

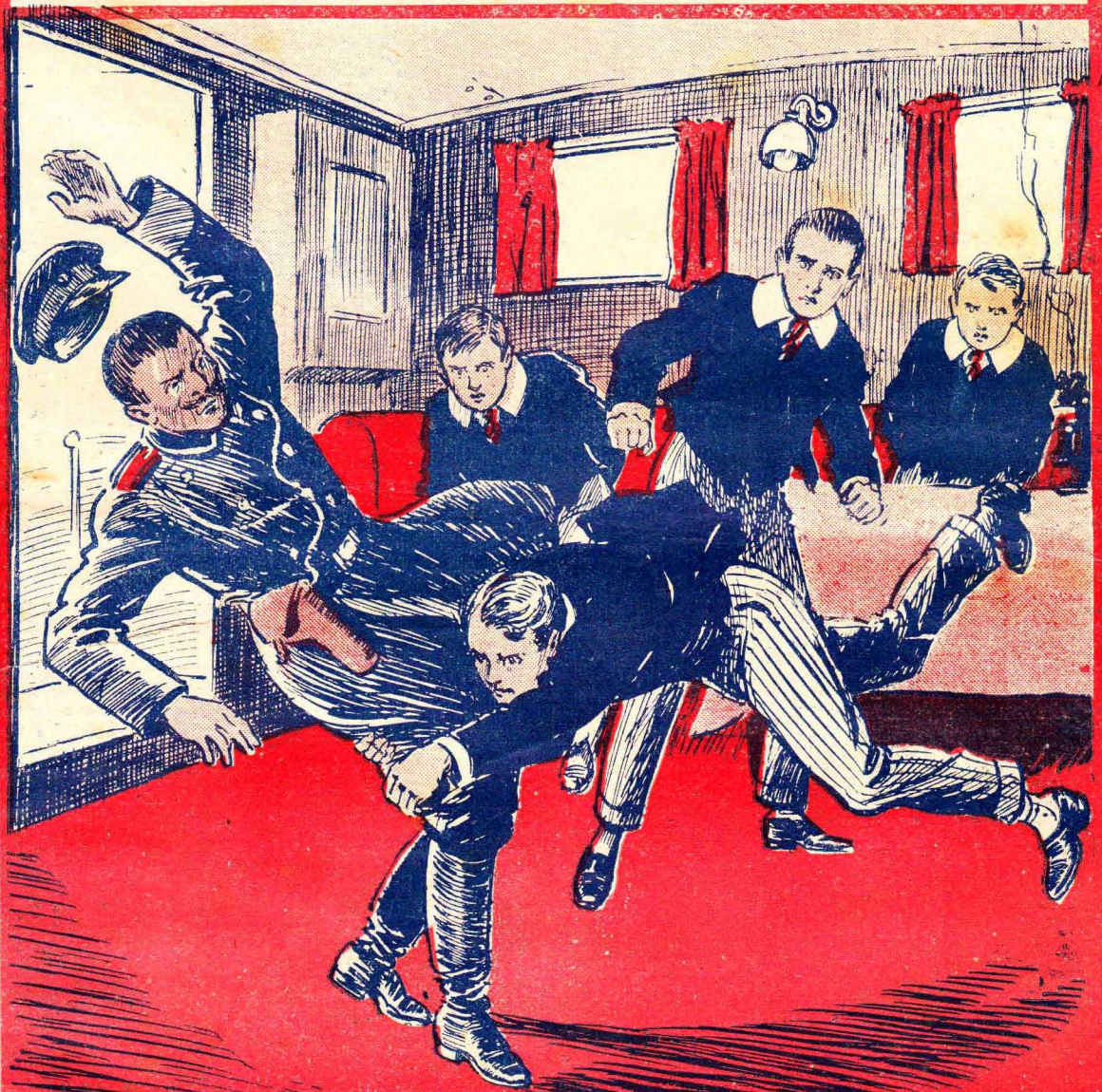
MEET PRINCE RAKOVSKY—"THE BOY FROM RUSSIA!"—IN THIS ISSUE!

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

# The GEM 2<sup>d</sup>

LIBRARY

No. 998.  
Vol. XXXI.  
April 2nd,  
1927.



*Know  
Feb  
19*

## THE CAPTURED JUNIORS' BID FOR LIBERTY!

Really amazing events occur at St. Jim's in this week's grand, extra-long story, when the boy from Russia brings a storm about the heads of Tom Merry & Co.

A PRINCE AT ST. JIM'S! Baggy Trimble would give his soul to be a prince, or failing that to be the friend of one! But there are very few other fellows at St. Jim's who would like to change places with Prince Michael Rakovsky from Russia, who finds himself mixed up in a strange and perilous adventure the moment he sets foot in St. Jim's!



# THE BOY FROM RUSSIA!

A Powerful New Long Complete Tale of Adventure and Intrigue, Featuring the World-Famous Schoolboys, Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, and a Prince of Russia.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER 1.

Trimble, Too!

"RAKOVSKY, sir?"

"Yes, Merry. Prince Michael Rakovsky of Iger!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Lowther.

And Manners grimaced.

"I presume you will be pleased to undertake this small task for me, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton, with a slight inflexion of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

To notice Tom Merry's tone was a trifle resigned, Mr. Railton did not appear to notice it. The Housemaster nodded.

"Very well. Please bring Rakovsky to my study as soon as he arrives, my boy. You have plenty of time to meet the train at three o'clock."

And, with another nod, Mr. Railton closed his study door.

He left the Terrible Three of St. Jim's in a far from exhilarated mood.

"Oh, these Housemasters!" ejaculated Lowther, in deep disgust. "Of course, Railton didn't know we had a House match on this afternoon—"

"Come away from his study, old man!" grinned Manners.

"You fellows needn't come," said Tom Merry. "I suppose Railton thinks it's more important that this giddy princeling should be met than we should wallop Figgins & Co. at footer. Anyway, I shall have to do as he says, and take young Rakovsky to my waistcoat; but there's no reason why you chaps should weaken the House team!"

"Oh, rot! We shall come, of course!" grunted Lowther. "It's only a scratch game, after all. Figgins & Co. will keep."

"Stick together," agreed Manners. "Here's Blake. He'll skipper the team if you ask him, Tom."

"Well, you do look like a cheery lot of moulting owls!" remarked Jack Blake, grinning. "Better get a move on, Figgy is on the field already!"

"I shall have to ask you to act as skipper to-day, Blake!" said Tom Merry manfully. "Railton wants me to meet a new kid at the station—"

"Blow the new kid! Blow all the new kids in the country!" ejaculated Blake. "Any fellow will take the job off your hands, if you ask nicely."

"You see, this is an extra special new kid!" explained the Shell captain patiently. "He's come all the way from Russia, fleeing for his life from the Bolsheviks or something, and Railton wants him to have an official welcome from the junior captain, so as to make him feel at home!"

"What rot!" remarked Blake.

"Well, I couldn't refuse. Railton doesn't see quite eye to eye with us over House matches, you know—"

"Even Railton has his weak points!" agreed Blake.

"And the fact is, I've got to go!" finished Tom Merry.

"And we're going, too!" said Lowther, speaking for Manners. "Can't leave Tommy in the lurch. You'll have to find three reserves, Blake!"

"It's sheer bosh, but I suppose it can't be helped," admitted Blake thoughtfully. "I'll take the job on, then, Merry. I'll put Dig in, and Mulvaney, and Kerruish. Dig! Digby, you chump!"

Blake had caught sight of Digby in the Hall, and his yell caused his chum to turn back suddenly.

"Hallo! What's up?"

"You're playing, old chap! Get into your togs, quick. And if you see Mulvaney and Kerruish, tell 'em they'll be wanted, too!"

"Tom Merry standing out?" inquired Digby, noting the lugubrious expressions on the faces of the Terrible Three.

"We've got to meet a giddy Russian prince!" groaned Lowther. "Come on, Tommy! We can give the chap a bumping to ease our feelings!"

"Nice welcome for royalty!" chuckled Blake. "I shall be rather interested to see this fellow, when you bring him home. Give him my compliments, Tom Merry!"

"And mine!" called Digby, half-way up the dormitory stairs.

The Terrible Three looked at each other dismally. It was really a little too thick of Mr. Railton to expect them to give up a House match for the pleasure of a new fellow's company—however illustrious the new fellow might be. Doubtless Prince Michael was a great man in his own country, or rather, had been before the Bolshevik regime was instituted. Possibly he had come down in the world since then. He might even be as hard up as Trimble. But if he had all the charms imaginable, and was fairly oozing with cash, Tom Merry & Co. could not bring themselves to regard him as adequate compensation for the loss of a House match.

"I suppose as he's a giddy foreigner, we ought to be polite!" remarked Tom Merry resignedly. "Noblesse oblige, as Gussy would put it. Come on, we're in for it!"

The three juniors descended the School House steps in a far from cheery humour, and the sound of a ball being punted about on Little Side made them long all the more to relinquish their mission. But there was nothing to be done, in the face of Mr. Railton's request. Requests from Housemasters amounted to commands.

"Hold on a minute, dear men!"

Cardew of the Fourth, lounging as usual, stepped gracefully in their path on the way to the gates.

"Stroll along with us if you've anything to say!" suggested Lowther. "We're due at Rylcombe at three."

"Charmed!" assented Cardew urbanely. "Always glad of your exhilaratin' company, old beans! But I want to ask a question."

"Pile in!" invited Tom Merry.

"Ici on parle francais!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Is it true?"

"Eh?"

"Is it true, Merry? I've been hearin' the most excitin' news from Blake!"

"Oh, Prince Rakovsky!" grinned the Shell captain. "Yes, we're going to meet him now. Want to come with us?"

"I understand you fellows were grousin' because you've been deputed for the job?" asked Cardew. "No accountin' for tastes, of course. Now I should have jumped at the chance of makin' a distinguished acquaintance."

"You mean you'd have been keen to see what kind of a specimen the chap is?" grinned Lowther. "I can't see you title hunting, like Trimble!"

"Well, I'm comin', unless you chaps kick me out!" assented Cardew. "I've got no end of aristocratic connections, but even I can't claim to have hob-nobbed with royalty. It's rather a distinction for you fellows, lookin' at it from Railton's point of view!"

"I'd sooner distinguish myself scoring goals against the New House!" remarked Tom Merry. "Talk of angels! Ye gods! Is it really Trimble?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Beau Brummel, the second!" gasped Lowther.

There was good cause for astonishment, even amazement, among the Terrible Three. They had reached the gates now, and, evidently awaiting somebody, a fat form came in view. It was Baggy Trimble—but not the Baggy fellows were accustomed to kick and cuff in Form-rooms and corridors. It was Baggy resplendent—fairly shining from top to toe!

"Tut-Trimble! Is that really you, Baggy?" gasped Manners.

Trimble's beady little eyes gleamed, and a look of lofty contempt appeared on his fat features—or so he imagined.

"I've been waitin' for you fellows!" he responded, with crushing dignity. "I hope you don't intend to butt in between myself and my friend Rakovsky?"

"Your whatter?" ejaculated Lowther.

"My friend Rakovsky!" repeated Trimble firmly. "We call him Michael at home, you know—and between pals he's called Micky!"

"How did you know he was coming?" inquired Manners grimly. "Bootlace came undone—what?"

"No, you suspicious rotter! I may have dropped my penknife."

"And stuck your fat ear to Railton's keyhole?" finished

Lowther. "I wonder you didn't go on ahead of us—an aristocratic fellow like you, you know."

"You fellows can sheer off!" said Trimble finally. "That's what I waited to tell you. I can't have a crowd of bouncers round Micky—"

"Why, you fat clam!" roared Manners.

"Cut off before you get hurt!" suggested Lowther.

"By gad! I believe I've seen that topper before!" murmured Cardew.

"And that coat! I've seen Talbot in that coat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"My hat! Those are Grundy's shoes!" roared Manners. Trimble's face was a study. He had hoped that those details would pass unnoticed—he had even hoped to replace the "borrowed" articles before their owners discovered the loss. A fellow had to spruce up a bit to meet a real live prince, even if he was only a Russian!

"I—I say, you know," began Trimble nervously, "they're only—only loaned! Don't be mean rotters, just when I'm going to meet Micky, you know!"

"You're not meeting Rakovsky if I can help it!" retorted Tom Merry grimly. "Let me catch you within a mile of the station, and I'll burst you!"

"Oh dear! But, I say—"

"Scat!" roared Lowther ferociously.

He made a sudden movement with his foot, and Trimble scuttled hastily backwards.

"March!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't a great deal of time left through jawing! If Trimble follows, kick him—hard!"

And the Terrible Three and Cardew set off for Rylcombe at a swinging pace—a pace that made Cardew, not in the best of condition, breathe a little hard.

"I shall have to put in a bit more footer practice!" gasped Cardew, as the station came in sight. "You fellows are a bit strenuous for a slacker like me!"

"Never mind. We've left Trimble behind!" grinned Lowther. "By Jove! The train's signalled!"

The four juniors hastened on to the platform just in time to see the local from Wayland rumble to a standstill. A number of people descended from the train, including a tall, dark, and rather pallid youth, who looked up and down as if expecting to be met.

"That's the chap!" murmured Lowther. "Go ahead, Tommy!"

Tom Merry, wearing his cheeriest smile, strode towards the stranger, whom he had little doubt was Rakovsky. But the Shell captain was forestalled. A well-known podgy form rolled across the platform and halted before Rakovsky. There was a gasp from Tom Merry & Co. as they recognised him.

"Trimble! How the thump did he get here before us?" gasped Tom Merry.

How Trimble had accomplished that remarkable performance was a mystery, but there was no doubt that he was seizing his opportunity to impress his charms on the prince. The juniors grinned as they approached.

"Welcome, your Highness! Welcome to St. Jim's!"

The prince smiled quite pleasantly, and extended his hand frankly. Trimble took it, and, with deep reverence, pressed it to his fat lips. The prince eyed that proceeding with considerable surprise, and drew his hand away rather quickly after the kiss. Lowther swallowed a chuckle, and produced a remarkable sound in his throat. Tom Merry hastened to introduce himself.

"Good-afternoon, Rakovsky! I've been sent by Mr. Railton to take you to the school!"

"You rotter! I'm looking after the prince!" hooted Trimble indignantly. "You leave him alone, Tom Merry! He can't speak a word of English, of course! I'm acting as interpreter for him!"

"Youovitch come meetski?" inquired the prince, smiling. "There you are! What do you think of that for a lingo?" demanded Trimble triumphantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does he mean by that, Baggy?" grinned Lowther.

"He wants some grub—meat, if you've got it!" explained Trimble, with deadly seriousness. "Don't you, your Highness?"

"Well, no, thank you!" grinned the prince. "You see, I can speak English, French, German, or Russian equally well. I have lived in France for the last three years!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble's face was a study.

Quite how he had expected Rakovsky to speak he did not know. Probably some low, guttural tongue, in Trimble's opinion. He had certainly not expected the prince to turn out an expert linguist—better, possibly, at the English language than Trimble himself.

He felt swindled.

"Roll away, Baggibus!" advised Cardew, drawing his well-shod foot back a little. "You've done your act!"

Trimble's eyes gleamed, and his rage found expression at last.

"All right! I'm going, you rotters! You think you've got the prince all to yourselves, I suppose? Well, you can jolly well have him, for all I care! He's only a blinking Bolshevik, anyway!"

And with that parting shot Baggy turned his fat little nose up in the air and headed for the exit. He took about three paces in lofty disdain. The next moment he felt as if a battering-ram had caught him.

"Yarooop! Whoop! Oh, my hat! Wow-wow-wow-wow-wow!"

Baggy Trimble fled through the station exit and into the street, where he collapsed and roared. Cardew languidly dusted his toe-cap with a silk handkerchief, after which he rejoined his friends, grinning.

He arrived just in time to see the third of Rakovsky's big boxes dumped on the platform by a perspiring porter.

"Lend a hand, Cardew!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"There's three more to come!"

"Oh gad!" murmured Cardew.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Something New in New Fellows!

CARDEW did not lend a hand at landing Rakovsky's luggage on the platform. Cardew rather prided himself on looking "natty," and Tom Merry & Co. were not getting any "nattier" helping the Rylcombe porter. Indeed, by the time the half-dozen boxes which comprised the Russian junior's belongings had been piled on a couple of trolleys, the Terrible Three were breathless and dusty and warm.

"Don't mind this fellow, Rakovsky!" grinned Lowther, indicating Cardew. "He can't help being a slacker!"

"Born tired, y'know!" yawned Cardew. "I always steer clear of anythin' demandin' manual labour! Might I inquire how you strenuous johnnies intend to get that little lot as far as St. Jim's?"

"There's rather a lot!" admitted Tom Merry, scratching his head.

"You haven't brought the family treasure with you, I suppose?" asked Lowther, grinning.

Rakovsky started, and shot a keen glance at the Shell junior. For a moment his dark eyes were full of suspicion, but it was only for a moment. When he responded he was wearing his usual pleasant smile again.

"I shall remain in England a long time—perhaps for good," he replied calmly. "My luggage includes a great deal that is of value. I am much obliged to you for taking so much trouble. Would it not be possible to hire a conveyance of some kind?"

"There's the hack!" said Manners.

And there was a chuckle.

Certainly the aged hack and its aged driver were to be had. But it was doubtful if the decrepit horse could have moved the hack a yard once it was loaded with Rakovsky's luggage.

"Let's get outside, an' see what we can find," suggested Cardew.

The dandy's suggestion was adopted. Two porters shoved the big trolleys after the juniors, wondering a little how the new fellow intended to transport his belongings.

"There's a taxi!" said Manners hopefully. "If the man will take the lot on board, we can walk. Why, what the thump is Trimble talking to him for?"

"I think the boot's on the other leg—the taxi-man is talking to Trimble!" grinned Lowther. "They seem to be disagreeing over something."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Want the other foot, Baggy?" asked Cardew.

"Help a fellow out, you know! I—I'm in a fix!"

"Got it!" ejaculated Lowther triumphantly. "Trimble took a taxi near the school—that's how he got here first! I remember it passed us in the lane."

"The swindling chauffeur wants ten bob—says he's been kept waiting here when he was due back at Wayland!" gasped Trimble. "Pay him, somebody, for goodness' sake! There's old Crump over there!"

"You fat scoundrel! You jolly well deserve to get run in! It would be a lesson to you!" grunted Manners.

"How much did you say?"

The juniors stared as Michael Rakovsky produced a leather wallet and extracted a pound note.

"T-ten bob, your Highness!" gasped Trimble. "I—I mean a pound! Gimme the note, your Highness. I'll pay him."

"We'll square, Rakovsky!" said Tom Merry hastily. "Put it back, old man."

But the Russian junior was not to be stayed. He shook his head smilingly, and handed the note to the taxi-driver.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

"I think we had better leave my luggage to be sent," he said. "What do you think, Merry?"

"What price that dray, Tommy?" ejaculated Monty Lowther suddenly.

He pointed across the street to a brewer's dray, drawn by two big horses, which stood by a public house. The driver had evidently repaired inside for refreshment, and the dray had no load upon it.

"Let's interview the man when he comes out," suggested Lowther. "If he's willing, we'll have Rakovsky's baggage at St. Jim's in no time!"

The juniors had not long to wait. The driver appeared in a few minutes, and listened with a grin on his face to Lowther's suggestion. When a ten-shilling note from Rakovsky was slipped into his hand, his objections melted like the winter snow.

The boxes were piled on board, and the juniors clambered up on top of them. In this manner Rakovsky completed his journey to St. Jim's.

There was quite a little crowd waiting at the gates when the brewer's dray hove in sight, and a terrific cheer greeted the prince on his arrival.

"Welcome, Rakovsky!"

"Good old Bolsky!"

"Hurrah!"

Possibly the Russian prince had suffered many vicissitudes since his father's reign came to an end, but it was obvious that he was pleased by that warm reception.

He stood on the highest of the pile of boxes, and held up his hand for silence.

"Oh, my hat! He's going to make a speech!" gasped Monty Lowther.

Rakovsky opened his mouth to speak, but he got no further.

There was a sudden blare from the back of the crowd, and a raucous sound burst on the ears of the juniors. A general move towards it solved the mystery, and an angry murmur arose.

"Go it! The Red Flag!" shouted Racke, and the blare was redoubled. Racke himself was wielding a cricket-stump in lieu of a conductor's baton, and in his other hand he was holding a comb-and-paper. Crooke had a mouth-organ, and was blowing away for dear life, though it was certain that the sounds he produced were nothing like the Red Flag. Mellich had a tin whistle, and Scrope operated with a stump and a tin can as a drum. Clampe and Chowle, of the New House, were represented by a cornet and a mouth-organ, and several other fellows had instruments of their own invention. There was no tune, but the noise was deafening.

Tom Merry's face flushed as he saw the cause of the uproar.

It was an insult to Rakovsky—just the kind of thing that might have been expected from a cad like Racke. Whatever Racke's feelings towards the new junior, he had no right to insult him openly in this manner.

"Stop that!" shouted Tom Merry. "Chuck that row, Racke! Do you hear?"

"Yes; shut up, you cad!"

"Chuck it, Racke!"

If Aubrey Racke heard those shouts, he heeded them not. His stump rose and fell rhythmically.

"Great, you fellows! Keep it going! More saxophone, Lorne! That's right! Let's hear that whistle, Mellich!"

"Shut up!" roared Monty Lowther from the dray. "Hold the cad, somebody! Wait till I get near him!"

Lowther, together with Tom Merry and Manners, was about to leap from the dray when a hand fell on his shoulder.

"One moment!" observed Rakovsky calmly. "Leave this to me, please!"

"But—"

There was no time to restrain the Russian.

With a lithe movement, he dropped from the dray and slipped in among the crowd. In a few seconds he had forced a passage as far as Racke, whom he eyed grimly.

