


DO YOU GET HALF-A-CROWN THIS WEEK? (See Page 2)
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The **GEM** 1

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"AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!"
A Grand Story of St. Jim's,

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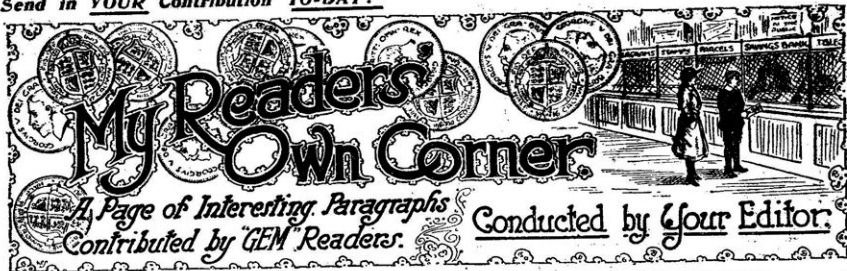
"KANGAROO'S MENAGERIE!"
A Splendid Tale of St. Katie's.



THE TRAPPED ELEVEN!

HARRY NOBLE SAVES THE GAME!

(A Rousing Incident in this week's Splendid Complete School Story.)

Send in **YOUR** Contribution **TO-DAY!**

A Postal Order for Half-a-crown will be remitted to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

A Puzzle.

My first is in Fish, but not in Merry;
My second's in Rake, and also in Cherry;
My third's in Wingate, not in Dutton;
My fourth's in Bunter, Greyfrains
glutton;
My next's in Coker, not in Brooke;
My sixth's in Levison, also in Crooke.
Think over this with studious care,
And the name of a country you'll surely
find there.
(Solution, France.)
A. E. Bramwell, 41, Rupert Street,
Nechells, Birmingham.

A Letter from Lucknow.

"My sister Eveline and I are two of your girl readers in India. But owing to the war we have not been able to get the GEM and 'Magnet' Libraries. We have hunted through the whole of Lucknow, but with no success. So we have saved up a lot of our pocket-money, and will be sending for about a pound's-worth of books. I do hope you will be able to send them. These books we will circulate among our friends. I try to follow the example of such characters as Tom Merry and Bob Cherry, but sometimes I forget about them. I think it would be more helpful to girls if they were to read such books as these instead of the stuffy books written for girls that only seem to put a lot of sentimental rot into their heads.—Yours gratefully, Mina Hanvey."—Miss Mina Hanvey, 14, The Mall, Lucknow, Indii."

The Lobster.

The lobster dreads thunder. When the peals are very loud numbers of them drop their claws and swim away for deeper water. Any great fright may also induce them to drop their claws. But new ones begin to grow at once, and in a very short time these are as large as the old ones. The lobster often drops its shell. It then hides until the new shell is hard enough to protect it.—Ronald Youngman, The Willows, Ashington, Sussex.

The Dog and the Pastries.

There was a dog once named Tiger who went errands to the baker's with Frank, his master. The dog grew so clever, and understood so well what was

wanted, that he was allowed to do the errands by himself. He took a note and the basket, and the baker knew the rest. One day, as Tiger was going home with a basket of tarts, he met another dog, and the two went off together. The second dog sniffed, and helped himself to a tart. Tiger sprang at the thief. The noise brought more dogs, and they all started to eat the contents of the basket. Tiger looked on in dismay. At last he thought that perhaps he had more right to eat his master's tarts than the others, so joined in and ate the rest.—Jack Collings, Mt. Kororoit, Melton, Victoria, Australia.

An Afternoon with a Press Photographer.

In the football season the Press photographer has a busy time. He is seen kneeling at the side of the goal, about a yard or so back from the line. He kneels so as not to obstruct the view. He has a collapsible, focal-plane type camera, with a shutter which thinks nothing of taking an express train. There are big lenses working at a large aperture for the darkest days. The shutter clicks at the crucial times in the game. After the match the photographer hastens off to his dark-room for development. He prints while the plates are wet, having soaked his paper so as to prevent it sticking to the negative. A quarter of an hour's washing is followed by hardening and heat-drying. Then off goes the photographer with his pictures to the newspaper office. The camera-man gets wildly cheered when the ball hits him or his camera.—Peter K. McLaren, 5, Campbell's Buildings, St. Catherine's Road, Perth.

A Curious Epitaph.

Beneath this pile of rustic stones
Lies the body of Mary Jones.
Her name was Smith—it was not Jones;
But Jones was put to rhyme with Jones.
Tom Bond, 47, Federation Street,
Barnoldswick, near Colne, Lancs.

A Visit to a Printing Office.

About the year 1480 Caxton introduced printing to this country. When visiting a printing office one first of all enters the case-room. Here men and women are seen working at the cases,

which are divided up into compartments containing letters. Each worker has a sheet of the manuscript to be printed in front of him, and occasionally glances at it as he rapidly sets up the type. These are placed in such a manner that they can only be read if held in front of a mirror. When the last letter has been set up the type is taken to a hand-press, and an impression is taken. This is the proof, and is for correction. After the errors have been corrected the type is arranged into pages. Then a mould is made, and this mould is filled with molten metal. Soon this becomes cold, leaving a plate with all the type in one solid piece. The plates are taken to the printing-room and placed in the machine. In the case of coloured pictures several impressions have to be made, as only one coloured ink can be used at a time.—Harold Harris, 120, Bowman Street, Crosshills, Glasgow.

Tom Merry and Co.

"Dear Mr. Editor,—Just a line to you know that all my family, including myself, consider 'The Schoolboy Castaways' is the best story of Tom Merry & Co. and St. Jim's that we have had for many a long day—year, in fact. I have been a reader of the GEM since No. 116, and I always take it, and always shall. My two favourites are Tom Merry and Gussy. An Old GEM Reader."—R. G. Page, 16, Alfred Road, Gravesend.

Photography.

Photography is a fascinating pastime; it is also educational. Whilst on holidays many good snaps can be taken. Developing is really easy enough. The best camera to buy is a Brownie. It is a day-light-loading, film camera, and, besides being cheap, it is exceptionally easy to use. On a bright summer's day a lever has only to be pressed to make the exposure. On dull days, or when indoors, time exposures must be made. When the film has been exposed it is developed and fixed in a dark-room by holding it in a loop and passing it through the solutions. The prints can be made in daylight.—E. P. Roney, 15, Garloch Road, Cambervell, S.E. 5.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."



AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Decidedly Not Cricket!

"HA, ha, ha!"
Crooke of the Shell thought it was a priceless joke. And so did Mellish of the Fourth. And their laughter echoed along the Shell passage at St. Jim's. Afternoon lessons were over, and Crooke and Mellish had just called on Aubrey Racke. They intended to ask Racke to accompany them to a secluded retreat in Wayland Wood, where the young rascals might enjoy a quiet smoke without fear of being pounced upon by the authorities.

To the amazement and amusement of Crooke and Mellish, they found Aubrey Racke in the act of changing into flannels.

It was so unusual for Racke to don flannels—since he was anything but a cricketer—that Crooke and Mellish chuckled explosively, and finally burst into a peal of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Racke gave a final twist to the highly-coloured necktie in his cricket shirt; then he spun round rather abruptly.

"What's the joke?" he demanded.
"You are!" chuckled Crooke.
"It's a novelty, and no mistake, to see you in flannels!" said Mellish. "Anybody would think you were going to play cricket!"

"I am!" said Racke.
"What!"
Crooke and Mellish were not laughing now. They blinked at Aubrey Racke in stupefied amazement.

"You—you—What did you say?" gasped Crooke.
"Gettin' deaf in your old age? I said I was goin' to play cricket."

"Oh, come off!" said Mellish.
"You're rotting!"
"On the contrary," said Racke, "I'm dead serious!"

"You—you're going to play cricket?" howled Crooke. "Why, you don't know a wicket from a maiden over!"

"My dear-fellow," said Racke, keeping his temper with some difficulty, "just because I haven't displayed my ability in the past it doesn't follow that I'm a dud. I'd undertake to knock spots off you at the game, anyway!"

"But—but you said only yesterday that you'd made up your mind not to handle a cricket-bat all through the season!" protested Mellish.

Racke grinned at himself in the looking-glass, and proceeded to brush his hair.

"I've changed my mind since yesterday," he said.

"Why?"
"The fact is," said Racke, brushing his hair straight back over his head, without forming a parting, "I had a letter from my pater this mornin'."

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Crooke.

"Everythin', dear boy. The pater's comin' down to see me on Saturday—the day of the Greyfriars match—an' in his letter he expresses the hope that I'm makin' a name for myself on the playin'-fields."

"Oh!"
"Of course, I don't want the pater to think I'm slackin', an' foolin' away the golden hours of youth. I want him to think that I'm coverin' myself with glory, an' all that sort of thing. Therefore I'm goin' to take part in the practice this afternoon, in the hope that Tom Merry will give me a place in the eleven."

Crooke gave a chuckle.
"Tom Merry's likely to do that—I don't think!" he said.

"Why, man, you haven't a dog's chance of getting into the team!" said Mellish.

"I've as good a chance as anybody," said Racke. "Merry's bound to be surprised by my form—"

"Yes, he'll be surprised all right—but not in the way you mean!" chuckled Crooke.

"Look here—"
"Even supposing you do get a place in the team—and that can only happen by a miracle—what do you expect to gain by it?"

"A substantial tip from the pater, of course! After he's seen me make the winnin' hit against Greyfriars, he'll slap me on the back an' say, 'Aubrey, my boy, you're a buddin' Jack Hobbs! Your display was perfect, by gad! Kindly accept this tenner!' But if, on the other hand, I don't play in the eleven, I might not get a tip at all. Savvy?"

Crooke and Mellish "savvied" all right. But they did not look best pleased at the prospect of losing Aubrey Racke's company for the next hour or two. They had been looking forward to that excursion to Wayland Wood; and without Racke the proceedings would fall flat.

After making a few more rapid passes with the hairbrush, Racke strolled out of the study. He was a very vain youth—scrupulously careful as to his personal appearance—and his immaculate attire rivalled that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Comin' along?" he called to Crooke and Mellish, from the passage.

"No jolly fear!" growled Crooke.
"We know better than to make champion asses of ourselves!" said Mellish.
For a moment Racke hesitated, and it seemed quite on the cards that a quarrel would ensue. But the ead of the Shell thought better of it, and he strolled away in the direction of the cricket-ground.

The nets were up, and Tom Merry & Co. were at practice.

The Greyfriars match was the most important of the season. Even with ground advantage, St. Jim's would have to go all out to win. Harry Wkarton & Co. were foemen worthy of their steel; and, realising this, Tom Merry was putting every ounce of energy into the task of keeping his men up to the mark.

The captain of the Shell had not yet drawn up the list of players; but there were at least nine "certainties."

Tom Merry would skipper the side, as a matter of course. And Talbot, Monty Lowther, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were certain of places.

Of the New House fellows, Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Dick Redfern were all sure starters. It was rather a puzzle as to how the remaining two places should be filled.

Manners was well in the running, and so were Dick Brooke, Clive, Lovison, and Harry Noble, the Australian junior. But of these five three were destined to be disappointed.

One of the five—Dick Brooke—was batting now. And he was in excellent form. He despatched two successive deliveries of Fatty Wynn's to the railings; and the next ball he hit—a full toss—found a billet in Aubrey Racke's chest.

Racke staggered back with a yell as the cricket-ball struck him.

"Yarooooooh!"
"Good shot, Brooke!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Bet you a dish of doughnuts you don't do it again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bowl up, Fatty!" said Dick Brooke.

But Fatty was engaged in staring at Racke.

"He—he's in flannels!" he gasped. "Surely he's not going to play cricket?"

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"Great Scott, no!" said Figgins. "Racke's simply wearing flannels because they happen to suit his style of beauty."

"Plays he's playing poker with Knox of the Sixth?" suggested Monty Lowther. "It's quite the thing, nowadays to change into flannels for poker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I must say that Wacke looks very stwinkin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Almost as stwinkin' as myself, in fact!"
"Go hon!"

Aubrey Racke, having recovered from Dick Brooke's unintentional onslaught, lounged up to Tom Merry.

"Any objection to my joining in, Merry?" he asked, with unusual politeness.

"Not at all!" said the captain of the Shell, in surprise. "Have you decided to be a better slacker?"

Racke nodded.
"I'm not half a bad cricketer," he said modestly, "and I'll show you fellows in a few minutes what I can do."

"You're certainly hot stuff at fielding the ball—with your chest!" said Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Racke scowled, and took up his position behind the bowlers.

A moment later Dick Brooke's middle-stump was uprooted by a swerving ball from Fatty Wynn.

Brooke held out his bat invitingly.
"Who's next?" he asked.

"Go ahead, Racke!" said Tom Merry. The end of the Shell divested himself of his gaudily-coloured blazer and took Dick Brooke's place at the wicket. With a professional air he patted the turf in front of him, and then he prepared to receive Fatty Wynn's next ball. When it came it took the leg-stump with it.

"How's that?"
"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Racke replaced the fallen stump, with a snarl of annoyance.

"I wasn't ready!" he protested.
"All serene!" said Fatty Wynn, with a chuckle. "Are you ready this time?"

"Yes!"
"You're quite sure?"
"Yes—hang you!"
"Here goes, then!"

And Fatty Wynn sent down another ball, deadlier than its predecessor.

Racke swiped blindly at the ball, and, like most batsmen who swipe blindly, he missed it completely. There was an ominous crash behind him, and when he looked round he saw that his wicket was completely wrecked.

"Dash it!" he muttered.
"What's the excuse this time, Racke?" inquired Fatty Wynn.

"The sun was in my eyes!" growled Racke.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke's statement was absurd on the face of it, for the sun was not visible.

"Out you come, Racke!" said Jack Blake.
"Oh, give him another chance!" said Tom Merry.

Once again Racke took his guard. He was determined not to be bowled three times in succession. And he wasn't.

More by accident than design he managed to hit the ball; and Harry Noble, diving low, brought off a neat catch.

"Fluke!" said Racke savagely. Kaugerco smiled.

"The hit might have been," he said, "but there was no fluke about the catch."

"Your turn to bat, Reddy!" said Tom Merry.
Racke sullenly handed the bat to Dick

Redfern and joined the group of fieldsmen.

"Afraid you're pretty hopeless as a cricketer, Racke," said Tom Merry candidly.

