

GRIPPING LONG COMPLETE MYSTERY YARN OF ST. JIM'S INSIDE!

The GEM

2^D



The GHOST of MARLOW GRANGE!

FATTY WYNN'S



CHAPTER I. Useful Information!

"**A**NYTHING for me, Chubb?"

"Nothing for you to-day, Master Trimble!"

There very rarely was anything for Trimble. Chubb, the Bykonesse postman, grinned as he answered Buggy, and there was more than a hint of sarcasm in the emphasis he put on the "to-day."

Practically every day Buggy was to be found moaning about the school gates, waiting for the post; practically every day Buggy was disappointed. Business and Buggy Trimble were surely an even speaking terms, and Buggy, accordingly, lived a life of perpetual disappointment.

He grunted.

"Blessed if I can see anything to grin about, Chubb!" he roared. "You're sure there isn't! I was expecting rather an important—"

"You always see, Master Trimble, That's for Master Wynn."

Chubb handed an envelope snatched a letter from his hand. The Enquirer.—No. 1,238.

"I see it is," said Buggy calmly, not offering to hand it back. "It's all right, Chubb—I'll hand it to my pal Wynn. Matter of fact, I'm just waiting for him."

"But— Oh, very well, Master Trimble."

Though against regulations, Chubb often handed over letters to college fellows; he didn't dream of entrusting a St. Jim's man. And as it was the only letter for the New House he was only too glad to be moved the trudge across the quadrangle.

He nodded appreciatively, and went off towards the School House.

Buggy blinked at the letter. It was typewritten and business-like, and curiosity was Buggy's bounding sin.

"Fossil! Cardiff," murmured Buggy, his eyes beginning to glimmer. "I bet it's something about that property Wynn's uncle's left him in his giddy will."

He turned the letter over in his fat hands, noting as he did so that the flap was more or less securely fastened. And as he blinked the temptation grew with his curiosity.

"I—I think I'll have a squint," he decided at last. "If it's more good news perhaps I'll be able to wrangle some—"

—THEIR EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF MARLOW GRANGE!

LEGACY!

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



hesitatingly advise you to accept this legacy.
Yours faithfully,
"Signed" J. Jones,
Messrs. Jones & Co."

"My hat!" bawled Bagger Trimbles. "Three—three thousand giddy quids! Floor! I'd jolly soon sell for that! What the thumping good's a house? You can't eat it! But with three thousand— Floor!"

Bagger lobbed the flap again and sealed up the letter, hoping the traces that the letter had been opened would not be noticed. He rammed it into his pocket, his eyes glimmering. Fatty Wynn would undoubtedly be grateful to a fellow who brought him good news like that. Bagger had suddenly discovered quite an affectionate regard for the fortunate Fatty!

But just as Bagger was about to make a beeline for the New House across eleven yards across through the gate-way. They were Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., and Trimbles' eyes glimmered greedily as they fell upon a hand-basket carried by Leather and Digby.

As he sighted it Bagger promptly forgot Fatty Wynn's letter—and the three thousand quids. On this occasion Bagger had not been waiting for the postman. He had been waiting for Tom Merry & Co.—and here they were!

"Hallo! Oh, good! Here you are, you fellows!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Just waiting for you!"

"But Jove! Trimbles!"

"Bagger!" growled Tom Merry. "And we thought we'd kept our giddy pinks a secret."

"Oh, really, Merry—"
"Not until legshells are abolished at St. Joe's will secrets be safe from Trimbles," said Leather.

"Oh, really, Leather! I say, I've been waiting ages, you know," said Trimbles, rolling after the seven grinning justices. "Shall I take a hand with the basket, Leather, old fellow?"

"Shoo off, you fat art!" snapped Blake.

"If he wants the basket let him have it," said Leather. "Now, Dig—"

"That's right, Leather. I'm not here, I hope— Yoooop!"

Bump!

Bagger took the basket—in his fat chest—as Leather and Digby swung it at him. He sat down with a bump and a howl. Tom Merry & Co. walked on.

Bagger Trimbles scrambled up and rolled breathlessly in percent. A little rebuff like that was not likely to put Bagger Trimbles off.

"I say, you fellows!" he bawled. "Wait for me, you rotters! I'm jolly well coming with you!"

"Wait! Fwy do not bother us, Trimbles! You know well enough that you are not wanted!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"You had better run away and play!"

"Yah! Look here," pleaded Bagger—"don't be mean, you know! I jolly well know where you're going—up river to Meadow Hill!"

"That's right, old fat head! Your keystone information's correct," said Blake, turning his head. "But you're not coming—your're going!"

"Look here— Owt! Yah!" Blake's head missed
THE GAZETTE.—No. 1,232.

thing out of Fatty. In any case, I can easily say I opened it by mistake—that Chubb said it was mine. Here goes!"

And, after a cautious think round, Bagger Trimbles carefully opened the letter.

As he half-expected, it proved to be from the Cardiff solicitors, Messrs. Jones & Co. Bagger had already seen one letter from the legal gentlemen. When the solicitors' letter had come acquainting Fatty Wynn with the glad tidings that a deceased uncle had left him his property in Buncok, Fatty had, naturally enough, shown the letter to all and sundry.

"Dear Sir," this letter ran—
"With further reference to Marlow Grange, the property left to you in the will of your uncle, Mr. Evan Lewis Wynn, I have pleasure in informing you that a deed of gift—Mr. Resident Masters—is very desirous of purchasing the property in question.

"I understand that Mr. Masters proposes to visit you on Wednesday next, and that he is willing to offer £2,000—three thousand pounds—for Marlow Grange and its appurtenances. This I consider is an extremely reasonable offer, and in view of the present somewhat dilapidated state of the Grange, as trustee of the property I would un-

FATTY WYNN'S LEGACY!

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Trimbale by the fraction of an inch. "Yah! Would you!" he barked, trotting after the chains at the bottom of the stream. "Look here, if you don't jolly well imagine some I'll tell those New House wasters to raid you! I'll jolly well—"

"But Jess! We cannot listen to traitorous threats like that, even from Trimbale!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wag him, Jess boys!"

"Wink-ho!"

"Look here—I say, it's all right! Oh, my hat! Loggo! Yawrooooo!"

What happened next was not clear to Buggy Trimbale, but it was very painful. He was grasped, bumped hard on the dusty lane, and then he was rolled, yalling with anguish, into the narrow ditch. The ditch was dry, but full of prickly brambles, and Trimbale's anguished howls increased.

There, after dragging Trimbale's jacket over his head and raising his cap down the back of his neck, Tom Merry & Co. left him—having made it quite clear that there was nothing doing for him.

Tom Merry & Co. disappeared towards the river, and Trimbale was still struggling to get his jacket back over his fat elbows when three other justices came along. This time it was Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House.

"Hallo!" remarked George Figgins, eyeing the struggling Buggy with grinning curiosity. "What's that—a jug trying to teach its teeth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" yelled Trimbale, in a cracked wall. "Help a fellow, can't you? Goodness! I'm—grogg—grogg—wallowing!"

Fatty Wynn, being a very good-natured chap, went to Trimbale's aid. After a struggle the fat youth was helped from the ditch, his face crimson and swollen.

"By—the cotton oads!" spluttered Trimbale. "I—I—"

"You had?" said Figgins, shaking his head. "I suppose Tom Merry's lot did it! Trimbale! Awful brilliant!"

"Yes, those beats did it!" choked Buggy. "Just because a fellow wanted to join their rotten party."

"We spotted 'em with the larch basket," said Figgys, winking knowingly at his chums. "I should rush after 'em, old chap—I suppose you know where the giddy picnic's being held!"

"Yes, I jolly well do—at Meadow Hill. I—I say, Figgys, imagine some with you and we'll raid the picnic, eh?" added Trimbale eagerly. "I warned 'em that I'd tell you chaps if they didn't— Why, what then— Heav, beggo, you— Yawrooooo!"

Once again Buggy had no clear idea what happened to him, and again he found himself in the ditch, wallowing in brambles, and with his jacket over his head and shoulders.

"Thanks for the information, old fat man!" grinned Figgins. "But we don't like fellows who give their own giddy House away. Just a little lesson against playing the traitor, Buggy!"

"You-ow! Grogg! Scowt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And George Figgins & Co. walked away, laughing.

"I guessed Tom Merry was telling his giddy picnic up-river!" shouted Figgys gleefully. "Meadow Hill, eh? Just the information we wanted. We won't trail the beggars now—just cut across the fields to Meadow Hill, watch our giddy chaps, and raid the basket!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr.

"Ripping!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"We wanted to celebrate your inheritance, Fatty," remarked Figgys, "but we hadn't a bean between us. Some good being left a giddy mansion when you can't even raise the funds for a feed to celebrate it!"

"Well, it ain't my fault," said Fatty wistfully. "I wish it had been a hundred quid instead of a rotten house. You can't eat a house, and my palmer's solicitor at home advises me not to sell the blessed place. Still—"

"If we can raid Tom Merry's feed we can celebrate it, anyway," said Figgins cheerfully. "That was my idea, and Trimbale's part as on the right giddy track. Good! Come on, my boys!"

And Figgins led his chums over a stile and across the fields towards the river, intent upon dark deeds of daylight robbery—otherwise, to raid Tom Merry's picnic, if possible.

CHAPTER 2.

An Awkward!

"HERE we are! Full for the shore, you men!"

"Yes, wathah! This is really a vippin' spot for a picnic, dear boys!"

It really was. Meadow Hill was a little

wooded knoll overlooking the Rhyl, and on spring days it was a very favourite spot for picnic parties from St. Jim's.

Today it was looking its best, clothed in fresh greenery. Below ran the shining, rippling river, gleaming in the afternoon sunshine, with trees and thickets growing down to the rocks at the water's edge. From the knoll one could view the Rhyl upstream and downstream as it wound its way like a ribbon of silver into the distance.

Arthur Augustus stood up in the pew as the boat grounded.

"Back up, innage!" called Blake. "Jump ashore and heel her in, dummy!"

Arthur Augustus turned his head. Then, with leisurely dignity he jammed his spectacles into place and scowped Blake coldly.

"I refuse to be alluded to as an innage, or a dummy, Jack Blake!" he remarked firmly.

"Oh, my hat! Then jump ashore, forehead, and draw her in!"

"I think one of you fellows had better do that!" said Guss, shaking his head as he measured the distance with his eye. "I weally cannot wath splashin' my trousers, you know!"

"Oh crygial! Why did we bring it with us?" asked Blake. "Fancy being afraid of soiling its trousers on a giddy picnic!"

"Wendly, Blake—"

"Just dig it in the ribs with a scull, Leather!" said Blake. "We can't hang about here until it rains and the river rises and floods us sooner."

"Certainly, old chap! Always glad to oblige—even a Fourth kid!"

"But Jess! If you dare, Leather! Oh, great Scott! Keep that wretched scull away from my clothes!" shrieked Guss.

"Then jump for it, you eat!"

"I wathah! I absolutely refuse to be— Yoocepl! Or, no! Leather, you stink wathah! Stop! Yoww!"

Arthur Augustus shrieked as the dripping scull pelted into him, whirled vigorously by the grinning Leather. He twisted and danced about to avoid it in vain, and the boat rocked violently.

"Jump, you born idiot!" howled Tom Merry. "You'll have us all overboard in a minute! Leather—"

"Yawrooooo! Oh, great Scott!"

If Arey's determination not to jump gave way before that onslaught as Leather stood up and got to work in earnest with the scull. An extra vigorous shove in the chest all but overbalanced the scull of the Fourth, and with a wild, raging howl he was forced to jump for it.

Naturally, in such circumstances he jumped short—very much short—and there was a splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Man in!" sang out Leather. "Trust Guss not to jump without splashing everybody like this!"

"You-see—you stink wathah, Leather!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

He tramped ashore, and started to squeeze water from the bottom of his smart—or formerly smart—"trousers." The rest of the juniors leaped easily ashore, and the boat was hauled up and made fast.

"Your own fault, Guss!" said Leather severely. "He who hesitates is lost, remember! If you'd jumped instead of faking it! Oh, my hat!"

Leather turned and belted up the raging Arthur Augustus rushed at him, obviously intent upon assault and battery. Leather ran a few yards, and then he dropped flat. Arthur Augustus fell over him and came a fearful cropper.

Leather jumped up and trotted on.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled up and went after him, his noble eye gleaming with wrath now. Nothing short of a fearful thrashing would seem to satisfy Guss after that. Through the trees, leaping bushes and ditches, went Merry Leather, with Guss hot on his trail.

Suddenly Leather vanished from Guss's sight. Not Arthur Augustus was in for too big a rage to be cautious, or to note that Leather's headlong rushing had suddenly ceased also.

He charged like a mad bull past the thicket behind which Leather had hidden himself, and rushed on. Leather shrieked and walked calmly back to the picnic party, leaving Guss to it.

Arthur Augustus rushed on, stopping only when he reached the edge of the little woodland. Beyond lay meadows.

That the figure was Mostly Leather he did not doubt, and he went tearing in pursuit, his eyes fixed behind him at the end of its silver cord.

He reached the spot where the figure had vanished; and then, quite abruptly, Gussy pulled up short.

A voice had reached him from the trees, and it was not Leather's voice. It was the cheery, familiar voice of George Figgins of the New House.

"Go to go slow now, you men!" he was saying warningly. "Don't be in such a jolly old hurry, Fatty, you see! We've got to use strategy if we want to collar that feed!"

"I wait until they're stripped and in the giddy water!" came the cool voice of Kerr. "They're bound to bathe before the feed. Then we can slip in, collar the grub, and bank."

"That's the wisest!" agreed Figgins, with a chuckle.

to raid us! They are goin' to wait until we bathe, and then grab the grub!"

"Then?"

"And we never gave the cheery beggars a thought," said Tom Merry. "We might have known they'd spot us carrying the giddy basket, though. Good man, Gussy! Tell us what you heard—quick!"

Arthur Augustus told them.

"Right! We'll be ready for 'em," chuckled Tom. "They're pretty certain to be scooting round here soon. No need to bathe. If they see the camp unguarded they'll be bound to rush in. Leather, you trot off into the wood and kick us as much row as you can."

"But why on earth—"

"Make 'em fancy we're with you—see?" grinned Tom. "You, Gussy, can sprawl in the grass as if snoozing, and the rest of us will hide in the bushes there."



Buggy landed full on top of Mr. Masters, who went flying back into the ditch with Buggy on top of him!

"Just as they pulled our feed last summer term, you remember. Sit down, Fatty—"

"But I'm frightfully hungry, Figgys—"

"And you'll go on being hungry, Fatty, if we mess things up by being in too big a hurry!"

"But Jove!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "This—the festive rollicks!"

All Arthur Augustus' dice wrath faded; he quite forgot about vengeance upon the hapless Leather in this new game. Quite obviously, it was their picnic the New House rivals proposed to raid.

But Gussy had heard enough, and he made hurried tracks back to his School House charge. He found they had already carried the basket away and were unpacking it. Leather jumped up as he rushed into the little glade.

"Fas! Be careful, Gussy, old dear! I've got my fingers crossed!" he grinned, getting ready to bolt.

But Gussy ignored Leather.

"Look out, dash boys!" he gasped excitedly. "New House wants!"

"What the Champ—"

"New House wants! Where, Gussy?" exclaimed Tom Merry, springing him in alarm.

"Hills in the wood camp there!" went on Gussy breathlessly. "I just spotted Figgys, and I heard them plannin'!"

"Whatlike? An ambush, skipper?"

"Just that! Buzz off, Mostly!"

Mostly Leather chuckled and bowed off. A few seconds later they heard him shouting in the distance as if calling to his chums, Tom Merry, Mansons, Blake, Harries, and Digby hid themselves among the thickets beyond the clearing. Arthur Augustus sprawled gracefully on the warm grass, and placed a delicate cosmetic banky over his aristocratic features.

Silence settled upon the little glade. In the distance Leather's voice was still going strong. Arthur Augustus gave a realistic representation of a lazy youth snoozing in the warm sun.

It was a peaceful scene—at all events, Figgins & Co. thought so as they scooted near and got their first glimpse of the glade.

"Thought as much!" whispered George Figgins gleefully. "They've gone off for a ramble, leaving old Gussy to guard the giddy grub! What childlike innocence! Doesn't Gussy look a prettier?"

"Yes. But—" began the pesky Kerr thoughtfully.

"Quiet! Not a word!" beamed the arch-conspirator. "We've got to act swiftly, my lad! Listen! You clamp collar Gussy—and mind he doesn't let out a yell and fetch

the others rushing here! I'll grab the basket and rush it to the boat."

"The—the boat?"

"Of course! We'll collar the boat and take the grab across the river. They can't follow us then!" grinned Figgins gleefully. "Ready?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then come on!"

And Figgins led the rush.

Clearly enough, the cunning Francis Kerr had his doubts about the practicability of the scheme and the childlike innocence of Tom Morry & Co. But Figgins was an impetuous youth, and as he was already rushing to the attack, Kerr swallowed his doubts and rushed after him, as did Fatty Wynn.

They very soon had good reason to regret their impulsiveness.

As Francis Kerr stooped over Arthur Augustus a fat shot upwards with lightning speed, and took Kerr neatly under the chin. Kerr reeled back with a wild yell, and Arthur Augustus woke to sudden life, grabbing his legs and jerking them free under him.

Kerr had scarcely craved to earth when there was a yell of laughter, and the glads filled with foam as Tom Morry & Co. rushed from ambush.

"Look out!" shrieked Figgins. "Oh, great pip! We've been had! Run for it!"

But there was no escape for Figgins & Co. Tom Morry & Co. fairly swarmed over them. A skillful whistle man brought the grinning Lawford rushing to the spot, and in a matter of seconds all three New House raiders were prisoners.

Figgins almost choked with dismay and chagrin.

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"Yes—you reflect?" he panted. "You know all the time!"

"My dear jolly infant in arms, we always do!" said Tom sweetly. "Never try to put it across School House men, Figgins! We're a lot too good for you, you know! Fancy walking into a giddy trap like that! Fatty, old son, you're losing grip in your old age!"

"You—you reflect?" gasped Figgins, though he couldn't help a feeble grin. "Let us go, blow you!"

"We—we don't want to go exactly!" pouted Fatty Wynn petulantly, with a longing glance of the picnic-basket. "I—I say, you men, you might be decent. Call it par, and— and we'll be friends and join you in the picnic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Jove! Did you ever break such cheek!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "After trying to wald the grab, you know—"

"We're likely to do that, old bean!" laughed Tom Morry. "We can spare 'em some tarts, though, and some ginger-pop! Blase the jam-tarts over their chivvies and the ginger-pop down the back of their necks! Then we'll call 'em down the hill into the river and let 'em off!"

"That's the wrong!"

"Yess, wotnah!"

"I—I say, be decent, you fellows!" pleaded Kerr.

"Yes, it was only a lark!" gasped Figgins, in alarm.

"Look here—"

"We wouldn't have done it, only we wanted to celebrate my having been left that property!" growled Fatty Wynn.

