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READ the FINE SCHOOL STORY
of HIGH ADVENTURE *Inside*

GRUNDY'S GREAT BRAIN IS AT WORK AGAIN! HE'S A DETECTIVE!

THE 'RABBIT' OF THE SHELL!



**Tip-Top Story of
Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.**

CHAPTER 1. The Road Hog!

CRASH!

"Yarooogh! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do it again, Glyn, old boy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway twy to giveus an encoah, dear boy!"
"Grooogh! Ow! Don't stand there cacklin' like Japanese bantams, you grinning google-headed goops! Can't you lend a fellow a hand? Yoooop! I'm tied in sheepshanks and bowlines. Ow! My back!"

Thus, like the johnny in the poem, spake Bernard Glyn, the St. Jim's youthful inventor and dabbler in experiments.

There was some reason for his yells, and likewise plenty of justification for Tom Merry & Co.'s ribald merriment, for the spectacle the juniors had witnessed was one not to be enjoyed every day—or more than once in a lifetime, for that matter.

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Bernard Glyn, that inveterate practical joker, had been badly biffed, bumped, and bashed by one of his own brain-waves.

Monty Lowther wiped tears of merriment from his eyes, and recovered from his paroxysm of laughing sufficiently to lend Glyn a hand in extricating himself from a conglomeration of wires, struts, spars, and fabric, which had, a few minutes before, according to Glyn, been a glider. The others mastered their splitting sides one by one, and eventually Glyn was sorted out of the debris, looking and feeling like Mrs. Murphy's Irish stew—a sorry mess.

He regarded the remains of his "flying machine" sorrowfully. He had spent many weeks of half-holidays and evenings in the manufacture, in the grounds of Glyn House, of the latest child of his brain—a collapsible glider—to find that it adhered to its denomination only in regard to its collapsibility.

It was collapsible, all right.

This particular half-holiday he had invited Tom Merry,

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Monty Lowther, Manners, Blake, D'Arcy, Digby, Hancock, and some other chaps over to his home, Glyn House, to watch the

wonderful spectacle of a pioneer of engineless aviation taking off into very unsubstantial air for the first time. Grundy, Wilkins, Gunn, Baggy Trimble, Mellish, Wildrake, and one or two more had followed uninvited, so that, at all events, Glyn could not protest that he hadn't a substantial and appreciative audience.

But something had gone wrong.

The machine had certainly looked all right, and Glyn had been absolutely confident that it would do the jolly old albatross stunt until further orders.

Instead of that it had endeavoured to emulate a meteor!

Glyn House possessed an estate of several acres, and it was at the top of a steeply sloping field that Glyn was to attempt his flight. A length of elastic was attached to a hook on the undercarriage, several fellows took each end of this rope and walked away in front and to the side of the glider. At the back a short piece of ordinary rope was held by two others. When those in front had walked far enough Glyn shouted "Run!" and they ran; then "Leggo!" and those behind let go. Both ropes fell off their hooks, and the glider shot forward.

So far the junior's scheme had worked according to schedule, but, having been given its head, so to speak, the glider took a hand in the manipulation of things, and the schoolboy airman discovered that, twiddle the levers as he may, he could not exactly please himself about direction.

Instead of shooting smoothly out over the countryside, as its creator had intended it should, the glider took the bit between its teeth, shot like a mad thing up towards the

imagine. Pwaw allow me to feel your bones. It is quite possible—"

Arthur Augustus advanced sympathetically towards the aerated aviator.

It would have been safer to have essayed to stroke an infuriated buffalo.

"Grrrrrr!" rasped Glyn. "Don't touch me, you, you, you monocolled ass, you—"

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

WOW!

The Shell's got a new master who appears to have eyes in the back of his head.

No more slacking in class!

IT ISN'T FAIR!

firmament propelled by Glyn's powerful catapult and the hefty muscles of St. Jim's juniors, turned on its back and spun nose-first down towards the group of schoolboys below faster than it had left them. They streaked away in all directions so as to give it room to pass, in a manner of speaking, and the rest we know.

"Glyn, you frabjous chump, are you hurt?"

"Bai Jove, deah boy, it has just accuwved to me that you must be wathah badly shaken. No bwoken bones, I hope?"

Glyn eyed the hilarious juniors with wrathful stares. His throat wobbled helplessly, and he seemed to be struggling for adequate means of expression. He singled Gussy out of the crowd, Gussy being the last speaker.

"You, you, you, you—"

"Weally, Glyn, I don't considah that to be an intelligent wemark."

"You, you, you, you—"

"V. V. V. V. W. W. W. W!" cut in Lowther. "You'll soon learn it, Glyn, old boy! It's surprising how easy it comes if you concentrate."

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

"You blithering, feeble-headed fatheads!" howled the infuriated Glyn.

After all, it was a bit off, ragging a chap who'd just escaped breaking his neck, to say nothing of the No. 1 size disappointment he had suffered at the same time. The youthful inventor, who was a cool, calm and collected customer as a rule, was rapidly losing his hair.

"Weally, Glyn, deah boy, I fear you might be hurt to a gweater extent than you

"Bai Jove!" gasped the swell of the Fourth, adjusting the gleaming but much-abused monocle. "If you were not already shaken by your cwash, I would make you eat those words, you fwrightful boundah, Bernard Glyn!"

And with that frigid utterance Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stalked away in high dudgeon, followed slowly by the crowd of laughing juniors.

Glyn's bubbling wrath was gradually simmering down,

and by the time he had changed his torn apparel and bathed his bruises, he was, almost his usual urbane self, and took the chaff from his schoolmates, on the way from Glyn House to the school, all in good part.

"All the same, you fellows, I'm going to have another shot at it," he asserted.

"Splendid fellow!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bravo!" chorused the others.

"I'm simply dying to see you bump your fat head like that again," said Grundy. "Serves you jolly well right! Fellows like you shouldn't dabble in things you know nothing about; you should leave them to people with brains an' thinking-power."

"Like yourself, Grundy?"

"Yes, of course! Who else?" inquired Grundy, gazing round challengingly.

In Grundy's own estimation he was the only fellow at St. Jim's who could lay claim to real intelligence.

"My aunt!"

"Grundy with brains! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at? I don't want any of your ignorant cheek, Tom Merry!" roared Grundy at the last speaker.

"You don't need it, old man! Ignorance is your long suit. Who'd you get to pilot your glider—Baggy Trimble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the other fellows.

The mental picture of Baggy Trimble's enormous bulk suspended in air by anything less substantial than an airship was too funny for words.

"What's the matter?" piped up Baggy Trimble's panting voice from the rear. "I bet I could fly a glider better than Glyn, anyway. He only crashes!"

Roars of laughter.

"Guess you'd do more than that—you'd penetrate!" chuckled Hancock. "Sure guess you oughter hang on tight to terra firma. You'd dent old Mother Earth like she was made of tinfoil if you poked her as hard as Glyn did. Take my tip, old meat factory, an' get hitched to a gee-gee, an' call yourself a pitch roller. It'll be endangering the community in general to allow you to try to fly in the air!"

"Beast!" squeaked Trimble. "I'd show you if I had a glider!"

"You wouldn't!" contradicted Hancock laughingly. "I'd make the froth fly off the li'l old duck pond, an' put a few thousand miles between me'n this berg if you got cavorting around in the air, you lumbering lump of lead-lined unloveliness!"

They were nearing the school, and as Hancock uttered the last word of his candid description of Trimble's bulk the sudden roar of a high-power car came to their ears, and the next instant a great, slate-coloured, streamlined Sunbeam hurled round the corner ahead and tore down the narrow road towards the juniors at terrific speed.

"What the thump!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Look out, you chaps!"

With one accord the juniors flung themselves to one side of the road—the other consisted of a ditch—as the great car screamed past. Baggy Trimble, who by reason of his weight could not move so nippily as the others, escaped instant annihilation by a hundredth of a second. As it was, the front offside wing caught his broad trousers a glancing blow as he scuttled out of the way and spun him, squeaking wildly, into the ditch.

"Ow, ow, ow!" squealed Trimble. "Help! Murder! Police! I'm killed! I've been run over, and now I'm drowning! Help! Help! Yaoooooogh!"

Tom Merry, relinquished his loving embrace of a bed of surprisingly live nettles, staggered to his feet, and viewed the receding juggernaut with murderous gaze. Then he hurried to the aid of Trimble, who was, as somebody afterwards said, making the welkin ring with his howls.

With the other chaps' help, the fat junior was hauled on to the road, looking very much like a disconsolate dumping. The ditch was a muddy one, and was covered by a liberal film of green slime. Trimble seemed to have collected a pretty fair percentage of both.

"Poor old Baggy!"

"Gurgle-gug!"

"Are you hurt, old fatness?"

"Groooooogh! I'm dying! I'm ill! Can't you fellows see? I'm badly injured and almost drowned!" wailed Trimble.

"You're certainly looking a bit green!" said Lowther, with doubtful sympathy. "How about some chocolate, bacon-face?"

"I'm dying, I tell— Eh? Did you say chocolate, Lowther? Where? Come to think of it, a chunk of chocolate would make me feel a lot better. Chocolate does me good, you know."

Trimble quite forgot about his sudden death at the mention of chocolate.

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

"You don't mean to tell me that you like chocolate, Baggy!" gasped the humorist of Study No. 10, in well-feigned amazement. "Last night, when Mrs. Mimms' cat scooped those three cakes of choc that I left on the study table for about one wag of a wasp's whisker, you told me you never touched the stuff. Dear me! I'm really beginning to suspect that you don't always tell the strict truth, Trimble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast, Lowther! I never touched your rotten cakes of chocolate. I never saw them. I—I just happened to be passing your study when Mrs. Mimms' cat crept out—"

"Unwrapping the chocolate with one paw, smoking a

cigar with the other, and walking on its hind legs, Baggy?" interposed Manners.

More boisterous laughter. If Mrs. Mimms' cat devoured the terrific quantity of stuff attributed to it by Baggy Trimble, the aforesaid member of the feline specie would certainly have needed a size larger in waistcoats.

"But, look here, you fellows," said Tom Merry seriously, "it must be a madman driving that car. He might easily have killed the lot of us!"

"Sure thing!" agreed Hancock, the American junior. "An' I sure guess an' calculate that li'l automobile is hotted up some. I'll allow she'd hit up ninety per any old time!"

CHAPTER 2.

The New Master. I

THE immaculately clad figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing by the school gates as the juniors came up; but it was not the elegant person of the Fourth Form Bean Brummel that attracted their attention—it was something far more interesting.

When they were within a few yards of the gates, they were astonished to observe a small, frock-coated figure detach itself from some bushes at the roadside some distance down the Rylcombe road, and sprint with remarkable speed towards the school.

Remarkable speed, that is, for a man of his obvious age, for as he leaped nearer the juniors observed side-whiskers and wrinkles on his face.

Baggy Trimble, for once in his life, was anxious to clean himself, which was hardly surprising, for the green slime and mud from the stagnant ditch was exuding an indescribable odour, which caused Arthur Augustus, for one, to avert his lordly nose.

Unfortunately, Baggy's arrival at the open gate coincided exactly with the strange, frock-coated gentleman's, and as they had approached from opposite directions, and at high speed, they found the negotiation, simultaneously, of the rather narrow gateway distinctly tricky, not to say fraught with danger.

Crash!

It was, as a matter of fact, too tricky, and disaster overtook both sprinters as they turned into the gate.

"Ouch!" gasped Baggy.

"Urrrrrrph!" exploded the newcomer.

The impact was terrific, and the impetus given to the whiskered gentleman by his speed only served to counteract Baggy Trimble's undoubtedly superior bulk. The Falstaff of the Fourth recoiled like a ball from a racket, found the astonished Arthur Augustus in his path, and took him in his stride, so to speak. D'Arcy clutched hold of the first handy thing—which happened to be George Alfred Grundy—to save himself, and the three juniors smote the gravel with one accord.

The strange little man had bounced off Trimble quite as forcibly as had Trimble recoiled from the impact; but by a remarkable series of hops and slides, contrived to retain his balance. With a ferocious glance at the heap of scrambling juniors on the ground, and a muttered, unintelligible remark, he continued his sprint across the quadrangle, and vanished into the school.

Meanwhile, Trimble, D'Arcy, and Grundy were not exactly having a beanfeast. They were, in point of fact, giving a fairly faithful representation of a Rugby scrum as depicted by a well-known artist. Grundy's right fist was clutching D'Arcy's left ear, while his number nines were planted firmly in the region of Trimble's extensive waistcoat. D'Arcy, in turn, in his frantic endeavours to relieve himself of the odious Trimble's loving embrace, was clutching Grundy's collar with one hand and his nose with the other, and pulling hard. Trimble, like a staunch fellow and true, was doing his level best to make himself as inconspicuous as possible by burrowing in amongst the other two to the best of his ability, no doubt imagining an avenging spirit in the shape of the other half of the collision seeking his blood.

Altogether a delightful little tableau, and one which was being enjoyed by the other juniors in no uncertain manner.

"Lemme gerrup!" howled George Alfred.

"Save me! Ow! Yow! Help!" squealed Trimble.

"Go away, Twimble!" shrieked D'Arcy. "What a frightful smell! I'm choking, bai Jove!"

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

The melee ended by Trimble suddenly disentangling himself and sprinting for the school, having realised that vengeance was not being sought by the little man, and that vengeance would most certainly be demanded by those two terrible fighting men, Grundy and D'Arcy. So he tarried not, and by the time the other two found their unsteady feet, he was a minus quantity, leaving behind only a terrible smell, and two-thirds of his covering of mud



The Rabbit doubled up like a two-foot rule as Grundy's terrific left caught him in the ribs!

and slime equally distributed between the persons of D'Arcy and Grundy.

"My clobber!" wailed Arthur Augustus, surveying the wreckage of himself with an agonised expression. "Absolutely ruined! An' what a frightful smell! I must—"

"Howling lunatic!" roared Grundy, hugging a tender nose, and glaring with wrath over his fist at D'Arcy. "Wadyer wad to grab be for? Where's Tribble? I'b goin' to puch sub-buddy od the dose!"

And, Arthur Augustus being the only offending person handy, the great man of the Shell dived wildly at him.

Bang!
Unfortunately for that hot-headed junior, D'Arcy happened to step aside at the crucial moment, and Grundy's famous terrific right, instead of being planted firmly on Arthur Augustus' aristocratic nose, smote the iron bars of the gate with a resounding crack.

"Yaroooogh!" howled Grundy.
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry & Co. and the others.
"Gate-punching exhibition by the strong man, to wit, Grundy!" choked Lowther. "Followed by— Look out!"

With a stentorian bellow Grundy rushed at the group of laughter-contorted juniors, who scattered in all directions.

Grundy's flying fists smote air only, and no more, and the great man wheeled and rushed again.

"Scatter!" spluttered Lowther, holding his aching sides as he skipped away. "Phew! Keep your distances, chaps, the smell's getting stronger and stronger!"

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had followed the whiskered gentleman and Trimble into the school, to rid his august person of mud, slime, and smell, and after a while, realising that the only thing which would keep still to be punched was the gate, Grundy also fled towards the School House steps, almost weeping with impotent rage.

The other juniors followed at a more leisurely pace, discussing, between chuckles, the arrival of the little whiskered gentleman in the frock coat.

Of course, it could only be one person, and that was the temporary master in Mr. Linton's place. Mr. Linton had been called away by telephone the night before, to visit a sick relation in the North, and the Head had been obliged to telephone for a locum-tenens from London. No doubt this was he; but what a queer arrival at the school!

Tea-time over, Tom Merry & Co., in Study No. 10, were just settling down to prep, when there came a gentle tap on the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, once more a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, entered the study, followed closely by Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby.

"How now?" queried Lowther. "Wherefore the untimely intrusion—nay invasion?"

"Sowwy to intwude, deah boys—it's Tom Mewwy I wish to see in partic. There's somethin' wathah important that

I was pwevented from tellin' you at the gates this aftah' noon."

Blake nodded.
"Darned queer, I call it!" he said cryptically.

"A blessed mystery, in fact!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "And the longer you stand there and talk in epigrams, the more mysterious it gets, and the less Latin I'll do to-night."

"Bwiefly, it's this," said D'Arcy, seating himself on the corner of the table. "I awwived at the gates a few minutes befoah you othah fellows, an' just as I was turnin' in I was surprised to see a person dash behind some bushes down the woad. I couldn't help watchin', deah boys, an' the next moment a big, dark-gwey car came bowlin' along frowm Wylcombe an' stopped at the gates.

"There was a dark-skinned fellow in the car, an' he beckoned to me an' asked if I had seen anybody pass the school within the last few minutes, to which, of course, I answered that I had not, an' I didn't mention the person behind the hedge, because, deah boys, I didn't like the appearence of the fellow in the car; and in any case the deah old soul behind the bushes had not passed the school, so I was bein' perfectly twuthful.

"The dark fellow, who spoke in queeah accents, muttered somethin' about catchin' him farthah down the woad, twod on the acceleuator, an' toah off at a remarkable speed—pewwaps you remember the car passin' you?"

"I should shay sho!"
"Ask Trimble!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you make of it, Tom?" asked Blake. "Can you understand why your new master should be hiding behind bushes from motorists, and running into school like a jack-rabbit as soon as the car's gone past?"

The skipper of the Lower School shook his head.
"Can't pretend to understand it," he admitted. "Come to think of it, he seemed scared about something when he dashed into the school after bouncing off Baggy."

Prep was neglected that evening by most of the Lower School. The news of the new master's strange arrival had spread, as such news does spread, and was connected in many different ways with the mysterious racing-car that had nearly annihilated the group of juniors on the road from Glyn House.

G. A. Grundy, the great man of the Shell, sat at his study table, his head clasped in his big hands, hair tousled, thinking.

At least, he said he was thinking, and Wilkins and Gunn dared not contradict him, otherwise they would willingly have told him that he didn't know the meaning of the word.

Those two long-suffering lieutenants were creeping about
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on tiptoes, scarcely daring to sniff, for fear of upsetting their lord and master's already jaded temper; but suddenly Grundy banged the table and gazed about him wildly.

"You couple of clumsy fatheads!" he roared. "Why the dickens can't you run away and play, and let a man carry on his investigations undisturbed?"

"His what, Grundy?" inquired Wilkins warily, his eye on the book by Grundy's hand.

"Investigations, loony! Can't you understand plain English?" boomed Grundy.

"I think you mean 'investigations,' old chap—" began Gunn gently, and immediately regretted his foolishness.

"What!" howled George Alfred. "Are you trying to teach me English? Me? You ignorant fathead! Get out of my study, both of you!"

"But, Grundy—"

"Out you go!"

"What about prep?" wailed Wilkins.

"Get out!" roared Grundy, his hands gripping the edge of the table until the knuckles showed white. He commenced to rise slowly to his feet, and Wilkins and Gunn melted away. Grundy was in a mood to be humoured.

Relieved of the two disturbing elements, Grundy's mighty brain got to work, and shortly afterwards the Lower School was aware of the true reason of the new master's furtiveness—as explained by the one and only George Alfred Grundy.

His theory was that, in reality, the new master was an international crook, who, by means of a spurious message, had lured Mr. Linton away, and had taken his place at St. Jim's in order to hide from the police. Grundy dared not think what had been Mr. Linton's fate. The foreigner in the big grey car could be none other than a disguised police official on the crook's track.

