

THIS WEEK'S BUMPER PROGRAMME IS UNBEATABLE!

The GEM 2^D

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OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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THE EXPERIMENT THAT WENT WRONG!

(Professor Toppe Makes a Sensational Start as Science Master at St. Jim's. Read the Rollicking Fine School Story in this Issue.)



Address all letters: *The Editor, "The Gem Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.* Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "CRUCKLES" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly.

My Dear Chums,—Another Bumper Record Number! That will be the verdict on next week's magnificent issue of the GEM. It is a brilliant affair, and—make a special note of this fact, please!—next Wednesday comes the first of a new series of Grand Free Glossy Photographs, showing famous footballers in action, and with the players' signature. Charles Pringle, of Manchester City, is the subject of next Wednesday's grand photo, and you will agree that no better picture of this famous player has ever been published. And don't forget that it bears his signature, too!

BEATING ALL RECORDS!

I am not claiming too much for the GEM. I never have. But I will say this much—these new finely-executed, specially autographed portraits are better than anything the GEM has yet given away to its myriads of friends. In saying this much I am bearing in mind the fact that the GEM has always been in the very front rank of school story papers.

NOT ALL BY A LONG WAY!

As we all know, the GEM never does things by halves. Next week it starts off with a finer, infinitely more brilliant programme than it has ever put forward.

Mr. Martin Clifford commences a thrilling new series of stories of St. Jim's.

"THE PLUCK OF EDGAR LAWRENCE."

There you have the appealing title of a particularly striking yarn. It is not a tragedy, but it comes perilously near being one. You have the three fellows—all very well known to readers of the GEM—Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, and round this trio centres a story which is noteworthy for many things. Redfern and Lawrence are "out," but I am not going into the reasons of their feud. It is enough for the present purpose to point out that matters get very awkward, owing to the fact that Redfern has a pressing invitation to his uncle's seaside residence, and that his uncle insists on the boy bringing his chums. It is reasonable enough in the special circumstances that Redfern and Owen get off together. They feel strained with Lawrence, and the latter does not accompany his two chums when Redfern and Owen decide to prove the truth or otherwise concerning a valuable treasure in a cave down the coast. They are so intent on their investigation that they fail to realise their danger. Too late to save themselves, they find they have been cut off by the tide.

We get here to the crux of the business. Edgar Lawrence has been through all manner of mental torments over the difference which has parted him from Redfern. Friends ought to agree. When they fall out there is a raking up of sad reflections of so poignant a kind, that for a spell life seems not worth living. Existence resolves itself into a martyrdom. The finer spirited chap suffers the worst. He may say he is thick-skinned, but what fellow worth his salt really is that? He may give out that he possesses a rhinoceros hide—

he assumes a tough hide for the sake of his own pride—but in his heart he knows it is all wrong. He is sensitive to a slight, or a fancied injustice, as anybody could be.

But now Redfern is in deadly peril, he and Owen, and Edgar Lawrence comes on the scene. Without his aid—and it means risking his life—it must be all up with the two victims of the treacherous tide.

In a series of dramatic chapters, full of the most tense and vigorous writing, we see what goes on. Lawrence shows a hero's spirit, and rescues his comrades, but his own life, as it seems, is to be the forfeit. You will find a big appeal in this story of stern realities, and the wind up, startling with its splendid transition from the valley of the shadow to a brighter scene, touches the heart.

A MOTOR CYCLING SUPPLEMENT.

The "St. Jim's News" is always in the fashion, not merely as regards the mould of form, etc., a la Gussy, but in other more important matters. A motor cycling special number was to be expected. Look out for what all the giddy champions have to say about the favourite mode of travelling next week. The "St. Jim's News" may be little, but it is a multum in parvo, and the coming number is as smart as it is comprehensive.

"THE SPORTSMEN OF THUNDER CREEK."

An important feature for next Wednesday will be this splendid romance of the Wild West. Certain readers who have been writing to me of late asking for a story of the big spaces and the backwoods, will be more than satisfied with the coming treat. Thunder Creek is suitably named. Don't miss this yarn of palpitating interest.

"THE WOLVES" AND THE TUCK HAMPER.

The famous Wolves of Duncan Storm's topping serial are not going to get the Tuck Hamper. The latter is reserved for readers of the GEM. Please take note of the stupendous offer I am making in connection with the celebrated hampers, and the ever popular readers' page. This offer is very special indeed, and just the kind of thing to make a sensation. It will do all that.

YOUR EDITOR.

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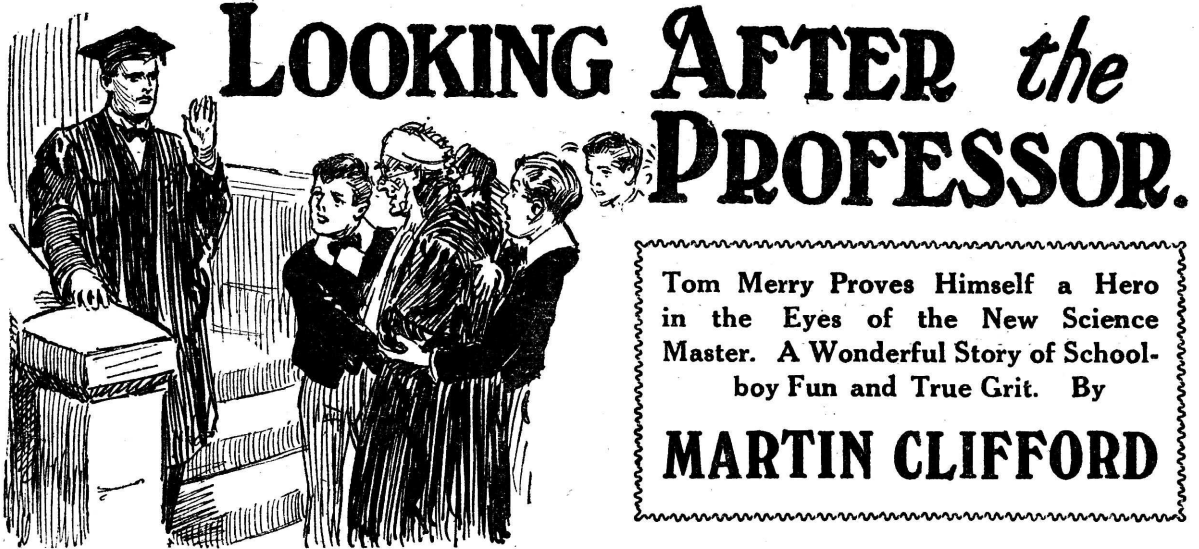
If your sister doesn't already read "School Friend," now is the time for her to begin, for this famous paper for schoolgirls is giving away each week (commencing in this Thursday's issue) a magnificent photo card of one of the world's most famous pictures. Tell her not to miss this.

SCHOOL FRIEND

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LOOKING AFTER *the* PROFESSOR.

Tom Merry Proves Himself a Hero in the Eyes of the New Science Master. A Wonderful Story of School-boy Fun and True Grit. By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

Exchange is No Robbery!

BY Jove! He's mopping along!"

Jack Blake made that statement. The Terrible Three of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, were cycling back from Abbotsford, where they had spent the half-holiday at a football match.

They were free-wheeling down a steep hill which led into Rylcombe, when, hearing a series of loud explosions behind, they looked round, and Blake made that remark.

"The silly jossler!" said Tom Merry. "He might slacken speed, coming down a hill like this!"

A motor-cyclist was driving his machine at full speed down the hill—hence the loud explosions, and the juniors' remarks. Tom Merry & Co. slowed down, and drew in to the left side of the road, to enable the motor-cyclist to pass.

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly. "Look at the way he's wobbling! He'll be into the side of the road in a minute!"

Bang, bang, bang! went the motor-cycle behind them. The machine was careering first to one side and then to the opposite side of the hilly road in an extremely dangerous manner.

"Here, we don't want to be run down!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "The chap on that machine ought to be pinched for driving to the public danger. We'd better dismount!"

The juniors vaulted off their cycles and watched in considerable alarm the career of the approaching motor-cycle.

Bang, bang, bang!
"The chap in the saddle has evidently lost control of his machine!" said Jack Blake.

"Bai Jove! There'll be a frightful cwash in a minute, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye tighter. "The idiot can't steer properly, and— Look out!"

"Look out!" shrieked Herries.
Whiz!

The motor-cycle dashed full tilt at them. The juniors made desperate efforts to jump with their machines out of danger, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not quick enough. The motor-cycle lurched towards him; Gussy gave a yell and jumped quite a foot into the air. Next minute there was a sonorous crunch, as Gussy's bicycle went beneath the wheels of the motor-cycle.

Bang! Whirr-rrrrr! Crash!
The luckless rider of the motor-cycle was flung from his saddle, and all the juniors saw of him for a moment were two long legs disappearing over the brink of a muddy ditch at the side of the road.

Splash!
"Gerrugh! Gug! Gug!"
"Oh cwumbs! Bai Jove! Wh-what's happened, deah boys?" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sitting up dazedly and rubbing his head. "Gwooooooh! My back's bwoken, and my spine feels as though it's dislocated, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Tom Merry and the others saw the funny side of the affair. They yelled with merriment.

Arthur Augustus groped for his monocle, found it, jammed it into his eye, and struggled to his feet.

Alas! D'Arcy's beautiful clobber was sadly spoiled! His trousers were rumpled and muddy, his collar burst from its stud, his jacket ripped up the back, and his topper crushed where he had sat on it.

"Oh deah!" gasped the noble swell of St. Jim's. "Look at my clobber! And look at my bike, deah boys! It's wuined!"

Arthur Augustus' bicycle was certainly in a more parlous state than the clobber of its owner. Both back and front wheels were twisted out of shape, the handlebars were bent, and one of the pedal cranks was twisted underneath the frame.

Gussy looked at it, and gasped.
"Yerrugh! Help me out! Oooogh!"

It was the voice of one crying from the ditch. Tom Merry & Co. looked round, and beheld a white-haired old man, with a very long nose and comical features, blinking at them from the ditch. His hair and face were smothered with muddy water; his clothes were drenched with it. He was scrambling up the bank in an endeavour to emerge from the ditch.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Manners good-naturedly stepped forward and dragged the old gentleman from the depths of the murky water.

"Yoogh! Gug-gug! Thank you, my lads! How about my motor-cycle?"

Monty Lowther, Herries, and Digby raised the motor-cycle which had caused all the damage.

"Look at my bicycle, sir!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrathfully. "It's wuined beyond wrepair!"

The old man wiped the mud out of his eyes and blinked sadly.
"Yes, my dear boy, so it appears—so it appears," he said, in rather a cracked voice. "I am so sorry that this has happened. The machine got completely out of control. As a matter of fact, this is the very first motor-cycle I have ever ridden!"

Blake felt a great temptation to remark that a bath-chair would be more to his mark, but refrained. Venerable age had to be respected.

"Yes, and I dare say it will be the last," proceeded the old gentleman, wringing the water from his trousers. "Listen, my lads, and I will explain. I am Professor Timothy Toppe, of Branksome Farm, Coteridge. Although living on a farm, I still carry on scientific experiments. I am a great scientist and inventor, you see. My latest search in the chemical world was for a substitute for petrol. I manufactured a preparation, placed it in the tank of this motor-bicycle, and came out this afternoon to test it. It works very well, but I am afraid it is rather impracticable. I must turn my attention to another invention, I suppose. Has the motor-cycle suffered much damage?"

"Only the front number plate twisted, the terminal on the plug lost, and the exhaust pipe pushed out," replied Jack Blake, grinning. "But look at this bike here. What are you going to do about that?"

Professor Timothy Toppe blinked at Gussy's bicycle.
"Well—er—I'm very sorry, but if the young gentleman would care to accept this motor-cycle for the damage I have done to his machine—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall be very pleased to let him have it," said the professor, beaming all over his muddy face. "I have no further use for the motor-cycle, and it is really more suitable for a young lad than for an old man like myself. What do you say, my lad?"

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle.

"Bai Jove! It's vewy good of you, sir!" he said. "I have nevah widden a motor-cycle, and have weally nevah thought of havin' one. But motor-cycling is gweat sport, and I shall be vewy pleased to accept youah ofah."

"That's all right, then," said Professor Toppe, smiling. "I have no further use for the motor-cycle. Take it, my lad—take it!"

And, picking up his hat which had rolled down the bank, the queer old professor waddled away, leaving a long trail of muddy water in his wake.

The St. Jim's juniors regarded each other in high amusement.

"Well, if this doesn't take the giddy biscuit!" breathed Tom Merry. "Gussy's got a motor-bike! What next?"

"Weally, deah boys, I am quite at a loss to know how to dwive the beastly thing," said Arthur Augustus. "I—ahem!—sincerely twust it won't wun away with me, as it did with the pwoffsor. Undah the cires, I think I'll allow one of you fellahs to wide it back to St. Jim's."

"I'm on, Gussy!" said Jack Blake readily. "I know how to drive a motor-bike—my cousin's got one, and I've often ridden it at home. Lemme see, there will have to be one or two adjustments made before we can get a move on. Let's have a few spanners out of your tool kit, Tommy, old son!"

"Certainly!" grinned Tom Merry. Blake soon had the connection fixed to the plug, the number plate straightened, and the exhaust pipe fixed.

"H'm! It's not a kick-starter!" he said, regarding the machine critically. "What do you think of it, chaps?"

"I think it might have come out of the Ark!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ass!" said Blake witheringly.

"What make of machine is it, Blake?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Goodness knows!" said Blake, examining the engine and the tank. "It seems to me to be a made-up affair. But it's got an engine, a magneto, and a carburettor, so it ought to go. I'll try it!"

Blake flooded the carburettor, advanced the spark, opened the throttle, and gave a mighty push.

Chuff, chuff, chuff!

"Go it, Blake!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Another little shove won't do it any harm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"There she goes!" roared Manners excitedly.

Bang, bang, bang!

The motor-bicycle darted forward when Blake was least expecting it. He sprinted after it, but could not reach the controls in time. The motor-bike lurched to the side of the road, and Blake came clattering over on top of it.

"Yow-ow-ow!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake picked himself and the machine up, and wheeled it to the centre of the road.

"Wish the dashed thing had gears!" he grumbled.

"Yow-ow! I've torn my beastly trucks at the beastly knee! I'll have to bother you chaps for a shove."

"With the greatest of pleasure, old scout!" chuckled Tom Merry.

Blake sat on the saddle, opened the throttle again, gave the machine some oil, and then turned to his grinning chums behind.

"Shove!" he said.

Tom Merry, Manners, Herries, and Digby "shoved." They fairly flung the machine along the road.

Bang! Bang! Whirr-rrr! Bang!

Amidst a cloud of blue smoke the motor-cycle whizzed forward.

"Blake's off!" roared Monty Lowther. "Go it, Blake! Give her some more gas, man! Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The motor-cycle disappeared down the hill, and only the explosions of the engine and the clouds of smoke from the exhaust-pipe indicated where it was.

D'Arcy kicked the wheels of his damaged cycle into shape, and mounted Blake's machine, holding the other at the same time. Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Herries, and Digby mounted their bicycles, and they all rode off in pursuit of Blake.

But, though they heard sundry loud explosions in the distance, they did not see any trace of Blake and the motor-cycle.

The captain of the Fourth, having once got going, evidently did not wish to stop.

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Tom Merry and the others rode on to St. Jim's, cheerfully discussing Professor Timothy Toppe and Gussy's newly-acquired motor-bike.

CHAPTER 2.

The New Master!

BANG! Bang! Bang!
"My hat!" ejaculated George Figgins. "What on earth is that?"

Bang! Whirr-rrr!

Kerr and Fatty Wynn looked astounded, too.

The three New House juniors were crossing the Close from the tuckshop at St. Jim's when strange noises burst upon their ears.

Looking in the direction of the gates, from whence those sounds proceeded, they saw a motor-cycle whirl in, which nearly knocked Taggles flying.

"Great Caesar!" yelled Figgins. "It's Blake!"

"Blake—on a motor-bike!"

Bang! Whirr-rrr! Bang!

Fellows came rushing up from far and near.

Jack Blake stopped his machine by the fountain and dismounted.

"Whew!" gasped Wally D'Arcy of the Third, arriving on the scene with Curly Gibson, Joe Frayne, and most of the fag tribe. "What a niff! Where on earth did you pick up that old grid, Blake?"

"Whose is it?" demanded Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Gussy's," said Blake cheerfully, wiping his greasy face with the back of his hand, and leaving more grease there as a consequence. "I've just ridden it home for him. Not a bad old jigger, is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Does it really go?" inquired Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Yes, of course, you ass!"

"She smells some—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take me for a ride, Blake!" piped Baggy Trimble.

Blake snorted.

"Not much!" he said. "The old iron wouldn't stand the strain. The engine would conk out in no time!"

"Oh, really, Blake—"

"Shurrup, Trimble! Here are the others!"

Tom Merry & Co., who had scorched back to St. Jim's, rode up and dismounted.

"You're back, then!" said Monty Lowther. "We thought we might have to inquire at the local hospital for you, Blake!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"How does she go, old son?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not so bad," replied Blake. "Of course, it's an awfully old thing! The engine rattles a bit, and she smokes and smells horribly. Look at my trucks—smothered with grease!"

"Hallo! Here's Glyn!" said Tom Merry. "Glyn knows all there is to be known about motors. I say, Glyn!"

Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor of St. Jim's, came up. He blinked at the motor-cycle in considerable surprise.

"Hallo!" he said. "Who's been raiding the British Museum for relics?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! That's my motor-bike, Glyn, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with some asperity. "Don't you think it's watah a toppin' bike?"

"H'm! Not too bad!" said Glyn critically. "Let's have a run on her!"

Glyn mounted the machine, Blake gave him a push, and he was off.

Shouts of laughter arose from the St. Jim's boys as Glyn careered round the quad. He drew up at length, and grinned.

"The engine wants decarbonising and new piston-rings, I reckon," he said. "Let me have a go at it to-night in the woodshed, and I'll make a decent job of it, Gussy."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

The juniors wheeled the machine away between them and installed it in the woodshed. Later on Bernard Glyn was seen to go in there, carrying his tool-box; and sundry crashes and bangs coming from inside the woodshed after that indicated that the amateur mechanic of the Shell was busily engaged on Gussy's motor-bike.

Tom Merry & Co. all had impots for Knox to do that evening, so they spent their time indoors.

Next morning, after breakfast, the Terrible Three were strolling in the quadrangle with Talbot, when suddenly they stopped.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "Look who's blown in at the gates!"

They looked, and beheld a very old gentleman, clad in a flowing frock-coat, a rather battered top-hat, and huge



Tom Merry & Co., with a liberal supply of bandages at their disposal, wrapped them round professor Toppe wherever they could, while Monty Lowther cheerfully emptied a bottle of oil over his head. By the time the juniors had finished their "first aid" operations upon the professor, he looked a curious spectacle indeed. (See page 7.)

boots, with white spats, carrying a large attache-case. He had just entered the gates of St. Jim's, and was conversing with Taggies.

"Great pip!" breathed Monty Lowther, in considerable astonishment. "It's old Toppe!"

"Professor Toppe!" murmured Manners. "The merchant who gave Gussy the motor-bike!"

The Terrible Three blinked at the queer old scientist.

"Here he comes," said Tom Merry, as the professor commenced to walk in their direction. "I suppose we had better acknowledge him. I wonder what the old bird wants at this school?"

The professor waddled up, and blinked at the Terrible Three over the rims of a pair of huge eyeglasses.

"Why, bless my soul! I know these boys!" he exclaimed—and his smile spread literally from ear to ear. "How are you, my lads? I did not know you belonged to St. James' School!"

Tom Merry & Co. raised their caps politely.

Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy came down the School House steps.

They halted in utter astonishment when they saw Professor Timothy Toppe.

The old gentleman beamed at them.

"Dear me! Here are the other boys!" he gushed. "Well, I never! Do you know, boys, that I am going to be your master?"

"Wha-a-a-at!"

That was rather rude of Tom Merry & Co., but really they could not help it. The professor's statement had taken them so utterly and completely by surprise.

"Mum-my hat!" gurgled Blake. "You—you're going to be a master at this school, sir?"

"Yes, my lads. I commence my duties this morning," replied Professor Toppe. "Dr. Holmes advertised last week for a chemistry master, for Professor Gordon, who usually takes the chemistry classes, is busy on other work connected with the matriculation exams. So I have been engaged—temporarily, I believe—as chemistry master to St. Jim's. You may take it from me, my lads, that I will make the lessons interesting for you. I have spent my life in the realms of chemistry, and I am hot stuff at it—ha, ha!—very hot stuff!"

