

TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!

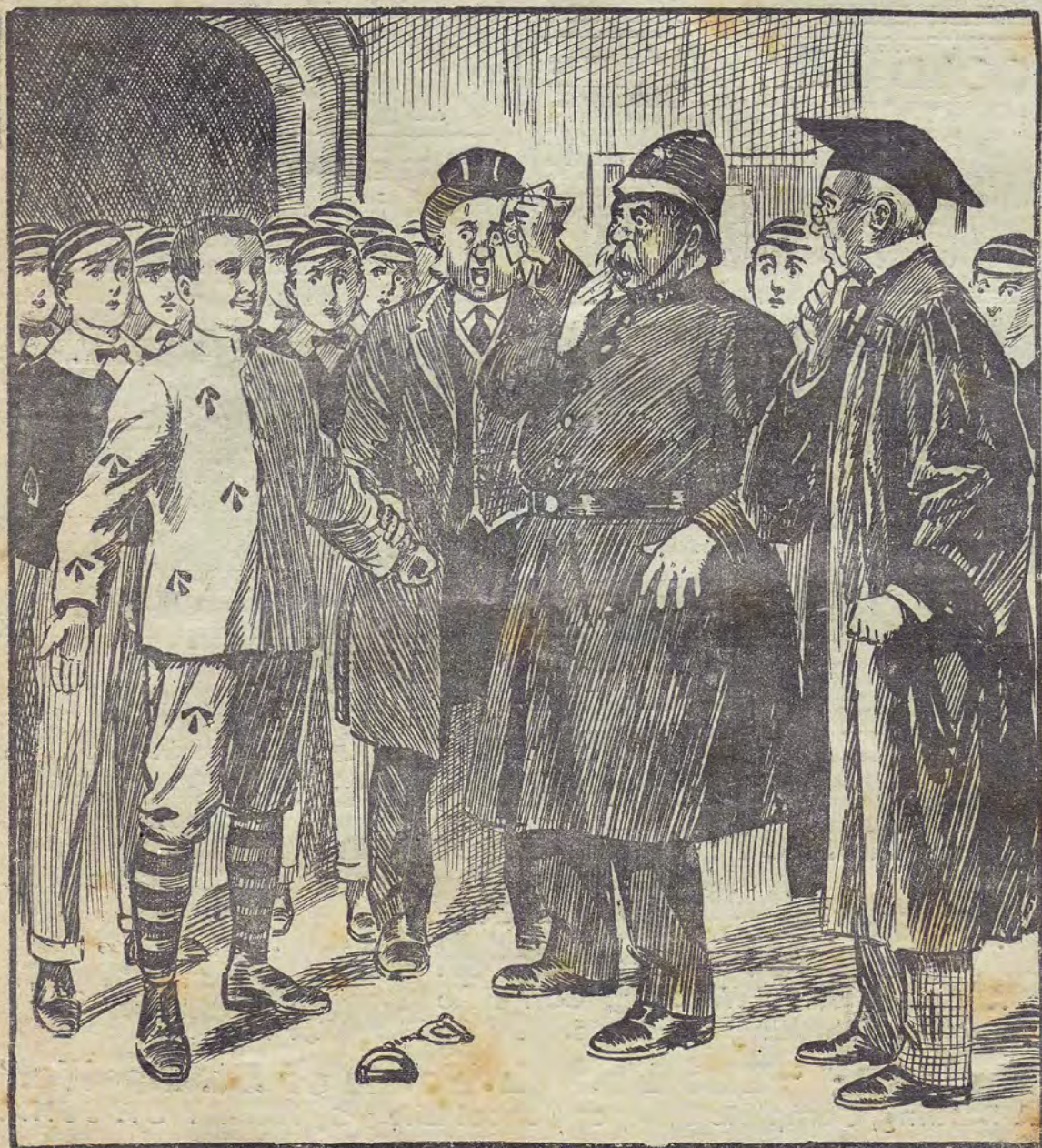
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Mr. Crump and his excited followers swarmed into the School House doorway, and the heavy hand of P.-e. Crump descended upon the shoulder of the gasping convict. "I arrest you!" spluttered Mr. Crump. "I arrest you in the name of the law! Surrender, you villain!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the prisoner. "Oh, my only-aunt! Rescue, School House!" But there was no need for the School House to rescue Tom Merry. His captors had released him as suddenly as if he had become all at once red-hot. They were staring at him in stupefaction!

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TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete
School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry Scores off Gussy.

"I SHALL go as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, made that statement in Study No. 6 with a rather defiant air.

It was as if he expected opposition, and had made up his mind to take no notice of it if he did.

If he expected criticism, he was not doomed to disappointment.

All the other fellows in the study left off talking, and they all turned their heads round towards D'Arcy, and stared at him.

There were a good many of them there. Blake and Herries and Digby, who shared the study with the Honourable Arthur Augustus, were there, of course. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—had come in to talk over the important affair with the chums of the Fourth. Reilly and Kangaroo were there, too, so the Fourth-Form study was pretty full.

Eight pairs of eyes were fastened upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at once, with a somewhat disconcerting effect.

"You'll go as what?" demanded Tom Merry.

"As which?" said Jack Blake.

"As who?" demanded Digby.

"Wichard Cœur-de-Leong!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with dignity. "I dare say you fellows are aware that the blood of the Plantagenets flows in the veins of the D'Arcies, and, as a matter of fact, Wichard Cœur-de-Leong is a distant relation of mine. I regard that as a vewy appropwiate chawactah for me to assume for a fancy dwess ball."

"My hat!"

"To assume the chawactah of Wichard Cœur-de-Leong," went on D'Arcy, with growing dignity, as he detected traces

of mirth in the countenances of his friends, "a chap has to have wathah a good figah—"

"Better chuck the idea, then," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And a certain dignity of mannah is wequired, too," said D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, and surveying the juniors with scorn. "I wegard the chawactah as most appropwiate for me. What do you think, Kangy?"

"Rotten!" said Kangaroo cheerfully.

"Weally, you ass—"

"I believe Richard Cœur-de-Lion was a rather bigger chap than you are," Tom Merry remarked sarcastically.

"I don't suppose there was much difference," said D'Arcy, with dignity; "and, anyway, I am goin' to have the chawactah of Wichard Cœur-de-Leong. As a mattah of fact, I have already ordahed the armour."

"Phew!"

"If you chaps could suggest any bettah chawactah I should be pwepared to listen to you, of course," said Arthur Augustus.

Monty Lowther looked thoughtful.

