"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Ferrers Locke, Detective. By Martin Clifford.

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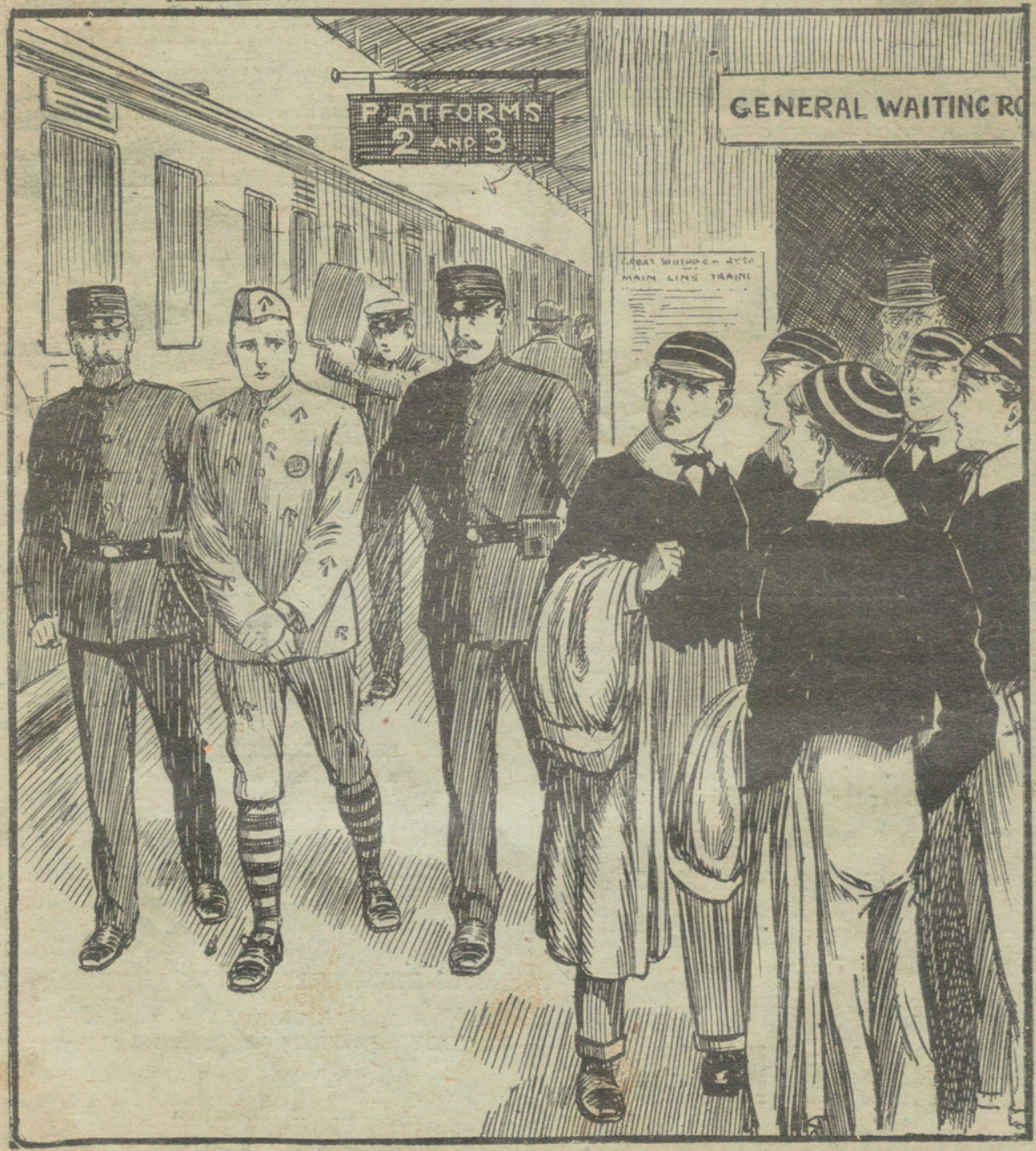

HIS CONVICT BROTHER!

Among the juniors in the group there was one who seemed to be more terribly struck than the others by the sight of the convict. It was Lynn, of the Fourth. He fixed his eyes upon the prisoner, and a low cry escaped him. Then, with clenched hands and a white, set face, he turned away from the scene.

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DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life, introducing the Famous Chums of St. Jim's—TOM MERRY & CO.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
The Convict.

"TRAIN in five minutes!" said Tom Merry.

Quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows were pouring upon the platform of Wayland Junction Station. It was a keen, frosty afternoon, and the fellows were wrapped in overcoats and scarves, and their vigorous breathing left trails of steam in the sharp air.

The junior eleven of St. Jim's were returning to the school after a footer match with Wayland Wanderers. They were in a state of great satisfaction with themselves and everybody and everything, for they had beaten the Wanderers by a handsome margin of three to one, and the Wanderers were a good team, and the match had been a hard one.

St. Jim's had come out so far ahead that they could afford to feel triumphant, and to pat themselves on the back a little. There was excuse for the pirouette which Jack Blake of the Fourth described as he came upon the platform—though the old gentleman whose waistcoat he bumped into did not look pleased. There was ample justification for the cakewalk which the Terrible Three—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—did down the centre of the platform, amid cheers from their comrades.

Three to one after a good match was a result that justified exuberant satisfaction. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, whose manners generally boasted that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, unbent so far as to twirl round gracefully upon one foot, and wave his silk topper in the air.

There was five minutes to wait for the train, and Tom Merry & Co. bumped down the bags containing their football things and waited. Fatty Wynn of the Fourth looked at his watch, and bolted for the refreshment-room. Football made Fatty Wynn hungry, and he never lost an opportunity of filling the aching void. When he was hungry, he ate to satisfy his hunger; when he was not hungry, he ate in case he might be—and he never let his chances, like the sunbeams, pass him by, as the song has it.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his eyeglass carefully in his right eye, and looking over his comrades with a cheerful smile. "I wathah think that we did jollay well this aftahnoon!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

"Hurrah for us!" said Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

"You fellows backed me up splendidly, I must weally say——"

"What!"

"Eh?"

"You fellows weally backed me up splendidly——"

"You mean, we made up for your blunders," suggested Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"And prevented you from doing much damage to the side," remarked Lynn.

"Weally, Lynn——"

"And brought off a win, in spite of your assistance," grinned Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Figgay! I——"

"Oh, Gussy played all right for once!" said Tom Merry,

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rather breathlessly. The cakewalk down the platform had winded him. "Gussy didn't give the enemy more than a dozen chances——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, we all did jolly well!" said Monty Lowther. "Of course, the front line did all the work——"

"Rats!" said Herries promptly. "Where would you have been without the backs?"

"Or the halves?" demanded Digby warmly.

"Yes, rather!" said Lynn of the Fourth. "In my opinion, the halves did the whole bizney——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared all the forwards together.

"Weally, Lynn, I must say you are an ass!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As this is your first trial in the junior team, too, you ought to be wathah modest about it."

"Oh, rats!" said Lynn.

"If you say wats to me, Lynn——"

Lynn laughed.

"Rats!" he replied.

"Bai Jove! Will you hold my hat, Lowthah——"

"Certainly!" said Monty Lowther, jerking D'Arcy's topper off, with ruinous results to the nap.

"Oh!" shrieked D'Arcy. "You uttah ass! I didn't mean hold it like that, you fwabjous chump. You are wuinin' my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give it to me, you feahful ass!" D'Arcy recovered his topper from the grasp of the humorous Lowther, and smoothed down the nap tenderly with his gloves. "Blake, deah boy, pway hold my hat while I thwash Lynn."

"Order!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "On such an auspicious occasion as the present, I move that Gussy behaves himself."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am goin' to give Lynn a thwashin'," said the swell of St. Jim's, pushing back his cuffs. "I was vewy doubtful about lettin' him play in the team at all——"

"You were!" shouted Tom Merry. "Who's captain of this team, I'd like to know?"

"You are, deah boy! But, of course, you would take the advice of a more expewienced playah in selectin' the team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah. Will you kindly put up your hands, Lynn, you wottah?"

"Oh, rats!" said Lynn.

He backed away behind Tom Merry as the excited swell of St. Jim's pranced up to him. Tom Merry pushed D'Arcy back, but the elegant junior was in earnest. He had dropped the monocle from his eye, which showed that he meant business. He whipped round Tom Merry, and rushed upon the Fourth-Former.

"Now then, you wottah——"

Lynn grinned.

He put up his hands, and gave the swell of St. Jim's a gentle tap upon his aristocratic nose, and Arthur Augustus staggered back.

"Oh! Bai Jove!"

"Cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry, pushing between them. "Honour is satisfied now. The first blood has been drawn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass, Tom Mewwy! I am goin' to give Lynn a feahful thwashin'——"

"Order!"

"I wefuse to ordah! I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean, Gussy. The train will be here in two minutes. Somebody had better go and dig Fatty Wynn up out of the refreshment-room."

"Weally, you know——"

"Peace, my infant—peace——"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly, his laugh dying away. "Look there!"

He nodded towards a group that had just come on the station platform.

At the sight of the new-comers, even Arthur Augustus, excited as he was, forgot his warlike intentions.

For they were two warders and a convict—the convict in handcuffs, guarded by the two warders—and the sight was enough to make anyone serious.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, dropping his hands at once. "Bai Jove! Poor boundah! I wondah what he's done?"

The prisoner walked with his head down, his whole aspect telling of the shame that overpowered him at being thus exhibited to the public gaze with the brand of a felon upon him. The juniors' faces grew serious and grim as they glanced at him—laughter seemed very much out of place in the presence of so much shame and misery. But among the juniors in the group there was one who seemed to be more terribly struck than the others by the sight of the convict. It was Lynn of the Fourth. He fixed his eyes upon the prisoner, and a low cry escaped him. Then, with clenched hands and a white, set face, he turned away from the scene.

CHAPTER 2.
Disowned.

THE prisoner was a young man—handsome and well-built, and in any other circumstances he would have looked a fine fellow. But now he walked with down-cast face and slouching shoulders, overburdened with shame and suffering. The two warders who guarded him seemed kindly enough to him, but they were taking every care of him, and were evidently prepared for an attempt on the prisoner's part to "bolt."

The convict raised his eyes for a moment as he came down the platform with his guards, and his glance rested upon the group of schoolboys.

A deep flush for a moment suffused his cheeks.

"Poor chap!" muttered Blake. "It seems rotten to show him in public this way. I suppose they're going down by the express to Portmoor from here."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I've seen convicts brought through this station before," he said, in a low voice. "It's not a pleasant sight. I should think some other way might be found of taking them to prison."

"I should think so."

"He doesn't look a bad lot, either," Manners remarked. "Quite a young fellow, and good-looking, too. I wonder what he's done?"

"He's got good feelings left, anyway. Did you notice how he coloured?" said Figgins. "He's ashamed of being seen in that rig-out."

"No wonder."

"Bai Jove! I feel awfly sowwy for the chap, you know, whatevah he's done," said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! You seem to be quite ovahcome, Lynn. You don't happen to know the man, do you?"

Lynn of the Fourth did not reply.

There was not a vestige of colour in his face, and his eyes had a strange gleam in them. He had turned his back towards the convict and the warders, and was looking almost wildly down the line, as if eager for the train to come in, and take him away from the painful sight.

Suddenly the convict uttered a sharp exclamation. He had caught sight of Lynn among the juniors, and he started forward so suddenly that the two warders, imagining that he was about to run, closed upon him, and grasped him in an iron grasp.

"No, you don't, No. 79," said the chief warder grimly.

The young man gasped.

"I—I wasn't trying to get away!" he exclaimed. "Don't—don't stop me! That's my brother!"

"Now then, No. 79——"

"Let me speak to him." The prisoner's voice was dry and husky. "Don't you understand? It's my brother! He was kept away from me—during the trial—I haven't seen him. For mercy's sake let me have a word with him!"

The juniors of St. Jim's heard every word.

They were too astounded to speak. Lynn's brother! This convict in manacles was the brother of Arthur Lynn of the Fourth!

Lynn, perhaps, was surprised too at being so claimed in public, for he did not move, did not speak, and his glance remained fixed upon the up-line, and did not turn for a second towards the convict.

The warders seemed to hesitate. There was no great harm in the convict speaking to his brother, if the boy was indeed his brother; and they were not unkindly men. While they hesitated, the young man called out to Lynn.

"Arthur, don't you know me? Won't you speak to me?"

Lynn did not move.

Tom Merry nudged the Fourth-Former.

"Do you hear, Lynn?"

"Let me alone!"

"But if he's your brother——"

"Perhaps he's only rotting," said Blake. "I suppose he isn't your brother at all, Lynn?"

Lynn's lips moved, as if he would gladly have denied it, but the white horror in his face, the hunted look of shame in his eyes, showed only too plainly that it was true. The convict was his brother!

"Is he your brother, Lynn?" asked D'Arcy.

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"Gerald, old man, it's all right," cried Arthur Lynn, springing forward and grasping his brother by the hand. "Don't you understand—the thief's arrested! Ferrers Locke has done it, and you are cleared, old man—and free!"

"Yes!" groaned Lynn.

"I can see the likeness now, too," Kerr remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why don't you speak to him, then?" asked Manners.

Lynn gritted his teeth.

"I won't speak to him! Hang him—hang him! I don't want to see him!"

"Bai Jove! If he's your own bwothah, Lynn, you might speak a word to the chap!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed indignantly. "Blood is thickah than watah, you know."

"Hang him!"

"That's not the way to speak of your brother, anyway," said Tom Merry roughly. "You might be decent to a fellow down on his luck, whatever he's done."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lynn made a furious gesture.

"Hang him! Why can't he let me alone?"

"Weally, Lynn——"

The warders had permitted the convict to come nearer to the group of schoolboys, convinced now that he was not thinking of escape.

"Arthur, won't you speak to me?"

The convict stretched out his manacled hands in impassioned appeal to the boy.

Lynn turned towards him with gleaming eyes.

"Let me alone!" he said, in a hard, bitter voice. "Haven't you disgraced me enough? Haven't you disgraced us all enough?"

"Arthur! I was innocent!"

Lynn burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Yes—I know you said that—you were innocent—and your employers, and the judge, and the jury, and the public—they were all wrong, and you were right."

"They were all wrong, Arthur."

"Lies!" said Lynn bitterly. "You're guilty, and you know it, and I know it. I wish you could be buried in prison all your life, instead of only for three years, so that you could never come out and disgrace us more than you've done already."

The convict started back.

"Is that how you speak to me, Arthur?" he muttered. "I—I hoped that you would believe in me, at least! As Heaven is my witness, I never touched the stolen bonds—I do not know where they are at this moment."

"Rubbish!"

"Arthur, listen to me. The firm offered to let the case go without prosecution if the bonds were returned—if I had had them, do you think I should have refused?"

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"You did, anyway!"

"I was innocent."

"Rubbish! You mean to sell the bonds when you come out of prison—it will be safer then!" said Lynn bitterly.

The convict's face was white and strained.

"You don't believe me, Arthur?"

"No, I don't!"

"Heaven help me, then!" The man's voice was a groan of misery. "Who will ever believe me again, if my own brother does not?"

He did not speak again.

The warders led him away to the farther side of the platform. Lynn stood with white face and clenched hands. There was condemnation in the looks of his companions, but he did not care. The local train for Rylcombe, which was to bear the football party back to St. Jim's, came puffing into the station. It stopped, and Tom Merry & Co. clambered into it. On the other side of the platform the express had stopped, and the two warders were helping their prisoner into it.

From the carriage in which he sat between his guards, Convict 79 looked out, and turned a last miserable glance upon Arthur Lynn.

Lynn did not look round.

He stepped into the train—not into the same carriage with Tom Merry & Co.—and shut the door sharply. Not a glance did he turn upon the express, moving out of the station, with the convict sitting between the two warders.

Thus the brothers parted. Away, as fast as the express could bear him, went Convict 79, back to the prison he had once escaped from—back to life-in-death—back to shame and misery—dishonoured by the world, disowned by his brother!

CHAPTER 3.

Friends in Need.

TOM MERRY & CO. sat very silently in the crowded carriage in the local train. The scene they had been witnesses of had had a painful effect upon their spirits, and all their light-hearted gaiety had passed away. Even Fatty Wynn, who had brought a bag of sausage-rolls into the carriage, ate them very slowly, and with less than his usual enjoyment. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his eyeglass in a reflective sort of way. The juniors were glad that Lynn of the Fourth was not in the carriage with them. They were sorry for the junior's humiliation and shame. But they could only feel that he had been heartless and unfeeling. Whatever his brother had done, blood, as D'Arcy said, was thicker than water.

"It's howwible!" said Arthur Augustus, as the local train began to move out of the station. The express had already gone from the other side of the platform. "I wegard it as howwible. It's wotten for Lynn, to have a bwothah a convict. But I think he might have spoken decently to the poor chap."

"I should think so," said Blake, with emphasis.

"I suppose he was trying to keep it dark at the school," Kerr remarked thoughtfully. "I've not heard anything of the case, and the man appears to have been in prison already. He was being taken back after escaping, I think."

"I remember seeing something in the papers about a convict escaping from prison; but I never guessed that it was Lynn's brother," Figgins remarked.

"I wonder if he's innocent."

"Bai Jove! I wondah!"

"It's not likely," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I suppose they don't send a man to penal servitude without being jolly careful about it."

"They make mistakes at times."

"Yes, I suppose. It must be awful for a poor chap who gets sent there by mistake," said Tom Merry, with a shudder.

"Yaas, wathah!" And D'Arcy shuddered, too.

"But it's not likely," said Blake uneasily. "Besides, a chap's own people would believe in him, if anybody could, I should think—and this fellow's own people seem to have given him up."

"Well, Lynn's nervous about what the chaps may think at the school. It's not nice for a fellow to be known to have a relation in prison."

"Bai Jove! No."

"I think we might as well say nothing about it," said Tom Merry, looking round. "Lynn's a decent chap really, and it would make things awfully hard on him."

"Agreed!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! I should have pwoposed the same thing myself, only I nevah thought of it!"

"Good, then! Mum's the word."

The juniors fell silent.

They could not help thinking of the shame and misery in the convict's face; and somehow the impassioned appeal he had made to his brother rang true in their ears. What if the man was innocent! Three years in a living tomb—three terrible years, with more added as a punishment for having broken prison once! They could hardly conceive how fearful it must be—and yet they knew it would be terrible—intolerable! Precious liberty, precious light and sunshine, taken away for three years! Whatever the man had done, the punishment was awful—more terrible than the judge who had sentenced him, probably, had imagination enough to understand.

The local train crawled on slowly through the frosty landscape. The juniors thought of the express, whizzing through the countryside, fast—too fast for the hapless man in manacles who was being whirled back to his prison as fast as iron and steam could whirl him.

The train stopped.

Tom Merry glanced out of the window.

"Not Wylcombe yet?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking up from polishing his eyeglass.

"No. We're waiting for another train to pass."

The train was stationary a few minutes, and then moved on again slowly. Tom Merry & Co. began to chat now, the gloomy impression upon their spirits gradually passing off. Suddenly Tom Merry gave a cry.

"Good heavens, what's that?"

The carriage door had swung open. A man staggered in, and fell into the carriage among the juniors' feet. The door swung wide in the wind.

"The convict!"

"Lynn's brother!"

"Good heavens!"

Tom Merry caught the carriage door and shut it. The man in convict garb staggered up, and turned a wild look upon the juniors.

"Don't—don't give the alarm!" he muttered hoarsely. "Have pity on me! You are my brother's schoolfellows—I am Gerald Lynn! Pity me!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Before Heaven, I am an innocent man!" the convict said huskily. "My brother will not believe me—but it is true!"

The St. Jim's juniors were silent.

They were utterly taken aback by the strange happening. The man whom they had supposed to be speeding towards the prison at the full speed of the express train had clambered into the local Rylcombe train while it was waiting on the siding—and they were too amazed to speak. The sight of a ghost would hardly have startled them more.

"How on earth did you get here?" gasped Tom Merry at last.

The convict sank into a seat, where the boys made room for him, breathing hard. He was evidently almost exhausted.

"I had slipped the handcuffs," he said. "The warders did not see—and I leaped from the train when I had a chance."

"Good heavens!"

"You might have been killed."

The convict laughed wretchedly.

"Better be killed than go back to hell on earth," he replied. "Better death a thousand times! I could not stand that again—the shame, the misery, the oppression, the degradation. You don't know what it's like, you youngsters. If you want to give me up, pull the communication cord."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We shall not do that, at all events," he said.

"I swear I was innocent," said Gerald Lynn hoarsely. "I swear it! The bonds were stolen, but I was not the thief! If Mr. Ferrers Locke had been able to take up the case, I think he would have cleared me—but he was abroad; and the police—they are blind. I was innocent—I was innocent!"

The juniors could not help believing him.

"I am sorry for you," said Tom Merry softly.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

The man's face brightened up.

"You will help me?" he cried.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's a jolly serious thing helping a convict to escape," said Kerr. "But how could we help you, if we wanted to?"

"Don't say a word about my having got on this train, for one thing. I shall jump off before we get to a station."

"That's all right," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you have nothing you could give me in the way of clothing?" asked the convict, with a glance towards the bags on the rack.

"Only footer things—and our things wouldn't be nearly big enough for you," said Tom Merry. "There's Figgins's raincoat—Figgy's a long-legged bounder, and it might cover up those things you're wearing—if Figgy——"

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"He can have it," said Figgins, "with pleasure. Only—only if the police find it on him——"

"There's no name on it," said Kerr; "that will be all right."

"I should not say a word of your having helped me, of course," said the convict eagerly. "It would not benefit me, even if I were cad enough. You ought to help me—I am an old St. Jim's fellow—ten years ago I was in the Shell of St. Jim's."

"Poor fellow!" said Tom Merry. "It's rotten! And—and I can't help thinking that you're telling the truth—that you are innocent!"

"Before Heaven I am!"

Figgins uncoiled the raincoat from the rack. It was certainly a long one; Figgins, though a youth, was a youth whose growth had outstripped his years, and he was nearly as tall as the convict, though not so well filled out. The convict, with eager, trembling hands, drew the waterproof round him, and gasped with relief as he saw that it concealed the tell-tale garb of the convict prison.