The juniors were amazed.

Quite a number had gathered to the scene, Racke, Crooke, and Mellish, and Grundy & Co. being amongst them.

They all regarded Professor Toppe as they might have regarded a specimen of some weird, new animal at the Zoo.

"Well, carry me home to die, somebody!" said George Gore of the Shell. "Fancy that moth-eaten old fossil taking us for stinks! What next!"

"It's the giddy limit!" said Clifton Dane.

Fortunately, Professor Toppe did not hear these remarks. He raised his battered topper, and waddled up the School House steps, carrying his huge bag and smiling broadly.

Toby, the page, piloted him indoors, and the boys of St. Jim's were left to discuss the matter amongst themselves.

"Well, if that doesn't romp off with the whole giddy bun foundry!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "But let us rejoice, chaps! The professor is a little potty, I believe, but he's a nice, easy-going old bird, and maybe we shall be able to get a little fun in stinks classes—which we aren't able to do with Gordon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Lower School went in to morning lessons animatedly discussing the advent of Professor Timothy Toppe as chemistry master at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

An Unexpected Explosion!

"NOW for stinks!"

Monty Lowther spoke quite cheerfully.

The Shell and Fourth Forms usually took the chemistry lessons together, as the syllabus was the same in both cases.

Latin for the morning being over, they emerged from the School House and crossed the quadrangle together towards the chemistry laboratory.

All were looking very expectant and happy.

The juniors did not always look so bright when proceeding towards the lab for "stinks." Professor Gordon had hitherto supervised the lesson, and was a "stickler" for discipline. He never allowed the juniors to dabble with weird mixtures and mysterious compounds, and indulge their curiosity in the mixing of chemicals.

But Professor Toppe was taking "stinks" that morning.

and the Shell and Fourth were looking forward to some fun. The old professor was a kindly and good-natured gentleman, and the boys also shrewdly judged him to be a trifle "soft." So they were rather curious to see what would transpire during chemistry lessons that morning.

They assembled in the laboratory and waited.

The side door opened and Professor Toppe whisked in.

"Good-morning, gentlemen!" he greeted, bowing low to his pupils. "I trust we shall have a very interesting discussion this morning."

Monty Lowther bowed solemnly.

"We sincerely trust so, professor," he replied.

The others chuckled.

Professor Timothy Toppe looked very curious in his mortar-board and scholastic gown. The headgear was too small for his large head, and the gown was so voluminous that as he walked the professor tripped continually over it.

But he did not seem to mind the smiles of his pupils.

Beaming all over his comical face, he trotted towards the large bench, and then looked round.

"Let me see," he remarked, affixing his huge spectacles and blinking at the syllabus sheet. "You appear to have reached the study of atomic weights and molecular equations. That is excellent. This morning I shall devote to practical demonstration. Monitors, bring out the apparatus!"

Blake, Tom Merry, and Levison, grinning, fetched the apparatus.

Professor Toppe selected some of the weirder articles, and proceeded to fit up a wonderful-looking apparatus.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, striking an attitude, and looking round with an air of great profundity, "you students of valumetric chemistry should take a special interest in the structure of various gases, and it is on this branch of the inquiry that we shall bestow our particular attention. I take here a bladder—so—and blow it up!"

The professor selected a large skin bladder, placed it to his lips, and blew prodigiously. The bladder gradually inflated to a huge size.

"There!" gasped the queer old gentleman, gripping the mouthpiece of the bladder and blinking round. "Here, for example, is a bladder full of gas, of common air. You observe how powerfully it resists my forcible endeavours to compress it, yet when I strike it with a mallet—Dear me! The air is escaping!"

The professor once more placed the bladder to his lips and blew hard.

Monty Lowther, standing near, could not resist the temptation.

He quietly took a pin from the lapel of his jacket, and just as the bladder reached a huge size he stuck the pin into it.

Bang!

The bladder burst with a terrific explosion under the professor's very nose, and it so amazed him that he sat down on the cold, hard floor.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Yoooooogh! Yah! Oh dear!" gasped Professor Toppe, struggling to his feet and rubbing his back. "Goodness gracious! Yowp! Do not laugh, gentlemen! That phenomena illustrates—yow!—what powerful resilience the—grooogh!—gas possesses. Its elasticity overcame the tenacity of the—yow-ow!—envelope, and it burst with the loud report you heard. Dear me! I have hurt my back! I did not expect the demonstration so soon!"

The Shell and Fourth chuckled.

They were beginning to take a very eager interest in the chemistry lesson.

"Let us proceed," said Professor Toppe. "We are faced, gentlemen, with that ardently-mooted and deeply-interesting philosophical question—what is gas?"

"I have a solution, sir," remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew quietly.

"Really, sir! What, then, is gas?"

"It's a nuisance in the form of words, sir, usually delivered by Cabinet ministers, tub-orators, election candidates, and schoolmasters!" replied Cardew, in his quiet, deliberate way.

The other juniors were extremely tickled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" they roared.

The professor blinked at Cardew over the rims of his huge eyeglasses.

"You misunderstand me, my lad," he said reprovingly. "I speak of elemental gas, as distinct from the species of gas you refer to. Now, gentlemen, it is part of our present task to attempt a solution of the problem, and at the same time see what great force some gases are possessed of. Chlorine and nitrogen shall be our first studies."

The heroes of the Lower School looked on cheerfully while the professor proceeded to manufacture some nitrogen. Weird smells arose in the chemistry laboratory in the process—probably that was because Jack Blake assisted in the manufacture of the gas.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther had gone to the label drawer

and made a careful selection of bottle labels. These he gummied on to various bottles whilst the professor's back was turned.

"I've mixed up all the chemicals," he whispered to Tom Merry, slipping back quietly to the bench. "My word, there's going to be some fun when the pro starts experimenting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gather round, gentlemen!" said the professor, looking up. "All is now ready for the series of tests we shall make. This gas is nitrogen, one of the most potent gases known to science. It is of this gas various explosives are manufactured, such as nitro-glycerine. I must warn you, my lads, that there is a strong likelihood of us all being blown sky-high as the result of this experiment. Come closer, and watch carefully!"

The juniors did not seem to relish the idea of coming closer. The professor's candour rather impressed them. If there was going to be an explosion, they would much rather keep at a safe distance from the scene of operations.

"Bai Jove! What a howwid smell, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, withdrawing a beautiful cambric handkerchief from his pocket and applying it to his nose. "Gwoooogh! Bai Jove! Look at those wed fumes!"

The juniors began to back away directly the red, noxious fumes began to arise. The professor did not seem to notice it, however. His comical features wore a look of intense rapture with the experiment. A curious brown liquid was being distilled from the glass retort. Professor Toppe blinked at the row of chemicals on his right, and selected a certain bottle.

"Look out, chaps!" murmured Monty Lowther. "The pro is now about to witness a demonstration of the power of gases—nitrogen in particular. Get back, if you value your eyebrows!"

The juniors watched the professor undo the cork of the bottle, and then they backed away hastily.

"Watch closely!" chirruped Professor Toppe, as he poured some of the contents of the bottle into the retort. "This is the most crucial moment, and—"

Bang!

A sound as of a giant thunderclap rent the air. There was a huge flash of light, and then dense clouds of suffocating fumes arose.

CHAPTER 4. First Aid!

"YAROOOOOOOOOGH!" howled the professor.

"Atchoo! Choo! Choo!"

"Ooooooogh!"

Those were a few of the weird, gurgling expressions uttered by the juniors as those pungent fumes enveloped them.

"Open the window—grooogh!—quick!" gasped Tom Merry, holding his nose. "Oh, my hat! The experiment was a failure, and no mistake!"

"Gwoooogh! Yaas, wathah!"

The boys rushed to the windows and opened them. As the fumes gradually cleared they were able to look at the professor.

The luckless old gentleman lay sprawled on the floor, his face and head as black as soot. He was gurgling and spluttering incoherently. His scholastic gown was ripped up the back, and the remains of the scientific apparatus were distributed all round him.

"Rescue, boys!" roared Jack Blake. "The professor's been knocked out!"

Levison, Kerruish, and Clifton Dane dashed to the first-aid cupboard, and dragged out the box of bandages, ointment, splints, and other surgical articles that were always kept in the laboratory in case of accidents.

"Yah! Yow-ow-ow! I'm dud-dying!" moaned the professor, sitting up and rubbing his blackened face. "What happened, boys? Did the explosion blow the roof off?"

"No, not quite, sir!" replied Tom Merry, restraining his laughter with great difficulty.

It was plain to see that Professor Toppe had not sustained a great deal of injury, although he wildly imagined himself to be horribly mutilated.

Monty Lowther, who was bathing a cut on the professor's hand, winked at the others.

"Yes, chaps, I'm afraid the professor is nearly done for!" said the humorist of the Shell in a loud voice. "The poor chap was in the thick of that explosion, and I doubt if he will recover. But all will be done to save him. We had better put his leg in splints, bandage him up, and take him over to the sanny."

"Oh, deary me!" moaned Professor Toppe, looking round with a scared face. "Am I really in such a serious condition?"

"Don't worry, sir. We know what's best to be done," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "We know heaps about first aid, you see, and will do all we can to save your life!"



Having dismissed his strange visitor, the disguised Kerr drew a deep breath. Then he gave a convulsive start as a figure came round the corner of the corridor. It was Professor Timothy Toppe himself! "Oh, jerniny!" groaned Kerr. "I'm in the wars, and no error! The game's up now!" (See *Chap.* 10.)

They felt the unfortunate professor shudder as they proceeded to bandage him up.

In reality, he had suffered one or two minor scratches and bruises, but he allowed the juniors to do as they liked with him.

Tom Merry & Co., with a liberal supply of bandages at their disposal, wrapped them round the professor wherever they could. Monty Lowther cheerfully emptied a bottle of oil all over his head, and then they tied up the professor's cranium with bandages in much the same manner as they would have tied up a currant-pudding.

The professor's left leg was put into splints, and yards of bandages rolled round it. His arm was put into a sling, sticking-plaster was affixed all over his visage, and iodine was applied to his arms until he reeked of it.

By the time the juniors had finished their "first aid" operations upon the professor, he looked a curious spectacle indeed.

To an observer not "in" the joke, it would have seemed that he had just emerged from a very serious aeroplane crash, or a particularly disastrous railway accident.

"Now for the sanny!" said Tom Merry, stifling his merriment with no little difficulty. "The quicker we get the poor professor in the doctor's hands the better, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Can you walk, sir?" gurgled Blake anxiously.

The professor groaned.

"I—I am afraid you will—yowp!—have to assist me, boys!"

"Right-ho, sir! All hands on deck!"

The professor, supported between Blake, Tom Merry, and Talbot, was led from the laboratory, and out into the quadrangle.

Time had passed during the operations in the laboratory, and the bell had rung for the termination of morning lessons.

Juniors were pouring out of the Form-rooms into the quadrangle as Tom Merry & Co. came out with the professor.

The sight of Professor Toppe, smothered with sticking-plaster and bandages, and with his arm in a sling and his leg in splints, soon attracted considerable attention.

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally D'Arcy, dashing up with the whole fag tribe at his heels. "What's happened—a fire?"

"No, my son; just a small explosion in the lab!" chuckled

Monty Lowther. "We've just rendered first aid to the pro. He got the worst of the explosion, you see."

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth came up.

They looked at the professor, aghast.

When they heard what had happened they chuckled.

The word gradually went round, and all the spectators were soon smiling broadly.

"My word! They've done the old chap up like a battered warrior!" chuckled Wally D'Arcy.

"They've fairly rolled him up, in fact!" said Curly Gibson.

Mr. Railton emerged from the School House, and came down the steps.

When he saw the professor in the midst of the laughing juniors, he halted, and regarded the strange scene in amazement.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "My dear professor, what ever has happened? I trust this is nothing serious?"

Professor Toppe blinked at Mr. Railton dismally, and groaned.

Tom Merry & Co.'s smiles gradually faded away. They began to realise that their jape, when it was discovered, would be visited with dire consequences to themselves.

"You have met with some terrible accident!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in grave concern. "How did it happen?"

In a faint voice the professor explained.

Mr. Railton's looks changed.

"But, my dear sir, such a trivial accident could not have produced such terrible results!" he exclaimed. "I perceive that you have—er—court-plaster all over your face, your head is wrapped in bandages, your leg has been put into splints, your arm is in a sling, and—ahem!—in fact, you are one mass of bandages!"

His glance wandered round to Tom Merry & Co.

"I trust," said Mr. Railton, in an ominous voice—"I trust, my lads, that you have not been making Professor Toppe the victim of an absurd practical joke. Who are the boys responsible for the—ahem!—first aid treatment?"

Tom Merry, Blake, Monty Lowther, Clifton Dane, Levison, Cardew, and Reilly stepped forward. Digby, Herries, Manners, Gore, and Kangaroo were quick to follow.

Mr. Railton's brow became grim.

"You lads appear to have made sport of the professor's accident," he rumbled. "You have performed the first aid

treatment in a ridiculous and very unnecessary manner. Remove the superfluous bandages and the splints at once!"

Professor Toppe suffered himself to be removed from his wrappings.

Yards and yards of bandage were unwound from him.

The smiles and the chuckles of the onlookers grew.

"Silence!" commanded the Housemaster sternly. "Take those things away, boys, and replace them in the laboratory. It is evident, professor, that the injuries you have sustained consist merely of a few minor scratches. There is no cause for alarm. Boys, cease that laughter immediately! The lads responsible for this affair will kindly see me in my study in ten minutes' time."

Mr. Railton delivered these words with a grim look at Tom Merry & Co.

Then he took Professor Toppe's arm and led the gasping old gentleman away.

The juniors who had participated in that funny jape on the simple science master grinned ruefully.

"We're in for a licking, I reckon, when we go to Railton's study. I can feel it in my bones!" said Tom Merry. "But still, the joke was worth it!"

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"Rather!" chuckled Blake. "The pro seems to have been made to have his leg pulled! He's a simple old stick; but he's a decent old stick. I like him better than Gordon."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co. went indoors.

Ten minutes later they turned up in a body at Mr. Railton's study.

The Housemaster was waiting for them, and invited them inside in a grim voice.

Various swishing noises and a medley of gasps and grunts coming from in there a few minutes later, indicated to the juniors waiting outside that Tom Merry & Co.'s interview with Mr. Railton had fulfilled their expectations and was a painful one.

When Tom Merry & Co. emerged from Mr. Railton's room they had expressions of woe on their faces.

Monty Lowther was wagging his hands violently in the air to cool his smarting palms. Reilly was quite doubled up.

"He, he, he!" giggled Baggy Trimble. "You chaps have caught it hot—what? I knew you would!"

"What a clever chap you are, Baggy!" said Monty Lowther, with heavy sarcasm. "Funny how you can foresee and foretell!"

"Well, I can usually tell what's coming, you know!" said Baggy, with a fat smirk.

"Oh!" said Monty, and his eyes gleamed. "You can usually tell what's coming—eh?"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled the fat youth of the Fourth. "I can—Wow! Oh! Yah! Yaroooooh! Wharrer you doing, Lowther, you rotter? Yoop!"

"I'm punching your silly head, Trimble!" said Monty, sailing into Baggy and driving him backwards along the passage. "What are you yelling for? It's your own fault! If you could tell what was coming, why did you wait for me to wallop you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the onlookers.

"Yarooooop! Yah! Wow! Stoppit! Help! Ow-wow!" wailed Baggy.

He fairly rolled down the stairs, and Tom Merry & Co. went along to their respective studies grinning.

CHAPTER 5.

A Change of Identity!

GEORGE FIGGINS chuckled.

He and Kerr and Fatty Wynn were seated in their study in the New House at St. Jim's. Tea was over, and Fatty Wynn was still lingering lovingly over the rabbit pie. While there yet remained a morsel of the tasty viands in the pie-dish, Fatty would not leave it alone.

Kerr was reading by the fire.

Figgins chuckled again.

"What's the joke, Figgy?" inquired Kerr, looking up.

"I've got an idea!" grinned the lanky leader of the New House juniors. "It's up against those School House

microbes. We haven't japed them for a long time, have we?"

"No, Figgy, we haven't!" said Kerr emphatically. "The cheeky beggars want teaching a lesson, too. They seem quite convinced that the School House is cock House at St. Jim's, which, of course, it isn't!"

"No jolly fear!" said Fatty Wynn, looking up from the pie-dish. "Those School House chaps ought to be scragged! I was having a snack before dinner yesterday in the tuck-shop, when Blake and Lowther came in and squirted a soda syphon at me. They intended squirting the beastly soda water down my neck, but I hopped off the crate quick. But the stuff went all over my plate of jam tarts and ruined them! Six tarts—lovely raspberry jam tarts—absolutely ruined! They were tuppenny ones, too!"

"Horrible!" said Figgins, with a grin. "Well, chaps, it's agreed that it's time we had a joke on Tom Merry & Co., and showed 'em that the New House is still very much on the warpath. I've got an idea!"

"Get it off your chest, Figgy!" said Fatty Wynn.

"My stunt, if carried out properly, ought to work like a charm!" grinned Figgins. "Just before coming in to tea, I heard old Professor Toppe tell Taggles that he'd be in the laboratory all the evening. He said he wanted to carry out some scientific researches. Old Toppe is a regular crazy scientist, you know. He seems to spend all his leisure time mugging over weird apparatus and fearful formulæ in the lab."

"My hat!" exclaimed Kerr in wonder. "What on earth has the pro got to do with our rag on the School House?"

"Lots and lots!" replied the New House leader with a chuckle. "List to me while I tell you. As I was saying, Professor Toppe will be in the chemmy lab all the evening. That will leave the coast clear in the School House for my rag. You're a regular dab at dressing up and impersonating people, Kerr. You've deluded everybody at various times by masquerading as Gussy and the Head and Mr. Ratcliff and Dr. Monk of Rylcombe Grammar School."

"Great pip! I believe I can guess what you're going to say, Figgy!" said Kerr. "You want me to dress up as Professor Toppe?"

"Exactly!" grinned Figgins. "You could do it as easily as rolling off a form, Kerr, old chap! He's just about your height, and you've got the same shaped nose. Besides, the make-up won't need to be too strict to detail, as it's night time, and you won't be looked at very closely. Don't you think you could dress up as the pro? We've got all the necessary props among our amateur theatrical things."

Kerr nodded.

"Yes, I dare say I could impersonate Professor Toppe pretty well," he said. "Your idea is that I should go over to the School House as the old chap, and give Tom Merry & Co. a high old time?"

"That's it!" said Figgins eagerly. "You could do it on your head, Kerr. You ought to be able to make those beggars sit up. Just think what you could do. Confiscate their grub on the pretence that jam tarts and cream buns and ginger-pop are scientifically unsuitable for human con-

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sumption. You could easily find some pretext to haul 'em away for a caning. Yes, that's a fine wheeze. Tom Merry & Co. caned by a New House chap. They'd writhe and tear their hair when they heard the truth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fatty Wynn. "You're right, Figgy!"

Kerr took several minutes to consider the matter.

"So long as old Toppe is safely out of the way in the lab, I don't mind taking the risk," he said. "Of course, if I should be found out, there would be the Dickens to pay. The Head would scalp me. But I'm game for a rag on the School House. While I'm dressing up, Figgy, you just pop down to the lab and see that the pro's there."

"All serene!" grinned Figgins.

He left the study, and Kerr proceeded to make himself up.

There wasn't another fellow at St. Jim's who was more skilled in the art of make-up than George Kerr of the New House. In fact, Kerr was quite as clever at impersonations as many professional artistes on the stage. Many a time and oft had Kerr hoodwinked the school by masquerading

as some other personage. He had even dressed up as Gussy, and deceived Jack Blake & Co.

The task of making himself look like Professor Toppe was an easy one.

By means of a wig and false whiskers, and the skilful use of grease paint, Kerr transformed his features into an amazing resemblance to those of the new science master of St. Jim's.

Fatty Wynn gasped when Kerr turned round from the looking glass.

"Oh, jeminy! It's marvellous, old chap!" he said.

Kerr selected some striped trousers, a black waistcoat, and a frock-coat from the box of props, also a collar and necktie. He dressed himself in these, and when he put on a pair of plain-glass spectacles the transformation was complete.

Figgins came in at that minute.

He fell back with a start when he beheld the aged-looking gentleman in the room.

"Mum-my only Sunday topper!" he ejaculated in a faint voice. "Is that—is that you, sir, or—or is it Kerr?"