"Bowling's my strong point," explained Racke.

"Is it? Then you can try your luck with Redfern."

Bitterly did Racke regret having laid claim to being a bowler. He spent a most unpleasant quarter of an hour.

Dick Redfern was a cricketer whose aim in life seemed to be to despatch the ball to the farthest limits of the horizon. He punished Racke's bowling unmercifully. Time after time he sent the ball careering to the railings.

Racke realised that he was cutting a very sorry figure. He could do absolutely nothing with Redfern.

The New House junior was irresistible. His hits were Jessojian.

Racke paused at length, pumping in breath. The aspiration was streaming down his sorrow face.

"I've had enough!" he muttered.
And he was in the act of walking away when Tom Merry hailed him.

"No, you don't!" said the captain of the Shell. "You've had your turn with the bat and ball, and now you can do a bit of fielding."

"Hear, hear!"
Racke had no alternative but to remain on the field. For upwards of an hour he was kept busily employed in leather-hunting. Several catches came his way, but on each occasion he bungled the ball badly.

"Poor old Racke!" said Monty Lowther, when practice was over. "He'd never make a cricketer, not in a thousand giddy years!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"He reminds me of those two pictures," said Figgins. "The Hope of His Side, and 'Out First Ball'!"

With feelings too deep for words Aubrey Racke strode away. And his cup of chagrin was filled to overflowing when he caught sight of Crooke and Mellish, and heard their chuckling laughter.

"I should advise you to chuck cricket, old man," said Crooke, "and take up the gentle but exciting pastime of shore-ha-penny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish.
With burning cheeks and gleaming eyes Racke passed on into the building. And his hopes of impressing his father with his cricketing ability had sunk to zero.

CHAPTER 2.

A Crushing Disappointment!

"BROOKE'S the man!" said Monty Lowther.

"Rats!" was Manners' curt comment. "Brooke's not bad, but he's not a patch on Clive and Kangaroo!"

A rather heated argument was taking place in Tom Merry's study after tea.

The captain of the Shell had a list of players on the table in front of him.

Ten names were down, and the argument centred upon the eleventh place. After careful consideration Tom Merry had allotted the tenth place to Manners. He had not taken this step because Manners was his chum—favouritism was foreign to Tom Merry's nature—but because he was genuinely convinced that Manners, on current form, was worth a place in the side.

But the eleventh place was yet to be filled, and Tom Merry was in a dilemma.

Monty Lowther was chanting the praises of Brooke, and Manners was divided between Sidney Clive and Harry Noble.

Tom Merry himself had a sneaking regard for Levison, who had bucked up wonderfully of late.

"If you leave Brooke out, Tommy," said Monty Lowther, "you'll regret it to the end of your days! At practice this afternoon Brooke showed up better than anybody, barring Reddy."

"Yes, I know," said Tom Merry, with a worried frown. "But Levison—"

"Levison's not bad, but he hasn't got what they call the 'big match' temperament. He's inclined to be a little bit flurried in a crisis. But Brooke's as cool as a cucumber. If he's the last man in, and the game's hanging in the balance, he can generally manage to win through."

Monty Lowther's argument carried a lot of weight with Tom Merry.

As a rule, Lowther spoke jestingly; but he was not jesting now.

Manners argued strongly in favour of Clive and Noble. But Tom Merry, after carefully weighing in his mind the merits of the respective candidates, wrote down the name of Dick Brooke.

At that moment a knock sounded on the door of the study.

"Come in, fathhead!" sang out Monty Lowther.

The "fathhead" proved to be Aubrey Racke.

"I say, Merry, I want to know—"

"This is an information bureau!" said the captain of the Shell. "Scat!"

"I want to know if I'm down to play against Greyfriars."

"Eh?"
"I was a bit off-colour this afternoon, but on Saturday I shall rise to the occasion."

"You jolly well won't!" growled Manners. "You won't get the chance!"

"My dear ass," chimed in Monty Lowther, "you can't play cricket for toffee! Your performance this afternoon was a sight for gods and men and little fishes!"

Racke scowled.
"I don't see why I shouldn't be given a chance—"

"he began.
"You've had your chance," said Tom Merry, "and you bungled it. You won't get another. If you had shown anything like form this afternoon I might have considered you. But as it is there's nothing doing."

Racke grew desperate.
"Look here," he said, "my pater's comin' down on Saturday, and I want to give him a favourable impression—"

"You'll never do that by playing cricket, old top," said Monty Lowther.

"If your pater saw you excavating lumps of turf, instead of hitting the ball, he'd have several sorts of a fit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Is my name going down, Merry, or not?" demanded Racke.

"Not!" said Tom Merry promptly. "If we happened to be playing a blind school, or a home for incurables, I wouldn't mind giving you a show. But I should need to be off my rocker badly I agreed to let you turn out against Greyfriars!"

Racke's eyes gleamed.
"Is that final?" he asked.

"It's as final as the editor's decision!"
"I might have known I hadn't a chance of getting into the eleven!" said Racke bitterly. "It's just like you, Merry, to study your own pals to the exclusion of everybody else!"

Tom Merry jumped to his feet.
"If you're not out of this study in two ticks," he said, "I'll put you out on your neck!"

Racke was too discreet to come to loggerheads with the captain of the Shell. He knew, from past experience, that Tom Merry possessed an alarming punch—alarming, at any rate, to the recipient.



Along came Taggles, grunting beneath the weight of the enormous back hamper. "Heave-ho!" sang out Dick Redfern. With a tremendous effort Taggles heaved the hamper aboard. (See Chapter 4.)

The cad of the Shell withdrew, closing the door behind him with a slam.

There was fury in Racke's face and malice in his heart. He was no sportsman. He could not and would not see that he was not entitled to a place in the eleven. And he meant to take an early opportunity of making things warm for Tom Merry, and for the other members of the team, if possible.

"What's up, Racke?"
Kangaroo of the Shell asked the question as he passed the scowling junior.
"Mind your own bizney!" snarled Racke.

Harry Noble shrugged his shoulders and walked on. It was useless, he reflected, to attempt to be decent to a churlish bounder like Aubrey Racke.

The Australian junior tapped on the door of Tom Merry's study and looked in.

"Made out the team yet, Merry?"
Tom nodded.

"Am I down to play?"
There was a note of intense eagerness in Harry Noble's tone. He seemed to hang on Tom Merry's reply.

"I'm awfully sorry," said the captain of the Shell, "but—"

Kangaroo's disappointment was obvious, though he did his best to conceal it.
"I'm left out?" he said quietly.

"Yes. I've got you down as first reserve. I know you're worth something better than that, but there's such a glut of talent to choose from that I can't find you a place. I've tried to do the square thing—"

"Of course!" said Kangaroo. "I don't question your decision one jot. I wanted to get a show, naturally. But I must hope for better luck next time. So-long, you fellows!"

And Harry Noble withdrew.
"Kangaroo's a real sportsman!" said Manners heartily. "Some fellows would have raised Cain over being left out of the team. But that's not Kangy's way."

"He's a jolly good sort!" assented Tom Merry. "I only wish I could squeeze him in somehow. But it can't be done!"

Meanwhile, Harry Noble had returned to the study which he shared with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn.

"Well," said the latter, "what luck, old man?"

"No luck at all!" said Kangaroo, dropping into the armchair.

"You mean to say that Merry's left you out?"

"Yes."
"It's a jolly shame!" said Clifton Dane indignantly.

Kangaroo shook his head.
"Merry's made the best selection possible," he said. "I'm sure of that. And, after all, a fellow must expect to take a back seat sometimes. Now, if I were in good form, like Talbot or Redfern—"

"Why, you'd lick the pair of 'em into a cocked hat!" said Glyn loyally.

Kangaroo smiled.

"It's decent of you to say that, Glyn," he said. "But you know in your heart, that I'm not in the same street with Talbot and Reddy in my present form."

Bernard Glyn was silent.

"This must be a rotten disappointment for you, Kangy," said Dane.

"It is. I tried not to show Tom Merry how hard it's hit me. But I don't mind confiding to you fellows that it's hit me jolly hard indeed. I was desperately anxious to turn out against Greyfriars on Saturday."

"For any special reason?" asked Bernard Glyn.

"Yes. My cousin, Tom Australia, is coming here to see me on the day of the match."

"My hat! Is he?"

"It isn't a he, fathhead—it's a she! Her name's Sylvia Lennox, and she's a ripping good sort. She's spending a holiday in England with her people."

Both Glyn and Dane sat up and took notice.

"How old is Miss Lennox?" inquired Glyn.

"Fifteen."
"She's just about Cousin Ethel's stamp, I take it?" said Clifton Dane.

"Yes. She's always chipping me—in a playful sort of way, of course—about my cricket. And I wanted to prove to her that I wasn't altogether a duffer at keeping my end up."

"Hard choice!" said Bernard Glyn.

"It's jolly rough on you that you can't play. Are you down as a reserve?"

"Yes—first reserve."
"Well, let's hope somebody stands down and you're called upon to fill the breach."

But Bernard Glyn realised—and so did Kangaroo—that the hope was a very slender one.

It was extremely improbable that anyone would stand down; for every single member of the team had set his heart on bringing about the defeat of the Greyfriars. Remove. And instead of being able to give his fair cousin a taste of his quality, Harry Noble would be compelled to attend the match merely as a spectator.

**CHAPTER 3.
Racke's Ruse!**

GWEAT news, dear boys—stun-ning news! When Tom Merry & Co came downstairs next morning they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dancing a horripile in the hall.

Gussy's face was positively glowing with delight. "Wherefore this undignified hilarity?" demanded Monty Lowther, with mock sternness.

"My patah has sent me a tennah!" "Hurrah!"

The Terrible Three became suddenly intimate with Arthur Augustus. Monty Lowther promptly fell on his neck; Tom Merry seized one of his slim hands and Manners the other.

"Ow! Don't be beastly wuff, Low-thah!" protested the swell of St. Jim's. "Now, the first thing to do when one receives a tennah, dear boys, is—"

"To blue it!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Exactly! This bein' the day befoah the great match, I feel I should like to entertain the whole of St. Jim's eleven." "A very commendable motive, old chap!" said Manners.

"It happens to be a half-holiday," Arthur Augustus went on, "so we've got the entire afternoon at our disposal. What shall we do, dear boys, and wheeah shall we go? Any suggestions will be gratefully received."

The Terrible Three looked thoughtful. "It wouldn't be a bad wheeah," said Tom Merry at length, "to hire a char-a-banc from the garage in Wayland and go for a picnic."

"Where?" "To some new place we haven't explored yet. We needn't fix on any definite place. Let the driver of the char-a-banc follow his own sweet will and take us about twenty miles away from St. Jim's."

"That's the idea!" "I doubt if a tennah would covah the expenses," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"In that case the rest of us could easily make up the amount," said Tom Merry. "Personally, I think we might do a lot worse than have this char-a-banc jaunt, with a ripping picnic about twenty miles out."

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming on the scene with Talbot and Dick Brooke. "What's the conspiracy?"

"Gussy's had a tennah from his pater," explained Monty Lowther, "and his advisers-in-chief are instructing him how to blue it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "A suggestion has been mooted by my friend here," continued Lowther, giving Tom Merry a resounding slap on the back, "that Gussy treats the cricket eleven to a joy ride in a char-a-banc, together with a picnic, at some place which has hitherto been unexplored."

"Topping!" said Jack Blake.

"Stunning!" said Talbot.

"First-rate!" agreed Dick Brooke.

But had those three juniors not belonged to the cricket eleven they would have said something vastly different!

"We'll get the consent of Figgins & Co.," said Tom Merry, "and if they're willing I'll see about hiring the char-a-banc."

"Splendid, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

The captain of the Shell hurried away in the direction of the New House. He explained the arrangement to Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern; and there was no dissentient voice.

"This is awfully decent of old Gussy," said Fatty Wynn. "You might tell him, Merry, that if he cares to hand over his tennah, I'll see to the ordering of the grub."

"And the scoffing of it!" chuckled Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What time do we start on this jaunt, Tommy?" inquired Figgins.

"Directly after dinner. I'll go and see about hiring the char-a-banc at once."

Tom Merry returned to the School House, and made his way to the prefects' room. He opened the door cautiously, and peeped in. The apartment was deserted.

"Good!" murmured the captain of the Shell.

And he crossed over to the telephone and took off the receiver.

"Number, please!" snapped the operator.

"Wayland, six double-six!" said Tom Merry.

After some moments' delay—during which the junior was in an apprehension lest Kildare or one of the prefects should come in—a drowsy voice came over the wires.

"Hallo!"

"Is that the garage?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"I want to speak to Mr. Coombes."

"This is Mr. Coombes speaking."

"Oh, good! I'm Merry!"

"I'm not!" said the garage proprietor. "I feel quite the reverse of merry. I've had a rotten night. Car broken down at midnight—miles away from anywhere!"

"You—you misunderstand me," stammered the captain of the Shell. "I didn't mean that I was merry, I'm Merry!"

There was a snort from Mr. Coombes.

"You say you're not merry, and in the same breath you say you are! What the dickens do you mean?"

"I'm Tom Merry of St. Jim's."

"Oh!"

The garage proprietor understood at last.

"Go ahead, my merry Merry!" he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I want to hire a char-a-banc for the afternoon."

"That'll be all right!"

"Will you send it round to St. Jim's at two o'clock?"

"Certainly! Where do you want to go?"

"Eleven of us are going for a picnic. We've no definite place in view. We'll let the driver take us in whichever direction he likes, and we'll instruct him when to stop."

"I see."

"That will be O.K., then?"

"Quite O.K.," said the proprietor.

Tom Merry rang off, and slipped hastily out of the prefects' room.

The captain of the Shell was blissfully ignorant of the fact that his instructions to the garage proprietor had been overheard. Yet such was the case.

Aubrey Racke had been taking an early-morning stroll in the quad. He had halted outside one of the open windows of the prefects' room, and, hearing Tom Merry at the telephone, he had lingered to listen.

When the conversation ended, Racke gave a chuckle.

This was the opportunity he had been waiting for—an opportunity of striking a blow at Tom Merry, and, incidentally, at the other members of the junior eleven.

Racke was not slow-witted. Already a scheme was forming in his mind. It was not so dastardly as many of Racke's schemes. In fact, it was more in the nature of a jape than anything else.