"I dare say my cap will fit you," said Figgins. "You can have it, if it will. I suppose that's all we can do for you."

"Yes, thanks—thanks—thanks!" The young man peered anxiously from the window. "Are we getting near a station?"

"Five minutes yet!"

"Good!"

"There's another thing," said Kerr quietly.

"What's that?"

"Cash," said the Scottish junior.

"Bai Jove, you're wight, deah boy! I nevah thought of that, you know."

"Whip round," said Tom Merry.

The juniors turned out their pockets. Among the number it was easy to raise a sum of between two and three pounds. D'Arcy's contribution being a gleaming half-sovereign. The convict looked at it and hesitated. He had taken the cap and the waterproof willingly enough, but he seemed to have a strange unwillingness to take money from the juniors.

"Shove it in your pocket!" said Tom Merry. "You may be able to get a change of clothes with it, and—— Anyway, you will want tin to get away."

"God bless you!" said the convict.

Tom Merry looked out of the train window.

"Two minutes more," he said.

The convict opened the door.

"For goodness' sake, be careful!" exclaimed Blake, in alarm, as he watched the green embankment gliding by. "Mind——"

"I shall be all right."

The convict stepped out upon the footboard with iron nerve. At the right moment he jumped, and rolled among the bushes of the embankment. The juniors crowded to the door and window of the carriage to see what had become of him. A form rose for a moment amid the bushes, and a hand was waved, and they knew that he was safe. Then the convict disappeared into cover again, and the train glided on, and a minute more and the juniors were stepping out of the carriage in Rylcombe Station.

From a carriage farther up the train, Lynn, of the Fourth, stepped out, with a gloomy, pale face and fixed eyes. The juniors glanced at him. Of their adventure with the convict he knew nothing, and they could not help wondering what he would say if he knew.

CHAPTER 4.

The Shadow of a Secret!

ARTHUR LYNN joined the juniors as they quitted Rylcombe Station, and walked through the dusky old High Street, carrying their bags. The face of the convict's brother was white and troubled.

He walked on for some time in silence, but it was evident that busy thoughts were working in his brain. He broke the silence at last.

"I say, you chaps——"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"You needn't say anything about—about my brother at St. Jim's," said Lynn, in a low, shamed voice. "I—I think you might keep it dark, if you don't mind. It's horrible enough for a chap to have a convict for a brother, without having it blazoned to the whole school. If it were known to all the chaps, I suppose I should have to get out of the school—I couldn't stand it."

"It would be pretty rotten, I suppose," said Tom Merry. "But that's all right! We had already decided to say nothing about it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thanks!" said Lynn gratefully. "You don't know what this means to me—to us—all the family. It's a horrible disgrace."

"It's pretty rough on your brother, too," said Blake drily.

Lynn's eyes gleamed.

"He deserves all he's got, and more!" he said fiercely. "He ought to be imprisoned for life for disgracing his people!"

"Suppose he's innocent?"

"He isn't innocent. He was found guilty!"

"Judges and juries have been mistaken before now, and will be again," said Monty Lowther.

Lynn shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, he's guilty! The bonds were stolen, anyway, and he was found guilty of taking them. There was only one other possible chap who could have taken them—Lanbury, the cashier, and he proved an alibi. Besides, some of the bonds were found in my brother's diggings."

"Phew!"

"Couldn't he explain how they got there?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, he said they must have been put there—all rot, of course! And the value of the bonds that weren't found was over ten thousand pounds, so you can guess that the firm were pretty wild. Gerald was lucky to get off with three years'. He might have had the decency not to speak to me on the station. Hang him!"

And Lynn relapsed into gloomy silence.

The chums of St. Jim's let the matter drop. They did not feel inclined to tell Lynn, in his present humour, that his brother had escaped again, and that they had seen him and helped him.

It was quite possible—indeed, probable—that Lynn would have preferred his brother to be safely immured in a prison cell, where he could be forgotten, and whence nothing would be heard of his shame and disgrace.

The chums reached the school, and found quite a crowd of fellows waiting for them in the dusky quad., keen to know how the football match had gone. In the crowd, Arthur Lynn slipped quietly away. He was in no humour for joining in the enthusiasm of the juniors of St. Jim's.

"How did it go?" asked Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, meeting the juniors as they came in.

"Three to one—for us!" said Tom Merry, cheerfully.

"Beaten them hollow!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly good!" said Kildare heartily.

"Hurrah!" shouted the juniors. "Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Bravo, Figgins!"

A crowd of New House fellows gathered round Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, and marched them off to the New House. Tom Merry & Co. marched on to the School House amid a cheering crowd. In the enthusiasm over the football victory it was natural enough that the juniors should forget, or almost forget, what had happened since, and that the hunted, lined, white face of Convict 79 should fade from their minds.

But there was one who could not forget, though he was the one who had pitied the escaped convict the least.

It was Arthur Lynn!

He took no part in the celebration of the football victory; he did not join in the merriment of the juniors, and he did not come to the festive tea-table in Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage, though Manners came specially to ask him.

He remained alone in his study, buried in gloomy thought.

His brother was a convict!

Hitherto it had been unknown at St. Jim's; now it was known to a dozen fellows. They had said that they would keep it secret; that they would say nothing. But a secret known to only one or two was in great danger of leaking out, and a secret known to a dozen! Some word would be dropped—some hint given. Lynn groaned at the thought of it.

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It seemed to the miserable boy almost certain that, ere long, the truth would be known all over the school—proclaimed in all the studies and Form-rooms of St. Jim's—that Lynn, of the Fourth, had a brother in prison; that Lynn major, once a fellow of St. Jim's, was a convict, toiling in the prison gang, branded with the broad arrow.

Lynn shuddered as he thought of it.

If it became known, how was he to face it—how endure life at the school? He felt that he would not be able to endure it; that he would have to go!

To leave St. Jim's—to leave his old school, and break off a career successfully begun—because his convict brother had claimed him before a crowd of St. Jim's fellows. It was no wonder that bitterness was in his heart, and that he thought only with anger and loathing of the convict brother whom he had disowned.

CHAPTER 5.
An Unexpected Meeting.

TOM MERRY borrowed a newspaper from Mr. Railton the next day, to look in it for some account of the escape of Convict 79.

He could not help taking an interest in Lynn's brother—wondering whether the unhappy man had succeeded in making good his escape.

He hoped that Gerald Lynn was free. In spite of appearances, in spite of the finding of judge and jury, and the apparently overwhelming evidence, Tom Merry could not help doubting Lynn's guilt.

He had not spoken, he had not acted, like a guilty man.

True, his own brother did not believe in him. But Arthur Lynn was more occupied in thinking about himself than about his brother—more troubled with the disgrace that had fallen upon his name than with the misfortune that had fallen upon Gerald.

There was a brief paragraph in the newspaper relating to the convict. It only chronicled that a convict who had escaped from Portmoor Prison, and who had been recaptured, had succeeded in making his escape a second time while being conducted back to prison—leaping for liberty from an express train

The country was being scoured for the man, but he had not yet been found. As he was in convict garb, and without any known resources, his recapture was only a matter of a short time.

That was all!

But Tom Merry drew a breath of relief when he had read it. The recapture of No. 79 might be only a matter of time, as the paper stated, but at all events he had not been recaptured yet. And Tom Merry felt a keen desire that the wretched man would succeed in making good his escape, though liberty without his name being cleared would be a poor enough gift.

Jack Blake disinterred a number of old papers from the library, and the chums of St. Jim's found therein reported the trial of Gerald Lynn, and they read it up with great interest.

It seemed a clear enough case. In the bank where Lynn had been employed, a number of bonds had been stolen, and from a safe to which Lynn had access. Some of them had been discovered at his rooms by the police, and that was the heaviest weight of evidence against him. There were other circumstances, but that was the worst. His defence had been simply denial. He had not been able to account for the bonds concealed in his rooms; had not been able to prove where he was at the time the bonds must have been abstracted from the safe; and could not deny that he was in debt, and that he had promised his creditors a speedy settlement.

Everything told against him, and he had been found guilty, and condemned to three years' penal servitude. He might have been dealt with more gently if he had handed back the undiscovered bonds, but he had persisted that he knew nothing about them. As they were easily negotiable securities, the jury's opinion was that he was willing to serve his term for the sake of being enriched when he came out of prison, and recovered his plunder from where he had concealed it.

"It looks a jolly bad case," Blake remarked, after reading out the reports.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, and his own people have given him up, apparently," he said.

"That's bad!"

"Only I can't help thinking that he was telling the truth," said Tom Merry musingly. "I thought there was truth in his looks, and he certainly was fearfully in earnest when he was speaking to his brother. There have been plenty of cases of miscarriage of justice; it's not anything new."

"That's right enough."

"You remember what he said in the train," went on Tom Merry—"if Ferrers Locke, the detective, had been in England at the time, he would have helped him. If he wanted to have Mr. Locke take up the case, I should think he must have been innocent. Mr. Locke would certainly have got to the truth, whatever it was."

"No doubt."

"Mr. Locke is back in London now, I know," Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "I should like to see him to know what he thinks of the case."

"He might come here to see you," Blake suggested.

"I hope he will."

Ferrers Locke, the famous private detective, was an old acquaintance of Tom Merry's. On one great occasion, Tom Merry had had the honour of helping him in a case, in which he needed the aid of a lad, and he had served the famous detective so well that Ferrers Locke had never forgotten it.

More than once Mr. Locke had visited Tom Merry at St. Jim's, when business or pleasure had brought him into that part of the country, and he was well known by sight to the fellows at the old school.

Tom Merry and Blake quitted the school library.

They were looking very thoughtful. As a matter of fact, they were both seemingly more concerned about Convict 79 and his unhappy fate than was his own brother in the Fourth Form.

Arthur Lynn glanced at them in the passage as they went out into the quadrangle. There was uneasiness and suspicion in his look. He hesitated a moment, and then came up to them.

"I suppose you fellows haven't said anything?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry looked him in the eyes.

"About your brother?" he asked.

"Yes."

"We promised not to, didn't we?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, we don't break our promises," said Tom Merry curtly.

Lynn coloured.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I—I can't help feeling uneasy. It would be rotten for me if it got out, that's all."

"If I were in your place——" Tom Merry paused. Lynn looked at him inquiringly.

"Well?" he said. "If you were in my place——"

"If I were in your place, I should be thinking more about my brother than about myself," said Tom Merry. "It's worse for him than for you."

Lynn's lip curled with a bitter expression.

"I've no time to waste on him," he said. "He's disgraced his family, and that's enough for me. I shall never speak to him again as long as I live, if I can help it."

And he walked away, with a gloomy brow.

"You chaps comin' down to the village with me?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, stopping in the passage.

"What are you going to Rylcombe for?"

"To see the tailah, deah boy."

"No time," said Blake. "It's only an hour to afternoon school, and it will take you hours to try on the new waistcoat."

"It isn't a waistcoat, you ass, it's twousahs; and I'm not goin' to twy them on. It's only a question of bein' measured this time. It will not take more than a quartah of an hour, pwobably."

"Right-ho, then!" said Tom Merry. "We can stand and look on, and offer suggestions."

"Good!" said Blake, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus regarded them rather dubiously. The suggestions they were likely to offer would probably be conceived in a humorous spirit. But he did not want to walk down to the village alone, so he nodded consent.

"Vewy well, come on!" he exclaimed. "Just wait a minute while I get my toppah."

"Why won't a cap do?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"My dear Blake, how can you expect Gussy to be measured for trousers in a cap?" asked Tom Merry seriously. "It is impossible, on the face of it. Toppers are indispensable on occasions like this."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, buck up, Gussy!"

"I sha'n't be a minute, deah boy. I won't even stop to change my collah," said Arthur Augustus generously.

"You'd better not."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Buck up!" bawled Blake. "Tempus is fugiting, you ass!"

Blake's remarkable Latin was unanswerable. D'Arcy bucked up, and was soon ready, and the three juniors strolled down to the school gates together. As they turned out into the road they caught sight of Lynn, of the Fourth, just ahead

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of them, and quickened their steps to overtake him. Lynn gave them a nod.

"Going down to Rylcombe?" asked Blake.

"Yes; I want the latest paper," said Lynn.

The chums of the School House understood. Lynn had seen the morning paper, and was anxious to know whether Convict 79 had been recaptured.

Lynn was buried in thought, and uttered hardly a word as they walked into the village.

At the shop of Mr. Wegg, the local tailor, D'Arcy halted, and Tom Merry and Blake stopped too. They were going in to give D'Arcy the benefit of their valuable advice in selecting his new trousers.

The local from Wayland had just come into the little station on the opposite side of the road, and several passengers were coming out of the station doorway. Lynn, who was about to leave the chums of the School House, stopped, his eyes fixed upon a man who had come out of the station—a man of about thirty-five, in a dark overcoat, with a clean-shaven face, and piercing, light-coloured eyes. It was evident that Lynn knew the man.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.

The man was crossing the street, and he caught sight of Lynn the next moment. He gave a little start.

"Lynn!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Mr. Lanbury."

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed Mr. Lanbury, in a sharp, abrupt voice.

CHAPTER 6.

A Mystery.

TOM MERRY and his companions looked on at the scene in astonishment. They remembered the name of Lanbury; Lynn had mentioned it after they had helped his brother to escape.

Mr. Lanbury was the cashier of the bank from which the bonds had been stolen, the crime for which Gerald Lynn was suffering the horrors of penal servitude. The juniors looked at the man with interest. Mr. Lanbury looked like a man who was cool, determined, and possessed of self-control; but he was evidently startled and shocked, in some way, by meeting Lynn minor in the streets of Rylcombe. Why the sight of the schoolboy should have such an effect upon the bank cashier was a mystery.

Lynn himself seemed to be surprised.

"I was wondering what you were doing here, in this country place, Mr. Lanbury," he said.

The man recovered his calmness in a moment.

"I have run down to see a friend who lives in the neighbourhood," he said. "But what are you doing here, my boy?"

"I'm at school here," said Lynn.

"At school!"

"Yes; St. Jim's."

"Oh, I was not aware of that!" said Mr. Lanbury. "Is St. Jim's near here?"

"Yes; half a mile down the road."

"Oh!"

"Is there any more news of my brother, Mr. Lanbury?" asked Lynn.

The cashier's brows came together in a frowning line.

"No," he said; "he has not been found. You are aware, I suppose, that he broke away from the warders who were taking him back to prison?"

"Yes."

"There is no news of him since then." Mr. Lanbury glanced at the other juniors. "Is this disgraceful story known at your school, then, Lynn?"

Lynn flushed.

"No, Mr. Lanbury. These fellows know it, and they're keeping it dark. If—if you're going to stay in the neighbourhood, I should like you to say nothing about it. It would be rotten for me."

Mr. Lanbury nodded.

"Quite so," he said. "I can understand that it would be decidedly unpleasant for you if the boys at your school knew that your brother was a convict, and such things soon get about. I shall say nothing."

"Thank you, Mr. Lanbury."

Mr. Lanbury nodded to the juniors, and walked down the street.

Tom Merry was keen enough to see that the chance meeting had annoyed the cashier extremely, though why it should do so he could not guess.

Lynn nodded to the juniors, and walked on down the street, with a gloomier shade on his brow. The advent of the cashier seemed to him to make it more probable than ever that the story of his shame would become known. He might trust Tom Merry & Co. to hold their tongues, but there was a shifty look in the eyes of Mr. Lanbury which warned one not to trust him too implicitly. He had, it was true, no motive for saying anything to injure the boy; but Lynn felt very uneasy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at his watch.

"Bettah go in now," he remarked. "I don't want to have to huwwy ovah the twousahs."

"Great Scott!"

It was a sudden exclamation from Tom Merry.

A man had appeared in the doorway of the railway-station, and was sweeping the narrow village street with a keen, searching glance.

One look at the clear-cut, intellectual face and keen, grey eyes was enough for Tom Merry. He knew the old friend whom he had not seen for a long time. It was Ferrers Locke, the detective.

Tom Merry ran across the street at once.

"Mr. Locke!"

The gentleman started.

"Hallo, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed; and he shook hands very cordially with the hero of the Shell, and then with Blake and D'Arcy.

"I heard you were back in England, sir," said Tom Merry. "I never expected to see you here this afternoon, though."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Were you coming to the school, sir" asked Tom Merry.

Mr. Locke shook his head.

"No, Tom. As a matter of fact, I am down here on business."

"Business?" said Blake. "Why, nothing ever happens in Rylcombe, Mr. Locke. You haven't come down to track out a chicken-stealer, or anything of that sort, have you?"

The detective laughed.

"No," he replied. "But I am here on business, all the same. May I ask you lads not to mention to anyone that you have seen me?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Locke!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom Merry. "We won't say a word."

"Very good," said Mr. Locke. "By the way, did you see a man leave the station just now—a man in a dark overcoat?"

"Mr. Lanbury?"

The detective started.

"You know him?" he exclaimed.

"Lynn knows him," said Tom Merry.

"Lynn?"

"Lynn, of the Fourth Form, sir."

"A relation of Gerald Lynn, the escaped convict?" asked Mr. Locke, with keen interest.

"His brother, sir."

"Oh! And he pointed out Mr. Lanbury to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Did you see which way Mr. Lanbury went? I have to see him," the detective explained.

"Down towards the bridge, sir," said Tom Merry. "He must have turned up one of the side lanes; he's out of sight now. But he must be going to cross the bridge, from the direction he's taken."

"Thank you. Not a word, mind, about having seen me."

"Mum's the word, sir."

And Mr. Locke, raising his bowler hat slightly to the juniors—a salute which was returned by a most graceful sweep of D'Arcy's topper—walked away up the street.

The juniors looked after him in wonder.

What was Ferrers Locke, the detective, doing in Rylcombe?

Was he there in connection with the escape of Convict 79? Tom Merry's heart sank a little at the thought.

"He's after No. 79!" said Blake, to whom the same thought had occurred.

"Bai Jove!"

"Poor old Seventy-Nine!" said Tom Merry. "He has no chance of getting clear if Ferrers Locke is after him."

"Rather not!"

"But I don't see it," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Mr. Locke is a private detective, and he's not the kind of man to track a man down for a reward. Why should he be up against Gerald Lynn? Lynn spoke of him as a man who would have helped him in his defence if he had been in England at the time."

"He may be lookin' into the mattah now on Lynn's side."

"But why should he come to Rylcombe to do that?" exclaimed Blake. "The bank robbery took place in London."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Well, what have you got in your noddle now?" Blake demanded.

"He's watchin' the cashier."

"Phew!"

"That's it," said Blake, with sudden conviction. "He's come down here to watch Lanbury, though what Lanbury wants here is a mystery. Perhaps he knows where Convict 79 is, and is going to communicate with him, and Mr. Locke will surprise them."

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"Blessed if I can make it out at all," said Tom Merry. "After all, I suppose it's no business of ours. One thing we can be sure of, whichever side Ferrers Locke takes will be the right side."

"Yaas, wathah! But the time is passin', deah boys, and we haven't settled about those twousahs."

"Oh, blow the trousers!"

"Weally, Blake——"

The juniors crossed the street again to Mr. Wegg's shop, and Arthur Augustus opened the door. Tom Merry and Blake followed him into the somewhat stuffy sanctum of Mr. Wegg, the tailor. From D'Arcy's mind, at all events, all other thoughts were banished now. He was thinking only of the most important of all subjects—new trousers!

CHAPTER 7.

The Prodigal Nephew!

MR. WEGG greeted the juniors with great politeness. Mr. Wegg was a little, stout man, with a round red face, and a round red nose, upon the bridge of which a pair of pince-nez found a resting-place. Mr. Wegg was nearly bald, with a wisp of hair carefully brushed across his shining head, as if to show up his baldness to the greatest possible advantage. He had a very polite manner, and a bow that was quite Grandisonian. Mr. Wegg did a great deal of business with the St. Jim's fellows, and especially with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Not that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the habit of wearing clothes made by a country tailor. He would have rejected the idea with scorn of appearing, as a rule, in clothes made by any but the best Bond Street artists. But there were times when repairs had to be done, and when new garments were required in a hurry, and on such occasions D'Arcy patronised the local sartorial artist; but he was careful not to give Mr. Wegg his "head," as he expressed it. If Mr. Wegg showed any desire to make D'Arcy's trousers or waistcoats, as he made those of the Rylcombe youth, D'Arcy came down upon him gently, but very firmly.

Mr. Wegg had to reproduce Bond Street measurements and fashion, and Mr. Wegg's six remaining hairs were in danger of turning grey on some of these occasions. But Arthur Augustus, if he gave a great deal of trouble, paid well and paid cash, and that was a solace for the bothered Mr. Wegg. He had a great many customers who did not pay at all. Arthur Augustus seldom even looked at the items on his bill, with the result that the items multiplied in quite a remarkable manner, and swelled up big totals.

"Good-aftahnoon, Mr. Wegg."

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen," said Mr. Wegg, rubbing his hands. "I have some very fine things in trouserings, Master D'Arcy."

"Vewy good."

"I have some fine new suitings, if the other young gentlemen would care to see them," Mr. Wegg suggested.

"Oh, no, we're simply here as lookers-on," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Some fine waisteoatings," hinted Mr. Wegg.

"Any jacketings?" asked Blake gravely.

"Ahem!"

"D'Arcy is very much in need of a good jacketing," remarked Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ahem! He, he!" laughed Mr. Wegg, who always laughed at his customers' jokes—an important branch of any business. "He, he, he!"

"I twust the matewial for these twousahs is diffewent fwom the last patterns you showed me, Mr. Wegg," said Arthur Augustus. "As I wemarked on that occasion, that gween shade is dead and buwied, and I want somethin' new."

"Quite so, Master D'Arcy. Quite so. I—ahem!"

Mr. Wegg paused as there was a sound of a loud thump on the ceiling overhead. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whose repose of manner was perfect, did not appear to observe it; but Tom Merry and Blake, who had less of the repose of the Vere de Vere stamp, glanced upwards.

Mr. Wegg coloured a little and coughed.

"My nephew Adolphus," he explained. "He has come back from London on a visit to me. You remember my nephew, Master D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Wegg."

All the juniors remembered Adolphus Wegg very well.

The tailor's nephew was an ambitious youth, with a vacant mind and a taste for anything but work.