"With our grab, you cheeky boudlers! Well, my hat!"

"Well, we're steady!" pleaded Fatty. "I say, you might—"

"Well, we might!" agreed Tom Morry, his eyes suddenly glimmering. "We might even ask you to join in on conditions."

"But Jove! Wotnah, Tom Morry—"

"You ring off a sec, Gussy?" grinned Tom Morry. "Fatty's just reminded me that he's a man of property now, and if we're nice to him he might even ask us down to his giddy mansion in Surrey."

"Oh!"

"If Buggy Trimble thinks Fatty is the fellow to pal on with, we've let's a man of substance, why shouldn't we?" demanded Tom, wrinkling at the astonished Blake. "Think how nice it would be to get an invite to visit Fatty's property in Surrey!"

"Oh! Oh, my hat! Good where, Tommy!"

"Quite a good think, Tom Morry!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Wotnah, you cheeky rotters!" spluttered Figgins. "Like your cheek!"

"Of course, we can't very well ask for an invite," assumed Tom Morry cheerfully. "But we've heard you've got permission to take several fellows down to view the giddy property, Fatty, and it would be awfully nice if you'd include nice little fellows like us."

"Ripping!" said Blake. "No second or third lesson on Wednesday; nearly a whole day off in the giddy country! Set us nicely! Yes, we'll accept your very kind invite, Fatty Wynn."

"Yess, wotnah!"

"You jolly well won't!" howled George Figgins. "Think Fatty's going to take you cheeky chumps!"

"Yes, old dear! Fatty prefers tarts and ginger-pop internally to externally!" smiled Tom Morry. "And he loves being pulled down the hill and ducked in the river, don't you, Fatty?"

"Oh dear! I say, Figgins, old chap—"

"We've got heaps of grab—jellies and potted meats, a big plum cake with cherries on top, some packets of choco-late, some ripping macaroni, and gallons of lemonade and pop!" said Blake invitingly. "Don't it make your mouth water, Fatty?"

"Oh dear!" growled Fatty again, glancing wistfully at the luring Figgins. "I—I say, Fatty, why not let 'em come? I'm awfully hungry! The car will easily hold 'em all. Besides, we're all sleepy, and likely to be oval poor remittance cases next week-end. And we'll need somebody to buy grab for us on the way down, and Gussy's bound to be dumb, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Fatty Wynn was thinking it all out seriously. It was not much use being a man of property if a fellow had no money in his pockets to buy grab with. And his chance was also thinking it out now; they certainly did not want to be plastered with jam-tarts, and then ducked in the river if they refused the terms.

"It—it's not a bad idea, Figgis," ventured Francis Kerr. "More—more tea, you know, if those boudlers come. And—and the river looks awfully wet!"

Figgins burst into a laugh.

"Oh, all right!" he said at last. "It that agreed, then—"

If Fatty will take you chips, you'll call it par and let us join you in the feed now?"

"That's the programme," assented Tom cheerfully. "Is it a go, Fatty?"

"Oh, yes! Certainly, old chap! I—I'm awfully keen to have you, in fact. Look here, I'll start unpacking that basket right away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And so it was settled. The hatchet was buried, and the New House rivals were released. Fatty Wynn, his fat, good-natured face beaming, set to work right away to lay the cloth on the grass and unpack the lunch basket. When Fatty Wynn took his dinner he inspect Marlow Grange, his lawyer, Tom Merry & Co. were looked to accompany the party. On the best of terms now, the rivals walked into the good things—having postponed bathing out of consideration for Fatty's appetite—while they dined on the proposed outing.

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Masters!

"WHAT the thump—" began Kildare. The skipper of St. Jim's was accosted, so also was Darrell, who was with him. The two chums had just come through the gates when they sighted a retired form in the lane.

It was Buggy Trimble. Though Kildare and Darrell could not see his face, they judged that from his form! The fat youth was walking about in the middle of the lane, struggling desperately to get his jacket down over his head and shoulders.

Evidently he had just emerged from the ditch, for his clothes were covered with grass and brambles.

"What the thump!" repeated Kildare. "Oh, it's that rogue old Trimble! Who's done this, Trimble?"

"Hiap!" yelled Buggy, his voice sounding muffled and breathless. "Let a fellow loose instead of staving, you idiots!"

"Trimble!"

"Oh, cranks!" gasped Buggy, suddenly recognizing Kildare's voice. "I—I say, I didn't know it was you, Kildare! You might let a fellow loose!"

Kildare laughed, and with the grinning Darrell's aid, helped Buggy and helped him retrieve his cap from down his back. Then they walked on, smiling.

Trimble glowered.

"Oh, oh!" The aerial beauty he pasted, referring to Figgins & Co. "I've a jolly good mind to run after Kildare and report the notes for building a fellow! Oopagh!"

He straightened himself up and reviewed the situation distantly.

The School House picnic party would be well on their way up-river now, and whether Figgins & Co. succeeded in their obvious intention of raiding them or not, Buggy realized that he was out of the running.

But Buggy was a fellow who did not give up the grab trail easily. That his charming presence was not welcome or wanted by the picnic party did not worry him in the least; all that worried him was the difficulty of wedging himself in, wanted or unwanted. Yet somehow it had to be done; otherwise, it meant a wasted afternoon and a meagre tea in Hall.

"Craggs!" growled Trimble. "They're all heads—rotter, mean heads! I shall have to tramp to Meadow Hill now—nothing else for it. Maybe I'll get a chance to pinch the grub while they're halting or something. I hope those New House rotters haven't shipped in, though."

And Buggy was just starting off down River Lane when a man came along Rylcombe Lane from the direction of the village.

He was a tall man, dressed in black, with a thin, parchment-like face, half hidden with a thick, black beard. His eyebrows were black and heavy, and his eyes were born and quick.

Trimble did not even glance at him as he turned to go down the little lane leading to the river. But a voice came on his ear, and he stopped and glanced back.

Trimble grunted, and walked on to the man.

"What's the matter?" he demanded sourly.

The gentleman in black did not look displeased, and he certainly did not look a generous man. Trimble had no use for the colleagues who were neither prosperous nor generous.

"I've a St. James' School, I presume, my boy?" followed the man, nodding to the school wall. "I have come an interesting way named Wynn—David Llewellyn Wynn, New House, according to the address. I see you are a St. James' boy." He added, glancing at Trimble's grubby cap. "If you can kindly direct me, or tell me where I can find Wynn—"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

He was interested at once, and he hastily remembered the letter still repeating in his pocket. The recent stirring events had quite caused him to forget that letter. But he remembered now, and his eyes glared with curiosity as he eyed the gentleman over. That then was the Mr. Masters mentioned in that letter he did not doubt.

Certainly he did not look like a gentleman in the position to write cheques for three thousand pounds! Yet—

"Oh, you're—you're Mr. Masters, sir?" gasped Trimble, involuntarily.

"Yes." The gentleman gave Trimble a sharp look as he started. "You—you are not Master Wynn?"

"Narrow! You—you see, Fatty—I mean, Wynn's my last pal!" said Buggy, recovering himself. "Just such another fellow as me, you know—rather distinguished looking, if I may say so, sir."

"Oh—oh, quite!" said Mr. Masters. "Then possibly you will tell me where I can find Wynn?"

"Oh, he's gone out for the afternoon—gone up-river, you know," said Buggy, rather uneasily.

"What?" Mr. Masters frowned and looked more than a little angry. "But he is expecting me. The boy should have waited to see me. Most inconsiderate—"

"He didn't know you were coming, though," said Buggy. "I mean—that is—" he added hastily.

"He must have known I was visiting him this afternoon," snapped the gentleman in black. "Otherwise he could not have told you, my boy."

"Oh—oh, yes, sir!" gasped Buggy, regretting his involuntarily spoken knowledge of Mr. Masters' name. "He—he must have forgotten, you know. Awfully careless of him. But—look here, sir—I'll take you to him if you like. I think I know where to find him."

"You stated he was up the river."

"Yes; he—he told me that was where he was going—to Meadow Hill. If you like I'll take you there, Mr. Masters. I wouldn't mind the walk in the least."

In the circumstances Trimble wouldn't. A gentleman who could look out three thousand golden quids was a gentleman Trimble longed to oblige. He would certainly be good for a decent tip. And there was Fatty Wynn.

Buggy had already quite made up his mind, since the advent of Fatty Wynn's inheritance—to be very pally indeed with Fatty. Buggy hadn't the slightest doubt—no shadow of doubt whatever—that Fatty would leap at the chance of seeing Marlow Grange for three thousand pounds. A fellow couldn't eat a horse. But with three thousand pounds in his pocket to do as he liked with—

Trimble almost danced with excitement. Fatty was a good-natured, easy-going fellow, and Buggy felt more than equal to the job of being Fatty's pal and adviser in regard to the spending of the thousands. Probably Trimble's ideas in that respect were likely to agree with Fatty's ideas as regards the spending, at least. Buggy felt already that he was swayed under with delicious grub, and wallowing in oceans of ginger-pop. In character there was an enormous difference between the fat, hot strong and efficient Fatty Wynn and the flabby, weak, and fatuous Buggy Trimble. But where grub was concerned their hearts beat as one, their minds worked alike.

Mr. Masters frowned. It was a warm afternoon, and he had already walked from Rylcombe Station. But he walked on now.

"I think Master Wynn is very inconsiderate," he snapped.

"Mr. Jones, the solicitor and trustee of the property, has written concerning the loss of my proposed visit. It is clear that he has received the letter, otherwise you would not have known my name."

"He—he must have forgotten you, sir?"

"Pish! Masters! However, I am exceedingly anxious to see the boy, and I will certainly accompany you! Kindly lead on."

"You don't wish to see the Head, sir? It's usual when anyone comes to visit the Fellow—"

"No, I do not! Lead on," snapped Mr. Masters.

Trimble grunted under his breath and led on. So far the gentleman in black did not promise much in the way of tips. When he'd seen Wynn and faced up the role of Marlow Grange, however, he was pretty certain to change his humor.

The thought looked Buggy up, and he trotted alongside Mr. Masters, quite cheery now. They reached the tow-path, and Buggy led the way along the river. Most of the walk Mr. Masters spent in grumbling, and in asking questions about Fatty Wynn. Buggy stopped at last, quite fagged after the walk.

"Here we are, sir," he remarked, glancing up the wooded slope leading up from the tow-path. "There'll be—
Hallo! That's them! Listen!"

From the little hill above came sudden laughter, followed by an indignant voice—the dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arroy.

"You thoughtful wulfen, Loethlak!" he was shouting. "You placed that wretched jam-tart there on purpose, knowing very well that I would sit down on it. Look at my stomach—look at my trousers—certainly ruined! It is corkin' to laugh at, you—*you*!"

Gassy's words ended, and from the sounds of battle that followed it was clear that Arthur Augustus had dropped words for actions.

Mr. Masters frowned severely and followed Trimble so that the youth peered and puffed up the wadded slippers. They engaged on to the shouting to find Arthur Augustus and Loethlak locked together in a deadly embrace and rolling over and over among the footstools on the cloth. The rest of the party, nearly helpless with laughter, were struggling to separate them.

"Scandalously hoodlum!" scolded Mr. Masters. "Which is Master Wynn, boy?"

"That's him—looking into the chocolate," grinned Buggy. "I say, hold on, you fellows!"

Trimble's voice stopped the struggle at once, so unexpected was it. Even Loethlak and Gassy ceased struggling and blinked curiously at Buggy's commands. Had Buggy been alone they would have known exactly what to do at that juncture. Buggy would have gone down the hill much quicker than he had come up it.

But the sight of the tall gentleman in black lured these young and staid.

"You are Master Wynn, I presume?" said Mr. Masters, approaching the boy Fatty Wynn and ignoring the rest completely. "May I have a word with you?"

"Ma'am!" gasped Fatty, nearly choking in his effort to swallow a chunk of chocolate. "Goo-goo! Y-eh, I'm Wynn! Goo-goo-goo! Excuse me, sir!"

"I am Mr. Masters," went on that gentleman, trying to twist his sour features into a smile. "I have come a long way to meet you, Master Wynn, and I am rather surprised that you did not wait at the school for me. However—"

"But—but why should I wait?" gasped Fatty, scrambling up, his face covered with chocolate and crumbs.

"I—I'm afraid I don't understand, sir."

"You were expecting a visit from me?"

"Not at all, sir—never heard of you before, sir?"

"Nonsense, my dear boy! You received Mr. Jones' letter this morning—"

"I've had no letter at all this morning," said Fatty, crying his rather blubbery.

"Then," said Mr. Masters, glancing at Trimble, "how did this boy know my name, and the fact that I was expected by you this afternoon?"

"Wynn's eyes gazed at Trimble—they all gazed at him. Trimble quaked a little. To pull out the letter now or to turn up that he had read it was out of the question.

"I—I didn't know your name, sir," he gasped. "You—you see, I just guessed it."

"What?"

"Fancy me guessing it right like that!" gasped Buggy feebly. "Ho, ho, ho! But here's Wynn now, sir. He—he wants you to explain why you want to buy this house—I mean, why you've come, sir!"

Mr. Masters turned from Buggy with something near a snort.

"The letter itself is of little consequence," he said. "There appears to have been some mistake, as you should have received it certainly no later than by the noon post. It was from Mr. Jones, the solicitor who is trustee to the property bequeathed, I understand, to you by an uncle, Master Wynn."

"Oh?" said Fatty Wynn. "I certainly haven't seen the letter, sir."

"Very well; my name is Masters," resumed the gentleman in black. "I am anxious to purchase Marlow Grange from you, Master Wynn—that is my business. But perhaps it would be better if we discussed the matter in private," he added, frowning as the juniors standing round.

"I—I'd rather they remained, sir," said Fatty Wynn; somehow he didn't quite take to the gentleman in black.

"They know all about Marlow Grange. But I don't want to sell the place, sir. My father—or, at least, his solicitor, doesn't advise me to sell it."

"Ah—ah!" Mr. Masters' twisted smile faded abruptly. "What can a boy like you do with a property? I may add that the house you should have received was from the trustee of the property, who is also a solicitor, and well acquainted with the house; and I understand that he writes strongly advising you to sell. Mr. Jones knows that the place is in a dilapidated state, and would cost a great deal in repairs and overhauls to make it up to date

and reasonably habitable. By selling you would save endless expense, and also the cost of upkeep during the years you must remain at school. At present the place is more or less worthless."

"Then why do you wish to purchase it, sir?" asked Fatty innocently.

Those was a soft chuckle, and Mr. Masters' face darkened. He gritted his teeth as if in the effort to keep the smile on his face.

"On purely sentimental reasons," he answered after a pause. "I have always had a—ah—certain fancy to own Marlow Grange. The place appeals to me, and, fortunately, I am in a position to pay the price on this. It is immaterial to me how much I spend on the place."

"Really, sir," said Fatty with childlike innocence, "how how much you pay for it, too, sir?"

"Umph!"

CHAPTER 4. Nothing Doing!

THINGS was another awkward pause. Mr. Masters did not appear to be enjoying the business discussion somewhat. He spoke at last.

"As Mr. Jones will have explained in his letter, I am prepared to buy the property, including the whole of the effects—the books and furniture just as it stands—for the sum of three thousand pounds," he said.

Probably, like Trimble, Fatty should have been impressed by that enormous sum, but he wasn't.

"Jolly, sir, but there's nothing doing," he said, after a glance at Figgins. "The furniture alone's nearly worth that, and the house is worth three times that amount, I bet."

"Ah—ah! You will never again get such a chance to get rid of your white elephant, my boy."

"I'd choose that."

"Yes, rather!" added Kerr coolly. "Fatty isn't going to sell, sir?"

"No fear!" snapped Figgins, who had already amazed up Mr. Masters a little. "We wouldn't—"

"Be silent, you!" snapped Mr. Masters, turning angrily upon Figgins and Kerr. "This is no affair that concerns anyone but Master Wynn himself. If you will accompany me for a stroll, Master Wynn—"

"I'm staying here, sir," said Fatty cheerfully; "and I'm not selling Marlow Grange."

"You are determined upon that, sir?"

"Absolutely," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm sorry, sir, but I've been advised not to sell."

"Yet Mr. Jones, who knows more than anyone about the property, advises you strongly to sell, Master Wynn."

"Not that I'm aware of, sir! I've seen no letter!"

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Masters, beginning to lose his temper. "This boy could not have known my name otherwise. He was expecting me, and he states he is your closest friend."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bad Jove, Trimble!"

"I—I say, you fellows!"

"If Trimble knew that, then he must have had the letter and opened it," said Blake grimly. "Just what the fat little werns would do."

"Oh, really, Blake?"

"Have you had a letter of Wynn's, you fat fraud?" sneered Fatty.

"Nothing of the kind, Figg! I never dreamed of opening it to see what it was about, and I didn't even know it was from that solicitor when I took it from Chubb. You—*you* see—"

"Then you did!" yelled Blake. "Why, you—you—"

"Certainly not!—I say, why are you fellows looking at a fellow like that—*Yurrooo!* Leggo!"

"Uped him!" snapped Blake. "If it came at noon he'd have it on him!"

"Good, woooo!"

"Oh crony! Leggo! I say, you, it's all right!" yelled Trimble in great alarm. "I—I've just remembered that it's in my pocket, you know! The last is, I'd clean forgotten it all now."

"Yank it out, then, you fat burglar!"

"Oh crony!"

Trimble panicked it was rather apprehensively. "I haven't opened it, of course," he added hastily.

"Wouldn't dream of—"

"You fat chub!" Here you are, Fatty," said Blake, handing the letter to the astonished Fatty Wynn. "The fat pecker's opened it, right enough."

"Is that letter from Mr. Jones?" asked Mr. Masters.

"Yes, sir," said Fatty, after reading the letter through.

"You are quite right—Mr. Jones advises me to sell, but I—"

"And this boy has actually opened it and kept it back from you, Master Wyan?"

"Yes," said Fatty, with a grin. "But we're used to that."
 —Monstrous! Your attitude to me would have been different had you received that letter first!" snapped Mr. Masters, looking quite nasty; and before Trimble knew what was happening the gentleman in black gave him a terrific box on his fat ear.

"Yarrouagh!" roared Trimble. "Here, why— Youop! Keep him off!"

"Here, hold on, sir!" snapped Tom Merry, and he stepped swiftly in between the yelling Baggie and the stranger—just in time to save Baggie from another furious box. "We'll deal with Baggie. You leave him alone!"

"I—I'm just increased at this wretched boy's unwarranted and dishonourable conduct," snorted Mr. Masters. "He has undoubtedly caused me all this avoidable annoyance. The walk alone would have been resisted. And had you received that letter earlier—"

"It would have made no difference, sir," said Fatty-Wyan calmly. "Mr. Jones may be right, but I don't intend to sell until my people advise me to."

"Your people can know nothing of the house. You would be well advised to get rid of it, my boy."

said Mr. Masters, his disappointment growing clearly now. "It is a very old house. And—probably you are not aware of this fact—it is haunted!"

"Fawel! How ripping!"

"What! What!"

