

FORM-MASTERS FIGHT IN FORM-ROOM! See the Long Complete School Year Inside!

# The GEM

2<sup>D</sup>



## CHAPTER I.

Backing Up Linton!

"GENTLE-  
MEN—""Hur-  
rah!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Hear! Order,  
you assed! Gentle-  
men—!""That's the third  
time you've said it,  
old chap," re-  
marked Harry  
Noble, otherwise  
Kangaroo, of the  
Shell.Tom Merry, the  
captain of the Shell  
at St. Jim's, glared  
at the American  
junior exultantly."Well, I shouldn't  
have to start begin-  
ning again all the  
blasted time if you  
idiots wouldn't  
interrupt!" roared  
Tom. "Shut up!""Hear, hear!  
Order!" cut in  
Reginald Talbot  
quietly. "We  
haven't called this  
giddy Form-mee-  
ting to rag about  
Linton to Tom  
Merry, you ass!"The excited herd  
of talk in the junior  
(Common-room) died  
down. All eyes  
regarded  
upon the stalwart  
figure of Tom  
Merry.Tom was standing  
on the table in the  
centre of the room,  
surrounded by a  
dense throng of  
Shell fellows.Though it was sup-  
posed to be a Form-meeting, there was a generous sprinkling  
of Fourth-Formers in the crowd as well. Blake & Co. of the  
Fourth were present, and so were Cardew and Lexion and  
Chive and one or two others, who had come along filled with  
keen interest in the proceedings that evening.

"On the ball, Tommy!" murmured Mooty Leather.

Tom began again.

"Gentlemen, you all know the reason for this meeting  
to-night," he said in a tone of fierce determination. "Poor  
old Linton, our Form master, has been kicked out of St.  
Jim's!"

"Shame!" growled George Alfred Gronds.

"At least, they've tried to kick him out, but he won't  
go!"

"Hurrah!"

"And this Form is backing him up to a man!" went on  
Tom Merry grimly, to the accompaniment of excited cheers.  
"You bet we are!" nodded Cyrus K. Handcock, the  
American junior."They've told Linton to go—the Head's told him to go—  
because poor old Linton is supposed to have been in league  
with some crooks who stole some school funds!" Tom con-  
tinued hotly. "A letter has been found, supposed to have  
been written by Linton, asking for his share of the stolen  
money. I can't explain that letter; but I, for one, believe  
Linton when he swears he never wrote it!"

"Of course he didn't!"

"Good old Linton!"

THE GUN JOURNAL—No. 1271.

## THE FIGHTING



"But the Head believes Linton did write it, and Linton's  
been told to go," went on Tom in quieter tones. "You  
can't blame the Head, I suppose, in a way; he's reasonable,  
that's all. But Linton refuses to go until the Head brings  
in the police to charge him with his supposed guilt and  
have him up before a court of law. The Head naturally  
won't do this, because of the scandal and the honour of the  
school!"

"We know all this, don't we?" suggested Crooke, with a  
smile.

"Rats!" said Tom earnestly, with a glance at the end of the  
Shell, who was standing against the wall with his hand  
on Barrett. "I'm going over the fence to make sure that all  
the chaps understand the position. The position is that  
Linton won't go unless the Head brings in the police, and  
the Head won't bring in the police. So it's a deadlock for  
the moment. But—and it's a big but—the Head has lined  
up for another master to come to the school to become  
master of the Shell. He arrives to-morrow afternoon—"

A chorus of voices interrupted Tom's words for a moment  
or two.

"The Head thinks that when the new master arrives Lin-  
ton will go—that he'll have to go, then," went on Tom, when  
the hissing had died down. "But old Linton is determined  
to hang on to his job—good for him!—new master or no  
new master. There's going to be trouble, therefore, when  
the new head arrives. This meeting has been called for the  
Shell to decide just what the Form is going to do  
about it!"

# FORM MASTER!

By  
Martin Clifford.



Tom finished with a gasp, glances in his eyes as he glanced toward the crowd.

Excited faces were turned towards him from every side. The Shell had turned up in a body that evening; even the glimmering spectacles of Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, could be seen among the crowd. And Skimpole's face was excited and grim as anyone's.

Though Mr. Linton might not be the absolute ideal of what a Form master should be, in the opinion of his pupils—he was too strict a disciplinarian for that—most of the Shell fellows had a deep-rooted respect and inward affection for the old gentleman, in spite of the hard things they were liable to say about him when Mr. Linton scattered love rather freely in the Shell Form room.

In his hour of trouble they had called to him with a loyalty that had astonished Mr. Linton himself—and deeply touched him.

"That's the question," repeated Tom quietly. "What are we Shell chaps going to do about it?"

"Send a round- robin to the Head, saying we're sure old Linton's innocent," suggested Gibbon Duce, the Canadian junior, doubtfully.

"That wouldn't do any good," said Tom, shaking his head.

"What's your idea, then?" asked Talbot eagerly.

As captain of the Form, Tom Merry's idea carried weight.

"Well, for one thing, we won't let ourselves be taught by anyone but Linton, if you follow my advice," said Tom grimly. "Do till now, as you know, of course, the Head has let Linton carry on with the Form for a day or two—until the new master arrives. The Head had to agree to that, in the strict, really. But as soon as the new master comes—what's his name? Oh, Pilbeam, when Pilbeam comes, he'll try to take the Form. So will Linton! He's standing firm on that, just as the Head is standing firm that on Thursday morning Pilbeam shall take the Shell. Well, they can't both take it, I suppose, and it's up to us to ignore Pilbeam's very existence and only do as Linton says."

"Good one!" ejaculated Clyn. "Goodness knows what'll happen next!" There was a gleam of excitement in Tom's eyes. "But we've got to remember that Pilbeam is nothing to us. We won't recognize him as the master of the Shell! Not while Linton's still here!"

"Hater not!" "Another thing," went on Tom, with a sudden, grim smile. "When Pilbeam, the new master, arrives at the school-to-morrow afternoon, it's up to us to make a demonstration of some sort to show our feelings. It may mean trouble, but it'll be worth it. We'll let the fellow Pilbeam know we don't want him!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled the Shell in chorus. "That's agreed, then?" cried Tom. "Stand up anyone who doesn't agree!"

Not a hand was raised. There were more excited cheers.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "All that has to be done now is to let Linton know that we'll stand by him even when the new master is here. I'll go and tell him so myself. And to think out some good stunt for to-morrow afternoon, for when Pilbeam comes!" He glanced towards the figure of his chum, Mandy Lawton, the humorist of the Shell. "I dare my old Lawton will hit on some good scheme for us!"

"I'll try!" grinned Lawton.

"Hurray!" The Shell cheered excitedly.

"Bai Bye!" Arthur Augustus D'Arvy of the Fourth, the swell of St. Jim's, turned his gleaming monocle towards his chums, Bisha, Herwin, and Dicky. "These Shell fish are getting their dandruff up all right!"

"Don't blame 'em!" grunted Bisha.

"Nonsense, wathah not! But things are goin' to be pretty exciting in the Shell when the new master, Pilbeam, arrives!"

"My hat, yes!" grinned Herwin.

"If you ask me, dear man," cut in a drawing voice from the back of the crowd, "you're wastin' your time! All this loyalty to Linton is very touchin', of course; but what good is it goin' to do? The Head's told Linton to skip—a new book has been arranged for, to be master of the dear old Shell, and whatever you dear men do about it you can't boot the Head in the end. Not that it matters to me, of course."

And Ralph Rockham Cardow, the dandy and slacker of the Fourth, yawned and grinned where he stood lounging against the wall with his hands in his pockets.

The Shell turned and glared at Cardow as one man.

Cardow bowed at them languidly.

"Why, you-you chunky Fourth Form ass!" roared Manners.

"I say, chuck him out!" yelled somebody.

"Blas, hear!"

There was a surge towards Ralph Rockham Cardow.

In their protest excited state the Shell fellows were not in the mood to listen to interference with their affairs from a Fourth-Former!

"Chlor him!"

"Chuck him out!"

Cardow's hands came out of his pockets very abruptly. He put up his hat, a look of sudden alarm in his handsome face. Lawton and Clyn, his two chums, closed up hurriedly on either side of the slacker of the Fourth.

"Bai Bye!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arvy. "I say, we can't allow this, chah boys!"

"Back up, Fourth!" ejaculated Bisha.

Though Bisha & Co. and the rest of the Fourth-Formers present felt that Cardow had been an ass to interfere with the Shell, loyally to the Fourth made it essential for them to back him up now that the trouble was started. They plunged towards the corner in which Cardow, lighting gamely, had been reaped off his feet by five Shell fellows and was being dragged towards the door. Lawton and

**ONE FORM—  
TWO FORM-MASTERS—**  
And a fight in the Form-room between them! Hectic scenes at St. Jim's in this thrilling long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co.

Clive, who had fought to free him, had vanished now under a pile of excited Shell chaps.

"Wade in, Fourth! Rescue!"  
 "Kick out those blasted Fourth Form devils!"  
 "Hai Jove! Yawoooh!"

A wild struggle was in progress now throughout the Common-room, and Arthur Augustus gave a yell as a Shell Set landed on his arithmetical case. The yell of St. Jim's disappeared among the legs of the excitedly warring juniors.

In their excited state the Shell fellows could have wished for nothing better than a Form wrap.

Hiff! Thud! Bang! Crash!

The table went over, and Tom Merry, who had been hastily scrambling off it, was lying. He flew into the arms of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as the yell of St. Jim's was smothering up, and the two collapsed with a yell.

"Yow!"  
 "Yawoooh! Oh, hai Jove!"

"Hark up, Fourth!"

"Check 'em out, Shell!"

Crash! Bang! Hiff!

The Fourth were not getting on very well. Though their first rush had succeeded in sending Cardew from among heads, the Shell fellows were very much in the majority, and the Fourth-Formers were having a rough time.

"Out with 'em!" gasped Kargason.  
 Somebody, somehow, managed to get the door open, and Dick Julian of the Fourth went flying out into the passage, followed by Arthur Augustus and Marrie. The three struggled in a kicking heap as they strove to sort themselves out.

Whee, whee, whee!

Blake, Cardew, Clive, and Digby followed in swift succession, flying out through the doorway and landing, with yells, on top of their previously ejected Form-fellows.

Crash, crash, crash!

"Hi! Yawoooh! Yawoooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Out with 'em!"

Lorvian, struggling fiercely, was collared and slung out through the doorway, to add to the struggling pile in the passage.

"Any more?" grinned Monty Lowther, glancing round very breathlessly, and clapping at the same time his hands on his knees, which had suffered from contact with Clive's boots.

"There's Baggie!" called Clifford Dane.

Baggy Tribble, the First Fry of the Fourth, had, of course, made a point of attending the meeting, and with certainty. He was waiting now, very heavily, that he had been less certain!

At the beginning of the trouble the fat Fourth-Former had crawled into a corner, hoping to escape unobserved. He gave a gasp of terror at finding himself discovered.

"Yow! I—I say, don't be lenient! I—I—ow! Whooop! Leggo!"

Baggy was seized, despite his fat struggles, and rushed across to the door. He shot out through the doorway like a stone from a catapult, and there was a yell from the passage. Jack Blake had just managed to get free from the piled-up, struggling Fourth-Formers; he was staggering to his feet—just in time to receive Baggie full in the chest.

Blake collapsed once more, with Baggie on top of him.

"Oh, groosh!" gasped Blake feebly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of triumphant laughter from the Shell fellows crowding in the doorway of the Common-room as they surveyed the gasping, kicking pile of battered Fourth-Formers in the passage. Some of the Shell fellows were pretty badly battered themselves; but there was no doubt that the victory was theirs!

"Hurrah for the Shell!" panted Kargason.

"Yow! Cooosh! Groosh!" gasped the Fourth-Formers, as they tried to save themselves out.

And then there was a startled speculation from Monty Lowther. A firm step had sounded in the passage, and the next moment the tall figure of Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had come striding into view.

"What's all this rapping?" rapped the skipper angrily.

"How dare you behave like this in the House? All of you will take a couple of hundred lines each! And now, dear old 'O, urrains!" rathred Messers, in the middle, dunnardd dunnardd that had fallen.

"Yow! It's not fair!" gasped Tribble, struggling to his feet. "I was checked out of the Common-room! I wasn't rapping, Kildare! Really, I—"

"Shut up, Tribble!" cut in the captain sternly.

"Oh, ho!"

The Shell fellows began hastily to disperse. The Fourth-Formers followed them as quickly as they could, leaving a very battered collection indeed. Kildare waited till the

last of them had gone, with a stern frown on his good-looking face. But though the meeting had ended in disorder, it had shown one thing beyond any possibility of doubt!

The Shell were standing by Mr. Linton, their disgraced Form master. So long as he stuck to his guns, they would stick to him.

But there was no doubt, too, that things were going to be exciting to a degree, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had said, when Mr. Pilbeam arrived the next day, and that famous Form found itself with two Form masters!

## CHAPTER 2.

### At the ON MESS!

"HELLO, Kent?"

It was the following afternoon—a Wednesday.

Lorvian, the captain of the Fifth, was standing in the sunlight of the School House doorway, early after dinner, waiting for his two chaps, Smith major and Lee, to join him before setting off for the Fifth Form cricket ground.

It was the sight of a tall figure that had just emerged from the doorway behind him that had caused Lorvian's words.

The fellow addressed as Kent glanced at him and nodded.

He was a dark, rather foreign-looking fellow, who had arrived at St. Jim's little more than a week ago. He was still almost unknown at the school, even among the Fifth, his own Form.

Kent was not, apparently, a friendly individual, though he always appeared civil enough. He kept largely to his study out of class-time—the and study of the Fifth Form passage.

"Going out, eh?" said Lorvian, with a glance at Kent's cap.

"Yea. A nice afternoon for a walk," returned Kent, smiling.

"Wouldn't you sooner play cricket?"

"No, thank. Afraid I don't play cricket. Perhaps I'll take it up some time."

With a nod, the new Fifth-Former went on down the steps, turning towards the gates. Lorvian watched him vanish into the road.

"Run chap," commented Lorvian inwardly. "Silent off of a fellow. Must be lonely. But he doesn't seem to mind!"

The captain of the Fifth might have considered Kent a still more "run chap" had he followed the new Fifth-Former just then!

Outside the school gates, Kent turned along Hycombe Lane. He was walking briskly, but he quickened his steps still more once he was out of sight of St. Jim's. Some distance down the road he turned onto a shadowed lane that led towards Weyland Manor.

Once or twice he glanced carefully over his shoulder, as if to make sure that he was not followed. Half a mile up the lane he turned into another narrow, lonely country road, instead of keeping on towards the manor. A few minutes afterwards he had arrived at a pair of big gates set in a high wall. On the high-given stone pillars flanking the gates was to be seen the name of the house that lay somewhere beyond, among thick trees—Soranston Manor.

It was obvious from the neglected look of the gates and the broad drive that Soranston Manor had been unoccupied for a long while. But Kent turned into the grounds without hesitation. He evidently had business there.

After a final glance back, he strode swiftly up the drive through the trees. Before long the house itself came into view—a gloomy-looking, forbidding pile. Kent strode up the steps to the big front door, took out a key, and let himself into the house.

Inside, he was faced with a lofty, dusty hall, bare of furniture. He turned straight to a door on the right, and pushed it open, entering the room beyond.

It was a large room, neatly furnished with a few chairs and a table. The remains of a meal lay on the table, at which three men were seated. They glanced round swiftly at Kent's entry. He nodded to them as he closed the door behind him. There was an eager light in his eyes.

"Well?" he breathed.

"We got him all right," grinned one of the three—a huge man with a broken nose. "No trouble at all! He's looked up with young Catts down below."

The mysterious Fifth-Former from St. Jim's drew a long, deep, triumphant breath.

"Splendid!" he muttered. His eyes glittered, as a low laugh escaped him. "Then it's all pouncing now—oh, Hiss!"

The man addressed as Hyde nodded with a thin smile.

He was a man of about thirty, and would not have been bad-looking, in a lean way, had his face not held something rascally and unscrupulous. It was clear, however, that he was a well-educated man. He was far better dressed, too, than the other two at the table, the second of whom was a small, ferret-eyed rat of a man, in great contrast to the big, heavy-jawed individual with the broken nose.

"Yes, Visser," parroted Hyde. "It's all plain sailing now. With this schoolmaster, Filbeam, safe in our hands, it only remains for me to go to St. Jim's in his name, and win a fortune!"

Kerr—whom Hyde had addressed as Visser—laughed again. It was not a pleasant sound.

"Yes, a fortune all right!" he grinned. "More than half a million, isn't it, that old Donnan has left in his will to whoever is master of the Shell at St. Jim's at his death?"

"More than half a million," nodded Hyde greedily. He shot a sudden, frowning glance at Visser—alias Kerr. "What about Linton, though? You said he was kicking

who had taken that long-empty house to use as their headquarters—Catts having, unfortunately for him, learned the truth about the new Fifth-Farmer and his secondarily associate.

"Catts is safe enough," said Hyde carelessly. "He doesn't give us any trouble now. We'll keep him here, with Filbeam, till our job is done."

He glanced at his watch, and rose.

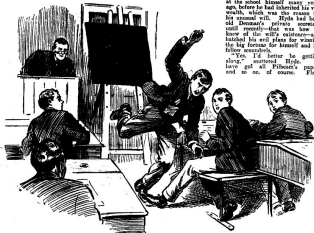
"Time I was getting along," Curranly sent a note from London to Dr. Holmes, in Filbeam's name, saying he had been delayed, and wouldn't arrive till the three-thirty train."

The individual who called himself Kerr at St. Jim's, and whose real name was Visser, nodded.

Curranly, he knew, was a rascally undergrowth—one of the gang—who was in the employ of Mr. Donnan, the old eccentric, who was dying, and whose will left all his fortune to the man in the position of master of the Shell at St. Jim's at his death. Old Donnan had been a master of the Shell

at the school himself many years ago, before he had inherited his vast wealth, which was the reason for his unusual will. Hyde had been old Donnan's pet's pet's secretary until recently—that was how he knew of the will's existence—and hatched his evil plans for winning the big fortune for himself and his fellow associates.

"Yes, I'd better be getting along," muttered Hyde. "I have got all Filbeam's papers and so on, of course. Fleck



Berkett thrust out a foot. The next moment Visser had tripped over it and a pocket-book shot from his inside pocket.

against going, although the Head has told him to clear out."

"Oh, he'll go, when you turn up as the new master?" said Visser easily. "He'll leave by, of course. He's an obstinate old fool, but he can't last out long now."

"No one suspects that letter was a forgery, which made it seem he was guilty over that business of the school funds?" said the little cat-faced man eagerly.

"No one!" chuckled Visser. "I fatter myself I made a smashing good job of that letter!"

"Good!" murmured Hyde. "We framed-up Linton all right!" He smiled sardoniously. "A good thing he knows nothing about the fortune left in whoever is master of the Shell when old Donnan dies—which won't be long now, I hope."

"And how is our friend Catts?" asked Visser coolly.

