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LONG, COMPLETE
TALE OF
TOM MERRY

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD



POOR
OLD
D'ARCY!

(See page 10.)

NO. 10.

VOL. 1.

"IF YOU'VE HAD
ENOUGH, SAY SO!
HAVE YOU HAD
ENOUGH?" SHOUTED
'ARRY 'ARRIS.
"YAAS, WATHAH!
GASPED D'ARCY. G

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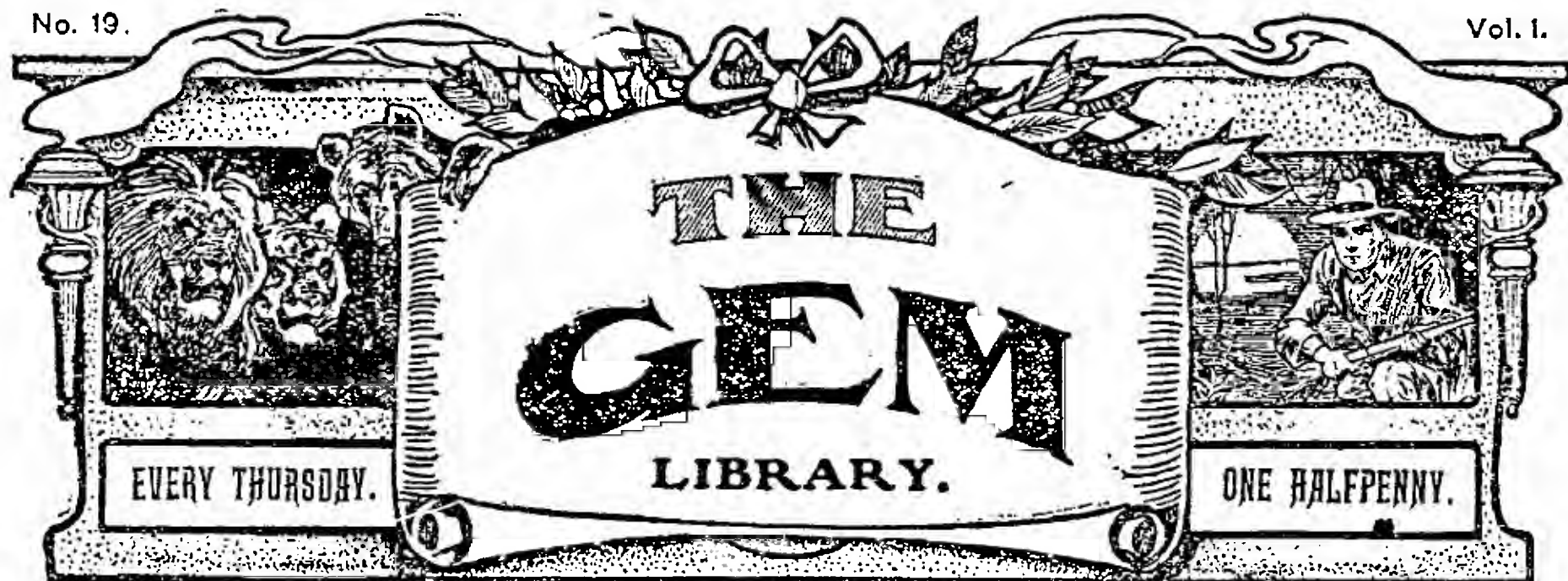
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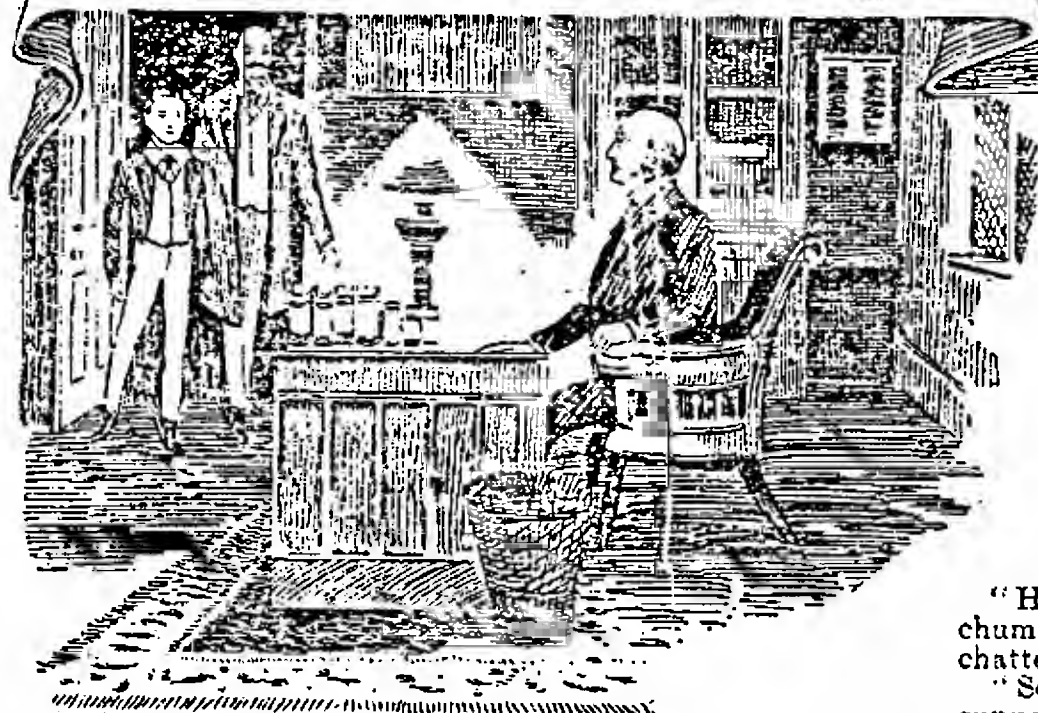
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A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Is Called In.

"MERRY!"

Tom Merry half-opened his eyes, with a drowsy yawn.

The School House at St. Jim's was sunk in silence and slumber. The moonlight, growing paler as the hour of dawn drew nigh, glimmered faintly on the old elms in the quadrangle. In the Shell dormitory in the School House silence and darkness reigned.

"Merry!"

"Lemme alone," murmured Tom Merry, sleepily. "Taint rising-bell yet."

"Wake up!"

Tom felt himself shaken by the shoulder. He opened his eyes wider and stared round him. A candle glimmered in the gloom of the long dark dormitory.

"Are you awake, Merry?"

"Yes, I am," said Tom, taking a grip on his pillow, "and it's no use your imitating Railton's voice, whoever you are—you can't take me in like that. What the dickens do you mean by waking me up in the middle of the night?"

"Merry—"

"I'll Merry you!" exclaimed Tom, wrathfully, and he hurled the pillow with a deadly aim.

There was a splutter as the candle went out, and the sound of a fall in the darkness.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"How do you like that?" he exclaimed. "I don't know who you are, but you've only got what you asked for."

"Hallo, what's the matter?" asked the voice of Tom's chum, Manners, from the next bed. "What are you chattering about, Tom?"

"Somebody just woke me up, and I've biffed him. I suppose it's Blake or one of those kids from Study No. 6, playing a little game on us. I say—"

"Merry," said a severe voice from the darkness, "I suppose you do not know that I am your housemaster, or I should cane you."

Tom gave a gasp.

"My hat! You don't mean to say you're really Railton?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, I am Mr. Railton."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm—ha, ha, ha—awfully sorry, sir. I thought it was one of those bounders from Study No. 6 working off a little jape on me. Ha, ha, I'm sorry!"

There was a scratch, and a match glimmered out. The candle was relighted, and Tom, sitting up in bed, saw that it was indeed the master of the School House standing beside him.

Mr. Railton was looking rather flushed. He had been startled by the pillow suddenly bowling him over in the dark. But he did not look angry.

"Merry, I want you to get up immediately, and dress yourself, and come with me to the Doctor's study," he said.

"The doctor, sir! At this time of the night!"

"It will be light in an hour, Merry."

"But—but—but—"

"Dr. Holmes will explain, Merry. Get up and dress yourself, and come down to my room."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton left the dormitory, leaving the candle standing on Tom's washstand. Tom stared at Manners, and Manners stared at Tom.

"Well, this beats everything," said Tom. "What on

earth can they want? Which of our latest little games was bad enough to make the doctor get up an hour before daylight to see into it, Manners?"

Manners shook his head.

"Don't ask me. Blessed if I understand it. It can't be the strike we had last week; the Head hasn't said a word about that."

"No. Then what is it?"

"Maybe he doesn't want to haul you over the coals at all," suggested Manners. "Perhaps it's something else he wants you for."

"I don't see what it can be. I suppose I'd better go."

Tom got out of bed and dressed himself. He was amazed and intensely curious. Manners was just as curious, and he did not go to sleep again when Tom left the dormitory.

Tom Merry joined Mr. Railton, who was waiting in his room, and the housemaster led the way to the Principal's study.

A light gleamed under the door of Dr. Holmes's study. Mr. Railton knocked, and the knock sounded strangely hollow in the silence of the sleeping house.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Head.

Mr. Railton opened the door.

Dr. Holmes was seated at his table, and had evidently been leaning his head upon his hand. He had raised it at the knock. His face was looking unusually pale and serious, and there was a worn look about it which did not escape Tom's notice.

"Merry is here, sir," said Mr. Railton.

"Thank you," said the doctor, quietly. "Come in, Merry."

Tom Merry entered the study.

Mr. Railton stepped out again, and closed the door. Tom Merry was alone with the Head—the dreaded and yet kindly personage who ruled the destinies of St. Jim's.

"You may sit down, Merry."

Tom sat down.

His face expressed the wonder he felt. He heard a sound from the quadrangle without, and understood that Mr. Railton had left the house. What could it all mean?

The Head caught his expression.

"I dare say you are greatly surprised, Merry," he said, "but I can explain to you in a few words. Do you remember a short time ago the visit made to this school by a celebrated London detective?"

Tom Merry started a little.

"Do you mean Ferrers Locke, sir?"

"Yes."

"I remember, sir?"

"You were of some assistance to him, Merry," said the doctor. "He told me how you had helped him in his search for the rascals who were committing robberies in the neighbourhood, and that it was really due to you that he was able to effect their capture."

Tom coloured.

"It was very kind of him to say so, sir. I tried to help."

"And you succeeded. Now, Merry, Mr. Locke has made a most unusual request, yet one which I think it will be consistent with my duty to grant, if you are willing. I may mention first that Mr. Locke has obtained the full permission of your guardian, Miss Fawcett. Would you like to go to London for a short time—a few days—and assist Mr. Locke in a case he has now in hand?"

Tom drew a deep breath of amazement.

"The details of this case," continued the Head, "will be told you by Mr. Locke, as far as he deems expedient. I need only say that, unless this gentleman succeeds in the work he has undertaken, a heavy loss will fall upon me—a very heavy loss indeed. To be quite frank, Merry, my honour is involved, and Ferrers Locke is trying to save me from the result of a piece of villainy upon the part of a man I trusted." Dr. Holmes passed his hand across his brow. "Mr. Locke thinks you could be of great use to him in this matter—in what way I do not exactly know—and he has asked me to let you go to him for a few days, if you are willing. What do you say?"

Tom's eyes were dancing.

"Oh, sir, I should like it awfully! It—it would be ripping!"

The Head smiled slightly.

"Then you are quite willing to go?"

"More than willing, sir. If I can help Mr. Locke I shall be awfully glad. I should like to go above all things."

"Then we will consider it settled, Merry. You will leave the school at once, and catch the six o'clock train at Rycombe. Mr. Railton has kindly gone to put the horse in the trap, as I do not care to call attention to the matter by having any of the servants awakened. It is only a short time since I received Mr. Locke's urgent message. How long will it take you to pack a bag, Merry?"

"Only a few minutes, sir. But——"

"What is it, Merry?" asked the Head, as Tom paused.

"Could I take anybody with me, sir? Could I take old Manners?"

The doctor hesitated.

"Without consulting Mr. Locke, I cannot say," he replied.

"You had better leave it till you see Mr. Locke in London, and ask him. Then if he gives you permission, you can easily wire to Manners."

"Yes, sir. May I tell him anything about it? He was awake when I left the dormitory, and he will ask me."

"You had better tell him that you are called suddenly away, then," said the Head. "You may say that you are going to see Mr. Locke."

"Very well, sir."

And Tom Merry left the study. He was in a state of high delight as he made his way back to the Shell dormitory in the School House.

Tom, like a healthy British lad, was fond of anything that smacked of adventure, and this was an adventure indeed! He had liked Mr. Locke very much when the famous detective was down in Rycombe, and he would be very glad to see him again. And he was already thrilling at the prospect of aiding the detective once more in a difficult, and perhaps dangerous, case.

He was so delighted that he didn't walk into the dormitory in the usual way but came in doing the cake-walk, and in the gloom he cake-walked into Manners' bed, and fell plump across his chum's legs.

"Hallo!" roared Manners, who was dropping off to sleep again. "What's that? None of your little games!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom, as Manners gripped him by the hair on the back of his head, and began to tug. "Chuck it! It's only me!"

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" said Manners, releasing him.

"What do you mean by sprawling over me and making me jump out of my skin? What did the Head want?"

"Me."

"What else, fathead?"

"I'm called away, suddenly," said Tom. "Ferrers Locke wants me in London. Can't tell you any more now. Don't be curious: it's a fault in little boys. Jump out of bed and help me pack my bag."

"You're rotting!"

"My dear kid, I'm telling you the solid truth. I'm going to London, and Railton is going to drive me over to Rycombe to catch the six o'clock train."

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Manners, in amazement.

"So am I," said Tom. "Lend a hand."

Manners helped him pack his bag. He was soon ready. Tom Merry was never very long about anything.

"My hat!" said Manners, with a sigh. "I wish I were coming."

"I wish you were, old chap," said Tom. "I asked the Head, and he says I must ask Mr. Locke. If he says you can come, I'm going to wire."

Manners rubbed his hands.

"I say, that will be jolly. It will make Study No. 6 green with envy."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Yes, it will be one ahead of Jack Blake and his lot," he remarked. "We shall come back covered with glory. Blake will be ready to kick himself, and as for Figgins & Co., over in the New House, why they'll have to hide their diminished heads. Hallo, there's Railton calling."

"Good-bye, Tom, and don't forget that wire if you can fix it."

"Good-bye, old kid. Rely on me."

And the chums shook hands and parted. Manners sat on his bed to think over the surprising happening, and Tom Merry hurried downstairs and joined the housemaster, his bag in his hand.

"Are you hungry, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Oh, no, sir," said Tom, who was too excited to be hungry.

"H'm! You won't get anything to eat till you get to London," said the housemaster. "I have cut some sandwiches. You had better eat some, and put the rest in your pocket."

