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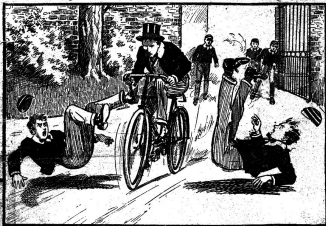


COMPLETE STORIES  
FOR ALL, AND EVERY  
STORY A GEM!

# A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!

A Splendid New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD. (Copyright Hamilton)



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, pedalling as if for dear life, came whirling down the drive. Levison and Mellish were standing there, and although they saw him coming, they made no attempt to move. D'Arcy crashed right into them, sending Levison in one direction, and Mellish in the other. "Ow!" gasped Levison. "Yow—ow!" wailed Mellish. (See Chapter 1.)

## CHAPTER 1.

### A Young Man in a Hurry!

#### TING-YING-TING-A-LING!

Buzzzzzz!

A bicycle bell rang furiously outside the gates of St. Jim's. Blake of the Fourth, who was lounging carelessly in the gateway with his chums Herries and Digby, glanced out into the road.

A cyclist was tearing up to the gates of the school as fast as his machine could carry him. The eye could not follow the whirling of the pedals as they raced round. And the three senior Formers stared in blank astonishment at the rider. For the rider was their noble and elegant cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, the swell of the school, whose mansion, as a rule, had all the repose which attends the estate of Vere de Vere.

But Arthur Augustus's manners at the present moment were not the smoothest traces of Vere-de-Vere repose. He flew from it.

Heat over his handle-bars, his eyes were jammed into his eyes, and he was glared there, Arthur Augustus was speeding for his life, racing as if he was on the race-track, or if his life depended upon his speed.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Gasey! Hallo, what's the matter?"

"Nobody's after him!" said Digby, looking down the road. "What the dickens—"

Ting-ling-ting-buzz! went the bell, as Arthur Augustus turned his machine into the old gateway. Blake and Herries and Dig had barely time to jump out of the way. Follows were not allowed to ride their machines within gates, and they had naturally expected Arthur Augustus to jump off there. But he didn't! He rode right in, and Herries and Blake and Digby jumped in three directions just in time.

"Are you all?" roared Blake, staggering against the gate.

"Are you off your rocker? Stop!"

"Stop, you chump!" roared Herries.

"Stop, you ass!" bellowed Digby.

But Arthur Augustus did not stop. He continued his reckless career up the gravel drive, heedless of the shouts on all sides. Levison of the Fourth was standing on the drive, talking to Mellish. They were in the way, and they saw the screeching cyclist coming. But cyclists weren't allowed on the drive, and Levison and Mellish weren't going to get out of the way, not if they knew it! They stood tight!

Ting-a-ting-buzz!

"Chucky, you ass!" growled Levison. "Let him stop!"

Next Wednesday:  
"BROUGHT TO BOOK!" AND "PLAYING THE GAME!"

But D'Arcy didn't stop! He rode right on! There was a foot of space between Levison and Mellish, and Arthur Augustus rode through at top speed. A foot of space was not quite sufficient for his passage, and the result was that Levison went flying in one direction and Mellish in the other.

They landed on the ground with two loud and terrific bumps.

"Ow!" gasped Levison.

"You-ow!" wailed Mellish.

Arthur Augustus and D'Arcy did not stop to see if he had done any damage. Perhaps he knew he had.

He dashed on towards the School House without slackening speed. Levison and Mellish sat up dazedly.

"He's mad!" panted Levison.

"Ow! Dangerous!" gasped Mellish. "Ow! My head! You! My back! Groah!"

At the steps of the School House D'Arcy jumped off his machine. The bicycles went whirling away, and Arthur Augustus, without a glance at it, dashed to the steps.

Mokey Leather and Manners of the Shell were chatting there with Kangaroo, otherwise Harry Nobbs. They saw D'Arcy coming, and wondered what the hurry was. But D'Arcy did not stop to explain. Breathlessly he rushed through them, and Mokey Leather sat down on the steps. Kangaroo roared against the door, and Manners staggered into the hall, and collapsed there.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy himself roared from the shock, but only for a moment. He recovered himself in an instant, and dashed on for the stairs. The Shell fellows yelled behind him.

"You silly ass!"

"I'll scalp you!"

"I'll pulverize you!"

D'Arcy did not heed. He rushed blindly up the stairs. After him rushed the three Shell fellows, on a vigorous hunt. There was a sudden roar on the staircase as D'Arcy rushed into Robby of the Fourth, who was coming down.

"Goh!" roared Robby. "Hare and care! Is it mad ye are?"

Robby was spread over the stairs. Arthur Augustus gasped, and caught at the banisters.

"Soway, dash boy! I'm in a hurry!"

"Sare, and I'll slaughter ye!"

"Scowry!"

D'Arcy sped on up the stairs, and Robby sprang up and roared after him. There was a loud crash as he struck rock, and got into all corners, all breaking in pieces. But the swell of St. Jim's seemed quite unward of it.

He went down the Shell passage like a racer.

"After him!" panted Kangaroo.

"Collar him!"

"Faith, and I'll scalp ye intirely!"

The door of Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage was open. Bernard Glyn of the Shell was standing there, chatting with someone in the study, doubtless Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, himself.

Glyn glanced round at the sound of rapid footsteps, and looked in surprise at the swell of the Fourth as he reced up.

"Hallo, Gussy? What— Yarrooh!"

Glyn went spinning as D'Arcy rushed into the study. He brought up against the opposite wall, and gasped.

"Why, you are, you fathead!"

Right into the study went the unheeding Arthur Augustus, at such a rate that when he arrived there he could not stop himself. Right into the study table he dashed, catching at it with both hands to save himself.

Tom Merry was seated on the other side of the table. He was working at an impetition, or, rather, he had been working at it, but had passed for a chat with Glyn when he looked in.

He had a pen in his hand and a sheet of impot paper and an inkpot before him.

He stared blankly at Arthur Augustus as the latter charged into the study, but he had only a second to stare in. Then

came the catastrophe. Arthur Augustus grasped the table as he charged into it. Study tables in junior studies were not built to resist an impact like that.

The table went over, as might have been expected under the circumstances.

The edge of the table caught Tom Merry across the chest, and he went flying backwards over his chair.

Chair and Tom Merry landed on the study floor, and after them shot the impot paper and the inkpot!

"Splish!"

"Goo-goo-goo!" came in gurgling accents from Tom Merry. His chair went on his back, he was on his back, sprawling over the chair, and the inkpot had landed under his chin. The edge of the table rested on his legs, and the breathlessly excited face of Arthur Augustus looked down at him over the tilted table.

"Eal Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Gooch-dash!"

"Greatest Scott! I'm scowry!"

"You-you dangerous fanatic!"

"It's all right, dash boy!"

"All right, it is!" gasped Tom Merry, struggling to get to his feet. "Wait a tick till I get up, you dangerous fanatic, and I'll show you whether it's all right or not!"

"Repeat what it's all right!" he wailed yet there, Tom Merry, isn't it?" demanded Arthur Augustus, screwing in his eyes a little more tightly to take a closer survey of the captain of the Shell. "I weald hardly know you with all that ink oosh your face!"

"I'll show you in a second whether it's me?" said Tom Merry emphatically.

He leaped to his feet, and rushed upon the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus backed hastily away.

"I tell you it's all right, dash boy!"

There was a rush of feet in the passage. Four or five broadheads and furious jaws came rushing in.

"Here he is!" roared Mokey Leather.

"Collar him!"

"Squash him!"

"Jump on him intirely!"

"Wealdy, dash boy—wealdy— Yawwooh—ah, gwooah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disappeared on the floor, under a wave of avenger. For some moments nothing could be seen but eyes and legs and excited faces, crimson with wrath and coercion. From under the excited hump came an unheeded roop.

"Oh, wessah! Wessah! Wessah! Oh, wessah!"

CHAPTER 2.  
Important News.

"SQUASH him!"

"Scalp him!"

"Scratch him bald-headed!"

"Slaughter the spalpeen!"

"Bump the silly ass!"

Those exclamations were all uttered at once, and each of the speakers was trying to carry out his own suggestion. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in great peril of being squashed, scalped, bumped, slaughtered, and scratched bald-headed at one fell swoop. His voice made itself heard in pitiful accents.

"Peay check it, you chaps! I've got something important to say to Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry was waggling ink out of his neck now and off his face. He had received all the contents of the inkpot; and the inkpot had been newly replenished just before Arthur Augustus entered the study. Tom Merry was not in a good temper.

"Keep him down, you fellows!" he said. "When you've done bumping the silly jester I'll empty a bottle of ink over him! We've got a new bottle, and he's welcome to it—welcome to the lot!"

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a wall of protest from D'Arcy.

"Tom Merry, you wottah, I inteadly wofuse to have ink poured oosh me! I came here to do you a favah."

"Well, you've dese it," said Tom, mopping away at the ink. "Now I'm going to do you one, in the same way. One good term deserves another."

"You stiah ass!"

"Hallo, is Gussy here?" exclaimed Jack Bisse, arriving at the door with Herries and Digby. They had followed the wild cyclist across the quadrangle, and the speaker in Tom Merry's study brought them to the spot. "Glad to see you've collected him. He's gone dotty, you know. I've seen it oosh on for some time."

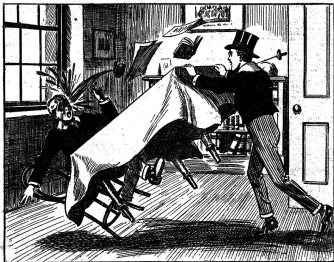
"Wealdy, Blake!"

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See columns 2, page 24, of 1916 issue.

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The edge of the table caught Tom Merry across the chest as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy crashed into it. And after him went the ink-pot and the ink-pot. Splash! "Groooch!" gasped Tom Merry. (See Chapter 1.)

"And now it's broken out," said Blake. "He nearly ran us down on his bike at the gates, and he's half-killed Levison and Mellish—"

"And left his bike canted up in the quad," said Digby. "We're thinking of getting a strict-waistcoat for him!" growled Harrier. "Blasted if he oughtn't to be taken aboard on a chair, like Turner!"

"Woolly, Howie!"

Arthur Augustus was still feebly wriggling in the grasp of the juniors. They were holding him spread-eagled on the carpet, ready for the ink. Tom Merry had taken a large bottle of blue-black fluid from the cupboard, and was uncorking it, and D'Arcy was watching him with distended eyes.

"Over his head and down his neck!" said Monty Lowther. "Give him the lot! It's worth a look to do Gassy a real good turn. Hear, hear?"

"You uttah wotnabs?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Blake, deak boy, keep that howlin' idiot off with his beastly ink!"

Jack Blake shook his head.

"It will teach you to moderate your transports, my dear chap," he said. "Look at what you've done to Tommy's chivvy. It wasn't much of a chivvy, to begin with, but look at it now!"

"Aa!" said Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass are wastin' time!"

"I've nearly got the sock out!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "I was not referin' to that, Tom Merry. You are wastin' time; and verry likely he will get away if you don't back up."

That mysterious remark caused Tom Merry to peer in his lobster with the corker and stare blankly at the swell of St. Jim's. The other fellows stared too. They had not the remotest idea of what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was driving at.

"Ho!" repeated Tom Merry. "What?"

"That chap."

"What chap?"

"The chap I came to tell you about!" howled Arthur Augustus. "Do you think I waded home on my bike for nothin', you see?"

"I thought you were dotty," said Blake.

"Dotty or potty," said Tom Merry. "You don't mean to say that you had a reason for rushing into my study like a dangerous leasie?"

D'Arcy glared at him.

"You uttah, coveen ass, do you think I should have howled like that without a reason?"

"Then you had a reason!" asked Monty Lowther.

"Of course I had, you chump!"

"Well, if it was a good reason, I'll let you off the ink," said Tom Merry, putting down the bottle. "Now, out with it!"

"Pwey allow me to wade, you fellows."

"Let him get on his hind legs," directed Tom Merry.

"But mind he doesn't fall. If he's really mad, he may start running again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am not mad, you frightful ass!"

"It's up to you to prove that," said Tom Merry. "We're willing to give you a hearing. Now, why did you come bolting into my study like a runaway mule?"

"I've seen him!"

"What—a mule?"

"You uttah ass—no; that fellow—your giddy double!" D'Arcy exclaimed excitedly. "And I washed back in a great hurry to make sure that the chap there was your double, and not you, you see! If I hadn't found you head, I should have thought that it was you I had seen there, you see. So I scrooled home at top speed, and washed here to find you. And hush you are, deak boy!"

D'Arcy gaped out the words.

It was not very loud, but the juniors understood now, and there was a general exclamation.

"You've seen him?"  
 "Tom Merry's double?"  
 "Where is he?"

Arthur Augustus dashed down his clothes, some of his noblest every day. He was the epitome of all eyes now, and he realized his importance.

It was indeed important news that he brought—important to Tom Merry & Co., at all events, especially to Tom Merry himself.

For the person whom Tom Merry had been in very serious trouble owing to the presence of Master Reggie Clavering in the vicinity.

Reggie Clavering was Tom Merry's double; in appearance they were almost exactly the same. Some opinions, probably different words would have been used; but seen apart, they were indubitably mistaken for one another.

And Clavering, having been guilty of a blackguardly act, with the deliberate intention of letting the blame fall upon Tom Merry, the school authorities had great difficulty in proving his innocence.

Clavering had, indeed, overstepped the bounds of the law in his attempt to induce Tom Merry by means of that strange, unworldly, unworldly; and when the truth came out, the law officers had looked for him, but he had vanished.

The juniors of St. Jim's had looked for him, too, with the intention of going him with a message that he would never want to come near the school, and trouble Tom Merry again. But they would not find him.

Clavering had gone—no one knew whether. And Tom Merry & Co. were pretty well satisfied that he would never return back into the neighborhood of St. Jim's.

Why the fellow wished to cause injury to Tom Merry was a mystery. Tom had only met him once, and did not even know him.

There was some reason the juniors could not guess, though they remained their brains over it a good deal.

It had been agreed that Master Clavering was to be watched for. It was not supposed in the neighborhood; though the juniors did not suppose for a moment that he would. He had made his cowardly attempt to ruin Tom Merry; he had failed, and he had fled. And they did not expect to see anything more of him.

These the excitement with which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's news was received.

The juniors wondered now why the word of St. Jim's had come wandering back to the school at top speed, and rushed into Tom Merry's study, without stopping a second on the way. He wanted to argue himself that Tom Merry was there, and that it was really the "double" whom he had seen outside St. Jim's.

"So he's come back, has he?" said Tom Merry, a steady glitter coming into his blue eyes, and his hands clenching nervously.

He wanted very much to get to close quarters with Master Reggie Clavering. If he succeeded in getting his double within easy-length, he intended to make his thoroughly sorry for his impudent trick.

"Where did you see him?" demanded Monty Lowther.  
 "I was out for a spin on my bike, you know," Arthur Augustus explained. "I came home by way of the town's park. I passed the Fountains on my way back—you remember, the place where we had a row with Cotts once—"

"You, yes; go on!"  
 "Right—ho! I was 'thinkin' about that row with Cotts—"  
 "How Cotts?" roared Blake. "Get on with the warbling."

"Pshaw don't interrupt me, Blake. You are wasting time!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "If we are going to catch that wretch, and make an example of him, there is really no time to waste in talk, you know. I consider—"

"Will you get on, you duffer!" roared Kargaroo.  
 "I am getting on as fast as I can, Kargaroo, consider now that I am obviously interrupted. As I was saying, I was passing the Fountains on my bike, when I saw a man go in a chap with a black moustache and an eyelash. He struck me at once."

"Burrack you!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What on earth did he strike you for?"

"I do not mean that he struck me, you see; I mean that he struck me," explained Arthur Augustus. "I mean, I was struck by seeing him there. You see, he was the same chap I saw with that wretch Clavering once in Wycombe Lane."

"Oh, I see. Back up!"  
 "I am backin' up!" I remember that Clavering had called him Gerald Goring."  
 "Gerald Goring?" said Tom. "Never heard the name."  
 "Well, it struck me at once that if that chap was there, perhaps Clavering was there, and I looked into the garden, and in and behold!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "There was your double, Tom Merry, with a wretch a two, 'darker' something, and smokin'—"

"The rotter!"  
 "Did they see you?" continued Lowther.  
 "Washed not! You know there are trees along the bottom of the garden, and I looked through the trees. I thought it was Clavering, but he's so remarkably like Tom Merry that—that—that—" D'Arcy paused and hesitated.  
 "That you thought it might be me—something?" said Tom grimly.

"D'Arcy colored.  
 "Well, no, dear boy; I know you wouldn't do a thing like that, only—only be it so very remarkably like you, you know, that—that—well, I worked hard at once, to make sure that you were here, that's all!" D'Arcy confessed. "I thought that if I found you, that would settle it, and I'd take you fellows back with me at once to see Clavering, and see him. Of course, I knew it was Clavering, so he was smokin', but—but the resemblance is really remarkable—"

Tom Merry nodded shortly. He could see that there had been a doubt in D'Arcy's mind. It had come to an end, and D'Arcy himself.

"Well, all right," he said. "So the rotter has come back—and he's at the Fountains, is he? I suppose he thinks he's safe there—it's a good distance from the school, and a lonely place."  
 "Yes, within!"

Tom Merry looked round at the crowd of juniors in the study, his eyes gleaming.

"You see how it is, you fellows. That wretched law comes back—he's just waited a week or so for the affair to blow over, and now he's come back—to play his rotten trick again! He can't have come for anything else, but—and something up against me—I don't know what! Well, you know what we agreed it be done back!"

"What-what?"  
 "You'll back me up!"  
 "Yes, indeed!"  
 "Then get out the bikes, and we'll all go and see Clavering," said Tom grimly. "You chaps can see fair-play while I handle him! I'll give him the kicking of his life—or so he shall give it to me! You chaps can see fair-play, in case his friend should want to chop in. And if I can't get you, one of you can do it. He's got to be held within an inch of his life!"

"Hear, hear!"  
 "I'll go and wash this ink off, and join you at the gates," said Tom hurriedly. "Get the bikes there, if we're late in for looking-up, it can't be helped. We can't let slip a chance like this for dealing with that rotter."  
 "Right!"