Immediately after dinner that day the cad of the Shell, unseen by any of his schoolfellows, proceeded out of gates. He strolled for about a mile in the direction of Wayland, and then he halted, as a well-equipped char-a-banc swung into view round a bend in the road.

Standing in the middle of the roadway, Racke held up his hand, and hailed the driver.

"Stop!" he exclaimed.

The driver—a pleasant-faced Irishman—obeyed the command.

"Faith, an' what can I do for ye?" he asked.

"Would you like to earn a quid?" said Racke.

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Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus led the others along the footpath. As they stepped out into the roadway, they uttered simultaneous exclamations of astonishment. “The char-a-banc’s gone!” cried Blake. “That beggar Micky Flanagan has disappeared!” (See Chapter 4.)

“Shure!”
 “An’ you’ve no objection to being a party to a practical joke?”

The driver grinned.
 “Practical jokes are just in my line, begorra!”

“That’s ripping! You’re taking a party of fellows on a picnic jaunt—”

The Irishman nodded.
 “Well, I want you to leave ’em stranded.”

“How?”
 “Take ’em as far as they’ll let you, an’ then come back without ’em.”

“That’s easily done,” said the driver, with a chuckle.

Racke produced his wallet, and took therefrom a ten-shilling note.

“Here you are,” he said. “I’ll hand you another as soon as you’ve carried out my wishes. You won’t let me down, will you?”

“You can rely on me, sir. I’ll take the omnibuses as far out as possible, an’ then leave ’em in the lurch.”

“That’s the idea!” said Racke. “If there’s a row afterwards, you can pretend that you didn’t know the fellows expected you to take ’em back. You can say you thought it was to be a single journey—not a return.”

“Right you are, sir!”
 Racke stood aside, and the char-a-banc rumbled on its way.

The cad of the Shell, delighted at the ease with which he had achieved his purpose, remained in the roadway, chuckling and rubbing his hands. He

pictured to himself the sorry plight the cricketers would be in—stranded in a remote part of the country, and unable to return to St. Jim’s.

And the prospect of putting Tom Merry & Co. to serious inconvenience was a very pleasant one for Aubrey Racke, who felt quite confident that the driver of the char-a-banc would carry out his part of the programme to perfection.

CHAPTER 4.

Fairly Stranded!

“**J**UMP in, deah boys!” said Arthur Augustus cheerfully, as the char-a-banc rumbled to a halt in the quadrangle at St. Jim’s.

“Half a jiffy!” said Fatty Wynn.

“What about the grub?”
 “I have instructed Taggles to bring it along.”

“Good!”
 The eleven juniors clambered into the vehicle, and waited for Taggles to arrive. He came at length, crumpling beneath the weight of an enormous tuck-hamper.

“Taggy’s in training!” remarked Monty Lowther, peering over the top rail of the char-a-banc.

“In training!” repeated Jack Blake.

“What for?”
 “The village sports. He’s going to run in the hundred yards race for boys under ninety!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
 “Heave-ho, Taggy!” sang out Dick Redfern.

With a tremendous effort Taggles heaved the tuck-hamper on board. Then he stepped back, mopping his heated brow.

“Which it’s the custom, Master D’Arcy, to make me a small gratuity—”

“Vewy well, Taggles,” said Arthur Augustus. “I was about to make you a substantial one, but as you seem to pwefer a small one, I have gett pleasah in handin’ you the sum of tuppence.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
 Taggles had no use for the drinking fountain. Cold water was one of his pet aversions.

“Which it’s the custom, Master D’Arcy, to make me a small gratuity—”

“Vewy well, Taggles,” said Arthur Augustus. “I was about to make you a substantial one, but as you seem to pwefer a small one, I have gett pleasah in handin’ you the sum of tuppence.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
 Taggles’ face was a study.

“You—you—” he spluttered.

“Catch, deah boy—I mean, deah man!” said Arthur Augustus.

And a couple of coins went hurtling down on to the flagstones.

Taggles, supposing the coins to be pemmes, made no movement to pick them up. And it was not until the char-a-banc had started on its journey that he discovered that they were half-crowns.

The departure of the excursionists was witnessed by an envious crowd.

"'Lucky beggars!!' growled Crooke of the Shell. "'Wish I was going!'"

"Same here!" said Mellich.

But Aubrey Racke chuckled.

"We're better off where we are," he said.

"How do you make that out?" asked Crooke.

But Racke strolled away without deigning to reply.

The char-a-banc swung through the school gateway and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Tom Merry & Co. were in great spirits. They didn't know where they were going, and they didn't care. Everything was left to the driver, and the fact that the juniors had made no cut-and-dried arrangements beforehand lent a novelty to the excursion.

"Gussy's a brick to blue his tinner in such a worthy cause!" said Jack Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"We shall have the time of our giddy lives this afternoon," said Dick Redfern, "and it will put us in fine trim for the Gregorians' match to-morrow."

"Absolutely!" said Talbot. "Hi! Where are you going, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus was advancing, with some difficulty, towards the front of the swaying vehicle.

"I am goin' to wemonstwater with the divah!" he explained.

"Why?"

"He's scorchin' along at a widiculous an' weckless pace!"

"Rate!" said Manners, dragging the swell of St. Jim's back by his coat-tails. "This is just a nice pace—not too slow. I can't stand these things when they go at a funeral pace!"

The char-a-banc dashed through the familiar High Street of Wayland like a live thing. And as it sped on into the outlying country Fatty Wynn plucked Figgins by the sleeve.

"Don't you think we ought to stop now?" he asked.

"Eh? What for?" exclaimed Figgins.

"The picnic, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn's eagerness to commence operations on the tuck hamper evoked much merriment.

"My dear old barrel," said Kerr, "we've got another fifteen miles to go before we think of stopping!"

"Oh crumbs! Can I have a few tarts to be going on with, Gussy?"

"Weally, Wynn, I wergard you as a gweedy glutton!"

The Falstaff of St. Jim's gave a grunt.

"I'm simply finished," he said. "I was refused a fifth helping of pudding at dinner-time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fully an hour elapsed before the driver of the char-a-banc slowed up.

It was a very lonely and very picturesque part of the country—the borders of Sussex and Hampshire.

Their surroundings were a sealed book to the St. Jim's juniors, who had never visited this particular spot before.

The char-a-banc had halted on the fringe of a dense wood.

"An ideal place for a picnic," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Come along, deah boys!—We'll cawvy the hamph into the wood, an' see if we can find a nice leafy glade."

"What about the driver?" inquired Jack Blake. "Not going to leave him out in the cold, are you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I'd quite forgotten the divah!" said Arthur Augustus. "What's your name, my man?"

"Micky Flanagan, sir."

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"Well, Micky, will you do us the honah of joinin' in our picnic?"

"I can't leave the char-a-banc, sir."

"Oh, rats! That'll be all right!" said Tom Merry.

But the driver shook his head.

"There's been a lot of car-thieves about just lately," he said. "An' if anythin' was to happen to this char-a-banc the boss would hold me responsible. It's very kind of you, young gents, but I must stay here."

In that case," said Figgins, "we'll give you a few sandwiches to amuse yourself with. And here's a manuscript of mine that you can read. It's the first instalment of a pirate serial that I've written for 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"Micky will never survive that pirate serial," said Monty Lowther. "When we come back to the char-a-banc we shall find he's succumbed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tuck hamper was lifted out into the roadway and opened.

A packet of sandwiches was handed to Micky Flanagan, together with Figgy's story; and then the juniors made their way into the wood, D'Arcy and Jack Blake carrying the hamper between them.

After following the footpath for a couple of hundred yards the party lighted upon a shady dell.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry.

"This will suit us down to the ground!" The contents of the tuck hamper were set out on the grass, and the juniors fell to with keen appetites.

The picnic proved a tremendous success.

Everybody was in high humour, and Fatty Wynn, in particular, was in his element. He attacked a rabbit-pie with great gusto, and then turned to the pastries, of which there was a tempting array.

Fatty was not exactly greedy, but he liked a lot. And by the time he had reached his seventh doughnut he began to feel very drowsy. With the doughnut only half-consumed, the fat junior nodded off to sleep. A beatific smile illuminated his features, and his hands were clasped in the region of his waistcoat.

"Well, of all the lazy bouncers—" ejaculated Figgins.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Tom Merry.

"We'll make him when it's time to go—and that won't be for an hour or more."

Having finished their repast, the juniors sported themselves in the long grass, gazing up at the overhanging leaves, through which blue patches of sky were visible.

It was a melodious afternoon. The birds were carolling; Fatty Wynn was snoring, and Arthur Augustus was humming, "Wocked in the Cwadle of the Deep."

The time passed swiftly as the juniors basked in their shady retreat; and at length Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"Time to start back," he said.

Figgins roused Fatty Wynn by the simple expedient of inserting his boot in the fat junior's ribs.

The Falstaff of St. Jim's started out of his slumbers with a yell which rang through the woods.

"Yaroooh!"

"Put a jerk in it, Fatty!" said Kerr. The plump junior did not rise.

"I'm going to have another forty winks," he said.

"Your mistake!" said Figgins blandly.

And, pressing his knee into Fatty Wynn's back, he heaved the fat junior to his feet.

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus led the way along the footpath. They carried the empty tuck hamper.

The remainder of the juniors, chattering gaily, followed behind.

When Blake and D'Arcy came to the end of the footpath and stepped into the roadway, they uttered simultaneous exclamations of astonishment.

"Anything wrong?" asked Tom Merry, from the rear.

"I should jolly well say so!" said Jack Blake. "The char-a-banc's gone!"

"What!"

"It's a fact, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "That beggah Micky Flanagan has disappeared!"

"My hat!"

"After reading Figgy's story, I dare say he decided to go off and start in business as a pirate!" said Monty Lowther.

Nobody laughed at Lowther's flight of fancy.

The situation was serious.

Blake and D'Arcy were joined in the roadway by the rest of the party, and the juniors exchanged startled glances.

Tom Merry glanced up and down the road, but, like the prophet of old, he saw no man.

The driver of the char-a-banc had vanished—and so had the vehicle itself.

"This is a pretty go!" growled Figgins. "I suppose we must go and hunt for the bouncer."

The juniors divided themselves into two parties, which set off in opposite directions.

The road was searched for a distance of a mile or so on each side of the wood, but the search proved futile.

Only one wayfarer was encountered—a stolid-looking rustic—and he could throw no light on the mystery. Arthur Augustus devoted ten minutes to trying to explain to him what a char-a-banc was; but even after this long-winded explanation the yokel was no wiser. He didn't know a char-a-banc from a mowing-machine or an aeroplane.

After their fruitless search, the two parties joined forces again at the spot where the char-a-banc was last seen.

"What's to be done, Tommy?" asked Manners.

"We must tramp to the nearest railway-station," replied Tom Merry, "and go back by train. And when we see that bouncer Flanagan again, we'll pulverise him!"

"Hear, hear!"

The St. Jim's juniors were fairly stranded.

The nearest railway-station, for all they knew, might be a dozen miles away. And the afternoon was already drawing to a close.

"Weally, this is most distwessin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "If this is Flanagan's idea of a joke, I cannot congratulate him on his sense of humah!"

"Oh, come on!" growled Tom Merry. "It's no use jawing here!"

And, discarding the empty tuck hamper, the juniors started off to find the nearest station.

CHAPTER 5.

Trapped in the Tower!

"THE ploughman homeward plods his weary way," quoted Monty Lowther.

Tramping along the road, ahead of the juniors, was another stolid-looking rustic.

The St. Jim's party quickened their pace, and bore down upon him.

"I say, old top," said Dick Redfern, "can you direct us to the nearest railway-station?"

The rustic halted, with wide-open mouth and vacant eyes.

“Eh?” he said.

Redfern repeated his question.

“Would ‘oe mind speakin’ a bit louder, mister?” said the man. “I’m crool deaf!”

Making a megaphone of his hands, Redfern fairly bellowed the question.

“Which is the nearest railway-station?”

“Slowcombe,” said the rustic, comprehending at last.

“How far is it?” asked Talbot.

“Six moids as the crow flies.”

“We’re not crows!” growled Tom Merry. “How far is it by road?”

“Jest over seven moids.”

“Oh crumbs!”

“Are we going in the right direction?” asked Dick Brooke.

“Oh—ah! Turn to yer roight when you gets to the Pig an’ Gridiron.”

The juniors thanked their informant, and passed on. Their tempers were not improved by the prospect of a seven-mile tramp, and their feelings towards Micky Flanagan were almost homicidal.

It was a long and weary walk, and the rich scenery around them had no charms for the parched and dusty juniors.

A good pace was maintained—greatly to Fatty Wynn’s discomfort—and after a couple of hours’ tramp the party came in sight of their goal.

Slowcombe Station was aptly named. There was no sign of activity on the little platform.

The booking-office was closed, and the only person visible was a slumbering porter, who was reclining on an ancient trolley.

Monty Lowther gave the man’s head a playful tug.

“Wake up, old Rip van Winkle!” he exclaimed.

The porter sat up, blinking drowsily at the juniors.

“Wodger want?” he growled.

“What time’s the next train to Wayland?” inquired Tom Merry.

“Nine o’clock.”

“Oh, good!” said the captain of the Shell, looking greatly relieved. “I was afraid there might not be a train to-night.”

“Neither there isn’t!” said the porter ungrammatically. “I meant nine o’clock to-morrow mornin’.”

“Help!”

Arthur Augustus made a despairing gesture, and threw himself on to a seat.

“We’re done, dear boys!” he groaned.

“Dished, diddled, and done!” moaned Fatty Wynn.

The situation was truly alarming.

It was locking-up time at St. Jim’s. Everybody was expected to be within gates. Yet here were eleven juniors stranded miles and miles away from their school!

“This is the absolute limit!” said Talbot.

“Can’t we represent that we’re of Royal blood, and get a special train put on for our benefit?” suggested Monty Lowther.

“Don’t be an ass!” snapped Tom Merry irritably. “The position’s quite bad enough, without your idiotic jokes!”

“Well, it’s no use cooling our heels here,” said Jack Blake, at length. “There’s only one thing to be done in the circus.”

“What’s that?” inquired half a dozen voices.

“We must take to the road again, until we hit upon some civilised place where there’s a chance of getting a conveyance of some sort.”

“I—I can’t walk another step!” faltered Fatty Wynn.