"You are very kind, sir."

Mr. Railton was indeed very kind. He had a spirit-stove going in his study, and hot coffee and sandwiches ready for Tom Merry. Tom had thought that he was not hungry, but the smell of the coffee made him aware that he was, and he ate four sandwiches and drank two cups of coffee with a keen relish. Then Mr. Railton wrapped the rest of the sandwiches up in some exercise paper, and Tom put the packet in his coat-pocket.

The trap was waiting outside. Tom did not see the Head again. He went out to the trap waiting for him.

Dawn was breaking over the quadrangle at St. Jim's, and

a pale, silvery light glimmered on the old elms, and ghostly shadows lay between.

Three figures in coats and mufflers came out of a side door in the School House, with towels over their arms. They stopped and stared at the waiting trap in amazement. They were Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, and they were going down to the Ryle for an early morning swim. Study No. 6 meant to come out strong in the swimming competition on sports day, and even the languid Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was kept up to the mark by the energetic Blake.

"Hallo, we're not the only early risers," exclaimed Blake. "I wonder what that means? Why, it's Tom Merry, or his ghost."

The juniors stared at Tom Merry as he came down the steps of the School House. Tom caught sight of them and nodded affably.

"Where are you going, kid?" asked Blake.

"Important business," said Tom, airily. "I'm going up to town."

"Have they sent for you from Colney Hatch at last?" Blake inquired.

Tom climbed into the trap.

"I've no time to listen to your poor little witticisms, Blake," he said, loftily. "I'm going up to town on important business. Mind you're good little boys while I'm gone."

Blake breathed hard.

"Do you want to take a thick ear up to town with you?" he asked. "If so—er—good morning, Mr. Railton."

The housemaster smiled.

"Good-morning, Blake. I see you are going for a swim. That's right."

He stepped into the trap and gathered up the reins. Manners leaned out of the window of the Shell dormitory and waved his hand to Tom Merry.

"Good-bye, old Tommy. Remember me to Mr. Locke."

"Righto!" said Tom, waving his cap.

The trap rattled away. It passed the gates of St. Jim's, and disappeared towards the village of Rycombe. The chums of Study No. 6 were left staring blankly at one another.

"You heard that?" said Blake, at last.

"He's going to see that detective chap who was down here," said Herries.

"That's it! Now, what's the little game?"

"Weally, I don't know, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I haven't an ideah."

"I know you haven't," said Blake. "You needn't tell us that, Gussy."

"Blake, don't be wude."

"Tom Merry is going up to town," said Blake. "Going to see that detective chap. What's the little game? Kids, we've got to get on to this."

"Rather!" said Herries, with an emphatic nod. "If anything's going on, I don't see why we should be left out of it."

"Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"We'll screw it out of Manners somehow," said Blake.

"If necessary, we'll follow Tom Merry to London and see what his little game is. Come along."

They went down to the Ryle and had their swim. But Blake was unusually thoughtful all the time. Something was evidently on, and he was determined that Study No. 6 should not be left out in the cold.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom and the Detective.

FERRERS LOCKE was waiting at the London terminus for Tom Merry.

Tom stepped from the train and looked about him, and the next moment the famous detective tapped him on the shoulder.

"So you have come, Tom?"

Tom looked up with a bright smile as the detective shook him by the hand.

"Yes, sir, I was very glad to get your message. I hope I shall be able to be of some use to you, Mr. Locke."

"I hope so," said the detective. "Come this way. I have a cab waiting, and you will come to my diggings first, where I shall explain to you."

Tom was soon seated beside the detective in a cab, which rattled away through the London streets, already busy in the early morning.

Tom was intensely excited and curious, and wondering what he was wanted to do, but he did not venture to ask any questions, patiently waiting till Mr. Locke should speak.

The cab stopped at the door of Mr. Locke's "diggings"

in Baker Street, and Tom accompanied the detective to his rooms. Breakfast was laid for two.

"Have you breakfasted, Tom?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, with a smile; "but that was two hours ago."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Then you must be ready for another. Sit down, Tom, and make yourself comfy. Now, I am going to explain to you, Tom, as much of the case as I think is expedient for you to know, and I am sure you will not be curious about the rest."

"Certainly not, sir."

"I want you to help me in a way in which only a lad, like yourself could help me. Did Mr. Holmes tell you anything of what was at stake?"

He said that unless you were successful in this case, sir, he would be put to a heavy loss."

"That is quite true. I will explain. A large part of Dr. Holmes's money was in the hands of his solicitor, Reuben Scarlett, who has absconded with that, and with a great deal belonging to other people. Unless he is discovered and forced to disgorge his plunder, Dr. Holmes will be practically ruined. That is not the worse. The doctor was in charge of money belonging to his sister, an invalid lady at Bournemouth, and this also he entrusted to Scarlett. Dr. Holmes is an excellent Principal of St. Jim's, Tom, but as a man of business he lacks something in experience. People will say that he ought not to have been deceived so easily by this rascal Scarlett; they might even say worse things. I know the doctor is the soul of honour and uprightness, and I am anxious to set him right in this matter. That can only be done by capturing the thief and recovering the money, or such of it as remains."

Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming.

"I understand, sir. I hope you will be able to catch the scoundrel."

"I hope so, Tom, and that is what I want you to help me to do. Reuben Scarlett has disappeared. We know at Scotland Yard that he has in his possession a great quantity of securities, and in all probability a large sum in bank-notes, and it is almost certain that he has not left London. At every port, and at every great railway centre, detectives are watching for him, and he will find it impossible to get out of the country. We have reason to believe that he is hiding in London."

Tom nodded as he started on his second egg.

He was keenly interested in the statement of the case in which he was to take part.

"My suspicions," continued Ferrers Locke, "centre upon a certain house, which Scarlett is known to have frequently visited. It is a small private school, which was started only a few weeks ago by a man named—or at least known as—Gilbert Crane. Whether that is his real name or not I cannot at present say. Scarlett was certainly on intimate terms with this man Crane, of whose antecedents so far we have been able to discover nothing. He apparently came from nowhere, and is known to nobody."

Tom looked puzzled.

"Yet you say he keeps a school, sir?"

"Yes, a small private school called Hyam House."

"But surely people don't send chaps to a school with a headmaster of that sort, sir. You generally want to know all about the place and the people before you send a kid there."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Quite so, Tom, but this is not an ordinary school. It is a home for the not-wanted."

"The what?"

"For boys whose people are too poor or too careless to care where they go," explained Mr. Locke. "Mr. Crane has, I believe, six boys under his charge, and they do not look very happy, from what I have been able to see of them. He advertises that boys are taken complete care of at Hyam House, and when a boy is sent there, I imagine, his people wash their hands of him. They pay Mr. Crane's fees, and that is the end. The boys there, I think, are all orphans, and regarded as burdens by the people who send them to Mr. Crane to be looked after: poor relations, you understand, who cannot be entirely cast off."

Tom nodded.

"I see, sir. A bit different from St. Jim's."

"Yes, very different. Yet I am going to ask you to go there, Tom, and enter Hyam House as a new pupil."

Tom Merry started and dropped his egg-spoon.

"Are you, sir?"

"Yes, and now you see how you can help me. I have reason to think that Mr. Crane is in some kind of collusion with the defaulting solicitor, yet I have not been able to obtain a particle of evidence to that effect. Except for the fact that his antecedents are unknown, Mr. Crane appears

to be quite respectable. His little establishment seems to be quite open to the light of day. If I could prove that he is a rascal, I should have something more definite to go upon. But he is too careful."

And the detective's brow puckered slightly.

"Now, Tom, I am going to take you to Hyam House, as a new boy, on the same terms as the others there," he went on. "I shall be Mr. Fawcett, the brother of your old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and in disguise, of course. You have been taken away from St. Jim's, and sent to Hyam House, for reasons which I shall satisfactorily explain to Mr. Crane. I may say that, although we are using a stratagem, I have no desire to make you say anything that is not true. That would be inexcusable, for I am far from believing that the end justifies the means. You will go under your own name to Hyam House, and you will say nothing that is not in accordance with facts."

Tom Merry looked a little relieved.

"I understand, Mr. Locke."

"You know what I want you to do? If this man Crane is a rascal, I want you to discover it and tell me so, if you can; and if there is any individual living in concealment on the school premises, I want you to let me know. Such an individual is pretty certain to be the man I want."

"Ah! I think I could manage that, sir."

"There is one point I must mention. Tom. Mr. Crane does not use his boys gently, and he will probably give you a warm time at Hyam House. Canings seem to be the order of the day there. You are not afraid of getting hurt?"

Tom made a grimace.

"No, sir. I've had some experience of that kind of thing."

The detective looked at him curiously.

"Indeed, Tom. I thought you had a fine set of masters at St. Jim's."

"So we have, sir. But we had a rotter once. He was a chap named Ames Keene, and he was master of the Shell. He was a brute, and he was down on me, and I had a warm time till he left St. Jim's. I don't mind a bit of it over again, sir, if I can help you and the Head."

"That's right, Tom; you are a brave lad! I may say that I counted upon your willingness, and I have already made an appointment to see Mr. Crane this morning before lunch to bring him his new pupil."

"I am ready, sir; but—"

"Speak out, Tom!"

"There's my chum Manners, sir, at St. Jim's. I told him I'd ask you to let him come if it were possible. I suppose it couldn't be managed?"

The detective looked thoughtful.

"I'm afraid it couldn't, Tom, just at present. You see, two boys from St. Jim's might make Mr. Crane wonder. Perhaps we can do something for Manners later on. At present—"

"Very well, sir; I'll write to Manners and tell him, if you don't mind."

"That will be all right." The detective rose from the table. "There's a desk, Tom. You can write while I am preparing for the interview with Mr. Crane, of Hyam House."

So Tom sat at the desk, and dashed off a letter to Manners. He had finished, and was looking at the pictures on the walls of the room when the door opened, and an old gentleman entered. Tom glanced at him. He was dressed in a black frock-coat and trousers, slightly rusty, and carried a silk hat in his hand. He looked about fifty-five or sixty, his grey hair being very thin on top. He had a white moustache and a wrinkled forehead.

"Excuse me," said the old gentleman, in a thin and slightly querulous voice, "I expected to find Mr. Locke here."

"He has just stepped out, sir," said Tom politely. "I'm expecting him every minute."

"Dear me! Then I suppose I must wait."

"Won't you sit down?" said Tom, pulling out an easy-chair.

"Thank you, my boy! What is your name?"

"Tom Merry, sir."

"Tom Merry! Dear me! Then you must be Miss Priscilla Fawcett's ward, who was lately at St. James's College?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, in astonishment.

"And you don't know me?"

"I—I don't think so, sir."

"Dear me! You don't know Miss Fawcett's brother? Dear me!"

"Miss Fawcett's brother! He is in India, sir!"

"Ah, you were not aware that I had returned from India, and was residing with my dear sister at Laurel Villa, at Huckleberry Heath?" said the old gentleman, beaming upon Tom Merry.

"No, sir," said Tom; "I—I'm sorry I didn't know you, sir. I haven't seen you, you know, since I was a little chap."

"Not at all; you saw me only twenty minutes ago."

"I don't think so, sir."

"Yes, you did, Tom!" said the voice of Ferrers Locke.

Tom stared round in amazement. The detective did not appear to be in the room. Then he looked at the old gentleman again. The latter was laughing heartily.

"Ha, ha, Tom! I am glad to see that my disguise is so good!"

Tom Merry gave a gasp.

"Mr. Locke!"

"Exactly," said the detective, speaking in his natural voice, his deep tones in strange contrast with the grey hair and white beard. "You saw me twenty minutes ago, Tom. I was Ferrers Locke, then. Now I am Joseph Fawcett. You think I shall pass?"

"My hat," exclaimed Tom Merry, staring at the deceiving old gentleman, "you are really Mr. Locke!"

"Yes"—the detective laughed—"really; the real Mr. Fawcett is still in India, I believe. I have only been to Huckleberry Heath once in my life, and that was when I went yesterday to obtain Miss Fawcett's permission for you to help me in this case. Do you think I shall pass muster with the master of Hyam House, Tom?"

"I should think so, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically. "It's—it's splendid, sir!"

"Thank you, Tom. Mind, I am Mr. Fawcett now, and not over fond of you, because of your reckless pranks at St. Jim's, and your general recklessness, which has caused myself and my sister a great deal of anxiety. Come along!"

A cab was waiting outside. A pseudo old gentleman stepped into it with Tom Merry, and they were driven away at a rapid rate in a southerly direction.

Hyam House was on the south side of the water, and a good drive from Baker Street. While the cab rattled on, Ferrers Locke gave Tom fresh instructions, and the boy listened eagerly. He fully understood the part he was to play at Hyam House, and he was ready and eager for the adventure.

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprising Recognition.

FERRERS LOCKE and Tom Merry were shown in at Hyam House by an unamiable-looking manservant, who then departed to inform Mr. Crane of their arrival.

The room in which they were shown had a large window looking out upon the grounds of Hyam House. Tom Merry looked out with some interest, anxious to see as much as he could of what his new home was to be like. Several boys were playing in the grounds, but there was none of the shouting and merry laughter which Tom was accustomed to.

The boys, who ranged in age from eleven to fifteen, seemed to be very quiet—strangely quiet, and did not seem to enjoy their play very much. Perhaps that was because a man with fainty grey eyes stood watching them. The latter had his back turned to the window where Tom Merry stood, but it seemed to the boy at once that there was something familiar in the lines of his figure.

Was that Mr. Crane, the master of Hyam House? Evidently—for the sullen-looking manservant was crossing towards him, undoubtedly to acquaint him with the fact that visitors were waiting.

Where had Tom Merry seen Mr. Crane before? The boy was deeply puzzled. He was anxious to see the man's face, but as yet he could see nothing but his back. Ferrers Locke glanced curiously at Tom.

"What are you thinking of, Tom?" he asked quietly.

"Is that Mr. Crane, sir?"

The detective glanced out of the window.

"Yes; that is Mr. Crane."

"I believe I have seen him before, sir."

"Indeed! That would be a strange coincidence."

"He'll turn round in a minute, sir, and then I shall be sure."

Tom kept his eyes fixed on the master of Hyam House. As he expected, Mr. Crane turned as the manservant approached nearer, and then Tom caught a full and clear view of his face. It was not a pleasant face. The features were hard, the expression cold, and the eyes were small and grey, and looked like flints. The hard chin was adorned with a tuft of beard, and a scanty moustache was on the upper lip. Tom uttered a sharp exclamation.

"I knew I knew him!"

"That is very strange, Tom. What can you know of him?"