The crowd of juniors hurried out. As they ran the bicycles down to the school gates they encountered Figgins & Co. of the New House. And as soon as Figgins & Co. knew what was on, they rushed for their machines at once. The New House fellows were the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co. of the School House; and in this matter they were backing up Tom Merry most loyally. Figgins especially was very anxious to interview Master Reggie Clavering, Master Reggie having once been guilty of serious wrongs to Cousin Ethel, a feat that Figgins of the Fourth could never possibly forgive.

Ten minutes later a crowd of cyclists were working along the level-path in the sunset, heading for the river-side inn at top speed. Tom Merry in the lead, riding hard, with a gleam in his eyes that boded ill for his double when he met him.

CHAPTER 3.  
 A Precious Pair.

REGGIE CLAVERING scratched a match on his boot and lighted a cigarette.  
 The junior who so strangely resembled Tom Merry was sitting at one of the little tables in the garden of the Fountains Inn—an old garden thick with trees, sloping down to the tennis-path and the dining-stove.

On the opposite side of the table sat the man with the

ANSWERS

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black moustache and the eyeglass. He was rolling a cigarette. There was no one else in the garden. On the table stood a bottle of whisky and a soda siphon and glasses. Master Reggie Clavering was evidently preoccupied in his taste, for he was pouring that form of liquid refreshment as well as his older companion.

Gerald Goring was watching him curiously.

"Well," said Clavering, as he blew out a little cloud of smoke—"well, I'm here, Goring. And the sooner you tell me what you want, and let me get away again, the better I shall like it. After what's happened last week, I don't care about sticking in this neighbourhood. It's not safe. Why couldn't you meet me somewhere else?"

Goring shook his head.

"You've wanted here," he said.

Clavering gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Look here," he said, taking the cigarette from his mouth—"look here, Goring. If it's that game over again, I'm not having any. You may as well understand that first as last. It was a rotten failure. Tom Merry proved somehow that it wasn't he who went to the Grammar School and looked Gordon Gray. It ought to have worked all right, for all the Grammar School chaps took me for Tom Merry. So they wrangled out of it somehow. And they set the local lobbies, too, looking for the fellow who had impersonated Tom Merry. Why, I might have been arrested!"

"You cleared off just in time," said Goring, with a nod.

"Well, I'm not just," growled Reggie. "I'm not going to risk being sent to a reformatory to please you. I think they're in the matter deep—they don't want a scandal. But there's no earthly chance of playing the same game again. If anything happened like that over again, everybody would know perfectly well that it wasn't Tom Merry—that it was his double. It would simply mean that the police would be backed up to look for me—and they could find me if they tried. I'm not going to get into trouble like that for nothing. It's not good enough. I tell you plainly, that if you want me to impersonate Tom Merry again, I'm not going to do it. That's flat!"

And the precaution which helped himself to whisky and soda.

"Don't take too much of that stuff," said Goring, with a curl of the lip. "You're not old enough to stand it. And I will tell you to keep your head clear."

"Rubbish!" said Reggie.

"I'm not suggesting trying the same game over again," went on Goring, after a glance round to make sure that the garden was deserted. "I know as well as you do that the game is up in that direction. Tom Merry seems to have better's own look. It ought to have succeeded."

"But it didn't!" snapped Reggie.

"No, it didn't; so that idea will have to be dropped. But I've thought out a better plan—a plan that can't fail!" Goring's voice sank still lower. "I've told you what's at stake, Reggie. If Tom Merry is disgraced and expelled from St. Jim's, it's worth fifty thousand pounds to me. And you get your whack out of that!"

Clavering's eyes glinted.

"That sounds all right," he said; "but I don't see how it can be worth anything to you. What's the money coming from?"

"That's my secret."

"Is it coming from some agency of the fellow's?" Goring chuckled.

"Who's from a friend of his?"

Clavering started.

"You're getting that enormous sum of money from a friend of Tom Merry's, on condition that he's disgraced and sacked from his school?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, that's all rot, and you know it!"

"You would understand if you knew the circumstances."

"Tell me, then."

Gerald Goring shook his head.

"Least said is soonest mended," he said. "Excuse me, Reggie, but it's possible for a chap to know too much. Besides, that's neither here nor there. It's going to be made worth your while, and that's enough for you to know."

Clavering granted discontentedly.

"You've done what I asked you, Reggie—about getting leave from home?"

"Yes!" snapped Clavering. "I've told my uncle I'm going to stay with some friends in Sussex for a week. He doesn't care what I do—not a rap! As a matter of fact, he's glad to be rid of me for a week. He doesn't like me."

"That's not surprising!" chuckled Goring.

"Oh, stop all that!" growled the protesting youth. "I've got a week to do as I like it, and that's all right. But mind, nothing like that last scheme of yours. I'm not going to tell the rat. Besides, I should be spotted at once."

"I tell you I've checked that. What I want you to do is quite safe," said Goring impatiently.

"Well, if it isn't, I don't have anything to do with it."

"Suppose you want on Goring, making his voice to a whisper—"

"suppose it could be confined for you to change places with Tom Merry—at his school?"

Clavering started.

"Change places with him?"

"Yes. Suppose you could get his clothes and things, and put them on, and walk into St. Jim's as Tom Merry?"

"Why, you—you can't!" gasped Clavering. "I'd meet the chap face to face—"

"You wouldn't?"

"Why not?"

"Because he would be somewhere else—being taken good care of," said Goring significantly.

"Oh!"

"Take it that Tom Merry is put somewhere where he can't get away. That's my part of the business," went on Goring, in the same low, cautious tones. "You walk into St. Jim's in his clothes—as Tom Merry!"

"My hat!"

"You've been at a public school—you know the ropes. You'd drop into his place quite easily. You know his friends by sight. There'd be no difficulty about that. Nobody could have the slightest suspicion."

"My hat!" repeated Clavering breathlessly.

"And once you are there, you could easily get a good way to get the sack?"

"Got the sack?"

"Yes, as Tom Merry."

"Oh!"

"You can do anything you like so long as it's not enough to be noticed for. You've sneaked into the academy Tom Merry. You leave in disgrace, and a few days later I release the real Tom Merry—"

"Then he'd tell the story about having been kidnapped."

"He'd believe that!"

"If it's a matter of money, nobody would," said Clavering thoughtfully. "It would sound like an awfully clever bit of business."

"Exactly; and the circumstances would be arranged to discredit anything he might say. He would be found roaming about the streets under the influence of liquor, and taken away by the police," said Goring coolly. "I should arrange that."

"Good boots!" Clavering struck back a little nervously. The cool, unscrupulous wickedness of the suggested sting opposite had seemed to scare him, much as he was Goring's friend highly.

"What do you think of the idea, Reggie?"

"I'd be glad to do the best I had to," said Reggie sulkily. "I hate Mr. He liked me, once, and he's the kind of fellow I hate, anyway. But—but that—"

"Think of what's at stake!"

"Well, it's good enough," said Clavering. "But you've got to get Tom Merry in your hand first. That won't be easy."

"Leave that to me. Until that's done, I shan't ask you to take a hand," said Goring quietly. "All you've got to do is to let me know all you've wanted. You'll think it won't be many hours."

Reggie helped himself to whisky and soda again.

"My hat!" he said, his eyes glittering. "I should have a high old time, playing that part of St. Jim's. I'd make some of them sit up, hang their heads! I hate the lot of them!"

"Quite so, you—"

Gerald Goring paused.

There was a sound of a crowd of bicycles on the towing-path. They stopped at the gate of the iron garden. Goring started to his feet.

"Malediction! There they are—Tom Merry himself!"

"There was no time for Reggie Clavering to escape. The garden gate was thrown open, and the crowd of St. Jim's janitors rushed in, Tom Merry at their head.

#### CHAPTER 4. Ragging a Rascal.

TOM MERRY hunched under the tree, his eyes gleaming. He took no notice of Gerald Goring. His eyes were upon the boy seated at the table—the boy who had reminded him so closely that he might have been his twin brother. Clavering was covering back.

Round the table crowded the St. Jim's janitors—a dozen of them, and all in deadly earnest. There was no escape for Tom Merry's double.

"Hark to it, deak boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jubilantly.

"Fairly ought!" chuckled Blake.

"Nailed, by Jove!" said Egerton.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 224,  
The Grosvenor School, Tottenham,  
A. Madhouse, Sec. Lend. Gen. Lib. No. 100,  
Tom Merry & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Hardly expected to see us here—what?" said Kerr, with a grin. "How do you do, Master Reggie Clavering?"

His eyes wandered round the circle of threatening faces with a hunted look. Goring was twisting his black moustache with suppressed rage. His hand had closed for a moment upon his heavy Malaga cane, but he had released it again at once. It was clearly no case for violence. The St. Jim's fellows were too many for him, and their looks showed that they would have stood on ceremony if he had slipped in.

"So I've found you, Clavering?" said Tom Merry, in a low and steady voice.

Clavering tried to pull himself together, but there was something in Tom Merry's clear blue eyes that sent a chill of fear to his very heart.

"I've long been looking for me?" he stammered.

"Yes."

"Well, you've found me, and now you've found me, what do you want?"

"First of all, I want you to explain the reason why you imprisoned me, and tried to get me into trouble," said Tom quietly.

Clavering laughed nervously.

"I didn't," he said. "It—it was only a lark, Gordon Gay rigged me, and—and I went for him. I didn't know they would take me for you."

"That's a lie!" said Tom directly. "You gave your name as Tom Merry when you went to the Greenacre School."

"I—"

"For some reason I don't understand, you passed yourself off as me; with the intention of getting me diagnosed."

"I—"

"Will you explain why you did it?"

"It—it was only a lark."

"Was it? Well, it was the kind of lark I don't like," said Tom Merry grimly. "Not that I believe you, but cut! I know you must have some reason, though I can't guess what it was. How do I expect to get the truth out of you? You'll have to confess what I asked you for being impudent to Ethel Clavering a long time ago. But that wouldn't be reason enough to make you take all this trouble to injure me."

"It was only a lark," said Clavering sulkily.

"Well, now you are going to pay for your lark," said Tom Merry. "These fellows have only come to see fair play. You're going to get a fair show, which is more than you wanted to give me. Get up!"

"What do you want?"

"I'm going to lick you!"

Clavering wadded his dry lips with his tongue. The heated look intensified in his eyes. It was only too clear that he did not want to stand up and beey the price he had injured. He was not the stuff of which heroes are made.

"I—I'm not going to fight you!" he stammered. "You can clear off. I don't want anything to do with you."

Tom Merry laughed grimly.

"It isn't a case of what you want, but of what you're going to get," he said. "Get up from that table."

"I won't!"

"Then I'll make you."

Tom Merry reached over the table, grasped Clavering by the collar, and wrenched him from his chair. Clavering stood upon his feet now, quivering with rage.

"Now," said Tom, "I'm ready."

Gerald Goring lighted another cigarette. It was impossible for him to interfere, and he knew it.

Tom Merry stripped off his jacket, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Will you get up your hands?" he demanded.

"No, I won't," said Clavering. "I—I'm not in a condition to fight. I've been drinking."

Tom Merry's lip curled with contempt.

"All the same reason why you should be licked," he said. Clavering put his hands into his pockets.

"I won't fight you," he said; "you can do as you like."

Tom Merry's hands trembled with anger. He could not lick a fellow who refused to defend himself; but to allow the young rascal to escape the penalty of his cowardice—that was not to be thought of.

"You'll either fight, or take a ragging," he said, "and you'll find the ragging worse than the licking. I promise you that."

"Yes, wotnah, you wotnah?"

"Yes, wotnah," said Blake impatiently. "He hasn't the pack of a white rabbit, and he's not worth licking. Collar him!"

"Bloused if ever I saw such a rotten case!" growled Figgins. "If he won't stand up to you, Tom, let him pick one of us. I'd be happy to oblige him."

THE GEN LIBRARY—No. 324.

"Same here," said Kangaroo heartily. "Would you prefer me, you cad?"

"Or me?" cried in Monty Lowther.

"Or me?" said Messers.

"Let me alone!" growled Clavering savagely. "I tell you I'm not in a state to fight anybody. Another time—"

"Another time won't come, if you can help it," said Tom Merry. "What have you come back here for at all? It's to play some more of your cotton-tricks. I know that. Well, you're going to be made to understand that it doesn't pay. You're going to be handled in such a way that you'll be glad to give St. Jim's a wide berth in the future. Now, for the last time, will you put up your hands?"

"No."

"Then collar the cad!"

And the crowd of juniors closed in on Tom Merry's double.

"Help!" yelled Reggie. "Goring, help me!"

"Your friend had some of his own business," said Blake. "He heard his knuckles into Reggie's collar. 'We shouldn't mind ragging him, too, if it came to that!'"

"Yess, wotnah! A man who will allow a kid to drink whiskey in his presence ought to be jolly well wagged," said Arthur Augustus severely.

Goring twisted his moustache uneasily.

"If you don't help me, Goring, I'll give you away!" yelled Reggie.

"Oh! So that fellow's in the game, too, is he?" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a quick look at Goring.

The latter sprang to his feet. He knew that Reggie Clavering meant what he said.

"Let the kid alone!" he exclaimed, grasping his heavy cane. "I won't see him ill-used! Release him at once!"

"Bats!"

"Go and eat cake!"

"Stand back!"

"You'll get hurt if you chip in here!"

Reggie Clavering was struggling savagely in the grasp of the juniors, kicking and tearing, and scratching like a cat. He yelled again to Goring for help, and repeated his demand. But Gerald Goring ran to his aid, brandishing his heavy cane. Like the St. Jim's juniors did not care for the cane. Half dozen of them fastened upon Goring, and he was wailing all his feet and plunged into the gram.

"Let me go, you young villain!" roared Goring.

"Bats!"

"Sit on hip, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn groaned and plunged down his heavy weight on Goring's chest. The man with the black moustache gasped and collapsed. Kerr stood on his legs, and Figgins took a firm grasp upon his hair, to make sure of him. Goring struggled in vain under the New Horse juniors. Meanwhile the School-Brood fellows attended to Reggie Clavering.

Tom Merry had said that the ragging would be worse than the licking—and it was!

For the next few minutes the young rascal had the impetuous that he was in the middle of an earthquake and a cyclone combined.

He was bumped and bumped, and bumped again. The remains of the whiskey were poured over him, and then Blake let fly with the soda syphon, drenching him from head to foot. His collar was torn out, his jacket ripped up the back.

"Duck him!" shouted Lowther.

And Reggie, struggling wildly but in vain, was rushed headlong down to the treading-path in the middle of the crushed juniors.

"Let me go! I—I— Help!"

Splash!

The water was shallow at the river's edge; but it was deep enough for Reggie! He went right under, and came up streaming with water and mud.

"Groo-hoo—groo-goo!" he gurgled.

He scrambled out of the water, only to fall again into the streaming hands. Splash went the unhappy impersonator of Tom Merry into the thick, soft mud at the river's edge. It covered him to a waist.

"Goo-goo!"

He crawled out of the mud, smothered from head to foot, and barely recognizable. There was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bel Jove! I'm afraid the wotnah's clobber is quite ruined."

"Give him another!"

Splash went Reggie into the soft mud again.

This time he did not crawl out. He sat up in the mud, gasping and spluttering. It covered him to the armpits and knees.

"Goo-goo-goo!"

"I think that's enough," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Have you had enough, Clavering?"

"Gerroogh!"

"Now will you promise to clear off, and not come back?"

"Good!"

"You won't be allowed to get out till you promise," said Tom Merry coolly. "You can stay there as long as you like."

"Good! I—I p-p-promise!" stammered Reggie. "I—I'll go—I—I'll stay away! I—I'll do anything you like! Good!"

"Good! We'll drop in to-morrow to see if you've gone," said Tom Merry. "If you're still here, you'll have the same dose again. Understand?"

"Do! Good!"

"Come on, you shape! I think that's settled him!"

And the St. Jim's juniors, laughing loudly, reassembled their machines and rode away down the bowling-path. Their laughter died away in the distance as Reggie Clavering crawled out of the shed. It was sticking to him in chunks, and he splashed out mud and water as he slipped feebly back into the garden. Gerald Goring was there, ruffled and rumped, and white with fury.

They looked at one another.

"Well!" said Goring, gritting his teeth.

Clavering passed.

"I—I'm ready for anything now," he muttered in a choking voice—"anything—anything you like, so long as I can get even with them! Anything!"

"To-night!" said Goring.

"The sooner the better!"

And Reggie crawled limply into the inn.

## CHAPTER 5.

### In the Dark Hours!

TOM MERRY & CO. rode back to St. Jim's in a cheerful mood. They were late for breakfast, and the whole party were rewarded with fifty lined spoons; but they did not mind. They had, as they believed, succeeded in "speaking" Tom Merry's double, and they were satisfied with their success. After that terrific rugging, they were pretty certain that Reggie Clavering would not venture to re-appear in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's. Whatever mischief he might have had in concealing, it was stopped in the head row.

"We'll take a spin down to the Meadows to-morrow, and make sure he's gone," Mervyn Lowther remarked, when the Terrible Three went to the study to do their time and their prep. "But I think he'll have cleared off."

"If he hasn't, we'll make him sorry he's stayed!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Oh, he'll be gone," said Mervyn. "It isn't as if he were a chap with any pluck to speak of; I fancy he's scared off for good! Dusk it all, a rugging like that might have scared off even a fellow who had some courage! And he hasn't any."

So it was in a mood of satisfaction that the chums of the Shell set down to do their preparations.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in high feather that evening. It was the swell of St. Jim's who had spotted Clavering, and tonight vengeance dawned upon the scheming rascal, and D'Arcy was very well satisfied with himself in consequence. Indeed, Arthur Augustus was so satisfied with himself that Blake offered to take his measure for a new hat of a larger size.

"What?" said Arthur Augustus severely. "It's jolly lucky for some of you chaps that you've got no head to look after you, that's all. That wretch would have been playing his wotten tricks again if I hadn't spotted him. Now we're rid of him for good and all—you can rely on that!"

And the chums of St. Jim's agreed with that, though, as a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus's conviction was very far from the truth.