"I trust the coast is clear, my lad?" said the disguised Kerr, in a faithful imitation of Professor Toppe's high-pitched tones.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins burst into a roar of laughter.

"Then it is really you, Kerr?" he said. "My word, the change is marvellous! I quite thought the real article had somehow been spirited away from the lab and dumped in here!"

"Is the pro in the lab?" inquired Kerr anxiously.

"Rather! He's simply wrapped up in his experiments. You can go ahead without fear, old chap."

"Good egg!" chuckled Kerr.

He was quite as enthusiastic about that jape on Tom Merry & Co. now, as Figgy was. Kerr, although a canny

turning over the pages of Skimpole's book on Evolution, and pushed it farther over the edge of the banisters.

At the precise moment that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived directly underneath, Kerr let the book drop—right on Gussy's lovely topper!

Whiz! Scrunch!

It was a beautifully-timed shot. The heavy volume whirled down and knocked the topper out of D'Arcy's hand next minute, flattening that lovely article of head-wear on the stairs.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Wh-what the— Yawooogh! Yah! Help! Yooooop!"

Gussy was so taken by surprise that he lost his balance on the stairs and went lurching over backwards.

He crashed into Blake, Herries, and Digby, and all four went floundering downwards with a series of wild yells.

"Look out! Yooop!"

"Yarooogh! Wow!"

"Ow-wow-wow!"

The four chums of Study No. 6 landed in a heap on the mat at the bottom.

Tom Merry & Co., and a number of juniors who had followed Blake & Co. indoors, and had seen the thing happen sent up yells of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. picked themselves up, moaning.

"Yow! What was that?" gurgled Blake. "Did the roof fall in?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Wow! My toppah!" screeched Gussy, darting down, and picking up his battered headgear, which now resembled a concertina.

"A topper, did you call it, Gussy?" inquired Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "It might come in useful as a pot for a geranium, but as a topper, I'm afraid it's no more, old chap!"

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Scotsman, had a very pronounced sense of humour, and was as fond of a joke as anybody.

Kerr walked out of the New House and crossed the darkened quadrangle towards the School House.

He chuckled softly to himself.

All being well, he felt confident of being able to pull off the rape of the term on Tom Merry & Co.

He passed Kerruish and Lumley-Lumley in the quad, and both these juniors raised their caps respectfully to him.

Kerr reached the School House and walked boldly in.

He went upstairs, chuckling softly to himself.

On the upper landing he met Herbert Skimpole.

The genius of St. Jim's had two massive volumes under his arm. They were the immortal works of Professors Balmcrumpet and Loosetop, which formed Skimpole's staple reading matter.

"Dear me!" said the "professor," stopping in front of Skimmy and beaming at the books. "What ever are those volumes, my boy?"

"This is Professor Balmcrumpet's book on Evolution, sir," said Skimmy, quite pleased that somebody had at last shown some interest in his pet studies. "The other here is a dissertation on Determinism, written by that eminent scientist, Professor Loosetop."

"Let me look at them, my lad," said the pseudo professor.

Skimpole willingly surrendered the books.

Kerr rested them on the banisters of the landing. Directly below was the staircase.

Kerr's eyes twinkled, for at that moment he saw four youths ascending the stairs. Jack Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 had just come in. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy led the way, holding in his right hand his glistening topper. That topper was Gussy's latest, and had been described by Monty Lowther as a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Behind Gussy came Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby.

The "professor" up above made an elaborate show of

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, groping for his monocle, and jamming it into his eye. "What wottah dropped that book on my toppah? I'm goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"I'll scrag him!" bellowed Blake wrathfully. "Who did it? Skimpole?"

Blake & Co. made a threatening stride towards Skimpole, who came bounding down the stairs in quest of his book. But Skimmy drew back with a look of alarm.

"Pray desist from any violence, my dear fellows!" he gasped. "It was not I who dropped the volume on D'Arcy's hat. Professor Toppe was perusing the book, and accidentally dropped it over the banisters!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Professor Toppe!" gurgled Blake. "Do you mean to say that old Toppe slung that book down at Gussy?"

"He inadvertently let it drop, my dear Blake. Ah! Here is the professor!"

Kerr grinned down the stairs, but he did not come down. He was taking no undue risks!

"I'm ever so sorry, my dear boys!" he said, in such a good imitation of the real professor's voice that the juniors were quite deluded. "Accidents will happen, you know! One top hat more or less makes no difference to you, D'Arcy, I presume?"

"I-I-I—" gasped Gussy.

"Never mind! Cheer up! There is one consolation, you should not overlook," said the "professor" beamingly. "That is, the book might have fallen on your head, D'Arcy. That is a consolation, isn't it?"

"Oh cwumbs! If—if you put it like that, sir—" gasped Gussy.

"I do!" said the disguised Kerr. "And, of course, I'm very sorry!"

Kerr skipped gaily away, leaving Jack Blake & Co. below, looking sheepishly at each other and breathing very hard.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 785.

The bogus professor made his way quickly along to the Shell passage.

Study No. 10, the headquarters of the Terrible Three, was deserted.

Kerr chuckled, and went in.

He knew that Tom Merry & Co. would be along fairly soon, so he made haste to turn the study table upside down, pour condensed milk into the pickles in the cupboard, turn all the books in the bookcases out into the middle of the room, and empty the wastepaper-basket on top of them.

Kerr then hurried out.

He did not wish to meet Tom Merry & Co., so he went towards the back corridor.

Then, as he was traversing the corridor, Kerr gave a start.

Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was coming along.

He had somebody with him, and Kerr heard Professor Toppe's name mentioned.

"Oh, my hat!" he muttered to himself. "I don't want the Head to see me. That's too much of a good thing. He might tumble to my little game, and then I'd get it in the neck! Oh, good!"

He saw a dark recess in the wall near at hand, and into this he dived for a hiding-place.

To his surprise, the Head and his visitor stopped at the end of the passage.

"I have sent the page to fetch Professor Toppe to see you," Dr. Holmes said. "He is in the laboratory, working. If you will come along to his study and wait—"

"Yaroooogh!"

That fiendish yell, coming from the window recess, caused both men to wheel round in amazement.

Kerr had poked his head out of the window to see if there was any avenue of escape to be found there. A strong wind blowing across St. Jim's had banged the swinging window-shutter on his head with such sudden force that Kerr had inadvertently let out that yell.

"Grooogh! Wow! Now the fat's in the fire!" he moaned.

There was no help for it now.

He had to come out and face the music!

CHAPTER 6.

Not a Success!

"BLESS my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes, peering at the figure that emerged from the window recess. "It's Professor Toppe himself! You were here all the time, professor?"

"Ye-es!" gulped Kerr. He meant to carry out the deception to the bitter end, now. He resolved that he might as well be in for a pound as a penny, anyway, if the worst came to the worst.

"What ever were you doing there, my dear professor?" gasped the Head in great astonishment.

"I—I felt rather queer, Dr. Holmes, and—and was looking out of the window for—for fresh air!" replied the disguised New House junior.

This was strictly true, for the appearance of the Head and the visitor for Professor Toppe had made him feel distinctly queer!

Dr. Holmes gave him a peculiar look.

"You have certainly lost no time in coming in from the laboratory," he said. "This gentleman has come to see you, professor!"

"Thank—thank you, Dr. Holmes!" gulped Kerr.

The Head walked away, leaving him alone with the other. Kerr's brain worked swiftly.

Should he reveal that he was a spoofer, or carry on with the deception?

The other's harsh voice broke into his thoughts.

"I don't suppose you will be very pleased to see me, professor, and I don't wonder at your hiding from me in that alcove!" he said. "I only wanted to see whether you really were at St. Jim's. You can send me away, if you like. I know I'm not welcome."

"You—you're not!" muttered Kerr, taking the cue that he would probably be doing the right thing, from Professor Toppe's point of view, in sending away the visitor. "I—I don't wish to speak to you! Please go!"

The other laughed harshly.

"This won't be the last you'll hear of me—not by long chalks!" he said. "I'll go, as you ask me. I see I can do no good by staying. I'll say good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Kerr thankfully.

The visitor, whoever he was, walked briskly away down the stairs.

Kerr drew a deep breath. Then he gave a convulsive start. A figure came round the corner of the corridor on his left. It was Professor Timothy Toppe himself.

"Oh jenny!" groaned Kerr. "I am to get into the wars, and no error! The game's up now!"

To his surprise, the professor looked pleased, and was rubbing his hands.

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"Splendid! Splendid!" he said, in his high-pitched voice. "You got rid of him better than I should have done! The rascal exercises a subtle influence over me, and I feel almost powerless in his hands. I should have taken him to my study, and not dismissed him summarily out here, where he has no opportunity for treachery. But—but who are you?"

Kerr then made a clean breast of it all. He told Professor Toppe who he was, and why he had come into the School House masquerading.

"Dear me!" said the queer old man, blinking at his "double" over the rims of his glasses. "What an extraordinary youth! And what a clever impersonation! I cannot tell you how amazed I felt when I saw myself, or a person who appeared to be myself, talking to that rascal. Kerr, you are a very daring boy. But I am not angry with you. You may continue the impersonation in order to—ahem!—get free. I will make my way back to the laboratory without being seen."

And, smiling all over his face, Professor Toppe hurried away down the passage.

Kerr gasped.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band!" he muttered to himself. "I'm blessed if I know what it all means, but Toppe's a sport! And I've got his permission to masquerade as him! Good egg!"

Kerr chuckled and walked towards the junior quarters.

He heard sounds of wrath coming from the Shell passage.

The Terrible Three had discovered the depredations of the mysterious raider in their study.

"Who did it?" came Tom Merry's voice in accents of wrath.

"New House bounders, I expect!" said Manners.

"Great pip! How on earth did the blighters get in here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke, Croke, Mellish, and a number of other fellows who were not exactly in sympathy with the heroes of the School House.

The Terrible Three were mystified and furious.

"I'll spifficate the blighter if I catch him!" howled Manners. "Look at my chessmen all over the place! I—I—I—"

"Here's Professor Toppe!"

Kerr walked boldly down the passage. He had to go down the Shell passage, as a matter of fact, in order to get to other parts of the School House, which he intended to rag before departing.

"Dear me, boys!" he said, in tones of mild surprise. "What does this commotion mean? Dear me! What untidy boys you are, to make such a mess in your study!"

"We—we—we—" gasped Tom Merry.

"It's not our fault!" roared Monty Lowther. "Somebody else did this!"

Kerr wagged his head.

"Nonsense! I'm afraid you lads must be taught to be a little more tidy!" he said. "This is really disgraceful! Merry, Lowther, and Manners, follow me to my study!"

"Oh corks!" groaned Lowther. "The silly old buffer is taking a hand now!"

The Terrible Three dared not disobey the edict of a master. They followed the disguised Kerr to Professor Toppe's study.

Inside there, Kerr shut the door and solemnly took up a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Merry!" he said.

Tom Merry exchanged winks with his chums.

They did not mean to take that caning without having a little fun, if they could help it.

Tom Merry raised his palm, and Kerr raised the cane to swipe.

But as he brought down the cane, Tom Merry jerked his hand away quickly. The cane, instead of striking his palm, hit Kerr's knee with a resounding swish.

"Yaroooogh!" roared Kerr, temporarily taken off his guard. "Oh crumbs! Yah! Ow!"

The Terrible Three started and blinked at him. Those were very surprising sounds for a venerable old gentleman to make. Besides that, they were uttered not in Professor Toppe's high-pitched voice, but in tones that were distinctly boyish.

Monty Lowther gave a sudden roar.

"His whiskers have jerked round!" he yelled. "They're not whiskers at all, you chaps! They're false! That isn't Professor Toppe at all!"

"Great pip!"

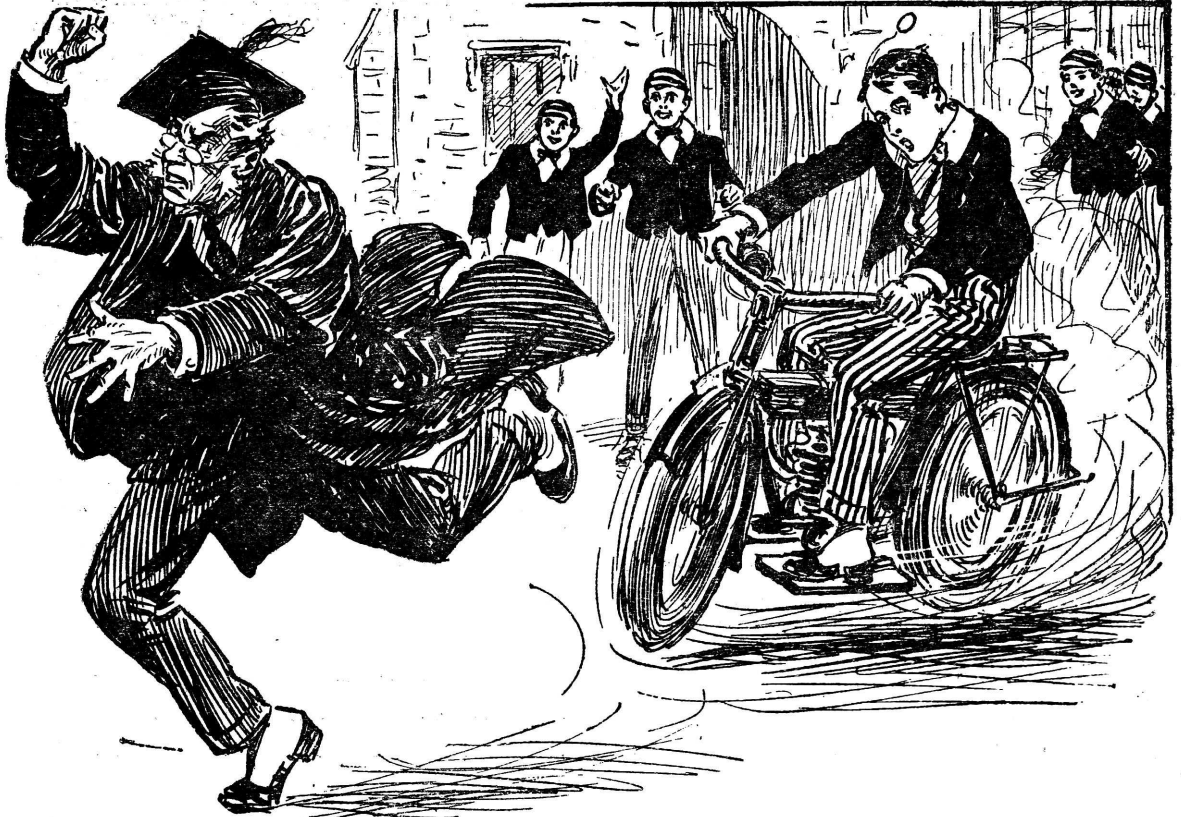
Tom Merry and Manners looked closely at the "professor," and they saw that Monty was right.

Kerr's false whiskers had been jerked out of position, and the grease-paint was distinctly visible.

The Terrible Three stood spellbound.

Kerr was the first to act.

He dived for the door, determined to make a bold effort to escape.



Mr. Ratcliff ran as he had never run before, the snorting machine with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the saddle chasing him like a bloodhound. "Oh dear! yah! Grooooh!" panted Ratty as he ran. "I'll make that young—yoogh!—scoundrel pay for this—groooh! I am quite out of breath, and shall have to—yoogh!—give up in a minute!" (See page 16.)

Crash!
Tom Merry shot his foot out quick as thought, and the bogus professor was brought down heavily on the carpet.

Next minute the Terrible Three flung themselves at him and wrenched off his disguise. The New House junior stood—or, rather, lay—revealed.

"Kerr!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"Kerr!" gurgled Manners.

"That spoof!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

Kerr fought and struggled, but he was caught.

The Terrible Three, with grim looks on their faces, bore him away to the Shell passage.

The School House juniors heard the news in amazement.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, who had come along with Jack Blake and a whole host of Fourth-Formers. "Kerr, the howlid spoofah! Then it was he who dwopped that book on my toppah! I—"

"Scrag him!" roared Blake.

"Pulverise him!" hooted Herries.

"Yaroooogh!" yelled Kerr, as he was grasped by a dozen pairs of hands. "Leggo! Wow! Yah! Stoppit! Yaroooogh!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

The School House juniors proceeded to bump Kerr severely on the passage floor.

Then they formed in lines along each side of the Shell passage, and the hapless New House raider was made to run the gauntlet along it.

He was swiped with cricket-stumps, slippers, knotted handkerchiefs, and all manner of implements of torture.

"Yah! Grooogh! Wow! Ow-wow-wow!" he moaned when he staggered to the end.

Tom Merry and Blake promptly seized him.

"Now we'll do him up and send him back!" said the Shell captain grimly. "Fetch some rope, Monty. Lug him outside, chaps!"

Rope was procured, and Kerr was dragged outside. The School House fellows took him round to the back of the school, and Kerr was dumped into one of the school dustbins that happened to be nearly empty.

"Yaroooogh! You rotters! Lemme out!" he roared. But Tom Merry and Blake rammed him in tight.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's that rope?"

Kerr was roped into the dustbin so that he couldn't get out.

Then Tom Merry & Co. rolled the dustbin across the quadrangle and left it on the New House steps, where the astonished Figgins and his chums found it a few minutes later.

Figgins & Co.'s great jape had not turned out such a howling success after all!

CHAPTER 7.

A Midnight Marauder!

BOOM!

It was the last stroke of midnight tolling from the old clock tower at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry sat up in bed and listened.

He thought he heard a noise outside the window. The noise had awakened him, and caused that feeling of vague uneasiness to steal over him.

Creak!

There was the noise again. It came from the window.

All was dark and quiet in the dormitory. Only the sound of Grundy's unmusical snoring disturbed the night air.

Tom Merry held his breath, and peered though the darkness towards the window.

Then he started.

A face appeared at the window, plainly visible in the moonlight, and two scintillating, sinister eyes looked round.

Tom Merry sat there in bed, transfixed with amazement.

The face was gone as quickly as it came.

There was a rustling of the ivy outside, and that was all. "My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "I—I wonder who that was?"

His brain acted swiftly. Perhaps it was Figgins, or one of the New House fellows out on a raid. It might be a Grammarian on the same errand. Or, on the other hand, it might be a stranger—a burglar!

Many another boy, seeing that face at the window, would have dived back into the bed in terror.

But Tom Merry was made of sterner stuff. He was not troubled with nerves, and did not believe in ghosts.

He sprang quietly from bed, and went over to the window.

It was half open at the top, and the Shell captain, standing on a chair, was able to look out.

He looked downwards through the gloom, and then caught his breath.

A strange man was climbing the ivy. The marauder was making his way along a ledge towards another window on the right, at which a light was burning.

"My hat!" muttered Tom, as he watched him clamber on to the window-sill. "He—he's going into the professor's room!"

He stepped lightly from the chair, and looked round.

There was a burglar at St. Jim's, and it was his duty to capture him, if possible.

Tom went over to Monty Lowther's bed, and shook its slumbering occupant.

"Grooooooh!" said Monty, stirring sleepily. "Whasser marrer? 'Tain't rising bell!"

"Shush!" whispered Tom Merry. "Get up, Monty. There's a burglar in the school. I've just seen him!"

That startling news had the effect of waking Monty Lowther instantly.

He jumped from bed, and hastily donned some warm garments. Tom Merry roused Manners also, and, in a few minutes, the Terrible Three, with their boots slung over their shoulders, were creeping from the Shell dormitory.

All was still and silent in the gloomy, deserted corridors.

The Shell fellows made their way swiftly towards the room that had been assigned to Professor Toppe.

There was a light shining under the door, indicating that the professor had not yet retired.

"Shush!" muttered Tom Merry. "Don't make a noise! I'm going to look through the keyhole."

Hardly daring to breathe they waited. Tom Merry bent down and applied his eye to the keyhole. What he saw caused him to draw a sharp breath, and his whole body tensed with horror and amazement.

A sinister-faced man, heavily built, and with heavy, black eyebrows, was bending over a small table at the side of the bed. On the table was a bottle of medicine—the professor's medicine which he was taking for indigestion.

The intruder was in the act of pouring something from a small glass phial into the bottle.

Tom Merry looked at the bed to see what the professor was doing, but could see no sign of the queer old man.

Where was Professor Toppe? What was he doing out of his room?

The questions, however, soon passed from Tom Merry's mind. The scoundrel in the room was putting something into the professor's medicine—poison perhaps.

Tom Merry shuddered, and drew back from the keyhole. Manners and Lowther in their turn looked through it.

The three juniors looked at each other in horror through the darkness.