"You remember that chap I was telling you about, sir,"

said Tom eagerly. "the master of the Shell at St. Jim's. He was a brute, and he had to leave the school."

"Yes, Tom," said Ferrers Locke, looking interested. "His name was Amos Keene, I think you said?"

"That's it, sir. Well, this is the chap."

Ferrers Locke started.

"Mr. Crane is the man you knew at St. Jim's as Amos Keene!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Mr. Locke," said Tom, with conviction. "I am certain of it. He is dressed differently, and he is wearing a beard and moustache now, and he wasn't then. But I'd know his eyes anywhere. He's Amos Keene!"

The detective's brows contracted for a moment. This was a contretemps he had been far from expecting, and yet he was glad to know that his suspicions regarding Mr. Crane were well founded.

"He was a brute, sir, at St. Jim's," said Tom, "and he got mixed up in a burglary, and had to leave the school. He plotted with a scoundrel to injure a boy who suspected him, and Blake had a narrow escape. Keene was really kicked out of St. Jim's, and he very nearly went to prison. That's why he's changed his name, of course. He could be sent to penal servitude now if Dr. Holmes cared to prosecute."

"Tom, my boy, your coming here has done a great deal for me already, though by chance," said Ferrers Locke. "I know that half my theory is true: Crane is a rascal, and therefore it is extremely probable that he is in association with the scoundrel Scarlett." Ferrers Locke spoke in a low and cautious voice. "But you say that the man has changed his appearance since you saw him last?"

"Entirely, sir. There's something about his figure, and there's his eyes. Otherwise, I shouldn't know him for the same man."

"But you are quite certain?"

"Quite, sir."

"Good! Don't appear to recognise him. He will know you as Tom Merry, if he is the man you think; but you must appear to know and see nothing. Can you do it?"

"Trust me, sir."

Mr. Crane was walking quickly towards the house. As he disappeared from sight, the faces of the boys seemed to brighten, and the play went on with more boyish spirit. It was easy to see that Gilbert Crane, alias Amos Keene, was not liked by the boys of Hyam House.

A minute later Mr. Crane entered the room.

He gave a start as his eyes fell upon Tom Merry, but recovered himself in a moment. But that start, slight as it had been, did not escape the keen eyes of Ferrers Locke.

Whatever doubt the detective might have entertained of the correctness of Tom Merry's assertion was dissipated now. He knew that Mr. Crane knew the boy from St. Jim's, and was, therefore, undoubtedly the person Tom Merry took him for.

Nothing, however, showed in the detective's manner. He played the part of Miss Priscilla Fawcett's brother to the life. Mr. Crane shook hands with his visitor.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Fawcett," he exclaimed; "and this is the lad you spoke of in your letter?"

"Yes; this is the lad," said the detective. "Tom, this is your future headmaster, Mr. Crane."

Tom Merry made his best bow.

"I am very glad to receive Master Fawcett——"

"No, no," interrupted Mr. Joseph Fawcett, to give the detective the name of the character he had assumed; "Master Merry, if you please, sir."

"Ah, I beg your pardon!" said Mr. Crane blandly. "I am glad to receive Master Merry in my establishment."

"And now, Thomas, I think you may run away while I speak to Mr. Crane," said the brother of Miss Priscilla peevishly.

"Certainly," exclaimed Mr. Crane; "go into the garden, Master Merry. You will there find your new schoolmates."

Tom Merry obeyed. The two gentlemen were left alone together. Mr. Fawcett sat down again.

"I must explain to you," he began, "that this boy is a great trouble."

Mr. Crane nodded assent.

"I quite believe that, Mr. Fawcett, from his looks."

"He has until very lately been in the charge of my sister, Miss Fawcett," continued the visitor. "He is, as a matter of fact, still in her charge, but I have taken an interest in the matter. Miss Fawcett is absurdly attached to the boy, and can see nothing wrong in what he does, and would let him go to ruin if no one interfered. Master Merry has been lately at a school called St. James's College, of which you may have heard. I believe it is a well-known public school, but I know little about these matters. The best part of my life has been spent in India."

Mr. Crane nodded.

"I have heard of the school," he said.

And the visitor did not appear to notice the gleam that came into his eyes as he spoke.

"I have induced Miss Fawcett to take the boy away from St. James's College," resumed the gentleman from India. "I believe that a school of this kind will be far better calculated to give him the training he requires. There is not, I believe, any of the modern leaning to indulgence and leniency in your system, Mr. Crane."

Mr. Crane's lips tightened a little.

"Not at all."

"Tom Merry's pranks at St. James's School have been a constant source of worry," Mr. Fawcett went on, "and at last I have induced my sister to leave the matter in my hands. The result was my communication with you."

Mr. Crane bowed.

"I noticed," went on Mr. Fawcett, "that the boys in your grounds are nicely quiet, and there is none of the objectionable noise and horseplay that is so detestable, from my point of view. If you can make Thomas Merry like the rest in that respect, Mr. Crane, you will have earned my undying gratitude."

Mr. Crane rubbed his thin hands together.

"I shall do my best, sir. And I think I may say that I shall succeed. You will allow me to offer you a glass of wine?"

"Thanks, no," said Mr. Fawcett. "You are very kind, but I am compelled to think of my liver, which has suffered from twenty years spent in a tropical climate."

"Ah, yes; no doubt!" said Mr. Crane sympathetically.

"I leave Thomas Merry entirely in your charge, with every confidence," said Mr. Fawcett, rising. "The cheque for the fees I shall post you this day. I think that is all."

"You would like me to call Master Merry in to say good-bye——"

"Er—no—I don't think you need trouble," said Mr. Fawcett, taking up his hat. "My cabman is waiting, and he will undoubtedly overcharge me as it is. I think I need not see Thomas Merry again. Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, my dear sir!" said Mr. Crane, shaking hands very cordially with his visitor.

Joseph Fawcett seemed to be a man after his own heart.

The cab rolled away with Ferrers Locke; and Tom Merry remained unfriended in Hyam House. And the days he spent there were not likely to be happy ones, judging by the expression upon Mr. Crane's face as he stood looking at the boy from the window.

"Tom Merry!" he murmured. "What a strange chance that he should come here—that we should meet again! The boy I hated at St. Jim's—the boy who was the cause of my ruin there, and through whom I was kicked out of the school and compelled to take to this wretched little establishment in a suburb, under an assumed name! Master Tom Merry, I think that the time has come to pay off some old scores."

And Mr. Crane rubbed his hands with anticipation.

CHAPTER 4.

Not To Be Left Out.

JACK BLAKE rose from the table in Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's, and pushed away his books.

"Finished already?" asked Herries, looking up.

"No," said Blake.

"Then, what are you chucking it for?"

"Got something more important to think about. Blow prep."

"What about Mr. Lathom in the morning?"

"Blow Lathom!"

"You'll get an imposition."

"Blow the imposition!"

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up plaintively, "you are interwupting my work. Yaas, wathah!"

"Blow your work!"

Herries and D'Arcy looked at one another. There was certainly something the matter with Blake that evening.

"Well, if you've got something on your chest," said Herries, "get it off. What are you bothered about?"

"I'm thinking of Tom Merry and that detective bounder," said Blake. "Manners had a letter this afternoon, and he won't let on a word as to what was in it."

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S DAY OUT."

ORDER
NOW!

"Yes, I asked him, and he was quite wude," said D'Arcy. "He's going about in an awfully cocky way," said Herries thoughtfully. "He seems to think that Tom Merry is going strong, and is going to put Study No. 5 quite in the shade."

"Which is all rot," said Blake.

"Extweme wot," assented Arthur Augustus.

"All the same, we've got to know what Tom Merry is up to, and what's going on generally," said Blake. "Are we going to be left out in the cold?"

"Certainly not."

"We've got to take a hand in the little game."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But I don't see how," said Herries. "Tom Merry is in London, and that's a good step from here. You can't step over and see what he's up to, unless you've got the seven-league boots. And you haven't."

"What's the matter with following on his track?" said Blake.

Herries stared.

"Going to London?"

"Yes."

"The three of us?"

"Oh, no," said Blake hastily; "that would be too big an order, of course. But why shouldn't one of us go on Tom Merry's track, and see what the little game is?"

Herries whistled.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"You hear that, Herries? If Gussy has the nerve, I don't see why you want to hang out."

"I'm not hanging out," said Herries. "I'm game if you are."

"That's settled, then."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus seemed quite excited about it.

"It's a jolly good whipping ideah!" he exclaimed. "Of course, Blake is the chap to go. He's just the fellah to do it."

"Not at all," said Blake coolly. "We'll cast lots who's to go. That's only fair. Besides, the two who stay behind have got to keep the secret, and I don't think either of you would have sense enough for that."

"Let's toss up," said Herries, with spirit. "I'm quite ready to go, and so is Gussy, of course."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy; but he spoke a little more dubiously now.

Blake produced a penny.

"You and I first, Herries," he said. "The winner to go after that boulder Merry."

"Agreed!"

"Sudden death, or best two out of three?"

"Oh, sudden death!" said Herries recklessly.

Blake tossed the penny and caught it.

"Heads!" said Herries.

Blake opened his hands and showed the figure of Britannia.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Now it's between Gussy and me."

He threw up the penny.

"Heads or tails, Arthur Adolphus?"

"Tails," said Arthur Augustus nervously.

Herries showed the King's head.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's Gussy!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

D'Arcy looked very uneasy.

"Of course, this is all a joke," he remarked. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it?" said Blake. "I'll 'ha, ha, ha!' you, you boulder! If you don't carry out the scheme you'll get scragged."

"And expelled from the study," said Herries.

"Come, Aubrey, I thought you had more grit!"

"More pluck!"

"You're not afraid?"

"Haven't you the nerve?"

"Buck up!"

Between two fires, D'Arcy surrendered.

"Of course, I'm quite willin' to go, deah boys," he said.

"It will be quite an adventure, and you know what an adventurous chap I am."

Blake winked at Herries.

"Of course we do," he said. "You're just the kind of chap to do the trick, Gussy."

D'Arcy purred.

"Then I will go and ask the Head's permission—"

Blake thumped him on the chest as he rose from his chair, and he sat down again suddenly, his eyeglass dropping off in the shock.

"Blake, I wish you would not be so wuff!"

"I wish you would not be a silly goat!" said Blake. "Ask the Head's permission! Do you think he would be likely to give it?"

"But—"

"You ass!" said Herries. "This sort of thing has to be done secretly. Do you think Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake go around asking the Head's permission before they take up a case?"

"But—"

"You've got to keep mum, donkey!" said Blake. "You've got to leave St. Jim's darkly, at dead of night, and—"

"And mizzle off without a soul being the wiser!" exclaimed Herries.

"Exactly! And we'll keep it a secret that you're gone as long as we can."

"I see, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "Of course, I'm game. I have a gweat deal of spiwit when I'm woused."

"Then wouse up your spiwit at once," said Blake, "and listen to your instructions. I saw the postmark on that letter Manners had to-day, which he wouldn't let us read."

"Did you weally?"

"Yes, I did weally. The postmark was Kennington. Tom Merry must have posted it after he left Locke's house, because the detective lives in Baker Street. Do you know what that shows, kid?"

"It shows that he took it out in his pocket," said D'Arcy.

Blake gave him a withering glance.

"Anything else?"

"Weally, I can't think of anythin' else," said Arthur Augustus, after some reflection.

"Can't you, Herries?"

"It shows he went to Kennington and posted the letter there," was Herries' brilliant contribution to the discussion.

"My hat!" said Blake. "Can't you see, duffers, it shows that they took a cab? Tom Merry must have passed hundreds of pillar-boxes near Baker Street—anyway, he must have passed two or three—and what would he want to wait till he got to Kennington before posting the letter for? They went in a cab, and didn't stop till they got to that salubrious subbub. Which shows—"

"That he didn't walk."

"Herries, old chap, don't you make any more of those splendid guesses. You'll make me ill; I can't stand too much brilliance all at once."

"Oh, don't rot! Get on!"

"Well, Ferrers Locke and Tom Merry took a cab to Kennington," said Blake. "They must have done it pretty soon after Merry's arrival in town, as Manners got that letter this afternoon. Ergo—that's Latin—the case they are engaged on is in Kennington."

"How do you know they're engaged on a case?"

"Because Manners as good as said so. He's blowing about it for all he's worth."

"Most likely he's romancing."

"Most likely you're an ass," said Blake politely. "What else could Tom Merry have gone up to see Ferrers Locke for?"

"They might be gone to the Oval to see a cricket match. I believe the South Africans were playing there to-day," said Herries.

Blake looked discomposed for a moment.

"I'll bet you that's what it was," said Herries, pursuing his advantage.

"Rats!" said Blake decidedly. "Ferrers Locke might take Tom to a cricket match, but he wouldn't send for him to catch the six o'clock train in the morning. Tom Merry would have taken it a little more easily if he had just been going up to town on a holiday. Besides, he said he was going on important business."

"That's so. Well, what do you make of it?"

"That the case, whatever it is, is in Kennington," said Blake. "and it's to that part of London that Gussy will have to go to find Tom Merry."

"You ought to be a giddy detective, Blake," said Herries, admiringly. "I really think you must be a relation of your namesake, Sexton of that ilk."

Blake gave a smile of gratification.

"Now, Aubrey," he went on, "you understand. You're to go up to town and get on the track of Tom Merry, and we'll keep your absence a secret. You don't want to funk it?"

"My deah Blake, I am perfectly weady, and I will do all that's pos to get on the track of Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy.

"Righto!" said Blake, heartily. "We'll make these bounders in the Shell sing a little smaller before we've done with them. Now, it's best to strike while the iron's hot, Gussy. Get ready to go."

"What about my pwepawation?"

"Blow your preparation! I'll do it for you."

"Vowv weill."

"We'll pack you a little bag," said Blake. "I suppose you've got plenty of money? You're always wallowing in filthy lucre."

"I think I have a couple of fivahs, and a sovewain or two, and some silvah."

"That's more than enough. Now to get ready. You'll

catch the eight o'clock train at Ryelombe for Euston, change at Weyland. We'll see you off at the gates, and then we'll fix it up to answer for you at calling-over."

So it was arranged.

It was a reckless plan, but Study No. 6 had their back up, and on such occasions Blake said that a little recklessness was called for.

Half an hour later Arthur Augustus was gone from the old school, on the track of Tom Merry, or, as he expressed it himself, "on the twack!"

CHAPTER 5.

Tom Merry Has a Warm Time at Hyam House.

"MERRY! I—er—think your name is Merry?"

Mr. Crane looked sharply at Tom Merry as he made the remark.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

He was quite aware that Mr. Crane, alias Amos Keene, knew very well that his name was Merry, but he was playing the part assigned him by the detective.

Not by the slightest sign did he allow the master of Hyam House to suspect that he had recognised him.

