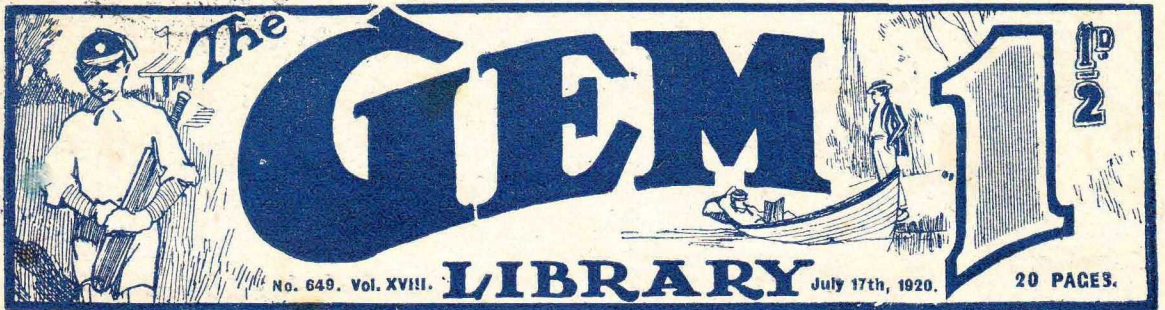


TWO GRAND COMPLETE STORIES IN THIS ISSUE!

The **GEM** ¹/₂

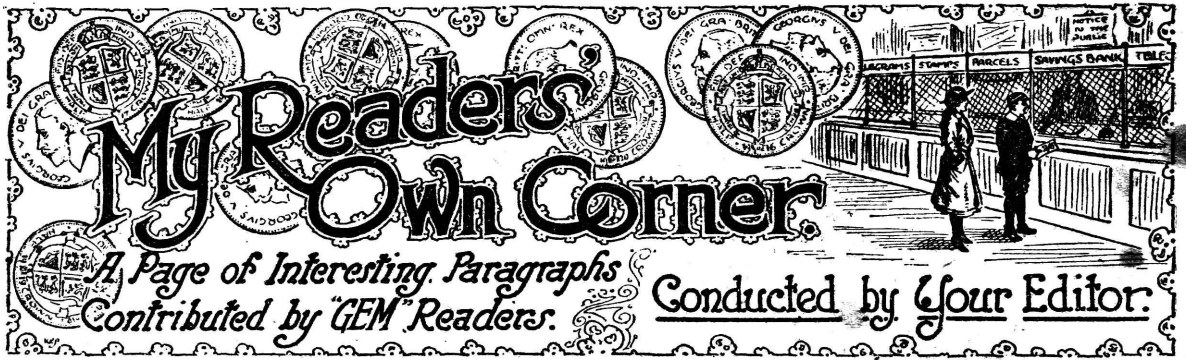
No. 649. Vol. XVIII. **LIBRARY** July 17th, 1920. 20 PAGES.



FACE TO FACE FOR THE FINAL RECKONING !

(A Dramatic Moment in the Grand School Story in this Issue.)

More Half-crowns for GEM Readers.



NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

THOSE EARLY NUMBERS.

No doubt you will be surprised to hear that I have had No. 2 of the GEM lent me to read by a chum of mine, and I think the tale relating to Stephen Masters in "A Britisher's Pluck" is equally as good as those of Tom Merry & Co.; in fact, it was quite a change to me, as I have not read many adventure tales before. I shall read them more now, though I shall not forget the GEM. My friend also has "Tom Merry in Chicago." I have found a chum in Toronto through the Companion Papers.—J. Walker, Hollings Street, Manningham, Bradford.

THE TUDOR ROSE.

I saw in the "Boys' Friend" an explanation of the Tudor rose. I remember another version of the carved rose—namely, that it was symbolic of confession. When a person wishes to say or do anything in secret, people say nowadays that it is done under the rose, or sub rosa. So you can see how that saying has been handed down. The rose was carved inside the churches and cathedrals of England, and the ten petals represented the Commandments.—Miss C. Kelly, 5, Hands Street, Litherland, Lancs.

THE ANT.

A soldier friend of mine who served in the R.A.F. in Asia Minor saw an ant dragging after it a piece of stick eighteen inches in length. When it reached its headquarters—a hole in the ground—it left the stick and dived into the cavity. After a short space of time, it reappeared with a pair of feelers, which fastened on to one end of the stick overlapping the hole. The ant which had brought the stick then took hold of the other end and gradually raised the stick upright—as a man does with a ladder—so that presently the stick was drawn down into the earth to vanish entirely.—Clifford S. Hayne, 97, Pitt Street, Kimberworth, Rotherham.

VERY PARTICULAR.

The Master: "What! Leaving? You have only been here a day! What is your grievance?" The Maid: "Your forks, sir, are four-pronged instead of

three-pronged, and it makes too much work for me. Good-day, sir!"—A. G. Derrich, Bank Hotel, Bridge Street, Bristol.

IN HAPPY JAPAN.

The Museum at Nara, the former capital of Japan, is said to be the oldest in the world. No addition has been made to the exhibits since the foundation of the establishment in A.D. 756. Its doors are only opened once a year, when an inspecting committee examines the treasures. There are three thousand articles on view, mostly of a decorative sort, some from China and Korea.—Bert Ruddock, 40, Talworth Street, Cardiff.

A FAMOUS FRENCHMAN.

Francois de Bassompierre was a handsome French soldier and statesman who lived in the reigns of Henry the Fourth and Louis the Thirteenth. He was greatly trusted by his Royal masters, and was entrusted with many important embassies. Bassompierre was a wit. On one occasion he told the King that he rode into Madrid on the smallest mule in the world. "A fine sight," said the King, "that of an ass upon a mule." "Yes," said Bassompierre, "but I was your Majesty's representative."—James Johnstone, 11, Widows' Homes, Lerwick, Shetland Isles.

I feel this anecdote scarcely does the great marshal justice. In later days, Bassompierre fell into disgrace—this was with Louis the Thirteenth—and he went to the Bastille. He was brave in misfortune as he had been on the field of battle. He is pictured humming the old song of his time:

"Farewell Court, and farewell ladies,
Farewell music and cadence!
Farewell the ball, farewell the dance!
Farewell your pleasant pastime,
Tambourines and violins!
Since to the war we go!"

A SHOP IN SLIGO.

This is the first time I have had the pleasure of writing to you. I don't think any other stories beat yours. I am a recent reader of the GEM, and I am sorry to say I have missed some of the stories; but luckily there is a shop in

Sligo where they sell back numbers, so I have bought a lot. I shall be delighted to help make the GEM as popular as I can.—F. Cross, The Mill House, Ballysodare, County Sligo, Ireland.

THE WISHBONE.

Boarding Mistress: "Is there anything wrong with that egg, Mr. Fourper? I see you according to a very critical examination." Mr. Fourper: "Oh, nothing wrong with the egg, Mrs. Henpeck. I was just looking for the wishbone, that's all!"—Harry Morris, 7, Peacock Avenue, Pendleton, Manchester.

A NEW WRITER.

I am not a new reader of the GEM, but I am a new writer. I hate writing, but at last I have been brave enough to take up the sword—I mean the pen. I am fond of swimming, and toddle off every morning to the deep about 7.30. Of course, I am not always punctual, but then it does not really matter, as the sea is always there waiting for me—not like a railway-train, which goes chasing off and lets you have the pleasure of seeing its tail disappearing round a bend.—Miss Dorothy Littlewood, the King's Head, High Street, Hythe, Kent.

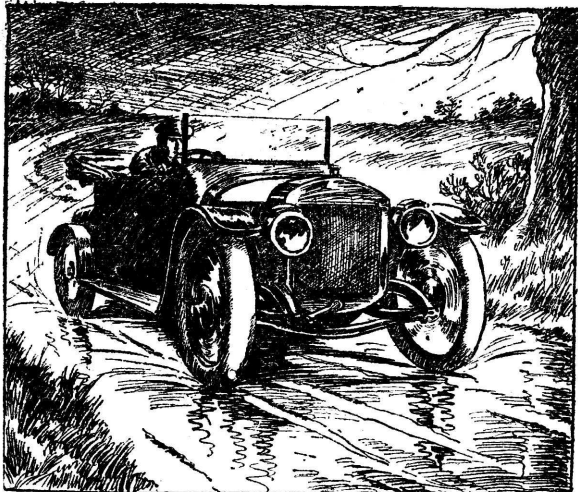
THE OLD TIMES.

The first story I read in the GEM was of Gore when he was having shady dealings with a man called Tickev Tapp, and I enjoyed it so much that I have been a staunch reader of the GEM since. I don't think the stories have ever been better or more popular than now.—John Drummond, 6, Ingleby Drive, Dennistoun, Glasgow.

STALE NEWS.

"Is this the newspaper office?" inquired the infuriated Mr. Timmouse of the editor of the "Weekly Scandal." "Yes," was the reply. "Didn't this paper call me a liar?" "It did not." "Didn't it call me a scoundrel?" "It did not." "Some paper did." "Possibly it was our contemporary," said the editor. "This paper never prints stale news."—F. Smithson, 1, Panshurst Road, South Hackney, E. 1.

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."



THE FINAL RECKONING!

A Long, Complete, Story of St. Jim's, introducing Marie Rivers.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Innocent or Guilty?

"I CAN'T believe it! I'll never believe it!"

Talbot of the Shell uttered the words vehemently.

"Marie Rivers is innocent—and so is her father!" Talbot went on. "And any fellow who questions their innocence is a cad!"

"Afraid there are a good many cads present, then!" observed Crooke.

Talbot's gaze roved round the Shell dormitory. It finally rested upon Tom Merry.

"You believe in Marie, Tom?"

"Absolutely!" said the captain of the Shell. "But—"

"Well?"

"I must say—and you must admit it yourself, old man—that the evidence looks jolly black against her. Let's try and review the facts calmly. During the night all the silver cups and other trophies were stolen from the sanny, where the Head had ordered them to be stored. And this morning Marie is missing. And her father, who was supposed to be here in the capacity of a 'tec, disguised as a new gate-porter, is missing, too. Mark you, I believe in Marie, and I believe in her father—but I'm simply trying to show you how the average fellow looks at it. He thinks, not without reason, that John Rivers has turned cracksman again, and that Marie has gone into partnership with him."

"Hear, hear!" said Racke. "I take that view myself."

"You would!" said Talbot bitterly. "You're always ready to condemn anybody on the slightest provocation."

"Well, if Marie Rivers is innocent," retorted Racke, "why has she disappeared?"

"Yes, tell us why?" urged several voices.

Talbot was taken aback. "I—I can't account for Marie's disappearance," he said. "Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"She may have been kidnapped."

"Rats!"

"You'll have to think of a better one than that, Talbot!" sneered Crooke.

"I suppose her father was kidnapped at the same time?" said Racke sarcastically.

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Talbot.

"I should," said Harry Noble. "John Rivers knows how to take care of himself. He's about the last person in the world who'd allow himself to be kidnapped."

The fellows continued to express their views on the subject whilst they were dressing, and Talbot saw that the majority of them believed Marie and her father to be guilty.

Bernard Glyn summed up the prevailing opinion when he said:

"To my mind, John Rivers has had a relapse. He went straight for a time—for a long time, in fact—and now he's broken out again. And he made Marie a party—an unwilling party, most likely—to the theft."

Talbot looked utterly cast down.

When decent fellows like Bernard Glyn and Harry Noble inclined to the opinion that John Rivers and his daughter had reverted to a career of crime, the situation was black indeed.

Apart from Talbot himself, only three fellows in the dormitory—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—still believed in Marie and her father. And even the Terrible Three showed a tendency to waver in their belief, so overwhelming was the evidence against the ex-cracksman and the school nurse.

Why had Marie and her father disappeared? It was inconceivable that they had been kidnapped.

The kidnaping of Marie alone would not have been a very difficult matter. But John Rivers would have proved such a tough handful that few, if any, kidnapers would have succeeded in overcoming him.

Simultaneously with the disappearance of John Rivers and his daughter, the school's most valuable trophies had been looted. What, then, was more natural than to suppose that the two persons who had absconded were the looters?

"Have you heard the news, deah boys?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the Shell dormitory, fully dressed, with Jack Blake. Both were looking very excited.

"Do you mean the news of the burglary, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas."

"We heard it ages ago. Kildare came in and told us."

"Did he tell you that Miss Marie had disappeared?" inquired Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

"And the gate-porter who was taking Taggy's place?"

"Yes; that was John Rivers."

"What!"

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus uttered the exclamation together. They had not known until now of the gate-porter's real identity.

"John Rivers!" repeated Blake, in

astonishment. "But—but what was he doing here?"

"He was supposed to be carryin' out investigations as a representative of Scotland Yard," said Racke. "But the only thing he carried out was the loot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Talbot strode towards Aubrey Racke with blazing eyes.

"Another word from you, you cad," he said, "and I'll give you the licking of your life!"

That threat was quite sufficient to subdue the cad of the Shell. He wisely relapsed into silence.