“Well, you don’t suppose we’re going to carry you, do you?” growled Figgins.

“We’re no champaign weight-lifters!”

“If only I had left that seventh doughnut alone!” moaned Fatty.

After a brief discussion, it was decided to fall in with Jack Blake’s suggestion.

Accordingly, the juniors quitted the stagnant lido station, and set off along the road in the gathering dusk.

They were tired and leg-weary, and progress was painfully slow. Fatty Wynn would not have progressed at all, had not Figgins and Kerr urged him on by means of sundry prods in the back.

Presently, to add to their misfortunes, the party found themselves confronted by a steep hill, on the summit of which they could distinguish what appeared to be an old beacon-tower, which had been in use in the days of the smugglers.

“This blessed hill will just about finish us off,” groaned Jack Blake. “Let’s squat down and rest.”

But Tom Merry shook his head.

“We’ll rest at the top,” he said. “If we stop here we shan’t feel like going on again.”

The juniors toiled up the hill. They were smothered with dust; their legs were aching; and their gay spirits had evaporated long since.

After what seemed an age, they reached the summit of the hill. And here they found consolation in the shape of a sign-post, which indicated that it was two miles to Granchester.

Granchester’s quite a decent-sized place, I believe,” said Tom Merry. “We ought to be able to charter some sort of a vehicle there, anyway.”

“Before we think of footing it for another two miles,” said Manners, “let’s have a rest. We’ve earned it.”

A short distance from the road, looming up in the dusk like a giant sentinel, stood the old beacon-tower. The juniors, at a signal from Tom Merry, made their way towards it.

The tower had successfully weathered the storms of generations. It was a more elaborate structure than most of its kind. The architecture was crude in places, but the general effect was one of solidity.

There was a stout oaken door, which was opened without difficulty, and the juniors found themselves in a round, dingy apartment, encompassed by stone walls.

A spiral staircase was visible, but the juniors did not explore it. They were far too exhausted to undertake the exertion of climbing to the top of the tower.

“Look here, you fellows,” said Tom Merry. “I vote we have a whip-round for this conveyance we hope to get.”

“We don’t know how much it’s going to cost,” said Figgins.

“It’s bound to be a big figure,” said the captain of the Shell. “We’ll pool all our resources, and then we shall see how we stand.”

Tom Merry himself set the ball rolling with a couple of half-crowns, which he placed in the centre of the stone floor.

Manners added a two-shilling piece, and Monty Lowther, with a rueful smile, contributed a collection of battered coppers.

The others responded to the best of their ability, and soon there was quite a pile of money on the floor.

And then, just as Tom Merry was starting to count, there was a dramatic interruption.

Footsteps sounded on the spiral staircase, and whilst the juniors looked up in wonder, half a dozen powerfully-built men rushed into the room.

The foremost of the men held a revolver.

“The first one who moves,” he said,

addressing the startled juniors, “won’t get the jim to move again!”

The St. Jim’s juniors wondered if they were dreaming.

The invasion had been so sudden, so totally unexpected, that it fairly took their breath away.

Even if the leader of the gang had not been armed, it was doubtful if Tom Merry & Co. would have stirred. They sat as if turned to stone—paralysed by the shock of it all.

One of the men crossed to the door, and put his back to it. The others—with the exception of the leader, who stood with levelled revolver—calmly helped themselves to the money which lay on the floor.

“Not much of a haul, Neddy!” growled one of them, addressing the leader.

The man called Neddy grinned. The grin seemed to give his face a diabolical appearance.

“I fancy we shall do better than that in a jiffy,” he said. “That young swell sitting in the corner is likely to have some useful trinkets on him.”

The young swell in question—Arthur Augustus D’Arcy—gave a gasp of alarm. “You—your fearful wotials! If you attempt to deprive me of my property, I’ll—”

“No use defying them, Gussy,” said Talbot. “That merchant with a face like a gargyle has got you covered. And he won’t hesitate to shoot if you make any resistance. It’s a dashed awkward fix to be in—but it’s better to lose your property than your life.”

Talbot had been in situations like this before, and he could generally discriminate between a man who meant business and a man who was merely bluffing. He saw that the leader of the gang belonged to the former category. If Arthur Augustus offered resistance, he would afford an easy target for the determined and unscrupulous Neddy.

As soon as their money had been transferred to the custody of the looters, the juniors were commanded to turn out their pockets. They had no alternative but to obey.

Arthur Augustus was obliged to sacrifice the massive gold watch, which had been a special present from his father, and which must have cost anything from twenty to thirty pounds.

Other watches, of less intrinsic value, but not less valuable to their owners, were handed over.

Penknives and fountain-pens were added to the spoil. And Manners, with an acute pang of regret, was compelled to forfeit his beloved camera. In vain he protested that it would be of no use to the looters. All was grist that came to their mill.

Having robbed the juniors of their cherished possessions, the members of the gang departed—not up the spiral staircase, but out of the door.

The leader went last, with his revolver upraised all the time, lest the juniors, in desperation, should decide to launch an attack.

“Ta-ta!” said Neddy, with a mocking smile. “Very thoughtful of you to come to this tower, I must say! It’s a long time since we had such a choice collection of pigeons to pluck!”

“You—you scoundrel!” muttered Tom Merry. “You’ll go to prison for this!”

But Neddy evidently regarded imprisonment as a very remote possibility, for he laughed heartily.

Then, with a final gesture of farewell, he disappeared through the doorway.

Crash!

The heavy caken door was slammed to, and, to their utter consternation and dismay, the juniors heard the sound of a key grating in the lock.

The realisation of their position dawned upon them in a flash.

"They were prisoners in the old beacon tower!"

As soon as the gang had decamped, Talbot leapt to his feet and rushed to the door.

It was as he feared.

"Locked!" he exclaimed.

"Oh crumbs!"

"The awful villains!"

"We shall have to stay here all night!"

"Unless," said Jack Blake, "we can force the beastly door open."

"Impossible!" said Talbot.

In the dim, uncertain light the juniors blinked at each other in baffled perplexity.

What was to be done?

No way of escape presented itself.

Exhausted, penniless, robbed of their possessions, and imprisoned in a lonely tower many miles from St. Jim's!

It was indeed an appalling situation.

Not one of the party said anything to brighten the outlook. Even Monty Leathers was silent.

Arthur Augustus, bemoaned the loss of his watch and Manners nearly wept as he thought of his camera. As for Fatty Wynn, he declared that he would expire from starvation long before the morning came.

"This is perfectly awful!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Who'd have thought we should be trapped like this?" said Figgins.

"No use shouting for help, I suppose?" suggested Dick Brooke.

"Not a scrap!" said Talbot glumly.

"We should stand no earthly chance of being heard!"

"Anybody got a match?" asked Kerr. "Nobody had. And in the rapidly-deepening darkness the members of the St. Jim's Junior Eleven: writhed and chafed in their captivity—faced with the cheerless prospect of spending a long and sleepless night in the confines of the old beacon-tower!"

CHAPTER 6.

Kangaroo's Resolve.

EAR away at St. Jim's the prolonged absence of the picnic-party caused great consternation:

Mr. Railton, in company with

Kildare and Monteth of the Sixth, waited up until a late hour for the arrival of Tom Merry & Co. But they waited in vain.

The Housemaster was looking very grave.

"I cannot help entertaining the supposition that a calamity of some sort has occurred," he said.

"It certainly looks like it, sir," said Kildare, who was no less anxious.

Monteth had a suggestion to make.

"Shall I go and make inquiries at the garage from which the char-a-banc was hired, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, do, Monteth!" said Mr. Railton. "I had not thought of that. Doubtless the proprietor of the garage will be able to throw some light on the matter."

Monteth hurried away to the bicycle-shed, lighted the lamps on his machine, and set off at once in the direction of Wayland.

The New House prefect was back within the hour. He had nothing favourable to report.

"The garage is shut up, sir," he said, "and the proprietor doesn't live on the premises, so I couldn't get hold of him."

Mr. Railton glanced at his watch.

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"It is past eleven!" he exclaimed. "I will go and consult Dr. Holmes as to the advisability of sending out search-parties."

As a result of the Housemaster's interview with the Head, a couple of search-parties, composed of Sixth-Formers, were sent out to scour the countryside.

For upwards of two hours the seniors were engaged in searching; but they naturally did not go farther afield than a radius of four miles of the school.

The searchers were finally compelled to return empty-handed to St. Jim's. They reported the futility of their quest to Mr. Railton, who in turn reported it to the Head.

"Nothing more can be done to-night," said Dr. Holmes, passing his hand wearily across his forehead. "We must wait until the morning, by which time I trust the juniors will have returned."

In the Shell dormitory, and in the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House, there was tremendous excitement.

"Where ever can those fellows have got to?" asked Harry Noble, for the tenth time.

"It's a giddy mystery!" said Bernard Glyn.

"I shall be able to solve it in the morning," said George Alfred Grundy, who rather prided himself upon his detective ability. "I feel too sleepy now."

"Rats!"

"Supposing they don't turn up in time for the match to-morrow?" said Clifton Dane.

"In that case, the fixture will have to be cancelled," said Crooke.

"It won't!" said Kangaroo grimly.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"I mean this—that if the team doesn't turn up, I shall organise a fresh eleven and skipper it myself!"

There were several exclamations of approval, and many of derision.

"Fat lot of use a scratch eleven would be against Greyfriars!" said Wilkins. "It would mean an innings victory."

"For the scratch eleven!" said Kangaroo, with a smile.

"No, you ass—for Greyfriars!"

"This sort of talk," said Gunn, "is idiotic. Merry and the others will turn up all serene. Matter of fact, they may be here at any moment. I expect the char-a-banc broke down, and they've had to tramp about a dozen miles."

But the time passed and Tom Merry & Co. failed to put in an appearance.

One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep. And when they awoke at the shrill ringing of the rising-bell, the beds of Tom Merry and his chums were still vacant.

The morning passed without any news of the absentees.

Dr. Holmes made strenuous efforts to trace the missing juniors. He telephoned to the Wayland garage, and learned that the char-a-banc had returned empty.

Pressed for an explanation of this, the proprietor said that he understood from the driver that the latter was not required to wait and bring the juniors back.

Numerous inquiries were made, and no likely source of information was left untapped. But all efforts to find the members of the junior eleven proved futile.

In desperation, the Head communicated with the police. But he got no "forrader" that way. The local police were hopelessly incompetent; and, although they assured the Head that they would solve the mystery in next to no time, they quite failed to justify their assurance.

Dinner-time came, but not Tom Merry & Co.

Somebody else came, though—somebody whom Harry Noble of the Shell had been longing to see—his cousin from Australia.

Sylvia Lennox was a charming girl. And her greatest charm was the sunny smile which never seemed to leave her face. But there was nothing "soft" about Sylvia. She possessed a slim, athletic figure; and courage, as well as good humour, shone in her eyes.

Sylvia greeted her cousin cordially, and she did not fail to notice that something was amiss.

"There is something wrong, Harry," she said.

Kangaroo nodded.

"We're playing Greyfriars this afternoon," he said, "and—it sounds like a fairy-tale, I know, but it's a fact—our cricket eleven has disappeared!"

"Disappeared?" echoed Sylvia, in wonder.

"Yes. They went out yesterday afternoon for a picnic, and they've not been seen since. We've hunted high and low for them, but they seem to have vanished off the face of the earth."

"Then, I suppose," said Sylvia, as the two cousins walked into the building together, "you'll have to cancel the match!"

"No jolly fear!" replied Kangaroo.

"I'm going to take it upon myself to raise an eleven."

"Splendid!"

Harry Noble escorted Sylvia to Study No. 11, and introduced her to Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane.

"Jolly pleased to meet you, Miss Lennox!" said Glyn heartily.

And there was genuine enthusiasm in Clifton Dane's "Hear, hear!"

Kangaroo took a notebook from his pocket, and jotted down a couple of names.

"You fellows will turn out this afternoon, of course?" he said.

"Eh?"

"What?"

Harry Noble's study-mates blinked at him in astonishment.

"You heard what I said last night in the dorm," said Kangaroo. "The first eleven not having returned, I'm going to get up a fresh team."

"Why, my dear old duffer," said Bernard Glyn, "we shall be whacked to the wide!"

"Not afraid of a whacking, are you?" said Sylvia reproachfully.

"Nunno, Miss Lennox! But—"

"Don't hang back just at the moment you're wanted. That sort of thing's awfully feeble!"

Bernard Glyn turned red at Sylvia's remark. He wanted to be on good terms with her, and so did Clifton Dane, and they realised that unless they backed up Kangaroo tooth and nail they would earn nothing but contempt from his charming cousin.

"I'll play," said Glyn promptly.

"Same here," said the Canadian junior.

"That's the style!" said Sylvia approvingly.

"Goodness knows where the rest of the team's coming from, though!" said Glyn.

"I'm going to hunt round for recruits," said Kangaroo, "while you fellows take Sylvia in tow and show her the sights of St. Jim's."

Notebook in hand, Harry Noble started on his quest.

It was surprising what a fine team he was able to raise.

Levison, Clive and Carlew of the Fourth, promptly consented to play.

The two first-named were excellent players, and so was Ralph Reckness Cardew when he cared to bestir himself.

“I fear,” drawled Cardew, “that we sha’n’t be up to the weight of our absent friends. At the same time, we shall be able to give those Greyfriars beggars a good run for their money.”

“Hear, hear!” said Clive.
The next two fellows to be enlisted were Herries and Digby, both of whom were capable of putting up a good show.

Kangaroo then went round to the New House, on the trail of Lawrence and Owen. But the two scholarship juniors were not at home. At that moment they were exploring Wayland Woods in the hope of finding some trace of the missing cricketers.

But the New House yielded one very promising player in the person of Koumi Rao, the Indian junior.

On his day Koumi Rao was one of the deadliest junior bowlers at St. Jim’s. The only reason why he had been excluded from the original eleven was that Fatty Wynn had the stronger claim.

Kangaroo now wanted two more players, and he had no difficulty in finding them. On his way back to the School House he encountered Dick Julian and Lumley-Lumley, both of whom were drafted into the team, making it complete.

Scarcely had the selected juniors changed into their flannels than a rumble of wheels sounded in the quad.

The Greyfriars team had arrived.

afterwards in his luxurious car, he was not greeted by an elegant junior in flannels, but by a scowling youth in Etons.