"Ah, Merry," said Mr. Crane, with a nod, "I want you to understand that your way of life in Hyam House will be very different from what you have been accustomed to at the school you have lately left."

"Yes, sir."

"There will be no foolish indulgence here. You are a mischievous, wilful boy—I understand so from Mr. Fawcett, I mean—but those qualities will not flourish at Hyam House. I expect you to be quiet and obedient."

"I shall do my best, sir."

"You will be expected to work well, and to show a good result of your work," said Mr. Crane. "You will find a list of rules posted up in the dining-room. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

Tom left the master's study. He breathed more freely when he got outside it. He had never liked Amos Keene, and now he liked him less than ever.

The boys of Hyam House were accustomed to sleep in a single large room which served as a dormitory. They took their meals in the dining-room, a large apartment looking out on the grounds. Hyam House had once been a private house, standing in its own grounds, and was a very old building. It was mostly in great need of repair, and the grounds were in a very uncultivated and ill-kept condition. The place seemed very well suited for the kind of establishment Mr. Crane had started there.

Tom Merry went into the dining-room.

He knew that Mr. Crane was not to be trifled with, and that the kindness he was accustomed to at St. Jim's would be sadly lacking here. Yet he could not change his nature, and he was still Tom Merry: Merry by name and merry by nature. He came into the room, where the gloomy-looking boys were assembled, like a ray of sunshine.

There were six boys present. They had come in for dinner. The table was laid, but it was not yet the time for Mr. Crane to make his appearance. Until he did so, none of the youngsters ventured to approach the table. Nor were the viands on it of a tempting kind, from Tom Merry's point of view. Slags of bread, and cold meat and vegetables, all of the scraggiest kind, formed the menu at Hyam House.

Every eye was fixed upon Tom Merry as he strolled in, his hands in his pockets, whistling a careless tune. Some of the boys looked horrified, as if whistling were almost an unpardonable sin in the precincts of the funereal private school.

Tom gave a general nod all round.

"Hallo," said Tom, cheerfully, "I'm the new boy. My name's Tom Merry. I'm glad to see you all. How do you like 'em done?"

"Don't speak so loud," said a pale-faced youth, with freckles. "Mr. Crane will be angry if he hears you."

Tom laughed.

"Oh, I daresay the Crane-bird will get used to it in time," he said. "What's your name, chappy?"

"Herbert Foster."

"Well, how do you do, chappy? How do you like 'em done, Bertie? I say, I'm jolly hungry. Do you kids dine alone, or are you waiting for anybody?"

"We're waiting for Mr. Crane."

"Well, if he doesn't hep in soon I shall start," said Tom. "I'm awfully peckish, though I must say that mutton doesn't look any too enticing. I wouldn't give it to my terrier at St. Jim's."

"Indeed!" said a cold, hard voice.

Tom started a little.

Mr. Crane must have been very close behind him, and he

had now entered the dining-room with his silent, cat-like tread.

He fixed his cold, flinty eyes on Tom as the latter turned. "Indeed, Merry! You are pleased to disapprove of the fare provided for you?"

"Well, sir, it isn't what I've been used to," said Tom, frankly.

Mr. Crane smiled sarcastically.

"It is what you will have to get used to, Merry, I think. No doubt you will be able to eat it with enjoyment when you become really hungry."

"I hope so, sir."

"In order to give you every opportunity, Merry, you will miss your dinner, and have nothing to eat till tea-time to-night," said Mr. Crane, with a cold smile. "Wickers, you will not serve Master Merry."

"Yes, sir," said Wickers.

Mr. Crane took his seat at the head of the table. He did not trouble about the formality of grace. Tom sat down with burning eyes.

The fare was certainly bad, but he had a healthy boy's appetite, and he wanted something to eat. He did not mean to go all day without his dinner, and he had already made up his mind to circumvent Mr. Crane somehow.

Poor as the fare was, the Hyam House boys cleared their plates very rapidly. They were evidently hungry; but no one ventured to ask for a second helping. Second helpings were tabooed at Hyam House.

After dinner they went into the grounds to amuse themselves till afternoon lessons. Tom went with the rest, feeling extremely hungry and dissatisfied.

"I say, you were silly to get Crane's back up like that," said Herbert Foster, joining Tom. "It's a favourite trick of his to make a fellow miss his dinner. It saves the grub, you see. He's the champion mean man, and when he takes a spite against you he lets you know it. We don't enjoy life here."

"I see you don't," said Tom. "If I had a schoolmaster like that I should put him through it pretty well."

"Well, you've got him now," said Foster.

"Yes, of course," said Tom, hastily. "I'm nearly famished. How long before lessons?"

"A quarter of an hour yet. There's a bell rings when it's time."

"Where's the larder?"

Foster started.

"What do you want with the larder?"

"Grub," said Tom, laconically.

"You don't mean to say—"

"I mean to say I'm fearfully hungry, and want something to eat," said Tom, determinedly. "Tell me where the larder is. I don't want you to help me."

Foster grinned.

"Oh, I'll show you," he said. "But Crane will half kill you."

"I'll risk that."

Foster explained the bearings of the larder to Tom, but did not venture to enter the house with him.

Tom went in boldly enough, but he scouted cautiously to see that the coast was clear before he approached the larder.

He found the way easily enough, and having dodged Wickers, the ill-tempered looking man-servant, he reached the larder.

It was not a very well-supplied one. But there was plenty for Tom. Giving a hasty glance round, he started on the remains of a ham, eating as fast as he could in case of interruption.

Tom had a healthy appetite, and he had a foreboding that there might be no tea for him after this escapade, and so he did not spare the ham. It is probable that he consumed as much, now that he was on his mettle, as the rest of the scholars at Hyam House had eaten between them at dinner time.

Then he turned to a cold pie, and made a clean sweep of it, and finished up with cheese and biscuits. The whole he washed down with a jug of milk.

"Well," murmured Tom, as he pushed open the door of the larder again, "I feel better now, and that's one advantage. I wonder if there will be a row."

He had not long to wonder.

As he emerged from the larder, he came face to face with Wickers, who stared at him in amazement. Then he gave a shout.

"You've been a-boning the grub, you young himp."

Tom Merry nodded coolly.

"My dear chap, you are quite right," he said. "As you so energetically and grammatically put it, I have been a-boning the grub."

"You young himp!"

"Let me pass, like a good fellow."

"Yes, I'll let you pass," said Wickers, and he made a grab at Tom Merry's collar.

Tom dodged promptly, and Wickers stumbled over his foot and measured his length on the floor. By the time he had risen again Tom had vanished.

The new boy at Hyam House rejoined the others in the grounds. Herbert Foster looked at him curiously.

"Have you had a feed?"

"Yes."

"There will be the dickens to pay. There's the bell. Come on."

The boys trooped into the house. They entered the school-room, a large and lofty apartment, which had been the drawing-room of the house when it had been a private mansion. There was the master's desk at one end, and half a dozen forms with desks in rows.

Mr. Crane was standing by his desk, a frown upon his face, and a cane in his hand.

His expression, as he glanced at Tom Merry, showed that Wickers had informed him of Tom's little escapade in the larder.

"Merry!" he said, in his cold, cutting voice.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Come out here."

Tom Merry obeyed. The rest of the boys stood up, looking on with interest not unmixed with fear. Tom Merry faced the master coldly.

"Merry, I hear that you have been to the larder, and gorged yourself in a most disgusting manner there," said Mr. Crane.

"That is not the case, sir."

"Do you deny that you went there?"

"No, sir. I went there and ate enough to fill me up," said Tom, cheerfully. "I was awfully hungry, and I wasn't sent here to be starved, you know."

Mr. Crane's face went black with rage.

"I have already noticed that you are inclined to be self-willed and insolent, Merry," he said. "I shall punish you severely, as a lesson to yourself and to others. Hold out your hand."

Tom hesitated a moment, and then held out his hand. The cane came down with a savage slash upon it.

"Now the other."

The other palm was served the same.

"The other again."

Tom Merry put his hands behind him. He could see plainly enough that Amos Keene bore him an old grudge from the days of St. Jim's, and meant to make him suffer now that he was, as he imagined, in his power. Obedience was useless when the master's object was to goad him to resistance as an excuse for a severer punishment.

"Hold out your hand," shouted Mr. Crane.

Tom Merry did not stir.

The boys looked at one another in amazement. They did not know Tom Merry.

"Wickers!"

The man-servant came in.

"You will hold Master Merry while I flog him," said Mr. Crane.

"Yes, sir."

"You won't!" said Tom Merry, with a glint in his eyes.

"Don't touch me, you brute, or you'll get hurt."

"Take him up, Wickers," said Mr. Crane, in a low voice of concentrated fury.

"Yes, sir," said Wickers.

But he approached Tom cautiously.

The hero of the Shell at St. Jim's was an athletic lad for his age, and he had his fists clenched. He had no respect for Wickers, and evidently meant to hit out.

Wickers made a sudden rush. Tom Merry's right came out, and Wickers sat down suddenly. He held his hand to his nose, from which a red stream was flowing.

"Seize him, you fool!" shouted Mr. Crane.

"Tain't so blessed easy," murmured Wickers, staggering to his feet.

"Seize him, or I shall instantly discharge you!"

Wickers scowled savagely, and made another rush at Tom Merry. Tom hit out again, and Wickers gasped upon a drive in the same place again, but he managed to grasp Tom, and then, of course, the boy's strength was as nothing against that of a full-grown man.

Tom was gripped, and sprawled across a desk, and Wickers held him down savagely, face downwards, and then Mr. Crane brought the cane furiously into play.

Tom Merry wriggled and struggled.

He had never had a caning like that before in his life, and till that moment he thought he had never known what pain really was. A birch was simply nothing in comparison with the stinging, lashing cane.

He would not cry out. He set his teeth obstinately, determined that no sound of pain, no appeal for mercy, should

pass his lips. But he struggled desperately, and Wickers had all his work cut out to hold him.

And Mr. Crane, approaching too near in the enjoyment of his cruelty, suddenly received a drive from one of Tom's lashing feet full in the region commonly known as the "bread-basket." It doubled him up, and he staggered away gasping, and held on to his desk for support. Tom tore himself loose from Wickers.

"That—that will do," gasped Mr. Crane. "Merry, you will go to the dormitory at once, and remain there without food or drink till bedtime."

Tom left the room.

He was aching and paining in every limb, and he was glad to get away. His heart was burning with resentment and fiery indignation. He might not have gone so quietly if he had been, as Mr. Crane imagined, an ordinary pupil at Hyam House. But Tom Merry was there to play the part assigned to him by Ferrers Locke, and he did not want to fail the detective. Whatever usage he received at Hyam House, he had no choice but to put up with it till the work for Ferrers Locke was done. Then—well, then he would be at St. Jim's again, and Mr. Crane, alias Amos Keene, would in all probability be in prison.

CHAPTER 6.

The Swell of St. Jim's on the "Twack."

"B AI Jove, I wonder where I've got to, don't you know."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stared about him as he made the remark.

The swell of St. Jim's was in London at last, but he could hardly be said to be fairly on the "twack," as he called it.

He had caught the train at Rylcombe which Blake had instructed him to catch. He had arrived at Euston in the small hours of the morning, and had passed the remainder of the dark hours at the station hotel. He had plenty of money, and so far his task had been simple. He did not rise till twelve o'clock, and then he spent an hour and a half over a breakfast and lunch combined.

After that he thought it was time to get on the "twack."

But that did not seem very simple. Viewed from the distance of St. Jim's, the matter seemed far easier than it seemed now that Arthur Augustus was on the spot.

After some reflection he took a cab to Kennington. The driver looked at him curiously.

"What part of Kennington, sir?" he asked, with the extreme respect of a London cabby for a fare who looked as if he would tip liberally.

"Oh, any part," said Arthur Augustus, vaguely. "Get me there as quickly as possible, my good fellah. I am in a hawwy."

The cabman drove off.

He drove Arthur Augustus across London, and set him down in the Kennington Road, and Arthur Augustus thanked him politely, and asked him how much his fare was.

"Well, sir, it would be pretty cheap at fifteen shillings," said the cabby, looking at the swell of St. Jim's out of the corner of his eye.

"Vewy good," said D'Arcy.

He paid the cabman fifteen shillings, and the jehu drove away grinning, and fervently hoping that he would chance upon another fare like Arthur Augustus.

Then Arthur Augustus looked round him.

He was in a strange country of tram-lines and 'buses, and people hustled him to and fro as they passed on their business.

The swell of St. Jim's felt his brain in a whirl as he gazed round him.

Here he was in the district where, according to Jack Blake's clever deductions, Tom Merry was engaged with the London detective.

But it seemed that a search for Tom Merry would be a good deal like hunting for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

D'Arcy, having dismissed his cabman, walked on, turning over hazily in his mind various plans for effecting the purpose for which Study No. 6 had despatched him from St. Jim's.

Where he was, and where he was going, he had no very clear idea.

And at last, tired and quite confused, he halted, and stood looking round him upon a busy scene, lost and completely nonplussed.

"Bai Jove! Where can I possibly be, I wondah!"

He muttered the words aloud.

"Ere yah, sir. 'Ere's yer 'Ecker."

A ragged-looking newsboy rushed up to D'Arcy with a



The blood of the D'Arcys boiled in the veins of Arthur Augustus.
 "You extremely impertinent person!" he exclaimed. (See page 12.)

paper extended in his grimy fingers. He had a bundle of others under his arm.

D'Arcy looked at him in amazement.

He mechanically accepted the paper held out to him.

"Thank you," he said, politely.

The newsboy stared at him.

"'Ere none of yer little gimes," he said.

D'Arcy stared at him haughtily.

"I fail to compwehend," he said.

The newsboy gasped.

"You—you what?"

"I fail to compwehend," he said.

"Oh, strike me pink!" said the vendor of "Stars" and "Echoes."

They stared at each other. A more striking contrast than they presented could hardly have been imagined.

D'Arcy had dressed himself in a style befitting the importance of the expedition before leaving St. Jim's.

He wore his shiniest silk topper, his palest of pale lavender kid gloves, his handsomest brown boots and neatest spats, his best diamond studs, and the most brilliant of the brilliant assortment of waistcoats in his store at St. Jim's.

The newsboy was clad, the lower half of him, in some garments that might have been trousers once, but now consisted chiefly of holes. He wore a coat that had belonged to someone the size of a lifeguardsmen, and though it had been sheared away to make it wearable, it still nearly trailed on the ground behind him. He wore the wreck of an ancient bowler hat on his head, and what had once been boots on his feet.

His face was grimy, but it was a good-natured face, and the little keen twinkling eyes had some humour in them.