"Was Wacke insinuat' in," said Arthur Augustus, "that Miss Mawie's fathah was responsible for the burglary?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"Then I wegard Wake as a wotten cad!" said the swell of St. Jim's warmly.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Jack Blake.

Talbot turned eagerly to the Fourth-Formers.

"You fellows are willing to believe that neither Marie nor her father had a hand in this business?"

"Quite!" said Blake.

"Miss Mawie is stwaight as a die!" said Arthur Augustus, with conviction.

"As for John Wivahs, he insulted me yesterday, when he was heah in the capacity of gate-portah. He put me across his knee, an' administahed chastisement—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' he outwaged my personal dignity. All the same, I should not dweam of wegardin' him as a thief."

"Thank you, Gussy!" said Talbot quietly.

He was relieved and gratified to discover that the two Fourth-Formers were stout champions of his girl chum.

"In my opinion," said Arthur Augustus, "an' I think you fellahs will agree that my opinion cawwies a certain amount of weight, the silver cups an' things were stolen by the same scoundwel who made off with my patah's cah the othah day."

"By Jove!" said Tom Merry. "I hadn't thought of that!"

"It wequiahs a fellah of judgment to link the chain of circumstances togethah," said Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!"

"If you say 'Wats!' to me, Tom Mewwy—"

A stormy scene might have ensued had not Kildare of the Sixth made his second appearance in the dormitory that morning.

"Haven't you kids heard the breakfast-gong?" he demanded.

"No, Kildare," said Tom Merry.

"We were discussing—"

"The only thing you're called upon to discuss at the moment is breakfast," said the captain of St. Jim's. "Get a move on!"

Kildare went downstairs, and the juniors followed in a chattering, noisy procession.

At the breakfast-table the controversy concerning the recent burglary still went on.

With a heavy heart Talbot noted that the fellows who protested the innocence of Marie Rivers and her father were in the minority.

CHAPTER 2.

A Startling Theory!

DR. HOLMES was seated at his desk.

Instead of breakfast, the maid had brought him in a cup of coffee, and that was all. He did not feel in the mood to partake of refreshment of a more substantial kind.

The Head's brain was in a whirl. The news of the burglary—brought to him early that morning by Mr. Railton—had thrown him into a state of consternation, if not actual distraction.

"Upon my soul, there would seem to be no limit to these outrages!" murmured Dr. Holmes. "This is the third theft which has occurred within the last twenty-four hours! It is truly appalling! Lord Eastwood's car has been stolen; eight hundred pounds' worth of War Bonds, which I was holding in trust for Koumi Rao, have been stolen from my safe; and now trophies of intrinsic, and in some cases historical value, have been removed from the room in which I ordered them to be kept. And, as if this were not enough to distract one, John Rivers and his daughter are not to be found!"

The Head reviewed the situation over and over again in his mind.

It seemed that the burglars were having matters all their own way.

What would be the next step in their villainous campaign?

It was with great apprehension that the Head thought of the future.

"If burglaries of this sort become a daily, or rather, a nightly occurrence," he murmured, "the school's reputation will be placed in jeopardy. I shall have indignant parents requesting to withdraw their boys from a place where personal property is unsafe—where thieves break in and steal. Now that John Rivers has unaccountably disappeared, I scarcely know what action to take next. It is terrible! I—"

The Head broke off as a knock sounded on the door of his study.

"Come in!"

It was Talbot who entered.

One glance at the junior's pale, troubled face convinced Dr. Holmes that he was suffering severe mental anguish.

"Well, Talbot?" he said kindly. "You wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir. It—it's about last night's affair, sir—"

The Head looked up quickly.

"Can you throw any light on the outrage, Talbot?"

"No, sir. I only wish I could!"

"Then what is it you wish to say to me?"

Talbot met the Head's gaze appealingly.

"I—I hope you don't believe that Marie Rivers and her father had a hand in the burglary, sir?"

The Head stared.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

"Bless my soul! Why should I believe that?"

A great load slipped from Talbot's mind. It was obvious that the Head did not think as the majority of his pupils thought.

"Both Marie and the Professor have disappeared during the night, sir," said Talbot, "and I thought you might imagine—"

"That they had decamped with the stolen property? No, my boy. My faith in their honesty remains firm and unshaken. It is inconceivable that they should have done this thing! The idea is not to be entertained for a moment!"

"It's being entertained already, sir, by three parts of the fellows—"

"That is unfortunate. The theft of the silver trophies having coincided with the disappearance of Marie and her father, it is perhaps only natural that the average person should come to the conclusion that those two carried out the theft between them. However, that is not my view, nor is it the view of Mr. Railton, with whom I have discussed this appalling affair."

Talbot's face brightened up.

"I'm so glad to hear you say that, sir!" he said. "I was afraid that you would believe as the majority believe."

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

"I am convinced that the trophies were stolen by the same person or persons who appropriated Lord Eastwood's car, and rifled my safe two nights ago. And as John Rivers only arrived at the school yesterday, it was impossible for him to have been concerned in those two outrages. That scoundrel Dawlish, who has been a constant menace to you and to Marie, is undoubtedly the organiser of these dastardly raids!"

"Then you think, sir, that it was Dawlish who broke into the building last night?"

"I am confident of it, Talbot!"

"And how do you account, sir, for the disappearance of Marie and her father?"

Dr. Holmes hesitated.

"It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty what has happened," he said slowly, "but I am of the opinion that Marie fell into the hands of the thieves—that she was kidnapped—"

"Kidnapped, sir?" echoed Talbot, in startled tones.

The Head nodded.

"Previous attempts had been made, with more or less success, to kidnap her, and it is not unlikely that another and a successful attempt was made last night."

"But—but John Rivers, sir—"

"My assumption is that he went in pursuit of the kidnappers."

"My hat!"

This view of the situation had not occurred to Talbot, and he could not help thinking that the Head was correct in his assumption.

"I may, of course, be wrong," said Dr. Holmes. "Time will show. It is possible that I shall hear some news in the course of the morning."

Talbot stood clenching and unclenching his hands. He was agitated and impatient.

"If Marie has really been collared by Dawlish's gang, sir—"

"Yes?"

"Then I should like to have a shot at tracking them down."

The head frowned.

"I cannot allow you to undertake such a hazardous mission, Talbot. If no news comes to hand by midday, I shall communicate with Scotland Yard. You must not look so distressed, my boy. This is a time of stress and anxiety for us all; but I have no doubt that events will terminate satisfactorily."

"There is nothing I can do, sir?"

"Nothing—except to keep a stout heart through this crisis. I will not fail to keep you posted with any information I receive concerning Marie and her father."

"Thank you, sir!"

Talbot quitted the study. Out in the quadrangle he encountered the Terrible Three.

"Any news?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

Talbot shook his head.

"What does the Head think about it all?" inquired Manners.

"He thinks it was Dawlish's gang who raided the school last night. And he reckons that they kidnapped Marie, and that John Rivers has gone off in pursuit."

"My hat!"

"The Head's going to let me know the moment he gets any news," added Talbot.

"Good!"

At that moment the bell rang for morning lessons, and the juniors went along to the Form-room.

CHAPTER 3.

A Staggering Surprise!

AFTER dinner that day Mr. Railton called on the Head.

"Have you received any information, sir, concerning last night's affair?" he inquired.

The Head sighed wearily.

"No information whatever, Railton," he replied. "I have waited here all the morning in the hope of receiving news by telegraph or telephone. But nothing fresh has come to light—nothing."

"Then, I suggest, sir, that you communicate with Scotland Yard."

"That is precisely what I intended to do."

Mr. Railton stepped to the telephone.

"I will put through a trunk call to London—" he began.

"No, no!" interposed the Head. "I am heartily tired of endeavouring to communicate by telephone! When I made a previous attempt to get into touch with Scotland Yard the careless operator put me on to a firm of furniture removers! The person who spoke to me was most objectionable!"

And Dr. Holmes shuddered slightly at the recollection.

"I will send a telegram," he added.

And the wire was accordingly written, and despatched by Toby, the page.

The message was worded as follows:

"Please send further assistance! Urgent.—HOLMES."

"I have no doubt that a detective will arrive in the course of the afternoon," said the Head.

Mr. Railton nodded.

"The sooner this unfortunate affair is cleared up the better," he said. "Though I fear the detective will arrive too late to be of much use. That scoundrel Dawlish has had too good a start."

The Scotland Yard authorities were not slow in responding to the Head's summons. A couple of hours later, whilst afternoon lessons were in progress, a tall, top-hatted individual entered the gateway of St. Jim's. With a brisk and business-like stride he made his way direct to the Head's study.

Toby was waiting outside, and the visitor handed him his card.

"Take this in to Dr. Holmes at once!" he said.

"Werry good, sir!"

The next moment the Head had the shock of his life.

For the name on the card was "John Rivers"!

"Bless my soul! What does this mean?"



The Professor produced his card, and when Mr. Crump saw printed thereon, "John Rivers, New Scotland Yard," he was considerably impressed. He lumbered to his feet, and flicked a fly off his forehead. This latter action was also intended for a salute. (See chapter 4.)

It could only mean one thing, the Head reflected—that John Rivers had already proved successful in his quest—that he had tracked down the kidnappers, and returned to the school with Marie.

"Ask Mr. Rivers to come in, Toby."
"Yessir!"

The Head had a further surprise when John Rivers entered. The neatly-fitting black suit which the detective wore was in marked contrast to the gate-porter's uniform, which Dr. Holmes had expected him to be wearing.

Placing a chair for his visitor, the Head remarked:

"I await your explanation, Mr. Rivers, with considerable interest and anxiety."
The detective looked surprised.

"My explanation, Dr. Holmes?" he echoed, raising his eyebrows. "I do not understand—"

"I am consumed with curiosity to know what happened here during the night."

John Rivers laughed.

"That is rather a conundrum, sir!" he said. "It is for you to explain to me—not for me to explain to you—what took place here during the night. If anything startling happened, I know nothing about it, since I was not here at the time!"

"Not here?"

The Head's tone was one of utter bewilderment.

"I have only just come down from Scotland Yard," said John Rivers. "On

receipt of your telegram the chief detailed me to come and take up the case."

"But—but—my dear sir"—the Head was fairly flabbergasted—"you came here two days ago!"

"Indeed I did not!"
"What!"

"This is my first visit to the school for some months!"

The Head's brain seemed to swim.

"Then—then I have been deceived and imposed upon!" he exclaimed. "Two days ago I sent you an express letter, urging you to come here in the capacity of temporary gate-porter—"

It was John Rivers' turn to look astounded.

"I have received no express letter from you, Dr. Holmes," he said.

"Good gracious! Did you not interview me in this study the day before yesterday?"

"Indeed I did not! The day before yesterday I was engaged on an important case down in Cornwall."

The Head was looking very grim now. He rang the bell for Toby, who was lurking in the passage.

"Do you remember my handing you an express letter two days ago, Toby?"

"Yessir!"

"It was a most important letter, and I instructed you to despatch it at the post-office in Rylcombe. Did you carry out my instructions?"

Toby hesitated. His face flushed, and he looked very confused.

"Answer me, boy!" rapped out the Head. "Did you convey that letter to the village post-office?"

"No, sir!"

The Head's brow grew black as thunder. And the unfortunate Toby was quaking at the knees.

"Why did you not obey my commands?" said Dr. Holmes sternly.

"I—I—it was like this 'ere, sir. I met a feller out in the lane, an' he said he'd see to the postin' of the letter for me."

"What sort of man was he?" asked John Rivers, turning to the scared-looking page.

"He was a big-built cove, sir, with a muffer round 'is neck."

"Clean shaven?"

"Yessir!"

"And wearing a tweed cap?"

"That's right, sir!"

"Then," said John Rivers, turning to the Head, "it was Dawlish!"

"Bless my soul!"

"He intercepted the letter, read it, and arranged for one of the members of his precious gang to come here and impersonate me."

"That is obviously what happened," assented the Head. "I was completely deceived. I have unwittingly harboured a criminal in the school! He was given a clear field for his activities. And now he has decamped, taking your daughter with him."

"My daughter!" cried John Rivers, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

leaping to his feet. "Why did you not tell me this before, sir? You mean to say that Marie has been kidnapped?"

"That is my assumption. A serious burglary took place here during the night, and this morning your daughter was found to be missing."

"Good heavens!"

There was a dramatic pause.

Toby took advantage of the situation to slink to the door. But the Head promptly called him back.

"You have disregarded my express commands," he said sternly. "You will take a week's notice!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Toby.

John Rivers came to the pageboy's rescue.

"I suggest that you give the boy another chance, sir," he said. "There is every excuse for him. From what I know of Dawlish, he probably compelled Toby to deliver up the letter."

"Very well," said Dr. Holmes. "I will overlook your conduct on this occasion, Toby. But if you fail to obey my commands in future, you will not be dealt with so leniently. You may go."

Greatly relieved, Toby beat a retreat. As soon as the door had closed behind him, John Rivers turned to the Head.

"Would you be good enough to tell me all that has happened, sir?"

The Head nodded.

"A series of outrages has occurred, Mr. Rivers. In the first place, Lord Eastwood's car was stolen."

"From his garage?"