"Topside!" grinned Fatty Wyan. "I always wanted to have the run of a giddy haunted house. Good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young fool!"

"Here, draw it mild, sir!"

"I—I beg your pardon!" choked Mr. Masters. "But you do not understand. Years ago, before your property, a butler was murdered in terrible circumstances. Since then the house has been haunted, and at least three mysterious deaths have been attributed to the ghost!"

"Jolly ripping!" commented Fatty.

"We'll hunt that giddy ghost when we go down there on Wednesday, chaps!"

Mr. Masters started.

"You propose to visit the house on Wednesday, Master Wyan?"

"Yes, rather! And we're going to nail that jolly old ghost!" grinned Kerr, in answer.

"I was addressing Master Wyan," snapped Mr. Masters irritably.

"And I was addressing you, old sport!" said Kerr coolly. "And I might as well tell you not to waste your time trying to talk round old Fatty. He isn't selling to you, or to all agents—we'll watch that!"

"You—you impudent young rascal! How dare—"

"I dare, because I believe you a giddy scooper!" said Kerr, to the surprise of his own chums. "Next time you come on business don't disgrace your giddy self, and then perhaps chaps won't distrust you, old bean. At it is—"

"Wastly, Kerr, old fellow," began the shocked Gussy.

"Ring off, Gussy! He knows what I mean!"

"I—I do not know what you mean, you insolent young scoundrel!" panted Mr. Masters. "What—what—"

"I mean this, old bean!" said Kerr coolly, and stepping forward swiftly, he tapped at Mr. Masters' black beard.

It came off in his hand, revealing a clean-shaven chin.

"Oh, but Jove!"

"Great pip!"

Mr. Masters stood motionless, breathing hard and fast.

But his face was flushish now in its sudden fury. Quite unexpectedly he stepped forward and struck the smiling and knee-tapped Kerr full in the face with his flat hand.

It was a brutal, vicious blow, and Francis Kerr gave a howl and went head over heels.

Mr. Masters stepped forward farther still, as if to do more, but to get the chance to do so more—he had already done too much for Tom Merry & Co. and Piggins & Co.

He was grabbed on all sides and held fast, struggling furiously in his ungovernable rage.

"Let me go!" he panted. "How dare you! I—I will have you punished! I will have the police—"

"I fancy the police are the last you'd go to, old sport!" snapped Tom Merry. "Have you finished your business discussion with this guest, Fatty?"

"Yes, rather! I see, roll the matter down the hill and give him a ducking," suggested Fatty cheerfully. "He was out to cheat me somehow, and we're not letting him let old Kerr like that!"

"Watch out! Wag him, deak boys!"

"Hear, hear!"

The answer was unanimous. Mr. Masters, grasping their intentions, yelled furiously, but in vain. His false beard was



A rough hand was slapped over Baggie's mouth, and he was lifted, struggling vainly, in the arms of one of the men!

reversed down the back of his neck, and then he was sent rolling downhill with a vigorous and combined series of pushes.

More than one St. Jim's fellow had been rolled down that hill, which at that spot was steeply inclined and bare of trees and shrubs. Like a rolling log, sure that he would roll all arms and legs, Mr. Masters went down with a rush, shrieking in horror, fully expecting to land in the river when he reached the bottom.

But there was no danger of that. At the bottom was a deep ditch, formed by the raised towing-path which came between, and Mr. Masters, still yelling furiously, landed in this with a rush and a bump.

"Now Trimble's turn!" sang out Haha. "I think he's served it as much as that scooper!"

"Yaaa, watch it!"

"Oh rickety!" Trimble jumped, wishing, too late, that he had gone while the going was good. Now it wasn't good.

"I say, you fellows— Laggo! Look here— Oh cranial! Yarrouagh!"

Baggie's wild howl was something as they started him off. He went rolling down more like a fat barrel than a log. He landed full on top of Mr. Masters, just as that worthy, soaked in muddy, slimy water, was crawling out from the ditch.

As Lowther said, Buggy could not have aimed better had he tried.

Mr. Masters went into the ditch again with a rush. Buggy on top of him. The juniors roared as they struggled out, dripping with water, and gasping explosively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Masters only stopped to give the unlucky Buggy a furious look on the car, and then he returned away and vanished along the leaving-path. Evidently once was enough for him. It was enough for Trimble. Shaking his wet cap at the laughing juniors he squelched away—keeping a safe distance behind Mr. Masters, however.

"Well, that's that!" laughed Tom Merry. "It's pretty clear that either Masters—if that is his name—was not so arduous Fatty somehow. If his intentions were honest he wouldn't jolly well wear a giddy false beard! I mistreated him from the start, but you were jolly keen to spot his disguise, Kerr. Good man?"

"Yess, watah! But I woudh wish that watah wanted to buy the Gwange, Wym! It's watah queer!"

And Gussy's chums thought the same and wondered the same, and they discussed the matter over tea. But they could not make head or tail of the mystery. With or without the false beard Mr. Masters was a stranger to them all, and they simply couldn't understand the why or wherefore of the strange business.

One thing seemed clear, however. Either Mr. Jones, the solicitor, wasn't aware what a strange client Mr. Masters was, or else the man who had visited them was not Mr. Masters at all, but an impostor—which seemed the most likely theory.

CHAPTER 5. Marlow Grange!

WEDNESDAY seemed an age in coming to the excited juniors—and especially to Fatty Wym, the lucky heir to Marlow Grange. Mr. Bailton had given his permission and his blessing to the outing, allowing Wym and his chums to leave the school after first lesson in the morning. He also raised no objection to the party being addressed by Tom Merry & Co. Their leave was extended to nine o'clock at night—almost a whole day's holiday.

Naturally, the lucky party was excited by every other fellow at St. Jim's. The only fellow who didn't envy them was Buggy Trimble of the Fourth.

Buggy didn't envy them, simply because he was determined to be one of the party—surely! Not only had Buggy determined that, but he had actually approached Mr. Bailton, and after pleading his case almost with tears in his eyes, had managed to persuade that generous Housemaster to grant his permission to go—Mr. Bailton never dreaming for one moment that Buggy hadn't been granted Fatty Wym's permission, and that Buggy was the last fellow at St. Jim's Fatty would willingly take.

But so it was. Buggy had brought that much off. The question now for Buggy was more difficult—just how to persuade Figgins & Co. to include him in the lucky party.

For days Buggy had haunted Fatty Wym, and had collected some Kerr Hozzo kicks in that time that he usually did in a term. As he was liked on sight by Figgins & Co. the problem was now more difficult than ever.

There was the car. Buggy could conceive himself in the car beforehand—he had done this kind of thing before. But he had always been forced out, and the beasts were "wise" to that dodge. Certainly they did not dream that Buggy was going to Marlow Grange—they had yet to make that discovery. But on the last occasion he had tried it on, he had been discovered—after a terrible time proceeding towards a seat—and he had been booted out to tramp for miles home.

He dare not risk it again.

Besides, he wanted a more comfortable mode of travel; Buggy did not like discomfort.

He solved the problem at last.

He was the first out of the Form-room the next morning, opened the gates by a roundabout way, careful not to let anyone see him go.

To his disappointment the car had not arrived yet; but even as he stood gazing along the lane he signified a big closed car approaching.

It did in a short stop before the gates.

It was a very nice car, and the smartly-dressed chauffeur placed inquiringly at the last junior standing with his raincoat over his arm.

"You're late, my man!" said Trimble, with lofty severity.

"Excuse me, sir, but I was interested to report at last, and there's a minute to go yet."

"Your thumping watch must be wrong, then," said

Buggy. "Well, no matter, let us get on. What's your name?"

"Jenkins, sir!"

"Very well, Jenkins. We'll get off at once. You know the way to Marlow Grange, don't you?"

"I know the way to Marlow village, and I'll soon find the Grange, sir," said Jenkins, hastily opening the door for the hapless, impatient Buggy. "You are Master Wym, sir—"

"Of course. Got a more car, my man?"

"But—but I understood you were taking a number of friends, sir?"

"They are following me by train, Jenkins," said Trimble calmly. "Beaks won't let 'em off—well! Buck up, Jenkins! Dash it all, are you asleep?"

"Oh! Oh, you, sir—I mean, no, sir! Very good, sir!"

And Jenkins closed the door of the saloon upon Buggy Trimble, leaped into the driving-seat, and the car shot away—on route for Marlow Grange.

Buggy had solved his little problem.

What would happen when Fatty Wym and his invited guests began the car had gone did not trouble Buggy. He was a fellow who neither looked before he leaped nor cast trouble half-way. It was Fatty's own fault for not inviting him officially. And, after all, there would not have been room in the car, big as it was, for Buggy in addition to the other crowd of fellows.

In his valuable opinion, Buggy had acted in a masterly fashion, and as he was there first he was entitled to bag the car. Fatty Wym could scarcely expect him to be left behind just because there wasn't room in the car. Besides, Fatty was bound to arrange something for his guests, and in any case Arthur Argus was rolling in cash. He could either take them all by train or hire another car—quite a simple matter really.

In any case it wasn't Buggy's affair what happened to them, and he certainly wasn't going to envy his head about them yet. Later on, of course, Fatty and his pals might want an explanation—especially as the beasts had refused to allow him to join the party. But before then he was pretty confident of being able to give a satisfactory explanation. At the moment he was just going to enjoy the ride, and he did.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. had arrived at the gates in a cheery group just in time to see the big car vanish up the lane.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Fatty Wym. "I say, that couldn't be our car, could it?"

"It started from here, anyway," said Blake, staring after it. "I heard it come off. Jolly queer!"

"Thumping queer! I'll ask old Guss!"

Tom Merry inquired at the lodge, but Targler could tell them nothing beyond the fact that he had heard a car outside—in fact, it had passed him from slumber, and Targy was rather indignant about it.

The juniors decided it couldn't be the car they had ordered, and they waited patiently. They were still waiting—though for them patiently, a quarter of an hour later.

"Dash it all, this is a bit thick!" snarled George Figgins, frowning. "Look here, I'm jolly well getting to ring the garage up."

And he rushed away indoors. In a few minutes he came back again, looking astounded.

"This beats the band," he said blankly. "Blimey, the garage man, says the car was sent some time ago—should have been here before ten-thirty; he swears it came."

"Baj Jaws! Then that car was new—"

"Must have been it," said Figgins. "The fellow must be jolly or something. If he doesn't turn up jolly quickly we'll insist upon him sending another car!"

"Yess, watah! I coudh this it watah watah. We can't wait both all the mornin', hai Jaws!"

They waited another five minutes, with growing annoyance and indignation. Then Arthur Argus and Figgins rambled indoors again, and had a rather heated argument on the phone with Mr. Blimey of Rycombe. In the end that bewilderer gentleman agreed to send another car. In his opinion the car he had sent must have gone to the Grammar School by mistake, and he wanted the juniors to walk. But they would not wait—they had waited long enough.

Another five minutes they stood in wrathful impotence by the gates, and then the car came into sight. It was not a new car by any means, and they were far from impressed at sight of it. Still, it was a car at last, and they tumbled aboard, and the car started off.

The ride to Marlow was uneventful, but it was decidedly uncomfortable. It was a smaller car than they had expected, and asked for, and they were packed in like sardines in a tin, taking it in turns to sit on the floor among the feet of their companions in distress.

Altogether it was scarcely an enjoyable ride; it would

have been less enjoyable had they only known to whom they owed their misadventure.

But it came to an end at last, and their first glimpse of Marlow Grange greeted them up considerably, whilst Fatty Wynn fairly roared with joy.

Marlow Grange was an old, rambling house, and from a distance it looked fine and handsome. It was only when the car ran along the neglected, wood-covered drive that they saw how badly it needed repairs and cleaning.

"Well, it was undoubtedly a fine old house.

"Jolly decent old place," remarked Tom Merry cheerily.

"Congrats, Fatty. I wish the place belonged to me, any way."

"Yess, wotah! Adah all it only requires a few repairs, and modernisation," Wynn, remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Wotah wotah! Hinstah was talkin' out of his hat, you know."

"Well, I'm jolly glad we've landed here at last, anyway," grinned Fatty, as they squeezed out of the car. "I'm feeling like a pansake, you know, I say, I do hope Foster's got some grub ready—I'm frightfully hungry."

"Who the dickens is Foster?"

"The caretaker," explained Fatty, rather frowning as he glanced over the house. "The place hasn't been occupied for years, you know—except by Foster. That's why it's got into such a state, I suppose."

"Well, if Foster's lived here alone for giddy years, then it's pretty certain he's not afraid of ghosts, anyway," grinned Blake. "Still, the place does look a bit ghostly—what? Just the sort of place—"

"Masters was stuffing you up, Fatty," said Tom, though he couldn't help looking strangely disturbed as he noted the dark, dusty windows and general air of desolation and loneliness about the Grange. "There isn't a giddy ghost, but—"

"But it doesn't look over cheerful!" grinned Digby.

There was no doubt about that. Great trees grew close up against the old house, giving it rather a gloomy, forbidding aspect. Every window at the front of the house was

closely shuttered, and the whole place was silent, and appeared to be deserted.

But suddenly Keer pointed to the wood-covered drive. On it showed clear wheel-marks—the tread of motor-tires, and obviously recent ones.

"Someone's been here lately, anyway," he remarked.

"Probably a tradesman's van—though it would scarcely come to the front entrance, would it?" grinned Figgins.

"Anyway, let's get in, Fatty. I'm hungry, too."

They dimmed the car, telling the driver to return for them at six o'clock that evening. In a rather awkward group they climbed the steps to the front entrance. A rusted bell-handle hung by the shuttered front door, and Fatty Wynn dragged it in.

From within came the distant jangle of a bell, and then came another sound—a sound that made their hearts leap.

It was a wild yell—a shriek from within the shuttered mansion.

"O-good heavens!" gasped Tom Merry. "What—what on earth—"

"Someone shrieked!" breathed Figgins. "It—it almost sounded like—"

"Almost like Trimble's voice!" ejaculated Jack Blake under his breath. "But—but—"

"That that's impossible!" said Tom Merry breathlessly.

"Yet—yet I thought it sounded familiar, too. What on earth—"

And Tom Merry & Co. blinked at each other, too startled with other amazement even to feel alarmed for the moment.

CHAPTER 8.

Mystery!

THERE was a silence. After that one startling shriek no other sound had come from the shuttered mansion.

"What on earth can it mean?" muttered Tom Merry, breaking the silence at last. "I could have sworn it was Trimble's voice. Yet—"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Aha!" said Harris. "That fat woman's in the Form-room at St. Jim's. But something's wrong—something serious has happened in there!"

"Ring again!" suggested Messers.

Fatty Wynn dragged again on the bell-pull, this time a vigorous, prolonged one. Inside the great house sounded the distant jangling of the bell again, strangely eerie in the silent house. But no reply came. They waited in silence, and suddenly Blake gripped Tom Merry's arm as faint sounds reached them from within the hall.

"Someone coming," said Figgins. "Good!"

"I fancy I spotted the blind man before that shutter there," said Francis Kerr, frowning. "Someone's watching us, anyway!"

The faint sound inside had ceased, and silence followed.

"No go," said Tom Merry, growing greatly alarmed now. "Whosever's inside doesn't mean to let us in. We'll have to break in somehow. I don't like the look of this."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "This is a nice start, anyway!"

"This way!" snapped Tom.

He led the way round to the back of the house, keeping his eyes keenly fixed on the windows, in the hope of finding a way in. All the janitors were thoroughly alarmed now, remembering that terrified shriek. Tom regretted that they had not acted swiftly instead of waiting patiently for some minutes.

At the back of the Grange they found several windows unfastened, and then Tom stopped before a small window low down in the wall. It was wide open.

"Give me a leg up!"

With his chest up, Tom was through the little window in a flash, and soon he had helped the rest through. Fatty Wynn fidgeted in rather a tight position. It was not the way Fatty had expected to enter upon possession of his inheritance, but it seemed the only way in, for they had already found the back doors locked.

They found themselves standing in a small pantry, and they passed through this into a big kitchen. It was clean and tidy for the most part, though the great copper and iron pans on the walls looked as if they had not been cleared for years. But it was obviously in use, for the remains of a meal lay upon the table.

But the room was unoccupied, and they started a tour of the big house without delay, expecting they knew not what. And all the time, though they did not mention the fact to each other, they had a strange, uneasy feeling that they were watched—that they were not alone in the silent house.

And then, with a startling suddenness that shocked them, they found Buggy Trimble.

They came upon the fat janitor in the big dining-room. He was unconscious, and he was lying across the will body of an elderly man stretched on his face on the dusty carpet.

"Good heavens!" breathed Tom Merry.

"Trimble!" panted Blake. "It is Trimble! How an earth—what—why— Oh, great Scott!"

"But Jerry, Trimble!"

They were astounded, despite that strange shriek which had reminded them of the fat janitor. How he could have come here they could not for the moment imagine. Yet, here he was, lying unconscious over the body of a man. They could scarcely believe the evidence of their eyes.

But Tom Merry wasted no time in speculation.

"He's stunned, I think—so's the man!" he snapped, in a low voice, glancing about him rather fearfully as he spoke. "Fetch some water, chaps—quick!"

Arthur Augustus and Harris rushed back to the kitchen,

and came back a few seconds later with a can of water. Meanwhile, Tom had loosened Trimble's collar, and between them they laid him on the carpet with his head on pillows.

The unfortunate fat janitor's eyes were closed, and his face was white, with a terrified expression upon it.

They also did what they could for the man, who was in his thirties, and whom they guessed was the caretaker, Foster.

"They've both had nasty knocks on the head as far as I can see!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Hallo, Trimble's coming round now! Good!"

Trimble's eyes opened, and he blinked dazedly round him, and then he stammered.

"What's happened, Trimble?" asked Blake gently. "You're all right now, kid. Nothing to be afraid of, old man!"

"Oh! Oh, it's you fellows!" gasped Buggy faintly. "I—I— Something hit me on the back of the head! Oh dear! My head! Oh! Oh!"

So far, though they had done all they could for him, the elderly man showed no signs of recovering consciousness. It was clear the blow that had felled him had been more powerful and deadly than the blow that had felled the fat janitor. But Trimble was sitting up now, blinking about him dimly, his hat, Bobby hands pressed to the back of his head in no little anguish.

"How on earth did you come here, Buggy?" demanded Figgins. "You ought to be in the Form-room at St. Jim's now."

"I—I came in the car!" mumbled Buggy. "I—I say, you fellows, it's all right—"

"You—you came in the car?" stammered Blake, giving his claims an eloquent look. "You mean in our car, you—"

"Well, I had to come somehow, hadn't I? I mean, that is, I didn't come in the car—nothing of the kind! I—I came by train, and— Oh—oh, my head!" groaned Buggy faintly. "I say, you fellows, can't you see I'm terribly injured? Fancy bullying a chap with questions now! Oh, oh!"

The janitor feebly blinked at Trimble. They understood now what had happened to the other one—the big car they had ordered. Buggy Trimble had coolly begged it, turning them to get to Marlow Grange as best they could. The sheer impudence, the cool cheek of Buggy's action fairly left them gasping.