Tom Merry was very thoughtful that evening, and there was a cloud of deep thought upon his brow when the Shell went up to their dormitory. He was so satisfied as his chums that Reggie Clavering was done with; but he was puzzled. Why had Clavering played such a trick upon him as he had done, with the evident intention of getting him into disgrace in the school? Tom Merry had been within an ace of being expelled, after Clavering had impersonated him at the Grosvenor School. Why had he done it? And that black-roasted fellow with the apron, whom Clavering had addressed as Goring—what had he to do with it? Clavering's words in the big garden had proved that Goring was in the plot. But why? Tom Merry did not remember ever to have seen the man before—he did not know the man or his name.

Why should an upper stranger seek to mix himself in the Shell fellow's affairs in this way, and plot with his double to cause him to be disgraced?

It was a hopeless puzzle.

That he had an enemy—a cunning and unscrupulous enemy—in the man with the black mustache Tom Merry could not help realizing. But why should the man be his enemy? He realized now, too, that Clavering, though he was, had undoubtedly been under the influence of the older rascal in the trick he had played. Tom Merry's double was merely a tool in the hands of a wretched, villainous plotter evidently had been the ruin of Tom Merry. But why?

Tom Merry was utterly puzzled. He thought and thought the matter over, but he could come to no solution. He wondered whether he would ever know. It was impossible to get the truth from either Clavering or Goring. Falsehoods he might get from them, but not the facts—he knew that. And there was no other source of information. It seemed as if it would remain a mystery.

And would there be any other scheme to fear from his enemy? If Goring had played against him once, what other his reason, might he not plot again? His reason, unknown as it was, doubtless will exist.

It was enough to make the captain of the Shell feel decidedly uncomfortable.

Into his happy, careless life of a schoolboy had come the shadow of plotting and crime, whence and why he did not know, and could not guess.

Mervyn and Lowther were equally concerned in their minds about it; but they had to admit that they could find no explanation.

"No good trying to think it out, Tommy," said Mervyn Lowther, as he observed the frown upon Tom's knitted brows. "It's a silly mystery."

Tom Merry nodded.

"What I'm thinking is, that if that man wants to injure me, he may try again," he said. "And I don't know what form it may take next time."

"I wish you'd be want to hurt you, Tom?"

"I can't guess."

"You're sure you don't know him?"

"And you've never met him?" asked Mervyn.

"Never, that I know of."

"You don't even know his name?"

"Not that I recollect, until I caught it here."

"Well, it's a mystery, and no mistake," Mervyn Lowther commented. "It's as plain as your face that what follows Goring is using Clavering for his own good—his own clear enough. But, after all, I think it's pretty safe now. The whole school knows you've got a double, and that he's tried to disgrace you by passing himself off as you, and doing rotten things. Whatever he does in the future, you'll be safe from him now that everybody knows the fact."

"Yes, that's so."

"Besides, I'm sure he's scared off; he won't dare to stay about here after the way we've handled him."

But Goring—

"I don't see what he can do," said Lowther thoughtfully. "He was able to use your double to harm you, but that's knocked on the head for good now. Anything else he might try we should be able to deal with if he begins again."

"We'll keep an eye open for him, anyway," said Mervyn. Kibbles came into the dormitory to see lights out, and the chums of the Shell turned in.

After lights out, there was the usual buzz of talk in the dormitory. The Shell fellows were all interested, naturally, in Tom Merry's double, and the juniors who had taken part in the rugging had to tell the story over again several times. The talk ran chiefly on the affair of Reggie Clavering, but Tom Merry did not join in it. He was thinking. But his thoughts came to nothing. He had to acknowledge that he could not penetrate the veil of mystery that surrounded Gerald Goring and his scheming.

The voices died away in the Shell dormitory.

Tom Merry, troubled by his thoughts, remained awake after the other fellows had gone to sleep, but gradually he dropped off. The worrying thoughts in his mind became vaguer and more vague till they were seeried in dreams.

When school o'clock sounded from the old clock-tower of St. Jim's, Tom Merry was so sound asleep as the rest of the juniors.

Silence and slumber reigned in the old School House.

In an hour more the last of the lights were out, the last door had closed, and the School House was plunged into sleep.

One!

The hour came daily through the night from the clock-tower, but there was no wakening or in the vast pile of St. Jim's to hear it.

Two o'clock!

Two o'clock!

Dead silence in the old School House when the strokes had died away.

Into the high windows of the Shell dormitory the starlight of the Gem Library—No. 22.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 22.

streamed faintly, showing up dimly the beds and the sleeping janitor.

It fell upon the handsome face of Tom Merry as he lay in sound slumber, his curly hair ruffled upon the pillow. Faintly, imperceptibly, the door of the dormitory opened. A man's face looked in at the entrance.

It was a face half hidden by a thick black beard and heavy black eyebrows, but seen in the faint light that beard and the eyebrows would have been seen to be false, and the clear-cut features of Gerald Goring might have been recognized; but in the darkness of the sleeping School House there was no chance of recognition if the intruder had been seen.

The door was some inches open; it remained so for a full five minutes, while the midnight intruder listened to the steady breathing of the Shell fellows.

Satisfied that all were sleeping at last, he pushed the door further open, and stepped into the dormitory, silent as the grave in his rubber shoes. The door was gently closed.

For several minutes more the intruder stood motionless, in shadow, his heart beating hard, his eyes glistening.

The janitor slept on.

Then the man crept nearer to the beds. He scanned face after face in the dim light of the stars.

He passed at last—by Tom Merry's bed.

Closer and closer, like a cat stealing upon its prey, till he was close beside the sleeping, unconscious junior.

From his pocket he drew silently a folded cloth, from which a faint, sickly odour came almost imperceptibly.

He approached the cloth to the face of the sleeping junior, and Tom Merry's features twitched for a moment in sleep.

He was breathing the odour of chloroform, and moment by moment his chamber became deeper, heavier. His breathing grew harder.

Goring's eyes glittered over him. There was no chance now of the hapless junior awaking. The intruder had run risks, but the very dazing of his venture had ensured its success.

The chloroformed cloth was approached closer to the sleeping junior's face, and pressed over it at last. Tom Merry hardly stirred. For several minutes the cloth remained there, in the firm hand of the plunger. When he withdrew it, Tom Merry was no longer sleeping—he was plunged into insensibility.

"Bids—did an hour, at least!"

Goring did not utter the words, but he grinned. The signs was helplessly in his hands now. Unless some of the juniors awoke—

But the rascal made no sound. At that hour of the night slumber was heavy. Silently, carefully, Goring lifted the drugged junior from the bed. He laid him upon the floor without a sound, and then, with deft fingers, arranged the bolster and pillow in the bed to give the appearance of a sleeper there. If anyone should awake, and glance in that direction, there was nothing to excite suspicion.

Then he seized the insensible junior in his arms, and silently moved to the door. He moved without haste—with caution and coolness.

Five minutes elapsed, and then the dormitory door had closed silently behind the rascal, and he was heaving away the still form in pyjamas—away from the friends who would have risked anything to save him, but who never dreamed of his danger.

## CHAPTER 6.

### A Change of Identity

"It is all right!"

It was a tremulous whisper.

Rogge Clavering trembled. He was waiting there, in the darkness, in the upper box-room at the back of the School House of St. Jim's.

He had been waiting there for his confederate. It was by means of the box-room that the two rascols had entered the house. Outside, there was an out-house. They had climbed upon it, and Goring had opened the box-room window. It was a simple catch, and easily opened by a thin blade inserted between the sashes. Clavering, trembling, had waited there while Goring was gone.

He had returned now—successful from his errand.

His case noiselessly into the box-room, and Clavering trembled still more as he saw the still form hanging upon the rascal's powerful shoulder.

Goring had the insensible junior upon the floor, and closed the door of the box-room.

The house was still and silent. Evidently there had been no alarm. Gerald Goring had done his work well.

Clavering's eyes almost started from his head as he gazed

down at the motionless form upon the floor, dimly seen in the darkness.

He clatched Goring's arm.

"You have not—not—" He choked over the words.

"Goring—"

"Fool!"

"But he—he looks—"

"I told you what I was going to do. It is chloroform."

Clavering gasped.

"He is not—not—" He seems so still! And it is possible to—"

"Fool!" repeated Goring. "He is as well as you or I!"

Repeat Clavering drew a deep, quivering breath.

"You are sure?"

"Of course I see see! Do you think I want to risk my neck, you fool? So far yourself!"

But Clavering was satisfied.

"And no one awake?" he whispered.

"Why should they awake?" growled Goring. "I am not a bungler. I have done more difficult things than this."

"I—I suppose so," muttered Clavering, shrinking away from him. "Then the coast is clear?"

"Quite clear."

"And I—"

"Your place is ready for you. Strip off your clothes, and get into my pyjamas. I'll put your clothes on him. Quiet!"

Goring's low, unshaken voice seemed to calm the nerves of his less courageous confederate. Clavering listened a moment; the house was quite still. He began to take his things off with quick, nervous fingers.

In a few minutes the change had been effected. Tom Merry, insensible and inert, was put into Clavering's clothes, and Clavering stood shivering in the Shell fellow's pyjamas.

"It's sold," he muttered.

Goring muttered an oath.

"You understand?" he whispered. "You're to go to his dormitory—"

"Where is it?"

"Fool! Haven't I shown you the plan of the school, and explained it to you a dozen times?" Goring muttered angrily.

"But, in the dark—"

"I will take you there," said Goring, between his teeth.

"You'll go as quietly, and slip into Tom Merry's bed—the empty bed, you understand."

"Yes, yes!"

"That's all. Go to—sleep there, and wake up in the morning as Tom Merry. That's all you've got to do!"

"And you—"

"I shall have Tom Merry in a safe place before then," muttered Goring, with a low chuckle. "He won't get away; you can rely on that!"

"It seems easy enough," said Clavering, with a deep breath.

"Quite easy. We've arranged about re-communicating with one another afterwards. You remember the instructions?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Good enough. Now come on!"

"But—but he—"

"He's safe enough."

"He can't—can't wake?" muttered Clavering, with a scared look at the insensible form on the floor.

"Not for an hour yet; and I shall have the chloroform ready for him when he does in the eve!"

"I'm ready?"

"Not a sound, not a syllable, now!"

"All right!"

Goring opened the door, and, with his hand on Clavering's arm, led him from the box-room.

Silently they reached the door of the Shell dormitory, and quietly Gerald Goring opened it.

There was silence within, broken faintly only by the deep breathing of the sleeping juniors.

Goring nudged Clavering into the dormitory.

He pressed his hand; it was not safe to speak. Clavering moved cautiously towards the bed.

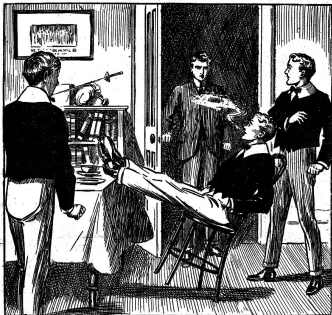
He was trembling—with cold and with nervousness. But he braced himself as he realized that the danger was past. Goring had withdrawn; the door was closed again. Even if any of the juniors should awake now, they would only see Tom Merry—as they supposed—out of bed.

But they did not awake.

Clavering found the bed. The bolster and pillow under the bedclothes looked like a sleeper, but there was no sound of breathing there. He glanced up and down the dormitory. All was shadow.

Slowly and cautiously he pulled back the bedclothes, arranged the bolster and pillow, and slipped into the bed.

The bed creaked a little under his weight. He caught his breath, and listened carefully.



Billard's general look faded as he caught sight of the smoker. "What does this mean, Tom Merry?" he demanded sternly. "I never suspected you of this sort of thing! Throw that cigarette into the fire!" (See Chapter 10.)

But there was only silence.

He rested his head upon the pillow, and drew the bed-clothes over him. His fears were gone now. He knew that he could trust Gerald Goring for his part of the scheme. There was no danger in that quarter.

He was safe now! Nobody at St. Jim's could distinguish him from the junior he was impersonating; nobody could dream of the trick that had been played in the mill boxes of the night—that Tom Merry had been stolen away, and his double had taken his place! Who could suspect that? He was secure, and his fears had vanished.

A satisfied smile was on his face now, as he lay in Tom Merry's place, and listened to the steady breathing of the Shell fellows. He was one of them now—he was Tom Merry of the Shell; and the cheat could never be discovered, so long as he played his cards carefully.

And, with that satisfied grin still upon his face, Reggie Clavering fell asleep in Tom Merry's bed.

Meanwhile, Gerald Goring was losing no time. He had stolen back silently to the box-room, where his insensible victim still lay.

He closed the door, and opened the window. He pressed the chloroformed cloth tightly over the unconscious junior's face once more, to make assurance doubly sure. Then he lifted him to the window, and carefully lowered him upon the heads of the orthoses. The night was dim, and the shadow of a large tree fell upon the spot.

Still holding the junior, Goring slipped from the window, and laid Tom Merry upon the leads. Then he softly closed the window.

From under his dark coat he drew a coil of rope, fastened one end under Tom Merry's shoulders, and lowered him to the ground.

He followed him quickly, coiled up the rope again, and concealed it under his coat, and lifted the junior from the earth. With the Shell fellow in his arms, he strode away, keeping in the darkest shadows.

By the school wall, in the thick shadows of the elms, a dark figure lurked. There was a momentary matter of voices, and Goring's confederate clambered upon the wall, and the insensible junior was passed up to him. In a moment more Goring was in the road, and he received Tom Merry from the hands of his confederate. The latter dropped lightly into the road.

"The car's ready!" whispered Goring.

"You bet!"

"Quick, then!"

The road was dark and silent, utterly deserted at that hour. There were no eyes to see the two rascals as they bore the insensible junior away. A hundred yards from the school, in a side lane, a small car had been backed, with lights out. The unconscious junior was lifted into the car, and Goring followed him in. His confederate took his place in the driver's seat.

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A few minutes more, and the car was speeding along the disused road—speeding away from St. Jim's.

Tom Merry, unconscious of what was passing, was borne away from his comrades, away from the old school, in his bed, in the Shell dormitory in the School House, his double was already sleeping—as calmly as though no crime lay upon his conscience. When the ring-bell rang out in the morning, he would awaken—as Tom Merry!

## CHAPTER 7.

### Under Another's Name.

CLANG! Clang! Clang!

Monty Lowther sat up in bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House, and yawned.

The spring sunshine was glimmering in at the high windows. The iron tongue of the ring-bell was clanging unceasingly, heard far and wide.

"Wake up, Tommy!" sang out Lowther, as he tumbled out of bed.

Tom Merry's bed was the last to keep its occupant that morning. Steve Goss, generally supposed to be the latest fellow in the Shell, was not the last up for once.

"Tommy, old son, you'll be late!" called out Manners.

Tom Merry came from Tom Merry's bed. Lowther stopped to the bedside and shook the sleeper, and the latter's eyes opened drowsily.

"Time to get up!" said Lowther.

"Let me alone, confound you!"

Lowther simply jumped.

As a rule, Tom Merry woke up fresh and good-tempered in the morning. Even if any "jags" overnight had disturbed his slumbers, and he did not make up fresh, he could generally be relied upon for good-temper.

But he didn't look good-tempered now—at all events, the comment of Tom Merry's bed didn't. His face was heavy with sleep, and he was yawning. The sharp, irritable answer had been rapped out without a moment's thought. Lowther was so much astonished that he stared blankly at the junior.

His look recalled the double of Tom Merry to his senses. He had forgotten, in the moment of waking, the part he was playing. He flushed red, and sat up.

"Steady on, Tommy!" said Lowther at last. "What's the matter with you? That isn't the way to speak to a pal!"

"Oh, all right! Is it ring-bell?"

"Yes; it's stopped."

Clavering grinned wretchedly. He was not used to early rising. Since he had left his last school, months before, he had led a sleepier life—late hours at night, and late rising in the morning. To turn out at seven sharp was an infliction of discipline he hardly knew how to endure. But he had to endure it, and he dragged his unwilling limbs from the bed.

"You've not looking very fit this morning, Tom," Lowther remarked, regarding him. "Not getting your cold back, are you?"

"No, any cold?"

"You had a whopping cold last week; don't say you're catching it again."

"I'm not."

"Good! You'd do as dandy as a boiled owl! Not been out on the tiles, I suppose?" Monty Lowther demanded humorously.

"No; I'm a bit drowsy, that's all."

"Cold water will cure all that?"

Clavering nodded, and turned to his washstand. He was accustomed to hot water for his bath in the morning, and bathing in cold water did not appeal to him. But he knew that he must fall in with the customs of St. Jim's if he were not to risk unending suspicion. He sponged himself down, shivering, in cold water, and dressed.

"Feel better now—what?" said Lowther.

"Yes."

"Come down, then. We'll have a run in the quad before breakfast."

"Fix up!"

Clavering spoke naturally enough. The utter lack of suspicion on the part of the Shell fellows reassured him. There was not the faintest suspicion in the dormitory that the real Tom Merry was not there, and that the false one had taken his place.

How were the janitors to suspect that strange happening of the hours of darkness? Clavering had dropped in Tom Merry's clothes; he had thrown Tom Merry's pyjamas carelessly on the bed.

There was nothing to hint at the change of persons that had taken place during the night.

And as Clavering realized the total unsuspectance of the Shell fellows, his spirits rose, and he felt alight. He began to enjoy the part he was playing. He was not blessed with "The Gem"—No. 258.

much courage, but the part required little of that; there was no danger of discovery, unless he made some outrageous mistake. The sheet required cunning, resource, unscrupulous integrity, and those qualities he had in abundance.

The blarney part he had to play—that of degrading Tom Merry while honoring Tom Merry's name—would come later.

For the present his game was to take the place of the Shell captain without exciting suspicion, to accustom himself to the place, to learn all the details that it was necessary for him to know. And to that end he assumed, as well as he could, Tom Merry's kind manner and sunny smile.

"Know my being ratty when I woke up, Lowther," he said, as they left the dormitory. "I was horrid sleepy."

Monty Lowther laughed.

"That's all right, old son, I'm not tetchy. Really, I was a bit surprised. You seemed to have picked up the other fellow's way of speaking."

"What other fellow?"

"That old Clavering."

"Oh," murmured the junior, "I—I see! Well, I hope I shall never be like him, Lowther."

"Quite impossible, old son," said Lowther. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, you were thinking about him instead of sleeping last night, trying to work out the giddy mystery—what?"

"Yes—"

"Thought it out yet?" asked Manners. "I've been thinking too. And why that chap Goring and that old Clavering should be plotting against you, Tommy, is more than I can guess. I give it up."