"No. It was left outside in Wayland Woods during a picnic. And somebody—presumably Dawlish—made off with it."

"Can you give me a description of the car?"

"Certainly!"

The Head furnished the necessary particulars, and John Rivers recorded them in his notebook.

"The second outrage," Dr. Holmes went on, "was the theft of a number of War Bonds, to the value of eight hundred pounds, from my safe. I was holding the bonds in trust for Koumi Rao, an Indian junior at this school."

"When did this theft occur?"

"The night before last."

"The third and the latest burglary took place last night?"

"Yes. Fearing that an attempt would be made to steal the silver trophies belonging to the school, I arranged for

them to be stored in one of the wards of the sanatorium. The door was securely locked."

"A locked door is a small obstacle to Dawlish," said John Rivers. "I imagine he found it a simple task to break into the room and annex the plunder. And doubtless this temporary gate-porter, whom you imagined to be me, facilitated Dawlish's entry to the school by unlocking the gates."

"That is very probable."

"And you say that the scoundrel has now decamped, taking my daughter with him?"

"Yes. I have communicated with the local police—"

"The local police," said John Rivers, "are a set of incompetent nincompoops! I thought so before I entered the Yard—and I think so now. You are not likely to get much satisfaction from that quarter, Dr. Holmes."

The Head sighed.

"The whole business is very upsetting and distracting," he said. "You will, of course, take up the case at once?"

"At once!" repeated John Rivers grimly.

And he shook hands with the Head, and went abruptly from the study.

CHAPTER 4.

On the Trail!

"THE Professor!"

Talbot of the Shell uttered the exclamation in profound astonishment. He had just stepped out into the quadrangle, after lessons, when the tall, well-knit figure of Marie's father greeted his gaze.

John Rivers sighted the junior, and advanced to meet him with outstretched hand.

"I was hoping I should see you, Toff, before I went," he said.

Talbot made no reply. He was too taken aback to speak.

What had happened?

Why had John Rivers returned so suddenly, and discarded his gate-porter's garb?

These questions, and many more, were soon answered.

The Professor explained everything to the astonished junior, who listened breathlessly to the recital.

"So the Head was spoofed!" ejaculated Talbot, at length. "Well, I'm jiggered! Fancy that scoundrel palming himself off as you!"

"He seems to have carried out his job very successfully, Toff. I should imagine he had been an actor, or something of the sort, before he joined Jim Dawlish's gang. Anyway, he completely deceived Dr. Holmes."

"I suppose he let Dawlish in last night, and between them they looted the silver cups and things, and collared Marie?"

The Professor nodded.

"And they got clear away in the stolen car," he said.

"Then you think it was Dawlish who bagged Lord Eastwood's car?"

"There's no room for doubt."

"This is a rotten business, Professor."

"Beastly, Toff."

"You are going after the rotters, of course?"

"Yes. Whether I shall succeed in retrieving the stolen property is an open question. But I shall find Marie. I shall find her, Toff, if I have to seek her far and wide—if I have to track those villains to the end of the earth. And when I meet Dawlish—the Professor's tone was quiet but ominous—"I fear I shall be unable to restrain myself from using this!"

And the speaker's hand went to his

hip-pocket, and he partially exposed to view a Webley pistol.

"Dawlish deserves all he gets," was Talbot's terse comment. "He's caused endless trouble since he formed his precious gang. By the way, do you know what the fellows are saying in connection with this affair?"

"Well, Toff?"

"They are saying that Marie had a hand in the burglary."

The Professor frowned.

"Their minds will soon be disabused of that impression," he said. "And now, Toff, I must be off. Too many precious hours have been wasted already."

"Can I come with you, Professor?" Talbot's tone was fired with eagerness. "I've already asked the Head if I could go, and he's as obstinate as a giddy mule. But if you put it to him in your persuasive way—"

John Rivers shook his head.

"Without wishing in any way to disparage you, Toff, I would prefer to tackle this affair single-handed. There are risks to be faced—"

"As if I minded that!" said Talbot scornfully.

"It is better, from all points of view, that you should remain here," said the Professor. "If I find that your assistance is necessary, I shall not fail to send for you."

...And with that promise Talbot had to rest content, though he could not overcome the almost fierce desire to set out in quest of his girl chum.

John Rivers held out his hand.

"Au revoir, Toff! And keep a stiff upper lip. I hope to be back soon—with Marie."

Talbot gripped the Professor's hand hard.

"Good luck!" he said fervently.

The Professor did not leave St. Jim's immediately, but he went into the porter's deserted lodge, where he had left his bag.

And when he emerged, a quarter of an hour later, he was no longer attired in the black suit and the top-hat. He wore a coarse tweed suit, with a cap to match. A false moustache and a false set of eyebrows also formed part of his make-up.

Whilst Talbot hurried away to acquaint Tom Merry & Co. with the startling news he had learned from the Professor's lips, the Professor himself set out on the trail.

It seemed a hopeless task.

A search had been made in and around the school sanatorium, but it had yielded no clue as to the movements of Jim Dawlish and his accomplice.

Out in the roadway the Professor looked for possible car-tracks; but he found none. Doubtless they had been obliterated by the heavy rain which had recently fallen.

The Professor decided to go on to the village, and make inquiries. He went first of all to the little police-station, where that substantial representative of the law, P.-c. Crump, was slumbering placidly.

With an exclamation of impatience, John Rivers roused the portly constable.

"Wake up, man!" he snapped, prodding Mr. Crump in the ribs with his boot.

The constable, who had been reclining at full-length on one of the benches, struggled into a sitting posture, and blinked angrily and suspiciously at the intruder.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The Professor produced his card, and

a Great NEW Complete Story Paper

No. 1 On Sale This Friday!

Long Complete Tales of **SEXTON BLAKE**, the Master Detective, **ROBIN HOOD**, Prince of Outlaws, and **BUFFALO BILL**, King of Scouts. Thrilling **NELSON LEE** Serial. Printed in 4 Colours

ORDER YOUR COPY TO-DAY!

NUGGET WEEKLY 1½

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.



“Out you get, your ladyship!” With mook politeness Pat Donovan assisted the girl, who was cramped in every limb, to alight from the car. “You are going to leave me in this place?” asked Marie. (See chapter 5.)

when Mr. Crump saw printed thereon, “John Rivers, Criminal Investigator,” and the words, “New Scotland Yard,” in the bottom left-hand corner, he was considerably impressed.

He lumbered to his feet, and flicked a fly off his forehead. This latter action was also intended for a salute.

“Proud to meet you, Mr. Rivers,” said Crump. “Which I was jest enjoyin’ a little nap, sir. ‘Ope as ‘ow you don’t mind; but I’ve bin werry busy lately.”

“Busy?” echoed John Rivers scornfully.

Crump nodded.

“I’ve bin a-trackin’ down the warmints as stole Lord Eastwood’s car,” he explained.

“You have met with no success, of course?”

“Not yet, sir. But I thort I was on the right track last night.”

John Rivers caught the constable by the arm.

“Explain!” he said quickly.

“It was like this ‘ere, sir. I was on my beat in the village street—”

“We’ll have it in prose, please!” said the Professor drily. “Try again!”

“I was patrollin’ my beat, jest after midnight, when I ‘eard a car comin’ towards me.”

“Yes, yes!”

“I pricked up my ears at once,

thinkin’ it might be the stolen car. You see, in the hordinary way, no cars passes through the village at that time ‘night—”

“Did you get a glimpse of the car?” Mr. Crump nodded.

“There was no lights, neither fore nor aft,” he said. “But I could see that it was a yeller-painted car—so it couldn’t have been Lord Eastwood’s. ‘Is lordship’s was painted red.”

“Fool! Hasn’t it occurred to your obtuse mind that the car would have been repainted?”

“My heye! I—I never thought—”

“You are incapable of thought!” snapped the Professor. “That is why you will remain a plain constable, without promotion, for the next twenty years or so! Did you notice how many people were in the car?”

“There was three, sir. Looked like two men an’ a young lady.”

The Professor clenched his hands. The identity of the passengers was only too apparent.

“Did you call upon the driver to stop?” he demanded.

“Yessir. I shouted, ‘Wot about yer lights?’ an’ he said, ‘Get outer the way, you old fool, or I’ll run yer down!’ He’d ha’ done it, too, if I ‘adn’t ‘opped on to the pavement.”

“In which direction was the car travelling?”

“Towards Wayland, sir.”

“Did you telephone to the Wayland police, and instruct them to intercept it?”

“Nunno. You see, I thort as ‘ow it couldn’t ha’ bin Lord Eastwood’s car—”

“Whether it was Lord Eastwood’s car or not, the driver should have been apprehended for not showing front or rear lights. You mean to say that you made no communication of any sort to the Wayland police?”

Crump shook his head.

“Then you’re about the biggest imbecile I’ve ever struck! The driver of that car was undoubtedly Jim Dawlish.”

“My heye!”

“And if you had shown an ounce of gumption, his arrest would have been a simple matter. But you sat tight and did nothing. You allowed the scoundrel to slip through your fingers!”

“Seen’ as ‘ow it was a yeller car, sir, I didn’t think—”

“Bah! You make me sick!” growled the Professor. “Why you ever elected to join the Police Force I can’t imagine. You’re no ornament to it!”

Mr. Crump cowered before that scathing indictment. The portly constable had always regarded himself as a valuable acquisition to the Force. He considered that he should have been promoted ages

ago. But his opinion of his own powers was considerably modified now as he writhed under the lash of the Professor's tongue.

"If I can be of any 'elp now, sir——" he began contritely.

"The very best thing you can do," said John Rivers, with cutting scorn, "is to lie down and go to sleep again!"

And, with this Parthian shot, the detective strode out of the station.

It was to Wayland that he wended his steps. On arriving there, he sought out the police-inspector, who could give no information on the subject of Lord Eastwood's car. He unblushingly told John Rivers that he had slept like a top all night.

From another quarter, however, the Professor obtained valuable information.

Dr. Croft, of Wayland, came into the police-station whilst the detective was there.

"I have called here several times to-day, inspector," he said, "but you were absent. I wish to draw your attention to an unusual occurrence which took place last night shortly after midnight."

The inspector beckoned to the speaker to proceed. John Rivers listened with growing interest.

"I was returning home in my car, after attending a case at an outlying village, when another car passed me in the High Street—a car without lights. And as it passed I distinctly heard a cry for help. The voice seemed to be that of a girl."

John Rivers uttered a sharp exclamation.

"You gave chase, doctor?" he asked.

"Yes. But the car was superior to my own, and I was outdistanced. I managed to keep my quarry in sight for half a dozen miles or so, and then I was obliged to abandon the chase, and return to Wayland. I telephoned to the police-station here, but could get no reply."

"I was asleep at the time," murmured the inspector apologetically.

"Thought so!" said the doctor. "You are seldom otherwise!"

John Rivers turned to the medical man.

"My daughter was in that car," he said. "She has been kidnapped."

"Great Scott!"

"And it is my duty, both as a parent and as a Scotland Yard official, to give chase."

"Then I don't envy your job!" said the doctor. "The scoundrels must be miles away by now. They were going in the direction of Burchester when I followed them. They seemed to be making for the coast."

After a further conversation with the doctor and the inspector, John Rivers hurried round to the nearest garage, and hired a smart-looking two-seater. He was soon speeding away in the direction indicated by the doctor.

The Professor had struck the trail at last. But he was haunted by the knowledge that he might be too late. It was his conviction that Jim Dawlish intended to leave the country, taking Marie with him.

And in this event, the chances of John Rivers reclaiming his daughter would be indeed remote.

CHAPTER 5.

In the Hands of the Enemy!

MEANWHILE, what of Marie Rivers?

The girl had put up a plucky fight in the school sanatorium against Jim Dawlish and his confederate, Pat Donovan. She had resolved, if possible, to prevent the burglary from taking place, and she had come within an ace of succeeding.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

In the nick of time Dawlish had managed to overpower the school nurse. Something—it felt like a damp cloth—had been clapped over Marie's nose and mouth, and she had been rendered unconscious. Dawlish had then carried her to the car, which stood in the shadow of the school wall. Then the loot had been placed on board in a couple of sacks, and the car had leapt forward into the night.

"We were lucky to get clear so easily!" panted Donovan. "If you hadn't had that cloth handy, Jim, I verily believe that this mix would have got the better of us both. Jove! She's as strong as a lioness!"

"It was a near thing!" agreed Dawlish, who was at the steering-wheel. "Still, we're well away, an' that's all that matters. I fancy her ladyship won't budge for a couple of hours."

But Dawlish was wrong. The amount of chloroform which had been administered was much less than the scoundrel imagined. It had been sufficient to render Marie unconscious, but only for a short time.

As the car was entering Wayland the girl opened her eyes.

Fully a couple of minutes elapsed before Marie realised the situation. At first she could not for the life of her imagine what was happening. She was conscious of being whirled along under a pall of darkness, and that was all.

Then she caught sight of the sacks, and of Pat Donovan's sinister face, and she understood.

Her last recollection was that of a cloth being pressed to her face, and she realised that she must have been chloroformed. Dawlish and his accomplice had then made off with the spoils—and with her!