Tom Merry & Co. had just—at last—settled down to do some prep when Grundy burst in on them.

They listened to him gravely enough, though bursting with inward laughter, and Tom appeared to be considering the great theory with his customary seriousness, after George Alfred had finished expounding it.

"Hm—hm—hm!" said Tom, after a long pause. "There might be something in it, Grundy, old man. It might—"

"Might! You idiot, of course there's something in it! Haven't I told you that it's the result of my careful investigations?"

"All right, all right!" soothed Tom. "I was just going to say that it might be wise for you to tell Mr. Railton, but something has just occurred to me. Did you take into consideration, Grundy, the rather important fact that Dr. Holmes appointed the new master?"

"Er—er—well—" began Grundy, his equilibrium shaken for a second—but not more. "As far as I know, he's in it as well!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the occupants of Study No. 10.

Grundy glared round with a murderous glare, his fists clenched ominously. The Ajax of the Shell, however, decided that the Terrible Three would be rather too much of a handful, even for himself, single-handed, so he snorted violently and left the study with a gesture of weariness. The cackling asses would soon see!

CHAPTER 3.

The Thought-Reader!

PROFESSOR JOHN GORDON McTAVISH peered over powerful spectacles at the sea of shining faces before him, and the Shell returned the scrutiny with interest.

It was Monday morning, and the new master's first appearance, so to speak, in public.

For several reasons he attracted a good deal more of the boys' attention than even in the ordinary way a new beak would have done—in the first place, because of his weird behaviour on his arrival at the school; and in the second place, because of his very appearance. His affinity to the genus *Lepus cuniculus* was so marked that every junior in the Shell mentally dubbed him "The Rabbit" there and then, and the name stuck.

He was small and wiry, with narrow shoulders, and quick, nervous movements. When not using his pink, bony hands they were suspended together in front of his chest, drooping down, like a rabbit's forepaws.

His face was pink and wrinkled, and was adorned on each cheek by a fluffy side-whisker, his ears were outstanding and pointed, his nose was small, and, in fact, puggy, and his chin receded almost to the point of non-existence. His front teeth protruded, and over them, to complete the irresistible caricature, his wrinkled lips were continually pursing and unpursing.

In fact, the only things about Professor John Gordon McTavish that did not remind one forcibly of rabbits were his eyes, which were steely, glinting grey, and his voice, which was singularly deep and reverberating. A rabbit's eyes are either pink or brown, and very gentle-looking, and its voice non-existent.

"Good-morning, boys!" boomed the big voice from the little man.

"Good-morning, sir!" chorused the Shell.

Grundy tapped Wilkins' shin gently—at least, he imagined it to be a gentle tap—and winked slyly. Unless Grundy was very much mistaken, there was going to be some fun in the ensuing few weeks.

But Grundy was very much mistaken!

It was impossible for the long-suffering Wilkins to stifle a yelp of anguish at the terrible hack on his shin, and Grundy suddenly found himself the subject of the Rabbit's intense and concentrated gaze. He shifted nervously in his seat. What did he want to stare at a chap like that for? It was dashed uncomfortable, thought Grundy.

McTavish's voice boomed again.

"What is your name, boy?"

"Eh?" gasped Grundy, suddenly realising that the new master could not, of course, be aware of whom he was addressing. "I'm Grundy, you know—George Alfred Grundy. Is anything—"

Grundy's burbling suddenly ceased. Those terrible eyes—the kind of eyes that Grundy fondly imagined he himself possessed—seemed to be boring into his very brain—such as it was.

"Stand up!" boomed the sonorous voice; and for once in his life Grundy obeyed almost instantly. He couldn't help it!

"You seem to be not only George Alfred Grundy, but also very impertinent!" thundered the Rabbit, baring his teeth to the gums every time he uttered an 's.' "Do not kick your neighbour's shins, Grundy. It is not conducive to amicability in Form, and without that very necessary



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quality one cannot hope to pursue one's studies in a satisfactory manner. Do not wink, either, for that is suggestive of levity; and levity in class I will not brook!"

The Rabbit turned to address the rest of the Form, leaving an utterly demoralised Grundy gaping at his desk.

"Boys, you will continue your studies in the accustomed routine until I have perused certain notes left for me by Mr. Linton."

He turned to his desk, and the juniors exchanged rapid glances. It was significant that there was not the slightest sound from them. Even George Alfred Grundy was almost quiet, and shuffled in a most subdued manner.

This quaint little man, at whom they had been ready to laugh when he first appeared, had with his first few words very forcibly impressed upon them Personality with a capital P.

One thing that puzzled the juniors was how the master had managed to spot the shin-kicking episode. Grundy's desk was a long way from the front of the Form, and Wilkins' yelp

while undoubtedly showing that he was hurt, certainly did not explain to McTavish the cause of the pain.

It was a little later in the morning that the Shell Form had another distinct shock.

Talbot, Tom Merry, Lowther, and several other chaps had been called upon to construe, and the new beak made his dissatisfaction felt in no uncertain manner. Even Talbot's perfect com he sniffed at, and then when Grundy stood up the Form drew in a deep breath.

Already they could see the sparks flying!

But to their astonishment, when Grundy made a fearful muck of things as usual, the master passed on with nothing worse than a peculiar glance at the great man of the Shell, and the same sniff that had rewarded Talbot's perfect effort.

All at once the horrible truth burst in upon the Shell, with the exception, of course, of Grundy, who considered his con better than Talbot's, anyway. The new master knew just about as much Latin as did Grundy himself!

Shocks followed in quick succession. Professor McTavish had turned to the board, and Grundy snatched the opportunity to hiss a new idea to his great theory to a neighbour when the thundering voice boomed forth once more.

"Will our shin-kicking Grundy kindly attend to his studies?"

Grundy spun round as if stung, and the rest of the Form fairly gasped. The Rabbit had been writing on the black-board, with his back to them. He could not possibly have seen Grundy turn round, and yet he had told him to attend to his work!

"That is right! A hundred lines if I have occasion to reprimand you again, Grundy!" boomed the voice into the board.

The little figure continued writing unconcernedly, while the brains of the Shell fairly reeled.

By the time break came the Shell was the most exasperated Form in the whole of St. Jim's. Professor John Gordon McTavish might not know much about Latin, but he jolly well knew how to keep his pupils' noses to the grindstone! The mystery was how he managed to twig things with his back to the Form. Half the Shell were

ready to believe that the new master really had eyes in the back of his head, whilst some of them were actually talking about the occult and what not.

Grundy vowed vengeance. His shuffling feet and general restlessness and inability to attend had earned him wiggings by the dozen and lines by the hundred during the morning, and "break" found him in a dangerous mood.

"I'll make the rotter sit up!" he said darkly to a small and rather unsympathetic audience in the quad. "You wait! Think I'm going to allow a little rabbit of a spy—"

"Crook," corrected Lowther.

"All the same," said Grundy airily. "Think I'm going to let a crook order me about? Me—Grundy? Not likely! I've got a scheme that'll make him sit up and realise that there are some people in the world who command respect. Me, for instance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy gazed round in astonishment.

"I don't see what there is to cackle about."

"Look in the mirror!" spluttered Lowther. "Grundy commanding respect! Hold me up, someone!"

"Cheeky ass, Lowther! I'll punch your giddy nose if you don't look out!" roared Grundy.

"Come on, then, Grundy! Let's go over by the gate, where you punched Gussy's nose so efficiently. Wow! Dragimoff, somebody! Yarooooogh!"

The exasperated George Alfred had given way at last to the itching desire to slaughter some of his laughing audience and charged Lowther like an enraged bull.

Unfortunately for Grundy, Professor McTavish chose precisely that moment to emerge from the School House, and he hurried over to the scene of combat with an agonised expression on his face.

"Grundy!" said McTavish, drawing in sail, as it were, and bringing up a few feet from the melee.

Grundy was sublimely unaware of his persence.

"Grundy!" "Grrrrmph! Take that, you cackling ass, and that, and—"

Ow! What blithering idiot did that? Yarooooogh!"

"Grundy!" The new master had hooted in desperation, and the curve of Grundy's anatomy presenting itself favourably at that particular moment, he administered a resounding spank with his open palm—a most effective weapon when scientifically applied.

George Alfred struggled to his feet and swirled round to hit out at the latest antagonist. Too late did he spot the familiar cap and gown. Hasty at the best of times, when on the warpath, he was positively suicidal, and the Rabbit doubled up like a two-foot rule as Grundy's terrific left, intended for some junior's olfactory organ, took him fair and square in the ribs.

"Ouch!"

"Oh crikey!"

Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the juniors in the audience melted discreetly away. Whatever Grundy was about to receive he had certainly asked for, and it would be only foolish to tarry and share the punishment Grundy had striven so hard to win. Lowther also picked himself up, and, not being requested to stay, made himself scarce.

FIFTY YEARS HENCE?...



The worthy Herbert Skimpole has gone to befriend the cannibals! He's in an awful stew—but the cannibals think it's going to be a topping stew!

"Gug-ug-Grundy!" spluttered the outraged master. "Great pip! I didn't know it was you, sir! I'm sorry!" gasped Grundy. "Somebody fetched me a crack, and I turned round—"

"Y-you did-id-id! Somebody fetched you a—a—a—" stuttered McTavish, slowly overcoming the devastating effects of Grundy's straight left.

"Yes, sir! I'm sorry! I honestly didn't know it was you. You see, these asses were ragging me about—er—about my theory, and I was just teaching them—"

"Grundy," roared the Rabbit, recovering completely from his injury, "cease chattering! Upon my word, boy, you are utterly incorrigible! You—"

"Here, steady on!" began Grundy. "Ain't I explaining that I didn't know it was you I was—"

"Ahrrrrrrr!" gasped the exasperated master. "Be quiet, Grundy! Upon my word, be quiet!"

Professor McTavish was fairly shaking with righteous passion, which was not surprising. Grundy would have made a sphinx quiver and shake like a jelly.

"You will take two hundred lines, Grundy, for brutally assaulting your schoolmate, and for insolence to your master. As for your attack on myself, I will take your explanation and apology for that, because I cannot conceive any boy wilfully striking his master in such a barbarous manner; no, not even a boy of such low intellect and barbarous ways as yourself, Grundy!"

With which acid speech the outraged master swept back up the School House steps, and the great man of the Shell stood in the quad alone, like Napoleon, to ponder on his woes.

Things very nearly came to a head that afternoon. This uncanny new master was gradually wearing the Shell Form's nerves to shreds. The events of the day and the vision of a veritable mountain of lines before his eyes were making George Alfred Grundy almost wild-eyed, and when the Rabbit asked him if he were trying to fly, when he had been silently signalling to someone at the other side of the Form behind the Rabbit's back, Grundy gave way.

"How the dickens did you know what I was doing?" shouted Grundy, glaring ferociously at the irritating back of the master.

Professor McTavish turned slowly from the board and faced Grundy. On his face there was an expression of mild surprise. His lips oscillated a little more rapidly, thereby increasing the irresistible resemblance to the rabbit, but his eyes gleamed malignantly over the broad-rimmed spectacles.

"I beg your pardon, Grundy?"

A normal youngster, hearing the ominous tones of the master, would have apologised quickly and taken the consequences as they stood. But Grundy was not normal.

"I said how the dickens did you know what I was doing, sir, with you; back turned?" persisted Grundy. "It ain't cricket, knowing what a chap's doing when he thinks you ain't looking—"

"Stop!" thundered the voice of the master. "Are you mad, boy, that you address me in this manner? Good gracious, what—"

"It's not cricket!" reiterated Grundy doggedly. "And I'm not goin' to stand for it!"

"Upon my word!" gasped McTavish, reaching for the cane.

A little murmur passed round the Form. Once more Grundy was for it! It certainly was not the great man's lucky day! Nevertheless, for once in a way, all the fellows were in sympathy with Grundy. He might be a hopeless ass, but he had only spoken their minds.

"Silence!" roared McTavish. "Come out, boy! I will punish you severely!"

Grundy walked doggedly to the front of the class.

"I still say it ain't cricket—" he began.

"Hear, hear!" came a voice from among the juniors.

"Silence!" thundered the Rabbit. "Come out, Noble!"

His eagle eye picked out the second offender with uncanny accuracy.

The caning was brief, but very much to the point. McTavish lacked nothing in the way of pep, and his cane had a bite which made the two youngsters regret somewhat their impulsive tongues.

Strangely enough, Noble seemed the least distressed member of the Shell after that incident. His hands burned as if they were tied tightly round red-hot bars; but he scarcely noticed the pain. His eyes shone with a strange light, and once or twice his lips twitched into a faint smile.

Immediately after lessons Noble barged in like a tornado on the occupants of Study No. 10.

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"Tom Merry!" he gasped. "I'm simply bursting to get it off my chest! I'd have told you in class, this afternoon, but there you are—what can a fellow do when the beak can see round corners?"

Monty Lowther gazed at the intruder with open mouth, and then leaned forward and felt Noble's forehead gently.

"Ah!" he murmured, shaking his head sorrowfully. "I knew it! The Rabbit's licking, coming on top of the trials and what-not of to-day, have turned the poor chap's head. Poor old Kangaroo! It makes one wonder who will be the next to go."

Noble stared at Lowther's serious face for a second, and then grinned.

"Come off it!" he laughed, getting astride a chair. "It's a fact, I tell you, although I couldn't let you know before. You'd hardly believe it, would you?"

Tom Merry heaved a patient sigh.

"If you'd be so kind as to elucidate," he said, "and let us know exactly what you're blathering about, if anything, we might tell you whether we believe it or not."

"Well, it's just this—" began Noble; but at that moment a tentative tap came on the door, and Gussy's aristocratic nose made its appearance, followed by the famous monocle.

"Hallo, deah boys!" said Gussy. "I say, Tom Mewwy, they tell me your new mastah is somethin' of a despot—what?"

"Ask Noble, beautiful one," said Lowther. "He knows the Rabbit more intimately than us—excepting, of course, Grundy!"

"Come in!" said Tom Merry. "There doesn't seem to be a vacant chair; but the floor's all right, if you can manage to miss the spot where Lowther shakes his fountain-pen."

"Bai Jove! I don't admiah your ideahs of hospitality, Mewwy. I wefuse to sit on the floor. I pwefere standin' up to soilin' my twousahs!"

"Come on, Noble, let's be having that number one size secret!" exclaimed Manners. "We're turning haggard and old with prolonged suspense. Blow Gussy's trousers!"

"It was when Grundy was getting his whacks," resumed Noble. "The terrific beef the Rabbit was putting into the cuts made his specs slip a bit, and—what do you think I spotted?"

Noble had a secret, and he seemed fully aware that once it had passed his lips it would be a secret no more.

"What do we think you spotted?" roared Lowther. "You'll be spotted in a minute, you howling gasbag! Spotted with— Hey, Manners, where'd you put that tarpot?"

Noble continued hastily.

"Well, on the inside of the Rabbit's specs, let into the broad tortoiseshell rims, are two blessed concave mirrors! Ho can see everything that's going on behind and round about without turning round!"

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Gweat goodness! How twoly wemarkable!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!"

"Well, that explains everything," said Tom, when the first shock of the astounding disclosure had passed. "But that's as far as it goes. What the dickens can we do about it?"

"Pinch the specs!" suggested Manners hopefully.

"How?" inquired Lowther. "He seems to wear 'em, every blessed minute, and you can't very well go pinching people's specs off their very noses. They're liable to suspect something."

"There's only one time possible for that," said Tom Merry slowly; "and that's in the night, when he's asleep. I don't suppose he'll be wearing them then."

"Bai Jove! Burglawy, Tom Mewwy?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "If you're sewiously pwoposin' burglin' your new mastah's bed-woom, count me in. I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

"I do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's the only thing to do. We can't put up with many more days like to-day has been!"

He turned to Noble.

"Have you told anyone else about this, old chap?"

"Not a soul!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "I came straight here as soon as lessons were over."

"Good! Don't tell another soul. We'll purloin those specs somehow, and that'll put an end to his mouldy tricks, and nobody need be any the wiser."

"Good bisney!" grinned Lowther. "When shall we do the deed, Tom? To-night?"

Tom shook his head.

"No. We shall have to scout round and find out exactly where the bed-room is. It may not be Mr. Linton's. And we shall have to find out what time the Rabbit retires for the night, and so on; but we'll get 'em all right!"

CHAPTER 4.

Foreign Schemers!

ANTHONY HYST, the new tenant of Brazenby Lodge, a great rambling building of doubtful period, about five miles from Rylcombe, was a large man, with a dark complexion and a hooked nose. Of course, there were other things about him, but his largeness and his nose hit one, so to speak, in the eye.

The other things about him, which one observed with anything but pleasurable emotions on closer observation, were deep-set, small black eyes, a bald pate, into which a slanting forehead receded from beetling brows, and a great scar which ran from the left corner of his heavy mouth to his ear.

The wound that had left the scar had apparently severed nerves and muscles connected with the mouth, for when he spoke only the right side moved. This, of course, was more his misfortune than his fault, but it certainly did not add to his already doubtful beauty.

He was leaning over a paper-littered desk, and talking in a low voice to another dark-skinned man opposite, and

trousers of ze schoolpoy—ah, so large! Like ze palloon, put of much weight—

Scarface broke in on his ramblings.

"The fact remains, Hemedo, that you didn't utilise to the best advantage the great chance that was given you. The road from Rylcombe to the school is a long and lonely one. The professor was carrying the secret with him—we had proved that—and all you had to do was to run over him—quite accidentally, of course—and secure the papers. A chance in a million."

"Put ze engine—" insisted the other emotionally.

"Pah! Bad management!" snorted Scarface. "Anyway, it's up to you to get that secret, and now that he's managed to get safely into St. Jim's as a master, you'll have no easy job. The only way of getting it is to steal it, and you'll have to break into the school to do that. You'll have to find out which are the master's rooms, where he keeps the papers, and the best time to do the job. I don't envy you. For one thing, from my own observations, I should say you'd have a hot ten minutes in the hands of the schoolboys there, if they catch you. They're an unusually hefty lot, with plenty of pep."



Tom Merry flung the door open, to find Grundy forcing Gunn's long nose into a brimming inkwell!

he punctuated his remarks with thumps on the desk with the paper-weight in his right hand.

Every time the paper-weight hit the desk, the other man blinked and jumped. Had the conversation been of any sustained length, the listener would probably have ended up a nervous wreck!

"... and we shall have to get them, by hook or by crook, before the next week is out, or else"—the man with the hooked nose concluded, with an expressive shrug—"the chief will finish us—like that!"

Hyst made a significant wringing motion with his horny hands, and the other man shuddered.

"I haf my pest done!" he said excitedly, waving his hands about. "It iss not ze—what you call—fault of mine zat ze master he get away. I haf told you; did I not? Ze car ze train raced from London, unt ze—what you call—professor, he leafe ze station, put ze Sunbeam, she vill not begin—start, you say. Ze professor takes not ze confeyance, put walks miff his feet, unt so I haf hopes. Put still ze engine vill not begin, unt I am desperate getting. Soon, after long whiles, ze engine, she gos, unt I make ze chase of ze little professor, put quick feet he has, for ze school I reached, unt him I had not seen. Ze poy at ze gates—ah, so elegant! He say ze master he not yet arrife, so I make ze chase furdur. Ze professor, him not zere, put ze—what you call—mutguard of ze Sunbeam, she dent herself on ze

The other dark-skinned gentleman wailed woefully in a foreign language, wringing his hands pitifully. He did not object to running down a crowd of schoolboys in a narrow lane, but he was not enamoured of the idea of encountering a squad of the same forceful youngsters when on a burgling expedition. Life, for Mr. Jacob Hemedo, was coloured in very sombre hues at that moment.