"I say, what can we do?" muttered Monty Lowther.

"That villain has got to be caught!" said Tom Merry under his breath. "Let's make a sudden dash into the room and nab him!"

His hand grasped the doorknob, preparatory to thrusting the door open suddenly. But, despite Tom's carefulness, the door handle rattled.

They heard a scuffle inside the room.

Crash!

Tom flung the door open, and the three plucky juniors dashed recklessly into the room.

But a chair, flung violently from the direction of the window, crashed into their midst, and threw them temporarily into confusion.

When they looked again, the marauder had disappeared. The window was open, but the room was empty save for themselves.

"Quick!" muttered Tom. "We've got to catch that rascal! He's climbing down to the ground. We'll get through the box-room window."

They ran along the corridors to the lower box-room, and, climbing through the window, managed to reach the quadrangle.

They looked round in the darkness, but could see nobody.

"He must have run under the elms in the Close!" said Tom Merry. "Come on—he can't escape!"

They dashed across the darkened quadrangle to the old elms in the Close.

"Hark!" said Manners, stopping suddenly.

They listened, and heard a scuffling noise coming from the cloisters, followed by a muffled cry.

"This way!" muttered Tom Merry.

They reached the cloisters and, following the sound of the scuffling, came upon two men fighting on the ground.

Without hesitation, the Terrible Three flung themselves on the combatants.

One of them, they soon discovered, was the professor, so they devoted their attention to the other.

But the man seemed to be gifted with superhuman strength. He picked up a heavy weapon, and swung it round. It came down with a sickening thud on Tom Merry's head, and the lad fell back with a groan.

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Monty Lowther and Manners grasped the rascal, but he beat them back with his weapon and, tearing himself away, disappeared into the darkness.

"After him!" cried Tom Merry, holding his throbbing head and keeping back the groans that wanted to come to his lips.

He forgot his pain, and dashed away with Manners and Lowther on the track of the miscreant.

But the juniors were too late.

They hunted high and low for their quarry, but the cunning rascal had managed to make his escape.

They returned to the cloisters where the professor had been attacked.

The old gentleman was still there, looking for them.

"Are you all right, sir?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"Yes, thank you, my lad. And you?"

"My head hurts a bit where the rotter clouted me," replied the Shell captain. "But we're all right! Sorry we weren't able to catch him. Was he after you?"

"Yes, my dear lad!" replied the professor. "Dear, dear! I am terribly upset! Look at my telescope, too! It's broken!"

"That's what the rascal hit me with!" remarked Tom Merry ruefully. "So you were down here all the time, sir?"

"Yes—I came out to study the stars with my telescope," said the old scientist. "Suddenly, that villain dashed out at me, and, but for you lads, he might have killed me."

"Yes, we know that," replied Tom Merry grimly. "Whatever you do, sir, don't touch that medicine in your room. It may be poisoned. We saw him put something in."

"Good heavens!"

They crossed the quadrangle together, and the Terrible Three accompanied Professor Toppe to his bed-room.

The faked medicine was poured away, and then the professor turned to the boys, his wrinkled old face wearing a sad expression.

"I am going to tell you lads the truth," he said slowly.

"That man who broke in here to-night is my nephew, Ralph Stevens. Until ten years ago, I kept him in luxury, and gave him all he wanted. But he turned out to be no good. He robbed me, and dissipated everything on horse-racing and gambling. I disowned him, turned him away from my house, and told him I never wanted to see him again. I saw no more of him since then until to-night, although I guessed that he was still alive, and would do me injury if he could. You see, I have no other relations besides himself, and he thinks that if I die suddenly and leave no will, he will inherit all I have. He knew I had made no will. Until now, I had intended spending all my money on scientific research so that, when I die, there wouldn't be much to leave. Although I live on quite a humble farm near here, I have a great deal of money—and it's hidden. Ralph shall never know where it is. Now that I know he is about, I must return home to protect my property. I shall have to give Dr. Holmes my resignation to-morrow. I cannot stay at St. Jim's and leave my house unprotected—Ralph might succeed in discovering where all my money is hidden."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther listened gravely.

"You certainly aren't safe with that desperate scoundrel knocking about," said the Shell captain quietly.

"No—and I must go home as soon as I can," said the professor. "I am very grateful to you lads for what you have done for me to-night. I shall never forget the great service you brave lads have rendered me. I must leave you now, go and pack my belongings, and hurry off. Good-bye, boys!"

The professor smiled kindly to the juniors, and hurried away.

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Ratty!

HONK, HONK!

Quite a number of juniors collected in the quadrangle next morning, and they turned round in surprise as this strange sound reached their ears.

"By Jove!" cried Tom Merry, who was chatting with his chums, Manners and Lowther. "It's Glyn!"

Bernard Glyn, the amateur mechanic, astride the motorcycle which he had repaired for D'Arcy, came tearing towards the group of juniors.

"Clear the way!" he shouted. "I'll run you over if you don't!"

With a quick movement he brought the machine to a halt, and then dismounted.

"Where's that chump, D'Arcy?" he asked. "I've fixed up this jigger of his."

The Terrible Three looked round and beheld Arthur Augustus in conversation with other members of the Fourth.

"Let's walk over to him," said Tom Merry. "Bring the giddy machine with you, Glyn."

With a constant honk, honk! of the horn, Glyn followed



"Lend a hand, chaps!" chuckled Tom Merry. The juniors crowded forward, and dragged the luckless Housemaster from the coal-hole. They did not handle him very gently, and—quite by accident, of course—let go of him and sat him down on top of the hard, unsympathetic coal! Mr. Ratcliff's epiteful face was suffused with passion, and his eyes glinted!
(See page 16.)

the Terrible Three in the direction of the crowd of Fourth-Formers.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's, looking round. "What an awful wow! And what do these Shell boundahs want with us?"

"Here's your jigger," said Glyn. "All in order, and ready for the road. Going to have a trial spin on her?"

"Yaas, deah boy," answered D'Arcy. "But I'm afwaid I don't undahstand the thing pwopahly, you know. Give me a little instnuction, deah boy."

"Sure!" replied Glyn. "All you've got to do is to sit on, lift the exhaust, open the throttle a little, and push. Then, when she starts firing, drop the exhaust and give her some air. Then you regulate speed with the throttle-lever. Easy as falling off a form!"

"Yaas, but I don't want to fall off this beastly thing, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Are you sure I sha'n't get any oil or— or anythin' on my clobbah?"

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!" said Glyn in a tired voice. "Sit on, and I'll give you a shove!"

Arthur Augustus sat rather gingerly on the saddle of his motor-bicycle.

Glyn gave him instructions as to the manner in which to start and control the machine.

"Now, do you understand, Gussy?" inquired Glyn.

"Yaas, I—I think so, deah boy."

"Got the exhaust raised?"

"Ya-a-as!"

"Then here goes!"

Glyn gave the machine a huge shove, and it immediately commenced firing.

"Drop the exhaust!" yelled Glyn.

Gussy did so, and the machine bounded forward at a terrific rate.

"Pull the air over, Gussy!"

Bang, bang! Splutter! Bang!

The spectators scattered out of the way of the motor-cycle, for Gussy's course was a zigzag one.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he found himself being whirled along at breakneck speed. "This is wathah wotten, bai Jove! I—I've forgotten which lever Glyn said opewated the air!"

Gussy pulled the bottom lever, which happened to be the throttle-lever, and the machine's speed increased considerably. He found it rather hard to steer, and the machine went all over the quadrangle.

Clouds of smoke arose from the exhaust.

"Close her down, Gussy!" howled Glyn, as the noble swell of St. Jim's whirled by again. "You'll be into something in a minute!"

"Gweat Scott! I—I believe the beastlay lever's jammed!" gasped Gussy.

Bang, bang! Whirrr-rrrrr!

He wrenched at the throttle-lever, but could not reduce speed.

With a haggard look on his face, Gussy hung on to the handlebars for dear life, and steered the machine in all directions.

"Look out, Gussy!" yelled Tom Merry. "Here comes Mr. Ratcliff!"

The tall, weedy figure of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the unpopular master of the New House, was seen crossing the quadrangle.

When he heard the sounds of the motor-bicycle and saw the clouds of smoke in the air, Mr. Ratcliff halted.

He stood petrified as Gussy whizzed towards him.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff. "A—a motor-cycle in the precincts of the school! The young rascal! I—I— Yah! Gerraway! Mind where you're going, you reckless boy!"

Bang, bang! Whirrr-rrrr-rrrrr!

Gussy was confused, but he made a manful effort to steer out of Mr. Ratcliff's way. Unfortunately, Ratty made a bolt in the same direction, and the front wheel of the motor-bike missed him by inches. The New House master gave a wild leap into the air, and then dashed away in a very undignified manner.

"Look out, sir!" ehortled Blake joyfully. "He's after you!"

Arthur Augustus did not intend giving chase to Mr. Ratcliff, but the fact remains that he managed it somehow.

As Mr. Ratcliff bounded across the quadrangle his scholastic gown flowing in the wind, the motor-bike followed him.

Mr. Ratcliff looked round haggardly, and seeing the fiery monster on his track, put on a desperate spurt.

"Go it, sir!" roared Monty Lowther. "You'll do twenty miles an hour if you keep up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a highly entertaining sight, and one which the juniors enjoyed to the full.

(Continued on page 16.)

OUR SPECIAL SHORT COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORY!



THE AFFAIR OF THE STOLEN MUMMY!

BY EDMUND BURTON.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1. A Curious Tangle!

IT was Tim O'Carroll who ushered the early caller into the consulting-room. She was a motherly-looking soul, with a kindly face at present somewhat drawn, and her hands trembled visibly when she accepted the chair. Anthony Sharpe indicated near the window.

"Well, what can we have the pleasure of doing for you, madam?" the investigator said, noticing her agitation. "Take your time, however; there's no hurry."

"I'm all right now, sir," the woman answered, calming herself as she looked into Sharpe's keen face; "but those black men—they gave me such a turn, that—"

"Just a moment!" cut in the detective. "Let's begin at the beginning, or we shall get into a bad mix-up. Firstly"—he glanced at the slip Tim had scribbled—"I understand your name is Mrs. Simpson? Very well, then; please let me have all the facts about whatever is troubling you."

"Yes, sir," replied the caller. "My name's Simpson, and I'm nousekeeper to Mr. Andrew McKinley, of the Elms, Bridchester. Mr. McKinley is—"

"An expert in Egyptology, and has a valuable collection of curios," cut in Sharpe; "also, he's said to be something of a recluse."

The woman's eyes opened wide.

"You know him, then, sir?"

"I met him once, some time back. It was after a lecture I attended. An interesting man, truly. But forgive the interruption, Mrs. Simpson."

"Well, sir," she continued, "about a month ago my master came into possession of a new curio—a mummy, which he considered the most wonderful find of its kind. It was believed to be that of one of the oldest Egyptian high priests, and Mr. McKinley, though he never took us much into his confidence, was as excited as a schoolboy on that occasion. He had it taken to his private museum in the west wing, and that was the last I saw of the sar—sar—"

"Sarcophagus," prompted Sharpe.

"That's the word, sir," Mrs. Simpson nodded. "The thing was brought in, and that was all I knew about it until last night. Neither of us—the parlourmaid or I—is allowed there on any pretext, the master doing his own tidying and renovating."

"Mr. McKinley is a bachelor, I believe?" said the detective. "And now I gather he only employs two servants—making three persons in the house all told?"

The woman inclined her head.

"That's right, sir. It's been that way since Peters left, some three weeks ago. Peters was a kind of confidential valet of the master's, but I believe he found a better place."

"And last night," Sharpe reminded her—"what happened then?"

"Three dark-skinned men knocked at the door and handed me a note from Mr. McKinley ordering me to admit them to the west wing. He was presenting the new mummy and an empty case to some museum, and I was to allow them to be taken away."

"Your master was not at home at the time, then?"

"Well, sir, that was the queer part of it," Mrs. Simpson returned, "for I thought then that he had been in all day, buried away among his books and curios. It was always difficult to say whether he was in or out, since it was a strict rule of his that nobody should even knock at those doors which led to his 'den,' as he didn't want the least disturbance, in case he should be studying something important. He used to appear as regular as clockwork for his meals, and occasionally he would run up to London for some further research work, but it was only by pure chance that we could be aware of his movements. He had his own private keys, and slept in a small room, also in the west wing."

"How strange!" Sharpe commented. "Was he—er—quite right in his head, d'you think?"

"He was as sane as you and I are, sir," Mrs. Simpson said decidedly. "He was only rather odd in his habits."

"Well, let's get on! You permitted these fellows to take away the mummy-cases, of course?"

"I did, sir. They showed me a key, which I presumed Mr. McKinley had given them, and two went in, while the third stayed in the hall talking to me. The others were absent a little time; then they bore out one sar-thingummy, and returned for the second. Both were placed in a big motor-car waiting outside, and driven quickly away."

"But what's the great mystery, Mrs. Simpson?" asked Sharpe, a trifle impatiently.

"This seems quite lawful and straightforward, so far. Unknown to you, Mr. McKinley was away, and sent these men for the curios."

"This is the mystery," replied the woman, producing a slip of paper from her handbag. "That's the order I got. The light in the hall was poor, and I thought it was genuine; but afterwards I saw that, though something like, it's not the master's writing at all!"

Anthony Sharpe took the slip and studied intently. It was a sheet torn from an ordinary notebook, folded in two.

"You're sure this is a forgery?" he asked presently, glancing up.

"Positive, sir!" replied the woman, passing over another paper. "Here's Mr. McKinley's real handwriting."

The investigator compared the two, and nodded.

"Yes, you are right, madam," he agreed. "An attempt has been made to imitate your employer's penmanship, but it is not well done, and you would probably have seen the difference by daylight. Well, anything more?"

"Yes, sir," Mrs. Simpson nodded, "I felt puzzled when I discovered that forgery, but more mystified than ever when Mr. McKinley failed to appear for breakfast this morning. Also, I found that he had not gone away, for none of his hats or coats seemed to be missing, and the small valise he usually takes with him when leaving town was still where he generally kept it."



"Look at that, sir!" cried Peters, drawing up his sleeve, and indicating a series of livid marks, like burns, dotted all over his arm. "Those Egyptians did it with lighted cigarettes, the brutes!" Sharpe gazed straight into the man's eyes. "Tell me all you know about this!" he commanded.

"Then I plucked up courage to disobey his strict orders. I knocked at the doors leading to the west wing, but got no answer; then I found a key to fit, and went in. He was not there, though two chairs were overturned and one of the window-hangings torn down. It—it looked as if there had been a struggle in the museum-place, sir!"

"Yet you heard no sounds of such last night?"

"It's impossible to hear anything once those doors are shut. They are very thick—solid oak—and have heavy curtains on the inner side. What's more, that third fellow kept me talking all the time, so I didn't pay much attention to anything else."

Sharpe was silent for a spell, gazing abstractedly out of the window; then he turned his head quickly.

"Were the lids on both the mummy-cases when they were carried out?"

Mrs. Simpson nodded.

"On both, sir—I noticed that, as it happens."

"H'm!" the detective grunted. "And now, what about this man Peters? He was Mr. McKinley's confidential valet, you say, and he left about a week after the valuable curio was delivered. Who brought the mummy to the Elms?"

"Peters himself, sir."

"Peters himself!" Sharpe's eyes narrowed. "How did that come about? Did Mr. McKinley send him to fetch it?"

"I don't really know," the housekeeper replied. "All I can tell you is that Peters had been away for a good while, and then returned, looking very sunburnt. With him came a motor-van containing the sar-sar— Oh, the mummy's coffin, sir, and this was brought inside. A week later Peters left, Mr. McKinley telling me that he had been offered a better post."

"By Jove, a queer tangle!" Sharpe commented, half to himself. Then aloud: "Well, Mrs. Simpson, we can do no more here, so, if you like, we'll go down to Bridchester together. You can tell me anything fresh that occurs to you on the way."

CHAPTER 2.

Drawn Blank—A Startling Interruption.

THE Elms was a big, rambling old mansion, standing in its own grounds. Mr. McKinley had originally inherited it from a wealthy aunt, Mrs. Simpson informed Sharpe, and it suited the owner's strange tastes uncommonly well.

It was early evening when they arrived, but the light was still fairly good, and Sharpe, accompanied by Tim O'Carroll, at once began an examination of the room where the struggle was supposed to have taken place.

Nothing had been touched since the house-keeper had left early that morning. The two overturned chairs still lay on the floor, and the curtain hung, partly torn, from its pole above the window. Standing on little tables all round were strange curios, all of Egyptian workmanship—from vases and other ornaments to several specimens of tapestry and papyrus under glass covers. But, carefully though they searched, nothing in the nature of a clue rewarded them.

As they paused in the middle of the big room, uncertain where to turn next, a loud pealing came from somewhere in the lower regions of the house; and presently Mrs. Simpson's voice was heard, raised excitedly. Sharpe hurried out to the hall, glancing at a wild, dishevelled figure standing on the doormat. The man was panting, as though he had been running hard, and his forehead was wet with perspiration.

"It's—it's Mr. Peters, sir!" the housekeeper said breathlessly. "He—he wants to know if the master's all right!"

"Ah, does he now?" Sharpe smiled queerly. "Come in here, please, Mr. Peters! I am a private detective, so kindly be frank with me. What d'you know about this curious affair? Your former master has evidently disappeared in some strange fashion, and we've got to find him!"

"I knew it—I guessed the devils meant some mischief!" the ex-valet cried; and then, pulling himself together with an effort, he drew up his sleeve.

"Look at that, sir!" he growled, indicating a series of livid marks, like buras, dotted all over the flesh. "They did it with lighted cigarettes—the brutes!"

Sharpe gazed straight into the man's eyes.

"Tell me all you know—everything!" he commanded, though his tone was kinder this



As Anthony Sharpe dashed round to the back of the house, he saw two men in the act of lifting a long, box-like object into a large closed car. Before he could reach them, however, they hastily dropped their burden, sprang into the vehicle, and drove off.

time. "I don't profess to have any substantial theory, so far, but we may not have a minute to waste!"

Peters' story was a strange one. Some time before, Mr. McKinley had become possessed of a strong clue to the whereabouts of the mummy of one, Amen-Otep, high priest of Memphis, who lived some centuries B.C. Knowing its value from an historical standpoint, and also knowing that the Egyptian Government would probably claim it for the Cairo Museum, if found, he sent Peters out there to smuggle it over, if at all possible. The valet had set to work cunningly, and succeeded by the aid of much carefully-distributed "backsheesh" in doing what was required of him, greatly to his employer's delight.

A week or so after the delivery of the mummy, Peters had accepted another post not very far away from the Elms, and left Mr. McKinley's service; but soon he found that his movements were watched, and finally he was kidnapped, being taken to a lonely house a short distance off.

His abductors were full-blooded Egyptians, and during his imprisonment, he learned that they were members of a surviving sect who still revered the ancient priests—a secret society, in short, which sought vengeance on any unbeliever who ventured to defile their sacred tombs.

McKinley being Peters' master, and suspecting that the valet was acting for someone else, it was at the former that their vengeance was directed. They wanted their deceased priest's body back, and they also wanted the man who had dared to order its removal from its resting place. Peters had been followed over on the boat, but they had lost him in London, though they had cunningly succeeded in picking up his scent afresh later on. His subsequent sudden retirement from Mr. McKinley's service, however, had rather baffled them again; for Peters had not been to the Elms since leaving, and they did not know where the mummy had been taken, though they suspected it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bridchester since the valet was still frequently seen in the town.

Therefore they had used the only weapon to their hand. Having captured the servant, they had first tried bribery, but, that failing, torture had been substituted in order to make the man speak. Finally, Peters' resistance was broken, and he consented to write that note to Mrs. Simpson, ordering delivery of the mummy-cases; also, they forced him to give them a key which he happened to have in his bunch—a key of one of the doors to the west wing that he had accidentally omitted handing over to Mr. McKinley when he left his employment.

"They were very anxious to know if the boss was at home," Peters concluded, "and I told 'em he was hardly ever away—you tell a lot of things, sir, when there's two or three fag-ends smouldering on your flesh at the same time!" He shuddered. "But what they wanted the second case for, I dunno. At least, I'd no suspicion until I managed to break loose, and was half-way over here, and then—"

"Yes, my man," Sharpe cut in, "and more

than likely your suspicion is correct. But we must move at once. Lead us to that house as quickly as you know how! They may not have returned there, but—"

"They did return, sir! I heard a motor-engine and the sounds of voices last night, when I was still cooped up in one of the rooms, and they were still there when I left a short time ago—hammering at something. I didn't care a brace of shakes about the old mummy, but I was most anxious about Mr. McKinley, so I was most anxious about in case they might cop me again. Come along, sir, it's not far!"