Marie's heart sank.

This was not the first time she had been kidnapped by Jim Dawlish, and she knew of no experience less pleasant.

On the previous occasion Talbot had come to her rescue.

But where was Talbot now?

In bed in the Shell dormitory—blissfully unconscious of his girl chum's peril—knowing nothing of the grim drama which was now being enacted!

Marie could guess that the car in which she was making her enforced trip was the property of Lord Eastwood. She had travelled in this same car before—under far happier circumstances!

Where were the scoundrels taking her? With an effort Marie raised herself up on the seat of the car, in order to take stock of her surroundings.

There was a startled exclamation from Pat Donovan.

"By Jove, Jim, she's come round!"

"Keep her quiet!" hissed Dawlish.

"There's another car just ahead of us!"

Another car!

A gleam of hope came into Marie's eyes. And before Donovan could intervene her voice rang out on the night air: "Help! Help!"

The cry was heard by the occupant of the other car, which Dawlish had now passed.

"Full speed ahead, Jim!" exclaimed Donovan. "That merchant's coming after us!"

Dawlish set the car going at maximum speed. He was not unduly alarmed. He knew the capabilities of Lord Eastwood's car, and he anticipated no difficulty in outpacing the man behind.

Up hill and down dale, onward through the deep shades of night, skidding and swerving, avoiding disaster by a miracle, rushed the car.

And Marie's hopes grew fainter as the sound of the pursuing vehicle gradually died away.

"We're safe!" said Donovan, in tones of relief. "Ease up a bit, Jim, or we shall be having a fine old smash-up!"

Dawlish slackened his speed.

As the car drew near to the market-town of Burchester the darkness began to lift.

It was dawn—a hopeless dawn indeed so far as Marie Rivers was concerned!

The car passed through Burchester, where there was not the slightest sign of life, and sped on through the Sussex countryside.

As the daylight grew stronger Marie Rivers noticed that her captors looked uneasy.

And there was good cause for uneasiness on their part. The two sacks containing the silver trophies which had been stolen from St. Jim's were plainly visible in the car, and Dawlish and Donovan were afraid lest the plunder should be seen, and awkward questions asked.

This possibility occurred to Marie also. And she felt more hopeful in consequence.

"Surely," she reflected, "Dawlish would not be able to proceed much farther by car? The bulging sacks were bound to attract attention; and when the next town of any size was reached the thieves would be apprehended."

But Jim Dawlish knew what he was about. After a time he turned the car up a narrow side-lane.

It was very lonely and desolate hereabouts, and Marie surmised—correctly, as it happened—that Dawlish was making for one of his retreats.

The car halted at length beside what appeared to be a gipsy encampment.

In a small meadow, partially screened from view by a tall hedge, stood a couple of caravans, and horses were grazing in the vicinity.

On hearing the approaching car, two swarthy-looking men came running towards the gate of the meadow.

Dawlish jumped down from the driver's seat, and went forward to greet them.

Marie saw the three men in earnest conversation for some moments, and she wondered what her fate was to be.

Was she to be left here in this lonely encampment—a prisoner in the hands of the swarthy scoundrels who were now conversing with Dawlish?

The question was soon answered.

Dawlish came back and resumed his seat, the gate was opened, and he steered the car into the meadow. Then he motioned to Marie.

"Out you get, your ladyship!"

With mock politeness Pat Donovan assisted the girl, who was cramped in every limb, to alight from the car.

"You are going to leave me in this place?" asked Marie, turning to Dawlish.

"No fear! I'm not lettin' you out of my sight just yet. We've simply stopped here for the purpose of swoppin' vehicles. We're goin' to complete our journey by caravan. The loot will be hidden from view there—an' so will you!"

"And wheré do you propose to take me?"

Dawlish refused to answer that question. He rapped out some instructions to the swarthy-looking men, who were both members of his gang, and they bustled about and prepared breakfast.

"I should advise you to make a good meal," said Donovan gruffly, turning to Marie. "It might be hours before we get the next!"

But Marie had no appetite. She could not have touched the most tempting fare at that moment.

Fully an hour had elapsed before Dawlish, in menacing tones, ordered Marie to get into the waiting caravan.

The vehicle was very cosy and comfortable inside.

As soon as Marie had clambered in, the two sacks of plunder were put in after her. Then Donovan entered by the door at the back, and Jim Dawlish took the driver's seat.

Lord Eastwood's car was left at the encampment in the charge of the two swarthy men. To these Dawlish bellowed some instructions. Then he flicked his whip, the horse plunged forward, and the caravan jolted through the gateway and along the narrow lane.

Pat Donovan made himself comfortable on one of the rugs which covered the floor of the vehicle.

"I mean to keep an eye on you, m'lady!" he said grimly. "No larks, mind!"

Marie said nothing.

"You'll have quite a good time on board this here caravan so long as you behave yourself. Got me?"

Marie preserved her silence.

"Not very talkative, are you?" said Donovan. "I had a pet parrot once," he added reminiscently. "He was just like you. Couldn't get a word out of him. Paid fifteen bob for the beastly bird, too!"

There was a pause.

"Say somethin', m'lady, for goodness' sake!" urged Donovan. "There's no reason why we shouldn't be quite pally, you know."

Marie was silent. Her spirit was crushed; her courage was failing her. Lack of food and sleep had sapped her vitality.

For hours the caravan rumbled on.

The girl could not see where they were going; but a familiar sound came to her ears. It was audible above the rumble of the caravan.

It was the roar of the sea!

The caravan halted at last.

Marie's bonds were severed, and she was allowed to descend from the vehicle, which seemed like a moving prison to her.

Looking about her, Marie saw that the caravan had stopped on the summit of a lofty, lonely cliff.

This was an unfrequented part of the South Coast—a place where, to quote Byron, "mortal foot had ne'er or rarely trod."

And yet her surroundings seemed familiar to Marie. She had been here before. Yes; she was sure of it.

At the base of these very cliffs she had once stood at the mercy of the incoming tide. And Talbot had come opportunely to her rescue.

Was she again destined to stand face to face with death?

As Marie peered over the edge of the cliff, Jim Dawlish watched her with a mocking smile.

The girl saw that it was low tide—that at present there would be no danger to anybody who walked along at the foot of the cliffs.

But the tide would be coming in soon—and what then?

Would Dawlish cause her to descend the cliff, and then abandon her to her fate?

The wall of the cliff was almost sheer, but it was possible to descend it without injury. Climbing up again, however, was quite a different proposition. It was next door to impossible to ascend the cliff at that part. And certainly Marie would not have sufficient strength for the effort, if she were called upon to make it.

Dawlish could guess what was in the girl's mind.

"Penny for 'em!" he said.

"You are going to make me go down there?"—Marie indicated the boulders which lay at the base of the cliff—"when

the tide comes in, so that I shall have no chance to escape?"

Dawlish shook his head.

"That would be much too clumsy!" he said. "I should be takin' too big a risk. Supposin' somebody nipped down an' saved you? It was done before, an' it could be done again. No, your ladyship, I'm leavin' nothin' to chance!"

And Donovan gave a boisterous laugh. "Then where are you going to take me?" demanded Marie.

Wonder and dread were mingled in her tone.

Dawlish pointed a little way out to sea. "You see that monument affair?" he said.

"That is Stormpoint Lighthouse!"

"Exactly! An' that's our destination."

Marie realised that her fate would be even more terrible than she had imagined.

Stormpoint Lighthouse was no longer in use. It had been condemned for various reasons, and another lighthouse had been erected farther along the coast.

It was Dawlish's intention to make Marie Rivers a prisoner in the place. He and Donovan would probably spend the night there, and in the morning they would decamp, leaving the girl to face want and privation and death!

Marie glanced at the gloomy, forbidding-looking structure, and shuddered.

It would have been a far more merciful fate, she reflected, to be swept out to sea by the angry waves.

But to be imprisoned in a lonely lighthouse, without food and sustenance—to be haunted by the grim spectre of starvation—

The thought was truly terrible.

Jim Dawlish looked up at the darkening skies.

"There's going to be a fine old storm!" he exclaimed.

"In that case," said Donovan, "it's time we made a move."

The horse was taken out of the shafts, and was left to graze on the grassy knoll at the top of the cliff.

"I suppose it's quite safe to leave the caravan, Jim?" said Donovan.

"Quite! Nobody ever comes within a mile of this place."

It did not occur to Dawlish that the horse and caravan would serve as a clue to the scoundrels' whereabouts. He did not know—and it was as well for his own peace of mind that he didn't—that the captive girl's father was hot upon the trail—that his arrival at Stormpoint was only a matter of hours.

Dawlish turned to Marie.

"Come along!" he said gruffly.

Marie accompanied her captors for about a mile and a half along the cliff-top. Then they reached a narrow, winding path which ran down to the rocky shore.

It was with considerable difficulty that Marie descended the path. She could scarcely drag one foot after the other. Twice she stumbled and fell; and on neither occasion did her callous captors assist her to rise.

When, after what seemed an eternity to Marie, they reached the foot of the cliff, Dawlish disappeared into a small cave. He emerged in a few moments, dragging a rowing-boat to the water's edge.

"Hop in!" he said briefly.

Marie hesitated, whereupon Donovan promptly bundled her into the boat.

"That's the way!" said Dawlish.

He pushed the boat off from the shore, and then clambered in. Then, pulling vigorously on his oars, he guided the small craft in the direction of the lighthouse.

Heavy drops of rain began to fall. The sea, which a short time before had been fairly calm, now became as active as a whirlpool. The boat lurched dangerously from side to side.

"It's not far, that's one blessin'!" panted Dawlish.

Donovan leaned forward in the boat, and caught his leader by the arm.

"Jim, we've forgotten something!"

"Eh?"

"The loot! It's been left in the caravan!"

"Thunder!"

Dawlish's face was a study. In his anxiety to convey his captive to the lighthouse he had clean forgotten the two sacks of plunder.

"We shall have to go back for the stuff!" he growled.

"In a sea like this? We shall sink the boat! Those sacks are jolly heavy!"

"Can't be helped! We daren't leave 'em in the caravan all night."

The storm was now raging in earnest.

Vivid flashes of lightning darted across the sky. The rain fell with increased force. Giant waves dashed and crashed tumultuously upon the rocky shore.

But the boat was comparatively safe now. Dawlish had reached his objective. He stood up, and clung to the iron ladder which led up to the entrance of the lighthouse.

"Out you get, you two!"

Marie Rivers was almost fainting with hunger and exhaustion. It was necessary for Donovan to carry her bodily up the steps of the ladder. Then he conveyed her up the spiral staircase to the observation-room at the top of the lighthouse.

Jim Dawlish followed, having first moored the boat to the ladder.

Food and drink were stored in the lighthouse, which was evidently a favourite resort of Dawlish and his confederate.

Having first attended to their own needs, the men offered Marie a plate of meat and a hunk of bread. And this time the girl did not refuse.

"She's found that hunger-strikin' doesn't pay!" said Donovan, with a harsh laugh.

Dawlish nodded, but said nothing.

"Anythin' wrong, Jim?" asked Donovan.

"I'm worried about the loot."

"No need to worry. We'll go an' fetch it as soon as the storm gives over."

But the storm showed no sign of abating. The gale shrieked and whistled around the windows of the lighthouse. On more than one occasion the lamp which Dawlish had lighted was extinguished.

"There won't be much sleep for any of us to-night, I'm thinkin'," said Dawlish.

And he was right.

But it was not merely the storm which would rob the two kidnapers of their slumber.

Nemesis—represented by John Rivers—was overtaking them fast!

CHAPTER 6.

Good News!

"TELEGRAM for Master Talbot!"

Toby, the page, made that announcement as he came into the junior Common-room at

St. Jim's.

It was close upon bed-time, and a crowd of Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were excitedly discussing the recent stirring events at the old school.

The excitement grew when Toby appeared on the scene with the telegram.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

"News from the Professor, most likely!" said Tom Merry.

Talbot nodded. And all eyes were turned upon him as he ripped open the buff-coloured envelope.

"What luck, Talbot?"

"Tell us the news!"

"Has the gang been collared?"

A gleam of joy came into Talbot's eyes as he read the message.

The telegram had been despatched from a remote Sussex village, and Tom Merry & Co. could see at once that it conveyed good news. Talbot's expression was eloquent of delight.

"Wead it out, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This suspense is feahful, you know!"

Talbot declaimed the telegram aloud.

"It's from the Professor," he announced, "and it says:

"Progressing splendidly. Two members of gang captured. Lord Eastwood's car recovered. Hot on trail of Dawlish. Anticipate successful termination of quest by morning."

"Hurrah!"

It was no half-hearted cheer which followed the reading of the telegram.

Forgetful of his dignity, and of the repose which is said to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere, Arthur Augustus emitted a shrill whoop of delight.

"Bwavo, the Pwofessah! He's we-covahed my patah's cah!"

"And what's more to the point," said Jack Blake, "he's captured two members of the gang! This is stunning news!"

"Simply great!"

A great load of anxiety had slipped from Talbot's mind. To him the concluding words of the telegram meant more than all the rest put together.

