

Magnificent Story of
Tom Merry & Co.

"GLYN'S COLOUR RAY!"

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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TROUBLE IN THE THIRD!

Mr. Selby, a victim of Glyn's Colour Ray, causes a scare in the Third Form room. (An exciting incident from the grand long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. 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
 "JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—Look out for next week's number of the GEM! I know once you have the copy in your hands, you will be saying that the old paper has gone one better than ever, for next Wednesday's issue will contain the opening instalment of our ripping new serial,

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!", By Roland Spencer.

Make a note of the fact. It is one of those events which are right down welcome. Roland Spencer has made himself persona grata to all "Gemites," for it will be remembered he wrote that stunning yarn, "Tom of the Ajax!" The famous author's new venture is an advance on that triumph. In the grand story which starts next week we glimpse the romance of the old days of the Spanish Main, when treasure ships, laden with the priceless riches of the Indies, brought their golden cargoes from the West to Spain. Or, rather, as it happened in many instances, they tried to bring the ingots into port. Sometimes it was contrary weather that intervened. Often enough the convoys found enemies on their route, for Spain was then a tyrant Power, and had conjured up many foes.

You will be thrilled with all the details of Roland Spencer's new story. It has the mystery of the sea in it, and all the magic of the past, to say nothing of the vivid human interest running right through. What more likely than that the secret buried deep in the wastes of Neptune's kingdom, along with the rotting timbers of the old gold ship, should be wrested from its watery hiding-place beneath the waves?

The new serial brings immense possibilities into view, and GEM readers far and near will be entranced by its wonderful vision of the bygone.

"THE DESERTER!"

By Martin Clifford.

Cardew in the cart again! The lackadaisical junior, with his delightful aristocratic pose, plunged into trouble with consummate ease! How he does it on this occasion, and why and under precisely what conditions, you will see in the very next issue of the GEM. Mr. Martin Clifford has turned out a clinking fine yarn, full of point and plot. Cardew has given his word of honour to Tom Merry that he will be on the spot, ready to take his share in a mighty cricket fixture upon which all St. Jim's is keen,

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for the honour of the school is at stake. And for some occult reason Ralph Reckness fails to turn up. It is unthinkable. There seemed no doubt about it. The consequences are pretty nigh tragic. Cardew's adsum is not heard. He is missing. And why? I must let it stand at that. You will be wanting to know more about this matter, and with good reason. Just watch the GEM!

THE TUCK HAMPER!

As I have before pointed out, that good ship the Tuck Hamper sails every week for the home port of some trusty reader of the GEM. You will get details about this important event by consulting that sparkling corner of hilarious yarnlets known as the Readers' Page. Enough for the present to remind all and sundry that in this competition there is a chance for all. Entries should be despatched to the Editor, The GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS."

Naturally, I feel considerable regret about having to announce that our smart little supplement, the "St. Jim's News," will be crowded out of next week's issue of the GEM. But with the regret comes the gratifying thought that the grand complete story of St. Jim's will be extra long. In fact, the added pages of Martin Clifford's splendid yarn compel the postponement of the "News." But we shall soon have the supplement booming again as lively as the proverbial cricket.

SHOULD HE GO TO SEA?

A chum in the Midlands asks me a question about his future. He feels he would like to break away from his present life and get a job on board ship. Candidly, I feel he would be making a mistake. For one thing, it is no easy business to get a berth. But that is not the point. My chum is at work in a milk business, and his wages help to keep his home together. For the present, at any rate, his duty is to stop where he is. Duty is a much bigger thing than day-dreams or anything else in the world.

PUTTING UP WITH THINGS!

We all have to do that. There is much calm sense in taking things quietly. To

do so—i.e., to take things quietly—may be imitating the pick-pocket. But we need not go into that matter here. A correspondent who has suffered a good deal from the bullying of a short-tempered foreman tells me that he must have a change. He feels he cannot stand the manners of the overbearing bully any more. Part of that is pride. Hard words break no bones, and when the victim knows the abuse is undeserved he can surely submit and grin over the trouble to himself. Really, it is the cross-grained overseer who calls for pity, not my correspondent. I hope he will cheer up.

"CHUMS AWHEEL!"

By Geoffrey Prout.

Next week we have the first story in a grand new series of adventure yarns of the road. You will see from the inaugural story what a splendid slap-up feature this new attraction is, full of life, and the spirit of the open air. The opening yarn introduces us to a trio of good fellows, sworn chums, namely, Denny Burdett, Bob Harkley, and young Sandy Munro, who hails from somewhere far north of the Tweed. The three doughty comrades, in a motor-van, find themselves up against a knotty problem, and, like true knights of the road, they tackle the difficulty in real sporting style. It is not alone the engines of the car that hum, but also a topping fine yarn, for the chums put on full speed right into the thick of as amazing a series of exploits as anybody could wish.

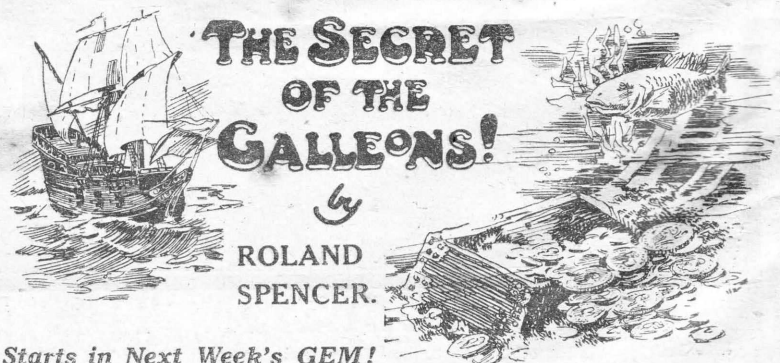
THE NEW SERIAL!

One more word about "The Secret of the Galleons!" I should appreciate a postcard about this noteworthy tale. It marks a new departure, and I shall be much surprised if it does not get something even a bit extra special in the way of a reception. GEM readers know a good thing when they see it. Verb. sap. Don't miss a real treat!

FROM RUSHOLME.

A correspondent writes from this town to say that he liked the recent yarn about Glyn and the joke on Ratty. "I have three suggestions," he says. "One that the St. Jim's tales are longer; that we have pictures of St. Jim's chaps and masters on the back page, and a story about Gan Waga." I am making a note of all three notions. My chum goes on to say: "I hope you've got some more tales about Cardew coming, as he is my favourite character next to Tom Merry." With regard to his last request, let my Rusholme supporter only wait till next week. He will find Cardew basking in the full glare of the limelight in a nailing good yarn.

Your Editor.



Starts in Next Week's GEM!

Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of the Shell, makes another discovery—the results of which are as unwelcome as they are amazing! You will be thrilled and fascinated by the mystery of—



Glyn's Colour Ray!

A New Extra-Long Exciting School Story of the Popular Chums of St. Jim's—Tom Merry & Co.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. A Little Accident!

DO you fellows notice a sort of gentle humming sound?"

Tom Merry, captain of the Lower School at St. Jim's, looked round the table in Study No. 10 of the Shell corridor as he spoke.

His chums, Monty Lowther and Harry Manners, finding themselves addressed, looked up from their prep and listened critically.

"Yes; I can hear it," announced Manners. "Sounds like a hive of bees having an argument among themselves."

"Sooner than that they should have it with me!" grinned Monty Lother. "But, anyway, it can't be bees. Seems to come from the next study."

"I expect it's Glyn doing some kind of experiment," conjectured Tom Merry thoughtfully. "But it's a bit unusual, surely, with Dane and Noble in the study."

"I don't think they are there," said Manners. "I saw them in the Common-room about twenty minutes ago. Ten, to one Glyn's locked 'em out."

"He hasn't," said Tom Merry. "They were going into Study No. 11 when I came along the corridor ten minutes ago."

It was certainly curious that Bernard Glyn, the youthful scientist of the Shell, should have been permitted by his study-mates to conduct one of his frequent experiments while they were in the room. They usually raised lively objections, for among other inconveniences he was apt to create very unpleasant odours on such occasions.

It seemed that for once they had come to some amicable arrangement.

"Oh, bother Glyn, anyhow!" said Manners. "Let's get on with our—"

Crash!

It was the sound of a heavy bump, followed by the tinkle of breaking glass, that had interrupted Manners.

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther gleefully. "The fun's starting. That sounded like bottles being smashed. There was a sudden outcry in the next study. 'You ass!' The voice of Bernard Glyn, raised in accents of wrath, became audible, in spite of the intervening wall. 'That was your fault, Dane. Now you've jolly well done it!'"

The door of the next study opened suddenly and violently, and the voices, in the corridor, became more audible.

"Why couldn't you be more careful?" went on Glyn, in an aggrieved tone. "That was the sulphuretted hydrogen apparatus—about the worst thing you could have knocked over! It'll stink the place out, and I shall get the blame for it. You blithering mugwump!"

The Terrible Three looked at each other. "Sounds cheerful!" murmured Monty Lowther. "It— Oh, my hat! It's started!"

-He whipped out his handkerchief, and covered his mouth and nose, coughing and spluttering the while. Glyn's prophecy was certainly being fulfilled. A most vile odour was drifting into Study No. 10.

"Grrroooh!" gasped Tom Merry, following Lowther's example in the matter of the handkerchief. "This is a bid too thig! Glyd ought to be poleagsed!"

Stronger and stronger became the effluvia. It percolated even through the handkerchiefs, and set the Terrible Three coughing.

"Rotten eggs!" gasped Manners, speaking the literal truth, since hydrogen sulphide is the gas that is chemically equivalent to the fumes that emanate from decomposing eggs.

Other studies were beginning to share in the treat. All down the corridor doors were opening, and indignant juniors were coming out to make protests.

The smell met them and drove them back to such shelter as closed doors afforded—which, truth to tell, was but little.

The door of Study No. 10 was thrown unceremoniously open, and Dane staggered in, followed by Noble. Both had handkerchiefs over their faces.

"Cad we cobe id here for a bid?" gasped Dane. "We're dearly poisoned!"

Tom Merry nodded, without uncovering his mouth to speak.

Monty Lowther, with great presence of mind, moved towards the window, which he opened with some difficulty in view of the fact that he was using but one hand for the job.

The rest of the juniors made a combined dash in his direction, leaning out and breathing the pure, untainted air of the quad in great gulps.

"That's better," said Dane. "Oh, what a life! Did you ever smell anything like it?"

Tom Merry shuddered. "Never before!" he replied fervently. "And I jolly well don't want to again. How you fellows can share a study with a chap who deals in such things beats me."

"We simply have to stick it as best we can," said Noble

gloomily. "Of course, it doesn't often get as bad as that. It was an accident."

"I should just think it was," put in Manners feelingly. "It's a wonder half the House aren't poisoned."

"They may be, for all we know," suggested Monty Lowther cheerfully. "I reckon we've had a lucky escape. Perhaps the rest of the studies are strewn with bodies. In that case, I hope you chaps won't forget that it was little me who saved your lives."

"What caused it?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Well, it was really my fault, in a way," confessed Dane. "I was reaching for a dic from the shelf, and knocked some bottles down."

Manners had retreated into the study, and was breathing with great care.

"It's getting a bit clearer," he announced. "I reckon we'd better be getting on with our prep."

The tramp of feet could be heard in the corridor, and the voice of George Alfred Grundy sounded near the door of Study No. 10.

"I'll give him kick up stinks! Hand me that cricket-stump, Wilkins."

"Grundy on the warpath," grinned Tom Merry. "Cheerful for Glyn!"

Dane shrugged his shoulders.

"You can bet he's locked himself in," he said.

The next moment his statement was verified; for there came the noise of somebody banging on the door of Study No. 11.

"Now then, Glyn!" roared Grundy. "Open this door!"

"Who's that?" inquired Glyn from within.

"I'll show you who it is as soon as I get in," promised Grundy grimly. "Now, then, don't keep me waiting all night."

The juniors chuckled.

"Oh, it's you, Grundy, is it?" called out Glyn indifferently. "Go away; I'm busy!"

"Eh? Busy? You cheeky sweep! I'll give you busy when I get hold of you! Now, then, open this door!"

Grundy drummed on the wood with his cricket-stump.

The Terrible Three went out into the corridor, where they found an assembly composed of most of the occupants of the Shell studies, all of whom were armed with cricket-stumps, fives bats, or singleticks. It was generally agreed, on all sides, that the scientist of the Shell had gone a little too far on this occasion.

As somebody expressed it, an unofficial stinks lab in the corridor was bad enough, but a poison gas factory on one's very doorstep, so to speak, was beyond the pale altogether.

Grundy, who had apparently constituted himself leader of the punitive force, pounded on the door of Study No. 11 and yelled through the keyhole.

"D'you hear me, Glyn? Let me in! I'll teach you to kick up stinks! Wait till I get hold of you! Now, then, turn that blessed key! I've not got all night to waste!"

There was, however, no response to this tempting appeal, and Grundy turned to the grinning crowd with an expression of disgust and astonishment.

"Jevver see such an obstinate ass?" he growled, and fell to beating on the door again.

Thump! Thump!

At last it dawned upon the mighty brain of George Alfred that Glyn had not the slightest intention of opening the door, and with a final rattle of the stump, and a hefty kick at the lower panels as a sort of demonstration to the Shell scientist of the treat that he had forgone by his stubborn refusal to admit his visitors, the burly junior went back to his own study, breathing threats of a postponed vengeance.

The crowd in the corridor also dispersed, to resume their interrupted prep.

"I say," said Noble, struck by a sudden thought. "What the dickens are we going to do? It's a dead cert Glyn won't let us in now."

"Better come into our study," suggested Tom Merry. "We can lend you paper and a dic and all that sort of thing."

"Thanks," said Noble gratefully. "We'd go into the Form-room, but we've got no books or anything."

"That's all right," said Tom Merry heartily. "You're welcome as flowers in spring, you know."

It was about ten minutes before the dorm bell was due to ring that Glyn made his appearance in Study No. 10, to be greeted with grim looks.

"Oh, you fellows are here, are you?" he said. "Good! I've been wondering where you'd got to."

"You stopped at wondering, then," said Noble, not overcordially. "A nice fix we should have been in if it hadn't been for Tom Merry."

"Awfully sorry," apologised Glyn contritely. "I really forgot all about you till about ten minutes ago. I was busy, you see. And, in any case, I couldn't have opened the door. It was too big a risk. Those blighters were ripe for scalping me."

"Serve you jolly well right if they had done!" growled Dane. "What's the matter with your hand?"

He indicated the middle finger of Glyn's left hand, which was bandaged.

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Glyn, putting it into his pocket rather hastily. "I—I hurt it slightly, that's all."

"I don't wonder at it!" commented Tom Merry dryly. "The only marvel is that you haven't blown yourself sky-high, and taken us with you. I expect it'll happen one of these fine days. Have you done your prep, or—"

"Oh, so I've found you, have I?" interrupted a voice from the doorway.

The juniors looked up to see Grundy standing there surveying Glyn with grim satisfaction.

"I've been looking for you," he continued. "I knew you'd have to come out sooner or later."

Glyn gazed calmly at George Alfred Grundy.

"Every time I look at you, Grundy," he said, with thoughtful regret, "it makes me wish I could invent an apparatus for curing lunacy."

"W-w-what!"

"Of course, your mental deficiency isn't the only thing that's wrong with you," went on Glyn. "There's your face, for instance. But there might be some hope in that direction. It ought to be quite possible to devise some sort of machinery for altering the shape of it, if only slightly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy stepped into the study, and proceeded, very deliberately, to take off his coat.

"I sha'n't need any machinery for altering the shape of yours," he said. "Hold that for a start!"

"That!" was a mighty round-arm blow that might well have effected some alteration in the features of a bullock. Glyn, however, was not there when it arrived.

He dived under Grundy's arm, caught him round the waist, and back-heeled him neatly. As the burly Shell fellow went to the floor, with a resounding bump, Glyn slipped out of the door and sped along the corridor, chuckling as he went.

The discomfited Grundy sat gasping, half-dazed, for a few moments before he recovered himself. Then he sprang to his feet, grabbed his coat, emitted a roar that set the ornaments dancing on the mantelshelf, and went pounding in pursuit.

"Come on!" laughed Tom Merry. "There goes the dorm-bell. We'd better be going up, or there'll be about seventeen different kinds of murder committed before we can interfere."

"That doesn't worry me," grunted Dane. "If you ask me anything, I reckon both of 'em deserve scragging. Let 'em do it to each other, like the Kilkenny cats, and save us the trouble."

CHAPTER 2.

Very Mysterious!

"MY hat!"

It was the following afternoon.

George Gore of the Shell stood in the doorway of Study No. 9 in the Shell corridor, and stared wide-eyed at his study-mate, Herbert Skimpole, the philosopher of the School House.

Gore had just returned from cricket practice on Little Side. Skimpole had been spending the afternoon with a fountainpen and a sheaf of impot paper, busily engaged upon the two hundred and twenty-third chapter of his monumental treatise upon evolution, "From Maggot to Man."

Skimpole returned Gore's horrified stare with one of mild surprise.

After his first ejaculation, uttered when he had pulled himself up short upon the threshold of the study, just as he had been about to step inside, Gore had stood there, leaning against the doorpost, his lower jaw dropping and his eyes coming almost out of his head.

Skimpole blinked behind his huge spectacles.

"Gore, my dear fellow—" he began, getting up from his chair with the obvious intention of crossing over to his study-mate.

Bang!

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There was a lot of commotion in the corridor, and when Knox opened his door he found most of the Sixth standing about with their handkerchiefs to their noses. "What's the matter, Macgreggor?" he asked. The Sixth-Former grinned. "Well, if you asked for my opinion," he declared, "I should be inclined to say that somebody has been playing a trick on Knox, and that some chemical from the 'stinks' lab has been dropped in his study!" (See page 12.)

Skimpole was alone in the study. The door had closed violently, with Gore on the other side of it.

Skimpole blinked helplessly. He had completely forgotten the two hundred and twenty-third chapter of "From Maggot to Man." He was beginning to suspect that all was not well with Gore's mental condition, and to feel concerned on behalf of his study-mate.

He went to the door and endeavoured to open it. The handle refused to turn, and it was evident that somebody was holding it on the other side.

Presumably it was Gore, and, indeed, at that moment his voice was to be heard calling down the corridor. Study doors opened, and juniors came crowding wonderingly out.

Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form corridor, who were on their way to tea with Tom Merry, came round the corner, paused in astonishment for a moment, and hurried forward.

George Alfred Grundy, who had stopped to arm himself with a cricket stump, came up in an officious manner.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What is it? New House raid? You holding 'em in there? Right you are. I'll deal with 'em! Now then, you fellows, back me up!"

He strode forward, swinging the stump truculently, but Tom Merry, who had just arrived, caught him by the shoulder and swung him aside.

"Just a minute, Grundy," he said. "Plenty of time for that sort of thing when we know what is really wrong. Whoever is in there can't get away. Now then, Gore, who and what is it?"

"It's Skimmy!" said Gore in an awed voice. "Oh, my sainted aunt!"

"Never mind your sainted aunt. She can wait for a bit. What about Skimmy?"

"He—he—he—he's gone mouldy, or something!" stammered Gore.

"What?" It was a simultaneous gasp from the assembled juniors.

"Gone mouldy?" repeated Tom Merry in a bewildered voice. "What the thump—"

"It's true!" insisted Gore. "I always thought this Socialism business of his would send him potty, but it's turned him green instead."

"Green?"

Gore nodded emphatically. "Yes. As green as—as green as grass!"

The juniors stared blankly at each other, and then at Gore.

"Rot!" said Tom Merry, at last. "It isn't rot!" protested Gore. "I tell you—"

"Tell your sainted aunt! I suppose this is your idea of a joke? I don't think much of it."

"Yaas, wathah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and frowned severely upon Gore. "Uttrahly widiculous! Gween, indeed! How you can stand theah and tell such feahful cwams, Goah, I weally cannot—"

"But it's true, I tell you!" almost howled Gore. "I was just going into the study when I saw him, and I jumped out again mighty quick, I can tell you. His hands and face are bright green."

"It's some sort of 'a jape," said Digby practically. "Skimmy's painted himself, or something, to pull your silly leg."

"What! Skimmy pulled my leg?" Gore's tone was more than scornful. "Don't be an ass, Digby! He's about as likely to work a jape as he is to fly to the moon."

"Well, what's the good of arguing like this?" said Tom Merry impatiently. "Let's have a look at him and settle the question. Open the door, Gore!"

Gore backed away hastily.

"No jolly fear! It may be catching. I'm not taking any risks!"

Tom Merry stepped forward and turned the handle. As the door was thrown open the crowd of juniors pressed up behind him, eager to look over his shoulder.

They stopped in the doorway of the study with exclamations of amazement.