CHAPTER 3.

The House of Mystery—The Second Mummy Case!

DUSK had closed down when Peters led Anthony Sharpe and Tim O'Carroll across country, and presently the trio were cautiously approaching a big ivy-clad dwelling-house. This place had long been untenant, and had earned the customary description of "haunted," so it made an ideal base for such a plan of action as had recently been adopted by the three mysterious strangers.

No lights were showing in any of the windows, but the early moon had just risen, so that it was easy to distinguish surroundings quite plainly. Sharpe deftly forced a small window beside the front door, and they crawled through into the dusty hall.

After a short pause, during which not the slightest sound could be heard, the investigator's electric torch stabbed the gloom and the trio moved cautiously forward. Then they suddenly halted, Peters giving a slight gasp. From somewhere at the back came the unmistakable chug-chug of a motor engine.

"I told you they were here when I left, sir," the valet breathed, "and now they're on the move. They—"

"Come along—quickly! After me!" Sharpe interrupted, scrambling out again and dashing round to the back of the house.

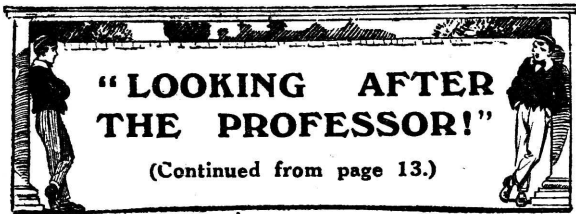
Two men were in the act of lifting a long box-like object into a large closed car, the lights of which were full on and its engine purring smoothly.

Simultaneously, the parties caught sight of each other, and the pair beside the motor, hastily dropping their burden, sprang into the vehicle, which was driven off by a third man at the steering-wheel ere Sharpe, who was leading, could reach the spot. He fired a couple of shots at random, hoping to puncture the tyres, but the light was tricky, and the car wobbled so violently over the rough side-track, that accurate shooting was impossible.

He watched the red disc of the rear lamp dwindle away with a strange look on his face; then he shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"It's no go!" he muttered. "We may be able to trace 'em later, though probably the

(Continued on page 28.)



"LOOKING AFTER THE PROFESSOR!"

(Continued from page 13.)

Gussy was not enjoying himself, however.

The motor-bike was now quite out of hand, and he could only trust to Providence.

Mr. Ratcliff ran as he had never run before, and the snorting machine, with a weird instinct, chased him like a bloodhound.

"Oh dear! Yah! Groooooogh!" panted Ratty, as he ran. "I'll make that young—yooogh!—scoundrel pay for this—Groooooogh! I am quite out of breath, and shall have to—yerrugh!—give up in a minute!"

He dashed towards the rear of the School House.

The local coal merchant's cart was drawn up outside, and the coalman was engaged in the strenuous occupation of shooting coals down the coal-hole, under the supervision of Mrs. Kebble, the matron.

Mr. Ratcliff ran blindly towards the scene, in the desperate hope of being able to scramble in through the back door, and thus seek safety.

But luck was not in Mr. Ratcliff's way.

As soon as he reached the coal-hole the coalman inverted a sack of coal.

Mr. Ratcliff, in dodging the motor-bicycle that whizzed up, charged into the coalman, his legs went down the coal-hole, and the coal went all over him.

Whirrr-rrr! Bang!

It was Gussy on the motor-bike.

The machine dashed into the heap of coal, Gussy lost control of the handlebars, and he came off precipitately.

The motor-bike went one way and Gussy went the other.

He landed on top of the coal heap beside Mr. Ratcliff, whose legs were still down the hole.

"You hidjits!" roared the coalman. "Look wot you've gone and done!"

Tom Merry & Co., sobbing with laughter, ran to the scene. Glyn went over to the motor-bike and turned off the petrol.

"Yoooooogh!"

"Groooooogh! Yah! Ow-wow-ow!"

Weird noises came from the coal heap.

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly and rubbed a bump that had arisen on his forehead.

"Oh cwumbs! Bai Jove! Wh-what's happened, deah boys?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Blake, assisting his noble chum to his feet. "You're all right, Gussy. Your clobber is torn a trifle, and you're pretty dirty, but that's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys, assist me out of this coal-hole!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, whose face was black with its contact with the coal. "I—yowp!—shall have something to say to D'Arcy about this—groooooogh!"

"Lend a hand, chaps!" chuckled Tom Merry.

The juniors crowded forward and dragged the luckless Housemaster from the coal-hole. They did not handle him very gently, and—quite by accident, of course—let go of him and sat him down on top of the hard, unsympathetic coal.

Mr. Ratcliff struggled to his feet and fairly danced with wrath.

His thin, spiteful face was suffused with passion, and his eyes glistened with fury.

"D'Arcy, you young scoundrel!" he choked. "I have half a mind to punish you now with my own hands! But you shall hear further of this from Dr. Holmes! Groooooogh!"

Mr. Ratcliff gathered his tattered gown about him, jammed his battered mortar-board on his head, and limped away.

The juniors chuckled as they watched the unpopular Housemaster go.

Arthur Augustus was in a parlous state.

His beautiful clobber was dirty and torn. He looked a sight for gods and men and little fishes!

"Cheer up, Gussy! The motor-bike's all right!" said Tom Merry. "What ever made you chase Ratty like that?"

"Gwoooooogh! I don't know, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus, groping for his monocle and jamming it into his eye. "It seemed as though I had my attention diwected towards the old boundah, and this beastlay machine cawwied me towards him! I—I couldn't stop, bai Jove!"

"No wonder!" grinned Bernard Glyn. "The throttle control cable has snapped. But that's only a detail, Gussy;

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I've got plenty of cable in my den, and will soon put that right."

"Oh, wats!" gasped D'Arcy. "I'm weally fed up with the beastlay thing! If you like, Glyn, you can have the use of it for the pwesent."

"Good egg!" chortled Glyn. "I'll soon show you chaps how to ride a motor-bike! I'll put a new cable in at once!"

Tom Merry & Co. took Gussy indoors and helped him wash and have a change of clothing.

They were walking along the lower corridor when Toby, the page, told D'Arcy that the Head wished to see him.

Gussy went, and found Mr. Ratcliff with Dr. Holmes.

He was engaged with the Head for ten minutes, and when he emerged Gussy was looking rather serious.

"Licked?" inquired Blake anxiously.

"No, deah boy," replied Gussy. "The Head was wathah a bwick. Watty twied to make things worse, but the Head saw weason when I pointed out to him that I weally had no contwol ovah the bike, and that I should have stopped had I been able. As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the verdict, then?" demanded Tom Merry.

"We're pwohibited fwom widin' the motor-bike any more!" said Gussy. "The Head says it's to be kept in the woodshed, and any boy found widin' it will get into sewious twouble."

"Oh Jemima!"

The juniors looked dismayed.

"That's put the tin hat on it, then!" groaned Blake. "But still, I suppose it is rather thick, having a motor-bike in a school and riding round the quad. We'd better go down and tell Glyn."

Bernard Glyn was busy in the woodshed.

He grinned cheerfully as the others came up.

"It's all serene now," he said. "I've put a fresh cable in. Watch me ride the old jigger!"

"You'll get a whopping if you do, old son!" remarked Tom Merry.

"A—a whopping?" demanded Glyn. "Who's going to whop me?"

"The Head. He's prohibited us to ride the motor-bike any more. A chap caught riding it will get a licking."

"Oh, my only Sunday topper!" moaned Glyn. "After all my trouble in getting it perfect!"

"What the Head says, goes," said Tom Merry glumly. "Can't kick against the traces, you know, Glyn."

"N-no!"

The juniors were all despondent at the Head's edict, but none wore a more dismal look than Bernard Glyn, to whom mechanics was the very bread and meat of life!

CHAPTER 9.

A Narrow Escape!

PROFESSOR TIMOTHY TOPPE left St. Jim's that morning.

Everybody, with the exception of the Head and Tom Merry & Co., wondered what had caused this sudden departure.

Although a very queer old man, the professor had endeared himself to everybody at St. Jim's, and there wasn't one did not express regret at his departure.

Tom Merry & Co. understood, but they kept their information to themselves.

They did not mention the adventure of the previous night, except to Jack Blake & Co., whom they could trust.

Professor Toppe was going home to look after his affairs, and keep them from the evil designs of Ralph Stevens, his dissolute nephew.

Mr. Linton took the Shell for geography that afternoon, and the lesson was well under way when Mr. Railton entered the Form-room.

"Excuse me, Mr. Linton," he said. "I wish Merry to come with me."

Tom Merry arose gladly, and followed the Housemaster from the Form-room. He was not a slacker, but geography, when it dealt with meteorological problems, replete with isotherms and isobars, rather bored him.

He wondered, as he entered the Housemaster's study, what he was wanted for.

"Do you know how to get to Branksome Farm, at Coteridge, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir," replied Tom. "I know the way by road, of course. Trains from Rylcombe go there, too. Coteridge is four stations away."

"Quite so, Merry," said the Housemaster quietly. "I understand, Merry, that you are aware of the circumstances which led to Professor Toppe's departure from here to-day?"

"Yes, sir. A rascally nephew of his has turned up, and wants to get possession of the professor's property," replied the Shell captain. "He has gone home to see that Ralph Stevens doesn't find out where his valuables are hidden."

"That is correct. Now, you know, Merry, that the

professor had no friends in the world, so he confided in Dr. Holmes. He expressed a wish to make a will; and, as Dr. Holmes has an intimate acquaintance with the law, he has consented to assist the professor, and act as trustee to his estate. For that purpose, Dr. Holmes has gone over to Coteridge to see the professor this afternoon. He has just telephoned to say that he has left certain important papers behind, and wishes you to take them to him as soon as possible. He is now on his way to Coteridge. Will you hurry over to Wayland, and see if you can catch a train there? The next train to Coteridge from Rylcombe is not until five o'clock."

"Certainly, sir," replied Tom cheerfully. "If you give me the papers, I'll do my best."

Mr. Railton handed Tom a packet, which the Shell captain put into his pocket.

"Whatever you do, be careful not to lose those papers. And you must reach Coteridge as soon as you can, for Dr. Holmes has another very important appointment for this evening," said Mr. Railton.

"I understand, sir, and will do my best."
Tom Merry went to his study, took his cap, and hastened downstairs.

A thoughtful look crossed his face as he went down the School House steps into the quadrangle.

"It's jolly late," he mused, glancing up at the clock-tower. "Not much chance of my getting to Wayland in time. I—I wonder if I dare take the motor-bike? I don't suppose the Head would mind."

Tom pondered this question as he crossed the quadrangle. The Head wanted those papers at once. If Tom missed the train at Wayland he would never get to Coteridge in time. The probability was that he would not catch the train. True, he could use his push-cycle, but on that it would be impossible to travel as fast as on the motor-cycle.

So Tom determined to risk it. He went over to the woodshed, opened the door, and wheeled out the motor-cycle.

There was nobody about, for lessons were in progress. Taggles blinked at him curiously from the lodge, and granted when Tom informed him that he was going on an errand for the Head.

Outside, in the Rylcombe Lane, Tom turned on the petrol, sat on the machine, and pedalled off.

Bang! Bang! Bang!
It went off like a rocket, in a cloud of dust and smoke.

He was at the cross-roads in less than no time.
"By Jove! This is topping!" he chuckled to himself, as he took the road that led to Wayland Heath. "Won't the Head be surprised to see me on this little outfit!"

The sensation of rapid motion as he travelled across the wide expanse of Wayland Heath exhilarated and thrilled him. Wayland passed, he entered the long country roads that led him to his destination, and opened the throttle full.

"Coteridge already!" he chuckled, after a run of a quarter of an hour. "Why, I shall be at the giddy farm before the Head arrives! Won't he be amazed when he finds the papers there! This is topping!"

Through the little town he buzzed; and, after stopping to inquire the way to Branksome Farm, shaped his course down a long country lane, tree-bordered on either side.

This led him to the private road belonging to Branksome Farm.

The road was in reality nothing more than a path. On one side was a high hedge, and on the other a fence which enclosed the farmyard.

A short way ahead of him Tom could see the farmhouse—a large, rambling old place. He was interested in his inspection of Professor Toppe's home that he did not think to look ahead.

A goat had been tethered, by means of a rope, to a post in the lane, and had strayed to the opposite side, so that the rope was stretched right across the path.

Tom did not see his danger until it was too late.
"Oh crumbs!" he ejaculated in horror, as he saw the goat and the rope. "Wh-what the merry blazes! I'll be killed!"

Tom was almost upon the rope now. To run into that would mean terrible injuries, at least, to himself, and probably to the goat, also.

He looked quickly to the left and right, and chose the lesser evil.

Wrenching at the handle-bars, he set the motor-bicycle buzzing full-tilt for the fence.

Crash!
It was a shabbily-built, weak affair, and the machine and its rider tore through it as though it had been paper.

On the other side of the fence was a deep bank, leading down. Although Tom shut the engine off, he could not check the motor-cycle's mad career down this bank. It went, straight as a die through another fence, and finally crashed into the midst of a piggyery.

Pigs went scuttling away in all directions, squealing with terror.

Tom Merry was flung off the machine. He performed a

series of ungraceful somersaults in the air, and finally landed, with a sickening jolt, against the legs of two men who had been standing in the farmyard, conversing together.

Both men were bowled over, and one of them reeled backwards and fell into a trough full of pigs'-wash.

Splash!

"Yarooooooogh!"

"Wow-wow-wow-wow!"

"Oooooooop!"

Those loud howls mingled discordantly with the shrill screaming of the pigs, and all was pandemonium, for a little while, in the yard of Branksome Farm.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry's Clever Ruse!

"YOU young scoundrel!"

The unfortunate man who had been hurled into the pigs'-trough, jumped to his feet, and, grasping Tom Merry by the collar, hauled him up.

Tom gasped.

"Leggo!" he said, as the man commenced to shake him like a terrier does a rat. "I—I say— Yarooogh!"

"I'll teach you to come in here like that!" snarled the other. "Look at the state I'm in! How dare you ride up that road! It's private. Hold him, Jepson!"

Tom Merry wriggled in the farmhand's grasp.

Suddenly, however, he ceased his struggles, and looked blankly at the man, who was frantically wiping the sticky wash from his trousers.

He was a heavily-built, dark-eyed, beetle-browed fellow. Tom Merry had seen his face before—well he knew it!

He was standing face to face with the man he had struggled with in the cloisters last night—Ralph Stevens, the professor's dissolute nephew!

Stevens was glaring at the St. Jim's junior, but did not appear to recognise him.

Last night, evidently, he had not caught sight of the boys who attacked him.

"What are you doing here?" he snarled. "That lane outside is not a public thoroughfare."

Tom Merry's brain acted swiftly.

What was Stevens doing at Branksome Farm? Where was the professor? What mischief was afoot? He decided not to acquaint Stevens of the object of his visit.

"I'm sorry," he said, a little sullenly. "If it hadn't been for that confounded goat of yours out there I shouldn't have come through the fence!"

Stevens was regarding Tom thoughtfully with his deep-set, glittering eyes.

"Look here, my lad, I've a good mind to get you into trouble!" he said. "You are trespassing on my land; you have damaged my fence and ruined my suit. Where would you be if I had you arrested?"

"Are you the owner of this place, then?" asked Tom coolly.

"Yes, I am! Don't be impudent, or I shall make you smart! Now, listen to me. I have something to propose to you. Would you do me a service, if I promise to say nothing about this?"

"That depends," replied Tom quietly.

"Well, I'll explain. I have an old uncle living with me— he's at present in bed, ill. He is a miser, and has been robbing me through thick and thin, and has hidden the money somewhere. It's on this farm, but I can't discover where it is. Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, is coming here this afternoon—I expect him any minute—and he's going to help the old man make his will. My uncle will tell him, of course, where all the money is hidden. Now, I want you to sneak into the bed-room and listen to all that goes on. It's impossible for me, or any of the others, to get in there without being discovered, and he's a wily old man. We've been looking for a boy, or somebody whom we can hide under the bed. All of us are too big. Now, look here, my lad, I want you to do that for me. If you work in with us, and discover where the old man has hidden the money, you shall be allowed to go, and I'll give you ten pounds for yourself. Think of it— ten pounds!"

Tom Merry was silent.

Evidently this rascal was no judge of character, or he would not have asked him to enter into his nefarious schemes. It all sounded plausible enough, but Tom Merry was able to realise what was behind it all.

Professor Toppe was ill in bed. Tom suspected foul play. Stevens had come to the farm, had given the old man something to make him ill, and was now waiting to find out where the valuables were hidden.

Stevens was posing as a master of Branksome Farm, and he evidently had one of the servants as his accomplice.

Now he wanted somebody to hide under the bed in the old man's room, and listen to his conversation with Dr. Holmes.

Ralph Stevens was regarding Tom Merry steadily under his heavy eyebrows.

"Well, my lad?" he asked.

The St. Jim's junior thought rapidly, and a bold scheme entered his head.

"All right, sir," he said, pretending to be scared and frightened. "You show me into the bed-room, and I'll do the rest. Will you promise I won't get into trouble?"

"Yes, of course!" laughed the other easily. "Follow me indoors, my lad, and be careful not to make a noise. My uncle is sleeping, and I want you to be safely hidden before he wakes."

Tom followed the two precious rascals through the farm-garrets and into the house, via the back door.

Branksome Farm was picturesque inside, furnished tastefully in the old English style. Stevens led Tom upstairs, treading stealthily. Outside a bed-room door on the upper landing they halted and listened.

Sounds of steady breathing came from inside.

"He's still asleep," muttered Stevens. "Now, my lad, be careful!"

He opened the door and beckoned Tom to enter.

The St. Jim's junior, with fast beating heart, did so. He crawled across the carpet, and squeezed himself under the bed. There was barely sufficient space for him there, but he managed it with difficulty. No wonder Stevens and his confederates realised the impossibility of hiding there themselves!

"Now, be careful not to let yourself be discovered!" whispered Stevens, in a warning voice. "Mind, any treachery, my lad, and it will be the worse for you!"

He withdrew, and Tom was left alone under the bed.

Swift thoughts raced through the schoolboy's brain as he lay there.

Ralph Stevens took him for a very different type of boy to what he really was. Tom Merry had not the slightest intention of falling in with the rascal's wishes.

Soon the old man stirred and rang the bell.

A white-haired old manservant came into the room.

"Hasn't Dr. Holmes arrived yet, Freeman?" asked Professor Toppe, in a weak voice.

"The station cab is just coming down the lane, sir," replied the butler. "Here is Dr. Holmes!"

A few minutes later the Head of St. Jim's was shown into the room.

His kind old face expressed the gravest concern when he saw Professor Toppe lying in bed.

"What ever has happened, my dear professor?"

"I am ill—I believe I am dying!" moaned Professor Toppe.

"Ralph—my nephew—has been here, and has had something to do with it. But he shall not profit by his dastardly schemes. I want to tell you everything, Dr. Holmes, and leave all my property in your care. If I die, you must see that it is properly disposed of, and that Ralph doesn't touch a penny!"

"You may trust in me," replied Dr. Holmes. "I shall carry out your wishes to the last detail, professor. But do not imagine the worst. I will have an expert medical practitioner sent in, and you will make a speedy recovery, I hope."

"Have you brought the papers, sir?" asked the old man in a weak voice.

"Dear me! Hasn't Merry arrived with them? I left them behind at St. Jim's, but telephoned for one of the boys to bring them along at once. I—"

"Here I am, sir!"

Dr. Holmes almost jumped from his chair by the bedside as those words, spoken in cheery tones, came from below.

Next minute Tom Merry, dusty and dishevelled, clambered out from under the bed and handed him the papers Mr. Railton had sent.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "What ever were you doing under there, Merry? How dare you insinuate yourself into Professor Toppe's private bed-room in this manner?"

Tom Merry went to the door, opened it, and looked cautiously outside. Neither Ralph Stevens nor his confederate was in sight. The rascals were hiding downstairs, waiting for their boy accomplice to come out with his report.

"Don't raise an alarm, sir," said Tom hastily, as the professor extended his hand towards the bell. "I'll explain everything!"

And, in quiet, deliberate tones, the Shell captain gave a concise account of all that had happened since the motor-bicycle took him through the fence into the farmyard. Dr. Holmes and Professor Toppe listened in growing amazement.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, when Tom had finished. "What an amazing, audacious plot! So Stevens is in this very house! My dear professor, what had we better do?"