But Trimble was hurt, was injured undoubtedly, and an explanation from him would have to wait.

"Well, my only hat!" stated Tom Merry. "So—so that's what happened to our car! Trimble—"

"Oh, really, Tom Merry—"

"But we'll deal with that little matter later on," said Tom grimly. "How did you come to get in this state, Trimble?"

"I—I don't know," mumbled Buggy feebly, with another shudder. "I—I couldn't make anyone here at the front door after I'd dismissed the car—I—I mean, after I had'd dismissed the car. You see, I came by train—"

"Never mind that. Tell us what's happened here?"

"Well, I couldn't get an answer to my ring, though I'm jolly sure I heard people moving about inside," said Trimble, with a sudden frightened glance round the dim, cluttered dining-room. "And I was jolly hungry, you know. So—so I went round to the back and got in through a little window."

"You, yes. And what happened then?"

"There was nobody in the kitchen, but I'm jolly sure I

Would You Believe It?

Shooting a waterspout!



A Fish that walks!



heard somebody moving about," whispered Baggie, whose nerves seemed in shreds. "And—and I started to search. Thinking the beast wanted me to clear out, you know. So I walked about, and then—"

Trimbles shuddered again, and nodded to the tall form on the carpet, over which Arthur Augustus and Digby were still leaning.

"Then I found that—that chap!" he muttered. "I thought he was dead, and I was just stooping over him when—when I heard a sound behind me, and someone seemed to grab me, and I yelled out. And then—"

"We heard you yell. Yes, go on!"

"Something hit me on the head—a frightful blow!" wretched Baggie, clutching his head again. "I—I don't know what happened after that. Then—then I sprang my eyes and saw your chaps standing round me. That's all. And I think it's all that beast, Fatty Wynn's, fault."

"Mine!" gasped the dismayed and upset Fatty Wynn.

"Of course! If you hadn't been so jolly mean and refused to let me join the party, I should have come with your fellows, and this wouldn't have happened. I've a jolly good mind to claim compensation."

"Oh, my hat!"

Baggie staggered to his feet, and started to totter toward's the door.

"Where the thump are you going now?" demanded Blake.

"I'm hungry!" snapped Baggie indignantly. "After this I think I deserve a good feed, and I noticed there was some grub in the kitchen. Look here! You ought to come with me, Fatty. It's the best you can do to give me a good feed after what you've caused me to suffer!"

And Trimbles rolled out of the room, plainly not seriously injured. The thought of the grub in the kitchen seemed also to have banished his fears with surprising quickness.

Just then the elderly man sat up, helped by Gray and Digby, and, seeing he had regained consciousness, the chaps forgot Trimbles and surrounded the man. His face was white as chalk, and the wound on his head, unlike Trimbles's, bleeding a little. The juniors found clean linen, and bound it up before asking questions.

"Yes, I'm the caretaker—Foster," he whispered at last. "I—I wasn't expecting you young gentlemen until later this afternoon. Else I'd have had a real ready."

"Don't worry about that, Foster," said Tom Merry.

"How did this happen? You've been attacked—"

Foster parried, and glanced fearfully about the dirty fit room, just as Trimbles had done. He muttered:

"It's the ghost!" he murmured. "It's the ghost of that there murdered butler! I'm certain of it now, and I'm not stopping no longer in this house!"

"But Jove!"

"You young gent's take my tip and clear out of this house," went on Foster earnestly. "Master Wynn, don't you come and stay here whenever you do. This house is haunted—haunted by the ghost of that—"

"I'm afraid we don't believe in ghosts, Foster," said Fatty Wynn unseeingly. "You've been attacked by a tramp or someone who's—"

"It wasn't no tramp, air! Like you, I never did believe in ghosts!" parried the man boldly. "I've lived here all alone for years, and never once did I see nothing until—until things began to happen some weeks ago. I used to laugh at the folks who said the house was haunted, I did. But now—after this I ain't stopping. I'm packing my job up and clearing out, Master Wynn. And I advise you—"

"No ghost is going to frighten me out," said Fatty stoutly. "It was some tramp who's managed to get into the house, Foster. But you haven't explained what's happened yet."

"There ain't much to explain, young gent's, but it's enough for me. I'd just finished a meal, having been trying to clean up a bit before you young gentlemen came—I mean, some of the rooms airn't used. And I'd just got up from the kitchen table when I hears a noise."

The man paused impressively.

"It wasn't the first time as I've heard noises in this house lately!" he resumed grily. "I've heard footsteps and the shifting of furniture more than once, and each time I've rushed to have a look I've found nobody, and nothing disturbed. And even in the night I'm wakened up and heard noises, and I've seen Night's Flash in the room. But I've seen nobody. It—it's his grin on my nerves more and more, and only this mornin' I was thinkin' as I'd have to give my job up, Master Wynn."

"Someone trying to frighten you away," said Blake. "Goodness knows why, but—"

"Well, this here look on the head's warrin' enough for me, young gent's," said Foster bluntly.

"Well, go on! You were saying you heard a noise—"

"Yes, and I rushed into the dining-room, determined to settle it all this time. And then—well, then I was in the middle of looking about me, woodwork what could have made the noise, when I heard a slight sound behind me—a sort of rattle it was. But before I could turn round it got me. Something hit me on the head and I knowed as more until you gent's brought me round."

"And that's all!"

"That's all, and it's more'n enough for me, air!"

"It's pretty clear there's something rummy going on here," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "If it's been going on for some time then it can scarcely be a tramp. Someone's been trying to frighten you away, Foster!"

"It was the ghost—the ghost of that murdered butler! I'm certain of that now, young gent's!"

"Well, we'll try it if it is here!" said Tom grily. "Look here, who's game to come and search the house from top to bottom?"

They were all keen, for that matter—excepting, perhaps, Fatty Wynn, who seemed anxious to join Baggie Trimbles in the kitchen! But Fatty manfully restrained his hungry longings, and leaving Digby with the injured caretaker, they started a thorough search of the old mansion.

For over half an hour they searched about, going into every room and leaving not even a cupboard unexplored. But it came to nothing. Save for themselves, the house appeared to be empty, and all the juniors were looking very thoughtful and disturbed when the search ended.

They gathered in the kitchen, and Foster, still rocky on his feet, but greatly recovered now, insisted upon helping Fatty Wynn to prepare a meal for the hungry juniors. Foster had been a gardener on the estate, but he was handy in a kitchen, and soon they were sitting down to a good meal, for there was a fair amount of foodstuf in the house.

But he was adamant in his resolution to "pack up his job." His nerves were obviously badly shaken, and he had had enough of the loneliness of the old house.

"I'll stay on until to-night, Master Wynn," he said grily. "But I ain't sleeping here another night. I've got a brother in the village, and I'm stayin' with him. And if you'll take my advice, Master Wynn, you'll not stay neither."

And nothing could move him from that determination.

Facts from Far and Near.



A Street of
CANDLES
LONDON

Nearly a mile long, the Santa Rosa Avenue, Alhambra, California, is lined with Christmas trees which are lighted every day from Christmas Eve until New Year's Night.



Mr. Elliott Lynn visited every acre of land in England (72 in all) in 15 hours in 1917.

A hat owned by an author lived in New Bedford, Mass., U.S.A. and a perfectly square.



The Leadest Mouse ever heard was one August 12, 1883, when the volcano of Krakatau exploded, killing 36,477 people. The island lies between Java & Sumatra. The sound of the explosion was heard at Rodriguez (Africa) 3000 miles away.

The Cox Lumber—No. 1,322.

CHAPTER 7.

Ruthless Punishment!

IT was the middle of the afternoon when Tom Merry & Co. finished their lunch. After the usual the punters went for another tour of the old house, this time visiting up with a ramble round the grounds. On the whole Fatty Wynn was delighted with his "property"—and the other punters did not wonder. Though old, the house was in a good state of preservation, and obviously only required various surface repairs. The furniture was also old, but it was decidedly good furniture. All agreed that Fatty Wynn's inheritance was "not to be sneezed at" by any manner of means.

"And that speaks! Masters wanted you to sell the place for three thousand!" greeted Blake. "Like his rotten cheek, I must say! As for the ghost business, the brute was trying to frighten you into getting rid of the place, of course. Ha, ha, ha!"

He passed. After what had happened to-day they could scarcely deny that something was wrong at Marlow Grange—some strange mystery overshadowed the old mansion.

"I'd be inclined to think old Foster was in with Masters—if the old chap hadn't been injured," said Tom Merry, musing thoughtfully. "It did strike me at first that he might be behind it all. But—well, that knock on the head was no joke and might have been fatal! It all beats me hollow."

"Old Foster's decent enough," said Figgins, shaking his head. "But he's fairly got the wind up. I wish we could say so here and call the giddy ghost, anyway! What about rigging up Ralston and making it we could stay overnight, Tommy?"

"Yes, he'd jump at the suggestion—I don't think," grinned Tom. "Besides, the phone's cut off here, and it's two miles to the giddy village. I'm not looking forward to going back in that car, though."

"But isn't the first car coming back at six—the one Baggie bagged?" demanded Herbie. "If it is we're all right."

"It jolly well isn't," snapped Tom Merry. "I've asked Baggie. The fat lot told the driver to leave back to St. Jim's—had some idea we might not be able to come without it being. If the fat lot ain't here's best—"

"'Woid wrong him!" bawled Blake. "Did you ever hear such cheek in your life! But wait until he's better, though!"

"Here comes the fat lot now!" chuckled Lowther. "Look—if old Fatty isn't waiting until Baggie's better. Go on, Fatty—give us a peep on Fatty Wynn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The punters laughed as they all sighted what Blake had suddenly sighted. Tearing across the entrance lawn towards them was the fat figure of Baggie Trimble, a big paper bag under one arm. Behind him, peeping in pursuit, was the podgy face of Fatty Wynn. Fatty's face was crimson with rage, and he bawled furiously after the fleeing Trimble.

"Come back! Come back, you fat thief! Come back, you rotten burglar! Bring those money back, you woid beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The punters roared as they understood. They had left Fatty Wynn beside engaged speaking messages for tea in the kitchen, while Baggie Trimble refused in conduct on the kitchen sofa. According to Baggie, he had asked fearfully, and they had laughed him. Even if it hadn't asked after the blow he had received, they felt it must have acted badly in consequence of the enormous lunch he had packed away inside him.

Evidently the lunch hadn't satisfied Baggie, however. He had wanted his money and had found Fatty's message—or it looked as if he had.

"Help!" bawled Baggie, suddenly sighting the laughing punters. "Keep him off, you fellows! I haven't taken his rotten message—never even seen 'em! Besides, a tramp took them—I just spotted him rushing out of the kitchen with them. Look here— Oh, couldn't!"

Baggie had slumped down a trifle to level his denial; but as Fatty gained on him he turned off at a tangent, going strong. In fact, he fairly flew.

Only an hour ago Trimble had been sympathized with by the punters over his terrible headache. He had told them how ill he felt and that he knew he could never stand the journey back to St. Jim's that night, and that the only thing was to stay the night—with them, of course. In fact, Tom Merry had wondered if that wouldn't be the best course if Trimble didn't improve before six o'clock.

But there didn't seem much wrong with Trimble now. He flew like a champion on the under-path, and vanished among the trees with Fatty Wynn raging after him.

"Add that's the jolly lark!" grinned Tom Merry. "That settles any thought of staying on. With Trimble if he couldn't have had a good reason. But now—"

The Game Lovers.—No. 1,286.

"What a jolly lot he's got!" sighed Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums went indoors, ready enough for tea, after their ramble. In the kitchen was a delicious smell of frying scones—but no message were in sight, and they began to feel as Fatty did as regards Baggie Trimble. Well, there were plenty of eggs and other things, and the punters finished getting tea ready for Fatty. That late youth came swooping in a short while later.

"Get him!" asked Blake, with a chuckle.

"No, I jolly well didn't," spluttered Fatty, pasting his forehead. "I lost him among the trees, and didn't find the burglar. But just you wait! I'll—I'll smash him into bits! I left him groaning on the blessed sofa just after I'd turned the scones out of the pan, and came back a few minutes later just as he was bolting out with the scones—ha, ha, ha!"



Tom's fat shot up, knocking the automatic upwards with jerk.

them in a paper bag, you know! Tho—the fat burglar! Ho—ho—"

"Never mind, old man—we're done plenty of eggs, and we'll give Baggie something to go on with later. I say, it wouldn't be a bad idea to clear off in the car at six and leave the fat runner in it—I mean if he's fit, and he looks it now," grinned Figgins.

"Good idea! Serve the fat rotter right!" bawled Blake, his eyes glowing. "We know now that he's fit enough by this way he ran for it. He's been spoofing us, knowing we were only waiting for him to sneeze to give him a bump for coloring the cat."

"But don't! That's wretched without permission, Baggie!"

"But! Serve the fat rotter right!" grinned Tom. "But we can hardly go as far as that. What would he say if we left him behind? But we'll not let him have any tea."

and we'll lock up the grub. He shan't get another bite until he gets back to St. Jim's."

"And we'll rag him half-headed when he does come in," snarled Hervey. "Those scoundrels do no good! We'll give him lessons and we'll teach him to lag other people's cars!"

"Yess, wathah?"

And the juniors agreed upon that. Trimble was obviously better now, and it to take his punishment. So the chums settled down to tea, determined to deal with Buggy as he deserved to be dealt with the moment he showed his face at the Orange doors again, while Fatty Wynn's programme of punishment was blood-curdling in its ferocity.

But Buggy was not back yet. Had they only known it Buggy was to be punished for his sin in a strange and startling manner.

CHAPTER 8.
Mistaken Identity!

"BASTY!" That was Buggy Trimble's candid opinion of Fatty Wynn. Buggy didn't at all see why Fatty should object to his helping himself to the scones he had cooked—even to

Buggy grinned with satisfaction as he munched, his fat face still crimson and streaming with perspiration.

He was just about to start on an eighth scone when a shadow fell across the ground before him, and then a second.

Glancing quickly up, Buggy saw two men standing before him.

He started violently. Who they were he could not imagine. They were both rather roughly dressed, and he did not quite like the look of them. Buggy was still on the Markon Grango grounds, and he couldn't help feeling a trifle frightened as he remembered what had happened in the house.

"Good afternoon, sir?" said one of the two men, a thin, forty-faced individual. "You are Master Wynn, I believe?"

Buggy couldn't help grinning faintly. The genial, respectful way in which the man addressed him, and the way he touched his cap, rather pleased the fatuous Buggy. It also caused his heart to vibrate at once.

"Good afternoon!" he mumbled. "I—I say, y'pore know you're jolly well trespassing here?"

"I'm sorry, sir. As a matter of fact, we were on our way to the Grango to interview you, Master Wynn. Please forgive us taking the liberty of using a short-cut across your estate, sir."

Buggy Trimble grinned, feeling quite backed. He wasn't used to such respect from anyone. Moreover, it occurred to him at once that these men had obviously mistaken him for Fatty Wynn. Probably they had learned that Fatty was rather distinguished-looking—in Buggy chose to turn being fat—and naturally they had taken him for the new owner of the Grango.

Buggy grinned and gave them a rather patronizing nod. If they chose to take him for the owner of the Markon Grango he didn't mind a bit. He liked society, and he liked recognition. Moreover, he was very curious as to the business of those rather seamy-looking gentlemen. Lessons never did cure Buggy of his inquisitiveness.

"That's all right!" he said lightly. "If your business with me is important I'll overlook your taking such a liberty, of course. My estate isn't for sale, if that's what you're after—"

"Oh, too-inked no, ah?"

"I thought that couldn't be it," assented Buggy affably. "You both look a bit too seamy, if I may say so, to be able to plank down thousands—"

"To be frank, sir, our business is—"

"As it is very confidential, sir, perhaps you would be good enough to allow us to come up to the house where we can discuss the matter, sir?" he cried.

"Ah! Why the thump can't we discuss it here? We're alone, aren't we?" demanded Buggy, with a grin.

"I understood you have friends with you, sir—"

"They're at the house—having tea, I expect," said Trimble. "That reminds me, I shall have to trot along or I shall miss tea. Look bye—"

"And the caretaker—Mr. Foster—"

"He's at the house, Look here, if you've got anything private to tell me I'll hear it out," said Trimble. "Duck you, do!"

"Certainly, sir! Now we are certain you are alone," added the forty-faced man, with a curious grin at his companion. "We've no objection to stating our business. You are our business, fatty!"

"Ah! Look here, you cheeky— Oh! Whizzer— Oh! rickety!" All Trimble's fears came back with a rush as rough hands gripped him.

Too late he started to yell—a rough hand was clapped over his mouth, and he was lifted, struggling vainly, in the arms of one of the men.

"Faster than we could have hoped for, Decker!" grinned the forty-faced gentleman. "This way, fatty!"

"Guggenwagh!" A terrified purple came from Buggy as he was hurried through the trees for a few yards, and then half-lifted, half-dragged through a wild laurel hedge.

Behind the hedge was a narrow lane, and in the lane a car was standing.

"All clear!" said Decker coolly. "Look ready, though!"

Trimble, thoroughly frightened now, started to struggle desperately, his eyes nearly starting from his head. Had he wanted to deny the identity of Fatty Wynn now it was too late.

He was bundled into the back of the car like a wriggling sack. Decker whipped a scarf over his mouth, and tied it securely. Then, while the other man held him fast, a cord was run round his arms and legs and he was dressed up like a chicken. Then Decker jumped into the driving-seat and the car started off.



The next moment wild confusion reigned in the room!

taking the lot. Buggy always could justify his actions easily. He wanted the scones, for instance, and, therefore, he had a perfect right to take them.

"Mean bastid!" roared on Buggy, with his mouth full of messages. "He wanted them all for himself, of course!"

The fat junior was feeling most indignant about it.

Fatty Wynn had made his run harder than he had run for a long, long time, and he was still feeling breathless and pumped. Moreover, the running had cured his headache and relieved a trifle. Fatty Wynn was a most heartless beast, chasing him like that after the fearful blow he had received.

But Buggy was feeling a bit better now, having already digested half a dozen of Fatty's messages, and he was still going strong as he sat on a shady bank below some trees.

Obviously, Fatty Wynn had given up the chase, and

It reached the open road at last, and went off at a good speed.

In the bottom of the car the hapless Trimble lay, and gurgled and gurgled, while the fat-faced man grinned down at him. Buggy was beginning to realize now that his snout and impertinence had landed him into an awkward position.

He was kidnapped—being taken away a prisoner. Where? He soon got a faint idea, at all events. After covering his snout or so the car turned off from the main road and followed up a long lane, bumping over shaky ruts and nearly shaking Buggy's breath from his body. Then a strange sound began to strike on Buggy's snout—a sound that grew from a murmur into a loud, incessant splash.

Buggy knew what it was at once. The sea! He had known Marlow Orange was near the sea, having passed along the cliff road for some distance before turning inland to reach it. Now they were approaching the sea again—it seemed remarkably close, too.