"Why not go as a Silly Ass?" he asked. "That would save you the trouble of making up for the part."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Lowthah—"

"Look here! How are you going to dance if you go as a giddy knight in armour?" demanded Blake. "Why can't you be a Minstrel Boy or a Red Indian like anybody else?"

"I wefuse to be a minstrel boy or a Wed Indian! I am goin' as Wichard Lion-Heart. I am partly a Plantagenet by descent—"

"Descended a long way, I suppose," remarked Lowther.

Next Thursday:

"IN HONOUR BOUND!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

No. 217 (New Series.) Vol. 6.

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"I don't see how you make that out, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "We've had Richard Cœur-de-Lion's death in the history lesson, and I distinctly remember that his togs were stained red with his blood when he got the arrow in his bread-basket. Now, you've told us a lot of times that the D'Arcys are blue-blooded. I appeal to all the chaps present."

"Hear, hear!" said Kangaroo.

"Yes, I distinctly remember hearing Gussy say so," said Blake. "That rules him out of the Plantagenet family. If Richard's blood was red and Gussy's is blue, it's quite clear that they can't be relations."

"Impossible!" said Manners.

"You uttah asses—"

"There's a distinction of colour, you see," said Tom Merry. "Now, as I've proved that King Richard was no relation of yours, you don't want to go as a Crusader in armour. Better go as a 'bus-driver, or something like that. Have you got any 'bus-drivers in the family—if you must go as a relation?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wedged you as an ass, Tom Mewwy—"

"Or what about a convict?" suggested Monty Lowther. "A broad-arrow suit is very distinctive. Have you any convicts in the family, Gussy?"

"I wedged that wemark as objectionable, Lowthah—"

"Suppose he went as a Harmless Lunatic?" said Manners. "It's a part he's been playing for so long that he'd have it right at his finger-tips—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I wufuse to entah into such a wiculous discuss," said the swell of St. Jim's, with his nose very high in the air. "If I go to this fancy dwess ball at all, I shall go as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong. And I am bound to go, as there will be nobody else to look aftah you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah. As a mattah of fact, I expected some wibald cwiticism on this subject, and so I ordahed the armour down fwom London, and I expect it to be delivered to-night," said D'Arcy. "When you chaps see me in my armour I wathah think you will wedged it as wippin'."

"If Gussy has finished being funny, we'll begin to discuss the costumes," said Tom Merry. "As the ball comes off the day after to-morrow, there's no time to waste. We must do justice to the occasion, after Glyn has got his pater to ask us."

"Yes, rather!"

"I am not bein' funnay, you uttah ass! I'm goin' as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. Tom Merry made a soothing gesture.

"Yes, yes; I know! But talking about costumes, I think I shall go as a convict. It will be rather seasonable, as there's a convict escaped from Blackmoor lately, and he's supposed to be hiding in this neighbourhood. Chap got up as a convict ought to make rather a sensation."

"Good egg!"

"And Gussy could go as a warder," suggested Blake.

"You feahful ass! I am goin' as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong, in complete armour—"

"Complete in one number?" asked Lowther.

"Ass!"

"Gussy could go as a chimney-sweep," said Tom Merry. "I wouldn't mind lending a hand blacking him over with soot—"

"Quite sootable!" agreed Lowther.

"I am goin' as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong!" Arthur Augustus's voice rose to a shriek. "I have wepeated already that I am goin' as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong."

"I know you have, and it's time you put on another record, if you're bound to go on understudying the gramophone," retorted Tom Merry.

"You uttah ass!" Arthur Augustus pushed back his spotless white cuffs. "I will twouble you to put up your hands, Tom Mewwy."

"My dear ass—"

"Othahwise I shall thwash you," said D'Arcy. He dropped his hands upon Tom Merry's shoulders, and yanked him out of his chair. "Now, then, you ass, put up your hands, and I will give you a feahful thwashin'."

"My dear fathead— Ow!"

Tom Merry broke off as Arthur Augustus rushed at him, smiting. D'Arcy's knuckles came upon Tom Merry's nose, and he staggered, and fell heavily to the floor. He did not move again, and Arthur Augustus danced round him excitedly, brandishing his fists, and calling frantically upon him to come on.

"Get up, you wottah! Get up and be thwashed! Yah! Come on!"

Monty Lowther rose and ran to Tom Merry, and knelt beside him. Tom Merry did not move. His left eye quivered.

slightly, and that was all. Monty gave a groan that would have made the fortune of a heavy tragedian.

"Oh! Poor old Tommy! Ow!"

"G-g-good heavens!" exclaimed Manners. "What has happened?"

"Ow!" sobbed Lowther. "Poor old Tommy! Ow!"

Arthur Augustus suddenly ceased his war-dance. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye again, and gazed anxiously at the fallen youth.

"Bai Jove! Have I hurt him vevy much, deah boys?" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in startled tones.

"Boo-hoooh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Shut the door!" said Monty Lowther faintly. "Don't let anybody else see that Tom Merry is dead. Gussy must be allowed time to escape."

"Gweat Scott!"

Blake ran to the door and closed it. The juniors stood round in a group with solemn faces and bated breath. Monty Lowther bent over the still form of Tom Merry and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER 2.

In Hiding.

TOM MERRY lay quite still upon the study carpet.

Monty Lowther lifted his chum's head for a moment, and it fell dully upon the carpet again. It was only an inch or so, but the heavy thud struck a chill to the heart of the swell of St. Jim's.

"B-b-bai Jove!" he stammered. "I—I—I—"

"Poor old Tommy!" wailed Lowther.

"Boo-hoo!" sobbed Manners.

And the juniors all wept and sobbed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed from one to another in horror.

"I—I didn't mean to hit him vevy hard!" he gasped. "I am wathah a hard hittah when I am in a wage, I know. Pewwaps I stwuck him too hard."

"It might have been heart-disease," suggested Blake. "Do you know whether there was heart-disease in the Merry family, Manners?"

"I d-d-don't know!" sobbed Manners. "This—this is horrible! Sudden death is a fearful thing, especially when the chap owes you money. I l-l-lent Tom Merry a shilling this morning. Ow!"

"Weally, Mannahs. I think it wathah wotten to think of things like that at a time like this."

"Perhaps he's still got it in his pocket," suggested Kangaroo. "No good leaving it there to be buried with him."

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Reilly. "Let Gussy search him."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Gussy ought to do it, as he killed him," said Herries solemnly.

D'Arcy shuddered.

"You uttah wottahs! Are you—are you sure he is done for, Lowthah?"