"I've got an idea, sir!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "Those rascals believe I am going to lead them to the place where the valuables are hidden. Well, let me lead them to a different place where I can lock 'em in, and then we'll send for the police."

"That is quite an ingenious scheme, Merry," said the Head. "If the professor will lend his assistance—"

"Certainly I will!" said the old man in the bed. "Here, Merry, take this cellar key. I have all my keys at my bedside. The cellar is an excellent place!"

He gave Tom Merry instructions how to find the cellar.

Then Dr. Holmes took down in writing all that the professor had to tell him. The business being transacted, Dr. Holmes took his departure.

"I will inform the police immediately," he whispered to Professor Toppe.

Tom Merry returned to his hiding-place under the bed, and the professor lay back as though ignorant of the schoolboy's presence.

He rang for the manservant, and then took a dose of his medicine.

A few minutes later Tom heard the professor sleeping soundly.

Then the door opened cautiously, and Ralph Stevens crept in.

"Come out, boy!" he whispered. "The old man's asleep again, and he won't wake for an hour or so. I've drugged his medicine, you see. Did you overhear anything?"

"I overheard everything, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"Where has he hidden the money?"

"Come down to the cellar, sir, and I'll show you something!"

Stevens and Jepson eagerly followed Tom Merry downstairs.

Tom led them along a dark passage, and then down a narrow flight of rickety stairs. They eventually found themselves at a stout oak door, which gave access to the cellar.

"The door's open!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He didn't think it necessary to keep it locked, you see. Come on!"

"Wait. I'll strike a match!" muttered Stevens, in a voice tense with expectancy.

Little did he dream that the boy he thought he had frightened was leading him into a trap!

The two rascals went into the pitch black cellar, and Stevens lit a match.

Next minute Tom flung himself at the man's back, and sent him staggering forward. The match went out, and a bellow of wrath rent the darkness.

Jepson's arms went out to grasp the boy, but Tom was too quick. His foot went between the rascal's legs and tripped him up. Leaving both of the men floundering against each other in the dark, Tom darted out of the cellar, slammed the door, and locked it.

Crash! Bang! Thump!

"You little scoundrel!" came a muffled voice from inside.

"Open this door!"

"Not much!" retorted Tom Merry through the keyhole. "You can stay there, you rotters, till the police come! They won't be long really!"

"You—you—you—"

Crash! Bang! Crash!

Although the two imprisoned rascals kicked frantically at the door, they could not burst it open. It was made of good old English oak, and was still as solid as when it had first been fixed there.

Tom Merry ran upstairs and found Freeman, the butler, in a state of excitement.

He soon allayed the old fellow's fears.

A few minutes later the police and Dr. Holmes arrived.

"Have you caught them, Merry?" asked the Head eagerly.

"Yes, rather, sir—just like rats in a trap! They're downstairs in the cellar, doing their best to kick the door down! Hark at 'em!"

"Give me the key, my lad!" said the bluff, terse little police-inspector in charge of the party.

Tom Merry did so, and the police went down the stairs in force.

They opened the cellar door, and a sharp but brief struggle ensued.

Ten minutes afterwards Ralph Stevens and his accomplice were dragged up the stairs, both with their wrists secured with handcuffs.

"So much for those rascals," said the police-inspector. "Thanks very much, sir, and to you, too, my lad, for your promptness. We'll soon have these rascals under lock and key again."

Dr. Holmes had brought back a doctor with him. They found the professor still fast asleep in bed.

"Yes, he's been drugged!" said the doctor, after a brief examination. "But there's no cause for alarm. He'll pull round quickly after proper treatment. If he had been left in the hands of his nephew, however, I fancy his days would have been numbered!"

"You have behaved splendidly, Merry!" said Dr. Holmes warmly. "Had it not been for you—"

"Blame the goat, sir, that caused me to ride through the fence!" said Tom, with a chuckle. "If I hadn't ridden into

(Continued on Page 27.)



GINGER DAN'S DOUBLE VICTORY!

by
**MALCOLM
ARNOLD**

A Gripping Story of Sterling Pluck.

CHAPTER 1.

A Dastardly Scheme!

THE white-painted gate clicked as it swung to behind the lean, ragged figure of Tu Sin. Bill, the huge sheep-dog, had slipped in after the yellow youngster, and Tu Sin halted for a moment to wag a long finger at the brown-eyed animal.

"Now, you got to behave yourself, honourable Bill," he said. "If there should be other dogs in this house, don't permit yourself to regard them as honourable enemies. Otherwise we get chuck-out quick time."

He paced up the gravel path through the little stretch of garden, and went on round to the back of the tiny villa, knocking on the door. He had to knock a second time before the door opened, and a thin, faded woman, with a pale face and red-rimmed eyes, appeared.

She hesitated doubtfully as she caught sight of the long, lean, yellow face. Tu Sin whipped off his ragged cap and made his best bow.

"Would the gracious and honourable lady sell this humble personage a little milk and a loaf of bread?" he asked in his sing-song voice, extending one yellow hand and revealing the fact that a sixpence lay in the grimy palm.

From a capacious pocket Tu Sin produced a glass bottle of the large-mouthed type which usually adorns milkmen's trollies.

"Who—who sent you here for milk and bread?" the woman demanded.

Tu Sin had raised his almond eyes to her face, and he noted the pallor and the signs of recent tears on the faded cheeks.

"No one has sent this dishonourable personage, gracious madam," he returned. "This unworthy stranger has come a long way and is velly hungry."

It was late in the afternoon of a cold February day, and in his thin garments, Tu Sin certainly gave the appearance of extreme hunger and fatigue.

Mrs. Barry, after another glance at the long, yellow countenance, nodded her head. "All right," she said, "wait here. I'll get what you want."

She took the milk bottle and retired, closing the door behind her, and Tu Sin, thrusting his hands into his pockets, grinned down at Bill squatting on the path.

He and his chum, Ginger Dan, were on the road, starting out on one of those long, vagabond tours which Ginger Dan loved. From a certain stretch of waste ground in Limehouse they had set off in a crazy old caravan, which they had patched up during the winter. A nondescript nag, picked up in the docks, was their motive power, and they had headed south in search of the sun.

On this, the third day of their journey, they had halted on the edge of the woods, miles from nowhere. Sam, the nondescript nag, had developed an obstinate reluctance for further effort, and they had turned the old beast out to graze along the roadside.

Their food supply was fairly ample, but they lacked both milk and bread, and it was in search of these two very useful commodities that Tu Sin had gone off with Bill. He had tramped three miles before he had

come to this first house, a lonely villa on the borders of a common.

A signpost had indicated that two miles further on was the town of Medhurst, where, of course, there would be shops and stores. But if a suave plea could supply Tu Sin with what he required, why should he trudge those extra miles?

"A soft tongue is good fiend in the hands of the hungry, honourable hound," said Tu Sin to Bill. "I go save two mile tramp through it."

It was four or five minutes before the door opened again, and the slim faded woman appeared. Tu Sin's almond eyes lighted up as he saw that filled bottle of milk and the substantial-looking parcel accompanying it.

"There's a bit of a cold chicken—and one or two apples," the kindly dame remarked as she handed her burdens over to the lean, lanky Celestial.

Tu Sin shifted the parcel under one arm, then held out his hand with the sixpence.

"May the winds of prosperity ever blow in the direction of the bounteous and kindly dame," he said.

The woman made as though to draw back her hand, but Tu Sin, leaning forward, dropped the coin in her hesitating palm.

"If this humble personage can do anything for you, gracious and kindly dame, he is ready," Tu Sin went on.

He knew that he had received much more than his sixpence could have purchased, and he was anxious to make a return for that, if possible.

The red-rimmed, sad eyes rested on the yellow face for a long moment, then the woman caught her breath sharply, as though a sudden, grim inspiration had come to her. "I wonder if I dare! Oh, I wonder if I dare!" she murmured half to herself.

Tu Sin watched her solemnly, his yellow face expressionless. He watched the changing emotions on the thin, lined face, then suddenly the woman seemed to make up her mind, for she came out and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Could I trust you to take a—parcel to Medhurst, and give it to someone there? I'll pay you. I'll give you five shillings, but you must go at once."

She took a slip of paper out of her pocket and wrote an address on it:

"Colonel Edward Thom,

The Grange,

Medhurst."

"It is just before you reach the town," she said, "a big house on the left. You can't miss it. Will you—will you do this for me?"

There were not many things that Tu Sin would not do for five shillings, and he swept the speaker a quick bow.

"This humble person will oblige and deliver the gracious lady's request. Give me parcel, madam. I go at once."

The woman flew into the villa and returned a few moments later, bearing with her a square oak box. Tu Sin noted that there was a padlock on the box; the padlock had been sealed, while around the box a thick strap had been fastened, forming a loop.

"Take this to Colonel Thom, and tell him that Mr. Barry has sent it. That's all."

There was an air of tense anxiety in her face as she watched Tu Sin adjust the box.

"You must go at once—at once!" she added.

"I go now," Tu Sin said, turning round on his heel.

He headed for the pathway which ran down the side of the house, and Bill, rising, followed the lean, supple shape. But, as Tu Sin turned the angle of the wall, he heard the click of the gate in the front of the garden.

The woman called out something, which Tu Sin did not understand. He hurried on up the path with his milk bottle and the parcel and the heavy oak box.

A quick footfall sounded, and suddenly a short, stocky figure came round the top of the path, halting as it caught sight of the burdened Chink.

"Ere, what the deuce are you doing—you darned yellow skunk? You drop that! D'you 'ear? Drop that!"

Before Tu Sin could make the slightest move to defend himself, the newcomer had leaped at him, and had caught him by the throat. It was a merciless grip that fell on the lean neck, and Tu Sin, staggering back, dropped his armful of belongings. The milk bottle fell on the path and smashed, shedding its white contents on to the frosty ground.

An angry oath sounded, and Bill, the huge sheep-dog, came charging up the path to his master's rescue, but as he made his leap the thick-set man swung round and sent a heavy kick crashing into the dog's side. Poor Bill rolled over half stunned, and Tu Sin's powerful aggressor jammed the youngster back against the wall of the house with a force which indicated the strength in the thick-set body.

The young Chink's head came in violent contact with the rough brick wall, and, although he made a plucky attempt to grapple with his adversary, Tu Sin had not the ghost of a chance.

Releasing one hand, his captor aimed a smashing blow at the long pointed jaw of the unfortunate lad. The blow went home dead on the mark, and Tu Sin crumpled like a leaf, sagging helplessly down the wall to roll over in a huddled heap.

Dropping back into the path, the infuriated man whipped round again just as Bill staggered to his feet. Around the other side of the house came the slim figure of the woman in black, and she raised a quick cry as she saw the man slipping his hand into his pocket.

"No, no, Jim, don't—don't. I—I'll explain—I'll explain!"

There was a revolver in the man's hand now, and he raised it, taking quick aim at the dog, but the woman flung herself forward, wrenching the arm upwards just as the shot rang out.

Bill leaped away as the bullet snarled past him, and his quick sagacity indicated to him his danger. With an angry bark the huge sheep-dog turned, flew like a streak of lightning across the garden to bound over the hedge and vanish.

"Confound you! You made me miss my THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 785.

aim!" The angry voice was quivering with wrath as the man turned and jerked his arm free.

"Jim—Jim, you don't understand! I—I gave this unfortunate boy that—that box!"
 "You!" Jim Barry fell back a pace, peering at the white, terrified features of his wife, then on to his ugly, dissipated countenance there crept a look of grim, sullen rage.
 "Oh, you did! Why?"
 "To save you from being a thief!" the woman returned.

Barry swung round, and looked at the ragged youngster huddled against the wall. His eyes travelled first to the parcel of food and then to the heavy, oak box which lay at the side of the path.

"Right-ho!" the man muttered, half-aloud. "You thought you were going to get ahead of me, did you—eh? Well, now I know that you are wise to what I was going to do, you'll come into it with me; and this darned Chink will help as well!"

He nodded towards the terrified woman.
 "Come along, give me a hand! I'm going to lock this fellow up in the tool-shed. You and I caught 'im red-handed trying to steal the Travers Cup. You get me? Red-handed! But there were two of them. The other got away with the cup! You follow?"

"Oh, Jim—Jim, don't—don't! I knew you meant to steal it! I heard you talking it over with those terrible men two nights ago. Don't do it, Jim—don't do it!"

She laid a fluttering hand on her husband's arm, but he knocked it aside.

"I tell you, I've got to do it!" said Jim, the sweat standing out on his forehead.

"I'm broke—down and out, and that cup's worth five hundred pounds. It's either the cup or the workhouse for me, and I've made my choice! Quick—elp me!"

Next moment the unconscious figure of Tu Sin was being carried down the narrow pathway and across the space behind the house, to be dropped into the low-roofed tool-shed, where the man tied him by the ankles and wrists to the heavy carpenter's bench. Then Jim Barry, manager of the Medhurst Rovers' football team, locked the door of the shed behind him, and went back to the house.

An amazing chance had come his way—a chance by which he would be able to cover his own nefarious deeds, and hoist the blame on to other shoulders.

His wife was in the kitchen when he entered, and he cast a grim glance across at her.

"Don't forget, Kate," he said, "there were two of 'em in this job—that Chink and some one else. Your story is that the Chink came round to the back door, and while you were giving him something to eat, the other fellow broke into the front and got away with the cup. I came in just as the Chink was sheering off and collared him, but the other chap escaped."

"Jim—Jim, I—I daren't tell a lie!"

A stride saw the bullying ruffian across the room, and he caught his wife by the wrists, shaking her roughly.

"You want to see me clapped in gaol, then? For that's what it means unless I raise money at once! Our accounts will have to be produced next week, and there's three

or four hundred pounds short, which I won't be able to account for, unless I get the cash! It's gaol for me or that Chink! It's up to you to decide!"

She looked into his heavy face, and gave a little sob.

"All right, Jim, I—I'll tell a lie, for your sake!"

He released her wrists, smiling grimly as he turned away. The woman hurried to the window and saw the thick-set figure reach the side path and lift the oak box, then Jim moved off swiftly across the garden, and vanished over the fence.

With her hands pressed to her heart, the frail woman turned and dropped into a seat beside the window.

Her husband was going to hide the cup, then make his way to the town to tell his lying story—his lying story that would cover his own dastardly move.

CHAPT R 2.

Arrested!

TU SIN came back to consciousness to find himself trussed up against the thick, wooden leg of the carpenter's bench, and for a moment his dazed brain refused to enlighten him as to what had happened, then gradually, as his head cleared, he pieced together the amazing events which had occurred, and he realised that he was a prisoner.

Not content with knocking him out, his thick-set aggressor had tied him up hand and foot and had put him in that stuffy shed.

"What go happen now?" Tu Sin thought to himself.

He shifted his position slightly. He had that true Celestial temperament which looks on all rough treatment as part of life's handicap. The thick-set individual had evidently resented Tu Sin's presence in the garden, and had displayed an entirely unwarranted rage.

"He go spill milk," Tu Sin remarked, recalling the scene of the battle. "He vely hot-tempered gentleman, and no give fellow time to explain."

Tu Sin's jaw hurt him abominably, and his head throbbled from the violent contact with the rough wall; but he was as tough as a dry root, and as his strength returned to his lean, sinewy limbs, he began to strain at the cord, trying to free himself.

He was still engaged on this profitless task when he heard the murmur of voices, then a few moments later the door of the shed was flung open, and a stocky figure, bearing a lantern, appeared.

Tu Sin blinked up into the shaft of light, and saw Jim Barry's heavy face. Behind the stocky, thick-set figure was a taller aristocratic-looking man, and framed in the doorway was the burly, blue-uniformed figure of a constable.

"There he is, colonel!" Jim Barry grated, pointing to the figure squatting in the dust. "That's the one I caught!"

Colonel Thom came forward, halting in the centre of the tool-shed.

"A Chinee, by Jove!" he said, eyeing the long, yellow countenance and the almond eyes that blinked at him.

"Caught red-handed! If I'd been a minute later I'd have missed him, colonel!" the husky voice of Barry put in behind.

The constable came into the shed, and Colonel Thom nodded to the officer.

"Better take him in charge, Markham," he said.

Barry held the lantern forward, while the constable removed the bonds that held Tu Sin to the bench, then he stooped, and helped the slim youngster to his feet, producing a pair of handcuffs and clapping them on the lean, yellow wrists.

In Limehouse, where Tu Sin came from, there is an unwritten law which is followed by all the foreign element there; sometimes it is a good law, otherwise it is not so good, for it forbids an arrested man from making any statement or complaint.

"Never talk to a policeman," is the sage advice given in that district, "lest your words be twisted and used against you."

For some reason or other Tu Sin was being locked up—an experience that he had already gone through on one or two occasions in his native Limehouse, where laws are so easily broken.

"You darned yellow skunk!" Jim Barry snarled. "But you didn't get away with it, did yer?"

Tu Sin's almond eyes regarded the speaker calmly.

"This humble personage no thief. He paid to honourable and benevolent lady. And you go spill milk and plump me on jaw!"

Colonel Thom turned to the door of the shed.

"We won't waste time on this fellow," he said over his shoulder to the constable. "You take him back to town and lock him up. We have to find the other man before he gets away, if possible!"

Tu Sin caught the meaning of those words, and a cold sweat broke out on him. Was it possible that they were also going to drag Ginger Dan, his chum and leader, into this affair?

He opened his lips to protest, then closed them tightly again. Under no sort of circumstances would he help them to find Dan. If buying bread and milk was an indictable offence in this strange country, then, at least, Dan should not share punishment.

"Come along o' me!" the policeman grunted, slipping one huge hand under Tu Sin's arm.

As he emerged from the shed Tu Sin saw the lighted doorway of the villa and the thin, tense figure of Mrs. Barry standing there.

Tu Sin was the only one who caught that quick, threatening glance which Jim Barry cast at his wife; and the look of dull terror which came into the pinched, frightened face of the woman as she backed away into the kitchen, gave Tu Sin another theory, which he worked out in his own curious way.

The woman was evidently terrified over what had happened. Quite possibly that bread and milk which she had sold had not been hers to dispose of. Tu Sin had often bought

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clandestine meals off the managers of cafes and small eating-houses in Limehouse, knowing that the money paid for them would never go into the till.

"Maybe she afraid she give me that half-chicken," he mused, in his quaint way. "Therefore I keep my mouth shut, not get her into trouble, too."

And so it was a completely silent and obdurate Tu Sin that trudged back across the common with the policeman by his side. Once or twice the policeman did try to pump his companion, but the non-committal grunts that his questions were received with roused his ire at last.

"Not going to give the game away, ain't yer!" he said. "All right, my lad, all the worse for you! And you won't get away with it, either. We'll find that other chap, you take my word for it!"

They were still half a mile from the town, when Tu Sin heard a scuffling in the bushes on the left, and, glancing over his shoulder, saw a shaggy shape dart out of the bush and squat down in the thick grasses close to the road. It was Bill, the ever watchful, keeping touch with the yellow youngster.

But in this instance the blue uniform that Tu Sin's escort wore was a danger signal that Bill understood all too well. A vagabond dog is as chary of getting within the reach of the arm of the law as a vagabond himself.

When Tu Sin and the constable passed the clump of grass, Bill arose to his feet again, and made another of his noiseless rushes, dropping again into the dust—just as his sheep-herding ancestors worked when driving their charges homeward.

An idea came to Tu Sin, and his manacled hands were raised and fumbled in the loose folds of his jacket. He found a small notebook and a stump of pencil, and, pressing the notebook against his chest, Tu Sin scrawled a straggling message on one page.

The constable, striding along beside his lanky charge, caught none of these movements, and Tu Sin, watching his chance, cast the notebook away from him so that it fell in the long grass by the side of the road.

"Go, get Dan, Bill!"

"Eh, what's that? Who are you talking to?"

The sheep-dog had seen that notebook drop, and, with a quick run, retrieved it. It was only then that the constable saw the shaggy follower, and he made a sudden lunge towards it; but Tu Sin flung himself to one side, and his foot shot out just as the constable passed him.

The burly, uniformed figure rolled on its face into the grass, and the outstretched hands missed their target. Bill, whipping round, leaped out of distance, and once again Tu Sin's thin voice sounded.

"Go, get Dan! Get Dan! Quick, Bill, quick!"

"You yellow streak!"

The constable leaped to his feet, and made a grab at Tu Sin's shoulder, shaking him violently.

"Velly solly, honourable policeman!" Tu Sin said. "This unworthy personage no see you properly. Velly solly! Hope you no hurt yourself!"