"I don't mind helping you a bit," continued Scarface, perhaps touched a little by the other's distress, "for a consideration. On conditions, of course," he added quickly, "that I don't take any of the risk."

"Ah, you are kind!" exclaimed the other, with a hint of sarcasm in his voice. "You vill me help—if I you pay? Ach! You vill take my vages as well as your own? No! You haf as much right the secret to get as haf me!"

Scarface leered one-sidedly.

"Do you want me to tell the chief how you have failed up to now?" he asked sinisterly. "Or about that other—"

"Ah, no, no!" exclaimed the other man. "Not zat! I vill you pay for to help me! I must ze secret get at all costs!"

"That's the way to talk, Hemedo!" said Scarface. "Just think of the great reward from—you know whom—when you hand over the great secret! The small consideration I shall ask for will be a more nothing as compared with the

money you will be paid. Come, let us begin to form a plan at once!"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the other, visibly bucked by Hyst's words. "Let us finish ze job unt avay get! But it iss varm herein. I can mit my head plan better outside, so let us ze car take out, unt to ze fields drive!"

"Not a bad idea," agreed Scarface. "It certainly is too stuffy in here to think much. Is the Sunbeam running properly now?"

"Ah, yes!" said the foreigner. "Zere iss mit her nozzings wrong. I cannot know why she vill not begin at ze station!"

Five minutes later, a great, streamlined Sunbeam car drifted smoothly and slowly along the road towards St. Jim's. It was a car that Tom Merry & Co. would have recognised had they seen it, and one that Baggy Trimble would most certainly have kicked petulantly. But they did not see it, for it stopped long before it reached the school, and the occupants sat deeply engrossed in certain plans and plottings.

Only one St. Jim's junior was destined to spot that car, and it was a cynical Fate that chose that junior.

CHAPTER 5.

Grundy Takes Action!

"YOU howling idiot!"

The walls of Study No. 3 shook to the thunder of Grundy's voice, and Gunn, who had, in a thoughtless moment, been careless enough to sneeze, ducked involuntarily, and snatched up a heavy ruler. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and, strangely enough, the great man of the Shell was in a particularly murderous mood.

"Can't you be quiet? Can't you, I say? Great Scott, when the only man in the school with any thinking power wants to work out a problem that would dazzle an ordinary brain, you two fatheads can't even be quiet! Dash it, life ain't worth living!"

"No," breathed Wilkins, "it isn't!"

"What?" howled Grundy. "What did you say, Wilkins?"

"I said it's a nice day," said Wilkins patiently.

Grundy glared. If Wilky was trying to pull his leg— But Wilkins' mention of the weather had given Grundy an idea. There was only one place in the world where he would find peace and quiet, and that was out in the fields, far away from the school, and—in Grundy's opinion—its crowd of noisy imbeciles.

"Look here, you two! I'm going out. Get that. And if you should happen to need me, you've only yourselves to blame when you won't know where to find me. Get that. It'll teach you not to torment your superiors in future!"

With that he grabbed his cap and stumped out of the study, leaving Gunn and Wilkins gaping but relieved. The reason Grundy imagined they might need him mystified them, but they passed it over gladly enough. It was a happy thought that they would not have to put up with him for the rest of the afternoon, for whereas Grundy's study-mates were his staunch supporters, they had no craving for his company when he was "thinking."

Grundy strode out across the fields with purposeful stride. As he walked, his bad temper gradually subsided, and his mighty brain set about the intricate problem he had set it to solve, the problem of how to make the hated tyrant, the Rabbit, "sit up."

Indeed, Grundy had set himself a task, for past experiences had taught him that juniors cannot make masters sit up with impunity, and that anything he did would have to be done with a very sly hand.

And Grundy's hand was anything but sly. His maxim was "Aim straight and hit hard," and it was a maxim that had its points when dealing with schoolmates; but when it came to masters—

Grundy scratched his head. His mind kept turning to fireworks as being the liveliest means of making a beak sit up; but each time he rejected the thought with a dubious shake of the head. He had not quite forgotten the last time he had utilised fireworks for that same purpose!

It was after nearly an hour's steady walking that Grundy came across a great, grey, streamlined car, apparently abandoned in the narrow road. His mighty brain had been grappling with a scheme for making a secret panel under the master's desk, controlled by a hidden spring at Grundy's desk, so that whenever the beak got a little too obstreperous for the junior, he could press the button, and—blip! Old Rabbit-face would be out of the way! But the sight of the car drove all other thoughts out of his mind.

"Phew!" whistled Grundy gently. "Blessed if this isn't

the very same bus that nearly knocked us all over—the one that fathead Gussy said was chasing the Rabbit—the foreign police, on the track of McTavish!"

What luck! Grundy advanced towards the car, bent on examining it. If he could only find the owner, perhaps he would be able to swap theories. Grundy felt sure the police would be helped no end if they knew the result of his "investigations."

Possibly the great man of the Shell would have felt a little more dubious had he been able to see the expressions on two swarthy countenances that peered at him through chinks in the hedge at the side of the road!

"Shush!" hissed Hyst, better known as Scarface. "See, Hemedo, there is one of the boys from the school where we suspect the professor is hiding. We must capture him. He may be able to tell us something—with a little persuasion!"

Scarface leered cruelly. He and the man called Hemedo had been discussing the task before them from every angle, and they could not decide how they could possibly get hold of the secret they were after. When Grundy blundered on the scene Scarface regarded it as a gift from the gods, and thanked his lucky stars that they had decided to leave the car and sit on the soft grass on the other side of the hedge.

Drawing a long-barrelled revolver from his hip-pocket, Hyst rose silently to his feet.

"Hands up!"

"Yow!" yelled Grundy, jumping like a shot rabbit. He confronted the owner of the voice, and saw, over the top of the hedge, seven or eight inches of the ugliest, most unprepossessing face he had ever set eyes on, even taking into consideration the times when he looked at the mirror. Very much in the foreground, so to speak, was a wicked-looking little circle of blue steel, and George Alfred, who, in the ordinary way, thought many times about a command before he obeyed it, fairly cricked his shoulders in his frantic effort to reach up to the sky before that revolver went off!

"Hey!" gasped Grundy. "What the dickens do you think you're playing at? Don't you know who I am? I'm Grundy, and I'm divestig—"

Suddenly the great man paused. Supposing this man was not really a police official? For all Grundy knew, he might be a confederate of McTavish who had captured the owner of the big car. Grundy decided not to say too much, and inwardly congratulated himself on his foresight.

"I don't know who you are," snapped Scarface, "but keep those hands in the air"—Grundy's arms had been unconsciously sagging. "What I want to know is, why are you snooping around here? You seem mighty interested in that car!"

But Grundy scarcely heard him. He had caught sight of a swarthy face peering through a chink at the bottom of the hedge, and felt that his suspicions were confirmed. The man peering through the hedge was captive, of course! Grundy could almost see an expression of frantic appeal on his face.

Grundy felt that his supreme moment had come. It was up to him to rescue the police official from the hands of this rogue, and to help him capture, in his turn, the rogue himself. After that, little would remain to be done. Scarface would, of course, give information about his confederate, "Professor McTavish," who would promptly be arrested, and he—Grundy—would be publicly commended on his foresight and swift action. The school would, at last, be compelled to recognise him in his true light.

At least, that's how Grundy fondly figured it out.

At that moment, Hemedo—whom Grundy was about to "rescue"—muttered something to Scarface, and for a fraction of a second the latter looked away from the school-boy. It was a fraction of a second too much!

With a terrific leap, Grundy crashed full into the hedge, grabbing for the revolver.

Bang!

A bullet almost nicked his ear, and plugged into the coachwork of the car, but his fingers closed on the barrel of the firearm, and dragged it out of the astonished Hyst's grasp.

The tables were turned! Frantically sorting himself out from the thorny hedge, Grundy dashed through an opening a couple of yards away and covered Scarface with the revolver.

That worthy wore a distinctly startled look on his face as he put his hands up—but had he known Grundy as well as the boys of St. Jim's, it is probable that his hair would have turned white there and then! A revolver in Grundy's fist was about as safe as an anchored iceberg.

"Jolly well stick 'em up!" yelled Grundy. "Now, sir," he added, addressing the, flabbergasted Hemedo, "handcuff him, and we'll bundle him to the nearest police

station. His confederate is at the school—calls himself Professor McTavish! Ha, ha, ha!”

For a few seconds Jacob Hemedo gaped like a landed fish, and then the penny dropped, so to speak, and he tumbled to Grundy's mistake.

“Prave poy!” he shouted, jumping to his feet. “You haf safe me! Ach, you I vill revard!”

It didn't occur to Grundy that it was rather strange, Hemedo being Scarface's captive, that he shouldn't be tied up, but then, it was Grundy's nature to miss little details like that, besides which, his Adam's apple was jiggling up and down like a celluloid ball at a shooting range with excitement, and he was to be excused for missing a few points!

The little foreigner produced a pair of handcuffs—crooks of his type often carry these handy things—and snicked them in a business-like way on to Scarface's wrists, Scarface scowling all the time, but inwardly jubilant. This was far better than he had anticipated!

“Now, I vill take ze shooter,” said Hemedo, oilyly. “For ze bad man iss now secure. Zatt iss right! So! I vill now take charge, unt hand ze rogue to ze Engleash police. You are a very clever poy. Vhat iss your name?”

“Grundy, sir,” said the great man, puffing out his chest.

“George Alfred Grundy, of St. Jim's school, future—er—chief of Scotland Yard. They need someone with brains

until I come to ze school to arrest ze wicked professor, ozervise terrible sings will happen. I cannot say vhat, put you promise? After I haf taken away ze—vhat you call—crook, I vill see zat your brafe deed goes unrewarded not, Hein?”

“Right-ho!” agreed Grundy cheerfully. He was so bucked that he didn't even bother pointing out that his name was not “Grumbledy,” and he felt that the wonderful moment, when it came, was well worth the waiting. He would keep it a secret, all right!

The great man hurried back to the school feeling very important indeed. At last his astuteness was being appreciated. The mighty effort of his brain was to be rewarded. He would make those cackling asses feel small!

He grinned delightedly to himself as he imagined the expressions on the juniors' faces when Dr. Holmes made a public speech on the alertness of Grundy, the tactfulness of Grundy, and Grundy's brains, advising the juniors—and seniors as well, for that matter—to endeavour to the best of their ability to emulate their schoolmate, George Alfred Grundy, who had been instrumental in bringing to book the world's greatest gang of crooks, swindlers, murderers, and goodness knows what else.

Thus George Alfred's thoughts, as he strode over the fields at a pace which brought him to St. Jim's about ten seconds before lock-up.



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there like me. I knew old McTavish was a crook, as soon as I set eyes on him!”

“Ah, yes! Ze wicked professor,” exclaimed Hemedo. “Tell me all about him, poy, for zis villain might refuse to open!”

Grundy responded to this request with gusto. As it happened, he had made it his business to find out which bed-room the Rabbit was using, with a view to filling the fireplace with fireworks some dark night, and by the time he had finished expanding on the subject of Professor John Gordon McTavish, both Hemedo and Hyst knew all there was to know about the St. Jim's new master.

Anyone but Grundy would have smelt a rat when Hyst waited so docilely while he was talking, making no attempt to get away, and, indeed, taking as much interest in the proceedings as Hemedo. But it wasn't anybody else but Grundy—the one and only future chief of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, as he fondly imagined in that exalted moment.

“Many, many sanks to you!” exclaimed Jacob Hemedo, when Grundy had finished. “You must pe py far ze most cleferest poy at the school, no?”

“Absolutely!” agreed Grundy. His heart warmed to this discerning little foreign detective. He knew how to appreciate real intellect when he saw it!

“One sing!” said Hemedo, as he led Scarface through the hedge and ushered him into the car. “Mr. Grumbledy, you must keep all zis matter a tight secret within your heart

CHAPTER 6.

Plot and Counter-Plot!

“SSSSSSSSSS!”

“Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah, I was forgettin’—”

“Ssh! Gussy, you idiot!”

“All wight, Tom Mewwy, it was merely a tempowawy lapse of memoway, an’ I wefuse to be called—”

Manners clapped a heavy hand over Arthur Augustus D’Arcy's mouth, and whispered in his ear.

“If you don't put a sock in that confounded oscillating loud-speaker of yours, Gussy, we'll gag you, scrag you, drag you into Nobody's Study, and tie you up there for the rest of the night,” rasped Manners.

Arthur Augustus subsided, and followed Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Blake out of the dorm. He had no desire to miss the fun of pinching the Rabbit's specs, and much less to spend the night in that bleak and bare room called Nobody's Study, so with great difficulty he “put a sock in it,” and held his remarks in check. He had managed to slip his clothes on and steal out of his own dormitory without making a sound, simply because there was no one awake to speak to, but as soon as he had crept into the Shell dormitory and found the other four conspirators awake and dressing, he had begun to bleat in his irrepressible way.

They filed silently along the corridor and made their way
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to the Masters' section, where even Gussy had no inclination to speak aloud.

Professor John Gordon McTavish's bed-room was right at the end of Masters' Corridor, and the five juniors, with Tom Merry in the lead, slunk silently, with bated breath, past rows of doors, each one concealing an ogre in the shape of a master.

It was exactly and precisely opposite to Mr. Railton's door that Manners chose to sneeze. At least, he didn't exactly choose, but the terrible tickle in his nose gave him no option. The fact remained, he sneezed! The fact that he tried to stifle it only made it worse, and the effect was like the explosion of a battery of artillery in the corridor.

With one accord the five adventurers scuttled back the way they came, and waited at the end of the passage with hammering hearts. Arthur Augustus could not resist the temptation to give Manners a dig in the ribs, and hiss in his ear:

"You fivightful fathead, Mannahs, makin' thathow-ible wow, an' yet you've got the cheek to tell me to be quiet!"

"Ssssh, Gussy!" whispered Tom Merry.

"Oh owikey!"

For ten minutes they waited, ready to fly back to their dorm at the slightest sound, but apparently no one had been disturbed by the din, so they began once again the ticklish journey along the sacred corridor.

After what seemed an age they reached the door of the Rabbit's bed-room, and listened tensely. The only sound that came from within was the gentle snoring of the sleeping beak, and Tom could not repress a grin as he wondered if the master's wrinkled lips were still pursing and unpursing in time with the snores.

Tom tried the door with infinite care. He hardly expected to find it locked, for Lowther had spent most of the afternoon waiting for a suitable opportunity to relieve the lock of its key. He had been successful, and since the key reposed snugly in Tom Merry's pocket, it seemed reasonable to suppose that McTavish would not have locked the door with it.

Tom turned the handle which, fortunately, was well oiled, and the door gave as he pushed it. Leaving the other four outside he sidled into the bed-room, and switched on the small pocket torch he had brought with him. His heart was hammering so hard that he felt sure it would wake the sleeping master, and the veins in his forehead were throbbing almost painfully.

Tom flashed the pencil of light round the room, and followed it feverishly with his eyes. The big, black case containing the spectacles was nowhere to be seen. The light fell on a small chair by the bedside, and Tom's heart leaped as he spotted the familiar case lying there, within a foot of the beak's head. The light flickered for an instant on the professor's face, and even under those tense circumstances Tom Merry had difficulty in stifling the mirth that was generated by the sight of those thin, wrinkled lips, still oscillating, as he had imagined them to be, in syncope with the steady snores.

But this was not the time for hilarity, and with nerves strung up to concert pitch, Tom whispered gently to those in the doorway what he was about to do, and then commenced to edge along the carpeted floor, between the bed and the big oak chest of drawers—a space of roughly eighteen inches—towards the chair on which reposed the hated specs in their case.

He had switched off the lamp, now that he had located the specs, and was relying on the very dim light from the window to guide him. Although it was midnight, and

really dark, once his eyes had become accustomed to it, Tom could just make out the white pillow of the bed, and the dark shape of the master's head on it.

Slowly, with infinite caution, he crept towards the head of the bed, and so carefully did he move that not the slightest creak or rustle betrayed his presence in the room. Nevertheless, by the time he reached the chair the strain was telling on him, and the hand that reached out for the black case trembled slightly.

Tom told himself that he was not cut out for a burglar as his hand closed over the case, and then he heard a sound that made him jump as if he had been electrocuted. It was a slight, scraping sound, and it came from the direction of the open window.

As Tom crouched, paralysed, by the bed, the scraping ceased, and the next moment a dark shape loomed into sight, and a bright beam of light shone into the room. Tom ducked swiftly under the bed, and thoughts chased each other like lightning through his head. Was this some other crowd of juniors after the glasses? Had someone else spotted the tale-telling specs? Or was it something more serious—a real attempt at burglary, or perhaps worse than that?

A shiver ran down Tom's spine as he thought of Gussy's tale of the foreigner in the big car. Evidently the new beak had enemies, and they seemed to be enemies who would not stop at running over a few schoolboys on the road.

Tom slipped quietly across the floor under the bed and peeped from the other side, and was in time to see a burly shape slip through the window and drop silently on to the floor. He knew in an instant that it could be no St. Jim's schoolboy. It was far too big.

The feet—rubber-shod—crept straight towards the bed, and Tom realised that it was more than burglary. Someone was about to attack the sleeping master.

For a fraction of a second Tom hesitated. If he gave the alarm there would have to be an explanation of his presence in the master's bed-room in the middle of the night, and the only possible outcome would be expulsion. On the other hand, the master, Rabbit though he was, was in danger, and after that split second of hesitation there was to Tom only one line of action, and he took it.

The intruder had reached the bed, and was bending over it. His feet were within a foot of Tom's face, and Tom acted. The heavy, steel spectacle case was still in his right hand, and with every ounce of strength in his body the skipper of the Lower School brought it round with a terrific crack on to the man's unprotected ankle—with great effect.

"Yow!" yelled a voice in the darkness, in the universal language of the injured.

And then followed a volume of oaths in a language that Tom did not understand. The feet began capering incongruously, and the junior felt the bed shake as its occupant sat up with a jerk.

"Great heavens!" exploded the sonorous voice of Professor McTavish, and then pandemonium reigned.

The second intruder stood not upon the order of his going, but shot through the window head first, still howling from the pain in his ankle. He clutched hold of the ladder about half-way down, thereby saving his neck, and in a jiffy the wiry form of the master was out of bed and at the window.

Tom saw his chance, and grabbed at it with both hands. Like a shadow he glided from under the bed and slipped through the door where the other four juniors crouched, quaking. The master, had his head through the window,

Would You Believe It?


Paavo Nurmi holds 10 world's records for running. His time for the mile is 4 mins. 10 secs. (1923)



Bloom

Thank you! Please favour me again.

An automatic machine in Vienna which speaks when used.



Blondin, the famous rope-walker, crossed the Niagara Falls on a tight-rope, wheeling a lady in a wheel-barrow.



and any sound Tom might have made was drowned in Professor McTavish's voice.

The five youngsters shot down the corridor like lightning. It was touch and go whether they would be intercepted or not, for the din was sure to rouse the whole school in a very short time, and they had to run the gauntlet of Masters' Corridor.