"I do not know how to stwike you pink, or any other colour," said D'Arcy. "Nor should I do so, my good boy. Go away."

"None of yer gimes."

D'Arcy waved his hand.

"Go away."

"A blessed bilk," said the newsboy; "a blessed, blinking bilk!"

"Are you alluding to me?" said Arthur Augustus, frigidly.

"Yes, I am. Where's yer 'apenny?"

"What?"

"Yer 'apenny."

"Oh, a halfpenny. You want me to pwesent you with a halfpenny to buy sweets?" asked D'Arcy, innocently.

The newsboy gave him a withering look.

"Sweets! Oh, lummy! I don't eat sweets. I smokes cigarettes."

"Then you are vewy w'ong," said Arthur Augustus. "You will rot gwow up stwong, and you will wuin your wind, and will not be able to play cwicket."

"Oh, lummy! Lummy! Gimme the 'apenny for that 'Ecker, and lemme go afore I jump on yer."

"Oh, I perceive," said D'Arcy. "You wequire payment for this papah." He fumbled in his pocket, and produced a half-crown. "I have nothin' smallah than a half-crown. Can you give me change?"

"Oh, lummy! You'll gimme fits!"

"You will oblige me," said D'Arcy, "by being more

worshipful in your mannah. I am not accustomed to being addressed with impertinence by a low fellah."

"A whar? Who're yer callin' a low fellah?"

"I think most decidedly that you are an extremely low fellah," said Arthur Augustus, "and you must not be impert, or I shall feel that it is my duty to chastise you."

The newsboy looked puzzled.

"What does that mean in Henglish?" he asked.

"I shall give you a severe licking, that is what it means," said D'Arcy. "I do not want your papah. I did not ask you for it. Go away and play."

The newsboy seemed dazed.

"A licking?" he said. "You lick me? You—you tailor's dummy, you lick me—me, 'Arry 'Arris? Come on, then! I want to have that there lickin'!"

He laid his bundle of papers carefully on the pavement and squared up to D'Arcy, much to the horror of the swell of the School House at St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus was no coward. In spite of his dandified ways he was as plucky a youngster as any at St. Jim's, and that was saying a good deal. But he shrank, with a shiver of horror, from the idea of fighting a London newsboy in the street. And then, his clothes—his hat—above all, his waistcoat! How they would suffer in such a rough-and-tumble scrimmage! He could stand a fight, and, if necessary, a licking, as well as most fellows. But to have the newsboy's grimy hands on his face—to have the tousled head jammed against his beautiful waistcoat—horror!

"Keep away, you extremely wude person!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wefuse to entah into any such mattah at all. Yaas, wathah! I wefuse to soil my hands upon you."

The newsboy danced round him, brandishing a pair of very dirty fists.

"Come on!" he yelled.

"I wefuse! I distinctly wefuse to come on! It is not poss. for a person of my dig.," said D'Arcy haughtily. "Keep your distance, you wude boy! Go away! I will call a constable and have you taken into cus— Oh!"

The "Oh!" was elicited by a tap on the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus.

"There you har!" yelled 'Arry 'Arris. "Now, come on!"

"Go away!"

"That's one for your boko. There's one for your fancy weskut."

"O-o-oh!" gasped D'Arcy, as he received a drive in the chest. "You will pwovoke me to wetaliate, you wude boundah! I shall weally have to thwash you!"

And D'Arcy, throwing his "dig" to the winds, went for the newsboy. But the street-arab had not passed the years of his brief career in the gutter without learning how to use his fists in a way that was positively amazing to the swell of St. Jim's. He danced round D'Arcy, planting in a blow here and there, till poor Arthur Augustus was bewildered, and did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

A crowd gathered round, looking on with great amusement, the rougher section of it cheering on 'Arry 'Arris, who was now wildly excited.

"Come hon!" yelled 'Arry, tapping D'Arcy on the nose and then on the chin. "Come hon! There's a oner for your smeller! There's a tap for your kisser! Yah! Come hon!"

The last tap was too much for D'Arcy. He sat down violently in the gutter, and as it happened to be a muddy one, he sent up a splash round him as he sat down. There he remained, looking up in almost idiotic bewilderment at the newsboy, who was executing a kind of wild war-dance round him, and brandishing his grimy fists.

His tall-hat was in the mud beside him, his trousers were muddy all over, his beautiful waistcoat soiled from the top button to the bottom. His eyeglass dangled round his neck. His gloves were split and soiled.

"Have some more?" shouted 'Arry 'Arris. "'Ere's some more if you want it. Come hon! Get hup and come hon! Why don't you get hup?"

"You wude boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

"If you've had enough say so. Have you had enough?"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"That's all, right, then. You'll think twice next time afore you insult 'Arry 'Arris," said the newsboy, calming down somewhat and picking up his bundle of papers. "'Ere you are, sir! 'Ere's your 'Ecker! 'Speshul edition! Latest murders! 'Ere you are!"

And 'Arry 'Arris was gone.

D'Arcy sat in the muddy gutter, wondering whether the world was coming to an end. He, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, had been knocked out and left sitting in the gutter by a newsboy of the London streets! Evidently something was wrong with the laws of Nature.

"Let me lend you a 'and, sir," said a rough but civil voice; and a flashily-dressed individual plucked D'Arcy from the gutter. "That's right!"

He plucked Arthur Augustus from the gutter. The crowd dispersed, but D'Arcy's new friend did not leave him. He stood holding the swell of St. Jim's by the arm till he recovered himself.

"Thank you!" said D'Arcy feebly. "Allow me to weward you with half-a-crown."

The flashy individual shook his head.

"Not at all, sir. I only want to help you. Would you like to come into my ouse for a brush-up arter that little fall? You look rather soiled, sir. You do really. 'Ere's your 'at."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured D'Arcy. "Is your house near here?"

"Tain't fur, sir. Lean on my arm, so. You are a sight to be seen in the street—you are, sir, and no mistake."

D'Arcy shuddered. His weakest spot was on his personal appearance, and the knowledge that he looked dilapidated and disreputable was gall and wormwood to him.

"Thank you!" he gasped. "I shall be vewy glad to come."

"That's right, sir! This is the way."

The flashy individual led Arthur Augustus away from the scene of the fight. D'Arcy was too dazed to notice where they were going, and too grateful to the friend in need to think of suspecting him of ulterior motives.

They passed through several streets, and D'Arcy did not notice that each was darker and meaner than the last, till the last was a mere alley—a dismal alley, where dwelt dirty, unshaven men and slatternly, screaming women. His guide pushed open a door, and D'Arcy was pushed into a dusky room.

The door slammed. The sound of the slam awoke, for the first time, a vague alarm in D'Arcy's breast. He looked quickly round him.

"What is this place, my good fwiend?"

"It's my digs," said his guide, with a chuckle. "And now I'll trouble you to 'and over your watch and chain and spare cash, Mr. Blooming Dandy."

And Arthur Augustus realised that he had been trapped, and that he was at the mercy of one of the thieves of London.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry Makes a Discovery.

TOM MERRY came down in the morning with an ache in every lin-b. He had not slept much during the night, for the effect of the thrashing Mr. Crane had given him had been lasting. He was looking a little paler than usual when he took his place at the breakfast-table in the dining-room at Hyam House. Mr. Crane looked at him with a sour smile.

"I hope you have learned your lesson, Merry," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom quietly.

Breakfast was a dismal meal. There wasn't much to eat, and what there was, wasn't of the best. The boys of Hyam House ate as much as they dared under the eye of Mr. Crane, and then they adjourned to the school-room.

Mr. Crane was severe and fault-finding. He was especially so with Tom Merry. But Tom was very careful, and he contrived to get through the morning without another caning. At dinner-time Mr. Crane addressed his remarks chiefly to Tom, seeking to provoke the boy into a hasty answer.

"Are you satisfied with the food to-day, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom cheerfully.

"You are sure you would not like it improved?" asked the master of Hyam House, with sarcasm.

"Well, yes, I should, sir," said Tom.

One of the boys giggled. Mr. Crane fixed a cold, icy glance upon him.

"Foster!"

"Yes, sir," said Foster, trembling.

"You laughed, Foster. What did you laugh at?"

"At what Merry said, sir. I am sorry, sir."

"Ah! In order that you may be sincerely sorry, you will miss your dinner, Foster."

"Yes, sir."

"And as you are the cause of Foster's fault, Merry, you will miss your dinner also."

Tom's eyes flashed.

"Well, Merry, have you anything to say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Are you quite sure?"

Tom looked the master straight in the face.

"Do you want me to speak what I think?" he asked bluntly.

"Really, I should be honoured," said Mr. Crane.

"Well, I think you would not be allowed to starve boys in this manner if it were known," said Tom Merry.

The boys looked terror-stricken at this reply. Mr. Crane turned crimson.

"Indeed, Merry! You will go to your dormitory, and remain there the rest of the day without anything but bread and water."

Tom hesitated.

"Wickers," roared Mr. Crane, "remove Merry from the room!"

"Yes, sir."

"You needn't trouble," said Tom Merry, rising from his form. "I'm going."

He walked out of the dining-room. He went up to the large room used as a dormitory, and sat on one of the beds, thinking. He was sitting there when he heard the boys go into the school-room, and detected Mr. Crane's unpleasant voice from below dealing with the class.

Then he rose, a gleam in his eyes. He had already ascertained that Mr. Crane's establishment consisted only of himself and Wickers, besides the boys. Wickers, he knew, was now down in the kitchen. Tom Merry had the upper part of the house to himself. He stepped cautiously to the door of the room. There was no sound in the house save a drone from the school-room below, and a distant clink of washing knives and forks and dishes in the nether regions.

"Now's the time," murmured Tom.

He removed his boots, and left them inside the door. Then he stole out of the dormitory.

We have already said that Hyam House was a very old building, and had been a mansion in its palmy days. The establishment of Mr. Crane occupied less than half of the house, and there was a wing quite unused. Mr. Crane doubtless hoped that his school would grow when its peculiar advantages became more widely known, but at present Tom Merry was his seventh pupil only. A large part of the house was locked up and unused.

Tom had intended to explore the uninhabited part of the house during the night. But he would have found it difficult, and perhaps dangerous, and now his banishment to the dormitory had given him the opportunity of effecting his purpose in the daylight.

He was at Hyam House to learn whether any person was secretly living in the building. He would never have a better chance than the present of making the discovery. The other boys were too terrified by Mr. Crane to dream of venturing out of their own quarters. Tom Merry was not so easily terrified.

He crept along the passage leading into the disused wing of Hyam House. It was dark and dusty and neglected. He turned into a passage running at right angles with it, out of which several doors opened. The air of the whole place was that of dust and neglect and desertion. But a sudden gleam came into Tom's eyes.

The handles of the doors in this passage were dirty from want of care and use. But the handle of the last door was far cleaner than the rest. There was only one way of accounting for that. The door of that room was frequently opened, while the other doors were never touched.

Tom had already learned, by talk with the boys in the dormitory the previous night, that the whole wing was supposed to be uninhabited. He had hinted at the possibility of some friend of Mr. Crane's residing there, and Herbert Foster had positively assured him that there was no one in the house, so far as any of them knew, besides themselves, Mr. Crane, and Wickers.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed as he advanced closer to the door. He put his ear to the keyhole to listen. He heard nothing, but smelt something—a very distinct odour of tobacco. He wasn't fond of tobacco smoke, but he sniffed up that scent with a great deal of satisfaction.

Someone was smoking a cigar in the room of the deserted wing. Who was it? Wickers was below; Mr. Crane was in the school-room with the class. Who was in the room here smoking a cigar. Some secret dweller of Hyam House! There was no other explanation.

Tom, his heart beating hard with excitement, placed his eye to the keyhole, and looked through. At first he could see little, but soon he made out most of the interior of the room, and saw that, unlike the other rooms, it was furnished. He caught a glimpse of the grate, and saw that a fire was burning in it. A moving figure crossed his line of vision. A man was in the room, moving about, and the next instant the door was flung suddenly open!

Tom had, perhaps, made some slight sound without noticing it. He started back as the door was flung open. A man with a sandy-coloured beard and pale, grey eyes appeared in the doorway. He gave Tom Merry a startled glance.

"Who are you?" he cried. "What are you doing here?"

Tom was dismayed for a moment; but he did not lose his accustomed coolness.

"Nothing, sir," he replied.

The man sprang forward and seized him by the arm.

"You young, spying hound! Who are you?"

Tom Merry struggled.

"Let me go."

"What are you doing here? Who are you?" cried the man, shaking him violently.

"I am a new boy here," said Tom; "that's all."

"What is your name?"

"Tom Merry."

"You—you young rascal! You were spying here. Crane—Crane!"

He shouted the name at the top of his voice, and the house rang with it.

"Crane!"

There was the sound of an opening, then a slamming door, and of swift footsteps.

"Crane—Crane!"

Mr. Crane came panting along the corridor.

"Scarlett, you fool, what are you shouting like that for? Are you drunk?"

Tom eyes danced.

Scarlett! There was no doubt now. He had run the defaulting solicitor, the man whose flight threatened to ruin the Head of St. Jim's, to earth! But his satisfaction was short-lived. He caught sight of Crane's face as he came swiftly along the passage, and what he saw in it made him shiver.

"Crane, who is this boy?"

"Tom Merry!" Crane ground his teeth. "What did he come here for? Don't let him escape!"

He ran forward swiftly to seize Tom. The boy was desperate. He knew that he had to deal with two men who were desperate, whom the fear of exposure and penal servitude might drive to any cruel deed.

He gave Scarlett a sudden terrific kick, and the man released him, with a cry of pain. It was only for a moment; but a moment was enough for Tom Merry. He darted away along the passage to the end.

"After him," panted Crane; "there is no outlet that way!"

He dashed after Tom Merry, Scarlett following more slowly. Tom heard his words, and his teeth came together hard. He turned and rushed back towards Mr. Crane. Before the villain could guard against this sudden attack, Tom Merry's lowered head crashed upon his stomach, and he reeled back and went with a thud to the floor.

He gave a gasp, as all the breath was knocked out of his body, and lay wriggling and groaning on the floor, while the boy, his own head reeling from the concussion, dashed on. Scarlett made a clutch at him, with a murderous light in his eyes. Tom dodged with the neatness of a Rugby three-quarter, and ran on swiftly, with the rascal in hot pursuit; but Mr. Crane did not join in the chase now. He still lay on the floor, groaning.

Tom ran as fast as he could. Scarlett was shouting to Wickers, and, as Tom dashed along the corridor into the inhabited wing of the house, he heard the manservant ascending the basement stairs. He redoubled his speed, and reached the door opening upon the grounds. Right out into the sunny afternoon he dashed.

"After him!" screamed Scarlett. "Seize him, Wickers!"