"I—I was thinking about it," said Clavering, quick to take his cue. "I've come to the conclusion that it was only a lark, after all."

"What—what Clavering did?"

"Yes. He said it was only a lark, you know, and I really think it was. He can't have any motive for wanting to injure me."

"But Goring?"

"Goring! Oh, he's only a friend of Clavering's. He's got nothing to do with it."

"But you forget," said Lowther. "Clavering himself said something at the Feathers about giving Goring away. That shows the man is in it."

"Clavering was half stiffy, you know. I don't suppose he quite knew what he was saying."

They were in the quadrangle now, and Monty Lowther and Manners both passed to look inquiringly at their eyes. Tom Merry's change of views surprised them. Evidently he had been thinking the matter out to some purpose.

"Then you don't think there's a plot against you at all, Tom?" Lowther demanded.

"No. Why should there be?"

"Of course we can't guess that. It's their secret."

"Well, I don't think there is. I'm sure we shall hear anything more of Clavering," said the cheat coolly. "He's gone for good."

"Well, I hope you're right."

Blake & Co. were already in the quadrangle. Herries had brought his building out for a run, and he generally did before breakfast in the morning. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the Terrace Three in his usual graceful way.

"Wippie's marving!" he remarked. "We shall get some cricket to-day, dear boys. We've got to keep up practice for the Grammarian's match."

"Yes, father."

"I've been thinkin', Tom Merry," murmured the swell of St. Jim's, turning his eyes from the Shell fellow. "undah the cire, as the Grammarian match is the first important match of the season, perwidge you would be willin' to do the sensible thing."

"What is that?"

"I mean I am willin' to captain St. Jim's jentils in your place, if you like, for this occasion only!" D'Arcy explained.

"You see, we want to start the season with a win, and I would think that is the best way to make sure of it."

Clavering laughed, but his heart was beating. It was only through that careless remark of D'Arcy's that he discovered that Tom Merry was junior cricket captain at St. Jim's. He realized that he had a great deal to learn if he was to play his part well.

"I'll think about it, D'Arcy," he said.

"Very good, dear boy."

Monty Lowther gave an expressive grunt.

"What not, Tom! If you don't captain the team next Saturday you'll leave it to Kangaroo or Figgins or me, you see!"

"Well, Lowther—"

"Oh, snat!" said Monty Lowther disrespectfully.

"Hallo!" said Herries, coming up with Towser. "What's

the argument! Hallo, Towser, what's the matter with you, Terry? Down, dog!"

The janitor all stared at Towser. Towser, the hound, was an animal of somewhat uncertain temper, but he had always liked Tom Merry. Animals of all kinds took to Tom Merry invariably, as good a proof as need be of a kind and generous nature. But now, Towser was growling at the captain of the Shell. Herries made a dash at his collar, and held him back, looking very puzzled.

Clavering backed away, the colour fading from his cheeks. Towser did not look pleased when he was angry, and his jaws were formidable.

"Keep that beast away!" snapped the captain of the Shell angrily.

"Yes; hold the beast, Herries!" said Arthur Argusot reprovingly. "That wretched hound has no respect whatsoever for a fellow's trousers."

"Down, dog! Down, Towser!" commanded Herries, as the hound continued to growl, with his eyes fixed upon Tom Merry's double. "What on earth's the matter with the dog! What have you been doing to him, Tom Merry?"

"I! Nothing."

Herries shook his head.

"What have been doing something," he declared positively. "Towser doesn't act like that for nothing. I always know what a fellow's a rotter, by Towser taking a dislike to him. He can't stand Lewison or McEldon, or Cotts of the Fifth. Now he can't stand you. Look at his face!"

"Do you call that a face?"

"Yes; let Towser's face alone," growled Herries. "He's a jolly good-looking dog, Towser is. None of your poodle-pamper lap-dogs. What have you been doing to him?"

"Nothing, you dunder!"

"Not playing any tricks on him in his kennel? Lewison was caught tormenting his once."

"Tom Merry wouldn't do a wretched thing like that, Herries."

"Well, I suppose he wouldn't," admitted Herries. "All the same, Towser isn't growling at him for nothing. I want to know the reason."

"The reason is that he's a rotten, ill-conditioned mongrel, that ought to be shot or drowned!" growled the Shell fellow. Herries flushed with anger.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, go and eat coal!"

"Why, you are; you silly fustian—"

"Blast!"

Clavering swung away, and Herries made a stride after him. But Jack Staks taught him by the arm and swung him back.

"Peace, my infant!" said Rikhe calmly. "Not worth snapping about. Go and chain Towser up before he does some damage."

Herries snorted.

"Towser's got some reason," he said. "He doesn't like Tom Merry now. Towser never makes any mistakes. I shouldn't wonder if it turns out that we've been mistaken in Tom Merry."

"Oh, rats!"

"Yess, wata, deah boy."

"Fibs!" said Digby.

Herries snorted again, and led Towser away. He had great faith in Towser's judgment, and, indeed, if the janitor had known more of the facts, they would have realized that the dog's instinct had not been at fault on that occasion.

## CHAPTER 8. Hold a Prisoner.

TOM MERRY awoke.

There was a strange buzzing in his ears, a sensation of whirring in his head. His eyes, as they opened, were fixed upon the blank whiteness of a ceiling. His limbs felt strangely heavy.

Where was he? What had happened to him? Even in the first moments of wakefulness he was oppressed by a sense that something had happened, that some misfortune had come to pass.

He raised himself upon his elbow, and sank back again wearily.

"Louthor! Mamma!" he muttered. "What's this? Is it ringing-bell yet?"

No sound came to his ears.

Yet it was broad daylight. The ringing-bell should have been ringing. The fellows should have been up by this time.

He tossed his head, and looked about him. Then he reversed will, struck with amazement mixed with strange alarm.

He was not in the Shell dormitory.

That much was evident at a glance. He was in a room

about ten feet by ten, with a single small window, and that window was protected with iron bars at some distance from the glass.

There was a door opposite him, as he lay on the bed—closed.

Where was he?

He dragged himself from the bed, his head aching and whirling, his legs trembling under him. Where was he? What had happened to him?

Gradually his head became clearer. He realized that there was a faint, sickly odour clinging about him, an odour that pecked him at first, but which he knew he had smelt before somewhere. It came to him with a sudden flash what it was—the odour of chloroform.

He had been drugged.

"Good heavens!" muttered the junior, with blanched lips. "What has happened! Who has done this? Who am I?"

He set down on the edge of the bed to think. It was a new day. The sun was shining in at the window, but from the window he could see nothing, for the panes were of ground glass, impenetrable to the eye. But the best of the sun told him that it was late in the morning, if not already the afternoon.

He had slept long in the grip of the drug.

It was some time before he could collect his scattered senses. He had gone to sleep the previous night in the Shell dormitory at St. Jim's; he remembered that clearly enough. He had awakened—here! How long the night he had been drugged in his sleep, and taken from his bed and brought to this place. That much was clear.

But why? And where was he?

The room was barely furnished—a bed, a chair, a table, a few articles of furniture. The bars across the window told their own tale. The room was designed as a prison, and it must have been prepared carefully in advance. How else could he get back with barred windows. Whoever had brought him there had planned it carefully in advance, and this room had been made ready for his reception. He was a prisoner. In whose hands? That he could not guess.

A kidnapper. But why should he be kidnapped? He remembered that Arthur Argusot, D'Arcy had been kidnapped once by a gang of blackguards for reasons—But, then, D'Arcy was the son of a rich nobleman. Tom Merry was not rich. His old governess and guardian, Miss Fricelle Fawcett, was far from rich. Since Miss Fawcett's loss of fortune, indeed, Tom Merry's loss at school had been paid by his uncle in America. There was nothing in the shape of a ransom to be gained by kidnapping him. That idea was not to be entertained for a moment.

Then why?

He rose again, and inspected the room. His clothes were returning again, and with it his anger was growing.

He tried the door; it was secured on the outside. He shook the handle in vain. It did not even rattle the door.

Then he moved to the window. The bars inside were semi-circular in shape, thick and strong, and so arranged that it was impossible to reach the glass through them. And the ground glass was thick and opaque. He could not see through it, and he could not reach it to make any attempt to break it. The crossed bars of iron kept him at once that arm's-length from it.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

He was a prisoner—a helpless captive. And there was no clue to his whereabouts that he could discover. He might be near St. Jim's, or a hundred miles from the old school. It was impossible to tell.

He had been laid upon the bed fully dressed. And as he glanced down at the clothes he wore he realized that they were not his own.

With a hope of discovering some clue to their real owner, he plunged his hands into the pockets and searched them. But the pockets were empty. Save for a few loose matches and a broken cigarette, he found nothing.

Whose were the clothes?

It came into his mind like a flash.

The broken cigarette asked his thought. Whose clothes were likely to fit his limbs as if they had been expressly made for him—whose but those of his double, Clavering? His enemy and his double—Clavering! A suit of clothes taken by chance would not have fitted him so well. He was dressed in Clavering's clothes. And Reggie Clavering and Goring were the only enemies he had—the only persons who could have played this trick upon him.

He knew it!

He had fallen asleep the previous night wondering whether there was any fresh move of the cowardly game in store. And when he awoke he found he had been made. He had been taken from his bed, chloroformed in his sleep, and taken away. And, as it was necessary to dress him, a suit of Clavering's clothes had been used.

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Of so much he felt certain. But what was the object? The rascal could not intend him personal harm. If that had been intended it would have been done already. He was sure, so long as limb was concerned. It was his liberty that had been taken away. But why—why?

How long was he destined to remain here? He became conscious that he was hungry. It was probably noon by this time, or past noon.

He went to the door and hammered upon it with his fist. If he could make his peepers come he might learn more. At all events, they could not intend him to starve.

Thump, thump, thump!

The blows on the door rang through the silent building. He heard the sound of footsteps outside the door at last; the sound of a drawing bolt, and of a key being turned back in the lock. The door opened.

Tom Merry stood ready to make a spring for liberty. If a chance presented itself, but there was no chance. A thick-set man blocked up the doorway. He had a heavy cudgel in his hand. His face Tom Merry could not see. It was covered by a cloth drawn tightly over it, and fastened at the back of the head; the most complete kind of a mask, that could have been devised. Holes were cut in the cloth for the eyes and nose and mouth. Through the eyeholes two sharp eyes glittered.

"Be you's awake, young 'un!"

It was a hoarse and husky voice—a voice Tom Merry did not know. With it there came a stinging odour of rum and tobacco.

"Who are you?" asked the junior.

"I ain't 'ere to answer questions."

"Where are I?"

"Find out!"

"Am I a prisoner here?"

The man chuckled behind the masking cloth.

"Looks like it, don't it?" he said jeeringly.

Tom Merry clucked his head, and the masked man made a threatening motion with his cudgel.

"You hit a finger," he said in a tone of unmistakable menace, "and I'll lay you on the floor so quick you won't know you 'a' gone!"

Tom Merry breathed hard. The man was a powerful fellow, and in a combat with him the junior would not have had much chance, and the weapon he carried made the attempt hopeless. But it was as much as the enraged junior could do to restrain himself.

"What have I done to you?" he said, between his teeth.

"What have you brought me here for?"

"Don't you ask questions, and I won't tell you no lies, young 'un!"

"How long am I to be kept here?"

"You'll see!"

Tom Merry scanned him. The short, thick-set ruffian was obviously not Gerald Goring. But that he was an accomplice of Goring, Tom Merry felt certain. Only to Goring and Clavering was it possible that he owed his imprisonment.

"Look here," said Tom Merry slowly, "you'd better let me go. I shall be missed from St. Jim's this morning. I shall be searched for. I'm bound to be found sooner or later, and then you will get into trouble. Don't you understand that? Kibbopping is a serious thing."

The man chuckled.

"I reckon you won't be found," he remarked.

"They will search for me until they find me."

"Well, they're welcome. Look 'ere, young 'un, you ain't going to be treated badly. You'll 'ave food and drink, and a comfortable room to sleep in. Wet more do you want? Twice a day I'm going to bring you your meals; you can't want more'n that. Only believe yourself. Try to get up rusty, and I'll brain you as soon as look at yer."

"Twice a day!" repeated Tom Merry. "Then they intend to keep me here for some time?"

"That's as may be."

"Goring and Clavering have employed you to do this?"

The man started a little.

"Don't know them names," he said.

Tom Merry knew that he had.

"Look here—look here—began the junior again.

"Shut up! 'Ere's your food!" The man stepped out of the room, and lifted in a well-laden tray from the landing outside. Tom Merry had a glimpse of a staircase through the open doorway. "Now you eat, and shut up. If you 'ammer on the door you'll miss your next meal—so-ry!" Behave yourself, and every day I'll come here at twelve, and again at six, with a good meal for you. Make a fool of yourself, and I'll bring you to reason through your stomach—see! A day or two without food will make you see sense, I reckon."

He strayed backwards from the room, and pulled the door THE GIRL LIBRARY—No. 324.

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shot. The key clicked in the lock. Tom Merry heard the bolt shoot on the outside.

He was alone again—a prisoner in solitude. But he was hungry, and he ate the ham, the hard-boiled eggs, and the sals with which the tray was laden with a good appetite. And as he ate he evolved plans in his mind for gaining his liberty.

## CHAPTER 9.

### A RIFT IN THE LUTE!

MONTY LOWTHER'S brow was clouded. He was sitting alone in the study in the Shell passage, gazing moodily at the fire. Lowther hardly knew why he was moody and depressed.

It was Thursday, two days since that visit to the Featherers, when Reggie Clavering and Gerald Goring had been so easily ragged by Tom Merry & Co.

On Wednesday some of the juniors had cried down to the Featherers to improve after Reggie Clavering, and they had discovered that his house was gone. They were satisfied that they were done with Tom Merry's double. The ragging had evidently scared him away from the neighbourhood.

It was not of Clavering that Lowther was thinking now, as he sat alone in his study. He was thinking of Tom Merry.

The Terrible Tharge of the Shell had always been inseparable. True, there have sometimes been little tiffs in the study—they were only human. But all differences had always been made up, and had left no impression behind.

But now—

Merry Lowther realized that there was a difference now. He had not spoken about it to Manners, but he knew that Manners realized it too. There was an unspoken but well understood secret between them.

Something had changed.

Lowther hardly knew what it was; but Tom Merry was not the same as of old. It was only during the last two days that there had been a difference; but the eyes of friendship are quick to see.

Perhaps there had always been a side of Tom Merry's nature that his chums had not seen; it was possible. They were seeing it now. Perhaps, Lowther thought, in a manful endeavour to find success for his old chum—perhaps Tom Merry's nerves had been put on edge by the worry caused by his double. Perhaps he was not quite himself just now. Yet that would not fully account for the change.

There was a change—that was undoubted.

In the first place, his chain had developed a jolt-tamper. The kind, good-humour of old was gone. Short and sharp answers, abruptness, snarling remarks, sarcasm—these were the order of the day now. The old peace and harmony no longer reigned in Tom Merry's study.

And the captain of the Shell had taken up with Levinson and Mellish, of the Fourth—that was very curious, too. Levinson and Mellish were the black sheep of the School House, and Tom Merry had always despised their baseness. Now he was seeking their society—and Lowther knew that he smoked with them, and played cards with them. It was such a change that he could not have believed it unless he had seen it. But he had seen it.

And when he had ventured a remonstrance he had received a curt and snoring reply that came very near to breaking off his friendship with Tom Merry on the spot.

Lowther was thinking this over as he sat alone in the study.

There was a footstep at the door, and he looked up. It was Manners. Manners' face was cloudy, too.

"Hallo!" said Lowther politely.

"Tom not here?" asked Manners.

"No."

"Know where he is?"

Lowther smiled bitterly.

"In Levinson's study, I think."

Manners knifed his brows.

"He seems jolly fond of Levinson the last two days," he said. "He never could stand him, any more than we could."

"Lots of things have changed the last two days," said Lowther. "Manners, old man, what do you make of it? What's come over old Tummy?"

Manners shook his head.

"Blowed if I know," he said. "I haven't spoken of it, Monty; but—there's a change in him. He doesn't seem like the same chap."

"I'm what I was thinking."

"It's occurred to me once or twice that he's getting fed up with our friendship," said Manners abruptly.

"I don't like to think so, but—"

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"We've been chasing a long time," said Lowther slowly. "We don't want to break it in a hurry now, Manners, old man. It's up to us to be patient a bit, I dare say he's been worried and bothered by that rotter Clavering's tricks."

"But Clavering is gone now, and he wasn't like this before."

"It's odd," said Lowther.

"Jolly odd!"

Merry Lowther rose to his feet and stretched his long limbs.

"Well, it's tea-time," he said. "Tom ought to come to tea. If he's with Levison, we may as well go down the passage and call him."

Manners looked doubtful for a moment.

"All right," he said, after a pause.

The chance of the Shell went to the Fourth-Foam passage, together. They stepped outside Levison's study and knocked. The door was locked.

"Who's there?" called out Levison.

"De-Manners and Lowther!"

"Oh, come in!"

Levison unlocked the door, and the chance of the Shell stepped in. There was a heap of cigarette smoke in the study. Levison and Mellish were there; but Lamsley-Lamsley, who shared the study with them, was not present. He was not a party to Levison's peculiar amusements. Lowther and Manners looked at their chance—the fellow they believed to be Tom Merry. He was seated at the table, with a cigarette between his lips, shuffling a pack of cards. He glanced at them curiously.

"Hallo, my fellows! What's up?" he asked.

"A good deal would be up if Kildare or the house-master caught you like this, Tom," said Merry Lowther quietly.

The Shell fellow shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, they won't catch me," he said.

"Tom, think that up!" said Manners. "I don't understand what's come over you! Don't play the rotter backward like that. It's good enough for Levison and Mellish, but it's not good enough for you!"

"Thanks!" said Levison sarcastically.

Manners looked on him with fashing eyes.

"Hold your tongue, you said!" he broke out. "For two pins I'd take you by the neck and bang your caddish head against the wall! Shut up!"

Levison's eyes glimmered, but he shut up. He knew that Manners was quite ready to be as good as his word.

"Tea's ready, Tom," said Lowther.

"I don't want tea now; I'm busy."

"Busy playing cards?" said Lowther, with a bitterness he could not repress. "Blamed if I ever thought that of you before, Tom!"

"I suppose I'm my own master!"