They had just whipped round the corner into comparative safety when the sound of a powerful motor-engine starting up came to their ears, and simultaneously with the sound three or four doors crashed open, and white figures ran up the corridor towards the scene of the disturbance.

Approximately thirty seconds later every one of the five adventurous juniors was safe between the sheets, albeit with panting lungs and throbbing hearts, and one of them, Tom Merry to wit, still held in his hand a heavy, steel spectacle case.

CHAPTER 7.
The Lion's Den!

EXCITEMENT reigned supreme at St. Jim's on Thursday morning. News of the attempted assault on the new master spread like measles, and everybody was talking about it. Very little work was done, except in Shell Form, where McTavish, minus his specs, nevertheless managed to keep the juniors under strict observation.

There was only one thing that puzzled Tom Merry, and that was the tale that had got about that the night intruder had stolen some valuable plans. Now Tom knew very well that the strange foreigner had not been in the room long enough to steal anything, let alone papers of value, which would almost certainly be looked up somewhere; but, needless to say, the skipper of the Lower School could not breathe a word of what he knew.

The master's attitude was also puzzling. Quite naturally he was agitated, but Tom could scarcely see any reason for the state of nerves in which Professor McTavish seemed to be. The police at Wayland had been notified of the outrage, and already Inspector Skeat was nosing round looking for some clue that would lead him to the mysterious assailant.

Yet another junior in the Shell was puzzled, and this was the junior who had been strutting about all the previous evening gassing to inattentive ears about "Detective Ability" and "Astuteness," and making vague and irritating remarks about "Foreign Commissions," and what not.

George Alfred Grundy was sorely troubled, and when two or three more days passed, and his foreign police official did not turn up to take Professor McTavish away, Grundy the Great seriously began to wonder if the impossible had happened—he had made a mistake.

He had heard, of course, that the man the professor had found in his bed-room was a foreigner, and that a powerful car had been waiting for him, and Grundy began to wonder if the man he had spoken to in the field really was a member of a foreign police force, and if the professor really were a crook. It seemed strange, thought the great man of the Shell, that if McTavish were a crook he should be so quick to run to the police about the incident of Wednesday night.

George Alfred was a man who believed in direct action, and anything that seemed a little out of the straight irked him. As usual, Gunny and Wilkins suffered first, and it was a harassed Wilkins that sought out Tom Merry on

Saturday afternoon and asked him to try to find out what was worrying their lord and master.

"He's tearing his hair and fretting and fuming like a caged lion," said Wilkins. "And if we bat an eyelid he threatens to brain us with the poker, or sling us through the window, or—"

"Well, what is there in that to worry you, Wilky?" grinned the skipper. "That sort of thing usually shows the great man is merely in good health and great spirits, doesn't it? The time to start worrying about Grundy is when he becomes meek and mild, and merely satisfies himself with bashing your head and Gunny's together. Am I right?"

Wilkins shook his head.

"There's something radically wrong, Merry," insisted Wilkins gloomily. "I wish you'd come and have a word with him"

Tom assented with a chuckle, and made his way to the lion's den. He arrived at the door just in time to hear a sharp scuffle, a gurgling, spluttering sound, and a deep, reverberating roar. He flung the door open in alarm, to find Grundy in the act of forcing William Gunn's long nose into a brimming inkwell.

The great man looked up with thunder and lightning in his eyes, but seemed loath to release his victim, who continued to struggle and gurgle helplessly in Grundy's vice-like grasp until Tom dived to the rescue.

Grundy was in no mood for interference, and the scrap that ensued was fast and furious. Two minutes saw the end of it, with Tom kneeling, panting, on the great man's chest on the floor, and Wilkins and Gunn looking on with satisfied expressions. Gunn was busy mopping a blue and grazed olfactory organ, and, since the ink had splashed and smeared pretty well all over his face, he was a strange sight to look upon.

"Grundy, you born idiot—" began Tom breathlessly.

"Lemme gerrup, you howling ass, and I'll show you who's a born idiot!" roared Grundy.

Tom proceeded to sit on Grundy's fat head.

"There you are, looney," he panted, when the difficult operation was satisfactorily accomplished, "you can jolly well practise being a cushion for your skipper until you cool down a bit, then we'll have a talk about the new beak, or something else as elevating, just to pass the time on, and to save your study-mates from an inky death."

At the mention of the new beak Grundy stopped his struggling and drooped like a pricked balloon, and, noting the signs of surrender, Tom arose.

Grundy got to his feet slowly, gently massaging his nose. He showed no further signs of a desire to scrap, so Tom helped himself to a chair and waited until the vanquished warrior had regained his breath somewhat. Wilkins and Gunn sat at the table, and presently the lord of Study No. 3 found his voice.

"Well, Tom Merry, what the dickens do you want, barging into a fellow's study and interfering in his own private affairs eh?"

Tom laughed.

"When the manipulation of your own private affairs necessitates the removal by drowning in ink of divers members of the Shell, old chap, I fancy it's high time somebody stepped in and put the brake on," he said, and then became serious. "Look here, Grundy, there's somethin' on your chest. You're worrying about some blessed thing or other, and—and—well, I don't want to seem inquisitive, but I think you ought to cough it up, and let's see if we can do anything to help. See what I mean?"

Tom finished rather lamely. After all, it did seem a bit nosy, prying into a fellow's private affairs like this. Still,

Facts from Far and Near.

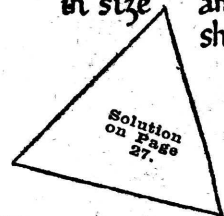


The Horned Ox-Ray or Devil Fish attains enormous proportions. One taken at Barbadoes took 7 yoke of oxen to move it.

Sir Robert Cary rode from London to Edinburgh with the news of Queen Elizabeth's death—400 miles in 60 hours.



Can you divide this triangle into four parts, each equal in size and shape?



Solution on page 27.

Grundy's study-mates had to be considered, so Tom waited for a reply with his jaw set.

Grundy did not speak for some minutes, and then it was not to Tom, but to Wilkins and Gunn.

"Scat!" he ejaculated explosively, causing the hapless juniors on the table to jump like niggers in a haunted house.

"Scat yourself!" retorted Wilkins heatedly, his courage reinforced, no doubt, by the presence in the study of the doughty captain of the Lower School. "I'm just about tired of you handing out—" continued Wilkins, but was interrupted by Grundy.

"Eh?" roared the hefty dunce of the Shell, scarcely able to believe his own ears. "Don't you give me any of your cheek, Wilkins, unless you want me to ram your nose in the inkwell, as I did Gunn's, for the same reason. Do a bunk! D'ye hear? Hop it! Go and play hopscotch, or anything, but take your ugly mugs away from me. They give me a pain. Besides, I want to talk to Tom Merry in private."

Gunn and Wilkins made themselves scarce. They were rather hurt that their lord and master should think fit not to include them in his private talks with the captain, but they were anxious enough for him to get his troubles off his chest. Grundy normal was trying enough to his long-suffering study-mates, but Grundy abnormal, and with something troubling his mighty mind, was altogether unbearable.

Gunn made his melancholy way to the bath-room, there to tussle with the indelible properties of school ink as related to a long and abused olfactory organ, and Wilkins went to the playing-fields to kick a ball about.

In Study No. 3 Tom Merry was having an experience not to be enjoyed every day of the week. Indeed, it was something not experienced in the memory of anyone at St. Jim's during the whole of George Alfred Grundy's time in the school.

Tom could scarcely believe what he heard. But it was true, and after the first shock of surprise had passed, the skipper listened intently.

Grundy the great, the man infallible, the brains of the school, was admitting a mistake!

Through the whole of the sad story went Grundy—how his "investigations" had led him to believe that Professor John Gordon McTavish was really a foreign crook in disguise, and that the foreigner in the big racing car was a detective on his track; how he had accidentally dropped across the big car in the road on Wednesday, and of his encounter with the scar-faced man, and how, finally, he had told the two men in the field all about the new beak.

Tom listened dazedly, and sat as if paralysed for a few seconds after Grundy had finished speaking. At length he spoke.

"Well, you frightful idiot!" he commented caustically.

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Grundy, feeling somewhat more like himself now that he had relieved his conscience. "Anybody's liable to make mistakes, ain't they? And I thought I was doing the right thing to tell the police. Anyway, the old rotter shouldn't be so giddy mysterious, knowing what people are doing when he can't see 'em!"

Not knowing of the mirrors in the specs, Grundy was still completely mystified as to how McTavish had been aware of the juniors' misdeeds when his back was turned, and why, after that Wednesday night, the master's strange powers of the occult should leave him so completely.

Tom did not enlighten Grundy. He did not intend the story of the real reason of the midnight marauders' sudden flight to get any farther than the Terrible Three, Noble, and D'Arcy.

"Look here, Grundy, you've got to tell Inspector Skeat about this, see? Professor McTavish has lost something of great value. Nobody knows what, but—"

Tom suddenly broke off. Supposing the valuable thing that had been stolen was—the specs? For a second Tom's heart stood still. Surely they were not as valuable as all that? The police would not have been notified of the theft of a mere pair of specs! But, no! The police had been told of the attempted attack on the master, and— Ah! Tom suddenly remembered. The stolen goods were papers of some sort! Tom breathed again. But the thought flashed through his mind that he had not yet had the opportunity of looking inside the spectacle-case. He had slipped it into his locker at the first opportunity and locked it there, safe until the time came to return it to the master, and that would not be until Mr. Linton returned. Still, it was safe to assume that the specs were inside it, since the master had been without them ever since.

"But, at any rate," continued Tom, "what you've just told me would certainly help the police no end, for it's

morally certain that the men who attacked the professor were the men you gave all that information to earlier in the day, and, of course, they weren't policemen at all, as any idiot but you would have known."

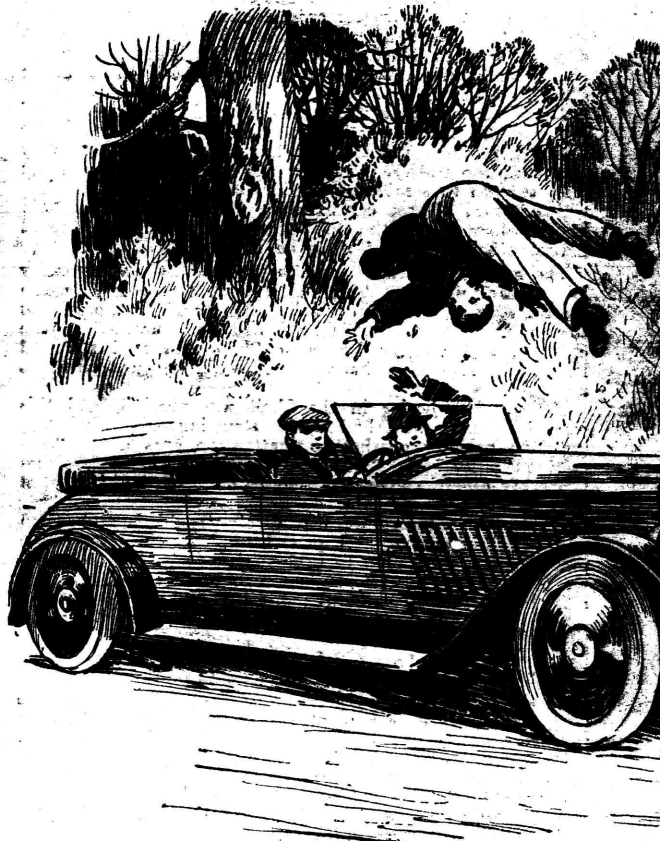
"They looked like it, anyway. And what else could they be?" said Grundy glumly.

"Goodness knows!" exclaimed Tom. "But not foreign police, or I'm a Dutchman! Police officials don't make a habit of breaking into schoolmasters' bed-rooms, as a general rule. Great pip, Grundy, I wouldn't like to be you, if this gets round the school! Your legs'll be pulled until you'll look as if you're on stilts!"

Grundy groaned sepulchrally, and then his eye gleamed. "I suppose I'll have to tell Inspector Skeat, Tom Merry—"

"Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt!" came a voice from the doorway, and Glyn's grinning face appeared round the door, effectively stopping Grundy's dire threats to anybody who attempted to rag him about the awful results of his investigations.

"Sorry!" continued Glyn blithely. "Didn't know you were jawing, you two. Found a kindred spirit in Grundy



Grundy's bike hit the radiator of the car

the Grummet, Merry? What are you discussing, if I might make so bold as to axe. Plato?"

"What did you say, Glyn? Grundy the—" inquired the great one, in deadly tones.

"Grummet," supplied Glyn cheerfully. "Say, you fellows, quit kidding. I just popped along to see if you'd care to lend a hand with my glider. I've got her into shape again, and made a good many improvements, and I'm expecting big things from her this afternoon, if you fellows will give a hand with the catapult again. I've got Blake & Co. and some other chaps; but the more the merrier, you know, and I'd like to die with as big an audience as possible!"

"Sorry, old man!" said Tom. "But I've got to go to Wayland. Can't be helped—urgent bizney, and so on, so I know you won't mind. Grundy's coming with me, so he'll be a non-attender at the great event also. Good luck! Hope you don't fall too heavily; and try to miss the spectators!"

"Blithering fathead! I shan't crash this time!" snorted Glyn. "All right, if you're too blinking independent to come, I'll have to find someone else, I suppose!"

He turned to the wrathful Grundy, who was still contemplating whether or not to bash this urbane interrupter who had the cool cheek to call him "Grundy, the Grummet!" "I say, Aristotle, where are your two tortured chums?" inquired Glyn. "You haven't shoved 'em up the chimney, have you?"

Grundy growled ominously, and Tom answered for him. "You'll probably find Gunn scraping his nose with a potato-knife, or boiling it in soda-water, to get the ink off, Glyn, and I think I should run away and play with your glider, if I were you, because George Alfred's in a funny mood, and he might take it into his head to baptise you similarly. Close the door behind you, there's a good chap!"

Snorting, Glyn withdrew. Grundy opened his mouth to speak several times, and closed it again like a fish. He strongly suspected Glyn and Tom Merry of poking fun at him, but wasn't quite sure.

Tom spoke again, not giving him the necessary time to come to a definite decision on the matter.

"Come on, Grundy! Are you game to tell Inspector Skeat?"

Grundy nodded mutely. He was game enough, but the job was far from being to his liking. This was the first mistake he had made in his life, thought Grundy; but he wasn't the fellow to shirk owning up to it. He rose sluggishly to his feet.

get to Wayland, tell Inspector Skeat the whole story, and get back in time for lock-up.

Grundy trod on the pedals with both feet, and found some outlet for his pent-up emotions in the strength that was necessary for him to expend in driving the bike forward. Tom at first found difficulty in keeping up with the great man of the Shell, but eventually caught him up and passed him.

Grundy put speed on, and in his turn passed Tom, and it developed into a mad race along the road to Wayland.

Round sharp corners swept Tom Merry and Grundy, ramming brakes on, skidding, sticking to their seats by a series of miracles, until they had quite forgotten about the main issue of their errand, and were intent only in racing each other.

It was on rounding a sharp bend that they found the road almost blocked by a huge streamlined car. Grundy was yards in the lead as it happened, his hefty muscles having proved to be superior to Tom's, and his speed was such that he was neither able to stop nor to steer clear of the car. C-r-r-r-rash!

The front wheel of Grundy's bike hit the low radiator of the car, buckling like tinfoil, and, with a yell, its rider shot from the saddle and sailed through the air, landing on his neck in the back seat of the car, after turning a complete somersault over the heads of the two astonished occupants of the front seat, those same being Scarface and the garrulous Jacob Hemedo.

Tom Merry rammed his brakes on when he saw the car in the road, and he jammed them on so hard that the bicycle skidded over, precipitating him into the unresponsive hedge at the side of the narrow road.

Before he could collect his dazed senses and scramble to his feet, he was conscious of the roar of a high-power engine, and he looked round in time to see the tail of the car disappearing up the road, with Grundy in it, although that junior was not visible to Tom. His crash had knocked him out, and he lay unconscious in the back of the Sunbeam.

Scarface, who was at the wheel, had been quick to recognise the schoolboy who had spoken to them in the field, and he had good reasons for desiring an interview with that same boy; and for preventing anyone else from interviewing him, so he slipped the car into gear, trod on the gas, and bore Grundy away.

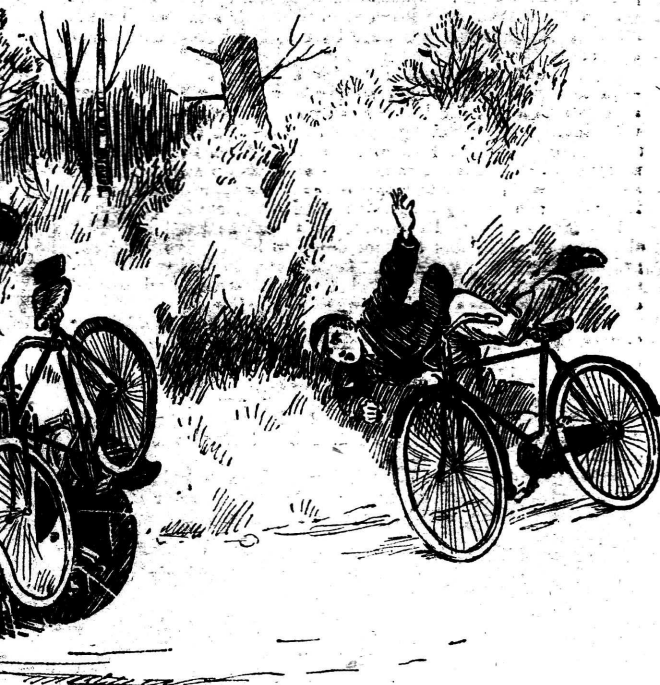
Tom Merry staggered back to the road, ruefully rubbing a twisted shoulder, and gazed stupidly for a moment at the cloud of dust that marked the path of Grundy's passing. His eye fell on Grundy's bike, over which the heavy car had passed, and he held his forehead in a shaky hand.

Nothing was more certain than the fact that that bike would never race any more. It was just a mass of twisted steel tubes and spreadeagled spokes.

Tom looked at his own machine, which was upside down in the bottom of the hedge, and found to his delight that it was undamaged beyond a mere skewing of the handlebars, which was quickly put right.

The captain of St. Jim's Lower School quickly decided on the best course of action. It was useless to pursue the car, which would by now be miles away, so he resolved to carry on and tell Inspector Skeat about the foreigners in the racing Sunbeam, as well as the kidnapping of Grundy.

Tipping the mangled remains of Grundy's bike into the hedge, Tom mounted his machine and proceeded at a good pace, although, be it known, with a lot more caution, towards Wayland.



He was shot head-over-heels into the back seat!

"Half a mo, you chaps! Hang on! Whoa! Just a little more. Now then, are you ready? Leggo!"

Three juniors were hanging with all their strength to the ropes controlling Glyn's catapult—Blake, Herries, and Baggy Trimble—while several others were pulling on the elastic. The latter had run a considerable distance when Glyn shouted, and Blake and Herries let go the tail-rope, but not so Baggy Trimble! The Falstaff of the Fourth had attached himself to the rope absent-mindedly with the other chaps, and he had been too engrossed with thoughts of the tuckshop to hear the alarm.