And then the car drew to a halt, and Buggy realized they had reached their destination. It proved to be a low, shabby bungalow perched on top of the cliffs overlooking the Channel.

Buggy got a brief glimpse of the house as he was dragged from the car and carried indoors, and then the sunlight vanished, and he was dragged down on the floor of a shabby bed-room overlooking the sea.

Next moment the gag was whipped from his mouth, and he spluttered and gasped violently for some moments, while Decker and his companion grinned down at him curiously.

"Up! Get up! Grogg! Heave!" he roared.

"Look here, where've you brought me here for? Loose me! If you don't—"

"Not yet, Master Wynn!" grinned Decker. "But I'm not Wynn!" yelled Buggy. "My name's Trimble—Bugsy Trimble!"

"Oh! You're not young Wynn, the new owner of the 'Orange'?" ejaculated Fox-face. "Don't come it, kid! You told us yourself!"

"I was pulling your leg!" shrieked Buggy, nearly terrified out of his wits. "I'm not Wynn at all!"

"Likely we'll swallow that!" grinned Decker. "You think we'll let you go by telling us you aren't Wynn? You try another one, Master Wynn!"

"But I'm Trimble, I tell you!" shrieked Buggy.

"Oh, yes! Naturally!" grinned Fox-face. "You ain't Master Wynn, of course, now! Changed your name since you got here—what! Decker, you can shove off and fetch the boss now!"

"Look here, listen to me!" howled Buggy.

"That's enough, kid!" snapped Fox-face, his grin fading. "Try that yarn on us again, and I'll beat you! Shove off, Decker! The kid's safe now!"

"Right, Joey!"

And Decker hurried out. A moment later Buggy heard the car starting, and then heard it move away, and gradually the noise of the engine died away. Joey gave Buggy a warning glance, and then he went out, closing and locking the door behind him. And Buggy Trimble groaned a deep and dismal groan, and wished from the bottom of his fat heart that he had not pushed himself upon Fatty Wynn's boat that day. Certainly he had not enjoyed himself overmuch so far, and the future looked very black indeed for Buggy.

CHAPTER I.

A Problem!

"WHERE on earth can the fat cheap be!" asked Tom Merry.

"How Trimble!" grinned Horrie. "Why worry about Trimble?"

"But it's ten minutes to six now, and the fat one hasn't shown up yet!" snapped Tom Merry, his brow clouded and uneasy.

"The fat rotter's fudging meeting Fatty Wynn!" grinned Blake.

"He knows he's for it when—"

"If you ask me, there's more in it than that!" said Monty Lovelace, with a deep chuckle. "You remember Buggy was trying to wrangle illness so that he could hang on here overnight? I bet the fat wangler's looking out of the way, hanging well enough we wouldn't dare have him behind."

"But Jove! That is very likely, dear boy."

Knowing Trimble as they did, it certainly did seem likely, and Tom Merry's frown deepened. After Mr. Railton's kindness in granting them leave as he had done, it would be ungrateful to overstay, to say the least of it.

"I'm blamed if I can imagine even Buggy risking it," said Tom at last. "He'd know it would mean trouble when we got back. He'd know it well enough we've landed to his watching illness, and he knows we'd have to tell the facts. I—I can't understand it."

"I agree with you there, Tommy," said Keer, nodding thoughtfully. "Even Buggy wouldn't risk it. That ain't all. Even at the risk of a licking from us, Buggy wouldn't have stayed away from his snout so long."

"The fat beast had my snout!" sneered Fatty Wynn.

"True enough! But a few snouts wouldn't suitly Buggy. He's not back because he's been prevented—goodness knows how—from coming back. After what's happened here already, I don't like the look of it," said Tom solemnly.

"We'd better have a good hunt round before the car comes."

"It's here now," said Lorrian. "Hark!"

There was the hoating of a horn from the front of the house. It was obviously the car come to take them back to St. Jim's. Tom hurried round to explain to the chauffeur, while his chums started a systematic search of the house and grounds. Many of them still had the feeling that Buggy was hiding somewhere, hoping they would be forced to stay on in consequence. Yet they couldn't help feeling also that Buggy was the last fellow to risk being left behind in that grim, desolate house alone for the night.

With growing alarm, they searched, shouting out Buggy's name at the top of their voices. But they were forced to give it up at last. Buggy was undoubtedly not in the house or the grounds. He seemed to have vanished completely. At the end of an hour the chauffeur began to get restive. He soon made it clear that he had no intention of waiting much longer.

"We can't go without Trimble, though," said Tom Merry. "Look here, come along with me to the village, Blake! We'll get on the phone to St. Jim's if we can."

It seemed the wisest thing to do. That something had happened to the fat and fatuous Buggy seemed certain now, and they all had the disturbing feeling that it was something in connection with the recent happenings at Marlow Orange. In a few moments the car was taking Tom Merry and Blake to the village.

The rest went on with the search, though it seemed pretty hopeless now. After Fatty Wynn's last glimpse of the facing Buggy he seemed to have vanished completely into thin air. Foster had packed up his belongings and departed by this time, and the janitors had the house to themselves. In the red glow of the setting sun the old, gabled mansion looked still more eerie and mysterious.

The car was heard at last, and Tom Merry and Blake jumped out.

"Well?"

"We're to stay for the night."

"But Jove! Oh, good!"

"And Railton's sending Kilmer along in the morning; he may possibly come himself," added Blake grimly.

"How! Well, my hat!"

They had scarcely expected it, yet what else could Mr. Railton do? He could scarcely order the janitors to return leaving Trimble still missing. The janitors had had a vague hope that Trimble himself had returned to St. Jim's in the other car—having told them a fib regarding it—in order to escape possible vengeance from Fatty. But Tom Merry and Blake soon made it clear that he hadn't.

Railton's saving about Buggy, of course, Tom Merry said. "He seems to think the fat one is keeping out of the way on purpose to keep us back."

"Yes," the told him about the attack on Buggy this afternoon.

"Yes. We decided it was best in the circumstances. He got the wind up them; ordered us all to return and leave the

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house at once. But I reminded him again about Bagg, and in the end he agreed to allow us to stay the night."

"Hal Javel! That will give us a chance to hunt for the wicker ghost, don't you?"

Tom Merry tipped the champagne, and he drove off back to Wayland, Tom telling him they would phone if they wanted him in the morning. The juniors went indoors to make preparations for the night. Most of them expressed satisfaction with Bagg's Triebels for absconding himself, and thus giving them the opportunity to stop. Yet their grinning comments lacked humor.

The caretaker had kept many of the rooms more or less free from dust, but the beds were raised and likely to require a great deal of airing. The juniors started work with a will, however. They built up big fires, before which they piled up mattresses and sheets and blankets, in three of the bed-rooms. With the lights blazing all over the house, and the shutters removed from most of the windows, the place soon began to look less deserted and more habitable.

But Bagg's Triebels did not return, though they almost expected every moment to see his fat face. Having done all they could, the chums spent an hour in the billiard-room, after which they had supper in the kitchen, Fatty Wynn being cook and host afterward. Then they sat up discussing the strange mystery until late. Tom Merry not wanting to go to bed until the last hope of Bagg's returning was gone.

But still Bagg did not return. And at eleven-thirty Tom Merry decided it was useless expecting him then, and the chums retired for the night, and silence settled upon Marlow Grange.

"What's that?"

Tom Merry sat bolt upright in bed.

He had not slept yet. Tom had not felt much like sleeping—his thoughts were too busy thinking over the day's strange happenings—and his chums were the same. Blake, Arthur Augustus, and Lovelace, shared the big bed-room with Tom, and, like Tom, they also had been too excited and disturbed to mind to sleep.

They had lain talking for hours, it seemed to them, but for some moments they had been silent in a determined effort to woo slumber.

And then—then had come that strange, eerie cry—a cry that came from the blood rushing to Tom's temples and made his heart beat violently.

All four of them were sitting up in bed now. Their faces showed white and startled as Tom Merry heavily exclaimed on the light.

"That—that sounded like Fatty Wynn!"

"Yes! Quick! Something's wrong!"

Tom leaped out of bed, threw his feet into slippers, and whipped his coat on. Lovelace's impression that the cry sounded like Fatty Wynn's voice confirmed his own.

The others were following his example now at express speed, and they went after Tom as he rushed from the room. Loud and shrill the shrieks led came—shrieks of horror and terror.

Out in the passage other startled juniors were standing at the doors of two bed-rooms.

"You heard—"

"Yes. It was Fatty's voice! Quick!"

They rushed at Fatty Wynn's bed-room door, blinking in the darkness. Fatty was sharing a smaller bed-room with Francis Kerr, and so he swung the door wide Tom heard Kerr's voice, tense and startled.

"Fatty! Fatty, old man, what's the matter? You're all right! You—you've been dreaming, you see!"

The light was on now, flooding the small bed-room with a cheery glow. Kerr was leaning over Fatty Wynn, who was lying half across his bed, his fat form shaking with terror, his pudgy face like chalk, his eyes staring. Clearly the fat youth had experienced a horrible fright—or he had had a bad dream. His fingers were clenching his throat convulsively.

"What's the matter, Kerr?" demanded Tom. "Fatty, old man—"

Fatty Wynn was gasping and groaning almost hysterically. But between them they managed to quieten him. Kerr's face was almost as white as Wynn's own.

"What on earth's happened?" asked Tom again.

"Goodness knows!" said Kerr, his voice shaky. "I woke up hearing Fatty shrieking and shouting for help. Someone—"

"It—it was the ghost!" panted Fatty Wynn faintly. He sat up on the bed, his fat form shaking and quivering. "It was the ghost of the old butler. His—his fingers had me by the throat; nearly choked me! Boy could they squeeze—"

He broke off with a shudder.

"Hal Javel! You must have had a nightmare, don't you?"

"I didn't; it was real—terrible!" groaned Fatty, glancing round the room fearfully. "I saw it—an old man dressed as a manservant. Long, white hair! Oh!"

"You've been dreaming about that yarn—"

"I don't think so!" snapped Kerr. "Just as I woke up a chunk of burning wood dropped from the grate and lit up the room a bit. I'm certain I spotted a fairer leave the room, you fellows!"

"Here!"

The juniors eyed each other, started indeed now. Kerr was the last fellow to imagine things. Tom Merry scooped towards Fatty, and glanced closely at the fat youth's throat. Livid marks showed upon the skin.

"That settles it!" he said, in a low tone, pointing the marks out. "Someone has been here, and he gripped Fatty by the throat. But no ghost could have done that. Fatty, if you were someone out to frighten us all, someone's trying to frighten us from—"

He got no farther. For just then came a sound that almost froze the blood in their veins.

It was a wild, horrible shriek of maniacal laughter, shrill and hideous.

In dead silence the juniors stood, their hearts pounding madly. Silence had followed the strange, eerie laughter. But the sound had come from the passage outside the door, and, seeing his lips bare, Tom Merry rushed out into the passage.

All was deep darkness here, and Tom stared up and down, still convinced that there was trickery of some kind at work. His eyes joined him, working like so many of themselves now. And then there was a sudden gasp—a combined gasp of fear as their staring eyes sighted something at the far end of the corridor.

A small landing window stood there, and a faint glimmer of sunlight came through it. But it was not this faint glimmer they stared at, but another—a faint glimmer of strange, phosphorescent light.

It grew stronger, and then the juniors caught their breath, and their hearts almost stopped beating.

Tense and still, their cheeks suddenly dry and hot, the juniors stood as if turned to stone.

And then Tom Merry got a grip of his nerves. Seizing a chair he swung it aloft, and hurled it at the figure. In a flash the "ghost's" arms went up and worked off the flying chair, and at the same moment Tom's voice rang out.

"It's trickery, you chaps! Quick! Collar the speaker!" Tom's shout, loud and clear, acted with electrical effect upon his chums, and they followed him with a rush, only Fatty Wynn, scarcely able to stand yet, holding back.

Instantly the figure turned, but Tom was a swift too quick.

He leaped upon it, and his grasping hands clatched solidly. But even as Tom clutched, something equally solid struck him full on the temple.

It was a huge fist, hard as iron. Tom went spinning away, and the remarkably solid ghost bolted along the passage. By the time Tom's chums had recovered themselves, the mystic light had vanished with the ghost of the aged manservant.

Tom Merry scrambled up. His chums had rushed to the top of the stairs, and were peering down into the darkness.

"Switch all lights on and hunt for the brute!" roared Tom, bawling his temple. "My hat! That was a pretty hotty ghost—and a pretty hotty punch for an aged man; screw! Ghost—oh! We'll give the brute ghost!"

Their faces vanished now, the juniors set about the hunt in earnest. Lights were soon blazing all over the mansion, and even Fatty Wynn had recovered all over the mansion. And even Fatty Wynn had recovered all over the mansion. And even Fatty Wynn had recovered all over the mansion. And even Fatty Wynn had recovered all over the mansion.

But the search came to nothing. All they discovered was an open window on the ground floor. The small, peony window through which Bagg's Triebels had entered that day.

"Through it's morning now," said Tom Merry quietly. "The sooner we get to sleep the better. We'll keep lights burning this time. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to rig heavy traps over each door. Heavily do it with a bundle of water."

"Hal Javel! Good ideas, don't you?"

They all agreed that it was a good idea, and before they

turned in each bed-room door was fitted up with a nice spring for the glass, if that hefty gentleman did turn up again.

CHAPTER 10.

On the Trail!

THE rest of the night passed without incident, and the sun was streaming through the windows of the Grange when Tom Merry woke and hunched out of bed. The horror of the night had faded, and he felt bright and fit enough, despite loss of sleep. Tom was the first up, and, removing the basin from above the partly open door, he started to wash and dress. Tom had promised Mr. Reddon to ring him up early that morning news of Trimble, or no news, and that meant a walk to the village, for all telephone instruments had been removed from the old house long ago.

Tom still had great hopes that Trimble had returned to St. Jim's in the meantime, and yet the fear that something untoward had befallen the fat mouth could not be dismissed lightly.

The other juniors were awake now.

"Nothing happened, Tommy?" asked Lawther.

"No. Though I haven't seen any of the other chaps yet."

"But Jeez! I'll was along and heeish, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, and he hurried out in his pyjamas.

The next moment, from the passage outside came a sudden, appalling wail, followed by hoarse howls in the distant tones of Arthur Augustus.

"Good heavens! What on earth—?"

"Scound— Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lawther, suddenly understanding. "It's old Gussy! He's forgotten the boot-traps! Just what he would do!"

"Oh, scound!"

They rushed out! Bare enough Gussy had forgotten the boot-traps, and had walked right into the one next door. Unfortunately for Arthur Augustus the juniors next door were late in rising. Arthur Augustus, drenched through and rubbing his head frantically, was seated in a swimming pool of water, and surrounded with broken crockery.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ov, ov, ov! Gorough! It's nobbin' to laugh at, you widdah widdah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

But Tom Merry & Co., and Figgins & Co. thought it was, and they roared. They were still laughing when they went downstairs, and it was after breakfast before the indignant Arthur Augustus forgave them for their heartless hilarity.

Leaving Fatty Wynn busy at work in the kitchen, Tom Merry, Blake, Harrow, Digby, Arthur Augustus, Masters, and Lawther started off for the village, glad enough for a walk in the bright, warm sunshine. Figgins and Kerr went for a stroll in the grounds, as it was decided scarcely wise to leave Fatty alone with no one within call.

Little dreaming of the discovery they were about to make, Figgins and Kerr strolled through the neglected grounds, their thoughts and conversation full of the mystery surrounding Master Orange. It was Kerr's keen eye that fell on the door—the first idea they had found to what had happened to Buggy Trimble.

Walking round by the hedge of laurels, they came upon a patch of grass, and then they sighted a paper bag, half-filled with odd mementoes.

"What does this mean?" demanded Figgins, as Kerr picked up the bag, and then glanced about him keenly.

"Trimble's dropped that—"

"Yes—and is it likely Trimble would drop this unless he was forced to do so?" said Kerr, his eyes gleaming.

"And look at the state of the grass! There's been a struggle here of some kind!"

"Here? You mean—"

"Kerr examined the ground round about, and then he approved through the hedge. It only took him a few seconds to make the most of the discovery—two-by-two marks were clear as daylight on the soft, chilly ground of the lawn.

"Trimble was carried through the hedge and dumped into a car!" snapped Kerr emphatically.

"Looks like it! That means he was—"

"Kidnapped, of course?"

"But why on earth—?"

"Goodness knows why! But you can bet it's something to do with the mystery surrounding the Grange, Figg. Probably Trimble's made some sort of discovery, and the enemy—wherever they are—have it and have captured him!"

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"Quite likely, Kerr!" admitted Figgins, nodding. "Look here, let's follow the trail up!" he added eagerly.

"Yes, rather!"

In their excitement they soon forgot their intention not to stray far from the Grange. The narrow unimproved narrow could have followed the trail. Three of the acres on the east must have been old ones, but the left rear one was new—Kerr soon discovered that even the tracks in the soft chalk. They followed it up, walking fast, and soon they reached the old road. Here the trail led to the left, and they started off at a brisk trot.

There was no need to go slowly, for it was impossible for the car to have left the road. And the trail was still clear as a glass. They had followed up the trail for about a mile, when a foot scouted behind them. It was a baker's motor-car.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Kerr. "We'll get a lift until we reach the first road that branches off, at all events."

The driver of the van cheerily accented to their request for a lift, and soon they were speeding on again. The van rocked the little, ragged lads, and as it was passing it Kerr gave an exclamation and called to the driver to pull up.

"I thought—" began Figgins, grinning.

"We'll not risk it!" said Kerr. "I got a glimpse of a house or something along that lane as well as a glimpse of the giddy sea. You never know."

The driver dropped them off, and, after tipping him, the van went on. Kerr's eyes scanned the ground to pick up the trail again. He looked puzzled, as did Figgins, for the familiar tread was not to be found, and Kerr's eyes glared.

"Transferring good job we got off!" he snapped. "That car must have turned down that cart-track after all—or else it turned back."

They hurried back to the lane—and, as Kerr fully expected, the trail did lead down the little lane, seawards. They followed it up, excited and satisfied now. In the distance showed the low roof of a bungalow, and Kerr's eyes fixed heavily upon it every now and again.

They soon reached it, and there the trail ended.

"The car stopped here and turned round—in fact, it's been here a good many times by the look of the ground," said Kerr. "Trimble was brought to this bungalow. Come on!"

A glance over the wall before the bungalow showed no signs of life at the building, and without hesitation Kerr led the way up the shady pathway to the front door. Kerr felt the handle, and to his surprise the door opened. They entered cautiously.

Yet, hands and on their guard as they were, they did not expect what happened.

The moment they were inside the door slammed behind them, and two men placed themselves swiftly with their backs to it. Figgins and Kerr were startled, but were startled still on finding themselves staring at the gleaming automatic.

"Put your heads up! One more and this will go off!" snapped a voice that seemed as strangely familiar, as did the face of the tall man now facing them, menacing them with the automatic.