"Look out, Racke!" called Gore. "The prince is thirsting for blood!"

Gore's remark did not result in a chuckle. The "music" of Racke's orchestra ceased suddenly, and the conductor whirled round to face Rakovsky.

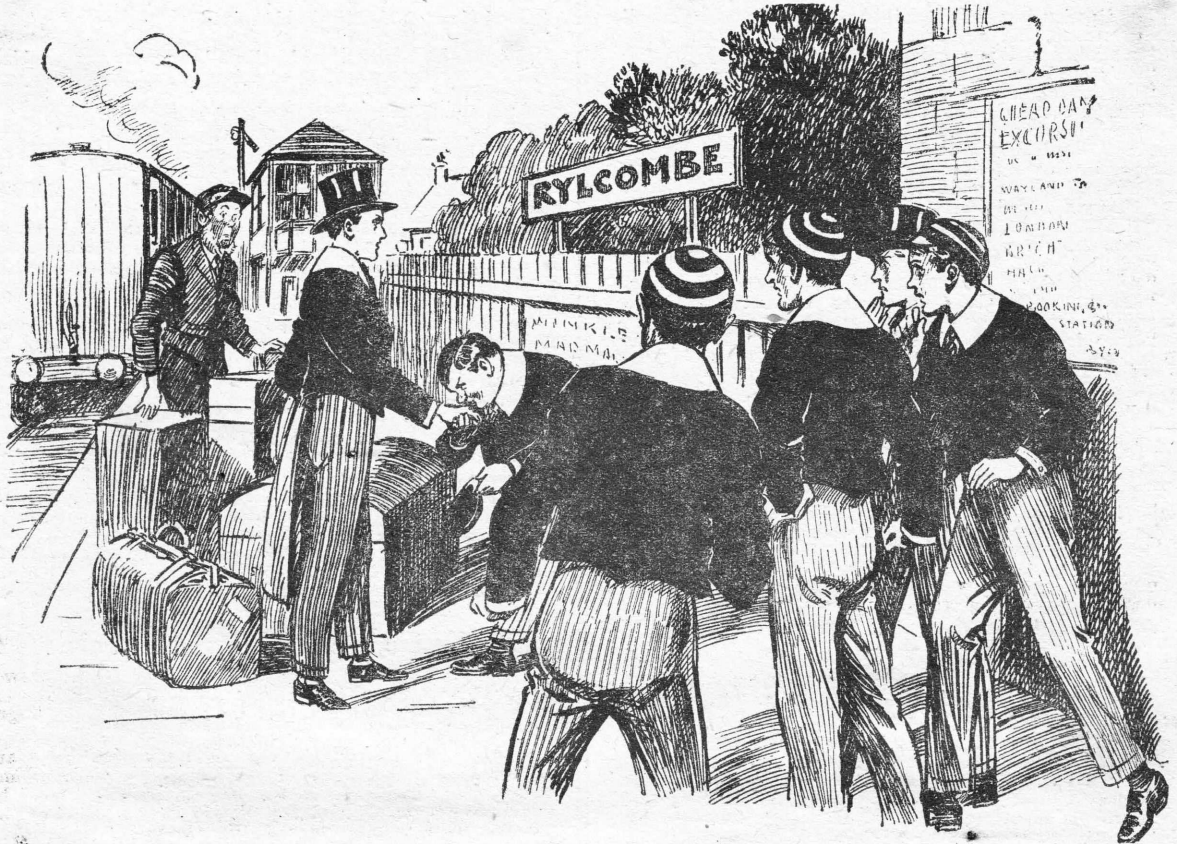
"Well? Don't you like it, you foreign cad?"

A murmur from the juniors died down as Rakovsky fixed his black eyes on the cad of the Shell. There was something in that penetrating glance that seemed to go right through Racke, and he grew pallid.

"You have insulted me!" said Rakovsky coolly. "Do you deny it?"

"We don't want Bolsheviks bargain' into a decent school!" snarled Racke, though his lips were dry.

"Then put up your hands, while I knock your words



"Welcome, your Highness! Welcome to St. Jim's!" Prince Rakovsky smiled quite pleasantly, and extended his hand quite frankly. Trimble took it, and with deep reverence, pressed it to his fat lips. Tom Merry looked on spellbound, while Lowther swallowed a chuckle. (See Chapter 1.)

back down your throat!" snapped the Russian, springing forward.

"Stop them! What will Railton say?" gasped Tom Merry, jumping down into the crowd.

But it was too late to stop the new junior. He had hardly given Racke time to guard ere he leaped upon him, and now, while Racke covered as best he could, he was driven all round the ring of juniors under a hail of blows.

Evidently, at some time during his princely career, Rakovsky had received instructions in the art of fisticuffs—as Racke was learning to his cost!

A smashing blow between the eyes "flooded" the cad at last, and Rakovsky stepped back, breathing a little hard, but untouched.

"I'm done! Hang you!" gasped Racke, tenderly feeling an eye that was already darkening ominously.

"You are not knocked out—only afraid!" said the Russian contemptuously. "But if you will not fight, very well."

"Get up, you funk!" growled Grundy, stirring Racke with his foot. "You haven't the pluck of a bunny-rabbit!"

"I'm done, I tell you!" gasped Racke. He was safe on the ground, and he knew it. And he had no desire whatever for another sample of the Russian junior's quality with his fists.

"As you will!" said Rakovsky coolly. He smiled as he met Tom Merry's glance.

"By Jove, you can scrap, you boulder!" said the Shell captain admiringly. "I'd like to have the gloves on with you in the gym, some time, if you're willing!"

"Whenever you like," answered Rakovsky calmly.

"Where shall we shove your boxes, old man?" asked Lowther. "In the dorm, or in one of the box-rooms? You won't want them all under your bed—what?"

"Taggles will take them up to the box-room," said Tom Merry. "You'd better see Railton next—and keep it dark that you've got into a row already, for goodness' sake!"

Rakovsky nodded, and, under Tom Merry's guidance, found himself in the masters' corridor.

"Drop into Study No. 10 to tea afterwards," said Tom Merry cordially. "Any fellow will show you the way."

Rakovsky was not long in the Housemaster's study. He received a kindly welcome from Mr. Railton, and was then

conducted to the Head's study, where Dr. Holmes put him through his paces.

"You will share Study No. 7, in the Shell passage," said Mr. Railton, after the interview. "If you are not comfortable, you must let me know. But I think you will become accustomed to things quite quickly, my boy."

And, with a kindly nod, Mr. Railton left the new junior to his own devices.

Hammond of the Fourth directed him to the Shell passage, where he was to "tea" with the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 of the Fourth.

Most of the fellows were at tea when the Russian junior entered the corridor, and he found it deserted. He glanced at the numbers on the doors, in search of No. 7, and found it at last.

He knocked, and started at the voice which bade him "Come in!"

A faint odour of tobacco smoke greeted him as he looked into the study, and he nodded to Racke and Croke, seated at the table.

"Well? What do you want here? Better get out before you're chucked out!" sneered Racke.

"Mr. Railton has informed me that I am to share this study," said the new junior simply.

"Wha-a-at?"

"He hoped I should be comfortable."—Rakovsky smiled slightly. "Do you know if there are any vacant rooms farther along the corridor?"

"None excepting the punishment-room—Nobody's Study!" grinned Croke.

"An' you're not comin' in here—that's flat!" addeed Racke.

Rakovsky's lip curled.

"I shall be back again if I cannot find better quarters," he remarked coolly.

He shut the door and wandered along the passage, eyeing the broken and mutilated number-plates on the doors with a glimmer in his eye. He paused at last before No. 2, and knocked.

Lucas and Frere were at tea when Rakovsky dropped in—a thin tea. Funds were low in Study No. 2, as they often were. The advent of Rakovsky took the two juniors rather by surprise.

The Russian boy did not fail to notice the meagre supplies on the board, and he drew out his leather wallet.

"I haven't met you fellows before—"

"This is Frere, I'm Lucas."

"I'm looking for a study. The headmaster has put me in No. 7, but I do not think Racke and I would get on very well together. And I have many State matters which make it imperative that I should have a room to myself. Do you think you fellows could find other quarters?"

"Well, of all the undiluted cheek—" breathed Lucas.

"Nerve!" added Frere.

"If a ten-pound note each would be of any use, you are welcome. I am not accustomed to accepting favours."

"Oh!"

"A tenner each!" ejaculated Lucas, his eyes gleaming.

"My hat! I'd do a lot for a tenner!" said Frere candidly.

"Here is the money," said Rakovsky. "Shall we call it settled, then?"

"I—I suppose it's all right?" asked Lucas, a little doubtfully.

"Fellows have changed studies before now," said Frere.

"I know I can get a dig in with Boulton and Walkley."

"It's a deal, then," said Lucas. "We'll clear out tonight, Rakovsky. I—I suppose you won't stay to tea?"

"Thanks all the same, but Tom Merry has asked me," said the Russian junior gravely. "I am much obliged."

The prince looked very pleased when he presented himself in Study No. 10.

"Hallo, Rakovsky!"

"Trot in, old man!"

"Vewy pleased to meet you, deah boy!"

And Rakovsky sat down to a high tea.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Mysterious!

"BED-TIME, kids!" Kildare turned the handle of Study No. 2 in the Shell passage, but the door did not open. Staring a little, Kildare rapped on the panels.

"Lucas! Frere! What have you locked the door for?" There was no answer from Study No. 2. It might have been unoccupied, save that Kildare caught the sound of a swift movement from within.

"Open this door at once!"

Kildare's expression was becoming rather grim. It was highly unusual for fellows to "sport their oak," and when it occurred they usually had something to conceal. And Kildare was a prefect, and did not appreciate being kept waiting.

A cheery bunch of juniors, heading for the dormitory, passed as they observed the captain of the school.

"Open this door, Lucas! I can hear you moving about, you young idiot! Sharp!"

"My hat! Rakovsky is sporting his oak!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"Is Rakovsky in here?" asked Kildare, turning his head.

"It's his study now, Kildare. Lucas and Frere—ahem!—agreed to change out!"

"Oh!"

Kildare looked a little surprised, but he made no comment. If fellows elected to change studies, it was none of his business. He rapped on the door again.

"Rakovsky! It is time for bed. Open the door at once!"

The juniors—quite a crowd of the Shell and Fourth by this time—waited with deep interest. There was the sound of a chair being pushed back this time, and footsteps approached the door. The key turned in the lock, and Rakovsky appeared in the doorway.

"I am sorry if I misunderstood you," he remarked, smiling at Kildare. "I was busy, and did not want interruptions. You said it was bed-time, I think? I am ready."

Some of the fellows grinned. There was a very disarming look about the new junior, but it was hardly to be believed that he had "misunderstood" Kildare's order. He had not wanted to open his door until he was ready, for some reason of his own.

Kildare gave him a grim glance.

"I'll let you off this time," he said at last. "But take a tip, and chuck trying to pull the leg of a prefect. It's a dangerous game. You can cut!"

"Thank you. Perhaps you will show me the way, Merry?"

"Certainly, old bean!" grinned the Shell captain, linking his arm in Rakovsky's. "But I'd advise you seriously to bear what Kildare said in mind!"

Rakovsky nodded, and accompanied the chums of the Shell up the staircase. He passed Cardew on the landing, and smiled. The dandy stifled a yawn and nodded back.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

"Good-night, Rakovsky, old man!"

"Good-night, Cardew!"

"Good-night, Micky, old chap!" squeaked Trimble, waving a fat hand cheerily at the new junior. "See you to-morrow!"

"I hope not!" ejaculated Rakovsky.

"He, he, he! Your little joke, what? Yaroooh!"

"Get into the dorm, old fat man!" advised Cardew.

"Unless you want another?"

"Yah! Beast! You're jealous because Micky won't be friendly with you, you rotter!"

Cardew chuckled, and proceeded to undress in his usual lazy style. But he slipped in between the sheets before Darrell came to see the lights out, and composed himself for slumber.

"Good-night, Levison. Good-night, Clivey!"

The sleepy responses in the dormitory grew fainter, and soon the whole of the Fourth Form dormitory, with a solitary exception, was in the arms of Morpheus. The exception was Cardew, lying on his back and gazing into the darkness.

Boom!

"Oh, gad! Only a quarter. I shall fall asleep before half-past."

To the waking junior half-past ten seemed as if it would never come; but the clock in the old tower chimed at last, and Cardew slid without a sound out of bed.

It was cold—bitterly so, and the dandy of the Fourth was not long in getting his clothes on. He turned up the collar of his jacket as he crept to the door.

A moment later and he was creeping along the corridor towards the box-room.

"If Levison or Clive could see me now!" murmured Cardew. "Dash it, where is that slackin' bounder? He promised to be here on the stroke!"

He was in the box-room now, and, according to the arrangements, Racke of the Shell should have been there, too. There were occasionally times when the strain of football and Form work became rather more than Cardew could bear—occasions when his heart yearned for some more exciting pursuit to revive his jaded nerves.

This was one of them. His study mates had observed for days past that Cardew was beginning to "break out" again. An incautious cigarette in the study had given the game away, and Cardew was thankful that Levison and Clive had not spotted him leaving the dormitory.

If all went well, he was to join Racke in a "little game" with Joliffe and Lodgey at the Green Man. As he shivered in the darkness, Cardew felt that, after all, there was something to be said for a warm bed.

"Oh, my hat! I don't believe the bounder is comin'! Br-r-r-r!"

Cardew glanced at the window, but it was not open. Racke could not have gone without leaving the sash raised an inch or two for his return. As the minutes sped, it was borne in Cardew's mind that the Shell fellow was not coming.

"Oh, gad! What a rotten slacker! Too cold, I suppose. I've a jolly good mind to go by myself, by Jove!"

Cardew had brought his overcoat with him, and he peered into the shadowy quad. The wind was moaning weirdly in the leafless elms; it was not an inviting night. Practically any fellow but Cardew would have turned back with a shudder to the warmth of the dormitory, but the dandy's queer streak of obstinacy came to the top.

"Dash it all, I'm not goin' back now. Here goes!"

He slipped up the sash, and swung one leg out over the sill. Then he stopped, drawing a quick breath.

Among the shadows of the quad something had moved. Cardew had had no more than a glimpse, but he was sure that he had not been mistaken. Somebody else was on the prowl that bitter winter night, though the junior had not been able to recognise the figure.

He swung his leg back into the box-room, and strained his eyes to pick out details in the shadows.

For a few moments it appeared that he must have been mistaken; nothing moved save the shadows of the swaying elms. But Cardew gave a start as a figure—unmistakable in the starlight now—crossed a corner of the quad in the direction of the chapel.

Cardew watched until the figure disappeared suddenly under the shadow of a wall; it did not appear again.

"I know that fellow! By gad, if I'm right, I've hit on a giddy mystery, if you like. Ralph, my boy, you're on in this act!"

His eyes gleaming with excitement, the dandy of the Fourth dropped from the box-room window to the leads, and thence to the ground. Keeping in the shadows, he set off swiftly on the trail of the mysterious figure.

"He was carryin' a whackin' big bag!" murmured Cardew. "I wonder what that was for?"

The figure had disappeared towards the chapel, and

Cardew darted across to the cover of the elms, and followed. He reached the ancient edifice barely a minute after the unknown, but the latter, whoever he was, was not in sight. "This is a job for a bloodhound!" grinned Cardew. "Be careful, Ralph."

Taking cover behind the masses of fallen masonry the Fourth-Former approached the chapel closer, until he paused right at the head of the steps leading to the vaults. The vaults were extensive, and the unknown could not have ventured into them without a light. For a moment Cardew was tempted to risk the descent and investigate further, but he abandoned the notion after some thought.

"Whoever the chap is, he'll have to come out again!" he murmured philosophically. "There's no other exit that I've heard of. I think I'll wait an' see. Gad! It's freezin'!"

There was no doubt that, cold as it already was, it was getting colder. In the morning there would probably be thick white frost on the window-panes of the dormitories. Cardew began to wish, rather late, that he had never thought of leaving his bed that evening.

But he could not bring himself to abandon the mystery he had stumbled upon. He crouched behind a broken wall and waited.

As it happened, his vigil was not destined to prove a long one. A scraping on the stone steps warned him that the unknown was emerging, and Cardew crouched lower behind the masonry. For a second he had a glimpse of a figure silhouetted against the wall; the next moment it was gone.

Cardew rose swiftly and silently, and followed. The figure ahead of him was still carrying the big bag, but by the manner in which he held it, it was empty now. Before, it had been heavily laden.

As the unknown crossed the quad towards the School House Cardew had a clearer view of him, and his suspicions were confirmed. It was a junior whom he was following—and a junior whom Cardew could not mistake.

"How the thump is he goin' to get in again?" breathed Cardew. "He evidently didn't leave via the box-room!"

The question was answered immediately. The fellow walked quite coolly up to the big door of the School House, and turned the handle. It opened at his touch, and he passed inside. Creeping nearer, Cardew heard the bolts drawn on the inside of the door. A click, and it was locked, just as it had been when Mr. Railton left it barely half an hour ago.

"By Jove! The fellow's got a nerve!" grinned Cardew. "If a master had happened to spot that door open, it would have been all up, I imagine. This thing wants thinkin' out!"

A few minutes before, Cardew had been determined to visit his "goey" friends at the village inn; now, his brain was grappling with the problem which the strange happenings just beheld presented.

Cardew did not head for the old oak which juniors used to help them over the school wall when breaking bounds; instead, he turned and made back to the box-room.

When he re-entered the Fourth Form dormitory he was still as far as ever from a solution of the mystery. For long the dandy of the Fourth remained awake cudgelling his brains, but he fell asleep at length.

Rising bell the next morning found Cardew rather sleeper and even more inclined to yawn than usual, which was the cause of more than one suspicious glance from his chums, Levison and Clive.

"Up late last night, Ralph?" asked Levison bluntly. Cardew yawned again, but shook his head urbanely.

"Not guilty this time, dear man! I didn't sleep well, but I haven't been payin' Lodgey my respects, if that's what you mean!"

"I'll take your word for it, Cardew!" said Levison, grinning. "Some fellows wouldn't!"

"Please yourself, dear old bean!"

And Cardew lounged out of the dormitory, leaving his chums to finish dressing. Levison and Clive said no more on the matter, though Clive looked a little worried. There were times when chumming with Cardew had its troubles and trials.

The dandy of the Fourth strolled gracefully down into the Hall, and lounged by the letter rack. Rakovsky, with Tom Merry and Talbot escorting him, and Baggy Trimble hovering jealously behind, came down the staircase, and approached the rack.

"Anything for the prince, Cardew?" called Lowther, and Rakovsky smiled.

"Haven't looked, dear man! I don't run over the letters lookin' for other fellows' remittances, like Baggy Trimble!"

"Move out of the way, then, and let a fellow see!" suggested Lowther. "Good! There's one for me."

Rakovsky glanced at the "R's," but he evidently did not expect to find anything. Cardew gave him a peculiar look.

"Good-mornin', Rakovsky! You're lookin' in the pink, old man."

"I can't say the same for you," said the Russian junior, grinning. "You're looking tired."

"I didn't sleep very well, I'm afraid," yawned Cardew. "I suppose you did, what?"

A gleam shot into Rakovsky's dark eyes, but it was gone in a flash. He met Cardew's languid gaze calmly enough.

"Splendidly, thanks! Shall we take a walk in the quad?" "Anythin' you like, dear man!"

Rakovsky and Cardew detached themselves from the rest of the fellows and descended the School House steps together.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mystery of the Moor!

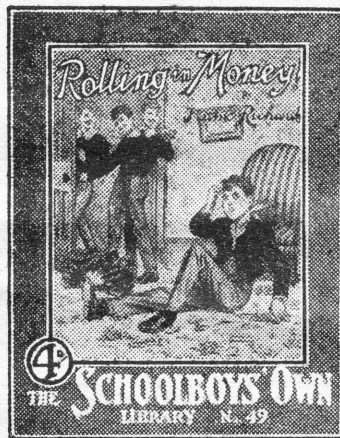
"WHAT about a little run this afternoon, Rakovsky, old bean?"

Cardew clapped Michael Rakovsky quite cordially on the back as he came upon him in the quad.

It was two or three days after the Russian junior's arrival. Rakovsky had begun to settle down now, as every

NO APRIL FOOL'S JOKE!

THIS FINE VOLUME IS ON SALE FRIDAY!



THERE'S NO BETTER TONIC THAN A HEARTY LAUGH... AND THIS YARN IS FULL OF LAUGHS!

A jolly book-length story, dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, with Johnny Bull in the limelight.

ORDER THIS BARGAIN BOOK NOW!

new fellow did sooner or later. In Rakovsky's case, he did not appear to suffer from shyness, which was perhaps fortunate, when he was alone in a strange country.

The new junior had proved sociable enough, but he had made few close friends. If there was one fellow whom he seemed to regard in the light of a pal, it was the whimsical dandy of the Fourth.

And, having just emerged from the Form-room on that sunny half-holiday, he brightened up at seeing Cardew.

"A run! Where to? Do you mean by car?"

"A fellow can telephone for a car from Blankley's, in Wayland," said Cardew. "I've sometimes had one out before. How would you care for a run this afternoon with Levison and Clive?"

"Rather! But Merry told me that it was compulsory football practice to-day."

"Oh, rot! We can cut footer!" ejaculated Cardew. "I don't know, though! Levison and Clive wouldn't. I'll ask Kildare to let us off—what?"

"Better find him at once, then," said Rakovsky.

Cardew nodded, and the two juniors hastened into the House in search of the captain of the school. Tom Merry spotted them in the Hall, and gave a hail.

"See you on Little Side this afternoon, Rakovsky?" The prince shook his head.

"I have never played football, Merry, though I shall be THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

willing to try another day. But Cardew and I are going out in a car this afternoon."