"Yes," said Lowther with a gasp; "if you like to put it like that, you certainly are!"

"That's not the sense!"

"Not—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake give a fellow a rest! If you don't like it, you can get out. Levison didn't ask you in here."

"Hallo! What's this!" Lamsley-Lamsley, of the Fourth, came into the study and coughed as he caught the cigarette smoke. "Levison, you backward, I'll punch your head if you turn my study into a blasted tap-room! Why—Tom Merry!" Lamsley-Lamsley broke off in amazement. "You?"

"Well!"

Lamsley-Lamsley regarded him curiously.

"I don't want to preach to you, Tom Merry," he said. "I suppose you can do as you like, and if you want to play the giddy or I guess it's none of my business. But you won't do it in my study! Get out!"

"Look here!" began Levison.

"Shut up!" said Lamsley-Lamsley. "Tom Merry, you can get out of this study; and if you don't go jolly quick, I'll put you out on your neck!"

He jerked the pack of cards out of the Shell fellow's hand as he spoke, and tossed them into the fire. The junior rose, his eyes flaming; but he did not resent Lamsley-Lamsley's words or his action.

"H'll go!" he said sullenly. "Go and eat corks! I'll see you later, Levison. I'll come to tea now, if you fellows have got it ready."

And he left the study with Manners and Lowther.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Left Alone!

THE three Shell fellows entered Tom Merry's study in silence. Manners and Lowther were gloomy and depressed, and their companion was frowning ominously. In glum silence they prepared tea—in contrast to the usual cheery chat and good-fellowship.

What had come over Tom Merry?

That was the question Manners and Lowther asked one another anxiously. The scene in Levison's study worried them. Tom Merry had been absent smoking and playing cards—enough to get him expelled from the school if a master or prefect had seen him. Lamsley-Lamsley had been fully within his rights in ordering him out of the study; Manners or Lowther would have done the same in his place. And Tom Merry had gone quietly, under the threat of being pitched out "as his neck" if he did not go. Of course, he had no right to act in that way in Lamsley-Lamsley's quarters; but to allow himself to be ordered about by a Fourth-Foamer, to take threats quietly—What had come over him? If he felt ashamed of what he had been doing, that would have been different. But he was not ashamed. He had yielded to Lamsley-Lamsley's threat—why? Not because he was alarmed, not because Lamsley-Lamsley was in the right. Because he was afraid to resent the Fourth-Foamer's conduct.

It could only be that; and yet Manners and Lowther knew from old experience that Tom Merry was as brave as a lion—that he hardly knew the meaning of fear.

They had seen him risk his life to save a child from a train at a level-crossing not so long ago. They had seen him in many a schoolboy combat. He could not be a failure. Yet he had acted towards Lamsley-Lamsley like an errand boy. What did it mean?

Had they, after all, been deceived in their shunt? Was he the backward he now seemed to be? Had he been blinding them for a long time, and now thrown off all disguise because it was growing too irksome to him?

And had his rotten habits sapped away his nerve and his courage, and left him what he now appeared—a wretched lunk?

With those thoughts in their minds, Manners and Lowther were not likely to be cheerful. They did not speak, and they did not look at their chance, as they prepared tea. The three Shell fellows sat down to the meal in glum silence.

Lowther made an effort to break it at last.

"Light enough for some cricket practice after tea!" he remarked.

"Yes, we'd better knock the ball about a bit," said Manners. "You haven't been doing much practice the last two days, Tom. There's the Grammar School match on Saturday."

"I'm not going to play."

Manners and Lowther stared at him.

"You're not going to play!" repeated Lowther.

"No!"

"Is the first important match of the season?" said Manners.

The captain of the Shell shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I'm fed up with cricket," he said.

"You haven't had much yet to get fed up with," said Lowther. "You're captain of the junior eleven, Tom, and captain of the Shell; the fellows will expect you to play."

"Then they'll be disappointed."

"But why?"

"I'm fed up with it. I'm going out with Levison, tea, on Saturday afternoon," said the junior definitely.

Lowther's brow became very black.

"You're getting very chummy with Levison, lately," he said.

"Well, why shouldn't I, if I choose? Levison's all right, and I get on with him!"

"You need not so."

"Well, I do not, and that's enough. He's good enough for me. I like him better than those rotters in Study No. 4, anyway."

"Those what?"

"Rotters! I can't stand Blake, if you see; and as for Hevies, he's a caddish brute, with no more brains than his bulldog, and Digby is a duffer. As for D'Arcy, he's a tailor's dummy, and I can't stand him at any price. They were going to come to tea with us to-day, but—"

"We asked them," said Lowther. "I'm surprised they haven't come."

"Well, I told them I'd prefer their room to their company."

"You did, Tom?"

"Yes, I did!"

"Why?" asked Lowther quietly, but with a glint coming into his eyes.

"I'm sick of them."

"We're not sick of them, anyway. You might have consulted us before you insulted them."

"If you want to chum with that Fourth-Foam crowd, you can do it, Lowther; I'm not going to. I prefer Levison."

"I shall certainly explain to Blake as soon as I see him that we had nothing to do with what you said," exclaimed Lowther hotly. "It was a rotten thing to do, Tom."

"Thanks!"

"It will mean trouble between us," said Manners usually. "I remember how D'Arcy passed us without speaking in the quad just before I came in." I thought there was something queer in his look."

"He's a queer beggar, anyway. He thinks of nothing but the fit of his trousers and the pattern of his waistcoats—the silly idiot."

"He's a good sort," said Lowther.

"Oh, yes!"

There was a grim silence in the study after that. To Manners and Lowther it was clear that their charm and study leader was making himself intentionally disagreeable. Did it mean that now he had taken up with Levinson he wanted to drop his old friends? It looked only too much like it. And Manners and Lowther were beginning to feel very angry now. Their patience with their chums was growing exhausted.

The captain of the Shell pushed back his chair from the table, felt in his pocket for a cigarette, and lighted it. Manners and Lowther exchanged glances.

"Don't do that here, Tom," said Manners quietly. "I can do as I like in my own study, I suppose," was the defiant reply.

"It's our study too."

"Well, I don't object to your smoking," said the junior, with a sneering laugh. "I'll give you some cigarettes, if you like."

"Keep them! Look here, Tom, you may be caught in this!" said Manners, really distressed. "Kildare may look in. He said he'd drop in and tell us whether he wanted us to bow to him at the sets after tea."

"I'm not going to bow to him."

"It's jolly good practice bowing to the best batsman at St. Jim's. And he gives us tips about our play. It's very useful to us, and very kind of Kildare."

"Oh, hang Kildare and his kindnoess!"

"I tell you he may come in, Tom. Will you check that cigarette away?"

"No, I won't!"

"It's asking for trouble. Kildare's a good sort, but he's head prefect of the House, and he couldn't protect me to within if he wanted to."

"Oh, yes!"

There was a tap at the door, and it opened, and Kildare's handsome and good-natured face looked in.

"Hello, kids!" said the captain of St. Jim's, in his genial way. "I've looked in to— Hello, hello! What's this?"

Manners and Lowther looked sad and uncomfortable. Kildare's genial look faded as he fixed his eyes upon the junior who was smoking. And the smoke did not cease as the St. Jim's captain looked at him. He returned the cigarette between his lips, and blew out a little cloud of smoke almost in Kildare's face.

Kildare's face became hard as iron, and he made a stride towards the junior, gripped him by the shoulder, and swung him out of his chair.

"What does this mean, Tom Merry?" he exclaimed sternly. "I never suspected you of this sort of thing! Throw that cigarette into the fire!"

The junior shrank from Kildare's blazing eyes. The cigarette fell into the embers, and was consumed.

"So you've been taking me in, you young end!" said Kildare grimly. "You've kept up appearances pretty well. I must say. How long has this kind of thing been going on?"

The junior looked sullen, and did not reply. But the defiance was gone out of his manner. The look in Kildare's eyes scared him.

"It's the first time he's smoked here, Kildare," said Manners awkwardly. "We—we wouldn't have it in this study! Let him off this time, there's a good chap!"

"If it were the first time," said Kildare. "Have you smoked anywhere else, though, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, I have?"

"Then it's a habit of yours—ah?"

"Yes, it is," was the sullen reply.

"Then it's a habit I'll ease you of," said the captain of St. Jim's grimly. "You'll take two hundred lines, Tom Merry—do you hear? And if I catch you again, I won't give you lines, I'll thrash you. Understand that!"

And Kildare strode from the study, his brow very dark, without having said anything more on the subject of bowing. Tom Merry's study was in disgrace now.

"Hang him!" muttered the junior, rubbing the shoulder where Kildare had gripped him. "Hang him! I'll pay him out for that!"

"Nonsense you jolly 'wall right!" said Lowther savagely. "What business have you to get the study in disgrace?"

"Oh, shut up!"

Merry Lowther's eyes glittered. His anger was at boiling point now. He clenched his hands involuntarily, but Manners caught him by the arm.

"No good scrapping, Meety," he muttered.

"I've had enough of it," growled Lowther. "Look here, Tom Merry, we may as well have this out. You've changed a lot lately, and you've got new friends—precious pals, I must say. You seem to be doing your best to get yourself and the study into disgrace. You've been trying to quarrel for the last half-hour. Does that mean that you don't want to pal with us any longer? If it does, you've only got to say so, and we won't trouble you with our friendship any more—you can bet on that!"

Lowther drew a deep breath.

"Do you mean that, Tom Merry?"

"Yes, I do!"

"That's enough!"

Merry Lowther turned his back on his study-mate, and walked out of the room without another word. Manners made but lingered, looking almost bewitchingly at the captain of the Shell.

"You, old man—" he began hesitatingly.

The junior slowly took another cigarette from his pocket and lighted it. Manners bit his lip hard, and followed Lowther from the study. The door closed, and the captain of the Shell was left alone.

A cynical smile hovered over his lips, and he grunted through the tobacco smoke. It was the breaking of an old friendship, but that did not trouble the unrepentant rascal who was playing the part of the captain of the Shell under the name of Tom Merry.

**CHAPTER 11.**  
**Parted Friends.**

ALL the School House knew that evening that there had been a quarrel in Tom Merry's study. Manners and Lowther said little about it, but their actions spoke for themselves.

They did not do their preparation in the study as usual. They did it in a corner of the Form-room by themselves. They had been seen removing their books and other personal belongings from the study. The quarrel was evidently of a serious nature, and the two Shell fellows refused to "dig" with their Form Captain any longer.


There was much talk and surmise on the subject among the

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

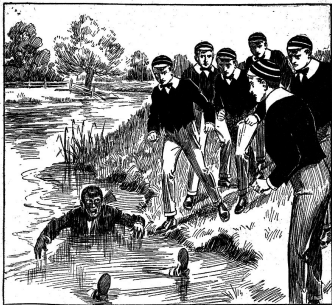
# BROUGHT TO BOOK!

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Neggie Clavering set up in the mud, gasping and spluttering. "That'll teach you to keep away from St. Jim's!" said Tom Merry, grimly. "Have you had enough?" "Gosh!" spluttered Clavering. "I'll go away! I'll—I'll do anything you like!" (See Chapter 4.)

Shell fellows and the justices of the House generally. Some serious persons inquired the reasons of Messers and Lowther, but met with decidedly curt replies, and went away with their curiosity gratified.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form seemed really concerned about the matter. Arthur Augustus took a fatherly interest in the Terrible Three, and he asked Blake's opinion as to whether it was an opportune moment for a fellow of tact and judgment to chip in, and attempt to heal the breach.

Blake shook his head positively.

"Let 'em alone," he said. "No good meddling."

D'Arcy turned his eyesless appreciatively upon him.

"I was wolly not thinkin' of meddlin', dear boy," he said. "I was thinkin' of chippin' in and healin' up the breach."

"Same thing!" said Blake.

"I do not regard it as the same thing at all, Blake. I am very sorry to see old friends fall out in this manner. I dare say it is wolly nothin' at all, you know—only a breach once made goes on widenin', you know."

"I dare say they're fed up with Tom Merry," said Blake abruptly. "I'm fed up with him, too, for that matter. We've been mistaken about him. That's jolly clear now."

"I told you so!" chimed in Harrier. "You can trust Tower. You noticed the way Tower frowned at him the other morning."

"Oh, wats! He's all right—sufferin' from an attack

of nerves, or somethin', that's all," said Arthur Augustus snugly. "That flash of his beasty double yowwied him."

"That didn't make him take up seeking, I suppose," said Blake tartly. "And he plays cards for money with Lewison."

"Yess, that's wathah wotter, I know. However—" "And he's been tryin' his hardest to make himself obnoxious the last two days," said Blake. "Lowther asked us to tea in the study this afternoon, and Tom Merry told us we were not wanted. I'd have punched his head, only—well, I wish I had punched it now."

"Certainly his manners leave somethin' to be desired," admitted Arthur Augustus. "He has been quite wade to me on several occasions."

"Well, let him alone, then."

"Forwags it is up to me to see if I can do anythin'," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "A word in season, you know—"

"Oh, hosh!"

"Wolly, Blake—"

Blake turned away with a grunt. The Shell fellow had got on the wrong side of Blake now, and Blake resented it keenly. He was not a fellow to bear malice; but deliberate and disagreeable rudeness, without offence given, was hard to forgive. Tom Merry seemed to be on the way to losing all his friends in the School House.

Arthur Augustus meditated for a little while, and finally made his way to Tom Merry's study. He knocked politely

at the door, and opened it, and was then taken with a fit of coughing. The study was thick with smoke.

"Hai Jee! Gwooh!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

Three juniors were there—the captain of the Shell had company. He had soon replaced Messers and Lowther. Levinson and Mellich, the black sheep of the School House, were sitting at the table with him. All three were smoking, and they were playing cards. These were little piles of copper and silver on the table.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's famous memento dropped from his eye with the shock he had received as he beheld that scene. The three juniors looked at him far from amiably.

"Great Scott!"

"What that does, can't you?" growled Levinson. "We don't want every fool in the House to be looking in."

"Oh, let 'em look," said the Shell fellow coolly. "I don't care."

"Perhaps you want to be sacked!" growled Levinson. "I don't! Sit at that door, D'Arcy, and get on the other side of it first."

"I came here to speak to Tom Merry."

"Oh, don't bother now, said the Shell fellow.

"I am sorry to see that you are on bad terms with your old mate, dear boy. I trust I may be able to—"

"Nip, Levinson!"

"Get it!" said Levinson.

"Wash, Tom Merry!"

"Hallo, are you still there?"

"Yes, I am still here!" said Arthur Augustus, his anger beginning to rise. "This is really not a polite way to receive a friend, Tom Merry."

"You're no friend of mine," said the Shell fellow brutally. "For goodness' sake go back to your fancy waistcoat, and don't worry."

And Levinson and Mellich chuckled gleefully. It was a triumph to them to see Tom Merry on bad terms with his old friends.

Arthur Augustus stood almost speechless with indignation for a moment or two. The three juniors went on playing cards as if he were not there. D'Arcy found his voice at last.

"You utiah wottah!" he gasped.

"Oh, get out!"

"I will get out with glasses, you feebah wottah, and I will certainly smash come to this study again."

"Thanks!"

"Before I go, I will tell you my opinion of you, Tom Merry. I regard you as a wottah and a blackguard. I have been injured in you. I thought you were a decent chap, and I was mistaken. You are an utiah and I refuse to know you afiah this!"

"Hurrah!"

"Pshaw! don't speak to me when you see me again," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall ignore your existence, you utiah wottah."

And Arthur Augustus retired from the study, trembling with indignation, and closed the door with quite unnecessary force. He heard the rattling cards of Levinson and Mellich as he stalked away down the passage.

His classes noted his ruffled look as he came back into the common room, and they grinned.

"Well, what look!" demanded Blake.

"Did Tom Merry listen to the voice of the chamber?" grinned Digby.

Arthur Augustus snorted. It was not a dignified thing for the rector of St. Jim's, the younger son of a noble earl, to do; but he did. He snorted.

"Pshaw! don't mention that wottah's name to me again, dear boy," he said. "I've done with him. I regard him as an avwatt blackguard. I wash my hands of him entirely."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake heartily.

A little later, Kangaroo of the Shell came into Study No. 5, where Blake & Co. were doing their preparation. The Constable junior was looking puzzled and troubled.

"What's all this about Tom Merry?" he asked. "I hear that Messers and Lowther have roved with him, and won't dig with him any longer, and he's taken up with Levinson and Mellich, and they're having a bean in his study. Has he gone dotty?"

"Looks like it," said Blake gruffly.

"But he's simply asking for the sack," said Noble. "Why, anybody might drop on him while he's playing the giddy card. Knew of Sixth would be glad of the chance."

"Sure, him right if he does."

"You chaps quarrelled with him too?" asked the puzzled Constable.

"Not exactly; but we're not speaking to him any more. Fed 'em up!" explained Blake.

"Yes, wash 'em! Fed wight up to the gill."

"Well, I don't understand it," said Kangaroo thoughtfully.

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fully. "I've spoken in Messers and Lowther, but they're grumpy, and won't jaw about it. Still, Tom Merry was always a pal of ours, and I think it's up to us to stop him playing the fool and getting sacked. I was thinking that a ragging would meet the case. Will you fellows come along, and we'll rig the study, burn their cards, and make them eat their cigarettes. We did the same thing to Levinson once, you know, and it did him good."

"I refuse to have anything to do with him."

And Blake shook his head.

"But he's simply asking for the sack!" urged Kangaroo.

"Let him get it, then, and a good thing too!" snorted Herriot.

Kangaroo looked at them rather curiously, and scouted the study. He passed Tom Merry's door, and passed. The voice he knew well was speaking, loudly enough to be heard in the passage.

"I go tap!"

"Not so loud, Merry," came Levinson's voice. "Dash it all, suppose somebody should pass!"

"I don't care!"

"Well, I do."

Kangaroo opened the door. The study was thick with smoke. The Constable junior looked grimly at the three players.

"Pretty set of young blackguards, I must say," he remarked. "I'm not surprised at you, Levinson, but I must say it beats me to see you doing this kind of thing, Tom Merry."

"Another giddy preacher—what!"

"I'm not here to preach to you," said Kangaroo angrily. "If the other fellows were of my mind, you'd get a jolly good ragging, to put a stop to the sort of thing."

"Can't you mind your own business?"