For Gore had been speaking no more than the truth. Skimpole stood there by the table, blinking at the peering faces through his huge, horn-rimmed spectacles, and the skin of his face and hands was a vivid green.

"Good heavens! What in the name of Christopher Columbus—" Tom Merry's startled voice trailed off.

"It must be some sort of trick," muttered Digby.

"Really, Merry, what does this mean?" inquired Skimpole nervously. "Really—"

"Ass!" snorted Blake. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

Skimpole's bewildered expression was such that the juniors were forced to the realisation that, incredible as it seemed, the School House philosopher was really unaware of his condition.

"Look in the glass!" snapped Blake.

The bewildered savant moved across to a small mirror that hung on the wall and peered short-sightedly into it. His jaw dropped, and he passed his hands across his face in a dazed fashion. Their verdant hue attracted his attention, and he transferred his startled gaze to them.

"Dear me!" he murmured with obviously genuine astonishment and distress. "What a peculiar phenomenon! Doubtless some extraordinary pathological condition of the epidemics."

"Bosh!" snorted Grundy contemptuously. "A kid's game!" He pushed forward and grasped Skimpole by the shoulder. "But it doesn't take me in. I— Oh crumbs!"

He broke off in dismay as he caught sight of his own face in the mirror, and at the same moment a startled gasp went up from the juniors outside.

For, immediately upon his touching Skimpole, a greenish tinge had appeared upon Grundy's skin, rapidly deepening until he was of the same complexion as the philosopher of the Shell.

That settled it. The affair was obviously no hoax. There was a hasty stampede from the doorway.

"Grundy's got it, too!" whispered Blake in an awed voice. "I don't like this!"

Grundy was still staring into the mirror. Suddenly he gave vent to a bellow of dismay.

"Wow! I'm going to see Railton about this. Make way, you chumps!"

The juniors were only too eager to afford Grundy a clear passage. As he made for the doorway they scattered in all directions, and he had vanished round the corner before they again ventured to the door of Study No. 9.

Arthur Augustus put up his eyeglass and surveyed the unfortunate Skimpole with an expression of the utmost commiseration. Gussy, the warm-hearted, was terribly concerned about the affair, and he lingered in the doorway of Study No. 9 with more thought for Skimpole's welfare than his own safety. He had not been there many seconds before Blake's attention was called to him, and the leader of Study No. 6 was quick to call his follower to order.

"Gussy, you ass!" he cried. "Come away from there! You saw what happened to Grundy?"

"Yaas, deah boy!" replied Gussy. "But I am suah theah is no need to wovwy. Gwunday went wight into the woom, but I am outside, you know."

"I don't care twopence about that," growled Blake. "There's no sense in taking any risks. Come away from the place altogether!"

"But weally, you know—" protested Gussy.

"Shut up and come away!" demanded Blake, stepping forward to enforce his injunction by pulling Gussy into the safety of the corridor.

Exactly what happened in the next few moments none of the juniors were very clear about when they compared notes later. Blake maintained that as he stepped towards Gussy somebody deliberately tripped him, but, if that was really so, it is certain that nobody saw it done. It is true that both Racke and Crooke were standing close to Blake at the time, and either of them might well have been suspected of such a mischievous trick, just as they were quite cunning enough to perform it in such a manner as to escape detection. But suspicion, however well founded, is not proof.

In any case, Blake's stumble was unfortunate, for he lurched against Gussy, who was totally unprepared for the impact, and who, thrown off his own balance in turn, went spinning into the study, to be brought up sharply against Skimpole.

A gasp of dismay went up from the onlookers, justified almost as soon as it was uttered by the appearance of the now familiar tinge upon Gussy's features.

Blake, who had caught at the door-post to recover his balance, gazed at his study-mate in horror.

"Gussy, you—you ass!" he gasped. "Come back!"

He made a grab for D'Arcy's shoulder, but Digby and Herries, acting promptly, pulled him back just in time. At

least, they thought they had been in time until Tom Merry gave a startled yell.

"Your hand, Blake! Look at it!"

Blake held up the hand with which he had grasped Gussy's shoulder. From finger-tips to wrist it was green—only a faint green certainly, but an unmistakable colour for all that. Digby and Herries released him as though he had suddenly been transmuted into a red-hot poker.

A hush fell upon the assembled juniors. The affair was beginning to frighten them. In the deep silence a humming sound became audible from the direction of Study No. 11, where behind a closed door Bernard Glyn was presumably conducting one of his frequent experiments.

Suddenly the noise ceased, and Glyn came out into the corridor, to blink in amazement at the crowd of juniors.

"I thought I heard a row outside the door," he said. "What's the matter?"

He had to ask the question twice before anyone regarded it, but he veritably jumped when matters were at last explained to him.

"Green!" he repeated in a whisper. "Green! Oh, my hat! Let me see!"

He pushed his way through the crowd and went right up to the door to stare at Skimpole and Gussy. Urgent warnings were hurled at him, but he paid no heed to them.

"Oh, great Scott!" he gasped. "This is ghastly!"

"Isn't it?" said Tom Merry glumly. "Skimpole, Grundy, Gussy—and now Blake! It looks like spreading through the school. If we only had some idea of what it might be. All we know is that it's contagious."

"Eh? Contagious? Rubbish!" snapped Glyn. "It's nothing of the kind!"

"But I tell you it is!" said Tom Merry warmly. "We all saw—"

"Boys!"

The deep voice of Mr. Railton, who had just arrived on the scene, cut short Tom Merry's remarks, and caused the juniors to draw aside respectfully to afford a passage to the Housemaster.

He stopped at the doorway of Study No. 9, surveying Skimpole and D'Arcy with thoughtful eyes, rubbing his chin the while. He flung a few inquiries at Tom Merry, who told him what was already known about the mysterious affair.

Then he stepped into the room.

To the amazement of the juniors nothing happened—not even when the Housemaster put his hand on Skimpole's shoulder and turned his face up to the light. Mr. Railton's skin remained as pink and healthy as when he had first appeared in the corridor.

"Well, of all the giddy mysteries," said Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath, "this takes the merry biscuit!"

Mr. Railton turned to the watching juniors.

"You boys will all return to your respective studies," he said, "and keep there until after tea. Skimpole, D'Arcy, and Blake will accompany me. There is no occasion for alarm at present. I will discuss this matter with Dr. Holmes, who will doubtless summon medical advice. But nobody will be permitted to leave, nor anyone else to enter, this corridor until my permission has been obtained."

And the Housemaster rustled off, with the three victims of the mysterious malady in his wake, leaving the rest of the Shell and two of the Fourth Form staring blankly after him.

CHAPTER 3.

Glyn Explains!

"WELL, I wouldn't say that I was exactly scared," said Tom Merry slowly, "but a chap can't help feeling a bit jumpy about it."

The Terrible Three had just finished tea in Study No. 10, and sat at the table discussing the amazing events of a half-hour or so before. There was an unwonted solemnity in the demeanour of the comrades of the Shell, and, indeed, the whole of the Shell corridor was unusually quiet.

No cheery tinkle of tea-cups and rattling of plates, mingled with the laughter and murmur of cheery conversation, was to be heard. The juniors were taking tea in a state of glum depression.

"You never know who's going to be the next to go," went on Tom Merry. "It's bad enough when you think of Skimpole and Grundy; but when it comes to poor old Gussy, and then Blake—oh, hang it, it's rotten!"

Digby and Herries, the remaining members of Study No. 6, who had been unable, in consequence of the Housemaster's edict, to leave the Shell corridor, and had perforce to stay with Tom Merry & Co., nodded miserably.

The Terrible Three were in funds, which fact had accounted for their inviting Study No. 6 to share their festive board, but though the table was loaded with eatables that ought to have appealed to the appetite of any boy healthily hungry after several hours strenuous exercise in the open air, they had done no more than soil their plates with a few crumbs in a pretence at eating.



Knox drew back as his captive emitted a yelp. For it was not the cry of Tom Merry, but that of a master—and Mr. Ratcliff at that! His action awoke Cutts and Gilmore to the seriousness of the situation, and in company with Knox they turned on their heels and fled. Mr. Ratcliff sat up and gasped. (See page 16.)

They sat and stared moodily at the tablecloth. Even Monty Lowther, that irrepressible Merry Andrew, on whose mercurial spirits the most depressing of situations had usually no chastening effects, sat with a puckered brow, plucking at a corner of the tablecloth in an attitude of dejection.

"What I can't understand," confessed Manners, "is how Railton managed to escape it. He walked into the study, examined Skimmy and Gussy, as well as Blake's hand, and came out without the slightest trace of that ghastly green complexion. Yet Gussy only touched Skimmy for about a second, and Blake touched Gussy's shoulder with the tips of his fingers, and they both got it. It's thundering queer!"

He shook his head in a puzzled fashion. Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"Perhaps it's a sort of disease that doesn't affect grown-up people," suggested Digby. "Like measles, you know."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry.

"Well, anyway, Railton—"

"Oh, blow Railton!" snapped Herries. "It's Gussy and Jack I'm thinking about. Whether Railton's got it or not doesn't help them, does it?"

"No, but—"

Manners was interrupted by a knock at the door. All eyes turned in that direction. The juniors were hopeful that there might be some good news regarding their stricken chums.

Tom Merry jumped up and went eagerly to the door. When he opened it Bernard Glyn was standing in the corridor outside.

The School House scientist stepped into the room, and in spite of their own worry the juniors could not but notice that he was looking as unlike his usual cheery self as they were. It was evident that the plight of the unfortunate juniors was being taken to heart by someone other than their own immediate chums.

"You fellows got a few minutes to spare?" inquired Glyn abruptly.

"That depends," said Tom Merry. "What do you want us for?"

Glyn hesitated for a few moments before replying.

"Oh—er—I just want you to step into Study No. 11 and see something I have got there," he said at length. "It's rather particular."

"I don't quite get you," said Tom Merry wonderingly. "What sort of 'something' do you mean? An invention?"

Glyn frowned, rubbing his chin with a finger in a rather embarrassed manner.

"Well, in a way, yes," he confessed. "That is to say—"

Tom Merry shook his head decisively. "Sorry, but we're not interested at the moment," he said a trifle coldly. "We've got more important things to think about just now than making stinks."

"Hang it, it's like your cheek!" broke in Herries hotly. "You know jolly well that Jack and Gussy are in the sanny—to say nothing of Skimpole and Grundy. And you expect us to be in the mood to fool about with clockwork mice, or some other potty idiotic stunt that you've—"

Glyn grinned faintly. "Funny you should say that!" he interrupted. "Because I was going to show you some mice, among other things, but not clockwork ones. Live mice!"

"Mice!" snorted Manners. "Mice! Made a bit of a mistake, haven't you? This isn't the Third Form Common-room. I dare say if you trotted along there you'd find some of the fags ready to play with you and your beastly pets!"

"They're not pets," replied Glyn quietly. "Look here, you fellows, I'm not rotting, nor going into my second childhood just yet. I know you're all worried about Blake and D'Arcy. But there's really no need to get the wind-up."

"We haven't got the wind-up," denied Manners indignantly. "Like your blessed cheek, Glyn, coming in here, and—"

"Oh, shut up a minute!" broke in Glyn irritably. "Give a chap a chance to speak, for goodness' sake. Besides, it's all rot to say you ain't funky. Everybody along the corridor is. It's only natural. I should be myself if—"

"And you're not, of course!" said Herries, with heavy sarcasm. "Oh, no! You wouldn't be! You—"

"Will you shut up?" implored Glyn wearily. "When I say that I'm not funky I don't mean that I'm not worrying about the affair, because I am. But I'm not afraid of anything happening to me, and I'm not anxious about those fellows in the sanny because I happen to know what's wrong with them."

Five pairs of eyes focussed themselves on Glyn in wide-eyed amazement. The statement of the School House scientist, delivered in the most matter-of-fact tones, was certainly startling.

"You—you—know?" gasped Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn nodded coolly.

"I ought to, anyway," he said calmly. "I was responsible for it."

That was another shock for the occupants of Study No. 10, and it left them speechless. They could only sit and stare at Glyn and each other.

"I can guess how you fellows feel about it," went on Glyn. "I expect it's knocked you all of a heap, as it were. But it's very simple, really. I was doing an experiment this afternoon, and it went wrong. That's all."

"All!" repeated Tom Merry, recovering his voice. "All! I jolly well like that! Four fellows turned as green as—as cheeses, and now you come along and tell us it was all through one of your experiments going wrong, and there's nothing to worry about. Why—"

"S-s-s-sh!" hissed Glyn, with sudden alarm. He crossed to the study door, looked along the corridor, and closed it.

"Don't yell it up and down the corridor, you ass! I don't want everybody to know!"

"That's all very well!" retorted Tom Merry warmly. "Everybody ought to jolly well know! It's not fair to them to be running risks like this. I tell you, Glyn, this fooling about with science has got to stop! Where's it going to end? Last night you nearly suffocated the whole corridor, and now you've started going about turning chaps green! Who knows—"

"Well, you certainly won't if you don't give me a chance to explain!" snapped Glyn. "It was an accident!"

"Accident be blowed!" almost hooted Herries. "Why did—"

"Oh, come into Study No. 11 and let me explain to you!" begged Glyn, running his hands distractedly through his hair. "You don't suppose I did it on purpose, you duffers, do you? I'm doing all I can to put it right."

"That's all very well," said Digby. "But—"

"Oh, come into Study No. 11 for a minute," repeated Glyn, and led the way out of the room.

The five juniors followed him, to find Dane and Noble sitting by the table in Study No. 11, with expectant expressions, tinged with gloomy foreboding, upon their faces.

"Hallo!" greeted Dane. "He's managed to rope you in, then! Nice state of affairs, isn't it?"

"We know very little about it!" growled Tom Merry disgustedly. "But if what Glyn has been telling us is true, he ought to be jolly well pole-axed!"

"Don't I keep telling you it was an accident," put in a testy voice from the direction of the cupboard, in the depths of which Glyn was groping.

"What's the good of telling us that?" demanded Digby. "Accident or no accident, it's happened, hasn't it? What good does it do those four poor chaps in the sanny to say that?"

"Oh, shut up!" It was plain that Glyn's nerves were frayed almost to breaking-point.

He jugged a box out of the cupboard and placed it on the study table.

The juniors watched him interestedly but dispiritedly.

"Oh, one moment! I forgot!" Glyn was unwinding the bandage from his finger, the one that he had injured during his experiment on the preceding evening.

When the last fold came away he held up the digit so that all the rest of the juniors could see it. From the lower knuckle to the tip it was a bright green.

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry, his awe of the mysterious malady returning at this manifestation. "You—you've got it, too, Glyn!"

"Got it!" snapped Glyn. "Fiddlesticks! Can't you understand that there's no disease or anything like that about this business? It's merely a colouration of the skin due to a ray with which I have been experimenting. Look here!"

He opened the box on the table and took out a small cage. Inside were two tiny mice. They ought to have been white mice, but they were not. Their hair was white certainly, but underneath that their skin showed green—green as Glyn's finger, Blake's hand, and the skins of Skimpole, Grundy, and Gussy. Their tails and tiny snouts were more visibly green.

The two little creatures, with the unnatural colour of their skins gleaming through their coats, presented a weird appearance. The juniors stared at them in silence.

"You see?" said Glyn, with the air of a showman.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath. "Yes, we see all right!" he said grimly. "Perhaps you don't mind explaining what it all means?"

"Right you are!" Glyn lifted his apparatus from a corner of the room on to the table. "First of all, I don't suppose any of you chaps know very much about X-rays? No! I thought not! Ever heard of a Coolidge tube? You haven't? Right!"

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He threaded the bared end of an insulated wire through a terminal and screwed it into place. A switch clicked, and immediately a low humming sound became audible from a black cylindrical object on the table.

"That's an induction coil," explained Glyn, pointing to it. "I can't stop to explain how it works, but it intensifies the current that is fed to it from the accumulators under the table. By connecting up this other piece of apparatus—called a condenser—the powerful alternating current that is flowing through the secondary circuit of the coil is transformed into a direct current. Sometimes an interrupter is used instead of a condenser."

He laid his hand upon a small black box, rather like a camera.

"Never mind about all that," broke in Herries roughly. "What about Blake and Gussy?"

"Just a moment," said Glyn quietly. "You'll understand then."

He picked up the black box and withdrew a sliding side, revealing the interior, which was lined with a dull metal.

"You see that glass bulb affair, with all the radiator fins at one end?" went on Glyn, pointing to the apparatus with which the box was fitted. "That's a Coolidge tube. When a current of electricity is passed through it, there is a certain complicated reaction which results in the electrical energy being transformed into light rays. You can't detect them in the ordinary way, because they're beyond the spectrum of visible colours: but the photographic plate is able to do so. These invisible light rays are capable of passing through most opaque bodies. Lead is the most effective arrester of the rays, and it is invariably used for that purpose. This box is lead-lined, and the rays can only emerge through this small aperture, so that I am able to direct their path by pointing the box in the desired direction."

"This may be jolly interesting!" interrupted Tom Merry. "But what's it got to do with Jack and Gussy?"

"As I told Herries, you'll understand in a moment or so. Now, I bought this tube from a scientific instrument maker about a week ago, but I didn't unpack it till yesterday. After Dane and Noble had cleared out of the study last night I fetched it out in order to take an X-ray photograph of my finger, in which I thought there was a tiny filing of steel. I wanted to locate it. Anyway, I put a photographic plate into the special dark slide, and, to my amazement, as soon as my finger was in the path of the ray the skin became green. I switched off the current jolly quickly, I can tell you, and sat down to think it out!"

"Well?"

"I realised that, in consequence probably due to some error in construction of the tube, some new phase of the ordinary X-ray had been produced. There wasn't time to do any more experimenting that night, so I bound up my finger and put the tube away. This afternoon I went down to Rylcombe and bought some white mice and did a few experiments on them."

"But Blake and Gussy and Skimpole—"

"By an idiotic oversight," confessed Glyn contritely, "I omitted to use a lead screen to intercept the rays. The consequence is they passed right through the wall and flooded the next two or three studies. It wouldn't have mattered in the least, for most of you fellows were out on Little Side; but, of course, that idiot Skimpole had to be fooling about in his study, and he was in the direct path of the rays. Naturally he got the benefit of what was going. I knew nothing of all this, and went on working all the while that Grundy, Gussy, and Blake were doing their little bit in the study. When I heard all the commotion, I came out, switching off the current first, and so when Railton went into Study No. 9 there were no rays to affect him. Now you understand all about it."

The juniors stood silent for a few moments.

"Well, this is the giddy limit!" said Tom Merry at length. "I always thought you were a bit of an ass, Glyn, to fool about with things you don't properly understand! But I never expected anything like this was likely to happen. How about those four chaps in the sanny?"

"Oh, they're all right, really, you know!" Glyn assured him. "It's only a matter of the colour of their skin. Nothing wrong with their health. And I'm going to get to work in the hope of discovering a ray that will counteract the effect of this one."

"That's all very well," grumbled Herries. "But—"

"Can you suggest any better scheme?" snapped Glyn.

"You know, I can hardly believe it possible!" said Digby slowly.

Glyn shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll give you a demonstration if you like," he proffered.

"On mice, of course. Oh, there's absolutely no danger! I shall use a lead screen this time."

As he spoke, he was already adjusting flexible wire between the black box and the condenser. A small cage containing two more white mice was placed on the table, and beyond it Glyn carefully erected a sheet of lead to act as a screen.

"That will confine the rays to the space between the box

with the tube in it and the screen itself," he said. "Now watch!"

He clicked over a switch. The coil hummed, and the juniors watched the mice intently.

Glyn was pointing the aperture in the black box straight at the cage in which they were contained.

There were simultaneous gasps as the mice could be seen changing colour until they were as green as the ones that Glyn had produced when the juniors first entered the study.

They pressed nearer to the table. Dane received somebody's elbow in his ribs, and was turning to remonstrate when his arm caught the lead screen.

Bump!

It fell heavily to the floor.

The juniors stood aghast. They remembered Glyn's remarks about the importance of the screen.

Glyn himself reached over and switched off the current, then turned on Dane angrily.

"You clumsy ass!" he snapped. "You blithering burler! You—you—"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry soothingly. "No harm's been done. None of us were in line with the opening in that box."

"Perhaps not! But somebody might have been. And how do we know that nobody was in the corridor just then?"

The juniors exchanged startled glances. They had not thought of that.

Tom Merry went to the door and glanced up and down the passage. There was nobody in sight.

"It's all right!" he reported, coming back into the study. "Nobody about!"

But it happened that Tom Merry had made a sad mistake, as he was destined to learn before many minutes had elapsed.

CHAPTER 4.

A Shock for the Third!

IT was often said of Mr. Selby, the far from popular Third Form master, that he spent a great deal of his time deliberately looking for trouble.

That may or may not have been so, but it is certainly incontestable that he found it. Indeed, Mr. Selby had every reason for endorsing the dictum that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards—with the qualification that some people get more than their share of the universal heritage.

