two, and I don't see why he shouldn't meet you."

"I don't see it, either; but there it is. I didn't want to force him to fight; for, after all, it would be about nothing. So there it ends."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, what's the matter with you, Gussy?"

"If Thurnel is not goin' to fight with Tom Mewwy, he is open to keep his engagement with me," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see nothin' whatevah to laugh at. Where is the wettah?"

"Gone out."

"That is most pwovokin'. Howevah, I will look for him. Unless he apologises for his disgustin' wudeness, I have no wresource but to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Now, look here, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

"You can't—"

"The wascal stwuck me," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose you do not imagine that a D'Arcy can allow anybody to stwike him without avengin' the insult."

"But—"

"It is not a case for butts. I should wefuse to be stwuck undah any cires. I am goin' to look for Thurnel and give him a feahful thwashin'."

"But suppose he gives you one?" asked Blake.

"I do not wegard that as vevy pwob; but, in any case, the honour of the D'Arcys will be avenged," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately way.

And he walked down towards the gates. He left his chums grinning.

"Bless the honour of the D'Arcys," Blake remarked. "I hope he won't find Thurnel. He will get a hammering if he does. But there's no stopping him."

Arthur Augustus strolled out of the school gates. Mellish was in the road, walking at a leisurely pace towards the village, and the swell of St. Jim's hastened his steps and overtook him. Mellish glanced round.

"Stop a minute, deah boy!"

"Well?" said Mellish.

"Have you seen Thurnel, the new chap?"

"Yes."

"Where is he, deah boy?"

Mellish looked curiously at the swell of St. Jim's. He had not the faintest intention of telling him where to find Thurnel. Thurnel's secret was to be a mine of wealth to the cad of the Fourth, and all might be spoiled if it became common property. Mellish intended to acquaint himself with the whole story as soon as he could, and to keep it to himself just as long as Thurnel made it worth his while. He knew that Thurnel was gone to the Golden Pig, in Rylcombe now; and he immediately made up his mind to send Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the opposite direction.

"What do you want him for?" he asked.

"I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin', for his beastly wudeness to me in the dormitory last night," explained D'Arcy.

Mellish chuckled.

"Well, he's gone into the wood, to walk over to Wayland, I believe," he said. "If you hurry along the footpath you're bound to overtake him."

"Thanks awfly, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus hurried away. Mellish chuckled, and resumed his way to the village. If Arthur Augustus followed his directions, he was not likely to see anything of Thurnel. And the unsuspecting Gussy was following them.

At St. Jim's, Blake & Co. were saying things about their warlike chum. They wanted him in a football match they were playing against Figgins & Co. But he did not return; and the match was played without him. After the match the juniors went in to tea, a party of them being crammed into Tom Merry's study for the purpose, and still Arthur Augustus had not returned.

"What on earth's become of him?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he made the tea. "He can't be looking for Thurnel all the blessed afternoon."

"Hallo! Speak of angels, and you hear the rustle of their giddy wings," exclaimed Monty Lowther, as the door of the study opened.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered. He was very tired and dusty, and he sat down in the nearest chair and gasped.

"Where on earth have you been?" exclaimed Blake.

"Here, have a cup of tea, kid," said Tom Merry kindly, bringing the first cup poured out to D'Arcy. "It will liven you up."

"Thanks awfully, deah boy!"

"Now, where have you been?"

"Lookin' for Thurnel."

"Did you find him?"

"No."

"Have you thrashed him?" asked Lowther.

"I wegard that question as widiculous, Lowther. How could I thwash him if I did not find him?"

"My mistake," said Lowther blandly. "Have you thrashed anybody?"

"No."

"Has anybody thrashed you?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you've wasted an afternoon. You might as well have stayed in and played footer," said Lowther severely.

"Bai Jove! I forgot the footh. I think Mellish must have been deceivin' me. He told me Thurnel had gone ovah to Wayland. I've been lookin' for the wottah ovah there, but I could not find a twace of him. I shall give Mellish a feahful thwashin', as well as Thurnel. I wegard it as a beastly caddish twick. I am vewy tired and hungry."