"Anticipate successful termination of quest by morning."

The Professor must indeed be full of hope and confidence, or he would not have written that. It was not his way to count his chickens before they were hatched, and he never made a statement of that sort unless there were very good grounds for it.

"It's all up with Dawlish!" said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" said Manners. "He may be under arrest already for all we know. Hurrah!"

And a fresh storm of cheering burst forth.

The achievements of John Rivers awakened the liveliest interest and enthusiasm.

"I knew all along that Miss Mawie had been kidnapped!" said Arthur Augustus. "Any fellah of judgment an' discernment would have realised that. But theah were some cads who said that Miss Mawie had waided the silvah cups an' things."

"I was one of the cads," said Harry Noble contritely. "I jumped to an idiotic conclusion, and I'm sorry."

"Same here," said Bernard Glyn. "We were a set of dummies to ever suspect Miss Marie. And when she comes back we'll give her the biggest reception she's ever had in her life!"

"Yes, rather!"

Nobody—not even Racke and Crooke—doubted Marie Rivers now. And those who had deemed her guilty of theft now wished they had not passed judgment so hastily.

Kildare of the Sixth came into the Common-room shortly afterwards, and announced that it was bed-time.

The juniors went up to their respective dormitories, but the majority of them had no thought of sleep. They remained

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

awake for hours, discussing the thrilling tidings which Talbot had received that evening.

And what of the Professor?

How had John Rivers come to achieve his success?

The detective's task had proved a comparatively easy one. He had picked up the tracks of Lord Eastwood's car, and had traced them to the lonely encampment where the two swarthy-faced men had their quarters.

These men—Jerry and Jake—were now members of Jim Dawlish's gang, and they did not fully realise the need for caution.

Having nothing better to do, they beguiled the time in drinking. And when John Rivers arrived on the scene, in the two-seater which he had hired from the Wayland garage, he found the two men in a practically helpless condition.

The professor was disappointed at seeing no sign of Jim Dawlish or of Marie in the encampment. But he had lighted upon two men who were obviously members of the gang, and he had discovered Lord Eastwood's car.

"This is good enough to be going on with," he murmured.

And he advanced towards Jerry and Jake, who were sprawling in the long grass, chanting a rancous refrain:

"For to-night we'll merry be,
For to-night we'll merry be,
For to-night we'll merry be,
To-morrow we'll be sober!"

But the fingers became sober sooner than that.

The sight of John Rivers caused them to leap to their feet, with savage and startled imprecations.

Jerry started to fumble in his hip-pocket, but the detective was too quick for him.

Click!

The handcuffs were upon the man's wrists, and before Jake could get to his confederate's assistance he had shared a similar fate.

"That's that!" said the Professor coolly. "I'll trouble you to step into this car. No, not the stolen one, the other! I might mention, my friend"—this to Jerry—"that you're not the only person who possesses a revolver. I have one here, and if there is any show of defiance I shall not hesitate to use it!"

The Professor spoke quietly enough, but his prisoners saw that he was in earnest. They lurched rather unsteadily towards the car, and clambered in.

As John Rivers drove away to the nearest police-station, keeping a wary eye on his charges, he endeavoured to pump them for information concerning the movements of Jim Dawlish. But the men were silent.

"I warn you," said the Professor, "that this will mean a long term of penal servitude for both of you! You have committed a series of thefts—two at St. James' School and one outside it."

"We've stolen nothing!" growled Jerry.

"But you were accessories after the fact, also receivers of stolen property. On those grounds alone, you are liable to be heavily sentenced. I strongly advise you to turn King's evidence, and to give me such information as shall lead to the capture and conviction of Dawlish. If you will do this, I will exert my influence with the authorities, and see that you are leniently dealt with."

Jerry remained silent and sullen. But the man Jake was made of weaker stuff. He was scared at the prospect of a lengthy term of imprisonment, and he

finally blurted out the facts. He explained that Jim Dawlish and Pat Donovan had travelled by caravan to the coast, that they had in their possession the trophies stolen from the sanatorium at St. Jim's, also the War Bonds which had been taken from the Head's safe. He went on to explain that it was Dawlish's intention to imprison Marie in the lighthouse at Stormpoint, and to abandon her to her fate.

John Rivers listened to the recital without interruption. He felt seriously alarmed for his daughter's safety.

He knew where Stormpoint was situated. He knew that he could get there by car within an hour.

But supposing he arrived too late?

Supposing Dawlish and Donovan had already decamped, and placed themselves beyond reach of the law?

And there was an even more haunting prospect than this.

Supposing Marie, faint and famished with hunger, and driven to despair by captivity and ill-treatment, was seriously ill, or worse?

The Professor lost no time. He handed Jerry and Jake over to the local police, with instructions that they were to be kept under the strictest supervision. He also told the inspector where Lord Eastwood's car was to be found, and arranged for the prompt return of the vehicle to its owner.

And then, declining the inspector's invitation to spend the night with him, John Rivers set off in his car in the direction of Stormpoint.

Dusk was descending, and dark clouds loomed overhead. And presently the storm broke in all its fury. But the Professor did not heed it. He was soon drenched to the skin, and the car skidded on the rain-sodden road.

Crouching grimly over the steering-wheel, John Rivers raced on into the deepening darkness—on and on, to the rescue of his daughter.

And a cry seemed to be borne to his ears on the wings of the storm—a mocking cry, consisting of two words of poignant tragedy:

"Too late!"

CHAPTER 7.

Face to Face!

"IT'S calmer now, Jim."

From one of the upper windows of the lighthouse, Pat Donovan peered out into the blackness and the rain.

The storm had lessened in intensity, and the sea was calmer, though it was far from being as smooth as a millpond.

"You'd better see about fetchin' the loot, Pat!" said Dawlish.

"Eh?"

"An' buck up! The stuff's not safe in that caravan."

"But you're going to give me a hand, surely?"

"I'll stay here an' keep an eye on her ladyship."

"No need for that!" growled Donovan. "She can't run away."

"I'll stay here!" repeated Dawlish, with emphasis. "You can easily manage the job by yourself."

"Those sacks are jolly heavy——"

"A little weight-liftin' won't break your back. Besides, you can fetch one sack at a time."

"That means a tramp of six miles altogether. The caravan's a mile an' a half from here."

"Walkin' is good exercise, Pat."

"Wish you'd try some, then!"

Dawlish looked aggressive.

"That's enough jaw!" he said sharply.

"You go an' fetch that loot, or there'll be trouble!"



Vivid flashes of lightning darted across the sky. The rain fell with increasing force. Giant waves crashed tumultuously upon the rocky shore. But the boat was safe now. Dawlish reached out and clutched the iron ladder of the lighthouse. "Out you get, you two!" (See chapter 5.)

Marie Rivers pricked up her ears. She was hoping that the two men would quarrel. If that came about, a chance of escape might present itself.

But Pat Donovan knew better than to quarrel with his leader. He went sullenly from the room, and descended the spiral staircase.

A moment later he had released the boat from its moorings and was pulling vigorously towards the shore.

The night was very dark, and Donovan was not in a good temper. He was so clumsy in his endeavours to land the boat that he found himself floundering in three feet of water; and his language as he waded ashore was decidedly picturesque.

Donovan ascended the winding cliff path, and made his way in the direction of the caravan.

In the intense darkness he experienced great difficulty in picking his way.

"Dashed if I'm goin' to make this journey again!" he growled. "Once is quite enough for me!"

The only thing to be done, in order to obviate a second journey, was to convey both sacks of plunder from the caravan to the boat.

The sacks were very weighty, and it was a herculean task.

But Donovan was a muscular scoundrel, and, in the language of the classics, he put his beef into it.

Fully an hour elapsed, however, before he regained the boat.

"Shouldn't be surprised to find that

I've shed a trail of silver cups behind me!" he panted, dumping the sacks on to a flat piece of rock in order to rest.

No sooner had Donovan seated himself beside the plunder, pumping in breath, than he heard the sound of footsteps approaching from the rear. They were hurried footsteps, accompanied by the quick breathing of a man.

"What the thump—" began Donovan.

He sprang to his feet in amazement and alarm, and spun round.

And as he did so a tall form loomed up in the darkness, and a voice exclaimed:

"Surrender!"

Donovan was utterly taken aback. He was too paralysed either to attack the intruder or to make a dash for liberty. He hesitated; and his hesitation proved fatal. His wrists were seized in a grip of iron, and the handcuffs clicked upon them.

The prisoner recoiled with a gasp of fear and chagrin.

"Who—who are you?" he muttered hoarsely. "A 'tec?"

"I am John Rivers!"

Donovan uttered an exclamation which was in keeping with the picturesque language he had used previously.

"How did you get here?" he added.

"It's a long story," said the Professor, "and I've neither the time nor the inclination to tell it now. Where is my daughter, you scoundrel? Answer me, or, by Heaven, I'll put a bullet

through you! If you have harmed her—if you have done her an injury—"

"She's quite safe!" muttered Donovan.

"Ah!" There was unbounded relief in the Professor's tone. "She is in the lighthouse, I take it, with Dawlish?"

"No, no!" said Donovan quickly. "They're miles away from here! If you like, I'll direct you—"

But John Rivers did not possess such childish simplicity as Pat Donovan might have imagined.

"You are lying!" he said.

"I'm not! I can assure you—"

"Enough!" said the Professor.

And he produced a coil of rope from his pocket.

"What are you goin' to do?" asked Donovan, in alarm.

"Tie your legs up. Then you can stay here while I fetch that arch-scoundrel Dawlish!"

Donovan laughed harshly.

"You'll never capture him alive!" he declared.

"No, I don't suppose I shall." The grimness of the Professor's tone made Donovan shudder. "I shall feel strongly disposed to shoot him on sight!"

Donovan's legs were securely bound and he was helpless.

The detective's next movements were lightning-like. He pushed the boat off, and leapt in. Plying the oars strongly and vigorously, he struck out in the direction of the lighthouse.

Writhing and impotent, Donovan watched him go. He wanted to warn Dawlish; but that was impossible. Even if he shouted at the top of his lungs his voice would be lost in the roar of the wind.

John Rivers reached the lighthouse in record time. He made the boat fast to the iron ladder, which he ascended in a couple of bounds. Then, entering the lighthouse itself, he went up the winding staircase.

He was half-way up when a voice hailed him from above.

"That you, Pat?"

"Yes!"

"You've been pretty sick!"

The Professor made no reply to that observation. He completed the ascent, and rushed, with levelled revolver, into the room at the top.

"At last, James Dawlish! Put up your hands!"

There was a glad cry from Marie, and a startled exclamation from the leader of the gang.

Dawlish realised that he was fairly trapped; but he did not comply with the Professor's command.

"Put up your hands," repeated John Rivers, "or—"

Close behind Dawlish was a door leading out on to a narrow parapet. In a flash the scoundrel whipped it open and rushed through.

Crack!

The Professor fired his revolver. But in the uncertain light his aim was erratic. The bullet buried itself in the wall.

Jim Dawlish stood crouching on the narrow ledge outside, waiting for his adversary to renew the attack.

It was Dawlish's intention to lure the Professor on to the parapet, and to get to grips with him. In this he succeeded.

Brushing Marie aside—for the girl had been in the act of following Dawlish—John Rivers sprang through the doorway. His blood was up, and he was fully determined now to shoot the scoundrel who had kidnapped his daughter with the dastardly intention of leaving her here to starve.

But, handicapped by the darkness, and blinded by the rain, the detective could not see his quarry.

He fired at random, and the bullet whizzed over Dawlish's head.

And then, whilst he was still trying to get his bearings, the revolver was knocked from the Professor's grasp. It went clattering on to the stone ledge; and the next instant John Rivers was seized in the tenacious grip of a desperate man.

A terrible struggle followed.

Even as he fought to free himself the Professor realised his danger.

At one time the parapet had afforded protection in the shape of railings; but at that particular spot they had been swept away by constant and powerful storms.

To be hurled from that narrow ledge meant a sheer drop into the seething cauldron of waves below.

John Rivers redoubled his efforts. He was stronger and more wiry than Dawlish. But the latter fought with the inhuman strength of a madman. If he was to go to his doom, he resolved that the Professor should accompany him.

Marie stood watching the terrible contest from the doorway. She could not interfere. There was scarcely room for two on the parapet, and the presence of a third party would spell certain disaster.

To Marie's horror, Dawlish appeared to have the upper hand. Before he had taken up the shady profession of a

cracksmen he had won numerous wrestling bouts in the North of England. He would have proved a formidable opponent for any man. And now, in his frenzied condition, he seemed to have the strength of a lion. He was endeavouring to catch his adversary round the waist; and John Rivers knew that if Dawlish succeeded it would mean the end of everything.

Swaying backwards and forwards, their breath coming and going in great gasps, the two men continued their struggle.

Once the Professor came within an ace of losing his balance, and Marie was compelled to turn away her eyes. When she dared to look again, however, she saw, to her unutterable relief, that her father was safe—for the time being at any rate. But his future safety was extremely problematical.

The struggle had only been in progress half a minute—though it seemed half a decade to the anxious girl looking on—when Dawlish broke away, paused for one thrilling second, and then hurled himself bodily at John Rivers.