Mr. Selby was "Old Beaky" to his irreverent Form, an appellation conferred upon him not only in literal reference to a certain prominent facial feature, but also in figurative allusion to a metaphorical organ of mischief-detection which he was credited with possessing, together with a knack of extending it towards matters which did not—or should not—concern him in the least.

Which possibly accounted for the marked success with which he pursued his quest for trouble. Sometimes he found it on behalf of somebody else—which was, indeed, his intention—but more often he discovered it to be neatly parcelled up and labelled to his own address.

At the very moment that Dane knocked over the lead screen in Study No. 11 another new, and utterly unexpected, packet of trouble was duly delivered to Mr. Selby, although it is true that at the time he was utterly unaware of the fact.

It so happened that Mr. Selby was standing in the Shell corridor, and in the direct path of the ray.

Really, Mr. Selby had no right at all to be in the Shell corridor—especially that evening, since Mr. Railton's edict applied as much to undermasters and prefects as to juniors.

But Mr. Selby was in a temper, and he had forgotten all about the prohibition.

He was in search of Manners minor.

The unfortunate fag had done something that he ought not to have done—or else omitted to do something that he ought to have done—in class that morning, and had thereby incurred the displeasure of his Form master. Mr. Selby himself was not quite certain just what Manners minor had done—or had not done—the original offence having been so slight as to have been practically forgotten in detail already. But it was by no means forgiven, especially now that Manners minor had chosen to aggravate it.

Manners minor had been instructed to report to Mr. Selby's study immediately after tea for the purpose of expiating his crime. He had, furthermore, been charged to bring with him two hundred lines written in a fair round hand as the outward and visible sign of an afternoon's penance. With the reception of the imposition and the delivery of two strokes from a cane Mr. Selby had intended to regard the affair as closed.

Had intended, that is, prior to the second outrage.

For though six o'clock had come and gone Manners minor had done neither.

Mr. Selby sat waiting in gathering wrath, and at a quarter-past six he decided that Mahomed, by starting out for the mountain that had failed to come to him, had set an excellent

example, and with a cane in his hand and seething fury in his heart he had adopted the Oriental expedient.

Failing to find Manners minor, or any useful information regarding his whereabouts in the Third Form Common-room, he made straight for the Shell quarters. On previous occasions Manners minor, flouting authority, had invoked the support of his major, Manners of the Shell, and had even sought, and had been afforded, shelter in Study No. 10.

In view of the possibility that history might be repeating itself, the Form master betook his furious person to Study No. 10, therefore, and greatly to his chagrin, drew blank. The little apartment was untenanted.

He stepped out into the corridor again. From the next study came a curious humming sound, and the Third Form master stood just outside the door for a few moments, listening.

There was the sound of a bump, as though some heavy object had fallen to the floor, followed by a startled cry. The humming noise stopped abruptly.

Somebody could be heard calling somebody else an ass, in tones of unmistakable annoyance. Mr. Selby would dearly have liked to poke his head into the room and discover what was going on, in the pious hope that it might be something to which authority could take exception; but as he was not the recognised authority in that part of the School House, and where Shell juniors were concerned, he was wise enough to restrain both his curiosity and his officiousness for once.

So he compressed his lips and strode away, grasping his cane with tense-muscle fingers.

It was within a few minutes of the time when the Third were due to assemble for prep, and Manners minor was certain to be in his place then, the penalties for absence being of too serious a nature for a fag to take risks. One might have supposed, therefore, that Mr. Selby would have been contented to postpone his retribution.

But he was far too angry to be capable of adopting a waiting policy. He was determined to find Manners minor as soon as possible. He went down the main staircase and out into the quad, where he peered round in every direction.

The quad was absolutely deserted, however, and Mr. Selby, with an impatient and exasperated exclamation, went back into the House. Up the stairs to the dormitory floor he rustled, and along the short corridor to the Third Form dorm.

Manners minor was not there. The angry master, gritting his teeth, retraced his steps, looking in at the box-rooms on his way down stairs.

Back on the level of the Lower School studies he found the corridors deserted. The school had settled down to evening prep. Mr. Selby consulted his watch hastily, and discovered with a start of surprise that he was already overdue in the Form-room.

He made his way in that direction without further delay.

His expression as he jerked through the door bodied ill for Manners minor—and for the rest of the Third, too, for that matter.

The fags did not look up at his entry. Mr. Selby had a habit of coming to evening prep in a very uncertain temper, and he was likely to vent his mood on the first boy who chanced to catch his eye.

Therefore the Third Form, being wise in their generation, had learned to lie low, like Brer Rabbit, and "say nuffin!"

But there was one member of the Third who knew perfectly well that lying low would avail him nothing on this occasion. Reggie Manners had no doubt about what was going to happen, but for all that he bent over his work with the rest of the Third-Formers.

Mr. Selby mounted the step to his desk and laid the cane down in front of him.

His eyes glittered, and his thin nose shone like glass as the skin tightened over it under the strain of his compressed lips.

"Manners minor!"

The words cut through the silence of the Form-room with something of the effect of cracking ice.

Reggie Manners looked up slowly and reluctantly.

"Y-yes, sir!" he stammered apprehensively.

Then as his eyes rested on the Form master's face he gave vent to a sudden startled gasp.

"Ooooooooh!"

The rest of the Third looked up in astonishment as the peculiar and utterly unexpected ejaculation reached their ears. They looked at Reggie Manners, who was shrinking back on his form, his eyes, nearly starting from his head, fixed in a terror-stricken stare upon Mr. Selby.

The Third followed the direction of Reggie's gaze, and a chorus of horrified cries broke from their lips.

Wally D'Arcy's exclamation was possibly the only intelligible one.

"G-g-great pip! O-o-old Sus-Sus-Selby's got it!"

Mr. Selby thrust forward his head and swept the Form with a glance in which amazement and fury were blended.

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His brows knitted into a grimmer frown than ever, and he clutched the edges of his desk with a stress that threatened to prise away the heading.

"Silence!"

He managed to get out that one word with a veritable bark of fury before his rage overmastered him and choked his utterance.

"Manners! D'Arcy! How dare you——"

He broke off, released his desk, clutched at his cane, and literally sprang down to the floor of the room, with the obvious intention of exacting summary punishment for such unparalleled behaviour.

As he strode towards the front desks the fags seated therein came hastily to their feet and scattered in all directions.

Mr. Selby made ineffective cuts at them with his cane, but did not pause in his advance upon D'Arcy and Reggie Manners, who were apparently the ringleaders in some form of mutiny that was affecting the whole of the Third.

As the master approached Wally D'Arcy the fag exhibited signs of the liveliest consternation. His terror was, indeed, so great that it could hardly have been due simply to the fear of a licking. He jumped up with a cry of alarm and backed away, poising a Latin grammar in a fashion which clearly indicated his readiness to fling it at Mr. Selby should the latter approach him more closely.

And Mr. Selby had every intention of approaching Wally. He had not picked up his cane for the mere purpose of intimidation. He reached out his hand to seize the fag—and a Latin grammar crashed under his chin.

The book had been flung with all the strength at Wally's command, and Mr. Selby staggered back with a yelp of anguish.

Wally sprang on top of a desk and raised another book threateningly.

At that moment the door opened and Dr. Holmes entered.

In the first few seconds of his appearance in the Form-room his face was a study in expressions. His astonished glance swept round the room, changed to one of anger, and then, as he saw Mr. Selby, it became one of astonishment again, until consternation finally supervened.

"Mr. Selby!" he said with unwonted agitation.

The Form master turned, and became aware of the Head's presence. The pandemonium in the room had died down.

Mr. Selby guiped, and flung out a quivering hand to indicate Wally D'Arcy, still poised on top of the desk, the book raised above his head.

"Dr. Holmes," jerked the master, his voice trembling with passion, "you have just come in at the right moment, sir! Now you will possibly have some conception of what I have to contend with! This young ruffian, sir, this—this incorrigible young hooligan, D'Arcy minor, sir, has incited the whole of the Form to a sort of—of organised insubordination. Upon my appearance in the room, sir, they set up a howl of derision. Not content with that, sir, D'Arcy minor alluded to me in terms of the grossest disrespect. He has flung books at me, sir! He——"

"But, Mr. Selby, surely——"

"And Manners minor also, sir! He is equally responsible with D'Arcy minor, sir. He has deliberately flouted my authority. He had disobeyed my express orders. I demand their instant expulsion, Dr. Holmes! Their instant expulsion! At once, sir! Both of them! Do you hear me, sir? Both of them! At once!"

Dr. Holmes held up his hand in a commanding gesture. His fine old face was set in stern lines.

"I heard you, Mr. Selby," he said grimly. "Although I must confess that I can scarcely credit the evidence of my ears. I think you have forgotten who I am and where we are, that you presume to address me in such a fashion. Rest assured that whatever the two juniors whom you mention have done to incur your anger, they shall be adequately punished for it. But there is, at present, a more urgent matter calling for immediate attention."

"More urgent? What can be more urgent than——"

"I allude, Mr. Selby, to the state of your health."

"T—the sus-sus-state of my health!" repeated the Form master blankly.

"Certainly, sir! Do you really consider that you are in a fit condition to carry out your duties? Apart from all other considerations, your presence in the Form-room in your present state constitutes a grave menace to the well-being of these boys. I have every reason for supposing that this distressing malady is highly contagious."

The bewildered master gazed at the venerable Head as if hypnotised.

"Really, Dr. Holmes, I do not in the least understand you!" he gasped. "I can assure you that I am as well as ever I was."

"Then your appearance certainly belies you," said Dr. Holmes curtly.

"M-m-my appearance?"

"That is what I said, sir. Is it possible that you are unaware of your condition? Look at your hands, for instance!"

Mr. Selby cast a wondering glance at the hand that held the cane. His jaw dropped and he reeled back, clutching at a desk for support. No longer blinded by rage, he saw for the first time that the skin of his hands was bright green in hue.

Recovering himself with an effort, he rushed across to his own desk, and rummaged inside with trembling fingers until he had unearthed a small pocket-mirror, which he had confiscated from a member of the Third a few days previously.

One glance confirmed his worst fears.

His face was also a bright green.

At last he understood the reason for the amazing behaviour of the Third, and the unwillingness of Wally D'Arcy to be brought into contact with him.

"Great heavens!" he moaned, and sank into his chair, burying his face in his arms on the desk before him.

The Head, together with the Third, looked sympathetically at his crumpled figure. Tyrant as Mr. Selby undoubtedly was, the Third could not but be sorry for him in his palpable distress. They even overlooked the fact that it was really a most pitiful display of pure blue funk.

They, like Mr. Selby, had all heard of the new and mysterious malady that had stricken four of the Fourth and Shell, and they were more than a little scared by their first experience of it.

Mr. Railton was hastily summoned, and the unfortunate Third Form master was taken away to the sanatorium, where, in company with the other, and previous victims, he was examined by the local medico, who did his best to conceal the fact that he was absolutely ignorant of what the symptoms portended.

CHAPTER 5.

Wally & Co. on the Warpath!

"W E'RE not jolly well going to stand it."

It was a few days later, Wally D'Arcy stood on a chair in the Third Form Common-room, and the thirty or so fags who comprised the indignation meeting surged excitedly round him.

"I say, we're not going to put up with it," repeated Wally D'Arcy in a still louder voice.

He had to yell to make himself heard at all, and the second attempt at raising his voice above the tumult that prevailed in the Common-room was not conspicuously successful.

It is true that Wally had been, by almost unanimous consent, appointed chairman of the meeting, but he was not being accorded the respectful attention that was due to his office.

The rest of the fags appeared to be of the opinion that by appointing Wally as chairman they had paid him a very generous compliment, and that he ought to be satisfied, without wanting to monopolise the speech-making as well. Others maintained that the duty of a chairman was confined to calling upon others to speak, and keeping order while they were doing it.

The five or six who held that view of the matter began their orations simultaneously, pausing occasionally to demand fiercely of Wally that he would bring the meeting to order on their behalf, while Wally was as strenuously and determinedly yelling for order on his own account.

The rest of the meeting were mostly concerned with airing their private grievances to their immediate neighbours.

Curly Gibson was Wally's principal rival for the post of orator-in-chief. Curly considered that as he had suffered to a greater extent than had Wally from the reign of injustice, of which the indignation meeting was the outcome, he had more right to talk.

Wally, needless to say, did not agree with that view of the matter, and having been appointed chairman of the meeting, he disdained to argue about it, contenting himself with giving a ruling upon the subject. As Curly declined to abide by the chairman's ruling it didn't make much difference, anyway, and the rival disciples of Demosthenes continued to shout each other down, the fact that he had been ruled out of order in no wise affecting the stridency of Curly's voice.

"It's up to us to show—" howled Wally.

"If Knox thinks we're—" yelled Curly.

"The blighter that he can't—"

"Going to be treated like—"

"Do just as he likes with—"

"Dogs, he'll jolly well find—"

"The Third, and—" Wally broke off and glared fiercely at Curly.

"Look here, young Gibson! Can't you shut up when I'm talking?"

"Shut up yourself, young D'Arcy!" retorted Gibson truculently, also breaking off in the middle of his harangue to return Wally's stare with an even fiercer one. "I'm talking."

"I know you are, and you ought not to be!"

"How about yourself?"

"Well, I'm chairman, ain't I? I was elected—"

"You weren't elected to talk. You're supposed to keep order."

"Well, how can I keep order when asses like you—"

"Look here, young D'Arcy—"

"I am looking, young Gibson."

"I know you are, but you can't see anything as funny as I can."

It took Wally about five seconds to appreciate the real meaning of that remark, but when he did so he jumped down from his chair and commenced to push through the crowd towards Curly Gibson.

"You cheeky beast, I'll—"

"Ere, chuck it!" protested Joe Frayne, who in moments of excitement was prone to relapse into his native Cockney dialect. "If you two starts fightin' all the uvvers'll join in, an' then there'll be a 'appy 'ome, I don't fink!"

He thrust himself between Curly and Wally.

"Wot's the user quarrellin' about who's goin' to do the spoutin'?" he went on in tones of disgust. "None o' these cowns is listenin' to yer, so wot's the odds? It ain't worth scraffin' about, an' chance it."

Under his ministrations a truce was patched up, and Wally and Curly, with the able assistance of Joe Frayne, set to work restoring some sort of order to the meeting.

Since the removal of Mr. Selby to the sanatorium the Third had been under the supervision of one or the other members of the Sixth Form. Owing to the fact that Kildare and Darrell were both working hard for the forthcoming examination in connection with the Founder's prize, they had very little time to give to any new duties, and in consequence the major part of the work had fallen to Knox.

And the Third had very soon made the discovery that Knox, the temporary Form master, was even worse than Knox the prefect. In the latter capacity his powers and opportunities were limited, but in the Form-room he reigned practically supreme.

Unjust and bad-tempered as Mr. Selby indubitably was, the Third soon found themselves wishing very fervently that he was back. Mr. Selby, in his worst moods, was preferable to Knox.

They had been sneered at, caned with brutality, given heavy impositions, and recommended to Mr. Railton for gatings, all to a hitherto unheard of degree.

Wherefore the Third had come to the unanimous decision that something had got to be done in the matter.

Unfortunately it was far easier to come to such a decision than it was to decide what was actually to be done and how to do it.

It was all very well to agree that Knox ought to be boiled in oil, and express willingness to assist in such an operation; but boiling people in oil, however much it may appeal to one as being eminently desirable, is hardly a practicable measure.

So the meeting had been arranged with a view to settling upon some effective form of retribution that could be actually adopted. Most of the fags had very vague ideas—in so far as any of them had any ideas at all—upon the matter. Wally alone was possessed of the glimmerings of a feasible notion, and so far he had been unable to put it before the meeting.

When Curly had agreed to back Wally up, instead of opposing him, however, and comparative order had been established in the Common-room, the chairman was at last able to address the meeting.

"Gentlemen of the Third—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up, you cackling asses! I rise to address you in the sacred cause of freedom. Are we going to stand it?"

"No!" roared the meeting.

"Of course not! Britons have fought for freedom in the past! They have earned the right to live their lives in freedom—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up! You know what I mean. And, to-day—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, and come to the hosses!" implored a voice.

Wally glared round, failed to identify the owner of the voice, and went on with his speech.

"Now, I've got an idea—"

"Sew a button on it!" suggested some unknown humorist cheerfully.

"And I don't mind telling you it's the goods. You remember the time when we stunk old Beaky out of his room with some muck we got from the New House chemmy lab? He never found out what it was, or who did it, and I vote we do the same to Knox."

"Yaaaaaarrrrrrroooooo!"

A howl of execration broke out at the mention of the

hated name, mingled with cries of approval for Wally's scheme.

In the end it was decided to leave the affair in the hands of Wally, Joe Frayne, Curly Gibson, and Reggie Manners.

"The first thing to do is to get hold of some of the stuff," announced Wally, as the selected four made their way out of the Common-room.

"My word, you do have some bright ideas, Wally!" said Reggie Manners sarcastically. "The rest of us would never have thought of that. We should have gone along to Knox's study empty-handed, like a lot of jays——"

"Shut up, young Manners!" snapped Wally. "Don't you start being funny. We're in a bit of a fix. Last time we got the stuff from the New House—or at least young Timson got it for us. But we can't go over there now."

"Why not try Glyn?" suggested Curly Gibson. "Ten to one he's got some, or something just as ripe."

"Good egg!" approved Wally.

"More likely a rotten egg, if it smells anything like the last lot did!" grinned Reggie Manners, who seemed to be blossoming out as a humorist.

Bernard Glyn had for once omitted to lock his door, so that the quartette of Third-Formers were enabled to walk straight in upon him. He was obviously very busy, and greeted them in anything but a cordial manner.

The fags were wise enough in their generation to treat him in a very diplomatic fashion, and after a great deal of persuasion he agreed to supply them with what they wanted.

He filled six small test tubes with an oily, greenish-yellow liquid, carefully corked them, and handed them over to the fags, with an injunction to get out of the study while they were well.

Five minutes later, having ascertained that Knox was in Mr. Railton's quarters, making his evening report on the day's work of the Third, they were in the Sixth Form corridor.

Once inside Knox's study they wasted no time.

Five of the test tubes were placed in positions where it was almost certain that they would quickly be broken. One was wedged in the grooves of the table drawer, another was put under the blotting-pad which the prefect was likely to be using within a short time, another was laid under the cushion of the armchair, and two found resting-places under the carpet in the immediate vicinity of the table.

The last was placed in the door-frame, in such a position that it would inevitably shatter as soon as the door was moved more than a few inches.

Then they scurried off, with many chuckles, to provide themselves, by their presence in the Common-room, with an alibi that was likely to be needed.

When Knox came striding back to his study he was in no pleasant frame of mind. Mr. Railton had raised his eyebrows over the list of recommendations for Housemaster's punishment that Knox had laid before him, and had pointed out that both Kildare and Darrell had been able, on various occasions, to maintain order among the Third without finding it necessary to invoke a higher authority. Mr. Railton had been quite nice about it, but Knox was under no misapprehension as to his meaning. If Knox couldn't keep order in the Third Form without having recourse to an undue amount of punishment, then there must be something drastically wrong about Knox's methods.

He kicked open the door of the study and switched on the light. He threw a pile of exercise-papers on to the blotting pad, and flung himself into the armchair scowlingly.

He sat there for a few seconds, and then sprang to his feet with a petulant exclamation. He crossed to the table and jerked open the drawer, from which he took a box of cigarettes.

He selected one, and stood moodily tapping it on the lid of the box.

Suddenly he sniffed.

A most unpleasant odour was perceptible in the room. He moved his feet and glanced down hastily as he heard something crunch under one of them.

There was nothing to be seen on the carpet, however, and with a shrug of the shoulders Knox felt in his pocket for a box of matches.

The matches were there all right, but Knox did not take them out. The faint, unpleasant odour that he had noticed a second or so before had suddenly become about ten times as intense. Knox gasped as it took him by the throat.

With every second it was becoming worse. He glared round and strode over to the fireplace, seeking for the source of the smell.

In a short time the room was untenable. Knox found some difficulty in breathing.

And it was steadily getting even worse.

Knox, coughing and spluttering, went over to the window, which he flung open.

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It didn't seem to make a lot of difference, however. The atmosphere was still positively thick.

And Knox was soon afforded evidence that it wasn't confined to his own study.

There was a lot of commotion in the corridor, and when Knox opened his door he found most of the Sixth standing about with handkerchiefs to their noses.

Macgreggor was the only member of the School House Sixth who belonged to the Science School, and he quickly recognised the smell.

"It's one of the sulphides," he announced. "They all stink pretty poisonously. The di-sulphide of carbon, I should say, at a venture."

"We'll take your word for it," said Kildare. "But knowing what it is doesn't explain why it's infesting the place, though, does it? Where's it come from, anyway?"