They dashed out into the open after Tom. Wickers, who was evidently in the secret, put on a short spurt and drew very near to Tom. The solicitor panted on behind. Both of them realised now that Tom Merry meant to make a break to escape from Hyam House altogether, and that, if he went, he would carry out into the world the secret so carefully hidden by Mr. Crane.

Everything depended upon capturing him. What was done with him afterwards was another matter. His capture, before he could gain the street, was the important point now.

"Cut him off from the front, sir!" shouted Wickers.

And Scarlett dashed off to obey. The manservant panted upon the track of Tom Merry. Tom was breathing hard now. He was one of the finest sprinters in the juniors' forms at St. Jim's, but the concussion when he butted into Mr. Crane had made him sick and faint, and his treatment since coming to Hyam House had, of course, detracted from his form. He felt himself tailing, and heard the thudding footsteps of Wickers coming momentarily nearer and nearer.

He dodged the man and raced away, running parallel with the high wall of Hyam House. He could have cut off towards the front, but there he knew that the scoundrel Scarlett was watching and waiting for him to cut off his escape.

Closer behind sounded the heavy footsteps and panting breath of Wickers. The ruffian's outstretched hand almost touched the boy's shoulder. Tom Merry felt a puff of hot breath on his cheek. He threw himself suddenly to earth.

It was an old trick, but the ruffian behind was not prepared for it, and it succeeded. He went on, right over Tom Merry, and fell helplessly upon his face. He gave a gasp of pain, and his hands crashed down upon the rough ground.

Tom was on his feet in a moment. He had succeeded beyond his hopes, and had gained a respite. He ran on again. The high wall bounding the grounds of Hyam House seemed to shut him off from hope. But a sudden gleam darted into his eyes.

In one corner a tree grew very close to the high wall. As soon as he observed it, and saw his chance, Tom Merry dashed straight for the tree; but Wickers was now on his feet, and chasing him hotly again.

Tom made a desperate spring, and caught a low branch. At the same moment Wickers, with a frantic spurt, reached him, and grasped one of his ankles as he clung to the branch above.

"Got you—oh!"

Tom was too desperate to hesitate at anything then. His free foot crashed into Wickers's face, and the ruffian reeled back, with the blood spurting from his nose and mouth. His grasp relaxed, and Tom, with a final effort, dragged himself upon the branch. He lay along it, holding on dizzily, gasping for breath and utterly exhausted.

Wickers staggered to his feet, holding his hand to his face, and glared up at him. He reached up to get a grip on the branch. Tom drew himself further into the tree, and scrambled along another branch to the wall. Wickers saw that he could not overtake him in time.

"Here, stop!" he exclaimed. "You'll break your neck getting over that wall. I'm not goin' to hurt you. Come back, and Mr. Crane will let you off."

Tom gave a gasping laugh.

"Not good enough," he murmured. "Wickers, old dear, you must be a simple merchant if you think I could swallow a yarn like that. Good-bye, Bluebell!"

Tom hung on the wall with his hands, and dropped on the outside. It was a good drop, but Tom Merry was active. He fell lightly upon his feet, and ran along the passage which lay outside the wall. A minute more, and he was in the street.

Five minutes more, and he was at the telephone-office, ringing up Ferrers Locke. Meanwhile, Wickers returned sullenly towards the house. He met Mr. Crane coming out.

"Where is he?" gasped the master of Hyam House.

"Blessed if I know!" said Wickers sullenly.

Crane turned deadly pale.

"You—you haven't let him escape?"

"He got over the wall."

"Fool! Idiot! Traitor! All is lost!"

"I know all is lost, and a nice hole you've got me into, as well as yourself. I'm going to be about one minute before I clear out of this house for good!"

"Stop! I—"

"You'd better clear, too. That boy knows something; the next thing will be the police coming down on us!" said Wickers roughly. "I'm off, anyway!"

Crane stood half dazed, his hand pressed to his forehead. Scarlett came round from the front of the house and joined him.

"Where is the boy? You have caught him?"

"He has escaped!"

Scarlett reeled against the wall.

"Then all is lost!"

"He can know nothing," panted Crane. "How can he know anything?"

"He heard you call me Scarlett."

"The name would mean nothing to him."

"He may have seen it in the papers. What was he searching through the deserted wing for? He came here for some purpose. He may be a spy of the police."

"Nonsense! He is a schoolboy."

"How do you know?" snarled Scarlett. "He might be a spy. He is more than old enough to be one of the assistants of Ferrers Locke, who has the case in hand."

"Impossible! I know he is simply a schoolboy, because he was in the Shell at St. Jim's when I was master there."

"St. Jim's! And it is the headmaster at St. Jim's who is one of the greatest sufferers by my absconding!" exclaimed Scarlett. "How do you know that the boy has not been sent purposely to spy out—"

"It is absurd. I cannot imagine so."

"I cannot help fearing so. I shall not remain here."

"It is not safe to go, especially in the daylight."

"It is more safe than to remain," said Scarlett; "and if you are wise you will go, too. We can watch from a distance and see if the police arrive and then—"

"Where shall we go?" asked Crane despairingly.

"To Flush Bill's den in the Borough. That is our only chance now."

"It is giving up everything."

"It is escaping penal servitude."

"I—I suppose it is safer. Let us go. Heavens, what a fool I was to help you in this matter at all! It's too late to think of that now. Let us go."

In five minutes the two rascals were outside Hyam House. From a street corner at a distance they watched the house, and a quarter of an hour later saw an inspector and two constables stop at the gate.

"You see that?" whispered Scarlett.

Crane groaned under his breath.

"I see. All is lost. Let us go!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Surprise For Arthur Augustus.

"**H**AND over your spare cash and other wallybles," said the rough voice in the dusky den into which the unlucky Arthur Augustus had been entrapped. "And sharp, unless you want a knock over the 'ead, young shaver."

The blood of all the D'Arcys boiled in the veins of Arthur Augustus.

"You extremely impertinent person," he exclaimed. "How dare you address me as young shavah? Let me out of this dirty place immediately."

The ruffian chuckled.

"It's easier to get into Flush Bill's 'ouse than to git outer gin," he said. "Come, I don't want to hurt you. And over that watch."

D'Arcy measured him with his eye.

He was alone in the room with the ruffian, who had produced a life-preserver from his pocket.

He evidently meant business, and Arthur Augustus had no chance whatever against the life-preserver, or against the ruffian without it, for that matter.

Slowly and reluctantly the swell of St. Jim's took out the lovely gold watch which had cost his "governah" thirty guineas, and handed it to Flush Bill.

The ruffian looked at it with sparkling eyes.

It was a prize such as very seldom came in his way, though Flush Bill was one of the most cunning and successful thieves in London.

"Good," he commented, stowing it away in his pocket. "Now your cash."

The two "fivahs" were reluctantly handed over.

"My blessed word," said Flush Bill, "I didn't know I had caught a blessed Rothschild! Have you got any more about you?"

"Only a soy and some silvah," said D'Arcy, almost tearfully. "I considah you a wuff and most dishonest bwute."

"Oh, don't say these unkind things," implored Flush Bill. "Just 'and over the rest of your tin, before I fire you out on your head."

D'Arcy was about to obey, when the door suddenly opened, and a stream of daylight came into the dusky room, which was lighted only by a small window high up in the wall.

Two men entered quickly and closed the door behind them.

Flush Bill swung round with a startled oath.

"Wot the dooce—why, is it you? What's happened?"

"The game's up at Hyam House, that's what," said one of the new-comers. "Neither noticed D'Arcy in the shadowy room for a moment. 'The gaff is blown!'"

"My word!"

"We've come here to lie low for a bit," said the other. And D'Arcy gave a start of surprise as he heard the voice, for there was a tone in it familiar to his ears. He looked quickly at the speaker.

The two men had been muffled up, though the afternoon certainly was not cold. Now they had turned down their collars, and Arthur Augustus saw their faces. Like Tom, he instantly recognised Amos Keene, in spite of the change in his appearance since the time he was master of the Shell at St. Jim's.

And he was not so cautious as Tom Merry had been.

He stared open-mouthed at the rascal, and at the same moment Crane caught sight of him.

"Hallo! Who is that, Bill? Why it's—it's—"

The swell of St. Jim's was not a person easily forgotten. In spite of his dilapidated appearance, the late master at St. Jim's knew him at once.

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus made his best bow.

"How do you do, Mr. Keene? I am vewy glad to see you, vewy glad indeed," he said, affably.

Flush Bill stared from one to the other.

"'Allo!" he exclaimed, with a hoarse laugh. "Is this 'ere an old friend of yours, Crane?"

Crane was gritting his teeth savagely.

"How came he here?" he muttered. "He knows me."

D'Arcy shrank a little from his savage look.

He had been slow to divine that Crane might be a friend of the ruffian who had entrapped him, but now that knowledge burst upon his mind.

"Weally, Mr. Keene," he exclaimed. "I know you, of course, but I wegard you in a vewy fwriendly way. I think——"

Crane turned quickly to the door and locked it.

"How came that boy here, Flush Bill?" he said, huskily.

"I brought 'im 'ere for a gold ticker," said the ruffian; "and he has shelled out uncommon well, I must say."

"He must not go. He knows me, and——"

"Weally, I must go. I have a most important engagement, my deah fellah, and——"

"He will blab! He must not go!" said Crane shrilly. "You must keep him safe here, Bill, now that he has seen us."

"That's easy done," said Flush Bill, carelessly. "There's plenty of rooms in this old rookery where he can be locked up, for as long as you want. If you two coves are going to hang up in the house, you can look after him."

D'Arcy looked extremely alarmed.

"I pwotest against anythin' of the sort," he exclaimed. "I cannot stay here undah any circumstances. It is quite imposs. I assuah you, deah boys."

Flush Bill grinned.

He gripped D'Arcy by the collar, and dug his knuckles into the back of his neck.

"Come along, kid."

"But I assuah you——"

"Git on!"

D'Arcy was dragged away. The ruffian drew him along a reeking filthy passage, and pitched him into a small room, with a single tiny window high up in one corner. The only furniture the room contained was a sack on the floor.

"Them's your quarters, Mr. Blessed Fine Gentleman," said Flush Bill, with a hoarse chuckle. "I 'opes as 'ow you'll be nice an' comfy."

"You wuff, wude bwute——"

The slam of the door cut off the rest of D'Arcy's eloquence. Flush Bill returned to the front room, and rejoined the two rascals there.

"Now gimme the lay," he said.

Scarlett explained what had happened at Hyam House.

"I reckon that kid Merry was sent to spy out," was the ruffian's comment. "Anyway, if the police are there, you had no choice but to clear. And if that smart kid Merry is a chum of this Gussy cove, as you say, why you'd better be careful with Gussy. Why, if he got out, and said a word, the whole game would be blown."

"He shall not get out," said Crane, savagely.

"You're safe 'ere," said Flush Bill. "You was lucky to get away in time. There ain't no chance of the p'lice trackin' you 'ere. You've only got to lie low for a bit."

He unlocked the door.

"So-long. I've got a gold ticker to sell, and a jolly good long price I fancy I shall get for it. I'm off."

And Flush Bill departed, to effect the sale of poor Arthur Augustus's gold watch to a "fence" in the New Cut, while the swell of St. Jim's languished in durancé vile in the foul den in the Borough slum.

CHAPTER 9.

Tracked Down.

"**F**LOWN!"

Ferrers Locke uttered the one word.

He spoke quite calmly. He was disappointed, but his cool, calm face did not show it. Tom Merry looked, and felt, as he would have expressed it, "rotten."

"It's all my fault," he said.

The detective patted his curly head.

"Not in the least, Tom. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"If I hadn't given myself away to that chap, and had let you know secretly that he was there, you could have swooped down and collared him," said Tom remorsefully.

"That was the arrangement, and I mucked it up."

"You did your best, Tom, and you did it uncommonly well," said Ferrers Locke, quietly. "You could not help what happened. And when you were discovered your only resource was to escape from Hyam House as quickly as possible. Thank goodness you were able to escape. The police arrived too late. That was only to be expected."

Ferrers Locke gave a regretful glance round Hyam House.

He had, immediately on hearing from Tom by telephone, communicated with the Kennington police by phone, and they had gone with all possible haste to Hyam House.

The detective had dashed down from London as fast as a motor-cab could carry him.

He arrived in time to find the police in possession of the house, and Tom Merry waiting for him there, and the boys of Hyam House lost in amazement; but the birds had flown, as he had feared and expected.

Ferrers Locke was philosophical. It was a defeat, but Tom Merry had done much, and the detective took the defeat calmly.

But now both Crane and Scarlett had disappeared into the wilderness of London, and in all Hyam House Ferrers Locke failed to discover a clue to the direction in which they had fled.

Evidence was discovered to prove that Scarlett had been there, and that Crane had been his confederate. But where were they now?

Ferrers Locke left the house with Tom Merry.

He had arranged for the boys of Hyam House to be taken to the police-station until their parents could be communicated with. Wherever they went, it was pretty certain that their future quarters would be an improvement upon Hyam House, and so they were in high spirits.

Tom Merry's face was serious as he walked beside the detective.

"I suppose you won't want me any more," he said, with a sigh.

The detective smiled.

"I may, Tom. I have not only to find the two rascals who have fled from Hyam House. I had a letter today from the Head of St. Jim's, and he has given me someone else to find. You may read the letter."

Tom Merry stopped, in wonder, and read the letter the detective smilingly handed to him.

"Dear Mr. Locke," so ran the epistle from Dr. Holmes, "I have a favour to ask of you, if you can spare time to look into the matter. Otherwise, it must be left to the police."

"Some of the boys here have had an inkling of Tom Merry's business in London, and some boys in the School House, who are his rivals in a boyish way for distinction in our little world here, seemed to have resolved to emulate him. It was discovered this morning that a junior named D'Arcy was missing, and on questioning his study mates, Blake and Herries, it came out that the three had cast lots to decide which of their number should follow Tom Merry to London and discover, as Blake expressed it, what larks he was up to."

"Well, the nerve of those Fourth Form kids!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"The lot fell upon D'Arcy," the letter continued, "and he actually left Rylcombe by the night train, and is now somewhere in London. The absurdity of such a quest does not seem to have occurred to the juniors. I dare say D'Arcy will be found wandering about Euston Station. I should mention, however, that he was instructed to proceed to the suburb of Kennington, Blake having deduced by the postmark on a letter received by Manners that Tom Merry was that district."

"Cute!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He handed the letter back to the detective.

Ferrers Locke was smiling.

"I did not get this letter till late in the day," he said.

"I made inquiries at Euston, and learned that Master D'Arcy had stayed at the hotel there, and had taken a cab for Kennington. I found the cab, and the driver informed me where he had set the lad down. Since then I know nothing of him, but I fear that he may have fallen into bad hands."