"Wire in," said Tom Merry hospitably.

"Yaas, wathah! Thanks awfully!"

And D'Arcy wired in with an unusual appetite. But though he found hospitality in Tom Merry's study, he found little sympathy there. The juniors all seemed determined to take his vain excursion to Wayland in a humorous sense, and they chuckled over it all the time Arthur Augustus was having his tea.

CHAPTER 21.

An Astonishing Discovery.

"YOU fellows asleep?"

It was a faint whisper in the Fourth Form dormitory at St. Jim's.

The dormitory was dark and silent. It was close upon midnight, and everyone in the great building was in bed. The light was out in the last window, and all the school slept—or almost all. The last stroke of midnight had died away, when Thurnel sat up in his bed and whispered the words.

There was one junior who heard him—but he did not make a sound. It was Mellish, the cad of the Fourth. He lay quite still, breathing regularly, though his heart was beating faster than usual. Mellish felt that a crisis was coming; Thurnel intended to leave the dormitory again, and this was the opportunity for the cad of the Fourth to learn the whole of the strange secret. And Mellish did not mean to lose that opportunity. He had not stayed awake for nothing.

"Are you asleep?"

The voice was a little louder now.

There was no reply in the deep silence of the dormitory. Thurnel waited a full minute, and then he crept silently out of bed.

Mellish trembled as he heard the new boy coming towards his bed in the darkness. A horrible fear seized upon him; he remembered how the new junior had held him close to the flowing waters and threatened him. But he realised that Thurnel could not intend him any harm in the crowded dormitory. The new boy was suspicious, and wanted to make sure that he was really asleep. That was all.

And Mellish kept his eyes closed, and breathed calmly, though with a great effort.

Thurnel bent over him.

"Are you asleep, Mellish?" he whispered.

Mellish breathed regularly.

"I want you to help me in a scheme I've got on, Mellish; it will be worth your while."

Mellish made no sound. He was quite as cunning as the other, and he knew that the words were a trick to ascertain whether he was really asleep.

Thurnel waited, watching him for a full minute, and then, with an audible sigh of relief, he glided away.

Mellish heard a faint sound as the dormitory closed. Thurnel had taken his clothes under his arm, and gone out.

The cad of the Fourth sat up in bed.

He was trembling with excitement.

Where was Thurnel gone? What did it all mean? Mellish was determined to know. He crept out of bed, and donned his trousers and jacket, and without waiting for anything more he crept to the door.

He listened intently there for a few moments, and then

opened the door softly, crept into the passage, and closed it. Then he listened again.

There was no sound in the passage. Where had Thurnel gone? Mellish stole along to the head of the stairs, and paused suddenly and drew back into the shade. In the glimmer of a starlight window Thurnel was finishing putting on his clothes. Mellish remained quite still, and watched him from the shadows.

Thurnel, quite unconscious of the espionage, finished dressing, and then moved away. The direction he took showed Mellish that he was making for the window by which he had quitted the School House the previous night. He was breaking bounds again, then! Mellish followed noiselessly and heard him open the window.

But he did not climb out. There was the sound of a soft faint whistle in the gloom, and Mellish almost jumped as it was answered from without.

The cad of the Fourth felt his heart beating almost to suffocation.

There was someone standing below the window to whom Thurnel had given the signal-whistle.

Mellish, straining his ears, heard a faint rustling sound in the deep silence, and knew that it was the sound of the thick branches of ivy moving under the weight of a climber.

A dark form loomed at the open window, and Thurnel helped the climber in.

Mellish crouched into the gloom.

Who was it?

He could not doubt that it was the man Thurnel had met the previous night in the wood, and whom he had certainly gone to consult that afternoon.

But what was Thurnel's father doing there, entering the School House of St. Jim's at midnight like a burglar?

Mellish was alarmed now. He realised that there was something more in this than he had dreamed at first. He had not been able to guess the meaning of Thurnel's mysterious conduct—but now he could guess only too well—though he hardly dared to think that what he guessed was the truth.

The window was silently shut, and then the two dim figures passed Mellish. He held his breath.