The mysterious disappearance from St. Jim's of Gerald Catts the Fifth had caused a tremendous sensation at the school a week before. Though there had been no trace of his whereabouts, and it was generally assumed now that Catts had run away from the school for some reason best known to himself, the excitement with regard to his disappearance had been quite forgotten in the still greater sensation with regard to Mr. Linton.

No one at St. Jim's dreamed for a moment that Catts was being held a prisoner at Stratton Manor by the crooks

here is going to drive me to Wayland, to pick up the London train there. So that I'll be on the three-thirty all right, if anyone meets the train at Rycombe."

"Good!" grinned Visser. "There's not a flaw in our plans that I can see. No one will ever suspect that you are not the real new master. All you have to do is to hang on at St. Jim's until old Donnan dies and you've inherited!"

"That's it," grinned Hyde. "Well, I'll be going! Come on, Fleck!"

The man with the broken nose rose to his feet. Ten minutes later a closed car drove out of the gates of Stratton Manor, and turned in the direction of Wayland. Mr. Filbeam, the new master of the Shell, would soon be arriving at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 2.

The Impostor Arrives!

"HERE he comes!"

"This must be Filbeam!"

"Oh, good!"

A tangle had appeared round the head of Rycombe Lane, a quarter of a mile or so from St. Jim's, speeding towards the school gates.

At sight of it there were excited murmurs from the big throng of juniors waiting by the roadside.

Except for Harbott, the bully of the Shell, and his chums, Gerald Crooke, the whole Shell was gathered there in Rycombe Lane!

Their appearance was extraordinary!

Each of them was wearing a topper—some of them were decidedly battered toppers, too. Round the toppers were tied huge bows of various coloured ribbons, with long trails of ribbon hanging down the wearer's back. They wore all wearing coats and trousers, and big bows in the place of feet.

The Shell fellows had gathered at the prearranged spot in Rycombe Lane by ones and twos, and there donned their carnival attire. A big surprise was waiting for St. Jim's when the new master of the Shell arrived.

"Stop that taxi!" grizzled Monty Lowther.

"What-oo?" shrieked Grassy.

The strangely attired Shell fellows hastily spread out in a mass across the road.

The driver of the taxi was a fat, red-faced, sherry-looking individual. But there was an expression of dumb astonishment on his face now, as he was forced to stop his somewhat ancient vehicle—unless he preferred to run into the throng of amazing-looking juniors.

The taxi came to a standstill, with a squeak of decrepit brakes.

"My!" ejaculated the taxi-driver. "What has earth—?" Tom Merry stepped quickly up to the cab and glanced in at the window. The lean, astonished face of the man named Hyde stared out at him with glittering eyes.

"Excuse me," said Tom coolly, "are you Mr. Filbeam?"

"I am!" snapped the began new master.

"Thank you!" said Tom gravely. "We only wanted to make sure."

He turned to the driver, and thrust a crisp one-pound note into the astonished man's hand. But, despite his bewilderment, the taxi-driver took the money sagely enough, and locked his cap with a beaming grin on his jolly face.

"This is a school rag," explained Tom in a low voice. "We're going to escort this gentleman to the school. So drive at a walking-pace—and if the gentleman inside objects don't leave him!"

"I'm on!" grizzled the driver, with a wink. "He's not a civil-spoken gent, he isn't! So I don't mind!"

"Good!"

Already the crowd of juniors was lining up in procession around the taxicab containing the astonished "Mr. Filbeam." Monty Lowther had scrambled up beside the driver, and Talbot and Kangaroo and one or two others of the more boldy ones had stationed themselves near the doors to prevent any chance of the new master jumping out of the cab. A long double line of juniors was leading the strange procession.

"Carry on!" said Tom to the driver.

The man let in the clutch, and at a feigned pace the amazing procession started off towards St. Jim's.

There was a further gasp from within the cab.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Just a little demonstration to welcome you to St. Jim's, sir," answered Tom grimly.

"This is monstrous!" Hyde's eyes were glittering with rage. "Driver! Quicken up, man! Leave these boys behind!"

The driver winked at Monty Lowther, and appeared not to hear.

There was a gasp of fury from the supposed Mr. Filbeam. He made as if to open the door. But instantly Kangaroo Talbot's hand grappled the handle outside, holding it firm. It was quite impossible for the man inside to open it with the small lever-handle within while Talbot's strong fingers held the main handle.

"Let me out! This—is—is disgraceful! I—!"

"No good making a fuss, sir!" said Talbot blandly.

Hyde clenched. For the moment, at any rate, he was too furious to speak.

Grinning back, the amazing procession, the ancient taxi in its midst, turned the bend and came in sight of the gates of St. Jim's.

"My giddy aunt!"

"Behot Jees! Look, deah boys!"

"What on earth—?"

Blake & Co. of the Fourth had been crossing the quad towards the School House. But as they passed near the gates they stopped with sudden astonished ejaculations, staring out into the road.

A long procession was wending its way towards the school gates!

Mr. Filbeam, the new master of the Shell, had arrived at St. Jim's—and the Shell were escorting him in!

The Shell fellows, in their ribbon-adorned toppers, came marching slowly into the quad in procession. Driven by the grinning taxi-driver, the ancient taxi containing Mr. Filbeam—or the man who was supposed to be Mr. Filbeam—came crawling along in the middle of the amazing procession, with its furious occupant glaring helplessly out of the window.

He was beside himself with rage. But he was powerless to escape! The moment he tried to open either of the doors the strong hand of Talbot or Kangaroo would fasten upon the handle from outside, making it impossible for him to open it.

"Ye gods! Look!"

"It's the Shell—"

"And the new master!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yells of laughter rang out in the quad.

Blake & Co. were not the only fellows who were watching the amazing scene. From all sides fellows were peering across the quad and forming a dense throng on either side of the gateway, through which the procession had to pass. Figgins & Co. of the New House, Fourth-Formers galore, swarms of lads, a number of Fifth-Formers—even one or two hitherto unknown members of the lolly Sixth—a dense crowd was rapidly filling the quad to watch the arrival of Mr. Filbeam.

And the crowd fairly yelled with excitement!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Figgins, the New House junior leader, wiped the tears from his eyes. "What a scream!"

"Talk about a giddy carnival!"

"I say, Filbeam may be ratty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



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During the approach to the school, large coloured boys had been lined at various points on the track, which rolled through the crowd, proceeded and followed by its double line of jammers and flanked by brilliantly adorned Shell fellows.

And the crowd fairly shrieked with mirth!  
In all the history of St. Jim's, probably, no new master had ever arrived at the school in such an astonishing fashion.

And judging from his furious countenance as he glared out at the laughing crowds, the new master was not enjoying his unique position. His face was contorted with rage.

"My giddy aunt, I feel sorry for the Shell when Pilbeam takes charge of 'em!" grunted Ernie Levinson.

There was a sudden gasp from Redfern of the New House.

"My hat! The Head!"

A dignified, portly figure had appeared on the steps of the School House, staring across at the procession wounding his way across the quad as though he could not believe his eyes. It was Dr. Holmes.

"Hullo my son!" gasped the Head. "What ever is the meaning of this?"

Kilmore, of the Sixth, had just appeared from the School House, too, to see what all the noise laughter in the quad was about. Kilmore was unwilling not to smile.

"I fancy it is the new master of the Shell, Mr. Pilbeam. He has just arrived, sir," he said. "And—hem!—the Shell are awaiting him!"

In blank amazement—an amazement that was turning gradually to thunderous wrath—the headmaster of St. Jim's watched the procession march slowly towards the School House.

#### CHAPTER 4. Pinning a Form!

"BOYS! How dare you!"  
The Head's voice thundered out across the quad in grim wrath.  
"Stop!" cried the Head breathlessly. "Halt, at once!"

The procession did not stop, however. It kept on at the same slow, mournful pace towards the steps on which the Head was standing in majestic fury.

It was not often that the Shell fellows turned a deaf ear to a command of the Head's. They liked and admired Dr. Holmes, and as a rule they were only too willing to accede to his slightest request. But at present they were "up against him" over the matter of Mr. Linton—and they meant to show the Head just what they felt about the coming of the new master!

That they were in for trouble, they knew. They had known that ever when the jacks had been played. And since they were in for it, they felt that they might as well be banged for a sheep as a lamb!

The Head watched the procession dumbly as it filed past the foot of the steps. He seemed now to have lost all power of speech. His face was white with anger.

At a word from Monty Lovelock, the driver brought the taxi to a standstill at the foot of the steps. Tom Merry stopped gravely up to the door of the taxi and opened it.

And the new master, trembling with rage, stepped out!

He glared round at the silent jammers as if he would have liked to eat them alive. Could larks have killed, there would have been every need for a funeral pot then!

He seemed to be lightning for words. But they would not come. Then his eyes fell on the figure of the Head.

"Dr. Holmes," he panted. "This—is this an outrage!"

"It is indeed an outrage, Mr. Pilbeam!" agreed the Head, with gleaming eyes. "The Shell appear to have taken leave of their annual Bellows row, sir, they shall be made to regret this monstrous behaviour!"

The Head's face was more grim than the Shell had heard him use for a long time. There was no doubt that they were in for trouble! But they were ready for that, and they met the Head's gleaming glare, as his eyes swept over them, with grim composure.

"Come on, you chaps," muttered Tom Merry quietly.

The writhing straggled Shell split into two parties, the New House fellows turning towards their own House and the School House contingent following Tom Merry up the steps past the Head into the hall behind him.

Dr. Holmes and the new master watched them go without a word. But Hyde's eyes were glittering with an almost English rage; and the Head's face was set like stone.

The School House procession made its way direct to the junior Common-room. When they were all gathered there, Tom Merry closed the door, and faced his grimly silent companions.

"Well," he said coolly. "That's that! I expect it'll mean a bugging by every one of us. But it'll be worth it. We've shown Pilbeam, and the Head, and the whole school, what we feel about this new master being brought in to take over the Form from Linton."

"Hear, hear!" nodded Talbot quietly.  
"Pilbeam looks like a rotter, anyway," grunted Messers. "I guess he looks a tough guy," agreed Cyrus K. Handcock. "He'll give us trouble, anyhow, if we let him."

"We shan't let him through," snapped Tom. "Linton's our master, not Pilbeam!"

"Rather!" exclaimed Outburt Coxz eagerly.

"Hurrah!"

The Shell waited. They knew that the storm would soon be burning round their ears. And as they expected, they had not long to wait.

There was a tap on the door. The grinning face of Toby, the School House page-boy, looked into the Common-room.

"Which the 'Ead wants the 'ole Shell to go to Big 'all—last once?" said Toby impressively.

"Thanks, Toby," said Tom Merry quietly, and Toby vanished, well grinning. He had seen the arrival of the new master, with his strange escort, in the quad, and he had been vastly tickled by "the young gents' lark!"

"Come on, you chaps," said Tom Merry. "Let's go and face the giddy master!"

The Shell fellows had already removed their coloured bows, and were looking quite normal as they filed out of the Common-room and made their way to Big Hall.

The New House contingent arrived with them. The Head was waiting no time in gathering his victims!

Dr. Holmes was standing on the dais, a dark frown on his usually genial old face. The new master was standing at his side, now wearing cap and gown. Mr. Hailton and Mr. Reddick, the two Housemasters, were also there, both looking very grim. Ephraim Tappan, the school porter, was present, too, trying to conceal a whistling grin. He held a long birch.

In an orderly though the resolute Shell marched up to the dais where the masters were gathered, and halted in a silent body before it. The Head surveyed them with a stern face. Tom Merry, as captain of the Shell, broke the grin silence.

"You stand up for all, sir?"

"I did," said the Head coldly. "I understand that the whole Form was accessory in the monstrous affair I witnessed in the quadrangle."

"The whole Form, sir, except Baskets and Crocker," nodded Tom Merry.

Baskets and Crocker had not arrived in Big Hall with the rest of the Shell. They were probably out, to avoid any chance of being implicated in the matter.

"How dare you behave in this monstrous fashion!" The Head's voice was quivering with anger as he swept his gleaming eyes over the gathered Shell. "To subject your new Form master to such a rag, and I suppose you have the temerity to call it—"

"Excuse me, sir," cut in Tom Merry quickly. "we did not rag our Form master. We would not dream of doing such a thing, sir."

"Then what do you call your disgraceful behaviour towards Mr. Pilbeam?" thundered the Head.

"Mr. Pilbeam," explained Tom coolly. "is not our Form master. Mr. Linton is our Form master, sir."

The Head drew a long breath.

"I have dismissed Mr. Linton," he said in grim tones. "Mr. Pilbeam has been engaged to fill his position. Mr. Pilbeam is now master of the Shell."

"Has Mr. Linton left the school, then, sir?" asked Tom civilly.

"He has not."

"Then I'm sorry, sir, but while he remains at the school we shall continue to regard him as our Form master, of course," Tom Merry said in steady tones. "I'm afraid we cannot recognize Mr. Pilbeam as master of the Shell until Mr. Linton leaves St. Jim's."

There were murmurs of assent from the Shell. The Head's face went pale with anger, and there was a sharp squint from the new master.

"Hear, hear!" cut in Reginald Talbot. "That is our position, sir!"

"Silence!" rapped the Head fiercely. "I think you boys have taken leave of your common sense. I tell you that Mr. Pilbeam is now your Form master. Mr. Linton has been dismissed. And for your monstrous behaviour towards Mr. Pilbeam this afternoon, I am going now to dog the whole Form. After that you will all apologise to Mr. Pilbeam for your shameful unpardonable!"

Tom Merry met the new master's eyes. They were  
The Great Lament.—No. 1,821.

glittering maliciously. The captain of the Shell glanced back to the Head.

"I am sorry, sir, I've no objection to the flogging, but I am afraid I must decline to apologise to this—this gentleman!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured the Shell in grim tones.

"We shall see about that!" rapped the Head, with gleaming eyes. He turned to Taggart. "Kindly give me the book. Thank you! You will now come up on to the dais one by one to receive your punishment and make your apology."

Tom Merry stepped forward and mounted the dais.

Taggart, at a word from the Head, placed a chair in front of Dr. Holmes. Tom bent over it without waiting to be told to do so.

Whack, whack, whack!

The birch rose and fell with stinging force.

Dr. Holmes had been an athlete in his youth, and his arm seemed to have lost none of its old muscularity, despite his age. Tom gritted his teeth to keep himself from gasping aloud. But no sound escaped his lips, and he did not move a muscle as six times the birch stroked landed.

But Tom was pale despite himself as he straightened up and turned towards the group of masters. Although there had been no more than six strokes of the birch, it had been enough. Tom Merry had never received a harder flogging in his life.

"You will now apologise to Mr. Filbeam for your behaviour this afternoon," said the Head grimly. "Express your regret to him."

Tom shook his head.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said in a low tone, his eyes fixed on the Head steadily. "I can't do that since I feel no regret."

The Head's eye gleamed.

"That is your decision, Merry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you may bend over that chair again."

Without a word Tom bent over the chair again, and again the Head's birch rose and fell six times.

"There!" gasped the Head, as he lowered his arm.

But he did not expect his command for an apology to Mr. Filbeam. He saw, no doubt, that such a command would be in vain, and he would have made himself well scolded had he not looked the look of continuing with the birch until the apology was given, since he knew that he was up against a will as determined as his own.

Tom Merry was looking a little white despite himself as he quietly left the dais and Manners took his place.

Like Tom Merry, Manners suffered his punishment in doped silence. And, like Tom, he shook his head in answer to the command to apologise to the new master.

"I am sorry, sir, I can't do that."

"Very well," said the Head grimly, "bend over once more, Manners."

And Manners received another six. His walk was not quite steady as he left the dais.

Talbot came next, then Mesty Lowther, then Kargaroo, and Handcock followed the Australian Junker. One by one the whole Shell took its medicine without flinching—twelve strokes in all, since each of them politely declined to make any apology to the new master—until the Head came to the last fellow of all, Herbert Skimpole!

Knowing beforehand that there would be trouble later, Tom Merry had tried hard to demands Skimpole from joining in the rag against Mr. Filbeam. But Skimpole, surprisingly enough, had insisted upon joining in with the rest of the Form. Now, however, the hanging-brained freak was looking as though he almost wished he had not been quite so insistent upon expressing his loyalty to Mr. Linton in such a daring fashion.

He bent over the chair very gingerly indeed.

Whack!

"Yarrop!"

A handkerchief broke from Skimpole as the birch landed. He leapt into the air, clapping the seat of his trousers.

"You!" gasped Skimpole. "Ouch! Oh dear!"

"Skimpole," thundered the Head, "remain bending!"

"Ow! Oh dear! No—no—certainly!"

Skimpole bent over again, very nervously indeed, and again the birch lashed through the air. Once more Skimpole leapt as though he had been struck with a red hot poker, and gave a wild yell. Mr. Redden, the Housemaster of the School House, stepped up to the Head and whispered something to him. The Head nodded and lowered the birch.

"Skimpole, will you apologise to Mr. Filbeam for taking part in that disgraceful demonstration this afternoon?" demanded the Head sternly.

"Oh dear!" Skimpole blinked nervously at the birch. The Old Lessor.—No. 1,311.

Then he blinked unobtrusively at the silent Shell. "I—I—y—yes!"

The Head smiled grimly.

"Excellent! Proceed with your apology, Skimpole."

Again the freak of the Shell blinked miserably at the assembled faces of his Form. None of them would have minded had Skimpole given in; they scarcely counted Skimpole in with the rest of them. But somewhere deep within him Herbert Skimpole was made of the right stuff.

He would stand by his Form.

"I—I beg your pardon, Dr. Holmes!" he gasped. "When I replied in the affirmative to your question, I—I must have made a slip of the tongue, a slight error of control over the lingual faculty. I meant to say no, sir!"

"Good old Skimpole!" breathed Mesty Lowther. "He's a giddy hare!"

The Head's brow grew very dark.

"You now will assume your—ah—bending attitude, Skimpole!"

Skimpole obeyed, looking very white. The birch landed on his thin person with stinging force once more—bringing another yelp from the freak of the Shell. But the Head was leaving Skimpole off lightly compared with the others. He laid the birch down, and Skimpole, very thankfully, limped from the dais.

A low murmur of applause greeted him. Skimpole smiled faintly.

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Dionis!"

Without a word the Shell marched from Big Hall in orderly formation. The Head's stern gaze and the glittering arm of the boggy Mr. Filbeam followed them.

Back in the common-room the Shell fellows surveyed one another with grim faces.

"My hat! The Head laid it on pretty thick!" muttered Clifton Dams.

"Yes," Tom Merry nodded. "But not one of us apologised to that rotter Filbeam, anyway. Not even old Skimpole! Good old Skimpole! Skimpole, you're the hero of the giddy hare!"

He slapped the freak of the Shell on the back. Skimpole gasped.

Mesty Lowther rubbed the seat of his trousers ruefully.

"Well, that's one!" he said, with a twisted grin.

Tom shook his head.

"No," he said quietly, "it's not. Not by a long chalk! Over! Why, things are only just beginning! The real fun will start to-morrow morning when Filbeam tries to take the Shell!"

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Rival Form Meeting!