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Poor old Gussy!" he exclaimed. "He was a funny merchant, but he was a jolly good sort. I hope nothing's happened to him."

"'Ere, yer, sir. 'Ere's yer 'Ecker.'"

It was a boyish voice, as a paper was thrust into Ferrers Locke's hands.

"Hallo, 'Arry," said the detective, with a smile, as he felt in his pocket for a coin. "Busy as usual?"

"Bless my boots," said 'Arry 'Arris. "It's Mr. Locke! Mighty glad to see yer, sir. Ain't got any little jobs for yours truly like the last, sir? I'd do anything for you, Mr. Locke, and like it better'n selling pipers."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Not at present, 'Arry," he said good-humouredly. "I shall send for you when I want you again. But what's the matter? Have you been in the wars?"

He glanced at the newsboy's face, which showed signs of his recent conflict. One of the eyes had a purple circle, and the nose was red and swollen.

"Only a little scrap," said 'Arry cheerfully. "You should ha' seen the swell when I'd done with him, sir."

"Hallo, so you have been fighting a swell, have you?"

"You bet, sir. He cheeked me, and I sat on him. Awful swell from the country, I reckon. He wouldn't fight at

first; said it wasn't poss for his dig, whatever that means."

Tom Merry pricked up his ears.

"My hat," he exclaimed, "that sounds like old Gussy!"

Ferrers Locke looked interested.

"What was the lad like, 'Arry?" he asked.

"Oh, awful swell!" chuckled 'Arry. "Fancy waistcoat an' spats, and topper as shiny as a plate-glass window. Awful haw-haw! Yaas, wat-hah! Ha, ha, ha! I left him sitting in the gutter, and I saw Flush Bill help him out, and so I bet he'll go home without his tucker."

"I say, that sounds awfully like D'Arcy," exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is it possible that it was poor old Gus, Mr. Locke?"

"We will see."

The detective questioned the newsboy closely. 'Arry 'Arris willingly gave a minute description of the "swell," and his description left no doubt in Tom Merry's mind that it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whom he had met.

"It's D'Arcy, sir," exclaimed Tom excitedly. "Now, young shaver, put down your papers, and put up your fists."

"Allo, wot's biting you?"

Tom Merry squared up to 'Arry 'Arris in a warlike way.

"That chap you licked is a friend of mine. We come from the same school. One good turn deserves another. You licked him, and now I'm going to lick you. Come on!"

The newsboy deposited his papers on the pavement.

"Right-oh," he exclaimed; "'Arry 'Arris is yer man. Come hon, then."

In another second they would have been at it hammer and tongs; but Ferrers Locke, laughing, grasped each of them by a shoulder, and they were swung apart.

"I say, sir—" expostulated Tom Merry.

"I say, sir—" ejaculated 'Arry 'Arris.

"You are not going to fight?" said the detective.

"Let me give him just a lick, sir," urged Tom.

"Lemme give 'im just a wipe, Mr. Locke—just a little wipe round his kissèr," implored 'Arry.

"Not at all. Both of you be quiet. Listen to me. I'm afraid some misfortune has happened to D'Arcy, the boy you fought with, 'Arry. I want to find him."

"Oh, I see!" said 'Arry, calming down. "Is that the lay?"

"Yes; you say you saw Flush Bill helping him?"

'Arry 'Arris grinned.

"Yes, and I knows Bill, and so do you, sir. He'll have his tucker. I saw him a-piloting the kid along, and I guessed where they was going."

"Where do you think?"

"To Bill's place in Paradise Alley, where he could skin the greeney," said 'Arry promptly.

Tom Merry looked very anxious.

"We must look for poor old Gus, sir," he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "We must look for him. Can you guide me to Flush Bill's place, 'Arry?"

"Easy, sir. Leastways, I'll point it out. I don't want to be picked outer the Thames, found drowned, to-morrer," said the street arab, with a wink.

Tom Merry shuddered. The glimpse he was getting of the life of the grim, great city was not wholly a pleasant one.

"Very well," said Ferrers Locke; "come along, Tom."

They followed the lead of 'Arry 'Arris. Street after street was passed, bewildering to Tom, but Ferrers Locke evidently knew exactly where he was all the time. Towards the end of the journey he stopped and spoke to a couple of policemen, and Tom discovered that the latter were following him at a cautious distance. Some distance from the alley 'Arry stopped.

"That there's the place, guv'nor," he said. "Flush Bill's den is the little 'ouse with the shutters. So-long!"

The detective pressed five shillings into his hands, and 'Arry 'Arris promptly disappeared. Ferrers Locke stood looking towards the shuttered house thoughtfully. Suddenly he made a dash forward, and seized a man who had slouched out of a narrow turning.

"Flush Bill!"

Before Flush Bill knew what was happening, the handcuffs clinked on his wrists. He stared at the detective in rage and terror.

"No good making a row," said Ferrers Locke crisply. "I have the police within easy call. Where is the boy you robbed to-day?"

"The—the—the boy?" stammered Flush Bill.

"Yes; still in here?" The detective had quickly noted Flush Bill's look of apprehension towards his hovel. "Open the door, then."

"Selp me, guv'nor, he ain't—"

"Open that door!"

Flush Bill made a spring to escape. He was lying on the ground the next moment, and a stream of golden coins jerked from the pocket of his ragged coat.

"Ah," said Ferrers Locke grimly, "you are in funds, my

friend! I know what that means. This way, constables. There is your prisoner!"

"It was a gold tucker," said Flush Bill mournfully—"a lovely gold tucker. I ain't hurt the kid, Mr. Locke, I swear it!"

"We shall see. I—"

Flush Bill submitted quietly to the constables. He knew that there was no chance of resistance. Ferrers Locke tried the door of the hovel. It was locked. Flush Bill's manner left no doubt in the detective's mind that Arthur Augustus was still in the house, and he did not hesitate to take strong measures. He put his shoulder against the flimsy door, and it crashed in under his weight.

The detective dashed into the room. Two men sprang to their feet, and Ferrers Locke gave almost a yell of amazement and triumph:

"Scarlett!"

And Tom Merry cried in astonishment:

"Amos Keene!"

The two rascals, thus unexpectedly brought face to face with their tracker, stared at Ferrers Locke in rage and terror, blankly, for a moment. Then they made a rush to escape. Like a tiger Ferrers Locke flung himself upon Scarlett, and bore him to the floor. At the same moment Tom Merry valiantly seized Crane, and held him fast.

"Help here!" shouted Ferrers Locke.

The two constables dashed into the room. In a moment they saw how matters stood, and joined in the fray. The odds were too great; and in a couple of minutes Scarlett and Crane were secured and handcuffed.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Who'd have thought it? But where's old Gussy?"

In the confusion Flush Bill had contrived to decamp, handcuffs and all; but in the keen satisfaction of securing the greater prize, nobody cared for that. Tom Merry went along the little, dusky passage shouting the name of Arthur Augustus:

"I say, D'Arcy! Are you here, Gussy? Answer, Adolphus! Where are you, Aubrey?"

A feeble voice answered from behind a bolted door:

"Here I am, Tom Mewwy, in this extremely dirty woom."

Tom Merry had the door open in a twinkling. D'Arcy came towards him, looking more like a scarecrow than the elegant swell of St. Jim's. Tom Merry burst into a roar:

"Ha, ha, ha! You do look a funny merchant, Adolphus!"

"Oh, take me away iwom here!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "Take me somewhere where I can get a clean collah, for goodness' sake!"

Tom linked his arm in D'Arcy's.

"Come on, old kid. You're all right now; we're going back to St. Jim's, and everything in the garden is lovely! Here he is, Mr. Locke, a little soiled, but as good as new."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus.

Back to St. Jim's Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus went in company. The case was finished; the rascals were captured, and it could not be denied that D'Arcy, as well as Tom Merry, had had a hand—though unconsciously—in bringing about that desired result.

Ferrers Locke accompanied the boys to St. Jim's to see the Head. His interview with Dr. Holmes was a very satisfactory one to both. The detective had succeeded in a most difficult case. The doctor had escaped ruin, and possibly unpleasant imputations. For with the defaulting solicitor, almost the whole of the securities and a large part of the cash he had absconded with, had been recaptured. The losses caused by Scarlett's dishonesty were almost wholly made good, while the rascal himself went to penal servitude for a long term; and in the same gang at Portland he had the honour of the company of Amos Keene, alias Crane.

Ferrers Locke shook hands heartily with Tom Merry when he left.

"You helped me a great deal, Tom," he said. "I sha'n't forget what I owe you in a hurry; neither will the doctor, I can answer for it."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom. "I say, you won't forget to send for me again, will you, if you should want me?"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I won't forget, Tom. And—who knows what may happen?"

"Jolly good sort, that chap," said Manners, when the detective was gone. "Here you are, back again, covered with glory, Tom, just as I predicted."

DAILY MAIL

"Oh, you're a giddy prophet, you are," said Blake, coming up. "Jolly lucky for all of you. I think. Merry, that I thought of sending Gussy up to town to help you out."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

Manners stared.

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"I don't see it," said Blake obstinately. "Gussy tracked the giddy criminals to their lair—you can't deny that."

"Why, he was taken there by his ears!" exclaimed Manners excitedly.

"Oh, weally, don't you know!" said D'Arcy.

"I don't care how he got there," said Blake. "The detective chap went there because he was there, and found the bounders he was looking for. I don't deny that Tom

Merry had a hand in it. But it was Study No. 6 that brought the business to a success. It was Gussy who scored all along the line. And that fellow Scarlett might be still going about with the doctor's cash in his trousers' pocket, if we hadn't thought of sending Gussy to see the thing through. It was Gussy's innings all the time."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Manners once more.

Tom Merry laughed heartily.

"Let it go at that," he said. "It's a case of honours divided!"

THE END.

(Our next issue will contain a Splendid School Tale, entitled "Tom Merry's Day Out." Order in advance.)



Stormpoint

A School Tale. By MAURICE MERRIMAN.

READ
THIS
FIRST

Rex Allingham, Jim Fisher, and Bob Bouncer are three well-known chums at Stormpoint College. Hal Trehearn, the captain of the school, favours them; but they are bullied by Jardon and Symes, two Fifth-Formers, who play many spiteful tricks upon them. Bob mysteriously comes into some money, and, as he is frightened that his stepfather—who is coming down to the school—might like to have the handling of it, Bob draws it from the bank and hides it. The three chums set out from Stormpoint College to meet Bob's stepfather. On the way back from the station, Fern—Bob's relative—falls into a very muddy stream. On arriving at the school, he tells the Head that it was through Bob the accident occurred. "How am I to return home like this?" he inquired. "You might borrow a suit from the

porter. He's rather paunchy, but you could stuff a pillow in so as to fill you out!" answered Bob. (Now go on with the story.)

Porker Loses His Tea.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rex.

"Silence, boys!" cried the doctor sternly. "How dare you make fun of the matter? Leave the room, all of you! Do you wish to say good-bye to your father, Robert?"

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, sir. Good-bye, stepfather! I hope you will be able to get that mud off, but I have my doubts."

"He is the most insolent boy I have ever known!" snarled Fern. "I don't at all understand how he gets all that money. It is certainly not from relatives, because he has none. It is a matter that must be inquired into."

"You need not bother about it, stepfather," said Bob. "I get it quite honestly. I haven't got any debts, or anything like that. Come on, old chaps! I don't think stepfather wants me any more."

"Suppose we come and see what Porker is having to his tea, as he calls it," suggested Rex. "He is always trying to get us into a row, and we ought to point out to him the error of his ways."

They quite agreed with this opinion, so made their way to the porter's lodge. Porker was just commencing his tea, and he did not look best pleased at seeing the chums.

"I say," exclaimed Rex, "you are surely not going to wolf all that grub?"

"Now, you be off, you varminits! I've had quite enough of you for one afternoon."

"But think what an awful lot that tea will cost!"

"You ain't paying for it, are you?"

"No, my dear old guzzler! It would about ruin me to keep you in teas. Bob might be able to do it, because money is no object to him. I wish he would give me the recipe for making it like he does. You've got plenty of butter on that toast. My eyes! He's eating sausages with hot buttered toast!"

"He will make his whiskers grow if he greases his mouth like that!" growled Bob.

"If you don't clear bout I'll fling summat at your 'eads, and so I tell you! I suppose a man as works from morning to night can have a sausage to his tea if he feels so disposed?"

"Assuredly, Porker!" answered Rex. "But you have got five sausages to your tea, and hot buttered toast is too greasy to eat with sausages."

"He will turn himself into a sardine, and wallow in oil!" said Bob.

"He looks more like a porpoise than a sardine!" observed Jim.

"Bust! I'll hurt some of you directly!" roared Porker, seizing his stick and coming to the door, which he locked as the chums bolted, but they went to the window and chaffed him through that. "If I don't break their 'eads it's a caution!" muttered Porker, pulling down the blind.

"You can bet he's coming out!" whispered Rex. "Entice him away if you can. Back, directly!"

Rex bolted into the passage, and dodged into the opposite room. He was only just in time, for, as he had expected, Porker's door was noiselessly opened, and he crept out, stick in hand. He was in his slippers, so made no noise; but Rex hoped that his comrades would be on the look-out. Darting into the lodge, Rex shoved the sausages into one of Porker's boots, and the rounds of buttered toast into the other; then he got back to the opposite room, and waited for results.

Porker soon returned, and he left his door open to watch for the enemy. Having pulled up the blind, he gazed at his denuded table.

"Gorn," he hooted—"gorn! I'll report 'em—as sure as I'm a living man I'll report 'em! Greedy little varminits, to go and wolf my tea! It ain't often as I can fancy anything, but I did fancy those sorsages! Bust it! Wait till I get at 'em. Bother the bell! What does the doctor want to ring that 'ere bell for when I'm having my tea? It's always the way; there's no rest in this college. It's a strange thing as a man can't have his tea in peace!"

Here Rex heard a slight sound at his back, and, turning, he saw Bob and Jim climbing through the window of the room in which he had taken up his position.

"Don't make a sound!" murmured Rex. "Porker has lost his sausages and toast. Watch him put his boots on. There goes the bell again. He won't go to the doctor in his slippers."

"Hang the bell!" growled Porker, leisurely seating himself in his chair preparatory to putting on his boots. "He'll have to wait!"

"Watch him keenly," whispered Rex. "Mind you don't laugh."

Porker drew on one of his boots, then he uttered a wild howl. He had rammed his foot into several rounds of hot buttered toast.

Now, hot buttered toast is very nice, but it has its drawbacks when placed in a boot. Porker gave vent to his

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"TOM MERRY'S DAY OUT."

ORDER
NOW!