Racke’s arm was in a sling, and he explained to his father that he had had the misfortune to injure his elbow.

“Otherwise, pater,” said Racke, “you’d have the pleasure of seeing me make a century this afternoon against Greyfriars.”

But that pleasure was denied to Mr. Racke. And it would have been denied to him just the same if his hopeful son had been playing in Kangaroo’s eleven.

CHAPTER 7.

An Uphill Fight!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were astounded to learn from Harry Noble that the St. Jim’s Eleven was missing from school and could not be found.

“Then the match is off?” said Bob Cherry, in disappointed tones.

“Not so, my son,” said Kangaroo.

“I’ve raised a team of my own.”

“A second eleven?”

“Yes; but you needn’t grin. Second elevens sometimes turn out to be as efficient as first.”

“My dear fellow,” said Wharton, “we’ll play you with pleasure, of course. But look out for a licking!”

“We shall see.”

Vernon-Smith gave a chuckle.

“We had intended to go back by the

“but each one of us has got to do his best—and nothing short of his best—for the honour of the school!”

“Hear, hear!”

“Good old Kangaroo!”

“Australia for ever!” cried Sylvia, clapping her hands.

Harry Noble smiled at his cousin. Then he led his men on to the field, and allotted them to their positions.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith walked out to open the Greyfriars innings, and they were loudly cheered. It was ever the custom at St. Jim’s to cheer visiting sides.

The opening was highly sensational.

With his first ball Koumi Rao wrecked Harry Wharton’s wicket.

The Greyfriars skipper was utterly bewildered. He had imagined that the ball was right off the wicket. But it had swerved in suddenly and removed the balls and the off-stump.

Wharton walked back to the pavilion with a rueful countenance.

“Watch that dusky merchant,” he said to Bob Cherry, in passing. “He’s got a nasty swerve.”

Bob Cherry nodded, and took his chum’s place at the wicket.

After glancing round to see how the field was placed, he took guard, and kept his eyes open for the nasty swerve.

But it never came. Instead, Koumi Rao bowled a fast, perfectly straight ball, which shot beneath Bob Cherry’s bat and dislodged the middle-stump.

At Wharton’s downfall, there had been

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YOUR EDITOR.

Very fit and active they looked as they clambered down from the brake, and their faces were familiar to the St. Jim’s fellows.

They were the Famous Five—Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh—and the remaining six were Mark Linley, Dick Penfold, Vernon-Smith, Peter Todd, Tom Brown, and Squiff, the Australian.

From one of the windows of the Shell dormitory Kangaroo saw the visiting eleven descend from the brake. Slipping on his blazer, he hurried down to greet them.

On the stairs he was accosted by Aubrey Racke.

“I say, Noble—”

“Sorry, can’t stop,” said Kangaroo breathlessly.

“But you must! It’s most important.”

“Stand aside!”

“Look here,” said Racke desperately, “I understand you’re getting up a fresh eleven?”

“Well?”

“Will you count me in?”

“No.”

“But my pater’s due to arrive at any minute, and I want him to see me play.”

“You don’t want him to see you with a couple of black eyes, do you?” said Kangaroo.

“Nunno!”

“Let me pass, then!”

Racke stepped aside with a scowl, and Kangaroo went down the stairs three at a time.

And when Racke’s father—a pompous, purse-proud profiteer—arrived shortly

six o’clock train,” he said; “but we shall now be able to catch the four-thirty.”

“How’s that?”

“Because we shall have pulverised you by then!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The Greyfriars fellows quite underestimated the strength of the opposition. They expected to find fellows like Skimpioe and Grundy playing against them.

But when they adjourned to the cricket-ground, and saw the St. Jim’s players at practice, they became less confident.

“Looks like being a close game after all,” said Harry Wharton. “That Indian fellow bowls a very tricky ball.”

The conditions were ideal for cricket, and the seats in front of the pavilion were packed with spectators. Everybody was anxious to see how Harry Noble’s team would shape.

Sylvia Lennox was there chatting to a group of School House fellows. And Mr. Racke was present with his son, who predicted a crushing defeat for St. Jim’s, owing to the fact that their star batsman—Aubrey Racke—was not playing.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and he decided to bat first.

Before leading his men on to the field Kangaroo delivered a rousing address.

“We’ve got to win, you fellows!” he exclaimed. “We mustn’t allow ourselves to think of failure. We’ve got to prove to these Greyfriars chaps that there’s more than one junior eleven at St. Jim’s that’s capable of licking them. There’s to be no slacking, mind”—the speaker’s eye seemed to dwell for a moment on Ralph Reckness Cardew—

a roar of applause. The roar was doubled in volume now.

“Two wickets down for six!” chortled Bernard Glyn.

And he and Clifton Dane, who were fielding in the slips, executed a hompise whilst they were waiting for the next batsman.

Frank Nugent was next, and the dismissal of Wharton and Bob Cherry tended to make him “nervy.”

Instead of playing forward to his first ball, he played back at it, and he lifted it on to his wicket.

“Out!”

“The hat-trick, by Jove!”

Koumi Rao had dismissed three batsmen with three successive balls. And the spectators, hugely elated, were on their feet, waving their caps wildly in the air.

“Now a fourth victim, my dusky friend!” said Cardew, clapping Koumi Rao on the back.

But the next man in—Mark Linley—set up a resolute defence. The three remaining balls of the over were tapped back to the bowler.

And now came Vernon-Smith’s turn, against the bowling of Clive.

Clive was no duffer with the ball, but he was much easier to play than Koumi Rao. He took some time to get his length, and Vernon-Smith punished him unmercifully.

But when he was called upon to face Koumi Rao, the Bouncer of Greyfriars was all at sea. He spooned the ball high in the air, and it descended with a plop into the gloved hands of Levison, who was keeping wicket.

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"Twenty for four!" remarked Kangaroo, glancing at the telegraph-board. "This is great! If only we can keep it up."

The remainder of the Greyfriars batsmen—like one exception—were skittled out with ninepines.

The exception was Hurree Singh, who, curiously enough, was the only fellow who could make any headway against the bowling of Koumi Rao.

It was a case of Greek versus Greek—or, to be more correct, Hindu versus Hindu—and the batsman had the better of the argument.

But Hurree Singh could get nobody to stay with him; and the Greyfriars innings closed for the total of 40.

Harry Noble's eleven came off the field like fellows in a dream.

They could scarcely believe that they had skittled out the Greyfriars team so easily. Yet the figures spoke for themselves.

"We ought to be able to get quite a useful lead on the first innings," said Kangaroo.

"Yes, rather!"

But St. Jim's opened their innings just as disastrously as Greyfriars had done.

Hurree Singh proved himself to be another Koumi Rao. He bowled with deadly effect, and few could withstand him for long.

Kangaroo, conscious of the fact that Sylvia's eyes were upon him, played a masterly game. But the others did little or nothing.

Ducks' eggs were the order of the day. Levison got one, and so did Cardew and Clive.

Hurree Singh's bowling was backed up by some wonderful fielding, and St. Jim's were finally disposed of for exactly 40—the same total as their opponents.

Kangaroo was loudly clapped on returning to the pavilion. He had carried out his bat for 18.

"Well played, Harry!" said Sylvia Lennox.

Kangaroo looked glum as he dropped into a seat beside his cousin.

"Afraid there's nothing to go into raptures about," he remarked. "I was hoping we should do better than that. But it's a bowler's wicket—the ball is beating the bat all the time."

"The second innings will decide the issue."

"Yes. If only we can get Greyfriars out as cheaply as we did before we shall stand a good chance. But I'm afraid the buggars mean business this time."

At that moment Mr. Railton came on the scene.

The Housemaster raised his hat to Sylvia, and smiled at Kangaroo.

"How is the match going, Noble?"

"We're level on the first innings, sir. It ought to be a tight finish. Any news of Tom Merry and the others?"

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"No news whatever, my boy. I am pleased to see that you are putting up a creditable fight in their absence."

"I think we'll just about pull it off, sir," said Kangaroo.

But he was less optimistic when Greyfriars started on their second venture.

In the first innings Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent had been disposed of with consecutive balls. But now they fairly made the fur fly.

Wharton rattled up 20 before he was caught in the slips; and Nugent and Bob Cherry then remained in partnership for half an hour, hitting out lustily.

Koumi Rao had struck a bad patch. He had practically worked himself to a standstill. His bowling had lost its sting, and the batsmen made hay of it.

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"Our dusky friend is played out," murmured Cardew to Harry Noble. "Better let somebody else take a turn."

Kangaroo nodded, and he instructed Dan Julian to take Koumi Rao's place.

Julian bowled a very accurate, medium-paced ball, and as a rule he was very effective. But he could not make head or tail of the Greyfriars batsmen, who were in excellent trim.

"Seventy up!" groaned Bernard Glynn; his glance wandering to the telegraph-board.

"And only one man out!" said Clifton Dane. "Bernard, my son, they've got us groggy!"

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were well set, and they gave the impression that they would remain at the wickets untroubled.

But the partnership was dissolved at length.

Bob Cherry ran out to meet a half-volley from Julian, and he smote the ball far into the long field.

Lumley-Lumley, judging the flight of the ball beautifully, raced along the boundary-line, and brought off a sensational catch.

"Well held, sir!"

After Lumley's brilliant individual effort, the St. Jim's fieldsmen warmed to their work.

A really smart return by Cardew caused Mark Lanley to be run out; and the wicket, stumped two batsmen in quick succession.

"That's tons better!" said Kangaroo, his face glowing. "With a bit of luck, we shall prevent 'em from getting the hundred."

But the Greyfriars "tail" wagged to some purpose.

Tom Brown and Squiff came together, and the two Colonials made merry. They played fine, forcing cricket, and the runs came thick and fast.

Kangaroo tried all his bowlers, but with no result.

Not only did Greyfriars exceed the hundred, but they were well in the running for an additional fifty.

When at last the innings closed, the score stood at 149.

Squiff and Tom Brown had made 20 apiece, and they were loudly cheered.

Then came the tea interval.

"We're fairly up against it, Sylvia," said Kangaroo, as he escorted his cousin to the tea-tables. "We want one hundred and fifty to win!"

"It's not an impossibility—"

"But it's next-door to it," Sylvia smiled.

"I want to see you make a century, Harry, in the second innings."

"I'll do my best to oblige," said Kangaroo. "But it's easier to talk about getting centuries than it is to actually compile them! That dusky fellow—Hurree Singh—bowls like a wizard. Cocoonut-shies aren't in it when he gets going!"

"He may have lost his sting."

"Hope so," said Kangaroo fervently, "or it will be all up with us!"

Tea was a merry meal, so far as the Greyfriars fellows were concerned.

But the St. Jim's fellows, for the most part, consumed their bread-and-butter and cake in silence. They were confronted with a formidable task. The labours of Hercules appeared trifling by comparison to the junic's cricketers.

But the silence of the St. Jim's players was the silence of determination rather than of despair.

What Greyfriars had accomplished they could accomplish themselves, they reflected. If they went down, they would go down fighting. But, with Harry Noble's influence and example to

inspire them, it was quite possible that they would not go down at all! For the junior from Australia was proving himself to be a very capable skipper, and, better still, a nailing good sportsman!

CHAPTER 8.

Australia Wins!

MEANWHILE, what of the original St. Jim's eleven—the fellows who, by rights, should now have been engaged in knocking spots off the Greyfriars Remove?

In the old beacon-tower, miles away from St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. had passed a wretched night—a night of acute discomfort and privation.

They had tried to force open the stout oaken door which had stood between them and their freedom. But all their efforts had proved futile.

They had then climbed the spiral staircase, and entered the apartment at the top of the tower. There was a lantern in the room, and by means of this lantern the prisoners might have signalled for help. But not one of them possessed any matches.

And so in gloom and despair, unrelieved by any prospect of escape, the juniors had remained all night in the tower.

And what a night it had been!

Not one of the party had slept a wink. Sleep had been impossible in such circumstances.

When the morning broke, and the sunlight streamed in through the solitary barred window, Tom Merry and Talbot again climbed to the top of the tower, and signalled for assistance.

But the signals had not been seen. There was nobody to see them. In that remote part of the country few people were abroad.

"Looks as if we shall have to stay here indefinitely!" said Tom Merry.

Talbot nodded.

"It's awful!" he said. "We shan't get back to St. Jim's in time for the match!"

"Even if we did, we shouldn't be able to play," said the captain of the B-shell.

"Our fellows are absolutely done up. Fatty Wynn declares he's starving, and if we have to stay in this show much longer he won't be very far from the truth!"

At that moment Jack Blake's voice boomed up from below.

"Anything doing, you fellows?"

"Nothing!" replied Tom Merry.

"We've shouted till we're nearly hoarse, and we've waved our handkerchiefs till our arms are aching. But there's nobody to hear or see."

"We'll come up an' we'll see you, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And he and Jack Blake mounted the spiral staircase.

The faces of the juniors were white and strained. The long night of captivity had taken toll of their vitality.

With the dawning of a new day they had expected to be liberated. But their expectations were not realised.

For upwards of an hour Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus remained on the lookout at the top of the tower. But help seemed as far off as ever.

Figgins and Kerr then took a turn. They fluttered their handkerchiefs from the window, and shouted to the full extent of their lung-power.

"Help! Rescue!"

And at last their cries were heard.

A farm labourer, who was making his way across the fields, glanced up in the direction from whence the shouts came, and, greatly wondering, he hurried across to the tower.

"What be these lads a-doin' of up there?" he exclaimed.
 "We're not here from choice!" shouted Kerr. "We're locked in!"
 "For goodness sake bash the door in, or something!" growled Figgins.
 The farm labourer approached the door of the tower, and pitted his weight against it.
 "This 'ere door," he said slowly, "refuses to budge!"
 "Well, go and get a battering-ram, or something!" yelled Kerr.
 But the rustic, like the door, refused to budge. For some moments he stood scratching his head in perplexity.
 "You be in a rare tight fix!" he observed at length.
 "And so will you be if you don't put a jerk in it!" bawled Figgins. "Buzz off and get help—sharp!"

After a great deal of hesitation the farm labourer strolled off. He did not return for nearly an hour, and the juniors began to despair of his ever returning at all. But he came at last, accompanied by a couple of hefty-looking men, who were armed with crowbars.