The length of elastic Glyn used for his catapult was very strong; but at the same time Baggy Trimble was an outsize specimen of schoolboy, and consequently what ensued was something like the meeting of the irresistible force and the immovable object, the immovable object being fairly faithfully emulated by the hapless Baggy.

He was immovable, at any rate, for about one-tenth of a second, and then the irresistible force proved to be the winner, and Trimble shot like a cannon-ball—literally—after the glider.

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

Bump! Crash! Bum-ump-p!

"Ow, ow, ow! Groooooogh!"

CHAPTER 8.

Without an Engine!

TOM found the back tyre of his bike unaccountably flat, and he had a puncture to mend before he could take it on the road.

It was fully three-quarters of an hour later that he and Grundy set off to Wayland, and they knew they would have to make the tyres zip to some purpose if they were to

Baggy squeaked after Glyn's machine, very effectively keeping it to the ground, but not preventing the catapult from doing its bit. His fat wrists had somehow got the rope tangled round them, and, yell as he would, the young dumpling was forced to proceed over the field at a pace he had imagined impossible for anything to move.

Blake & Co. and the other juniors found Baggy's antics so killingly funny that they were nearly tied up in knots on the grass in paroxysms of laughter. Glyn himself, seated in his machine, unable to stop it, though he knew it would not take off, nearly collapsed with uncontrollable mirth when he saw what was serving as an anchor.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Baggy, you'll catch me yet!" yelled Glyn.

"Groooh! Ouch! Uff! Er-r-rrrrgh!" gasped Baggy, as each little bump caught him in the waistcoat. There was a bump roughly every yard, and Baggy travelled thirty yards before the catapult spent its ferocious energy.

They came to a standstill eventually, the glider and the human avalanche, after what seemed to Baggy Trimble to be miles and miles of bumping over rocks and boulders, and were surrounded by laughing juniors.

Baggy rolled unsteadily to his feet, and after—not without some difficulty—removing the rope from his wrists, he felt his fat body all over.

"What's up, Baggy?" asked Manners, between laughs. "Been trying to take Hancock's tip, and become a roller? You've made a beautifully flat path for about thirty yards!"

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

"You awful rotters!" screamed the fat junior, when he had regained his breath. "You did that purposely! I know you did, and I think it is a rotten trick. Ow-ow! Both my shoulders are out of joint, and I think my back's broken. Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hancock, the American junior. "Guess you're too well padded with shock-absorber stuff to take much harm. Anyway, you've proved you can't fly a glider. Why, I guess you'd anchor a Handley Page bomber if you were tied to a rope from it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorused the other chaps. "Yah! You beasts!" squeaked Baggy. "I'm off for some tuck to make me better. You can fly your beastly, rotten old glider by yourselves, so there!"

And the fat junior rolled unsteadily off towards the school, followed by the mirthful voices of the other fellows.

"Come on, chaps; let's have another go! It's getting late, and I want to give her a good try-out-to-day, if possible!"

Glyn's voice was eager, and, indeed, there was no reason why it should be otherwise, for the machine he had made was a beautiful piece of workmanship, and, as far as the eye could see, there was no earthly reason why it should not fly.

No earthly reason, that is, except earthly reasons like Baggy Trimble, who was, however, well out of the way by now.

Once more the catapult was hitched to the glider, the elastic stretched to its utmost by the willing muscles of the juniors of St. Jim's, and the command to release her waited for by boys who were only one whit less excited than the inventor and maker of the machine.

"Leggo!" shouted Glyn, his tense fingers on the joystick.

Once more the machine was released, and this time there was no dead weight in the shape of Baggy to stop the glider, and it shot like a rocket out and up over the sloping field.

Up, up, up went the glider, climbing into the light breeze. The chaps down below watched, with bated breath.

In the glider Glyn was in his element. Already he had proved to himself that his machine was more than a mere glider. It was actually a heavier than air, engineless flying machine. The clever gadgets he had invented and incorporated in the machine made it possible for him to use all the air currents to the best advantage, climbing as he pleased, and flying forward at an excellent speed. His heart was in his mouth with joy and excitement, and, waving his hand to the juniors, who were by now far below, he turned and made for Rylcombe.

Glyn had known the exhilaration of flying in an aeroplane—he had piloted one very successfully during that memorable period when Sir Rollo Prance had furnished St. Jim's with facilities for having flying tuition—but the wonderful thrill of piloting this bird of his own making, this soundless machine that slipped through the air like an albatross, and answered to his every touch, was far in excess of the pleasure felt when controlling a zooming, shrieking, engine plane.

The air sang past Bernard Glyn's ears as from a height of fifteen hundred feet he shot down to barely five hundred, gaining speed every second. Gently manipulating the joystick, he flattened out, found the up-current, and soared dizzily upwards again. This was the life!

Glyn had every confidence in his machine, and tried other tactics, flying progressively without dipping and climbing. He had lost a good deal of altitude owing to this, and was only a few hundred feet up when a sharp "crack!" came to his ears, and something pinged past his ear.

"G-good heavens!" ejaculated the astonished Glyn. "Some silly ass must think I'm a bird! He's shooting at me!"

Another crack came from below. Glyn heard the wild scream of a bullet as it continued on its way after striking part of the glider, and the joystick suddenly became loose in his hand.

The second bullet had cut the control-wire!

Bereft of control, the glider lurched sickeningly to one side, and spun dizzily earthwards.

CHAPTER 9.

Just in Time!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY came painfully to his senses approximately five minutes after he hit the back seat of the Sunbeam with his neck. For some time he struggled with his memory in an effort to recollect where he was, and how the dickens he had got there. Then suddenly he remembered, and tried to jerk his head round to see where the car was. That was as far as he got, for an excruciating pain shot through his neck and down his spine, and he realised it was as stiff as a gas-lamp, and would be for weeks. He had cricked it with a vengeance.

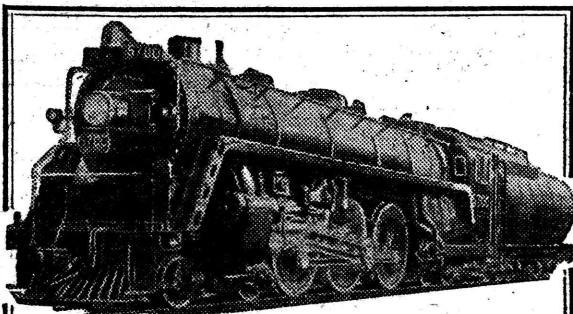
He stretched himself painfully into a more comfortable position, and as he did so, the car slowed down and came to a standstill. At the same time, his upturned eyes caught sight of a strange, silent, winged thing gliding above, and for a moment he thought it was some outlandish bird out of a fable.

As he gazed at the object above, voices came from the front seat.

"Ach!" said the voice. "Look, see! Dere iss ze mad professor, flying in ze machine ze plans of what we cannot get!"

"By James, Hemedo, you're right!" hissed a voice which Grundy recognised. "Fetch him down— No; not you! I'll shoot! We'll have those plans even yet!"

Even to the dull-witted Grundy, the purport of the conversation was absolutely unmistakable, and light flooded in



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upon the brain of the great man of the Shell. These men were the real crooks, and that was what they were after! The plans of some invention or other belonging to Professor McTavish. Then they had not been successful in stealing the plans the other night, as rumour had it?

Grundy's brain—such as there was of it—worked more quickly than it ever had done before. His eye was on the machine above and he suddenly realised what it was. The men in front thought it was the professor, in a flying-machine he had invented, and the secret of which they were trying to get; but Grundy knew it could be no other than Bernard Glyn, the intrepid young inventor of the Shell, successful at last.

Grundy scrambled painfully to his feet, and opened his mouth to shout, but at that moment there was a staccato crack from a long-barrelled pistol in Scarface's hand, and the boy in the back of the car choked with horror as he realised that they were shooting at Glyn.

The dunce of the Shell was anything but a coward, as every junior in St. Jim's had good reason to know, and, in spite of pains in every muscle, and the handicap of an immovable neck, he flung himself at the men in front.

But he was too late to stop a second shot, and as he

actually fell more slowly than would Glyn have done had he jumped for it.

With his heart hammering, Glyn managed to secure the wire when barely twenty feet from the ground. Twisting the steel round his finger, he lifted the elevators just at the proper moment, when for a fraction of a second the machine was on an even keel. The impetus of the fall was sufficient to hold the machine against the air, now that Glyn had control, and with a shout of joy, the schoolboy felt the machine flatten out and shoot along a few feet above the ground.

The wire was cutting his finger to the bone; but he seemed scarcely to notice the pain. He had, as he thought, saved his invention from disaster. But he had reckoned without that swarthy rogue, Jacob Hemedo.

The last-mentioned gentleman was rather an outside in men, as far as breadth went, although he was not particularly tall. Anyway, he was far too solid for a flimsy flying machine to strike amidstships without something alarming happening. Glyn was just congratulating himself on getting safely out of a particularly nasty fix, and was planning a suitable execution for the humorist with the gun, when he just caught sight of what appeared to be a grown-

PARABLES AND PARODIES.

By MONTY LOWTHER.

Now Monty's started verse again, for rhymes we cannot stump him!
But if he gets much worse again, we'll simply have to bump him!

"HOW DOTH THE LITTLE BUSY BEE?"

I.

How doth the little Baggy bee
Improve each shining minute?
By opening his mouth at tea,
And stuffing doughnuts in it.

II.

Said Gus to Blake: "Fwom out the lake
A cwy for help is sounding."
Said Blake to Gus: "Don't make a fuss,
It's only Grundy drowning!"

III.

"AFTER BLENHEIM."

It was a summer evening,
Old Grundy's work was done,
And now beside him on the floor
Lay Wilkins (G.) and Gunn.
"They called me many names," said he,
"But 'tis a famous victory!"

Wilkins' eye was glowing black,
And Wilkins' face was green;
While Cuthbert Gunn was down and done
With a bump upon his bean.
But things like this, you know, must be
After a famous victory.

Wilkins called George Alfred, "Chump!"
And Gunn gave him a shock—
To Grundy's grief, he called his chief
A burbling jabberwock!
"They won't do it again," said he;
"After this famous victory."

I saw old Grundy strolling by,
And beaming like the sun;
I asked him there, "Pray tell me where
Are Wilkins (G.) and Gunn?"
"They're in the sanny, now," said he,
"After that famous victory."

snatched the smoking firearm from the foreigner's hand and flung it into the hedge, he just caught a glimpse of the machine spinning earthwards.

As Grundy tackled him from behind, Scarface, who until now had betrayed no trace of his foreign nationality by his speech, gasped out an oath in a strange language, and struggled wildly. Grundy, his heftiness proving a great asset, managed to drag him opponent half-way over the back of the seat, and with his left arm crooked round the ruffian's neck, hammered him well and truly for a few seconds with his famous right.

Scarface's companion did not wait to see the issue of the unequal combat between crooked schoolboy and vigorous, desperate man, but sprang out of the car muttering to himself, and dashed towards the spot where he thought the glider would fall.

Up above, Bernard Glyn was making a bid to save his machine. It had fallen only a few feet when he saw the loose end of the cut wire protruding from its casing, and with an effort of desperation, he reached for it.

It was no easy task, for he had all his work cut out to save himself from falling head-first out of the pitching, spinning plane. Fortunately, there was not the tremendous weight of an engine to drag him down, and the glider, a super-light structure of streamlined spar and oiled silk,

up edition of Baggy Trimble capering wildly in the field, directly in front of the scudding plane.

It was absolutely unavoidable. Glyn had managed to get the machine out of its spin, but could not hope to steer it properly. Indeed, even if he had been in full control of the machine, it is doubtful if he would have been able to dodge the man in front.

Bif-f-f!

"Grump-p-ph!"

Crash!

The glider's main skid took the foreigner fair and square in the waistcoat, and he collapsed like a pricked balloon, completely out of the quarrel for the next hour or two. Glyn's wonder machine pitched over on its back with an ominous rending noise and cracking of stays, and Glyn fell sprawling, but unhurt, several yards away.

"By the Pyramids!" gasped Glyn, picking himself up. "Have I flown into a land of lunatics?"

He was advancing towards the prostrate Jacob when he heard a yell that made his blood run cold.

"Ow-ow! He-e-elp! Gug-g-g-g—"

The voice that yelled was absolutely unmistakable. It could belong to none other than Grundy of the Shell, and Glyn wheeled and sprinted as hard as he could to the rescue.

As he reached the hedge dividing the field from the narrow lane, something gleaming in the short grass caught his eye, and he stooped and picked it up.

A long-barrelled revolver! Grundy had regretted having flung it away immediately after doing so, for after successfully planting a fair number of right hooks in different places on Scarface's distorted features, to the detriment of that already ugly physog, the burly foreigner had proved too strong for the plucky Shellite, and in about one wag of a wasp's whisker had knelt on his stomach in the back seat.

When Glyn rushed on the scene, revolver at the ready, Scarface was systematically and scientifically, with a very ugly expression on his face, squeezing every ounce of breath from Grundy's windpipe. Grundy's face was a delicate purple hue, and his eyes were bulging out like snail's eyes, and it is not too much to say that had Glyn been much later, he would have been too late to have been any further use to George Alfred Grundy in this world.

"Hands up!" barked Glyn, and so intent had Scarface been on his task of relieving a long-suffering St. Jim's School of one, George Alfred Grundy, that he jumped six inches on hearing Glyn's imperative command, and obeyed it with alacrity.

Grundy remained perfectly still. He was as dead to the world as was the foreigner in the field, and he would probably need the tender ministrations of Dr. Harvey for a week or so.

Glyn advanced warily. He had a good idea of the desperate nature of the man he was dealing with, although naturally enough, he was absolutely in a fog as to the meaning of it all. All he knew was that this lunatic in front, or the other imbecile in the field, had plugged shots at him in the air, and that he had caught this dark-faced johnny with a scar on his face doing his level best to put poor old Grundy where nothing would bother him.

He waved the revolver dangerously, and Scarface winced. The ruffianly foreigner was brave enough with the shooting apparatus in his own hand, but when it was in possession of a reckless-looking schoolboy like Glyn, and was, moreover, pointing alternately at his head and his stomach, he felt that there are better things than bravery in this little world, and life is very short at the best of times. Scarface decided to do strictly as Glyn told him, which was very wise of him, for Glyn was in a truly terrible mood.

"Step out of there!" rasped Glyn. "Keep your hands up, my beauty, or I'll shoot holes in 'em! That's it. Now then, 'bout turn, and no monkey tricks."

Scarface did as he was told meekly enough, and Glyn proceeded to make a cursory examination of his schoolchum, taking care at the same time to keep a weather eye on Scarface's broad back. Having satisfied himself that Grundy was still in the land of the living, Glyn issued further instructions to his captive.

"Now then, Antonio," rasped the schoolboy inventor, "I don't know what all this is about, but you've jolly well got to do a little work for your living, for once in your life. Step into that field, and quick march to your fellow-idiot. I'm coming close behind, and—I've just made sure there are still four rounds in the chamber!"

The pair filed through the hedge, and at Glyn's command Scarface lifted the burly form of Jacob Hemedo, his fellow-crook to his shoulder, and staggered back to the car with him. He deposited the limp, fat form on the floor in the back of the car, by Glyn's instructions, and seated himself in the driver's seat. Glyn took his place by his side, taking care to keep as healthy as possible a space between them, and to keep the muzzle of the revolver snuggled up to his prisoner's side.

The experience and the sensations it carried with it, could not have been exactly pleasant for the rogue; but he deserved it. As he told Glyn repeatedly, the revolver was

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on a hair-trigger, and a jerk of the car might cause it to explode. The only reply he got, however, was a prod in the ribs, and beads of perspiration stood out on his receding forehead.

As a matter of fact, Glyn had his finger behind the trigger, so that it was practically impossible for it to go off; but Scarface was not to know this. Glyn was pretty level-headed, and he had no desire to have a man's life on his hands, even if that same man had done his level best to wipe out Grundy and himself.

"Drive on!" commanded Glyn. "And don't do an inch over twenty miles per hour, or else you'll shake my schoolmate off the seat—see?"

The "see" was emphasised by a dig in the ribs with the revolver, and Scarface nodded emphatically, with a painful expression on his face.

As soon as they reached a point in the road where it was wide enough to turn the big car, Glyn ordered the crook to turn and make for Wayland. He was anxious to get rid of his prisoners, for the strain was beginning to tell on him.

As luck would have it he was relieved of his unpleasant task some considerable time before he had anticipated he would be, for a red police car came tearing along to meet the Sunbeam about a mile farther along the road, and Glyn heaved a sigh of relief when he recognised Inspector Skeat and Tom Merry.

A whole jumbled host of thoughts ran through Glyn's head on seeing Tom Merry with the inspector. He remembered finding Tom and Grundy in earnest confab when he butted in to solicit assistance for the launching of his plane, and he remembered Tom telling him he had to go to Wayland with Grundy, but what had happened in the intervening hour Glyn hadn't the haziest notion, and he hadn't time to ponder on it just then.

Inspector Skeat deftly snicked a pair of handcuffs on Scarface's wrists, and between them they transferred the bulky form of the other foreigner into the police car. Glyn swiftly related what had happened.

"And I think, sir," he concluded, "that I'd better borrow the Sunbeam until you take charge of it, because Grundy ought to be rushed to bed straight away."

"Quite right, my boy," agreed Inspector Skeat. "I

will send Dr. Harvey up from Wayland as soon as I have safely disposed of these two. From what Master Merry has told me, I fancy they are the two men I am after for Wednesday night's little affair."

Tom Merry and Glyn climbed into the great streamlined Sunbeam, Tom sitting in the back seat with Grundy, who was just beginning to show signs of regaining consciousness, and Glyn taking the driver's place. The schoolboy inventor trod on the gas, now that there was someone to prop up Grundy, and a few minutes later they swung into the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

A crowd of fellows dashed out of the school to meet them, and willing hands soon bore the unlucky Ajax of the Shell to the sanny. Blake & Co. and the other chaps had not yet arrived at the school. Indeed, so swiftly had events moved that they were still on their way to search for the scene of Glyn's crash, a mile away from the place where he had taken off.

CHAPTER 10.

Trouble for Tom!

"IT'S a regular mystery."
"Yaas, wathah! As a fellow of tact an' judgment—"
"Ring off, Gussy! What's your idea about it all, Tom Merry?"

The junior captain of St. Jim's was in Study No. 10 with Glyn, Manners, Monty Lowther, Herries, Digby, Blake,

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and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Altogether a mighty crowd, and the din from their hefty young voices, nearly all speaking at once, bade fair to bring a prefect or two on the scene until Tom spoke, thereby silencing the rest.

He had just finished telling them what he knew of Grundy's little interview with Scarface, the man Grundy had fondly imagined to be of a foreign police force, and Glyn had given a lurid description of his encounter with the crooks.

Prep was being shamefully neglected, but it was Saturday evening, and the juniors felt that the exciting incidents of the afternoon gave them some justification for their slackness.

The only man who could have enlightened them on some of the points that were puzzling them was, strangely enough, George Alfred Grundy. It was seldom indeed that it fell to Grundy's lot to be able to enlighten anybody on any subject, though he would have thought you were quite mad had you dared to tell him so.

But Grundy was in bed, and Dr. Harvey had just left after visiting him, so the great man could not tell the mystified party of juniors in Study No. 10 what he had overheard Scarface and his companion say about the "mad professor," and the machine, the plans of which they could not get.