Macgreggor grinned.

"Well, if you asked for my opinion," he declared, "I should be inclined to say that somebody has been playing a trick on Knox. One of the juniors, most likely."

"But how could they do it?" inquired Kildare wonderingly.

"They've probably filled a few test-tubes with the stuff and put them where they'd get broken," replied Macgreggor acutely. "It's quite an old lab joke."

"Oh, is it?" said Kildare grimly.

Knox was gritting his teeth in fury. He had suddenly remembered, in the light of what Macgreggor had said about test-tubes, the invisible something that had scrunched under his foot. He ventured back into the study, and turned up the carpet. There, sure enough, near to the table, was a little heap of splintered glass. Also, a foot or so from it, a tiny test-tube full of an oily liquid.

The Sixth were chuckling openly. Even Kildare's mouth corners were quivering.

Knox strode across the room and opened a cupboard, from which he took an ashplant.

The stench in the study was still overpowering.

As he stepped into the corridor Kildare moved forward.

"I'll take the matter up if you like, and——" he proffered.

"I don't," said Knox thickly. "I'll settle it in my own way. I'll make the young rotters sorry they ever came to St. Jim's."

And, grasping his ashplant fiercely, he strode off down the corridor, his teeth set, and his eyes glittering malevolently.

CHAPTER 6.

Glyn is Hopeful!

TOM MERRY knocked on the door of Study No. 11 in the Shell corridor.

Monty Lowther and Manners, with Digby and

Herries of the Fourth, stood behind him with resolute expressions on their faces.

"Come in!" called a voice; and the Shell skipper turned the handle and walked into the room, followed by his companions.

Bernard Glyn was busy at the table, which was covered with apparatus, while Dane and Noble sat in armchairs and watched him curiously.

"Hallo!" greeted Dane cheerfully. "Come right in! The more the merrier!"

"I don't know about that!" replied Tom grimly. "We haven't come here to be merry!"

"But I thought you always were!" said Dane, with a grin.

"Thought I always was what?"

"Merry!" chuckled Dane.

He laughed alone, however, since no one else even smiled.

"If you'll take my advice, you'll leave that sort of thing to Monty!" Tom Merry told him. "We've come here on serious business. I suppose you know that the school's been put in quarantine?"

"Eh? Since when?" gasped Noble. "First I've heard of it!"

"About an hour ago! We've only just had the news ourselves! Pretty fine state of affairs, isn't it? And all through Glyn's fatheaded experiments!"

"It's certainly awkward!" agreed Noble.

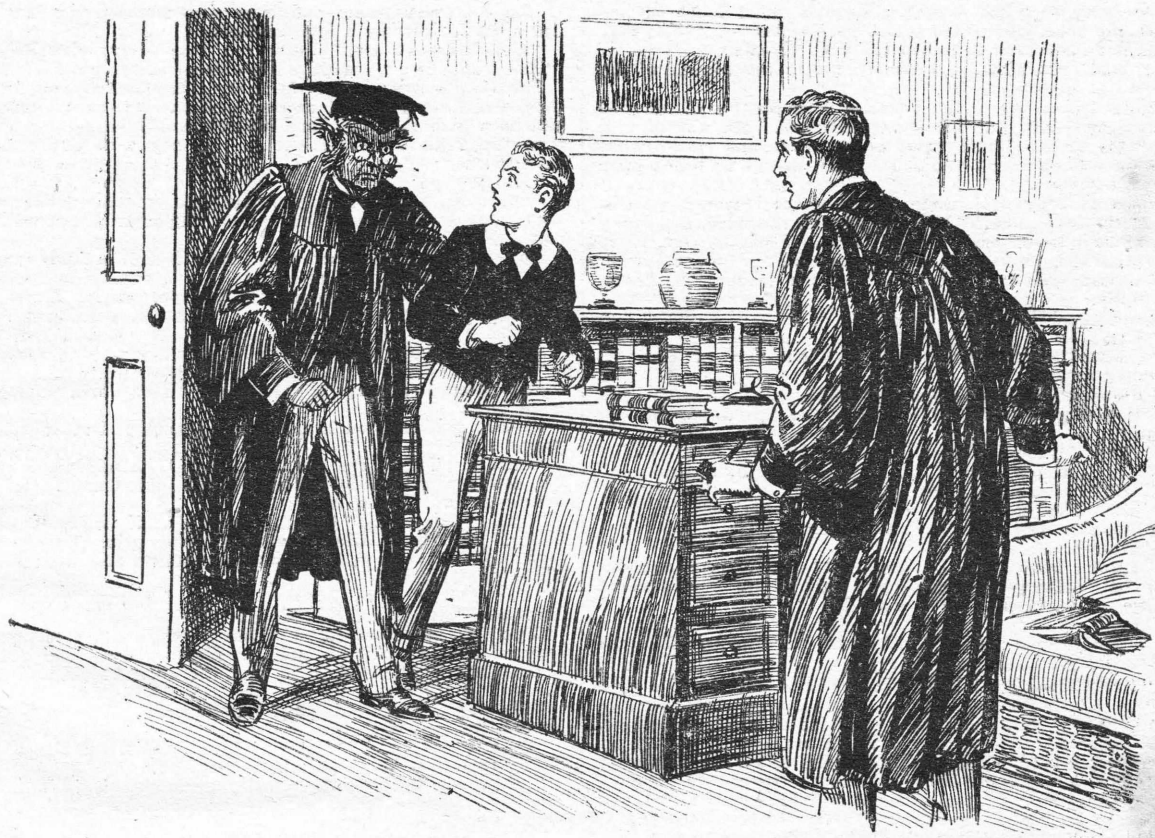
"Awkward! It's a dashed sight more than awkward! Nobody is to be allowed to leave or come to the place until further notice, and the Greyfriars match should take place in two days' time! A jolly fine state of affairs if we have to cancel it!"

"Why not postpone it?" inquired Dane.

"Impossible! Our fixture list is complete right to the end of the season, and if we put the match off we've got no alternative date to offer Greyfriars. And we can't afford to lose a game. We've come to see what Glyn's going to do about it!"

"Why me?" growled Glyn, without looking up from his work.

"Why you!" snapped Tom Merry. "Simply because it's



Mr. Raiton stood staring at Mr. Ratcliff with the utmost consternation. "Really, Mr. Ratcliff," he said in an anxious voice, "what on earth has happened to you? If the extraordinary hue of your skin is due to some fresh phase of—" He was interrupted by a cry from the Fifth Form master, echoed by one from Tom Merry as his words made them both aware of the fact that Mr. Ratcliff's hands and face were a brilliant blue. (See page 17.)

you who've got us into this mess, and it's up to you to get us out of it!"

"What do you expect me to do?"

"Goodness only knows! But surely you can think of some way of putting matters right! If you can't turn those fellows back to their proper colour, you can at least go and make a clean breast of it to Raiton. He can't blame you for it. 'Tisn't as though you did it on purpose, for the fun of the thing. An accident's an accident, and that's all there is to it!"

"All very well for you to say that, but how do I know Raiton's going to look at it that way. Besides, it's quite on the cards that he'd stop my doing any more experiments if he knew how this one had turned out!"

"Jolly good job, too! Hang it, Glyn, this is bad enough, but who knows what's going to happen next time if you go on?"

"That's exactly what Raiton's going to say, you can bet your boots!" replied Glyn gloomily. "And that's why I don't cotton to the idea of telling him."

"Well, what are you going to do, anyway?" inquired Digby impatiently.

"I'm going to cure those fellows in the sanny," said Glyn. "Good! Now you're talking!" approved Tom Merry enthusiastically. "Can you do it soon, do you think?"

"I'm pretty certain I can. At least, I've got an idea, and if I can only have a few minutes to myself to work it out, I think it's going to do the trick. But with all these blessed interruptions—"

"Carry on!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Don't mind us! So long as it's successful, we sha'n't object to waiting a bit!"

"I've been working like fury every opportunity I've had in the last two days," continued Glyn, resuming his task. "As a matter of fact, I lay awake last night, and about two o'clock this morning I had a sudden notion, and came down here to work it out."

"Jolly good job nobody spotted you!" commented Manners.

"That's so! But they didn't, anyway! I was at work till nearly rising-bell. Haven't had much sleep. Well, I couldn't sleep with this on my mind. The first idea I had was a washout. I constructed a tube that turned a couple of mice blue instead of restoring them to their original white.

They're in that box over there if you want to have a look at them. I haven't got time to show them to you."

"And when do you think you'll be able to get things right again?" inquired Tom Merry anxiously.

"Probably within an hour or so," replied Glyn. "Mind, I'm not promising anything, but if all goes well they'll be out of the sanny by to-morrow morning at the latest. Look here, you fellows, you needn't wait unless you like. I'll come in later and tell you how I've got on!"

"Half a minute!" put in Tom Merry, struck by a sudden thought. "How are you going to get to them? They won't let you into the sanny!"

Glyn smiled.

"No need for me to go in at all," he said. "I can work it from outside. A wall or two makes no difference, you know. Nothing but lead will arrest the progress of the ray. I shall sneak out and fit up my apparatus as near to the sanny as possible, and work from there."

"A risk!" commented Digby.

"Well, I've got to take risks, haven't I?" retorted Glyn.

"Then we'll come with you," announced Tom Merry.

Glyn looked rather pleased.

"Will you?" he said. "I must say I should be bucked if you would, though I didn't like to ask you. I shall probably be glad of some help!"

So it was arranged that the Terrible Three, with Digby and Herries, should come back to Study No. 11 in an hour and a half's time, to accompany Glyn, Dane, and Noble, on their expedition, Glyn estimating that he would have his apparatus ready by then.

It was clear that Glyn was anxious to have the study to himself for a little while, so the other seven juniors agreed to go down to the Common-room. They filed out into the corridor just in time to see somebody turning the corner that led to the stairs. They recognised the figure as that of Knox, but it occurred to none of them that the prefect's presence had anything to do with them, and they certainly did not suspect that he had been listening at the door of Study No. 11.

Yet such had been the case, and it was in consequence of what he had overheard that Knox was making for the Fifth Form corridor.

Cutts and Gilmore—St. Leger was not in the study at the
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time—were so much taken by surprise when Knox pushed open the door without the preliminary of knocking, that they had not time even to sweep the pack of cards, with which they had been amusing themselves, into the drawer of the table.

They looked up at the intruder with glances of mingled anger and fear, but Knox only grinned. He was himself addicted to such indulgences as cigarettes and card-parties, and he was not likely to make trouble, though he did happen to be a prefect.

As a matter of fact, when they saw who it was, the Fifth-Formers allowed the cards to remain on the table, and Knox made no allusion either to the forbidden pasteboards, or to the haze of cigarette-smoke that was tainting the air.

"I want you two fellows to do me a favour," he began abruptly.

Cutts shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he said. "Matter of fact, we're only playin' halfpenny points on credit. We're stoney! Sorry!" Knox scowled.

"Don't be an idiot! I'm not talkin' about money. It's those young blackguards, Merry & Co. I've got 'em on toast!"

"Good!" yawned Cutts. "Make it hot for 'em!"

"That's what I'm goin' to do, and I want you to help me."

"Us?"

"Yes, I've just discovered they've got some kind of game on to-night. Going to break bounds, you know!"

"What for?"

"I don't know! But it's some kind of devilment, you can bet! And I'm goin' to catch 'em red-handed. That's where you come in. I shall want some help!"

"Oh!"

"How did you get to know about it?" inquired Gilmore interestedly.

"I overheard 'em talkin'. Some of the fags played a trick on me a little while ago—showed some stinkin' chemicals into my study. I knew it'd be the dickens of a job to find out who'd done it, but it suddenly struck me that Glyn probably knew something about it. You know he's always messing about with that kind of thing, and ten to one he supplied it to the young rotters who put it into my room. I was going to try and scare their names out of him."

"Some hopes!" murmured Cutts.

"Oh, I don't know," said Knox significantly. "You can do marvels sometimes with an ashplant, and I don't suppose Glyn's any thicker-skinned than the rest of the little sweeps! Anyway, I made for his study, and just as I was going to open the door I heard Merry's voice saying something about going out in an hour or so's time. They were all in it, according to what I heard, Glyn as well, and a couple of the Fourth."

"And you don't know what they're up to?"

"No; but we shall soon find out. If we don't we shall have to make it up ourselves when they're in front of the beaks. We can think of something between us, surely, and a prefect's word comes before anything they can say. I know you fellows are up against them. Are you on to help me yank them up?"

"You bet we are!" responded Cutts. "I'd give my ears to see 'em all sacked!"

"Right you are, then!" nodded Knox. "I'll keep a lookout, and fetch you as soon as you're wanted!"

And he departed, an evil grin on his face, to take up his self-imposed vigil in the neighbourhood of the junior corridors.

CHAPTER 7.

Not Quite a Success!

READY, you fellows?"

Bernard Glyn stood just inside the doorway of Study No. 10.

Tom Merry rose to his feet briskly, his example being followed by Manners and Lowther, who were both also present.

"I'll cut down and tell the others," said Monty. "They're in the Common-room."

"Right-ho! Be as quick as you can! We don't want to waste any time!"

"Have you managed it?" inquired Tom Merry.

Glyn nodded.

"You know those green mice? Well, I've made 'em white again, and if this tube will do that to mice, it's sure to work the same with the fellows."

"Good! Ah, here comes the rest of the chaps!"

Digby, Herries, Dane, and Noble had lost no time in coming, and within a couple of minutes they were all stealing quietly down the smaller staircase leading to the side-door of the School House, laden with apparatus.

With the exercise of the utmost caution they were enabled to gain the Close without meeting anyone, and to cross over

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to the evergreen-bushes and trees that screened the sunny way a matter of only a few moments.

"Well, here we are," announced Tom Merry cheerfully. "Thank goodness we managed it without being spotted."

But Tom Merry was wrong in supposing that nobody but themselves was aware of their excursion. Knox's vigilance had been well rewarded, and he was even then setting out from the Fifth Form corridor in company with Cutts and Gilmore.

"Hurry up!" said Glyn briskly. "You've got the accumulators, Dane. Pass 'em over here, and for goodness' sake try to be less clumsy than usual! If you drop 'em, we're done. Now the coil, Manners."

He worked swiftly, screwing wire into terminals and adjusting his apparatus generally.

"I say, one of those blinds isn't properly drawn," announced Manners suddenly. "I believe if I shinned up this tree I could see into the room."

"Might be nobody there," said Digby.

"Well, there's a light, anyway, so it's ten to one the room's occupied," argued Manners. "It's worth trying. Here goes!"

He swung himself on to the lowest branch and made swift progress.

"Cheers! This is the ward they're in," he said gleefully.

"I can see somebody. It's—yes, it's old Gussy! He's sitting up in bed, reading!"

"The 'Tailor and Cutter,' probably, if it really is Gussy," whispered Digby, with a faint grin. "Keep a look out, Manners, and see what happens when Glyn sets his apparatus going."

"That's what I've come up here for, ass!" replied Manners. "Right you are, Glyn! Let her go!"

Glyn pressed the lever arm of the switch, and the subdued hum of the coil became audible. He picked up the lead-lined box and operated it so that the aperture pointed at the wall of the sunny.

"Nothing's happened yet," announced Manners from above.

"Of course it hasn't!" growled Glyn. "Give me time!"

The juniors stood in breathless suspense.

"Well, it's about time something happened, isn't it?" inquired Digby. "The damage was done a jolly sight quicker than this, anyway."

"Sister Ann, what seest thou?" called Monty Lowther softly to his chum in the tree above. "Any change in Gussy yet?"

"Not so far," confessed Manners, in a disappointed tone. "He's still as green as—Steady on! He's—oh, jumping jellyfish!"

Manners' voice rang out in a startled shout. The branches creaked and swished as though he was about to fall out of the tree.

"What's the matter?" called up Tom Merry anxiously.

"It—it's Gussy! He—he's g-g-gone blue!"

"Blue?" echoed the juniors aghast.

"What's that?" Glyn snapped off the switch, and the humming of the coil ceased. "You say D'Arcy has gone blue, Manners? Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure! His hands and face are bright blue!"

"Good heavens! Can you see any of the others?"

"No. And I don't want to! The sight of Gussy's enough for me!"

"What's happened?" asked Tom Merry, in an awed voice. "Has something gone wrong?"

Glyn made a gesture of despair.

"It's an accident!" he said.

"What?" came Digby's voice, in disgusted accents.

"Another?"

"Oh, shut up, ass!" snapped Glyn. "I know what's happened. I've been using the wrong tube. I told you I made one that turned the mice blue, didn't I? In my hurry I must have fitted up—"

"Yes, yes! We quite understand that!" put in Tom Merry impatiently. "Don't waste time explaining! Let's hear what you're going to do about it!"

"There's only one thing for it," returned Glyn. "I must cut back and get the other tube. Once I've got that, I can—"

"Turn Gussy pink or purple, I suppose?" suggested Lowther cheerfully.

"Ass! I tell you it'll restore 'em to their proper colour!"

"That's what you said you were going to do with this one," Digby pointed out. "You can't expect us to have much faith in what you say, Glyn, can you?"

"But haven't I explained—"

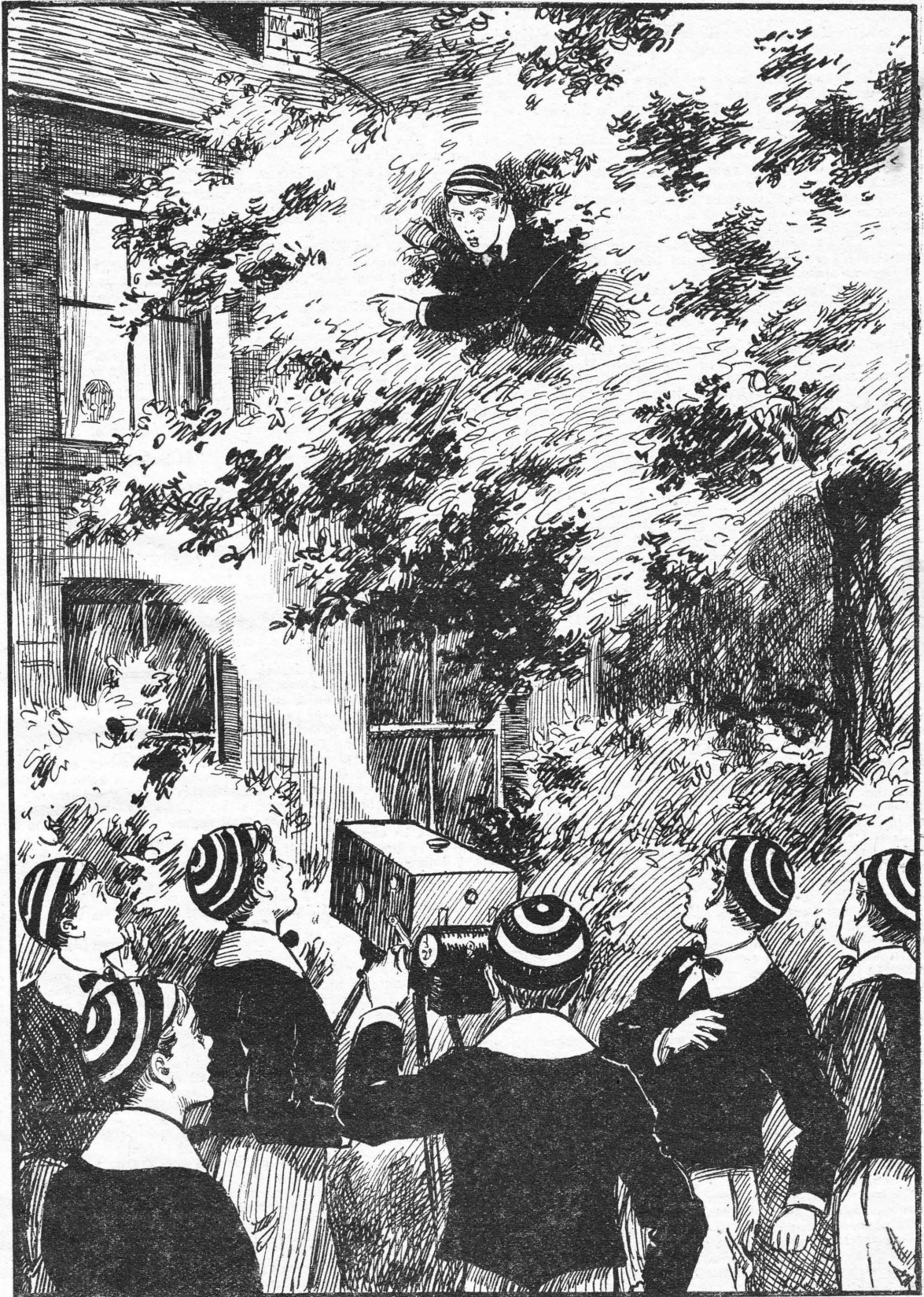
"You have!" said Tom Merry dryly. "In fact, you've done nothing but explain for the last couple of days. If you'd start doing something—"

"Oh, hang it! I'm going back for that other tube!"