"Great pip! Masters!" gasped Kerr involuntarily. They knew the fellow at once—the white, parchment-like features and the cold eyes—and he still wore the same black clothes. There was silence in the little hallway, and the juniors slowly put up their hands. Behind them were two men, and before them a third, menacing them with an automatic. They were hopelessly trapped.

"Bring them inside!" snapped Masters viciously.

His face was cool with rage, for some reason or other, while his men looked wild and savage. The two juniors were hauled into a three-roomed—the same room Trimble had occupied. Yet Trimble was not there now.

"To the young fools up, and then we'll get off!" ordered Masters. "We've wasted more than enough confounded time on this game!"

"What about that other lid?" said Decker, his face strangely white.

"Never mind him! If the young fool's gone over the cliff so much the worse for him!" Masters turned to the juniors. "Where's young Wynn?" he snapped.

"Find out!" said Kerr coolly.

Masters leaped swiftly.

His friends were seen going towards the village hall as he went. "As he has not come with you he must be still at the Grange—alone! Not that it matters much—I can deal with his friends as I see dealing with you."

The juniors exchanged grim glances. But Masters ignored them now. They were roughly tramped up with

and bang down on the floor. Then the door was locked upon them, and they heard the car drive away.

"That's done it," groaned Kerr gloomily. "Unless those chaps have hurried back from the village they'll find poor old Fatty alone. But what does it mean? You recognized that brute—it was Maston, the fellow we had that rumour with up river."

"Of course! Well, we're in a nice pickle now. We're— Oh, my hat! What did that chap mean about the other kid going over the cliff?" asked Figgins, startled.

"Trimble— Oh, great pos! Look!" Even as Figgins mentioned Trimble's name he glimpsed a fat, familiar face pressed against one of the small panes of the window. It was Trimble.

"Trimble!" shouted Kerr. "Oh, great Scott!"

"—I say, you fellows—"

"Come and cut us free, Buggy!" yelled Figgins. "Quick! Smash a pane and catch the window-catch, you see!"

"He, he, he!" Trimble's dirty face broke into a grin.

"I say, I'll soon have you out of that, you fellows!"

"Oh!"

There was the crash of smashing glass as Trimble crashed a stone against a pane. A moment later a fat hand came jabbling through the gap, managed to free the catch and drag the casement window wide.

It was a tight fit, but the fat youth scrambled through somehow, and soon he was standing before them, a fat grin on his grimy face. His clothes were dishevelled and covered in chalk. Figgins and Kerr stared at him as he cut them free from their bonds.

"Trimble, how—"

begged Kerr.

"Ho, ho, ho! I did the trick!" giggled Trimble.

"You see, the beasts were in here with me when you were spotted sneaking up the lane. Old Maston was just slanging those beasts for bringing you here by mistake for Fatty Wynn, you know; he was fairly raging. He was to have come this night, but his didn't turn up."

"You, but how on earth—"

"Ho, ho, ho! Docker spotted you fellows coming, and they rushed to the front to watch you—forgetting all about me," grinned Trimble.

"Lookly, they'd not me free to eat my grub, you know; and I saw my chance at once. I'm pretty wide, you know. I rushed out by the giddy back door, and knowing they'd easily catch me if they came after me, I climbed up on the roof of the out-house, and hid there. Strategy, you know."

"Well, it's lucky for us you did get free," said Kerr grudgingly. "And now—enough getting! Come on, Fatty! We've got to head it!"

"Here, hold on, you fellows! I say— Oh, couldn't we have a fellow of heaved Trimble, and generally."

But they did not wait for Buggy Trimble. They rushed from the cottage, intent only on getting back to the Grange at the earliest possible moment. Buggy Trimble rolled after them at top speed, yelling and peering. But they soon left him far behind.

They had been running for a good few minutes when, hearing the sound of a car behind them, Kerr gave the word to stop.

"Oh, good! A car!" he panted, turning round. "We'll get a lift. Why, what— Oh, great snakes! Right!"

The car alone was familiar to them—it was the Head's car. At the steering-wheel was Mr. Bailton, and by his side was Kildare. In the back were squatted Darrell, Buggy, and Buggy Trimble, whose face was fat and smiling.

The car drove up alongside them, and the Housemaster leaned out.

"Jump in, my boys!" he rapped out sharply. "Trimble is expecting you can! Trimble has explained how matters stand."

"Oh, good, sir!"

Kerr leaped in and squeezed in the front, and Figgins

squeezed in behind as best he could. And the next second the car was roaring away along the dusky cliff road all out, on route for Marlow Grange.

CHAPTER II.

The Mystery Solved.

"HALLO, you alone, Fatty! Where's Figgie and Kerr?"

Tom Merry and his chaps entered the kitchen of the Grange, and grinned a smile as they sighted Fatty Wynn. The fat youth was happy-busy. He had washed the dishes and cleaned up a little, and then he had settled down to a well-deserved snack after his hard work.

"Oh, it's you fellows!" gasped Fatty Wynn, putting down his knife and fork. "I was just having a snack, you know. Work makes a chap jolly hungry. Figgie's out with Kerr somewhere; I thought the lads' bounders were coming back to give me a hand," he grumbled. "Haven't you fellows seen them?"

"Not only just got back from the village. I see, Bailton's coming here with Kildare, Darrell, and Babon, Fatty?"

"Woe-what!"

"Fact, old chap," said Tom, his face growing serious again. "They've heard nothing whatever of Buggy, and it's clear now that something jolly serious has happened to the poor chap."

"And Bailton's coming here. Oh, wonderful!"

"So Linton told me on the phone," said Tom, nodding.

Bailton and the Sixth fellows started very early in the Head's car. They should be here soon, I should think. Bailton's evidently taking it all jolly seriously."

"Hallo, that sounds like a ear now," put in Lovelace.

They listened; and then there came the sharp ping of the bell in the hall.

The juniors hurried through the house to the front door. Tom Merry called through the door:

"Coming, sir!"

He tapped at the rusted bells and turned the key.

The doors were pushed slowly open from outside—nearly knocking the surprised Tom Merry over.

The visitors did begin to understand why.

It was not Mr. Bailton's party at all—far from it! It was Mr. Reuben Masters, Docker, and Jess!

"Great rip! Mr. Masters?" stammered Tom Merry. "I—I say, what do you want here?" he went on warily. "You've no right— Oh!"

Tom jumped as he found himself blinking down the short, ugly barrel of an automatic. Docker grinned and closed and barred the front door again.

"You boys will walk before me into the front room, there," said Masters in his cold, grating voice. "And I'd advise you not to attempt any foolish opposition. Be quick! Ah—" he looks off at a lookerby accident. "Here is Master Wynn! Wynn will also walk into that room."

"You—you utter rascal!" gasped Tom Merry, still staring blankly.

"Be quiet! Be as you are told, you young fool!"

Tom hesitated, but as he met the man's cold, hard eyes he decided to obey.

"I've no desire to harm any of you," began Masters calmly, as they stood waiting for the next move. "And my business is only with Master Wynn. Your boys will stand where you are, under my eye, and you will not interfere."

The juniors did not stir.

"The other day," roared Masters softly. "I asked Wynn to sell me this house for a certain sum. He refused; but I'm still hopeful of coming to a satisfactory agreement."

"I'm not jolly well selling," snapped Fatty Wynn, no trace of fear in his fat, good-natured features. "And, after—"

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then, I'll see you hanged before I'll dream of coming to any agreement. Now you jolly well know who's been causing all the queer happenings here."

"What do you mean, Master Wynn?"

"You jolly well know what I mean!" said Fatty indignantly. "It was you who luffed old Foster on the head, and it was you who bilked Trimble in the same way, you rascal! And it was you, or one of your rotten pals who played ghost last night. Has you won't jolly well frighten me into selling. No fear! You can go and see our color!"

"There's no need to go into matters that are past," he said calmly. "I am asking you again to sell me this house at its stands. If you refuse—I will be the wiser for you, and for your friends."

"Go and see our color! I'd give it away before I'd sell it for you for a million!" gasped Fatty pathetically.

"And where is Trimble?" snapped Tom Merry early.

"We know you've got him somewhere."

"Trimble—if that is his name—is where you will all be if Master Wynn refuses to sell," said Masters, his voice cold and cruel. "If you are going to be obstinate, Master Wynn—"

"I am, you rascal!"

"Very well, perhaps you will not continue to be obstinate when you know me better. There are ways and means of making obstinate persons sensible to reason. Doctor, get your coat and fasten those young fools up. Afterwards heat a poker in the kitchen fire until it is red-hot."

"But Jove!"

"The masters did not need to be told what Masters meant by that."

"You—you frightful rascal!" panted Fatty Wynn. "You—you mean to torture me!"

"Easily!"

"I shall never give way," said Fatty thickly. "You can do what you jolly well like!"

"Perhaps you will when you see your friends suffering, hey?"

"I—I—you must be mad!" said Fatty Wynn, springing him in horror. "Remember, if you think Mr. Jones, the solicitor and trustee of the property, will allow such a deal!"

Masters laughed harshly.

"Mr. Jones would, I have no doubt, be very pleased to hear of your death, Master Wynn," he said coolly. "By the event of your death the property goes to him, I believe."

"But you're mad! If I did agree, I should tell the police how you forced me into selling," said Fatty grimly. "Then you—"

"Enough! I will give you one minute!" snapped Masters coldly, taking out his watch. "Doctor has gone—"

He said no more, for in that moment, while he lowered his gaze from a brief instant of time, Tom Merry, who had been watching him sharply, acted like lightning.

His fist struck out, knocking the automatic upwards with a jerk, and then Tom was springing at the second.

There was a violent crack of a shot, a startled oath. The next moment wild confusion reigned in the room.

Doctor was a huge, powerfully-built man, and he easily bang of Arthur Augustus and Digby, sending them spinning at once. But Herrie leaped in to the attack, grabbing up the first thing to hand as a weapon.

This was a massive dining-room chair, and Herrie found it a hit above him in weight. But he managed to swing it round his head and bring it crashing down.

Just in time Doctor sensed it coming, however, and he leaped to one side, and the chair crashed on the big table and a splintering of wood.

There was also a splintering of glass. Doctor, just about to rush Herrie, suddenly pulled up, a wild, crazed yell escaping him.

"Look! My back, look here, here! Look!"

It was almost a moment and it started everyone in the room. The furious fight ceased for a brief second, and Masters easily dragged himself free and leaped back.

"Look!" yelled Doctor again. "Look, look!"

Doctor sprang forward, obviously forgetting the juniors in his wild excitement. He stooped and picked up something from the ground.

Three times he stared at the object, heedless of the thin, splintered glass that covered it, and he picked up three small, gleaming, white globes the size of his marbles.

They glared on his opened hand, milk-white and opalescent, glittering like hateful eyes in the shattered room.

"The pearls here!" he panted. "You've no need now to try this here house," he added, his voice shaking with greed and wild excitement. "You won't forget our share, though, hey? Fetch! Look at 'em! They were hidden in the hollow top of that chair—hidden in a glass tube. Look at 'em—at last!"

Masters closed as if satisfied, his eyes, full of greed, fixed Tom Merry.

as if hypnotized upon the glittering pure gems on the man's palm. Then, with a scarcely articulate cry, he leaped forward and snatched the gems from his accomplice's hand. One of the milky-white pearls dropped and rolled, but he pounced upon it like a cat.

"Oh, but Jove!"

The men seemed to have forgotten the juniors completely. His eyes blazed with greed and madness as he gazed over the three pearls on his palm. But by this time the juniors had overcome their bewildered amazement, and Tom and Blake exchanged quick glances.

"Look out!" yelled Jove, warning danger.

But his warning came too late. The juniors swarmed over the three, making the most of their chance—a chance they felt they wouldn't get again once Masters had recovered from his trance of greed and glowing triumph.

The next moment a wild and whirling struggle was going on in the darkened room. Masters had realized the danger now. He had possessed the pearls and he leaped for the automatic lying on the floor.

And just then there came a violent peal at the front-door bell.

It gave the juniors courage and hope, for they knew it must be help for them; probably it was Mr. Railton and the seniors from St. Jim's!

"That thought came to Tom Merry, and he yelled out!"

"Quick! Open the front door someone! It'll be Railton!"

Figgins and Kerr obeyed quickly enough.

The next moment even Masters saw the game was up as Mr. Railton, followed by the three athletic Sixth-Formers, rushed into the room. In a matter of seconds Masters and his men were on their backs, pinned down helplessly.

Tom Merry's first action was to get the pearls from Masters' pocket, and he had the usual rascal carried with rage.

"Enough of that, you villain!" snapped Mr. Railton sternly, as Tom finished telling him the story. "Now perhaps you'll explain when those pearls belong to, and what this amazing affair means, my man!"

"Find out, confound you!" snarled Masters. "Find out!"

"We'll find out, my man!" said the Headmaster grimly.

"Oh, at least, the police will, I've no doubt! To the rascal up securely, boys!"

And they did find out—at least, the police did—and the juniors heard the full story before they returned to St. Jim's. Once he fully realized the game was up Masters collapsed, and told all. The story was an amazing one, but the most amazing narrative for Tom Merry & Co. was when they learned that Mr. Masters was none other than Mr. Jones, the solicitor and trustee of the property.

Finding he could not persuade Fatty Wynn to sell, he had adopted far worse or had to gain possession of the house, so that he could, of course, search it from top to bottom at his leisure for the pearls, knowing also that the house was worth far, far more than three thousand.

On the surface Jones had been a respected solicitor, but he was secretly an aggressive of crooks, and he had done a great deal in a local way for crooks.

Through a crack-man, for whom he had acted in a legal capacity, Jones had learned of the pearls—the proceeds of a robbery at the Grange. Actually, the pearls had been stolen by the aged butler acting in collusion with crooks— but, instead of handing them over, the wretched butler had hidden them in the hollow top of the chair to keep for himself; and for double-crossing the crooks the hapless man had paid with his life. In fact, the crack-man—Jones—had been given a life sentence for the murder, and it was as he died, in prison, that Jones had sent for Jones and told him the story.

But all he could tell was that the pearls—magnificent gems, worth thousands—were somewhere in the house hidden away, and Jones had been forced to try to get the house to himself to carry out a reckoned search.

That was the last Tom Merry & Co. saw of the rascal solicitor; he was for a long and well-deserved stay to the very prison where Jones had paid for his sin.

And the rightful owners of the pearls were traced by the police—people who had owned the Grange before Wynn's uncle—and the insurance people paid Wynn himself a handsome reward for their recovery—a reward Fatty insisted upon sharing with his chums.

Baggy Trimble, of course, demanded a share, but didn't get it. But later on the chums related a little, and when, some weeks later, they went down again to Marlow Grange for an outing, they allowed Baggy to accompany them, this time as a mere or less-honoured guest.

THE END.

(Fatty Wynn's happy end last, he's going to have a good find about next's day, but contains another thrilling story—conclude St. Jim's game entitled "LANTON AN REPORT!")

TOPPING NEW COMPLETE STORY OF ROOKWOOD!

CHUMS DIVIDED!

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER I.

A Shock for Lovell!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL gave a convulsive start.

He stared at the paper lying on the table in the end study, as if he could scarcely believe his eyes. Indeed, he scarcely could.

Never had Lovell, of the Rookwood Classical Fourth, been so astonished. For some moments he was too astonished to be offended. But that was only for a few moments. Offense followed swiftly on astonishment. Crimson overspread the face of Arthur Edward, and his eyes glowered under brows knit with wrath and indignation.

Lovell felt that he never could have believed this, if he had not seen it with his own eyes. But a fellow had to believe his own eyes.

Lovell was alone in the end study in the Classical Fourth. It was a half-holiday on Rookwood, and Lovell had run in for his hat. Jimmy Silver and Raly and Newcome were already on the cricket ground.

The hat lay on the table, and as he reached to pick it up, Lovell's eyes fell on the unfolded letter that lay near it. That letter was in Jimmy Silver's hand, and evidently Jimmy had left it unfolded when he went down to cricket. Lovell, of course, was not the sort to look at another fellow's letters. He would not have dreamed of such a thing. By sheer chance his eyes fell on the letter. And as Jimmy Silver's "hat" was large and round, and very distinct, he simply could not help catching the words. Not that it should have mattered, for the Physical Four of Rookwood had no secrets from one another—as a rule, at least. In this case it mattered a lot, as it unfortunately happened.

For the sentences that leaped to the astonished eyes of Arthur Edward was: "Of course, I don't want Lovell."

It made Lovell jump.

Jimmy Silver was writing to somebody, and mentioning

that, of course, he didn't want Lovell. What the dickens did the fellow mean?

The crimson faded out of Lovell's face, leaving it quite pale.

He was Jimmy's chum. They often had little arguments, and even little rows. But they had been good chums ever since Jimmy Silver had come to Rookwood School. The Physical Four of Rookwood had always been loyal and inseparable. Lovell had always stood with his chums, but he had never doubted him. And now—

He stood rooted, his eyes on that unfortunate letter. Unconsciously, he took in all that was written on the first page. It was not much, for Jimmy's hand was inclined to spread. It ran:

"Dear Father,—It's a slipping icon, and I should be jolly glad to cross bones for the week-end and bring my friends. Only Lovell's boots rather in hot water with Mr. Dalton lately, and Dalton may not let him off. Of course, I don't want Lovell

That was all that was written on the first page. Lovell absorbed it unconsciously. Not far words, or whole sentences, would he have turned the sheet to see

what was written on the next page. He stood staring at those offending words, in the handwriting of his chum, his face pale, and grooving set and hard.

He concentrated that a week-end at Jimmy's home had been wasted. They had discussed in the end study whether Mr. Dalton would be likely to let Lovell off. Lovell, of late, had devoted more attention to cricket than to school work, and the Fourth Form master had not taken it quite kindly. Not a sign had Jimmy given that he didn't want Lovell in the party. Why shouldn't he want him, as much as his other chums, Raly and Newcome? He had even declared that if Lovell couldn't get leave, it wouldn't be worth while to take the week-end at all. And now he was writing to his father that he didn't want Lovell. It was rotten! It was beastly! It was, in fact, treachery! Lovell's face worked as he stared at that letter.

He was astonished; he was offended; but he was more hurt than either. Jimmy Silver was writing like this about him. As if Lovell was a fellow like Tubby Muffin, hunting in where he wasn't wanted!

Lovell recovered himself at last. He understood now—or he thought he understood. He wasn't wanted, and this was what Jimmy Silver's friendship was worth! He turned away from the table.

He did not pick up his hat, after all. He was in no mood to join his friends on the cricket ground. His heart was heavy, but his eyes were glistening as he slowly left the end study.

"I say, Lovell, old chap!"

Conrad Attophus Reginald Muffin, more commonly known as Tubby, met him in the Classical Fourth passage. He looked a fat, hard man, like Lovell's arm.

"I'm jolly old chap, what do you think?" said Tubby. "I've just a half-crown. If you could lend me a bob till I find it—Whooop!"

Lovell was generally a good-tempered fellow. Why he gave the fat Tubby a shove, sending him staggering against the passage wall, was quite unknown to the **Classical Ten Gun Lancers—No. 1,886.**



Jimmy Silver & Co., turned on Morny, seized Mrs. and banged his head on the study door.