Kangaroo seemed to swallow something with difficulty, but he left the study without another word. He did not want to row with Tom Merry; they had always been friends. But, like the other fellows, he was "fed up," and when he saw the captain of the Shell again, he passed him without speaking.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Mr. Linton Receives a Shock.

TOM MERRY was going to the dogs—the giddy howl was, as Blake expressed it.

"That's the worst about that."

All the School House juniors know it, and the news spread to the New House. Figgins & Co. were amazed. They were "up against" Tom Merry as rivals of his House, but in a friendly sort of way. They were sorry to hear of the new line he had taken, and they were quite concerned about it. Figgins, in the goodness of his heart, ventered a mild remonstrance and a word of warning. But the reception his kind remonstrance met with discouraged him so effectually that he did not venture a second time.

The captain of the Shell was openly scornful and sneering, and he left Figgins's overtures to general with a fellow he had always liked intimately, three words had been a row. But Figgins left the School House with flushed cheeks and glittering eyes, and when he rejoined his chambers in the New House he spoke very much to the point.

"The fellow's an utter cad," he said. "Either he's changed very much, or else we've been taken in up till now. I've done with him. I came jolly near giving him a dashed good hiding!"

"He must be off his rocker," said Kerr.

"Looks like it."

"Quite changed, anyway," said Fatty Wynn. "He was never to me to-day when I saw him in the tuck-shop. I asked an cricket man with some lam-tarts, and he said he wasn't a gambling pig. As much as to say, you know, that I was one!" added Fatty Wynn, much aggrieved.

"He seems to be wanting to quarrel with everybody lately," said Kerr. "Lowther and Messers have checked up the study; they're not on speaking terms now. Study No. 6 don't speak to him. Kangaroo's dropped him, and Duns and Glen too. He seems hardy to have a friend left in his own House!"

"He won't have any more, either!" said Figgins grimly. "I'll never speak to the rotter again—I know that—unless it's to tell him what I think of him!"

"He's checked up cricket too," said Kerr. "He's not going to play in the Grayson School match. I hear he's resigned an cricket captain."

"All the better!" growled Figgins. "He's not wanted!" But it was very puzzling.

It was not only that Tom Merry seemed to be determined to go to the "low-ways"; his recklessness was as amazing as his curious change of character.

The maddest of black sheep might have been expected to

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take some care not to be found out, when expulsion from the school was the certain penalty.

But the captain of the Shell did not seem to care whether he was found out or not. In fact, he seemed to be asking for trouble.

Levison and Mellish had greeted the change in his goodly. They were only too glad to score over their old enemies by helping Tom Merry into the downward path; but after a few days Levison and Mellish both began to get bored by the utter recklessness of their new associates.

They were ready for any blackguardism, but they were not ready to take the risk of being expelled from the school.

And so by the end of the week even these two black sheep began to be a little shy of his society.

On Saturday came the cricket match with the Grammar School; but Tom Merry was not in the St. Jim's junior team. The fellows who knew how he had been looking forward to the cricket were amazed. Some of the juniors with whom he had not yet quarrelled spoke to him on the subject, but his answers were not agreeable.

"Sure, and what's come over ye?" Folly of the Fourth demanded, coming up to the junior skipper as the Shell came out after morning lessons on Saturday. "Is it three that ye're not playing this afternoon, Tuesday?"

"Quite true."

"But why not?"

"I don't care to. I've checked up cricket."

"Sure, Gordon Gay and his team are in great fettle, and we need ye at the wickets, Tom Merry," the Irish junior said reproachfully.

"Harg Gordon Gay and his team?"

"Don't ye really care for the game at all, at all?" Reilly asked in astonishment.

"No, I don't!"

"Well, it's a pity as ye are, then?"

"Oh, rats!"

Reilly's eyes glittered.

"And if ye says 'Rats' to me, I'll wipe up the floor wid ye, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed angrily. "I don't know what's come over ye, but I'm not going to stand your cheek!"

The Shell fellow snatched something, and turned away. And the other fellows, looking on, exchanged significant glances. It was another case of kind. The captain of the Shell had not ventured to resent the angry words of the Fourth-Former.

Reilly stood at him in blank amazement. He had expected a "scrap" to follow, but evidently there was to be no scrap. The Belfast junior shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and swung away, and did not speak to the Shell fellow again.

Tom Merry had once been the most popular fellow in the school. It was safe to say now that he was the most unpopular. There was hardly a decent fellow at St. Jim's who would speak to him now, and even Levison and his set, though they chattered with him, did not like him.

The captain of the Shell had developed a sneering tone and an unpleasant manner, which nobody could be expected to stand patiently. But for his backwardness in reweaving mirth, he would have had many a fight on his hands in those days. But, although he was unwilling to enter into personal scraps, he had developed a bullying manner towards smaller boys.

Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form, related with burning eyes how Tom Merry had cuffed him in the passage, and slapped him with a cricket stump when he hit back.

Tom Merry had always been the champion of the fags, and had often stood between them and the bullying of fellows like Gore. But he had outdone Gore now, and his popularity with the far Forms was quite gone.

If he had deliberately set out to make himself thoroughly disliked by the whole of the Lower School, he could not have done better than he was doing.

The seniors, too, had noticed that he was not like the Tom Merry of old. Ever since Kilkane had caught him sneaking, he had been odd to him, and had kept a sharp eye on him.

He had caught him a second time, and cuffed him; and more than once the other prefects had cuffed him for impertinent answers. He had even been imprisoned to the House-master, and Mr. Raffles had cuffed him for it.

If any mischief should happen to the fellow now, it was certain that he would receive no sympathy from anybody at St. Jim's. Indeed, most of the fellows, utterly disgusted with him, wished heartily that he would be found out and expelled.

And most of these felt that it could not be long before it happened. His utter conduct was only equalled by his recklessness. The dinner seemed to be coming at dinner that day.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was at the head of the table in the dining-room in the School House, and the unpopular junior was near him. When the Shell master gave the signal to rise, the catastrophe came. As the captain of the Shell rose from his chair, a pack of cards slipped from his inside pocket, and shot down to the floor in a stream.

Mr. Linton stood petrified. There was a gasp from all the juniors.

The cards streamed over the floor, round the very feet of the Form-master. Mr. Linton gazed at them blankly. Cards were strictly forbidden in the school, even for a harmless game of leggos-by-neighbour. And for a fellow to be carrying a pack of cards in his pocket—well, it was the limit. Mr. Linton, at once, as he recovered from his astonishment, assumed an expression that made the juniors draw their breath quickly.

"Merry?"

Mr. Linton's voice was like the rumble of distant thunder.

"Yes, sir," said the junior solemnly.

"These cards are yours?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pick them up, and hand them to me!"

The junior obeyed. Mr. Linton took the cards, and he could not help noticing the aroma of tobacco that hung about them.

"Merry, I will not say how shocked I am! This accidental discovery shows how much I have been deceived in you. You are accustomed, then, to playing cards—and to smoking at the same time, as the smell of the cards plainly shows."

"The junior was solemnly silent."

"You will come with me to the Head!" said Mr. Linton. The junior followed him silently from the room. There was a hum among the other fellows.

"Well, that's a clean howl-out, if ye like!" murmured Manners. "The ass! The duffer! It's the end, Lovelock!" Lovelock nodded moodily.

But it was not the end yet, though very near it. Mr. Linton told the story to the Head, and Dr. Holmes gazed steadily at the guilty junior. "You be remembered the good word Tom Merry had always had in the school, and these was kindness mingled with his goodness."

"I am shocked and surprised, Merry!" he said. "I cannot say how this grieves me! But I shall give you another chance. I feel that you have acted foolishly rather than wickedly. Probably you have been led into this folly. You deserve to be expelled from the school, but I shall care for this time. But I warn you, Merry, that I shall not be so lenient on another occasion!"

And the junior was cuffed, and dismissed from the Head's presence.

## CHAPTER 18.

### The Stake.

GERALD GORING sat upon a log in Bylcombe Wood, with a cigar between his teeth. He was waiting in that secluded glade at a distance from the road—waiting for Reggie Clavering.

It was Saturday afternoon. At St. Jim's the junior cricket team, minus their skipper, were playing the Green-squads. The junior-whom all St. Jim's believed to be Tom Merry was missing through the wood, on his way to keep his appointment with the master-plaster.

Goring looked up and nodded as the junior came through the trees.

"I've waited for you," he said.

Clavering nodded, and snarled.

"I've been cuffed," he said sulkily.

Goring laughed.

"Well, that won't hurt you. That was part of the bargain."

"The old beast laid it on hard!" grunted Reggie. "Look here, I'm not going to stand such a row of it! I'm more than sick of St. Jim's!"

"Is St. Jim's sick of you? That's more to the point!"

Reggie grinned momentarily.

"I fancy so. They don't know what's come over Tom Merry. I think I've paid the better out now for what he's done to me. He hasn't a friend left in the school!"

"Good!"

"And as for his reputation he hasn't one left!"

And Clavering proceeded to give an account of the late happenings at St. Jim's.

Goring listened with a sardonic grin on his face. He could not have chosen a better tool for his purpose than this young rascal who so strangely resembled Tom Merry. He nodded with satisfaction as Clavering finished.

"Good enough, Reggie! It's pretty well time to finish now. Strike the iron while it's hot, you know. There won't be any more of it."

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be much wrong among the fellows there when Tom Merry gets the satisfaction?"

"I don't they'll all be jolly glad?"

"That's exactly what I want—nobody to regret him—or to believe him afterwards when he tries to explain. Not that he'll have much chance to explain, either. I shall keep him safe for a few months."

Clavering opened his eyes.

"Months?" he repeated.

"Certainly! It's safer, on full consideration," said Goring coolly.

"But it's impossible! When he—I mean, I am sacked from St. Jim's, Tom Merry will be expected home. His guardian—"

"Exactly. You'll go and make Miss Fawcett Fawcett dislike you as much as the fellows at St. Jim's do. The idea is to make him thoroughly disliked all round. You can take Miss Fawcett in as easily as the rest."

"I suppose I can," said Clavering slowly. "But about my remaining away from home so long! That's not easy."

"Easy enough! You're supposed to be staying with your friends in Sussex. Well, write to your uncle that they're going on a holiday in Scotland, and want you to go with them. Your uncle won't be anxious to get you home—what?"

Clavering scowled.

"He's glad to be rid of me," he said viciously.

"Exactly. It's all quite easy," said Goring.

"I suppose it is," assented Reggie, "and the longer it is before Tom Merry tells his story, the safer it will be for us. You've got him quite safe?"

"Safe as houses."

"Where is he?"

"Twenty miles from here, in a lonely house on the hill near Loxford, and Trouble is looking after it."

"I should think Trouble would get pretty fed-up with it."

"He's satisfied so long as he has plenty of beer and tobacco. Besides, he stands a whack," said Goring.

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"Twenty miles from here, in a lonely house on the hill near Loxford, and Trouble is looking after it."

"I should think Trouble would get pretty fed-up with it."

"He's satisfied so long as he has plenty of beer and tobacco. Besides, he stands a whack," said Goring.

"Exactly. It's all quite easy," said Goring.

"I suppose it is," assented Reggie, "and the longer it is before Tom Merry tells his story, the safer it will be for us. You've got him quite safe?"

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"Where is he?"

"From a man in South Africa," said Goring. "Look here, Reggie, it's got to be kept dark. You understand that? I'll explain—there's not much to tell. Have you ever heard the name of Broadbent?"

"I think I've heard you mention it."

"He's a big gun in Cape Colony, rolling in money. My father was his partner once upon a time. They had shares in the diamond-fields in the early days—pals, and all that. He thought a lot of my father—and, in consequence, of me."

"He didn't know you?" grunted Reggie.

"Never mind that. He's a grim old brute—distrustful and suspicious. I dare say his experience in South Africa made him like that. He's pretty old now, and in bad health—may go off the books any minute. And he's made his will."

"And you're in it?" asked Reggie, getting interested.

"No," said Goring, between his teeth. "I'm not in it! I was, but when I got into disgrace at college I was got out of it. He refused to have anything more to do with me. He's old-fashioned, a regular Puritan, and won't make allowances for a young fellow. I didn't think it would turn out so bad; but it did. His lawyer is a friend of mine, and he did his best for me. But it was no use; I was got right off."

"Hard losses!"

"The old brute hasn't kith or kin of his own. But he had a great chum long ago—now dead. It was Tom Merry's father. He was killed in India. He was Captain Merry then."

"Exactly. It's all quite easy," said Goring.

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"Safe as houses."

"Where is he?"

Clavering coolly. "It's worth five thousand at the very least."

"You confounded young blackmailer!"

Clavering laughed.

"I like that! But we needn't quarrel about terms. You haven't got the money yet. After you've got it I can give you away at any time I should choose, and you'd have to disgorge it again. You know that. I'm going to stand a good whack, and you may as well make up your mind to it."

"The look that Gerald Goring gave his youthful accomplice was not a pleasant one. But he smiled sulkily. His existing plot was impossible to carry out without the aid of Tom Merry's double. He was in the young rascal's hands.

Clavering rose and threw away the stump of his cigarette.

"That said" he remarked. "I'm satisfied. Now, about getting to the finish. It's time I got dose at St. Jim's."

"Quite so! Let it get finished on Monday, then; you can say all you've dose already," said Goring. "It must be something serious, of course—something that can't be wiped out, such as theft."

"There!"

"You'd have nerve enough?"

Clavering shook his head.

"I might have nerve enough, but it's not good enough," he said. "I can't do that. They might do something worse than expelling for theft!"

"It would be looked up to as a scandal!"

"I'm not taking chances like that," said Clavering decidedly. "Besides, if it should ever come out that I'm not really Tom Merry, they'd take it up against me to get even with me. I'll think of something else. What about poisoning a Form-dancer?"

"That would get you the sack, certainly, but it's not disgraceful enough. It might be put down to hot temper. Look here, if you are found intoxicated in your study—"

"Good egg," exclaimed Clavering. "That's it! And I'll give care to let it be quite convincing."

"That settles it," said Goring, rising. "Make it that! Don't bungle it, and don't get really caught, or you might have to pay too much. You can set the pace. Take enough to make it easy to put on the job."

"All news," said Clavering, checking.

"Now, good-bye! We don't want to risk being seen together."

And they separated.

Gerald Goring strode away in one direction, Clavering in another. He was grinning as he took his way back to St. Jim's.

Probably he would not have felt so satisfied if he had seen a white, scared face that peered from the thickets into the glade after the plotters were gone.

It was the face of Levison of the Fourth.

The spy of the School House had been close, something in the thicket, a prey to mingled curiosity and terror, while the schemes talked, and he had heard every word. Levison had followed the junior he believed to be Tom Merry from the school, supposing that he was bent on some strand of questionable pleasure, and intending to join him. The stealthy manner in which Clavering had entered the wood had excited his curiosity, and he had taken care to watch him without being seen. Levison was a spy by nature, but never had he dreamed that his spying would bring him such knowledge as this.

He understood now, understood the supposed deterioration in Tom Merry. It was not Tom Merry who was at St. Jim's, but his double.

It was all clear to Levison now.

He was almost frightened by his discovery. It placed Clavering in his power, but it made him a party to a lawless scheme, if he did not reveal his knowledge. Levison thought deeply as he made his way from the wood with great caution. The real Tom Merry he knew with the false Tom Merry he could get on very well. And to have the fellow under his thumb—a fellow who would soon be rich—Levison's eyes glinted at that thought. And then the thought of the risk came to chill him. Levison of the Fourth resolved to keep silent, for the present at least, and to think very deeply and very carefully before he acted.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Mesty Lowther's Last Word!

"WELL, bowled, Fatty!"

"Beava, Fergusson!"

Clavering smiled sulkily as he heard the shouts from the playing-field, as he came in at the school gate.

The junior match was going strong. Fatty Wynn of the New House was bowling in his best style. Gordon Goo's wicket had just gone down, to the delight of the St. Jim's crowd.

Tom Merry's double passed for a few moments to watch the play, and to look round in the crowd for Levison. Levison was not there, but he joined Mellish, who was leaning on the pavilion and watching bats while he watched the cricket.

There were two gloomy faces in the St. Jim's field—Masters' and Lowther's. The chance of the Shell were not enjoying the match.

They had set themselves off from Tom Merry and all his works, and they felt that they had been right to do so. But, somehow, on the cricket-field that afternoon, they could not help thinking of their old share.

They missed him sorely.

Tom Merry should have been in his place there, playing up for St. Jim's. And whose was he? Out with Levison, probably, at some backwashy occasion that might get him expelled from the school. It was impossible to feel and friendship for such a fellow as he had turned out to be, and yet, somehow, that sunny afternoon their hearts misgave them. They were thinking more of their old chum than of the Grammarian's beating, as a matter of fact, and once or twice they missed chances in the field, which made Kangaroo glare at them. Kangaroo was captaining the junior eleven in the place of Tom Merry.

Lowther caught sight of the captain of the Shell lounging by the pavilion, and chatting with Mellish. He had come to watch the cricket, then, at least. Was that a sign of returning grace?

But, as the thought passed through Lowther's mind the Shell fellow walked away with Mellish, turning his back on the cricket-ground. Lowther sighed.

"Look alive!" raved Kangaroo, as the ball from Frank Mack's bat shot past Lowther. "Go on to sleep, instead!"

And Lowther dismissed his old chum from his mind, and gave attention to the game.

He was glad, however, when the match was over.

The Grammarians were by a narrow margin, and they departed from St. Jim's in a mood of great satisfaction at having pulled off the first cricket match of the season.

The Saints were far from satisfied.

It was the loss of Tom Merry's steady batting and his influence over the team that had given the Grammarians that narrow margin of runs. They all felt that, Tom Merry had chosen to play the giddy goat instead of playing the game. The feelings of his one-time followers towards him were bitter enough. Never had his popularity been at a lower ebb.

"Seen Tom?" Lowther asked, joining Masters' a little later.

Masters shook his head.

"No. Do you want to speak to him, Mesty?"

Mesty Lowther coloured and hesitated.

"I—I've been thinking of it," he said, at last. "Look here, Masters, we've been Tom Merry's pals for a long time, and—and it's worth trying to save him from ruining himself. He seems to be asking for trouble. He used to be a decent chap enough."

"Used to," said Masters.