"Cut off, then! We'll wait here! But don't be—"

"Hist!"

(Continued on page 16.)



Bernard Glyn pressed the lever arm of the switch, and the subdued hum of the coil became audible. He operated the lead-lined box so that the aperture pointed at the wall of the sanny. "Oh, jumping jellyfish!" Manners' voice rang out in a startled shout, and the branches creaked and swished as though he was about to fall out of the tree. "What's the matter?" called up Tom Merry anxiously. "It's—it's Gussy!" cried Manners. "He—he's gone blue!" "Blue?" echoed the juniors, aghast. (See page 17.)

It was a warning whisper from Manners in the tree above.

"What's the matter?" called up Tom Merry cautiously.

"Quiet, you asses! Somebody's coming this way!"

"Who is it?"

"I can't see. But there are three of them, and they're heading straight for here."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Tom Merry, in dismay.

The juniors waited in breathless silence.

"They came over in this direction," said a voice near at hand.

"Knox!" whispered Tom Merry, recognising the tones. "Sounds as if he'd spotted us coming out!"

"What's he want to come butting in for?" gritted Glyn.

"The interfering idiot! I've a jolly good mind to turn him blue just to teach him to keep his nose out of—"

That Glyn's vengeful notion was more than a mere passing thought was evident when he moved towards the switch as he was speaking.

Tom Merry saw the movement, and jumped forward with a low-voiced exclamation.

"Don't be an ass, Glyn! You've done enough damage as it is!"

Glyn's hand reached the switch a fraction of a second before Tom Merry's reached the School House inventor's shoulder, and the subdued hum of the coil broke the silence. Glyn grabbed at the lead-lined box, and endeavoured to direct the aperture in the direction from which Knox's voice had sounded.

Tom Merry tore it out of his hands, while Lowther fumbled along the length of insulated wire that linked the coil to the accumulators, found the switch, and cut off the current.

Of course, the damage had been done. Not the damage that Glyn had intended, but that which the rest of the juniors had foreseen as soon as the sound of the coil broke out, to be followed by the scuffle between Tom Merry and Glyn.

It was practically impossible that Knox should not have heard it. And the fact that he had was announced when his joyful cry of "There they are!" reached their ears.

"Glyn, you—you—oh, you blighted ass!" hissed Tom Merry witheringly. "Bunk for it, you chaps!"

"But the apparatus—"

"Hang the apparatus! Look after yourselves! Look out! Here they come!"

The juniors broke cover just as Knox, Cutts, and Gilmore arrived upon the scene.

It was a case of each for himself, and none of the juniors wasted time in making themselves scarce. It is true that Glyn would have remained to look after his beloved apparatus, but Dane and Noble dragged him off with them, and he had no choice in the matter.

Flying figures dispersed in all directions, and in only one case did the intruders lay hands upon their quarry. Cutts managed to get a grip upon Manners, who, in consequence of having to slide out of the tree, did not get a fair start with the rest, but Monty Lowther, hearing his chum's call for assistance, turned and charged the Fifth-Former to such good purpose that Cutts went sprawling on his back, releasing Manners, who flashed away into the darkness without delay.

Tom Merry went scudding away towards the boathouse with Knox at his heels. He eluded the prefect by turning sharply round at the end of the sanny, putting on an extra spurt, and taking cover in a clump of bushes. Knox wasted a few minutes in futile search, and then returned to the scene of the first encounter in a very disgruntled mood.

Cutts and Gilmore were both there, the former caressing a rising bump on the back of his head.

Knox growled something uncomplimentary when he saw they were empty-handed, and Gilmore, in view of the fact that Knox was in the same condition, made an obvious retort.

The snapping of a twig under a foot turned their attention to a dim figure a few yards away, standing in the shadow of a tree, as if seeking to escape detection.

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"There's one of 'em!" he said softly. "Come on! We'll get him, at any rate!"

"What's he standing there for?" inquired Gilmore, in a puzzled voice. "He must have seen us!"

"Not necessarily! We've been in the shelter of these bushes, and perhaps he's got his face turned the other way, looking for a chance to get over to the School House. Ten to one he's afraid we're somewhere that side. I expect it's that young rotter Merry! He couldn't have got back to the House yet."

The three stole quietly forward. The figure seemed unaware of their approach. They could not see it very distinctly, but it was feasible to suppose that, as Knox had suggested, whoever it was had got his back turned to them.

Within a few yards Knox gave a whispered order, and

with the two Fifth-Formers, charged down upon their unsuspecting quarry.

"Got you!" panted Knox triumphantly, as his arms went round the startled figure.

Cutts, his head throbbing, and burning to avenge that painful and ignominious fall, swept his leg round so that his instep caught the captive behind the knees. With a yelp he subsided, with Knox sprawling across him.

Cutts and Gilmore grinned delightedly.

The grins went cold on their faces as the captive emitted another yelp.

It was not Tom Merry. It was not even one of the juniors they had been chasing a few moments previously. It was not, in fact, a junior at all.

It was Mr. Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House.

Cutts and Gilmore stood for a second as though paralysed. Knox used the same second to better purpose. He released his captive and sprang to his feet. His action awoke Cutts and Gilmore to a sense of what was due to the situation. In company with Knox, they were a level hundred yards away from the spot in less than even time.

Mr. Ratcliff sat up and gasped. He had been indulging in a late evening constitutional when the sound of running footsteps had attracted his attention, and dimly seen forms had passed him, scurrying towards the School House. He had stood in the shadow of the trees, watching the School House, in the hope that circumstances might enable him to take a hand in the proceedings to the discomfiture of some of the participants.

And suddenly an earthquake had included him within the sphere of its activities.

At least, so it had seemed to Mr. Ratcliff at the moment.

Mr. Ratcliff's hand, pressing upon the ground for the purpose of assisting him to rise to his feet, encountered a piece of cloth.

A cap—a boy's cap! Assaulted by boys! Here was proof—and a clue!

It was too dark to see if there was a name inside the cap, but presumably there would be. It should be an easy task to trace the owner.

There came the sound of running footsteps. Mr. Ratcliff sat in the shadow of the trees, and groped for his pince-nez.

Thud!

Something hard struck him in the ribs. There was an exclamation of dismay, mingled with a cry of anguish from Mr. Ratcliff, and a soft, heavy body plumped down upon him.

"You ass!" growled the newcomer resentfully, rolling clear and scrambling to his feet. "Who is it?"

He peered down into the darkness at his feet, and at that moment Mr. Ratcliff so far recovered himself as to be able to fling his bony arms round the knees of the speaker.

"Ah, I have one of you, at least!" he gasped triumphantly.

"Wretched youth! You shall regret this outrage! Do not seek to escape!"

He lurched painfully to his feet, and dragged his captive into a beam of light that streamed from one of the School House windows.

"Ah, Merry! I might have guessed it!" he snapped. "Wretched youth, where are your accomplices in this outrage?"

"M-my accomplices!" stammered Tom Merry blankly. "I don't—"

"Ah, you refuse to answer me! No matter! They shall be found and brought to book for their dastardly conduct!"

And Tom Merry, bewildered beyond measure by the vague accusations that were being levelled against him, and amazed by the discovery that the recumbent form over which he had tripped while speeding back to the School House after eluding Knox in the darkness had been that of Mr. Ratcliff, was dragged round into the quad and up the steps of the School House by the furious master.

CHAPTER 8.

Mr. Railton Learns the Truth.

"COME in!"

Mr. Railton, in a comfortable armchair on the hearth of his study in the School House, a pipe between his teeth, looked up from the pages of his book and glanced towards the door, on which a knock had just sounded.

In response to his call the handle turned, and Tom Merry of the Shell appeared in the widening aperture.

"Hallo, Merry!" began Mr. Railton cheerily. "Come in, my boy, and—"

He broke off in surprise. Tom Merry was not alone. Neither did he seem to be entering the Housemaster's study of his own accord.

A hand was on his shoulder, propelling him forward, and the owner of that hand had loomed up in the doorway behind the junior.

It was Mr. Ratcliff, and Mr. Ratcliff at his grimmest. He began to speak before he had entered the room, while he still stood in the faint light of the corridor.

"Mr. Railton, I regret that I have an unpleasant duty to perform." Mr. Railton was secretly sceptical as to the truth of that statement, but he made no audible comment. "I have a complaint to make—partly in connection with this wretched junior, although there are others concerned in the affair. I have no doubt, however, that Merry is the ring-leader and the most culpable. I have been assaulted—brutally assaulted—by juniors of your House. I was fortunately successful in capturing Merry, who, of course, denies all knowledge of the affair. His accomplices made good their escape, but it should not be difficult to discover their identity, particularly as I have secured a cap belonging to one of them."

He tossed the cap on to Mr. Railton's desk as he spoke. The School House master made no movement towards taking it up. He stood there, staring at his colleague with the utmost consternation.

"But really, Mr. Ratcliff," he said in an anxious voice, "what on earth has happened to you?"

"Eh? Happened? What do you mean?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff angrily. "Have I not explained what has happened? Surely you are capable of understanding—"

"I am at least capable of appreciating the fact that you are in a most remarkable condition!" interrupted Mr. Railton curtly. "And at the present moment I am more concerned with that than with anything else, as I should have imagined that you also would have been. If the extraordinary hue of your skin is due to some fresh phase of—"

He was interrupted by a cry of consternation from Mr. Ratcliff, echoed by one from Tom Merry. The School House master's words had made them both aware for the first time of the fact that Mr. Ratcliff's hands and face were a brilliant blue—a circumstance that had previously escaped their notice in consequence of the New House master's preoccupation with other matters, and Tom Merry's position, his back having been turned on Mr. Ratcliff since his arrest in the quad.

He sent, accordingly, for Gilmore of the Fifth.

Gilmore appeared within a few minutes in a palpable state of blue funk. He had discovered the loss of his cap just as he was re-entering the School House, and had been praying ever since that it had not been dropped anywhere near the scene of the encounter with Mr. Ratcliff. The summons to the Housemaster's study was sufficient indication of the fact that the cap had indeed gone astray in the penalty area, so to speak.

In the face of the evidence afforded by the cap, and Mr. Railton's catechism, Gilmore lost his nerve, and decided that unreserved confession was the best, if not the only, course for him to adopt.

The full story naturally included Knox, Cutts, and several juniors. Gilmore, for obvious reasons, was unable to furnish his interlocutor with a full list of the latter, and it also necessitated relating the incident of Knox's visit to the Fifth Form corridor.

"And you say you don't know what the juniors were doing?" said Mr. Railton.

"No, sir! But Knox said it was certain to be some kind of mischief."

"That is quite probable," said Mr. Railton coldly. "But it is no part of Knox's duty to connive at wrongdoing in order to— But that is beside the point at issue. I will discuss that with Knox, Cutts, and yourself at a more fitting occasion. Have you no idea at all of what the juniors were doing when you reached them?"

"None at all, sir. But I think it was something to do with one of those mechanical contrivances of Glyn's, because we heard a sort of humming sound."

"A humming sound?"

"Yes, sir. It stopped before we got to them."

"I see. Very well, Gilmore. I will make a full inquiry into your share of the business later on. You may go now, but send Glyn to me."

When the School House scientist presented himself at the House master's study he was in no easier frame of mind than Gilmore had been. He was soon afforded good and sufficient reason for his uneasiness.

SPECIAL FOR NEXT WEEK—

"THE DESERTER!"

—An Amazing Long Story of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford.

Tom Merry understood at once what had happened. When Glyn had switched on the current in his reckless attempt at making Knox pay for his interference with their operations, Mr. Ratcliff must have been somewhere in the vicinity, and he had unluckily intercepted the ray before Tom Merry had succeeded in snatching the box from Glyn.

Here was a pretty pickle!

Mr. Railton acted with promptitude. He dismissed Tom Merry with a few curt words, and conducted the dazed New House master to the Head's house.

Dr. Holmes was in his study, but he was not alone. A short, sturdy, red-faced man with an abundance of untidy white hair, and blue eyes which twinkled merrily, suggesting that their owner was everlastingly enjoying some private joke, was introduced to the School House master as Sir Everard Crighton, the famous pathologist, who had been hastily summoned to the school on the advice of the local general practitioner, who had at last confessed the fact that he was completely baffled by the mysterious epidemic.

When Sir Everard saw Mr. Ratcliff he sidled his head like an inquisitive bird, took a step forward, adjusting a pair of pince-nez which he had extracted in a most leisurely fashion from his vest-pocket, and said:

"Dear me! Dear me! Extraordinary! Mo-ooost extra-oor-din'ry! And how long has this young man been in this extraordinary condition, may I ask?"

Mr. Railton briefly recounted the details of Mr. Ratcliff's visit to his study—the New House master seemed incapable of speech—and the famous consultant listened interestedly.

With the consciousness that nothing further was expected of him, and he was not in a position to do more, Mr. Railton returned to his study.

The first object that his gaze encountered upon entering was the cap that Mr. Ratcliff had thrown on to his study table. With a recollection of the complaint that had brought the luckless House master to his study, Mr. Railton frowned, picked up the cap, and glanced at the lining.

An expression of bewilderment came into his eyes as he read the name on the small tab attached thereto.

It was that of Gilmore of the Fifth.

Yet Mr. Ratcliff had stated positively that the cap had been dropped by one of the boys who had been concerned with Tom Merry in the alleged attack upon him.

Mr. Railton decided that the matter merited a little investigation.

Mr. Railton had spent the few minutes between the departure of Gilmore and the arrival of Glyn in doing some constructive thinking. He had begun by wondering exactly what special interest the neighbourhood of the sanatorium could possibly have had for Glyn, and from that starting point he had progressed along rather definite lines.

He did not tell Glyn what he had learnt from Gilmore. As a matter of fact he hadn't learnt much that was tangible from Gilmore at all, but the Fifth-Former's reference to a "humming sound" had proved suggestive to the Housemaster's brain.

He pointed out to Glyn the remarkable fact that his (Glyn's) immediate vicinity appeared to be a most unhealthy region with regard to this new and mysterious malady. All the seizures had occurred within a yard or so of Glyn's study, with the exception of the last, and in that case Glyn had been only a short distance away from the victim at the time.

Mr. Railton made no comment upon the series of remarkable coincidences. He drew no inference from them. He simply drew Glyn's attention to them in a pleasant, chatty fashion, and invited him to make his own explanation.

And Glyn wisely decided to do so.

Mr. Railton heard him through in silence, and sent him to his study for the tube he had intended to use outside the sanatorium that evening.

Then Mr. Railton conducted Glyn and his tube to the Head's study. He arrived just as the news that all the patients in the sanatorium were now blue instead of green had been communicated to Dr. Holmes, and Sir Everard Crighton, expressing mild regret that he had not adopted the Law or the Army as a career, was preparing to go over and investigate this new complication of an already baffling problem.

In company with the astonished Head he listened interestedly to Glyn's explanation, prefaced by a few words from Mr. Railton, only interrupting about seven or eight times with "Most extraordinary!"

"To my mind it is incredible," said the Head. "Incredible! May I ask what course you propose to take, Sir Everard?"

"It seems to me there can only be one," replied the

(Continued on page 28.)



CHAPTER 1. Bitter Blood!

GEOFFREY WOOD snatched up his pith helmet, flung open the wire-gauze door, then took the four veranda steps in one bound and dashed across the scorching compound

Outside the laboratory bungalow the air was stifling. The Indian sun beat down pitilessly. Nevertheless, young Geoff seemed in a mighty hurry.

In a dozen strides he was through the compound gate and on the fringe of the jungle beyond.

"Dekho, Mehta Ram!" Geoff called out in Hindustani to the head man of a gang of squatting coolies. "Why do you sit there and let these lazy sons of owls do no work? Thirsk sahib has ordered this patch of jungle to be cleared. But, since nearly half one hour no coolie has done one stroke!"

Young Geoff had good reason for annoyance. He had a pile of work on hand in the experimental laboratory of the Bengal Radium Institute. And every time he shot a glance through the wire-gauze windows he had seen Mehta Ram and his gang of coolies—who were supposed to be clearing the surrounding jungle—squatting on their haunches.

The little institute was situated in the heart of a Bengal jungle, and was devoted to obtaining radium from local deposits of pitch-blende. And Geoff, who had studied chemistry in England, had only recently arrived.

But he was an expert, radium mad, and had been sent out from home to be the only white assistant to James Thirsk, the sour-tempered old scientist who bossed the place.

Geoff was mighty keen, and had, apart from his other work, picked up quite a lot of the local languages during the six months he had been out.

But old Thirsk was never satisfied. He expected Geoff to do his research work in the laboratory and keep an eye on the coolies at the same time.

As Geoff, who looked a strapping young fellow in his white ducks, shouted at their head man, the score of half-naked coolies scrambled up. They

made some shift to hide their hookahs, and the English lad glowered at them.

"I guess," he muttered in English, "you don't care a hoot, you hopeless crew of * bhang-smoking wasters, that more pitch-blende has been located under this patch of jungle—an' therefore it's got to be cleared quickly. Still, you're jolly well going to work, or feel my boot—"

Geoff broke off, to swing round furiously on Mehta Ram. For the head coolie hadn't attempted to rise, and was staring up insolently.

For a second Geoff studied the fellow, noting that he looked different from the others. For Mehta Ram had a primitive air of aristocracy about him. He had thin, well-cut features, and his skin was lighter than that of the other coolies.

Altogether Mehta Ram had been a puzzle to Geoff ever since the white lad had arrived at the Radium Institute. But that didn't deter Geoff now.

Geoff shot out an arm, gripped Mehta Ram by the shoulder, and jerked him to his feet. But the head coolie was a good deal bigger than Geoff, and wrenched himself free.

"You're not the master," Mehta Ram exploded in Hindustani. "Thirsk sahib is master here!"

At the mutinous insolence Geoff doubled his fists and his blue eyes flashed. But he controlled himself with an effort; though he heard some of the coolies snigger.

"Not another word, Mehta Ram!" gritted the lad. "Are you getting on with the work, or shall I show you—"

But Mehta's Ram's air of insolence vanished. He suddenly bristled with rage, jumped back, and whipped out a long knife. In a flash the other coolies, following their leader's example, spread out fan-wise behind Geoff. All were armed with axes and heavy machetes.

Geoff sized up the situation in a twinkling. He knew that English overseers on Bengal estates had often been attacked and killed by coolies, and he didn't intend to add to the number.

The quickest way out of the danger

* Bhang: the leaf of a plant smoked by Indians.

would be to out the ringleader. So Geoff flung himself at Mehta Ram.

There came a flashing gleam of steel as Mehta Ram struck down. With his right arm Geoff parried the blow, and his left fist made stunning contact with the head coolie's brown chin.

Down crashed Mehta Ram on his back, his rag of a turban flying from his head. He lay still, in a huddled heap. But Geoff only managed to snatch up a stout bamboo stick and whirl round in the nick of time.

For, as their leader fell, the other coolies rushed on the English lad, yelling with rage. The fierce rays of the sun glinted on whirling axe-blades and heavy cane-knives.

Sucking in his breath, Geoff sprang to meet them.

Whack, whack! went the stout bamboo, descending with terrific force on brown heads and arms.

Geoff danced about like a boxer. He was never in the same place for the tenth of a second. In less than a minute three coolies were on the ground, two more had dropped their weapons and were nursing their bruised arms, and the rest fled.

Panting for breath, Geoff strode back to Mehta Ram. The big native was just scrambling up; and Geoff helped him—not very gently.

"Now," snapped the lad, "just shout to your gang to come back! Then get to work! If there's any more attempt at mutiny you may get hurt!"

Mehta Ram seemed to think he had been hurt enough for the present. Anyway, though he glared savagely, he shouted to the rest of the coolies to come back from the jungle.

The three Geoff had downed were quickly brought round with a bucket of water. Five minutes later the whole gang were at work on the forest clearing as if they were doing it for a wager.

The little rebellion, which might have ended in a tragedy, seemed to have been promptly quelled. So thought Geoff as, after watching for a few moments, he strode back towards the laboratory bungalow.

*Dekho: Look here! See!

But Geoff was reckoning without Mehta Ram. He certainly thought the head coolie a very unusual sort of Indian to be doing coolie work. But he very nearly lost his life in a horrible manner before he discovered just how unusual Mehta Ram was.

Hardly had Geoff gained the veranda, when the gauze door of the research room flew open, and out popped a little old man as if he'd been fired from a gun.

Like Geoff, he was dressed in white ducks, but with his high-domed forehead, nut-cracker features, and short bow legs he presented a queer spectacle. He scowled at Geoff through gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Good-morning, Mr. Thirsk!" began Geoff.