"Oh, are you?"

Cardew and Rakovsky spun round, and Tom Merry grinned.

Kildare, unseen by the Russian junior, had approached quite near, and could not help hearing the last few words.

"Hold on, Kildare!" began Cardew hastily. "You see—"

"I'm talking to Rakovsky," said Kildare. "Has nobody told you that it's compulsory practice this afternoon, Rakovsky?"

The Russian junior nodded.

"Merry said so, Kildare. But Cardew offered to take me for a run in a car. I am sure you will not object to this, Kildare?"

"You can be jolly sure that you can't pull my leg as much as you appear to think!" observed Kildare tartly. "You know as well as I do that I can't make exceptions for no reason, Cardew!"

"Sorry, Kildare!" said Cardew meekly. "I thought it would give our friend a chance to see the surroundin' country, that's all. But if you can't let us off, it's no go—what?"

"Well, I'll be quite frank!" said Kildare. "You're not going pub-haunting, I suppose? You've been caught out at that kind of thing once before, you know. If you give me your word—"

"By gad! You're dashed uncomplimentary, Kildare! I can give you my word that we're merely goin' for a little jaunt! If that's not good enough—"

"All right! You can go!" remarked Kildare. "But I shall expect to see you at the next practice, Rakovsky, mind!"

And the St. Jim's skipper strode out of the House.

Rakovsky gave Cardew a rather peculiar look, and Cardew coloured.

"Gad! Givin' away my reputation like that!" he ejaculated. "Still, we're lucky to get off! I'll run along and borrow Latham's telephone."

Rakovsky nodded, and repaired to the dining-hall as the bell rang out. After dinner he put on a thick motoring-coat and goggles, and strolled up to Cardew's study—No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage.

He found the chums of Study No. 9 just ready, and in a cheery mood. It was just the day for a run—clear, but not too cold—and the Russian junior was looking forward with great keenness to a trip through the English countryside—much greater keenness, in point of fact, than he would have done to a football practice.

Levison and Clive, being regular members of the House team, had not experienced any difficulty in getting off—they had not Cardew's reputation for slacking against them.

The four juniors, well wrapped up, swung out of the School House doorway all abreast. They had not expected to meet anybody just at the head of the steps, but they did. There was a terrific impact, and a still more terrific roar from Baggy Trimble, who happened to be the fellow concerned. Cardew staggered, and Clive gasped. They were in the centre of the line. But Trimble, unable to stop himself, overbalanced and rolled head-first down the stone steps with a series of bumps, each accompanied by a yell of wrath and pain.

"Yow-wow-wow-woop! Wooooop! Yarooogh! Fire! I'm killed! My collarbone's broken! Whoooooop!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pick him up!"

"Yah! Rotters! Don't you dare touch me! My backbone's busted in three places, and—"

"It was your fault, you fat idiot!" grunted Levison.

"You were charging up the steps like a rhinoceros!"

"Don't touch me! I tell you I'm dying! Yowooooop!"

"Take his ear, Clive!" grinned Cardew. "I've got the other! All together! Pull!"

Chuckling, Clive complied. He pulled—just a little pull. It was surprising what a little pull was required to get Trimble on his feet again. Trimble fairly leaped from off the ground. The pain in his ears seemed of far greater importance than the one in his backbone.

"Lemme go, you rotters! Leggo my ears, Clive! Cardew, you cad!"

"Backbone all right now?" grinned Levison.

"Collarbone mended itself, Trimble?" inquired Clive.

"Feelin' like compulsory footer practice, old fat man?" chuckled Cardew. "I should advise you to buck up an' get changed! I can see Kildare in the offin'!"

"Beasts!"

Trimble glowered, and pumped in breath, while the four juniors strolled on. A big grey car from Blankley's—reserved for hire by extra special customers—was purring at the gates, and a toot from the horn announced its arrival.

Cardew and his chums strolled cheerily down to the

gates, and Trimble, his little eyes gleaming, glared after them.

"My hat! Going for a run—without me! We'll jolly well see about that! Wait for me, you fellows!"

Trimble roared the last sentence, and Cardew glanced round.

"Put it on!" he observed. "Baggy is on our trail already! We're not takin' him in the car!"

The pace of the juniors was too great for Trimble to maintain, and he broke into a trot. A shout from the quad he heeded not.

"Trimble! Trimble! You're wanted on Little Side!"

Possibly there would be trouble over cutting footer practice; even the presence of a prince would not save him from Kildare's wrath. But Trimble did not intend to be left out of that run, and his fat little legs fairly twinkled over the ground.

"By gad! He's comin' up hand-over-fist!" gasped Cardew. "Here's the car! Jump in, you fellows! I'll shove Trimble's cap down the back of his neck if he bothers us!"

"I have a better scheme!" observed Rakovsky, grinning.

"What's that?"

"Let him join us. We can drop him after a mile or two!" smiled the Russian. "The walk back will do him good!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Good wheeze! Here he comes!"

Trimble arrived with a breathless rush. He was going much too fast to stop himself, and it was Cardew who stopped him quite unexpectedly. Cardew sat down on the drive with a crash, and Trimble rolled on top of him.

The juniors in the car gave a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you podgy elephant!" gasped Cardew, scrambling to his feet.

"Keep off! I'm coming with you!" howled Trimble. "I'm not going to be left out of this, I can tell you! My pal Micky wants me to come. Don't you, Micky?"

"Get in the car!" said Cardew grimly. "Get in—quick—before I kick you!"

"Oh, really, you rotter! I wonder old Micky manages to put up with you, Cardew! Don't mind him, Micky, old chap! I can stand a lot for a pal, you know!"

"I do not remember that you are a friend of mine!" remarked Rakovsky coldly.

"He, he, he!"

Trimble decided to treat that as a joke. His eyes began to roam the car in search of catables. Trimble was never long anywhere before his inner man began to demand sustenance.

The car was gliding along the main road to Wayland now, and Trimble's eyes fell on a basket under the seat of the car.

"I say, that looks like a good tea—for one, of course. What are you fellows going to have?"

"It's about a mile now!" murmured Clive thoughtfully.

"I'm giving him three or four!" muttered Cardew. "What do you say, Rakovsky?"

"What are you fellows whispering about?" demanded Trimble morosely. "I think it's jolly rude to whisper things behind a fellow's back. Why don't you chuck these rotters out, and let us have the car to ourselves, Micky, old man?"

"This is Cardew's car," said Rakovsky calmly. "Is there anything else you would like to know, Trimble?"

The only response to that was a grunt, and Trimble sat silent until, at a sign from Cardew, the car slowed to a halt. They were outside Wayland now, and a long walk awaited Baggy, though he was unaware of it.

He became aware of it, however, when Cardew opened the door and pointed to it.

"There's the door, Trimble. Just oblige us by gettin' out, will you?"

"What? I'm jolly well not going to walk all that way back to St. Jim's! Why—what— Leggo!"

"Collar him!" rapped Levison.

Trimble put up a fierce struggle, but he was overwhelmed. He found himself lifted bodily—no light task—and dumped, like a sack of coke, in the roadway. Before he could scramble to his feet, there was a whirl, and the car disappeared in a cloud of dust, through which he glimpsed Cardew fluttering a handkerchief in farewell.

Trimble stared fixedly after the car for some moments, and then his thoughts framed themselves in one expressive word:

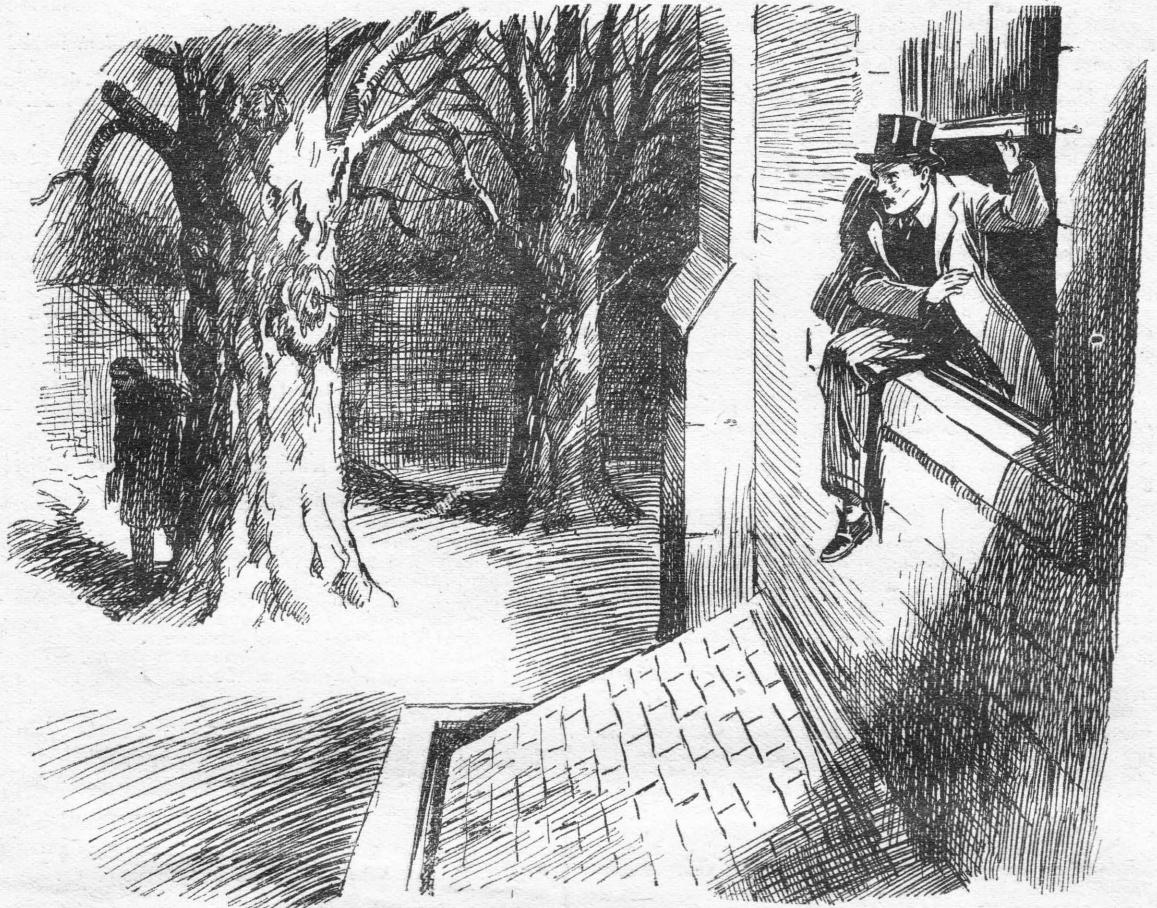
"Rotters!"

Dismally the Fourth-Former dragged himself to his feet, and banged the dust from his Etons. There was a lot of it, and he expended a great deal of breath and energy before his clothes began to assume a more or less respectable appearance again.

By that time Trimble was in a state of mind wherein he would have willingly allowed Cardew and his chums to languish in boiling oil.

He was warm, and he was tired, and he had a long—a very long—walk in front of him. Even when he reached





Cardew slipped up the sash, and swung one leg out over the sill. Then he stopped, drawing a quick breath, for among the shadows of the quad something had moved. Somebody else was on the prowl, and Cardew strained his eyes in an endeavour to recognise who it was. (See Chapter 3.)

Wayland, he had no cash to take the train to St. Jim's. It was a case of shank's pony, or remaining where he was, and, grunting dismally, Trimble set off.

It had been a clear afternoon when the car started, but now a mistiness seemed to have sprung up, and little wisps were curling over the roadway.

By the time Trimble had found the Wayland road again it was foggy—he could scarcely see twenty yards in front of him. And every minute the fog appeared to grow denser. Trimble had read about sea fogs, and this certainly was thick enough to have come in from the Channel. It was borne in Trimble's mind after a few more minutes that it was fortunate that he had struck the main road into Wayland—he was safe so long as he followed it.

It was only possible to see a few yards now in any direction, and Trimble shivered as he thought of the plight of any fellow who had gone for a ramble on Wayland Moor that afternoon, for there were quarries and pitfalls on the moor.

"Crumbs! What's that?"

A sound came out of the fog—a peculiar, muffled sound, yet clear enough to the fat junior's ears. It seemed like a dull roar, a distant thrumming, and it was coming closer and growing steadily in volume.

Trimble instinctively covered under the hedge at the side of the road as that thrumming roar approached. It appeared to be overhead, coming out of the swirling white canopy of fog. The roar grew into a clattering and rattling, and then, as Trimble watched, spellbound, a great grey shape loomed overhead, to be swallowed up in the fog the next moment.

For a few seconds Baggy Trimble stared up into the white, gently moving fog; then, obeying an overpowering impulse, he turned and ran as fast as his legs would carry him.

#### CHAPTER 5. Prisoners!

"WHAT price Sussex, Rakovsky? Different from Russia, what?"

"Rather less barren in the winter, Cardew," said Rakovsky, with his pleasant smile.

"It's getting cloudy now, though," remarked Clive.

"A bit misty, too!" said Levison.

Cardew leaned forward and touched the chauffeur on the shoulder.

"Put it on, old bean. We may as well get back in time for tea."

"Right, sir!"

The big car from Blankley's leaped over the moor at an increased pace.

It had been a pleasant run around Wayland; doubly so to the boy from Russia, to whom the English lanes were quite new. All four juniors were feeling well satisfied with themselves, though the afternoon, hitherto clear, was now threatening to turn off dull and misty.

Little wisps were already curling round the car, and the juniors drew their coat-collars closer round their necks.

"It's gettin' jolly misty," ejaculated Cardew. "Blessed if I can see the old mill, an' that's only half a mile from here."

"How large is the moor?" asked Rakovsky.

"Three or four miles across," said Clive. "Jolly awkward place for a fellow to get lost after dark; there's quarries and things where people have been known to tumble down with rather serious consequences."

"All right if you stick to the road, you know," remarked Cardew. "What are we stoppin' for, chauffeur?"

The fog seemed to be advancing like a blanket over the wide moor now, and it was becoming a little difficult to see what lay ahead.

"Safer to slow down, sir," responded the chauffeur. "We don't want to run into anything!"

"Dash it all, there's nothin' to be afraid of!" ejaculated Cardew. "If we crawl home at this rate we shall be late for callin' over!"

"Better that than landing in a ditch!" said Levison.

"Or bumping into somebody, Cardew," added Clive.

"Safe enough on the road, sir," said the chauffeur reassuringly, whereat Clive and Levison grinned.

It was not likely that Cardew was worrying about his safety; it went against the grain to crawl along when a better speed might have been made.

"Well, you're seein' the country, Rakovsky!" said Cardew philosophically. "This looks like developin' into a regular London pea-soup fog!"

Bump, bump!

Bump, bump, bump!

"Oh, gad! What are we stoppin' for now?"

"Missed the road, sir!" said the chauffeur curtly. "I'll soon have her back again."

"Oh, my hat!"

The chauffeur clambered down from his seat, and walked round the car. But he had, in the fog, which was now dense enough to blot out anything outside a dozen yards' radius, run a good way off the road, and it was fortunate that the car had run only on the grassy, hilly road.

The chauffeur's examination was brief. He approached the juniors and touched his cap.

"If one of you young gentlemen would get out and walk ahead, I'll try and steer her back on her tracks," he suggested.

"I'm your man," offered Levison.

"Thank you, sir!"

The chauffeur got back into the car, and started the engine. With Levison walking in advance, he began to follow his own tracks towards the main road.

"Right you are. This is the road!" called Levison, after a few moments.

"Good man! Jump in, then!"

Levison clambered in again, and the car slid on into the fog. It was impossible to see more than a very few yards now, and there was nothing to do but crawl until they had left the moor behind.

The chauffeur switched the headlights off, for they threw back the fog, rendering it like a white wall. The car crept on, sounding the horn at frequent intervals, though they had met nothing so far.

"We ought to be on the main road into Wayland by this time," remarked Clive.

"Probably the man has taken the wrong turnin' somewhere!" grinned Cardew. "We look like gettin' home with the milk!"

"At the worst, we can camp out in the car!" said Rakovsky. "When I was fleeing with my family from the Bolsheviks, I slept in a ditch more than once."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hallo! I can hear something!" ejaculated Levison.

"Another car—goin' pretty fast, too!" said Cardew.

"Give 'em a hail, or they'll be into us!"

The chauffeur swerved as far to the left of the road as he could, and the juniors united their voices:

"Aho, there! Look out!"

It was a shout that echoed away into the fog, but the sound of the approaching engine did not diminish. It had resolved itself into a mighty humming and thrumming, and appeared to be imminent.

"It—it sounds as if it's over our heads!" ejaculated Levison suddenly.

"Talk sense, old chap!"

"It jolly well is!" said Levison excitedly. "Listen! It's a lot too loud for a car!"

Both juniors and chauffeur realised now that it could not possibly be a car that was responsible for the noise. The humming was almost deafening now, and appeared to come directly over their heads.

"What on earth—" breathed Clive.

The humming became a shattering roar, and then decreased a little. Almost before they realised it the noise resumed its humming note, and died away in the fog.

"It must have been an aeroplane," said Levison coolly. "I pity the pilot, making a landing in this!"

"Too jolly loud for a plane!" remarked Cardew. "I've never heard a row like that before!"

"What do you make of it, chauffeur?"

"Must have been a plane, sir. He stands a good chance of crashing if he tries to come down in this fog, though."

The faces of Cardew and his chums were a little white as the car glided onwards. They could imagine the plight of an airman, obliged to descend in the thick fog which enshrouded the country, for the machine had little chance of flying through it safely.

But they could do nothing. Even if their surmise was correct, the aeroplane would most likely fly several miles farther before it was forced down; the juniors could make no move in aid of the pilot.

The car slid on at a snail's pace, but there was no sign that they were anywhere near the Wayland road.

"By gad, I believe we've missed it altogether!" breathed Cardew, at last. "If so, we're landed properly in the cart!"

"It is lucky that we brought thick coats!" smiled Rakovsky.

He, at any rate, was not dismayed at the thought of a little danger and discomfort. The Russian prince had

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

learned his lesson in a hard school, and appeared to find some amusement in their present position.

Another ten minutes went by, and the chauffeur turned his head.

"I'm sorry, sir. I've missed the road. I don't know where we're heading at the present moment, but I'll keep on if you like!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Keep on," said Levison. "So long as we're on some road we're bound to land somewhere before long."

"I'll do my best, sir."

The car ran on again, but neither driver nor passengers knew whither now. The thick fog enclosed them like a shroud, blotting out everything. The main road might have been a hundred yards or a hundred miles distant, for all they knew. The only thing to do was to feel the way ahead and trust to luck. Cardew gave a sudden start.

"What was that?"

"What was what?"

"I heard that thrummin' again!"

The juniors listened keenly.

"By Jove! I caught it then!" said Levison.

"Listen!"

"Help!"

It was a faint cry—faint, but clear, from some distance away in the fog.

The juniors' faces were white as they strained their ears to catch the sound again.

It came again—near this time, and with a desperate note in it that sent a cold shiver down their spines.

"Help! Oh, help!"

That eerie cry from out of the billowing swirl froze the blood in the veins of Cardew and his chums.

"Stop! Stop the car!" said Levison, his face set.

The chauffeur obeyed; the car came to a standstill.

Again came that cry out of the fog—clearer and clearer still:

"Help! Help!"

It was near enough now for the juniors to catch the gasping sob which accompanied it. Cardew threw open the door and sprang to the ground, and Levison was only a moment behind him. Clive and Rakovsky followed them into the road as a form burst from the fog and reeled towards them.

Cardew made a leap towards the tottering figure, and supported it just in time.

"Let me go! Let me go, I tell you! Why—what—you, Cardew! Oh, thank goodness!"

"Piggott!"

"It's young Piggott, of St. Jim's!"

"Great Scott!"

Levison took the fag's other arm, and shivered a little himself as he felt the youngster's form shuddering.

"Take it quietly, kid," said Cardew kindly. "Come into the car an' sit down."

"No, no! I tell you I've seen the ghost of the moor! Let go, you rotters!"

"Keep steady!" said Levison grimly. "You're safe enough now—get that into your head! And tell us what you were shouting about."

"Oh dear!"

Piggott of the Third stared fearfully round him, as if he expected to see an apparition emerge from the swirling fog. But the presence of the Fourth-Formers reassured him, and he collected his wits with an effort.

"Did—did you hear that thrumming?"

"Yes, kid. It was an aeroplane; some poor blighter in for a smash, I imagine. Have—have you seen him come down?"

The juniors waited for Piggott's answer with bated breath. Something had obviously frightened the fag out of his wits, and they feared that the cause was not far to seek.

"Oh! It wasn't an aeroplane!" gasped Piggott. "It came out of the sky, making a terrible clattering and clanking—like chains."

"The plane, right enough!" said Levison seriously.

"It wasn't, I keep telling you!" gasped the fag, shuddering again at the recollection. "It swooped out of the fog—like a huge shadow—clanking and clattering—"

In spite of themselves, the Fourth-Formers felt a tiny shiver.

"It was like a— Oh, I can't describe it! Anyway, it was far too big for an aeroplane, I know that! Fellows have spoken about the ghost of the moor, you know! Let's get away from here, for goodness' sake!"

"It's all rot about it being a ghost, of course!" said Levison. "Who's game to investigate?"

"Don't—don't you dare leave me behind!" gasped Piggott, in dire alarm. "I tell you it was unearthly! You're fools if you go looking for it!"

"I'm going!" said Levison obstinately. "Ghosts are sheer bosh—and we may be able to help!"

"Count me in!" said Cardew quietly. "I don't believe Piggott's account, anyway. Let's all go!"