While he had been a resident in the village of Rylcombe, he had walked abroad in splendid garments, the best that his uncle's shop could produce, and he had caused many a flutter among the young ladies in Bunn's Popular Cafe, and at the station buffet.

Master Adolphus was a man about town in Rylcombe, but the country village was too narrow for his aspiring soul. Like Cæsar, he was ambitious, and, like Cæsar, he suffered for it. He had gone off to London quite suddenly, and there were rumours in the village that he had equipped himself for the journey at his uncle's expense, but without his uncle's consent—in other words, that he had robbed the old gentleman of a considerable sum before going.

But Mr. Wegg perhaps considered the price a cheap one for getting rid of his troublesome nephew, who lived upon him, and had very expensive tastes, and at the same time openly patronised him, and was ashamed of the shop that supported him.

Mr. Wegg's patience with his nephew, who was a scapegrace and worse, was one of the topics of Rylcombe; and the village gossips all remarked that the old gentleman seemed to grow younger and more cheerful as soon as his expensive and fashionable nephew was gone.

Adolphus had sometimes come in contact with the juniors of St. Jim's at his uncle's shop, and he had disliked them intensely, because he suspected them of looking down upon him as a tailor's nephew—whereas, as a matter of fact, they never thought about him at all, excepting to wonder, perhaps, why old Wegg did not kick the ungrateful bounder out.

"He's come back," Mr. Wegg explained awkwardly. "Only for a visit. He—he has some business in Rylcombe, though I am sure I do not know what it is. I am afraid London has not improved my nephew."

"I am sowwy, Mr. Wegg."

"I am afraid he has learned late hours and dissipation," said Mr. Wegg, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "He used to lie in bed till ten in the morning, after keeping late hours at the Green Man, but now he seldom rises till twelve. He was out very late last night, and I think he is only just getting up."

"Bai Jove!"

"London has not improved him," said Mr. Wegg sadly.

Mr. Wegg's words were proved the next moment by the sudden appearance of Mr. Adolphus from the doorway of the parlour behind the shop. Mr. Adolphus was clad in a gorgeous dressing-gown, and had gorgeous Turkish slippers on. His face was pasty in colour, and his eyes bleared and blinking, and altogether he looked as if he had had a "night out," and as if it had done him no good.

He blinked at his uncle, not for the moment seeing the juniors in the dusky little shop.

"Ain't there something to drink in this 'ouse?" he asked.

Mr. Adolphus had learned many things—how to drink, and gamble, and smoke, and swear—how to lounge gracefully with a silk-hat tilted on the side of his head; but he had not yet mastered the difficulty of the aspirate.

"Adolphus——" began the much-enduring Mr. Wegg.

"Ain't there anything——"

Mr. Adolphus paused.

He had suddenly caught sight of the three juniors, looking at him with unmistakable expressions of disgust. He had the grace to colour.

"Good-afternoon," he mumbled.

The juniors nodded coldly.

"Come back to see the old place," Mr. Adolphus volunteered. "Slow after London, I give you my word. How they stand it 'ere I don't know!"

And with that disparagement of his native village, Mr. Adolphus rustled back into the parlour. His frowsy head emerged again for a moment.

"I'm expecting a visitor, nunky," he said.

"Yes, Adolphus."

"Let the old woman show him up as soon as he comes," said Adolphus. "Mr. Brown is the name. You remember that name—Mr. Brown."

"Yes, Adolphus," said the patient Mr. Wegg.

And Adolphus retired again.

Mr. Wegg, looking very shame-faced, began to sort out his "trouserings" for D'Arcy's inspection to cover up his confusion. The juniors made no remark. They wondered at the little old gentleman's patience with his prodigal nephew, but it was no business of theirs. A fellow who stayed in bed till half-past one, and demanded strong drink as soon as he rose, was the kind of fellow to be kicked out of any house, in the opinion of Tom Merry & Co. They would gladly have kicked Master Adolphus out of Mr. Wegg's house if Mr. Wegg had wanted them to. But the old tailor was long-suffering, and he was enduring the visit of his nephew with what patience he could muster.

ANSWERS

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CHAPTER 8.
"Mr. Browa!"

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY turned his attention to the trouserings.

Mr. Wegg spread out his rolls of cloth with great pride, and the swell of St. Jim's adjusted his monocle and surveyed them critically.

"What do you think, Tom Mewwy?" he asked.

Tom Merry tapped a roll of cloth of a huge check pattern.

"That looks ripping," he remarked.

"Ahem!"

"Pawn to king's fourth," said Blake humorously, tapping the check pattern. "Anybody would know you were a chess enthusiast if you wore this little lot, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Or there's this one with the pink stripes," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "That would be—ahem!—striking."

"Very striking," agreed Blake.

"Weally, you fellows——"

D'Arcy selected his cloth without his chums' assistance. Then Mr. Wegg produced his measuring tape, and requested D'Arcy to step into the fitting-room. The fitting-room was a little apartment somewhat like a telephone-box, fitted round with mirrors that gave a view of the inmate's figure under all possible aspects.

The glass was not of the finest quality, and on one side D'Arcy had an elongated visage, and on the other a somewhat flattened one. There was not too much room in the fitting apartment, but Blake and Tom Merry came in, too. Blake explained that he wanted to see the fun.

Mr. Wegg ran his measuring tape over D'Arcy.

He made mysterious marks upon a fragment of paper, which were supposed to indicate the proportions of the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy wore a thoughtful expression.

"It's a wathah difficult question about the length," he remarked.

Mr. Wegg nodded.

"What do you think, deah boys?"

"I don't quite see where the difficulty come in," said Tom Merry. "Trousers are generally made the length of a chap's pegs, ain't they?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you misappwehend. The question is, whethah they should be made a little longah to be turned up, or whethah the avewage length should be pwesewved. In that case, there is an appeawance of shortness when they are turned up."

Tom Merry and Blake looked exceedingly grave.

"That's a serious matter," said Blake, nodding his head with the solemnity of a mandarin.

"Very serious," agreed Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus was somewhat flattered by the serious consideration they were evidently giving to that important detail.

"Yaas, wathah," he remarked. "I am glad to see that you fellows can appweciate the difficulty of the posish."

"As a rule, of course, they must be turned up," Blake remarked, wagging his head again.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"On the other hand, they require sometimes to be turned down," Tom Merry observed.

"Yaas:"

"By Jove, I've got a really good idea!" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"Good! What is it, deah boy?"

"Why not have one leg long and one short?" suggested Tom Merry. "Then you could wear one turned down and the other turned up; or——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass severely upon the two juniors.

"So you were wottin', you wottahs!" he exclaimed. "I wegard you as a pair of silly asses! Pway don't cackle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally thought you had intelligence enough to undahstand the importance of the mattah!" said D'Arcy crushingly. "I was deceived!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Wegg.

"Pway shut up, deah boys. If you cannot be of any use, pway don't be a twouble," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "We're learning things!"

D'Arcy went ahead.

After due consideration, the length of the trouser-legs was satisfactorily settled, and then came the question of how far the shape should approximate to the peg-top ideal.

That point was carefully thought out and settled, and Mr. Wegg put down his measuring-tape at last.

Just as he did so, there was a tinkle of the little bell, which announced a new-comer in the tailor's shop.

"Pray excuse me a moment, young gentlemen," said Mr. Wegg.

"Certainly, my deah man!"

Mr. Wegg stepped out into the shop. The door of the fitting-room was left half open.

The juniors could not, however, see who was in the shop, and they felt no curiosity in the matter. But they jumped, and D'Arcy forgot even his trousers, as there came a voice they knew:

"This is Mr. Wegg's, I think?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "That's that chap Lanbury!"

"Queer!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes," answered Mr. Wegg, "I am Mr. Wegg. What can I do for you to-day, sir? I have some very fine selections in trouserings——"

"I wish to see Mr. Adolphus Wegg. I understand that he is staying here."

"Yes, certainly! My nephew is expecting a visitor."

"Very good. Please tell him I wish to see him. I am Mr. Brown."

"Very well, sir."

The juniors gazed at one another silently.

They could not very well help hearing what was said, in subdued tones, within six feet of them.

Mr. Lanbury, the cashier of the City Central Bank, was the visitor whom Adolphus Wegg was expecting, and he had come there under an assumed name. What did it mean?

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry and Blake were silent. They were utterly puzzled.

Mr. Wegg went into the little parlour, and was heard to call up the stairs, and the tones of Adolphus replied. The tailor returned into the shop, and then Mr. Lanbury passed the open door of the fitting-room as he went into the parlour.

All three of the juniors saw him pass, though he did not see them. And there was no mistake about it. It was Mr. Lanbury.

He went on into the parlour, without thinking of looking round into the open doorway of the fitting-room, and then Mr. Wegg returned to his customers.

The juniors did not linger in the tailor's shop.

The matter of the trousers had been satisfactorily settled, and the chums of the School House bade good-bye to Mr. Wegg and quitted the shop. In the street they looked at one another with astonished looks.

"Well, my only chapeau!" Blake ejaculated.

"So young Wegg has been chumming up with bank cashiers in London!" Tom Merry remarked. "If I were a banker, I shouldn't care to have a cashier who had friends like Adolphus. I should be afraid he might help himself from the safe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What the deuce does he mean by going about under an assumed name?" exclaimed Blake. "If he's a friend of young Wegg's, why can't he come under his own name?"

"I don't understand it," said Tom Merry abruptly. "It looks to me as if there's something fishy going on. You remember when Lynn was with us, and we first saw Lanbury, he was crossing the street to us. We were standing outside Mr. Wegg's shop at the time, and he was crossing from the station to it. It's pretty clear now that he was going into the shop then, and he didn't because young Lynn and we were outside. He walked down towards the bridge, and he came back when the coast was clear."

"It's queer!"

"Jolly queer!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"Bai Jove! Wathah!"

"What is he so jolly secretive about?" said Tom Merry. "I wish I knew where to find Ferrers Locke."

"Ferrers Locke?"

"Yes. I should like to tell him."

Two strokes rang out from the church clock.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "We're late for lessons!"

"Bai Jove, there will be a wow!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And the three juniors ran down the lane towards St. Jim's as fast as they could go.

CHAPTER 9.
The Face at the Window.

THE Shell and the Fourth had long been in their Form-rooms, at lessons, when the trio reached St. Jim's, and they hurried there at once. Tom Merry was given fifty lines for being late, and he accepted them meekly, and went into his place in the Form. In the Fourth Form-room Mr. Lathom was a little milder. He looked at Blake and D'Arcy over his spectacles, and asked them to explain.

"I was delayed at my tailah's, sir," Arthur Augustus explained. "I am vewy sowwy I am late, and Blake is vewy sowwy."

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"Yes, sir," said Blake. "Very sorry, sir."

"Very well," said the kind little Form-master. "You may go to your places, but it must not happen again."

"Thank you, sir."

"You are vewy kind, sir."

And the two juniors took their places, very well satisfied with themselves and with Mr. Lathom, and exceedingly glad that they were not in the Shell. They knew that Tom Merry would not get off so cheaply with Mr. Linton.

Blake's place was next to Lynn, and during maths. he asked Lynn some questions while Mr. Lathom's attention was chiefly directed towards the blackboard.

"Do you know much about that man Lanbury, Lynn?"

Lynn looked at him in surprise.

"Lanbury? The man we met in the village to-day, you mean?" he inquired.

Blake nodded.

"No," said Lynn. "I only knew him by sight. I saw him several times when I visited my brother at the bank, that is all."

"Was he a friend of your brother's?"

"They were on friendly terms."

"Did you know he had a friend named Wegg?"

"Wegg? No."

"You never saw young Wegg in London?"

"Of course not!"

"Know any reason why Mr. Lanbury should go about calling himself Mr. Brown?" asked Blake.

Lynn looked astonished.

"No! Does he?"

"He does."

"Blessed if I know why, then!"

"Yes; it's jolly odd, ain't it?"

"I should say so!" said Lynn, in wonder. "I remember hearing my brother say once, though, that Mr. Lanbury had some sporting friends, and that it wouldn't be a good thing for him if it were known at the bank. He might call himself Mr. Brown when he went to see them. But I don't know anything about it."

"Oh!" said Blake. "And Adolphus is one of his sporting friends, perhaps? I don't know what to make of it, but it seems to me that I smell a mouse."

Mr. Lathom turned round from the blackboard.

"Blake!"

"Yes, sir?" said Blake meekly.

"Take fifty lines for talking!"

"Yes, sir."

And Blake did not talk any more.

But he thought very much about the strange matter. It was odd—very odd, that the cashier of the City Central Bank should come down to a quiet place like Rylcombe to visit the disreputable nephew of Mr. Wegg, the village tailor, and that he should assume a false name for the purpose. And Blake shared Tom Merry's desire to see Ferrers Locke and ascertain what the detective's opinion might be upon the matter.

Lynn tapped Blake upon the arm as they came out of the Form-room after lessons were over.

"What were you asking those questions about Lanbury for?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, I wanted to know, you know."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"I know he's in Rylcombe."

"Well, I know that. I saw him," said Lynn. "I think, perhaps, he may be down here to help the police look for Gerald. I shouldn't wonder. I know Gerald was very bitter against him at the trial, and threw out hints that Lanbury knew what had become of the bonds."

"Oh, he did, did he?" exclaimed Blake, much interested.

"Yes. It was rot, of course."

"How do you know it was rot?"

"Gerald was found guilty," Lynn explained.

"Well, I think you might stick to your own flesh and blood, even if he was found guilty, so long as there was a doubt left!" Blake exclaimed.

"There wasn't a doubt left," said Lynn gloomily.

And he walked away. Lynn was very restless that day.

The meeting with the escaped convict the day before had unsettled him. The knowledge that a dozen fellows at St. Jim's knew all about his disgrace weighed upon his mind. He did not speak upon the subject himself, and he did not exactly think that the juniors were speaking about it; but he dreaded everything.

It was bad enough for a dozen fellows to know his secret, and a chance word might make it known to the whole school.

It was like a black cloud upon Lynn's mind and spirits.

He did not enter the juniors' common-room when most of the juniors of the School House gathered there in the evening. Fellows who did not know his miserable secret wondered what was the matter with Lynn, of the Fourth, who was generally cheerful enough.

Lynn did his preparation in his study, with Hancock and Dacre, who shared the room with him. When preparation was over, Hancock and Dacre rose and yawned, and prepared to go downstairs.

"Coming down?" asked Hancock, looking at Lynn, who did not rise.

Lynn shook his head.

"No; I'm going to do some German," he said.

"My hat! Fancy doing German without having to!" said Hancock, with a whistle of surprise.

"Queer taste!" said Dacre.

And the two juniors quitted the study, leaving Lynn getting out his German grammar and dictionary. But Lynn did not do any German. He was far from being in a humour for work.

He sat at the table, his pen in hand, his brow wrinkled with thought.

His nerves were in a strange twitter.

It had seemed to him that there was something significant in the looks of Hancock and Dacre as they left him. They must think it curious that he chose to stay in the study by himself. They perhaps knew that there was something on his mind. It seemed to the unhappy junior that everybody at St. Jim's knew that there was something on his mind.

As a matter of fact, Dacre and Hancock had not given the matter a thought. But Lynn's nervous fancy was sensitively alive.

As our greatest of dramatists has told us, the thief doth fear each bush an officer; and the fellow with a secret seemed to read suspicion in every careless glance that was thrown upon him.

Lynn was thinking now of his convict brother, and wondering whether, in the crowded common-room below, there were whispers on the subject—whether fellows were whispering to each other that Lynn of the Fourth had a brother in prison.

Suppose the escaped convict were captured near St. Jim's—and he certainly was lurking not far away. It would cause a sensation in the school—the convict's name might come out—probably would come out—and the similarity of name could not fail to excite remark. Without any chatter from the juniors who already knew, the rest of the school would be put in possession of the facts.

Lynn's feelings were very bitter.

Gerald had disgraced the family. Why could he not have been content to take his punishment quietly, and remain in silence in his prison—not bring himself again before the public gaze in this way?

If he was innocent—bah, he was not innocent! He had been found guilty by judge and jury, and that was enough. He was a thief, a scoundrel, and any remnant of shame should have prevented him from troubling the brother upon whose name he had already brought a deep enough stain.

Such were the black and bitter thoughts of the Fourth-Former, as he sat at the study table, his idle pen in his hand. Outside, the night was black and almost starless, and a keen, wintry wind swept through the leafless branches of the old elms in the quadrangle. The windows rattled as the wind smote them.

Tap!

Lynn did not notice the sound. It was not much louder than the scraping of the old elm-branches against the walls outside the window.

Tap!

It was louder this time—unmistakably a tap. Lynn started from his gloomy reverie and looked up.

He glanced round towards the door, imagining that the tap had come from that direction—as from what other direction could it have come?

"Come in!"

The door did not move.

Tap!

Lynn started violently. The tap was upon the pane of the window; and his eyes turned quickly in that direction, and he saw the outlines of a white face pressed to the glass.

Lynn staggered back.

He knew the face—he knew the hideous garb of which he could catch a glimpse—the garb branded with the broad arrow. The face at the window was the face of his brother.

CHAPTER 10.

Go!

LYNN stood transfixed—his hands clenched, his face deadly white—his eyes fastened upon the face at the window.

He could not speak; he could not move. It was as if a ghost had risen to confront him.

His brother!

Here—here at St. Jim's!

It was like a horrid dream. It seemed to him that his fevered imagination was playing him tricks, and that it had

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With the prefects' canes lashing behind them, the juniors of the Remove scattered, and bolted out into the passage. "There! I think that will be the finish of this little affair!" gasped Wingate, of the Sixth. *(An incident taken from the grand long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, entitled "BY ORDER OF THE FORM," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of our grand companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale at all newsagents. Price One Penny.)*

conjured up that pale vision of a face at the window. But the tap, sounding sharply again upon the glass, showed him that it was real enough.

It was his brother.

Lynn staggered towards the window. Then, as a hasty thought shot into his mind, he turned back and locked the door. No one was likely to come to the study; but if someone should come—should see his brother! As in a vision of horror, Lynn saw all the hideous possibilities—the alarm given—the police—the convict dragged away before the wondering eyes of all St. Jim's—himself, covered with shame, cowering under the eyes of his schoolfellows!

Tap!

Lynn hurried across to the window, and opened it. He stood looking at the figure before him, crouching partly upon the window-sill, partly in the thick tendrils of the ivy upon which the convict had climbed.

His eyes gleamed; hatred was burning in them. He clenched his hands hard; the fearful thought had come into his mind to push the man away—away—to death upon the hard flags below. Anything—anything to avert the terrible shame which this visit threatened to bring upon him.

"Arthur!"

The convict's voice was low and faint; he was weak with cold and hunger. But it did not touch the heart of the angry junior.

"What do you want here?" he muttered. "How dare you—how dare you come? How dare you? Haven't you disgraced me enough already?"

The convict shrank from his savage words.

"Arthur! Brother!"

"Don't call me your brother," said Lynn, in a thick, savage voice. "You're no brother of mine! You're a convict—a thief and a convict!"

"I am a convict, Arthur, but no thief!"

"Bah!"

"Help me in, Arthur, for mercy's sake! I am cold to the bone! I shall fall!"

Lynn stood back from the window.

"Get in, if you like," he said; "I shall not touch your hand."

"Arthur!"

"I hate you!"

The convict turned a white face upon the boy. He had climbed partly into the window; but he rested there upon his elbows, and came no further.

"Put the light out," he said quietly. "I might be seen from the quadrangle."

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Lynn silently raised his hand and put out the gas.

"I came here in a last hope," said the convict, in low and shaking tones. "I climbed the ivy to your study window, Arthur. I waited till you were alone; I have waited since, I don't know how long, trying to find the courage to knock."

"I wish you had fallen, as you waited."

"Arthur!"

"Oh, I hate you! Why will you come here to shame me?"

"I did not come to shame you, Arthur," the voice went on miserably, in the darkness. "Heaven knows, I felt as much for you as for myself, Arthur, when that sentence was passed upon me—a sentence I had never deserved!"

"Bah!"

"If I have broken prison, it is because I hope when in freedom to make a fight to clear my name."

"Lies—lies!"

"I had hoped that you might help me, my brother; help me with what I need to make my escape—clothes, food, money. Even if you believe me guilty, Arthur, you might remember that I am your brother; that your mother is my mother, and that she is equally fond of us both, and how it must wring her heart to know that her elder son is shut up in misery in a convict prison."

"I wish you were there still."

"Do you mean that?"

"Mean it?" said Lynn furiously. "Of course I mean it! I wish you were there—buried in the deepest cell they have—there, or anywhere, where you could bring no more disgrace upon us."

There was the sound of a sob in the darkness.

It did not soften the boy's heart. He was too occupied with his own terrors and troubles to have a single throb of pity for what the convict must be suffering, innocent or guilty.

"Then you will not help me?" said the convict.

"No!"

"Because—because you are afraid, Arthur, or because you hate me?"

"Because I hate you!"

The convict groaned.

"Good heavens!" he said, in a low and shaken voice. "What am I to expect from the world, when my own brother turns on me?"

"Leave me in peace."

"Very well, Arthur"—the convict's voice was firm again—"very well. Be it so. I came here, as a drowning man catches at a straw—I came to swear to you that I am innocent; to see if you would help me!"

"I will not help you!"

"I could force my way in; I could force you to help me, Arthur, by threatening you with the shame of seeing me arrested here under your eyes."

Lynn trembled with rage.

"You—you hound!" he muttered. "I expected that; I was looking for that! Now——"

"I shall not do so, Arthur," said the convict quietly. "You have disowned me; you refuse to help me. I will take nothing from your hand that is not freely given. You wish me to go—I will go!"

There was a slight sound as the convict slid back from the window.

Lynn started.

His unwelcome visitor was going. It seemed almost too good to be true. For a moment a flashing doubt came across the junior's mind. This was not the conduct of a guilty man; a thief, a criminal, would not have acted so.

But in his relief, he had no time for that thought. It seemed as if a shadow of worse than death was lifted from his mind, when the head and shoulders of the convict disappeared from the square of the window.

"Good-bye, Arthur!"

The junior did not reply.

"I am going, Arthur. I shall make one attempt to get away towards the sea; and if I fail, I shall give myself up; if I do not die of hunger on the moors. Before I go, Arthur, give me your hand—for the last time."

Lynn did not move.