"Well, it's pretty clear—up to a point," said Tom. "But past that point—"

"It's as clear as mud!" cut in Monty Lowther. "It's this way—"

"Brrr!" said Manners rudely. "Everybody's as fogged as everybody else, so what's the use of arguing?"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I've got a bwain-wave!" suddenly exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

The effect of the announcement was electric. Lowther staggered back into Manners' arms, and Manners, taken by surprise, collapsed in a heap on the floor with Lowther on top.

In the midst of the hullabaloo there was a peremptory rap on the door, and Kildare of the Sixth looked into the study.

"What a ghastly din!" he exclaimed, with a grin. "Ease up a bit, young 'uns, or else I'll pop along for my ash-plant!"

His face became serious.

"Ah, Glyn, I thought I'd find you here! You'd better come along with me to the Head's study. You, too, Merry. Inspector Skeat is here, and wants to have a talk with you about this afternoon's affair."

Kildare withdrew, and Glyn and Tom followed him to the Head's study, leaving the ruffled Arthur Augustus to air his "brain-wave" among the remaining unsympathetic juniors in Study No. 10.

The two juniors found Professor John Gordon McTavish in the Head's study, as well as Inspector Skeat, Mr. Railton, and, of course, Kildare. The Head was looking worried, as well he might, for it is no laughing matter for pupils to be kidnapped, shot at, and half-strangled.

Dr. Holmes smiled at the two juniors—one of those smiles that had made him loved by everyone in the school, from the meekest fag to the fiercest prefect.

"There's nothing really to be alarmed about, my boys," he said. "Inspector Skeat is rather puzzled about one or two things concerning those two—ah!—ruffians' brutal attack on poor Grundy, and how it was you, Glyn, happened to be on the spot to act so fearlessly, and save your fellow schoolboy from—further damage at the hands of that ruffian."

Glyn blushed and stammered something about it being "nothing," and the inspector from Wayland proceeded to question him about the doings of the afternoon.

Of course, the official knew from Tom how Grundy had told the two men in the field about Professor McTavish, and had guessed from that that they had been the mysterious assailants of Wednesday night, but beyond that he knew nothing, for the prisoners could not be made to utter a word about themselves or their motive in attacking McTavish and Grundy. All they did was flatly to deny having stolen any plans of any kind.

Glyn told him, modestly enough, about the success of his "glider," and how, when flying over the road, he had been mysteriously shot at; how he had crashed, knocking over the fat foreigner, and how he had dashed to Grundy's aid, luckily finding the revolver just in time.

Although the inspector was interested, Professor McTavish seemed ten times more so, his lips oscillating feverishly as he listened to every word. When Glyn had finished he slapped his knees and turned to Dr. Holmes.

"My dear Dr. Holmes!" he exclaimed. "This explains a great deal to me. These men are the two—chrrm!—about whom I have already spoken to you—the two men I came to the school to get away from. But it would appear

that they were not successful in stealing the spectacle-case containing the plans, after all, or surely they would not still be in the district. Besides, the fact that they shot at—er—hm!—Glyn in his soaring machine, seems to point to the fact that they mistook him for me, for, as you are well aware, the missing plans are of a new invention of mine—an engineless flying machine, capable of great speed and of sustained flying—a machine, in point of fact, the value of which our young friend here seems also to have discovered, somewhat to his cost."

Tom Merry listened like one in a dream. The professor's remark about the spectacle case had hit him like one of Grundy's straight rights, and it took him some moments to bring his senses into proper focus.

"One moment, sir!" gasped Tom. "Did—did you say the plans were hidden in your spectacle-case?"

The professor blinked at Tom.

"Why, yes, my boy. That is what I said. I folded them up, and put them in the case with my glasses, thinking that it was the least likely place for anyone to search, knowing as I did that these men were still trying to get the plans."

"Then—then I've got the plans!" blurted out Tom. There was only thing to do now, and that was to tell the whole story of the theft of the specs from beginning to end and trust to Providence for the result—expulsion, at least, thought Tom, and probably worse.

Everyone in the Head's study gasped audibly at this startling disclosure, and Kildare looked at Tom as if he thought the junior captain had taken leave of his senses.

Tom swallowed hard, and continued to tell them about the discovery of the professor's ingenious specs, and how they had resolved to make their life a little more bearable by borrowing the offending article until the new master left the school. As the story unfolded, the expressions of those in the study underwent some remarkable contortions.

Tom warmed to his work when he got to the part where the second intruder came into the bed-room, and when he told of whacking the man's shin with the heavy steel case, the Inspector could not repress a muttered "bravo!"

There was a sustained silence when Tom Merry ceased speaking, and Professor McTavish was the first to break it.

"You have the spectacle-case, my boy? God bless you! Go and fetch it. Bring it to me at once! Dear me, this is too good to be true!"

The Rabbit's voice was shaking with agitation, and it was evident that he had overlooked the seriousness of Tom's offence in his delight at the knowledge that his precious plans were still safe.

The Head, however, had not forgotten!

"One moment, Merry!" The Head's voice was grave, and Tom's heart sank even lower. "You admit, Merry, that you actually made your way into your master's bedroom at midnight, and stole this—this spectacle-case?"

"Yes, sir."

"How is it that you have not returned it before now, when you discovered that it contained the plans?"

"I didn't know the plans were there, sir!" said Tom. "I had no opportunity then to ascertain whether or not the specs—er—spectacles were there, and I have not looked inside the case. I locked it up in my locker, intending to return it to Professor McTavish immediately Mr. Linton returned."

The Head was silent for a moment, and the worried expression on his face increased.

"You are fully aware," he said at last. "That you have committed an offence punishable only by expulsion, Merry?"

Tom swallowed a lump as big as a pumpkin.

"I suppose so, sir," he gulped. "But, really, sir, we were driven to it. You see—"

No sooner had Tom spoken than he could have kicked himself. That "we" was a slip of the tongue that would tell the Head without a doubt that there were others in the plot to get the specs, and that was the last thing Tom wanted. He watched the Head anxiously, to see if he had noticed the use of the plural.

He had, and so had Kildare and Railton.

"Ah! So there were others in it, Merry, beside you?" thundered Dr. Holmes.

Tom nodded.

"Yes, sir, there were others."

"Hem! Well, I will not ask you their names, Merry, for it is not my principle to teach boys to be tale-bearers. On Monday, however, I shall ask those boys to come forward. Meanwhile, I shall discuss with your Housemaster, Mr. Railton, what form your punishment shall take. I fear—I very much fear—that it can be nothing but immediate expulsion. You may go, Merry and—er—Glyn."

(Continued on page 24.)

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CHAPTER 1.

A Compass at Last!

"ALL hands on deck!" bellowed Skipper Roscoe of the Sapphire. "Things are looking sort o' homely!" Frank Parkes, the engineer, poked his tousled head up through the engine-room hatch. Billy Roscoe, the only other member of the crew, came out of the fo'c'sle rubbing the sleep from his eyes vigorously with his knuckles. It was his watch below.

The sun was sinking in the west and shedding a weird, hard light on the troubled sea. The wind was freshening to a gale, whipping the wave-crests to foam; but North Sea fishermen don't let things like that worry them, nor excite them unduly.

What interested the skipper most, was the sight of a number of trawlers right ahead. They were at least three miles away—not much more than dots on the expanse of the water—but from the way they moved, the way the smoke belched from their stacks, giving evidence of power, yet without any indications of speed, he knew that they had their trawls down.

At long last the old Sapphire had hit against a fishing ground. At last there was the prospect of better luck.

"Yarmouth boats, or I'm a Dutchman!" said Billy. "I don't care what they are!" cried the skipper. "We're going to lay alongside one o' them johnnies. We're going to find out where we are, and buy a compass. Frank, you just get a head o' steam on her, and we'll hit her up a bit." "I'll do a bit of stoking," said Billy, diving down to the stokehole.

Things were looking hopeful for the Sapphire, and they needed a stroke of luck badly. For one thing, they were terribly short-handed. There was only Skipper Roscoe, the captain and owner, Billy, his nephew, and Frank Parkes, Billy's pal, to run the trawler. To make matters worse, the Sapphire had been knocked about. Her bulwarks were mostly reduced to matchwood. Her small boats had all vanished. Her foremast had snapped off like a rotten carrot, and a stunted jury mast now stood in its place. The wheel-house had been wrecked. The binnacle was a crumpled mass of brass, and of no use whatever.

There were very good reasons for all this. As a matter of fact, Skipper Roscoe owned two trawlers, the Sapphire and the Opal. During a spell of bad times he had borrowed two hundred pounds from Stephen Sims, the skipper of the Opal. Sims was an unscrupulous man, with evil ambitions, who stuck at nothing to get what he wanted.

Above all else, he coveted the ownership of the Opal. He had insisted that Roscoe should give him a mortgage on the Opal as security for his two hundred pounds, and then he had prepared his nefarious plans, bribing the mate of the Sapphire to help him.

He had tried to have the Sapphire sunk in a storm. He wasn't the sort of man to care who drowned so long as he got what he wanted; but he knew that if the Sapphire foundered while she was with the fishing fleet, the crew stood a sporting chance of being saved.

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But things went wrong. The Sapphire did not sink, although Roberts and her crew deserted her. Billy and his pal Frank got aboard her, helped Skipper Roscoe, who had been stunned, and salvaged the ship. Without a compass or wireless, and short-handed, they strove to bring the Sapphire to port, and Sims did all he could to stop them. More than once he had nearly succeeded, knowing that if the pals won through to port, he would be a ruined man.

The pals' biggest anxiety was their ignorance about their position, but sighting the trawlers was going to help them.

"We'll fool Sims yet!" chuckled the skipper. "At a guess, I reckon we're barely a day's steaming from Lowestoft."

Billy came up from the stokehole, wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"They are Yarmouth boats," he said.

"Up on the fo'c'sle," ordered the skipper, "and stand by with a grappling-iron. We've got no small boats. We'll have to lay alongside one of 'em. I'm steering for the commodore."

The wind blew harder and came in violent gusts, but it takes a lot of wind to daunt a fisherman.

Very often when the boats fish in company, the most experienced skipper takes up the informal post of commodore, signalling when to shoot the trawls and when to haul in, when to run for port and when to ride out the storm.

Skipper Roscoe knew that the commodore's boat would more likely have a spare compass than any other, and the information he wanted would be thoroughly reliable. He could easily pick out the commodore by the pennant on her foremast.

The trawlers were steaming up the wind, their trawls strung out astern. Skipper Roscoe brought the Sapphire nearer and nearer to the wind, steering a course that would take him athwart the course of the trawlers. He dare not steer astern of them for fear of fouling their lines.

"More speed!" he bellowed.

"Come and get it!" growled Frank from the engine-room. "I can't work miracles!"

"But we won't shoot her bows if we don't move faster than this!" protested the skipper. "Hold on, though!"

"Throttle down!" yelled Billy from the fo'c'sle head.

"They're hauling in!"

Skipper Roscoe studied the trawlers. The commodore was hoisting his brown fores'l and showing a wisp of mizzen. He heve to, and his crew thudded along the decks to the winches and the ropes. They were bringing the heavy trawl to the surface.

"All the better for us!" grunted the skipper. "We'll take it easy, Frank."

He held on his way, but had no need to hurry. He knew that he wouldn't be welcome while the whole ship's company were busy with the trawl. His plan was to get almost alongside and then grapple when the crew were resting a bit.

He steered the Sapphire deftly round the bows of the commodore. They could see the name and registration marks quite plainly. She was the Grey Star, YH 0100.

"Tubby Venn's boat," said Billy; and there was a tone of disappointment in his voice. Tubby Venn wasn't altogether a desirable character, even if nothing definitely bad was known against him.

"We've got to chance it," said the skipper.

He got the wind blowing gustily over his counter and allowed the Sapphire to drift down upon the Grey Star, her engines silent. It was neatly done. Billy threw a grappling-iron, and it lodged conveniently in the Grey Star's mizzen shrouds.

The two ships grated together, and Tubby Venn, the bearded skipper of the Grey Star, leant out of his wheel-house and grinned at them.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Where've you come from?"

"North of the Faroes," said the skipper.

"Looks like you've met with rough weather."

"Bad weather and rogues," rejoined Skipper Roscoe.

"Only three of us aboard. We've salvaged her when she was abandoned, and we're dead set on bringing her to port."

Tubby Venn knew the skipper, just as the skipper knew him. Lowestoft and Yarmouth were not so far apart but what men got to know one another.

There was a queer, twisted smile on Tubby Venn's face.

"Where's the Opal?" he asked slyly.

"Don't know," said the skipper. "Suppose you haven't seen her? She ought to be hereabouts somewhere."

"I haven't seen her," said Venn. "Though there was a trawler heading south went down past us five miles or more to the west'ard. Hull down she was; a Lowestoft boat, I reckon, but too far away to make her out proper. But can I do anything to help, skipper?"

"You can give me our position and sell me a compass, Venn."

"I'll loan you a couple of men," suggested Venn.

"And then you'll put in a claim for salvage," retorted Skipper Roscoe. "Nothing doing, thanks all the same. Just oblige me like I said, and I'll do the same and more for you some day."

"Just a minute, then."

Tubby Venn came out of his wheel-house, leapt down to the deck, and went aft to his cabin.

"I don't trust him," said Billy, walking up to Skipper Roscoe.

"Come to that," replied the skipper, "I never had much time for Tubby Venn; but he can't hurt us."

"I'm not so sure," put in Frank, leaning his oily arms on the edge of the engine-room hatch. "He used to be very pally with Sims at one time."

"Sims isn't here," argued the skipper. "Anyway, we've got to risk it."

Then Tubby Venn came from his cabin.

"Longitude, 2, Latitude, 53," he said. "And here's a compass."

He named his price, and Skipper Roscoe paid it.

"That gives us a good chance of getting to port inside twelve hours," he said.

"But, look here," put in Venn, "it's more'n bad weather you've met with, skipper. What's been the trouble?"

"I can't tell you, Venn," replied Roscoe. "There's times—meaning no offence to you—when it's safer to keep a still tongue. I'm going to do all my talking when I'm safe in the trawl basin at Lowestoft."

"Have it your own way, of course," said Venn, with something like a scowl.

"How's the fish?" asked Roscoe.

"Fine!" said Venn, brightening. "And plentiful! Going's good just here, with little undertow. You could handle your trawl here, short-handed as you are, and get home with a good catch. Every little helps, skipper."

"To be sure, it does," agreed Roscoe. "Thanks for the help, Venn! I won't forget it. Let go, Billy!"

Billy just flicked the rope and the grappling iron broke loose from the mizzen shrouds of the Grey Star, and splashed into the water.

CHAPTER 2.

The Tin Fish!

"**A** HEAD, slow!" bellowed the skipper, grabbing the wheel.

"Ahead, slow," repeated Frank, from the engine-room.

"Half."

"Half it is," said Frank.

The Sapphire moved away from the Grey Star.

"Full!" cried the skipper.

Frank slammed the levers over, and the trawler headed south at a fair speed.

"Did you see where Venn went?" asked Billy.

"No; and I'm not troubling," said the skipper.

"But he went back to his cabin, and he's fitted with wireless. Sims has got wireless on the Opal."

"Now listen to me!" said the skipper. "You've done splendidly, Billy, up to now, and I'd be a dead man if it wasn't for you. But there's no call to look for trouble where it don't exist. We're within sixty miles of home, and I'm not scared of Sims in these waters. I'm going to splice that main haul, do a bit o' repairing on the trawl boom, and we'll shoot the nets."

"The winds freshening, and she'll be a gale before sunset," said Billy.

"Scared?" snapped the skipper.

"No," retorted Billy. "But we're wasting time in my opinion. But you're in command. I'll do what you say."

"That's the talk!" cried the skipper. "We'll shoot—just once. Since we're getting to port, after all, we might as well have some fish to land. We'll be wanting all the money we can lay our hands on, anyway. Now, get busy with that boom."

Billy looked at Frank for support. He didn't like the idea of hanging about there just then; but Frank only shrugged his shoulders, and clambered up from the engine-room to lend a hand.

An old experienced fisherman can't pass a good fishing ground without trying his luck. It becomes second nature, and he never knows when he'll meet with such luck again.

They repaired the trawl boom and got the lines all ship-shape.

"Over with her!" yelled the skipper.

The trawl went over the side and down into the depths. The lines were taut. Frank was at the engines, slowing down a bit until they got a steady pull on the lines.

Then they trawled, steadily, with the wind abeam, travelling slowly southward, nearing home, and catching fish as they went.

Skipper Roscoe chuckled to himself. It was the sort of position that appealed to him. He was getting the better of Sims, and he was taking home a good catch into the bargain.

Under the break of the fo'c'sle Billy rested, waiting for the time to haul in. He amused himself feeding the seagull he had taken upon himself to look after, when it was injured on the sandbanks by Sims' gunpowder. The gull had broken its wing, and Billy had set it in splints and made a pet of the bird.

As he had said, the wind was growing stronger every minute, and the sun sank in the west the light became dim and uncertain, and the lights of the Grey Star and her consorts twinkled far away astern.

"Man the winch!" yelled the skipper.

It was gruelling toil, being so short-handed, but they managed to bring the trawl to the surface, and it was a record catch. The skipper was jubilant at his luck, but Billy was still dismal.

"Better head for port," he said.

Frank eyed the catch with glittering eyes.

"I don't know," he began ruefully. "Suppose we ought to, but when the fish come like this it seems a shame to leave the grounds."

"I'm not going to leave 'em," said the skipper stoutly. "We'll shoot the trawl once more for luck, boys. Over with her!"

It was not a bit of use arguing. Billy shrugged his shoulders and set to work. The empty trawl went over, and they dredged the sea bottom again. As they went ahead steadily Billy stowed the fish in the holds. The skipper lashed the wheel and came down to help him. There was no immediate danger, and not a ship in sight ahead of them.

The night was dark, and they had only oil-lamps by which to work. It was by no means easy with only two to handle the catch and box it. Frank could not leave the engines and the stokehole. Power was needed to bring the trawl along the sand, and the wind was increasing to a gale.

The Sapphire began to labour. The weight of the trawl held her down, and the foam-crested waves began to wash over her. Billy said not a word, but even the skipper began to realise that he could not stay on that course indefinitely. He glanced at the sky, sniffed at the wheel, and pursed his lips.

"Better get her up!" he said. "Man the winch!"

They got busy, and it was a tough job—tougher than they expected. The winch rattled and roared; they panted and groaned as they hauled on the cold, wet ropes.

"Gosh alive!" gasped the skipper. "A record catch!"

"Or a wreck we've hooked!" panted Frank.

"No! She's coming up! A wreck 'ud tear the net! Heave, me hearties! Let her feel it! Ah, up! Ah, up! She's broken surface!"

The trawler swung round and hit the bows of the Opal. There was a blinding flash followed by an ear-splitting explosion!



"Hold her!" yelled Billy.

He rushed to the trawl irons and peered over the side. The bulging net was just on the surface of the foamed waves. He could see fish in the net, and something else—something else that made his blood run cold.

"It's a torpedo!" he bellowed.

"That's torn it!" gasped Frank.

The skipper darted to Billy's side and peered at the net in the dim, uncertain light.

"A tin fish!" he exclaimed. "Right enough, Billy!"