Rakovsky nodded, and Clive nodded, too. "What about me?" ejaculated Piggott fearfully. "I—I haven't the nerve to come with you after seeing—that!" "Don't you be a little funk, kid!" growled Cardew. "There's nothin' to be afraid of!" "But how will you find your way back to the car?" demanded Piggott. "Once you lose sight of it you'll wander all over the moor without finding it again—you know that!"

"Gad! He's right there!" murmured Cardew. "I'm staying here, young sirs," observed the chauffeur coolly. "And I'd advise you to leave well alone, too!" "Dash it all, if the plane has really crashed—" began Clive.

"Accordin' to Piggott it has!" said Cardew grimly. "We needn't go far," said Levison. "If we don't get

Cardew would have shaken off the detaining hand but he had no time.

There was a rush, figures loomed up like ghosts in the gloom, and almost before they knew it, the four juniors were seized. They struggled fiercely, but it was useless; they were as babes in the hands of their unknown captors.

A gigantic shape towered ahead of them, and with incredulous eyes, the chums beheld the cause of the mysterious noise. It was a huge air liner—sufficiently large to accommodate a hundred men in the great saloon—and it was surrounded by men in dark uniforms.

Michael Rakovsky bit his lip hard as he ran his eye over the men.

The next moment all four juniors were hustled up a ladder and into the saloon.

They were prisoners in the hands of they knew not whom. What did it mean? There must be some explanation,



## CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE.

### AN APRIL FOOL TRAGEDY!



**T**HIS is the Festival of Fools,  
The day when jolly japers  
Both at St. Jim's and other schools  
Cut many comic capers.  
It is the day when lower limbs  
Are pulled in great profusion;  
There's fun and frolic at St. Jim's,  
And chaos and confusion!

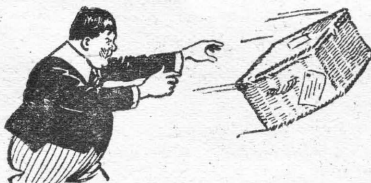
The call-bell clangs on April First,  
And Trimble cries, contrarily:  
"Let all the jokers do their worst,  
I mean to walk right warily!  
Yes, they can work their artful wiles,  
And try to catch me tripping;  
But I shall smile my loftiest smiles  
And foil them—oh, how ripping!"

He washes in his slap-dash way,  
And finds it most distasteful;  
"I never use much soap," he'll say,  
"It's greedy, and it's wasteful!"  
Dressed in a brace of shakes is he,  
Then down the stairs he'll scamper,  
And find, to his delirious glee,  
The postman's brought a hamper!

"Is it addressed to me?" he cries.  
His jaws agape with wonder;  
"This is a jolly nice surprise,  
A stroke of luck, by thunder!"  
Then Baggy, with a sudden scowl,  
Utters a cry of "Lummy!"  
It's All Fools' Day," we hear him growl.  
"This hamper is a dummy!"

He drags the hamper to the gates,  
And hurls it forth with vigour;  
"Confound the jokers and their baits!"  
He cries; then gives a snigger.  
"Some hungry tramp will find it there,  
Dash for it at the double,  
And then discover, with despair,  
It's full of bricks and rubble!"

Soon, sure enough, a tramp appears,  
And pounces on the hamper;  
The lid is prised, inside he peers,  
Then Baggy gets a damper.  
For it is filled with tempting tuck!  
The tramp goes off rejoicing;  
But Trimble thinks it awful luck—  
Wild walls of woe he's voicing!



out of shouting distance we shall be safe as houses. I think it's up to us!"

"And I think so, too," remarked Rakovsky. "We'll give you a hail every now an' then, chauffeur," said Cardew. "So long as you shout back we can't lose you."

"All right, sir."  
"I'm staying with the chauffeur—I jolly well know that!" said Piggott.

"Come on!" said Levison.  
And the juniors followed.  
They had hardly taken half a dozen steps before faint sounds came to their ears, among them the sound of voices.

"Hark!"  
The voices were unmistakable, but it was impossible to hear what was said.

"Come on!" ejaculated Cardew. "This wants lookin' into!"

He was in the middle of a stride when a hand was laid on his arm, and a fierce grip drew him back. The dark eyes of the Russian prince gleamed into his own.

"Stay! There is danger!"  
"What rot!"

But only Rakovsky, the new boy, was without need of an explanation.

#### CHAPTER 6.

#### The Return of Trimble!

"**L**OOK out, Fatty!"  
"Mind your boko!"  
Thud!  
"Yarooogh!"

"Goal!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House, sat up, gouging mud from his eyes and mouth. The ball was spinning in the back of the net, and Tom Merry, who had just shot, was roaring at the sight the goalkeeper presented.

Fatty Wynn was a very good goalkeeper, quite the best, in fact, in the lower school at St. Jim's. He had distinguished himself in saving a number of difficult shots that afternoon, and until the advent of the fog had never looked like being beaten.

But little wisps had changed to a drifting whiteness, and it was hard to follow the flight of the shot that Tom Merry sent in. Fatty Wynn had met it—with his face. Hence the roar of laughter which greeted the junior captain's goal.

Figgins, grinning in spite of himself, helped the New House custodian to his feet.

"Not hurt, old man, are you?"

"Fathead!"

"Sorry I kicked it so hard, Wynn!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ass! I shall have a prize nose in class to-morrow!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "I never saw it coming!"

"Shall we play on and lick you, or will you chuck it, Merry?" asked Figgins. "It's really getting too bad to see the ball."

"Oh, we'll let you off the rest!" said Tom Merry magnanimously. "Call it one each, what?"

"Right-ho! This fog is a bit of luck for you fellows, though we were just getting the upper hand, you know!"

"Bow-wow!"

The practice eleven came off the field with honours even. Every minute now the fog was becoming worse, and it was out of the question to finish the match. The match on Big Side ended a few moments later, and Kildare accosted Tom Merry on the way to the House.

"Do you know if Cardew and his friends have come in yet, Merry?"

"I don't even know where they've gone," responded the Shell captain. "Levison did say they were going for a run in a car, but he didn't say in which direction. By Jove! I suppose they're out in this fog!"

"That's what I'm thinking!" said Kildare quietly. "Better keep an eye on the gates till calling-over. Let me know when they come in."

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

The St. Jim's captain strode up to his study, looking a little worried. When he gave late passes to the chums of Study No. 9 it had certainly not occurred to him that the afternoon might turn out as it had. If the juniors were far afield they would experience some difficulty in getting home again. Kildare did not care to think of the possibility of an accident.

Tom Merry was looking serious, too, as he rejoined his chums.

"Cardew & Co. are out in a car," he announced. "They've got Rakovsky with them, I hear. Kildare wants us to keep our eyes peeled and let him know when they get back."

"Dash it all, they might run into a ditch in this weather!" ejaculated Manners uneasily.

"Silly asses!" commented Lowther. "Still, I suppose they couldn't have foreseen the fog."

"We may as well hang about near the gates for a bit when we've changed," said Tom Merry.

"That's it."

It did not take the heroes of the Shell long to change into Etons. They put on their great-coats before emerging into the quad.

"There's Blake waiting, too," said Lowther. "Aho, Blake! Anybody in sight?"

"Can't see a dozen yards along the lane," grinned Blake. "I expect the asses are all right, though. Probably hanging up at some inn till it clears."

"They've got a long wait if that's so!" remarked Lowther. "It doesn't show any signs of clearing!"

"What do I see?" ejaculated Tom Merry suddenly.

"That's somebody I know, I think!"

Out of the white blanket loomed a portly figure, and the Terrible Threë did not need to look twice in order to recognise it.

"That's Trimble's roll!" grinned Lowther. "Where's the fat idiot been, I wonder?"

"Cheerio, Baggy!" called Blake. "Seen anything of Cardew and his pals?"

Baggy Trimble looked up at the sound of the familiar voices, and gave a gasp of relief. He was home at last! It seemed to the hapless fat junior that he had been trudging for hours and hours and hours; he felt more as if he had done forty miles than four.

He fairly tottered in at the gates, and cannoned violently into Monty Lowther. Lowther staggered, and grabbed Trimble by the ear.

"What's the matter, you fat villain? You're rolling as if you were tipsy!"

"Ow! Leggo, you unfeeling beast! If you'd been walking all the afternoon you'd be dead beat, too! I've done something like twenty miles since dinner-time. Oh, dear!"

"Where on earth have you been, then?" asked Blake. "Taking up a course of training in your old age?"

"You fathead! It was all that awful rotter Cardew!"

Ow! And Rakovsky, the cad! I sha'n't call him Micky any more—I'm finished with the Bolshevik beast!"

"You've seen Cardew this afternoon, Trimble?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Where are they? Are they safe?"

"How should I know?" hooted Trimble indignantly.

"Cardew dropped me when we were a couple of miles outside Wayland—"

"It isn't twenty miles from there to St. Jim's!" grinned Lowther.

"Beast! I had to walk home, anyway. Me—with my delicate constitution, you know! I might have fainted by the wayside!"

"Good thing you didn't, old man," said Lowther seriously. "We should have felt the earth quake."

Trimble glared ferociously at Lowther, and he was hardly able to swallow his wrath. If ever a fellow had felt ill-used, Trimble was feeling that now.

"I jolly well hope they've driven the rotten car over a chasm, or something!" he grunted venomously. "If Cardew's had an accident, he won't get any sympathy from me, I can tell you. Begging a fellow to go with him—"

"Julian said you chased the car all down the drive," grinned Blake.

"Julian's a liar, then!" retorted Trimble recklessly.

"I—"

"What's that? I'm a what?"

Trimble spun round, to behold Dick Julian of the Fourth staring rather grimly at him. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and Trimble stuttered.

"I—I—that is to say, I may have hurried to—to catch—to catch the car," he gasped. "All right, Julian, you beast! I—I didn't say you were a—anything at all, in fact."

"You'd better not!" observed Julian, walking on.

"Oh dear! I—I say, you fellows! D-did Kildare notice that I wasn't at the footer practice?"

"He did," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "He said when you came in he'd have something to say to you."

"Oh, my hat! Didn't you explain that I was ill—couldn't move out of my study, in fact? Didn't you explain that to him, Merry?"

"Considering Kildare saw you cutting after Cardew's car, I shouldn't advise you to try that yarn on him," said Tom Merry. "You'd better get in and get it over, old fat man."

"I suppose so. This place is full of mean beasts all doing their best to persecute a fellow," growled Trimble. "Blow Kildare! I'd better see him, though."

And, filled with many misgivings, Trimble wended his way to the school captain's study to report. He felt that it was asking for a licking to do so, but he also knew—from bitter experience—that it was useless to try and dodge Kildare.

He knocked at the skipper's door unhappily.

"Come in!"

Eric Kildare looked up eagerly as Baggy entered, hoping to see Cardew, or Tom Merry. His face fell as Trimble's fat features appeared instead.

"Hallo! What do you want? Say it quick, and clear out!"

Trimble stared. At that moment he could cheerfully have kicked himself. Kildare obviously had other matters to occupy his mind, matters more important than Trimble's misdemeanours. And Baggy might have tactfully allowed "cutting" footer practice to fade into oblivion if he had known. It looked as if it were too late now. The damage was done.

He instinctively avoided coming to the point.

"Nun-nun-nothing, Kildare! If—if you're busy, I'll go—sorry if I've butted in, you know."

And Trimble began to retreat towards the door.

"Hold on, Trimble. I remember—you cut footer practice—by Jove!"

"You—you see—" began Baggy hopelessly.

"Did you get into Cardew's car, Trimble? Answer me."

"Ye-e-es. The rotters—"

"Have they come in with you?"

"Nunno. You see, that beast Cardew pitched me out in the roadway outside Wayland—"

"You haven't seen anything of them since then? Where exactly was it you left them?"

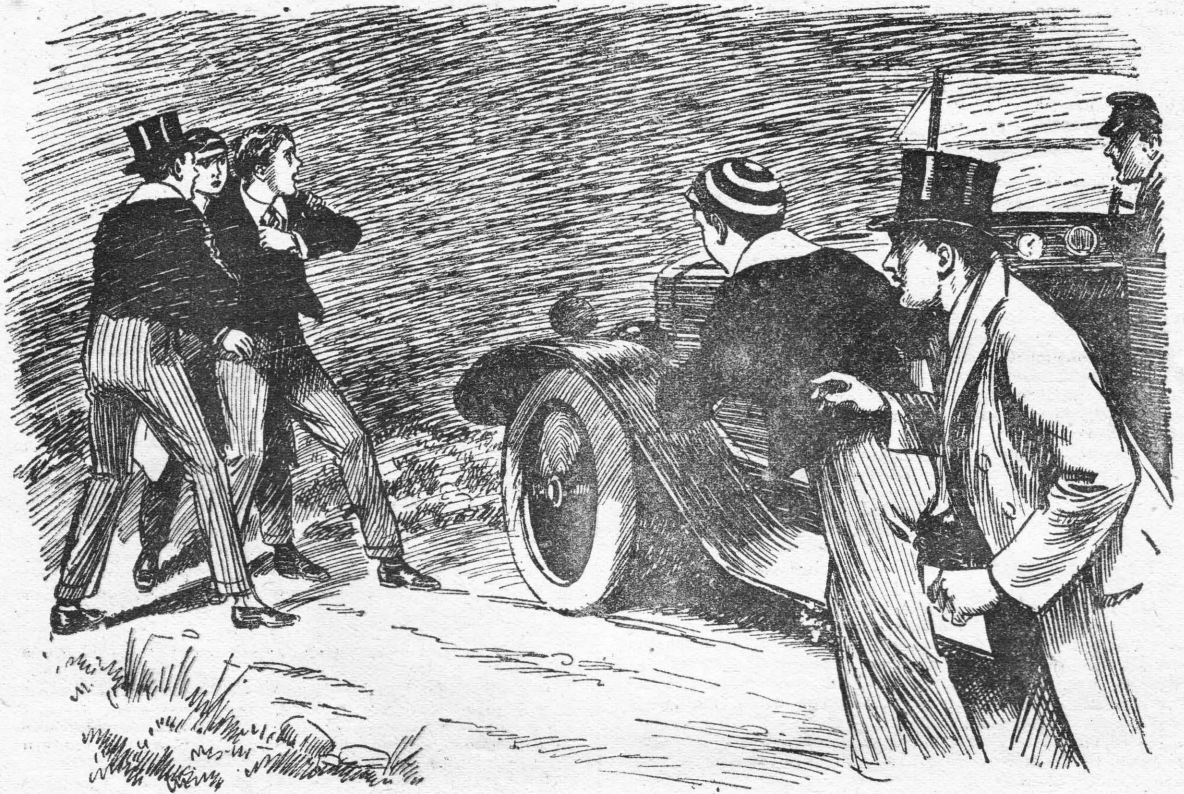
Trimble shook his head helplessly.

"It got foggy just after I started to walk home," he said. "I must have walked miles and miles and miles—I know that. It was lucky for me I was on the main road, otherwise I might never have reached St. Jim's alive. I—I think you ought to lick Cardew when he comes in, don't you, Kildare? I—"

"Shut up!"

Kildare desired only to think.

Trimble's information was, after all, not worth a great deal. Cardew and his friends were outside Wayland—or had been a couple of hours since. It was hardly likely that they were in the same place now. And it wanted only



Cardew made a leap towards the tottering figure, and supported it just in time. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "It's Piggott!" Levison took the fag's other arm, and shivered a little himself as he felt the youngster's form shuddering. "Take it quietly, kid," said Cardew kindly. "I—I can't!" stammered the fag. "I—I tell you I've seen the ghost of the moor. Let me go!" (See Chapter 5.)

a few minutes to calling-over. It was evidently time to report the matter to the Housemaster.

Kildare rose to his feet, and Trimble made an involuntary movement towards the door.

"You'll come with me, Trimble," said Kildare quietly. "And tell Mr. Railton all you know. Something serious may have happened to Cardew and his friends. They may be perfectly safe—but, on the other hand, they may not be. Follow me."

Baggy Trimble, looking a little serious as the truth of Kildare's words sank home, followed the St. Jim's captain to the Housemaster's study.

In that dread apartment, greatly to the fat junior's relief, no mention was made of cutting footer practice; indeed, Trimble found himself a figure of some importance, as the last fellow to have seen Cardew, Levison, Clive, and Rakovsky.

He told what he knew, which did not prove to be a great deal; and then Mr. Railton turned to his telephone.

"We must get in touch with the Wayland police at once," he said quietly. "I will then inform the Head of the matter. Possibly we are needlessly alarming ourselves; but there is always the contingency of an accident in weather of this character. I will also telephone to Blankley's, and ask if their car has been returned. It should be a simple enough matter to trace a large car if the boys are within a few miles of St. Jim's."

The Housemaster broke off as there sounded a knock at the door.

It opened to admit Tom Merry, looking much more serious than usual.

"Is there any news, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton eagerly.

"None, sir—beyond what Trimble knows. The fellows are keen to form a search-party, sir. I came to ask your permission."

"Certainly not, Merry!" said Mr. Railton decidedly. "I cannot allow the juniors out in this weather. But if you and a few of the seniors, Kildare—"

"I'm willing, sir," said Kildare at once.

"Then I will leave the matter in your hands," said the Housemaster. "I am sorry, Merry, but it is impossible to grant your request. There would probably be several more juniors missing by bed-time."

Kildare grinned, and passed out of the study to organise a search-party from the Sixth and Fifth. Undoubtedly,

Mr. Railton was wise not to allow the juniors to take part in the expedition. He was responsible for their safety.

But the Shell and Fourth-Formers did not look at the matter quite eye to eye with their Housemaster. Cardew and his chums were chums of theirs—and that made a difference which Mr. Railton could not be expected to see.

"Any luck?" asked Blake, as Tom Merry came out of the Masters' Corridor.

"None!" said Mr. Merry. "Railton thinks we should get lost. But we're going, all the same. The fellows are ready?"

"Waiting."

"I'll get my coat, then."

And Tom Merry slipped into the lobby for his overcoat and cap.

A few minutes later the Sixth Form search-party left St. Jim's via the big gates. After another few minutes had elapsed, another, quite unofficial party shinned silently over the school wall and dropped into the lane.

When Mr. Linton, the Shell Form master, took calling-over that evening, he found the majority of the leading lights of the Lower School missing. After roll, he took the list to Mr. Railton in considerable surprise.

Mr. Railton read the list of absentees, and compressed his lips. There was really nothing to be done.

Cardew's friends were on the trail.

## CHAPTER 7. A New Arrival!

**B**UMP!

"Look out, you idiot! Oh crikey!"

Splash!

For one giddy second Blake appeared to totter, and then he disappeared. The splash apprised his chums of where he had gone.

\* was dark and foggy, and cold in the lane—almost impossible to see a foot ahead. The searchers, under Tom Merry's leadership, had progressed not more than half a mile from St. Jim's, but already they were beginning to realise the futility of continuing.

In the fog they were continually bumping into each other and stumbling over unseen obstacles. Lowther had already tripped over a fallen branch and severely barked his shins.

Now there was another bump; and a yell of alarm from

Blake. The searchers hastened to his aid, with more than a suspicion of what had occurred.

Mysterious sounds emanating from the ditch at the side of the lane confirmed their suspicions.

"Gug-gug-gug! Oh, dear! Can't you grinning idiots help a fellow?"

The searchers were not grinning, but they did as they heard that.

"Bai Jove! Have you fallen in the ditch, deah boy?"

"Oh, you fathead! Think I'm taking a sun bath?" roared Blake. "Give me your paw, and stop blithering!"

"Weally— Pway do not gwab my hand in that mannah, you fwabjous chump! It is all mudday, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go, you ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You are dwaggin' me in, too, you wicidulous fathead! Bai Jove! I'm slippin'!"

Tom Merry made a grab, but he was too late.

To get out of the ditch, Blake had put his weight on Gussy's hand. Gussy was not prepared for that, and his hand had perforce to give. His aristocratic foot plunged into the ditch, and there was a yell of wrath from the swell of St. Jim's.

"You—you—your awful gwinnin' idiot, Blake! Look at my twousahs! Wuined! Uttahhly wuined! I am all mudday!"

"What about me, then?" hooted Blake, gouging mud and slush from his eyes and his hair. "I'm covered in the stuff!"

"Here, keep off!" ejaculated Lowther, in alarm. "My hat! You do look a dream, Blake!"

"Oh, deah! All your fault, Blake!"

Jack Blake glared. He had been as keen on the search as anybody. But a fall into a slushy, muddy ditch had altered his outlook. His most pressing desire at that moment was to get into a steaming hot bath. For a moment he looked as if he might run amok among the unsympathetic juniors.

"Hold on, Blake!" gasped Tom Merry. "You'll have to get back to the school, of course. Fellows can't help bumping into one another in this—"

"It was that footling ass, Gussy!" grunted Blake.

"Bai Jove! It was nothin' of the kind, deah boy!"

"Order!" rapped Tom Merry. "I put it to you fellows, it's pretty useless to go on. It's worse than hunting for a needle in a haystack at present, and Cardew and his friends are probably hiving up in some cottage all the time. I vote we get back!"

"May as well," said Talbot. "The fog is getting thicker, if anything."

"I'm going to trot!" said Blake, whose teeth were beginning to chatter.

"I'll come with you," said Tom Merry. "You, too, Gussy?"

"We'll all trot!" said Kangaroo. "It will get us warm—so long as we don't stumble into a ditch like Blake!"

"Good egg!"

The rescue party broke into a brisk trot—calculated to keep off a chill, but rather a dangerous pace in view of the fact that the lane ahead lay completely hidden from sight.

The juniors came into Rylcombe Lane at a good pace, and there was a sudden yell from those in the van.

"Look out!"

Crash!

"Sorry, sir!"

"Didn't see you, sir!"

"Let me help you up, sir!"

"Your hat, I think?" remarked Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners and Kangaroo each lent a hand to help the stranger to his feet. They had cannoned into him rather suddenly, and he had gone over, as Monty Lowther murmured, like a ninepin. In the foggy lane it was unavoidable, considering the speed at which the juniors had been travelling.