"F-e-e-el his heart and see!" sobbed Lowther.

"I—I'd wathah not touch him. But—but this is howwible, you know!" said D'Arcy. "I suppose I weally stwuck him a feahful blow."

"Frightful!"

"Awful!"

"Terrific!"

"I am wathah a wuff chap when my tempah is woused," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great distress. "I feel howwid."

There was a tap at the door.

"Good heavens! The police already!" gasped Monty Lowther.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Imposs! My dear chap—"

"Hallo!" came the voice of Bernard Glyn of the Shell through the keyhole. "What have you got this giddy door locked for? I've come to help you jaw over the costumes."

D'Arcy drew a breath of relief.

"It's only Glyn!" he exclaimed.

"We can trust Glyn," said Manners. "We can let him into the secret, and—"

"Better not," said Lowther quickly. "Gussy will have to bolt, of course. It would be a frightful disgrace to the school if he were hanged."

"Ow!"

"At a time like this we must think of the school," said Lowther. "Gussy must escape. He must not be seen here with the body. Wait a minute, Glyn! We'll let you in in a minute or two."

"What on earth's the matter?" yelled the Shell fellow through the keyhole.



Figgins struck a wax vesta, and the light glimmered into the study and revealed a figure standing in full view—the figure of a desperate ruffian with a cropped head, and a broad-arrow suit and striped stockings. "The convict!" gasped the juniors. (See Chapter 9.)

"Wait a minute! Look here, you chaps, Gussy had better not be seen here with the body at all," whispered Lowther hurriedly. "Get under the table, Gussy, till Glyn is gone. We shall have to open the door, or he'll bring half the School House here with his hammering. Under the table—quick!"

"But, weally—"

"We're trying to save your life!" said Lowther sharply. "Do as I tell you! We'll turn out the light and get the body away, and put Tom Merry in his own study without Glyn seeing him. Quick!"

"Oh, vewy well! But—"

"Get under!"

Manners held up the table-cover, and Arthur Augustus dived under the table. The swell of St. Jim's was in a state of such confusion of mind that he hardly knew what he was or was not doing. He whose greatest trouble hitherto had been the fit of a necktie or the colour scheme of a waistcoat, was hardly equal to deal with a fearful tragedy like this. Monty Lowther put out one of his long legs, and helped D'Arcy into concealment with his boot, and the table-cover dropped into place and hid him from view.

Then Blake unlocked the door.

Bernard Glyn came into the study in a state of amazement. He stared blankly at the chums of the School House.

"What's the row?" he demanded.

"Hush!"

"Eh? What am I to hush for?"

Monty Lowther turned out the gas without replying.

"You ass!" howled Glyn. "What are you putting us in the dark for? You silly ass, turn on the light!"

"Hush!" said Lowther. "Also hush! On occasions like this, you hush and hist as well."

"Are you hushing?" asked Blake.

"Yes, I'm hush and shushing. Come on!"

"What does it mean?" roared Bernard Glyn. "If this is a rag—"

"Shush! Come!"

Monty Lowther drew Glyn from the study. Outside the door he whispered to him, and Glyn broke into a chuckle. There was a sound in the darkness as of a heavy body being dragged away, and Arthur Augustus shivered as he heard it.

Then came a thrilling whisper in the darkness.

"Gussy!"

"Yaas, Lowthah!"

"Stay there till I call you."

"But—"

The study door closed softly.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Arthur Augustus remained in the darkness, palpitating beneath the table.

The minutes passed slowly.

No sound broke the stillness of the study save faint and indistinguishable echoes from the other parts of the School House of St. Jim's.

Where were the fellows gone—what had happened? What had they done with the—Arthur Augustus could not bring himself to form the word, even in his mind. Once he thought he heard a sound of laughter in the passage, but surely the fellows could not be laughing at such a time. Unless—a new thought flashed into the mind of the swell of St. Jim's, as he grew calmer—unless it was a rag!

He whipped out from under the table. He was very warm, and very red, and very dusty.

"Bai Jove! I—I woudah—"

He opened the study door cautiously.

There was no one in the passage.

After a moment's hesitation, he moved cautiously along the corridor, and turned into the Shell passage. There was a light under the door of Tom Merry's study, and a sound of laughter proceeded therefrom.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

He ran along the passage, and tore open the door of the study, and burst in, aflame with indignation.

A crowd of juniors turned round to look at him. They were having tea, and Herries and Blake and Digby and Lowther and Manners and Reilly and Glyn and Kangaroo, were all round the festive board—and last, but not least, Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked at Tom Merry with his eyes almost starting from his head, and jammed in his monocle and looked again. Tom Merry certainly did not look very dead. He was pouring out tea, and he looked up and nodded to the swell of St. Jim's with a cheery smile.

"Hallo, Gussy! Just in time for tea!" he said hospitably.

"You—you uttah wottah—"

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Do you always answer invitations that way?" he demanded. "Is that what comes of having the blood of the Plantagenets in one's veins?"

"You frightful wottah—you were only wottin!" gasped D'Arcy, between relief and rage. "I shall give you a feahful thwashin—"

"Me! What for?"

"For pwetendin' to be dead!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"I never said I was dead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any of you chaps hear me say I was dead?" demanded Tom Merry, looking round with an injured expression.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"You must have been mistaken, Gussy!"

"I didn't say you said you were dead, you silly ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Lowther said he would take away the body—"

"So I did take it away," said Lowther.

"How could there be a body if he was not dead, you wottah?"

"Why, of course, there's a body!" said Lowther, in astonishment. "You can't look at Tom Merry and say he hasn't got a body? He's not a giddy phantom. I never said a dead body, did I?"

"You—you uttah wottah—"

"Seems to me that Gussy is getting excited about nothing," said Glyn. "What made you think Tom Merry was dead, Gussy?"

"Those wottahs were wotting—and—and I stwuck him a feahful blow—"

"Oh, that wasn't a feahful blow!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "That whack wouldn't hurt a fly, Gussy!"

"You—you uttah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I will thwash all you wottahs! I—I—"

"Better wait till you've got your armour on!" grinned Blake. "You might get hurt otherwise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it pax, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm willing to accept an apology, and call the matter ended."

"Accept an—an—a-a-apology!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Certainly!"

"You—you feahful boundah! I—"

"Well, I'll waive the apology, if you'll only be quiet!" said Lowther magnanimously. "Now, I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

"Impossible!" said Kangaroo. "Gussy accepts! Sit down and have some tea, Gussy!"