Abolphus Reginald Muffin. But he did, and Toby Muffin banged on the wall, did down, and sat on the floor with a *clump*.

"Ow!" gasped Toby. "Wow, ow! Why, you rotter you—Ow?"

Lovell strode on, regardless.

He tramped down the stairs. His face was set, his brows knitted. Several fellows glanced at him, and some of them smiled. Arthur Edward's temper, in point of fact, was rather an uncertain quantity, and it sometimes furnished a little harmless entertainment in the Rockwood Fourth. It was not uncommon for Arthur Edward to take offense where none was intended, and to display wrath and indignation without adequate cause.

"Lovell's got 'em again," Morningson remarked to Errol, as Arthur Edward swung past.

"Cheese it, old man!" murmured Errol usually.

Morningson laughed. Lovell swung round and gave him a glare.

"You sticky an! What the clump do you mean?" demanded Lovell.

"What I say!" snarled Morny. "Nothing more, and nothing less! You've got 'em again, judging by your jolly old clivvy! Who's had the dashed cheek to come between the wind and your ability, old bean?"

Lovell clenched his fists. He was feeling strongly inclined to punch somebody. And Morny was making for it. Morningson looked at him moodily and provokingly; but Errol grasped his arm, and fairly dragged him away. Lovell glared after them, and cursed and maled for the dear again. Two or three fellows laughed at he went, and Arthur Edward's ears burned. Fellows were not supposed to go about frowning and scowling, and other fellows naturally regarded it as rather amusing. Lovell was quite aware that he was breaking the unwritten laws of Public Ten Gals Library—No. 1,222.

school life by displaying his emotions. But he did not care. His brow was blacker than ever as he tramped on into the quadrangle.

"Oh, here you are, old bean!" exclaimed the cheery voice of Jimmy Silver. "My hat! Forgotten your hat!" Lovell stared at him.

Jimmy, apparently, had come back from the cricket ground to meet him on his way. That was quite a chummy thing to do. And Jimmy's face was bright and cheery and friendly as usual. Yet on the study table lay that letter, in Jimmy's hand, staring in black and white, that he didn't want Lovell. It was sickening.

"Where's your hat, old chap?" asked Jimmy. He looked rather curiously at his friend. He saw that there was something wrong.

"In the study!" snapped Lovell.

"Aren't you coming down to the cricket?"

"No!"

"But you went in for your hat," said Jimmy, puzzled. "Anything up?"

Lovell drew a deep, hard breath. Was there anything up? Jimmy, of course, did not know that he had seen that letter. Lovell wondered anxiously what he would say, if he did know. He was disappointed for a moment, to think it all out, and ran his face fringed with his treachery. But he restrained that impulse. He would say nothing, but he would treat the fellow as he deserved. He would make it quite clear that if Jimmy didn't want him, he didn't want Jimmy.

"What's the trouble?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Anything happened?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Lovell bitterly.

"Well, get in for your hat, and come down to cricket," said Jimmy. "Look here, I'll cut in and get it for you, if you like."

"You needn't trouble."

"But what's the matter?"

"Find out!"

With that, Arthur Edward Lovell swung away and tramped across the quad, leaving Uncle James of Rockwood staring blankly after him.

CHAPTER 2.

A RUN IN THE LANE!

JIMMY SILVER walked back slowly to the cricket ground. His face was clouded, and he had a worried look. The chance of the end study had often found Lovell rather trying; there really never was any talking when Arthur Edward might not get "on his dignity," and treat his friends to the "marble eye." Often and often would Lovell take up an attitude of lofty dignity towards his class; and it only offended him if this lofty and dignified attitude was referred to as "the milk." Something, evidently, was amiss once more, and Uncle James watched rather wearily what it was. Obviously, it was something more serious than usual. Lovell was not merely dignified this time; he was offended and unfriendly.

"Is't Lovell coming down?" asked Ruby, as the captain of the Fourth rejoined the cricketers.

Jimmy shook his head.

"Why not?" asked Newcomb. "Old Lovell's not sticking, steady!"

"He's got his back up."

"Oh rubbish!" said Ruby. "What has he got his jolly old back up about this time?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Well, I dare say he'll get it down again by tea-time," remarked Newcomb. "Let's get on!"

Jimmy nodded, and they got on. Cricket practice was an important matter, though Lovell seemed to have forgotten its importance. It was rather amusing for Lovell to see it, as he was a member of the Classical Fourth room, and it was wanted in the forthcoming match with Marsden

House. Jimmy Silver was bent on keeping his men up to the mark for that match, and Lovell could not afford to neglect practice.

However, it could not be helped, and games practice proceeded without Lovell. Mornington and Errol came along—the former grinning. Morny called out to the captain of the Fourth.

"What's up with Lovell, Jimmy?"
 "Better ask him!" answered Jimmy shortly.
 "I've asked him, and he jolly nearly punched me!" squeaked Mornington. "All you fellows raised your p's and o's! Lovell's in a tantrum!"

Some of the fellows laughed, and Jimmy coloured uncomfortably. Lovell never seemed to understand that "tantrums" made a fellow look ridiculous; but his friends understood it far too. Lolly and offended dignity, so far from impressing fellows seriously, was taken hilariously at a jest. It was not pleasant for Jimmy Silver & Co. to find their friend furnishing entertainment for the Form once more.

Jimmy Silver was rather glad when cricket practice was over and the juniors went into tea.

The Co. expected Lovell to turn up in the end study as usual for tea. He was not there, and they waited. But Lovell did not come. His hat lay on the table where he had left it, beside Jimmy's untouched letter.

Jimmy glanced at that letter and picked up a pen. He thought he might as well finish that letter home, while he waited for Lovell to come into tea. But he paused and laid down the pen again. Lovell's state of offence might last over the week-end; in which case it was not much use making arrangements for a week-end together.

"Where the dickens is that man?" exclaimed Roly impatiently. "Look here, let's have tea!"

"Blessed if I know what's the matter with Lovell," said Jimmy. "I think I'll cut down and look for him. You fellows get tea ready."

Jimmy Silver went along the passage, looking round for Lovell. The offended youth was not in sight there.

"Boon Lovell!" he called out to Patty of the Fourth, who was in the doorway of Study No. 2.

"He's gone into Hall!" answered Patty.
 "He's not going in Hall!" exclaimed Jimmy.
 "I fancy so!" Patty of the Fourth grinned. "You fellows get another row on in your study!"

"Oh, not that!" grunted Jimmy.

He went downstairs with a clouded brow. If Lovell was taking in Hall, without a word to his comrades, it was clear that the matter was serious. No junior at Redwood ever took in Hall unless he was hard up. Jimmy made his way to Hall, where tea was going on. Not more than half a dozen of the Classical Fourth were there; but among them was Arthur Edward Lovell. Jimmy came along the long table and tapped him on the shoulder.

Lovell looked up. He gave the captain of the Fourth an icy stare.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Are you coming up to the study?"

"No, I'm not."

"Go and cut robe, then, you silly, silly man!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently, and he walked out of Hall.

Roly and Newcome looked at him inquiringly when he arrived in the end study alone.

"Lovell not coming?"

"No; he's taking in Hall on his own."

"What's the matter with him?"

"What's the good of asking me? Who ever knows what's the matter with the silly one when he goes his silly back up!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "I can tell you I'm getting fed-up. We can't arrange about the week-end now, even if

Dicky Dalton will let him off. I was writing home to-day; but it's no good writing now. Bless Lovell!"

The three juniors sat down to tea. When they came out of the study after tea they found a good many grinning faces in the passage and in the doorway of the study. The news that there was a rift in the life, in the end study, had spread all through the Classical Fourth now. It was not the first by many a one; and, as usual, it was taken at a joke.

"Lovell still talking?" called out Cyril Frodo.

"Oh, what up!" snarped Jimmy Silver.

"Bydams, lose his little temper!" inquired Gower; and there was a laugh.

"Tell Lovell to keep it up, you men!" yelled Mornington when the three as they went towards the staircase.

"Lovell on the high horse is as good as a Punch-and-Judy show!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three turned on Morny, seized him, and banged his head on his study door. Then they walked on their way again, leaving Morny roaring, and the other fellows cheering with laughter.

In the quadrangle they sighted Arthur Edward Lovell. He was "snoozing" along under the old Hookwood bench, with his hands in his pockets, and a deep frown on his face.

At a little distance Scocks, of the Second Form, was putting in a playful instance of the unconscious Lovell—making up an exaggerated frown on his shabby face, and shaking from either side young scamps of the Second.

Jimmy and his comrades exchanged glances. They changed Scocks & Co. and went their way, scattering with wild yells. Then they approached Lovell.

"Look here, Lovell!" began Jimmy Silver.

Lovell stared grimly at the three.

"Don't speak to me, Jimmy Silver!" he said curtly. "I want you to leave me alone! But I'd like to have it straight with you, Roly, and you, Newcome. Are you sticking to me or to that fellow?"

"That fellow?" repeated Roly. "Do you mean Jimmy?"

"I mean James Silver! We were friends before he came to Redwood," said Lovell. "I've struggled with him, and I expect you to stand by me."

"You silly man!" said Roly. "What's the matter with you?"

"You frumpetous chump," said Newcome. "What have you got in the lump of points you call a brain this time?"



Whele Jim gilled in with vhp. Gruch! There was a pangsing concusion on Lovell's weel down on his back!

Lovell set his lips.

"Are you sticking to me, or to that fellow?" he demanded, categorically.

"Lovell—" began the astonished Jimmy.

"Stand up! I'm speaking to those fellows! I've not speaking to you again so long as you're at Rockwood."

"Then you needn't speak to us, either, you fellow!" exclaimed Baby badly.

"You can go and eat robs, like the silly, talky one you are!" said Newcome. "Of all the hurling, blithering idiots!"

"That's enough!" said Lovell.

And he stalked away, leaving his three chums staring at one another helplessly.

CHAPTER 3. The Fight!

"PREP!" said Jimmy Silver, rather dimly.

Three fellows gathered in the end study for prep. Lovell was in the passage, and his friends wondered whether he would come in. He had not tea in the study; but he could hardly do preparation.

After the little scene in the quad it did not seem much use to hope for a reconciliation. Lovell was angry, and, like the prophet of old, he evidently felt that he did well to be angry. He had not explained what had offended him, and, apparently, he did not intend to explain. In such circumstances, it was difficult to see how the rift in the line was to be repaired. Still, Jimmy hoped that when they sat down together to prep, the cause of offence might come out, and might be explained away. The Co. had learned to be patient with Lovell.

There was a heavy footstep outside, and Lovell tramped in. The three made room for him at the table, and Jimmy pulled up a chair for him. Lovell did not even look at them.

He gathered up his books and papers. His glasses, for a second, lay open on Jimmy's unfinished letter, still lying on the table, and his eyes glanced. Jimmy had left it there, careless what eyes might fall on it. A black and bitter suspicion was in Lovell's mind now that Jimmy had left it there intentionally for him to see what was written. That was the fellow's way of letting him know that he was

not wanted; instead of speaking out openly and honestly. Probably Baby and Newcome had seen it, too. Indeed, they could hardly have avoided doing so, as the letter lay fairly under their eyes, as they sat at the table. Yet they evidently did not care. They were in this, with Jimmy Silver, of course—the three of them against Lovell! Well, he was done with the whole crowd of them!

With his books under his arms, Lovell turned to the door. The three exchanged glances and stared at Lovell's back as he went.

"Aren't you doing prep here, Lovell?" asked Jimmy Silver mildly.

Lovell looked round, a bitter sneer on his face.

"Not more I'm not wanted," he said. "There are other fellows who want me, if you fellows don't! I'm going to change into Peole's study."

"You silly chump!" snapped Baby. "That old Peole is pulling your silly leg—he likes to see a row on here." Lovell made no reply to that. He tramped out of the study, and closed the door after him with a bang.

The Co. were not looking their usual cheery when they left the study after prep. Peole's door stood wide open, and Earl Jennings was in that study instead of the usual three—Peole, Laxey, and Governor, the black sheep of the Classics. Fourth, looked out as Jimmy Silver & Co. came along, and grinned. Lovell looked out, and sneered.

Jimmy Silver passed. It was not pleasant to see his class-making friends with those dirty looks of the Peole. He knew, too, that Peole & Co. were only taking up Lovell from an impish desire to pull his leg and widen the breach in the end study. Jimmy resolved to make no more effort.

"Coming down, Lovell?" he called out in the old cheery way.

Arthur Edward Lovell stared at him without speaking.

"Oh, come on, Jimmy!" said Newcome. "Leave the silly one to stew in his own juice till he gets over it."

Lovell winced.

"And that fellow was a pal of mine before Silver came to Rockwood!" he said to Peole bitterly.

"Well, you silly one, tell us what's the matter with you, can't you?" howled Newcome.

"Give it a name, old chump!" urged Jimmy Silver. Lovell's eyes flashed.

"I'll give it a name, if you like!" he snapped. "I've turned you down, Jimmy Silver, because you're a trouser-out rotter, a false friend, and a back-lifter! You've got no friendliness and can me down behind my back, and you've got my friends away from me, like the rotten snark you are! And for true piss I'd stop out and map up the passage with you!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Peole. "Go it, old bean! That's the stuff to give 'em!"

Jimmy Silver's face was quite pale. Jimmy was patient, but he had a temper, and his eyes were gleaming now. There was a limit even to the forbearing patience of Uncle James of Rockwood.

"I don't know what you've got in your head, Lovell," he said slowly; "I suppose you're making some idiotic mistake, as usual. But no fellow can talk to me like that."

"You can like it or lump it!" jeered Lovell. "I wasn't going to say anything, but you asked for it. And I'll tell all Rockwood it if you don't shut your rotten eye!"

"Not without getting the thrashing of your life, you cheeky fool!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. His patience was quite exhausted now.

Lovell strode to the doorway.

"Put up your hands, you rotter!" he howled.

"For goodness' sake!" began Baby, in dismay.

"Check it, Lovell, you chump!" shouted Newcome, catching Arthur Edward by the shoulder.

Lovell struck his hand off and strode directly up to Jimmy Silver.

"Put up your hands!" he roared. "You've asked for it, you rotter! Take that for a starter!"

It was a tap on the nose, and a hard tap, Jimmy Silver's hands flew up. There was no choice left him now, and he stood on his defence. Lovell came on with a rush, and the next moment a furious fight was raging in the Fourth Form passage.

"Give 'em room!" shrieked Mornington. "Stand back, you men! Give Lovell room to drop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The jokers crowded back out of the way of the combatants. It was Jimmy Silver who needed room, for he was cowering under Lovell's heavy attack.

But every fellow, excepting Lovell, knew that Uncle James had only to exert himself to get the upper hand. Lovell was a muscular fellow, and had lungs of pluck, and



COKE'S HOLIDAY CAPTURE!

If there's a wrong way of doing anything, Herace James Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, will do it. He is almost the biggest duffer, idiot, and hurbling hand-in-glove that ever walked the earth! Yet, in spite of these many failings, he's got the pluck of a lion. Every boy who enjoys a really good school yarn should make the acquaintance of this amusing and amazing schoolboy character. Meet him in the topping long complete school yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing each week in

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some skill in boxing; but Jimmy was the champion fighting man of the Lower School at Rockwood.

"Go on, Silver!" shouted Merrington. "What are you playing that game for? He won't be happy till he gets it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Knock the silly one out, and have done with it," said Newcome.

Lowell grimaced. It was foul to the shame of his worth to find that the fellows took it for granted that Jimmy Silver could win that fight if he liked. Lowell resolved accordingly that he would show them that the water couldn't. He pressed the fighting fiercely. And Jimmy Silver, driven to a disadvantage, had to wrap in deadly earnest, or take a licking. And then Uncle James piled in with vim.

There was a rattling concussion as Arthur Edward Lowell went down on his back.

"Man down!" grunted Merrington.

"Well hit!" shouted Newcome.

"Go it, Lowell!" shouted Frank & Co. "Go it, old bean! You've got him licked, if you stick to him! Go it!"

Lowell scrambled up and rattled on again.

Lowell was driven back, and Jimmy's fists came thumping home on his nose, his chin, his chest, in a bewildering succession of blows. Lowell fought hard, but his defence was useless against that hot attack, and he was knocked right and left. There was a crash again as he landed on the floor.

This time he lay gasping. Jimmy Silver stood looking down at him, panting for breath.

"New check it, you fathead!" he gasped.

Lowell sat up dazedly. He was breathing in great gulps. One of his eyes was closed, and his nose streamed crimson. Lowell was, in fact, looked but not for which would he have admitted it.

He staggered breathlessly to his feet.

"Come on, you rascal!" he panted.

"Check it!" bawled Raby. "You're licked, you see! Check it!"

"Mind your own business! Get out of the way!" panted Lowell. "I'm going to whop that rascal!"

"You silly owl!" yelled Newcome. "Check it!"

Lowell rushed on, unheeding. Jimmy Silver's hands came up again, and the fight was resumed.

Jimmy Silver grinned. Lowell, making a last furious effort, rushed at him desperately. A light punch on the chest overpowered him, and he crumpled to the floor.

"Ow!" said Merrington.

Lowell made an effort to rise. But he could only sink his head against the wall of the passage, helplessly. He was utterly spent. He sat there breathing in gulps, beaten to the wall.

"Lowell, old fellow," said Jimmy, in a low voice. "I never wanted this. You know I never did. I can't understand what's got you—"

"Leave me alone," muttered Lowell harshly, with tears of rage in his eyes. "You've licked me—I know that. You treated me rottenly; turned me down and made a fool of me, and now you've licked me! Much good may it do you! Now leave me alone!"

Jimmy Silver stopped back. His face crimson. Evidently there was nothing more to be said. He walked back to the end study, where Raby brought him a basin of water, and Newcome a sponge, to bath his face, which needed it badly. And Merrington, his mercenary machinery suppressed for the moment, led Lowell away to the top of the oval of the passage, and he helped him to repair damages—not that there was much that could be done. Lowell's damages were many and manifold. And it was likely to be a long time before Arthur Edward ceased to display a highly decorative countenance.

CHAPTER 4. Merry Takes a Hand!

"YOU ARE!"

Valentine Merrington made that remark. He had just explained matters to Merrington.

Lowell gave him a moody, discomfited frown. Lowell was sore in mind and body. Jimmy Silver had been damaged in that fierce scrap, but Lowell was much harder hit. That he could have stood; but his pride was sorely wounded. He had set out to thrash the fellow by whom, he believed, he had been badly treated, and he had bagged a severe defeat. That rankled deeply.

"You see!" repeated Merry. "I thought you were making some silly mistake, and now I'm sure of it. Jimmy's son that sort of chap."

"I tell you I see it in his own fist!" asserted Lowell. "And Raby and Newcome jolly well know, too! The letter was lying under their eyes all through peep."

Merrington shook his head.

"There's a catch somewhere," he said. "If Jimmy Silver's a hand like that, Raby and Newcome would turn him down, if they knew."

"Well, they haven't," said Lowell bitterly.