But the little old man, who was none other than James Thirsk, the boss of the Radium Institute, cut the lad short.

"Good-morning, be hanged!" he spluttered. "It's vile! The thermometer is nearly a hundred and twenty in the shade! And what's all that noise about? I thought I heard the coolies chattering! It's most disturbing! Can't you keep 'em in order?"

Geoff stared, then laughed. "Yes, sir," he answered. "I'm afraid the coolies were a bit talkative. I had a little argument with 'em. In fact, Mehta Ram is a scrap too big for his job."

"Mehta Ram!" screamed old Thirsk. "Don't you fall foul of him. He's a most valuable fellow. I wouldn't lose him at any price. If he goes, all the coolies will go. You just be civil to Mehta Ram, my lad."

Geoff gulped, and a hot flush spread over his rubicund features.

Having just escaped death by the skin of his teeth, Geoff found his boss's remarks rather irritating.

"He's an insolent slacker, sir!" the lad broke out angrily. But he realised his words were of little use, for old Thirsk, though a brilliant scientist, had no powers of observation outside chemistry.

"Well, if he is insolent," Thirsk cried, "you must make allowances for him. He's only an ignorant coolie; and we can't afford to lose him. Coolies are scarce."

"But is he an ignorant coolie?" put in Geoff eagerly. He looks quite different from the others. I've got an idea that he's taken on his job here for some special purpose. Perhaps he's a thief—a Bengal thug?"

"Pshaw!" snorted Thirsk. "All the thugs in India were swept out of existence fifty years ago. You've been reading books, my boy. Just stick to your work for a change. Mehta Ram is only a common coolie, but a very necessary one."

Geoff, who worked about eighteen hours in every twenty-four, felt a little peeved, but, realising the futility of argument, he made to enter the laboratory.

Thirsk stopped him. "One moment!" snapped the old man irritably. "Take the radium we extracted last week and lock it up in the safe in your bungalow. I don't want it kept in—"

"Very good, sir," answered Geoff. "But I think we ought to have a new safe. That thing in my bungalow is absolutely prehistoric."

"Clear out!" snapped old Thirsk. "And do as you're told!"

So Geoff cleared out. Five minutes later he was proceeding towards his own mud-walled, thatched bungalow, which stood in an adjoining compound by itself. In one hand he

clutched a small leaden casket, which contained a very small quantity of the priceless radium.

Just as Geoff was entering the gate of his compound he heard a thin voice hailing him. The lad swung round to see, scurrying after him, the young Bengalee student whose job was to assist Geoff in extracting radium from pitchblende.

The native youth, who was of considerable assistance to Geoff, rejoiced in the name of Mookerjee Chundaji Dass. He was wearing a white robe, which left his brown legs bare, purple socks supported by green sock-suspenders, and canary yellow boots, and his head, which was shaven down the centre, had been liberally greased with coconut oil. He was a typical Bengalee.

"Hallo, Chunda!" grinned Geoff, who rather liked the timid native. "What's up? You look as scared as a hunted cat."

"Oh, sar!" panted Chunda in his queer English, "did I not behold you having most awful battle with dangerous coolies? By carefuller pushing my face round corner of bungalow wall, I observed without being myself regarded. I saw you strike Mehta Ram a shrewd smite. But beware of Mehta Ram, sar! In my opeenion he is one priceless, jolly old scamp, sar."

"That's what I think, Chunda," laughed Geoff. "But I guess I've tamed him for a bit. But half a mo—what d'you know about Mehta Ram?"

"Not a blazing thing, sar!" whispered Chundaji Dass, looking round fearfully. "But I beg to jolly well suggest that he is no more a coolie than I am!"

Then the Bengalee youth's round eyes fell on Geoff's leaden casket.

"Oh, sar!" he exclaimed, "surelee you are not putting more radium in your primitive safe-box? A blind monkey could open it with a rusty pin, sar."

"Orders, Chunda!" snapped Geoff, moving on. "Besides, no one knows where the stuff is kept except you an' me, and Mr. Thirsk, of course. And what native of these jungles would steal radium? It would be mighty difficult stuff to sell."

Chundaji Dass, still protesting, shuffled off.

Geoff entered his bungalow and deposited the little casket in the antique safe which stood in a corner of his sparsely-furnished bed-room.

"I don't believe in this old safe myself," muttered Geoff, as he twirled the knobs. "However, that's old Jimmy Thirsk's business."

Then Geoff left his darkened bungalow, returning through the grilling compounds to the chemical laboratory. He little guessed that within a week he would have left the Radium Institute and be a fugitive in the Bengal jungles.

CHAPTER 2.

Geoff is Determined!

Geoff sat up in bed quickly but noiselessly, with his pulses leaping. He could have sworn that he had been awakened by a light footfall on the veranda outside.

It was nearly midnight, and the black

vault of the heavens was dotted with twinkling stars. But silence reigned—the absolute stillness of an Indian night.

For a second Geoff held his breath, striving to peer through the darkness of his room. He had just made up his mind that he had been mistaken, when, suddenly, a tall, dark figure bulked in the open doorway.

Geoff's right hand darted under his pillow, extracting a small electric torch, and a second later the white eye of it cleaved the blackness. It fell full on the intruder's face—the scowling face of Mehta Ram!

"I guessed so!" breathed Geoff, bunching his muscles to spring.

But things happened at racing speed. Blinded for a second, Mehta Ram recoiled. Then, leaping into the room, he snatched up a wooden chair, and hurled it with deadly aim at Geoff's torch.

The chair whizzed across the room, knocking the torch out of Geoff's hand. There came a splintering crash as torch and chair hit the stone floor, and pitch darkness followed. Then from out of the blackness a shadowy form rushed upon the English lad.

But Geoff was on his knees. He punched upwards at a dimly-seen head, a jolting, short-arm jab, and from the darkness there came a gasp of pain.

The next instant Geoff was on his back, fighting desperately beneath about two hundred pounds of bone and muscle. Mehta Ram's steel fingers found Geoff's throat.

Desperate, half-strangled, the lad gave a mighty heave. The struggling pair rolled off the bed, to land on the hard floor with a dull thud. But now Geoff was uppermost.

Except for gasps and the cracking of straining muscles, the fight had taken place in grim silence. But as Geoff's hand fell by chance on the dropped torch the lad gave a cry of satisfaction.

"Got you, you thug!" he cried, and raised his weapon. But Mehta Ram was as slippery as an eel. Indeed, as Geoff had already discovered, the native had thoroughly greased his almost naked body with oil. And, as quick as lightning, he squirmed from under Geoff and hurled the lad over his head.

Geoff was on his feet as quick as his assailant. He whirled round, trying to grab the indistinct Mehta Ram, who had suddenly made up his mind to take to flight.

The lad seized Mehta Ram's slippery arm, then let go with a shout of pain, for two of his fingers had been torn to ribbons! The scoundrel had adopted another device, well known amongst Indian thieves. Besides oiling his skin, Mehta Ram had festooned himself with barbed fish-hooks.

As Geoff staggered back, the ruffian fled out through the open door.

Across his dark compound Geoff thudded in hot pursuit. But the lithe Indian seemed to have the eyes of a cat. He took the low compound wall at a jump, and quickly vanished in the rank jungle.

"Won't be a ha'porth of use to follow you in there," growled Geoff, as he halted, breathing heavily. "But I'll make old Thirsk send for the police in the morning, Mr. Mehta Ram. And I guess you've bungled your precious scheme absolutely."

However, Geoff knew well that it would be of no use to knock up his cranky boss in the middle of the night. So he returned to his bungalow and bound up his lacerated fingers. Then, after stretching a thin cord across his room, about six inches above the floor,



as a trap for any more visitors, he got back into bed.

But as no visitors came, Geoff was soon sound asleep. And the next morning, soon after daybreak, the lad was at his boss' bungalow.

He found Thirsk literally hopping mad!

"Plague take you, boy!" yelled the old scientist, as he danced about in his pyjamas. "One of the coolies has just been up to say that Mehta Ram has left and taken a dozen of the coolies with him! Or, at any rate, a dozen have bolted. They say you hammered Mehta Ram yesterday for insolence. So they won't stop. What the—"

"That's their yarn, Mr. Thirsk!" Geoff burst out hotly. "The truth is that the whole gang set on me, and I had to out the ringleader. But that's not all. During the night this ruffian Mehta Ram entered my bungalow! I've no doubt he was after the radium. I tried to catch him, but he was covered with oil and fish-hooks! Just look at my fingers!"

"Humph!" growled Thirsk, calming down a little at the sight of Geoff's angry face. "That's a queer business. But I expect you were mistaken—you took some common thief for Mehta Ram in the dark. Besides that, no coolie would try to steal radium. That's absurd. Someone was after cash."

Geoff had also thought it improbable that an ordinary jungle native would have a try for the radium. But he repeated his assertion that Mehta Ram was not an ordinary coolie, and he urged Thirsk to send for the police.

"Police!" screamed old Thirsk, screwing up his wizened face. "Certainly not! We'd never be able to get another coolie on the place—not if you turn police on to hunt runaways! And you say the radium's all right. You only had one intrusion, eh? Of course, it was

money some fellow was after. You were mistaken, my lad."

Geoff swallowed his wrath with difficulty, and nearly handed in his resignation on the spot. But he was too keen on his job to do that. So he contented himself with demanding a new safe. Thirsk grudgingly consented, and grumbled a lot about having to find new coolies.

"Well, Mehta Ram's hooked it!" Geoff told himself as he walked back to his bungalow. "So some good has come of the little night visit he paid me. And I guess I'll buy a pistol, in case we get another coolie like him! But why the dickens Mehta Ram should have wanted the radium—as I bet he did—is a perfect Chinese puzzle to me."

It also proved a puzzle to Chundaji Dass, who was enormously relieved to learn that Mehta Ram had gone.

"Oh, sar," exclaimed the Bengalee youth, when he learnt of the night attack from Geoff, "how fearfuller discomposed you must have been! For I bet my best boots that Mehta Ram was engaged in search for radium. Why, sar? Oh, that is insoluble mystery! Still, now that Mehta Ram has slung his hook, we may sleep safely in our beds."

Geoff laughed, but agreed that there was no more cause for anxiety about the radium, for the present, at any rate. And for the next few days things went smoothly at the Radium Institute.

A fresh gang of coolies was obtained from a neighbouring village, who, under a genuine jungle head coolie, worked a little, loafed and smoked a lot, but gave no trouble.

But disaster fell on the seventh day after Mehta Ram had vanished. The new safe, which had been ordered from Calcutta, had not yet arrived; and Geoff, returning to his bungalow after dark, got a shock that almost made him drop his hurricane lantern.

The lad had been detained till late in the laboratory, and he made straight for his bed-room. As the yellow beams of his lantern sent the black shadows scurrying into corners, his eyes fell on the old safe, and he recoiled aghast. The door of the safe hung open!

Darting forward, Geoff flung himself on his knees, rummaging amongst the drawers. Then, with a muffled cry, he snatched out the three leaden caskets he had himself placed in the safe at different times. With shaking hands he held them to the light. Each was empty!

"All the radium's stolen!" gasped Geoff, dashing the cold sweat from his brow. "And stolen by some ruffian who's got a use for it, yet who doesn't know the awful effect the stuff will have on him when it isn't in a proper casket!"

A moment's pause, then Geoff jumped to his feet, dashed out of his bungalow, and raced through the darkness to the bungalow of James Thirsk. Geoff's shouts brought the old scientist, arrayed in a kimona, padding out on to his veranda, his big bald head gleaming in the light of Geoff's lantern.

"All gone!" screamed the gnome-like old man, as Geoff stammered out the news. "Who? Why? What—"

"My idea, Mr. Thirsk," said Geoff breathlessly, "is that this is Mehta Ram's doing. I've plenty of reason for saying that he knew where the stuff was kept! And I guess he was out for a quarrel with me the day I floored him—in order to get sacked! You see, sir," Geoff went on hurriedly, "he guessed I suspected him. Well, he could either kill me and chance getting away, or he could make the thrashing I gave him an excuse for bolting, thus avoiding suspicion. That's—"

"Humbug! Rot!" raved Thirsk, his wizened face working. "Mehta Ram went a week ago! Because you beat him!"

"No, sir!" broke in Geoff. "He went because he had discovered where the radium was kept. That, I guess, is all he ever came for. For the last seven days he's probably been lurking in the jungle watching a chance."

"D'you know what I think?" hissed Thirsk, thrusting his wrinkled face close to Geoff's own. "I think everything you've told me about Mehta Ram—an ignorant coolie who couldn't want radium—is a faked-up yarn! There's a plot between you and Chundaji Dass to steal the stuff, and to try to foist the blame on a coolie!"

"Steady, Mr. Thirsk!" cried Geoff, his eyes flashing.

"Pouf!" screamed Thirsk. "I know I'm right! Only you and Chunda knew where the radium was kept, and only you two knew its value."

At that moment a third figure appeared on the dim veranda. It was Chundaji Dass himself, drawn from his quarters by old Thirsk's screams.

"Here's the other thief!" shrieked Thirsk, thrusting a bony finger into the Bengalee lad's face. "Your story, Geoffrey Wood, is too thin!"

"Oh, sar," exclaimed Chundaji, in his sing-song voice. "What is this most terrible uproar about? What is this talk of thieves?"

Geoff quickly told Chundaji about the disappearance of the radium, and about his own suspicions and those of Thirsk's.

"Look here, sir," Geoff ended, rounding on his fuming boss, "you're making a first-class error! If you were about twenty years younger I'd ram your



"Are you going to get on with this work?" cried Geoff heatedly. "Or shall I show you—" Mehta Ram suddenly bristled with rage, jumped back, and whipped out a long knife. In a flash the other coolies, following their leader's example, spread out fan-wise behind Geoff.

accusations down your throat! As it is, I'm going to try and trail Mehta Ram, get the radium back, and—"

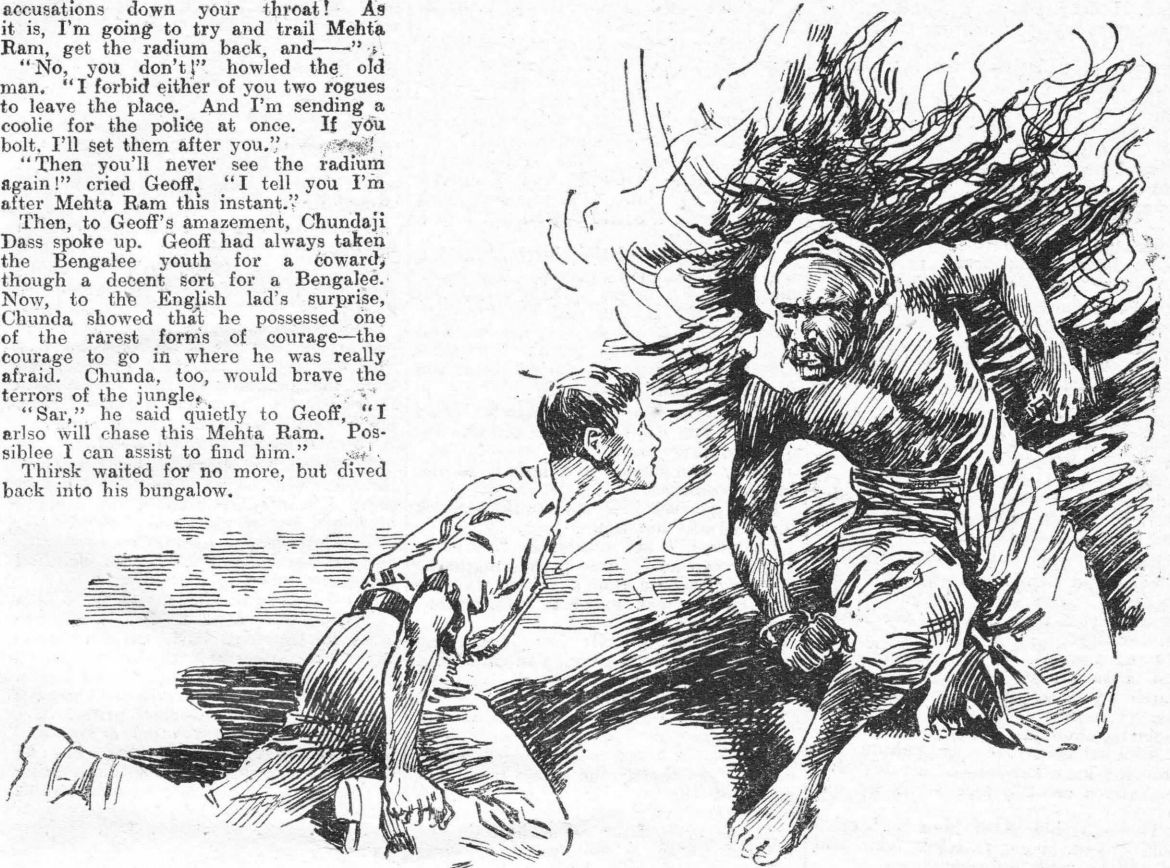
"No, you don't!" howled the old man. "I forbid either of you two rogues to leave the place. And I'm sending a coolie for the police at once. If you bolt, I'll set them after you."

"Then you'll never see the radium again!" cried Geoff, "I tell you I'm after Mehta Ram this instant."

Then, to Geoff's amazement, Chundaji Dass spoke up. Geoff had always taken the Bengalee youth for a coward, though a decent sort for a Bengalee. Now, to the English lad's surprise, Chunda showed that he possessed one of the rarest forms of courage—the courage to go in where he was really afraid. Chunda, too, would brave the terrors of the jungle.

"Sar," he said quietly to Geoff, "I arlso will chase this Mehta Ram. Possible I can assist to find him."

Thirsk waited for no more, but dived back into his bungalow.



The little room was flooded with a vivid glare as crimson tongues of fire licked up the doorposts. Geoff got a fleeting glimpse of Mehta Ram's rage-crazed face, a mask of fury. It was within a foot of his own, and the ruffian had whipped up a great knife.

"Come on, then," cried Geoff, gripping Chunda's arm; "the boss has gone for his pistol. I don't want to shoot the old lunatic, and I ain't anxious to be shot myself!"

Together Geoff and Chunda raced out of the dark compound. Behind them they heard the crack of a pistol, then the piercing voice of old Thirsk, shouting for a coolie to go and fetch the police.

"That'll take a couple of days!" gasped Geoff, as he raced over to his bungalow to get food and his rifle. "And a lot can happen in that time!"

CHAPTER 3. In Dire Peril!

"OH, sar," whispered Chundaji Dass, straining his eyes into the shadows, "what a fearsome place this jungle is! I have arlways lived the life of civilised being, sar, and am not at all accustomed to jungly haunts. Oh, my stars—"

Chundaji broke off with a scream of horror. For, out of the dense, dark tangle of jungle that hemmed in their path on each side slid a writhing cobra. Hissing like a gas-escape, the venomous serpent wriggled across the moonlit, narrow track.

The cobra vanished as quickly as it had appeared. But the whole jungle seemed alive with eerie night sounds.

"Come on, Chunda!" said Geoff sharply. "Pull yourself together! We've got to reach that village you

spoke of as quickly as possible. We can't hope to pick up Mehta Ram's trail without a guide."

The Bengalee youth shivered, and glanced fearfully over his shoulder. His vivid imagination peopled the jungle with all sorts of terrifying shapes. But he set his teeth, and trudged determinedly along in Geoff's wake.

It was two hours since the fugitives had left Thirsk's bungalow. And Geoff knew the police would be on their tracks within forty-eight hours. And neither he nor Chunda dared show up at the Radium Institute again without the missing radium.

Chundaji had thought they might pick up a native tracker at one of the jungle villages—perhaps a fellow who knew Mehta Ram by sight. And this was urgent, for Geoff knew nothing about tracking in jungles, and Chundaji Dass knew no more!

But before they had gone two hours Chundaji began to fear they were off the track of the villages. Moreover, if they found one, it was quite possible that no native would volunteer to track one of his own colour. The two fugitives were saved from their predicament in an astounding manner.

Rounding a bend in the path, they suddenly found themselves on the edge of a large, moonlit glade. Geoff halted abruptly and drew in his breath with a soft whistle.

For, in the centre of the glade, sharply outlined by the white moonlight, stood a nearly naked native. He was standing stiffly, with all his muscles braced, and Geoff could see that the fellow's eyes

bulged in terror. Beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

How long the native had stood thus it was impossible to guess. But evidently some time, for he looked ready to drop.

With his eyes, Geoff followed the direction of the petrified man's gaze, to see, coiled in the grass, a full-grown King cobra.

The reptile seemed to have mesmerised its prey. And, even as Geoff sighted it, the brute reared up from the ground, its purple hood expanded, and, in the moonlight, Geoff could see the black spectacle mark on that hood.