"But, he can't have changed utterly, and in a few days too. Don't it be, it was only last Tuesday he came with us to the Feathers to rug that old Clavering. He was his old self then. He seems to have changed relations with Clavering since then. Do you know what some of the fellows are saying—that those rotten tricks that were put down to his double were very likely done by Tom Merry himself after all, for he's doing the very same things now himself!"

"I've heard the chaps saying so," admitted Masters.

"It can't go on long. He'll get the sack. Why, he hasn't the sense of a baby. Levison and Cotts and those rotten know how to cover up their tracks, but Tom seems almost to want to be found out."

"I can't understand it."

"He's not very pleased to speak to now, I know," said Lowther awkwardly. "But—but it's worth while calling humble pig a bit to save an old pal from being kicked out of the school. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, with you, Mesty; not that I think it will do any good."

"Let's find him, anyway."

The chance of the Shell entered the School House. They learned that Tom Merry was in his study, and proceeded thither. The study door was half-open, and Mellish's voice could be heard.

"Not far now! You must be dotty to think that stuff, Tom Merry! It'll make you sick, for see thing, or, worse still, squiffy!"

Masters and Lowther exchanged a hopeless look, and slipped into the study. The captain of the Shell was seated at the table with a book before him. Mellish of the Fourth stood by the table, his face started and his sword.

"What's that?" said Lowther gruffly.

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"Hello! I thought you had done with this study!" exclaimed the captain of the Shell, with a sneering laugh.  
 "You'd better stop him, you chaps," said Meliss, who was evidently wroth. "He's actually going to booby whip you! He must be potty. Don't run away with the idea that I've led him into it. He's offered it to me, and I won't have any. I don't want to be socked, if he does."

And Meliss hurried out of the study. Evidently he did not consider Tom Merry's study a safe place, or Tom Merry a safe companion. And the Shell fellows realized how low their old chum had fallen, when the end of the Fourth avoided his company because it was too bad for him.

The junior at the table deliberately poured out the spirit into a glass. He seemed to take a curious pleasure in the horror and dismay in the faces of the two Shell fellows. Lowther closed the door quickly, and turned to him.

"Tom Merry—"  
 "Here's your health!" The junior raised the glass. Lowther struck it from his lips with a fierce hand.

"Crash!"  
 The glass smashed into a dozen pieces on the floor, and the liquor soaked into the carpet. Lowther fixed his eyes, blazing with anger and scorn, on the fellow he had once regarded as his best chum.

"You rotten-backyard!" he said, in measured tones.  
 "Mind your own business, confound you!"  
 "We came here to speak to you," said Monty Lowther bitterly. "To ask you if you wouldn't think better of it, and chuck up this kind of thing. We're willing to be friends again, if you are."

"Say the word, Tom, old fellow," said Manservant softly.  
 "Keep your friendship till I ask for it," was the sneering retort. "It will be long enough before I ask."  
 "You don't want it?"  
 "No, I don't."  
 "You want that filthy stuff, and the sock to follow?"  
 "That's my business."

Monty Lowther picked up the bottle from the table. The captain of the Shell made a dash at it and grasped it too.  
 "Give that to me!" he shouted. "It's mine!"  
 "Let go!" said Lowther, in a tone of concentrated rage and scorn. "Let go, or I'll knock you across the study."

"It's mine, you heard!"  
 "Let go!"  
 Lowther clenched his free hand. He was in such a rage that he was ready for anything, and if the captain of the Shell had shown anything of his old spirit, there would have been a fight in the study then. But he did not. He let go the bottle, snatching a curse, and backed away.  
 "Do as you like!" he said sulkily. "I can get more if I choose."

"You won't touch this, anyway."  
 There was a loud crash of breaking glass as Monty Lowther hurled the bottle, with all the force of his arm, into the grate. The liquor ran in a hissing flood over the warm coals.

"There, you cad! After this, don't be afraid that I'll interfere with you!" panted Lowther. "You can go to the dogs your own way, and welcome!"

He strode out of the study, and Manservant followed, without a glance behind. The captain of the Shell shrugged his shoulders, and kicked the door shut after them. In the passage, Manservant and Lowther exchanged one look.

"That's the finish!" said Lowther shortly. "The sooner he's socked the better. St. Jim's will be better off without a blackguard like that!"

Manservant nodded without speaking.  
 And in those very hours, in a lonely house upon Ladbroke Hill, the real Tom Merry was peering to and fro, with clenching hands and knitted brows.

For four days now he had been a prisoner—a helpless captive, seeing no one but the maddest man who brought him food and drink, and spoke hardly a word.

Not a word from the outside world had reached him. What was happening at St. Jim's, whether he was being searched for—or he knew nothing of it all.

Why he was a prisoner—what his fate was to be—it remained a mystery.

He was desperate, but he was helpless.  
 And as the darkness of another night descended upon the prisoner in the lonely house, something like despair crept

(Continued on page 57.)

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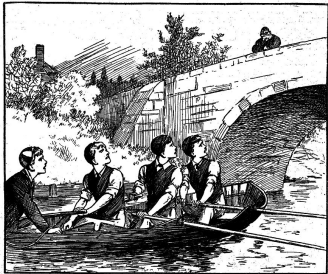


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into his breast. Would he never be found—never be rescued! But he drove the despairing thought away. If there was to be no rescue he would escape, and since more, weary but resolutely, Tom Merry of St. Jim's set his thoughts to that problem—to escape from the hands of the scoundrels who were holding him in hidden captivity.

#### CHAPTER 15. The Finish!

TWO more days had passed, and life at St. Jim's was more irksome than before to the unscrupulous young rascal who was playing the part of Tom Merry.

He had done his work only too well. He had alienated all Tom Merry's friends, one after another. He had disgusted every decent fellow in the House. He had gone so far on the downward path that he had earned off even "rotten" like Mellish, who avoided him now, fearful of being dragged into the ruin which the Shell fellow was evidently drawing upon himself.

For all the fellows knew that the end must come soon. It was no longer a secret of the Lower School. There had been whispers, rumors. The seniors knew it, also the prefects. Something had reached the Housemaster's ears, and Mr. Ballan looked very calmly and steadily upon the boy who had done him in his good books.

The incident of the cards had opened Mr. Liston's eyes, and his manner towards Tom Merry's double, was frosty.

Justices and seniors, prefects and masters, looked upon the Shell fellow with dislike and suspicion.

He was like an outcast in the House.

His work was done, and cunningly done, but he began

to feel the unpleasantness of it himself. He did not like being a pariah.

It was time to finish.

And on that Monday Reggie Clavering had resolved to finish. The plan he had concocted with Gerald Goring was ready to be carried out, and when that was done there could be no doubt about the result. The Head had forgiven him once, he would not, and could not, forgive him a second time.

Indeed, it was part of Clavering's plan to make the offence so serious that it would be impossible for the Head to pardon him.

Then he would be gone from St. Jim's, and in Tom Merry's room he would go to the prior's old home at Blackberry Heath, there to continue his vile scheme, and to turn Tom Merry's guardian against him as all others had been turned. In the long run, Tom Merry would be sorry for that ragging at the Feathers. Reggie Clavering promised himself that.

Kangaroo came in from cricket practice, and came up the Shell passage with his hat under his arm, whistling. He ceased to whistle as he caught a curious sound from Tom Merry's study.

It was the clink of a bottle on a glass, and the sound of a "screaming voice singing:

Clink—clink!

"Pour out the Rhine wine, let it f-d-dow, like a d-d-dog and b-b-bow-wow!"

The voice died away in echoes.

Kangaroo stood petrified.

"The fool!" he muttered. "The crazy, silly fool! He's simply asking for it!"

He hesitated a moment. Dugout was strong within him, but he thought of the scene when the reckless junior should be expelled—of old Miss Fawcett's sorrow and anguish—and he relented, and opened the door of the study.

The sight that met his gaze gave him a shock, although the Cornstalk junior's nerves were pretty strong.

A bottle of whisky was overturned upon the table, and the liquor was flowing from the table to the floor. A broken glass lay on the carpet. The room was foul with the fumes of the spirit. The captain of the Shell was holding on to the edge of the table dandy. He blinked stupidly at the Cornstalk.

"Hallo, ole fiver!" he stammered.

Kangaroo drew a deep, quick breath.

"Tom Merry! What have you been doing?"

The junior burst into a wild laugh.

"Keepin' it up!" he murmured thickly. "Have a drink, of chapsin. Have 'nother with me. What?"

"You siddy rotter!" exclaimed Kangaroo, seizing him by the shoulder. "Do you know what you've done! You're swally!"

The junior roared in his grasp.

"You mean alone!" he stammered. "You box' alone! Hands off! Where's that bottle?"

"Tom Merry!"

"You dare off! Whadder mean by shoving yourself in chap's study—what! You lemme 'nose!"

He staggered away from the Cornstalk, and reeled into the doorway, holding on to the doorpost to keep himself from falling. His face was flushed, and his eyes had a dull gleam. He had swallowed enough of the vile liquor to make it easy for him to set the part of drunkenness.

"Good heavens!" Kangaroo muttered, aghast. "He'll be sucked now—that's a cert! Tom Merry, you idiot, come in. Keep out of sight!"

He tried to cross the junior into the study.

"You lemme 'nose!"

"Hossener-Lowther!" called out Kangaroo, catching sight of the flames down the passage. "Come here, quick!"

They hurried up.

"He's siddy!" muttered Kangaroo hoarsely. "For goodness sake manage to keep him out of sight somehow."

Lowther hesitated a moment, but even yet the old friendship was not quite dead in his breast. He caught the junior by the arm.

"Tom—Tom, old man. Come in! Be quiet!"

Smack!

A clenched hand caught Lowther full in the face, and he staggered back with a cry of rage.

"Hands off!" muttered the wretched junior.

"Does'nt touch him, Lowther. He doesn't know what he's doing," muttered Mannox hoarsely. "What on earth's to be done! He must be got out of sight somehow."

But that was not so easy. A crowd was already gathering in the passage, to look on at the miserable sight, and there were exclamations of disgust and contempt on all sides, mingled with a cackle of laughter from Medish and Guss, and a few others. The news spread like wildfire, and the crowd increased every moment in numbers. There was a sudden alarm that a protest was coming.

"Drive him into the study, quick!" peated Lowther.

But it was too late!

Kiddare of the Sixth was striding through the crowd, his face stern, his eyes gleaming under his knarred brows.

The jigger made way for him; but even then Mannox and Lowther and Kangaroo and a few others formed a hedge round the captain of the Shell, with a faint hope of yet saving him.

"What's this?" rapped out Kiddare.

"It—it's nothing," stammered Lowther. "Tom Merry isn't quite well, and—"

"Let me see him!"

"It—it's nothing, and—"

"Stand aside!"

And as Lowther did not move, Kiddare shoved him angrily out of the way. Then he stood looking at the captain of the Shell.

The disgust and scorn in Kiddare's face were not pleasant to see.

"Come with me, Tom Merry!" he said quietly.

"I won't come! Go an' eat a-cake!"

Kiddare did not speak again, but he drew the junior away down the passage, through the crowd, that opened to make room. Straight to the Housemaster's study Kiddare dragged the dazed and reeling junior.

He knocked at the door, and Mr. Bailton's voice bade him enter.

The School House master started to his feet as he saw the writer and the junior.

"Kiddare, what is that? What—"

"I've brought Tom Merry to you, sir," said Kiddare.

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quietly. "You can see the state he is in. I thought you had better deal with it, sir."

"Good heavens!"

"I think it's been coming to this for some time, sir. This is only the climax."

"I fear so."

The junior paced dazedly at the Housemaster. Mr. Bailton pushed him to the armchair, and he sank down there in a listless way.

"Thank you, Kiddare! I will bring the Head to see him," said Mr. Bailton quietly. "Remain here with him till I return."

"Very well, sir."

The School House master quitted the study. Outside, in the passage, there was a hushed crowd of juniors. Mannox and Lowther were white and worn in their looks.

"It's the sack!" said Blake, as the Housemaster strode away, with rattling gait, in the direction of the Head's study. "I can't say I'm sorry!"

"I'm rather sorry," said Arthur Augustus, in a low voice, wearily polishing his eyeglass. "It's bound to see a decent chap come on the wicks like that!"

"He never was a decent chap!" growled Herriot. "A decent chap wouldn't turn out like that! Drunk! Pah!"

"Let him alone, anyway," muttered Lowther, with white lips. "He's going to be sacked—that's enough. Don't hit a chap when he's down!"

There was a hum.

"Here comes the Head!"

Dr. Holmes, stern and stately, came striding down the passage with the Housemaster.

The juniors crowded back. Never had they seen such an expression upon the Head's face before. Every vestige of kindness was gone; his features might have been moulded in iron. It needed only one look at the Head to know that there was no hope of mercy for the wretched culprit in the study.

The two masters passed into Mr. Bailton's study. Dr. Holmes stood for some moments staring regarding the half-conscious junior in the chair. Dugout, soon, burning, withering contempt was written in his face.

"Tom Merry, can you understand me?"

The junior stared at him stupidly without replying.

"Let him be taken to the dormitory," said the Head.

"Merry, tomorrow morning you will be flogged in public, and expelled from the school. You can be told that, Kiddare, when his mind is clear enough to comprehend. He does not seem to understand me!"

And the Head swept from the study.

All St. Jim's knew it within a quarter of an hour. In the School House and the New House it was discussed with bated breath.

Tom Merry was expelled!

On the morrow morning, a fogging before the assembled school, and a public expulsion. The sentence was terrible, but it was merited. And the junior upon whom that sentence had fallen lay sleeping like a log in the Shell dormitory, stared at by curious eyes that peered from time to time into the room.

And of all the fellows who discussed that tragic ending of Tom Merry's school career, only one knew the truth—Lorson of the Fourth. And Lorson was yet, at all events—kept his own counsel. He did not tell the St. Jim's juniors what they would have been overjoyed to hear—that the wretched boy in the Shell dormitory was not Tom Merry at all, but his double—his other self.

The plot for a fortune had succeeded. Tom Merry's double was to be driven forth on the morrow, disgraced, in Tom Merry's name, unless—the host-laid advance of mice and men "gang all a-gley," and there was still time!

THE END.

You cannot afford to miss the magnificent story entitled, "BROUGHT TO BOOK!" by Martin Clifford, which forms the sequel to the splendid story you have just read. On Sale Next Wednesday. Order your Copy in advance.

THE GEM LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "GRUCKLER," 12

Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Saturday. 1

the quality of the bowling. Grice hit more freely, but he paid the penalty for when he had scored 12, with 12 up, he was caught at once, and retired.

Mortimer came in, and he and Geoffrey played steadily for a quarter of an hour. By the end of that time Geoffrey was certain that he had nothing to fear, and he abandoned the colours by hitting the next ball he received out of the field, then a second was pulled to the leg boundary, and a third out brilliantly to the off. He revelled in the game, and an hour later a mighty cheer went up, for Belvidere, with one wicket down, had passed the Colchester total, and had won the match. Geoffrey and Mortimer continued to bat until the sun began to set.

Geoffrey was then bowled, purposely, for he had had enough of it, for 125. Mortimer left a few minutes later for a well-played 50, and Belvidere, declaring their innings, put their opponents in to bat again.

Colchester did needless things until stumps were down for the day; and, then, turning to Geoffrey, Grice said:

"Fancy, you've got to come home with me. You can telephone or write to your people saying where you are. They won't mind."

"I've asked 'em," Geoffrey answered. "I've got to go to London to look for rooms, and to find something to do. I've left home, and am thrown on my own resources."

"What!" said Grice. "And yet with all that on your mind you played as you did today for Belvidere? Here, I'm not going to lose sight of you! You're coming home with me. My dad must have a look at you. He's a good-natured sort of man. He may be able to do something for you. You're a gentleman, that's one great thing." Suddenly a thought dawned on him. "You're not the son of Major Foster of the London and County Building Society, who's just abandoned you, are you?"

Geoffrey flushed, but regarded his companion coolly.

"Yes," he said. "I am."

"Then that explains it!" cried Grice. "You've only just left Colchester. It was you who nearly saved the game against Headingham the other day. I might have known it. And they've sent you down all because of your father? It's a really shame, Foster. You've got to come home with me now. I'll bear of you as a friend. Got any change of tops with you, or your sleeping things?"

"They were going to be sent on to me to town," said Geoffrey, distressed.

"Never mind. I've got plenty to spare at home. My father is Richard Grice, of Grice & Mortimer, solicitors in the City. They are in want of a smart man like you. I dare say that he'll give you something to do until you can make up your mind that you intend to work at in the future. Hello! There's Mortimer nearly ready. Change into your trunks, Foster, and hurry up."

Geoffrey ceased to protest, and in a quarter of an hour he, Grice and Mortimer were walking towards Mr. Richard Grice's house at Barbican, for dinner.

By the strange accident of that cricket match in which Geoffrey played for Belvidere against Colchester, Geoffrey Foster got a start in life. Richard Grice the father of the

old Colchester boy who captained the Belvidere, was a shrewd, hard-headed man of the world. He knew well enough how to estimate Major Foster's misadventure from the City financial point of view, in which so many practices that were exempt were looked upon as almost legitimate business methods. If a heavy call had not been made upon the Building Society's funds owing to the publication of those paragraphs in the financial papers, which had sent panic-stricken investors to the offices of the company to withdraw their savings, Major Foster might have weathered the storm and become a rich man. Taking a fancy to Geoffrey, the solicitor did, he very willingly offered the lad a job as clerk at a salary of 25s. a week to start with, and Geoffrey, face to face with starvation, joyfully accepted.

#### At Grice & Mortimer's—The New Messenger—Patrick Mulready's Strange Behaviour.

Geoffrey Foster entered upon his duties in Messrs. Grice & Mortimer's offices in the City with a light heart. The salary was not a great one, but the boy did not mind. He had been taught the value of money by his father, who had always had to scrape and scurry in order to make both ends meet. Being about everything with that method that always distinguished him, Geoffrey obtained rooms in Whitechapel. In doing this he had a twofold reason, living in such a neighbourhood kept him out of the way of all his former acquaintances, a meeting with whom would have been deeply painful, and price cheap. Besides, it was within easy distance of his work.

Geoffrey was not staidly proud. He had no scruples about living in such a neighbourhood, where he found much to study, and even to admire; and he learned those to know and respect the Jews, amongst whom he had many friends in after life.