Where were they going? Mellish guessed, before he saw the direction they were taking. They were making for the school library.

The cad of the Fourth followed them with a thumping heart.

Not a word was spoken; only a faint sound guided him through the shadows on the track of the father and son.

They reached the library door. It was locked, but a faint click told that the lock had not delayed the two more than a moment.

They entered the library, and the great door was closed.

Mellish stopped, his heart beating.

From the keyhole of the library door came a glimmer of light, and he knew that the newcomer had turned on a dark lantern. Straining his ears at the door, Mellish heard a faint click within. Another lock had been opened; and he knew, as well as if he had seen it, that it was the lock of the dummy bookcase outside the safe.

There was no doubt now.

But Mellish's brain was almost swimming with the terrible discovery. There was no doubt; yet it was incredible. He felt that he could not give the alarm till he had seen with his own eyes.

He remembered that there was a small apartment opening off the library, a room that was sometimes used as a study by the Head. There was another door to it. Mellish crept away, and in a minute or less he was in the little room. The doorway communicating between it and the library was filled only by a thick curtain on brass rings. Mellish pulled one corner of it aside, and looked into the library.

The glimmer of light struck his eyes again.

He was at some distance from the light. But he could see the whole scene clearly.

Thurnel was holding the lantern. A full-grown man was with him, and the man had some instrument in his hand. The dummy bookcase was swung open, and the door of the iron safe was revealed. It was upon the lock of the safe that the midnight visitor was busy.

Mellish drew a sharp, deep breath.

The man was a cracksmen, there was no doubt of that. Thurnel was his accomplice. He had been sent to the school for the purpose of making this robbery possible—to ascertain where the silver was kept—the famous St. Jim's plate—to discover how it could be got at, and at the ripe moment to admit the cracksmen into the house.

And he had succeeded in all—so far. Mellish trembled with excitement. A faint sound of voices came through the silence to his ears.

"How long will it take, gov'nor?"

"A quarter of an hour at the most," said the cracksmen.

an, with a soft chuckle. "This safe is nothing to some I have handled"

"Good! The sooner the better."

"I sha'n't waste time, you may be sure of that."

"Go ahead!"

"If we had had more time, you might have obtained the key, Dicky. But after what happened last night—"

"It was not safe to hang it out an hour longer than was absolutely necessary," said Thurnel feverishly. "After that Mellish discovered, it was impossible to stick to the plan. He has been blackmailing me already. That does not matter, but I could not depend on his silence, and I know he has been spying on me since."

The cracksman started.

"No danger of his spying now, Dicky."

"Oh, no!"

"You are sure?" The cracksman gave a quick look up and down the long, dark room, and Mellish trembled. "Sure, Dicky?"

"Yes; I made sure that he was fast asleep before I left the dormitory."

"Good!"

The cracksman turned to his task again, Thurnel holding the light. Mellish crept away. He had seen enough—more than enough. He was trembling so between fear and excitement that he could hardly walk.

He stole away towards Mr. Railton's room. He pushed open the door and entered, and closed the door again gently.

"Mr. Railton!"

There was a stir in the bed.

"Who is that?"

"Mr. Railton, wake up, for Heaven's sake!"

"I know that voice. Is that Mellish?"

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing up at this hour, Mellish?" asked the house-master, sitting up in bed.

"There are burglars in the house, sir!" gasped Mellish. "For goodness' sake get up. There are two of them in the library, sir, and they're opening the safe where the school silver is kept."

Mr. Railton sprang up.

"What!"

"It's true, sir."

"This cannot be a joke on your part, Mellish, surely, but—"

"It will be too late to save the silver soon, sir."

"Come here, Mellish!"

Mr. Railton struck a match, and held it up to Mellish's face, and read his expression. The junior's wildly terrified look was sufficient to convince him that it was no "jape." The news was true.

"Very good, Mellish," said Mr. Railton quietly, as the match went out. "I will let you explain later how you come to be up, and aware of what is going on. Remain here. I shall call some of the prefects to help me, but you would be of no use."