STORMPOINT (continued).

feelings by uttering all sorts of threats, and he nearly convulsed the chums as he pulled his foot out with buttered toast adhering to it.

"Oh, won't I make it hot for the varmin'ts when I catch 'em?" he growled. "I'd jest like to have ten minutes with each of 'em, and a good thick stick. It's downright shameful that I can't have a mouthful to my tea without them passing their stupid remarks and shoving my grub into my boots! I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they have put the sorsages in the other. Well, I'm blowed!"

"Scissors!" gasped Rex. "Here comes the doctor!"

So it was. He stood gazing in blank amazement into the porter's lodge, and it was a sight that might well astonish anyone. Porker was still seated in his chair, pulling sausages out of his boot.

Dr. Andale objected to practical jokes. No doubt he had played them himself in his younger days, but he was too old to appreciate them now; nevertheless, when he saw Porker busily engaged in extracting sausages from his boot it was too much for his seriousness. He pulled out his handkerchief, and uttered a gurgling sound.

"What ever are you doing, Porker? And why don't you answer the bell?"

"Jest look here, sir!" hooted Porker, holding up a sausage; there were still two more in his boot. "Here, them boys have been and shoved my tea in my boots! I wasn't feeling quite well, and I fancied a round of toast to my tea, and they have been and shoved that into the other boot! I've rammed my foot in it! Jest you feel the mess it has made in my boot, sir!"

"Ahem! I will take your word for it, Porker. But if you are not well, don't you think that hot buttered toast with sausages is rather rich? I would advise you to ask the cook to make you a little gruel."

"If you please, sir, I hope as you will punish the boys as did it."

"Which boys were they?"

"Allingham, Bouncer, and Fisher, sir. You may always know which boys it is when there's any shameful work like this in hand. I call it downright crool to put a nian's tea in his boots! It don't matter to them if I'm faint for want of food. So long as they get their own tease, that's all they care about. Lood here; more sorsages! If it ain't downright scandalous, I dunno what is, sir! Here, I'm up early and late, working as hard as I can; yet, when I ain't quite well, I can't have a sorsage to my tea without having 'em stuffed into my boots! The greedy young rascals wouldn't like their tea spoilt, I'll warrant!"

"Well, Porker," exclaimed the doctor, looking far more serious than he felt. "I will let Mr. Salmon deal with the matter. You speak of having a sausage with your tea, but it would appear to me that

you were going to have a good many sausages, to say nothing of hot buttered toast. Now, I would point out to you that it is most unwise for you to eat in that manner; and, further, that you are not expected to have all those sausages for tea. It is unnecessary. The young gentlemen whom you call greedy young rascals generally only have bread-and-butter. I am inclined to think that if you were to moderate your appetite it would be beneficial to your health."

Then the doctor made his way to Mr. Salmon's study, and the chums breathed again.

Mr. Salmon was just having his own tea. Dr. Andale seated himself in the easy-chair, and shook with laughter.

"What's the joke?" inquired Mr. Salmon, getting out another cup and filling it for the Head. "Those boys again?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes. You must punish them this time,

Salmon. I should laugh. I saw it. Porker says he fancied a sausage to his tea, and it would appear that he fancied hot buttered toast to his sausages. At any rate, those meek boys put his sausages and toast into his boots——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I couldn't get any answer to the bell, and when I went to the lodge there was Porker producing sausages from his boots. He had shoved his foot into the hot buttered toast!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It is an extraordinary tea for a man to have when he does not feel well," said Mr. Salmon; "but—— Come in!"

This was in answer to a knock at the door, and the three culprits entered, looking remarkably meek.

"What do you want, boys?" demanded Mr. Salmon, striving to look fierce.

"If you please, sir," answered Bob. "Porker said we were to go to you. He said that the doctor told him you required to see us."

"I have not sent for you yet, but——"

"Thank you, sir!" interposed Bob, making a bolt for the door.

"Come back, boy!" ordered Mr. Salmon. "I understand from Dr. Andale that you have been playing tricks on the porter, and as you belong to my house Dr. Andale will leave your punishment to me. Now, you are far too old to act in this foolish way. I cannot say that I am surprised at you, because I am sorry to say that nothing you do surprises me now. What have you to say for yourselves?"

"If you please, sir," exclaimed Rex, "I'm the one to blame! The idea was entirely mine. Bob and Jim were merely sorter spectators."

"How many times have I told you not to say 'sorter'?"

"I'm afraid I could not count, sir."

"Why did you play such a stupid trick?"

"His boots were there, sir, and——and sorter temptation."

"Ha, ha! Grooh-hough-hough!" Jim made a desperate effort to turn his laugh into a cough.

Dr. Andale turned his face away, and his teacup rattled slightly. Mr. Salmon frowned worse than ever.

Naturally his boots were there. What had that to do with it?"

"Well, you see, sir, the sausages and hot buttered toast were also there, and I thought it would be a sorter surprise if——if I rammed those sausages into one boot and the toast into the other. I don't think it hurt him, sir. Toast quite soft; same remarks apply to sausages."

"I suppose you will try to convince me that a man's boots are the proper receptacle for hot toast and sausages?"

"Well, sir——er——not as a rule. Oh, no!"

"I was not aware that there are any exceptions to that rule."

"Then, depend upon it, there are, sir. Sha'n't occur again."

"I don't suppose it will, for the best of all reasons. The opportunity is not likely to occur. You must see what a remarkably silly trick it was. Besides, you wasted the porter's tea."

"If you please, sir, I don't think that matters at all," said Rex, gazing sorrowfully into his master's eyes. "In a way, it has done Porker good."

"Indeed?"

"Well, you see, sir, the poor man said he was not quite well, so he was going to wolf a pound of sausages to the accompaniment of hot buttered toast. I have the feeling that the sausages would do Porker more good in his boots than in his 'stummick.'"

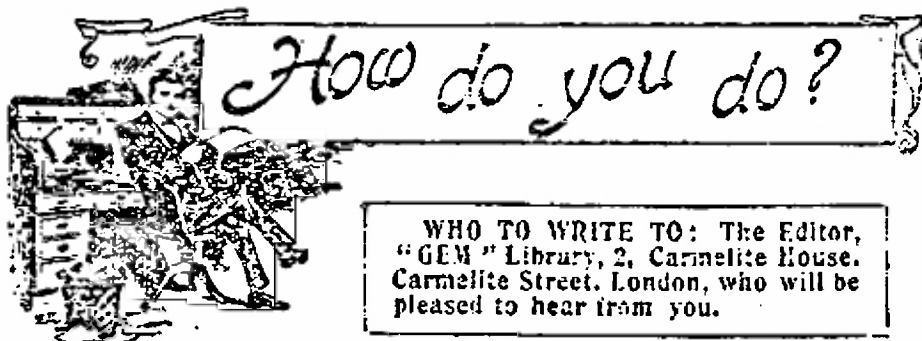
"Leave the room, boys!" cried Mr. Salmon.

This order was obeyed with surprising promptness, and the two masters shook with laughter.

"I positively cannot punish the lad!" exclaimed Mr. Salmon. "I should laugh. I nearly did then, and I believe he knew it."

And so the matter dropped.

(Another long instalment of this splendid school story next Thursday.)



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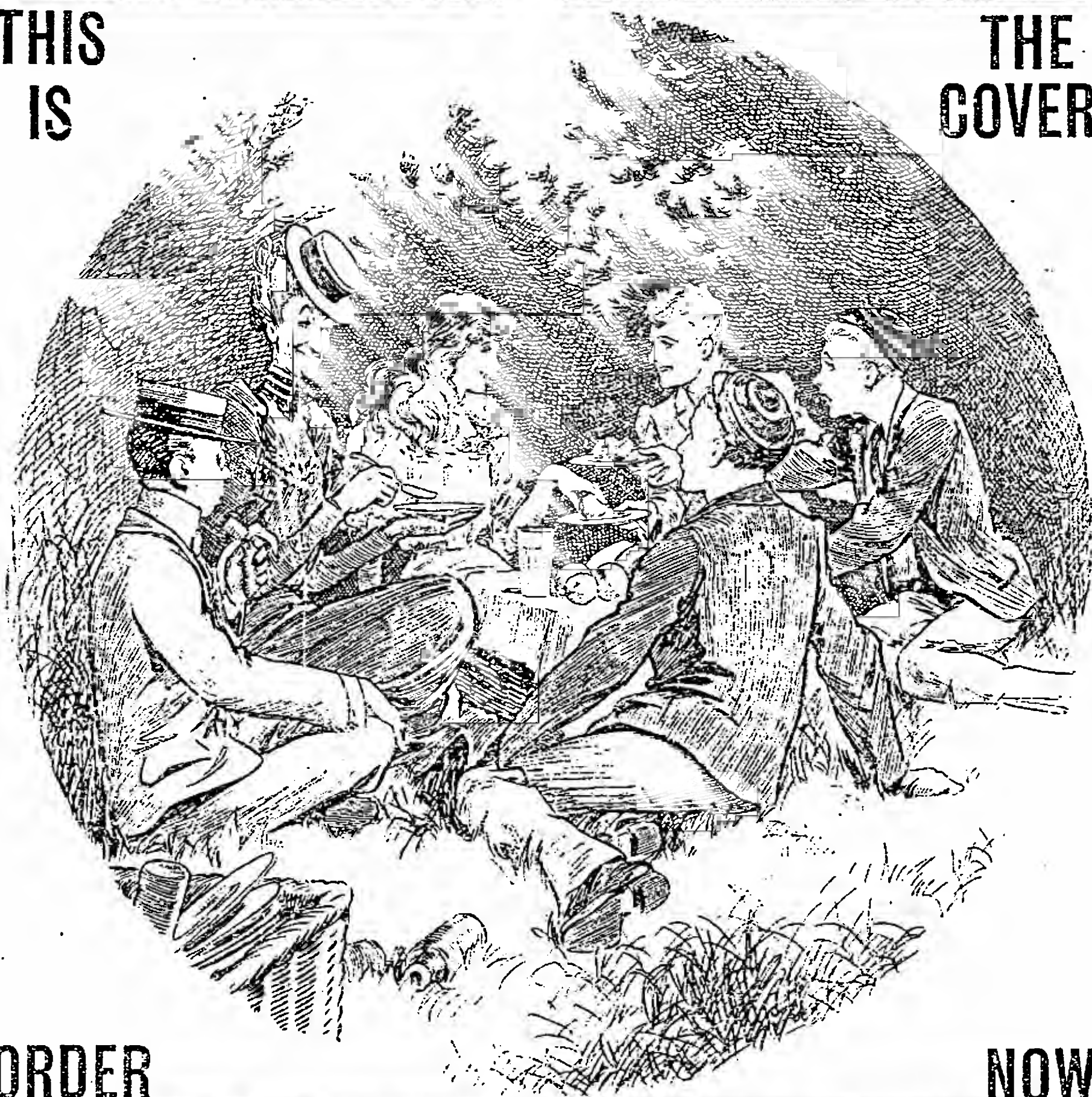
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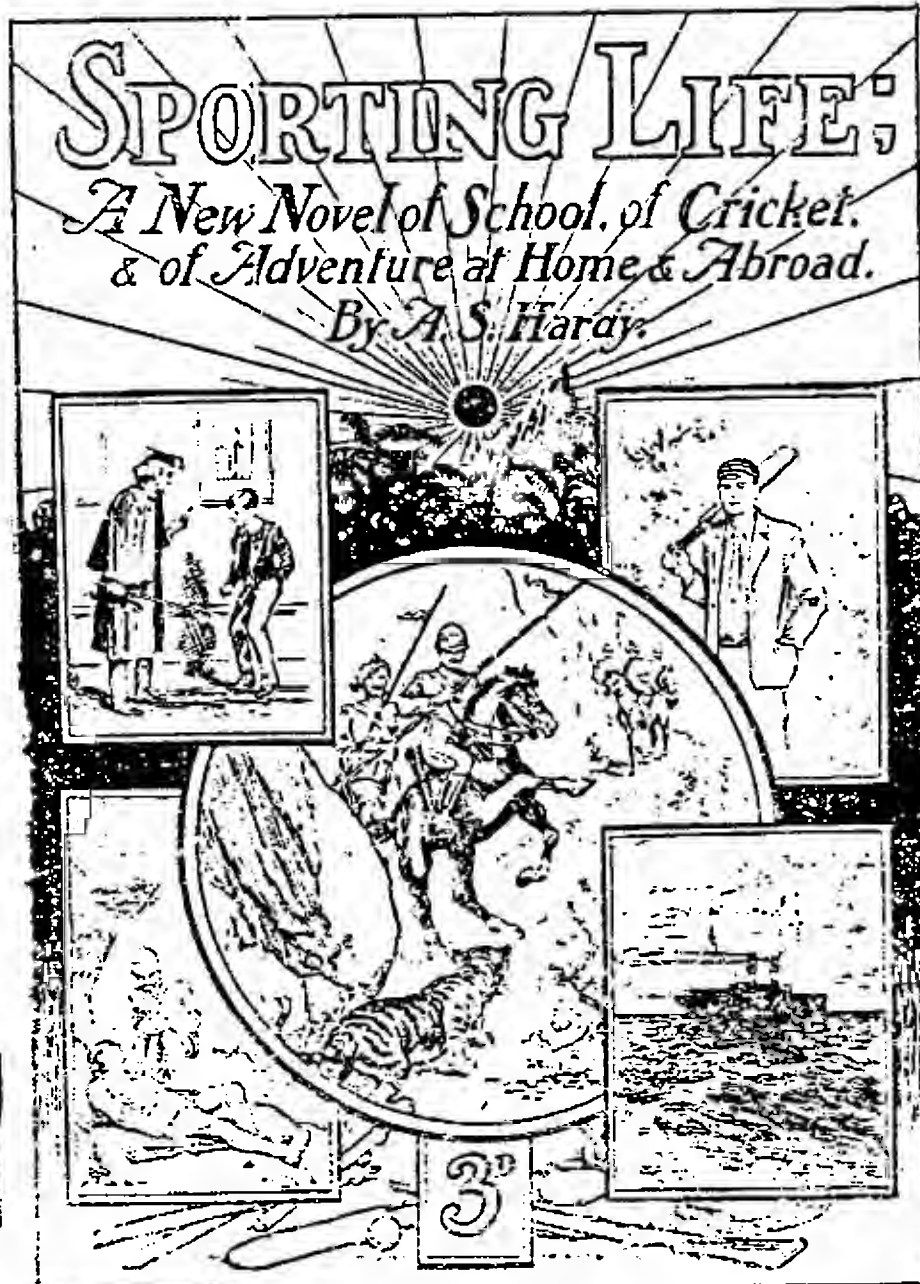
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