A combined attack was then made upon the door, which, after a persistent bombardment from without, was eventually swabbed off its hinges.

"Huw wah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Fweedom at last, deah boys!"

"About time, too!" grunted Jack Blake. "If I'd stayed in this place much longer I should have gone potty!"

The St. Jim's juniors staggered out into the bright sunshine. They thanked their liberators, but were unable to recompense them for the trouble they had taken, owing to the fact that they had no money, their cash and property having been stolen overnight.

For that same reason Tom Merry & Co. were unable to return to St. Jim's by train or to hire a conveyance.

"Afraid it means walking back," said Talbot.

A hollow groan came from Fatty Wynn. "Oh crumbs! We can't possibly tramp twenty miles!"

"Needs must, when the devil drives!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pr'aps we shall get a lift on the way," suggested Dick Brooke hopefully.

The juniors set out on the long trail to St. Jim's. They were directed by the men who had liberated them from the tower.

It was a nightmare journey.

A twenty-mile walk would have been appalling enough in the ordinary way. But the juniors were handicapped by being stale and exhausted at the very outset.

For ten miles they tramped under the blazing summer sun; and then Fatty Wynn collapsed. He threw himself down on the grassy bank, and vowed he could go no farther.

The others saw that Fatty was not shamming. He was indeed "whacked."

The whole party halted. Many of them were in almost as sorry a plight as Fatty Wynn.

They were half-way home; but ten more miles remained. And how they were going to cover that distance the juniors did not know.

But help came at last in the person of Dr. Croft, the medical man from Wayland. He was returning by car from a visit to London, and he slowed up in surprise when he caught sight of the St. Jim's juniors lying in recumbent attitudes on the bank.

"What, in the name of all that's curious, are you boys doing here?" he exclaimed.

In a few sentences Tom Merry explained what had happened—how the party had been trapped in the tower, and deprived

of all their possessions, and how, having secured their freedom, they were endeavouring to get back to St. Jim's.

The doctor became sympathetic at once. And his sympathy took a practical shape.

"I can't take you back in my car," he said. "It would only hold five at the utmost. But I'll tell you what I will do. I'll advance you the money for your railway-fares, and you can return by train from the nearest station, which is barely a quarter of a mile from here."

"Bai Jove! That's awfully wippin' of you, doctah!" said Arthur Augustus gratefully.

"Nonsense! I can't leave you stranded like this!"

The doctor handed over an adequate sum of money to Tom Merry, and went on his way. And then the exhausted juniors crawled, rather than walked, to the railway-station, and took tickets to Rylecombe.

The afternoon was well advanced when the members of the cricket eleven, famished and footsore, returned as unexpectedly as they had disappeared.

Dr. Holmes was the first to see them, from his study window. And he listened in amazement to Tom Merry's graphic description of what had occurred.

"My dear boys," said the Head, "you are in urgent need of food—"

"At the mention of that word a sparkle came into Fatty Wynn's eyes.

"Go at once to the dining-hall, my boys, and I will arrange for a substantial meal to be set before you," continued the Head.

As Tom Merry & Co. staggered into the hall, a storm of cheering burst forth. And it came from the direction of the cricket-ground.

"Hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Talbot. "What's going on, I wonder?"

The juniors were far too exhausted to go out and see; but from the windows of the hall it was possible to get a good view of the cricket-match which was in progress.

"My—my only aunt!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's the Greyfriars match!"

"What!"

"Some enterprising merchant must have raised a team!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Kangaroo's batting," said Jack Blake.

"And he's going great guns!" said Dick Redfern. "By Jove! Did you see that?"

Harry Noble had just despatched a half-volley of Hurree Singh's to the boundary.

"Wonder how the game stands?" murmured Manners.

The juniors were soon to learn.

Bernard Glyn came rushing into the dining-hall, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Glad you've got back at last!" he said breathlessly. "Railton's just been telling us all about it. You must have had a putrid time!"

"Well, we won't pretend we've enjoyed ourselves," said Tom Merry. "We haven't! It was beastly!"

"I'm dying to hear all about it!" said Glyn.

"And we're dying to hear who raised this new eleven!" said Figgins.

"Kangaroo, of course!"

"What are the scores, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"We tied on the first innings," was the reply. "Greyfriars made 149 in their second knock, leaving us to get 150 to win."

"A tall order!" said Talbot. "But Kangaroo will pull it off!" said Bernard Glyn. "He's playing the game of his life! I'm not insulting any

of you fellows when I say I've never seen anybody put up a better show."

"What's our score?" asked Kerr eagerly.

"When I came away it was ninety for four wickets."

"Ye gods! How ripping!"

"And Kangaroo's made most of 'em off his own bat," said Glyn. "He's well in the running for his century."

"Hurrah!"

"I got a duck myself," continued Bernard Glyn. "But what does that matter, so long as old Kangy pulls the game out of the fire?"

At that moment two of the maids entered with laden trays, and Tom Merry & Co. sat down to appease their hunger.

The meal was eaten to the accompaniment of cheering from without.

Harry Noble's partner at the wickets was Ralph Reckness Cardew; and the Greyfriars fellows, realising that they could do nothing with Noble, were concentrating their energies on getting rid of Cardew.

But Cardew refused to be got rid of. He was a fixture. He did not go in for Jesopian drives, or anything of that sort. But he managed to keep his end up, and that was all that was necessary.

To give the Greyfriars fellows their due, they never once slackened. Victory was being wrested from their grasp, but they were still as keen as mustard, and were as active as squirrels in the field.

But the batsmen triumphed. And at length a mighty roar went up from three hundred throats.

"They—they've won!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"They had! And, with the winning hit, Kangaroo had completed his century—the first of the season!"

St. Jim's seemed to have gone mad.

A tremendous demonstration marked the conclusion of the game; and Tom Merry & Co., crowding to the windows of the dining-hall, saw Kangaroo carried shoulder-high to the pavilion by an enthusiastic throng. And then they saw him set down on the pavilion steps, whilst a slim, athletic girl came forward with outstretched hand to congratulate him.

Sylvia Lennox had every reason to be proud of her Australian cousin!

CHAPTER 9.

The Culprit Discovered!

SEVERAL moments elapsed. Then the hero of the match, hot, breathless, but triumphant, came into the dining-hall with Sylvia. And Tom Merry & Co., exhausted though they were, were not too exhausted to send up a ringing cheer.

"Kangy, old man, you're a giddy Trojan!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"I doubt if I myself could have put up a better show!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your batting," began Jack Blake, "was—"

"Blow my batting!" said Kangaroo.

"First of all, let me introduce my cousin—Miss Sylvia Lennox. And now let's hear the full story of your adventures."

Tom Merry & Co. described in detail all that had happened during the past twenty-four hours.

Harry Noble, and his cousin listened attentively, and when the narrative was finished they quitted the dining-hall together.

"Sylvia," said Kangaroo, "would you think it beastly of me to slope off now?"

(Continued on page 20.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 646.

A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA!

By "COOEE."

(Continued from last week.)

"HOW can you tell a harmless snake?" asked Jack Thornton.
"Well," answered his uncle, "the learned men say that snakes with over two hundred and forty plates or scales are harmless, but as no one can stop to count, it as well to kill the brutes first and count the plates afterwards. The rule in Australia is, kill every snake you can. It is a point of honour."

The servant-boy took the snake away and hung it over a wire fence, where he heat of the sun would soon dry it up.

Mr. Thornton told Jack to put on his leggings and go with him round by a swamp at the back of his farm.

"Take your gun. We may see some more snakes, or something else to shoot."

They went round by the district school, which had the post-office attached to it, and some boys who were a little early, were gathered near a hole, down which one after another was putting his arm. A small boy was saying, as Jack and his uncle came up:

"I can feel him, but can't get a proper grip of his tail."

"Well, boys," said Mr. Thornton, "you're at it again."

"Let me try," said a bigger boy; "my arm is longer than yours."

He thrust his arm down the hole, shouted "I've got him!" and drew out a black and red snake, about three feet long, twisted it round his head like a whip, and threw it a few yards away. The snake fell, wriggled feebly, and then lay quite still. The Australian boy had done the usual thing, broken its back with a quick jerk.

Jack was amazed, and envied the pluck and the skill of the young Colonials.

When they had gone about a mile they found the bush track wider at one part and more exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Suddenly Mr. Thornton stopped, and told Jack to listen to the excited chatter of some birds ahead.

"What is the cause of it, uncle?"

"Shouldn't wonder but a snake is about. The birds often make this noise if he is near their nest. Let us go quietly."

Sure enough, they had not gone far when they saw a large, brown snake stretched full length and as still as a stick. As they looked a little bird hopped out of a bush and stood in front of the snake, about a yard away.

The snake's mouth was open, and the long tongue was gently quivering. The bird sat watching it as if it were a worm or insect, hopped a little nearer as if to catch it, when, quicker almost than the eye could follow, the snake's head darted forward, and the poor bird disappeared into the fatal jaws.

"Shoot, Jack, if you like," said Mr. Thornton.

After steadily aiming close behind the head, Jack fired, and was immensely pleased to hear his uncle say:

"You've got him, my boy! He's as dead as a doornail!"

To make quite sure, Mr. Thornton gave the snake a vigorous blow with a stick.

I congratulate you, Jack, on your first snake! We'll hang him over

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 646.

the fence, and I'll get a boy to skin him, so that you may keep the skin in memory of a great day!"

On their way home they saw what very few people in Australia see—a double snake. Two snakes had got hold of a rat, one holding it by the head, the other having a firm grip upon the hind quarters. Neither would let go. The bigger and more powerful snake began swallowing the rat, and as the smaller one still held on, its head went with the rat's body, and by degrees entirely disappeared down the big snake's throat. No sooner had this wonderful feat been accomplished than the victorious snake wanted to go to sleep, and, coiling himself comfortably, was soon enjoying first winks.

"Now, Jack," said his uncle, "you can kill him with a stick if you like, and if you're smart about it."

Like a true English boy, Jack was delighted to get the chance, and struck firmly and quickly again and again.

"That'll do, my boy; you've broken his back half a dozen times!"

On the way home Mr. Thornton told Jack that the little bird killed by the snake was not fascinated, as many books say. The tongue is only used to decoy the bird. The old story about a snake licking his prey all over before swallowing it is quite untrue.

"What if the snake had bitten me?" asked Jack.

"Well," said his uncle, "I would have cut the skin out round the bite, tied your arm up tight with my handkerchief, sucked the wound, and put into it some permanganate of potash, which we always keep at home and in schools. Every bush-boy in Australia knows what to do. A little 'snake-bite outfit,' including tourniquet, lancet, and permanganate is kept in every school."

"What a wonderful place the Australian bush is!" said Jack. "I'm glad I came to see and hear all these strange things!"

"Well, my boy, one of these days I'm going to show you the queerest creature in Australia, and perhaps in all the world."

That night, in his dreams, Jack saw many snakes, but managed to kill them all, and never once was bitten.

(Our next chapter will tell of "The Queerest Creature in Australia.")

The Editor's Chat.

Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Electricity House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

FOR NEXT WEEK.

Next Wednesday's splendid long complete story of the chums of St. Jim's is one that I can confidently recommend to all lovers of a really good, rousing school yarn. Dick Brooke, the day-boy, who in his home life has adventures to struggle against which the average St. Jim's junior knows nothing of, gets badly "up against it." His own pluck, however, and the loyal aid of his brave sister, with the addition of a helping hand from Tom Merry at a critical moment, pulls him through. All will enjoy

"DICK BROOKE'S TRIAL!"

By Martin Clifford.

Our next story of the popular chums of St. Katie's, is a particularly amusing one, and deals with the startling adventures of one Richard Dexter, on the great occasion of Speech Day at St. Katie's. I will not spoil the story for you by giving away the plot.

You will derive special enjoyment from reading

"KIDNAPPED!"

By Michael Poole.

Next week, again, I hope to squeeze in another instalment of Jack Thornton's adventures under the title of

"A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA."

By "Cooee."

and in addition, page 2 will again be devoted to that now most popular feature in connection with which lots of half-crowns are still flying round:

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

THE FUTURE.

It would not be good if some of the clever folks who talk so wisely about the future were able to tell what was going to happen. We should have the GEM of the week after next being read before it was printed. And there is another thing. This is a world of striving—or should be. If results were known beforehand, lots of people would be discouraged—often without reason, for, naturally, there could be no such thing, really, as knowing what would happen. The future is being fashioned to a large extent every day, and we all have a tiny share in the work. What might happen is another horse entirely. What may happen is an affair in which we are all mightily concerned. It is easy to admire new discoveries, and the work of the patient scientist who goes plodding on in his study, year in year out, but as for the individual who talks of forecasting events, he is a mere beater of the air. We are all operatives in the factory of the future, and to some extent it rests with us.

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A Grand Long Complete Tale of
Dickie Dexter & Co., at St. Katie's.

By MICHAEL POOLE.

CHAPTER I.

What Happened to Dingo.

WHEN you come to think of it quite carefully, the affair of the Kangaroo's Menagerie really begins away back in Australia.

Australia is a big place, where they do things on a bigger scale than in the Old Country. Jimmy Curtis was born on a farm which was reckoned to be one of the biggest in a place where most farms are pretty big.

It was the sort of farm where a few odd animals more or less didn't make any difference at all. Jimmy had a dog of his own almost before he could walk. Later on he had several dogs, and they all knew Jimmy.

Besides the dogs, he had one or two other odd animals. Somebody gave him a monkey, and there was a tame, guaranteed non-poisonous snake, and a special kind of goat, all of which regarded young Curtis as their own particular friend.

When Jimmy went to Murray's School, he took one of his dogs with him, and found that it was quite possible to keep a couple, if he wanted to do so.

They were kept off the premises, so to speak, but the Head of Murray's, being a dog expert himself, rather encouraged his boys to keep a dog.

When Jimmy came to England he left his dogs and the monkey and the goat and the pet snake and a horse, and one or two other favourites, on the farm. For a year or two, at all events, he would have to cut the circus business out of his life. England was only a little place, and they wouldn't stand that sort of thing.

But when he'd been at Katie's a week or two the Kangaroo's ideas began to alter a little.

There was heaps and heaps of room

round the school for just one little dog, and there was nothing at all in the rules about not having a dog.

And, anyway, having a dog of his own was one of Curtis' habits now. He felt homesick without one.