The cobra was about to strike. Its victim was swaying like a leaf in the wind.

Crack!

Geoff's rifle rang out with a whip-like report. Then the body of the big serpent lay thrashing in the grass, but its head was blown clean off!

There came a wild scream from behind Geoff. But it was only Chundaji Dass relieving his pent-up feelings.

The rescued native gave a deep gasp, like a man coming out of a trance. Then he darted forward, to fling himself at Geoff's feet.

"White lord," he cried, in Hindustani, "thou hast saved the life of Kala Lal, the magician! For I, Kala, dwell in these wild haunts, learning magics. All beasts are my servants—"

"Except snakes, it seems!" cut in Geoff, in English, adding: "Kala, my

friend, I fear you're a humbug! I guess you're just a wandering fakir,* and find the hermit business impresses the ignorant—eh? Anyway, for the love of Mike, get up!"

Kala rose, guessing what was meant from the tone of Geoff's voice. But Chundaji plucked at Geoff's sleeve.

"Sar," he whispered, "doubtless this fellow is merely a fakir, and altogether ignorant and contemptible. But possible he could guide us to a village, or mayhap he could even help us to trail Mehta Ram. Sometimes these fakir johnnies are awfulee clever—"

Geoff cut short Chundaji's long-winded statements by rounding on Kala Lal. Breathlessly he demanded to know if there was a village close at hand, or whether Kala would aid them as a tracker.

"Oh, sahib," said Kala, "you have wandered afar from villages, but in return for saving my life, I will aid thee to the best of my poor ability. It chances that I can, for my unworthy hovel is hidden amongst these great trees. Here I dwell, and—"

"But can you help me to track a thief," yelled Geoff, in an agony of impatience—"a tall man, who robbed me, and who must have fled into the jungle about dusk?"

"I was about to say, sahib," said Kala, with dignity, "that such a one passed my poor home a few hours since. I wondered that any honest man should be afoot in the forest after dark, far from villages. He was running, but I saw his long moustache, his big thin nose, and a crooked scar under his left eye!"

"That's Mehta Ram himself!" cried Geoff. "Lead us on his track, fakir, and you will be well rewarded."

"Oh, my stars!" gasped Chundaji. "What excellent fortune!"

Geoff agreed, and the hermit of the forests proved his gratitude by starting forthwith on Mehta Ram's trail. Whether Kala the hermit was a genuine holy man or a humbug, he quickly showed that there was no fraud in his powers as a tracker.

He proceeded in front of Geoff and Chundaji at a slow jog trot, mumbling to himself, and pointing to indistinct footprints and broken twigs.

Until Geoff had met Kala he had been on Mehta Ram's track right enough. For the simple reason that Mehta Ram had been going along a well-defined game track, and Geoff, taking it for a village path, had followed aright unknowingly. But beyond Kala's jungle hut Mehta Ram's trail seemed to wind all over the map. None but Kala could have followed it.

For hours they proceeded, at times forcing a way through dense jungle, at times scrambling up and down the rugged sides of old, long-dry water-courses.

Once they heard the throaty roar of a tiger, several times they heard yelping jackals. Chundaji Dass was in a blue funk, but he kept on. But when the moon sank and darkness followed they were obliged to halt, and Geoff and Chundaji were thoroughly exhausted.

With the following dawn, stiff and sore, they took up the trail. And now the food question became serious. For Geoff had not been able to bring much, and they had not passed any villages where they could buy any.

"This is a hungry business," grinned Geoff, as at midday they halted beside a water hole. "And this jungle's like

*Fakir: Beggar, considered holy in India.

a Turkish bath. But buck up, Chunda. You ain't dead yet!"

Chundaji tried to force a grin, but it was a dismal failure, and, after a necessary halt, they pushed on again. Towards dusk they at last sighted the first human habitation they had seen since leaving the Radium Institute.

Kala suddenly halted and lifted a warning hand. Geoff and Chundaji crept up to him. Parting the thick undergrowth, the trio looked out into a large clearing.

In the middle of the clearing stood a big Hindu temple. It was a long white building with great pillars set at intervals. But at one end stood a tall, pointed tower, of queer design, and covered with beaten metal. The sides of the pointed tower flashed back the rays of the setting sun redly.

"I can do no more, sahib," hissed Kala. "The trail has led hither. Inquire of the priests."

Then, soundlessly, the hermit of the jungle vanished.

Geoff gasped in surprise, then shook his head at Chundaji.

"I guess," he muttered, "we'll be mighty careful. Those priests might be friends of Mehta Ram's. We'll wait for dark, then sneak up close before showing ourselves."

"Altogether a jolly fine idea, sar," whispered Chundaji, trying to smile, but his teeth chattered.

On the edge of the jungle Geoff and Chundaji sat waiting for darkness, and, as soon as the flaming sun had sunk, night settled down with tropical swiftness. Very shortly the whole blue-black vault of the sky was glittering with twinkling stars.

All at once, from somewhere in the pointed tower, a bell started ringing with a melodious twinkle. Then came the sounds of men's voices chanting. The temple seemed to throb with life. The reflection of many torches glowed like an open furnace.

"Now," whispered Geoff, "they're getting busy. Come on!"

The pair slid from the jungle, creeping towards the humming temple.

Unseen, Geoff and Chundaji reached the outer row of pillars. Noiselessly they stole across a dark corridor, to hide behind another pillar, and to gaze on an astounding scene.

They were gazing into a big hall lit by a hundred waving torches. And the

floor of the hall seemed packed with white-robed turbaned priests. All the priests had their backs to the two watchers, and seemed to be staring intently at a huge, dimly-seen idol at the farther end.

Suddenly the monotonous chanting ceased. With a mighty rustle all the priests went down on their knees. In his eagerness Geoff forgot caution, and craned his head round the pillar.

He was in time to see a gaunt man in flowing robes mount some steps and turn to his kneeling followers. The gaunt man was evidently the chief priest, and he was saying something.

Geoff only caught a little. The man was saying that one of their number had been successful in a certain quest. Then from the shadows at the idol's base stepped forth another white-robed figure. He limped as though in great pain.

"Mehta Ram!" gasped Geoff.

Geoff's gasp of astonishment cut across the silence of the great hall like a pistol-shot. Instantly came confusion, a chaos of voices, and screams and yells of rage. The priests leaped up and charged furiously at the intruders. Brown clenched fists were raised on all sides.

Geoff stood fast, furious at spotting a thief posing as a hero. But it was too much for Chundaji Dass. At the pounding rush of feet the Bengalee whirled about and fled for his life to the forest.

Above the din Geoff tried to raise his voice, shouting to the chief priest. But something caught the lad a stunning blow on the side of his head, and he dropped unconscious. He knew nothing of the blows that were rained on his senseless form.

Geoff came round to find himself lying in darkness. He was bound hand and foot, and ached in every limb. But directly his scattered wits returned the lad strained fiercely at his bonds. He quickly discovered they were strong, but had been tied by an amateur.

Five minutes of desperate struggling and Geoff worked his hands free. But he suddenly desisted from further efforts, and thrust his hands behind his back. His quick ear had caught the sounds of approaching feet—a halting, shuffling gait.

Then suddenly a door burst inwards, and in limped a tall figure, holding a flaming torch above his head.

By the ruddy, leaping light Geoff got a rapid glimpse of his prison. It was quite small, and the walls seemed made of stout wood. Then Geoff glared up at his gaoler. It was Mehta Ram!

"You shameless robber!" Geoff gritted. "I knew you were no coolie. What have you done with the radium? Speak truly, for your time is short. Soon police will be here. And, by heck!" Geoff ended, "why are you lame? I know. It's—"

"Silence dog!" cut in Mehta Ram, limping forward quickly. "Police will find neither you nor the treasure you speak of! Know that I am a high priest of this temple, and that it was but to gain the treasure that I engaged for menial work as a coolie. For this I shall receive great honour. But you, dog, will die! For a night and a day have you been lying in this upper chamber of the pointed tower, but now that your senses have returned prepare for the end. The priests wait!"

Stooping, Mehta Ram slashed at the thongs round Geoff's ankles. As the knife severed the cords Geoff's right hand, which he had freed himself, shot out like a flash of lightning.

Geoff clipped one strong hand about the villain's ankle, then wrenched. Down

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crashed Mehta Ram on his back. The flaming torch flew from his hand, whizzed across the room, and out through the open door. It fell with a thud on to the wooden stairs.

With a scream of fury Mehta Ram bunched himself up, to hurl himself on Geoff, who was scrambling up. At that instant, from beyond the door, came the devouring roar of rushing flames.

The little room was flooded with a vivid glare as crimson tongues of fire licked up the doorposts. The fallen torch had started a conflagration which would not burn out till the pointed tower collapsed.

Geoff got a fleeting glimpse of Mehta Ram's rage-crazed face, a mask of fury. It was within a foot of his own, and the ruffian had whipped up his great knife.

With all his force Geoff struck out at Mehta Ram's chin. The big native's head snickered back, and he crashed in a huddled heap on the floor.

Geoff leapt over the fallen ruffian, and darted to the door. An intense wave of heat beat him back, a scorching blast. The old tower was burning like a haystack.

"B'gosh!" gasped Geoff, staggering back. "I might chance rushing down those steps before they collapse—if I was alone. But I can't leave this scoundrel to burn! Great snakes! I'll have to try and carry him!"

At that moment, above the clamour of the roaring flames, came an outburst of frenzied shouts from below. The priests had just discovered the tower was burning.

And as Geoff darted back, to bend over Mehta Ram, the whole structure seemed to shake. Then billows of smoke swirled into the little room.

CHAPTER 4.
The White Man.

"OH, sar! This is a most alarming business! But even police are better than another night in the jungle!"

It was Chundaji Dass who spoke. After leaving Geoff, the cowardly Bengalee took to the jungle. But he quickly discovered that the backward trail was impossible to find in the dark, so he scaled a big tree.

Dawn found the ragged Chundaji still cowering in the topmost branches. Now he might have descended, to proceed back to the Radium Institute to give himself up.

But he was now filled with shame at having deserted the English lad. Yet he could not think how to rescue Geoff. So he spent the whole day in his perch, in an agony of indecision.

At dusk a white police-officer with two native constables, hot on Geoff's and Chundaji's trail, came pushing through the jungle.

Down slid Chundaji and gave himself up.

"So here's one of 'em!" barked the officer, gripping Chundaji's shoulder. "Where's your leader? And what have you two done with the radium?"

Rapid and tearfully, Chundaji poured out his story.

"What?" cried the officer. "The English lad in a temple! The priests will kill him for interference. And I don't believe a word of your yarn, Chunda. You shall stop here with one of my constables. I'll—"

But the Bengalee youth broke in, begging to be allowed to go with the police to the temple, and swearing he could quickly show the way and the best means of entrance. Now that Chundaji had overcome his fears, he was burning to try and help rescue Geoff.

At last the officer consented, reckoning Chundaji might be of some use. So, with the Bengalee leading, the little party pushed rapidly through the jungle. As the sun sank and the shades of night came rushing up, they burst out of the forest into the big clearing.

Here they halted aghast, for the high, pointed tower of the jungle temple was burning fiercely! Columns of smoke wreathed up, licking flames shed a crimson glow, and the body of the temple hummed with an uproar of shouting men.

"Oh!" shrieked Chundaji. "Hark to fearful cries! They say Mister Geoffrey Wood and one rascal priest is aloft in conflagration."

And Chundaji burst from the police, to head a charging rush across to the temple.

With the police at his heels, he stormed into the corridor, across the great hall, and on to the foot of some winding stairs at the base of the pointed tower.

At the sight of uniforms, the distraught priests melted aside to form a lane. Chundaji did not halt. He plunged into the fog of billowing smoke, and bounded up the steps two at a time.

Luckily the lower half of the tower was built of stone, and Chundaji, outstripping the police, was quickly forty feet above ground level. Here started the flaming woodwork, and, as the Bengalee fought upwards, he suddenly sighted two figures huddled on the steps.

One was Geoff, the other was the unconscious Mehta Ram! Geoff had got so far, then, overcome by the heat and the fumes, had lost his balance and come tumbling down.

Chundaji leapt at Geoff, pummelling him and shouting in his ear. Geoff sat up, tottering to his feet. A great roaring filled his ears, he was half blinded, choking, and scorched to the marrow.

But Chundaji's courage had risen to heights undreamt. He gripped Mehta Ram's legs, and started hauling the villain down the avenue of fire. Geoff, making a superhuman effort, got a hold of the ruffian's shoulders. A few seconds later the trio tumbled into the police who were storming up the steps.

Through the shouting throng below the police-officer forced a way, assisted by his constables, who were followed by Geoff and Chundaji, carrying Mehta Ram.

"Quick! To the jungle!" shouted the officer. "While the priests are still hazed by the fire!"

Indeed, so maddened were the priests at the danger to their temple, that none interfered with the escaping party. Also the sight of uniforms overawed them.

Inside the jungle, the party halted. Geoff lowered Mehta Ram, who was regaining consciousness. At that instant there came an appalling crash. It thundered through the jungle like an earthquake.

The top of the pointed tower, flaming like a giant firebrand, had crashed to the ground. Mercifully it fell away from the body of the temple. Further disaster was averted, but the priests, seething like a hornets' nest, buzzed about with only one thought—to move their treasures to safety.

"A plucky business!" exclaimed the police-officer to the singed and blackened Geoff. "But I've got to arrest you and the Bengalee youth for the theft of radium. Who is this fellow you pulled down the tower?"

"The thief!" cried Geoff. "Mehta Ram! The fellow who—"

"That won't do!" broke in the officer. "That's the story you told Thirsk of the Institute. I've heard it! You two must

come back with me. My constables will take this fellow back to his friends." "Search him!" yelled Geoff. "He's got the stuff in—"

The officer shook his head. But the proof of Geoff's assertion came in a sudden and dramatic manner. Mehta Ram, who had been lying on the ground, rolling about and protesting his innocence, suddenly sat up with a yell of misery.

"This stuff is demon stuff!" he howled. "My leg burns and burns!"

And he ripped open his robes, to show a great hole burnt on the inside of his leg.

"A radium burn!" cried Geoff. "I knew it when I saw him limp! That was your mistake, Mehta Ram! You should have taken the leaden caskets as well!"

"Take the bewitched things!" screamed Mehta Ram, and threw at Geoff three tiny little glass tubes. In each was an infinitesimal quantity of the priceless radium.

Deftly Geoff placed them in the leaden caskets he still had with him.

"If, Mehta Ram," observed Geoff, "you had left the tubes in the caskets, you would not have been burnt, and we should never have seen the radium again!"

"Accept the apologies of an old fool!" murmured old Thirsk humbly, as, two days later, in Thirsk's bungalow, Geoff was telling the story of the recovery of the stolen radium. And Geoff was handing out so much praise to Chundaji Dass that the Bengalee would have blushed if his skin hadn't been brown.

"But what did Mehta Ram want it for?" continued the old scientist.

"He confessed the whole thing to the police-officer, sir," answered Geoff, "as we were hurrying back through the jungle, to get clear before the priests realised their temple was safe and started after us.

"It appears that the priests of the temple had heard a lot of yarns about the wonderful stuff we were making here. They decided some of it would make a unique idol's eye. Well, Mehta Ram volunteered to try and get some. So he rigged himself up as a coolie, and got a job here, meaning to steal radium as soon as he could and get away with it. That was why he had that row with me—if he had deserted without the excuse of having been beaten it might have looked too suspicious.

"I never thought," Geoff ended, "that Mehta Ram looked a pukka coolie!"

"You needn't rub that in!" grunted old Thirsk. "It seems both I and Mehta Ram made mistakes. Anyway, Geoff, the new safe has come!"

"Good!" exclaimed Geoff. "Now I don't mind if we get fifty priests faked up as coolies! I'll make 'em work! Bless their industrious hearts!"

THE END.

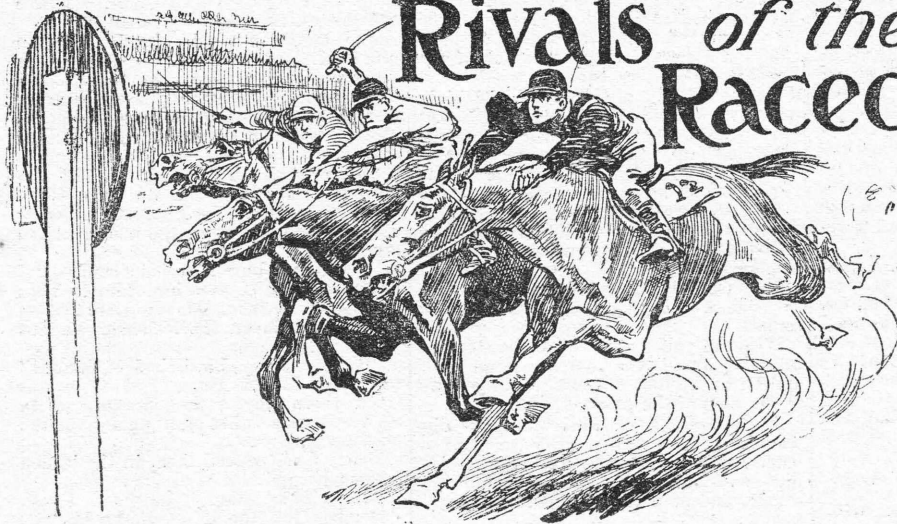
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"WELL, I'll be jiggered!" blurted Mat under his breath. "More of their hanky-panky—ch? What can the beauties be up to now?"

For it was quite obvious that the second motorist was the new Lord Riplade.

"I'm going to hide up here behind this willow—see?" Rackstone was saying now. "He won't spot me as he gets on to the plank bridge. Then one welt from behind will tumble him into the brook. That'll be your cue to come straight on and drive clean over him."

"Will it, begosh!" gasped Mat under his breath. "Who—why—what—"

But Lord Riplade was speaking, and he had to keep his queries for another time.

However much his lordship might have consented to this pretty plot before, he seemed inclined to jib at it now.

"But, you ass, can't you see?" snapped Sir Roger, down his throat at once. "If we don't get rid of this blundering fool before the cat's out of the bag—"

"I'll never see myself Lord Riplade, you mean," chimed in the other, finishing the sentence for him.

"Yes, quite right!" snarled Sir Roger. "And I'll be done out of the thirty thousand pounds I mean to have out of this job, which is far more important to me, so I tell you plain!"

The other paled. "You're not going to back out now; you can't afford to," went on the baronet, grinding his teeth with disgust.

"You're just sailing into the title as soft as can be, so you've nothing to get scared at yet. The only thing that's going to stop you is this Dick Derringer, if once he pops on the scene—"

"Dick Derringer!" blurted Mat to himself in his astonishment.

Then his chum was really the new Lord Riplade. Great Jupiter, what a surprise!

Mat could have prayed for the earth to open and swallow him. But a second later he was all ears again. Sir Roger was still hammering away at the fraudulent claimant to keep him up to the scratch. Well he might, too, for the appointed hour was creeping on. Their victim might appear at any moment.

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At last the impostor seemed to be convinced.

"Very well," he consented. "I'm to take my car back to the cross-roads and wait for your whistle. You'll see he lies square across the track, though. If I'm to do the job I want no bungling."

Sir Roger laughed. "I'll see to that," he said. "And here goes this half-filled whisky-bottle for a starter. That'll show he was drunk and fell in, and that it was all an accident. And as for the car, you know what to do with that?" he added.

The motor looked as if it were enamelled a light grey, Mat had noticed.

And this was strange, for Sir Roger's

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

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SCARFE, another apprentice, but an unscrupulous rascal.

SIR ROGER RACKSTONE, a mean and despicable scoundrel, and owner of the Stunt, a most unreliable racer.

The late Lord Riplade had so willed that, should his property be unclaimed by his missing heir within one year of his death, the Whiplash colt was to become the property of Tom Martingale, providing the trainer was still at Furzedown. Failing this, it would go to Sir Roger Rackstone.

Realising the situation, Sir Roger Rackstone sets a plot in motion, and gets Tom Martingale hounded out of Furzedown.

Mat Martingale, the old trainer's son, who is left in charge of the stables, finds a friend in Dick Derringer, an American, but further treachery follows.

Later, after buying the Stunt for a ridiculous figure for Lord Dungarrin, one of the Jockey Club Committee, Mat is granted a trainer's certificate.

Further futile attempts to bring about Mat's disgrace follow, thanks to the timely intervention of Lord Dungarrin.

Later, Lord Riplade puts in an appearance; but, owing to Sir Roger's poisonous tongue, he cuts Mat dead.

Following this, the Stunt mysteriously disappears.

Mat's suspicions are aroused, and a wire intended for Dick Derringer prompts him to hurry to the water-splash, where he overhears Sir Roger Rackstone and the new Lord Riplade conversing in low tones.

(Now read on.)

motor-car was a dark green. But the mystery was explained a moment later.