"HERE he comes!"

"Good old Linton! He's sticking to his guns all right!"

"You bet he is!"

It was the following morning, and morning classes were due to start in two or three minutes. A big crowd was gathered outside the door of the Shell Form room; other fellows besides the Shell had turned up to find out what was happening, if they could, before going to their own Form-rooms.

Some of the juniors had given it as their opinion that Mr. Linton would "back it" as the last moment, and fail to arrive on the scene, leaving the way clear for his rival, the new master of the Shell. But their expectation proved to be unfounded as a minute or two before the hour; Mr. Linton's gowned figure came into view along the passage, walking towards the Form-room, with a very grim and determined expression on his face.

"And now for Filbeam!" grinned Kargaroo.

But so far there was no sign of the new master. Mr. Linton, having arrived a little early—no doubt on purpose—was first.

Mr. Linton's eyes were gleaming as he approached the Shell Form room.

Innocent as he knew himself to be of the terrible charge that had been made against him, he was determined to stand by his rights, as he considered them.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Good-morning!" Mr. Linton's grim expression softened a trifle as he glanced at his waiting Form. That they were standing by him to a man he already had cause to know; and he felt very grateful to them for their unswerving loyalty.

He rustled into the empty Form-room, and the Shell trooped in after him, their books under their arms. The members of the other Form disposed reluctantly to their own class-rooms. They were very disappointed not to have seen Mr. Filbeam arrive at the same time as Mr. Linton to take the Shell.



Mr. Linton rustled to his desk and sat down. The Shell took their pieces with unusual quiet. They were on their very best behaviour with Linton nowadays. But there was a feeling of tension, barely suppressed excitement in the air. What would happen when Filbeam arrived—as an arrive soon he undoubtedly would?

It was a question that they did not have to wait long to be answered.

"Thursday morning—algebra!" said Mr. Linton, in as normal a tone as he could command. But he could not quite hide a faint tremor in it. "Your preparation was the problem on page a hundred and twelve, was it not?"

"Yes, sir," answered several of the Shell together, with a readiness for work that was unusual.

"Let us discuss the first problem, then," said Mr. Linton quietly, crossing his book. "I should like—"

He broke off abruptly. The door of the Form-room had swung open, and the tall figure of the headmaster of St. Jim's rustled into the room, followed by the new master of the Shell.

Not a sound was to be heard in the Form-room as the Head halted inside the doorway, his glancing eye fastened upon Mr. Linton at the master's desk. Mr. Filbeam—alias Hyde—stood beside the Head, also surveying Mr. Linton with a hard stare.

The Shell scarcely breathed. The big moment had come. It was Mr. Linton who broke the silence.

"Good-morning, Dr. Holmes!" he said icily.

"Mr. Linton," returned the Head, in tones equally icy.

"May I inquire what business you have in this Form-room?"

"I am taking my Form, sir," retorted Mr. Linton quietly.

The Head breathed very hard.

"You are perfectly well aware, Mr. Linton, that this is no longer your Form. There is no Form at St. Jim's now in your charge. You will leave this room at once."

Mr. Linton's face went red with indignation. His voice shook.

"I refuse to leave this Form-room! I consider myself master of the Shell."

"You are no longer master of the Shell!"

said the Head grimly.

"Mr. Filbeam is now master of the Shell, sir! I order you to leave this room!"

"I shall not!"

Mr. Linton's voice was quiet, but very determined.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Linton.

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"Good-bye," said Mr. Linton.

And with a glare at Mr. Linton, the Head swung on his heel and strode, rustling, from the room.

Across the heads of the breathless Form, the two masters of the Shell surveyed one another with glancing eyes.

"You fail!" started Hyde contemptuously. "You had better get out!"

"Leave my Form-room, sir!" said Mr. Linton, in a quivering voice. His hands were trembling.

"Your Form-room?" returned the bogus new master. "My Form-room, you mean? Get out!"

He strode suddenly towards the master's desk, and before the Shell had guessed his purpose, he had grasped Mr. Linton by the shoulder, to thrust him from his seat.

"Hands off, you rascal!" cried Tom Merry hoarsely, jumping to his feet.

But apparently Mr. Linton could look after himself. There was an excited gasp from the Shell fellows as they saw their dignified and respected master clutch his fist and hit out.

That!



Out of the shadows a leaping figure appeared and a hand dragged the half-burst sheet from Vincer's fingers!

Mr. Linton's closed knuckles landed squarely on the new master's jaw, and "Mr. Filbeam" let go his hold as he reeled back with a furious exclamation.

"Harrah!" yelled Clifton Dana. "Go it, sir!"

The new master recovered in a moment. It was the unexpectedness of the blow rather than its force which had staggered him for the moment. He leapt forward, a clenched fist raised above his head, his eyes burning savagely down into his rival's.

But his intended blow never landed.

Mr. Linton must have done some boxing in his youth, and the memory of it seemed to have come back to him in a moment. He guarded the furious man's smashing blow, and hit out with his left. His fist took the new master on the chin, and the impostor reeled with a gasp.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Go it, Mr. Linton," roared Grandy.

"Stop, you, somebody!" gasped Harold Glyn.

The whole shell was on its feet, shouting excitedly.

They had expected some excitement in the Form-room that morning. But they had certainly never expected for a single moment that they would ever live to see two masters fighting like a couple of juniors in the Shell Fives room!

It was so incredible as to be almost unbelievable, and yet it was happening before their eyes.

Tom Merry and Lowther and Talbot and some of the others might have interposed had they not been struck as if to stone by that amazing sight.

The new master had recovered again from his blow on the jaw. With a shrieking cry he hurled himself at Mr. Linton, hitting out savagely.

Mr. Linton defended himself gallantly for a moment or two, but he was too elderly to last long against the attack of the younger man, and the new master, in his rage, seemed to have lost all control of himself.

Tom Merry & Co., Talbot, Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane, and half a dozen others got control of their limbs again at sight of Mr. Linton's danger. They lunged from their desks and rushed to the rescue, overturned forms crashing behind them.

But they were too late. One of the new master's savage blows landed at last. It caught Mr. Linton on the chest, and he staggered back against the blackboard, almost falling, deadly white.

The new master, however, the new master had to deal with another foe.

"Collar him!" roared Talbot.

"Cluck him out!" gasped Tom Merry fiercely. "We'll teach the end to hit Linton!"

"My hat, you!" cried Glyn, breathless with anger.

"Hands off, you young hounds!" cried the impostor fiercely, as the juniors closed in on him. "Hands off! I won't be got so further!"

The juniors swept him off his feet, despite his wild struggles, and his mortar-board went flying. With a dozen eager hands grasping him he was rushed to the door.

"Out with the ruffian!"

"Harrak!"

The new master was hauled out into the passage, and his mortar-board was flung out after him. He left in a heap on the fireless, breathless and furious.

"You young hounds—"

Sham!

The door of the Shell Fern room had shut in his face. He heard a key turn in the lock.

"It's his key!"

A tall figure had come into view along the passage. It was the Head, followed by Killara, Darrell, North, and Knox of the Sixth, all looking very perturbed. At sight

of the dazed figure of the new master sitting on the fireless outside the closed door of the Fern-room, Dr. Holmes came to a halt with a startled ejaculation.

"Mr. Pilbeam! Do my eyes deceive me? I—I—"

The impostor scrambled to his feet, panting and dishevelled.

"Dr. Holmes! This—is this an outrage! I—I was foolishly accused by the boys themselves! I—I—"

"My hat!" breathed Killara to Darrell. "This Linton business seems to be getting pretty exciting! Good god!"

## CHAPTER 4

### Behind Locked Doors I

"ARE you feeling better, sir?"

In the Shell Fern room Tom Merry was asking that question in anxious tones.

After the opinion of the new master, and the turning of the key in the lock by Harry Manners, the Shell had turned their attention to Mr. Linton.

The master of the Shell—was he certainly seemed still to be by right of conquest—was leaning against the case of the blackboard, looking very white and ill. The blow he had received had gone close to the heart, and Mr. Linton was not in a condition to stand such treatment.

Asked by Tom Merry and Kangaroo, Mr. Linton walked unsteadily to his desk and sat down, gasping for breath.

"I—I am all right now, boys, thank you. I—I feel that perhaps it was my own fault. I should not have struck Mr. Pilbeam. But when he laid a forcible hand upon me I lost my sense of judgment, I fear, and—"

"You jolly well did right, sir!" cried Monty Lowther helpfully.

"No asked for a work on the jaw when he grabbed hold of you to push you off your chair!"

"Mr. Pilbeam is a gentleman!" said Mr. Linton weakly.

"I guess there's the whole of a difference between that guy and a gentleman!" nodded Cyrus K. Handcock grinsly.

"Never you mind, sir," said Tom sympathetically. "he's outside now, and the door's locked. Would you like to carry on with the lesson?"

Mr. Linton's face was not so pale now. He nodded, with a very determined expression.

"An excellent idea. I consider myself master of the Shell, and I intend to take my Fern as usual."

"That's fine, sir!" nodded Talbot.

The Shell fellows returned to their places and sat down. There was a violent rattling of the door-handle.

"Pilbeam's trying to get in again!" muttered Monty, with a grin.

"He can try, buddy!" murmured Handcock innocently.

But it was the voice of the Head that came to the ears of those within the Shell Fern room a moment later, muffled by the closed door.

"Open this door! I order this door to be opened!"

If Mr. Linton heard, he did not appear to do so. He had opened his book again, and in quiet tones began to read out the first of the algebra problems.

There was a heavy bang on the door.

"Open this door," say! came the tones of the Head.

The Shell glanced at one another, but made no sound. Mr. Linton continued reading. There were one or two more angry bangs on the Fern-room door, and the sound of voices. Then footsteps could be heard retreating along the passage.

"They've given it up!" breathed Manners.

"Or else they've gone to get an axe!" guessed Lowther. But the minutes passed, and the footsteps did not return.

For the time being, at any rate, the Head had given in, and Mr. Linton was left in possession of the field.

The Shell did not go out to break that morning. Despite Mr. Linton's protest against their sacrificing it, they decided to spend their morning break in the Fern-room, chatting and playing naughts-and-crosses while Mr. Linton quietly read. But the other Ferns went out as usual, of course, and many were the curious stares that were turned towards the windows of the Shell-room.

Throughout that morning the Shell worked behind locked doors, so well-behaved that, even had Mr. Linton been in the mood to do so, not a single line could possibly have been awarded by the strictest of disciplinarians.

When the final bell rang they fled from their room in exemplary order. Mr. Linton, looking very determined, rustled out after them and closed the door. There was no one about. The other Ferns were only just leaving their rooms, too, and as yet had not had time to come along and see what was happening to the Shell.

"Thank you, boys!" said Mr. Linton quietly, glancing round at the Shell fellows as they hastened in the passage.

"If you will be back at the Fern-room at the usual time after dinner, I shall take the class as usual this afternoon."

He rustled away towards the stairs, a grimly determined expression on his face.

Capt. F. F. ECKERSLEY,  
who is Chief  
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There was no doubt about it. Mr. Linton was sticking to his guns like a hero.

But how long could it last?

That was the question that was perplexing the minds of the Shell fellows!

"This can't go on for ever," said Tom Merry, rather glumly, as he turned towards the stairs in company with Manners and Towler, Handcock and Talbot. "How the deuce is it all going to end?"

"A Form with two masters!" exclaimed Talbot. "It's the roughest thing that ever happened!"

"Well, we're backing up Linton, anyway," cut in Manners.

"We haven't let him down yet."

"And we won't, either!" said Tom Merry fiercely. "Goodness knows how it's all going to end; but so long as Linton sticks to his guns, we stick to old Linton!"

He passed at the foot of the stairs, glancing round at the excited faces of the Shell.

"That's so, isn't it, you chaps?"

The answer Tom Merry got was a lusty cheer from the fellows in the Form with two masters!

## CHAPTER V. Surrender!

**T**AP. A knock had come upon the door of Mr. Linton's study.

It was after dinner. In half an hour's time classes would be beginning again at St. Jim's. Mr. Linton was sitting at his desk, silent and motionless, his head buried in his hands.

But at sound of that tap on the door he lifted his head. His haggard face turned towards the door.

"Come in!"

The door opened. The face of Toby, the page, looked timidly into the room.

"Which the 'admirer would be obliged at seeing' you in 'a study, sir,'" said Toby.

Toby's voice was sympathetic. He felt sorry for Mr. Linton.

"Thank you, Toby!" said Mr. Linton, in a strained voice; and Toby went away, closing the door softly.

For a few moments Mr. Linton sat staring at the wall. Should he answer the summons? Yes, he had better. He rose to his feet, picked up his mortar-board, and went slowly from the room.

Dr. Holmes was not alone when Mr. Linton, with a gleam of defiance in his eyes, appeared in the Head's study. The new master was with him, a look of vindictive triumph on his lean face. It was a look that brought a sudden dread surging up to Mr. Linton.

"You wished to see me, Dr. Holmes?"

Mr. Linton's voice was calm, but quite civil.

"Yes, Mr. Linton." The Head's voice was coldly grim.

"I have come to a decision which I think you should hear at once."

"Well, sir?"

"As you are well aware," went on the Head feigningly, "this morning a disgraceful affair occurred, when Mr. Pilbeam was forcibly ejected from the Shell Form room by the boys of that Form. I presume that you were a party to this notorious occurrence, Mr. Linton."

Mr. Linton was about to deny the charge, truthfully enough, when loyalty to his old Form altered his mind.

"I did not prevent the ejection of Mr. Pilbeam," he said quietly. "He had struck me, though I must admit that I had struck him first, after he had laid forcible hands upon me. I struck in self-defence."

"Nonsense, Mr. Linton. The whole affair was a disgrace to the school, sir!" thundered the Head. "I hold you entirely to blame. But the boys themselves cannot escape equal blame for the ejection of Mr. Pilbeam, their new master. You realize, I presume, Mr. Linton, that for a Form to—to throw out their master from his own Form-room is beyond all bounds? No punishment is too severe for the boys concerned, and the whole Form must be held guilty. Whether I punish these misguided boys or not, Mr. Linton, depends, however, entirely upon you."

"Well, sir?" said Mr. Linton hoarsely.

The Head's eyes were fixed upon him with an intent gleam.

"I have come to this decision, Mr. Linton," went on the Head slowly. "I shall expel the whole Shell Form from the school for having laid hands upon their Form master—unless—"

"Unless?" breathed Mr. Linton.

"Unless you, who were responsible for encouraging them in their mischievous behaviour, cease your obstinate, foolish disregard of my orders, and leave the school at once!"

Mr. Linton caught his breath. He seemed to reel as if from a physical blow as the Head delivered his ultimatum.

The whole Shell to be expelled for throwing their new Form master out of their Form-room—unless he himself surrendered and relinquished his position to Mr. Pilbeam without further fight for it, and left St. Jim's for good!

That Dr. Holmes would, in theory, be fully justified in expelling every member of the Shell for the throwing-out of Mr. Pilbeam, whom the Head had ordered them to accept as their new Form master, Mr. Linton realized.

But he could save them from that fate—by surrender to Pilbeam!

He sat down weakly in a chair, his eyes aghast. He glanced at the new master, and something in that lean, triumphant face told Mr. Linton that this was his rival's idea; Mr. Pilbeam had suggested it to the Head as a device way of getting rid of him!

"Well, Mr. Linton!" demanded the Head grimly.

Mr. Linton, meeting the Head's eyes again, realized that Dr. Holmes had issued no idle threat. The headmaster of St. Jim's could be a stern disciplinarian, and the throwing-out of Mr. Pilbeam from the Shell Form had increased the Head to such an extent that he would carry out his threat to expel that rebellious Form without a doubt—unless Mr. Linton, by leaving the school at once, was sorry for his legal Form.

"Dr. Holmes—"

Mr. Linton rose to his feet, pleading harsh outstretched. But the Head's face was stern.

"I am not going to argue, or even discuss the situation," said the Head. "I only want your decision—here and now. Will you go? Yes or no?"

Mr. Linton gave a little broken moan. He glanced pitifully from the Head's set face to the triumphant, gloating countenance of the new master. His chin sank upon his chest. Without looking at either again, he gave his answer in a low, shaking voice:

"Yes, I will go. To save these loyal boys I will go, Dr. Holmes. But I still protest my innocence of the actual charge that has been made against me."

He turned and opened the door, still without glancing at either of the men in the big study. It was with the uneasy steps of a broken man that Mr. Linton vanished from their sight, and the door closed upon him.

An hour later a station taxi rolled into the quad and stopped at the foot of the School House steps. Old Taggie appeared in a few minutes with a trunk on his back, which he heisted on to the roof of the taxi.

"'Oo is it? You taking?" inquired the taxi-driver, who often worked for the school and knew most of the masters and boys at St. Jim's by sight.

"Linton!" said old Taggie dully. "Old Linton!"

"He ain't leavin'!" gasped the driver.

"Not 'ad 'is in!" said Taggie, with a sigh. "Kicked out, between you and me. You—right cut!"

"My boys!" the driver gasped.

But before he could make further inquiries, the figure of Mr. Linton himself came into view from the School House doorway.

Except for his unusual pallor, and the deep lines that had become grooves in his face during the last few days, there was nothing about Linton's appearance to indicate that he was not going off on a perfectly usual journey.

He passed at the top of the steps, his eyes passing wearily over the grey old buildings that lined the quad. Then he came down the steps steadily enough and entered the taxi. Taggie shut the door.

But before the driver could let in the clutch to drive away, a sudden ringing about from the School House doorway arrested him:

"Stop!"

The figure of Tom Merry had appeared, breathless, running down the steps. He was followed by a swarming crowd of fellows.

The Shell had come to see Mr. Linton off!

Not until afternoon classes had been due to begin had the Shell heard the news that Linton had surrendered, was going away that very afternoon. The Head himself had appeared with Mr. Pilbeam to tell them so, as well as to inform them coldly that, owing to a promise to Mr. Linton, they were occupying regularity for having thrown Mr. Pilbeam out of the Form-room that morning.

With Linton having resigned his position at last, even the Shell could not refuse further to recognize Mr. Pilbeam—alias Hyde—as their new master. And afternoon lessons had begun, unobtrusively enough, under the harsh command of the newmaster.

But at eight of Mr. Linton's luggage being piled on top of the taxi, as seen from the Shell Form room window by

Masters, among the furious commands of their new master had been unable to keep the Shell in their seats. Heedless of furious threats from the supposed Mr. Filbeam, the Shell had thrown down their books, and posured from the classroom to see Linton before he went, and say good-bye!

"Down the steps they raced, and surrounded the taxicab.

"Good-bye, sir!"

"Best of luck!"

The faces of the Shell fellows were glad, however, their voices subdued, as they said good-bye, one by one shaking hands with Mr. Linton as he leaned from the window of the taxi, with a trembling smile on his face. Tom Merry was waving the final note to grip his hand.

"Good-bye, sir!" said Tom, in a voice that was not quite steady. "We know you are innocent of that—that rotten business!"

"Thank you, Merry!"

The tall figure of the new master appeared suddenly at the top of the steps.