One bright day he was in Dulchester. Dickie Dexter had come in with him, but had disappeared on some errand of his own, and Curtis was exploring the side-streets, where he dropped across a queer little shop, distinctly dirty and ill-kept, with cages in the window.

There were canaries and parrots and white mice in the front stalls, while at the back were bigger cages. Some of them had rabbits in, munching steadily away, and there was a glass tank, with goldfish doing their well-known sudden darting act.

But the thing that really got Curtis in the place where he sometimes had that homesick sort of feeling was a square box at the back. There was wire netting in front of the box, and, sitting on a few odd wisps of straw behind the netting was a dog.

At least, it would be a dog one day, when it grew up; but just at present it was only a very small puppy. A sad-eyed, young fox-terrier he was, and life was horribly dull for him this afternoon. He had eaten everything except the straw, and had got thoroughly fed-up with the performance of the parrot which hung just above his head.

So he sat and stared through the wire-netting and through the dirty glass window, trying to keep his eyes off the cage of white mice which was fastened up somewhere on his right side.

A shadow loomed in front of the window, and two eyes stared down on the puppy. Then the figure made a sign of flicking his thumb and fingers together. It was a greeting, and all the

pent-up feeling in the youthful terrier responded. He jumped up and clawed at the wire-netting, and gave a shrill yelp of joy.

Jimmy Curtis flicked his fingers again. For perhaps ten seconds he simply stood gazing at the dog, and a happy sort of feeling stole over him.

He never really thought about anything else till he was inside the dark shop, and a man was asking just what he could do for him.

"It's that jolly little puppy you've got stuck in the window," Jim explained.

"How much do you want for him?"
Of course, the argument only began then. Jimmy Curtis wasn't exactly an ace, and when he came to talk about pedigree and points the fancier admitted that the puppy wasn't likely to take any prizes.

"But he's a good dog. You'll train him as easy as winking," the fancier urged. "I can see you'll give him a good home, so I'll say thirty shillings to you, sir."

"I'll give you twenty," said Jim, and produced the note.

He was rather surprised when the man closed with the offer.

The question of carting the puppy away looked an awkward one at first, but Jim overcame it. He was wearing a Norfolk jacket, and by cutting the lining he made a pocket inside.

The first real greetings between Curtis and his new possession were joyful. Curtis decided that henceforth his name should be Dingo, because that also had a home-like sound, and Dingo himself had no objection.

Dingo and Curtis went back to Katie's pretty quickly. There was one or two minor incidents on the way, but Dingo wanted to get out and walk. But

there was no real excitement, and Curtis landed his precious charge quite safe and sound in Study No. 10.

When, in due course, Bill Strong, Dobbie, and the Kid came in they found the Kangaroo full-length on the floor, intensely interested in the gyrations of a black-and-white ball which was whirling about after a piece of paper which was fastened to a string. The black-and-white affair was Dingo, having the first real holiday of his fair young life.

"My hat!" said the Kid, when Dingo was calmed down and put on the table for inspection. "Isn't he a jolly bow-wow? Where did you get him from, Kangaroo? What are you going to do with it?"

"Bought him," Curtis answered. "He's mine. I'm going to keep him here!" Answers to the name of Dingo from to-day. He'll be a real pal to you, Kid. What do you think of him, Bill? This'll be something new for you to photograph, Dobbie!"

"He's a ripping little beastie!" said Bill Strong excitedly. "But I don't quite see where you're going to shove him. There'll be a row—"

"Rats!" Curtis retorted. "Don't you worry, Bill. I'll find a place for him; but just till he gets used to me I'll keep him in the study. Hi! Dingo!"

He held out a piece of biscuit for Dingo's benefit. In about twenty minutes Dingo wasn't so much Curtis' little dog as the property of the company.

Dingo, of course, showed a particular liking for Curtis, but he was a sociable little animal, and was prepared to be happy with any of them.

At the end of three days Curtis found quite a comfortable, permanent residence for him.

It was a sort of little archway in one of the old buildings attached to the school, and, with the aid of an old soap-box which he managed to beg from the laundry, and a small quantity of straw, Curtis and Dexter fixed up a decent home for Dingo during those periods when other duties kept them from him.

One or two others were let into the secret of Dingo's advent among them, and, having made his acquaintance and expressed their admiration, they became, as it were, members of the Dingo Club. They were free to unfasten Dingo, and, subject to wise safeguards, take him for a walk whenever the occupants of Study No. 10 were unable to do so.

You'll guess what happened in the course of a fortnight or so. Dingo, under Curtis' early tuition, became a very respectable and pleasant little tike. He didn't bark more than was necessary, and even then it was quite a discreet sort of bark, and everybody got to know about him, and he got to know everybody.

Even the Head saw Dingo, inquired about him, and smiled. After all, there really wasn't any objection to a little dog like Dingo, and the Head wasn't the sort of man to go kicking up a fuss over a thing of that sort.

At the end of that first fortnight Dingo was practically a recognised member of the establishment at Katie's. He wasn't really Curtis' dog at all, and here again the Kangaroo wasn't the kind of fellow to get annoyed about it.

He really felt quite pleased that Dingo was having such a good time. At the same time, Kangaroo felt that what he really wanted was a dog of his own. Dingo had revived the dog desire in Curtis.

"Keep your eyes open, Kid," he begged Dexter. "What I want to get hold of is a real dog—mean to say, Dingo's a jolly little chap, and all that, but there

isn't enough dog about him, if you understand. And, anyway, we never get a chance with him nowadays. Big Hallam and one or two other fellows in the Sixth must lock him up in their studies at times. It's all right, but—we'll have a dog of our own, laddie!"

Curtis mentioned the matter to his friend the fancier. Just what happened no one will ever know, because the Kangaroo says it was a fair and square business deal, and the fancier, when questioned about the matter, said that it was no business of his if the young gentleman wanted a bulldog, and didn't care whether it had got a pedigree or a character or anything else.

Anyhow, one warm, sunny afternoon Curtis struggled into Study No. 10. He was wearing his thick winter overcoat, buttoned at the bottom and open at the top, and he was perspiring freely. His lips were pressed firmly together, and the gleam in his eye reminded one of Jolly Roger.

"What on earth—" began Dickie Dexter, who happened to be the only occupant of the study.

"Look!" Curtis unfastened his coat and did a conjuring trick with a piece of sacking. From it tumbled what appeared at first sight to be a young mountain, until it untwisted itself and managed to stand on its feet.

"What about that?" asked the Kangaroo triumphantly. "That's a dog, Kid! A real, genuine—Down, Springy! Down!"

Before Dickie Dexter knew what was happening, the young mountain had literally flung himself on him. He kicked up as much row as a cheering elephant, and the Kid shoved his hands out violently in the hope of warding him off.

Curtis had the brute by the collar in a few seconds, and, to be truthful, Springy had made no attempt to bite.

"It's just his playfulness," the Kangaroo explained. "He was like that with me at first, but Snooks says he's quite a peaceable dog really—so long as you don't upset him. He's my very own, Kid, so let me have him almost as a gift, because he wants to get him into a good home. He'll be a real pal to you, Kid!"

"Keep your hand on his collar!" the Kid warned. "Let me get out! I love you, Kangaroo, but not your dog. I'm going! Send word down to the cricket-field when you've taken the brute away. I like dogs, but not ferocious man-eating monstrosities—"

"He's a jolly fine bull-dog!" protested Curtis. "I'll keep him here for a day or two, and then we'll fix up a little home for him somewhere near Dingo."

"I'm going for Bill Strong," said the Kid, pausing by the door for a moment.

"Take it back, Kangy! There's going to be no end of trouble if you keep that ugly brute round here!"

He banged the door behind him quickly, as Springy, having bided his time and waited till Curtis' grip relaxed a little, made a sudden jump.

But Dexter had gone, and Curtis quietly called the dog to him.

"Good old Springy!" he murmured. "Nice boy! You wouldn't hurt anybody, would you? Just want to show 'er how glad you are you've got a good home. Quiet, Springy! Don't you worry! There isn't going to be any trouble at all, old boy."

And Springy, square-shouldered, heavy-jawed and wild-eyed, pushed his face under the fold of Curtis' coat and shook his head in agreement. There needn't be the least bit of trouble so far as he was concerned!

CHAPTER 2.

Springy Gets the Boot.

YOU'VE probably noticed before how things happen in this world. One bright lad gets a bicycle, and before the moon changes everybody in the village has bought, borrowed, stolen, hired or won in a raffle bicycles for themselves.

That's something like what happened at Katie's. It was a sort of epidemic. The noble character of Dingo, combined with his gentle playfulness, convinced at least half the school that what they really wanted was a dog—or something like a dog, anyhow.

In the Second Form the dog idea was modified a little, and got changed to white mice. You see, the danger of having a dog was that some of the big fellows might collar it, or there might be a row; white mice could be kept all nice and comfortable in any odd corner, and carried about in your pocket at times.

Nobody really knew about this, except perhaps Snooks, who kept the queer little fancier's shop in Dulchester. During the fortnight after he sold Dingo, to a fellow wearing Katie's cap, business flourished with Snooks.

The Third and Fourth also varied the idea a little. One rather brainy crowd got a canary to brighten up the study they shared, and two or three, whose names were down on the waiting list for very little dogs, managed, with some difficulty, to cart back to Katie's a bowl of goldfish.

In the Fifth, two or three fellows produced dogs, about the end of the fortnight. Smitty, who was one of the real nuts, disappeared mysteriously one day, and came back carrying a closed bag. In it was a very pleasing specimen of the black cat.

Most of the fellows below the Sixth did all this surreptitiously, but the pots of the Sixth told Blott, the porter, to make certain arrangements. The little arches, of which hitherto Dingo had been sole tenant, became converted into a series of kennels.

In the next few days Springy became a kind of well-known secret joke. Whether the head knew about him or not I don't quite know, but there was an informal meeting of masters, which discussed the question of boys keeping dogs.

"I am loth to interfere," said the Head, "though my mind is filled with misgivings. However, we will just see how things go on during the next few days. The matter must be kept within reasonable limits."

Mr. Roger Blunt was entirely in favour of allowing boys to have dogs, provided the number was restricted.

The general idea was to wait for a day or two. Something was bound to happen within a very short time.

It did!

To this day the full truth is really a mystery. Did some of the Sixth bribe Blott to release Springy from his chain?

Or did Blott do it purposely for some motive not yet comprehended? Or was Blott's own story true?

Blott said that he was just passing along the back of the old refectory, never thinking of Springy, or dogs, or anything like that, when, without any warning, Springy simply sprang.

In self-defence, Blott raised his arms swiftly, and in doing so knocked the chain which kept Springy prisoner.

The chain just became unfastened, and all that Blott saw was a dark-brown mass of ugliness moving swiftly across space. It disappeared somewhere, somehow—

and after that Blott's interest in the matter declined.

Blott says that the tower clock was just striking the half-hour after eleven when he first saw Springy. Mr. Blunt will testify that it was not more than thirty-seven and three-quarter minutes past eleven when he heard a dull thud, several times repeated, on the Form-room door.

Thinking it was Blott going the rounds with some list or other, Jolly Roger called out cheerfully:

"Come in!"

The thudding was repeated, and varied with queer, rumbling sounds, as though the visitor outside hadn't quite managed to turn the handle.

"Just see who is at the door, Bunting, please!" said Roger, and began again to explain certain idioms in the French language.

Then: Whoo-oo-oo!

Springy had wonderful eyesight. He picked out Curtis almost before the Kangaroo grasped that his little pet was paying a morning call. The next second he was hurling himself across the room and had landed in Curtis' arms, and was licking his face.

"Springy! Springy!" whispered Curtis reproachfully. "Sh, Springy!"

"Ah! Curtis!" rapped out Jolly Roger, and came to the front of his desk.

"Is that you—"

Hearing a new voice, Springy turned, and beheld the tall, black-gowned man standing so fiercely upright on the little platform on which the desk stood.

"Good-morning!" said Springy, in his own quiet way. "How d'you do?"

That was what he meant, though to the onlookers it appeared like a wild and ferocious attack on their beloved master. Mr. Blunt staggered back beneath the weight of Springy's avanced.

But Springy went up against something this morning. Mr. Blunt demanded and commanded respect from men, boys, dogs, and all things that breathed.

Before Springy had a chance to get a proper grip with his teeth in Mr. Blunt's coat, he found himself seized and deposited violently on the floor.

"Is this your dog, Curtis?" demanded Roger, and still held Springy firmly in position on the floor.

"Yes, sir!"

"Remove him at once!" said Mr. Blunt.

Curtis came from his desk, and picked Springy up in his arms. Now that the excitement had been squashed, the Transitus began to see the humour of it all. It was quite a funny sight to see the Kangaroo clasping about half-a-hundred-weight of panting ugliness to his chest! "Silence!" said Roger, as they began to laugh. "See that, he is properly secured, Curtis! I will see you at twelve-thirty. Turning again to the subject of idiomatic French, we find that—"

The incident was closed. Curtis staggered out, and within a few minutes Springy was being attached to his chain again.

But Curtis observed that the chain was quite undamaged. Springy hadn't broken it, and the spring-catch at the end was in perfect order.

He returned to the Form-room. At twelve-thirty, when the others filed out, he remained behind with a vague feeling that there was going to be a row.

As a matter of fact, Jolly Roger was quite kind and gentle about the matter.

"If I report this matter to the Head," he pointed out, "there will be an order issued forbidding pets of all kinds. I don't want to do that. You have a small dog, I believe? That is sufficient. Within reasonable limits, I am the last

person in the world to interfere with your hobbies and pleasures, but you must admit that an animal of the proportions we have recently seen is carrying the matter a little too far. He will have to go."

"Yes, sir," said Curtis meekly.

"You will return him to his former home this afternoon," Jolly Roger went on. "If you desire to keep a pet, obtain something that is not so boisterous, something, perhaps, that doesn't delight to bark and bite, and is kind and gentle. You understand, Curtis?"

"Yes, sir," said the Kangaroo. "I understand, sir."

When he entered Study No. 10 they were trying to straighten up, but they stopped awhile to tell the Kangaroo just what they thought of him and his dog.

"I'll get some little thing of my own that'll make 'em sorry they bunged old Springy out!" Curtis decided. "What about a ferret? Or a real prize-winner whippet? Or— I'll have a talk with old Snooks! He'll know!"