"Oh, I know!" answered the impostor at the driving-wheel. "I wipe it over at the first halt. It's only dust stuck to oil, you say."

"That's the notion. If you're spotted coming along this road your description will be light grey. A quick rub over with a towel and you'll be dark green," laughed Sir Roger. "And don't forget you've got a false number on before and behind as well."

The other growled "Right!" and backed his car along to the main road again. Sir Roger went forward to hide himself behind an ancient willow within sighting distance of anyone just stepping on to the plank bridge.

"Will they, indeed!" said Mat, setting his teeth hard. "I'll go back and meet Dick and warn him!"

He set out promptly, stealing on the soft turf beside the road. Then he took to his heels and ran. He located the motor-car waiting far down the cross-road opposite. Now he strained every nerve for sight or sound of his chum.

"Dick," he panted as they met—"Dick, is that you? Stop and talk to me, for mercy's sake! I've got something terrible to tell you!"

"So I managed to catch you up," said Dick. "Is Scarfe here yet? What is your terrible news?"

"You have been back to the house, then, and read your telegram!" cried Mat, with relief, for he hoped Dick had forgiven him.

"Yes," answered his chum. "I found I had forgotten something—something I had left carelessly in an inkstand in the drawing-room."

"I know; an ebony locket," said Mat. "We found it. And, oh, Dick, why didn't you tell me? You're the real Lord Riplade, and I believe you knew it all along!"

His hearty "Ha, ha, ha!" ringing so clear on the silent night brought Mat back to the perils of the situation with a rush. He gripped Dick's arm.

"Hush, Dick!" urged Mat. "I'll give you the whole yarn later, but not now. There's bad business ahead of us—no less than a trap to knock you on the head and kill you!"

"A trap to kill me! Begosh!" gasped Dick.

"Yes, and it's all set and waiting. So speak in whispers," Mat ran on. "That wire from Scarfe was a forgery. He

isn't here at all. Sir Roger sent it as a decoy." "Snakes and scorpions!" breathed Dick, his eyes flashing even in that darkness. "What! Do you mean to say that Sir Roger is actually lying for me somewhere ahead here? Show me the tarnation skunk, and I'll give him traps!"

"Good! I'm with you," said Mat. "He's hidden down by the brook, where he fixed to meet you. But he's not alone. That rival of yours, the other Lord Riplade, is waiting, too, and he's not a hundred yards from here. So go slow, or we'll scare them."

Most lads of Mat's age would have been glad enough to scare them and see them bolting like hares. But Mat, like Dick, was intent on capture, if they could possibly manage it.

He told his chum the whole plot as he overheard it.

"And if you'll follow my tip, we ought to at least lay Rackstone by the heels!" he finished.

"And what's that, youngster?"

"Why, you walk forward straight into the ambush, just as if you did not know of its existence. I'll creep on ahead and be ready to jump on Rackstone from behind. When you draw level with the old willow, look out for his rush. He's only got a sandbag, for I heard him say so. If you can dodge the first welt you're all right. Then I'll be on his neck."

"That's it!" assented Dick. "That's the game, sure! You skip off now, then. But see you don't get yourself killed on my account!" he added, catching the youngster's hand in a farewell grip.

"Say you'll forgive me for making such an utter cad of myself to-day! That's all I want," he said.

"Forgive you? Bosh!" laughed Dick. "What was there to forgive? You were rattled just, and I was a fool to take it to heart."

So away went Mat, as happy as a king. He felt he could tackle ten Rackstones single-handed after that.

Facing Death!

NOW was Mat's time. He trod swiftly long the marshy edge of the stream. He could see Dick's head now moving along, black against the stars. Quickly it approached the danger-point. Mat held his breath, for his chum seemed to be advancing with too careless a swing.

And so it proved. His enemy was just too quick for him. Before Dick's foot was on the plank he had made his jump. Mat saw Sir Roger's hand go up with the sandbag in it, and Dick swung round to ward off the blow.

But the heavy weapon, too soft to leave a mark, yet which could kill a man as sure as a bar of lead, had already thudded home upon his skull.

Down went Dick, falling with a splash into the shallow brook. Simultaneously his assistant clapped a whistle to his lips to sound the call which was to bring Lord Riplade whirling down on the scene in the car and crush the life out of their victim.

But scarcely had the first thin screech sounded on the night air than Mat was on the baronet's shoulders like a cat, sending him crashing in the brook, too.

"You cur to down a man like that!" he gasped, pounding away with his fists. "I've a good mind to drown you where you lie!"

Sir Roger and Mat were rolling over and over in the water, but Mat was managing to keep the upper hand.

He had forgotten the part the sham Lord Riplade was to play. It was only when he heard the rush of a motor bearing down full tilt upon them that he saw what was likely to happen.

But it was Sir Roger who realised his own danger first. His yell of terror must have penetrated to his confederate's ears, for he checked his car and slewed it just where the road dipped to the ford.

"Great Scott, man, look out!" howled Rackstone at him, scared out of his wits.

"Look out? I should jolly well think I'd have to, with you bawling like a lunatic! How many more of you are there?" snapped the other at him. "You don't mean to say you've bungled it?"

"It's this rotten sweep here, Mat Martingale!" spluttered the baronet. "He's come on the scene, curse him!"

Mat, meantime, was yelling for help for all he was worth, and as if in answer the gruff notes of a motor-horn sounded in the distance.

"Here, don't sit there like a fool!" spluttered Sir Roger, making frantic efforts to free himself from his young captor's grip. "We shall be collared in a minute. Can't you see?"

"Yes, I most certainly can!" was the other's answer. "There's another car coming up already."

"Then why don't you jump down and help me?" shouted the baronet at him. "You can't bolt, anyway, for I'm right under your wheels!"

"Oh, can't I, eh?" retorted the other, with an ugly laugh.

"No; and if you try to," snarled Sir Roger, "I'll show you up for what you are, even if it costs me five years myself! Do you hear? If that's what you're thinking, you know what's ahead of you, you crawling coward!"

The sham Lord Riplade seemed to stiffen under the threat. He had been weighing up the position in his own mind for some time, as a matter of fact, and had come to the conclusion that the game, so far as the Riplade estates were concerned, was about done for.

But with the three principal witnesses

against him under the axles almost, this chance of wiping them out seemed too rich to refuse. So, without a second thought, he dropped his clutch again and drove full tilt down on them at top speed. Sir Roger uttered a frantic yell and tore himself free. As a matter of fact, Mat had already let him go. The youngster also saw the fate threatening them, and promptly thought of poor Dick. He was lying just beyond him, half senseless, and groaning.

So he clutched his chum by the collar, and then, with a heave which nearly forced his heart out of his mouth, he just managed to drag him aside.

A rush, a roar, and the fast-moving car had mounted the opposite slope and was away. A more dastardly attempt at wholesale murder could never be conceived. Mat was stunned by the horror of it. Dick had been saved, but only by the skin of his teeth.

Drenched to the skin, and sick with the leaden punch he had received on the arm, all Mat's anger was against the cur in the car, and for the moment Sir Roger was forgotten.

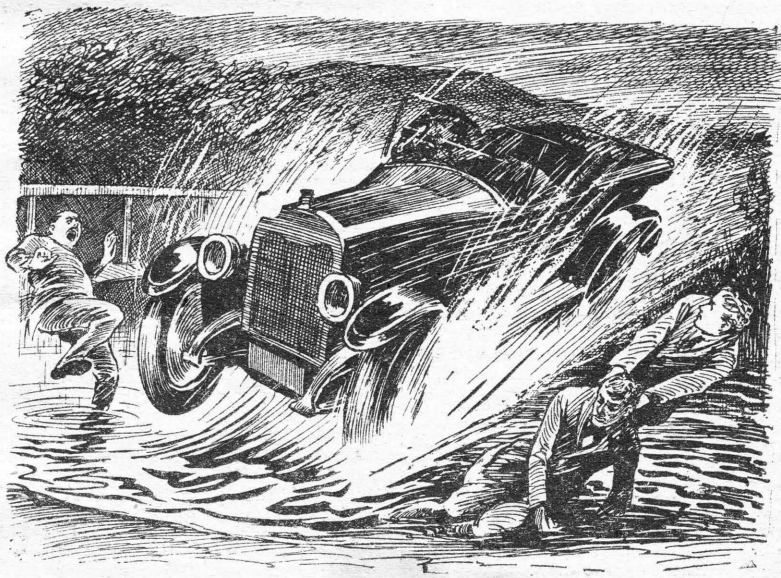
Then suddenly Mat remembered him, and swung round with a regular roar of rage.

But by that time the baronet had made good his escape. The youngster could hear the swift pad-pad of his footsteps running away over the heath; but though he dashed to the top of the rise in pursuit, there was nothing to tell him which way the blackguard had gone.

Friends Again!

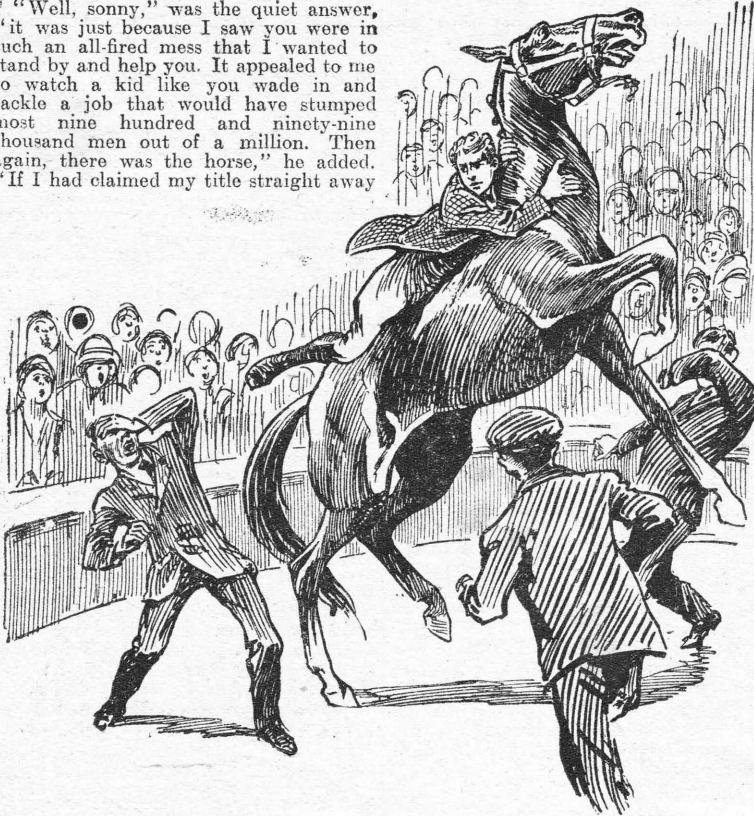
DICK dropped back into his old place in the house again, without ever another word being said about the quarrel. Indeed, the one topic was Dick's claim to the Riplade estates, to which he seemed entitled without a doubt. What's more, the artful beggar had known it all along.

"Then why in thunder didn't you go for them, instead of taking on a rotten job like this—helping me in all my troubles?" demanded Mat.



As the car came roaring down upon them Mat Martingale clutched Dick Derringer by the collar and dragged him aside!

"Well, sonny," was the quiet answer, "it was just because I saw you were in such an all-fired mess that I wanted to stand by and help you. It appealed to me to watch a kid like you wade in and tackle a job that would have stumped most nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand men out of a million. Then again, there was the horse," he added, "if I had claimed my title straight away



As the attendants rushed upon Mat, Whiplash reared up, lashing out with his hoofs, while Mat himself kicked out at his attackers to beat them off.

I should have had to put on starch and frills, and I wouldn't have got half the fun out of owning Whiplash that I did." "Fun!" echoed Mat dismally. "Well, I don't know where the fun has come in much, particularly now we look like losing him for good. Just think!" he groaned. "Twenty-four precious hours wasted in muddle after muddle, and no nearer knowing where he's gone to than when we started! I ought to be up and out now trying to find him, instead of lying here in bed."

Mat really seemed to be contemplating getting up and starting on a fresh search, though he had already been on his legs two days and a night without a rest.

Dick would not let him, of course. "Whiplash is my property," he said, "and if he's gone, I reckon it's my own fault more than anybody else's. So you lie where you are, sonny. Forty thousand lost Derby favourites wouldn't get me out of bed again to-night, so I tell you straight. I—"

They both sat up suddenly as a faint noise sounded from beneath the bedroom window.

Dick and Mat were out of bed in a jiffy.

"It sounded like Scarfe, didn't it?" exclaimed Mat, throwing up the sash.

Sure enough, he was right. It was the apprentice he had insulted and driven off the premises. Yet here he was back again, like Dick.

"I say, is that you, Martingale?" they heard him whisper eagerly. "I've found Whiplash at last!" Scarfe panted. "And by the merest accident, too. I happened

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to be down the town at the circus there—"

"Circus!" quoth Mat. "Do you mean here in Epsom?"

"What I say is right," insisted Scarfe, with a frankness there was no denying. "Whiplash has never been to Rugby. That was only a blind. He has been in Epsom all the time—drugged."

"Drugged! Do you mean it?" gasped Mat. "And he's down there now, you say?"

"He was. But they're shifting him out to-night."

Before an hour had passed, the whole town police force, headed by the exultant Widgin and Mat, might have been seen making its way in single file towards the circus where Whiplash was a prisoner—caged up and doped—if what Scarfe had told them was true.

"I wonder what they can have done with Whiplash?" Mat thought, gaining courage at finding the place so deserted. Surely this was his chance to find his four-footed pal, and get him out of this if he could. Stealing along behind the rows of cages, he reconnoitred by the doorway at the further end. But on the other side of the barrier was the main entrance to the circus-ring evidently.

Attendants were hurrying to and fro. Mat could hear the crash of the band and cheers of the audience.

"This is no road for me, that's plain," he decided. So, slipping back again, he lifted the opposite wall of the tent and wriggled beneath.

Now he was in a second enclosure shut

off like the other. Part of this again was screened by a strip of canvas on poles. He whistled softly.

"If he hears that and isn't dead drunk with drugs, he'll answer, I bet," murmured Mat breathlessly. And, sure enough, he heard a startled scramble of hoofs and an answering whinny. The Derby favourite was found.

In a trice Mat was tearing at tent-pegs and lashings, hacking his way through to his pet.

"Whiplash!" he cried. And in another second his arms were locked round the colt's neck.

"The curs, to tie you up like this!" raged Mat, slashing at the ropes. "Steady, boy! One moment, just, and then let them stop us who can!"

The last strands were severed. Mat gripped the racer's mane to vault on to his back. He was just scrambling into his seat when three men came bursting through the gap he had torn in the canvas wall.

"Crumbs, what the deuce is this? On to him, chaps!" roared the leader. He made a plunge to seize the fugitive, while the others leapt at the horse's head.

The colt's blood was up, however, as was Mat's. Up he reared, lashing out with his hoofs. Simultaneously, Mat kicked out at his attacker to beat him off. His toe caught the fellow on the chin, and over he went like a ninepin.

Their enemies scattered, but they were not finished with yet. They sent up a howl to their mates to "Stop him!"

However Mat managed to stick on he never knew.

"Bravo! Hurrah! Stick to him, nipper!" roared the delighted yokels.

And then, above all the din, as if someone had woken up all of a sudden, came a yell, clear and sharp, from the upper seats:

"It's Mat, and he's got the favourite! Oh, bully for you, youngster! Hold on to him till we come and help!"

Up jumped Lord Ripplade and down the steep tiers of seats he flew, helter-skelter, with Scarfe at his heels. Little they cared whose hats they knocked off.

Sir Roger Rackstone and the sham Lord Ripplade were soon in the hands of Widgin and his colleague, who made their exit amid a thunderous round of applause from the yokels who, as yet, thought this was all part of a huge farce.

"By George, that's good!" Matt cried. "You've bagged the lot, I see. I hoped you would."

"But Whiplash! What have you done with him?" demanded Dick.

"Oh, he's safe in the police-station yard, where he obligingly headed, as if he thought it was the very best place for both of us," said Mat. "I've brought the superintendent along with me now, and all the reserve men he could spare. I'm going to have every lout in the circus paraded, and run in, too, if I can only spot them."

Then came a grand round-up. Every man in the show that could be laid hold of, was paraded by the bobbies for Mat to identify. He only spotted two of his assailants, however, and these the least guilty of the lot.

Still, they had got the chief villains in Sir Roger and the sham Lord Ripplade, and Whiplash was safe once more.

(The concluding chapters of this splendid yarn tell how Mat Martingale's hardships are crowned with success, and how in the most thrilling race of the year he wins the Blue Riband of the Turf.)



Tuck Hampers and* Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.

(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week--You May Next!)

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TUCK FOR WALES!

"IT'S ALL ACCORDING!"

"Now, Johnny," said the school teacher one day, "what is the half of eight?" "Which way, teacher?" asked the cautious youngster. "Which way!" replied the astonished teacher... "What do you mean?" "Well, on top or sideways, teacher?" said Johnny. "What difference does that make?" "Why," explained Johnny, "half on the top of eight is nought, but half of it sideways is three!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to T. Davies, Garn View, Pontsticill, nr. Merthyr Tydfil, S. Wales.

GUSSY, AS USUAL!

Jack Blake, with his two chums, Herries and Digby, had been waiting for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for an hour and a half. At last, patience well-nigh exhausted, Blake strode up to the dorm, and found Gussy still engaged in dressing. "Aren't you ready yet?" demanded Blake angrily. "Bai Jove!" returned Gussy. "What evah makes you keep askin' me that, Blake, when I've been tellin' you this last hour I'll be weady in a minute?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eric Brereton, 25, King Edward Street, Shotton, nr. Chester.

NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

Worker: "Hallo, John! Did you get that job you were after this morning?" Shirker: "No, Jack. I wouldn't have it." Worker: "Why not?" Shirker: "Well, Jack, I asked the manager what wages he'd give me, and he said he'd give me what I was worth, so I had to tell him straight that that wouldn't do for me!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Marshall, 9, Henderson Road, Kyal Road, Sunderland.

IGNORANT!

"James," said Sir Martin, to his new man, "hand me a pair of shoes." James came back with a pair of shoes, though one was black and the other brown. "Why," exclaimed Sir Martin, "can't you see that this shoe is black and the other brown?" "Yes, sir," answered the servant, "but I can't help it; the other pair are just the same, sir!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Eddie J. Nelson, 20, Rempart du Lombard, Antwerp.

BROKEN ENGLISH!

A certain French-Canadian, whose knowledge of the King's English was rather sparse, was invited to stay a few days with some English-speaking friends in Montreal. On his arrival, the following conversation ensued: "How are you, Pierre?" "Well, my frien', I don't feel ver' good. I have a little 'hoarse' in my throat, in fac' I have a 'colt'!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. J. Coelho, 13c, Brooking Street, Rangoon, Burmah.

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"GLYN'S COLOUR RAY!"

(Continued from page 17.)

pathologist. "This budding Faraday must undo the damage he has caused. But first I should like to be afforded some concrete evidence of the effect of these weird rays that he has stumbled upon to such startling purpose. Try it on the dog, you know! Try it on— No, of course, you use mice, don't you? Well, mice, then!"

It did not take Glyn long to retrieve his coil and accumulators, and in the Head's study, with Sir Everard Crighton, Mr. Railton, and the Head himself as an enthralled audience, he gave a practical demonstration in the form of his celebrated experiment on two mice.

It was entirely successful, and ten minutes later he was submitting the occupants of the sanatorium to similar treatment with equal success.

What Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Selby said when they learnt the true nature and cause of their supposed illness is, perhaps, best left to the imagination.

Dr. Crighton had a few private words with Glyn before his car whirled him back to Harley Street.

"Some day, in the not too distant future, my boy," said the famous consultant genially, drawing on his fur-lined gloves, "you will be an invaluable recruit to the honoured ranks of scientific research workers, and a shining light of the Royal Society. That is, of course, provided that you have not in the meantime blown yourself into space, or poisoned the majority of your schoolfellows, and suffered the extreme penalty of the law, which, in my opinion, is far more likely to be your fate. However, one can never tell. Some people have simply phenomenal luck. You may be one of them. Let us hope so, at least. Good-bye, my boy!"

And Glyn responded with "Good-bye, sir!" in much less cheery a manner, since he was contemplating the inevitable interview in the Head's study, and wondering if he was going to be as lucky in that matter as Sir Everard had expressed a hope that he might be in other respects.

As a matter of fact he wasn't. But within three days he found it possible to sit down without experiencing more than a trifling discomfort.

And as St. Jim's won the match against Greyfriars, and Glyn himself escaped a ban upon his scientific pursuits, there was really matter for congratulation all round.

THE END.

(Another magnificent story by famous Martin Clifford next week, chums. Make a note of the title: "THE DESERTER!" You will vote it one of the best.)



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