"Return to your Form-rooms at once, all of you!" cried the new master in savage tones.

But he was ignored utterly.

"Good-bye, sir!"

Mr. Linton sat back in his seat. His face was working with emotion. The driver let in the clutch, and the taxi rolled forward towards the big gates.

"Give him a shove!" muttered Tom hoarsely.

And the cheer of the Shell fellows rang out in the old quad, loud and defiant to Mr. Linton's ears, as the taxicab disappeared rapidly through the gates, and was lost to sight.

Mr. Linton had gone from St. Jim's—broken, disgraced! He had gone for good—leaving the impostor who had planned his downfall in order to gain his position at the school in triumphant possession of the field!

From the Fifth Form window, the face of Kent, the new Fifth-Former, stared after the vanished taxicab with a faint, flickering smile on his dark face.

At the top of the School House steps the new master of the Shell ground his teeth savagely as he glared at his wretch Form.

"You will all be punished for this severely!" he raged, in harsh tones. His eyes glittered. "This Form is the most unruly it could be possible to imagine. A taste of discipline is needed. You will get it, I promise you, now that I am master of the Shell!"

Tom Merry glared at the man contemptuously.

"No one with any decent feeling at all would object to us saying good-bye to our old master," he said quietly.

"How, hoarse!" cut in the grim traces of Reginald Talbot.

The impostor in cap and gown paled with fury.

"Merry and Talbot, you will each take five hundred lines for your impertinence! And the whole Form will remain in detention throughout next Saturday afternoon, as punishment for leaving the Form-rooms without my permission just now!"

He glared round at the silent throng that faced him with angry bitterness. A malicious smile appeared upon his thin lips.

"Now follow me back to your Form-rooms. I am going to name this Form!"

Without a word the Shell fellows followed the figure of their new master into the House.

It was clear enough to all of those that, with the departure of Mr. Linton from St. Jim's, and his replacement by the man they knew as Mr. Filbeam, the Shell was in for a hard time under an iron hand!

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Iron Hand!

**S**CRAPES, scrapes, scrapes!

In the Shell Form-rooms, the monotonous scraping of many nibs was the only sound that broke the quiet of the Saturday afternoon.

Outside in the quad the spring sunlight was streaming down gloriously. It was an ideal day for cricket. But the match against the Fourth, which was to have taken place that afternoon, had had to be postponed. The Shell were undergoing detention, watched over by the glowering eyes of the great who had become master of the Shell!

Since two o'clock they had been at their desks, busy with the monotonous task that had been set them—the copying out of page after page of Virgil.

Virgil had never struck the Shell as being exactly an exhilarating writer. This afternoon they positively loathed him.

Tom Merry glanced up towards the window, at the smiling sunlight outside. The rest of the school were out of doors; far-off shouts could be heard faintly on the crisp air from the playing-fields.

"Merry, you are not attending to your task! Take a hundred lines!"

Tom Merry bent over his work again, with set face.

Kangaroo shifted his feet restlessly as he worked at a nearby desk. Instantly the harsh voice of the new master of the Shell cut the silence like a knife.

"Noble, take a hundred lines!"

Kangaroo stared at the figure at the master's desk in astonished dismay.

"But—how what for, sir?"

"For shuffling your feet," came the rasping answer.

"But I—only—"

"Make it three hundred lines, for daring to argue!" cut in the supposed Mr. Filbeam maliciously.

Kangaroo's mouth opened dumbly for a moment. Then he bent once more over his work, very red in the face.

Scrapes, scrapes, scrapes!

The Shell talked on, severely daring to breathe.

Mr. Linton had not infrequently been inclined to be irascible. But C. Linton at his worst had been an agent of kindness compared with Mr. Filbeam.

Scrapes, scrapes, scrapes!

The long minutes dragged on.

There was a break in the monotony at last, as a sudden tap came on the door of the Form-rooms. In answer to a barking summons from the new master the door opened, and a tall figure stepped into the room.

Burkett, working at a desk next to the aisle that ran up the centre of the room, glanced round, and saw that it was the new Fifth-Former, Kent, who had entered.

Burkett stared at Kent—alias Vicer—in surprise. It puzzled him to know what a Fifth-Former was doing in the Shell Form-rooms. Instantly a harsh voice from the master's desk made itself heard.

"Burkett, get on with your work—and take a hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!" grunted Burkett inwardly, as he hastily continued with his task. "The least!"

The new master was eyeing the Fifth-Former in apparent surprise, as "Kent" stared towards his desk.

"Well?" demanded the supposed Mr. Filbeam. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"My name is Kent, sir. I have brought you this note from Mr. Railton."

## Would You Believe It?

### Unusual Friends



An Edgworthsville catlover that has made friends with a ferret. After the ferret has worked a harvest, the cat returns after retrieving the rabbits & retrieves his friend.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 1,212.

The earliest well-finished tool produced by man—the Flint Fur-Hatcher of the early stone-age



The original is about 9 inches long & was clipped in the hand by the narrow part. It had no handle



Mashed for Life



has now been produced in this country early in the 19th century. It costs £10 per pound. A tin of 2 was worth 3 times as much as it is today.

where all her life

The Inspector at the master's desk took the note that was handed to him and opened it. As he had guessed, Visser's explanation had been untrue—a lie!

"Dear Kyle (the read, in Visser's handwriting),—I have been over to Benjamin Messer this afternoon. All is well there. Flash has heard from Curly that old Dismen is not expected to live another week."  
"There is no answer, thank you," said the hogan Mr. Pilsenan evenly.

A meaning look passed between the two, unnoted by the Shell; the fellows were too intent upon their work to notice anything very much—they had been under the iron hand long enough to know that the slightest sign of slacking off would bring down heavy punishment.

But Frederick Barlett, though his eyes were on his work, was inwardly raging. A hundred lines just for glancing round to see who had come into the Form-room! It was a bit thick!

"Hang Kent!" growled Barlett to himself angrily. "What did he want to come barfing in for? If it hadn't been for him—"

The new Fifth-Former was retreating his steps towards the door. On a sudden, angry impulse, Barlett, while keeping his eyes fixed on his work and his pen still active, thrust out a foot. The next moment Visser had tripped over it and gone sprawling.

He fell heavily on his hands and knees, with a breathless gasp. A pocket-book shot from the inside pocket of his coat, scattering the few papers and letters it had contained.

Barlett drew in his breath hurriedly, inwardly shouting. The Shell glanced round instinctively for a moment, with delighted faces, anything was welcome to relieve the monotony of their Saturday afternoon in *domus*—*oh!*

Reginald Talbot, who was sitting next to the side just by the spot where the Fifth-Former's scattered papers had fallen, stooped, grinning, to help him gather them up, as the latter scrambled furiously to his feet.

"Someone tripped me up," muttered Visser, all his work of pleasant oblivion, which he generally wore at St. Jim's, being dropped from him in a flash. "It was you!" he cried angrily, flinging out a pointing hand at Barlett.

"Not" retorted Barlett, with more apparent astonishment than resentment.

"Barlett, you will come out in front of the class!" roared the new master, his eyes glittering.

Reginald rose swiftly to his feet and left his desk, with a gift of bitter rage at the Fifth-Former.

"Stead!" he breathed fiercely.

"The bully of the Shell halted in front of the master's desk. The tyrant's eyes flashed through the air six times—three for each hand; and Barlett went back to his seat with his hands aproned under his armpits.

"Talbot!" berked the hogan Mr. Pilsenan. "Get on with your work, leave Kent to recover his belongings! Take a hundred lines!"

Talbot did not seem to hear. A sudden gasp, startled look had come into his eyes.

Though he had instinctively stooped to help the Fifth-Former to gather up the contents of his fallen pocket-book, Talbot had stopped doing so abruptly when the latter had suddenly sneezed with regard to Barlett. With an angry look, Talbot had been about to return to his work, leaving Kent to pick up his belongings himself, when his eyes had happened to fall on one of the papers lying near his feet.

He stared down at it with astonished eyes.

Whatever it was that he had seen, it was sufficient to hold his attention so fully for the moment that he failed

to hear the master of the Shell, and the man's eyes glittered angrily.

"Talbot!"

"This time Talbot heard.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Take three hundred lines!" said the master of the Shell angrily. "And get on with your work!"

Talbot bent over his desk again, as the Fifth-Former snatched up his papers, and left the Form-room.

On Talbot's face, as he worked on, there was a strange look. It was still there when, at long last, five o'clock chimed across the quad, and the Shell's imprisonment was over and they were allowed to file from the room—hurry, and inwardly smiling.

Whatever it was that Talbot had seen when Visser had dropped his pocket-book in the Shell Form room, it had left Reginald Talbot strangely disturbed!

CHAPTER 3.

Supplies!

**B**OOM! Boom!  
Midnight was striking, the deep notes ringing out crisp and clear across the starlit quadrangle of St. Jim's.

In the darkness of the Shell dormitory, Reginald Talbot, lying sleepily, heard the last reverberating chime die away to silence.

He turned over restlessly, and lay staring into the gloom.

From all sides the deep breathing of the sleeping fellows, and a huffy snore from the direction of Barlett's bed, told Talbot that he was the only one awake in the big dormitory. But to him sleep would not come.

"Linton's writing!" he muttered. "It was Linton's writing, I'll swear!"

In his mind's eye he could still see that fallen letter lying among the others that had dropped from Kent's pocket-book that afternoon in the Shell Form room. A letter written in Mr. Linton's handwriting—of that he was convinced. But he was equally sure that Mr. Linton had never written to Kent, the new Fifth-Former; there could have been no reason for such an action on Mr. Linton's part.

How, then, had the Fifth-Former come to have possession of it?

It was a startling question—a question that kept a troubled frown on Talbot's brow as he lay staring into the darkness.

Talbot, like all the Shell, had all along steadily refused to believe in Mr. Linton's guilt over the matter of the stolen school funds. Even the latter, supposed to have been written by Mr. Linton, and certainly in the old gentleman's handwriting, which had appeared to be a demand on Mr. Linton's part for his share of the stolen money—even that letter, though it had convinced the Head and Mr. Wallace and many more, had failed to convince Talbot.

But, somehow, as Talbot now realized, the Shell fellows had never fully tried to explain that letter. They had refused to believe in it; but they had not been able to explain it! It had been suggested that Mr. Linton had written it during some queer brain-storm, brought about by the worry he had suffered. But that had been a weak enough explanation.

Foggy!

That was the idea that was drumming in Talbot's brain now.

It was far more likely that some secret enemy of Mr.

Facts from Far and Near.



Playing the piano for 3 days!  
World's record for continuous piano playing is held by an Austrian, who played for 76 hours.



The first English Zoo was at the Tower of London and belonged to the King. As long ago as 1255 there was an elephant at the tower.

Commodus Lucius Emperor of Rome. G. won 1,031 gladiatorial pride ordered.



Venus Aurelius, 161-192, fought battles in the arena & in his world to worship him as Hercules.

Liston's had forged that letter with the deliberate intention of disgracing him.

Why Mr. Liston should have a secret enemy was a riddle which Talbot could not solve. He was not trying to solve it; the reason did not matter if such an enemy existed!

"Was it Kent?"

What possible motive the new Fifth-Former could have for wishing to see Mr. Liston disgraced and dismissed from St. Jim's Talbot could not imagine. But that letter to Mr. Liston's handwriting, which he had seen fall from Kent's pocket-book, needed a lot of explaining, it seemed to him.

Could it be that this had been the specimen copy from which Kent had made his diabolically clever forgery? If Kent had really been the forger, it was possible enough that he had kept that specimen of Liston's writing in case he should wish to bring further evidence against the secretary of the Shell. And if he was deliberately keeping it, it would probably strike him as being much safer to keep it in his pocket than to leave it unguarded in his study, even within a locked drawer.

"I wonder!" breathed Talbot, turning restlessly between the sheets. "If that letter was a deliberate forgery, done to incriminate Liston, one of the chances must have done it. It couldn't have been done by anyone outside the school. A master wouldn't do it, of course. It must have been one of the claps!"

And try as he would, he could think of no fellow at the school who might have done it—except possibly Kent!

Crocker, Mallin, Knox—men by one he had gone over in his mind the nature of all the shady characters of St. Jim's—fortunately they were few enough—and not one of them could have had any motive for doing such a foul thing, even if any one of them would have been unscrupulous enough to do it.

But Kent—no one knew anything about Kent! It might be that he was wretchedly enough in do such a thing, and it might be that he had some mysterious reason for wishing to do it.

"No one else would do it. It must be he!" muttered Talbot, with another uneasy turn. "Who else could it have been?"

That was the thing. If Kent was not the forger, then who was? But there was nobody else who could have done it!

Talbot thrust back the blankets silently, and slipped out of bed. A sudden look of restless determination had come into his good-looking face in the darkness.

He was working on a slight enough suspicion, he knew. But he had made up his mind. No stone could be left unturned to help Liston!

He would steal downstairs to the Fifth Form passage and search Kent's room! If the new Fifth-Former were really guilty there was just a chance that evidence of his guilt might be waiting to be found in his study.

In ordinary circumstances Talbot would no more have dreamed of visiting another fellow's room in the middle of the night and searching his private belongings than of trying to fly! But, for Mr. Liston's sake, with that vague suspicion in his mind, he would have done far more.

He slipped on slippers and a dressing-gown, and crept to the door. None of the sleepers stirred as he opened the door cautiously and left the dormitory.

Talbot had in the pocket of his dressing-gown a small electric torch, which had been there ever since a dormitory rag about a fortnight ago. He took it out and snapped it on. The vivid beam of light revealed the dark stairs. He stole down them, and turned in the direction of the Fifth Form passage.

It did not take him long to reach the end study. Pushing open the door, he stepped quickly inside, shutting the door behind him.

His face was set. Talbot did not like his self-imposed task. But he was determined to go through with it—for Liston's sake.

He glanced across to the window. The curtains were drawn, as Kent had left them before going to bed. The faint glimmer of a fire lay cold in the grate.

"Here goes!"

Talbot turned—still half reluctant—towards the desk that stood against the wall to the right of the door. But then he halted, as if turned to stone.

Footsteps were creeping along the passage outside, towards the room!

Talbot caught his breath.

Who could it be, strutting along the passage at that hour? The faint, almost ghostly, footstep halted. They had stopped outside the door. Talbot heard the handle rattle, as fingers took hold of it outside, turning it.

Click!

He snapped out the light of the electric torch, plunging the

study into darkness. With a swift movement Talbot stepped behind a tall screen that stood near the door. The next instant the door had opened softly, and in the darkness someone had stepped into the room.

Talbot, scarcely breathing, heard the door closed as softly as it had been opened. He could hear quick breathing near him on the other side of the screen. A match spluttered in the gloom.

The bay yellow light illumined the room dimly as a shadowy figure crossed quickly to a cupboard and took out a candle and lit it. The light increased abruptly as the candle alone with a steady flame. And the face above it, lit so clearly now in the shadowy room, was the face of Kent.

Setting the candle on the table, the Fifth-Former produced a key from the pocket of his jacket, and opened a drawer at the desk. Talbot heard the rattle of papers. Then Kent turned again to the table where the candle stood.

He held in his hand two folded papers.

Talbot, watching from the shadows, unconsciously drew a sudden, living breath.



Tom Merry and Vicer, locked in a fierce struggle.

With glowing eyes the Fifth-Former had thrust one of the papers into the candle flame!

The paper flared up, held in Kent's quivering fingers. And Talbot knew then that his suspicions, vague though they had been, had been right!

He realized in a flash that Kent had seen the startled look in his face that afternoon in the Shell Form room, when his eyes had fallen on that mysterious note of Mr. Liston's handwriting. Kent had foreseen that Talbot might suspect; he had doubtless lain awake, frightened and troubled—and now, at midnight, he had come down to destroy the evidence that might prove him the forger of the letter that had banished Mr. Liston from St. Jim's!

What the other paper was which Kent was holding, and which he clearly intended to destroy also, Talbot did not know. But he saw now, as the flames seized it, that the paper the Fifth-Former was holding to the flame was the

letter he had seen in the Shell Form room that afternoon—that letter of Linton's, stolen most likely from the old gentleman's waste-paper basket, which had devolved upon the specimen from which Kent had copied Linton's handwriting.

The flames licked along the folded sheet.

And then Kent—alias Vissar—gave a choking cry of terror and dismay.

Out of the shadows a leaping figure had appeared. A hand had closed upon the flaming paper in his hand, crushing out the flames at the same time that it dragged the half-burnt sheet from his suddenly nervous fingers.

He staggered back. In the shaking candlelight the scoundrelly Fifth-Former and Reginald Talbot stood facing



Talbot took a swift step forward, and his hand shot out to seize the paper clamped in the other's fingers. As his movement, Vissar seemed to find the power of movement, too. He sprang back with a choking cry, crushing the second paper in his hand.

Never had Talbot seen such fabled fury glaring from the eyes of a human being as he saw now in the eyes that stared into his own in the shadowy study.

Then Vissar came leaping at him!

Talbot was no workaholic. He was, in fact, one of the most lolly individuals in the Shell. But before that mad attack he staggered backwards against the wall helplessly, Vissar's fingers clamping at his throat.

The paper had fallen from the Fifth-Former's hand. In his mad fury his one thought seemed to be to vent his rage on Talbot—the fellow who had discovered his secret.

Clashed and diary, with Vissar's fingers lacerated round his throat like a vice, Talbot reeled helplessly in the powerful grip of the bigger fellow. Vissar's eyes blazed into his, the thin lips below working twistedly. There was foam upon them.

In ghastly silence the two reeled and struggled!

Talbot's hands were fastened on the wrists at his throat. But he could not tear the other's hands away. He felt his senses swimming as he fought for breath.

"So you'd meddle in my affairs?"

The voice that came to his ears seemed strangely far away—a horrible voice that he could scarcely recognize as that of the Fifth-Former whom he had known as Kent.

"You young fool!"

Vissar's eyes were glittering with madness in his own. And then suddenly his attacker reeled back. Talbot's fist had smashed into his face with all his remaining strength, with a blow that he was scarcely conscious of delivering.

Air rushed into his lungs as the choking hand fell from his throat. His senses cleared, and he hit out again desperately, as his toe leapt at him again, like a wild beast.

There was a heavy sound as the Fifth-Former dropped to the floor and lay still. Talbot, standing over him, reeling dizzily, exposed him to view. But he did not rise.

Talbot's smacking left hand had landed full on the point. Vissar was motionless—dumb brooked out!

A grim smile came to Talbot's lips as he realized that. He stood staring down at the crumpled shape at his feet—the fellow whom he knew now, for certain, had been the evil cause of Mr. Linton's downfall.

His eyes swept swiftly over the floor. With a matter of excitement, Talbot scooped and snatched up the crumpled sheet of paper that Vissar had let fall. He opened it out, in the light of the candle, and stared down at it in bewilderment.

It was a page out of a local telephone directory.

"What the dickens—?"

Then something caught his attention. He held the sheet close to the light. A bracing breath escaped him.

His keen eyes had shown him something that he might easily have failed to notice—which many other people would have failed to notice altogether; it had been so cleverly done.