The convict did not speak again. He slid into the ivy, and there was a rustle as he clambered down. Lynn seemed turned to stone.

The convict was gone.

Lynn trembled.

He listened—listened with bated breath and straining ears at the open window. Was he listening in fear that his brother might fall, or in terror lest there should be some sound of alarm—some sound to show that the man had been seen?

He hardly knew.

The rustle in the ivy ceased—the climber was gone. There was no sound in the wide, dark quadrangle.

Lynn bent his head from the window. Surely the man would be able to get clear. For his own sake, not for the convict's sake, Lynn hoped it. After all, the quadrangle was deserted at that hour. The night was cold and windy; no one was likely to be out of doors from either House at St. Jim's.

He started as the chime from the clock-tower came through the frosty air.

Nine o'clock!

The booming strokes of the great clock came with a sound like thunder to the straining, throbbing ears of the Fourth-Former.

He shivered. He remembered that at nine o'clock, in almost every weather, it was the custom of Figgins & Co., of the New House, to take their sprint round the quad. before going to bed.

What if they met the convict?

Lynn listened in silent anguish.

But there was no sound from the wide, gloomy quadrangle. Surely his fears were groundless. He closed the window at last, and relighted the gas in the study. His face, as he looked at his reflection in the glass, was colourless, bloodless. He was startled at the ghastliness of it as he looked.

A hand tried the door. There was an exclamation in the passage.

"It's locked!"

Lynn hastily unlocked the door. Dacre and Hancock came in, the former with a bag of chestnuts in his hand. The two juniors stared at Lynn.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Hancock.

"Nothing!" muttered Lynn.

The thought was beating in his brain, like a hammer. Suppose his brother had been in the study—suppose the two juniors had found him there?

"You look as if you had seen a ghost," said Dacre.

"I'm all right."

Lynn walked unsteadily from the study: he could not face their eyes. The two juniors stared after him in astonishment, but Lynn did not look round. He wanted to be alone—to get to some quiet place by himself, where his ghastly face and terrified eyes would not betray him to every observer.

CHAPTER 11.
A Meeting in the Dark.

FIGGINS rose from the table in his study in the New House, and stretched his long limbs and yawned. Kerr put down his Xenophon. Kerr was a fellow with what were regarded by the other juniors as extraordinary tastes. He would read Greek for pleasure, and the other fellows would hardly have consented to read it on the rack. But Kerr could do things easily which were difficult or impossible for his friends in the Fourth. Kerr had been observed to smile knowingly when the head boy in the Sixth made his Greek oration on Speech Day, Kerr being, in all probability, the only person in the school who understood it, with the exception of the Head. Fatty Wynn was seated in the armchair in Figgins's study, with his feet on the fender, and his eyes half-closed. Fatty had just disposed of two whole pork-pies, and was feeling very comfortable. He did not move as Figgins rose, but a sort of apprehensive shiver passed through him. He knew that Figgins was going to drag him out for a sprint in the cold, windy quad., as always.

"Come on, Fatty!" said Figgins.

Fatty Wynn did not seem to hear.

"Bung a book at him, Kerr!" said Figgins. "That rotten Xenophon will do! Blessed if I know how you can stand that stuff!"

Kerr smiled.

"Wake up, Fatty!" he said.

"Come on, Fatty!" said Figgins. "Time for a sprint before bed. Buck up! Kerr's put away his silly rot."

"I say, Figgy, I feel very comfy here," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, I'll soon alter all that!" said Figgins cheerfully.

And he did. It required only a tilting of the armchair, and Fatty Wynn shot out in a heap on the hearthrug. He gave a roar as he landed there.

"Ow! You ass!"

Figgins grinned.

"Buck up!" he said pleasantly. "No slacking allowed in this study. Get a move on!"

"Look here——" said Fatty Wynn.

"I'm looking. I'm just going to tread on you."

Fatty Wynn rose hastily.

"I suppose I'd better come," he said resignedly.

"I suppose you had," agreed Figgins. "Come on!"

And the three juniors left the study, Fatty Wynn still grumbling a little, and descended the stairs of the New House.

"Blowing great guns!" said Thompson, of the Shell, as they passed him to the door.

"All the better," said Figgins cheerily. "It will wake

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Fatty Wynn up. Come on, Fatty! I warned you to leave that second pie alone, you know."

"I say, Figgy——"

"This way!" said Figgins, pushing Fatty out into the quad. "Now, get a move on you! Next time you'll be satisfied when you've had enough."

And the reluctant Fatty, taken by either arm by Figgins and Kerr, found himself going round the dark and windy quad. at a rapid trot.

"Nothing like a sprint before bed to keep you in form," Figgins gasped, as the wind smote him. "You'll sleep all the better for it, Fatty. I think—oh! Ow! My hat!"

Bump!

Figgins had run right into a dim, shadowy form in the dark, and he staggered back, panting for breath.

There was a sharp exclamation from the shadowy form, and hurried retreating footsteps.

Kerr made a sudden spring.

"Got him!" he shouted.

"Quick!" ejaculated Kerr. "He's getting away! Hold him!"

Figgins's powerful grasp descended upon the struggling form, and Fatty Wynn a moment later lent his aid. The struggling unknown resisted unavailingly. The grasp of the three sturdy juniors was not to be denied.

"Got him!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Let me go!"

It was a breathless, strangled voice.

"Phew!" said Figgins. "That isn't a kid! Some blessed trespasser! Hold him while I strike a match."

Scratch!

The match glimmered out into the darkness of the quad. The next moment the wind extinguished it.

But the momentary glimmer had been enough to reveal a startling sight. The man in the grasp of the New House juniors was no stranger to them; they knew the white, hunted face, they knew the garb branded with broad arrows.

It was the convict!

"No. 79!" gasped Figgins.

"Lynn's brother!"

"Phew!"

The man's struggles had suddenly ceased. He, too, had recognised the juniors; he knew them for three of the fellows who had been in the railway-carriage when he had entered it, one of them for the fellow who had lent him the raincoat.

"What on earth are you doing here?" asked Figgins.

The convict panted.

"I came to see my brother. Let me go!"

"You can go fast enough," said Figgins, drawing the convict into the deeper shadow of the school wall. "It was a risky thing to come here. Have you seen Lynn?"

"Yes."

"What did you want to see him for?" asked the shrewd Kerr. "I suppose you didn't run such a fearful risk for nothing."

"I wanted help," muttered the convict.

"Has he helped you?"

"No."

"H'm!" said Figgins anxiously. "I say, this is rather thick, you know! We don't want you to be taken, but it would put us in a rotten position if it were known that we'd seen you and hadn't said anything. You oughtn't to have come here, you know."

No. 79 groaned.

"I know it!" he said. "I am going. I shall not return. God help me!"

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "What did you want your brother to do—give you clothes, I suppose, and tin?"

"And food!" said the convict hoarsely. "I am starving!"

"Poor chap!" said Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn could feel for troubles like that. The two pork-pies he had just eaten seemed to rise in judgment against him.

The fat Fourth-Former groped in his pockets, and brought out a chunk of milk chocolate. He pressed it into the convict's hand.

"Begin on that!" he said.

"God bless you!"

"I—I say, we ought to do something for the chap," said Figgins irresolutely. "I—I believe it's punishable to help a convict escape, but—but——"

"This is an exceptional case," said Kerr.

"Yes. You think so, don't you, Kerr?" said Figgins, who had unbounded faith in the judgment of his Scottish chum.

"Yes, I do."

"Good! We'll do something for him.",

"God bless you!" said the convict again.

"I suppose you want clothes most of all, so that you can get rid of that rig?" said Figgins thoughtfully. "I don't see why we couldn't get you some. Look here, Fatty! Cut off to the study, and bring all the grub there is in the cupboard, and my woollen scarf!"

"Right you are, Figgy!"

Fatty Wynn disappeared into the darkness.

The convict was trembling as he stood in the thick shadow of the wall. The juniors could only see the faint outlines of the man. He was shaking with the cold from head to foot; his garb was little protection against the bitter winter wind.

"Where did you pass the night?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"In the pit on the moor."

Figgins shuddered. He remembered how cold the previous night had been, and how he had laid an old coat across the bed, needing that as well as the extra blanket.

"By Jove," he said, "you're having a rotten time! I should think the prison would be better."

The convict gritted his teeth.

"Never," he muttered—"never that!"

"Look here!" said Figgins. "You'd better cut now! I'll manage to get some things for you by to-morrow—some clothes and tin and tommy, you know. I'll speak to the other fellows—the chaps you saw in the train, you know—and we'll fix it up. But you can't stay here. Where can I see you to-morrow?"

"You're an old St. Jim's boy, I believe?" said Kerr.

"Yes, yes."

"Then you know this neighbourhood well?"

"Every inch of it," said the convict, in a choking voice. "The pit I was in last night, I hid in it once when I was in the Fourth here, and we were playing robbers on the moor."

Figgins felt a lump in his throat. The reminiscence was curiously touching.

"You know the old monk's cell in Rylcombe Wood, then?" he asked.

"Yes, yes."

"I'll come there to-morrow, and bring you the things, or leave them there for you, if you're not there," said Figgins. "That all right?"

"Heaven reward you! It is more than my own brother would do for me," said the convict, in a faltering voice.

"It's a go, then!" said Figgins. "I wish I could do something more for you now. I can give you some grub—that's all."

"It is what I need more than anything else. I have not eaten to-day."

Fatty Wynn's plump form loomed up in the darkness. The Falstaff of the New House had not been long gone.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed.

A well-filled bag was pushed into the convict's hand, and Fatty Wynn, with quite a tender touch, passed a thick scarf round his neck.

"Better cut off now!" he said. "Pratt had his eye on me when I came out, and he may come buzzing out to see what's on."

The convict made a hasty movement.

"I will go. Thanks—a thousand times, thanks!"

He disappeared into the gloom. Figgins & Co. heard him drop from the school wall into the road. With grim and thoughtful faces the three juniors returned to the New House.

CHAPTER 12.

Cheap Clothes.

FIGGINS did not see Tom Merry that evening; but the next morning he met the hero of the Shell in the quad., when the Terrible Three came out for a run before breakfast. Then Tom Merry heard of the visit the convict had paid to St. Jim's.

"And Lynn refused to help him?" said Tom Merry.

"So he said."

"And you've promised to, Figgy, old man?"

Figgins coloured a little uneasily.

"Well, what could I do?" he said. "The poor chap was starving. It would be better to hand him over to the police than to let him sleep in pits on the moor in this freezing weather, and go days without grub."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I know it's risky, and—and I know it might get me into trouble," said Figgins, "but I'm going over alone after morning lessons to take the things to him——"

"That you're jolly well not!" said Kerr. "We're coming! We're all in this."

Figgins nodded.

"We've got to get some clothes for the chap," he said. "Men's clothes, of course; ours would be no good. I suppose we shall have to cut down to the village and get some of old Wegg's cheap reach-me-downs."

"Good idea!"

And that was arranged. The juniors were not specially flush with money just then, owing to the contributions that

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had already been made for No. 79 in the railway carriage. And what they could spare they wanted to hand over in cash to the convict. Mr. Wegg, in Rylcombe, besides being, as his shop-window proudly announced, a "bespoke tailor," also "ran a line" in ready-made garments, which Figgins alluded to disrespectfully as "reach-me-downs."

Great numbers of the youth of Rylcombe were clad in Mr. Wegg's ready-made garments, in assorted sizes and colours. There would be nothing striking about No. 79, so far as clothes went, when he was clad in Mr. Wegg's guinea suit.

After morning lessons, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked Kildare for a pass to go down to the village. The captain of St. Jim's looked at him inquiringly.

"You had a pass down to the village yesterday," he said.

"Yaas, wathah! I was goin' to my tailah's, you know."

"And where are you going to-day?"

"To my tailah's."

Kildare laughed.

"Hadn't you better take a room over your tailor's and live there?" he asked.

"Weally, Kildare——"

Kildare wrote out the permit. He added the names of Tom Merry and Blake, and the three School House juniors joined Figgins & Co. at the gates. Figgins & Co. had a pass-out from Monteith of the New House.

"All serene!" said Figgins. "We've got to get to the cell in the wood after going to Wegg's, and so we shall have to buck up."

And the juniors bucked up. They walked very quickly down to Rylcombe, and arrived at the little shop of Mr. Wegg. Outside the shop was a wooden figure in a boy's sailor suit on one side of the door, and on the other an effigy of a man with a meaningless smile, clad in one of Mr. Wegg's famous guinea suitings. Upon the effigy was a placard announcing that any member of the public who invested the trifling sum of one pound one shilling in one of Mr. Wegg's famous suitings would look exactly the same.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy remarked, glancing at it through his monocle. "I would wathah pay the guinea not to look like that, you know!"

And they passed into the shop. The tinkle of the little bell was not answered from the parlour. The parlour door was closed, but from the interior came the sound of heated voices. Some family argument was evidently proceeding, and in the heat of it the tinkle of the shop-bell had passed unnoticed.

"I can't have it, Adolphus! Indeed I cannot!"

It was the almost tearful voice of Mr. Wegg. The old tailor was evidently much distressed. The deeper, sarcastic tones of the prodigal nephew answered.

"My dear nunky, grin and bear it. Ain't you glad to see your affectionate nephew 'ome again? What?"

"It's disgraceful, Adolphus! You were intoxicated last night."

"Absolutely!" said Adolphus.

"You did not rise till twelve to-day."

"That's early for me."

"My dear Adolphus, I cannot bear it! It is disgracing me with the neighbours. Mr. Watts asked me yesterday what you did for a living in London."

"Oh! And what did you tell him?"

"I had to tell him I didn't know," said Mr. Wegg. "You have never told me, Adolphus, though I cannot help suspecting that it has something to do with horseracing, or something equally wicked."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Adolphus. "Oh, ab-so-lute-ly! He, he, he!"

"Bai Jove, I wish old Wegg would come into the shop, and leave his waggin' his nephew till latah," said D'Arcy, who had been tapping on the counter with his cane for some time. "He seems to have become deaf."

"What a nice lad Adolphus is!" said Figgins.

"The howwid wottah! If he were my nephew I would give him a feahful thwashin'."

D'Arcy tapped impatiently on the counter, but the hoarse laugh of Adolphus in the little parlour drowned the sound of his knocking.

"I don't see anything to laugh at, Adolphus!" exclaimed Mr. Wegg, his voice rising indignantly. "If you were not my dead brother's son——"

"But I am, ain't I?" said Adolphus. "You ought to be proud of me, doing you credit as I do! There ain't many tradesmen in Rylcombe and round 'ere with a nephew like me—a fashionable cove. You ought to be proud, you ought, nunky! As for wanting to drink whisky at midday, I always do! I live on it!"

"You will die on it, Adolphus."

"Oh, rot!" said the respectful nephew. "Besides, I ain't 'ere for long. When my little bit of business is finished, I'm goin'."

"When is your business going to be finished, Adolphus?" asked Mr. Wegg, his tones plainly implying that he was very impatient for that finish to come."

"Oh, when I've seen Lan—Brown again."

"Is Mr. Brown coming here again?"

"Oh, yes—absolutely!" said Adolphus.

"I don't like that Mr. Brown," said the tailor. "He looks to me a shifty man, and he looked round my shop yesterday in a very scornful way——"

"He, he, he!"

Bang!

The gold head of D'Arcy's cane bumped on the little parlour door, and this time the uncle and nephew could not help hearing. The voices in the parlour suddenly ceased, and a minute later Mr. Wegg, with a very flushed face, opened the door.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!" he said, rather flustered.

"Sowwy to disturb you, deah sir," said D'Arcy, "but we could heah all that you were sayin', you know, othahwise we would have waited longah."

"I—I—I—— But the fitting is not till Saturday afternoon, sir," said Mr. Wegg.

"Oh, I haven't come about the twousahs."

Mr. Wegg rubbed his plump hands in a businesslike way.

"Ah! You require a new overcoat, perhaps, or a new suiting?"

D'Arcy thought of the effigy outside the shop door, and shuddered.

"Not exactly, Mr. Wegg," said Tom Merry. "We want a suit of clothes, but it's to give to a man—a chap who's in need of duds, you see—chap about five feet seven. And do them as cheap as you can, won't you?"

"Ahem! One of my guinea suitings, or something a bit more tasteful at thirty shillings?" suggested Mr. Wegg.

"Let's see the thirty-bobber," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Wegg reached down a package and unfastened the string. From the inner parlour came a sound of liquid gurgling from a bottle into a glass, and a clink, which showed that the hands that held bottle and glass were shaking. Mr. Wegg's promising nephew was evidently indulging in his morning's refreshment.

Mr. Wegg heard it, and flushed, but the juniors did not appear to notice it. They felt for the old gentleman's shame and distress.

"Yes, I think that will do," said Tom Merry, turning over a suit of clothes in a thick, dark cloth. "Lemme see. We shall want some socks, and a cap, too, and a shirt."

"Wathah wuff on the poor chap to have to weah those twousahs," murmured D'Arcy, sotto voce.

"Never mind the cut," said Tom Merry. "They'll keep him warm."

"Yaas, that's wight enough."

The juniors selected the various articles required. Then Mr. Wegg suggested that the poor man might like an overcoat. But the available cash did not run to an overcoat, and the purchases were made up into a bundle, and paid for, and the juniors left Mr. Wegg's establishment.

"Better not go in a big crowd to see the man," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to attract attention. You buzz off with the things, Figgy—you and Kerr and Fatty. We'll get back to St. Jim's."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

And the New House juniors took the path into the wood,

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The door of the carriage suddenly swung open, and a man staggered in, breathless and panting. "Don't—don't give the alarm!" he muttered hoarsely. "Have pity on me!" "The Convict!" gasped Tom Merry & Co., in amazement. (See Chapter 3.)

to penetrate into the cold, leafless recesses where the convict lurked in hiding, and Tom Merry and Blake and D'Arcy walked back to the school. Just as they came in sight of the school gates Tom Merry caught sight of a well-built figure ahead in the road, about to turn into the school gateway.

"Mr. Locke!" he exclaimed.

And he ran forward and overtook the detective.

CHAPTER 13.
A Brother's Remorse.

FERRERS LOCKE shook hands with the juniors and walked into the quadrangle with them. The detective looked just as the juniors had known him of old, and several fellows lifted their caps to him as he went in. There was a thoughtful expression upon the quiet, clear-cut features of the famous detective.

"You were coming to visit us, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I was going to speak a word to you, Tom, before I left, certainly. But, as a matter of fact, there is a boy here I came specially to see—a boy named Lynn."

"Lynn of the Fourth?"

"I dare say he is in the Fourth," said the detective, with a smile. "I mean Arthur Lynn, the brother of the escaped convict."

"That's the chap, sir," said Tom Merry. "I—I wanted to speak to you about No. 79, sir. We know something about him."

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Locke!"

The detective looked at them in surprise.

"You know something about Gerald Lynn?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Locke."

"Very good. You shall tell me after I have seen Lynn," said Ferrers Locke. "Perhaps you can take me to the lad?"

"Certainly. I'll take you to his study, and Blake can hunt up Lynn and bring him there," said Tom Merry.

"Thank you, Tom!"

Ferrers Locke was taken up to Lynn's study in the Fourth-Form passage. The study was empty, and Mr. Locke sat down to wait. He did not have to wait long. Lynn opened the door and came in, and Tom Merry and Blake discreetly retired. Ferrers Locke rose to his feet. Lynn closed the door, with an evident fear that strange ears might hear something of what was said, and turned a look full of uneasiness upon Ferrers Locke.

"You—you are Mr. Locke," he exclaimed nervously, "the detective?"

"Yes."

"You want to see me?"

"That is why I am here."

"Is it—is it something about my brother?"

"Yes."

"For goodness' sake, don't say anything outside this study!" muttered Lynn. "The fellows here don't know. Tom Merry knows, and a few others, but they've promised to keep it dark. The school doesn't know."

Ferrers Locke fixed a penetrating look upon the boy.

"I have no intention of saying anything outside this study," he said. "I wish merely to ask you a few questions. Have you seen your brother?"

Every vestige of colour faded from Lynn's startled face.

"Have I—I seen him?" he panted.

"Yes."

"How—how could I see him?" said Lynn, trying to speak calmly. "I—I did see him at the railway-station the other day—the warders were taking him back to prison. Is that what you mean?"

"Have you seen him since?"

"That is a—a ridiculous question," said Lynn, in a dry voice. "How could I see him? You—you do not imagine that he would come here, surely?"

"Yes, I do."

"Mr. Locke!"

"Listen to me," said the detective, with the same penetrating look fixed upon the junior's white, changing face. "I can see by your looks that you have seen him since then."

"I—I—I——"

"He escaped from the warders at Wayland, after the express had left the station," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Then he disappeared. It occurs to me as very probable that, being in need of everything—especially a change of clothes—he might make an attempt to get into communication with his brother here to obtain help."

Lynn was silent.

"To a man situated as he was, without hope of aid from any other quarter, that would naturally occur as a resource," went on the detective, "and as his brother, you would probably run the risk of helping him, although he is a convict."

Lynn seemed to choke.

"But be assured that I do not seek your brother with the intention of injuring him in any way," the detective went on. "I am here as his friend."

Lynn's eyes opened wide.

"His friend!" he repeated. "A convict's friend!"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes. I knew your brother in London soon after he had left school, and I had formed the opinion of him that he was incapable of the crime he was convicted of. When I returned to England a few days ago I decided to take up the case, to sift the matter to the bottom in the hope of finding out something to his advantage. I am convinced that your brother was innocent."

Lynn panted.

"Innocent!"

"Yes."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Surely that is good news to you?" said the detective, a little puzzled by the boy's expression. "You must be glad to know that?"

"Oh!"

"It is not only my opinion, but I hope to prove it," said Ferrers Locke. "I have my eye upon a man whom I strongly suspect. I wish to see your brother, but not to arrest him or to betray him to the police. I should have obtained an order to see him in Portmoor, but he had escaped, and so I was unable to see him there. I want to know all he can tell me about the case. He may be able to throw some light upon the mystery of the stolen bonds, and enable me to help him to clear his name."

"Clear his name!"

"Yes. If he is innocent, as I hope and believe, I shall leave no stone unturned to clear him and bring the guilt home to the guilty party."

"And—and you hope to succeed, sir?"

"I have every hope."