No one can wreak vengeance on a manacled, helpless prisoner, and the county constable, after shaking his fist at the long, yellow countenance, jerked Tu Sin round again.

There was no sign of the shaggy sheep-dog!

"You're up to something there, I know," the constable said. "You're a wily one—you're not 'alf so blinking simple as you look. Come along; the sooner you're in the lock-up, the better I'll like it!"

CHAPTER 3.

Ginger Dan's Ruse!

GINGER DAN, seated in the crazy old caravan, stared at the open notebook with a puzzled frown on his freckled face.

Tu Sin was a very neat writer of good English, but to scrawl a message while one is walking stolidly along a dark country road is not by any means an easy task, and the wobbly lines were extremely difficult to follow.

"Now, what the deuce has he been getting up to?" Dan thought to himself, as he pondered the note again.

He read it out word for word.



As the burly policeman made a grab at the sheep-dog, he fell over the outstretched foot of Tu Sin, and his hands missed their target. Bill, with the notebook held tight in its sharp teeth, whipped round and made off.

"Dear Dan,—I go get locked up. They say they look for other fellow. You watch out. I guess they mean you. Look like no allow us buy milk, bread, in this place. Bread gone, milk spilt, Tu Sin gaol. Maybe you do something."

"He's talking through his hat," Dan decided. "Why on earth should he be locked up because he bought some bread and milk? No doubt he's been getting up to some of his old pranks, and they've collared him, silly owl!"

That was Dan's hasty decision drawn from a keen and intimate knowledge of Tu Sin's average conduct, and he shook his head at Bill as he rose to his feet.

"We'll have to do something, of course, Bill," he said. "But that yellow streak gets my goat now and again."

Bill made as though to follow his young master, but Dan shook his head, making the dog remain in the caravan, and closing the small door tightly.

Dan set off along the road, heading in the direction of the common.

He came to a thin plantation of trees, and, keeping to the long grass by the roadside, moved on in silence. Presently the murmur of voices came to him, and he heard the crackling of dried twigs from the coppice.

From the sound, Dan discovered that there were three or four persons moving through the woods, and presently he caught their hoarse cries as they called to each other.

"A search-party," Dan thought.

He remembered the warning that Tu Sin had conveyed in his letter, and came to a halt, peering through the trees, for it suddenly occurred to him that he might be the object of this search.

"Hang it all, I've done nothing," the youngster told himself; "and even if Tu Sin has got himself into a scrape, I don't see why I should be dragged into the affair."

But his natural caution prevailed at last, and so when a pair of headlamps appeared on the road, and came on slowly towards him, Dan dropped noiselessly into a ditch and lay prone there while the car passed.

It halted some twenty yards away from him, and, raising his head cautiously, Dan saw a well-built figure step from the vehicle, followed by another in uniform,

wearing the peaked cap of the higher-graded police official.

It was Colonel Thom, who had sent his chauffeur for the local police inspector, and now, raising his voice, Thom called to the search-party in the woods, receiving an answering cry. Finally the searchers appeared—three burly farm-labourers, and the fourth the thick-set, grim-jowled Barry.

The freckled-faced youngster crouching in the ditch heard their voices distinctly, and gradually the truth was revealed to him.

The local police inspector began to question Barry, and that quick-tongued rogue fired off his story part enough. Dan, listening, heard the whole grim accusation.

"I saw the Chink just before they put him in the cells," the inspector explained. "I can't make head or tail of him. He seems to have an idea he's being locked up because he bought some bread from your wife."

Jim Barry grunted.

"That was a trick, inspector," he said. "The Chink came round to the back of the house and talked to my missus, while his partner stole the cup. I was only just in the nick of time, or they'd both have got clear away."

"It's most unfortunate for us, Barry," Colonel Thom said, "for, of course, we had to return the cup to-morrow morning, and unfortunately it is not insured. I don't know what I'm to say to the donor. It's a pity you took the cup away from the bank, you know; it was much safer there."

"Yes, sir, I know that; but I—I wanted to clean it up a little before handing it over," Barry explained.

There was another consultation, then finally the colonel turned and re-entered his car, followed by the inspector.

"I don't think there's much use in continuing the search through the woods," he said. "We'll wait until to-morrow morning, and meanwhile we'll telephone to every police-station in the district. That cup has got to be found!"

The car moved off, then the three yokels and Barry turned to walk off down the road. They came quite close to where Dan lay flat on his stomach in the wet ditch, and he heard one of the yokels speak to Barry.

"Darned bad luck on you, Mr. Barry," the man observed. "Cos 'I reckons you feels

responsible, and that cup be worth a powerful heap of money, I suppose."

"I should think it be," said another. "Close on five hundred pounds, they tells me."

The figures moved on into the gloom, and Dan, rising to his feet, glanced after them. He had no fixed plan, but instinct told him to keep in touch with the thick-set manager.

And so, when the other men turned and went off up a side track, leaving Barry to continue along the road, Dan's task became easier. Barry slackened his pace presently, and, keeping to the other side of the hedge, Dan saw him halt once or twice and look back over his shoulder.

There was a suggestion of furtive caution about the figure which was not lost on the freckled-faced youngster, and Dan's suspicions began to rise then.

Barry turned through the gate into his own villa, and Dan saw him enter the house, then the youngster climbed the fence, making a swift tour of inspection of the place.

He gained the back of the villa, and saw the lighted window of the kitchen. Once Mrs. Barry came out on to the doorstep, but the harsh voice of her husband called her inside again, and Barry slammed the door, turning the key in the lock.

Dan heard the angry voice, and the thin frightened one of the woman, but he was too far away to catch what was being said. He heard enough, however, to know that Barry was bullying his wife, and the terrified note in her voice indicated her fear.

Seated in the shadows of the shed, that very tool-shed in which Tu Sin had been imprisoned, Dan began to cudgel his brains.

An instinct told him that there was something behind Barry's strange behaviour, and suddenly a brilliant idea came to him, one of those mad, foolish notions which occasionally came his way.

He wanted to test Barry, and he set about doing that task in his own curious way.

The scheming manager was seated at the table in the kitchen, having his supper, when he heard the quick clang of the front gate of the garden, then footfalls sounded on the gravel path, and someone approached the house, whistling as he came.

A loud double knock sounded on the front door, and Mrs. Barry, standing beside the fire, turned round, revealing a blanched face to her husband.

"You stay where you are," Barry said, pushing his chair aside and rising. "I'll go and see who it is."

He turned out of the kitchen, up the

narrow passage, and halted to light the lamp; then, opening the front door, peered at his visitor, a ragged, broad-shouldered, freckled-faced youngster, who touched his cap.

"Be you Mister Barry, sir?" the stranger asked.

"Yes, that's my name. What do you want?"

The lad pointed over his shoulder to the road.

"I met a gen'leman and a police inspector in a car just down by that road, sir," he said. "And they told I to come 'long here and tell 'e that they'd got the thief—got the thief, and the coop, mister."

Those quick alert smiling eyes were watching Barry's face, and a quick thrill ran through Ginger Dan as he saw the look of awed consternation which crossed the heavy brow.

Barry clutched at the edge of the door for a moment, staring at his ragged visitor.

"Got the thief—and the cup? Was it—was it Colonel Thom?"

"Dunno his name, sir, but he was a fine-looking gen'leman, and he was wearing a light coat. He gave I a shilling to tell 'e. He said you'd be mighty glad to hear it!"

Dan backed away from the door, replacing his cap again, and Barry leaned forward.

"Did the gentleman tell you that he'd got the thief and the cup?" he quavered.

"Yes, sir, I think they were in the car w' him. Anyhow there was someone sitting at the back, and the inspector seemed to be keepin' his eye on him!"

Dan was in the pathway now, and, with a final scrape and a bow, he turned and walked off towards the gate.

Barry stood staring after the stocky figure, then, dropping back a pace, slammed the door to.

That was the signal for a swift dive on the part of Dan. He sped across the garden, worked his way round to the left and slipped round behind the tool-shed.

He was only just in the nick of time, for a moment later Barry came hurrying out of the back door, thrusting his arms into his jacket as he came. Running across the paddock, he dropped into a sunken road, and turned to the left.

Dan kept a good fifty yards between him and the stocky figure ahead, and he followed Barry until he saw him turn through a broken-down gateway, and head for a single-storied building, which stood in the field.

Keeping close to the hedge, Dan drew nearer to his quarry, and he heard the creak of rusted hinges, and saw Barry open one of the huge half-doors of the great barn.

The man entered the barn, drawing the door after him, and Dan, slipping across the field, reached the weather-beaten old structure. He made a quick search and finally located a small window, the frame-work of which had given way, leaving a black gap behind it.

A faint beam of light appeared as Dan reached for the window drawing himself up so that he could see inside the deserted grange-shed. The dank odour of half-rotted hay came to him, and he heard a rustling from the left, then he caught sight of Barry.

The stocky man was just in the act of hanging a lantern up against the wall, and he had climbed on to a half-used bale of hay in order to do so.

There were quite a number of bales of fodder in the shed, heaped up on the side that Barry had headed for.

The stocky figure, after a glance at the lamp to assure himself that it was safe, turned and began to clamber over the stack of bales. Finally, when he reached somewhere about the centre, he set to work to draw bale after bale aside, until he had revealed a black gap in the heart of the heap.

Dan saw him dip down into the gap, then a moment later there appeared into view a square wooden box, a box with brass corners and strong brass bands round it.

Out of the hollow space among the bales, Barry climbed, thrusting the box in front of him. An eel-like wriggle saw Dan through the window, and he dropped cat-like on to his feet, then very cautiously he began to work his way across the granary heading for the pool of light.

Barry cleared the pile of bales, then, lowering the box on to the straw-littered ground, he knelt in front of it, and Dan heard the rustle of a bunch of keys.

Holding his breath, the youngster slid forward silently, then slipped behind a bale of hay just as Barry flung back the lid of the box. Raising his head above the level of the bale, Dan saw the crook lift the great, glimmering cup, and hold it up so that the beams from the lantern fell on its polished surface.

"Got the thief and the cup, have they?" Barry muttered half-aloud. "That was a darned lie, anyhow. They haven't got the cup. And they never will!"

There was a rustle behind him, and the cup dropped back into the padded box.

With a snarl of fear Barry whipped round. Out from behind a bale there stepped a sturdy, broad-shouldered, ragged figure, with a freckled face and a shock of ginger hair.

CHAPTER 4.

At the Mercy of the Flames !

"I 'M not too sure that they won't get the cup," said Ginger Dan.

For a moment Barry crouched, staring at the youngster, then, without a word of warning, he leaped at the lad, his hands outstretched, his fingers hooked.

But no one had been ever able to take Ginger Dan completely by surprise, when it came to the rough-house element. Barry, a stocky-built, beefy man, was just a trifle slow in his movements, and, even as he leaped, Dan stepped swiftly to one side, avoiding the clutching hand, then, whipping round like a cat he aimed a swift blow at his attacker.

Dan's bunched fist landed full on Barry's thick throat, just below the ear, and the beefy scoundrel went lumbering against the bales of hay. He had recovered himself in a moment, and, with a volley of oaths, he turned and made another furious rush.

Dan had dropped into his guard now, and his quick, clever footwork kept his powerful enemy at bay.

Again and again Barry tried to close with that swift-moving youthful shape, but Dan was always too quick for him.

The freckled-faced youngster did not go altogether un punished, for now and again those whirling fists would take toll on his sturdy body and chest, but Dan was a tough nut, immured to punishment, and he drove his own blows home in a steady cool way that jarred Barry again and again.

He fought all round the shed, now in the shadows, then swaying back again into the yellow halo cast by the lantern.

The litter under their feet rustled, and a fine, pungent dust arose as they lunged at each other. Once a wild rush from Barry



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saw him close with Dan, and he tried to wrap his arms round the youngster to throw him, but, although they swayed together for a moment, Dan, thrusting his head against his adversary's heaving chest, drove in four fierce punches into Barry's body that made the gasping, sweating man break away at last, staggering out to distance again.

For a moment Barry dropped his hands, staring at the freckled-faced lad with small, red-rimmed eyes. His jaw had dropped, and the sweat was pouring from his heavy, brutal countenance.

There had been a time when Barry was in condition, but that was years ago, before he had indulged in dissipation and easy living.

"You—you young hound!" Dan was at him like a tiger, and a straight left smashed on to Barry's loose lips, forcing his head back with a jerk.

"That's one for my pal, Tu Sin," Ginger Dan said through his set teeth. "And there's more to follow. Put 'em up, mister. We're not nearly finished yet!"

Snarling with fury, Barry made another desperate attack, his heavy fists swinging as he came. That a ragged vagabond, a mere stripping of the roads should stand up to him maddened the man, and he came in blindly, like a bull rushes.

Dan countered one vicious swing, then slipped into his work, and again a hurricane of blows fell on Barry's head and shoulders.

They fell into a clinch, but this time Dan was ready for him, and he had one arm free as they swayed together across the shed.

Barry tried to trip his opponent, but Dan's cat-like agility saved him, and, although he was swung off his feet, he landed all square again, and a terrific upper-cut registered on Barry's jaw, brought a grunt of savage fury from the sweating, snarling rogue.

Barry's face was cut and bleeding now, and, as the two fell apart again, the sight of that red, battered countenance brought a grim smile to the hard stern face of the young vagrant.

Again Barry charged, to be brought up sharp by a beautifully-timed left, that smote through his feeble guard and landed full on his bruised lips.

Dan was fighting like a tiger now, fighting in silence, and, although another shower of blows fell on him, he seemed to be invulnerable.

That ten long minutes of hurricane fighting saw Barry at the end of his strength. Out of training and flabby, his chest was heaving convulsively as he gasped for breath.

A smashing right, which landed on the stocky man's throat, sent Barry reeling half across the shed, and he stumbled in among the bales of hay for a moment. His hands reached out to steady himself, and his fingers touched something hard and heavy which lay between two bales.

With a quick wrench, Barry drew the object out. It was a short length of iron rod, a lever used for prising apart the iron bands which held the bales of hay together.

Dan saw the stocky figure lunge forward with upraised arm.

"I got you now—I got you now, you young hound!" Barry croaked, aiming a wild blow at his adversary.

Dan saw that heavy bar descending, and made a quick headlong dive at his murderous opponent. The deadly implement came down on Dan's shoulder, but Dan's leap saw Barry swept backwards, and, with the youngster's strong fingers gripping at his throat, the stocky ruffian went down with a thud.

He had raised the lever to make another swing at Dan, but it flew from his hand now, and, whizzing across the shed, crashed against the lighted lantern.

Dan heard the tinkling of glass, then the lantern, knocked from its support, fell flaming on to the little floor, and a moment later there shot up a great tongue of white flame, a tongue which spread with incredible rapidity, while volumes of pungent smoke came belching out of the tinder-like litter.

Locked together, Dan and his enemy were rolling over on the floor, Barry aiming wild blows at Dan's head, while the youngster clung to his grip on the thick muscular throat.

Then suddenly a mad effort on Barry's part saw them roll over and over until they crashed against a bale of hay which fell at their impact, and, bursting its bonds, spread out over the patch of flame.

Instantly the whole bale took fire, and that terrific burst of scorching heat, brought the half-mad Barry to his senses at last.



Barry made a leap at Dan, and with the burly ruffian's strong fingers gripping at his throat the plucky lad went down with a thud. Meanwhile, the tongues of flame were running like things of life hither and thither across the littered floor.

With an inarticulate yell, the thickset man bashed his fist into Dan's face, knocking the youngster backwards, then, plunging to his feet, he raised a wild yell of horror.

By now, one side of the shed was in flames and the tongues of fire were running like things of life, hither and thither across the littered floor.

Dan had one brief vision of a drawn, panic-stricken face, then Barry, raising his hands in front of his eyes, made a mad leap and vanished into the smoke as Dan arose.

A swirl of thick smoke filled Dan's lungs and eyes, and he staggered back a pace, his knees coming in contact with some heavy object on the floor. He stooped and felt it, discovering that it was the square wooden box.

"By Jove, the cup—I must get it!" Dan muttered to himself.

A quick wrench saw the lid open, and his fingers were thrust into the interior. Next moment the great golden cup was withdrawn, and, claspng it to him, Dan turned to face the circle of flames.

Barry had plunged to the left of the shed in the direction of the door, but it was on that side that the flames were closer, and Dan, remembering the window, took a headlong rush up the burning shed.

Myriads of sparks leaped up as he ran, and he felt the hot lick of the flames as they scorched him. The old granary was like a furnace now, and Dan felt the hot waves of nausea crowding down on him.

Through the smoke and the blaze he staggered onward, until he blundered into the wall, and another few paces saw him reach the broken window, through which the smoke was pouring in a steady column.

One mad, desperate effort saw Ginger Dan draw himself up and go headlong out through the gap, to sprawl at full length on the wet, cold grass, and lie there for a moment dazed and nerveless. Finally, recovering himself, the youngster rose to his feet and began to hurry away from the blazing barn.

He was nearing the gateway, when he heard a rending crash, and, looking over his shoulder, he saw the whole roof vanish and a great block of red, glaring light leap up to the heavens.

Two shafts of white light came swirling down the road, and a car halted outside the broken gateway.

Ginger Dan, a tottering, smoke-grimed figure appeared in the white halo just as Colonel Thom alighted from the vehicle. The old colonel stared for a moment at that swaying uncertain shape, as it came staggering onward, then he saw something glinting between the grimed, scorched hands, and a cry brought the inspector to his side.

"Look! By Jove, the Travers Cup!"

Ginger Dan, blinking under the glare of the headlamps, came on until he was a few paces from the two figures, then the vagrant held out the shimmering cup, and a twisted grin crossed his bruised, smoke-blackened face.

"I've brought you the cup back, sir," Ginger Dan said, "and now I want my chum—Tu Sin. That's a fair exchange, isn't it?"

Two days later a crazy old caravan wheezed slowly out of the old country town, and Tu Sin, walking behind it, grinned up at his bandaged, be-plastered chum.

They had had a right good time of it in the town, these two youngsters, for the truth had been revealed by Mrs. Barry when she had learned of her husband's terrible end.

For Jim Barry had not escaped from that whirlwind of flame, and his body had been found under the charred remains of the heavy door, which he had failed to open.

"In future, my honourable fiend, when we need delectable milk and nutritious bread, you will go get them—I don't seem velly good at that. Get into heap trouble!"

A grin lifted the corners of the thin lips.

"But I velly glad you proved to that fat-head policeman that he make mistake," Tu Sin added complacently. "You have the honourable double victory—saving my unworthy self and recovering the cup!"

THE END.

(There will be another grand long, complete story next Wednesday, entitled: "The Sportsmen of Thunder Creek!" by Gordon Wallace. Order your copy early!)

THIS INSTALMENT IS THE BEST YET, BOYS!



The Wolves of St Beowulf's!

A Stirring Story of Thrilling Adventures on Land and Sea.

BY
DUNCAN STORM.

Wobby & Co. are the pluckiest and liveliest schoolboys you ever met.

Introduction.

Jack Wabbygong, James Ready, Sweet, and a Chinese named Lung, chums together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, together with Viscount Waffington, a relation of the Countess of Castlewood, are instrumental in bringing about the capture of a gang of international burglars.

John Lincoln, one of the governors, takes an interest in the lads, and arranges to take them on a world tour.

The great day comes, and aboard the Pole Star the happy party set off on their great adventure.

After an exciting sea trip, the Pole Star dropped anchor at San Carlo, where the boys make things so lively they have to dash back to the ship to avoid arrest. Immediately they get back they are told they are to rout out a number of pirates, a prospect they hail with joy. The journey is continued until the coast of Morocco is reached. Here the party land, and, armed to the teeth, they advance upon the stronghold of Suini Baba, the pirate chief.

"Stampede his cattle, and then round them up by the sandhills," orders John Lincoln. "Then await further instructions."

(Now read on.)

The Stampede!

YOU will find yourselves up against nothing but a few camelmen, boys," said John Lincoln, "and I am sending Sulieman with you. So you are in good hands."

Off the column filed across the sandhills, making towards the dark pirate city, whilst Mr. Hobbs and Sulieman took their little party in charge and marched them into the sandhills for cover, making away towards the south.

"Now, young gents," urged Mr. Hobbs in a whisper. "For goodness sake keep quiet, don't laugh or make any noise. This is no gallantry show that we're out on. It ain't no movie stunt where you finish up your job and go 'ome to supper with the villain. If you make a slip, you're as like to get a knife between your ribs as anywhere in the world. Every one o' these wasps has got a sting on him. You leave the talking to Mr. Sulieman 'ere!"