Had the Professor stood in the way of that terrific charge he must inevitably have been swept off the parapet. But he darted to one side in the very nick of time.

Unable to restrain himself, Dawlish continued his onrush. He disappeared over the edge of the parapet, and dropped into space.

When Dawlish had made that frenzied rush at her father, Marie Rivers had averted her eyes. After a few seconds of terrible suspense she looked again, and instead of seeing two men on the parapet she saw only one.

And that one—by a miracle, it seemed—was her father!

The Professor was safe. He had had the worst of the encounter whilst it lasted. Dawlish had been his master in the science of wrestling. But Fate does not always ordain that the best man wins. And James Dawlish, scoundrel and cracksmen, had gone to his fate.

What that fate was it was impossible to tell.

There was a chance—a very remote chance, it was true—that Dawlish might be picked up by some passing vessel. He was a strong swimmer, and if he had managed to retain consciousness during his fall there was hope for him. Failing the arrival of a vessel he might be able to swim ashore.

But it seemed far more probable that he had gone to his doom—that the waters had closed over his head and engulfed him—that, after an interval of a few hours, perhaps days, his lifeless body would be washed ashore.

And if that were the case—if Dawlish had indeed gone to his death—then he had paid the penalty for a career dark with dishonour. And never again would he be a menace to the girl who, in the topmost room of the lighthouse, now stood clasped in her father's embrace.

CHAPTER 8.

Light after Darkness!

FOR some moments John Rivers and his daughter uttered no word.

Marie was too much swayed by emotion to speak; and the Professor, for his part, felt that words were too weak to give expression to his great joy at having found Marie.

When at last the Professor did speak, he attempted—though not with much success—to make light of what had passed.

"By Jove, little girl! Who would have thought we should meet like this—in a lighthouse, of all queer places!"

"Father!" The tears were coursing down Marie's cheeks. "You have saved my life! And—and you nearly lost your own in doing so! When I saw Dawlish leap at you on that parapet, I—I thought it—"

"You thought it was all up with me—eh? Well, I thought so myself, at the moment. But, knowing something of ringcraft, I'm pretty quick on my pins, and I managed to skip aside in the nick of time. And now, Marie, we must be off. You are ill, and unless you receive prompt treatment you will be having a serious breakdown. Your nerves are unstrung by this ordeal, and no wonder!"

With her father's assistance Marie descended the spiral staircase.

When, a moment later, they stepped into the boat, Marie said, with a quiver in her voice:

"What of Dawlish, father?"

An expression of sternness came over the Professor's face.

"Marie, you must not mention that man's name any more!"

"But—but you cannot leave him to drown! It is hard, I know, to return good for evil; but if there is a chance of saving him—"

"I fear there is none, child," said the Professor quietly. "However, I will gratify your wish."

And, taking the oars, John Rivers proceeded to row round the base of the lighthouse.

As they went Marie scanned the dark waters. But she could see no sign of Dawlish. Neither was any cry audible above the crashing of the breakers.

The Professor shook his head.

"It is useless," he said. "Dawlish will not trouble us again."

Marie gave a shudder. And the Professor, abandoning the futile search, rowed towards the shore.

Pat Donovan was still there, beside the sacks of plunder. He had witnessed with terror-stricken eyes the struggle on the parapet of the lighthouse, and he had seen one of the combatants drop into the abyss below. He had not known which one it was, but he had naturally hoped it was the Professor. His hopes were shattered when he saw John Rivers step out of the boat.

"Where's Jim?" faltered Donovan, as the Professor came towards him.

"He has dissolved partnership with you for good!" was the grim reply.

"You—you mean to say Jim's drowned?"

The Professor nodded. He felt quite convinced now that Jim Dawlish had gone to his account.

"Now, look here," he said, "I'm going to set you free."

Pat Donovan uttered an exclamation of joy.

"Only for a few moments," added the Professor, "so that you can carry one of these sacks to the car."

Donovan's jaw dropped. His dreams of freedom were but short-lived.

"If you attempt to bolt," said the Professor, "you'll know what to expect!"

The handcuffs were removed from Donovan's wrists, and the cord from his legs. Then he was compelled to carry one of the sacks of plunder, while the Professor tackled the other.

"The car's at the top of the cliff, Marie," said John Rivers. "Couldn't bring it any farther, of course. Do you think you can walk?"

Marie nodded, and she followed in the wake of the Professor and his captive as they abandoned the cliff path.

A few moments later the loof was safely deposited in the car, and Donovan was again handcuffed. He pleaded to be given another chance—he solemnly

vowed he would go straight in future—but the Professor was adamant.

"To let a rogue like you remain at large," he said, "would be an act of lunacy!"

Donovan was ordered to get into the car, and Marie and her father followed.

It was a tight squeeze for three, but the Professor explained that they would soon be getting rid of a portion of their human cargo—Pat Donovan, to wit.

Marie was well wrapped up in rugs. The rain had now ceased altogether, but the night was chilly.

"It will be practically a non-stop to St. Jim's," said the Professor. "We shall halt only once—at the first police-station we come to."

The car was set in motion, and it was soon speeding inland.

John Rivers was anxious to get his daughter back to the school as quickly as possible. The pallor of her face, and the unnatural brightness of her eyes, caused him great concern.

At the end of six miles or so a police-station came in sight.

It was the work of a few moments to give Pat Donovan into custody. He pleaded and protested to the last, but his efforts were unavailing. The Professor ordered him to be searched, and War Bonds to the total value of eight hundred pounds were found on his person. Those were the Bonds which had been stolen from Dr. Holmes' safe at St. Jim's; and the three thefts had now been completely cleared up.

After warning the police that Donovan was to be given no loophole of escape, the Professor rejoined Marie in the car; and as the vehicle sped on through the leafy lanes the dark shadows began to lift, and the twittering of birds heralded the dawning of a new day.

And Marie Rivers, weary and spent though she was, experienced the glowing joy of one who passes from the shadows into the sunshine.

Taggles, the gate-porter at St. Jim's, had returned to his accustomed place.

On this bright summer morning Taggles tugged vigorously at the bell-rope, and St. Jim's soon resembled a gigantic beehive.

There was a mad scramble to be

dressed on the part of the occupants of the Shell dormitory. The fellows were burning to know if there was any further news from the Professor.

Talbot was the first to complete his toilet. He went down the stairs three at a time, with the Terrible Three at his heels.

And as they sprinted out into the sunny quadrangle, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the postman, a two-seater car swung through the gateway of St. Jim's.

Talbot bounded forward with a cry of delight.

"Marie!"

And the Terrible Three raised a cheer which might have been heard all over the great building.

The quadrangle soon became alive with excited fellows. But the cheering was hushed when they caught sight of Marie's pale face.

"She is ill," said the Professor quietly. "I fear she is going to be very ill."

And, with Talbot's ready assistance, John Rivers piloted his daughter to the school sanatorium.

The doctor was immediately summoned, but he took a sanguine view of the situation. All that the girl needed, he declared, was rest and food, and Marie had plenty of both that day.

Of the Professor's interview with the Head—of the restoration of the plunder—of the overwhelming joy and relief of Talbot of the Shell, there is no need to speak.

The dark cloud which had hung so long over the old school was now lifted. James Dawlish and the members of his precious gang had been brought to book, the stolen property had been recovered, and, best of all, Marie had been saved.

And ever afterwards the school in general, and Talbot of the Shell in particular, would have cause to bless the name of John Rivers of Scotland Yard.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "GRUNDY'S GREAT RAID!" by Martin Clifford. Avoid disappointment by ordering your copy EARLY!)

A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA!

By "COOEE."

WHEN the first skins of these queer creatures were sent to the learned men in London, they thought somebody in Australia had played a trick upon them. It seemed impossible that there could be a creature partly bird, partly beast, partly fish. But travellers soon set their mind at rest, and proved it was genuine, and not a hoax. So they gave it a long Latin name—*ornithorhynchus paradoxus*—which means 'a contradictory creature, with a bill like a bird's.'

"We call it the 'water-mole,' or 'duck-billed platypus,' platypus meaning 'broad-foot.' It measures, you see, about twenty-four inches over all. Its fore-feet are webbed for swimming, and its hind feet are made like a mole's for tunnelling. It burrows on the river-bank, making a hole thirty or forty feet long, with an opening to the river and another above the surface, apparently for ventilation.

"In this burrow it lays two eggs, white, small, leathery. The mother can roll herself up like a hedgehog, and keep her eggs warm in that way. The milk for the young ones oozes through the mother's body, spreads over her fur, and the babies lick it off.

"Unfortunately, the platypus is getting rather scarce, for its dark-brown fur is much sought after. It takes thirty or forty skins to make a decent-sized rug."

After this long and learned lecture, Harry felt doubly proud of having bagged a specimen of the queerest creature on earth, or, as his uncle called it, "the lowest type of mammal," the type that showed the far-off pedigree of the mammal class.

On the way home in the gathering darkness they heard cries in the bush like those of a baby.

"Well, well," said Mr. Thornton, "this is our lucky day! Tie up your horse a minute to this tree, and let's look for this crying child."

Going into the darker shade of the bush, they found a little animal crying piteously beside his dead mother.

"Just as I thought," said Mr. Thornton. "You go that side, and let us try to catch this little fellow before he gets up the tree."

Harry caught the furry creature by the leg, and got a sharp bite for his pains.

"Poor little orphan!" said Mr. Thornton. "This is a native bear, or koala. Somebody has shot his mother. We'll take him home, and you can have him for a pet. He needs no other food than gum-leaves."

So when they reached home with the platypus and the bear, and thought of the dead iguana in the bush, Harry felt he had had a great day.

IT was Harry's duty to go daily to the post-office, and when his uncle opened the letters one evening he said:

"Why, Harry, here is Uncle Jack writing to say he would like you to spend a few weeks with him in the Mallee! You're in luck, my boy; you'll have great sport among the birds up there."

(Continued on page 18.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

YOUR CHOICE OF COMPLETE STORY BOOKS.

EACH A 65,000-WORD NOVEL COMPLETE IN ITSELF.

NOW ON SALE.

DETECTIVE TALES.

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

No. 132.—THE MAN FROM KERA-KURA.

A Magnificent Detective Tale of Stirring Adventures in England and Central Africa, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and the Hon. John Lawless.

No. 133.—THE ONLY SON.

A Gripping Detective Novel of a Mother and a Son, and well-written Episode in a Brigand's Stronghold, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and the bloodhound Pedro.

No. 134.—THE KING'S SECRET.

A Detective Romance that stands out as one in a thousand, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Dr. Lepperman and Eldrid Kurtin, the Scientific Criminals.

No. 135.—THE MYSTERY OF THE TURKISH AGREEMENT.

An Thrilling Detective Novelette, Strong in Adventure and Plot, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, Pedro, "Granite" Grant, and Mdlle. Julie.

SCHOOL, SPORT & ADVENTURE TALES.

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

No. 514.—NIPPER AT ST. FRANK'S.

Rattling Yarn of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure.

By ROBERT W. COMRADE.

No. 515.—KING OF THE CANALS.

Grand Story of Life on a Barge. By DAVID GOODWIN.

No. 516.—BY AIRSHIP TO OPHIR.

Splendid Tale of Mystery in Far-off Lands. By FENTON ASH.

No. 517.—UNDER SEALED ORDERS.

Magnificent Yarn of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

PRICE
4D.
EACH.

ORDER YOUR COPIES NOW.

EVERY NEWSAGENT SELLS OUT QUICKLY.

PRICE
4D.
EACH.

ANOTHER OF MICHAEL POOLE'S POPULAR SCHOOL TALES.



SMITHY OF THE FIFTH

A Splendid Long Tale
of Dickie Dexter & Co.
at St. Katie's, intro-
ducing J. O. SMITH.

CHAPTER 1.

A Pebble on the Brim!

"SMITHY'S got his colours!" announced Bill Strong to his three chums in Study No. 10.

"Good egg!" said Dobbie.

"He jolly well deserves 'em!"

"Good old Smithy!" said the Kid gladly. And then added a pinch of his well-known sarcasm: "Sure Big Hallam hasn't made a mistake? He really thinks Smithy is good enough for the nob's of the Sixth?"

"I think so!" said Bill cheerily.

"But Smithy's been in the First Eleven for a long time, hasn't he?" Curtis asked. "Why hasn't he had his colours before? You've got your colours, haven't you, Bill?"

"I have not," said Bill. "It may be that the lords of the Sixth will give 'em to me at the end of the season, just as they gave me my footer colours. But being in the First Eleven doesn't mean you get your colours, old son!"

They had to explain to Curtis then just what "getting your colours" really meant. It is rather a complicated business at Katie's, and fellows had been known to play for two whole seasons for the First Eleven and only get their colours at the end of that time.

The idea is that nobody except a fellow in the Sixth can be old enough or good enough to wear colours. Once you've got your colours you are a sort of gilt-edged player.

You can swank round in the special blazer, and on your flannels is emblazoned in silk the school crest. You are entitled to go barging round among all the Forms under the Sixth, giving them advice on how to play, and you are qualified to act as umpire in an inter-Form match.