One of the printed telephone numbers had been altered with Indian ink. Talbot, peering at it closely, saw that what had probably been originally "Wayland 4778" had been altered to "823." The number was opposite the name of a well-known Wayland garage.

For some moments, Talbot stood staring down at the altered number in utter bewilderment. Then suddenly a flash of memory and understanding leapt into his brain.

He remembered that it was old Taggins who had telephoned for the taxiash in which Mr. Linton had been going to the railway station when he had been robbed of the school funds entrusted to his care. That taxiash had been driven by one of the crooks who had robbed him, and it had been wheeled afterwards here it was that this lonesome taxi-driver had been able to come in place of a genuine one. When Taggins had been asked whom he had rung up he had insisted that he had rung up the usual garage—but the sheet of the telephone directory in his lodge which would have contained the name and number of the garage in question had been missing when the directory came to be examined.

At the time, no one had troubled to think much about the odd incident.

But what had actually happened was now clear to Talbot!

The scoundrelly Fifth-Former—evidently a member of the gang that had robbed Mr. Linton—had contrived to get at old Taggins' directory and alter the number of the garage that he had known the power would ring up, to

and essayed high above the old quad of St. Jim's!

see another—Vissar's face when grey, his eyes pin-points of glittering fire, Talbot's face set as grim as Fate!

CHAPTER 16.  
Proof!

"SO I was right!"  
Talbot's voice was like a knife edge.  
He crumpled the half-burnt paper into his pocket and held out his hand for the other.  
"Give me that—whatever it is!"  
Vissar's thin lips were contorted into a twisted line as he faced Talbot, poised like a panther about to spring. The candlelight flickered over his dark face, casting strange shadows on the walls around them.  
He made no movement. Except for the glitter in his eyes, he might have been a stone figure smacking there.

another number—the number of some telephone at which a member of the gang would be waiting to answer the call! And then, afterwards, before the attention in the number could be discovered by someone with sharper eyes than those of Ephraim Taggart, Kent—in Talbot recognized his name to be—had succeeded in tearing out the incriminating sheet.

That he had not destroyed it long ago was doubtless due to an oversight, which he had been about to remedy that night.

So that's how they stopped poor old Linton from going to the station in a real taxi!" bellowed Talbot. "My giddy aunt! If this doesn't prove old Linton's innocence, I'm a Dutchman!"

He thrust his hand into his pocket, and took out the half-bound letter. A glance at it showed him that it was a private letter which Mr. Linton had begun to write and thrown into the waste-paper basket before finishing, doubtless intending to rewrite it.

And when Kent stole this from Linton's room he stole some of his notes, too, to write his burglary on!" muttered Talbot grimly. "He's a clever scoundrel to have imitated the old boy's writing so exactly."

A stirring movement from the bedded figure at his feet roused him to crane both the incriminating papers into his pocket, and turn swiftly to the knotted cord Fifth-Former.

"Condemnation seemed to be uttering.  
"I'm not taking any risks with this bound!" breathed Talbot.

He stopped, and with the cord from his dressing-gown hastily tied Vincer's wrists behind his back. The other's eyes flickered open, glaring up balefully into his.

Talbot lifted Vincer into a chair and tied his ankles to the legs with string he found in a waste-paper basket.

"You can walk here, whether you like it or not, you retort!" muttered Talbot, dragging the knotted cord tight.

"I damn if you're awake enough to hear me. If you are, you'll be pleased to know that I've got both those papers safe, and thanks to them we'll soon have old Linton safe back at St. Jim's!"

He straightened himself, and turned to the door, hurrying from the study, locking the door behind him.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Escape!

FOR a minute or so Vincer sat huddled in the chair, staring with closed eyes at the locked door.

But gradually the drows was clearing from his brain. He sat up at last, with a stifled gasp. His head was swimming, and, aching horribly from that smothering upper-cut, but one thing was clear to him.

He was trapped!

He began to wrench fiercely at the cord that was knotted round his wrists and ankles, but he soon found how impossible it was to hope, precisely that he could drag himself free. Talbot had tied that cord too tight for that! He had been taking no chances.

A snarl of helplessness appeared on Vincer's face, and fear glimmered in his black eyes.

"I must get away!"

The words broke from his lips, a hoarse whisper.

He knew that the door was locked.

And in a few minutes, he knew, Talbot would be returning with Mr. Bailton, or Kildare, and some of the other Sixth-Formers! The police would be sent for—he would be arrested as one of the "wanted" members of the gang that had robbed Mr. Linton of that big sum of money, the school funds!

Vincer's face set in desperate lines.

Again he strained helplessly on the cord that held his wrists. Useless!

"They shan't get me!"

Turning round, his eyes fell suddenly on the flickering candle flame.

The next moment an idea had leapt into his brain. He rocked his chair backward to the table, thrusting out his bound wrists over the flame of the candle.

His face whitened with pain, as the flame, licking the cords, seared his wrists. But he held them steady where they were—the perspiration standing out now on his forehead in great glistening drops. A little groan broke from his lips. But a few seconds later, his straining wrists burst asunder the smothering cord.

In a moment he had untied his legs.

He was free!

For a moment he stood motionless at his blistered wrists. They were badly burnt. But he had no time to heed the pain in them. With a swift movement he seized the heavy The Gem LIBRARY.—No. 1,212.

chair and carried it to the door, jamming the back of it up under the door-handle.

"That'll keep 'em out for a bit!"

Dragging open a drawer filled with clothes, he snatched out a pair of trousers and a coat, and began pulling them on over his pyjamas feverishly.

Vincer was out to get away from St. Jim's for good, and he did not fancy the idea of being through the night in pyjamas and dressing-gown.

He turned his head suddenly, listening.

Hurrying footsteps were coming down the passage towards the door.

He caught his breath. They were back sooner than he had expected. Then a trusted smile appeared on his lips as he glanced at the chair jammed under the handle. They should keep them out till he was clear away.

He heard the key turned in the lock. The handle rattled, and the door was thrust open an inch. But it opened no farther. The chair held it.

He heard an excited exclamation from without, as those in the passage realized that the possessor of the coat and study had slipped himself from his bonds. Vincer, hastily buttoning his jacket as he moved towards the window, heard Mr. Bailton's voice about to him in a very grim tone.

"Kent!"

"Bosh, the door is!" came the voice of Kildare, and there were mutterings of eager agreement from several others.

Mr. Bailton, on being awakened by Talbot and hearing his evening story, had first of all thought only of the fact that Mr. Linton was proved innocent of the terrible charge that had been made against him. That had been wonderful news for Mr. Bailton, who had been terribly distressed by Mr. Linton's supposed guilt.

His second thought had been that Talbot's prisoner was evidently a dangerous customer, whom it would be necessary to deal with at once. And for that reason he had awakened Kildare, Derrill, Smith, and Baker and brought them with him, after having sent Talbot back to the Shell dormitory.

And the four Sixth-Formers were not likely to let a study door interfere with them very long!

Vincer realized that as he sprang to the window.

Crash!

A terrific shoulder charge had been made upon the door from without. It shattered, but the chair held.

Vincer dragged up the window.

Crash, crash!

The chair, heavy though it was, and cleverly jammed under the handle, would not hold the door long before that onslaught. Vincer, stooping down, white-faced, into the yard, looking for some means of descent, felt his heart go cold.

There was no pipe, so by reaching to his window-sillings!

Behind him, reverberating crashes upon the door echoed through the study.

He looked up, and a gasp escaped him.

At the end of the Fifth Form passage, where the study was situated, the casing hung low above the windows of the rooms. By standing on the sill it might be possible for him to grasp the casing and swing up on to the roof.

With a final splintering crash the door burst in, hurling the chair before it.

"Look out! My heavens!"

"Stop him!"

Mr. Bailton and the four Sixth-Formers had rushed into the room in time to see Vincer scrambling out on to the sill.

"He'll be killed!" gasped Mr. Bailton hoarsely.

Kildare leapt for the window.

There was a bark, and laugh from Vincer. He rose to his full height on the sill above the dizzy drop, his hands claying up for the edge of the gutter above his head.

"Come back!" cried Kildare hoarsely.

The captain of St. Jim's had stopped by the open window, waiting the impulse to grasp Vincer's legs, but his action should cause the fugitive to lose his balance and go tumbling to his death, across the foot below.

"I don't think!" cried Vincer, a baleful light flickering in his eyes as he stared down at the captain's upturned face.

The next moment he had swung upwards and vanished from their sight.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Hunted Down!

"HURRAH!"

"Ho giddy pig!"

"Hurrah for old Linton! Give him a yell!"

And the Shell fellows gave him "a yell" with a vengeance! The cheers echoed out deafeningly in the Shell dormitory.

Talbot had returned to the door to tell his wonderful



news at once—that Linton's innocence was proved, and that the ex-master of the Shell would presumably soon be returning to his old school. And, in consequence, in the Shell dormitory a wild, breathless, joyful tumult reigned.

The lights had been turned on, and most of the Shell were out of bed, walking round the dormitory in each other's arms, noisy with excitement.

They had forgotten that it was past midnight—or if they remembered they did not care. Noise in the dormitory after lights out was strictly forbidden; but the Shell were making enough noise to awaken the dead!

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Good old Linton!"

"Linton's coming back!"

Pillows were flung to and fro across the dormitory now, as the joyful Shell fellows allowed their feelings by starting a free fight with their pillows.

"So it was Kent!" panted Tom Merry breathlessly to Munnay and Lowther. "The found! Well, he'll pay for it! The police will nab him as a member of the gang that robbed poor old Linton!"

"But why the dickens did Kent want to land Linton in the soup with that forged letter?" cut in Munnay, in a bewildered tone.

"Goodness knows! Hoped to throw suspicion off himself, perhaps."

Berkout, the bully of the Shell, turned to Tom Merry & Co. Berkout seemed as pleased and excited as anyone.

"I say," he said sagaciously, "I remember now that when I found that letter in the hall—the forged letter—Kent was standing near. In fact, now I come to think of it, he jolly well pointed it out to me. It's clear as daylight now, though, of course, I never thought of it at the time—he'd just dropped it for someone to find."

"The cunning couter!"

The dormitory door suddenly swung open. The face of Darrell appeared. There was an instant hush.

"Check this row and get into bed, and get this light out!" said Darrell briefly.

In the momentary Darrell did not feel inclined to award the heavy punishments that he would normally have done. He could sympathize with the Shell's delight.

"What's happened?" cried Tom Merry sagaciously. "About Kent?"

"He's snuggled out of his study window," said Darrell grudgingly. "He's got on to the roof. But he can't hope to get away. The Sixth are surrounding the building. Now, then, into bed, the lot of you!"

The Shell obeyed reluctantly, and Darrell snipped out the light, leaving the dormitory empty. The moment he had gone an excited babel of voices broke out.

"On the roof!" breathed Talbot. "And I left him trussed up! How the dickens—"

"They'll catch him, for a cert!"

"Bound to!"

Gradually the excited talk died down. But the long minutes dragged by without any of the Shell finding it easy to get to sleep.

The knowledge that Kent, as they thought Yimer's name to be, was a fugitive on the old roof of St. Jim's, hunted by the police, while the rest of the Sixth surrounded the place to prevent his escape to the ground, was too thrilling to let them sleep easily.

They could hear faint noises in the quad below, and far-off shouting voices broke the silence suddenly, to die away again.

What was happening? Tom Merry, staring across at the long windows opposite his bed, felt his heart thumping with excitement.

"I say," he breathed to Monty Lowther in the next bed, "suppose—"

Tom's words snapped off.

His eyes were suddenly riveted upon one of the big windows.

A dark, shadowy figure had come swinging noiselessly down from somewhere above. Tom Merry, staring across with wide eyes, saw the swinging legs and a football on the sill outside the window.

"Look!" he gasped, sitting up with a jerk and flinging out a pointing hand. "Look—"

There was only one person who it could be, dropping like a cat from the eaves above to the sill of the dormitory window.

"Kent!" Tom heard Monty Lowther cry hoarsely.

"Hush!" breathed Tom. "Quiet, you chaps—"

Flipping aside the blankets, Tom Merry kept silently from his bed. Lowther, Munnay, Handcock, Talbot, and several others who had by now grasped the situation, followed suit. In the darkness of the unlighted dormitory they stood waiting, with glancing, excited eyes.

The figure outside, reckless of danger, had let go his hold

(Continued on page 18.)

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on the gutter above, and was crouching on the ledge all his fingers scrapping at the window-frame. With a hiss round the lower end slid up, and the fugitive dropped noiselessly into the dark dormitory.

It was quite clear that Kent-alias Visser—had not the faintest idea that the window he had entered was the window of a dormitory. He had not been long enough at the school to know the geography of the old buildings well, and in his desperate search for some place of privacy into the House, so that he might try to get downstairs and make his escape, he had inadvertently chosen to put his head into a regular boys' den!

His shadowy figure stood peering round. After the starlight outside, the gloom of the dormitory was pitch blackness to his eyes.

Tom Merry moved without a sound to the electric light switch. There was a click in the darkness; the next moment the Shell dormitory was flooded with a blaze of light.

There was a choking cry from the dormitory sounded by the open window. His head half-crouching, glaring round with bulging eyes, dazzled by the sudden light.

"Collar him!" roared Tom Merry.

And in a body the pyjama-clad figures of the students of the Shell lurched themselves at the scoundrelly Fifth-Former. Visser hit out in fury and desperation as they closed in upon him. His smashing fists found their marks.

Messners and Handcock went spinning before terrific blows. Burket collapsed before a savage left to the par. But the rest of the Shell were tumbling out of bed hastily, and pushing to head a hand.

"Collar the bandit!" roared Grundy.

"Come on, Shell!" roared Donald Glynn.

Visser could certainly not have chosen a worse place for his entry into the building. The Shell fellows were hurrying with bitter hatred against the fellow who had been the evil cause of Mr. Linton's disgrace and wrongful dismissal; and they were fighting with cold ferocity to capture the big Fifth-Former whom they knew as Kent.

But despite their pluck, and their numbers, they were up against a tough nut to crack. Visser was big and powerful and he was utterly desperate. His desperation lent him twice normal strength.

One after another the Shell fellows were knocked spinning by his smashing fists.

Tom Merry went down, his lip opened and bleeding. He scrambled up dazedly—only to be knocked down again by the flying figure of Knapton, as the Australian junior was sent down before a terrific blow in the face. Talbot, too, was knocked flying; and for some moments he was too dazed to rise.

Fighting bravely, Visser tried to make a break for the door. But what was more than he could manage, although he was holding his own so amazingly against the overwhelming odds.

Tom Merry, scrambling up at last, his senses swimming a little, gave a hoarse shout as he saw that his foe too suddenly and spring back to the open window.

"Stop him!" he roared, and lunged himself after the fugitive.

Visser turned and knocked Tom Merry back across one of the beds. The others were rushing at him; but in their excitement the Shell fellows were hampering one another, getting in each other's way. And Visser gained the window, swinging out on to the sill.

He straightened himself, grasping the gutter above. He kicked his leg free of Talbot's hand, and the next moment had swung himself upwards with his powerful arms, and vanished whence he had come.

"He's got away!" roared Talbot.

Tom Merry sprang to the window, grim-faced. The captain of the Shell had slipped on, and now he watched up his descending form, slipping into it in a flash.

"Deesey!" roared Messners. "What on earth—"

"I'm going after him!" said Tom between his teeth.

He swung out on to the sill.

There was a redoubt light in Tom Merry's eyes. Barring with hatred for the girl scoundrel who had so nearly ruined Mr. Linton, Tom Merry was not wanting cost in his determination to head the fifth a hand in bringing the blackguard to book.

"Come back!" shouted Leather Sundry.

But Tom Merry ignored his doom. He straightened himself on the sill, and grasped the gutter above. If it would hold the Fifth-Former it would support him. With an athletic movement he drew himself up, and crouched on to the sloping roof above, vanishing from sight as the watching started faces that crowded at the lighted window.

He was in time to see Visser disappearing over the dark fringe of the roof.

Scrambling up the stairs, Tom Merry followed.

## CHAPTER 13.

### The Fight on the Roof!

VISSEK heard him coming. At the top of the gabled roof he turned with a start. His eyes glittered evilly in the starlight, where he crouched astride the high ridge.

"Keep away from me!" he snarled, and gained the ridge six or seven yards from Visser, between the fugitive and the flat leads that joined the roof of the Shell dormitory with the dark, irregular roofs of the rest of the School House.

He stared across at Visser with gleaming eyes.

"You needn't think you're going to get away, Kent!" he said between his teeth. "You want to get back into the House, eh? Well—I'm stopping you!"

Visser came crawling towards him along the ridge.

"Out of my way, you young fool!"

"Rubb!"

Visser halted again, clinging desperately to the slates with clawed fingers. There was desperation and burning hatred in his dark eyes.

"Out of my way!" he roared again.

"Better surrender, Kent!" roared Tom Merry madly. "You're not going to get past me. You're trapped!"

Visser glanced round swiftly. But there was no other way of escape from the narrow gable above the dormitory except by passing Tom Merry and gaining the leads beyond. If he could once get to them, there was still a chance that he might find some skylight by which he could enter the House, get downstairs undiscovered, and break through the cordon of watchers in the quad to freedom!

Visser hung a quivering, pointing finger down towards the quad, far below.

"Do you want me to throw you off?" he snarled. "I shall, you fool! I'm not getting caught to-night, I promise you! Out of my way, or I'll kill you—I'll throw you off into the quad!"

He meant it—Tom Merry could see it in his blazing eyes. Visser would not stop at murder to make his escape. And Tom Merry, realising that, realised too that he was dealing with someone who was half-mad!

"Great Scott—his very!" bellowed Tom.

The next moment, Visser came at him, scrambling along the ridge of the roof, with bulging eyes. His clawing hands shot out for Tom's throat.

In another instant, the two were interlocked, fighting handily!

Half risen to their feet, Tom Merry and Visser roared and swung high above the old quad!

Tom felt Visser's breath heaving hotly on his face, saw the glittering mad eyes blazing into his own. One hand was at his throat, the other had grasped him round the waist, striving to fling him off that dizzy ridge, to send him sliding down the slates, to drop into the vast well of darkness below.

In ghastly silence the two grappled and strayed together, their feet sliding and scrambling on the slates.

From somewhere behind him Tom heard a shout. It was the voice of Eldred.

The captain of St. Jim's had appeared on the leads from a skylight. With white face, Eric Eldred raced across to the gable on which the struggling figures could be seen outlined against the stars.

Tom Merry was a well-built, stalwart youngster, every inch an athlete. But as he fought, he knew that his foe was too strong for him. And he felt his heart go suddenly cold.

With a harsh, horrible laugh, Visser scooped all his mad strength and swung Tom sideways. Tom felt his feet lose their grip. Then the steady arms let go their hold of him, and as he reeled, struggling to regain his balance, a fierce fist smashed into his face.

Tom Merry staggered backwards, his feet sliding helplessly on the steeply sloping slates.

Then he was falling, falling, dipping down the steep gabled roof, with torn, bleeding fingers clutching in vain for a hold. Down towards the eaves below—and the vast drop beyond.