"Trust us, Hobbo," answered Wobby. "We'll be as good as a Sunday-school treat!"

Sulieman led them swiftly through the hollows of the dark dunes where the

night breeze moaned dismally and the grains of sand fretted with a constant motion like water.

They had gone something like a quarter of a mile when a steady pulsing beat started. Tum! Tum! Tum!

It was the beat of nogaras or war-drums.

Sulieman signed to them to halt. He climbed up to the crest of a high dune and peered across to the city somewhat disturbed.

Nothing had transpired to give the alarm. John Lincoln and his party could not be near the place yet.

Down in the hollow the boys waited, listening to the sound of the distant drums.

Soon the red flare of fires showed round the gates of the city, and Sulieman, lying flat on the top of the sand dunes, could see men running to and fro with torches.

Evidently an alarm of some sort was forward. Sulieman waited to discover what it was.

Wobby and his friends were to discover this first, however.

Wobby held Nobby, the kangaroo, by a heavy strap to his collar. He had left the usual chain behind on the ship, for he knew that the clinking of a chair in the darkness might give them away.

Jim Ready was in charge of Dempsey, the bear, a bear no longer since he stood and walked in his hood and cloak like a human being.

As they waited, Nobby suddenly pricked up his ears and balanced himself on his tail, sniffing the wind.

"Hallo!" whispered Wobby, who was watching his pet. "There's something about. Nobby only sniffs like that when there is a whiff of nigger in the air!"

Then, from under the cloak in which the bear was shrouded, came a low, grumbling growl.

"Shut up, Dempsey, you ass!" whispered Jim.

But the bear growled again. Wobby looked round at the sand dunes behind them. He was conscious of a black shape which showed against the stars.

"Look, boys!" he whispered. "There a donkey up there, but I've never seen a donkey with green eyes before!"

Mr. Hobbs turned, and his eyes followed the pointing of Wobby's finger.

"Donkey!" he puffed. "That ain't no donkey! My word! It's a lion! This is all right! We've walked into a cirkis!"

A dismal grating roar sounded through the night, a roar that was something like the braying of a donkey, but more hoarse and resonant in its note.

Mr. Hobbs had whipped out his Service revolver.

Dempsey growled horribly, and tugged at his strap.

"Out with your revolvers, boys!" whispered Mr. Hobbs. "But don't shoot unless 'e comes this way, and don't shoot till I give the word. Just pretend you can't see him, but if 'e breaths up to us, pump him full of lead!"

The lion apparently did not like the scent or sound of the little group standing down in the hollow.

He gave another short, querulous roar, and melted like a shadow.

Sulieman had come down from his perch on the dune.

"There are lions about, young gentlemen," he said. "That is the cause of the disturbance about the city. These are lions from the Atlas, and they are very fierce and hungry, at this time of year."

"I thought that chap sounded as if he could do a nice loin chop," said Mr. Hobbs. "But what's all the fuss about, up-town, Mr. Sulieman?"

Sulieman smiled, and his white teeth gleamed in the darkness.

"The people are afraid of the lions," he said. "They take their sheep and goats into the city at night. Sometimes lions, at this season of the year, will enter the city itself and take animals from the corrals and even people from the streets. They have fires and beat drums to keep them away. That lion which has just passed us has been scared back by the light and the noise."

"Don't blame 'im!" answered Mr. Hobbs. "If I was a lion I should be frightened, too. Anyone would think that there was a steam roundabout going at the town yonder. But what's this going to do for us, and what are we going to do about it?"

Sulieman smiled. "Mr. Lincoln will halt his party in the dunes, and wait till they have quietened down," he said. "We will go on."

Another hoarse roar sounded from the dunes that lay between them and the seashore.

"Lions on the right of 'em. Lions on the left of 'em. Lions all over 'em, rode the six hundred!" quoted Mr. Hobbs. "The sooner we get our business over the better I'll like it. I'm no lion-tamer, I ain't!"

They marched on steadily, their weapons ready. Nobby was excited and trembling, and his sensitive nose was on the twitch. The scent of lions was everywhere in the air, and Nobby did not like it.

"Nobbo don't like the niff of lions," said Wobby in a low voice.

"Neither does old Dempsey," answered Jim. "Listen to him!"

From under the bear's robe came a low, purring sound.

It was plain that Dempsey had no use for lions, either.

"Shut up!" shouted Jim, and he cuffed Dempsey's head.

Then for a while the bear was silent. Sulieman led the party on.

Suddenly he came to a standstill, and right across their track, only a dozen yards ahead of them, padded a great shape.

"Lion!" whispered Sulieman. "Crumbs! It must be raining lions!" mumbled Mr. Hobbs.

The lion disappeared in the dunes, taking no notice of the little party, and Mr. Hobbs breathed more freely.

"Better his room than his company," he murmured. "Move on, Sulieman. I don't think much of your country! Too many cats about. Give me South-sea Common!"

Another ten minutes brought them to the end of the tumbled piles of the dunes, where the sand gave way to flat land.

Across this, about half a mile away, they could see fires burning.

Sulieman took a pair of glasses from under his robe.

"It is as I thought," he said. "They have gathered the animals on the grazing-ground because there are lions about, and they have enclosed them in a zariba of thorns where they have lighted fires."

He pointed to their right where the ground showed in great white squares.

"Let us follow this way," he said. "Our white robes will not be so easily seen."

"What's this?" asked Mr. Hobbs. "Snow?"

Sulieman smiled.

"No, master," he answered; "these are salt-pans. They are flats of mud, divided from the sea by a bank. The sea water is allowed to flow over them by sluices, and, drying in the sun, leaves a crust of salt behind it, which the slaves scrape up. It is sold to the south in the country of the blacks between this place and French territory. The caravans take it to the market at Timbuctoo. Salt is worth its weight in silver amongst the negroes of the south."

"If I'd known that I'd have brought a packet or two of Cerebos with me!" muttered Mr. Hobbs.

Their feet crunched over the dry salt which lay in a thick crust on the sun-split mud of the salt-pans.

"This is the mouth of the old river," said Sulieman. "But now it is all silted up."

One by one they stole across the salt-pans, Sulieman signing to them not to keep too close together lest the crust of mud and salt, hardened only by the sun, should give way with them.

Suddenly Mr. Hobbs floundered and

slid. The earth seemed to give way under him, and down he went up to his waist.

Black oozy mud came rolling up all round him, staining the white surface of salt.

"That's done it!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs. "I've cracked the ice!"

Lal unslung the long coil of climbing rope that he carried on his shoulder, and threw it to the unhappy Mr. Hobbs.

The boys, chuckling, strung themselves out along one of the low banks which divided the salt-pans into squares, and hauled a sort of tug-of-war with Mr. Hobbs and the mud.

"Pull hard, boys! I'm sinking lower and lower!" pleaded Mr. Hobbs. "My word, this place ain't called the River Nif for nothing. I shouldn't like to eat this salt!"

The boys tugged hard, throwing all their weight on the rope. Sulieman joined them, and his great strength did the trick.

There was a noise like the drawing of a cork from a wine bottle, and out came Mr. Hobbs, leaving a long, black trail behind him on the whiteness of the salt as he was dragged to safety.

"My word!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs, looking down at himself. "It's a good job I didn't put my Sunday trousers on for this trip. I don't think much of your road, Sulieman!" he added. Sulieman grinned all over his black face.

"You were unlucky, Mr. Hobbs. You struck a bad patch!"

"Bad patch!" muttered Mr. Hobbs. "I've done nothing but strike bad patches one after the other since I've been running with these 'ere boys. They call themselves the Wolves of St. Beowulf's. I call them the proper

hoodoo gang. You wait, Sulieman, and see if you don't get into trouble along with them."

"The way is better now," said Sulieman. "See, here we come on the marsh, which is the grazing ground. It will be safe here. It is very dry except in the rainy season."

The boys felt grass under their feet, and they found themselves on a slightly undulating plain, soft and springy underfoot, and covered with bushes of tamarisk and turpentine.

Sulieman had made towards this corner of the marsh, for these scattered bushes gave them cover in approaching the zariba, where the camel drovers had shepherded the herds of bubbling camels and the half-wild Arab horses.

But there was no need for them to have approached so carefully. The niggers in charge of the horses had got behind a wind-screen of reeds close by one of their fires, or had stowed themselves away in a small hut of piled stones, scared by the roaring of the lions.

The camels and horses, disturbed by the same sound, had ceased to graze, and had bunched themselves in two groups, each gathering round a wilted looking tree.

The party came close up to the zariba of thorn. It was light and flimsy enough—hardly lion proof. But a lion will seldom cross an enclosure, unless driven hard by fear or hunger, and the herders relied on their circle of blazing fires to scare away that great coward, the king of the desert.

Sulieman put his huge black hands on a section of it, and pulled at it without making more noise than he could help.

The thorns crackled and snapped, but none of the camel drovers, who were



Suddenly Mr. Hobbs floundered and slid, and the earth beneath him gave way. He sank to his waist, the black, oozy mud rolling up all round him, staining the white surface of the salt.

sheltering behind their reed shelter or in the stone hut, looked out to see what was the matter. Either the crackling of their own fires, which they had built up high of the same stuff, drowned the noise, or they were afraid to draw the attention of any beast that might be trying to break through their hedge.

Sulieiman opened a wide space in the rough abattis, and the boys helped him to drag it back. A horse does not mind thorns, but a camel, whose feet are soft, would balk at this barrier.

They crept into the zariba through the opening, and made their way towards the groups of camels which were crouching on the ground, chewing and bubbling after their fashion.

"Now, Mr. Wobby," whispered Sulieiman, "do you think that your kangaroo can start those camels?"

"Trust him!" replied Wobby. "He hates camels and strange beasts. You see him thump those brutes in the ribs when I tell him how."

Wobby slipped the kangaroo from the leash, and seemed to whisper in his long ears.

Nobby looked round, his mild eyes shining in the reflection of the fires, his soft nose twitching. Then, with a sudden leap, he made towards the resting camels.

The camels turned their heads as he approached them, and the leader of the herd regarded him contemptuously, tossing up its supercilious nose as Nobby approached in great bounds.

Wobby chuckled.

"That camel thinks he's the king pin of the outfit," he said. "See him putting on edge? Asking for a knock down, he is. Look!"

Nobby had bounded up to the camel, which drew back its snake-like neck with a bubbling grunt, showing its yellow teeth.

But it had no time to bite. Plonk!

The kangaroo had landed a tremendous kick in the ribs of the astonished ship of the desert.

With a squeal of anger the camel got to its feet, and all the other camels followed their leader's example.

No sooner was the camel on its feet than the kangaroo, which had been sparring round it, charged again, and sent it rolling over on its back.

"Bravo, Nobby!" whispered Wobby. "All right that time. Pass him another jolt in the ribs, my boy."

But the leader of the camel herd did not wait for another punch from the boxing kangaroo. He started to run, with the queer lumbering gait of his kind, his long, lanky legs swinging all over the place, and the rest of the herd of forty camels raced behind him as they charged round the circle of the zariba, closely followed by Nobby, who was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"This is Nobby's night out!" laughed Wobby. "Here they come! Look out, lads! Camels bite!"

The guardians of the camels, hearing strange sounds going on in the zariba,

ran out of their shelters to see what was doing.

They gave a yell and ran back again, as they saw the whole of their camels chased by a diabolical-looking shape which cleared the ground in great bounds of twenty feet.

In this part of Morocco the kangaroo was entirely unknown. There was not even a picture-book that would show these ignorant sons of Ham that such an animal existed on the earth.

With his paws and feet encased in boxing-gloves Nobby might well have been taken by these ignorant souls for some efreot or dive from the mountains.

It was a sort of camel Derby that took place round the circle of the zariba. It was led by the big camel which Nobby had kicked in the ribs. With outstretched neck and flying legs this hero of the herd cut out the pace, a metal camel-bell, which marked the leadership of the herd, jangling like a muffin-bell as he shot off on the first lap.

He was too scared to see the opening in the wall of the zariba, and he charged round at thirty miles an hour, with the camel Derby at his heels, and the kangaroo chasing up the rearmost camels.

It was really a splendid sight to see Nobby chivvying the herd to full speed, sometimes rising from the earth in a great bound to kick a flying camel and to make it travel faster.

(Next week's instalment will be more exciting than ever. Order your GEM early.)

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME POCKET MONEY, BOYS?

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- Row 4: T H A P L A D S U, CH, The fireworks were G O R G E O U S, T, the
- Row 5: P, C R E S E D, He is EXTRAORDINARILY clever, H U D D E R S
- Row 6: W, T H E, Y, #
- Row 7: LAST WILL, F, H R D, 2, P, T.

What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Huddersfield Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Huddersfield" Competition, GEM Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach this address not later than THURSDAY, March 1st, 1925.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

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I enter "HUDDERSFIELD" COMPETITION, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

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"LOOKING AFTER THE PROFESSOR!"

(Continued from page 18.)

the farmyard, I probably shouldn't have got to know of the rascals' schemes. May I ride the motor-bike back to St. Jim's, sir?"

"Yes, if you like, my lad," said the Head, with a twinkle in his eye. "But I cannot allow the machine to remain at St. Jim's. I shall see that it is sold, and D'Arcy's ordinary bicycle replaced. Come, along, we must return to St. Jim's."

That was not the last Tom Merry heard of the affair. Two days later the Terrible Three had a visitor. Professor Timothy Toppe, looking quite well again, was seated in the armchair, beaming at them.

His rascally nephew had met with his just deserts, and his property was safe. He had come to thank Tom Merry for the part he had played—and also to present him with twenty pounds.

Fifteen of the twenty pounds went to swell the coffers of the footer club, whilst the other five were expended on a huge feast which was held in the Rag that evening. All the Lower School was invited, and Professor Toppe was the honoured guest. They all drank their late science master's health in ginger-pop and currant wine, and when, the feast being over, Professor Toppe took his departure, there wasn't one who did not regret that the old gentleman wasn't staying to renew his duties as a master at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Next week's rollicking, fine story of the chums of St. Jim's, entitled: "**THE PLUCK OF EDGAR LAWRENCE!**" is one of the finest stories Martin Clifford has ever written. Make sure of reading it by ordering your GEM early.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

A Splendid Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck is awarded to the sender of what the Editor considers the most interesting paragraph. Half-a-crown is awarded for each other contribution accepted.

(If your name is not here this week it may be next.)

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

VERY COLD!

The oldest inhabitant of the village was telling his grandson some of the wonderful stories about the severe winters he had experienced as a young man. "I remember one very hard winter," said the old man, "when it was so cold that the river here was frozen nearly solid, and the thermometer stood at fifteen degrees below Cairo, and—" "Below what?" asked the boy. "Below Cairo. That's a very hot place in Egypt, and when it freezes there it's mighty cold, so they say it's so many degrees below Cairo." "Oh, I didn't know that," said the boy. "I always thought it was called Nero, after the man who had fiddled during the Fire of London!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious tuck has been awarded to J. L. Hill, Hill Crest, Branston Road, Heighington, near Lincoln.

AS HE WISHED!

A public schoolboy wrote to his rich uncle for financial aid, and then, wondering what impression his letter would make when received, added the following

postscript: "Dear Uncle,—I am so ashamed to ask you for money, that I have run after the postman to try and get the letter back. I am unable to catch him, and wish now that you will never get this letter.—Your loving NEPHEW." The reply he received greatly surprised him, and it was necessary for him to read it several times before he understood it: "My dear Nephew,—I am hastening to make you happy by telling you that your wish was granted. I never received your letter.—Your loving UNCLE."—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Jeffery, 14, Park Street, Southend.

MOST UNJUST!

A schoolmaster found two boys fighting in the playground. He asked them why they were fighting. "We had an argument about the two best football teams," said one boy. As a way of punishment the master told them to write down the name of his favourite team a hundred times. On going back to the class-room he found one boy working, while the other was crying. "What are you crying for?" asked the teacher. "It isn't fair," said the boy. "his favourite team is Hull, while mine's Wolverhampton Wanderers!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. E. Ingham, 12, Edward Street, Mile End, E. 1.

BREAKING IT GENTLY!

Tomkins minor had been expelled from school, and arrived home unannounced. His father expressed his surprise at seeing him. "What's this, my boy," he asked, "a holiday?" "Yes, father," answered the lad. "In fact, I don't really think I shall go back there again." "Tush, tush, my lad!" exclaimed the irate father. "That school has turned out some of the most famous men in the country!" "Quite so," agreed the lad. "That's why I'm here!" And even the father couldn't understand it.—Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Perks, 64a, Shrubbery Street, Kidderminster.

QUITE MISTAKEN!

A tramp knocked at the door of a gentleman's house. "Sir," he said, "I've walked a long way to see you, because people told me you were kind to poor chaps like me." "They said that, did they?" "Yes, sir; that's why I've called." "Oh, and are you going back the same way?" asked the gentleman. "Yes, sir." "Then, in that case, just contradict it, will you? Good-day!"—Half-a-crown awarded to Nelson Edgington, River View, Leslie Road, Dorking.

ON THE WRONG TRACK!

The circus manager was giving a few instructions to the attendant half an hour before the performance, when all at once a terrible howl came from one of the dressing-rooms, where a half-dressed performer was hopping about on one foot. "What's all that row?" demanded the circus manager of the attendant. "Oh," replied the attendant, "it's only the man who walks bare-footed on swords. He's just trod on a tintack, he has!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Lancefield, 43, Heythorpe Street, Southfields, S.W.13.

RECOMMENDED!

In a tramcar the other day two ladies were discussing the merits of the operas performing in one of the local theatres. "Well," said one lady, "my favourite opera is 'Trovatore.'" Just then the conductor came in to take the fares, and as he stood waiting, the other lady remarked: "I love 'Carmen.'" "Well," chimed in the conductor, with a knowing smile, "I'm married. Speak to Bill, the driver. He's single!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Pulham, 78, Highbury Gardens, Seven Kings, Essex.

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See this mark.

"THE AFFAIR OF THE STOLEN MUMMY!"
(Continued from page 15.)

number's a false one—What's that, Peters?"
"Look! It's—it's the master—Mr. McKinley!" the ex-valet cried suddenly, pointing to the stone coffin on the ground, the lid of which had been slightly shifted when it fell.

Sharpe nodded as he bent down.
"I guessed as much," he said, "and so did you, I fancy, Mr. Peters. That was the suspicion you formed as you hurried towards the Elms, eh? That was the reason for their demanding the second mummy-case; but, fortunately, we interrupted them just in time. Mr. McKinley's still living, though plainly he has been heavily drugged."

Whilst speaking, the investigator had placed his hand inside the inanimate man's waistcoat and felt his heart. It was beating!
"What was the game, sir?" Peters whispered. "As you say, I suspected they

wanted the empty case for him, but why go to all this trouble?"
"What easier method could they have chosen to get him out of the country and back to where they came from?" Sharpe said, putting question for question. "Look here! See how the stone lid has been chipped at regular intervals along the side, though in such a way that the marks would not be noticed by the casual observer. This explains the hammering you heard, Peters. Those were intended to act as air holes, and they could easily feed their captive at intervals. It would have been a simple matter to kill him straight off, either at the Elms—or here, but they wanted him alive—for what devilish purpose heaven alone knows! Only Old Egypt could solve that problem for us."

"And the mummy, sir?"
Sharpe pointed in the direction the motor had taken.

"Gone, I should say—and good riddance!" he replied. "We'll have a look over the house, but I'm pretty sure they put their most sacred load aboard the car first, before coming back for McKinley. Just a minute!"

He stooped again and forced some strong spirit from his flask between the unconscious man's lips. In a few moments Andrew

McKinley's eyes opened, and he blinked up dazedly at the investigator.

Leaving him in the care of Peters, Sharpe and Tim O'Carroll made a careful search of the entire building, but, as the detective had predicted, no second sarcophagus could be found. When they returned, McKinley was out of his unpleasant receptacle and leaning weakly against a low wall.

"Peters has told me all about it, Mr. Sharpe," he said, "so I must thank you for your timely assistance."

"Oh, that's all right," said Anthony Sharpe, with a smile; "but I advise you, my friend, to keep clear of these things in future," he touched the stone coffin with his foot, "unless you happen to know that nobody can object to your taking them under your wing?"

The other smiled, rather gloomily.
"Yes, I shall accept your good counsel," he rejoined, "though I bitterly regret parting with old Amen-Otep. He was a find in a million!"

THE END.

(Look out for the next detective story in the GEM: "THE MAN WHO WAS FRIGHTENED!" You will enjoy reading it.)

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