There are other privileges and responsibilities which obviously can't be handed out very easily to anyone below the Sixth Form.

But in football, for instance, Bill Strong's place in the First was a certainty. He was as good a back as Big Hallam himself. Yet Bill, having played

in every match last season, was only given his colours at the end of the last match.

In cricket Bill played for the First just as regularly as Big Hallam did. But it was a little bit awkward to give a fellow in the Transitus his cricket colours, even though he'd played regularly last season and was miles better than one or two fellows who had got their colours right away.

Smithy was another man outside the Sixth who was entitled to his colours very easily—except for the fact that he was only in the Fifth. After due consideration and consultation with the Head himself, Smithy was admitted to the elect circle, and given his colours.

To get your colours before you got into the Sixth was something to brag about. And everybody was glad that old Smithy had done it.

The fact that every fellow in Study No. 10 liked Smithy—even admired him—shows the sort of fellow he was.

Curtis thought that Smithy was the ideal of what a fellow should be, and he said so quite openly. As a matter of fact, Smithy was very much what Curtis probably would be in a year or two's time.

He had a natural faculty for doing things easily and gracefully. About one fellow in every hundred thousand is lucky or unlucky enough to be born with the gift, and they can't help being a success—if they can keep their heads!

You might not think it, but the Kid and Smithy had quite a lot in common, and at various times had been associated as the leading lights in different stunts. Of course, nowadays, being a big man in the Fifth, Smithy didn't mix up a great deal with the Transitus fellows, but his friendship with the Kid had not died away. Smithy wasn't that sort.

On this particular afternoon the Kid was up a tree. The tree stood in the copse, which was on the sloping ground between the playing-fields and the bank of the River Nare, and it was one of the Kid's own secret hiding-places.

It was easily the biggest tree in the copse—an ancient oak that took up more room than half a dozen of the smaller trees. Dexter had been down to bathe, but had come away early as he was absorbed in a story he wanted to finish reading.

Still, the story was not so utterly fascinating that the Kid hadn't time for other details. Other fellows passed right beneath the tree—and the Kid had a pocketful of odd pebbles. From his perch he could drop a pebble with absolute accuracy on to the straw hat of anyone passing beneath.

It made quite a pleasant diversion, because the Kid could see the fellows below quite easily, but they couldn't see him. Perhaps they might have spotted him if they'd looked long enough, but usually they looked up and around and seemed surprised, and then went on without having the ghost of a notion that the Kid was in the tree and was thoroughly enjoying the joke.

Three Transitus fellows, armed with towels and wet bathing-costumes, came strolling up the pathway. They were Bunting, Brontrox, and Grubb, and the Kid leaned gently forward and dropped a pebble.

Brontrox was in the centre and slightly behind the other two because the path was rather narrow. At the precise moment when the Kid let the pebble go the Bronto was in the act of drawing his handkerchief out of his right-hand pocket.

The pebble caught the brim of his straw hat fairly and neatly. Bronto's hand, still gripping his handkerchief, shot out instantly, and made a grab for his hat.

Of course, it wouldn't have knocked his hat off, anyway, but that sort of game does rather startle a fellow.

"What on earth was that?" demanded the Bronto, and went forward a few paces.

The three of them stared up into the tree, but could see nothing.

"Probably a jolly little squirrel," Bunting suggested, "having a game with you, Bronto! Anyhow, as I was

telling you, old Rackham is letting me have the bike, and if you get one, Bronto, we—"

They passed on. The pebble had created its effect and finished. Aloft in the tree the Kid smiled to himself, because he was amused.

He also pondered over the question of getting down, as he'd finished the book. Moreover, just at the moment when Bron-trox jerked his hand his handkerchief had dragged something out of his pocket, and even from where he was in the tree the Kid could see it quite plainly.

It was a plain, black-leather pocket-wallet, and quite possibly contained money. The Kid decided in his own mind that he might have two or three further minutes' amusement out of the Bronto when he returned the case to him.

He was just about to get down the tree when the sound of someone else coming along the path held him up. Peering through the leaves, he espied Smithy strolling along.

Smithy's head was bent, and he was evidently thinking of something very deeply—probably about his colours and whether he'd be able to get them on his flannels for the big match on Saturday. In the circumstances the Kid decided not to drop a pebble on him. Besides, he was further down the tree now, and if Smithy looked up he might spot the Kid.

As he passed right under the tree Smithy's eyes caught the case, and he stopped to pick it up. For a moment he examined it, then slipped it into his pocket.

The Kid had seen the case before, and knew that it was a patent American affair for holding "wads of bills," as Bronto used to say before he learned to call a pound-note a Bradbury. It had the Bronto's name in gold letters inside, and there was a little slit in which you could put a piece of cardboard behind a celluloid cover. On the cardboard you wrote your address, and could change it just when you wished.

"Blow Smithy!" said the Kid, as he climbed down the tree. "Now he'll go along to the Bronto and talk hot air about being careful, and I can't pull the Bronto's leg!"

You may remember that when the Bronto first came to Katie's it was the Kid who took him in hand and began the process of licking him into shape. Nowadays he was a very decent fellow, and had taken his proper place at Katie's, and was thoroughly enjoying life.

By the time the Kid got in to tea one or two other things had happened. For one thing, two or three letters had come, and they were sufficiently interesting to make him forget all about the pleasant hour in the tree and the incident of the Bronto's pocket-wallet.

He never even thought about it again until two days later, when Dobbie came into the study with the latest item of excitement.

"The Bronto's horribly sick," said Dobbie. "Just been talking to him as he's sticking up a notice downstairs. I told him he ought to advertise in the papers, because you never know—"

"But what's it all about?" demanded the Kid. "Get it off your chest, Dobbie, and let's have the story!"

"I'm telling you!" Dobbie retorted. "The Bronto's lost a case with twenty-five one-pound notes in it! Twenty-five! Does that make you sit up and take notice?"

"My hat!" said the Kid. "What on earth is he doing with all that boodle? His governor may be a jolly old millionaire, but hang it all—"

"He was going to buy a bike," Dobbie explained. "The Beak had given him permission, and the money rolled up on

Monday. The Bronto doesn't shove it into the Wrecker's, but sticks it with some other cash he's got in this wallet of his. And by Monday evening he'd lost the giddy packet!"

The Kid really did sit up and take notice then. Into his mind flashed quite clearly the incident of the pebble on the Bronto's brim.

He asked more questions, and Dobbie told all he knew. Bronto had the wallet all right when he went down to bathe, because he remembered taking it from the coat he was wearing to put it into the pocket of his blazer, which he was going to wear for the afternoon.

It was in his pocket all right when he undressed for his bathe. He came back with Bunting and Grubb, and they called at Mother Hubbard's to get some cakes for tea. Bronto said he'd pay, as he wanted change for a pound note, and felt for his case. But the case had gone.

"They've been hunting for it because the Bronto didn't want to start kicking up a fuss about it," Dobbie added. "Even now he's half-afraid to mention it because there'll probably be a shindy about him carting so much boodle round with him. He's got a notice out, and stuck it up on the board. You can see it for yourself."

"I'll go and have a look at it," said the Kid; and Dobbie was surprised at the queer note in the Kid's voice.

On the notice-board downstairs was a half-sheet of foolscap, upon which had been written with painful neatness:

"LOST!"

"A pocket-wallet, containing a considerable number of one-pound notes. The case bears the name A. W. Bron-trox inside. Probably lost between boathouse and Mother Hubbard's on Monday last. Information from anyone finding same will be greatly appreciated by A. W. Bron-trox, Study No. 17."

There were several fellows round the notice, and one or two others came even while the Kid was studying it carefully. As he turned away he saw Smithy of the Fifth staring at it.

The Kid looked at Smithy, and the latter seemed to become aware of it, for he nodded abruptly to the Kid.

"Silly ass!" Smithy jerked the words out. "Why can't he be more careful?"

He nodded again to the Kid, and turned away. And somehow the Kid had a horrible sinking sort of feeling, and he didn't want to go back to tea. He had an idea that Smithy had gone pale, and then Dexter told himself that he was a silly idiot. As though old Smithy would— It was a ridiculous idea!

But why hadn't Smithy given the case back to Bronto without waiting till everybody was talking about it?

CHAPTER 2.

The Mystery of Bronto's Wallet!

THERE were quite a number of different opinions on the Bronto's loss. But most people agreed that he was a silly ass to cart round so much money in his blazer pocket.

Anybody can be wise after the event. Of course, the Beak and the masters got to know about it, and from each one the Bronto had a light lecture on carelessness and the necessity of reporting at once to the Recorder, and depositing any large amounts of money with him. He was also closely questioned by everybody, including a large number of amateur detectives, who felt that this was just the sort of mystery they could shine in.

By the time Bron-trox had explained

about three hundred times exactly when he last had the wallet, and precisely what he did after that, and just when he discovered his loss, the story had got boiled down to fairly narrow limits.

In the excitement it was scarcely noticed that two fellows, at least, in the Upper School were not particularly interested in the matter. Neither Dickie Dexter nor J. O. Smith had much to say.

Even when the Head referred to the matter after morning prayers, Dickie Dexter stared at the stained-glass window, and Smithy read the hymn-book through again.

The Beak preface his remarks by the sort of stuff he was bound to say. It would be regrettable if he had to take any steps to limit boys to the amount of money which they might possess, but there was a special arrangement at the Recorder's office whereby boys could open what, in effect, was a banking account, and he hoped that in future no boy would run the risk of incurring a serious loss—and so on.

And then he touched on the case which had recently occurred.

"I feel quite sure that it is purely a formal question," the Head said, "but at the same time I feel it incumbent upon me to ask that if any boy in this school can throw any light upon the matter, or can give any information which will help us, we shall be grateful. And—ah—I need scarcely say that—er—if any boy—naturally take a lenient view and endeavour to help, but—ah—I feel quite sure that no boy in this school— But in future I trust that proper advantage will be taken of the Recorder's office. That is all!"

Of course, they guessed what the Head was driving at, but it was a jolly awkward thing for him to touch on. One of those things that have to be said, but are a lot better left unsaid, only— You know what I mean?

Dexter felt like an icy statue the whole time the Head was speaking. He had an idea that any minute Smithy would call out and hold up the missing wallet. He hoped he would—no, he didn't! He hoped— He wished to goodness he knew nothing about it, and then, again, he wished he knew more about it.

He tried to persuade himself at first that he'd made a mistake, and it wasn't a pocket-wallet that Smithy had picked up. But every time he closed his eyes he could see it quite plainly—could see Smithy opening it, and could catch a glimpse of the gold-lettered name, and the ends of the notes sticking out a little way from the pocket.

Then he tried other theories, but it was no use. The Kid knew perfectly well that Smithy had picked up the Bronto's case and hadn't returned it. Smithy kept the money, and he was simply a low-down— Oh, it was rotten!

On Saturday the First Eleven were playing Littledale School, and it was expected to be a pretty stiff match. Smithy appeared for the first time since getting his colours, and the Kid, feeling miserable and sick about everything, watched the match.

He felt sure that Smith would make a mess of his innings. It would at least prove that the Fifth Form captain was upset, even though he didn't show it.

There isn't space to give a full description of the match. Littledale batted first, and knocked up a hundred and thirty-five. Katie's began with Big Hollar and Bellinger, both of whom were out before twenty was on the score. Smithy went in fifth wicket down, and joined Bill Strong when thirty-seven runs had been scored.

Bill had made three when Smithy came, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

and the history of that match rather upset the arguments of those who were opposed to the idea of giving colours to fellows outside the Sixth.

Smithy played carefully for his first over, and took a couple of twos. Bill was playing just as you'd expect him to play when things were rocky—carefully and steadily. He scored two singles, getting back for the last ball of the over.

Then—fireworks! Smithy began to treat the bowling as though he were playing in a kids' game. Even from the boundary you could see that he was smiling with contempt. He opened his shoulders and hit every ball!

Bill scored seven runs while Smithy knocked up fifty-three! Then J. O. S. opened out at a ball which had a wicked break on it. He got it, but up it went, and Smithy retired—caught!

But they gave him a real reception when he came back, and old Smithy smiled in that "what-else-would-you-expect-from-me" sort of way he had, and lost himself in the pavilion.

The end of the match was exciting, but Katie's won by one wicket, and Bill Strong played a magnificent game, and scored the winning hit. His score was twenty-eight, not out. There hadn't been any fireworks in it, but that match was Smithy's and Strong's.

But Smithy's performance had brought matters to a head so far as the Kid was concerned. He felt he couldn't put it off any longer; and, whatever happened, he would see Smithy to-night.

There was no preparation school on Saturday nights, and the Kid strolled round to Smithy's study about seventhirty. He had already discovered that Harlock, who shared the study with J.O.S., was at a meeting of the photographic society, because he'd seen him go with Dobbie.

Smithy was in, sitting at the table and writing, but he looked up as the Kid entered.

"Hallo, sweet babe!" Smithy quietly pulled the cover over the pad on which he was writing. "Want to see me? You don't want to tell me about my splendid innings this afternoon? It was luck, my dear laddie—pure and unadulterated luck!"