The stranger was gasping as he was helped to his feet. He did not appear placated by those expressions of solicitude.

"You—you—you—" Here he broke off into a stream of language quite unintelligible to the juniors.

"Phew!" murmured Lowther.

The stranger calmed down a little. He was an elderly gentleman, of a rather foreign appearance, and with a sharp, pointed beard. His eyes, even in the dim light of an electric torch, were keen and piercing, and the same thought was in the minds of all the juniors.

"A Russian!" murmured Lowther.

"I take it that you boys belong to one of the schools here—Rylcombe or St. Jim's?"

"St. Jim's, sir."

"Oh! I am going there. Perhaps you will have the kindness to tell me if I am correct in following this lane?"

"We'll come with you, sir," offered Tom Merry. "It's

rather difficult to see in this fog, and we've got electric torches. I—I hope you're not hurt?"

"I am not accustomed to being tumbled over by a horde of schoolboys," remarked the stranger. "My own pupil is of a more dignified caste—his highness the Prince of Igor. I trust he is quite safe? He has settled down at the school?"

"Are you Rakovsky's tutor, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

"I have that honour. He is well?"

"Oh, quite, sir— At least, we hope so!"

"What?"

"I mean, he's not at school at present. He went for a run in a car with some fellows this afternoon, and they haven't come back yet. Nothing to worry about, though!"



"If you will glance this way, you will perceive that resistance hands." "But this—this is outrageous!" gasped Dr. Holm. "The room by the window one by one," said the Russian coolly. "shot!"

"What? What? Nothing to be alarmed about? Do you not realise that the prince's life is demanded by the Bolshevik insurgents of his country?" ejaculated the tutor.

"Oh, my hat!"

"He has been living in France during the last three years," said the Russian gentleman, with deep excitement. "Even there, attempts were made on his life. We had hoped that safety would lie in an English public school. And now you tell me he is lost in the fog? Ciel!"

"He's as right as rain, sir," said Tom Merry confidently. "Only waiting somewhere for the fog to lift, I expect."

The Russian gentleman's agitation was patent.

"Harry!" he ejaculated. "Mais c'est terrible! I had thought him safe here. Is this the school?"

The party halted before the gates of St. Jim's, and Tom Merry, after a moment's hesitation, rang the bell. It was useless to hope that their absence had passed unnoticed. All the searchers would have been marked absent at calling-over.

Taggles, grunting, shuffled down to the gates, and the Russian darted into the quad.

"Where is the headmaster? Lead me to his study!"

"This way, sir."

Tom Merry led the way towards the School House, and the Russian swept after him.

He hardly waited for the junior captain to knock on the panels of the Head's door.

"Come in!"

The Russian threw open the door and entered. His expression drew a start from the Head, who was in conclave with Mr. Railton.

The stranger's face was working, and his dark eyes gleamed with excitement. He appeared very deeply affected indeed.



useless!" said Mojowsky. "Your lives are in your own hands. I will not—!" "You and your comrades will leave the first man to make a sound or offer resistance will be shot." (Chapter 9.)

"Pray what is this?" ejaculated Dr. Holmes. "You have the advantage, sir!"

"My name is Mojowsky," said the Russian, moderating his voice a little, though he was still trembling with agitation. "Vladimir Mojowsky. I am tutor to his Highness the Prince of Igor."

"Pray be seated, sir," said the Head. "There is no occasion for excitement. I had heard, sir, that you were delayed in London and could not accompany the boy, Rakovsky, to this school."

"I regretted it then, I regret it even more now!" snapped the Russian. "I met some boys in the lane. They told me that his Highness is lost in a car—"

"I do not think so," interrupted the Head. "Indeed, I trust not. He went out with Cardew, Clive, and Levison this afternoon, and has not yet returned. Mr. Railton, the boy's Housemaster, was just speaking to me about the matter. I do not think there is any occasion for alarm. The boys are most probably putting up at an inn or cottage until the fog lifts."

"I assure you you view the matter too lightly, sir!" said Mojowsky grimly. "I may say that the prince has enemies—enemies who would not hesitate to kill him if they saw their opportunity!"

"So I understand," said Dr. Holmes, nodding. "However, in England—"

"I expected the boy to be kept under strict watch!" snapped Mojowsky. "The emissaries of the Bolsheviks are everywhere—there is no safety while the boy is not in the school!"

"I did not understand that," said the Head rather tartly. "In any case, I think you are worrying yourself needlessly. There is nothing to fear in this neighbourhood—a strange face would be noticed immediately—"

"I shall not rest until the prince is back in my charge!" said Mojowsky. "I demand that a search party be sent to look for him at once!"

"My dear sir—"

"The masters—every one of them, Dr. Holmes—they must scour the countryside for him!"

"The matter has already been attended to!" said the Head coldly. "A party of Sixth-Formers has been sent out—I hope they may bring us back some reassuring news. If the boys have not returned, or sent a message revealing their whereabouts, by bed-time I shall at once telephone to the police. But I think it highly probable that we shall have news before then."

"I myself telephoned to Blankley's, who hired the car to them," said Mr. Railton. "The car has not been returned yet."

The Russian made no answer.

He rose from his chair, and paced the room very much like a caged tiger.

It was obvious that he took a far more serious view than the Head. After all, a delay was only to be expected if the juniors had gone very far afield. The car could not travel at full speed or anything like it in a dense fog—if it was practicable to remain on the road at all. It was much more likely that a farmhouse or other shelter was harbouring the missing juniors.

Mojowsky gave a start as a knock came on the Head's door.

It was Kildare who appeared, and his expression showed at once that he had met with no luck.

"No news, sir, I'm afraid. We tried to get as far as Wayland, but the fog was too thick. We lost the road for some time, and wandered round in a circle. Nobody has seen them—I imagine they went farther afield than Wayland, sir. If there had been an accident we should have heard by now."

"You are right, Kildare," said Dr. Holmes. "Thank you for searching—though I hardly expected that you would find them."

"We did our best, sir."

"Quite so. If they come in before lights out, bring them to me at once, Kildare."

"Yes, sir."

The captain of the school left the study, and Mojowsky turned his eyes grimly on the Head.

"Well?"

"We must wait," said Dr. Holmes. "I am not surprised that Kildare and his friends failed."

"Neither am I!" said the tutor. "And I demand that you take steps at once. The police must be informed. I will ring them up myself."

The Head compressed his lips. He was anxious for the missing juniors, but he did not like the Russian's manner. But the police must be informed. The Head motioned to the telephone.

"Kindly ring up Inspector Grimes, of Wayland, Mr. Railton."

"Certainly, sir."

The Housemaster gave the number, and waited.

"I will take the call," said the Russian.

"As you will, sir!"

Mojowsky took the receiver, his eyes glittering.

"Yes, yes! Wayland double six three, you said, Mr. Railton?"

The Housemaster nodded.

"Wayland double six three. Thank you. I—"

The Russian broke off suddenly.

Both the Head and Mr. Railton stared.

A shout had come to their ears—indistinct, owing to its volume, but nevertheless recognisable—and to the startled ears of the masters it sounded like the word:

"Help!"

## CHAPTER 8.

## In the Hands of the Russians!

"WELL, your Highness?" Prince Michael Rakovsky drew himself erect. His dark eyes flashed, but he did not speak. Near him, on a divan, sat Cardew, Levison, and Clive, with their hands bound.

Opposite him, at the end of a long table, a heavy man reclined at ease, watching the prince with a glint of triumph in his eyes.

Rakovsky was free, but he had no chance of escape. At the end of the long saloon stood a grim-faced Russian with drawn sword.

The chums of Study No. 9 were regarding the man at the table with gleaming eyes. They could hardly realise what had occurred in the few minutes which had elapsed since they left the car.

There had been a sudden rush; darting forms, and then the giant shape of the air liner. Now they were prisoners, but for what reason they could not imagine.

But there was no surprise in the face of Rakovsky; only a burning animosity as he rested his eyes on the heavy features of his captor.

The man spoke again, in English; perhaps so that Rakovsky's comrades should not fail to realise the position. "Your Highness does not recognise Paul Varakoff? Come, surely it is not so long ago?"

"I know you for a traitor and hound of the streets!" said Rakovsky coolly.

The Russian gave an open laugh.

"Times change, your Highness! Look at me—what was I a few years ago, when you were the boy prince of our country?"

"When you were banished, it was an error of mercy!" snapped Rakovsky. "It is you who has brought my kingdom to the ground—you and the other cut-throat hounds!"

"We drove you out of the country—but you did not go empty-handed!"

"What do you mean?"

"The treasure of the Rakovsky family was world famous!" said the Russian coolly.

"What of it?"

"We need it—we who are loyal to the Government!" said Varakoff harshly.

Rakovsky shrugged his shoulders.

"You will never lay your hands on it!" he retorted grimly.

"That remains to be seen. What do you think I have flown to England for? Do you not realise the risk I am running—I and the hundred comrades who have accompanied me? It is for a big prize—the prize of the Rakovsky treasure!"

"I shall never reveal the secret!" said Rakovsky.

"You may be glad to when a knife is pointed at your throat! But we may not need your information—this is not a chance expedition!"

"You mean—"

"We are aware of the reason for your removal to England, and to this school, St. James'. The treasure is there, and that is where we shall seek it. Ah! We are right, then! You blanch!"

"Oh, gad!" murmured Cardew.

Rakovsky's head was held proudly erect, and his lips set.

"I shall give you no help!" he said calmly. "You are not yet safe again in Russia. Till then I shall hope!"

"Hear, hear!" ejaculated Clive involuntarily.

"Silence! Corsov!"

A uniformed Russian appeared as if from nowhere.

"Have the men reconnected the telephone-wires?"

"They are doing so, sir. It should be finished in half an hour."

"Good! The fog is our friend, Corsov. I should conceal our machine until we can move it to some gully, where it can remain unseen. That is all."

The man Corsov retired, leaving Varakoff eyeing his prisoners grimly.

"By gad! You've got a nerve, old bean!" murmured Cardew.

"What?"

"Comin' over here in broad daylight like this. If you'd been spotted, you'd have been properly in the soup!"

The Russian laughed. He was in an elated mood at the unexpected capture of Rakovsky, and the ease with which he had landed on the moor.

"We intended to await a fog!" he said calmly. "It was our only chance—to steer by dead compass reckoning and trust to luck to make a successful landing. We have come with this fog across the English Channel from our base in France. Fortune has been with us, especially in delivering the prince himself into our hands. It is a good omen!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

"How long do you intend to keep us here?" asked Cardew.

Varakoff gave him a slow glance.

"We shall not be here more than three or four days, at the most," he said coolly. "We could not hope to remain undiscovered for more than that length of time. You we shall keep until we are ready to depart—until success is practically assured. And then—"

"We may expect no mercy from this cut-throat!" said Rakovsky.

"You are enemies of the government!" said Varakoff, with a leer. "I shall do no more than my duty to my comrades!"

"You scoundrel!" ejaculated Levison.

The Russian turned away, and the juniors sat silent. Rakovsky, after peering from the thick windows into the fog, sank into a chair.

Cardew glanced at the door, but the guard was still there. There was no hope of escape—yet. The dandy of the Fourth did not abandon all hope on the instant. There might yet occur an opportunity of outwitting the Russian.

The minutes slipped by, and at length the man Corsov made his appearance again.

He spoke quickly in Russian to Varakoff, and a party of men entered the saloon laden with wires. These they fitted to receivers on the table, while Varakoff watched with approval.

"They've cut the telephone-wires from the school!" whispered Cardew. "By gad! The cunnin' villains!"

The fitting of the wires occupied some minutes, but the work was done at last. The men left the saloon, and Varakoff sat down again at the table. He smiled evilly as he caught the glances of the prisoners.

There was no mercy in that smile. It expressed only grim satisfaction with the progress that had been made—with the deadly determination to succeed in the enterprise. The juniors knew what to expect after the Russian's mission was accomplished—if nothing occurred to thwart its execution.

They preserved their silence. There was nothing to be gained by conversation, and they wanted to think. Cardew, in particular, had plenty of food for his keen wits.

To Cardew there returned the memory of Rakovsky's first night at St. Jim's, when Cardew had intended to go for a jaunt to the Green Man. Cardew remembered the mysterious figure he had seen leaving the chapel vaults, and he started.

He had suspected, but he had not been sure. There could be no doubt now. Varakoff had intimated that the treasure of the Rakovsky's was concealed at St. Jim's—and the prince's demeanour had shown that it was the truth. Much that had been puzzling the dandy of the Fourth was explained now. He saw the reason for Rakovsky's midnight expedition—probably followed by others on the nights following—in order that he might conceal the treasure in secret.

For a moment Cardew reflected that the Russians would never find the entrance to the old vaults—it was known only to St. Jim's fellows, and was half overgrown with trailing ivy. But if Rakovsky had known of it, then Varakoff might, and it became quite evident that a detailed plan of the old school must have been consulted by both sides.

But the Russians were not in St. Jim's yet, and Cardew did not quite see how they hoped to attain their end. It was not to be expected that an expedition so daring, and yet so carefully planned as this, would be at a loss for the final moves; but, cudgel his brains as he would, Cardew was unable to supply a solution.

He turned his thoughts to a more practical and immediate channel—that of escape from the air-liner. His eyes ran over the wires and receivers on the long table, and gleamed as a bell buzzed persistently.

Varakoff took a receiver in his hand, and listened.

Cardew watched keenly, and each of the juniors tensed.

They knew that this must be a communication from the outside world—that somebody—a friend—was at the other end of the wire which Varakoff held, and the thought filled them with a new hope of escape.

"My hat! If only a chap could speak for a minute on one of those phones!" whispered Levison. "A message to the school would bring the police down on these customers like an avalanche!"

"Bide your time, old man!" murmured Cardew coolly. "I'm only waitin' for a chance! Listen!"

Varakoff was speaking into the receiver, but it was in Russian, and only Rakovsky could understand it.

"What's he saying?" breathed Clive, who was nearest to the prince.

"They are only testing the fittings!" responded Rakovsky, smiling. "It is not a call from the school, as I hoped."

"Nothing doing!" murmured Clive.

"It's clever," whispered Cardew admiringly. "They'll intercept all calls to or from the school, an' put the callers off with some yarn or other. In that way they will be able to isolate the school, while— By gad!"



"What?" ejaculated Clive.

"That makes it clear, then! By Jove, the cunning bounders! With the school cut off from the rest of the world, they reckon they've got it at their mercy! An' I don't think they're far wrong, either!"

"My only hat!" breathed Levison.

Bz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! Bz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

"Quiet!" breathed Cardew.

The bell was buzzing again, and Varakoff glanced at the prisoners before he lifted the receiver. He motioned to the man Corsov, at the end of the saloon.

Rakovsky's face grew paler as a word passed in Russian.

Hope had run high in his breast—hope of some communication by means of the telephone. At that word the hope died.

Corsov came towards the juniors, a rag in his hand. He ripped it into four pieces, and bent over Rakovsky.

The prince's glance burned in his face.

"Your Highness will act wisely to submit!" said Varakoff coldly. "Gag them, Corsov!"

"That's done it!" muttered Levison.

Rakovsky's eyes glittered, but he offered no resistance as the rag was wound tightly round his mouth and secured behind his head. The bell was buzzing still, but Varakoff did not lift the receiver.

He waited while Clive was gagged, and then Levison. As Corsov bent over Cardew, he began to speak to the caller at the other end.

Corsov gave Cardew a warning glance as he bent down. There was a long, curved knife at his waist, and for a moment he fingered it suggestively. If the junior spoke, he knew what would be the penalty.

The voice on the phone came clearly to Cardew's stretching ears.

"Wayland double six three, please!"

Cardew drew a breath. It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, that sounded over the wires. The dandy of the Fourth knew that voice far too well to mistake it.

The gag was within an inch of his mouth, but Cardew's resolve was taken. He had time for one shout—with all the force of his lungs:

"Help!"

For a moment there was silence.

Then there was a snarl from Varakoff, and Corsov's knife flashed in the air.

Cardew set his lips, but at another word Corsov lowered the knife. His face set, Varakoff spoke coolly into the receiver.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Mojowsky's Secret!

"WHAT—what—"

"A cry for aid!" said Mr. Railton.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes.

Vladimir Mojowsky's expression was, for a moment, peculiar. His hand held the receiver steadily, but his eyes gleamed at the Head and Mr. Railton.

"Inquire!" rapped the Housemaster. "I think there can be little doubt that someone shouted the word 'help.' You heard it, sir?"

"Plainly!" agreed the Head.

"One moment, please. The exchange is speaking," interrupted the Russian.

A look of relief appeared on his face as he listened.

"You say the shout we heard was a jest?" he muttered.

"A very peculiar jest, in my opinion!"

"Very peculiar!" agreed Mr. Railton.

"It appears that the sound was caused at the exchange," said Mojowsky, turning from the receiver. "A highly unusual occurrence—they are extremely apologetic. I have never heard of such a thing."

"Nor I," said Dr. Holmes.

"It is certainly remarkable," said the Russian. "But perhaps, in the circumstances, we attached more importance to it than was warranted. It is a matter for complaint, however. I will give the number again. Wayland double six three, please."

This time there was no cry from the receiver. Little as the masters knew it, at Cardew's shout the wire had been disconnected, and there was a slight delay. Naturally, Mojowsky had to summon attention again.

"Bless my soul! I shall certainly complain to the proper authority!" exclaimed the Head angrily. "This is intolerable!"

"Wayland double six three," repeated Mojowsky, with exemplary patience.

He was through at last. Mr. Railton took up the other receiver.

"Is that the Wayland police-station?" asked the Russian. His eyes gleamed for a moment at the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to speak to Inspector Grimes!"

"One moment, please."

There was a short interval while the inspector came to the phone.

Mojowsky appeared cool and collected now, though his tone was brief and peremptory.

"Inspector Grimes speaking now. Who is it?"

"I am Mojowsky—Vladimir Mojowsky, tutor to his Highness the Prince of Igor!"

"Oh! I was unaware there was a prince in this district. Where are you speaking from?"

"St. James' School, inspector. I have just arrived. I find my charge, who came here some days ago as a scholar, is missing!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. He left the school this afternoon with three other boys in a car—"

"What kind of a car?" queried the inspector.

"A large grey touring car, hired from Blankley's, in Wayland," murmured Mr. Railton.

The Russian repeated the information.

"Where did they intend going? How long have they been gone?"

"We do not know where they went. It appears to have been a pleasure jaunt. A St. Jim's boy saw them on the Wayland road early in the afternoon."

"H'm! And they've been gone ever since?"

"Yes. I am terribly anxious; but in this fog there is little that can be done. It is my opinion that the boys have taken shelter somewhere, and will pass the night there. If there had been an accident you would have had news before this, inspector?"

"I have heard nothing."

"It is as I thought. If there is no news by to-morrow I will trouble you to scour the neighbourhood—"

"Who are you, sir?"

"His Highness' tutor—Vladimir Mojowsky!" ejaculated the Russian. "I told you once! Do you not realise that the prince must be found—that he has enemies in this country?"

"This is news to me," said Inspector Grimes stolidly.

"You will know more shortly. It is that which I rang you up to speak about. There can be nothing done to-night, but I have important information which I must impart to you at once—as soon as I can see you. Would it be possible to come over to the school this evening, inspector, after the boys are in bed? Say, ten o'clock. The matter is urgent—vital to the safety of the prince. His loyal subjects are running great risks in order to save him from his enemies. You will not withhold your aid?"

Mr. Railton started a little as a sound suspiciously like a chuckle came to his ears. But it was impossible. Inspector Grimes could hardly be amused at the Russian's information.

"There is danger," said Mojowsky intently. "His Highness has enemies in every quarter. One cannot pick one's words too carefully, and I certainly could not trust my information to the telephone. You will come, inspector?"

There was a pause as if Inspector Grimes was considering the matter. The journey at night through the fog was no light undertaking.

"I will come," came the inspector's voice, after a pause. "I shall motor over, if that is possible. If not, I shall walk. Will you ask Dr. Holmes if I can stay the night, Mr. Mojowsky?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The Head's agreement was given at once, and the Russian turned again to the telephone.

"Then we may take it as settled, inspector? We shall see you at ten o'clock?"

"Yes. Good-evening, sir."

"Good-evening, inspector."

Mojowsky rang off, his face wearing quite a pleasant smile. The responsibility which had weighed on him so heavily a few moments previously seemed to have rolled off him. Perhaps he regarded Inspector Grimes as responsible for the safety of the prince.

Mr. Railton replaced his receiver, and gave Mojowsky a rather peculiar glance. There was something about the Russian that the Housemaster could not understand, though he could not tell why.

"It will be a tiring journey for the inspector," observed Dr. Holmes. "The fog shows no sign of lifting yet."

"Judging by his voice, Inspector Grimes has a severe cold," said Mr. Railton.

"I noticed it, too, Mr. Railton." For a moment the Russian's eyes dwelt very keenly on the School House master. "It is unavoidable that the inspector should be summoned, however. His Highness—"

"Of course! Of course!" agreed the Head.

He found Mojowsky's concern for Rakovsky, to the complete exclusion of the three juniors who had been with him, a little irritating.

"With your leave, sir, I will retire until the inspector

is due," said Mr. Railton. "It is getting near the boys' bedtime."

"Before you go, Mr. Railton," interrupted Mojowsky, "I should like all the masters to hear what I have to say. While his Highness is here, I should like especial care taken that no harm befalls him. I—"

"You may safely leave him in my hands, sir!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes testily. "While Rakovsky is within the school precincts nothing can harm him!"

"Nevertheless, I should be obliged if you would acquiesce to my desire, sir," said the Russian smoothly. "I should like to speak personally to the masters on the subject. The boy's life is at stake, Dr. Holmes!"