Lynn staggered to a chair and sank into it. He was overcome. The detective watched him with a puzzled look. He was keen enough to observe, but he did not understand the strange emotion of Arthur Lynn.

"Surely you are glad to hear all this?" he exclaimed. "You must be glad at the merest chance of having this disgrace removed from your name, and of having your brother restored to liberty."

"Yes, yes!" Lynn groaned. "Innocent! Oh, heavens!"

"You believed him guilty?"

"Everybody did."

"You are not to blame for following the crowd," said the detective. "The evidence was very strong, and the real criminal was very cunning. But——"

"Innocent!" groaned Lynn. "And he came here—to ask help—to beg help from me—and I—I—I sent him away!"

The detective's face hardened.

"Then you have seen him?"

"Yes," muttered Lynn.

"Where—and when?" rapped out the detective.

"Here—last night. He climbed to my study window," Lynn faltered. "He told me he was innocent, and I did not believe him. I told him to go."

"Without helping him?"

"Yes."

"And he went?"

"Yes," groaned Lynn. "Poor Gerald! Innocent!"

"Do you know where he went?"

Lynn shook his head.

The detective's brows contracted a little. But he made no remark. He picked up his hat and stick.

"You are going to look for him?" asked Lynn.

"Yes. Good-afternoon!"

Ferrers Locke quitted the study, and closed the door behind him. His firm tread sounded down the corridor and died away. Lynn sat motionless, white, stricken.

Innocent!

The word rang in his ears, and seemed to beat in his brain like a hammer. His brother, whom he had despised, and disowned, and insulted, and driven away—his brother innocent! The shame and disgrace which had cut him so deeply—they were to be lifted, to fade away; the stain upon his name was to be erased. It seemed like a dream.

"Gerald—poor Gerald!"

Lynn leaned his elbows upon the table, and buried his face in his hands. The tears trickled between his fingers.

Remorse was gnawing at his heart.

"Poor Gerald! Will he ever forgive me? Oh, what a brute—what a fool I was! I should have known! But how could I know?" Lynn started to his feet. "If I knew where to find him—if I only knew!"

But he did not know. The brother he had cast from him was lurking in the freezing woods—starving perhaps, ill-clad against the winter cold, in fear of capture. And he——

Arthur Lynn groaned in misery as he thought of it.

CHAPTER 14.

Ferrers Locke Learns Something.

TOM MERRY was waiting for Ferrers Locke at the door of the School House. The detective's face was very grave as he joined him.

"I suppose Lynn's told you, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

The detective nodded.

"Yes, he's told me all he knows," he replied. "It is not much. It is very curious that you should have anything to tell me on the same subject, Tom. Come out under the elms, where we can talk freely."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry and Blake and D'Arcy strolled under the leafless elms with the detective. The fellows who saw them walking together little dreamed of the subject of their conversation. Mr. Locke was known to be an old friend of the chums of the School House, and it was natural that he should come in for a chat with Tom Merry when he found himself in the neighbourhood. That was all the St. Jim's fellows thought of it. Many of them looked on Tom Merry with an envious eye, greatly admiring his intimate acquaintance with the famous detective from London.

"Now, Tom, what can you tell me about Gerald Lynn?"

Tom Merry hesitated and coloured.

"I—I don't want to appear to be questioning you, sir," he said, "but would you mind telling me whether you are for or against the poor chap?"

The detective smiled. Tom Merry's expression showed where his own sympathies lay.

"Why do you ask, Tom?"

"Because we've helped him, sir; and—and, under the circumstances, we couldn't tell you anything if you're hunting him down."

"I am not hunting him down, Tom. I am looking for him because I want to see him for his own sake."

"Do you believe that he is innocent, sir?"

"Yes, Tom."

"Then—then you've taken up the case for his sake—to prove him innocent?" exclaimed Blake.

"Exactly."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath of relief.

"That's jolly good news," he said. "Of course, I suppose most convicts say they're innocent. But we couldn't help believing that poor chap. He seemed so earnest, and it

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seemed such hard cheese for his own brother to turn upon him."

"Tell me all you know about him, Tom."

Tom Merry described the meeting at Wayland Junction, where Convict 79 was disowned by his brother, and then the affair of the railway-carriage. Then, with a little more hesitation, he explained how Figgins had met Convict 79 in the quad. the previous night, after the unfortunate man's fruitless visit to his brother's study. He explained, too, where Figgins & Co. were even then gone with the purchases they had made at Mr. Wegg's.

Ferrers Locke listened with a curious expression upon his face. When Tom Merry had finished the detective was smiling.

"You seem to have been going pretty strong," he said. "Luckily, the man is innocent, and I hope to prove it. If he had been a criminal——"

"Well, sir, if he had really been a bad character we should have seen it, and we shouldn't have believed in him and helped him," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I'm wathah a keen chap, you know, sir, and I don't think he would have been able to take me in," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

Ferrers Locke smiled again.

"Well, well as it happens, you have done what was right," he said. "In my opinion, the man is undoubtedly innocent, and he has suffered wrong. You will tell me where he is, then, Tom, so that I can see him?"

"Certainly, sir. He's in the old monk's cell in the wood—you remember I pointed it out to you a long time ago when you were here, and we had a ramble in Rylcombe Wood?"

Mr. Locke nodded.

"I remember it quite well, Tom. I think I will go there at once."

"One minute, sir. I've something more to tell you."

"Indeed!"

"You were looking for Mr. Lanbury when you came down to Rylcombe yesterday, sir—at—at least, we guessed you were," Tom Merry stammered.

"Well?"

"I have gathered from what I've been able to read of the case that Gerald Lynn suspected Mr. Lanbury of knowing something about the robbery of the bonds."

"Yes, that is the case," said the detective gravely.

"I don't know whether you were watching him, sir, but we thought you might be, as you came out of the station just afterwards," said Tom Merry. "But, in any case, what he has done is so queer and suspicious that I think we ought to tell you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mr. Lanbury has been to Mr. Wegg's shop in the village to visit Mr. Wegg's nephew under the name of Brown," said Tom Merry. "We were there when he came, and he gave the name of Brown. I don't see why he should go about under an assumed name if he's an innocent man."

"That stwuck me at once," said D'Arcy, with a nod.

"What kind of man is this Mr. Wegg's nephew?" asked Ferrers Locke rather abruptly.

Tom Merry gave a faithful and by no means flattering description of Adolphus Wegg. The detective listened with the deepest attention.

It was very clear from Ferrers Locke's look that he attached the greatest importance to what Tom Merry was telling him.

"Young Wegg left Rylcombe some time back," Tom Merry concluded. "There was talk about his having robbed his uncle, but I don't know about that. Certainly, he's a rotten, disgraceful bounder. He stays in bed till midday, and gets drunk when he gets up. Old Wegg seems to be worried to death about him, but he doesn't like to turn him out. I'd turn him out jolly sharp!"

"What-ho!" said Blake emphatically.

"The curious thing is that Mr. Lanbury was coming to see Wegg, and he went down the street instead when we were outside the tailor's shop," said Tom Merry. "Young Lynn was with us then—he first pointed Lanbury out to us. Afterwards Lanbury came back to see Wegg, and gave the name of Brown. We were in the fitting-room when he came into the shop, and he didn't see us, and at the shop to-day we heard young Wegg say that Brown was coming to see him again."

"Ah!" said Ferrers Locke. "Then the business is not settled yet?"

"No, sir. Young Wegg said he was going to leave when it was settled."

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly.

"He is quite correct there," he said. "He will leave—when it is finished—but he will not return to his usual haunts, I think. To tell you the truth, Tom, I lost the track of Mr. Lanbury yesterday in Rylcombe, and I had come to the conclusion that he had returned to London; but if this Mr. Brown is going to visit our friend Wegg again, Mr. Lanbury cannot have returned to London."

"I suppose not, sir."

"It must be very important business to keep the cashier away from the bank for two days," the detective remarked musingly; "and how curious that a respectable bank-cashier should have business with a disreputable character like this Wegg—business, too, to be done under an assumed name! Tom, I don't know whether you realise it, but you have given me exactly the information I needed; you have helped me more than anybody else to clear Convict No. 79—you and your friends. I shall know where to look for Mr. Lanbury-Brown now, and I think I shall surprise him."

And, after a little further talk to elucidate any possible point that the juniors might have passed over, Ferrers Locke quitted the school, and walked down the road with a very satisfied expression upon his face. He went to carry hope and light to a man in the depths of misery; and the juniors' faces were brighter as they watched him go.

"Well, I rather think that we've got reason to be satisfied," Blake remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"Yaas, wathah! It was vewy fortunate I was on the scene."

"You?" exclaimed Blake and Tom Merry together.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What have you had to do with it?" Tom Merry inquired pleasantly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Hallo, here's Lynn!" said Blake.

Lynn came up, his face pale and troubled. His eyes were red with recent tears, but they were dry now.

"I—I say, you chaps," he said, in a faltering voice, "I—I release you from the promise you made to me, if you like—about my brother, I mean. I've seen Mr. Locke, and he says that Gerald was innocent, and he hopes to prove it."

"I think he will, too," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Locke generally does anything he undertakes to do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gerald came to me last night for help," said Lynn, with a haggard look. "I refused him."

"We know that," said Tom Merry quietly.

Lynn started.

"How do you know?"

"Figgins met him in the quad."

"Oh! Do you know where he is now?" Lynn exclaimed eagerly.

"Yes."

"Have you told Mr. Locke?"

"Yes, we've told him, and he's gone to see your brother," said Tom Merry.

Lynn trembled.

"Tell me where he is!" he exclaimed. "Tell me! I—I want to see him, to tell him that I believe in him, to ask him to forgive me for—for last night."

Tom Merry hesitated for a moment. But Lynn's request was evidently one to be complied with, and Tom Merry had not the heart to refuse.

"All serene!" he said. "I suppose I'd better tell him, you chaps?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy; and Blake nodded.

"Mind you don't attract attention in going there, that's all," said Tom Merry. "Your brother is in the ruined cell in Rylcombe Wood. You know the place?"

"Yes," said Lynn. "Thanks!"

He ran off towards the school gates. Tom Merry shouted after him.

"Hold on! Have you got a pass out, Lynn?"

But Lynn did not heed, probably did not hear. He ran on, and was lost to sight in a few moments more.

CHAPTER 15.

A Late Repentance.

"THERE you are!" said Figgins.

It was very quiet in the solitary ruin in the heart of Rylcombe Wood. Of the old stone cell which had sheltered an anchorite monk in the olden time, only the walls and part of the roof remained. In the shattered brickwork birds had built their nests, safe there in the depths of the tangled wood. The wintry sunlight filtered through the leafless branches over the old cell, and through the gaps in the rotten roof. They showed Convict 79, not now in his convict clothes.

The thirty-shilling suit of Mr. Wegg covered his limbs; and although the fit was not good, and the cut of the clothes would have made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy despair, the change was a decided improvement upon the garb branded with the broad arrow.

Figgins & Co. looked at him quite admiringly. A good

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meal, too, had made a difference to the convict. There was colour in his face now, and light in his eyes. And the gratitude in his looks went right to the hearts of Figgins & Co.

"There you are!" repeated Figgins. "I think you're really nicely fixed up now, you know. I've put the tin in the jacket pocket. Now we shall have to be buzzing off, but we'll give you a look in again, and bring some more grub. If you get a good chance to do a bunk, don't mind us; but if you're still here, the grub will come in handy."

"I don't know how to thank you," said the convict, in a faltering voice. "If I can only get safely to London, and see Mr. Ferrers Locke, I shall be satisfied. God bless you!"

He held out his hand hesitatingly. Innocent as that hand was, it had been branded with the manacles of a criminal. Figgins did not appear to notice his hesitation. He gripped the hand in his hearty way, and Kerr and Wynn followed his example. They left the old stone cell and plunged into the wood.

There was a step in the brushwood, and Ferrers Locke stood before them. The detective nodded to the juniors with a smile.

"Just in time to see you," he remarked.

"Mr. Locke!"

"It is all right," said the detective. "I have seen Tom Merry, and he has told me. I am here as Gerald Lynn's friend."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Figgins, in great relief.

The detective nodded, and passed on towards the ruin. Figgins & Co. went on their way to the school. They had no time to lose; afternoon lessons were at hand. Ferrers Locke stepped into the doorless aperture of the cell, and his tall shadow fell in the sunlight across the cracked stone floor.

The convict gave a violent start.

As the shadow fell, a desperate gleam came into his eyes; his hand closed in a grip upon a heavy stone. Then he looked up, and recognised Ferrers Locke. The stone dropped from his hand upon the floor with a crash.

"Ferrers Locke!" he cried.

The detective's brow was stern for a moment.

"Lynn! I have come to save you, I hope; but if it had been a warder, what were you going to do with that stone?"

Lynn turned crimson.

"I will never be taken!" he said.

"That will not do, Lynn. You are innocent now; if you make yourself a criminal, I cannot save you."

"You believe in my innocence?"

"Yes."

"God bless you!"

"I began to investigate the case immediately I came home from abroad," said Ferrers Locke. "I hope to bring the facts to light. But you must not injure your own cause, Lynn. If you are found, you must not resist. Promise me."

The hunted man nodded.

"If you believe in me, if you are working for me, I can bear anything," he exclaimed. "It was the being shut up in that stone tomb, without hope, without a chance, that drove me crazy. But if there is hope——"

"There is hope, my poor fellow."

"How did you find me?"

"I owe that to Tom Merry and his friends. I owe them more than that—I owe them information which will probably help me to clear up the whole affair," the detective said quietly.

"Heaven bless them!" said the convict. "They have stood by me, and helped me, when my own brother turned his back upon me and disowned me."

"Not now, Gerald—not now!"

It was a cry of repentance, as Arthur Lynn sprang in at the open doorway of the cell. His face was red with running, the perspiration, in spite of the cold, was pouring down his face. He reeled into the cell.

"Gerald!"

The convict turned a stony look upon him.

"What have you come for?" he asked. "Is it to find me out, and hand me over to the police?"

Lynn panted.

"Gerald, I'm sorry! I believe in you now; I want to help you."

The convict's face softened.

"You believe in me, Arthur?" he muttered.

"Yes, yes! I believed you guilty, that—that was why I was hard. But since what Mr. Locke has told me——"

"You might have known me better, Arthur."

Lynn's face was full of remorse.

"Forgive me, Gerald!"

The convict held out his hand.

There were tears in Lynn's eyes, tears of repentance. Ferrers Locke glanced at the brothers, and stepped outside the cell. For many minutes there was a murmur of voices in the old ruin; then Lynn came out. The tears were still glistening upon his eyelashes.

"Mr. Locke, I hope you will succeed," he said thickly. "But whether you do or not, I shall always stand up for my brother."

"Good!" said the detective; and he shook hands with the junior. "And I think I shall succeed, my lad."

Lynn plunged through the wood. He was glad that he had come there—glad that he had been able to see his brother, and assure him of his repentance, his trust. His heart was lighter as he tramped through the wood back to St. Jim's.

The bell for afternoon school had long sounded, and the Fourth Form were in their class-room, when Lynn reached the school. Mr. Lathom looked over his spectacles as the junior, breathing hard from his long tramp, came into the room.

"You will take fifty lines, Lynn," said Mr. Lathom. "You are nearly an hour late."

"Yes, sir," gasped Lynn, sinking into his seat on the form.

He was glad that the Form-master did not ask him where he had been.

In the old ruin in Rylcombe Wood, Ferrers Locke remained for more than an hour in close talk with Convict 79.

At the end of that time he rose from the stone seat.

No. 79 looked at him anxiously.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now I shall return to Rylcombe, and I bid you hope for the best," said Ferrers Locke. "And if you are discovered, mind, no resistance."

Gerald Lynn nodded.

"I am entirely in your hands, Mr. Locke," he said.

The convict remained buried in thought for a long time after the detective had left him. The woods were very silent; not a single note of a bird sounded among the gaunt trees; nothing but the faint swish of the wind in the leafless branches.

The convict shivered a little.

The silence was terrible to the solitary man; and worse than the silence was the faint rustling of the underwoods, every sound seeming to his ears like the step of a pursuer.

The early winter dusk fell upon the lonely woods, and the convict looked out into the gloom. It was his chance now. That vicinity was being scoured for him, but if he could reach London, if he could bury himself in the heart of the great city, there was a good chance that he might elude the search until Ferrers Locke had succeeded in clearing his name. And that Ferrers Locke would succeed, the convict felt an inward conviction.

He stepped from the stone cell at last, and moved away slowly and cautiously through the wood. From the wood he tramped out upon a deep, lonely lane, and he set his face towards London, with hope in his heart, but with his nerves in a twitter.

There was the sound of a horse's hoofs on the road. A mounted constable reined in his horse, in the light of a glimmering lamp, and called him to halt.

The convict halted, with despair in his heart. All passers in the lanes and byways were being stopped and questioned; the convict was perhaps the fiftieth the mounted constable had challenged upon that dusky road.

"Have you seen—— Scott!" exclaimed the constable. "Let me see your face! Surrender, Gerald Lynn!"

Lynn sprang back, with a fierce light in his eyes. But he remembered his promise to Ferrers Locke, and held out his hands with a gesture of surrender.

The next moment the handcuffs clinked upon his wrists.

"Caught, by hokey!" said the constable.

That night Convict 79 slept once more in his old cell at Portmoor Prison.

CHAPTER 16.
Mr. Wegg's New Lodger.

MR. WEGG was delighted.

The tailor who had the honour of making extra pairs of trousers for the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, had done a good stroke of business, beside which his dealings even with the expensive Gussy faded into insignificance.

It was towards dusk that evening that his new customer had presented himself. He was a man with a thick, greyish beard, and very dark complexion. He was well but quietly dressed, and he took an interest in the subject of clothes which quite won the heart of Rylcombe's fashionable tailor. He explained that he had recently returned from abroad, and that he was in want of many new things, and he selected coats, and trousers, and waistcoats, plain and fancy, from Mr. Wegg's stock with a freedom which showed that he had come home from abroad with his pockets well lined with cash.

Besides extensive purchases of ready-made attire, he had given orders for several suits, in various styles, and with an

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utter recklessness as to expense. True, Mr. Wegg's prices were not Bond Street prices. But they gradually rose as the guilelessness of the stranger became more apparent, until the last suit that the gentleman ordered approximated in prices to anything charged by London tailors. If the stranger within the gates had money, and was determined to spend it, there was no reason why honest Mr. Wegg should not make hay while the sun shone; so Mr. Wegg reasoned, at all events.

The stranger's extreme liberality might have excited the suspicion of the wary old tradesman, but for the fact that he revealed a wad of banknotes in opening his pocket-book, and that he paid down ten pounds—two crisp and rustling fivers—on account, and the notes were undoubtedly good.

Mr. Hamlin—the name the liberal customer gave—explained that he was staying in Rylcombe for the night, if not longer, but complained of the accommodation offered at the local inn, and referred to the fact that he had heard it mentioned that Mr. Wegg had a room to let.

To which Mr. Wegg replied that he certainly had had a room to let, but that his nephew had just paid him a visit, and was occupying the room in question. But as it would be undoubtedly a great advantage to have that paying customer in the house, for reasons of measuring and fitting—and perhaps because the wily Mr. Wegg was unwilling to let so wealthy a bird fly out of the cage—the old tailor mentioned that he could undoubtedly have a room prepared for the stranger, and that he would be honoured if Mr. Hamlin would accept it—at a merely nominal charge, of course—the nominal charge being about three times that charged at the inn.

Mr. Hamlin accepted the offer with gratitude, and his bag was brought from the station, and deposited in the room in question, which adjoined that occupied by the promising nephew of Mr. Wegg. Mr. Wegg apologetically expressed a hope that his guest would not be disturbed by any slight noise his nephew might make, explaining that the young man had learned late hours in London.

"He's out now," Mr. Wegg explained "Probably he won't be 'ome till very late. But perhaps you're a sound sleeper, sir."

To which Mr. Hamlin replied that he slept as soundly as a top, and, being tired after his journey, and with the pleasant fatigue of looking over Mr. Wegg's splendid assortments of cloth, in all qualities and styles, he thought he would go to bed early.

At nine o'clock, therefore—which was really not very early for Rylcombe—Mr. Hamlin found himself ensconced in his room.

He set down the candle, and fastened the door, and then looked in the glass, and a peculiar smile lit up the grey-bearded face. That smile made the face look very young for a moment, in spite of the grey beard.

Mr. Hamlin's next proceedings were extremely mysterious, and would have amazed his worthy host, if Rylcombe's Fashionable Tailor could have seen them—which he could not.

The gentleman from abroad first removed his boots, and drew on a pair of rubber-soled shoes. Then he removed his beard, which Mr. Wegg had never dreamed was a detachable one. Then he washed his eyebrows, and from black they became a pleasant brown in colour. By that time Mr. Hamlin looked twenty years younger, and bore a remarkable resemblance to the famous private detective, Mr. Ferrers Locke.

Then, setting the candle before the glass, and with one more glance to make sure that the blind was safely down, the new lodger in the Wegg household commenced making up his face with materials which he selected from the bag.

A pointed black moustache, with the ends curling upwards, gave him a decidedly foreign appearance, and a short, pointed dark beard added to the effect.

With these, and a few other minor adjustments, the mysterious gentleman soon eradicated any resemblance either to Ferrers Locke or Mr. Hamlin.

It was by this time ten o'clock, and Mr. Wegg was gone to bed. The lodger had heard his door close on the landing above, ten minutes ago. The housekeeper slept on the ground floor, and there was no likelihood that the old lady, who was troubled with rheumatism, would ascend to the upper part of the house. Mr. Wegg being a widower, the house had no other occupants, save his hopeful nephew, at present busily occupied in "keeping it up" with a circle of choice spirits at the Green Man.

The mysterious lodger unlocked his door quietly, and looked out upon the dark landing. The house was very silent.

He stepped out, and two steps carried him to the door of the fashionable Adolphus's apartment; and in a moment more he was in that room.