In those moments, that seemed like hours, Tom Merry thought his last hour had come.

But it had not. His helpless, sliding figure came to an abrupt stop. His toes had caught in the strong old gutter, and he lay face down, propped up on the slates, his face as white as paper—but safe!

He started up, to where his would-be murderer was standing at full length, a black figure against the starry sky.

(Continued at the foot of next page.)

Ask a hard question, boys—it's easily answered!



The Graduate is bursting with knowledge! Let him pass it on to you! Tell him what you want to know—and he'll put you wise!

"**C**OME on," shouted the Ed. to me this morning. "Tons of queries, my lucky lad, and all hard, all serious. Firstly, why does my office-boy wear shoes?"

"Business has getting too big for his boots, sir," I snapped back.

"Very good," said the Ed. "Now, secondly, what's the oldest tree in the world?"

"I should say that distinction must belong to the cypress tree of Somalia, in Lombardy," I told the Editor. "That tree is supposed to have been in existence in the time of Julius Caesar, way back about two thousand years ago. It's 221 in circumference, and stands 2111 in height. When the great Napoleon made his famous road over the Simplon, he made them take the road round this tree so that it should be left standing."

"That was very good of him," said the Ed. "What kind of a tree is the cypress exactly, Whiskers?"

"A tall, straight tree that grows to a tapering point, and with leaves that turn almost black. Among the ancients, the wood of the cypress was highly valued—they used it for making sarcophagi, tables, musical instruments, and also to make the cases in which they put their mummies."

"The next question is from Bill Stevens. He wants to know what a corral is?"

"There's an expression used chiefly in Spanish America and the States for an enclosure used for cattle or horses. In the days when the cowboys were attacked by the Redskins, they used to draw up their wagons in a circle round

their camp, as a means of defence, and this circle of wagons was known as a corral."

"Ah, yes," said the Ed. "I've seen that sort of thing on the pictures."

"That's right, sir," said I. "In Ceylon they use the same word for an enclosure in which wild elephants are captured. They capture elephants in the same way in India, but they call the enclosure a keddoo. The word

keddoo comes from the Hindoo word, 'khdooa, which means to chain.'"

"What's a curriole?"

"A light two-wheeled conveyance, in which a pair of horses are driven."

"Now tell me what kedgeroo is?"

"Kedgeroo is an Indian dish, made of boiled rice mixed up with a lot of highly-flavoured ingredients. There's white kedgeroo, and there's yellow kedgeroo. You pay your money and take your choice. White kedgeroo is made with grain, onions, butter, chives, pepper, and salt. The yellow variety includes eggs and is coloured with a stuff called turmeric."

"What's turmeric, Whiskers?"

"Turmeric is an Indian plant which belongs to the ginger family. The powdered root is used as a dye, and it's also one of the things they use in making curry-powder."

"What's a maulstick?"

"A maulstick, or as it's sometimes spelt, maulstick, is a stick with a soft leather end, used by painters to support their hand when they are painting."

"Here's a little query about sewing, my lad. Fred Messerer wants to know why seamstresses in other countries move their bodies less than the English women in sewing costumes?"

"You see, said Fred," said I, "that the English style of sewing differs from most other styles. In this country the seamstress moves his body the whole distance from end to end, on a sliding seat, whereas abroad they sacrifice a portion of the body swing in order to make more effective use of their big work. Our method is much more exhausting

than the other, but it enables the seamstress to bring more muscle into play, and to make more effective use of his weight."

"Know anything about jackals?" was the Editor's next.

"I guess I can tell you a bit about them," said I. "Let me see now. Jackals are members of the dog family, related to the wolf. They hide themselves away in the jungle during the day, and come out at night looking for food, in packs of an many as two hundred at a time. The howl of the jackal is very terrifying, and when they all start howling together, it's some noise, believe me. Yet these wild animals can be tamed, and when domesticated, will wag their tails and roll on the floor just like a dog. In India the jackals are hunted, much as the fox is hunted in this country. And I think that's about all I can tell you at the moment."

"The Ed. expressed his satisfaction with my wonderful brain-power in his usual manner, by looking for another query to holler me with."

"Can you tell Hagar Fry whether ivory is obtained in any other way than from elephants?"

"Ivory, or what is called ivory," I told the Ed., "is obtained also from the teeth of the hippopotamus, the walrus, the narwhal, the coccolute, and of some animals of the wild-beast family, such as the walrus, that lives in South Africa. Apart from these, ivory has also been obtained in large quantities from the remains of pre-historic animals dug up in Hamia. Animals like the mammoth and the mastodon, that used to roam about all over the world in the old days, had huge tusks, and they have been found buried in England receiving 221 in length and weighing 2001. These tusks, though they have been buried in the ground for thousands of years, are often in perfect condition."

"You seem to know a lot about ivory," said the Ed.

"Yes, sir," said I, "Ivory marketable in Ha, ha, ha!"

Having guessed that one I made for the door, but was halted back by the Ed., who caught hold of my coat-tails and dragged me to the wash-pot basin.

"Sit there," he growled, "you stinky bundle of rotund!"

Unfortunately the dog was curled up asleep at the bottom of the basin, and by the time the dog had finished and by the time I had tried to be funny, believe me, please, believe me!

## "THE FIGHTING FORM MASTER!"

(Continued from previous page.)

Vivier was watching Kildare, as the captain of St. Jim's scrambled up from the flat leads on to the narrow galleys.

"Keep back!" Tom Merry brand Vivier's arm.

The next moment the dark figure was running along the ridge, with cat-like skill, towards Kildare.

Kildare, crouching on the slates, waited with set face for the other's next attack.

But Vivier never reached Kildare's crouching square. Suddenly he missed his footing.

Tom Merry, staring upwards, with horror in his eyes, saw Vivier reel sideways, hands clutching at the air. There was a shout of appalled dismay from Kilo Kildare. Then Vivier was sliding down the steep slates on his back, elbows scraping, fingers digging madly for a hold which was not there, his head face staring downwards as he came down towards the ever-changing snow.

His heels struck the gutter, barely a couple of yards from where Tom Merry lay pressed against the slates. But Vivier's weight was too great. The motion of the gutter next to that supporting Tom Merry was wrenched away, and the captain of the Shell closed his eyes as the shrieking figure shot off the edge of the roof, and vanished.

A thin icy cascade flooding up to him from the depths, and

then he heard an unforgettable sound as Vivier struck the grave far below.

It was five minutes or more before Tom Merry could control his shaker nerves sufficiently to scramble back to safety. With Kildare's help, he gained the beach, and turned unsteadily towards the sky-light.

That Kilo—alias Vivier—had been killed there could be no possible doubt, he knew.

And with his death it looked as if the reason why he had sought to visit Mr. Linton must pass with him into the unknown!

"Letter for you, sir?"

Tohy, the School House page, had entered Mr. Linton's old study, with a letter on a salver.

Mr. Fitzbain—alias Hyde—who now had possession of that room, took the letter without a word, and Tohy retired.

"Talk about benevolence!" sniffed Tohy, outside the door.

"Kilroy a word of thanks from 'em! With they'd 'erry up and get old Linton back, and get rid of this 'ere Fitzbain!"

Tohy was not the only person at St. Jim's who wished that! The Shell wished it in a man; Mr. Ballton wished it; the Head wished it.

(Continued on page 21.)

**STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!**

# The BRASS LIZARD MYSTERY!

BY  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**



**CHAPTER I.**  
**No Luck for Tubby!**

**"TEN pounds!"** Tubby Maffin murmured those words. There was quite an ecstatic expression on the sharp face of Reginald Maffin, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood. Merely to think of the amount of luck that could be obtained for such a sum as ten pounds was joy to the last Classical.

"Ten quids!" said Tubby. "Ten whole quids! Ahhhhh!" Maffin, in the window seat at the end of the Fourth Form passage, had a newspaper in his hands. It was the "Letcham Advertiser," a local journal that consisted chiefly of advertisements. It was upon an advertisement column that Tubby's eyes were fixed.

Jimmy Silver & Co., from the doorway of the end study, watched Maffin with some amusement. They heard Tubby's remarks and wondered. Ten pounds and Tubby were as far as the Police wanted. Tubby seldom had ten shillings very often not ten pence.

"What's it all about, Tubby?" called out Jimmy Silver, interrupting the last Classical's meditations and mumbings.

Maffin gave a sudden start and blinked round. He had not noticed that he was under observation. He felt the newspapers hurriedly, and thrust it out of sight under his waistcoat. There was not much room for it there. Tubby peered into his waistcoat almost to bursting point. Tubby peered unapologetically as he jammed the folded paper into hiding.

"Oh, nothing!" he purred. "Nothing that would interest you fellows. In fact, nothing at all."

"Something about ten pounds, in the Letcham paper?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, staring at the famous Tubby.

"Oh, no! Nobody's offering a reward!" said Tubby. "Nothing of the sort, you know."

"A reward?" asked Ruby.

"No! A reward isn't even mentioned. Don't get that idea into your head," said Tubby anxiously. "Besides, I saw it first."

"You saw first what isn't there?" asked Newcomb.

"Yes! Exactly! I mean—I-I-I mean—" Tubby stammered. "Look here, don't you fellows be inquisitive! I'm not going to have a crowd of shags betting on it. I saw

**THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.**

old Isaac's advertisement first. If that ten quid comes to Rookwood, I'm jolly well going to bag it, see? Besides, there's nothing of the kind in the paper. Old Isaac at Letcham hasn't lost anything that I know of, and he isn't offering a reward of ten pounds."

And Tubby Maffin, to avoid further questioning, rolled away down the passage, leaving the Physical First laughing.

"What has that fat duffer got in his silly noodle now?" asked Lovell.

"Goodness knows!" said Jimmy. "Whatever it is, there was room for it."

The misapprehension of Tubby Maffin was abnormal, and Jimmy Silver & Co. dismissed him and his mysterious mumbings from mind on the spot. They did not even remember his dodgy existence till the Fourth Form gathered for class again. Then Tubby rolled in several minutes late, and Mr. Dalton gave him a severe look. Tubby had an anxious expression on his face, and a bulge under his ample waistcoat showed that the "Letcham Advertiser" was still stored away there.

Tubby rolled to his place, but he did not sit down. He held up a fat hand to draw Mr. Dalton's attention.

"If you please, sir—" spoke Tubby.

"What is it, Maffin?"

"I—I—I should like to be excused from class this afternoon, if you please, sir."

Mr. Dalton stared. All the Fourth Form, Classical and Modern, stared.

There was nothing surprising in Maffin desiring to be excused from class. Most of the Rookwood Fourth shared that desire with Maffin. But it was very surprising that he had the nerve to tell Mr. Dalton so. It was history in that lesson, and most of the Fourth were keener on oracles than on history. Tubby certainly was not keen on oracles. But he seemed to be very keen on something outside the Form-room.

"Maffin, what do you mean?" exclaimed the Fourth Form master sharply.

"I—I feel rather ill, sir!" said Tubby, looking very discomfited.

"You do not look ill, Maffin."

"I—I always look better than I feel, sir! I've got a fearful pain, sir, in my ribs—like a burning dagger—"

"Now, now, sir!"

"I—I'd like to walk down to the doctor's, sir, if you don't mind. I'm in awful pain, sir," said Tubby petulantly.

"It—it's like a red-hot carving-knife in my shoulder, sir."

"In your shoulder?" repeated Mr. Dalton.

"I—I mean in my ribs, sir! I—I think perhaps I'm sickening for— for plumage, sir!" wailed Tubby.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Maffin, if this is a foolish and fatuous pretext to escape class—" began Mr. Dalton.

"Oh, no, sir! Poor old Isaac—"

"You!" rapped the Fourth Form master.

"Old Mr. Isaac, of Letcham, sir!" gasped Tubby. "He's lost a string of very valuable pearls, sir. He—he's in great distress about it, sir. I—I'm going to find them for him if I can, sir, if you'd be so good as to excuse me from class—"

**£10 REWARD!**  
**Rookwood juniors turn detectives in a hunt for missing pearls.**

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Maffin"—Mr. Dalton picked up a case—"stand out before the class!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tubby. "I—I say, sir, I—I wasn't thinking of the reward, sir. In fact, there isn't any reward offered. I haven't seen the 'Letcham Advertiser' to-day, sir. I want to do the poor old fellow a good turn—"

"Stand over that chair, Maffin!" said Mr. Dalton. "I have seen Mr. Isaac's advertisement in the local paper, and am aware that he is offering a reward of ten pounds for the recovery of a string of pearls, supposed to have been stolen from his shop in Letcham and thrown away by the thief in his flight from a constable. Your miserable perjurations, therefore—"

"I—I didn't, sir!" gasped Tubby. "I mean I wasn't—"  
"You will not be excused from class, Maffin! You will stand over that chair—at once!"

"Ow!" groaned Tubby Maffin.

He rose dizzily over the chair.

Snish!

"Yarooooop!"

"Now go to your place, Maffin!"

"If—I if you please, sir—" gasped Maffin.

"Another word and I shall sue you severely, Maffin!" Reginald Maffin did not utter another word. He crawled back to his place, with the whole Form grinning. Surely against the grain, Tubby Maffin had to devote his attention to English history, instead of to a search for Mr. Isaac's missing pearls, for the recovery of which the magnificent reward of ten pounds was offered.

### CHAPTER 3. 110 Reward!

"HOLD ON!"

"Let's see that paper, Maffin!"

"Stop him!"

After the Fourth Form had been dismissed by Mr. Dalton, Reginald Maffin was hurrying away, when five or six voices hailed him. Other fellows in the Fourth, as well as Tubby, were interested in the reward offered by Mr. Isaac of Letcham.

But Tubby did not stop. He put on speed. It had been Tubby's intention to keep this little matter to himself. There would be plenty of reward-hunters going over the ground without a swarm of Rookwood fellows joining up. It was unfortunate, from Tubby's point of view, that Mr. Dalton had brought the matter out before the whole Form. Anyhow, he was not going to let his paper be seen, if he could help it.

But he could not help it. As he scudded into the quad a crowd of fellows rushed after him. Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, grabbed him by the collar. Lovell caught him by a hat ear. Baily and Newcome got an arm each. Tommy Dodd captured his fat little nose. Reginald Maffin was surrounded and safely held.

"I—I say, leggs!" howled Maffin. "I haven't got a paper—I haven't seen one—and I can tell you, Dalton was only talking out of his hat—there isn't any reward offered, and it's not in the 'Letcham Advertiser,' and I haven't got it, and—give me my paper, you rotter!" Tubby wound up with a roar of wrath, as Jimmy Silver jerked the newspaper from under his waistcoat.

"Let's see it!" exclaimed Leggett. "Ten pounds is worth picking up."

"It's my ten pounds, you Modern rotter!" roared Tubby. "I saw it first, didn't I? Look here, you fellows can keep clear of it. I can jolly well say—'Whooooop!'"

Tubby Maffin sat down on the hard, unempathetic earth, roaring. He was left to roar, while the juniors gathered round Jimmy Silver, who was holding up the "Letcham Advertiser" for general inspection.

"Well, Mr. Isaac wouldn't be offering a reward for nothing," said Jimmy. "It looks as if the man really did look with them; and they jolly well weren't on him when he was caught. I helped to bag him, and the hobby was done behind. He never had time to hide them anywhere when he found that he couldn't get clear; and in that case he might have been able to find them again."

"Ten pounds is ten pounds!" said Gunner. "I'm jolly well going to search."

"Same here!" declared Puffy of the Fourth.  
"Here's your paper, Maffin, you fat fraud!" called out Jimmy Silver. "Hallo! He's gone! What's coming down to the nets before tea?"

Jimmy Silver was in a minority of one. The juniors streamed away towards the gates. Lovell and Baily and Newcome were as keen as the rest; so "Uncle James" of Rookwood gave up the idea of cricket, and went with them. A swarm of fellows followed on the track of Maffin and Leggett.

They soon learned that Mr. Isaac's advertisement had been seen by other eyes at Rookwood. Hanson and Lumsden and Talbot, of the Fifth Form, were discovered on a field-path, looking about among tufts of grass. They placed suspiciously and discreetly at the juniors. Captain of the Sixth was seen going into a bush with a walking stick. Bingham and Howard and Tracy and a crowd of other Sixth fellows were walking along Coombe Lane, bent double, peering under hedges and trees.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Many hands make light work!" he remarked. "But it's a couple of miles to Letcham across the fields. Lots of room to look."

"Well, Bright, if he had them, wouldn't chuck them away at the start?" said Lovell argumentatively. "He would keep them so long as he thought he had a chance of dodging the hobby who was after him."

"True, O King!" said Jimmy Silver. "He was run down close to Rookwood, so the jolly old pearls may be quite near the school. Might have chucked them over the school wall, if you come to that. But I fancy that whoever bags Mr. Isaac's reward will earn it by the time he gets it."

"Oh, you never know your luck!" said Dick Oswald. "Might drop on them any minute."

"Might!" agreed Jimmy, laughing.

On the field-paths, bridle-paths, and footpaths that lay between Rookwood School and Letcham there were a hundred or more Rookwooders, juniors and seniors; and they were not all. Townsfolk from Letcham and Rookham, villagers from Coombe and other places, were to be seen dotted about the fields. Mr. Isaac's offered reward seemed to have woken up the countryside into unaccustomed activity.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell suddenly. "There's Bright! Has he got the neck to be looking for them, too?"

The Pastoral Four came on a young man loitering under the trees by a footpath. They knew Reuben Bright at once, truly the assistant of Mr. Isaac, and suspected and accused of having loitered with the missing string of pearls.



Bright strode after Tubby and administered a terrific kick. There was a fearful roar from Reginald Maffin!

The man with the missing tooth and little piggy eyes stared at them and grinned.

"Looking for those pearls?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Jimmy Silver, regarding the rather unpleasant-looking young man curiously.

"There were no any pearls," said Bright, shaking his head. "Old Isaac had his knife into me, and he made out that I'd pinched a string of pearls. I tell you straight there water was any."

"Then why did you both with the hobby after you?" demanded Lovell.

"Now to give him a little run!" answered Bright coolly.

"Mr. Isaac is offering a reward of ten pounds," said Ruby.

"That's only an advertisement for his sale," answered Bright. "He's got a sale on next week."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy.

Mr. Bright strolled away smoking his cigarette. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another rather uncertainly.

"Let's get on!" said Lovell.

And they got on. But the search for so small an article as a string of pearls, which might have been thrown into any creek or among over a wide extent of woodland and meadow, was a large order. Follows began to tire of it, and walked back to Rockwood in two and three. Leggett paced the Festival Fair, on his homeward way, with a scowling face.

"Any luck?" called out Jimmy Silver.

"No!" snapped Leggett. "I'm fed-up! The rotten pearls may be anywhere; if there were really were any, which I only half believe." And Albert Leggett snorted and stamped on it.

"We'll keep it up till call-time!" said Lovell.

"Oh, all right!" agreed Jimmy.