"If you insist—"

"Thank you, sir. Can I trust you to inform the masters of the matter, Mr. Railton? Thank you very much!"

Mr. Railton, with a rather short nod, left the study.

He could understand and sympathise with the Russian gentleman's anxiety for the prince. But he did not like the tutor's manner.

It was in a thoughtful mood that Mr. Railton sent messages to the masters that their presence was desired at ten o'clock in the Head's study. The Russian had some secret to reveal, though what it could be that concerned the whole of the masters at St. Jim's was a little difficult to fathom. In his career at the school Rakovsky was not likely to come into contact with half of them.

Still, the Russian's request had been granted by the Head, and the mystery would not remain long unsolved.

It was growing late now, and in a few minutes the prefects made their rounds and shepherded the juniors off to their dormitories. In the Shell and Fourth, in particular, there was excited discussion regarding the probable fate of the chums of Study No. 9 and Rakovsky—though opinion generally tended towards the view that they would turn up safe and sound in the morning.

The last of the juniors were in bed by nine-thirty, and the prefects reported to the Housemaster's study.

"All lights out, sir."

"Thank you, Kildare! Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir."

Mr. Railton spent the next half-hour in his arm-chair with a book, but he rose two minutes before ten. He joined Mr. Lathom in the corridor.

The Fourth Form naster blinked curiously at the Housemaster as they headed for Dr. Holmes' study.

"Have you any idea what the Head desires to speak to us about, my dear Railton?"

"The Russian tutor Mojowsky has something he wishes to tell us," said Mr. Railton. "It is all very mysterious; I know no more than that."

"Very curious!" commented Mr. Lathom.

In the Head's study, the rest of the masters had already gathered, and Mr. Railton closed the door behind him.

The Head was seated in his chair; the masters were disposed round the study, some sitting, some standing. Vladimir Mojowsky stood near the window, his expression very pleasant.

His anxiety seemed considerably lessened now.

The Head gave him a glance.

"We are ready, sir—"

"All the masters are present, Dr. Holmes?"

"Yes. You may speak out, sir."

"In one moment, sir. I have asked you gentlemen here to-night in order to make a rather startling disclosure to you—"

"Yes, yes. Pray proceed!" said Dr. Holmes.

"It concerns his Highness Prince Michael very closely indeed. As you probably are aware, he has been obliged to flee from Russia, and a price is put on his head by the Government."

"He is safe enough here, sir," said Mr. Linton.

Mojowsky smiled.

"He has been skulking in France for the last three years—"

"Wh-a-a-at?"

"What did you say, sir?" ejaculated the Head.

"He has been skulking in France!" repeated Mojowsky, smiling openly now. "We could not reach him there—he was too well guarded. But we succeeded in making the place too hot for him, and he has fled into England, thinking to escape observation in an obscure public school—"

"You will pardon me, sir—" began the Head icily.

"And we have every reason to believe that he has brought the famous treasure of the Rakovskys with him!" said Mojowsky grimly. "It was a clever scheme. Who would have thought of looking for the Rakovsky treasure at an English public school? Our knowledge was gained by a lucky accident—"

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Railton.

"The Government demands the prince and his treasure!" said Mojowsky. "And we have taken desperate measures in

order to secure it. My name is not Mojowsky; you have been deceived, like the poor-witted fools you are!"

"You—you have not laid your rascally hands on the boy, Rakovsky?" ejaculated the Head. "You a Bolshevik! I can hardly credit my senses. You will be seized—"

"I think not!" said Mojowsky sneering. "The prince is safe in our hands."

"But your message to Inspector Grimes. Mr. Railton heard you telephone to him!" said the Head.

"I did not speak to the inspector," said the Russian coolly. "What Mr. Railton heard was a conversation between myself and one of my comrades. We have intercepted your communication wires, Dr. Holmes. I am not expecting the inspector this evening—"

"You will put your hands up!" came Mr. Railton's voice incisively. "I knew you for a scoundrel!"

Mojowsky turned, and smiled at the revolver—a relic from Service days in Flanders—which the Housemaster presented at him.

"You are cautious, Mr. Railton. My comrade at the end of the wire all but betrayed himself to you! But—"

"Keep them up!" advised Mr. Railton grimly.

"If you will glance behind you, you will perceive that resistance is useless!" said the Russian mockingly. "The weapons of my comrades are fitted with silencers. Your lives are in your own hands. Kindly lower that revolver, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head.

There was no time for thought. The study window was thrown up, and gleaming barrels confronted the masters.

"This—this is an outrage!" gasped Dr. Holmes, his usually dignified manner thrown to the winds. "You will be made to suffer dearly for this, you scoundrels! I will not—"

"You will leave the room by the window one by one!" said Mojowsky coolly. "The first man to make a sound or offer resistance will be shot!"

## CHAPTER 10.

### The Ghosts in the Quad!

"OH dear!"  
Baggy Trimble of the Fourth sat up in bed. He blinked at the dim shades of the beds in the long dormitory, and he blinked at the high windows, through which the moonbeams threw patterns on the floor.

He blinked dismally, and grunted.

"Oh dear! I'm hungry!"

For once Trimble really was hungry. He was always ready to eat anything at the shortest notice, for that matter, but on this occasion it was genuine hunger, and not greed, that moved him.

Trimble felt that he had had a really horrid time. First, there had been that exhausting walk after Cardew had so humorously dropped him from the car—not that Baggy was sorry he had been "dropped," now the juniors were missing.

But the fat junior's troubles had only commenced on his return to St. Jim's. He had reported to Kildare's study, and in the excitement concerning Cardew and his companions, the fact that Trimble had "cut" games that afternoon had almost been forgotten.

But not quite. Kildare had called the matter to mind later in the evening, after his fruitless search, and had given Trimble two on each fat paw as a reminder that "cutting" footer did not pay.

Even that was not the sum total of Baggy Trimble's misfortunes on that unhappy half-holiday. He had reached St. Jim's only just in time for calling-over, and after roll he had cherished the hope of tea.

But tea in Hall was over, and there was a surprising dearth of fellows willing to stand Trimble a whack in their study spread. As a matter of fact, most of the fellows had had their tea by that time, and Trimble rolled along a little too late.

Deprived of the solace of tea, Baggy had waited desperately for supper-time. There was cheese and bread—dry bread—in Hall, but Trimble fancied something more appetising than cheese and dry bread. He had made a round of the junior studies, using his most persuasive blandishments, but without result.

Suppers in junior studies were thin that evening, and nobody felt inclined to watch Trimble wolf the lion's share of what there was. To his immense astonishment and indignation, Trimble had in every case been turned empty away. Nobody wanted him.

And when in desperation, he had rolled into Hall, resigned to the prospect of bread and cheese, it was only to find the juniors just finishing their meal, and to be packed off to the dormitory with the rest.

Tealess and supperless! That was the terrible state to which Trimble had been reduced—a state when even the

fat and fatuous Baggy began to revolve daring means of appeasing his inner man—when Trimble was the champion funk of the Junior School—that was admitted freely on all sides. Even his Form-fellows held no brief for him. But Trimble, like every mortal, had his limit, and he was approaching perilously near it now.

He had tried to sleep—but sleep was out of the question. A fellow like Tom Merry or Blake might be able to tighten his belt and forget a slight gnawing sensation, but not so Trimble.

He sat and blinked in the moonlight, with a growing conviction that he would either have to get food or starve. The thought of lasting out till morning made him feel quite faint.

He rolled out of bed at last.

"Oh! Wow! I'm famished! Isn't it c-cold?"

It undoubtedly was. But Trimble was not in the mood to let even the low temperature of a winter's evening stand in his path. Something had gone snap inside Trimble. He was like a lion searching for its prey.

He groped in the darkness for his trousers, and jabbed his toe against the bed.

"Yow! Wow! Ow-wow-wow!"

For the next few seconds he was busily occupied in nursing his toe; but he did not get back into bed. He slipped on his jacket, and with a pair of rubber shoes on his feet, headed for the door.

A sleepy voice, asking who was moving, showed that his rather clumsy movements had not passed unnoticed. But Trimble did not pause. He closed the dormitory door silently behind him, and crept like a very fat ghost along the corridor.

In descending the big staircase he did not make a sound; not that there was such a pressing need for silence, he reflected.

Trimble happened to know—in the same manner as he "happened" to know three parts of what went on inside the walls of St. Jim's—that there was a meeting of the masters in the Head's study that evening.

What was the subject of the most unusual meeting, Trimble had not been able to discover. But it was sufficient for his purpose to know that there was a meeting. With the masters safely closeted with the Head, it was highly unlikely that he would meet anybody prowling in the corridors.

Once in the kitchen regions, he would be perfectly safe. A master could hardly be expected to come creeping down on the same mission as himself.

Trimble slipped quickly and silently across the Hall, and took a corridor which he knew, from previous experience, led to the larder.

He gave several glances into shadowy alcoves as he went, his heart beating rather fast until they were past. Trimble could cackle with any fellow at a ghost in broad daylight, but just then he endeavoured to keep his mind off the subject.

"Oh, my hat! Wha-a-at's that?"

It was only a streak of moonlight playing on a curtain, but Trimble's heart turned over as he spotted it. It was undoubtedly safer not to bring a light; but Trimble began to feel that he would have taken quite a lot of risk to have had a candle with him.

But a pang of sharp hunger nerved him again.

He entered the kitchen, and felt his way to the larder.

Almost the first thing his hand fell upon was a candlestick, and he made haste to light it. He did not need a light to eat by; he could feel the way to his capacious mouth well enough from long practice. But a light enabled him to make a selection, and Trimble's eyes gleamed as they rested on rabbit-pie and apple-dumpling, treacle-tart, and suet pudding.

There was an ample supply of good things in the larder, and Trimble set to work without delay to demolish them. Possibly the cook had intended some of those choice viands for the morrow's dinner, but if so, she was likely to be disappointed.

Baggy Trimble was tealess and he was supperless; those conditions added to a naturally enormous stowage capacity. Amply as the larder was stocked, it was severely taxed before Trimble came to his limit.

The rabbit-pie and the apple-dumplings, the treacle-tart, and the suet pudding, had all disappeared. Other choice dishes had followed them; the larder shelf was very considerably lighter than it had been.

But even Trimble had to draw the line some time, and he had the wisdom to draw it now. He blew out the candle and crept towards the kitchen door.

"Groogh! I've biffed my foot against the rotten table! Where's the beastly door? Oh, here it is!"

As Trimble mounted the stairs from the lower regions, he was glad he had drawn the line when he did. He was

heavier on his feet now, and weighed down with sleep; it was quite an ordeal to get to the dormitory.

He crept up the main staircase, feeling like a fat boa-constrictor, desirous only of finding a dark corner and sleeping off that terrific feed. The whistling of the wind in the moonlit quadrangle drew his eyes as he passed a window. Trimble stopped.

He stared.

He could hardly believe his eyes.

While his eyes almost goggled from his head, Trimble's fat knees fairly knocked together, and a cold perspiration broke out on his forehead.

He wanted to run; but he felt as if he were rooted to the stairs. He opened his mouth to shout for help, regardless of the punishment for breaking bounds; but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

There were figures moving in the quad; gliding silently among the old, leafless elms.

They were figures in white, looming up like spirits from another world in the remnants of the fog.

With a start, Trimble realised that the fog had lifted; only shreds of it still hung about the quadrangle—just enough to blur the figures in white as they floated before his vision.

As he watched, paralysed with fright, a dark shadow concealed them from view; and with a sudden whoop Trimble broke the spell.

"Oh! Ah! Help! Save me! Ghosts! Spectres! Spooks! Help!"

Life returned to his fat little legs, and Trimble sped up the big staircase like lightning, shouting wildly for help.

In his dire alarm, Trimble's cries were little more than croaks, and it was unlikely that anybody would have heard them.

But the fat junior had recovered the power of motion now, and he was using it to the full. He went along the corridor like a champion of the cinder path; he fairly burst into the Fourth Form dormitory, and slammed the door behind him.

That slam brought several fellows out of the arms of Morpheus, and they sat up in bed just in time to see Trimble frantically locking the door.

"Who is it? What's happened?"

"Baggay, deah boy—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"What's the matter?"

"Ghosts!" hooted Trimble, diving under the sheets.

"Spooks, I tell you! I saw 'em in the quad—dozens and dozens of 'em! Save me, you rotters! Gussy, old man—I've always stood by you—save me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat idiot!" grinned Blake. "You've been raiding the larder again, and took to your heels at the sight of a shadow—"

"Yow-wow-wow! I didn't—I wasn't!" wailed Trimble.

"It's ghosts—in the quad—look if you don't believe me!"

"Ass!" grunted Blake.

Nevertheless, he slipped out of bed and glanced down into the quad from the dormitory window. His view commanded practically the whole of the quad, but there were certainly no ghosts in sight.

"See anythin', Blake, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, grinning.

"The quad must be full of them, according to Baggy!" grinned Herries. "How many can you see?"

"None!"

The Yorkshire junior turned from the window, grinning.

"I tell you there's hundreds of 'em—all dressed in white!" roared Trimble, with his head under the bedclothes. "I saw 'em—I ought to know!"

"The fog's lifted," grinned Blake. "You saw some wisps floating about, Trimble. Nothing to get funky about. Shut up, and go to sleep!"

"Who's funky?" ejaculated Trimble, emerging from under the sheets suddenly.

"You are, old fat tulip!" chuckled Digby.

"I'm not!" roared Trimble furiously. "I'm as brave as a lion, and you know it, you beasts!"

"What's that coming in through the keyhole?" ejaculated Blake, in alarm. "Hallo! What are you getting under the bedclothes for, Trimble?"

"Yah! Help! Keepemoff! I won't be haunted!"

Trimble's bravery seemed to have evaporated when put to that simple test.

"There isn't any ghost, you silly idiot! Shut up!" growled Blake.

"There is! I jolly well won't be haunted to please you, Blake, you rotter!"

"Shut up!" roared Blake, reaching for a slipper.

"I won't! I— Yaroooooooh! Oh! Wow!"

The slipper flew, and the aim was deadly.

Blake rolled over and composed himself to sleep, while a series of mumbblings and gruntings came from the bed occupied by Baggy Trimble.

But there was no more heard concerning ghosts in the Fourth Form dormitory that night. But perhaps the Fourth-Formers would not have slept so calmly had they known the actual truth!

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Alarm!

"I SAY, Blake!"

"Rats!"

"But I say, you know—"

"Roll away and pick daisies, old chap!"

"You rotter! It's important!"

Jack Blake paused in the act of adjusting his tie to look at Baggy Trimble.

Rising-bell had pealed not long before, and the Fourth had tumbled over, to discover that the morning was bright and clear, with no trace of the fog at all.

Trimble had been among the last to leave his bed, as usual, but he was ready to go down before Blake. Trimble gained a great deal of time through being satisfied with the merest pretence of a wash.

Now he was talking to Blake, and anybody but Trimble would have seen that the pleasure was all on one side.

"Look here, Blake, you know—"

"Well, what is it?" ejaculated Blake. "Cut it short!"

"I've got lines!" roared Trimble.

"What, already? You haven't been out of dorm yet!"

"You idiot! I mean Railton gave me them yesterday morning. A hundred, you know. I was to have taken them to him last night, you know."

"Why didn't you?"

"I—I forgot. You see," went on Trimble hastily, "there was such a fuss over Cardew and his pals—and a fellow was wanted to give evidence—that I really didn't have time. I—I thought—"

"Better explain it to Railton," grinned Blake.

"Oh, you ass! I should get a licking, or the lines doubled!" growled Trimble. "Suppose—"

"Get out of the way, Fatty! I'm going down! Coming, Gussy?"

"Hold on a minute, you beast! I was wondering if—you'd explain it for me, you know!"

"What?"

"Put—put it nicely, you know. Old Railton likes you, I know that. No accounting for tastes, of course. He—he might let me off if you put it well, Blake, old chap!"

Blake stared at Trimble fixedly for some moments. He had had a good deal of valuable experience with Trimble. He knew that Baggy was a very imaginable kind of an ass. But this latest fatuous scheme to evade punishment seemed even more fatuous than usual.

"Bai Jove, you know! Twimble weally takes the cake, Blake, doesn't he?"

"You'll do it, Blake?" asked Trimble eagerly.

"You awful idiot!" said Blake, in measured tones.

"Take my advice and tell Railton the truth, or as near as you can get to it, anyway. I couldn't do anything for you if I wanted to, you ass!"

"But—but you could pitch it nicely to Railton if you liked. Or do the lines for me yourself. Dash it all, what's a hundred lines?"

"Weally, Twimble—"

Blake made no answer to that question.

He placed his hands on Baggy's shoulders. There was a sudden twirl, and Trimble smote the dormitory floor with a resounding thud. He sat there and roared, while Blake and D'Arcy left the dormitory.

He roared until Reilly kicked him for making a row; after which, seething with wrath, Trimble scrambled to his feet and rolled downstairs.

He rolled to the letter-rack in Hall, and rolled disconsolately away again. His footsteps led him towards the study of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

Trimble was not a bright youth, as a rule. But even Trimble could see that a Housemaster would require some explanation to account for the absence of that hundred lines.

Considering that Trimble had been listening at a keyhole when the Housemaster came along, the imposition was really quite light. The fat Fourth-Former knew from experience that to lie low and say "nuffin" would only make matters worse in the end.

He cherished a hope of making Mr. Railton realise the circumstances which had conspired against him the previous evening, but it was a faint hope.

An industrious fellow might have set to work to get the lines done before breakfast, but Trimble was not an industrious fellow.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

Rap!

There was no reply to Trimble's knock. For a moment he was tempted to retreat, but he had screwed up his courage now.

Rap, rap!

Still no answer.

It was a little remarkable.

Mr. Railton was an early riser, and it was unlikely that he was not yet up. He was not in the quad or in Hall, so he must be in his study.

Rap, rap, rap!

No answer.

Trimble, his fat curiosity roused, began with infinite caution to turn the handle.

Then he pushed it open wider and entered boldly. If Mr. Railton was there, Trimble had come to explain why he had not done the lines. But Mr. Railton was not there, though there were several traces of his having been there the previous evening.

The maid had not yet come in to tidy the room, and it was just as the Housemaster had left it. His book lay upon the table, open. His pipe lay beside it, and his pouch, too. His dressing-gown was thrown over a chair, and his slippers were put to warm before a fire which was now out. There was an atmosphere of smoke in the room, and Trimble wondered if Mr. Railton slept in that atmosphere.

Trimble's brain, slow enough at normal times, seemed to work more quickly as he looked round the study. He glanced casually into the connecting room in which the Housemaster slept, and he started.

The bed had not been used. Mr. Railton had not slept there that night. Where was he now? What—

Trimble's fat brain was incapable of coping with this mystery.

Possibly there was some very simple explanation to it all. If so, he was quite unable to see it.

He spun round as a voice hailed him from the passage. The breakfast-bell had sounded, and he had hardly noticed it.

"Hallo, Baggy! Brekker! Has Railton laid it into you?"

"He's not here, Blake," said Trimble.

"Then where the thump is he, I wonder? Kildare wants to speak to him. He's just coming. Better cut, Trimble!"

"His bed hasn't been slept in!" said Trimble seriously. "It's a giddy mystery to me! Come in and look!"

"By Jove!"

Blake entered the study, and stared at the untouched bed. He whistled.

There were footsteps in the corridor, and Kildare appeared in the doorway.

"What the thump! What are two kids doing here?"

"Mr. Railton's missing, Kildare!" said Trimble. "I came to see him about some lines. Look at the bed!"

Kildare glanced at the bed, and he, too, appeared puzzled.

"Well, I'm jiggered! I'll make inquiries. You kids get along to brekker—sharp!"

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

Blake and Trimble left the study, leaving the captain of the school looking very puzzled indeed. Where Mr. Railton had passed the night, if not in his study, presented an insoluble mystery at the moment.

At the breakfast-table the news sped quickly. Trimble mentioned the matter to every fellow who would listen, and Blake's corroboration gave weight to the assertion. Soon the whole school was in possession of the startling facts.

"My hat! I haven't seen any of the masters this morning!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, as the minutes ticked by.

"Are we going to be left to take breakfast on our own?"

"Linton's jolly late!" remarked Manners.

"Lathom, too!" said Tom Merry, glancing at the Fourth Form table. "What's happened to your Form master, Blake?"

"That's what we want to know!" grinned Blake. "This is the limit, and no mistake! The masters seem to have flitted in the night!"

From the fag table, usually presided over by Mr. Selby of the Third, came an ever increasing uproar. The fags were enjoying the absence of their sour-tempered Form master.

"Ratty, too!" remarked Kangaroo. "The Fifth are on their lonesome. Perhaps there's a masters' meeting on!"

"More than likely," agreed Tom Merry. "In fact, about the only explanation, I'm thinking."

Breakfast had been served, and was getting cold. With one accord the juniors began on eggs and bacon, only the seniors refraining.

But breakfast proceeded, and still no masters appeared. Trimble, having finished his own share, began to cast envious eyes on Mr. Lathom's plate at the head of the Fourth Form table.

"I say, Blake, do you think Lathom would mind?"

"Mind what, Fatty?"



Blake grabbed at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's hand and pulled. "Let go, you ass!" shouted the swell of St. Jim's excitedly. "You are dwaggin' me in, too! Bai Jove! I'm slippin'—Yawwooh!" D'Arcy uttered that wild ejaculation as his aristocratic foot plunged into the ditch. (See Chapter 7.)

"It'll only get cold!" argued Trimble. "He can send for some more when he comes. Pass that plate, old man!"

"What, Lathom's plate?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes; buck up! It's getting colder and colder as it stands, you know."

"Well, my hat!" said Blake dazedly.