He closed the door, lighted the gas, turning it barely half on, and looked about him. The room was in a state of disorder worthy of the reckless young blade, Wegg. Boots and trousers were everywhere, and many fancy waistcoats of the most highly-coloured variety. There was a brandy bottle on the mantelpiece empty, and a dirty glass on the table, and cigar-ends on most of the articles of furniture in the room, and quite a swarm of them on the floor. The new lodger examined some of the cigar-ends, and very quickly detected that they were of expensive brands—indeed, it looked as if Mr. Wegg was in the habit of spending several pounds a week in cigars alone. Which was a very costly habit for a tailor's nephew with no fixed occupation.

The new lodger, having looked searchingly about the room, noting the traces of the delightful and fashionable West End habits of Mr. Adolphus Wegg, settled at last before a bag which lay in a corner of the room, and which was locked.

The lodger seemed to have come prepared for every possible emergency, for he produced a peculiar contrivance from an inner pocket, and quickly and with great facility picked the lock of Mr. Adolphus's bag, and opened it.

Not a recess of that bag was left unexplored by the inquisitive lodger whom Mr. Wegg had so unsuspiciously taken into his house to fleece. It really looked as if the lodger, after all, was not the person who was being taken in.

A singular assortment of things came to view in that search. Sporting papers with heavy underscoring in special places, a betting book full of the most mysterious figures, a pack of marked cards, and a set of loaded dice, letters signed by such names as "Trixie" and "Giddy Girlie"—these were among the private treasures of Mr. Adolphus

But apparently the inquisitive lodger did not find what he sought, for he gave a grunt of dissatisfaction as his search concluded.

He replaced everything in the bag just as he had found it, and relocked it; and then expended some time in a close and systematic search of the room.

This search also appeared to be fruitless.

With a muttered word of discontent, the lodger turned out the light, and left the apartment as silently as he had entered it.

Having gained his own room and locked the door, he stood for some moments in thought. So far, although his search had been unsuccessful, all had gone well. If Mr. Wegg, by any untoward chance, had discovered the inquisitive person in the act of searching his nephew's room, he would never have recognised him as his new lodger, Mr. Hamlin, but would have undoubtedly have taken him for a common burglar. But the worthy tailor of Rylcombe was sleeping the sleep of the just on the next storey, without a suspicion.

"If he has them, he has them on him," the lodger muttered, apparently referring to Mr. Adolphus, "and he must have them, or why should Mr. Brown come and see him here. It is not for the pleasure of visiting him. I suppose, after all, he would not be likely to leave them off his own person. But I must be very sure before I act."

He sat in the darkness, thinking.

Presently he rose, and felt with his hands over the wall that divided his room from Mr. Adolphus's apartment. Mr. Wegg had hoped that he would not be disturbed when Mr. Adolphus came in late, but Mr. Wegg must have been very sanguine to hope that, for the wall was a mere lath-and-plaster partition, and voices, if raised above a low level, could have been heard in conversation through it. Mr. Hamlin gave a low murmur of satisfaction, and there was a scratching sound in the darkness, and a sound of fragments falling. For some reason best known to himself, the mysterious lodger was excavating a hole through the wall, in a top corner, standing on a chair to do so. In the next room, as he had noted while he was there, a wardrobe cast a deep shadow upon that corner, and the opening would certainly not be noticed, unless Mr. Adolphus made a special search for it—which he was not likely to do, never having heard or dreamed of Mr. Hamlin and his inquisitive ways.

Mr. Hamlin seemed to be provided wonderfully well with any tools he might require. In a very short time the lath and plaster was penetrated, and a small opening, three or four inches wide, on Mr. Hamlin's side of the wall, and about an inch wide on the other side, in Mr. Adolphus's room, formed a connection between the two apartments.

With his ear to that little opening, Mr. Hamlin would be able to hear every word that was uttered in Mr. Adolphus's room, and with his eye to it, he would be able to see a good half of the room, as soon as the gas was lighted there.

He stepped down from the chair, well satisfied with himself.

There was nothing to do now but to await Mr. Adolphus's return; and the new lodger settled down by his window to wait, with a corner of the blind pulled back, to give him a view of the street.

The moon was climbing over the roofs of Rylcombe, and the rays fell with a wintry clearness in the old High Street. Across the road there was a glimmer of light from the railway-station, but the houses were dark and silent. The lodger started a little as he saw a dark figure leaning against one

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of the houses opposite. When footsteps sounded in the street that figure would detach itself from the shadows and come forward, as if to look at the new-comer in inquiry, and then it would fall back to its old position, almost invisible in the gloom.

Mr. Hamlin smiled softly.

It could not be Adolphus who was thus watching whoever came to his uncle's house—he could have no motive for doing so. Was it his visitor, Mr. Brown, waiting for the prodigal to return, to have a second interview with him?

The lodger wondered.

Twelve o'clock had rung out from the village church, when an unsteady step and a fragment of a drinking song sounded simultaneously in the street below. The watcher drew a breath of relief. He was sure that it was Mr. Adolphus returning.

There was the grating of an unsteady key in the lock of the side door, beside the shop. In the silent house, the door could be heard to open. The dark figure darted across the road, and did not reappear again. The lodger, listening within his locked room, was not surprised to hear two men instead of one ascending the rickety stairs.

Mr. Adolphus had come home, and Mr. Brown was coming up to his room with him. The lodger left his post by the window, and stepped softly upon the chair by the wall, and applied his eye to the hole he had made there.

A glimmer of light struck his eye. Mr. Adolphus was in his room, and had lighted the gas.

CHAPTER 17.
Greek Meets Greek.

MR. ADOLPHUS was walking somewhat unsteadily as he came into his room, and his hand missed the gas several times before he succeeded in lighting it. There was a smell of gas in the room, perceptible to the lodger on the other side of the wall, thanks to the connecting excavation in the plaster. A low, concentrated, savage voice came from Mr. Adolphus's companion.

"Do you want to set the house on fire, you fool?"

"Better language, please," said Adolphus, as, having succeeded in lighting the gas at last, he threw the stump of the match into the grate. "I don't want any of your impertinence, Lanbury."

"Don't call me Lanbury here," said the other, in the same suppressed tones.

Adolphus laughed.

"There's no one to hear," he said soothingly. "Nunky is always fast asleep, hours before this—they don't keep late hours in Rylcombe. And the housekeeper sleeps downstairs—like a giddy top. And there's no one else in the house."

"It's as well to be careful, all the same," said Mr. Lanbury, but in a tone slightly louder, and expressing evident relief.

"Do you call it careful, calling on a gentleman at this time of night?" asked Adolphus truculently. "Watching for a man outside his own 'ouse, too, like a pickpocket."

"I wanted to see you."

"I told you where you could find me," said Adolphus. "Why couldn't you come to the Green Man?"

"And talk before your drunken boon companions, you——" Mr. Lanbury broke off, and clenched his hands hard.

"They ain't a bad lot, though, of course, 'ardly up to my style in London," said Adolphus. "When a gentleman's buried in the country he must do the best he can."

And Adolphus sat down in an armchair and stretched out his legs, and stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, an attitude which showed off his rainbow-coloured waistcoat to the greatest advantage.

He was in full view of the keen, unfailing eye at the hole in the wall. Mr. Lanbury came further into the room, and leaned against the mantelpiece, regarding Mr. Adolphus with an eye of deadly animosity. He, too, was now in full view of the unseen eye, and the new lodger could note his pale, strained face, his glittering eyes, and the venomously tight lips.

Adolphus lighted a cigar, taking one thumb from its resting-place to hold the Ne Plus Ultra as he puffed at it. He blinked at the cashier. He had evidently been drinking considerably more than was good for him, but he had all his wits about him. Mr. Lanbury was not likely to obtain any advantage over the vulgar, worthless, but keen and alert scapegrace.

"What are you going to do?" said Mr. Lanbury, breaking the silence.

Adolphus blew out a cloud of smoke.

"What are you going to do, rather?" he said. "It ain't for me to say. I'm marking time."

"You—you thief!"

"No 'ard words between gentlemen," said Adolphus, holding up his cigar and wagging it in warning to Mr. Lanbury, "I don't like 'em."

"You—you racecourse tout!" hissed Mr. Lanbury. "You dare to talk to me!"

"Why not? One man's as good as another, and a racecourse tout's as good as a swindling cashier in a bank," said Adolphus. "But it ain't no good talking, and I ain't going to talk! 'Arf of ten thousand is five thousand, and you can take it or leave it!"

The unseen eye glittered.

Mr. Lanbury was silent for a few moments. He clenched his hands hard, as if he could barely restrain himself from springing upon the nephew of Mr. Wegg.

"I've offered two thousand," he said at last.

"And I've said five," said Adolphus, puffing contentedly at his cigar. "No 'urry, matey! I'm willing to wait, absolutely!"

"A thousand was what was agreed upon."

Adolphus chuckled.

"You arranged that," he replied. "I said 'yes,' because I wanted to get the job on. But I didn't mean to 'and over the ten thousand pounds worth of bonds to you for a thousand quid. Not much!"

"Fool! Silence!"

"Oh, it's safe enough 'ere," said Adolphus; "and not so 'andy with your fancy names, either!" he added threateningly. "Come to that, I ain't fool enough to 'and you over ten thousand quid for one thousand!"

"It was agreed——"

"Oh, rot! Lot you care for agreements!" said Adolphus. "You'd swindle me out of even the thousand if you could! You know that. You wouldn't give me a brass farden if you could 'elp it! Talk about agreements. I dessay you agreed with your employers, f'rinstance, to look after their cash for them, not to let a man into the bank to break open the safe and take the bonds out of it. Agreements! Oh, rot!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"'Old yourn, then!" said Adolphus. "I don't want any of your lip, I can tell you that, Mr. Lanbury! I'm as good a man as you are, and I tell you so plain. Talk a bit more civil when you're talking to a gentleman!"

The cashier set his white lips hard.

"The bonds are useless to you," he said, in a low but quite audible voice. "If you made any attempt to rid yourself of them, you would be detected at once. They are what is called easily negotiable, but they require to be negotiated by a man of City experience, and not in this country, either, for safety's sake. You cannot dispose of a guinea's worth of that paper by yourself."

"Very likely."

"What is the use of it to you, then?"

"It's worth five thousand quid to me," said Adolphus cheerfully. "Anyways, I don't part with 'em under that."

"You are mad," said Lanbury irritably, "and your folly may mean ruin to yourself, as well as loss to me! Suppose the bonds are discovered?"

"They won't be."

"Where can you keep them? If you hide them in your room, they might be discovered while you are absent."

Adolphus chuckled knowingly.

"I reckon I'm a bit too fly to leave them about," he replied.

Mr. Lanbury started.

"Do you mean to say that you are mad enough to carry them about on your person?" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"Safest place, ain't it?"

"Man! Fool! Suppose in one of your drunken escapades you were arrested by the police, they would be discovered at the station."

"That ain't likely to 'appen! I've kep' 'em all right so far."

"Oh, you are enough to drive a man crazy!" said Lanbury, controlling his rage with an evident effort. "The bonds are useless to you, and you will not give them to me."

"'Arves," said Adolphus—"'arves; that's fair! We did the work in 'arves. You knew the bonds was there, and that they was a sort to be got rid of easy. I knew 'ow to crack a safe, and I did that part of the bizney. You wanted me to 'and you over the bonds next day. You might 'ave 'ad your fingers on them, if you'd 'ad the pluck to be on the spot when I cracked the crib."

"I had to show myself in public somewhere to prove an alibi, in case of necessity," said the cashier. "As it happened, it was very needful."

"I've giv[illegible] some of the paper," said Adolphus, "enough [illegible] young Lynn's room, to make us both safe. A[illegible]'t put there all that I gave you—judgin' by the [illegible]ne paper of what the police found."

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"Some—some were overlooked in their search."

"Liar!" said Adolphus calmly. "You sold some yourself, you know that, and put fifty quid's worth instead of two hundred in Lynn's room as we arranged."

"Look here——"

"I look over that," said Adolphus; "that was a bit of a perquisite for you, I suppose. But you don't smell the rest of 'em, even, until you pay over the ready."

The cashier was silent. Adolphus leaned back in his chair, inserted his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat again, and puffed at his cigar with enjoyment. He seemed to enjoy the defeat and chagrin of the dishonest cashier as much as the exquisite flavour of his Ne Plus Ultra.

The cashier stood for some minutes leaning on the mantelpiece without speaking. His eyes gleamed deadly hatred at the half-intoxicated young scoundrel in the arm-chair. Adolphus looked round at him with a grin.

"You may as well go," he said. "I'm goin' to stay 'ere for a while to give you a chance, and you can call again when you've changed your mind, Mr. Brown. If you ain't come to your senses in a week, I shall go over to Amsterdam, and try my luck with the bonds among the Jews there, on my own account. They won't skin me of more'n 'arf. and that's what I'm offering you."

"I'll make it three thousand."

"Rats!"

"That's the last offer," said Mr. Lanbury.

"You can take it away with you, then."

"Very well." Mr. Lanbury moved from the mantelpiece, and approached Adolphus. "Good-night, I am going!"

He held out his hand. Adolphus grinned, and took it, and at the same moment Mr. Lanbury's left hand came out of his pocket, with something heavy in it, and a terrible blow was struck.

"Oh!"

Adolphus saw the blow coming, but he had no time to guard it. The short, heavy life-preserver crashed upon his head, and the young rascal sank back inert in his chair, stunned. A trickle of blood ran down his forehead.

A savage grin came over the cashier's colourless face.

"Now for the bonds."

CHAPTER 18.

At Last!

THE unseen watcher at the excavation in the wall had given a start as the savage blow fell. Even he, keen as he was, had not foreseen the action of the cashier. Had Mr. Lanbury shown a sign of repeating the blow, he would have had no time to interfere; but the cashier did not do that. He gave Adolphus one glance to make sure that he was insensible, and then returned the life-preserver to his pocket, and bent over the unconscious bank robber.

His quick, nimble hands searched through Adolphus's clothing, and he uttered an exclamation of relief and delight as something crumpled in his fingers in the lining in the back of the waistcoat.

In that safe place Adolphus had deposited the plunder, sewing it up in a bulky mass in the back of his waistcoat, flattened out as much as possible. There was no danger of the papers being discovered there, excepting by a systematic search. Mr. Lanbury opened a penknife, and slit up the waistcoat.

In the next room the unseen watcher quietly stepped from the chair and unlocked his door, and stepped out upon the dark landing. His hand felt in his pocket for a moment; it reappeared with a pair of handcuffs in it. There was not a sound. In the black darkness of the landing, the unknown waited, handcuffs in hand, for the cashier to emerge from Adolphus's room with the stolen bonds in his possession.

Mr. Lanbury was not occupied many minutes. He was naturally anxious to get away as quickly as possible from the scene of his criminal action. The disappearance of the light under the door warned the unseen watcher on the landing that he was about to quit the room. The man drew a deep breath.

Adolphus's door opened, and a black shadow loomed in the darkness. A step—a breathless exclamation—a click! Then a yell of rage!

"My heaven! What—— Who is that? Take them off! Take them off!"

"Not yet, Mr. Lanbury."

"Who—who are you?"

The cashier, white, despairing, terrified, shocked out of all self-control by the sudden grasp in the darkness, shrieked out the words, as he strained at the handcuffs locked upon his wrists.

Coldly and quietly came the voice of the unseen man in reply:

"I am Ferrers Locke, detective, and you are my prisoner!"

The cashier groaned.

"Ferrers Locke! I am lost!"

"Yes, you are lost, and Gerald Lynn is saved," said the detective quietly. "You will come with me, Mr. Lanbury, and I will have your latest victim attended to. Come!"

And the cashier, bowed, broken, crushed, went, with the handcuffs clinking on his wrists, and the detective's iron grasp upon his arm.

CHAPTER 19.

The Order of Release!

TOM MERRY looked out of the School House, on the bright, frosty day, after morning lessons, and gave a shout.

"Mr. Locke!"

The detective was crossing the old quadrangle towards the School House. In a moment he was surrounded by juniors—Tom Merry & Co. were all there, and Lynn was the most eager of all.

"Mr. Locke"—the junior's voice was heard—"my brother has been taken! We have just heard! He was arrested last night in Wayland Lane."

The detective nodded.

"I know it, my lad. But all is well!"

"You—you have discovered——" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes. Mr. Lanbury, the cashier of the City Central Bank, was arrested last night in Rylcombe, with the stolen bonds in his possession," said Ferrers Locke. "His accomplice, Adolphus Wegg, is now in the prison infirmary, recovering from a savage attack made upon him by Mr. Lanbury."

"Adolphus Wegg!"

"Bai Jove!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Yes; that was the explanation of the visits of 'Mr. Brown' to the tailor's nephew," he replied. "Wegg committed the robbery at Mr. Lanbury's instigation, but did not keep to the bargain of handing the loot over to the cashier—hence 'Mr. Brown's' visits, and finally his attack upon the young rascal. Adolphus Wegg made a full confession as soon as he recovered consciousness and found that he was in prison, and it is clear now, Lynn, that the bonds found in your brother's rooms were placed them by Lanbury. Your brother's name is cleared."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Lynn.

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom Merry.

Mr. Locke smiled.

"Lynn, I have obtained permission for you to visit your brother at Portmoor Prison, if you choose, and take with your own hand the order for his release."

"Oh, sir! Thanks, thanks!" cried Lynn, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Three cheers for Ferrers Locke!" shouted Figgins.

And they were given with a will.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

. . . . . .

One more scene!

A prison cell. A man in convict garb—a man upon whose clothes, and close-cropped hair, and worn and wretched face, was the brand of the broad arrow.

The door opens, and a warder enters. The prisoner looks up, a strange eagerness in his face, for a visit is at an unusual hour, and may mean anything. A boy follows the warder into the cell—a boy in Etons.

A cry from the convict.

"Arthur!"

"Gerald, old man, it's all right—it's all right!"

"What! Arthur!"

"It's all right!" Lynn springs forward and grasps his brother by the hand. "Don't you understand, Gerald—don't you catch on, old chap? Ferrers Locke has done it; the thief's arrested! You're cleared! Cleared, old man, and free! Free!"

"Free!"

"Free as the air, and you're coming away with me now," shouted Lynn. "Ferrers Locke is waiting outside. Hurrah!"

Strangely enough that shout rings through the stone cell of the convict. But Convict No. 79 does not shout. The tears are thick upon his eyelashes, and he sinks upon his knees upon the stone floor, his hands clasped together, to render thanks for his freedom to the Giver of all good. And Lynn, after a moment's silence, joins him there. In that moment all is atoned for; it is light—light and happiness—after a long darkness, to the man who has been pent in the convict cell, shunned by his friends, and disowned by his brother.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the famous Juniors of St. Jim's next Thursday, entitled: "CAPTAIN D'ARCY," by Martin Clifford. Order your "GEM" LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)

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NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE: "CAPTAIN D'ARCY!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

DEEP SEA GOLD!

A WONDERFUL NEW STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURE IN A SUBMARINE MOTOR CAR.

By REGINALD WRAY.

The Previous Chapters of "DEEP SEA GOLD," specially re-written for this number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums of Wellsea College, are bathing in the sea early one morning, when they are suddenly seized by enormous octopus-like tentacles and dragged swiftly down beneath the surface of the water.

They are pulled aboard a submarine motor-car, and are soon introduced to Captain Flame, the captain of the Octopus, as the strange craft is named.

The crew consists entirely of boys, with whom Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are soon on good terms.

They make for that dreaded mass of floating weeds known as the Sargasso Sea, and there, stuck fast in the midst of the weeds, they find both the Morning Star and the tug that had been sent out to aid her. While investigating, the Octopus is attacked by a body of Tankas—huge men who dwell in the crater of an extinct volcano. They defeat these, and invade this underground world.

After destroying the castle in the underground world, Captain Flame returns to his home, "The Islands," and quells a rebellion of the prisoners.

The rebels capture the Red Terror, Captain Flame's new submarine motor-car, and escape in it. The Octopus goes in pursuit, and a stern chase ensues. Captain Flame is just on the point of coming up with the rebels, when both the submarine cars are suddenly lifted off their wheels by an irresistible current, and swept along at a dizzy speed.

"Merciful heavens!" cries the inventor, pointing ahead. "We are being carried to the centre of the earth in the grip of some fearful whirlpool!" (Now go on with the story.)

How they Left the Red Terror.

Dick Dauntless followed the direction of Captain Flame's outstretched finger.

A shudder shook his frame.

So far beneath them that the eye could not pierce the tremendous depth was a constantly narrowing wall of water, around which they, and the Red Terror, were being carried at an ever-increasing speed.

Round and round they went, held helpless in the grip of that fearful maelstrom.

Nor were the two cars alone.

Immediately before the Red Terror floated, on a level keel, the engulfed hull of a large steamer and, around them, fish of all descriptions—from silver-scaled herrings to a huge sperm whale, which, thrashing the water with its mighty flukes, was vainly endeavouring to escape from the irresistible force of the circling waters.

The sight of the whale's ineffectual struggles carried greater dismay than they had hitherto felt to the adventurers' hearts.

If that mighty monster was helpless in the whirlpool's grasp, what would their puny strength avail them?

"We are lost, my lad! Nothing can save us!" declared Captain Flame, in decisive yet calm and resolute tones.

Already his strong will had mastered the first sudden thrill of terror.

"Not yet, sir!" replied Dick, though his heart did not back up his confident words. "What if we are carried into the centre of the earth? We have been there before, and have lived to tell the tale, and can do it again!"

Captain Flame shook his head, but for a few minutes he made no reply.

"It's no good indulging in false hopes, Dick," he declared at last. "Look around you at the tremendous force of water by which we are surrounded. It is bearing us every minute nearer and nearer to where the waters meet at the bottom. What will happen then? What can happen, save that we will share the fate of yonder ship, the Red Terror, even that struggling whale, and be crushed to atoms, like a grain between the upper and nether stones of a mill?"

A film passed over Dick Dauntless's eyes.

He knew Captain Flame too well to think that he would have spoken such ominous words had they not been drawn from him by a conviction that amounted to certainty.

A moment's struggle with despair and the intense love of life which burns in every human heart, then he faced the inevitable, like the brave, fearless boy he was.

"What is to be will be, sir," he declared resignedly. "But is there no hope?"

He looked eagerly at the great inventor as he spoke.

So great was his trust in Captain Flame that it seemed impossible he would find no way out of their difficulty.

Captain Flame made no immediate reply.

At length he spoke, and Dick's heart beat tumultuously with a new-found hope, as he said:

"There is a chance—one chance for, to a thousand against us. Keep the off wheel going."