"Weally, you boundahs—"

"Sit down and have tea!"

Arthur Augustus gazed round at the cheerful, smiling faces, and he felt that vengeance was out of the picture. His war-

like brow relaxed, and he sank into the chair Tom Merry hospitably pulled up to the table for him.

"Vewy well," he said. "I will make it pax. I wegard you as a set of boundahs, but I will make it pax. But—"

"No buts," said Manners cheerfully. "Try these 'sardines!'"

"Thank you! But—"

"This toast is good!"

"Thank you! But—"

"You mustn't butt in like that!" said Blake severely.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Sugar with your tea, Gussy?"

"Yaas, watah! But—"

"And milk!"

"Yaas. But I am goin' to the fancy-dress ball as Richard Cœur-de-Leong!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy triumphantly.

"My hat! If he hasn't got that old record on again!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"All right, Gussy; you shall go as Richard Cœur-de-Lion, or as Alfred the Great, if you like, with the cakes thrown in," said Tom Merry. "Pass the jam!"

And so that great question was settled, and whatever characters the other fellows might assume, it was established that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form should go as Richard Cœur-de-Lion—a distant relation of his.

CHAPTER 3.

Figgys' Little Joke

THE coming masquerade was causing a good deal of excitement at St. Jim's, not only among Tom Merry & Co., but with the rest of the fellows of both Houses. The fancy-dress ball was being given by Mr. Glyn, of Glyn House, near St. Jim's, the father of Bernard Glyn of the Shell. Mr. Glyn was a millionaire, and the affair was to be on a large scale, and the hospitality would be boundless. Mr. Glyn had certainly not intended to include junior boys from school in his list of invitations; but Bernard Glyn had put it to him very strongly, and his sister Edith had backed him up, and the result was a shower of invitation cards upon the St. Jim's fellows.

The ball was being given on the occasion of the engagement of Edith Glyn to Arthur Wodyer, who had been a master for a time at St. Jim's, and Housemaster of the New House during the temporary absence of Mr. Rateliff. The St. Jim's fellows all liked "Woddy" very much, and they were glad to hear of his good luck; and Bernard Glyn had kindly consented to approve of his future brother-in-law. Indeed, Glyn was full of stories of the love-smitten condition of Woddy, and he related with great gusto in the common-room how he had heard Edith allude to him as "Owney-owney!"

Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were going, and the question of costumes occupied every mind. Figgins & Co. of the New House were going, too. As Woddy had been their Housemaster, though only for a short time, they could not possibly be left out. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were therefore asked; and so were Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, the "New Firm," as they called themselves. Certainly, it would make a great many young people to be at the dance, but, as Kerr sagely observed, men were very seldom equal to the ladies in number at any dance, and public-school chaps who could dance would be rather an acquisition. And Kerr, at all events, could dance—he could do most things, and do them well—and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of course, had been specially designed by Nature to be the ornament of a ball-room.

Besides, Cousin Ethel was coming to the dance, and a friend of hers, Marjorie Hazeldene of Cliff House School. And, of course, the two young girls would want boys to take care of them, Figgins declared. And of Cousin Ethel, at least, Figgins was certain to take excellent care—probably to the extent of glaring at every other fellow who wanted to dance with her.

Figgins & Co. talked the costumes over in their study, with quite as much keenness as the other fellows over in the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's intentions were known, and they caused a grin in both Houses.

"Gussy is going as a knight in armour," Figgins observed, with a chuckle. "I'm sorry for the girl whose feet he comes down on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fatty ought to go as Sir John Falstaff!" Kerr observed. "It would suit him down to the ground."

"And you can go as the Unspeakable Scot!" growled Fatty Wynn, who did not always appreciate playful references to his plump proportions.

"I was thinking of going as a cavalier," said Figgins modestly. "Chaps with good figures, tall, you know, make up well as cavaliers. But never mind the costumes now.

Gussy's giddy suit of armour is going to be delivered this evening. I hear that it's to be delivered here for him, and Taggles will take it in."

"What about that?"

"Only a little jape!" grinned Figgins. "Gussy's armour will be masquerade armour, light enough for him to trot about in. I was thinking of changing the parcels—and letting him have a suit of real armour out of the school museum instead—real old heavy stuff, you know, that needs a dray-horse to drag it about. It will be funny to see Gussy in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was about ten minutes later that Figgins & Co. of the New House dumped a heavy box down in the lodge of Taggles, the school porter. The box was a large wooden one, of very heavy weight, and the name, "A. A. D'Arcy, Esq.," was daubed upon it in big letters. The carrier was not due yet—but the consignment had arrived, thanks to the kindly attentions of Figgins & Co. Taggles just then was busy in the stables, and the three juniors dumped the box down in his doorway, so that he could not possibly miss it when he came in. In fact, Taggles was more likely to fall over it than not.

The suit of armour had been very carefully selected. In the school museum at St. Jim's there were many ancient relics of old times preserved—monkish robes, and suits of armour, and the like.

Old armour, as visitors to the collection kept in the Tower of London will have noticed, is by no means large enough for the men of the present day. Many suits of armour worn in ancient wars are only large enough for the schoolboys of the present generation—which is really an effectual reply to the common talk of national degeneracy.

Armour which had figured in the wars of the Crusaders, and which was preserved at St. Jim's, was by no means extensive enough to encase the stalwart limbs of Kildare or Darrel of the Sixth.

Figgins & Co. had selected the smallest—and, as it happened the heaviest—of the armour suits in the school museum, and cheerfully delivered it at Taggles's lodge for delivery to the swell of the School House.

Five minutes after they had delivered it there Taggles came along. It was dusk in the quadrangle, and Taggles walked into his lodge without noticing the box there.

There was the sound of an angry roar from the lodge.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "He's found it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My heye!" came the eloquent voice of Taggles from the lodge. "What silly huss put that box 'ere? That's wot I want to know! I'll talk to that there carrier! Wot does he mean by comin' hearlier than usual and sticking his boxes in my 'all? My heye! Ow!"

Taggles reappeared, dragging the box into view.

Figgins & Co. strolled up, with sympathetic looks.

"Hallo, Taggy! That for D'Arcy?" asked Figgins.

Taggles snorted.

"Yes, Master Figgins, accordin' to the haddress. Silly ass of a carrier stuck it in my 'all, and I fell hover it! Ow!"

"Sorry!" said Figgins. "That's a bit heavy for you to carry up to the School House, isn't it, Taggy?"