Mr. Railton dragged on his trousers, and left the room. Even in his scared and excited state, Mellish could not help grinning. The House-master's warning was not needed; Mellish had not the faintest intention of helping to tackle the burglars.

He listened at the door. For a long time he could hear nothing. Was the House-master calling Kildare and Darrel and the other prefects? Had they gone to the library? If so, they were moving very quietly. Mellish could hear so sound. Five or six minutes had passed—whole nights they seemed to the anxious junior.

Then suddenly, through the deep silence of the night, came a wild uproar.

A sound of shouting, of scuffling, of fierce trampling and struggling!

Mellish gasped.

The burglars had evidently been attacked. The House-master and the prefects had come upon them in the library, and they were resisting.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

The fight was desperate, but short. In a minute or less the struggling had ceased, and only a furious voice raised in rage was heard. It was the voice of the disappointed cracksman, uttering wild oaths.

The noise had alarmed the house. Doors were opening, and voices calling. Seniors and juniors came out in their nightshirts, and the electric light in the passages was switched on. Mellish ventured out of the House-master's room at last. Tom Merry came tearing downstairs, and caught Mellish by the shoulder.

"What is it? What's happened?"

"Burglars!"

"My hat!"

"And I found 'em out and gave the alarm," said Mellish importantly. "They're in the library. I—"

But Tom did not wait for more. He rushed off to the library. A crowd was gathering there. Mellish followed. The gas was alight in the library now, and a bright illumination showed up the scene.

On the floor, bound with several cricket belts, lay the cracksman. Thurnel was standing up, secure in the grasp of Darrel and Kildare. He was white as death. The cracksman was swearing furiously, but Thurnel spoke no word. He was haggard and despairing. Mr. Railton had gone to the telephone in the corner, and was ringing up the police-station in Rylcombe.

"Thurnel!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What does this mean?"

"Yaas, wathah! What does it mean, deah boy?"

Thurnel did not speak or look up. But Mellish was ready to answer.

"Thurnel was the chap who let the burglar in!"

"What!"

"He's his son!"

"Rats!"

"It's true! He's really over twenty years old, and he's been spoofing us," said Mellish. "I found him out. If it hadn't been for me, they would have had the school silver and we'd never have seen it again!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Thurnel looked up with a haggard face.

"Well, it's true," he said. "Not much good denying it now. But that fellow who spied upon me isn't much better than I am, either. He made me give him money yesterday to keep my secret, because he found out I was playing a part here."

Mellish flushed scarlet.

"It's a lie!" he exclaimed savagely.

"It's the truth!"

"You liar!" Mellish clenched his hand, and struck at the face of the prisoner, but Tom Merry dragged him back in time.

"None of that, you cowardly cad!" said the hero of the Shell sternly. "I believe that what he says is true; it's just like you. And in any case, you don't touch a chap that's down while I'm standing by."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Railton put down the receiver.

"Go back to bed, boys," he said. "The police will be here in half an hour to take these two to the station. Kildare and I shall remain up. The rest will return to bed."

And the boys of St. Jim's returned to bed, but not to sleep.

It was a nine days' wonder at St. Jim's. Captured, the Thurnels had no motive to conceal the facts, and the whole story was soon known. Thurnel, the father, was a cracksman well known to the London police. Dick Thurnel, owing to his diminutive size, had been very useful to him in many of his lawless enterprises. The elder Thurnel, who had had a good education, and had indeed fallen from a good station, had conceived the idea of sending the boy to St. Jim's, as a means of obtaining an entry to the school, and information respecting the whereabouts of the school plate, which would have been a haul large enough for him to retire upon, if it had come off. Unfortunately for him, and fortunately for St. Jim's, it had not come off. But for Mellish the plan would have succeeded. There was not much doubt upon that point. But the cad of the Fourth did not figure in the eyes of his school-fellows as a hero, as he had expected. It was pretty generally believed that he had extorted money from Thurnel, and that he had been watching the new boy for his own mean reasons when he had accidentally discovered that he was engaged in a burglary. There was little credit due to Mellish; and he received little. The discovery was a great shock to the Head. He had been completely deceived by the elder Thurnel, and satisfied of the propriety of admitting the new boy to the school by forged documents, which it had been easy enough for a man like Thurnel to obtain. St. Jim's had had a lucky escape; and so had the chums of Study No. 6—for they had their study to themselves again now.