He did not pass Mr. Lathom's plate, but Trimble's fat hand reached out, and the plate was no longer Mr. Lathom's. Whether Mr. Lathom would consider his action justified, did not worry Trimble. He wired into bacon and eggs again with a happy smile on his fat face.

He was going strong when Kildare entered the Hall, wearing an extremely serious expression. He strode to the Sixth Form table, and held up his hand for silence.

"Stop gobbling, Trimble!" breathed Blake. "We can't hear Kildare speak!"

"I have serious news for the whole school!" said Kildare steadily. "I want every fellow to take it quietly, and act just as if matters were going on normally."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What on earth's happened?"

"Most of you know that Mr. Railton is missing," went on Kildare quietly. "I have searched all over the school, but he is not to be found. Worst of all, none of the other masters can be found, either!"

There was silence in the Hall.

If Kildare had exploded a bombshell in front of the fellows, he could not have created a bigger sensation.

All the masters missing!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great snakes!"

"I can't swallow it!" breathed Tom Merry. "Surely there's some mistake!"

"There are no masters anywhere in the school!" said Kildare coolly. "Now, don't get excited. I can't explain it just now, but I shall investigate further at once. I can only say that none of the masters slept in the school last night—all their beds are as the maids left them yesterday!"

"Flitted—in the night!" ejaculated Blake. "It can't be true! My only hat! Baggy!"

"What's that, deah boy?"

"The ghosts!" said Blake grimly. "Trimble, were the ghosts you saw the masters? Think, you fat idiot!"

"Mum-mum-my hat! They—they were dressed in white, though!" gasped Trimble. "I saw them as plain as I see you now, you know!"

"The fog accounted for the whiteness!" snapped Blake. "Come on, Fatty! Tell what you know to Kildare!"

"Lemme finish this egg—"

"Kimmon!"

Trimble was jerked away from the breakfast-table, and accompanied Blake to Kildare. The captain of the school listened attentively to Trimble's story.

"I am glad you told me this, Trimble. It is an utter mystery; but a search-party will leave the school at once to investigate. You may go back to your places. All juniors will go to their Form-rooms, under their Form captains, and carry on with work as usual. I shall hold the captains personally responsible for the work done. That's all!"

"Oh, I say!"

"We want to help search, Kildare!"

There was a chorus of protest from the junior tables. Kildare glanced up from a consultation with the Sixth, and frowned.

"Any fellow who objects is welcome to a dose of my ashplant!" he remarked. "Don't all rush at once!"

The juniors did not all rush to accept that invitation. There was an immediate move towards the door, and the Forms disbanded to their various Form-rooms.

In the Shell Form-room Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Now, you fellows. No ragging. Work!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Bosh! Kildare was only kidding, Merry!"

"What are you standing up there for, Monty?"

"Watching the search-party leave!" grinned Lowther, perched on a form by the high windows. "Pretty nearly all the Sixth and Fifth are going!"

"Get down, you ass!"

"It's sheer rot!" roared Grundy. "Why can't we join in the search as well as the Sixth? We'd be a jolly sight more use, if you ask me!"

"Well, Kildare didn't ask you!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Sit down and do some work for a change."

"My hat!" ejaculated Lowther suddenly.

"Eh?"

"Look!" Monty Lowther was fairly leaping with excitement. "Look! The seniors are being attacked! Look!"

"What?"

"Look!"

There was a rush of the Shell to the windows.

In the distance the lane to Rylcombe could be discerned, and, perhaps, five hundred yards from the gates a wild battle was in progress. Men, clad in unfamiliar uniforms, were grappling with the Sixth and Fifth-Formers, and even at that distance it could be seen that the combat was of a desperate nature. The seniors were already being borne back by strength of numbers.

For a few seconds the Shell watched, spellbound.

Then there was a clarion call from Monty Lowther:

"Up, St. Jim's!"

The Shell rushed for the door.

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Escape!

"By gad, can't we do somethin'?"

"What?" asked Levison.

Cardew of the Fourth allowed his gaze to wander to the saloon windows of the giant air-liner for the hundredth time.

The imprisonment of the four juniors had been only a few hours, but it seemed a lifetime. They had spent the night in their cramped position on the couch, the gags being removed, but their hands remaining bound.

Now bright sunshine was streaming down outside, and for a while the prisoners had hoped for rescue.

But Cardew's eyes, keenly surveying the position, had scouted that hope. In the dawn, the huge machine had been moved to a gully in the moor, and it lay there now, concealed from sight, unless one walked to the very edge of the gully and peered over.

There was little likelihood of a chance passer-by spotting it, and the juniors were well aware of that by now.

Hope had sprung into being through various causes at first, but one by one they had died. Blankley's had rung up St. Jim's to ask for news of their car, but the Russian leader, Varakoff, had put them off coolly with a reassuring statement.

With the telephonic communication between Wayland and

the school in his control, he was able to deal with all calls, and ensure that St. Jim's remained isolated.

What the next move of the Russians would be Cardew could only conjecture. But he realised with bitterness that any hope of outside intervention was futile.

The police knew nothing of the matter, and in a day or two at the most the Russians would leave as they had come—with or without their object fulfilled. Varakoff had hinted to them that his object would be gained that very day—that in the evening, with darkness to aid them, the Russians would take to the air again.

The chauffeur of the car, together with Piggott, had fallen into their clutches, and were prisoners, too. The Russians could afford to make prisoners of anybody who learned of their presence, safe in the knowledge that they would be gone before a search could be made. The only hope of the St. Jim's juniors was that a search-party from the school would light upon them in time.

Now even that hope was gone. The Russians had departed in force that morning, a mere handful of guards being left in charge of the camp. Cardew and his chums did not need telling where the Russians had gone.

A tall guard stood at the door of the saloon, with a revolver at his hip. His eyes played on the juniors mockingly. He read their thoughts.

Cardew's eyes glimmered at the guard. The tall Russian was all that stood between the prisoners and a dash for freedom, and anything, in Cardew's opinion, was better than sitting with their hands tied in their laps.

But the guard was smiling slightly; he did not look as if he were likely to relax his vigil.

Cardew's brain worked swiftly. He was a slacker in a good many ways; but intellectually, at least, he was a match for fellows considerably older than himself.

All his cunning was wanted now, if he was to trick the guard into releasing him. He had evolved a scheme in the early hours of the morning, lying awake in the darkness; now he intended to put it to the test.

"Yaw-aw-aw! Oh, gad, I'm tired of this, you fellows! How long do you intend keepin' us here, officer?"

The guard shook his head.

"Can't you speak English?" asked Cardew curiously.

"I am forbidden to speak with the prisoners!" said the man sourly.

He turned away, and felt in his pocket. His hand came out empty. Cardew's eyes glimmered again. He thought he knew what the man wanted.

"Cigarette, officer?"

The Russian turned again, and gave Cardew a doubtful glance. He quite obviously did not know what to make of the whimsical Fourth-Former, but his look was more friendly now.

"There's a packet of cigarettes in my inside pocket, if that's what you want," said Cardew lazily. "You'll have to fish 'em out yourself."

The Russian grinned, and bent over the junior. His hand groped in Cardew's jacket, and for a few seconds his eyes were off the junior's face.

Cardew was cool as ice. The capacious pocket of the Russian's great coat swung within an inch of his hands, and he knew that the man had matches in that pocket. As the pocket came close, he slipped his fingers in it and closed them hard on a box.

As the Russian stepped back with the packet of cigarettes in his hand, Cardew sat back, a box of matches in his hand. The man's glance was diverted as he lit up from a petrol-lighter, and in that moment Cardew had concealed the matches beside him.

"Don't forget me!" he remarked coolly.

The Russian glanced at him, but he did not offer to light a cigarette for Cardew. He laughed, instead, highly amused at the prisoner's simplicity.

"You thought I would disobey orders—eh? You are a young fool! I shall leave you for a while now. The slightest movement and your lives shall pay the forfeit!"

Cardew watched the Russian leave the saloon; he was trembling with suppressed excitement.

"My only hat! He's taken the bait, you fellows! By gad, I've fooled him!"

"What?"

"You ass, Cardew!"

"What do you mean, Cardew?" asked Rakovsky tensely. "It was a ruse to be rid of him?"

Cardew nodded briefly. He already had the box of matches in his hands.

"There's fifty of these," he remarked grimly. "If I can't burn this rope, you can call me a Dutchman!"

"Good man!"

"I'll strike the matches, while Clive holds the box!" said Levison coolly. "Get your hands as far apart as possible, Cardew, or you'll get burnt!"

"There's an inch to spare!" said Cardew coolly. "Go ahead!"



THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 998.

## CONCERNING "GEMITES"!

The real April Fool is the chap who forgets to read this grand story of Tom Merry & Co., 'cos he's missing the treat of his life.

IT'S OUT ON  
FRIDAY!

Quietly, methodically, Levison lit a match and held it under the rope that bound Cardew's wrists together. It was a thick rope, but two or three matches were enough to set it smouldering.

Match after match was held beneath it, till at last the strands began to part. Several times there was an exclamation from Cardew as the flame touched his flesh.

"Give it a wrench!" said Levison. "I think you can jerk it apart now."

Cardew set his lips, and jerked. With a snap the rope parted. Cardew was free!

He sprang to his feet, chafing his singed wrists. But it was no time to attend to minor injuries now. At any moment the guard might return—and one junior had little chance against the armed Russian. They must all get free and make a dash for it—it was the only hope.

Swiftly, coolly, Cardew drew a penknife from his pocket, and pulled out the bigger blade.

"Rakovsky first!" said Clive calmly. "Buck up, Cardew!"

The dandy of the Fourth bent over the prince. A couple of saws with the knife parted the first strand, and the others followed in a few seconds.

Rakovsky jerked his wrists free, and ran his fingers through his pockets for a knife. Cardew was already bending over Clive when there was an exclamation from the doorway.

Rakovsky's eyes were fixed on the figure that had appeared there—the guard had returned, as they had feared—and his expression was grim and mocking.

"So you thought to dupe me, you young dog! We will see!"

He strode across the saloon.

Rakovsky waited, proud and defiant. He took the failure of the attempted escape with cool reserve.

But in Cardew's eyes there was a desperate gleam. To be balked at the post was not Cardew's intention at all. As the Russian approached, he acted.

The man had a glimpse of a junior flying at him; the next he was rolling on the floor, his legs swept from under him by a Rugger tackle, and Cardew, gasping, was on his feet again.

"Cut, Rakovsky! It's up to you!" snapped Cardew. "Get to the school and warn them, old man! I'll keep this brute occupied!"

For a moment Rakovsky hesitated.

He had to leave his friends in bondage; but it was vitally necessary to warn the fellows at St. Jim's of their danger. The only hope of rescue lay in him. And at that he hesitated no longer. The guard was scrambling to his feet again, fury written in his face. Cardew sprang at him, but was brushed aside by a powerful sweep of the man's arm. But Rakovsky leaped, and he had snatched the man's revolver from his belt. As the Russian spun round the butt of the revolver crashed with stunning force against his forehead, and he reeled back.

Rakovsky smote again, mercilessly, and the man sagged to the floor. He was not likely to trouble the prisoners again yet awhile.

But there was no time to release the Fourth-Formers. The struggle in the saloon had attracted attention from the men without. Rakovsky sprang for the doorway, and jumped recklessly to the ground.

He rolled under the carriage of the machine, and scrambled up again, with the pursuers barely fifty yards behind.

But the air was clear enough now, and Rakovsky could see where the road lay. He ran his hardest up the slope of the gully, and his nimbleness stood him in good stead. He gained a few yards in the ascent, and sped for the road.

He had at least a chance of meeting help there. And it was unlikely that the Russians would wish to show themselves on the public highway.

He was right; there was no pursuit beyond the hollow wherein the giant aeroplane lay hidden.

His breath coming in gasps, Rakovsky ran for St. Jim's. He knew that an expedition had left for the school that morning; it was only too probable that he was too late to warn Tom Merry & Co.

He had no thought of getting help from the police; if the Russians had gained entry to the school, the Rakovsky treasure was in danger, and an hour or two might see its removal to the aeroplane—and once the Russians were clear of the coast the chances of recovery were practically nil.

He came into Rylcombe Lane and sped by the hedge. He was nearing St. Jim's when a sudden uproar burst upon his ears, and he paused. There were shouts in English, mingled with hoarse cries in Russian. Rakovsky did not need telling what had happened.

But caution came first. He slipped behind the hedge, and approached the scene of the battle.

Even as he watched, Kildare and his men were going down gallantly before the greater numbers of the Russians. There was no bloodshed—the noise of firearms would have attracted attention, and in the possible event of capture, the Russians did not wish to hang—but the Sixth and Fifth had no chance.

They were being overpowered—and the next move would be to deal with the juniors. Rakovsky took to his heels again and broke into the road near the gates.

A crowd of the Shell and Fourth came surging to meet him; the juniors had just spotted from the Form-rooms what was happening.

Rakovsky, gulping for breath, leaned on Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Danger, my friend! Close the gates, as you value your lives!"

"But—but where have you come from, Rakovsky?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I have been a prisoner—with Cardew, Levison, and Clive. There is grave danger—close the gates. It is the Russians!"

## CHAPTER 13.

### Warned in Time!

"THE Russians!"

A wave of excitement surged through the ranks of the juniors. There was a thrill in Rakovsky's words, but at the same time a threat of danger which unnerved some of the weaker spirits.

Trimble was the first to emit a yell.

"Ow-wow! We shall all be k-killed! Sus-sus-save me, you rotters!"

"Shut up, you fat funk!" snapped Grundy angrily.

"I won't shut up! I don't want to be— Yarooop!"

It was no occasion to stand on ceremony.

Panic was catching, and Grundy acted promptly. A drive from his hefty boot gave Trimble something else to think about.

"Close the gates!" panted Rakovsky. "Hurry!"

Tom Merry peered along the lane, irresolute.

His first impulse had been to dash to the rescue, regardless of the consequences. Only the arrival of the Russian prince had stayed their dash. But it was only too obvious that the seniors had been overpowered, and in that case what chance would the juniors have?

"Dash it all, we can't leave Kildare and his men in their rotten clutches!" ejaculated Blake.

"Hold on!" rapped Tom Merry.

His tone checked the rush out of gates.

"Get inside quickly, you fellows!" ordered the Shell captain sharply. "Rakovsky is right!"

"What—and leave Kildare and the rest in the lurch?" howled Grundy indignantly.

"We can't help ourselves!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"Get the gates shut and take cover in the House! If the Russians make a rush, we're at their mercy here!"

"By Jove!"

"Something in that!"

Clang!

Lowther and Digby swung the big iron gates to, and Manners darted into Taggles' lodge.

He threw the door open with a crash, startling the old porter out of a doze, and leaped to the nail on which the keys hung. Taggles sprang from his chair with surprising agility as the junior disappeared with the keys.

He was just in time to see Manners snap home the lock. The big gates would stand a good deal of battering now before they gave way, and Taggles emitted a snort of wrath as he saw what had been done.

"Wot I say is this 'ere, you young rips! If——"

"Sprint, Taggy!" gasped Blake, dragging at the porter's arm. "Sprag for your life, old bean! Do you want to be slaughtered by the Bolsheviks?"

"B-bolsheviks?"

Taggles jumped almost clear of the ground.

"Yes. Run, you fathead!" roared Lowther.

The juniors dashed towards the tuckshop, with Taggles in their midst.

Dame Taggles stared in amazement at the apparition of her husband and a crowd of juniors in the doorway.

"Lawks amussy! What ever's happened?"

"Keep cool, ma'am!" said Tom Merry. "You're quite safe at present. Come into the House, please!"

"Which I 'ear it's them Bolsheviks!" interrupted Taggles. "Don't get frightened, Martha, I'm 'ere!"

The good dame accompanied the juniors into the School House in considerable trepidation, in spite of her husband's assurances.

Tom Merry glanced anxiously from the head of the steps into the lane. It was deserted.

"They have gone," said Rakovsky quietly. "With so many prisoners, it was inadvisable to attack the rest of the school at once. They will leave the seniors on Wayland moor under a guard, and then—"

"They'll come for us!" finished Monty Lowther for him.

"Let 'em!" remarked Grundy darkly. "Let 'em, that's all! I'm ready, for one—"

"My only hat! It's easy enough to talk, but how are we going to resist when they do come?" asked Digby.

"Barricade the place first!" rapped Tom Merry grimly. "We'll see they don't get in without a struggle. Then we've got our cadet rifles—"

"Good heavens! You—you don't mean we've got to pot the bounders?" ejaculated Blake.

"It depends on whether they use firearms or not!" responded the Shell captain coolly. "I rather think they won't—too much risk of attracting attention. But we can fire blank cartridges—it will put the wind up them for a bit, and may bring help on the scene. I'll hold you responsible for seeing that the fellows are all served out with rifles, Blake!"

"Right—ho!"

"Please listen to me for a few moments before you decide on resistance!" said Rakovsky quietly.

"Go ahead, old man!"

"I think it highly probable that the men would be satisfied if no resistance was offered to them, and if I were given as a prisoner to be taken back to Russia!"

"I don't understand this, Rakovsky!" admitted Tom Merry frankly. "How did these fellows get over here in the first place, and how are they going to get back with you?"

"They came across in the fog on Wednesday," said the Russian junior. "They landed in a huge air-liner on Wayland Moor, and now their scheme is to besiege the school, and force their way in. They will take me—"

"Not if we know it!" said Blake staunchly. "You're a St. Jim's man now, you know!"

"And they will take the famous Rakovsky treasure, which was the main object of this daring expedition!" said Rakovsky coolly.

"The—the what?"

"It is useless for me to conceal it further. You remember that I brought a great deal of luggage, Merry?"

"Rather!"

"The bulk of the valuables was contained in my trunks. I have concealed a large amount in the chapel vaults—"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"The crown jewels and regalia of Igor are in my study—which I keep locked. It is for this that the Bolsheviks have made this attempt. The money would be a great help to their funds. The whole of the treasure is worth two or three millions!"

"Great Scott! You deep bounder!"

"They also demand my person," continued Rakovsky calmly. "I had to tell you this, so that you will know what you are doing. Your safest course is to hand me over without further ado, when I think you will not be molested. These men will not desire to have English blood upon their hands."

"But what about yourself?"

Rakovsky shrugged his shoulders.

"I am a prince," he said quietly. "I have lost my throne, and there is only one penalty."

The juniors were silent.

They knew well enough what Rakovsky meant, what fate lay in store for him at the hands of his enemies, once the treasure was safely in their hands.

There was danger in resisting the Russians; but, on the other hand, they could not hope to maintain a protracted siege. Discovery, and the relief of the garrison would be inevitable.

In any case, the minds of the St. Jim's juniors were already made up. They were not likely to desert a comrade when everything he possessed, probably his life to boot, was at stake.

Tom Merry slapped Rakovsky cheerily on the shoulder, and broke the silence.

"We're with you, Rakovsky—to the last ditch!"

"Hear, hear!"

Rakovsky smiled, and took Tom Merry's hand.

"I can only repeat my warning!" he said quietly.

"Blow your warning!" said Grundy. "Do you think a crowd of Russian bounders can bully us? I'm jolly well not giving in while I've got a leg to stand on, I know that! Let's get the rifles! Come on, Blake!"

"Good egg!"

"Barricade the House door!" rapped Tom Merry. "And secure the windows. Every window must be watched. You can be officer of the guard, Figgy!"

"Right, O king!" grinned Figgins.

"And Fatty Wynn is appointed chief of the commissariat!" added the Shell captain. "Monty! Manners!"

"Adsum!"

"You'll take guard in the clock-tower with me to-night," said Tom Merry. "It's the highest point of vantage available; we can see for miles, and spot the Bolsheviks coming."

The juniors dispersed to help in the preparations for the siege. There was plenty to be done, and time was short. The Russians might return at any minute. And when they came, the garrison intended to be ready for them.

Tom Merry & Co. were a little surprised as the afternoon came and went, and with it no sign of the enemy. But there was no hope of rescue. The isolation of the school remained complete.

When darkness fell, Tom Merry's expression became a little more serious. He thought he saw the intentions of the enemy now—to attack under cover of the night and gain their ends with a swift surprise.

If that was their aim, the junior skipper—now commander-in-chief of the St. Jim's forces—had foreseen it. He spoke to Lowther and Manners.

"I'll leave you in charge, Talbot. We're going up into the clock-tower to keep watch."

Laden with blankets, Lowther and Manners followed their leader out of the House via a window, and headed for the ivy-clad tower.

Something clanked as they walked, and Tom Merry gave an exclamation.

"What's that?"

"Only something I'm carrying," responded Lowther.

"Keep on!"

The Terrible Three entered the old tower, and began the ascent of the spiral stair.

Above the clock there was a little, low-roofed room, and it was here that the Terrible Three entered.

"We can see anything that goes on from here!" said Tom Merry grimly. "This is where we camp!"

"Hallo! This door opens!" remarked Lowther, turning the rusty ring. "There's a stone balcony outside."

"One of us can watch from there," said Tom Merry. "The other two can sleep in here, meanwhile. I'll take first watch. You fellows get in."

"Shove this on, then!" said Lowther.

"What the thump—"

It was a tin hat that Lowther gave the Shell captain. He had two others in his hand.

"You ass—"

"It isn't a joke," said Lowther quietly. "I got them out of the property-box, but we may need them. If the Russians fire—"

"They won't!" said Tom Merry.

"They may!" said Lowther coolly. "There's no sense in taking risks. Blake is issuing them to all the fellows—as many as we've got. They may come in useful in hand-to-hand fighting. Shove it on!"

Lowther and Manners entered the dusty attic, and Tom Merry, with a rather thoughtful air, put on the tin hat.

His eyes played keenly on the moonlit countryside below.

It was not a joking matter; for Rakovsky, it was very serious indeed. At any moment the Russians might advance on the garrison, and then the fighting was sure to be fierce.