And they wandered on, glancing right and left and round about. But the other searchers were clearing off rapidly, tired of the dimly light quest; and at last the Festival Fair gave it up. They had look to Rockwood, and reached Big Hall just as the roll-call.

Mr. Greedy, the master of the Fifth, was taking roll. When he came to the name of Muffin there was no answer, and Mr. Greedy repeated the name. But no fat voice answered "Acheen" from the ranks of the Fourth. Muffin was marked absent. Jimmy Silver glanced round over the Form. The last figure of Tabby Muffin was not to be seen. All the other searchers had come in, but Cecil Adolphus Reginald Muffin, apparently, was still keeping it up.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Late!

**T**ABBY MUFFIN granted.

Tabby was tired.

He was the first to start, and the first to give up the hunt. Although Tabby had been very keen to keep that quest to himself, he was early to abandon it to his rivals. Excursion never had appeared to Reginald Muffin; and a great deal of attention was required to root about among branches and bushes and trees. Muffin checked it at last, and took a rest. He sat down in a clump of trees, breathing hard after his efforts, and reflecting dimly that if Mr. Isaac's reward was only to be earned by such exertion as this, it was not such a catch after all.

Tabby had been resting quite a long time. A little exertion went a long way with Reginald Muffin; but he could do with any amount of rest. The sun was setting over the meadows, and nobody was in sight, and Tabby began, at last, to think of making the necessary efforts to get back to Rockwood in time for roll-call.

As the fat Tabby heaved himself to his feet and blinked round him, he became aware that he was not, as he had fancied, alone.

A young man stood at a little distance, leaning on a tree, watching him and smoking a cigarette. Tabby felt a thrill of alarm as he blinked at him. He had seen that boy's face, with the two missing teeth, looking over the wall below the road at Rockwood two or three days before. Who the man was Tabby did not know, but he knew that he did not want to meet him in a lonely spot. And now that the other fellows had all cleared off, this spot was very lonely indeed. Tabby wished that he had not taken quite so long a rest, and be started to roll away in a hurry.

The man with the missing teeth detached himself from the tree as which he was leaning, and stepped quickly into the fat Classical's way.

"Oh, no!" he remarked.

Tabby stopped. There was a threatening gleam in the little piggy eyes, and it alarmed Tabby. It dawned on the Gem Library.—No. 1,211.

him, too, that the man with the missing tooth had been waiting, and watching him while the other fellows went, in order to catch him alone. Reginald Muffin's fat heart began to thump quite unpleasantly.

"What—do do you want?" he stammered.

The man glanced mildly round. There was no one at hand. After a swift glance he dropped a hand on Muffin's shoulder.

"I—do—say—" stammered Tabby, in terrified alarm. "I—I—say, I—I've got to get back to school, you know. I—I shall be late for roll!"

"Shut it!" said the man, with the missing tooth, with a word as menacing that Tabby "shut it" at once.

"Now, and it over!" he said briefly.

"What—oi?" gasped Tabby.

"I know you got it!" said Mr. Bright in a low, threatening voice. "I was hanging about the school the other day, and I saw it in your hand. The brass lined. I want it—sharp!"

"I—I haven't got it!" gasped Tabby. "I—I've never seen it! I—I've never had such a thing as a brass lined in my life! Besides, it—it wasn't valuable. I—I said it for appearance!"

"You sold it?" snapped Bright.

Tabby jumped back, terrified by his look.

"It was mine!" stammered Bright.

"Well, if it was yours you checked it away, if you wanted it!"

Bright gave him a penetrating look. Everybody in the vicinity knew that Bright was suspected of having "pinched" a string of valuable pearls from Mr. Isaac, at Lanchester, and of having hung them away when pursuit was close at his heels. Only Tabby Muffin knew that the brass lined had been hung near the school wall at Rockwood. Had Tabby known that the man with the missing tooth was Ephraim Bright, he might have guessed that there was more in the brass lined than met the eye. But Tabby did not even know that it was a cunningly contrived contrivance with a secret opening, and was very far from dreaming what its contents might be, or, indeed, that it had any contents at all.

There was, for a moment, savage suspicion in Bright's look. But it was clear, from Tabby's fat, frightened face, that he knew nothing, and did not even suspect the brass lined in his mind with the robbery of Mr. Isaac's shop at Lanchester.

"Well, I want it," said Bright slowly, "and I ain't taking your word that you ain't got it, here you! I'm going to search you!"

"I—I don't mind," stammered Tabby.

It did not seem to matter much whether Tabby wailed or not. Bright grasped him, and proceeded to search him with careful thoroughness. But he soon ascertained that the brass lined was not in Tabby's possession.

He released the fat Classical, and looked at him blankly.

"What have you done with it?" he demanded.

"I—I—say, I—stammered Tabby. "I—I said it for a target! Leggett, of Modern House, has got it."

"You younger boys—yes!" snarled Bright.

"Where is it now?" gasped Tabby. "I say, I shall be late for roll-over! I shall get into a row!"

"Get along with you!" snapped Bright.

Tabby Muffin gladly got away. Bright stared after him savagely for a moment, and then, avoiding after Tabby, delivered a terrific kick. There was a fearful roar from Reginald Muffin.

"Take that!" snarled Bright. "And take—"

"Yaroooh!"

The second kick missed. Tabby was stepping out of the wood as if he were on the sinder-path. Bright snarled after him.

He lighted another cigarette and smoked it, his brows wrinkled. Mr. Ephraim Bright was up against a problem. Concealed inside the brass lined was a string of pearls worth four hundred pounds, which did not belong to Mr. Bright, but upon which he was anxious to lay his shrewish fingers, and the brass lined was in the possession of a Rockwood schoolboy whose name Mr. Bright now knew, but whom he did not know by sight. Now he was going to recover possession of his plunder was a deep problem. And Mr. Bright snarled and smoked innumerable cigarettes as he thought it out.

### CHAPTER 4.

#### The Wrong Man!

"SKEUSE me, sir!"

Albert Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, glanced round.

It was the following afternoon, and a half-holiday at Rockwood. After dinner a crowd of Rockwooders had turned out to try their luck again in the search for the

missing pearls. The field paths in the direction of Latham were dotted with Rockwooders.

Leggett joined in the search. But he had weakened down after a time and rested himself under a tree and smoked cigarettes—that being one of Albert Leggett's little ways when he was out of sight of masters and protectors. He was quite startled when a voice addressed him suddenly, and he jerked the cigarette from his mouth and started round.

A bony face with two missing teeth was staring down at him. Leggett did not know the man, but he did not like his looks. However, Jimmy Silver & Co. were within sight, following a path near the wood, and Leggett was not alarmed.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I gotta message for one of you young gentlemen of Rockwood," explained the man with the missing teeth. "P'haps you'd be so kind as to point 'im out to me, sir."

"What's the name?" asked Leggett, spying the man curiously.

"Name of Leggett, sir."

"The Modern junior started."

"Leggett?" he repeated.

"That's the name, sir. I dunno you'd know 'im by sight. I'd take it as a favour, sir, if you'd point 'im out to me."

"What's the name?" asked Leggett, spying the man curiously.

"Name of Leggett, sir."

"The Modern junior started."

"Leggett?" he repeated.

"That's the name, sir. I dunno you'd know 'im by sight. I'd take it as a favour, sir, if you'd point 'im out to me."

"What's the name?" asked Leggett, spying the man curiously.

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"That's the name, sir. I dunno you'd know 'im by sight. I'd take it as a favour, sir, if you'd point 'im out to me."

"What's the name?" asked Leggett, spying the man curiously.

"Name of Leggett, sir."

And, much to Leggett's relief, he walked away. Leggett was not a very courageous fellow, and Mr. Bright had quite scared him. He was extremely glad to see the back of the man with the missing teeth. And, without waiting to finish his cigarette, the Modern junior hurried away from the spot.

Leggett could take care of himself; and, anyhow, he had his friends with him. And Leggett was "up against" the Fistical Four and not at all unwilling to land them in trouble.

Quite unconscious of that little episode, Jimmy Silver & Co. continued to roam along the footpath. Three members of the Co. were not very enthusiastic; but Arthur Edward Lovell was determined. Having spent Mr. Isaac's reward in advance, the hospital Arthur Edward was resolved to bag it if he could.

"After all, we're Scouts," said Lovell argumentatively, "and we're jolly good Scouts! We ought to be able to find those pearls."

"If that fellow Bright hasn't found them already?" yawned Raby.

"Oh, that's not!" said Lovell.

"Why is it not?" asked Newcome.

"Well, it is not!" said Lovell

positively.

And his claims grinned. Evidently it was "not" because if Mr. Bright had found the pearls already, it was useless for them, the Fistical Four to hunt for them. And Lovell was not going to admit that.

"I dare say that rascal's hunt-



Mr. Bright staggered and yelled, Arthur Edward followed him, still hitting out furiously!

ing for them," went on Lovell. "But we've got a better chance of finding them, being Scouts. I dare say they're in a ditch."

"I wonder how many ditches there are between this and Latham!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Dunno!" sneezed Raby.

"Bunches!" suggested Newcome.

"Or perhaps shaken into a tree?" said Lovell.

"I wonder how many trees—" began Jimmy.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" interrupted Lovell. "Look here, if you fellows want to stick, you can jolly well stick; but I can tell you I'm going to find those pearls! You said it ten years!"

"This looks a promising place!" said Lovell, a few moments later.

The footpath led on through a belt of woodlands. There were trees and brambly bushes on all sides.

"I was just thinking—" began Raby.

"Well, what were you thinking?" snapped Lovell. "I don't suppose there was much sense in it, but what was it?"

"I was thinking that it's nearly tea-time; and Mommy asked us to tea—"

"You silly cheap!"

"Well, we told Mooney we'd come," said Jimmy Silver rapidly. "I really think we'd better check it all after tea, Lovell."

Smart from Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You shoozes can check it, if you like," he said. "I'm going on! Blow tea!"

The Co. exchanged glances.

"Well, we'll join you again after tea, old bean!" said Jimmy. "After all, we can't let Mooney down, after accepting his invitation."

BRACE-UP!

Three members of the Co. smiled, and turned back. They walked across the fields towards Rockwood, leaving Arthur Lovell to root alone through the wood. As the woodland creased about thirty acres and was fairly thick, Lovell had plenty of work ahead to occupy him till his chums rejoined him after tea.

But Lovell's search was not destined to last very long. As he rooted about under the trees and bushes, here, doubtless, he suddenly received a violent shove in the small of the back, which sent him sprawling on his face.

"Oooohoo!" spluttered Lovell, as he sprawled. "Wroooh! You silly ass—"

He twisted over furiously. For a moment he fancied that it was a Rockwooder playing a practical joke on him. But as he twisted over and arose, angrily up, he caught a heavy, slifty face. A knee was planted on him, pinning him to the ground. And Lovell, in amazement and rage, stared up at the threatening face of Mr. Bright, the late assistant of Mr. Isaac, of Latham.

#### CHAPTER 5.

##### Turning the Tables!

**A**RTHUR EDWARD LOVELL, panted. He was more amazed than anything else by this sudden and unexpected attack, but he was outraged, too. He glared up at Mr. Bright.

"You cheeky rotter!" bawled Lovell. "What are you up to?"

The piggy eyes glistened down at him. "Gorrol!" panted Lovell, straggling. "You cheeky woom! My hat! I'll jolly well mop you up if you don't stop!"

"I ain't going to hurt you, not if you're civil," said Mr. Bright. "You got something that belongs to me, Master Leggett."

Lovell stared at him blankly.

"You silly cheap! My name's not Leggett!"

"Oh, come off!" said Mr. Bright emphatically. "You've been pointed out to me by a bloke who knows you, and I know who you are. Don't you tell me any lies, young Leggett!"

## NEXT WEEK'S GRAND GEM PROGRAMME!

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"You silly owl—"

"That's enough! I want that brass lizard!" said Mr. Bright.

"I haven't got it, you fool! Muffin had it, that's all I know about it, you foolhead! And if it's yours, all you've got to do is to call at Rockwood and ask the headmaster for it. If it's yours, he will tell Muffin to hand it over to you, you dummy! Now get off my chest, you cheeky hoodlum!"

Mr. Bright's knee settled a little more firmly on Lovell's chest. He gave the Rockwooder an evil look. Calling on the headmaster of Rockwood to reclaim the brass lizard did not suit Mr. Bright. The headmaster might have put two and two together, and arrived at Mr. Bright's reason for desiring to regain possession. Mr. Bright preferred his own methods.

"You 'anding it over!" he demanded. "I know you got it! I'll buy it of you, fair and square; and-a-crown, if you like!"

"I never had it, you dummy! And if I had, I wouldn't hand it over to you!" bawled Lovell. "If it is yours you'd go up to the school and ask for it. I dare say you stole it, as you did old Muffin's pearls, you meany thief! Now let me go, you rotter!"

"You ain't going yet," said Mr. Bright, clenching his teeth. "I darsay if you sent a message to a friend in the school, Master Leggett, he'd bring that brass lizard to you. You write a little note to a friend, telling him where you put it and to bring it to you. See? I'll take the message."

"You—you villain!" gasped Lovell. "You'll go to prison for this!"

"Muffin it wouldn't be the fast time," said Mr. Bright cheerfully, "and I ain't there yet, neither. You 'op it!" But Mr. Bright had made rather a mistake in supposing that he could deal with this schoolboy as he had with Yobber Muffin. Arthur Edward Lovell was made of sterner stuff than the fat Tiddy.

Lovell was a strong and sturdy fellow, and he put all his beef into the swift upper-cut that jarred under Mr. Bright's chin.

"Oooohoo!" gasped the man with the missing teeth. He staggered back, howling, and Lovell tore his collar open.

"Now, you rotter—!" panted Lovell.

Lovell's right hand landed in Mr. Bright's eye. His left crashed on the sharp little nose. Mr. Bright staggered and rolled. Lovell followed him up, still hitting out barcely.

"Oh oooohoo!" gasped Ephraim Bright. "I—2—FH—"

He buried himself at Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell did not retreat an inch. It was a man against a boy; but the boy was strong and fit, and the man was baby and out of condition. Mr. Bright, greatly to his surprise, found himself knocked right and left. His hands saved the air wildly, while Lovell put in smashing blow after blow. His knuckles fairly rang on Mr. Bright's ill-favored face. One of the piggy eyes was closed; the sharp nose streamed crimson.

Ephraim Bright staggered back and back, and Lovell, following him up mercilessly, rained crashing blows on him with right and left.

"Ow, ow, ow!" gasped Bright. "Ow! Ooooh! Crimint! Oh, let! Oooohoo!"

Bang!

Mr. Bright went down in the grass at last. He lay there spluttering, Lovell standing over him with flashing eyes and ready fist.

"Now, you rotter—!" gasped Lovell.

"Oooohooohoooh!" gargled Bright.

"Do you want any more, you woom?"

"Oooohoo! Kapp off!" yelled Mr. Bright. "You blooming young prize-fighter, keep off! Let a bloke sleep! Oooohoooh!"

He squirmed away in the grass.

Lovell laughed breathlessly.

Leaving Mr. Bright squirming in the grass he turned and walked away towards the school, to meet Jimmy Silver & Co. when they came. Mr. Bright sat up dazedly, and passed his hand tenderly over his damaged features. He picked himself up, and limped away wearily in the opposite direction. He gasped and he groaned as he limped his weary way. The brass lizard and the stolen pearls hidden within it, were as far off as ever; and all Ephraim Bright had captured was the thrashing of his lips.

It was borne in upon Mr. Bright's mind that perhaps, after all, honesty was the best policy, and that the way of the transgressor was hard.

THE END.

(What can Leggett do with the Brass Lizard now? It never happens to keep it! Read next week's great Rockwood yarn! You'll enjoy every line of it!)



Start Our Great Serial Now!



(Opening Chapters  
retold on page 20.)

### Nigger Causes Trouble!

**B**EFORE we started for the jungle, I went to the camp for my revolver as soon as we had unloaded the raft, and loaded it safely up on the sand. There was another in a sort of garden-party gig-out, with a big floppy hat with flowers on her head, kneeling by the fire boiling a kettle, and she was not a bit enthusiastic about our job.

"It doesn't seem to me your work, Jill dear," she said.

"That's what you said when Amy Johnson flew to Australia," replied Jill. "Oh, mother mine, it's just my job! I'm the only one of the party to hold a tracker's badge."

"But going miles into the jungle—"

"We shan't go miles," I assured her. "We can't carry water for miles. We've got to seek a supply near at hand, and if we can't find it handy, we shall have to shift our camp. The whole outfit is new, and we haven't started building yet."

"Well, do be careful," said mother.

She insisted on an having a cup of tea before we started, and we were both quite game for that. Then, carrying the revolver, and whistling Nigger to land, we set off across the firm, white sand, Jill with a broad-brimmed white felt hat on the back of her dark head. She had pulled on a pair of thick stockings; but I was bare-legged, bronzed and hardened.

Young Jill certainly seemed a tracker. The marks in the sand were just tracks to me, but she read the track of the goats, and pointed out Dad and Dudley's footprints where they had roamed up our captives.

"This is as far as they came. Now you can see that the goat track leads round the bend."

We rounded the bend, and even I could follow the track easily enough now, for the marks in the sand all converged on a sort of opening in the jungle. But as we got close up to the jungle Jill suddenly stopped, and knelt down on the hot sand. Then she looked up at me in a rather queer sort of way.

"Barry," she said, very slowly and distinctly, "there's someone else on the island."

For a moment I was a bit taken aback, then I laughed.

"Not, old girl! I cried. "You're letting poor old Guide stuff get away with you! If the island had been inhabited we should have known it before now. Castaways would have welcomed us with open arms; natives with poisoned spears, or something. You can't put that over."

"Don't be so set, Barry! I tell you I'm frightfully serious! Look at those marks! They are the imprints of a man's bare feet!"

"Well, if you're positive about it, it just means that dad or Dud had a moon round here."

Jill gave me what I think people call a withering glance. "And jumped last part of a quarter of a mile, as as to leave no track in and from the camp! Don't be funny, who was spying on us had two toes missing from his left foot."

That gave me a horribly uncomfortable feeling, and somehow my hand seemed to go naturally to the revolver. This was a danger. Of course, Jill might be mistaken; but she seemed so cocksure about it, and she was not the sort of girl to talk out of her hat. I could see that her discovery had scared her; but she traced the footprints from the jungle to a tangled mass of vines, from which our camp could be seen, and then back to the jungle.

Someone had come out of the jungle and spied on our camp; she was quite sure of that.

"We mustn't tell mother, or she'd have a fit. What backs her up is the thought that we've got the island to

The Great Locomotive—No. 1221.

### STRANGE DISCOVERIES IN THE JUNGLE!

Enormous snake and  
giant bees attack the  
Island Castaways!

Barry. Besides, neither of these is deformed. The man who was spying on us had two toes missing from his left foot."

burrows; no unpleasant peeps or dangerous animals. You tell Dad and Dad when you're with them on the wrock to-morrow."

I pulled myself together.

"Oh, Jill told them, but I doubt if they will realize it, kid! If you're right, things are going to be a bit complicated. But our job now is to try to find water. And look here, young Jill, don't you get wandering about on your own."