"It was a wotten twick for the boundahs to play on a respectable school!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "I regard it as most ungentlemanly of them. But as it's turned out, it's all wight. We've got our study to ourselves, and there's not likely to be anothah new beast yet a while. So it's all wight."

And D'Arcy's chums agreed that it was indeed "all wight."

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete tale of Tom Merry and Co., in next Thursday's issue of the "Gem" Library, entitled "Tom Merry's Carnival," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 110.

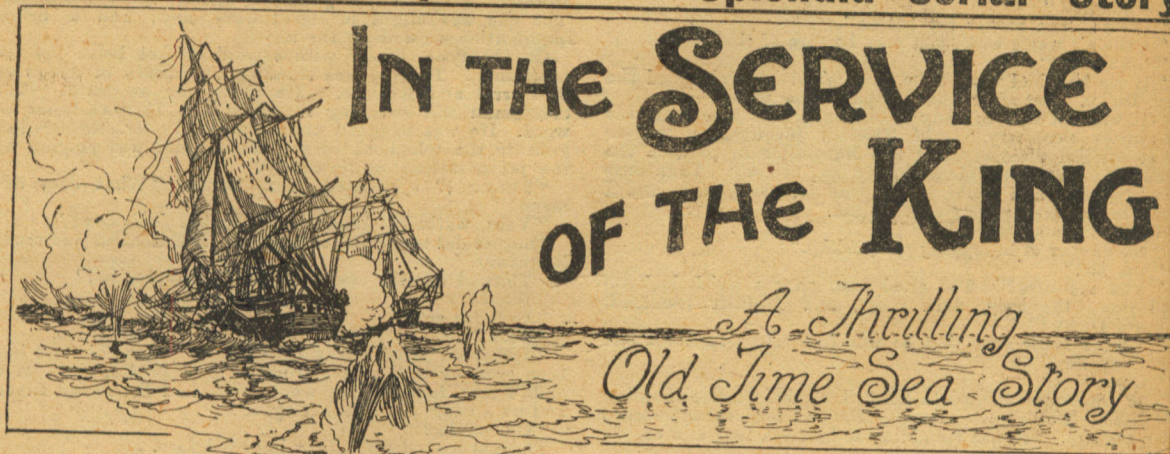
By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S CARNIVAL"

The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story



By Lieutenant Lefevre.

READ THIS FIRST!

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate *Catapult* as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith.

The first day at sea Oswald manages to fall foul of the master's mate, who has long been the bully of the middies' quarters. The two square up to one another, and are soon at it hammer and tongs.

(Now go on with the story.)

Rumbold Catches A Tartar.

Rumbold was a powerful man, and possessed a pair of extraordinary long arms, ending in massive fists; but there were two things that told heavily against him, the first, his inferiority in height to his antagonist, and the second his inferiority in pluck.

He had no heart for fighting, and after his first blow, which went wrong, he contented himself with trying to defend his own person.

"Go it, Rumbold! Sail in, my hearty!" crowed Ticehurst. Under any circumstances, the little master's mate was no match for Oswald, who was a good head the taller, and Oswald, who could now understand the object of Rumbold's pretended assistance, had worked himself up into a passion.

He had been to a public school, and knew how to use his fists, as Mr. Rumbold, in a very short time, found out to his cost. Bruised and battered, and well-nigh dazed with the fury of Oswald's attack, the master's mate went backing round and round the ring, holding up his fists, and feebly attempting to parry the shower of blows that fell upon every inch of his person.

"Have you had enough, you little brute?" demanded Oswald.

"You—you'll suffer for this!" gasped Rumbold.

Oswald lashed out with his left, catching the master's mate in the right eye, then, with his right, catching him under the chin, and lifting him clear off his feet and depositing him on his back on the deck.

"Serve him right! That's what he has been wanting a long time!" said Ticehurst, who had changed his tune when he saw how the battle had been going.