"They ain't got no consideration for a 'ard-workin' man, Master Figgins," growled Taggles. "I s'pose I shall 'ave to fetch the barrer."

"Lend you a hand if you like," said Figgins, who was rather anxious to get the consignment off the scene before the carrier arrived with the genuine armour. "We'll take one end, Taggy, and get it home in a jiffy."

"I'm sure it's werry kind of you, Master Figgins!"

"Not at all!" said Figgins politely.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn gathered round the heavy box, and Taggles took one end, and it was borne across to the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. were standing in the doorway, and they sighted it at once.

"What on earth's that?" Monty Lowther exclaimed.

Bump!

The box was allowed to rest on the top step, and Taggles fanned his warm brow.

"Box for Master D'Arcy!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "It's the giddy armour!"

"Gussy! Gussy! Here's the armour!" roared Manners.

"Bai Jove! Bwing it in, Taggles!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared upon the scene at once. He was expecting that armour, with a great deal of impatience. He wanted to show himself to the School House fellows clad cap-a-pie, in order to convince them that he had done quite wisely in choosing the character of Richard Lion-Heart for the masquerade.

"Not so heavy to bring it in, Master D'Arcy!" grunted Taggles. "It weighs about 'arf a ton, I think."

"Oh, wats, my deah man! Bwing it up to the studay."

"We've been helping him," Figgins explained blandly. "You fellows can lend a hand now; the box is a bit heavy."

"Pick it up, Gussy!"

"Wats! All you fellows lend a hand."

The Terrible Three gathered round the box. Figgins & Co., chuckling, disappeared in the dusk of the quadrangle. Taggles stood mopping his brow and grunting.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther lifted the box and ran it into the hall as far as the stairs, and then bumped it down again.

Bump!

"By Jove, it's heavy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If you're going to wear the giddy things that's in here, Gussy, you'll have enough to do!"

Arthur Augustus smiled benignantly.

"My deah chap, that's all wight! My ancestahts always wore armour, you know, and I shall find it quite easy. It might be wathah wuff on you fellows, but it will be all wight for me."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Lend a hand, you lazy boulder!" exclaimed Manners indignantly.

"Oh, vewy well, if you can't manage it!"

Arthur Augustus lent a hand. But he found the box a little heavier than he expected, and he was quite willing to let it rest half-way up the stairs.

Bump!

Mr. Railton came out of his study, with a rather annoyed expression upon his face. He glanced up at the juniors on the stairs.

"Whatever is all that bumping on the stairs?" he exclaimed.

"Only D'Arcy's armour, sir," said Monty Lowther.

"D'Arcy's what?" exclaimed the Housemaster, in amazement.

"Armour, sir. He's going to the fancy-dress ball as a second-hand knight in armour—"

"I am goin' as Wichard Coeur-de-Leong, sir," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Oh! Well, please make as little noise as possible. If the armour is so heavy as that, D'Arcy, I should hardly think you would be able to wear it."

"Oh, that's all wight, sir! I'm an awf'ly stwong chap, you know. It will be quite easy for me."

Mr. Railton smiled and retreated into his study. The juniors bumped the box upstairs and reached the Fourth Form passage. Blake and Herries and Digby came to their aid, and the box was triumphantly dragged in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 4.

A Peculiar Predicament.

TOM MERRY & CO. planted the heavy chest in the study and stood round it gasping. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cut the rope and opened the box. Packed in straw lay the suit of armour.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lifted it out piece by piece.

"Bai Jove, it is wathah heavy!" he remarked thoughtfully.

"Oh, that will be all right on the mighty limbs of a D'Arcy!" said Monty Lowther. "It wouldn't do for one of us common chaps to try it."

"Quite wight, Lowthah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy unsuspiciously. "It would come wathah wuff on you fellows. You can help me to dwess if you like."

"Better leave it till after calling-over," said Blake.

"We've got to get down into Hall in a quarter of an hour."

"That will be heaps of time, deah boy, and I am wathah anxious to twy the fit of it."

"Seems to me I've seen this armour before somewhere,"

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY: "IN HONOUR BOUND!"

said Tom Merry, looking at it. "It's jolly like the suit in the school museum."

"Lots of that old armour is vewy much alike, of course," said D'Arcy. "This has just come down from London."

"Blessed if I should care to walk about in iron bags!" said Lowther. "But there's no accounting for tastes. Which is the front of this helmet?"

"The pointed part, you ass!"

"It will make you look like a giddy bird with a big bill."

"Oh, wats!"

The chums of the School House helped the swell of the Fourth into the armour. It was in excellent condition, and all the fastenings were intact. Arthur Augustus removed his elegant Eton jacket, but there was room for his trousers inside the armour. His legs were soon encased, and the greaves were fastened on by the juniors; and when Arthur Augustus took a step he sounded very much like an ironworks in motion.

"Now for the iron waistcoat," said Lowther.

"It isn't a waistcoat, you ass!"

"Well, whatever it is, wriggle into it!"

The breast and the backpieces were fastened on, and Arthur Augustus, although he was determined to be satisfied, felt a great deal as if he were a potted shrimp. Next the helmet was secured, and D'Arcy's head disappeared, and in the place of the aristocratic features of the swell of St. Jim's appeared a long pointed visor, which gave him a curiously birdlike appearance.

"Undo the visor, you asses!" came a muffled voice from the interior of the massive headpiece.

"Blessed if I can undo it!" said Monty Lowther. "It seems to be jammed!"

D'Arcy made a step towards the glass to look at his reflection.

Clank, clank!

The sound of the clanking armour brought a crowd of fellows along the passage. There were exclamations of amazement at the sight of the knight in armour.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "That will knock them, and no mistake! The New House won't be able to beat that."

"Wathah not!"

"Suppose he falls down," said Reilly. "Sure, he won't be able to get up again!"

"That often happened in the Middle Ages," said Monty Lowther. "Let's turn him over on his back and see whether he can get up again."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was grasped at once, and he descended with a loud clank upon the study floor.

Clank, clank!

"Bai Jove! Help me up!"

The swell of St. Jim's made frantic efforts to rise. But it was in vain; the armour was too cumbersome for him. Probably its original owner had been through the same difficulties some hundreds of years before. The elegant junior lay on the floor, with his arms and legs clanking, in his vain efforts to rise; and the other fellows stood round yelling with laughter.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try, try, try again!"

"Help me up, you wottahs!" came in muffled tones from the closed visor. "If you don't help me up I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Heave-ho!" exclaimed Blake.

Half a dozen juniors seized D'Arcy by the arms and shoulders, and with some difficulty he was set upon his feet again.