Then he whipped into action. It meant danger for the Sapphire, and all aboard her. "Pay out on those lines!" he bellowed. "Smartly now! Let her drag astern a bit! You, Frank, down to the engines! Half speed ahead!"

They darted about frantically, knowing just what that catch meant. If it was alive—that is, unexploded—the danger was obvious to anyone. It might blow the bottom out of the trawler at any minute. The skipper was letting the trawl drift astern, and setting his engines going ahead in order to escape that calamity if he could.

But he wasn't cutting adrift. If he did that he would lose his trawl, and no fisherman cuts his nets loose until he is absolutely forced to it. Nets are money. Besides, dead or alive, the Naval authorities would pay a reward for that torpedo, and even if he got rid of the thing and let it sink again it represented danger and trouble to all other fishing vessels in the neighbourhood.

Skipper Roscoe knew his duty when he saw it. He had to get the torpedo out of harm's way if he could, and he meant to do it. He rushed to the wheel-house while Billy paid out the line, and the trawl drifted away astern a bit. Frank set the engines going, and the Sapphire, labouring badly in the heavy seas, steamed slowly southward, towing her dangerous catch a cable's length astern.

If the Sapphire had had aboard her the proper ship's crew, the skipper could have handled that torpedo much better. He might have got a weight on her, sunk her, and marked the spot with a small buoy, then gone to port and informed the authorities. Or he might have taken the risk of bringing her alongside, hoisting her to the deck, lashing her down and running for port with a danger signal at the gaff.

But, short-handed as they were, they could not handle a wet, slippery torpedo. The slightest slip, the merest knock, and they might all be blown to bits. He was doing the only thing left for him to do, leaving it in the trawl and towing it home.

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But it was risky work. The heavy seas crashed over the Sapphire, the wind howled, and the trawl surged from one side to the other. If the wind veered a point, if an extra big wave hit that trawl and swung it round so that it crashed against the counter of the trawler, then that trip would end in a disastrous fashion.

Billy was astern, watching, boathook in hand. He hardly knew what he could do if the worst came to the worst, but he felt he had to be ready for eventualities. The skipper was peering astern, craning his neck to see round the battered stack. Frank was toiling at his engines, feeling slightly concerned whenever he thought of that dangerous cargo towing astern.

If he hit up too much speed the whirling propeller might suck that trawl close under

the counter. If they paid out more rope the trawl might be unmanageable and swing round to crash broadside on. And no one suggested cutting it loose. That was simply unthinkable.

"How is she travelling?" bellowed the skipper.

"Easy all!" yelled Billy.

"Shall we go faster?"

"No!"

"But the seas are swamping us!"

"I'd rather drown than blow up!" retorted Billy.

"Might pay out a bit and see how she goes."

He came forward to the winch, and set the lines ready for paying out. He bent over the winch. The skipper turned and bellowed down to Frank.

"Steam fr the winch!"

"All set!" cried Frank.

But before Billy could set the winch going the seagull, under the break of the fo'c'sle, let out a screech of alarm. Billy spun round and saw the danger immediately—a trawler, without lights, was bearing down upon them at full speed!

"Port y'r helm!" he screamed. "Hard down, fr y'r life!"

CHAPTER 3.

In Harbour Again!

SKIPPER ROSCOE took one look and obeyed, whirling the spokes frantically, forgetful of the torpedo in the trawl.

The night was black, and that ship without a light had approached at top speed without being seen.

"Ahoy!" yelled the skipper. "Are you mad? Where's y'r look-out? Ahoy!"

"Ahoy! Port y'r helm!" screeched Billy.

"All hands on deck!" roared Skipper Roscoe.

And Frank came up out of the engine-room like a shot. The Sapphire was swinging round, responsive to her helm, but that strange trawler never altered her course an inch. She would ram the Sapphire—cut her in two.

"I'll set her full ahead!" panted Frank.

He dived back to his levers, and the engines rattled and roared. The Sapphire forged ahead, the laden trawl swinging in a wild arc astern of her. Frank came back on deck. If the stranger did collide with the Sapphire, he wanted a sporting chance of escape from death.

"Hold on all!" bawled the skipper.

He whirled the spokes of the wheel. Once more the Sapphire came round, the water curdled to foam under her counter as she forged ahead. Then Billy pointed at the dark bulk of the stranger.

"The Opal!" he shrieked.

Sure enough, they could make out the large registration letters and numbers on her freeboard as she rose on a wave crest.

The next moment the Sapphire swooped down on a great wave, and the sharp prow of the Opal clove the water barely three yards from her stern.

"Missed up!" gasped Frank.

"But the torpedo!" cried Billy.

The prow of the Opal struck the trawl rope. It pulled taut from the winch and snapped with a sharp report. The trawl swung round from the impact, and hit the bows of the Opal a glancing blow, and in the trawl was the torpedo. There was a blinding flash, and an ear-splitting explosion.

"It was a live one!" gasped the skipper, as if he had doubted it all along.

The wind howled and the waves ran high. What had happened aboard the Opal it was impossible to say. Her helm went up and she came round to the wind, her speed lost, yawing wildly, her mizzen flapping and thudding, smoke belching from her stack, her bows sinking lower in the water, the waves dashing over her fore'sle.

Skipper Roscoe brought the Sapphire round in a wide circle. It needed skilful handling to do it in the gale that now raged; but even if Sims had done his best to ruin him, Roscoe wasn't the man to abandon a ship in distress. Besides, the Opal belonged to him.

Billy fought his way aft and clung to the wreckage of the wheel-house.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Stand by to render assistance, of course!" snapped the skipper. "What else can we do?"

"She'll founder. That tin fish must have blown the bottom out of her."

"On the other hand p'r'aps it didn't," retorted the skipper. "I was mine-sweeping during the War. I've seen a bit with them tin fishes. If it isn't a direct hit they don't do the damage you'd expect."

"She's down by the head."

"Holed, I'll bet! But we may get her home."

"If that seagull hadn't let out a screech, Sims would have sent us down to the bottom and called it an accident."

"I know all about that," growled Skipper Roscoe. "Maybe Tubby Venn wirelessly to him—told him we were trawling these grounds—and he came to find us."

"I warned you," said Billy grimly. "Not that it matters now. I had an idea Venn was lying all the time. He said he saw a Lowestoft boat miles away from him. I believe he'd spoken to Sims, and was half expecting to sight us."

"No sense arguing about it now," said the skipper. "The Opal has stopped her engines. I'm running under her counter. Keep your weather eye lifted."

The Sapphire came round in a welter of foam and forged ahead, close to the drifting Opal. The Opal's crew were busy round the small boat by the foremast.

"Dead slow!" bellowed the skipper.

"Dead slow it is," said Frank, handling the levers in the engine-room.

Then the skipper hailed the Opal.

"Aho! Where's Sims?"

"Knocked out!" yelled someone.

"Ship's sinking, and we're leaving her!"

"You stay where you are!" bawled Billy.

"I'm giving orders here!" growled the skipper.

"But look!" cried Billy, pointing.

"See where she's holed?"

As the Sapphire went ahead the skipper stared at the bows of the Opal.

There was a hole in her plates, but it was above the water-line. The waves had lifted that trawl and hurled it against the Opal. The jar of the collision had exploded the torpedo, but the nose of the torpedo had not actually touched the Opal. If it had the Opal would not have remained afloat two minutes.

"Tricky things, them torpedoes," said the skipper. "You can never tell what they'll do."

"Bring her round, and I'll jump aboard," said Billy.

"This is where we salvage two ships."

"Half speed!" snapped the skipper.

Frank handled the engines skilfully, and it needed skill to be engineer and stoker as well.

Billy prepared ropes and had them ready, coiled and tied to his waist. The skipper steered the Sapphire in a circle. She headed away from the Opal, thrust her nose up to the wind in a smother of foam, swerved round, and came down with the wind, her dented stack belching smoke as she came. So cleverly was it done that she scraped the bulwarks of the Opal as the two ships passed.

Billy stood on the broken bulwarks of the Sapphire, and leapt at the fore shrouds of the Opal. His outflung hands gripped the ropes. The Opal rolled in the swell, and dipped him in the water almost up to the neck. Then as she lifted herself he came up and clawed his way in-board. He started off along the galleyway as Roberts, ex-mate of the Sapphire, dropped from the wheel-house, his face convulsed with fury.

"You get off here!" he bellowed.

But Billy acted, springing at the man. He brought his fist round smartly, and his bunched knuckles crashed in Roberts' face. The man reeled back and fell heavily, his head striking the wheel of the winch. The blow stunned him, and he slumped on the deck, senseless.

Billy grabbed a rope and tied his hands and feet. He was running no risks. The crew were grouped sullenly at the foot of the foremast, watching him, not hindering him, yet not helping him. They were not at all sure how matters stood.



From the bulwarks of the Sapphire Billy leapt for the fore shrouds of the Opal. His outflung hands gripped the ropes.

"Where's Sims?" snapped Billy.

The bo'sun came forward to explain.

"We only obeyed orders, though we didn't like it," he said. "We ran through the gale without lights. Roberts was at the helm. Sims was up on the fo'c'sle giving Roberts the direction. That tin fish exploded, and a splinter from the deck hit him on the head and knocked him senseless. We took him to his cabin."

"Then lock him in!" snapped Billy. "I'm in command here now. Hustle!"

A man rushed to obey, but the bo'sun protested. "She's sinking," he said. "We ought to get off her."

"You're going to help get her to port. Take the for'ard hatch up. Shift the fish and the boxes aft. Dump 'em anywhere abaft the wheel-house to lift her bows. Smartly, now!"

They were cowed and afraid of the future. They obeyed sullenly. Billy went to the wheel-house, examined the log and the charts, then leant out of the window and bellowed at Skipper Roscoe aboard the Sapphire.

"Ahoj there! Tubby Venn lied about our position. We're within twenty miles of Lowestoft. I'll get a rope to you. Give us a tow, and we'll manage it. The glass is rising, and the wind'll drop."

"Sling the line over then," said the skipper.

Billy sang out orders to the crew of the Opal, and a line snaked over the waters to the stern of the Sapphire, where Frank caught it deftly and hauled a cable aboard, making it fast. Then he went back to the engine-room, and Skipper Roscoe bellowed for half speed.

Meanwhile, aboard the Opal Billy got the for'ard hatch cleared of fish and fish-boxes. Anything and everything that had weight and could be moved was shifted astern of the wheel-house. That caused the stern of the Opal to drop so that the water lapped her bulwarks and lifted her prows high out of the water, raising the hole beyond the reach of the waves. Then the pumps were set working.

The gallant old Sapphire plugged ahead, towing the Opal. The engines of the Opal could have been used, but it would have been dangerous. The action of the screw would have been to make her dip at the prows, and any wave hitting that hole in her bows would have flooded the fo'c'sle.

So the two ships owned by Skipper Roscoe came home from the fishing. The skipper was a proud man in that moment. Homing boats came near to investigate that strange sight and offered help, but he refused persistently. "I can manage," he bellowed. "Haven't I managed all the way from the Faroes?"

As Billy had said, the weather moderated and the wind dropped to a stiff breeze, with no danger in it. And in the grey light of early dawn, so slow had they been forced to proceed, Skipper Roscoe steered the Sapphire between the harbour heads at Lowestoft.

"Safe home!" he growled. "But if it wasn't for them deep-sea pals I'd never have made port again. I don't hanker for another trip like that, Billy, me boy. But I've got my boats, and, what with compensation from the Government over that tin fish, I'll be able to pay off that two hundred I owe Sims, and I'll be safe for the future, sc lay to that."

Sims and Roberts were arrested, although they had to go to hospital for a spell before they could be tried by judge and jury, and then it was a thrilling story that was heard in court, and both men paid the penalty for their crimes at sea. As for the crew of the Opal, they were sternly censured; but as they were obliged to obey orders, it was difficult to bring definite charges against them. But not one of them ever sailed on one of the Roscoe ships again. They said that they never properly understood what was going on, and maybe that was largely true of most of them, if not of all.

But the skipper was satisfied, and when he made Billy and Frank partners, they were satisfied, too. But if ever you see a gull perched on the masthead of the old Sapphire, you can bet it's a pal of Billy's, whose screech saved them from being rammed by the Opal. They say that bird watches over Billy now, and maybe it's true. Queer things happen at sea!

THE END.

(Well, the Sapphire's won through, after all, but it was a tough voyage! Next week's GEM will contain the first story of a new series, "SLICK DOLAN—WHARF RAT!" It's a winner, boys!)

"THE 'RABBIT' OF THE SHELL!"

(Continued from page 19.)

"One moment!"

It was the Rabbit's deep voice, and the two juniors paused on their way to the door. The deep voice continued.

"My dear Dr. Holmes! I sincerely trust you will not—er—consider me interfering, but while I agree that—er—Merry and the other boys did a very foolish thing in—chrrm!—acquiring my spectacles in such a manner, I must and will say that I do—yes I do—consider them almost justified in doing so—chrrm!"

The little man blew his nose vigorously, and replaced the pink hands in their customary position in front of his chest.

"When I asked you to allow me to seek refuge at St. Jim's, my dear Holmes," continued McTavish, "to escape from the rogues who were trying to steal my invention, I should have thought more of what would be expected of me as a master. I am afraid, I—I must say, that I have failed miserably in the offices of master, and I am frankly overjoyed that Mr. Linton will return on Monday, and I can go away and leave the boys in peace once more."

"But—" began the Head, but McTavish silenced him with a gesture.

"The spectacles are another outcome of my eccentricity. I invented them and manufactured them as a protection against the enemies who were trying to get hold of my invention for a foreign power, and I have become so accustomed to them, and to seeing, as it were, back and front at the same time, that I am afraid I harassed the boys considerably."

"But, my dear McTavish—" began the Head again.

"Quite, quite! I fully appreciate your feelings in the matter, Dr. Holmes, but I want you to take into consideration the fact that this boy—er—Merry, while he was stealing the case containing the spectacles, was absolutely instrumental in saving me from being kidnapped by these rogues. I consider it was an extremely plucky act to hack the assailant's shin with the steel case, for if he had not done so, I have no doubt but that they would have taken me away, and forced me to divulge the secret of my invention to them. They might even have taken my life, after getting the secret, for, believe me, they were desperate enough!

"Moreover, Merry, I believe, together with—er—Glyn, and the unfortunate Grundy, played a great part in capturing the men who were dogging me. Dr Holmes, it

would grieve me very deeply indeed to know that this plucky youngster were expelled from the school because of myself!"

There was silence in the study for some seconds, the Head gazing straight in front of him, his fingers drumming agitatedly on the arm of his chair. Presently he turned to the professor.

"There is a great deal in what you say, McTavish, although I cannot conceive but that the boy's act was one of extreme impertinence and—er—wilfulness."

Dr. Holmes paused, and then turned to Tom.

"Nevertheless, Merry, you may rest assured that you will not be expelled from St. Jim's."

Tears almost sprang to Tom's eyes.

"Thank you, sir!" was all he could say, and then he bolted for the door, followed by Glyn.

Five minutes later he returned with the case containing the specs and—what was more important—the plans of the wonderful machine which the Head's old friend, Professor John Gordon McTavish, had invented. The specs were broken—the terrific shock they had received when the case had come in contact with our friend Hemedo's shin had seen to that, but the plans were intact.

The professor's joy on receiving the precious plans was a sight Tom would never forget. The little man almost hung round the junior captain's neck.

Tom's punishment was bad enough, but not as drastic as he had anticipated—gatings for the rest of the month—Grr!

The great George Alfred Grundy recovered from his injuries with a speed that spoke of a constitution as thick and hard as his skin, and a fortnight later black eyes were at a discount in the lower school.

Fellows simply could not resist the temptation to call Grundy "Sherlock," "The Great Spy," and sundry other names calculated to make the great man of the Shell demonstrate the fact that his experiences of that memorable Saturday had not taken from him any of his prowess with his terrible straight left!

Nevertheless, after that Grundy certainly boasted less of "detective ability," and so on, and seemed more wary as to the kind of thing he chose to "divestigate!"

THE END

(There are laughs galore in next week's ripping yarn of St. Jim's: "THE TAMING OF THE TYRANT!" Make a point of getting your GEM early and thus AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT!)



By
HEDLEY SCOTT.

(Opening Chapters
Retold on Page 26.)

The RANGERS' RECRUIT!

A Startling Sensation!

PIERRE DUPREZ'S eyes opened wide in horror as he saw this sudden change in the man he had accounted his victim, and with what wits were left to him strove to account reasonably for his own pitiful condition. As yet, however, the truth was hidden from him.

"My friend," said Locke coolly, "it takes a better hand than Pierre Duprez, or whatever your real name is, to poison me!"

"Ah! Then you are not poisoned?" This time words came readily to the Frenchman. "You were shamming! You did not scratch yourself! Ciel! Mon Dieu!"

"I did not scratch myself," returned Locke evenly, "so I certainly shall not be 'gone in five—ten—fifteen minutes—poof!' to use your own words. But you will be!"

"Me?" screamed the Frenchman.

Locke nodded.

"Yes! You see, my criminal friend, when you stooped and picked up the poisoned ring, I closed your fingers over it. The chances were a thousand to one on you getting scratched, and getting, incidentally, the poison so kindly intended for myself."

"Mon Dieu!" The Frenchman's terror was pitiful. "But I am killed! I know not the antidote. Oh, mon Dieu!"

"There is a chance that I shall be able to save you," said Locke contemptuously. "A faint chance. But until I have your word on one point I shall not lift a finger to save your miserable skin. Understand?"

The Frenchman crumpled down on his knees. In an incoherent babble he pleaded with the detective to save him;

promised to do anything asked of him, to be given the chance to live in return.

And the precious minutes of life were ebbing away.

"You must promise to return to your master and tell him that you have fulfilled his plan—"

"I promise!" babbled Gustave, an abject figure of misery and pathos. "I promise by all that I hold dear."

"Furthermore, you must tell your master that you intend to return to your own country immediately," pursued Locke relentlessly; "that you, having performed his last service, wish to sever all connections with him and his accomplices."

"I promise!" In an almost incoherent, unceasing stream the Frenchman repeatedly voiced his willingness. "I promise with my honour!"

"Friend Buxton will never suspect," concluded Locke deliberately. "It is your only chance—your only chance of life now and subsequent liberty!"

At mention of Buxton's name the Frenchman went into fresh paroxysms of grovelling appeal. How he cursed his folly at that moment for even daring to pit his wits against such a formidable foe as Ferrers Locke—the man who had not only played with him, despite his cunning, but, furthermore, knew the identity of the arch-criminal who had sent him on that murderous errand!

To do Gustave Lamont justice, he repented him at that moment of his wickedness, and comforted his wretched soul with the reflection that, despite his manifold crimes against civilisation, murder was not, mercifully, included in them. He would sever his connection with the Buxton gang at the first possible opportunity.

With rapidly glazing eyes he watched Ferrers Locke sterilise a hypodermic syringe, saw, as through a cloud, the detective advance upon him and bare his arm—that arm

in which the fatal poison had entered!

Then Gustave Lamont knew no more. He had fainted!

Ferrers Locke was busy after that.

A trusted taximan was given the task of taking Pierre Duprez, alias Gustave Lamont, to his own quarters. A couple of addressed envelopes in the Frenchman's pockets had supplied the necessary address in the first place, and a telephone call through to the flat in question had proved the matter beyond doubt. Gustave Lamont's butler-valet had been instructed to await the arrival of his master, who had had a "seizure." He would arrive by taxi.