"It'll teach him to let us fellows alone," said Hunter.

"Ce—Ce—Ce—Ce—" began Babbington; but nobody listened to him. Rumbold made no attempt to rise at first, but lay there, glaring up at Oswald.

"Have you had enough?" Oswald demanded again. "If not, get up, and I'll give you some more!"

Rumbold sat up.

"I'll re-report you to the second luff for this," he growled, wiping the blood from his face with his sleeve.

"That means that you've had enough, I suppose," said Oswald contemptuously. "Well, let it be a lesson to you not

to interfere with me again. Next time I sha'n't let you do so lightly!"

"Lightly! My heavens, hear him!" gasped Hunter. At that moment Maxwell, who had been on duty on deck, came in.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. Then he broke into a laugh. "I told you how it'd be, Rumbold," he said.

Rumbold let fly a volley of oaths, and picked himself up from the floor.

"A chap that can't take a joke, ain't got any business come to sea!" he muttered.

"Was it a joke cutting my hammock down? It was a joke that might have killed me," said Oswald.

"It was a joke. It's always played on new-comers," said Rumbold.

"Oh, then, in that case, the thrashing I have just given you is a joke, too. At any rate, it's a joke to what I will give you the next time you try any of your tricks on me," said Oswald. And he turned on his heel, leaving Rumbold to sink out of the cockpit.

"Brabs sent me down to fetch you on deck," said Maxwell, catching Oswald by the arm. "I told him you were sick, but he said, sick or not, he'd knock the stuffing out of you if you didn't come on deck sharp."

"I'll come," said Oswald. "But I am not sick any longer. The feeling has gone off. I expect it was the exercise I got thrashing that fellow that drove it away!"

"Shouldn't be surprised. Anyway, hurry up on deck, or there'll be the deuce to pay!"

The wind had dropped considerably, but there was a fine drizzling rain descending that made the deck a very uncomfortable place. It was pitch-dark, too, so dark that, standing in the bows of the frigate, all ahead was wrapped in impenetrable darkness.

Oswald went up to Mr. Brabazon, whom he recognised by reason of the peculiar construction of his lower extremities and touched his cap.

"You sent for me to come on deck, sir!"

Brabs, as he was called for short, turned on him with an unamiable growl.

"Yes, I did. We don't want any loafers on board the *Catapult*. I suppose you've got a pair of eyes in your head?"

"Yes, sir!" said Oswald respectfully.

"Then lay out on the jib-boom, and keep your eyes open and report at once if you see anything ahead. You hear that?—at once! What are you waiting for?"

Oswald hesitated.

"I have been only a few hours on board, sir, and I was never at sea before; so if you wouldn't mind telling me which is the jib-boom, I'd be—"

Brabazon exploded into a curse.

"Don't know the jib-boom, and you supposed to be an officer?" he yelled. "Thunder, what on earth is the Service coming to? That's the jib-boom," he went on, "yonder Clamber along the bowsprit, and over the cap, then you're on the jib-boom, and there, by thunder, you'll stay," he added, under his breath.

(Another instalment of this splendid serial next week.)

THE QUADRANT



We will supply direct from our Works to anyone, anywhere, a Coventry-made "QUADRANT" Cycle on credit at trade prices.

BUY DIRECT FROM FACTORY AND HAVE SHOP PROFITS.

"QUADRANTS" have won 20 Gold Medals for excellence, and are ridden by royalty. Guaranteed for TEN years. Send for machine on 10 days' approval—money cheerfully refunded if dissatisfied. Fully equipped 1910 MODEL

£3 12s. Cash.

Agent's shop price £6 10s. Monthly Payments from 5s. **WRITE FOR FREE LISTS.**

QUADRANT CYCLE CO., Ltd.
(Dept. 1B), COVENTRY.

2000 YEARS (AGOS) TO-DAY

SUITS ON EASY TERMS

For the small sum of 5/- monthly we will supply you with a good suit of clothes. Our Suits and Overcoats are cut to your own measurements, guaranteed good fit, good style, every bit good, good lining, buttons, and finish—Suits and Overcoats which make you feel comfortable and well dressed. Prices 34/6, etc., 5/- monthly. Patterns, fashion plate, and self-measure form Free. Write to-day.