Clank!

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard these wotten twicks as bein' in the worst of taste! I have a good mind to give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

"Hallo, he's getting dangerous!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Keep out of the way of the gauntlets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spare our lives, your Majesty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's breathed wrath from the interior of the cumbersome helmet. As a matter of fact, D'Arcy was feeling very hot and stuffy in the heavy armour, and his temper was suffering accordingly.

"Look here, you uttah asses—"

"We're looking!" grinned Kangaroo. "We don't often see a sight like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made a rush at the Cornstalk junior. But

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it was not easy to rush in the heavy armour, and he clanked towards Harry Noble with an elephantine tread. The Cornstalk dodged out of the study.

"There goes the bell for calling-over!" he exclaimed.

"I'm off!"

The juniors streamed off towards Hall.

"Get that rubbish off, and come down, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buck up! And you'd better send it back—"

"I wefuse to send it back!"

"Now, look here, you ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! My ancestahs wore armour like this, and I'm goin' to wear it. Undah the cires, I decline any assistance from you wottahs! The next fellow who laughs will get a thick ear!"

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

Arthur Augustus clanked down upon them. The Terrible Three dodged out of the study, and Blake and Herries and Digby ran after them.

If Arthur Augustus had smitten them while he had the iron gauntlets on, he might have done some serious damage, and the swell of St. Jim's was very excited.

"Better buck up, Gussy!" called out Blake.

"Wats!" came in stifled tones from the headpiece.

The juniors disappeared laughing down the corridor, leaving D'Arcy clanking angrily in the study. The swell of St. Jim's sniffed scornfully, and began to try to take the armour off. But to his dismay he discovered that that was beyond his powers. He could not even get the gauntlets off his hands, much less unfasten the greaves and the breastpiece and the helmet. He clanked to the door of the study and yelled for Blake. But the bell for calling-over had already ceased to ring, and the juniors were bolting into hall at top speed. They were already beyond hearing of the muffled voice from the helmet. Being late for calling-over meant lines, and the juniors were not anxious for lines.

Arthur Augustus halted in dismay in the passage.

He had to turn up for calling-over; there was no doubt about that. And he could not possibly get the armour off. There was only one thing to be done, and Arthur Augustus had to do it. Treading very slowly and cautiously in his tremendous panoply, he clanked down the passage, and down the stairs, and made his way to the lower school hall.

CHAPTER 5. In Armour Clad.

MR. RAILTON was taking call-over for the whole school, and all the fellows were in the hall. He was beginning the Fourth Form, when a sound of heavy clanking was heard in the distance, and the Housemaster paused in sheer astonishment.

Clank, clank!

"Whatever is that?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Figgins gave a joyous chuckle.

"My only hat!" he muttered to Kerr and Wynn. "It's Gussy in his armour!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My word!" murmured Digby. "He can't get it off, I suppose."

Blake almost exploded.

Clank, clank!

Richard Cœur-de-Lion was coming, and he came loudly enough to be heard in every corner of the old School House. Every eye was turned towards the doorway as the clanking came nearer.

"See the conquering hero comes!" whispered Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Clank, clank!

A figure in armour appeared in the doorway. Masters and boys gazed at it in astonishment. It was as if a knight of old had suddenly become resuscitated, and was revisiting the glimpses of the moon, like Hamlet's father, in complete armour.

"It is my father's ghost!" murmured Manners.

"Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good heavens!" Mr. Railton exclaimed. "What does this mean? Who is that?"

"Must be the ghost of St. Jim's, sir," said Monty Lowther.

"Silence, Lowther! Who are you, sir?"

Clank, clank!

The figure in armour advanced and took up its position in the ranks of the Fourth. There was a howl of pain from Levison as an extremely heavy foot trod upon his.

"Yow-ow!"

Blake backed away from the pointed visor, which came very near puncturing him.

"Look out, you ass!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Blake—"

"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

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LONG

"Oh, you giddy imbecile!"
 "Silence!" shouted Mr. Railton. "Who is that? How dare you come into hall in that manner? Who is it?"
 "Weally, sir—"
 "D'Arcy!"
 "Adsum!" said Arthur Augustus, thinking that his name was being called.

There was a yell of laughter. Even Mr. Railton's frowns could not restrain it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "D'Arcy," gasped Mr. Railton, "how dare you! Come here!"

"Yaas, sir."

Clank, clank!

The armoured junior clanked up the hall towards the astounded Housemaster. The juniors yelled with laughter, and the seniors were yelling too. Even the masters who were present could not help smiling.

"D'Arcy!" gasped the School House master.

"Yaas, sir. Here I am."

"How dare you come into calling-over in this ridiculous manner, D'Arcy?" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Weally, sir, it is not widiculous. My ancestahts used to go to battle wigged up like this, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's, with dignity.

"You—you foolish boy! You will take five hundred lines."

"Weally, sir—"

"I have never seen such astounding impertinence!"

"If you please, sir, I was twyin' it on, sir, and it won't come off," said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I tried to get it off, sir, and the beastly things won't come off."

The St. Jim's fellows roared. Even Mr. Railton could not help smiling, as he realised the painful predicament of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Dear me!" said the Housemaster. "Go away at once! Silence in hall! You may go, D'Arcy, and under the circumstances you need not take the lines. Go at once."

"Yaas, sir."

Clank, clank!

Richard Cœur-de-Lion clanked away majestically, leaving the whole hall almost in hysterics.

The clanking sounded away through the flagged passage, and it was heard on the stairs, and finally it died away in the distance.

The boys were shrieking. It was some time before sufficient order could be restored for calling-over to be proceeded with.

When the roll-call was over, the fellows hurried out of the hall gasping with merriment.

"Oh, Gussy, Gussy! He will be the death of me yet!" gasped Blake, with tears running down his face. "Fancy Richard Cœur-de-Lion answering adsum to his name! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and help him out," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, come on! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crowded up to Study No. 5. Arthur Augustus had returned there, and he was occupied in trying to get the armour off, without success. There was a shriek of laughter as the juniors beheld him sitting on the floor of the study, dragging frantically at the obstinate armour.

"Good old Lion-Heart!" yelled Kangaroo. "Go it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"In my armour, in my armour!" sang Lowther sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A muffled and exhausted voice came from within the closed vizor.

"You uttah asses! Help me get these howwid things off! I am suffocatin'! I feel simply howwid! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, yelling with laughter, fell upon the swell of St. Jim's, and began to unfasten him. The armour clanked off piece by piece, and Arthur Augustus sat up at last, crimson, flushed, and gasping, and utterly exhausted, and drenched with perspiration.