"Let's go and see them," said Merrington. "It won't take long to get at the facts."

Merrington walked him along the passage to the end study, and threw open the door. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome were there, Jimmy examining a steady eye before the glass. They looked round at the newcomers. Lowell bestowed a smile on his former friends and they frowned back. Merrington smiled.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "I've had enough of your lecturing in, Merry. You can find some other subject for your little jokes—or look out for a scrap!"

"In me," said Merrington, unheeding, "you behold the benevolent possessor."

"Don't be a silly ass!" growled Raby.

"Honest! Just!" said Merry. "I've got on to the trouble, and I think Silver can explain—"

"He can't!" asserted Lowell.

"There's nothing to explain, that I know of," said Jimmy Silver tartly. "Shut the door after you, Merrington."

"I'm not finished yet," said Merry calmly. He made a gesture towards the letter that still lay on the table. "Is that it, Lowell?"

"That's it!" growled Lowell.

"What the thump's that got to do with it?" demanded Newcome.

"Lowell!" said Merry. "Lowell saw that letter lying there, and saw—"

"Quite by accident," said Lowell quickly. "If a fellow leaves a letter lying open on a study table, a fellow's apt to be blamed for seeing it, I suppose. If you think I'd read your letters, Jimmy Silver—"

"You silly owl!" said Jimmy. "You're welcome to see it, Raby and Newcome have seen it, I suppose, as it was lying under their noses."

Lowell set his lips.

"I jolly well know it!" he said. "Let's get out of this, Merry—"

"Hold on! May I see the letter, Silver?"

"Yes, if you like. All Rockwood may see it, for all I care!" snapped Jimmy. "It's only a letter to my father about a week-end at home. Nothing in it to put that fathead's back up that I know of."

Merrington looked at the offending letter. He started for a moment. Then he smiled, opened the double sheet, and looked on the second page. He glanced at Lowell with a grin.

"You didn't read this through, Lowell?" he asked.

Lowell glared.

"Thank I was trying to read a fellow's letter?" he roared.

"I saw the top sheet because it was lying there. I never saw any more."

"Fifty you didn't, in the dirt," purred Merrington.

"I'll read it out to you, you benighted ass!" And Merry read out the letter:

"Dear Father,—It's a ripping idea, and I should be jolly glad to come home for the week-end and bring my friends. Only Lowell's been rather in hot water with Mr. Dalton lately, and Dalton may not let him off. Of course I don't want Lowell—"

Merrington paused and turned the sheet. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome stared blankly. Merrington continued on the second page:

"—to be left behind, if we come. It wouldn't be worth of a holiday for us without old Lowell."

Arthur Edward Lowell gave a kind of suffocated gasp. For a moment he stood rooted, transfixed. Then he fairly tore the letter from Merrington's hand and stared at it. He stared at the first page, turned it, and stared at the second. His eyes bulged wide open, his jaw dropped, and a wave of crimson overspread his discoloured countenance.

"Oh!" gasped Lowell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" called Merrington.

"Oh! Oh crony!" articulated Lowell. "Oh! Oh dear! Oh!"

(Continued on page 34.)

START RIGHT AWAY ON OUR RIPPING SERIAL!

THE ISLAND CASTAWAYS!



Salvage!

"I may be that when the loss of the *Magie* becomes known a destroyer will be sent out to try to find us," continued dad; "but she is a small boat and was probably a head-on collision out of her course. Saunders refused to send out an SOS, so there'll be no sign. It behooves us to be prepared. You get two or three barrels in this part of the world, I believe, so that unless the stock of flour is raised by sea water, we ought to have our own wheat and maize and oats by the time the supply is exhausted. The next thing is to make a raft. We'll see to it whilst Harry sends over such provisions as he can easily lay hands on."

Dad's manner showed that he certainly did not expect a quick rescue, if rescue came at all, and I doubt if ever three people worked as hard as we worked that morning. On shore I saw the white heels scratching on the sand, and Nigger, sitting beside Jill on the raft, was in disgrace for having chased them, and spent the evening dignity of one of the cockroaches.

I made journey after journey to the store, and one of the best jobs was to drag a hundredweight of potatoes out on to the dock. The sack was pretty well soaked, but I tipped them out on the sun-baked deck to dry, and hoped they would be all right; but dad, coming along with a cabin door, told me to send over a few bushelsful, and yell to mother and Jill to lay them in the hot sand in some slightly sheltered spot, so it wouldn't do for them to dry too quickly.

I had put on an old linen hat I had picked up, and Jill had shoved a persona on the back of her head. Mother was rather a scream in a floppy sort of hat with a rumbling-trimming, which I suppose was the latest Paris **THE GAZETTE—No. 1,232.**

failure to startle New Zealand. But, my word, she was sticking it gamely, and keeping potatoes which that silly man, Nigger, seemed to think he was supposed to dig up.

Soon after midday we launched the raft—four cabin doors nailed together—with lifeboats fastened to the sides. We slipped it over the ledge into pretty deep water without much trouble. Dad had found four cans in a stove-in boat, and he looked jolly well pleased with himself as he worked the raft round to the land side of the ship, where we made it fast, and knocked off for grub.

We had the meal in the chart-room, on the bridge; two tins of pork and beans, a loaf of bread, which was nasty and salty, and some quite good butter. Dad insisted on a bottle of light beer he had found, whilst Dad and I pugged into some pineapple chunks. Putting on his pipe dad studied a chart and the ship's log, but did not seem to get much satisfaction, but I bagged a revolver and a packet of ammunition I found in a drawer of the desk.

From a window in the chart-room we saw mother and Jill making some sort of meal, not troubling to go back to the camp, and we saw, too, that the tide had turned.

Dadley strolled off, though dad insisted that we should take a full hour off in the glaring heat of the day, even if time was short. The glass was rising rapidly, so that no danger threatened the wreck for the moment. She was carrying a general cargo, the nature of which we had little idea; but the boats were under water, and another tide over the things which were already soaked could do little or no more damage. Dad took the chart and log book, binoculars, sextant, and compass, and put them in the basket to be hauled over, and I made for my cabin to collect some clothes and belongings.

Things were finished about all over the place, but, being on deck, all of the bridge, there had been little water in it, and my few belongings had suffered no damage. I was arranging things into a suitcase when the Dad appeared at the door, and I gave a little gasp of surprise.

He was dressed in tunic and trousers of white drill; he had shaved, and a naval cap with a white cover was set about rakishly on his dark head.

"Bagged those from the second officer's cabin," he said. "Good thing that, and young Pollard was about your build, Barry. I should go and bag a suit of his. Dad seems to think that we're here for donkey's years, and if we can grow poultry food and potatoes, we can't grow clothes."

It was a good idea, for as we'd been making for New Zealand we had not bought a tropical outfit, but had made flannel bags and tennis shoes serve, so I made for young Pollard's cabin on the best-deck, thinking of that awful shriek as he had been washed overboard by that terrific wave.

The deck was hot to the feet. The sun glared down with an intensity I should never have believed possible, and I thought how glantly it would be to have weeks,

Steak and Onions for Supper on a Desert Island!

Just right for the tropics. Poor young Pollard was about your build, Barry. I should go and bag a suit of his. Dad seems to think that we're here for donkey's years, and if we can grow poultry food and potatoes, we can't grow clothes."

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The deck was hot to the feet. The sun glared down with an intensity I should never have believed possible, and I thought how glantly it would be to have weeks,

months, perhaps even years of it. And then I saw tangled wires draped over the cabin roof, and my heart seemed to jump up into my mouth, and I think I must have gone nearly dizzy with delight, and I was dancing on the hot deck, when I saw the Doc's astonished face halfway up the companion-way.

"Dad?" I called at him. "We're the biggest ones that ever lived! Why didn't we think of it before? We're saved, man—saved! The wireless!"

A Night Alarm!

I WAS locking madly at the door which had jammed when Dad smiled quite luxuriously up. He was not in the least excited, and he put his hand on my shoulder.

"Steady, kid!" he said quietly sharply.

To be called "kid" by old Dad is an insult; but I was too excited to resent it at the time, though I could always lick my brother, and he knew it.

I think that with the heat of the sun, and what we'd gone through in the last twenty-four hours, I must have been a little bit mad. I knew that as I fought to open the door, I told him that we were like men who'd supposed themselves lost, and never thought to see the compass they carried.

And, standing there on the scorching deck, Buddy lit a cigarette, and looked at me in that rather bored way of his, which dad said was the course of his being sicked from so many jobs.

"See quite like that, old chap," he said. "They might have reasons to suppose that their compass worked. We've got the least reason to suppose that the gadget in three words. I know we could easily fix up the aerial, but even if the set is O.K., it has a very limited range for transmitting, and there's not a lot of us in telling the essential inhabitants of some neighboring isle that we're stranded on some island, the situation of which we haven't the foggiest notion."

That sobered me down. I remembered Pollard telling me that it was a jolly good instrument for receiving—we'd found Daventry in the Panama Canal—but the transmitter had a very short range. Then we burst open the door, and a nearly full sea of six-inch low tension accumulator which was upset on the floor with the dead reed it sat on a great, heavy hole in a sea-sucking mat, and the big, glass bulb of one of the low tension valves was shattered.

That was a lamer! I felt sure that Pollard must have carried a spare transmitter valve, if not others as well, but we searched the cabin without finding it, though we discovered an unopened high tension battery of a hundred and twenty volts. Then dad came in, and he looked awfully busy in an old pair of brown h'd shoes in the skipper's cabin. He'd also found a medicine-chest, and was awfully keen about it, and a bit annoyed when the Dad pulled his leg about his qualifications as a doctor.

"I wanted Buddy to fix himself up with Pollard's tropical top," Dad said. "There doesn't seem anything knocking about, but now we're here we may as well take his sea-chest over."

"All right," said dad; "but hurry up. You boys take the raft over. I'll carry on with the cooling-gear arrangement."

Dad and I carried the chest down on to the raft, which floated beside the sunken boat, and we watched points on we loaded. The tide was coming in, the foredeck was half covered with water, and Dad's beautifully crossed trousers were being drenched round his ankles. We had precious little idea what the raft would carry, and our feet bled was comparatively.

But as I stood on it, pushing away at an oar, driving the raft towards the yellow sands, over which the surf was now breaking gently, I had a feeling that I could not get for the life of me describe, but seemed something like I had felt when I had just made my one and only century for Cyn-bridge School. I don't know why I should have felt so foolish, because there was nothing to be really hatched about, but I suppose the island already seemed hatched, and we were bringing stuff over that was going to make it a more comfortable home.

Nigger came swimming out and sprang on the raft as it entered the surf, jumping wildly over me and barking loudly, and he did not quit down until I had made a line of him.

"He's been watching the ship all the time, except when he chased the 'fow' and dug up the potatoes," said Jill, who seemed rightly pleased to see us, and hurried to help us

unload, while mother was working the basket on the gear that had saved our lives. "Tell me, about that shark, Barry."

I told her pretty briefly I hated the sight of the beastly thing, and I hoped I should not be called upon to pass through the salmon; and Jill gave a little shiver.

She had been rather sick as we being allowed out on to the wreck, but now she did not seem to mind so much.

Then mother came hurrying across the sand. She looked awfully funny, and I had to grin. I think I said that my mother had white hair; a sort of quiet dignity. But she didn't look a bit disheveled now. Her long skirt was torn, her face was burned crimson, and the big, floppy hat, with which I reckoned she'd intended to starve the New Zealanders, was certainly soiled by splashing on the sand of Necessity Island. It looked just about as much in keeping as a man wearing a tall hat with flared sides.

"Oh, Barry dear," she said, "I left my handbag in my cabin, and I wonder your father didn't send it over at once! It's either in the top drawer of the bunk or in the little cupboard of the washstand, and there's over ten pounds in it!"

"What on earth are you saying now?" I blurted out thoughtfully; and then could have kicked myself, and Dad did give me a sharp rap on the shin.

I saw Jill bite her lip, but mother was quite calm. "It's just as well to keep one's valuables, for they may come in useful," she said quietly. "And when you're in my cabin, look out for a pot of cold cream; I'm sure my face will be an awful sight to-morrow!"

And with that she hurried off to load in the basket again, and back we went to the wreck. Dad was tragically hoarse. He'd found the small electric refrigerator which had recently been fitted to the Mingo. With the stopping of the engine and the dynamo, it had ceased to function; but he told us that he had sent over a big steak, which, with a couple of smaller ones and some choice chops, had evidently been reserved for the skipper.

"I don't know how long the other things will keep, but we'll have steak, onions, and potatoes for supper to-night, boys!"

That sounded jolly cheering, and old Dad was sporting enough to go to mother's cabin—which means passing through the sub-deck with the dead shark in it. I helped dad get a sack of potatoes and a couple more bags of butter on to the raft.

There was no end of rice, for the Indians and Chinese had pretty well lived on that, and we took off eighteen tins of condensed milk, food stuff, and fruit, which dad said there was not much hope of keeping unless we could find a comparatively dry and shady place.

Dad and I took another load over, and mother got her handbag and cold cream. Then on the next load dad came with us, and we had a pot and a cup of tea on the island. We had brought over quite a lot of fresh water, too, although dad said he had not the least doubt but that we should find plenty on the island, there was no time for exploration until we had salvaged everything possible from the wreck.

Mother looked pretty well done up, and dad insisted that she should have a rest before cooking the supper, and said he and Jill would start moving things to the camp while Dad and I went back to the wreck to fetch a large tarpaulin we had not been able to fetch on the last journey.

"You can bring over that wireless set, too, if you're still keen, Barry," he said to me.

Jill looked up quickly.

"Will it work?" she asked eagerly.

"No," replied Dad, with a grin; "but Barry thinks he'll be getting Daventry next week! Good-night, boys, good-night!"

I took a bit of an ooze, but I was determined to get that wireless set ashore, even if it was only for the hope of being able to pick up some message, which would make us feel somehow in touch with civilization.

Dad helped good-humoredly to get the stuff on to the raft and to unlatch the aerial from the broken mast; but as we left the ship, we saw three parts covered by the high tide, tearing the chains but we'd forgotten all about behind us, he said that, even if the other sails were all right, and the high tension battery all right, I should be stranded for life, unless.

"Not if we save any lock in the aft hold," roared, Dad. "I said 'Tarp'—a twelve-foot battery on that has you

THE OPENING CHAPTER.

THOMAS BARRY MAYNE is on his way to New Zealand aboard the Mingo, with his father and mother. BARRY, his elder brother, and JILL, his younger sister, are also with them. During a terrible storm in the Pacific, the crew mutinied, and drove the boat ashore before all the crew. Barry and his family are locked in the hold. With an opportunity to get the Mingo crew ashore and the salmon is landed.

They have struck a good reef of an island, and taking the life, Barry manages to get ashore with a line. A heavy fallow and by means of a hand saw a narrow, but of course, Necessity Island. The next morning Barry and Dad go aboard the Mingo to arrange what they can. To their horror they are trapped in a land surrounded with wild things. Dad arrives in time and shouts, "Well, we're stranded," says dad, "but we must make the best of it."

(See continue the story, as told by Barry.)

The Gen Library—No. 1228.

were taking the roof, even allowing for it running down a bit during the night, I ought to get six volts out of it for a bit."

We landed the stuff, covered the things left by the roof with the big tarpaulin we'd just brought over, fastened the raft well up to the mast, and then made for our new camp, and a scolding smell of steak and onions on the new roof air hurried our steps.

We had intended rigging up a tent for ourselves, but had felt too tired, and when we'd finished grub, another and Jill went off to their tent, and we lay down by the fire. Dad's discovery of the box of safety matches untouched by water and the knowledge that we had untrapped beams to dry in the sun had eased us of any anxiety about the fire. We made it up, but cared nothing if it was out in the morning. We spruced ourselves on the mast, wrapped in blankets, with pillows for our heads, and I knew I was asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow.

I had not the vaguest notion how long I had been asleep, but a scream woke me up with a start, and then I heard a yell from Jill:

"Barry—quick! There's someone in our tent!"

I sat up, blinking in the darkness, remembered the revolver I had taken from the store-room, and, dazed as my brain was with sleep, I made a grab for it, then another searching feeling, opened my mouth as if with my teeth bared, and raised the board of my easy storage almost on top of me, and the next moment something lit me a terrific shock on the temple, and I seemed to be falling back into space, with something heaving and terrible bearing me down.

That shock on the head, which, at the moment I took to be a blow from a club, dazed me, but did not knock me quite out. I knew I experienced a glancing feeling of lank at the thought of being in the hands of a such of invading savages, and then, as I will stretched at the board, tried to pull myself together and reach for the revolver, I heard a yell of laughter.

"Stick it, Barry!" cried Dad's voice. "You've got someone's skull!"

Nerves, my feelings, seriously, and I heard the sharp crack of steel springing into, and then, with a mixed feeling of surprise, indignation, and amazement, I realised that I was holding a skull, not by the board, and just managed to shove back my head from his curved horn!

"That fellow gave a little shock, but the Island Conference have a lot of skulls ready to throw at! Mind you read next week's *Star* (archaeological, boys.)"

CHUMS DIVIDED!

(Continued from page 25.)

"What an earth—!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see?" shouted Montington. "Lovell saw the front page of this letter—"

"Well, what about it?"

"Look at it!"

Jimmy Silver looked at it.

"Lovell was too jolly handsome to read a letter's letter!" shouted Montington. "But if he'd turned, the page it would have been all O.K. As it was—"

Jimmy gasped.

"Lovell, you thundering idiot—"

"I—!" gasped Lovell. "I only saw— I—I thought— I—I never knew— I—I—!" Lovell's words died in a mumble. He tried again: "You see, the last page ends up, 'Of course, I don't want Lovell—'"

"You brought it back!" howled Jimmy. "Is that what you got near your old 'Mount? You—you—your idiot!" Lovell stood overwhelmed with confusion. He had not a word to say in defence. Riley and Newcome, with grinning now; but Jimmy Silver, for sure, was really angry! But as he looked at Lovell's miserable, contrite face his anger melted away.

"I—! say, Jimmy—!" whined Lovell.

"You see!" said Jimmy witheringly.

"I—! am up—I was in an awful" gulped Lovell. "But—! but I can tell you I was lost—I was awfully miserable, Jimmy, old chap—"

"And that's what we swapped about!" said Jimmy, his face breaking into a grin. "Oh, my hat! Lovell, old man, you really are the best!" Then, as the absurdity of the matter dawned on him, he burst into a laugh, and Riley and Newcome laughed too; and Lovell, at last, joined in; and a roar from the end study answered the rest in the passage.

When the Victoria Four came down from the study they came down arm-in-arm, in a sherry row across the passage and the stairs. Two of them looked considerably damaged; but all of them looked sober and bright. The rift in the late was mended; the friendship in the real study was, so to speak, renewed and equal to new. Arthur Edwards's unobtrusive error was washed out and forgotten; his friends agreeing that it was just the Lovell.

THE END.

(Poor old Lovell, he's always making mistakes! Don't forget that the GEM contains a new story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Montserrat EVERY WEEK!)

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