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BILL HARTLEY GETS A SHOCK!

Dead Detective comes to life behind
locked doors.

Ferrers Locke watched the taxi disappear in the mists of a London fog that was rapidly blanketing the metropolis, with a grim smile. In his pocket reposed the fatal ring—Marchant Buxton's ring, the ring which had twice proved abortive in Buxton's villainous scheming. On the little table, close handy, were Lamont's grey wig and beard.

"And now for a little wire-pulling!" muttered Locke.

He crossed to the receiver, and requested the recipient of his message to put in an appearance at the Baker Street flat without delay.

There arrived within five minutes Lynx-eye Collins, the star reporter of Fleet Street, the leading light of the "Daily Recorder" staff—a trusted and valued friend of Ferrers Locke.

Within an hour of Collins' departure from the detective's flat, all London was echoing to the newsboys' cried of a special edition of the "Recorder." In blazing posters appeared the news that Ferrers Locke had been found poisoned!

It was a daring piece of journalism, but Collins had been promised a "front row" seat with the full story of Locke's latest case, when he had completed it.

The effect of that news helped Gustave Lamont considerably. He awoke the following morning, after a deep sleep, to find himself in his own flat, closely watched by his anxious butler-valet.

"Thank heavens," murmured that individual, on seeing his master show signs of consciousness. "I thought you were never coming to."

Gustave Lamont's head was in a whirl. How had he reached his flat? How was he indeed alive? The first question was readily answered by his butler-valet; the second only found answer in recollection of those terrible minutes of lingering between life and death at Ferrers Locke's flat.

Almost mechanically Gustave Lamont sipped the coffee his servant had prepared, and took up his morning newspaper. Then he almost leaped clear of the bed.

"Mon Dieu!" he gasped, and the perspiration stood out in beads on his forehead. "Dead! Ferrers Locke poisoned!"

With intent to assist his agitated master, the butler-valet read out the full report dealing with the mysterious death of the famous detective—a circumstance which gave Gustave Lamont plenty of time to get a grip of himself.

Then the poison had worked; Ferrers Locke had indeed scratched himself fatally, unknowingly. How else to account for his death? Gustave for the moment gloated in his triumph. The irony of it all touched his humour. The man he had set out to poison had saved his life in return, and now was dead by that same poison!

Yet Lamont's gloating died in its infancy, and fear—stark fear—took its place. If Ferrers Locke was dead, then he, Gustave Lamont, was his murderer! Horror of horrors! At all costs it behoved Gustave Lamont to sever connections with the Buxton gang and England, without the loss of a minute.

In a state of trembling fear he leaped from the bed and snatched his clothes.

"My passport, Tompkins!" he babbled wildly. "I'm off to France by the first passenger plane from Croydon. Phone and reserve me a seat at once!"

"Yes, sir!" answered the astonished servant.

Gustave Lamont, a bag of nerves and keyed-up apprehension, was completely dressed within five minutes. His place in the morning passenger plane to Le Bourget Aerodrome, in France, was reserved.

Could he get out of the country before the police got on his trail?

His heart leaped into his mouth as the door bell screeched at that moment. Before the Frenchman could command his servant, not to admit anyone, the over-obliging Tompkins had answered the summons.

In an agony of dread Gustave Lamont watched the figure that came into view a second later.

It was Adolph Haverswood!

Gustave Lamont mopped his perspiring forehead and sank into an armchair lipped.

The dude advanced with hand outstretched in welcome, an engaging smile of approbation in his good-looking face.

"Congratulations, Gustave!" he said quietly. "Heartily congratulations! You have done well! The chief"—this in lowered tones—"sent me specially to commend you!"

A sickly grin overspread Gustave Lamont's face. His

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inordinate vanity was not proof against such complimentary words.

"Poof!" he exclaimed. "It was easy!" Albeit, the shudder that ran through his frame did not escape the eagle eye of Adolph Haverswood.

Neither did the packed suitcases standing in the hall, for that matter.

"You off for a week-end?" he lazily inquired.

Gustave Lamont's confusion was obvious.

"Nunno! That is, yes, of course!"

Something in his tone gave Haverswood the clue. He fixed a keen pair of eyes on his crony now—eyes that had lost their mask of lazy indifference to the world and everything in it.

"Do I gather that you are leaving us, Gustave?" he asked pertinently. "For good?"

Gustave Lamont rose to his feet and towered over the slimly-built dude.

"Why beat about the bush?" he said arrogantly. "I am finished. I am going back to France. You will please tell Buxton that, Adolph?"

A scornful smile played about the corners of Haverswood's mouth.

"That I will most readily do," he replied. "But I think you are foolish. Buxton is rather touchy these days, you know. Don't you think you had better change your mind and stay in England—and with us?"

Again Gustave Lamont drew himself up to his full height. "I do not!" he declared positively. "I am finished. I have had the scare of my life. Why, even now the police may be on my track. You will soon forget me, Adolph. There will be others to take my place. Good-bye!"

Adolph Haverswood shrugged his shoulders carelessly, but the gesture did not hide the smouldering menace in his eyes.

"Very well, Gustave. You have made up your mind. I hope you will not regret it. But, before you go, will you please return the ring which Buxton loaned to you for—"

"S-sh!" hissed Gustave Lamont, in an agony of fear.

"Someone might hear!"

"The ring, then," said Adolph firmly, and he held out a well-manicured hand to receive it.

It was then that Gustave Lamont grew panicky. He dived his fingers into his pockets and searched vainly for the fatal ring. He questioned the servant, but all he learned from Tompkins was enough to provide him with a fresh scare. The wig and the moustache he had worn! What had become of them? What could have become of them, since he, Gustave, had not arrived home with them the previous night? What indeed, but they had been left in Ferrers Locke's flat—the very flat in which now, for all he knew, policemen were assiduously searching for clues!

The fear of pursuit and possible arrest drove Gustave Lamont nearly frantic.

"The ring!" Haverswood had asked for the third time.

Lamont turned on him tigerishly.

"The ring? Curse the ring! Curse the lot-of-you!"

And while those hot words were echoing to the four walls of the Frenchman's sitting-room, Gustave Lamont was bundling himself and his baggage into a taxi.

"Croydon—"

Ferrers Locke had guessed the mentality of his man accurately. He would keep his word; he would sever his connection with the Buxton gang and clear out of the country. Yet there was one thing Ferrers Locke, with all his keenness, had overlooked—Buxton! He was reminded of it that same evening, however, when, as a film-actor looking for work, he took humble diggings in the neighbourhood of Woking, close to the Tindean Film Studios, of which concern Haverswood was a director, and afterwards settled down in his small bed-sitting-room to peruse his evening paper.

His own sudden end had been superseded in the world of newspaperdom with lengthy reports of "another mysterious shooting affray," that had taken place just before noon on the Purley road. The body of a Frenchman, identified as

Gustave Lamont, had, on arrival in a taxicab at Croydon Aerodrome, been found to be riddled with bullets! Who the Frenchman's assailant or assailants were, was a complete mystery. The taxi-driver had noticed nothing untoward on the way to the aerodrome. He had not stopped, except for traffic blocks; he had heard nothing above the monotonous hum of his engine; he had observed no suspicious-looking characters en route. But his fare was dead!

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

BILL HARTLEY, a six-foot edition of brawn and muscle, with flaming red hair, is "sent down" from Oxford. Arriving home, he quarrels with his father and goes to London to find work. There he meets Major Carstairs, an old friend, who is chairman of the Cashton Rangers F.C. After a trial Bill is signed on by the club, only to find that their centre-forward is Marchant Buxton, who brought about his dismissal from the Varsity. Buxton, who is also the leader of a gang of crooks, is determined to ruin Bill, but Ferrers Locke intervenes. Determined that the detective must be silenced once and for all, Buxton appoints Gustave Lamont, a member of the gang, to poison Locke. Disguised as a French detective, and wearing a specially prepared poisoned ring on one finger, Lamont, under the name of Duprez, visits his victim. Locke, however, quickly tumbles to the plot, and the ultimate result is that the gangster is himself poisoned by means of that same ring with which he had schemed to dispose of Ferrers Locke!

(Now read on.)

It caused another sensation, but outside the Buxton gang, Ferrers Locke was perhaps the only living individual who could have solved the mystery.

"Poor Lamont," murmured Locke, with a shake of the head. "He was not cut out for a gangster." Then his face, a perfect piece of make-up, furrowed grimly. "But that means another crime for which the Buxton gang will have to pay the penalty. A matter of days now!"

Meet Michael Kelly.

WHILE Ferrers Locke played his part in the Woking district, under the name of Michael Kelly, an Irish film actor from the overcrowded studios of Hollywood, and desirous of finding an engagement, Bill Hartley trained hard and often for the Saturday match with Stapleton Town. He and Tich Freeman, in the quiet of the evenings, even went to the lengths of rehearsing on a chess-board the crafty moves they intended to spring on the opposition—a method much despised these days, albeit one that famous Soccer players of the past have proved in both theory and practice.

As for Scotty, the terrier, Bill Hartley's new-found friend, he had accepted Tich and Bill with all the loyalty and devotion peculiar to a high-class member of the canine species, and harmony reigned in the little cosy flat which sheltered the three.

"How do you feel about the Stapleton match, Bill?" asked Tich

"Feel?" boomed Bill. "Why, Tich, my son, we're going to beat them handsomely. And if Buxton gives of his best—in football, I mean—our forward line will give the Stapleton crowd shocks!"

Tich scowled, as he always did at mention of Buxton's name.

"I'd feel a durned sight 'ppier if that window-pane dummy wasn't in the team. Wonder why the management shoved 'im in for this match?"

"He's a social attraction, you know," said Bill, with a forced laugh. "And don't forget that after the match the Duke of Stapleton entertains us at his place."

Tich licked his lips appreciatively.

"Don't I know it!" he remarked. "An' the ole dook does you simply splendid. Have what you like and as often as you like!"

Bill laughed, and then, as his eyes came into alinement with a photograph on his mantelpiece, he grew suddenly serious.

The face that stared out at him from the photo-frame was that of Ferrers Locke. Bill found it hard to believe that the famous detective, who had proved such a friend to him, was no more.

Tich followed his glance and his mood grew serious, too. "Pity about that chap Locke," he said simply. "One of the nicest blokes we ever struck, Bill!"

"You're right," said Bill. "Nothing's been discovered yet. Some say that he might have poisoned himself by accident. He was supposed to be an expert on poisons, and was always experimenting."

"There's something durned queer about it all," opined Tich. "The papers ain't saying anything. There's been no pow-wow about the inquest—"

"Nothing," agreed Bill. "Every time I trot round for information an officious policeman named Inspector Pycroft, tells me to beat it. There's something queer about it, as you say."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when there came a buzz from the front door bell. Bill started to his feet and raced downstairs. His big muscles jerked open the door as if it had been a ton weight.

A tall figure of a man, carrying a large parcel, staggered over the threshold, panting and gulping in great breaths of air.

"Who—what—" began Bill heatedly, resenting the stranger's "taken for granted" methods. And that was all he had time to say.

The unknown visitor quickly slammed the door shut and took the steps to Bill's quarters three at a time. In amazement

Bill followed angrily. On the threshold of the sitting-room Tich was roughly thrust aside by the stranger. He growled a protest, and looked on wonderingly, first at Bill, and then at the newcomer.

The latter carefully placed the large parcel he was carrying under the table, and then sank into an armchair.

Bill's big fists clenched unconsciously, and his anger showed in his crimson face.

"And who the thump do you think you are?" he burst out at length. "And what the heck do you mean by barging in here like this?"

With the words he advanced and shook the stranger by the shoulder, much as a dog shakes a rat. To his amazement, to say nothing of Tich Freeman's, the man burst into a chuckle.

"Don't be alarmed, guv'nor!" came his unmistakable Cockney voice. "I ain't doing no 'arm. 'Sides, I have somethin' to tell you abaht Ferrers Locke—"

"Locke!"

"Oh!"

Both Tich and Bill fell back. Their interest was aroused immediately, their anger forgotten at the intrusion.

"It's like this 'ere, mates," continued the stranger, eyeing both shrewdly. "I 'as reason to think that you're pals of that bloke Locke."

Tich Freeman nodded.

"One of the best men I ever met," declared Bill Hartley sincerely.

"Then I can let you into a secret," whispered the stranger. "You see, 'e ain't dead, though all the world thinks 'e is."

Bill and Tich's faces brightened. Next moment doubt returned. How could this uncouth stranger know anything about Ferrers Locke?

"Can you keep a secret, mates?" asked the stranger. "A real secret between the two o' you an' me?"

Mechanically Tich and Bill found themselves replying in the affirmative.

"On your Davy?"

Again came the affirmative replies.

"Then forget all you've read in the papers, mates," continued the stranger, "and prepare for a shock!"

With the words he scrubbed vigorously at his face with a specially prepared sponge which he drew from his pocket, snatched at his thick mop of curly hair, which came away in his hand, eased the

muscles of his face, and turned upon the startled chums a countenance that was the original of the face that peered out from the photograph on the mantelpiece!

"Ferrers Locke!"

"Strike me! Mr. Locke!"

Incredulity and amazement, doubt and horror, and returning incredulity switched to and fro in the expressions of Bill and Tich. It seemed unbelievable. The dead returned to life!

Both chums, Bill especially, told themselves that they were dreaming, but repeated, searching looks at the alternately smiling and grave face before them provided conviction.

It was indeed Ferrers Locke.

"Well!" Just one word from Bill, but it conveyed a world of meaning, whilst Tich's gaping mouth of horrified doubt, weakened under the influence of what his own eyes told him.

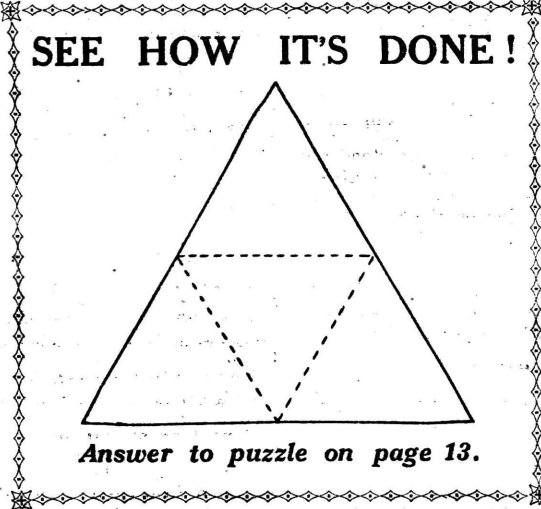
Locke dropped his Cockney accent.

"Excuse the masquerade," he said simply. "It was necessary for two reasons. One to lessen the shock, the other to lend success to the mission upon which I am engaged. But remember, to the outside world Ferrers Locke is dead. I have your word that you will not divulge that secret? To you, my friends—friends whom I need in this emergency—I am very much alive."

"Good gad!" breathed Bill. "But what in the name of all that's wonderful does it mean?"

"For reasons which both directly and indirectly concern you, Bill, I simply had to die. You must not ask me more

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at this stage. Suffice it, then, that I am now a new resident of Woking. That I am Michael Kelly, film actor, lately returned from Hollywood, and now seeking work at the Tindean Studios."

"This beats me!" confessed Bill.

"Bloomin' well licks me holler!" added Tich.

"Later will come the full explanation," said Locke, with a smile. "But you see that parcel under the table? Good! Guard it with your lives until the morning, when I want you to place it in a safe deposit. That parcel contains drums of films—films of shows the Tindean Film Co. have produced, but never shown to the public. They are precious, very precious. As an ordinary working man—as the man who walked into this flat a few moments ago, I succeeded in lifting them from the studios. The watchman unfortunately saw me and gave chase, hence my breathless state when I arrived here. Certainly he never guessed that I chose this as my burrow. Equally certain he never recognised in that disguise of Michael Kelly, who the director of the Tindean Films engaged yesterday.

"Then you deliberately set out, as Michael Kelly, to get into the studios," said Bill, beginning to see daylight, "so that you could snaffle these drums of films?"

"Your intelligence is well up to scratch, Bill," said Locke, with a smile. "I'll tell you more. For days now Jack Drake has been keeping an eye on the Tindean Film Company's premises. There's a pretty story to unfold—later on."

"You say all this comes about through me—indirectly?" gasped Bill.

Locke smiled.

"I do, with emphasis," he observed, "for it was through you that I was brought into the case—a case, Bill, that will prove the biggest triumph of my career when I have brought it to a successful conclusion."

"Well, I'm blown!" Bill's astonishment was pardonable. His head was in a whirl.

Locke glanced at the clock on the mantel.

"Time I was off. My landlady at Woking must not grow suspicious of her Irish lodger. Excuse me!"

From a capacious pocket Locke withdrew the paraphernalia of make-up. With a few deft touches of grease paint he became, Michael Kelly again. His trousers and coat were reversible; his cap sprang into shape as a Trilby. With mouths agape, the two chums watched the metamorphosis. One look in the glass Locke gave himself, seemed satisfied, and then, with outstretched hand, turned to Bill and Tich.

"Must be off!" he said simply. "You'll keep as mum as oysters, I know. Good luck in the Stapleton match, and look out for thrills in the reception at the duke's mansion!"

Hardly had the significance of that last remark sunk home, when to the ears of Bill and Tich came the sound of a closing door.

Ferrers Locke was gone!

Sixty thousand football enthusiasts paid their money to witness the match between two such celebrated clubs as Cashton and Stapleton, and the extra police that had been called in to manage the giant crowd turned away thousands of disappointed late-comers.

Conditions were ideal. Overhead the cheerful rays of the sun splashed a blue sky, across which the clouds moved with majestic slowness. The turf, carefully tended by diligent groundsmen, showed short and crisp. What little wind there was would be of scant advantage to either side.

Major Carstairs watched the jostling crowd with eyes that glinted approval. The terraces were packed solid; the stands would hold no more. The local band, parked in the centre of the playing pitch, played popular airs to keep the masses entertained until such time as the game should start.

"Very satisfactory, major—what?"

Carstairs turned as that cultured voice reached his ears. Towering above him stood a genial giant of a man in the middle forties. His weather-tanned face bespoke the traveller; his well-knit frame and easy carriage betokened the sportsman.

"Good-afternoon, your Grace!" And Major Carstairs offered his hand in greeting.

The Duke of Stapleton shook warmly.

"A record crowd, major!" he said breezily. "It's good to see them here!"

The major nodded.

It certainly was good, from every point of view—principally that of the "gate-money" which the Rangers would share with their rivals, Carstairs told himself.

For two or three minutes the Duke of Stapleton chatted amiably with Carstairs; then the pair of them sought the respective dressing-rooms of the two elevens.

Sandy Ferguson was giving his charges a final "once over." All of them looked to be in the pink of condition. Even Marchant Buxton appeared to have trained for the forthcoming tussle.

Tich and Bill were conversing in low tones. They had scarcely recovered from the shock of finding Ferrers Locke alive; and not infrequently their glances travelled in the direction of Marchant Buxton, suave and debonaire. Could he, they asked themselves, be the arch-soundrel the Baker Street detective imagined? It was too vast a problem for them.

(The Rangers are booked for a gruelling tussle. But what's going to happen at the Duke's reception? See next week's instalment, chums, you'll be thrilled no end when you read it.)

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