"Bai Jove," he gasped, "I'm glad to get wid of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see no cause whatevah for silly laughtah, you uttah asses."

But the juniors evidently could. They roared.

"Lucky we're too commonplace to wear giddy armour like this," grinned Lowther. "I shouldn't care to be tinned like a sardine myself. I'm looking forward to seeing Gussy dancing in that little lot."

And the juniors yelled again.

There was a sound of heavy footsteps in the passage, and Taggles came into the study doorway, and dumped down a large box.

"Hallo! More armour!" asked Tom Merry.

Taggles grunted.

"I dunno! It's a box for Master D'Arcy, and it's 'eavy, though it ain't so 'eavy as the last one, not by long chalks it ain't."

And Taggles departed grumbling. The juniors regarded the box with curiosity. It was addressed to A. A. D'Arcy, and was evidently for the swell of St. Jim's.

Blake cut the cord and opened it.

"More armour, by James!" he ejaculated.

"Bai Jove!"

"It certainly was armour, but of a lighter and more stagey variety. There was also a letter in the box, stating that this was the armour sent to the esteemed order of Master D'Arcy."

Tom Merry gave a yell.

"I thought I knew those giddy things!" he exclaimed.

"You've been spoofed, Gussy. That first lot is out of the school museum."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"That accounts for Figgins & Co. helping Taggles bring it in," yelled Monty Lowther. "It's a New House jape. Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus's face was a study. He realised that he had been done. There was a chuckle in the passage, and Figgins looked in.

"Got your armour, Gussy?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"If you're done with that first lot, Taggles is going to take it back to the school museum. Don't trouble about tipping him; I've done that."

And Figgins disappeared. Arthur Augustus made a rush to the door, but the practical joker of the New House was gone. D'Arcy turned back into the study, crimson. The juniors were yelling themselves hoarse. Taggles came into the study, and without a word, but with a broad grin on his face, collected up the ancient armour to take it away.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, at last. "I wegard Figgins as a wottah! I wegard you all as wottahs! Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, shrieking, streamed out of the study, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to try on his new armour if he chose.

CHAPTER 6.

Head's Orders!

"ROT!"

Jack Blake made that emphatic remark, and it was echoed by a crowd of other fellows, standing before the notice-board in the hall of the School House.

It was the day following the essay of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as a knight in armour, and morning lessons were over. As the juniors streamed out of the Form-rooms, attention was drawn to a new notice on the board, and a crowd quickly gathered round it. And the expressions of all the fellows showed that they agreed with Jack Blake's emphatic and monosyllabic expression of opinion.

"Rot!" said Blake emphatically. "Simply rot!"

"Wubbish!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Silly rot!" said Monty Lowther.

"Tommy rot!" chimed in Kangaroo.

The notice was in the Head's handwriting, and so the comments of the juniors were really a little disrespectful. But it was enough to exasperate them. The notice stated that, until further notice, Friardale Wood and Wayland Moor were out of bounds, and that all boys below the Shell were to remain within gates. The notice further stated that the reason was the supposed presence in the neighbourhood of the escaped convict from Blackmoor Prison. The man was known to be a dangerous character, and until he was recaptured, or until assured news was received that he was not in the vicinity of the school, the orders as to bounds were to hold good.

"Of all the rot!" said Blake, in exasperation. "All Forms below the Shell to be kept within gates because of a giddy escaped convict!"

"Utahly wotten, deah boys!"

"It's all very well to keep the Third in," said Blake, "but to gate the Fourth—as if we couldn't take care of ourselves!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's too thick!" exclaimed Figgins indignantly. "I really think we ought to send in a round robin to the Head, as we did to Mr. Ratcliff once."

"Hear, hear!"

"Why, we've got to go down to the village about the costumes!" Digby exclaimed excitedly. "How are we to see the costumes without going to the costumier's?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gating the Fourth!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "Why, suppose I want to go down to Mother Murphy's for some of her cream tarts?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that part of the notice seems to me all right," said Tom Merry judiciously. "But putting Friardale Wood out of bounds for the Shell—that's rather thick."

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NEXT

"IN HAVANNAH BOUND!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Too thick!" said Monty Lowther. "Of course, we shall have to make it a point of honour to go into the wood now."

"What's that?" exclaimed the voice of Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's. Monty Lowther looked round meekly.

"Only a little joke," he explained. "But I say, Kildare, it's really too thick to pen us in, in this way. I suppose the escaped convict won't hurt us."

"Head's orders," said Kildare. "The prefects have special instructions to see that they are obeyed, too. Langton and I and Darrel have just been in the doctor's study about it. Mind I don't catch any of you tripping, that's all."

Kildare walked away. As soon as he was gone, the remarks of the juniors broke out afresh, more emphatically than ever.

"It's all utter fosh," said Blake wrathfully. "What harm would a giddy escaped convict do us, even if we met him—which isn't likely?"

"And as if the Shell are better able to take care of themselves than we are!" yelled Herries excitedly.

Monty Lowther made a soothing gesture. "You see, we're the Middle School," he explained. "The Head knows that he can rely upon us to be judicious. It's different with you kids."

"Kids!" yelled the Fourth-Formers.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I guess the convict might want to collar our duds," said Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth. "That's what an escaped convict generally wants—a change of clothes."

"I suppose a giddy Bill Sikes couldn't dress himself in a Fourth-Former's Etons, could he?" demanded Blake.

"I don't know. I've heard that this man Wilde—that's his name—is a very little man," said Lumley-Lumley. "There was a picture of him in the 'Daily Mail.'"

"He's more likely to go for a Sixth-Former, or a master, if he wants a change of clothes," said Blake savagely. "I think this blessed order ought to be reversed—and the masters and prefects kept within gates instead of us."

"Better suggest that to the Head!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, it's all rot!" growled Digby. "As if the man can do us any harm. If we met him, I suppose he wouldn't eat us."

"Might pick up some tips from him for my costume for the dance," said Tom Merry. "I'm going as Convict 99, you know."

"It's beastly!" said Fatty Wynn. "I shall have to stick to Mrs. Taggles' shop now, and her cream-tarts ain't half so good as Mother Murphy's. I don't suppose the Head has thought of that."

"I don't suppose he has!" grinned Tom Merry.

The juniors dispersed, discussing the new orders in great dudgeon.