Eagerly Dick telegraphed the order to the engine-room, and the next moment the Octopus's huge driving-wheel was revolving swiftly through the water.

At first there was no alteration, save that the floor of the conning-tower was tilted slightly from right to left; but as they were carried deeper and deeper into the whirling funnel of waters their speed increased.

Gradually they overtook the Red Terror, peering from the windows of which could be seen the terror-distorted features of her crew.

A loud shout of dismay escaped Dick's lips, as he saw the whale float for a minute broadside on to the stream, then, with one fearful, despairing stroke of its enormous tail, hurl itself clean from out the funnel-like wall of water.

For a moment it shot through he vacuum round which they were being whirled; then, tilting downwards, sank like a stone to where, several thousand feet below, they could see a white speck of broken, tortured, heaving waters.

Round and round they whirled, faster and faster, until their very senses reeled. Dick clasped his hands to his head, for he was seized in the grasp of a fearful vertigo.

In the lower rooms the terrified boys were lying about in all directions.

All were violently sick, and suffering from a fearful giddiness, which made them long for the end.

Captain Flame, whose iron frame seemed to rise above all minor ills, was the only one in that apparently doomed car to keep his h[illegible].

Yet even he had abandoned hope!

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Suddenly he leaned eagerly forward and peered through the swirling waters to where the Red Terror rushed ahead.

A deep sigh of relief escaped his lips.

Instead of being immediately behind the stolen submarine car, they had already worked their way from the inner edge of the whirlpool, and the Red Terror was forging swiftly ahead.

With dawning hope came the bitter regret that he had not thought of this, their one chance of escape, before.

Now it was probably too late.

Ere they could edge free from the constantly circling stream they would be plunged into the opening in the earth, into which the very ocean itself seemed rushing.

A minute later the Red Terror and the wreck had vanished from his sight.

Grasping Dick Dauntless by the shoulder, he shook him violently.

"Wake up, Dauntless! Pull yourself together! Our lives hang on a thread!" he cried, in hoarse, strained tones.

Dick looked swiftly up.

The hope he read in Captain Flame's eyes brought renewed courage to his heart.

He looked wearily around; then a cry of incredulity burst from his lips, as he pointed over the rounding hull of the car, crying:

"Look, sir! Look! Look! The wreck and the Red Terror are overtaking us!"

It was true.

The inner ring of water, travelling faster than the outer, had carried the steamship and the Red Terror entirely round the circle, whilst they had barely accomplished one half the distance.

A moment later the stolen car flashed by, and Dick Dauntless's heart was touched by the appealing gestures and terror-contorted faces of the imprisoned rebels, whose mouths were opened in pitiful cries for help as they saw the Octopus slowing down, whilst they were being carried faster and faster to destruction.

Suddenly Captain Flame leaned forward, and peered anxiously to his left, where the Octopus's blazing searchlight fell upon a rough wall of rock.

"Stand by!" came in hearse, scarcely audible tones from the inventor's lips.

Wonderingly, Dick repeated the order, then, manipulating the wheels with steady, though anxious fingers, Captain Flame caused all the car's steel wire tentacles to trail over the face of the rock.

At first it seemed as though their hopes had deceived them.

Again and again a tentacle grasped a projecting crag, only to be torn from its hold, or to tear the living rock itself from the side of the precipice.

Suddenly a fearful jar swept through the Octopus, followed by a heavy thud, as two of the tentacles, closing round a projecting rock, held fast, and the force of the current hurled the car against the side of the precipice.

For a moment their fate hung in doubt.

Would the stout wire ropes bear the strain?

Scarce daring to breathe, Dick watched them stretch out like elastic bands, but a moment later another tentacle was made fast, then another, and another, until, in a loud voice, which was almost a shriek, Captain Flame yelled out:

"Full speed ahead!"

As in obedience to Dick's order, the huge wheels revolved swiftly, forcing the car forward, the tension on the tentacles relaxed, and, held tightly to the precipice, she remained motionless.

Minutes, which seemed like hours, dragged slowly by, during which they saw the Red Terror, dim and indistinct, pass again and again, some five hundred feet beneath them.

So far they were safe, but would they ever regain the gap in the ocean-bed into which the waters were pouring?

A minute later the fearful question was answered as, obeying Captain Flame's every order, whilst the inventor manipulated the wire tentacles, the Octopus commenced her fearful climb.

Assisted by her huge wheels, the submarine car climbed foot by foot, almost inch by inch, up the sloping precipice.

Now and again her wheels would be torn from their grasp, and, supported only on her groaning and creaking tentacles, she would sway in the water like a straw entangled in the dam of a mill stream.

But each time she dropped back to the face of the precipice, and resumed her slow, painful upward crawl once more.

Presently the slope grew more pronounced, the whirlpool's current less dangerous, until at length they were able to dispense with the assistance of the wire ropes, and, their engines working full speed ahead, climb to what looked like the mouth of a huge submarine crater, into which the waters were still pouring with terrific force.

A few minutes later they were hastening down the boulder-strewn slope of an enormous submerged volcano, until at length a level plain at its foot was reached, where all was still and peaceful as though the whirlpool which had so nearly proved their undoing was not a bare two miles away, Captain Flame leaned breathlessly against the wall of the conning-tower, and signed to Dick to bring the car to a standstill.

It was well he did so.

The fearful experience through which they had passed had affected his second-in-command more than he realised, and barely had the car come to a standstill ere the boy fell unconscious over the wheel.

Even Captain Flame himself seemed unnerved.

Staggering to the chart-room, he flung himself into a chair, and lapsed into a state bordering on unconsciousness.

The Hunters in Peril.

Homeward bound!

There was not a lad on board the Octopus whose heart did not bound the faster at the thought that the submarine car's head was turned towards the Old England they loved so dearly.

The fearful fate which had befallen the Red Terror and her helpless crew had cast a deep gloom over all.

It is true, they had not seen the stolen car absolutely perish, but from its position near the bottom of the whirlpool, it was almost impossible she could have escaped annihilation.

That the whirlpool had ceased to exist shortly after they emerged from its deadly grasp, they had every reason to believe.

Either the cavernous opening in the centre of the earth which had caused it had filled, or, for some other inexplicable reason, they were yet resting motionless at the bottom of the ocean when the waters around them had been strangely agitated, rushing now this way, now that; and several hours had elapsed before they settled down to the wonted quiet that obtained beneath the waves.

They were now crossing the Indian Ocean with the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and a portion of the Atlantic Ocean to be traversed before they would set their feet upon the sacred soil of Britain once more.

After their fearful experience in the whirlpool, even Dick Dauntless felt that he had had enough excitement to last him for some little time.

But as the effects of their narrow escape gradually faded, and they watched through the glass walls the constant panorama of hill and dale, mountain and valley, swarming with marine life, they longed to leave the Octopus and stretch their legs on the firm ocean-bed once more.

Consequently, when tempted by the glades and sylvan scenery of what can best be described as a marine park, Captain Flame suggested a shooting expedition, the boys hastened to the armoury, delighted at the suggestion.

They had seen browsing on the soft, luxuriant growth between the trees, which took the place of grass on land, a number of manatees and huge walrus-like creatures which offered fair sport for their rifles.

Captain Flame did not accompany them, as he wished to be alone to study their route back to England.

Coupling off, the boys left the Octopus beneath the branches of a wide-spreading, fernlike weed, which might easily have been taken for one of the magnificent fern-trees of Australasia.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde were together, and having marked from the car's conning-tower a huge, big-tusked creature, which might well have been taken for a walrus but for the short, trunklike mouth, into which it was thrusting the luscious seaweed by means of a pair of long, prohensile claws.

It was a fearsome monster, and one which would require no little nerve to attack.

Its tusks were of the purest ivory, streaked with strange, broad green stripes.

These tusks Dick was determined to secure as a trophy of his prowess.

As they stepped from the car they lost sight of the creature, which, for want of its real name, we will call the walrus; but they knew in which direction it was browsing, and, making a wide detour, gradually approached the spot on which they had seen it last.

Sea-hares, large, shrimplike creatures, which propelled themselves through the water by the use of their long, powerful hind limbs, arose before them at every step.

But, though the boys knew that these small creatures were splendid eating, they were after bigger game, and let them escape unharmed.

Suddenly Dick raised his hand, and sunk down on the ground.

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE: "CAPTAIN D'ARCY!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

He had seen the rounding back of the browsing "walrus" some fifty yards ahead.

As Jack Orde dropped to his side, Dick motioned him onward, and the two crept carefully through the weeds.

Presently they were stopped by what seemed an ivory palisade, stretching a hundred feet to right and left.

The obstructing bars were flat and of a yellowish-white, but there was plenty of room to squeeze through, and the next moment the boys had passed the barrier, and were looking around them in amazement.

They seemed to have stepped into a long, unfinished hall, the skeleton of which had been erected, and then the building abandoned.

Immediately above their heads stretched a long, curving line, formed by huge, round, jagged-ended pieces of bone.

A low laugh escaped Dick Dauntless's lips as the truth flashed upon him.

They had forced their way between the ribs of some long-dead marine monster, for at one end appeared a huge mass of bone, terminating in a double row of huge, sabrelike teeth, which could only be the head of what had once been an enormous creature, in comparison with which the monsters they had encountered in the Sargasso Sea would have been but tiny lizards.

For some minutes the boys remained lost in wonder as they surveyed the remains of that fearful dead marine monster, then a sucking, hissing noise, close at hand, recalled them to the object of their hunt.

Moving down the body of the skeleton, they crept between its huge jaws, which arose on either side of them like the walls of a house, and peered between the enormous teeth, the smallest of which towered high above their heads.

Fortune had, indeed, befriended them.

Scarce a dozen paces away was the wide head of the browsing "walrus."

For nearly a minute Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde watched the brute clearing off a foot or more of the seaweed at each mouthful; then, dropping on their knees, they rested their rifles on the skeleton's lower jaw, and aimed immediately between the feeding creature's huge eyes.

"Now, Jack, both together—fire!" whispered Dick.

The next moment their rifles rang out simultaneously.

The explosions were followed by a deafening roar, as the walrus reeled back, and swayed from side to side, as though about to fall.

"Quick, Jack, load again; we have only wounded him!" cried Dick Dauntless breathlessly.

It was true. The powerful bullets, which would have pierced six inches of solid oak, had flattened harmlessly against the animal's thick frontal bone.

As he spoke, Dick had thrust a second cartridge into the breech of his rifle.

But ere he could bring it to his shoulder, the walrus, realising from whence the painful wound had come, charged straight at the skull.

The next moment the boys were clinging for dear life to the dead monster's teeth, as, lowering its head, the walrus thrust its huge tusks beneath the enormous skull, and raised it from the earth.

With a crash, the back part, or brain-box, of the skeleton burst in two. Its tusks jammed in the half-decaying jaws, the walrus uttered half-angry, half-frightened bellows, and crashed through the weeds, carrying the boys, clinging for dear life to the skeleton's teeth, on its head.

Blinded by the mass of bone before it, the walrus shook its mighty head until the boys feared each moment that they would be shaken from their hold and crushed beneath its ponderous body.

On dashed the infuriated creature, now and again striking the row of teeth, which alone saved the boys from destruction, with its claw-armed feelers.

Immediately beneath the imperilled lads was the black head of their strange steed.

Into this Dick and Jack pumped bullet after bullet whenever their strange carriage steadied sufficiently to allow them to fire their rifles.

At first the bullets seemed to have but little effect on the enormous creature, but when they had been in that unpleasant predicament some ten minutes, Dick, leaning forward, thrust the muzzle of his rifle into one of the creature's ears, and pulled the trigger.

With a suddenness which sent both boys flying to the ground, the walrus came to a halt, sprang a dozen feet from the ground, then crashed head downwards into a mass of trailing weeds, where, after a few mighty convulsions, it lay stilled in death.

Bruised and shaken, but otherwise unhurt, Dick Dauntless struggled to his feet.

He was delighted to find Jack Orde also uninjured.

Dick surveyed his dead quarry with disgust.

"Of all the obstinate brutes I ever saw this is the worst!" he declared. "It's fallen with its head doubled up under its body, and its tusks are as far off as though they were in another hemisphere."

"Hang the tusks; I wish we had never seen them!" declared Jack Orde, adding, as he gazed upon the thickly-growing trees that surrounded them on every side: "The question is, where are we?"

"Some three hundred miles east of the Red Sea," replied Dick.

"I know that, you old ass!" laughed Jack. "What I want to know is, where's the Octopus?"

"At any rate, she isn't here!" retorted Jack. "However, our unwilling steed must have left a fairly plain trail behind him."

And, shouldering his rifle, he marched off in the direction they had just come.

Presently he paused and looked around him in dismay.

The yielding weeds through which the walrus had crashed had given to the huge creature's enormous weight, but their elastic stems could not easily be broken. They had regained their former position, and revealed no trace of the path by which the boys had been brought.

The City Beneath the Waves.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde looked at each other in dismay.

They knew not which way to turn.

So rapid had been the walrus' movements, so tightly had they been compelled to hold on to the skeleton's teeth, that they had had no time to note their route.

Indeed, though the lessening light now told that they had been carried down hill, they had been under the impression that their strange steed had sped over level ground.

For some minutes they walked on in silence, then paused, dismayed, at the foot of a perpendicular wall of rock, from fissures and crannies in which hideous octopuses and other deadly marine creatures seemed to leer mockingly at them.

"That's our way," declared Dick Dauntless, pointing up the precipice. "But the question is how are we to get up it? Come on, old chap; we must hunt for a path."

Keeping near the foot of the huge cliff, they walked onwards for some time in silence.

Presently they rounded a projecting corner of the rocky wall, and Dick Dauntless came to an abrupt halt, gazing in amazement at the strange, weird scene spread out before his astonished eyes.

They were on the edge of a wide plain, in the centre of which arose the lofty walls of a huge city.

Beyond the walls could be seen the shattered roofs of innumerable houses.

From the centre of the city arose a magnificent building, surrounded with enormous pillars, which upheld a large, dome-shaped roof, surmounted by a colossal figure of a woman, armed with shield and spear, and a plumed helmet on her head.

"It's a temple of Bellona, goddess of war!" cried Jack Orde. "Good heavens, Dick, what unfortunate buried city have we stumbled upon?"

Dick Dauntless shook his head.

"It cannot be Atlanta, for that is supposed to be in the Atlantic Ocean. What do you say, old chap, an hour or so cannot make much difference, one way or the other, should we explore the ruins?"

"I am with you," agreed Jack, and the next moment the boys were hurrying towards where a huge gap in the wall promised easy access to the submerged city.

As they clambered over enormous piles of fallen masonry, and stood gazing around from the breach, the solemnity of the scene struck them with full force.

It was indeed an impressive sight this unknown, long-forgotten city, buried three thousand feet beneath the waves.

How its doom had come they had no means of even guessing, but though many of the houses were in ruins, some still stood almost as fresh as when they had left the builders' hands, showing how sudden and complete the destruction must have been.

Silently the boys trod the now deserted streets, stopping to peer through doors and windows, to find the floors covered with a thin coating of sand and the mouldering bones of the late inhabitants.

One house they entered, its portico supported on enormous pillars, its facade covered with the finest sculpture.

They did not penetrate far, for they found the inner rooms in the possession of fearful sea creatures which they dare not disturb.

Returning to the street, they walked towards the building that dominated the city.

It stood on a real, or artificial hill, some two hundred feet

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Dropping on their knees, the two boys rested their rifles, and aimed immediately between the feeding creature's huge eyes. "Now, Jack, both together——fire!" whispered Dick Dauntless. (See page 24.)

in height, and was reached by terraces of marble steps, each one of which was thickly strewn with the skeletons of the doomed inhabitants, who had evidently flown to the temple in a vain attempt to escape the overwhelming flood.

Half-way up the steps Jack Orde seized Dick by the arm, and, pointing to a large opening in the wall some twenty feet above the topmost step, cried in hoarse, terror-laden accents:

"Look, Dick, there's someone there!"

"Something, you mean?" asked Dick, then came to an abrupt halt, gazing, with staring eyes, at a brilliant light which flashed suddenly upon them from the interior of the building.

It was not the yellow glare of candle or lamp which were in use at the time when the city was submerged, but the bright, steady glare of an electric light.

Reassured by this discovery, Dick Dauntless hastened forward, crying:

"Why, you old ass, it's the searchlight from one of our chaps who has tumbled upon this submerged city before us! Come on. They'll be able to direct us back to the Octopus."

Jack Orde shook his head, yet hastened to follow his chum's footsteps.

Presently they stood beneath the temple's artistically-moulded portico.

Before them arose a pair of enormous brass-studded doors, through which Dick sprang, crying:

"Hallo, you chaps, what are you doing——".

The words died away on his lips.

Coming towards him from the further end of the temple, but some twenty feet from the inlaid floor, was the brilliant light which had so astonished them shortly before.

It was not only the impossible height the light floated from the floor, but also the fact that it seemed to be moving towards them of its own accord, which alarmed them.

Jack Orde touched Dick on the arm.

"Come away, Dick! Quick! Before we see something else more horrible!"

Dick Dauntless shook him off.

"You can go if you like, I'm going to find out what it is!" he cried, stepping forward and flashing on his own light.

A relieved laugh escaped his lips.

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE: "CAPTAIN D'ARCY!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

As Dick's searchlight blazed forth, the mysterious glare swerved sideways, and Dick saw that it was blazing from above the mouth of a large fish, not unlike a carp.

As the illuminated denizen of the deep glided by, the boys saw, to their amazement, a long, double line of tiny lamp-like sparks, passing from its head to its tail, beneath which hung festoons of other lights.

A moment later the fish reached the outside of the temple, and in the reflected light of the sun which obtained without, its lamps paler, and finally disappeared.

Extinguishing his lamp, Dick penetrated deeper into the building, until he was brought once more to a halt by seeing what looked like a long, low, brilliantly-illuminated set of spikes, some eight inches in height, approaching with a wriggling, snake-like motion towards him.

There was a lower row of blazing spikes beneath the top one, and between them flashed numerous, unevenly-shaped specks of light.

Slowly the creatures approached, and Dick had just time to mark its sharp-pointed snout and total absence of eyes, when its head seemed to split in two, and a cry of horror escaped his lips as he saw a huge, cavernous mouth, beneath which appeared a sack-like pouch scraping along the floor.

So fearful was the apparition that Jack Orde, who was nearest it, seemed paralysed with terror, and unable to move.

Raising his rifle swiftly to his shoulder, Dick Dauntless took a hurried aim into the gaping mouth, and pulled the trigger.

The bullet sped true to its mark, and its brilliantly-illuminated spikes fading as life ebbed, the monster sank dying to the floor.

But as though the shot had summoned an army of ghosts to defend the temple, flashes of electric light appeared from the furthermost end of the building, and the next minute the boys recoiled in terror before creatures the like of which they had never seen in their most terror-haunted dreams.

Some were similar to that which Dick had shot, but with huge, powerful lower jaws, and enormous curved teeth, sharp as needles, strong as swords, with which they fell upon the dead body of their comrade, tearing it to pieces.

But all the fish that produced this natural electric light were not terrifying. Some were beautiful moving flares, others tiny transparent creatures, with long, streaming feelers, which emitted rays of coloured light as they waved like ribbons in the water.

"Come away, Dick. I thought the Sargasso Sea contained the most fearful creatures in the world, but they were as nothing to these."

But Dick Dauntless did not answer.

He had noticed vari-coloured flashes of light coming from immediately beneath the centre of the dome, and, careless of the ferocious creatures which surrounded him, moved towards the coloured lights which had attracted his attention.

Jack Orde hesitated, then, preferring to plunge into further danger rather than remain near the door alone, followed his leader.*

As, their head-light blazing brightly in the gloom, they passed beneath the gilded dome, they literally walked upon human skulls and bones, until at length they paused before a large, beautifully-sculptured marble altar, on which were piled gold and gems of every description.

There were sword-hilts blazing with diamonds, the blades of which had long since rusted away; ringlets, armlets, necklaces, bracelets, all piled in confusion on and around the altar.

There needed but little imagination to recreate the scene in that temple when the opening earth had dragged the plain, the city, and its inhabitants into a yawning chasm three thousand feet beneath the surface of the sea.

Panic-stricken, despairing inhabitants had flocked in their thousands to the temple, casting upon the altar the gold and gems and rich gifts with which they sought to propitiate their offended deity.

But all in vain. The temple, like the surrounding buildings, had been overwhelmed, and no living soul had trodden its inlaid floor for perhaps twenty thousand years, until the two boys from Captain Flame's wondrous submarine-car had stumbled accidentally upon the city.

Emptying their pockets and the pouch each boy carried at his belt, Dick and Jack proceeded to pick out the largest and most valuable of the gems until they could not stow another stone about their persons; then, glad to leave that horror-haunted temple behind, they made their way to beneath the portico.

Glancing around him, Dick marked a break in the precipice about a mile away.

Thither they turned their steps, and after a toilsome climb, regained the plateau on which they had stalked the "walrus."

Half an hour later they were led by the impatient booming of her syren to the Octopus, where they found the other boys had already returned, and that Captain Flame was angrily awaiting their return.

His brow cleared as he listened to Dick's recital of their adventures, and he marked the enormous value of the spoil they had brought with them from the temple.

At first he declared his intention of going to the submerged city and searching it for further treasure, but he was in a hurry to reach England, and, reflecting that now they knew the position of the lost land, they could return to it at any time, the Octopus resumed her journey.

How the Octopus Reached the Red Sea.

"Well, my lad, what is it?" asked Captain Flame, some two days later, as, looking up from the map over which he was poring in the chart-room, he caught Dick Dauntless's eyes fixed inquiringly upon him.

"I was wondering, sir, how we were going to get through the Suez Canal. It is very narrow, and so shallow that if we keep in the channel we'll be cut in two by the keel of some ocean liner; and if you venture on land it will betray the existence of the Octopus."

Captain Flame smiled; then seeing, by an automatic recorder on the wall of the chart-room, that they were within twenty miles of the Red Sea entrance to the canal, he beckoned Dick to follow, and led the way into the conning-tower.

"You can take a spell off, Allstraw," he said to Tom, who was at the wheel. "I'll take the car myself."

Glad to resume a game of chess with Jack Orde in the general-room, which his duty had interrupted, Tom Allstraw saluted, and hastened away.