Tom Merry was aware of a sense of grim responsibility as he stared into the night.

THE END.

(Look out for the sequel to this magnificent yarn in next week's GEM, entitled: "THE SIEGE OF ST. JIM'S!" It will hold you enthralled from beginning to end.)

Don't miss this week's

# BOY'S FRIEND

Now on Sale 2d.

Containing the opening chapters of

## FIVE GRAND STORIES

**HIS CONVICT FATHER.** An Exciting Story-Drama of Robert Earl of Sherwood, Outlaw and Outcast.

**RED VENGEANCE.** A Tale of Gripping Mystery, teeming with Exciting Indian and Cowboy Adventure in the Wild West.

**CAPTAIN KELLY'S QUEST.** An Exciting and Rollicking Yarn of the Captain himself, Engineer Donald, and Cooky Scrubbs with his harem-bone.

**IN THE DAYS OF CLAUDE DUVAL.** A Stirring Romance of Daring Deeds on the Moonlit Heaths and Highways.

**THE B. A. T. S.;** or, The School for the Backward and TroublesomeS.

**Buy the BOY'S FRIEND To-day 2d.**



**O-KAMA, THE WITCH!** For years O-Kama, the witch, has cast her spell over the tribe of Hekebu. But will her power hold good when she steps between the Hekebus and their two white victims?



An Amazing, Vivid Story of Perilous Adventure in the heart of the African Jungle.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

#### Besieged!

**T**HERE could be no doubt whatever that the reports which had sounded in the far distance were gunshots—rifle shots, Adam supposed.

And who other than Sandy McTavish, Jimmy Brown, the engineer, and their party of six natives could have fired the signals?

It would seem that the attacking skeleton army of the Hekebus had heard the sounds also, and they now surrounded the Temple of the Forest God in an unbroken ring. The wounded warriors had been carried away. The awe-striking beat of the drums had ceased. All was silent as the grave.

Above was the moon; around them beyond the clearing was the unbroken forest. And somewhere near at hand were Sandy McTavish and Jimmy Brown and those men who had travelled in the second aeroplane. Up and down the confined space of their fortress paced the weary and tired travellers.

It was necessary for them to be on the alert. They must watch and watch—and, if needs be, fight to the last gasp.

What chance had they of linking forces with their friends? As Adam, advancing to the top of the footway up which they had climbed, looked down he could see strange shapes standing motionless in the moonlight, skeleton men, whose weird white markings stood out strangely.

The silver moonbeams played upon their spear points.

How would it be possible to break through the armed ring of Hekebus? And even if they could fight a way out, whither should they turn in their attempt to join their friends?

Adam leant upon his rifle, thinking hard. A possibility thrust itself home which made him gasp.

What if the skeleton men had found Sandy McTavish and the others, attacked them, and— His heart leapt at the thought. Half-turning, he made to join Harry, where he stood on the far side of the Temple, and then smiled.

All was well with Sandy McTavish and the others so far as he knew, for had they been upset they would have fired more than those two shots. They had plenty of arms and ammunition. There was a machine-gun aboard the aeroplane, and since those shots had been fired by Sandy McTavish, doubtless as an answering signal, the machine must have come down in safety or they would not be there to fire at all. It was a consoling thought.

The only other explanation would be that other white men and not their own friends had fired the signals. But even if that were so, why, then, help was near if only Adam could attract it.

There came a time when the moon waned and utter darkness came. Had the Hekebus attacked they must have massacred the party of three with the utmost ease. With senses sharpened, Adam and Harry awaited breathlessly the attack which they felt must come; yet nothing happened,

#### WHO'S WHO IN THIS STORY!

**ADAM BYRNE**, accompanied by his chum, **HARRY FRANKLIN**, and a band of trustworthy followers, set out in search of the former's father and sister, news having been received from **WALTER BEAVAN**, a settler in Baruda, that the great white explorer, **GEORGE WILLIS BYRNE**, and his daughter, **ROSA**, who left England four years ago to explore the African jungle, are alive and well, but prisoners in the hands of a strange people at Barcomba, which lies north of the Silver Glacier and beneath the Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

Well equipped with guns, stores, provisions, two aeroplanes, and wireless apparatus, the party reaches Baruda, the first important stage of their journey. Here they meet Beavan, who proves that the

message he received is genuine. Adam and his companions part company with Beavan and continue their journey. Fate is against them, however, for the plane containing Adam and Harry is wrecked in a terrific storm and the chums are left stranded. Shortly after this they are attacked by a crowd of hostile natives who pursue them to the Temple of the Forest God. Aided by **MUTA**, a negro who has suffered at the hands of the White Bone men, as the natives are called on account of the peculiar way they paint their bodies, Adam and Harry are putting up a stout defence when a gun shot is heard in the distance.

"I reckon that's our friends," says Harry, brightening up. "They've come down safely in the other plane."

(Now read on.)

nothing stirred, save for the moving of some wild beast amid the forest.

It was then that Muta crept up to Adam.

"Hekebus," he murmured, "no attack white flying men in the Temple of the Forest God at night. They afraid—"

"Thank goodness for that, Muta!" returned Adam fervently. "But what about when the day breaks—"

"Then they come. This way—that way—there—there." Muta swung his arm, pointing. "Like the rising tide of the swollen river—up—up—up."

"And they'll swamp us, eh? Jolly prospect. Muta, isn't there some way out of this place? Can't we get into the forest?"

Muta grinned.

"No way. Hekebus everywhere."

"Ah, then we'd better stay where we are. We have rocks to protect us, and I can shoot and kill a lot of 'em before they kill us. But I hate to kill a man, Muta!"

That was it! Adam shuddered. To shoot down a human being even if he had a black skin and was bent on killing was to Adam a fearful thing.

From their point of view the skeleton men had right on their side. Whatever their grievance against Muta, and they had hunted him down intending to kill, Adam had shot one of their warriors in saving the poor wretch—now others had been seriously wounded or killed in the attack on the Temple—by the white men who had no right in their land.

Well, there it was—nothing could be done to alter the facts. When the dawn broke a fresh attack would be made, and unless a miracle happened the Britishers would die.

Adam thought of his home and his mother—of Mrs. Franklin and Harry's little brother Don waiting hopefully for news at Manor Court.

It looked as if their search for Professor George Willis Bryne and Rosa was here to meet an untimely end. Perhaps no news of their fate would ever reach home. Even Beavan, the stout-hearted settler of Baruda, who had promised to search and find them or their remains if ill befell them, might never penetrate to this unknown Temple in the Forest.

Adam blinked, nodded, and fell asleep as he leant upon his gun.

Facing the other wall of the Temple, Harry Franklin propped himself against a ledge of rock as he waited anxiously for the breaking of the dawn.

Muta sat with those sail-like ears of his pricked up to catch the slightest sound.

But from down below came no movement, no sign.

Adam awoke with a start at the note of a bird.

Was it a bird or was it a signal?

He blinked the sleep from his tired eyes, and stared into a wall of black, not even the ring of great forest trees being distinguishable.

And then like magic the darkness lifted, like a black cloth in a theatre which, rising, reveals the beauty of the scene behind. Instantly the air was filled with the song of

birds. The sombre sky was streaked with grey, with silver, then with gold. The trees took shape and colour.

Adam stared down upon glittering spear points—saw the skeleton men awake.

Tall and giant and sinister in their strange markings, the Hekebus stood below, and behind the ring of warriors were the drum beaters, weird-looking, brown-skinned men, oddly bedecked with feathers and beads, who began to beat out the throbbing, monotonous tom-tom-tom-tom which echoed like a death knell in the white men's ears.

Only the extreme peril of their situation served to rouse Harry and Adam, and brought the exhausted Muta with that ugly wound in his side to his feet.

"When will the attack begin, Muta?" asked Adam anxiously.

"Soon—soon. Hekebus not afraid of the Forest God when the sun shine."

"So it seems!" growled Harry, holding his rifle ready as he peered below and saw the Skeleton army forming for the attack.

"Harry," said Adam, "I'm going to fire again. If Sandy McTavish and the others are anywhere near they may answer the signal, and we may frighten these chaps. It's an outside chance. Better than killing—"

Harry's lips set.

"Anyway," he returned resignedly, "we'd never kill enough of them to matter. And our ammunition won't last for ever. Fire away, then, Adam, lad—and if the worst comes to the worst we'll die where we stand!"

Adam, pointing the rifle at the blue of the sky above, fired once, twice, the reports startling the Skeleton warriors below, some of them breaking ranks and running in terror towards the shelter of the forest.

Adam, after waiting a moment, fired again.

Then he uttered a whoop of joy, for clear and sharp came the answer—the unmistakable crack of a rifle—this time somewhere close at hand.

"They are coming, whoever they are, they are coming!" cried Harry in an ecstasy. "Adam, they may come in time!"

But the answering signals had been heard by the Hekebus as well. The Skeleton men began to chant a war-song to the beat of the drums. Adam and Harry could see them dancing excitedly and brandishing their spears. Swiftly they made a circuit of the little fortress. It became more evident than ever that the one vulnerable point was the narrow, crumbled path up which the besieged had climbed.

Everywhere else the ascent was so precipitous that they agreed the Temple fort could easily be defended as long as ammunition lasted.

Even Muta himself might hold the position against the rest for quite a while.

So they decided that Harry should guard that way, whilst Adam and Muta should defend the vulnerable path.

The singing and twittering and chattering of the birds was by this time almost deafening. The forest trees were topped with gold.

Suddenly the chanting of the warriors ceased. Formed in lines, with their leaders standing six or eight paces in front of them, they held aloft their spears, flourished their rounded shields of hide, and uttering one great shout of defiance, moved towards the Temple at the run. The assault had begun.

The frenzied beating of the drums no longer gave out a monotonous boom, but a rattle, the hands of the beaters moving so swiftly that one could hardly follow their movements at all.

A veritable giant of a Skeleton man was the first to gain the rocky pathway of the temple.

Never had Adam seen such a man. Years ago, when a boy, Adam had marvelled at the size of a Russian wrestler whom he had seen perform in a circus show, but, big as he had been, this giant Hekebu dwarfed him.

Adam shivered as he dropped the muzzle of his rifle down to cover this man.

After their leader swarmed an unbroken string of Hekebus. In the clearing below formed the main army, hundreds of them, it seemed to Adam, warrior preparing to take the place of warrior whenever a man was shot down.

The two white men and a wounded native had not a ghost of a chance of surviving should the Hekebus force home their attack.

Up they came in a determined rush, and Adam's finger was on the trigger when he saw the giant leader hesitate and stand as if transfixed.

Raising his arm as if to launch the spear he grasped, the Hekebu uttered a wild cry and began to shout in his native tongue.

## THEY'RE ALL FRESH!

"What a lot o' beauties, eh! Just caught 'em! I've had a real day out. I have been down the river with a rod I made myself. I spent all the morning reading the REALM—comes out on Wednesday's, you know. I couldn't sort of fish and read as well, so I got stuck into the yarn about Jack, Sam and Pete—and talk about laugh! They say Pete's a champion mirth-maker—a proper old side-splitter! I call him! All the chaps in my footer club read the REALM now: some of 'em say Pete's real, an' some say he ain't! But I don't care one way or another—he keeps me laughing! I reckon hearin' me chuckle must ha' put the fish in a good humour. Because when I dropped the old hook, up the little beauties came—sort of falling over one another to bite. Yes, I've had a corking day—always do o' Wednesday's, when the REALM comes out. It's worth tuppence of anybody's money!"



The Boys'  
**REALM**  
OF SPORT & ADVENTURE

Every  
Wednesday.  
Price  
Twopence.



Muta leaped forward and, dropping upon his knees, seized the hem of the garment the apparition wore and began to weep. "It is my mother!" he wailed. "O-Kama, the witch!" (See Page 26.)

Throwing wide his upflung arms he raved and turned as if to flee.

Adam held his fire. What had happened? What had the leader of the Skeleton army seen?

Adam dared not turn his head to find the cause.

But he heard Harry speaking, and Muta gibbering as if in an ecstasy.

"Adam, old son, the Skeleton men were about to attack," cried Harry. "Then I saw them scatter and bolt for cover, yelling like cowards, for from out of the Temple ruins there came the weirdest figure I have ever seen. It can't be a man. It must be a woman, and she scared 'em stiff by waving her arms and cursing them."

Adam, with rifle ready and eyes directed below, saw that the skeleton men, who filled the narrow, rocky path from bottom to top, were calling to one another, looking upward, scared.

No need to shoot. Adam turned his head, and as he did so, the strangest being he had ever seen, swung past him, and, gaining the head of the footway, flung up bony arms with fingers spread, whilst from wagging jaws issued the wildest and maddest denunciation Adam had ever heard.

That it was a curse he did not doubt, though he could not understand a word of it, and the giant leader of the Hekebus fell upon his knees, the other warriors behind him following suit.

And Muta, the black, leaping forward and dropping upon his knees, seized the hem of the feathery garment the apparition wore, and began to weep.

"It is my mother!" he wailed, upturning his rolling eyes and looking at Adam.

By the weird workings of fate, Muta had found his mother, whom the Hekebus called a witch, in the Temple of the Forest God.

She stood there, gaunt and weird, her head almost devoid of flesh, so that it grinned like a skull. Her hair was lank and long. She wore rings of metal round her wrists, her arms, her ankles. Feathers of many hues formed a necklet, and hung from a band at the waist over the hairy skin that formed her lengthy skirt. Her legs were thin to the point of emaciation. It occurred to Adam, as he took stock of her, that she was near to the point of death.

Yet her voice was shrill and strong and loud.

Adam could have laughed as he saw the Hekebu warriors, so brave a moment ago, grovelling and moaning at the

mere coming of this witch woman, who, doubtless, was telling them what she thought of them and their defamation of the Temple of the Forest God.

Muta, rising, stood back staring at his witch mother in awe.

Advancing to the very top of the footway, the woman continued her revilings, her voice rising to a wail.

And then, dropping her right arm, she pointed to the giant leader of the Hekebus. Her voice gained in anger, and her eyes flashed. Although he could not understand, Adam shivered at the bitter hate and malignancy of her tone.

He saw the giant shrink back and gibber, saw his eyes start from their painted sockets.

Then slowly, whilst the other warriors fled to the safety of the ground below, the big skeleton chief faced the witch.

As he stood there, with head erect and shoulders squared, bold and defiant now with sudden found courage, Adam could not help admiring him.

He looked magnificent as he answered the woman back.

Voice rose against voice, hers shrill and screaming, his deep-toned and full of fire. Gradually the Hekebu drew nearer to her so that Adam covered him again with his rifle.

For the moment the witch woman had saved them; but what would happen if this giant chieftain, instead of fleeing like the rest, were to outface the strange creature whom the Hekebus seemed to fear?

When first the apparition had appeared, and the giant had dropped upon his knees, he had set his spear down beside him.

Adam saw him glance downward at it. The skeleton man's underjaw was thrust outward viciously. Now he seemed to threaten.

The witch woman laughed defiantly, striking her withered body with clenched fist, as if goading him to strike.

Muta watched, afraid.

And then, in a flash, came tragedy.

The giant answered boldly, stooped, and groping for the spear, seized it; then, with a jerk of his arm, as swift as lightning, he flung it at Muta's mother.

(The fate of Adam and his comrades depends to a large extent on that spear thrust, for if the witch falls a victim to it her hold over the Hekebus is gone. Mind you read next week's instalment of this yarn, chums.)

# YOUR EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS!

OXFORD or CAMBRIDGE?

**A** READER living at Windsor wants to know which side I favour in the great annual Boat Race—Oxford or Cambridge? Well, it's hardly politic, I think, to let on which shade of blue I wear. All the same for that, I rather fancy it's going to be a tough race on Saturday—much more of a struggle than we saw last year. My Windsor correspondent has been promised a good view-point in the region of Mortlake Brewery on the great day—lucky bargee! He's going to write me his views of the crowd, the race as it passes him, and other interesting facts, so Gemites can look forward to some interesting pars about the race in a few weeks' time. Meantime, I'm sure we are agreed upon one point, namely, in hoping that the better crew flashes past the post first.

# NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"THE SIEGE OF ST. JIM'S!"  
By Martin Clifford.

The sequel to the grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. which you have just read: Don't miss this "thriller" chums, or you will regret it!

"BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!"  
By Arthur S. Hardy.

Another trenchant instalment of this popular adventure story, with thrills in plenty.

"GATED!"

By the St. Jim's Rhymester.

A jolly little poem dealing with the hated schoolboy punishment—detention. A good programme this, and well up to GEM standard. Order early, chums. Chin, chin!

Your Editor.



**ONLY 2/6**

to be sent when ordering a No. 400A Mead "Marvel"—the All-British Bike a million riders praise. While riding you pay balance in small monthly instalments. "MARVEL" 400 £4 19s 6d CASH. Every machine is lavishly equipped, richly enamelled, brilliantly plated and artistically lined in two colours. Packed Free. Carriage Paid. 10 Days' Trial. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Factory Soiled Cycles cheap. Accessories and Tyres at cut prices. Write To-day for illustrated art catalogue.

**Mead CYCLE CO. INC. (Dept. F601) SPARKBROOK, BIRMINGHAM**

# 1/6 THE BULLY BOY 1/6

20-Shot Rapid Repeater Action Pea Pistol. Fires a Pea 25 feet at the rate of 100 a minute. A Regular Pocket Lewis Gun! Bright nickel finish; each in box with ammunition. A better shooter than you have ever had before! Send 1/6 and don't miss our latest quick-firer! Colonial postage 9d. extra.



**J. BISHOP & CO., 41, Finsbury Sq., London, E.C.**

# HEIGHT COUNTS

in winning success. Height increased—health and physique improved. Wonderful results. Send for particulars and our £100 guarantee, to—**GIRVAN SYSTEM (A.M.P.), 17, Stroud Green Rd., London, N.4.**

# BLUSHING SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, SHYNESS, TIMIDITY.

Simple 7-day Permanent Home Cure for either sex. No Auto suggestion, drill, etc. Write at once, mention "G.M." and get full particulars quite FREE privately. **U.J.D., 12, All Saints Road, ST. ANNES-ON-SEA.**

# SUITS FOR MEN that look well. that fit well. that wear well.

Ready to wear and made to measure of Masters' famous double-wearing Ryex Tweeds and Serges, etc., in all shades, for 3/- deposit. Pay balance monthly, privately by post, while wearing it. Style, fit, make, and wear guaranteed. Write to-day for Free Sample Pieces of Cloth and Home Measurement Form, sent by return of post.

**MASTERS Ltd., 6, Hope Stores, RYE**

# FREE! 200 FREE!!

200 magnificent stamps, including 10 fine unused Colonials, a further over 50 unused, and fine 140 beautiful stamps. This is a really marvellous offer not to be repeated. Send p.c. only requesting Approvals. **LISEBURN & TOWNSEND, LONDON ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**

**STOP STAMMERING!** Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK E. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.**

**MAGIC TRICKS.** etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4for1/—**T.W. Harrison, 339, Pentonville Rd., London, N.1.**

# CUT THIS OUT

"GEM" PEN COUPON. VALUE 3d. Send 5 of these coupons with only 2/9 (and 2d. stamp) direct to the **FLEET PEN CO., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4.** By return you will receive a handsome lever self-filling **FLEET FOUNTAIN PEN** with solid gold nib (fine, medium, or broad), usually 10/6. Fleet price 4/., or with 5 coupons only 2/9.



# JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 15½ to 16½ years.

MEN also are required for

**SEAMEN (Special Service) - - - Age 18 to 25**  
**STOKERS - - - - - Age 18 to 25**  
**ROYAL MARINE FORCES - - - Age 17 to 23**

**GOOD PAY. - - - ALL FOUND. EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.**

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. and R.M.: 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol; 13, Crown Terrace, Downanhill, Glasgow; 30, Canning Place, Liverpool; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1; 289, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

# DON'T BE BULLIED



Send Four Penny Stamps for **TWO SPLENDID LESSONS** in **JUJITSU**, the Wonderful Japanese Self-Defence with out weapons. Better than any other science invented. Learn to take care of yourself under ALL circumstances, fear no man. You can have **MONSTER** Illustrated Portion for P.O. 3/9. **SEND NOW** to "**YAWARA**" (Dept. A.P.), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, MIDDY. New School in London, W.4, now open. Class and Private Tuition Daily. Free Trial Lesson.

# SECRET SERVICE Pocket DISGUISE OUTFIT

for Actors, Detectives, and others. 3/- each, post free. Overseas 6d. extra.—**Dept. XX, MILTON, 24, Station Parade, Norbury, London, S.W.16.**



# SAFETY REVOLVERS

**NO LICENCE REQUIRED.**

Accidents impossible. For theatricals, st. Protection against footpads, dogs, etc. **NEW MODELS.** Blue steel or nickel finish.

Six chamber - - - - - 6/0 post free.  
Eight " " " " " 8/8 " " "  
Ten " (Cowboy model) - - - - - 12/6 " " "

Blank Cartridges for Sateities - - - - - 1/8 per 100.  
Carriage 9d. any quantity. Catalogue free on request.

**JAMES MANSFIELD & CO., Ltd., 71, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.**



# 2-NOW AND THE BIKE IS YOURS

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles **ON 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CARRIAGE PAID**, on receipt of a small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms.

Write for Free Bargain Lists Now. **Ed. O'Brien, THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, DER 18 COVENTRY.**

**A LOW MONTHLY INSTALMENT TO SUIT YOUR POCKET**

# HEIGHT INCREASED 5/- Complete Course

3-5 inches Without appliances—drugs or dieting. **THE FAMOUS CLIVE SYSTEM NEVER FAILS.** Complete Course 5/- P.O. post free, or further parties. stamp.

**P. A. CLIVE, Harrock House, The Close, COLWYN BAY.**



All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, **UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4**