"No, it wasn't that," said the Kid slowly, and then looked straight into Smithy's eyes and almost gasped out the next sentence. "It was something more important, really—confidential, I mean. It was about that business the Head was jawing about yesterday morning. The Bronto lost a wallet, you know—twenty-five Bradburys."

"Ah, yes," said Smithy, "I remember! And you wanted to talk to me about it, Kid?"

"Yes!" The Kid plunged into it now. "I really caused the Bronto to lose it. I was up a tree and dropped a pebble on his brimmer, and that made the case jerk out of his pocket. I was just going to get down when I heard someone coming, and scrambled back, and—well, the other fellow picked it up."

Smithy still had the smile on his face, but somehow it hurt the Kid. Smithy's hand was resting on the table, and he was playing very nervously with a pencil. Yet he looked the Kid straight in the face when at last he spoke.

"Meaning me, Kid?" he asked very quietly, and the Kid nodded.

Smithy rose and walked to the door, where, very carefully, he pushed across the catch which closed the door to all comers. Then he turned and faced the Kid again.

"Pardon me for doing that, babe," he said lightly. "But I think our conversation will be confidential. Needless

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

to say, I did not know that anyone saw me take that case. Why didn't you report the whole rotten business to the Head, Kid?"

Dexter stared at him in wonder. "I didn't believe—I mean, you didn't intend to keep the money, of course, Smithy? You're not a rotter, but I couldn't help wondering—"

The Kid began to flounder again. "I am a rotter," said Smithy, and there was no sign of a smile on his face now. "I kept the case, Kid. I've used some of the money already. I'm the lowest hound that ever came to Katie's. A thief—a sneak-thief! I— D'you care to stay and listen to the whole miserable business, Kid? I'd like to talk about it."

The Kid nodded, but said no word. Somehow, he felt that he was dreaming this, or that Smithy was pulling his leg.

But, looking at Smithy's face, he knew that he was in deadly earnest. And again the Kid had a queer, contradictory sort of feeling that Smithy was a much older and much stronger fellow than he had ever imagined before!

CHAPTER 3.

The Kid's Commands!

BEFORE you really decide the kind of fellow Smithy was it's only fair to understand a little bit of his hidden history.

His father had been at Katie's years ago, but had died comparatively young, just when he was making a brilliant name for himself as a barrister.

Mrs. Smithy's chief hope was that her son should follow the same profession as his father, but it was something of a struggle to raise the funds necessary to send him to Katie's.

But it was done, and Smithy knew all about it, and meant, later on, to get scholarships to see him through. Of course, to a fellow like J. O. S., it was a bit of a handicap being short of funds, because he wasn't the sort to take second place to anybody.

It isn't unfair to say that, and it isn't anything against Smithy. If you'd put Smithy on a cannibal island he would have been one of the boss chiefs inside a fortnight, and they would all have been going in for cricket and clothes because it would seem the right thing to do—with Smithy knocking round.

When he was in the Upper Fourth Smithy got pressed for hard cash, and found a way out! A small pawnbroker in Dulchester agreed to lend him thirty-five shillings providing he paid back two pounds at the end of the month.

Smithy paid back the two pounds; but after he frequently found Jennison useful in times of emergency, because, again, Smithy wasn't the sort to go borrowing money from his friends.

But gradually he got behind, and had to renew his loans. Smithy wasn't a fool, and he thought he knew exactly what he was doing. All being well, he hoped to get the Holmes Scholarship this term, and that would open the way for him to clear off Jennison's little account.

Then Jennison got tired of renewing and adding on increased interest. He wanted the whole sum back, and delivered an ultimatum. For once all Smithy's powers of persuasion were simply worse than useless, for the more he talked the more convinced Jennison became that Smithy was simply out to swindle him.

It got to the stage where Smithy knew that the crash was bound to come. Jennison would not wait—and Smithy could not raise the sixteen pounds which was now due before the beginning of next term.

If the Head got to know about his bor-

rowing money, Smithy would be told to pack up. Wherefore Smithy decided to make a decent bid to leave the school honourably. It was the only way out.

He wrote Jennison a letter promising to pay him within ten days, and saying that he was going home to get the money—which was perfectly true. He wrote his mother saying that he was coming home on the Monday, after the Littledale match was over. Another letter went to a friend of his father's, who had always promised to get Smith a position in a shipping office if ever he decided to leave school.

Then he saw the Head, and explained that he was afraid he would have to leave the school, but could he have leave to go home on Monday. You see, Smithy's idea was that when he'd explained to his mother the true situation—well, it would be up to him to relieve her of any further worry so far as she was concerned, and that the time had come to begin earning money instead of spending it. He simply refused to face the idea of getting the money from his mother and then carrying on as though nothing had happened.

He spoke to Big Hallam, and mentioned the fact, in strict confidence, that he might be leaving the school, and that, if Big Hallam thought he deserved them, he'd like to have his colours before he went. And Smithy was officially informed the same day that he had been given his colours.

He expected a letter from Jennison, but none came, and in the afternoon Smithy went down to bathe. Coming back, he debated in his mind the idea of borrowing a bike and running, down to Dulchester just to make sure that Jennison wouldn't do anything before the promised date.

On his way through the copse he saw the case which the Bronto had dropped, and picked it up. He smiled bitterly as he saw what it contained, but there wasn't any other idea in his mind except that he would wander into the Bronto's study and throw the thing to him.

If a vague idea about borrowing from the Bronto did cross his mind, Smithy dismissed it. He called at the Wrecker's just to see if a letter had come in for him from Jennison.

"There's no letter for you, Smith," said the Recorder. "But a person called to see you, and is waiting now in the room here. I—he wouldn't state his business, but insisted that it was urgent."

He looked curiously at Smithy, because it was rather unusual for a Dulchester tradesman to come to the school and insist on seeing boys. In fact, at normal times the Recorder wouldn't have allowed the man to wait; but he gathered quite enough from the man to know that it might be wiser.

Smithy found Jennison in the little room on the right of the Recorder's office. He wasted no words, but told Smithy point-blank that he wasn't going to be fooled out of his money by any fairy tales of that sort. Either Mr. Smith paid half the money right now, or Jennison stuck at the school until he saw the headmaster and got a guarantee from him that it would be paid!

It wasn't a time for argument or quiet thought. The big hope in Smithy's mind was that he would leave the school with a good name so far as the fellows and the masters were concerned. And—anything to stave off Jennison for another day or so!

He turned his back on Jennison for a moment, and extracted eight pound notes from the Bronto's case.

"There you are, Jennison!" Smithy said, and never showed the slightest sign that he was upset. "It inconveniences me very much to pay before next week.

The Editor's Chat.

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

For next Wednesday.

"GRUNDY'S GREAT RAID!"

Under this title Martin Clifford has written a capital yarn of the chums of St. Jim's. Trouble arises when the great George Alfred Grundy plans a midnight raid on the Grammar School, and compels his two chums to join forces with him. The raid is carried out, and the three find themselves face to face with surprising consequences. Kerr has a grand opportunity of displaying his powers as an amateur detective, and he is not slow in taking advantage of it. Ultimately an astounding revelation is made, so that some good results after all come from

"GRUNDY'S GREAT RAID!"

To follow this will be a Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Dickie Dexter & Co. at St. Katie's, entitled:

"JOLLY ROGER'S SECRET!"

By Michael Poole.

In this story the Kid and the Kangaroo figure very prominently. By a combination of circumstances, Mr. Roger Blunt comes into possession of a well-guarded secret, and then things begin to take an unexpected turn, and the Kid finds himself in difficulties.

As usual, there will be another page wholly devoted to contributions sent in by my readers, under the title of:

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

and

"A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA!"

By "Cooee,"

an interesting narrative of wild life and adventures in the Australian Bush.

If you wish to avoid the disappointment of not getting a copy of this "special" number, please give your order to your newsagent early!

A CONJURING COLUMN.

A correspondent, writing from Burnham, Bucks, asks for a column about conjuring in the GEM. He is sure it would be popular, and I have not much doubt about it myself, but surely it would be wise to wait till the winter for such luxuries. Nobody wants to spend time doing clever things with the cards at a season when summer is calling everyone out of doors.

VERY KEEN.

"Why did you sandwich 'The Mystery of the Mill' between such good things as 'The Naturalist of St. Jim's' and 'Malcolm's Secret'?" So runs a letter from a loyal reader at the School of Mines, Adelaide. Well, the reason for the sandwiching was to give plenty of variety—nothing else.

CRICKET MATCHES.

L. Woolley, secretary of St. John's THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 649.

Junior Cricket Club, 217, St. Vincent Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, asks me to state that the club is on the look-out for friendly matches. Age fourteen, average. They are willing to take matches within three miles of Summerfield Park.

THE GOOD OLD "GEM!"

Robert Gould, 77, Great Newton Street, Liverpool, who says he wants to be in touch with a correspondent in London, tells me that the "Half-Crown Page" is a grand success. He puts the GEM first all the time. He has not found another book to equal it for its wit and schoolboy humour. Then follow cheers for the good old GEM. Much obliged.

AUSTRALIA.

"Violet," writing from St. Vincent Street, Albert Park, Melbourne, considers that Australian criticisms of Gussy and Cardew must be wrong. She admires both characters. "Have you," she asks, "read any of our two great Australian authors' books—Mary Grand Bruce and Ethel Turner? They are so absolutely true to Australian life, both in our cities, and out on the stations." My correspondent says the Companion Papers are enjoyed by all her family circle.

RAILWAY STATIONS.

A valued correspondent in Glasgow tells me there was some slight mistake in a recent reference to the size of railway-stations given in one of the Companion Papers. Waterloo Station is the largest station, and after it come Waverley, York, Crewe, Victoria, and Liverpool Street. Paddington does not seem to be in the first group at all, nor Euston, though these termini are fairly extensive, as everybody knows.

BELFAST.

My firm supporter, George Lytle, 19, Agra Street, Ormeau Road, Belfast, sends me a genial letter. I agree with a lot that he says, though I am not just now going to enter into some of the controversies. They are having lovely weather at present in Ulster's capital, and the cricket prospects look bright. It is somehow always interesting to get news from Belfast. Most Londoners who journey there have cheery remembrances of the trip—the Lagan River, the quaint effect of Larne, the effect of the country round with white cottages, and, if you have time to run up to the Giant's Causeway, so much the better.

VALUE FOR MONEY!

There is sound sense in John H. McGraw's letter. This correspondent, writing from Stockton-on-Tees, points out that grumblers ought to know they are getting the best value for the three-halfpence charged for the Companion Papers. Everything pretty nearly has doubled in price since the war. True enough. I am writing to this correspondent on the other matter to which he refers.

Your Editor

A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA

(Continued from page 13.)

Harry said: "But where's the Mallee?"

"Oh," said Mr. Thornton, "the name 'Mallee' was given by the natives to the low scrub which used to cover a great stretch of the country in the north and west of Victoria. It grows to a height of eight or ten feet or more, and although just a dwarf eucalyptus, or gum-tree, grows very thickly, and is troublesome to clear away. You'll learn all about it when you go up. The scrub gave its name to the whole countryside."

A fortnight later Harry travelled by train to Melbourne, and then for hours north-west to Warracknabeal, where his Uncle Jack met him and drove him out through fifteen miles of perfectly level country straight to his farm. His aunt, whom he had never seen before, gave him a warm welcome, and next morning his uncle took him to see how the mallee was cleared. A team of horses drew a great heavy wooden roller straight through the scrub, laying it all flat down and partly turning up the shallow roots. The scrub was then separated from the roots by the axe, gathered into great heaps, and as it is full of oil, it burned very easily. The mallee-roots were then dug out, gathered together, and left to dry. After a few weeks they are carted to the station, loaded on trucks, and sent to Melbourne, where they are used for fires, and as they burn very brightly and are beautifully clean, a good price is got for them. The next step is to plough and harrow the ground and sow it with wheat. If rain comes at the proper time, the land once considered useless yields good crops.

"Now," said Uncle Jack, "come down through this next paddock, and I will show you one of the most curious things we can boast of up in this quarter. Australia has 650 distinct species of birds as against Europe's 500, and one we have here is the size of a common fowl, and is famous for what it does in the way of building. If we are lucky, we may see it at work."

Pushing their way through some scrub, and moving as quietly as burglars, they came upon one of the bird-wonders of the world. They saw two mallee hens using their powerful hooked feet to scrape together leaves, vegetable refuse, and soil, and then throw it back by scraping until they had made a round mound measuring about twenty feet, and about two feet high, and tapering to the top. In the inside of this mound the hen lays her eggs, and leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the decaying vegetable matter.

Jack asked afterwards if this strange incubator had any ventilation, and his uncle said:

"Oh, yes! The birds make a shaft to allow of the escape of bad air."

"But when the young birds come out of the egg, how do they find their way out from the incubator when the mother bird is not there to look after them?"

"Wonderful to say, the father bird helps them, and more wonderful still, the young ones leave the egg fully fledged and able to fly."

(This interesting story of modern Australia by "Cooee" will be continued next week.)