"Bolt the door on the inside, Dauntless," ordered Captain Flame. "And now, my lad," he continued, as Dick returned to his side, "I'm going to show you the existence of a thing which very few suspect, and which none save myself know of," he said, glancing straight ahead through the telescope lenses.

Suddenly he gave the wheel a twist, and, leaving the deepening channel, the Octopus plunged into the mud on one side, to escape the huge keel of an enormous iron-clad, passing on its way from Britain to relieve a sister ship on the China station.

"You see, Dick, you were right; had we been in the canal itself we could not have escaped destruction," said Captain Flame, as he brought the car back to the carefully dredged channel, and continued on his way once more.

"Then what do you intend to do, sir?" asked Dick.

"Wait and see," was the reply.

For several minutes nothing happened, but the car sped along the bottom of the Red Sea at a tremendous speed.

Suddenly Dick looked through the plate-glass windows of the conning-tower in amazement.

The bright light of the sun, reflected through the waters, had vanished. They had plunged into a thick darkness, relieved only by the brilliant beams of the car's searchlight, which seemed, however, unable to pierce the dim, grey wall which hemmed them in on every side.

Slowing down to half-speed, Captain Flame glanced with an amused smile at Dick's bewildered face.

For three hours they remained moving through what seemed to Dick a thick fog, until, as suddenly as it had clouded over, the water around them became brilliant with sunshine, and before them appeared a wide stretch of open sea.

Captain Flame pointed over the car's bows.

"The Mediterranean!" he announced.

"The Mediterranean?" repeated Dick incredulously. "Then we have passed through the Suez Canal in safety."

"Not through it, my lad; under it. I have shown you a natural tunnel under the canal, a tunnel by which it may happen the submarine vessels of Britain may one day find their way to India, even though the canal itself has been blown up by an enemy. And now call Allstraw back to take the wheel. Warn the crew to be prepared to leave the Octopus in a few hours' time."

His admiration of Captain Flame increased ten-fold. Dick Dauntless retired thoughtfully to his own cabin, whilst the submarine car sped over the bed of the Mediterranean at her highest speed.

At the appointed time Dick Dauntless was summoned to

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* Almost incredible though the above account of the illuminated fish our hero sees in the temple may seem, the author assures his readers that such strange, uncanny creatures have been actually dredged up from the bottom of the ocean, and that scientists believe the lower depths of the sea contain monsters more hideous than the mind of man can conceive.

NEXT THURSDAY'S LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE: "CAPTAIN D'ARCY!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. Please Order Early.

the armoury, where he found Captain Flame and the entire crew getting under arms.

The Octopus had come to a halt, and, passing through the water dock, the boys formed up in line on the sandy ocean bed.

Placing himself at their head, Captain Flame gave the order to march, and they made their way straight towards where what Dick at first took to be a dull red rock arose from the bed of the ocean.

But as he approached he saw that what he had taken to be a rock was the upraised hull of an enormous vessel.

Her twin screws stood motionless above her useless rudder; her bows were buried deep in the yielding ground; her huge funnel, bent and twisted, protruded from a mighty iron superstructure, whilst from a turret in her stern two huge guns still frowned defiantly.

At her mast hung a tattered Union Jack, and it needed not the gaping wound in her side to tell Dick Dauntless that he was gazing upon the wreck of the unfortunate Victoria.

The little party had halted immediately in front of the enormous wreck, and now, low and solemn, came the order:

"With blank cartridge load! Ready! Present! Fire!"

Thrice the volley rang out; then, calling the party to attention, Captain Flame marched them back to the Octopus.

Every boy was sobered by the thought, yet elated to feel that he had formed one of those who had been selected to pay the last tribute of respect to the hundreds of gallant British tars who had been swept out of existence in a catastrophe which had robbed Britain of one of her finest ships.

Though those on board the Octopus had seen many weird and wonderful sights in the lower depths, the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea was by far the most interesting part of their travels.

The whole sea-bed was absolutely littered with relics of bygone civilisation, especially as they neared the coast of Italy, where they passed a wide stretch of level plain, dotted thick with the age-blackened timbers of mighty three-oared galleys, hung with the shields of their crews, their sides torn and scarred with stones that had been launched from enormous catapults.

Off Sicily they paused before a low-waisted galley, from whose hold Captain Flame secured priceless vases, marble statuettes, and wonderful specimens of the goldsmith's art.

To Dick Dauntless's astonishment, the Octopus stayed for several days in the centre of the Straits of Gibraltar.

One night, as they lay motionless beneath, perhaps, the busiest water highway in the world, with the dark hulls of huge liners and mighty warships constantly passing and repassing overhead, Dick awoke to find Captain Flame standing by the side of his bunk.

"What is it, sir? Anything wrong?" he demanded anxiously.

"Nothing is wrong, or everything; I cannot say yet," was the ambiguous answer. "Get up and join me in the armoury."

Wondering at the captain's mysterious words, Dick Dauntless obeyed.

He found Captain Flame awaiting him in the armoury.

The inventor had already donned his diving apparatus, and through the glass of his helmet Dick saw his eyes shining with an unwonted brilliancy, and he instinctively felt that they were on the verge of some great adventure which would change the whole course of their lives.

Without a word Captain Flame waited until Dick Dauntless had donned his diving dress, then led the way from the Octopus.

Not a word was exchanged between these two solitary pedestrians deep down on the bed of the silent Mediterranean.

Though he would have found it difficult to have explained why, Dick felt his heart beating swiftly with an unwonted excitement.

For half an hour they plodded steadily over a submarine landscape, which at other times would have aroused their keenest interest, but which was now passed through practically unnoticed.

Presently Captain Flame paused close in the centre at a huge triangle of chains, the apex of which was the huge black hull of an enormous war vessel.

Drawing his axe, Captain Flame struck the chains several times at unequal intervals.

A minute later a weighted rope ladder dropped from the surface, and, uncoiling itself as it descended, offered a means of communication between the ironclad and the bottom of the sea.

Beckoning his companion to follow, Captain Flame mounted the rope ladder.

Wonderingly Dick Dauntless followed, to find himself, a few minutes later, standing on the deck of a large battleship.

Long Live the King!

As Captain Flame stepped on deck, a marine guard presented arms, and a band struck up a majestic, awe-inspiring anthem.

Raising his hand to his helmet in salute, Captain Flame advanced to where a tall, handsome man in military uniform stood, surrounded by a glittering staff of naval officers, amongst whom Dick was not surprised to recognise his father.

Without a word the military officer, who was evidently a person of no little consequence, dropped on one knee, and raised the inventor's hand to his lips, then led the way to a sumptuously furnished state-room in the stern of the vessel.

Here Captain Flame removed his helmet, and signed to Dick Dauntless to do likewise.

The next moment uniformed officials stepped forward, and covered the inventor's diving suit with rich robes of state.

At the further end of the state-room was a tall, throne-like chair, towards which Captain Flame moved.

Dick was about to follow, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he looked back to see his father standing behind him.

"Keep by my side, Dick. You are about to witness the birth of a kingdom," was Admiral Dauntless's amazing assertion.

Dick took his father's hand, and pressed it affectionately; then, wonderingly awaiting what might next betide, watched whilst Captain Flame moved down the long, richly-carpeted room, and seated himself on the raised throne.

As he did so curtains to the left of the dais were agitated, and a man, clad in the rich robes of a bishop, stepped forward carrying a richly-jewelled crown.

Passing behind the throne, he stood for nearly a minute with the crown raised above Captain Flame's head; then, still in perfect silence, the diadem descended until it encircled the inventor's brow.

Then the silence was broken by a clash of steel, and a mighty shout echoed and re-echoed through the room as those present drew their swords and waved them above their heads, crying:

"Long live Paul I., King of Kravonia!"

Again the band on deck played the stirring notes of the Kravonian national anthem, whilst the deep booming of the warship's guns proclaimed a Royal salute.

"What does it all mean, dad? Who is the man I have known as Captain Flame?" asked Dick, in a low, awed whisper.

"The rightful King of Kravonia, which for nearly a hundred years has groaned beneath the sway of the northern tyrant. Now, owing to the treasure which, thanks to his submarine car, Paul I. has wrested from the ocean, Kravonia will soon be an independent state once more," replied Admiral Dauntless. "But though it was his Majesty's wish that you, who have followed him so faithfully, should be present at his crowning, there are those present who do not know you so well as we do, and who would be unwilling that one so young as yourself should share his council."

He beckoned a midshipman to him as he spoke, and shortly afterwards Dick Dauntless found himself seated with a number of midshipmen in the ward-room of the battleship.

Two hours later Dick found himself back on the ocean bed with the man whom we will still continue to call Captain Flame.

"And now, my lad, back to the Octopus. We have stirring days full of peril before us," cried Captain Flame, his voice ringing with a new-found power.

(To be concluded next Thursday.)

COMING!

A Wonderful, New Serial Story for "The GEM" Library by SIDNEY DREW!

STARTS NEXT THURSDAY!
GRAND - NEW - FEATURE!
ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE!

NEXT TUESDAY: **"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"** By FRANK RICHARDS. Please order your copy early.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS.—THE EDITOR.

Next Week's Story.

My readers may anticipate a special treat for next Thursday, in the shape of Martin Clifford's latest St. Jim's story, entitled,

"CAPTAIN D'ARCY."

This grand tale relates how, owing to the temporary absence of Kildare, the popular head of the Sixth and captain of the school, an election takes place, with the amazing result, thanks to Tom Merry & Co., that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the elegant Fourth-Former, is returned at the head of the poll the duly elected captain of St. Jim's. This startling development is made the most of by the juniors, as may be imagined, and a great deal of fun ensues when

"CAPTAIN D'ARCY"

is supreme at the old college.

Our New Competition Scheme Starts This Week.

On the back cover page of this number, readers will find full particulars and the necessary form for the first of our Weekly Competitions. A careful perusal of the few brief rules attached to this novel competition will at once make clear its extreme simplicity, and the advantage it possesses of being complete in one week. Next week a similar competition will appear, and the next week another, and so on until further notice, each being complete in itself, with a prize list of

Ten Handsome Presents Every Week.

Under this unique arrangement, every one of my readers stands a fair chance of gaining a prize if not one week, then the next, or the next after that. Everyone starts afresh each week, and on level terms. So start now at once, my readers, please, and collect all the coupons attached to the front-cover page of this issue that you can. Remember, if you prove to be one of the ten winners, you can select your own prize from our Grand Present List. Whatever you do, therefore, don't forget to underline the present you want most.

Replies in Brief.

H. W. Bingley, Yorkshire.—The best way for you to set about becoming a stableboy would be to apply to a local jobmaster or other horsekeeper for a job in the stable in any capacity. Your work would probably be rough to start with, and consist of doing odd jobs, cleaning, etc., but a smart lad would soon find himself promoted to more skilled work among the horses.

G. McQueen, Glasgow.—An excellent book on football is published by the British Sports Publishing Co., of 2, Hind Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C., at the price of sixpence.

C. C. Nelson, Sheffield.—The serial stories you mention—"Beyond the Eternal Ice" and "Deep Sea Gold"—have not yet been published in book form, but they may be looked for in the future in "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Complete Library.

J. Hill.—Yes; Levison, of St. Jim's, is the same Levison who was once at Greyfriars.

Miss E. Sorrel, West Green.—You may make your mind easy about Mr. Fawcett, who was not allowed to remain lost for very long.

J. Stephenson, Cannock.—No; yearly volumes are not published of either THE GEM or "The Magnet" or the other paper you mention.

"Loyal Gemite," Bermondsey.—I think I can safely promise you that you have not heard the last of Marmaduke Smythe.

In Our Popular Companion Paper.

I would remind those of my readers who, besides entering for our Weekly Competitions, appreciate the excitement and interest of an important competition drawn out over a number of weeks, that the

Novel Miniature "Magnet" Competition

has just started in our companion paper. Midget pages of this popular story-paper are being given away with each issue, and when a whole number of the miniature "Magnet" is complete, the editor is offering

Fifty Money Prizes

for neatly-bound numbers sent in to him.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

Can any reader kindly oblige Master V. Dyson, of 6, Frederick Crescent, North Brixton, S.W., with Nos. 121 ("Britain's Revenge") and 126 ("Dr. Pete") of "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

C. E. F., of 7, Park Place, Dover, wishes to obtain the following numbers of THE GEM Library: Nos. 149 ("Tom Merry's Fix"), 151 ("Tom Merry's Resolve."), 152 ("Tom Merry against St. Jim's"), and any other back numbers before them.

Miss Dorothy Couch, of 16, Trafalgar Place, Brynmill, Swansea, wishes to obtain Nos. 1-50 of "The Magnet" Library.

Will any reader oblige Master Robert McCallum, of 24, Blackhall Street, Paisley, with all the halfpenny numbers of "The Magnet" Library (Nos. 1-140, Vol. IV.)?

Master Willie Bland has two "Boys' Friend" 3d. Libraries to dispose of. They are No. 133 ("The Pride of the Team") and No. 167 ("School and Mill"). Address, 630, Cliff Mount, Bolton Road, Bradford, Yorks.

Master J. Smith, of 214, Mitcham Road, Tooting, S.W., has all the numbers of THE GEM Library from 114, and all of "The Magnet" from 142, to present date to dispose of.

Will any reader who wants back numbers of THE GEM or "The Magnet" Libraries, write to Carl Lofmark, of Finola, 1, Charles Street, Limerick, who is willing to dispose of his at half-price?

William H. Wright, of 7, Litherland Road, Bootle, Liverpool, has a few halfpenny issues of THE GEM, which he is willing to distribute among his fellow-readers of THE GEM Library who are in need of such issues.

Wiliam M. Jackson, of 15A, Upper Rathmines, Rathmines, wishes to obtain the early issues of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries.

Would-be Correspondents Please Note.

A great number of my readers have shown themselves anxious to take advantage of Our Correspondence Exchange, which has now established itself as a most popular feature of the good old GEM. The consequence is, that the Exchange has grown out of all proportion to the space originally allotted to it on this page. As I have this week no room for it elsewhere in this issue, I have taken the step of printing the names and addresses of would-be correspondents

On the Back-Cover Page of "The Magnet" Library,

so as to avoid the necessity of cutting short either of our grand stories to make room for it.

Readers desiring correspondents, therefore, need only peruse the back cover of this week's issue of our wonderful little companion paper, to find what they require.

YOUR EDITOR.

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors, 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Agents for Australia: Gordon & Gotch, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z. South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Canada: 371, Queen Street West, Toronto. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, December 30th, 1911.

"BY ORDER OF THE FORM" is the title of the grand, long, complete school story of the famous chums of Greyfriars, by Frank Richards, contained in this week's number of our splendid companion paper, "THE MAGNET" Library. Order it now. Price 1d.

The Magnet Library

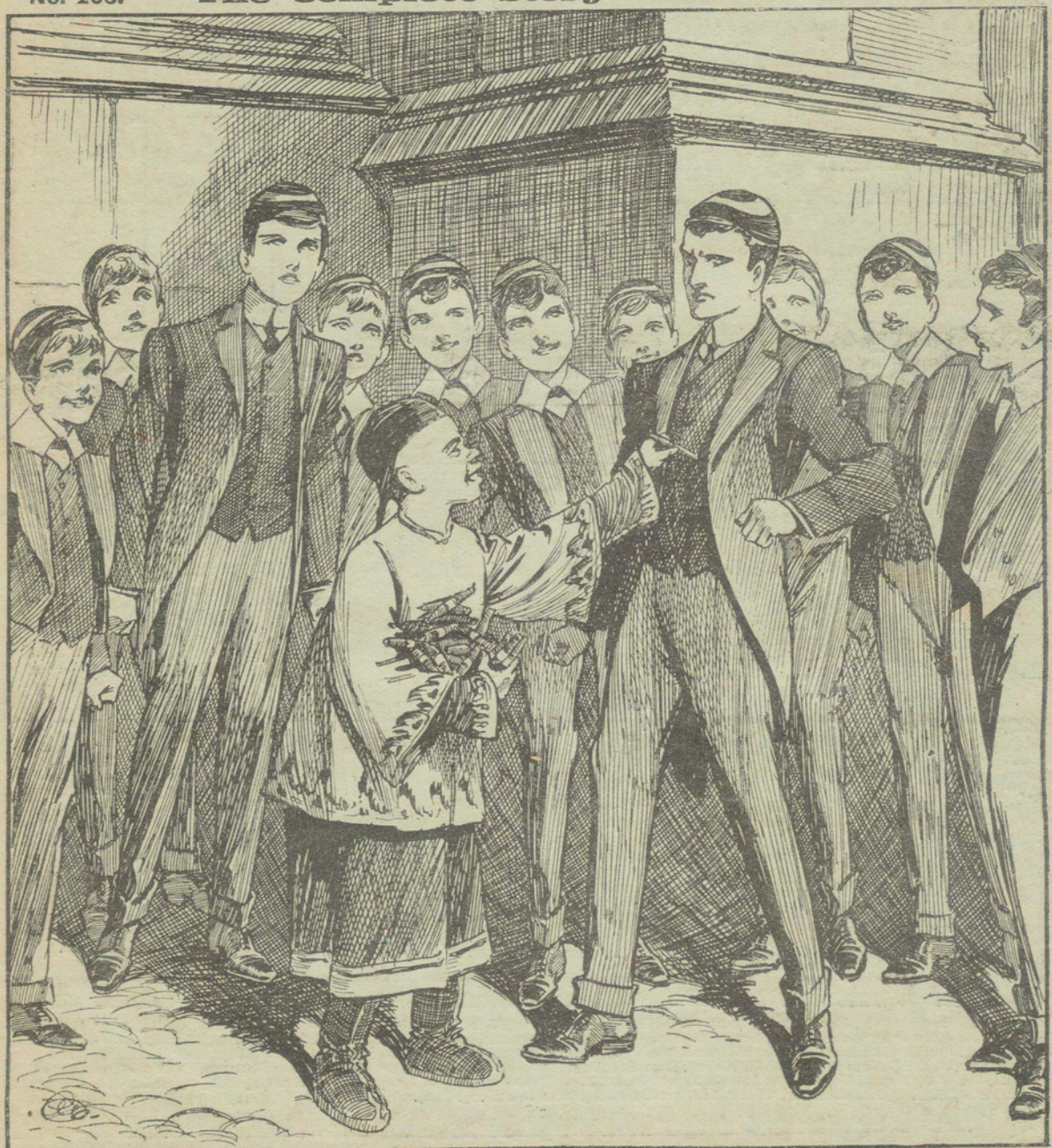
1d.

A Companion Paper to "THE GEM" LIBRARY. The Popular Thursday School-Story Book.

Also in this Number: A Grand Adventure Story by SIDNEY DREW, and a splendid competition.

50 MONEY PRIZES!

No. 203. The Complete Story-Book for All. Vol. 6.



THE SCHOOLBOY JUGGLER! *(An amusing scene in the grand, long, complete tale of school life contained in this issue of "THE MAGNET" Library.)*

A Simple Competition for Readers of The GEM Library.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Collect as many coupons as you can, similar to the one on the front cover page of this issue, cut them out, and paste them neatly on the form supplied below. Then post the page complete to the Editor, GEM Competition, 23, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C., so as to reach him by the first post on Tuesday, January 2nd, 1912.

Each week we shall award to the ten readers who send in the greatest number of coupons, TEN HANDSOME PRESENTS chosen by the winners themselves.

POINTS TO BE CAREFULLY NOTED.

All coupons sent in each week must be cut from the current week's issue of the The GEM Library.

The coupons printed in spaces 1 and 2 of the form below are Presentation Coupons, which are given you free to start your collection.

Please underline the Present, in the comprehensive list given below, which you most desire to receive in the event of your proving one of the weekly winners.

Competitors collecting more coupons than space provides for on this page must use a form from another copy of No. 203 of The GEM; but the two Presentation Coupons will not count more than once.

Be very careful in cutting out the coupons to cut neatly round the peculiarly shaped outline, and to paste the coupons neatly on the form. The Presents will be awarded primarily according to number of coupons sent in, BUT IN THE EVENT OF A TIE OCCURRING BETWEEN TWO OR MORE COMPETITORS FOR ANY ONE OF THE PRIZES, THE NEATNESS OF THE FORMS WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN DECIDING THE WINNERS.

The decision of the Editor on this or any other point connected with this competition will be final and legally binding.

Gem No 203 "Present Coupon" PRESENTATION COUPONS	Gem No 203 "Present Coupon"	3 Cut out the coupon to be found on the front cover and paste it down in this space.	4	5	6	7 All coupons pasted up on this page must be taken from No. 203 of THE GEM.	8
9	10 Competitors are only entitled to make use of *two* Presentation Coupons each week.	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Please underline the present you would like in the event of winning.	22	23	24
25	26	27 Ask your friends to help you collect the coupons.	28	29	30	31	32 Competitors collecting more coupons than space provides for on this page must use another sheet. The Presentation Coupons, however, will count only once.

GRAND LIST OF PRESENTS! CHOOSE ANY ONE BY UNDERLINING IT! READ THE RULES PRINTED ABOVE!

Penknife, Fountain Pen, Mouth Organ, Box of Chocolates, Brooch, Pencil Box, Magnetic Compass, Scout Billican, Scout Knife and Fork, Scout Semaphore Flags, Scout Haversack, Jar of Sweets, Cigarette Card Album, Picture Postcard Album, Cuff Links, Telescope, Nail Scissors, Electric Torch, Stamp Album, Hat Pins, Photographic Dark Room Lamp, Photographic Album, Dog Collar, Dog Whip, Clothes Brush, Hair Brush, Story-Book, Box of Paints, Kite, Steam Vertical Engine, Doll's Tea Set, Harmless Pistol, Amusing Game (taken from a large assortment of novel table games), Box of Draughts, Set of Chessmen, Bicycle Bell, Bicycle Repair Outfit, Bicycle Oil Can, Bicycle Lamp, Fishing Rod (3 joints), Spirit Level, 2-ft. Four-fold Boxwood Rule, Hatchet, Fretwork Saw, Cricket Ball, Serviette Ring (with initial engraved).

Write very clearly! NAME and ADDRESS _____

The Editor's decision on all matters concerning this competition must be accepted as final and legally binding in all respects, and acceptance of this rule is an express condition of entry.

D