It was in this frame of mind that he entered the dirty little shop of the fancier. There was another customer in, and he was evidently doing earnest business with Snooks.

Curtis wandered to the back of the shop, and knelt down to cheer old Springy up. The bulldog seemed almost as low and depressed as Curtis, and there wasn't an ounce of springiness in his massive form.

Suddenly Curtis looked up, and saw something which startled him. In the dim light of the drab shop he saw Mr. Snooks standing well back from his counter, while the little, foreign-looking customer was holding out his right arm.

Round this arm was curling and twining—a snake! Its head shot out two or three times from the man's shoulder and touched him on his cheek.

"Jumping snakes!" said Curtis. "If that reptile's of the poison brand, there's going to be trouble here pretty quickly! Down, Springy! Down!"

For even Springy was getting excited over the business now!

CHAPTER 3.

A Circus Performance.

AS Curtis stood upright, watching intently every movement of the snake, Mr. Snooks began to speak again.

"It ain't any use," he said sorrowfully. "I've got more snakes than I can sell.

"Ah, but zees—zees is different!" urged the man. "I will not ask you much. I will say fifteen sheelings! Gif me fifteen sheelings and my sweet leetle Leonora shall be yours—for eclair and eclair!"

"No!" There was a finality about Mr. Snooks' negative that crushed even the snake.

Slowly and solemnly it slithered back and wriggled into a cheap little attache-case which was lying open on the counter.

The customer turned round and espied Curtis.

"Sir—you!" he cried exultantly. "You will buy my leetle Leonora! The great marvel of ze age! She can do anything but talk! She will—"

"What's it all about?" Curtis asked cheerfully. "The snake? Is it poisonous? What's wrong with it?"

"Poisonous? Pah! See!"

He began to whistle dolefully, and in a moment or so the head of the snake appeared from the attache-case. "She is great pet for all ze children."

They got to business after that. Leonora, it appeared, had been one of five beautiful reptiles, and in their

painy days they had earned the gentleman now present, Professor Noire, as much as five pounds a week.

But the public had got tired of his great snake- charming act, and, anyhow, Leonora's brothers and sisters had pined away. At the moment Leonora herself was on sale to the highest bidder.

She was about three feet long and about three-quarters of an inch in stoutness, with a head just a shade thicker and heavier than the rest of her. Even Professor Noire was a little hazy about her family history, but she looked highly-polished, yet wasn't slimy when you touched her.

In the full daylight she was prettily-marked, with bits of red and gold peeping out of her back, and here and there splashes of white which gave her a dignified appearance. And she ate anything, having been so trained by Professor Noire when a member of the circus in which he was a leading performer.

"Complete with ze box which is her leetle home!" the professor urged. "She haf no vices; she cannot bite, and she is—oh, so gentle, so kind!"

Leonora was put through her paces, and really she was a remarkably intelligent snake. Curtis became more and more interested, and tried one or two of the tricks himself.

Leonora responded nobly.

Now, the Kangaroo wasn't really keen on snakes as a hobby, but in view of his recent sad experiences it seemed to him that Leonora would be an ideal companion for him. Nobody could complain about her, and yet— Well, the Sixth wouldn't have it all their own way!

Inside the next few minutes Curtis did quite a lot of business. Mr. Snooks didn't want Springy back again, and asserted that Curtis had probably spoiled the dog. However, he agreed eventually to take him, but no money changed hands.

Of the poison brand, there's going to be trouble here pretty quickly! Down, Springy! Down!"

It was nearly four-thirty when he got back to St. Katie's. Bill Strong, Dobbie, and the Kid were frowning around on the tea problem.

"Hallo, hallo, my noble Kangaroo!" the Kid greeted him cheerily. "Got rid of that man-eating monstrosity of yours? You ought to be a jolly old lion-tamer, Kangy! It was a great stunt this morning, though. See the way old Roger grappled with the untamed animal? Great! What do you swop Springy for? A tiger-cub, or a couple of white mice? What's that in the giddy case? You haven't brought another baby hippo this time!"

"Like to see it?" asked the Kangaroo; and there was a gentle note of amusement in his voice which roused their curiosity.

Curtis unfastened the case, and carefully put the lid back. Then he began to whistle a little song about home.

"Ho-ho-home! Ho-ho-home! Dearly-loved home,

Can I forget thee? Far-ar-ar though I ro-oh-oh-oh!"

It was Leonora's favourite song. Curtis had scarcely got to the long-drawn-out roaming part of the tune when up came Leonora.

The Kangaroo had purposely held the lid of the case so that his young friends shouldn't get a glimpse of his new pet.

too soon. Her head came up swiftly and in a straight line, and then—

"My giddy aunt! Chuck it!" Bill Strong yelled. "Bang the lid down, Curtis!"

"Hop it!" said the Kid. "Come on, Dobbie! Who wants to be a jolly snake-charmer? Not me!"

They all dashed to the door, and Curtis ceased his whistling. He felt that this was a proud moment.

"What's wrong, you chaps?" he asked gently. "You're not afraid of a little snake like this, are you? My own sweet little Leonora!"

He calmly stroked her head, and from the door the three watched him. They stayed there for a time, Bill Strong holding the handle in readiness for a swift exit if the brute tried any swift, darting action. And, for their benefit, Curtis put Leonora through one or two items of her remarkable and talented programme.

Then, Leonora gracefully retiring into her curls, he closed the case.

"What about it?" asked Dickie Dexter, when he felt safe again. "What's the trick, Kangy? Where do you come in? Are you taking your giddy little snake in as a permanent blazer, or is it merely here for an afternoon call?"

"Come and sit down, children!" Curtis bade them. "There ought to be a little amusement here for all of us!"

He explained about Leonora and all her good points. In due course Leonora was allowed to come forth again, and presently, when they were all thoroughly convinced that she really was a gentle creature, they became quite friendly with her.

And then they talked of her future. The Kid's eyes were beaming as he thought of all the possibilities before them.

"You're a concentrated chunk of brains, Kangy!" the Kid said unanimously. "We'll keep everything quite secret till to-morrow afternoon, and then the band will play."

There was going to be some real amusement to-morrow—in the afternoon! Leonora would positively appear, and the natives—especially the Sixth!—would be startled. The little lambs of Study No. 10 had the programme all mapped out!

So that what ought to happen now is a brief statement just as they have in the plays:

"Twenty-one hours elapse. Scene: the playing-fields at St. Katie's. Enter the four heroes with Leonora—in case complete."

But this isn't a play, but a truthful history, and it was nothing like that. Twenty-one hours didn't elapse before the fun began.

And there aren't four heroes in this story, anyway. Only two, and their names are Springy and Leonora. Let us for a moment turn our thoughts to Springy, tied up in Snooks' back yard.

Springy was absolutely fed up with the back yard. Moreover, he'd taken a fancy to St. Katie's. There was an airiness and spaciousness about the place that appealed to him, and he liked the big fellow who nursed him in his arms. All his life Springy had wanted to be fondled and nursed.

The whole of that night Springy tugged, pulled, jerked, and sprang. After a very tight breakfast he began again, and success crowned his efforts somewhere about ten o'clock in the morning.

There was about two yards of strong steel chain attached to his collar, but Springy didn't worry about that. He

was over the back yard wall and away, gladly and swiftly.

Despite the handicap of the chain, it is believed that Springy put up a record for the distance to St. Katie's. Nor did he waste any time this morning in scouting round, but went straight to the Transitus Form-room, where he felt sure of a warm welcome. He knocked at the door—

Consider the case of Leonora for a moment! The one point that the professor hadn't told Curtis about was that Leonora didn't always live in the attache-case, and that when she got tired of it she usually got out through one of the ventilation-holes in the side.

It was late in the evening when Leonora emerged, and sought a pleasant couch for the night. Over the back of the chair was a Norfolk coat, and Leonora espied a comfortable sort of pocket which appealed to her.

Curtis had left the jacket there because it was warm on returning from Dulchester, that afternoon, and he had taken a blazer instead. It was permissible to wear blazers in prep, but not in morning school.

Hence Curtis went down to breakfast in his blazer, then slipped along to the study and changed into his Norfolk coat. Then came morning prayers, followed by the Transitus Form-room.

Once or twice Curtis had a vague feeling that the coat was very heavy after a blazer; but not until they had been in the Form-room about ten minutes did he realise what it was. Something bulky seemed to be stirring, and Curtis, putting his hand down, felt Leonora's relevant complexion.

"My giddy aunt!" he thought. "Wonder how on earth she's got there? If Roger sees her— But why should he? So long as nobody starts whistling 'Home,' she'll stay there all right."

At ten-thirty there came a thud, thud, thud! scratch, scratch, scratch! at the door. Jolly Roger looked up quickly and stared at Curtis.

"Your dog, Curtis?" he began. "No, sir," said the Kangaroo. "He went back yesterday, sir."

"Very good!" Roger strode down the room, opened the door. Whoop-oo! Bang! Gr-r-rh!

Springy had come back! He was full of vim and violence, and, having nearly knocked Roger's desk over, he swung round, and did his famous imitation of a cannon-ball hurtling through the air, landing fair and square in Curtis' chest.

Just what happened then is rather confusing. Jolly Roger was rattling out frantically, Curtis was calling out, "Springy! Springy! Down, boy, down!" and Springy was trying to get the calming comfort of the Kangaroo's arms.

Generally, there was no end of a row, and Leonora suddenly wakened up and felt herself being shaken about and swung round, and thought it was time to make a few inquiries, signal or no signal. No good waiting till the band played "Home," with all this commotion going on.

She shot out skillfully, curled the first foot of herself round Curtis' wrist, and then did a swift sprint for the old familiar observation-post, which happened to be Curtis' shoulder.

Jolly Roger and about thirty bright lads of the Transitus had three minutes at least of sound circus performance.

Curtis was standing up, clear of his desk, and Springy was running round his legs, then jumping up to his chest, growling fiercely the whole time.

On Curtis' shoulder was coiled about eighteen inches of snake. Another eighteen inches extended up the side of his face, gaining, apparently, some little support from it, and a few odd inches, including the head, were wagging about above his hair.

"Down, Springy! Good dog! No, don't, sir! Leave her to me! She won't harm anyone! I'll sing her back again!"

For Mr. Blunt, seeing the snake, decided on prompt measures. Bull-dogs were amusing, but snakes— Urr-gh!

He jumped forward and picked up the long cane which nestled as an emblem of authority away behind his desk.

The words of Curtis checked him, and once again Jolly Roger stood and watched. Once again Curtis made an attempt to sing, but it wasn't up to much, and even while he was really getting going Jolly Roger darted forward and gripped Springy by the collar.

"Now, Curtis," Roger rapped out, "attend to the snake! I'll keep the dog!"

The Form began to enjoy it now. It was a great sight to see Curtis standing up like a noble hero and doing the snake-charming act, while Leonora glided gracefully round his arm and dived gently into the inside of his coat. But his singing, everybody agreed, was rotten.

Leonora had gone! Curtis turned meekly to Jolly Roger.

"I—I'll take Leonora away, sir," he suggested. "It will be better. She gets upset."

"By all means," said Roger grimly. "Take it away, and make very certain that it is properly secure. Do not return until you are quite sure. I will arrange about the dog myself. We will have your explanations of this circus performance later!"

Curtis retired. Roger went out shortly afterwards, leading Springy firmly and energetically. And that was the last the Transitus saw of either Springy or Leonora.

That same day a notice appeared on the boards, signed by J. A. Bird, headmaster:

"In future no boys will be allowed to keep dogs, mice, cats, snakes, or other pets on the school premises, except with the written permission of the headmaster, to whom application should be made through the usual channels."

Curtis read it, and smiled bitterly, then wandered out into the main court. As he did so, Jolly Roger crossed towards him, and with him was a pleasant little bundle of black and white, which bounded forward, and began whimpering for joy at Curtis' feet.

"Ah, Curtis!" Roger said cheerily, and stopped for a moment. "You have abandoned your menagerie, I hope? Better keep to this little fellow here, I think. We are not clearing all the dogs out, but the white mice are going! Two or three terriers are remaining. You have permission to retain Dingo. Yes: the Head mentioned it to me. I will let you have the authority later! A very decent little dog!"

"Yes, sir," said Curtis, and picked Dingo up in his arms. After all, there's no love like the old love, and Dingo had come back to his rightful master!

THE END.

(Another Grand Long Story of St. Katie's next week entitled "KIDNAPPED!" Order your copy EARLY.)



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AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!

(Continued from page 13.)

"Not at all, Harry. But why?"
"I've got an idea. I mean to get at grips with the gang who kidnaped them."

"Splendid!" said Sylvia. "I'm coming along, too."

Kangaroo and his cousin visited the garage in Wayland from which Tom Merry & Co. had hired the cha-bancane.

"What can I do for you?" asked the proprietor, coming forward.

"I want to see one of your drivers—Micky Flanagan," said Kangaroo.

Micky was promptly summoned, and Kangaroo, with equal promptness, flew at his throat—metaphorically, of course.
"You scoundrel! What d'you mean

by leaving those fellows stranded yesterday?"

"Faith, an' it was only a lark," said Micky. "Don't get excited, sir."

"It's as much as I can do to keep my hands off you!" said Kangaroo wrathfully. "Do you know what happened to those fellows?"

Micky shook his head.
"Then I'll tell you!"

And Kangaroo described how Tom Merry & Co. had been imprisoned in the old beacon-tower, and dispossessed of their money and their personal belongings.

Micky looked genuinely distressed.
"Shure, an' I didn't think anything of that sort would happen!" he exclaimed.

"Who bribed you to leave those fellows in the lurch?" demanded Kangaroo.

Micky Flanagan gave a very accurate description of Aubrey Racke.

"So it was Racke!" said Harry Noble.
"Well, I'm not surprised. We'll

deal with that precious outsider later. That's all I wanted to know. We'll get back now, Sylvia."

Racke of the Shell had a very disagreeable surprise that evening.

It had been a very eventful day for Tom Merry & Co.—a day crowded with incident and adventure. But they still had sufficient energy left to administer a well-merited bumping to Aubrey Racke, whose practical joke had led to such disastrous consequences.

But everybody agreed that the consequences would have been far more disastrous had not Australia—in the person of Kangaroo—come so opportunely to the rescue!

THE END.

(Another grand, long complete story of the chumps of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled "Dick Brooke's Trial!")

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