Boots, 13/6; Tan Willow, 17/6; or 2/6 monthly. Boot Booklet FREE

MASTERS' Ltd., 7, Hope Stores, RYE.

FREE FOR SELLING 24 POSTCARDS SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.

As an advertisement for our magnificent new range of Lovely Postcards we give every reader of this paper **ABSOLUTELY FREE a REAL DIAMOND Ring** (Lady's or Gent's), a Lady's Brilliant 5-stone Orient **DIAMOND Ring** (both exactly as illustrated), a beautiful **Necklet with Pendant, a Bracelet or Long Guard**, for selling 24 Cards (Comic, Actresses, Views, &c.) at 1d. each.

Our Special Free Prize List also comprises Ladies' and Gents' Watches, Roller Skates, Cinematographs, Sewing Machines, Dolls, Boy Scout Outfits, Phonographs, Clocks, Cutlery, Musical Instruments, etc., etc.

All you need do is to send us your name and address, and we will send you per return an assortment of postcards to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold, send us the money obtained, and we will immediately forward you the gift chosen according to the list we send you.

SEND NOW
(a postcard will do to)

ROYAL CARD CO.
(Dept. 70), Royal Parade, Kew, London.

RECORD BREAKING!!

"Record" Collector's Outfit, 10/- worth for 2d. Contains a Handsome Stamp Album, fully illustrated; the "Record" Pocket Stamp Case, richly embossed, fitted with linen pockets; the "Stamp Collector's Handbook," usual price 6d.; condensed priced Catalogue of the World's Postage Stamps; the "E-lipse," with Packet of 120 Stamps (catalogue value over 10/-), including Scarce Set of China, Scarce Cyprus, Queensland, India, Japan, Sets of Canada, New Zealand, U.S.A., Western Australia (Swan), etc., etc.; Packet "Record" Stamp Mounts and Perforation Gauge. Mention Bargain 1d. Also Free to all applicants a Scarce Old Unused British Colonial catalogue over 5/-. Send at once 2d. and 1d. postage (abroad 4d.) to **RONALD STONE & CO., WHITSTABLE.**

IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material or Cameras, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE.—Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

I offer you much longer credit and far easier payment terms than anyone else. Brand-new latest pattern **SWIFT, ROVER, COVENTRY — CHALLENGE, TRIUMPH, REMINGTON, HUMBER, PREMIER, PROGRESS, SINGER, QUADRANT, CENTAUR**, and other Coventry cycles supplied at 5/- monthly. A small deposit only has to be paid before the Machine is dispatched on approval, and I guarantee absolute satisfaction or refund your money. **HIGH-GRADE COVENTRY CYCLES from £3 10s. cash.**

5/- PER MONTH.

Write for Lists.

Edw. O'Brien, Ltd.
12 Years' Guarantee.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER (Dept. 14), COVENTRY.

1/- DEPOSIT AND 1/- WEEKLY.

As an Advt. we will send to first 1,000 applicants our **£3 8s.** "Royal Emblem" Cycle for 1/- DEPOSIT, and on LAST payment of 34 weeks at 1/-, making **£4 5s.** A HANDSOME PRESENT IS SENT FREE. Cash with order. **£3 15s.** only. Write for Illustrated Catalogue of Latest Models.

ROYAL EMBLEM CYCLE WORKS
(C30), Great Yarmouth.

NOW ON SALE. PRICE $1d. \frac{1}{2}$



Containing a Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of **GORDON GAY & CO.** By Prosper Howard.

Now on Sale!

THE **BEST** LIBRARY

No 112 The **BOY EDITOR**
A GRAND TALE OF A YOUNG JOURNALIST

No 113 **SAHIB and SEPOY**
A THRILLING NEW TALE OF THE INDIAN
MUTINY

No 114 The **WAR** of the **MILLS**
a Story of Lancashire Life
By David Goodwin

THE
'**BOYS**' **FRIEND**
COMPLETE **3** LIBRARY