Jill laughed as we entered the jungle, but it was a rather nervous, little laugh, and I was feeling jumpy, too. The blessed jungle might be filled with savages, who were only waiting for a chance to take to off our guard.

Somewhat, I rather hated the thought of a jungle. I was never keen on woods at home. I liked open spaces, and hated the starchy feeling; but the scene gripped me. It was cooler, the sun ast of filtering through colossal walls of trees and twisting vines with gorgeous blossoms on them. I'm not a bit of a poetic chap, but the strange silence, the sheer grandeur of it, the wonderfully coloured orchids, and a variety, black humanity sitting round a great, golden bloom, rather bewitched me even.

Jill stopped to tie some long grass together.

"Blazing our trail!" she said.

Then I saw something green and brown move on the branch of a tree above her head.

"Keep down!" I shouted hoarsely.

I saw the slimy, horrible body of a big snake shoot downwards, almost on top of her, and then, with my heart in my mouth, I raised my revolver, and blazed away at the hideous head.

Simultaneously with the crack of my revolver, which sounded extraordinarily odd in the dense jungle, came a half-sobbed scream from Jill as she flung herself forward, and a yelp of fear from the dog, who had evidently scented some sort of unknown danger, and had got the wind up. And I felt hoarse, sick.

I had fired at the hideous head of the snake from a range of about three or four yards, but so swiftly had it moved that I had missed the head. I had cut a great hole in the slimy body, which fell, writhing, from the bough of the tree to the ground, almost on top of Jill.

With that horrible feeling at the pit of my stomach, and dazed by the swiftness of the thing, for a few seconds I could only stand staring. My sister, white as a sheet, kept away from the horrible, spinning thing on the ground, and then I took a couple of steps forward and blew the head to bits.

"Oh, Barry!" said Jill in a choking little voice, and her deep blue eyes were wide with horror.

"That's one unpleasant neighbour the less!" I said.

I was smoking hoarsely, but I did not want her to see how nervous I was, and I wanted to reassure her.

My kid never had got pluck.

"It's better than squabbling with them like we do at home. I almost wish it was the man with the missing tooth," she said, with a funny little twisted smile. "That was good shooting, Barry. Awfully obliged! Keep away, Nigger!"

The black dog was roaring in a sorry sort of way round the still writhing body of the snake; but I told Jill the hoarse thing was dead, and that it was just muscular contraction. It was dashed unpleasant to discover that we'd got snakes as big as that on the island, though. I'd read that it isn't always the biggest snakes that are the most dangerous, but big brutes like that—about ten or twelve feet long, and as thick as a draypole—put the lesser up one notch.

I knew we were both feeling pretty queasy, and each determined not to let the other see it, while Nigger was puzzled and jumpy.

Before we went on, I cut a couple of long, fairly wiry sticks which, I thought, might come in useful. With them we showed the body of the snake off the track of the wild geese into the long grass, stepping mighty warily, while Nigger watched us, his head on one side, a puzzled expression in his eyes.

Jill got quite excited, and it was clear to me that we were coming to a sort of Clapham Junction of tracks in the jungle, and we were careful constantly to mark our own tracks.

Then I caught a second which sent a sort of thrill through me.

"Listen!" I said, and we stood still.

Away on our right came the sound of running water, just like the miniature waterfall in the grounds of a house in the country where I had once spent a holiday with a school chum. It was a jolly pleasant sound to hear on a desert island, where one might be stranded for months, or for ever, come to that.

We hurried on, and then came on a score which took my breath away.

We stood in a sort of clearing on soft, rich green grass, through which a stream of water ran. The water came shooting crystal clear off a mass of rock, which looked amazingly white against the background of green, with the sun shining through a network of leaves and wonderfully coloured and rather sickly scented flowers.

Jill gave a little cry and rushed forward, cupped her hands, and held them to the waterfall and took a drink.

"It's lovely and cool!" she called. "I wish we'd brought a pail!"

I ran up to her. The water splashed in our faces; and it was just like drinking water fresh from a deep well; but as I buried my nose in my hands I heard a whizzing sound by my ear. I hit out at it mechanically, though it meant dropping the water which was so jolly refreshing, and hit something soft and fluffy, and at the same moment Jill gave a little yelp.

"An outside in here has stung me on the nose, Barry!" she cried, half laughing, half crying at the pain, as she felt her nose.

Then came an earthen bark from Nigger, and he was plunging about and snapping wildly at grass, salivary, black-and-yellow things, something like the louse-like bees you see at home, but at least four times as big.

"That was a dog has stirred up a nest or something," I said; and then, with a sort of playing sound, a beastly bee got me on the neck.

"Bunk!" shouted Jill.

She was waving her hands wildly about, there was an over-growing buzzing sound in the air, and Nigger, with a score or so of the large bees upon him, was rolling over in the grass. A stream of bees was coming up out of the ground by the white rocks, and we made a wild bolt for it, hitting out right and left. I felt a sharp prick under the eye, and another on the ear. Jill was hitting awfully at her bobbed, dark hair, whilst poor old Nigger, dashing on ahead of us, would make sudden stops to roll over or scratch himself.

My neck began to give me beans, and I could feel that a bump was coming up. The bees didn't chase us very far, but we doubled back on our trail as fast as we could go.

But the main thing was that we had found water within what I reckoned to be about half a mile of our camp.

"Barry, is my nose swelling?"

And then, despite the horrible pricking in my neck, eye, and ear, I burst out laughing.

Jill was rather a pretty kid really, with what writers call a shapely nose, but when I looked at her it wasn't shapely—at least, there was plenty of shape, but it wasn't pretty! Her nose had swollen to about double its normal size, and her lower lip was badly puffed.

"If you think I look a scream," she said a little snappily, "wait until you see yourself!"

And then I realized that I could scarcely see out of my left eye, and that my right eye was swelling up horribly. We looked at Nigger and saw big bumps coming up on his black coat, at which he scratched and bit.

"Suppose it's poison, Barry?" said Jill, in a scared voice.

"Wind up!" I replied scornfully, though I felt a bit uncomfortable. "Of course it's poison, the ordinary bee sting is; but it's only a bit painful, and makes you look a sketch for a day or two, and then you're all right. Come on, let's get back. What we want is some ammonia."

We hurried along the trail, keeping our eyes open for danger—at least, I could only keep one open, and I was feeling uncomfortable in every sense of the word. I had read of people dying through being badly stung by bees at home, and with three lousy stings from bees at least four times as big as the ordinary bee, the outlook wasn't bright.

When we gained the sand we had some enough to mark the opening in the jungle by planting the two sticks I had cut in the sand, just by the entrance, so that it could be easily spotted. Then we ran

#### THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Young BARRY MATTS is on his way to New Zealand aboard the *Maipo* with his father and mother, MARY, his elder brother, and JILL, his younger sister, are also with them. During a terrific storm in the Pacific, the ship strikes a coral reef and the people are stranded on a strange island which they describe as *Barro Colorado*. Following the arrival of *Maipo* and *Maipo* a new chapter in the story begins. It is told of fresh water being found and Jill set out to explore the jungle.

"It is a trial in the jungle," says Jill, "never knowing what we are going to find!"

(She continues her story, as told by Barry.)

along the sand after Nigger, who was making a hull for mother, who was busy arranging stores into some sort of order.

"We've found water!" I shouted triumphantly, as we ran up.

Mother dropped a box on to the sand.

"But what on earth have you been doing to your feet?" she asked.

We told her what the bees had been doing.

"You need a bleeding or some strong ammonia," said mother, and looked quite pained when I told her that Jill could go into the scullery for the bleeding, and I'd pop round the corner to the chemist's for the ammonia.

"It's nothing whatever to laugh about, Harry dear," she said seriously. "The sting of a bee may possibly be dangerous, and these foreign things are sure to be nasty. I remember that a friend of mine was badly stung at a picnic, and she nearly emptied the vinegar bottle they'd brought for the cold salmon; but it quickly reduced the swelling."

"Well, have we got any vinegar?" asked Jill, a little breathlessly.

Mother said she'd just put away a small cask of it, and it took me precious little time to knock in the bung and pour some of the fluid into a bowl. Mother barked Jill into it, whilst I pretty well washed in vinegar, and then started on poor old Nigger, who evidently realized that there was some hope in the stuff, and lay still on the hot sand. He looked at me in a pathetic sort of way, which made me feel pretty rotten, and I realized how we should miss the tickle if he popped out as a result of stinging us three heavily bees.

"Listen!" cried Jill suddenly.

Mother, who was telling us some more about her unfortunate friend at the picnic, looked off abruptly.

Along: Don't say: DON'T SAY A WORD!

We all jumped up. It was the cross familiar and welcome sound on board the *Magie*, the sound of the gong which had summoned us to meals, and it came from the wreck on which we had left our ~~and~~ ~~last~~ ~~morning~~ ~~morning~~.

### Coccolite Creek!

IT'S funny how women always seem to hurry to the worst conclusions if anything unusual happens. Mother went as white as a sheet, and clutched Jill.

"Your father's got with an accident," she said, in a hush sort of way.

"But what on earth has happened?" asked poor old Nigger, and Jill trembled.

And that as Nigger, either troubled by seeing their trouble, or the stings he'd received, started to howl miserably, which wasn't calculated to improve the situation.

But I knew old Dad!

"I'll be there's nothing to worry about," I said. "Dad wanted to get up a cask of paraffin from the hold, and it's odds on that he's bitten off more than he can chew, and wants us to go back to the wreck and lend a hand. The raft is our life, and rather than land himself gear on the locker, Dad would bring away on the gong for an hour. He's good on labour-saving devices. I'll push over and see what's up. You two stay here."

But they insisted on following me to the reef by which the raft lay, well up on the sand, and we saw dad and my brother standing on the deck.

Dad made a trumpet of his hands.

"Bring the raft over, Harry, we want you to give a hand."

"Found water?" asked dad anxiously.

"Yes!" I yelled, and leaving Jill with mother, after they had helped push the raft into deep water, I made for the wreck, and soon heard Dad's laughter as he saw what a splash I looked.

"What on earth have you been doing?" asked dad.

"We've found some other things besides water, dad," I said, splashing a bit. I suppose, at being able to startle them. "We've found a dashed great snake I was lucky enough to shoot, we've found the bees who have made me in this case, and we've found that the island is inhabited."

"Quite a nice lot of discoveries in a very short time," said Dad actually, but dad looked worried about it, and demanded an explanation. He looked more cheerful when I had told him what had happened.

"The bees can be easily dealt with, but it will mean cutting a broad clearing before it's safe to go for water, so as to avoid a snake striking out from an overhanging ledge. I can't understand these footprints, though."

Dad said it looked as though there might be a deformed and timid lot of natives living either in the forest or on the hill, and so long as they'd get the wind up and kept out of the way, it didn't matter. He was all impatience to get a barrel of paraffin out of the hold.

"I suppose we ought to get the paraffin up, but we've a number of things to do," said dad.

"And from what I can see of it more than enough time to do them in," said old Dad casually, as he lit a cigarette. "Having landed the car we'd be mad not to make use of some jaxen."

There was some in that. I was all impatience to get the wireless going, and it seemed rather mad to spend a lot of time securing paraffin on which the car might or might not run; but I had to rely upon Moonbeam for my law tension, so I was nearly as keen as Dad on getting the car going on the island.

It seemed they'd struck a snag. Old Dad was no swimmer, Dad had lowered him into the hold; but the casks floating on the top of the water had been breached, and were no earthly good. Dad was not much of a swimmer either, and their idea was that I should go down into the hold, fix the tackle to a barrel, and then we could easily haul it up.

I heard the crane creaking as I went down into the darkness, after stripping and taking an electric torch. Then my feet touched water, and I flung on the torch just as an empty barrel struck against my legs. I tied water and yelled to them to give me plenty of slack, and then, holding the torch in one hand and the tackle in another, and keeping my mouth shut, and my one working eye open, I dived down to a likely looking blue barrel, saw enough to make pretty sure that it was sound, and came to the surface again, sheltered by the fumes of the paraffin and the taste of the water on my lips.

The next time I got the chain fastened round it so tightly as I could get it, and shovelled for a length of rope. Then I gave the signal to haul as I stood on a submerged barrel, and my barrel commenced to move groggily upwards towards the hatchway, though I decided that it would fall from the tackle before I could get the rope round it, and make it secure.

As the barrel appeared above the oily surface I yelled to Dad to stop the crane, and, gripping the steel bar, I stepped on to the barrel, swaying it with my feet, and worked the rope round it, a lousy awkward job, seeing that I had to hold the torch, and keep an arm round the bar, for at last I managed it. The crane started creaking again, and I was only just time the barrel, with me standing on it, to be lowered safely on to the deck, and getting it on to the raft was quite a simple job.

After I pushed off with our load a jolly good smell of cooking came to our noses. In one of the ship's bath-rooms I had managed to remove the rock of paraffin, and Dad had fixed us up a fresh pair of shorts and a sweater, which was not too warm now that the sea was cooling. He'd talked, too, and was immaculate white ducks, with the gold stripe of a sub-lieutenant in the *Naval Reserve*. The uniform had belonged to the first mate, but it fitted my brother pretty well, and I don't if anyone seeing us as we pushed the raft to the shore would have taken us for cut-throats.

Dad and Jill had stretched the log tarpaulin over some stumps in the sand, and made quite a decent shelter, and mother—strictly, dignified mother—had got chops from a young wild goat we had killed in the night, and, with fried potatoes and onions, they went down better than any other chop I have ever tasted.

I was anxious to try the car, but dad was against it. "There'll be plenty of time for that later, old man," he said. "By the present we can't relax our work on the wreck, and we must make the approach to our water supply reasonably safe. Besides, we don't know that the Moonbeam will run on paraffin."

"She'll run all right," said Dad confidently. "It's a high grade paraffin."

I made no remark, but I'd had a good deal of that paraffin in me. It was perhaps nice to think that it was a high grade, but it struck me that all grades taste much alike, and I'd taken enough to last me for a lifetime.

It was not until two days later that we were able to wangle an hour or so off to try the car. Dad had a ticklish job, and my right arm ached with the constant rearing of the engine, and we'd used a quart of our precious petrol in experimenting before he found a carburettor setting which would induce the Moonbeam to run on paraffin.

Dad let the engine warm up for a bit, and then let in the clutch, and we moved off along the firm sand.

And I burst out laughing. The Moonbeam saloon was the sort of push car one would see gliding down Bond Street, or hopping it along the Bourne-mouth Road at an untoward fifty or fifty miles an hour, and here she was, with an exhaust like a farm-tractor, pattering along the firm sand of a

desert island with a couple of fanned, discoloured passengers in their old-fashioned air-conditions.

"Oh! Dad grinned, too, as he opened the throttle a bit.

"Dashed funny if we find ourselves back home before 'we've done a mile!'" he said.

"Oh, this shore must be bigger than that!" I said. But with no real idea of the shape of the island, or whether we should be able to make the complete circle, it was certainly a voyage of discovery.

"We rounded the first bend, and the speedometer registered 500 miles a mile. Ahead of us was a length, stretch of white, firm sand, with blue water on one side, and trees and flowers with gorgeous flowers on the other. Above the tangled green of the jungle was a ferny hill.

"Dad said he did not quite like the look of that hill. It reminded him of pictures of volcanoes.

"It strikes me, Harry, old lad, that our very undesirable residence is liable to eruptive and volcanic. Don't say anything to mother or Jill, but I'll give you the tip, and you'll probably have a chance to tinker with that wireless. I say, we've done three miles."

I wasn't worrying about volcanoes, or earthquakes, or even hostile natives. It was really ripping gliding over the sand at about a steady twenty-five, with the engine working to her work, and paying along now as smooth, as though she had been passing on some super petrol. We were getting an idea of our island; the next bend might bring the wood side view, or we might find ourselves faced with some unknown difficulty or danger. It really was thrilling.

"Four miles!" said Dad, as we rounded a point, our wheels going over wonderful sweet, purple, and yellow blossoms, which trailed from the jungle on to the hot, white sand.

"Look out!" I shouted, for Dad was glancing out to sea, and I had noticed that just ahead the sand was darker, and just beyond the darker patch was water and a few straggling palm-trees.

He turned sharply, and braked.

"What?"

"The abrupt release of the accelerator pedal had sent the engine.

"This is lively!" said Dad. "I'll stop for a moment, Harry! If the roads will allow you to get on."

I leaped out quickly enough, but the engine would not have it—and Dad got out, too.

"Hold on! We probably a, checked jet or like, the the first—and we must look up."

"We must!" I said, grimly enough, and pointed to the swamp just ahead.

Something I had taken for a piece of washed-up wreckage had stirred into life! A huge crocodile was coming towards us at an amazing speed, and I had left my revolver in my jacket pocket!

*Life on Necessity Island in proving wonderful to the reader. But they still have many more thrilling discoveries to make. In next week's sporting adventures you will be thrilled, too; make sure you read it, please.*

## "THE FIGHTING FORM MASTER!"

(Continued from page 18.)

But an unexpected difficulty had arisen over the return of Mr. Linton. The Shell, in their first publication at the proof of Linton's insurance, had expected to see him back at the school in a day or two. They had not reckoned with the fact that no one knew what his looking of Mr. Linton since his departure from St. Jim's!

He had left an address. His suitcases, with whom the Head had communicated at once, knew nothing of his whereabouts. And for a week advertisements in the newspapers had failed to bring any news of him.

Mr. Linton seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth! And until he could be found and brought back, the impostor who now ruled in his stead would remain as master of the Shell.

In Mr. Linton's old study, it began Mr. Pittman ripped open the letter that Toby had brought him, and scanned the contents with eagerly glancing eyes.

"Dear Hyde," he read, "I've just heard from Carnaby. Old Demman is sticking fast—very near the end. The doctors don't expect him to live now for more than two or three days."

The latest message was signed "Flack."

Hyde crumpled the scratched sheet, and tossed it with the scrapings into the fire. He watched the flames consume them, with dark, glittering eyes.

A low snarl came only!

Despite the discovery of Mr. Linton's insurance, which—with the terrible death of the youngest member of the gang—had been a startling shock to the circles of Scranton Manor, it looked as though Hyde and his fellow associates would win the game nevertheless!

Hyde was still utterly unaccounted for. And in two or three days the old crocodile whose will left all his vast fortune to whoever was master of the Shell at his death, would be dead.

William Mr. Linton never found and reinstated as master of the Shell before old Demman died, the huge fortune of more than half a million pounds would pass into the hands of the impostor who had succeeded in, under the name of Mr. Linton, and taking his place!

Will they find him, then?

Hyde mastered the words himself.

Where was Mr. Linton? And would he be found and brought back to St. Jim's, and reinstated as master of the Shell, before old Demman died?

That was the question that had filled the mind of the logic Mr. Pittman for the last week, night, and day.

And he alone, of all St. Jim's, knew of all that hung upon the answer to that question!

THE END.

Mr. Linton is cleared of hand, but will they be able to find him? Whatever you do, don't miss next week's thrilling page, "THE ST. JIM'S FLIGHT SQUAD!"

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