As a relief to the dull routine of carrying messages from Grice & Mortimer to their clients and to other solicitors, and the copying of legal documents, and the making out of boring double-line of expense copies of letters, affidavits, summonses, and the like, there were always the week-end matches with the Belvidere to cheer him up.

Throwing his whole heart and soul into the play, he soon made a name for himself which began to echo far beyond the playing field of the Club near Ditton, and even that one representative of the Surrey County Cricket Club went down to watch him bat, their conviction being that the boy might one day become worthy of his place in the county team.

Twice the boy wrote to Timothy to his mother, saying that he was well, but never giving his address, and twice he went down to Guildford, and walked about to his uncle's, where inquiries of the gatekeeper obtained for him the information that Mrs. Foster was quite well, and living quietly at the Hall.

His father's whereabouts was that the boy's chief worry. Major Foster had left England without giving one clue as to his destination, and after a while the large spaces in the newspapers which had been devoted to detailing the latest movements of the detectives who were tracking the major criminal and was, were retained and retained, until at length they ceased to mention the affair at all, and the London and County Building Society boards began to be forgotten.

One day towards the end of the cricket season, Mr. Grice sent for Geoffrey.

"Foster," he said, "owing to our rapidly-increasing business, I have obtained the services of a messenger, who has been kindly given over to me by Major Bangley Jelfcock. He will arrive on Monday morning. From that time you will please devote yourself to the clerical part of the business entirely. He will occupy the extra office with you, and will be under your superintendence. Do your best to get on well together, and let me know whether you think him entirely suitable for the work. He comes with a very strong recommendation, so that I don't think there is much to fear."

Geoffrey withdrew, and with the Saturday afternoon match at Ditton impending, ceased to think of the messenger. But on Monday morning he had scarcely entered the office and hung up his hat, when the door opened and a man entered.

As he closed the door after him, Geoffrey glanced keenly at him and started as he recognized Patrick Mulready!

The man and the boy stood regarding each other silently for a moment.

"This is Messrs. Grice & Mortimer's, isn't it?" asked the ex-soldier at last awkwardly, shifting his feet restlessly.

"Yes," answered Geoffrey, recalling all the details of their last meeting at Elworth.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 224.

A BARGAIN! New. Large, Complete School Yell. of Ten Seres & Co. By HAZEL CLIFFORD.



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**Rudge-Whitworth**  
Britain's Best Bicycle

"I'm the new messenger. I was sent here by Major Jeffcock."

"That's all right," said Geoffrey, astonished. "I was expecting you. You are to have that table and chair by the window. I will give you instructions as to what you are to do, which I will receive in my turn from the officials."

There was a pause. Patrick Malreedy bit his finger-nails. He had evidently something on his mind. At last he stopped close to Geoffrey, ignoring the office-boy, who sat wringing his legs on a stool near by, entirely.

"He's got clear away," said the Irishman. "I'm glad of it. I wouldn't have had him take the £1,000. For if he were I'd have to stand by my old major, and some who wish his hair would have to suffer."

"What do you mean?" asked Geoffrey, amazed at the man's answer.

"Nothing," said the new messenger, retiring into his cautious reserve again. "Don't you take any notice of me; only I can't forget old times. But then, what's the use of me talking? I'm a messenger for Grace & Mortimer, and I'm going to serve under Major Foster's son. That's good enough for Patrick Malreedy, a no-or-do-well, who hasn't got a spark of honour and self-respect left."

Geoffrey gazed at the man in wonder. He began to think he must be either mad or drunk; but further speculation was cut short by the entrance of Mr. Gison. He gave Malreedy a keen glance.

"Are you the man from Major Baugley Jeffcock?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," cried the ex-trooper, bringing his hand instinctively to the salute.

"Oh, very well. I think you'll do. Mr. Foster will give you your instructions. There will be plenty for you to do, and hope of advancement should you turn out satisfactory."

With that the salutar entered his office, and soon the busy establishment was in the throes of the daily routine.

Geoffrey was much too busy to bestow any more attention on the new messenger that day, only speaking to him to give him his instructions, and the Irishman was out of doors raising bees and there with his messages until evening.

Then after Mr. Grace had departed, Patrick Malreedy came in from his last errand. He had walked towards Geoffrey, but he noticed that his legs were shuddering, his eyes dim, and as he gave the details of his journey, Geoffrey noticed that his speech was thick.

The man had been drinking.

"Malreedy," said Geoffrey in disgust, "you have been drinking."

The man stared. At first it seemed as if he was about to deny it, but instead he broke down into a fit of drunken sobbing.

"I know it, Mr. Foster," he said—"I know it. It was meeting you made me take to drink. I've been a bad lot to my life. Do you think with all my ability I would have remained a cooper if I'd gone straight? I couldn't go straight. It isn't in me to go straight. I've tried, and tried, and over again. Major Foster nearly saved me once. He was the only man who ever had a good influence over me. And what did I do? Saved him as sorry a trick as the rest. But I may-stay some day. I can't always go on like this, drinking myself into endless fits of shame and remorse. Don't say anything about it, sir. I did it because I couldn't help thinking of you, your father's son, a clerk in a school's office, when you ought to have your commissions and be serving your King. You were cut out for the Army, Mr. Foster. You're like what your father must have been at your age. I'm your devoted friend through thick and thin, if you'll let me be. I'd lay down my life for you, I would! It's no boast. I'm an obstinately obstinate, but I have a good heart, I have. I'm Irish through and through. Don't despise me, sir! Say you don't despise me, and keep it by you."

And he pointed towards the private office. Geoffrey was ashamed of the man. Malreedy would have wondered on for an hour or more if he had let him.

"That will do," said the boy. "I shall say nothing to Mr. Gison, only don't let this occur again, Malreedy, or I shall be compelled in my employer's interest to tell him the truth. Do you understand?"

The messenger bowed at him.

"Yes, sir," he murmured humbly.

"Very good; you can go. I will see that the office is safely locked up to-night."

Patrick Malreedy turned and left the office without another word, and a moment later Geoffrey heard his uncertain footsteps clattering down the concrete stairs towards the street.

(This Grand Serial will be continued in next Wednesday's issue.)

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 355.

"FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE," is the principal character in one of

## "THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Columns sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent a required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each letter two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not receiving three free coupons will be cheerfully supplied.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertiser direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

Leslie H. Christie, General Delivery, Station B, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England (Nottingham preferred), interested in postcards.

H. Charlton, c/o W. Jolin, Derrick Street, Kew, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Scotland, age 15-16.

Miss Fanny Ulster, 52, Barry's Street, Oshington, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in England or Canada, age 14-15.

Douglas Matthews, P.O. Box 150, Post Elizabeth, 599th Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England or Australia, age 16-17.

D. J. Gill, c/o W. N. Laver, Alexander Street, Ft. Pitt, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in the British Isles.

Edwin J. Gosden, 125, Eagle Avenue, Bassford, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in the United Kingdom, age 16-17.

Cecil Madler, The Residence, Malton, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girls living in Australia, age 15.

Harold B. Sheeman, P.O. Box 397, Cape Town, S. Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 16-18.

Miss Maggie Field, Manon, near Pinecove, Natal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers, age 15-17.

R. F. Grinley, H.M.S. Tingari, Edgecliff, Rose Bay, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers in the British Isles, age 15-17.

Jack Miles, 255, George Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a Boy Scout reader living in the United States or England, age 15-14.

Miss Madge Holbrook, 133, Pitt Street, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with Public School boys from all parts, age 15-17.

Miss Hannah Mackay, 363, Chapel Street, S. Jara, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in England, age 16-18.

Harry Higgin, General Delivery, Sioux City, Iowa, United States of America, wishes to correspond with a girl, age 15-16.

A. Rigney, 425, Prince Street, Dunedin, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

Bert A. Johnson, 30, Forrest Street, Boulder, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl in Lancashire, age 15.

N. K. Glance, 71, Pines Street, Bendara City, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps or postcards.

Box F. Jefferson, 245, Bridport Street, Albert Park, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards, age 17-20.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

# HOW TO GET ON IN CANADA!

BY A SUCCESSFUL EMIGRANT.



OFF TO CANADA

THIS WEEK:

Work in the West.  
The "Chain Gang."  
How to Get a Job.



A HOMESTEAD IN ALBERTA

During a long stay in the West I have only known two or three cases of young Britishers returning home admitted failures. These and the number of others who have returned to the Homeland to tell their friends what a "rotten country" Canada is, because they personally were unable to secure employment, have the basestest contempt of all people with a thorough knowledge of the West. Unless their failure was due to physical inability—in which case they ought never to have tried Canada at all—the contempt is well deserved.

Work is plentiful in the early summer in all the Western provinces, but it is often of the kind that calls for good stamina and tough muscles on the part of those who would perform it. I have already said that when seeking work in Canada you should not be afraid to tackle anything. And this is a statement worth repeating! It has been the keynote to the success of many of the foremost citizens in Canada to-day, and it should have a foremost place in the mind of any young British lad desiring of doing well in the New Country.

An English bricklayer that I know in Vancouver two or three years ago made thirty dollars (\$30) a week on an average for the first few months he was in the city. His wages were fifty cents (50c) an hour, and he put in a lot of overtime that summer. When, however, the building trade became slack, this man lost his good job. His success during the summer had so turned his head that he would not consider any other employment at lower wages. The consequence was that he soon ran through the money he had saved, and then was arrested for being without means of support, and had to work in the "chain gang."

The "chain gang" was a municipal institution in many Western cities, and it consisted of able-bodied men who were found to have no money and no employment. These vagrants were sentenced for a period to do municipal work, such as road mending, and were paid at the rate of two dollars (\$2.44) a day, for all labour performed. If the weather on any particular day was unfit for the work in hand, they were kept under lock and key, and no wages were paid for that day.

This "chain gang" system, which still exists in some places, does good work in keeping down unemployment and crime. Short shrift is given the physically fit "down-and-out" in the West. There are hundreds of tramps—they are called hobo's in Canada—always to be found, who steal rides on the "freight" trains, and furnish some of the material of which "chain gangs" are made up. Some municipal authorities adopt the expedient of notifying a down-and-out that he had better clear out of the town within a few hours, and this policy has usually taken.

In contradistinction to the case I have quoted of the bricklayer, I may say that of another Englishman I knew at the same period. This young fellow was of a good family, and had been educated at Cambridge University. A roving disposition had brought him to the West, and he soon went "on the rocks," in other words, he became "broke." He certainly lost what money he had through his own folly, but this realisation acted as a spur to him to "look up." He sought and obtained employment in a cheap restaurant in a low quarter of Vancouver, at the non-look-out remuneration of ten dollars (\$10) a week. For this wage he had to work fourteen hours a day, washing up dishes! But he stuck to it! And it wasn't long before he had saved enough to start looking for a better job. He obtained

one, and has gone from one position to another, until to-day he is comparatively wealthy—and all through his own efforts.

It has been well said that in Britain a dissatisfied man is afraid to throw up his position; in Canada he cannot get another; whilst in Canada, a man is afraid to hold on to a job for long, lest he miss a better one. But before thinking about "trading" a job, the thing is to get one, and to get one quickly often requires simple self-confidence. Without this you are tremendously handicapped anywhere, and especially so in a pushing, go-ahead country like the West.

Supposing that in the city in which you are looking for work is a firm of "painters and decorators" whom you know have a few vacancies for brush hands. Although the only work in the painting line you ever did in your life was to whitewash the old fire-house at home, you decide to apply for a job. You interview the foreman, a Yankee probably, and state your needs.

"Ken you paint?" he asks, eyeing you keenly.

"Well, you see, I haven't—exactly done much painting before, but I believe I could manage all right, sir."

"Only want 'brusher' men on this job!" fires out the foreman as he departs leaving you scratching your head.

That's not the way to go about securing a job in Canada, my chum! Oh, no! When he asked you whether you could paint, you should have replied: "You bet I can!" with all the enthusiasm of your nature. Then you would have been given a trial, and in all probability have proved perfectly satisfactory. The next thing to having a firm belief in your own capabilities is to let people know you have. Talk your longer way in Canada than in most countries.

The Canadian newspapers are not really good mediums through which to secure employment. The majority of them carry few advertisements in the "Male Help Wanted" columns, and retain old ones, that only cause inconvenience and disappointment to those who answer them.

In all cities there are "Employment Bureaus," but great care should be taken in dealing with these, as there are many "sharks" connected with them. The lowest fee they charge is one dollar (\$1.00). Some agents will send out a dozen men to a place where there is one vacancy, and when that place happens to be about ten miles out of town, there it apt to be some bad feeding on the part of the "clever" rejected ones. Don't forget, though, in dealing with employment agencies, that if the position you are sent to is filled, and you get a signed statement to that effect, the law entitles you to receive your dollar back.

If you apply each morning at any large place that employs unskilled labour, you can hardly fail to secure a position within a few days, as at most places men are constantly leaving. There is a restless spirit among workers in the West. Also, if when applying for a job you casually mention that it is your intention to stay in town for a few years at least, you will probably be received with open arms. Often the greatest trouble of employers during summer is to keep their workers, so they welcome a likely strayer.

In next week's article, among other things, I will have something to say about work on the farms, and the Canadian Government grant of 300 acres of land by which so many Britishers have been induced to emigrate.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 224A

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The Gem & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY—

"BROUGHT TO BOOK!"

R

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



# THIS WEEK'S CHAT

WHOM TO WRITE TO  
**EDITOR,**  
**"THE GEM" LIBRARY**  
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For Next Wednesday.

**"BROUGHT TO BOOK!"**  
 By Martin Gifford.

In his grand book, complete tale of Tom Merry of St. Jim's and his double Haggie Clavering, the great plot against the base of the Shell is carried on relentlessly. Its very daring denouement all suspense, but there is one at St. Jim's who knows the truth, who is in possession of all the details of the amazing imposture. Leiston, holding the whip-hand, arrests a priest, a thorn in the side of the alien Tom Merry. Besides this, the book which the impostor has copied out for himself, proves to be anything but a bed of roses. Deputed, cut, dashed, and yanked, the alien Tom Merry kills anything but a pleasant time, but he suffers everything for the cause he bears his death.

But when the caged bird gets free pastures move with dramatic suddenness, and the real adventure ends swiftly.

**"BROUGHT TO BOOK!"**

## WHAT IS YOUR AMBITION?

This week's issue of our grand companion paper, "The Magnet" Library, contains a splendid new pictorial feature entitled "Ambitions." The pictures in the current issue of our companion paper are the first of a splendid new series, in which the ambitions of "Meditations" of varying degrees and classes will be illustrated by the special artists of the "Magnet" Library. This feature is bound to be a highly popular one, and all ambitious boys and girls should study it carefully.

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. R. McGilchrist (Australia).—Thanks for your most interesting letter. Your two advertisements will appear in the "Gem" News Correspondence Exchange in due course.

H. Walsh (Newcastle-on-Tyne).—Have not heard of an existing "Gem" League in Newcastle.

W. Collingridge (York).—The issue of the "Gem" Library you are for is out of print, and therefore, unavailable from the office.

S. C. L. (Manchester).—You can purchase copies of "Mirrored Mirrors" stories from G. Norman, of Southampton Street, London, W.C. There are no indexes of the "Gem" Library published.

A. Arning (W.G.).—To become a jockey your best bet would be to become a stable-lad first. On this capacity you will learn the ropes of horsemanship. You may acquire some followers to get you into a first-class racing stable.

Dot (Hills of Mars).—Smoking at all times is a very bad and unnecessary habit for girls. Give it up altogether, my dear reader. You will benefit by it.

T. Hall (Bristol).—Thanks for your letter and suggestion. I am afraid other readers would not care for it. "Photograph" (Aberdeen).—A. W. Ginnery, of High Holborn, W.C., will supply you with photographic material at moderate prices.

Miss Williams (Australia).—In addition to the little story every week in the "Magnet" Library, Mr. Frank Hilderson contributes a complete tale of Harry Wharrier & Co. Trampers & Co., of Courtfield, in "Chronicle," our latest halfpenny companion paper.

## THE MUNICIPAL SERVICE AS A PROFESSION

Municipal Government, to an even greater extent than National Government, is having its purposes widened, and duties increased. The Municipal Service can never have a high prize as the Civil Service by offer to young men of great talent and exceptional education, but to those of an average abilities and requirements they are certainly not inferior. In the present time—considering the development in local government—they are not only superior. The road to the Civil Service is well known, consequently it is crowded, whilst that to the Municipal Service is not yet so notorious.

### London County Council.

It can hardly be said indeed that there is, as yet, a straight avenue to municipal employment. The London County Council has instituted a system of examination candidates wishing to enter its service, but so far the process has not been followed, even by the larger municipalities throughout the country. Their staffs are recruited from time to time by public advertisement of vacancies, the candidates being chosen on a comparison of their educational qualifications. In regard to some of the smaller authorities there is not always the degree of exactness, little or no publicity being given in vacancies which, it is to be feared, are occasionally filled by the "word-of-mouth" process on the part of members or officials.

The L.C.C. examination, however, is of great benefit not only because it provides the passport to the municipal staff in the highest degree, but because it is said to embody the standard of knowledge and character required from a youth who hopes to make a career for himself as a Local Government official. Such a youth might, worse than prepare himself for the examination, even though he has no definite prospect or desire of obtaining London employment. The subjects of the examination are of a value everywhere, and a "pass" is a diploma that would be honoured on seeking admission to the municipal service of any of the great towns.

The L.C.C. examination is divided into two parts—literary and competitive. It comprises English, History, Geography, Euclid (Books 1 to 4, and 5) on the former, and Geometry, Algebra (up to and including the higher theorem), Arithmetic (including decimals and percentages) and Euclid Trigonometry. Marks are also awarded for handwriting and orthography from the papers on composition, history, and geography, and special arrangements are made to the subjects of English and arithmetic. It is to be noted, however, that candidates who have matriculated at an University, or hold any equivalent educational certificate, are exempted from this preliminary examination. For the competitive part of the examination, which is dictated both orally and in writing, the candidates have an hour-and-a-half before them, but only five need to be selected, and with one exception the choice is in the hands of the examining body. General knowledge is obligatory on all candidates, but for the rest he can choose between any of the modern languages—Latin, occasional outline of the local government elements of English law, modern physics, and chemistry, mathematics, book-keeping, accounts, etc.

"The Municipal Service as a Profession." Special article next week.