As a matter of fact, many of the more adventurous fellows would not have been displeased by a chance meeting with the escaped convict. Escaped convicts, as Monty Lowther remarked, did not grow on every bush, and they would have been glad to see what he was like. But the fiat had gone forth, and the juniors of St. Jim's had no choice but to obey.

It was really very awkward, for the coming dance made it necessary to pay visits to the costumier's in the village. Mr. Wiggs, who dealt in second-hand clothes and fancy costumes, did quite a thriving trade with the amateur theatrical societies of St. Jim's, and he was likely to have a run on his stock just now.

But Mr. Wiggs's little shop was out of bounds now for all Forms below the Shell.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry to the indignant chums of No. 6. "We're going down to Wiggs's after lessons this afternoon, and we'll tell him what you want. He'll bring costumes up to the school for you to try on."

"Well, that's not such a bad idea," said Blake, a little mollified. "Save a walk, too. I want a Satan costume."

"A which?" said Monty Lowther.

"I'm going as Mephistopheles," said Blake, a little defiantly. "I think the character will suit me all right. Graceful sort of figure, and—"

"My hat!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Give us a list of what you want, my sons," said Tom Merry pacifically. "Don't row now! We'll make Wiggy bring up his whole blessed stock, if you like. What are you going as, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the hero of the Shell with a glance that was simply withering.

"I have already acquainted you with the chawactah I am going to assume, deah boy," he said crushingly.

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Did you?" he said. "What is it?"

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"I am goin' as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong!"

"Oh, yes, of course—in your armour!" said Tom Merry, with a nod. "I suppose you've thought about the possibility of a mistake as to the character you're trying to represent? You might be taken for a walking advertisement of Armour's Extract of Beef."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard the suggestion as widiculous. I considah—"

"Sure you won't have another costume?" asked Tom Merry. "I could select something really nice, if you wanted to go as a ragman or a spring poet—"

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose, and walked away, declining to enter into such a frivolous discussion.

"Mind you get me a good Mephistophelian rig-out," said Blake. "I'm rather particular about that. I say, Figgy—"

"Going to add to the Sorrows of Satan?" asked Figgins genially. "Must be rather annoying to the old gentleman, when every ass goes to a fancy-dress ball libelling him."

Blake glared.

"I suppose you're going as a clothes-prop?" he suggested.

"Or you might go as a cow that doesn't take proper care of its youngsters."

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"Why, it would have very thin calves," explained Blake.

And Blake walked away, leaving Figgins to digest that Partian shot. Figgins's calves certainly were a little slim, and he was strongly suspected of wearing double hose when he was in cycling-costume. Figgins turned crimson, but he had no reply ready.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "There goes the dinner-bell!"

And the juniors trooped in to dinner.

That the coming masquerade at Glyn House was occupying a great deal of attention in the school was painfully evident that afternoon. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, and Mr. Linton, of the Shell, found their classes very absent-minded, and they came out quite liberally with lines. Tom Merry & Co. made such a collection of impositions that afternoon, that they could not help regretting the time when they had had the use of the famous line-writing machine invented by Bernard Glyn.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "It's all in the day's work. Let's get a snack of tea, and go down to Rylcombe about the costumes, before Wiggs's is put out of bounds."

"Good egg!" said Manners and Lowther.

And the Terrible Three sallied forth upon their errand.

CHAPTER 7.

No. 61.

MR. WIGGS was most obliging. He seemed to take quite a fatherly interest in the fancy-dress scheme, and he entered into all the plans of the juniors in the most whole-hearted way. He also entered up a good many things in his little book, to be produced later. But for the present the juniors were thinking of the costumes, not of the bill. Tom Merry was delighted with the costume he was to wear as Convict 99, and Mr. Wiggs assured him that if he went out into the High Street of Rylcombe in it, he would infallibly be arrested by P.-c. Crump, the local representative of his Majesty's police-force, as the escaped convict Wilde. As Tom Merry did not wish to have that delightful experience, he did not put the matter to the test. The Terrible Three stayed quite a long time with Mr. Wiggs, selecting costumes, and talking the matter over, and Mr. Wiggs promised to call at the school that very evening with a large and assorted stock for the disposal of the Fourth-Formers, who were kept within gates.

Tom Merry and his chums stayed at Mr. Wiggs's, as a matter of fact, longer than they had intended, and it was deep dusk when they left the shop at last. They walked down the village street to the lane at a good pace. They were likely to be late for locking-up; and the amiable Taggles always took a pleasure in reporting juniors who were late for locking-up. And to be reported out after the gates were closed would be most awkward just now when the Head was taking particular care of his flock on account of the ruffian who was supposed to be hiding in the neighbourhood.

The juniors, and probably the Head, had taken it for granted that the escaped convict was a ruffian. Probably he was; and, at all events, it was best to be careful. So the Terrible Three thought, as they tramped out into the lane in the thickening dusk. They could not help casting quick glances to right and to left as they went down the lonely road.

"What about taking the short cut through the wood?" said Monty Lowther hesitatingly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It's the only way to get in before the gates are closed," hinted Lowther.

"Yes, I know; but out of bounds. The Head has sort of



The man who had emerged from the vaults turned deathly white and staggered back a pace, "Cesare!" His husky, startled voice reached the ears of the hidden juniors. It was easy to see that the man was a prey to mortal terror. The next instant the Italian came towards him with a bound. "Geoffrey Dorrian!" he hissed. "At last!" (For this exciting incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton and Co., entitled "SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!" by Frank Richards, which is contained in our companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale at all newsagents. Price One Penny.)

put us on our honour by letting us come out of gates at all, don't you think?"

"Well, just as you like. Only if we're reported late in, it may lead to the Shell being gated as well as the Fourth."

"Oh, rotten!" said Manners. "Let's buck up."

They hurried down the lane. Tom Merry pricked up his ears as the lights of the village disappeared behind them. There was a high hedge, with occasional gaps in it, along the road at this point, and it seemed to Tom Merry that he could hear footsteps on the other side of the hedge, keeping pace with their own.

"Do you hear that, you chaps?" he whispered.

"Echo, I think," said Lowther.

"Listen, then—put a run on!"

The juniors broke into a trot. The echoing sound from behind the hedge quickened, too. It certainly sounded regular enough to be the echo of their own footsteps on the hard road, and yet— There was a sudden bump behind the hedge, and an exclamation. It was no echo. Someone was stalking them behind the hedge, and had evidently slipped and tumbled into a cross-ditch.

"Somebody there!" Tom Merry muttered. "I wonder if—"

"My hat! Look!"

They were opposite a gap in the hedge. In the thick dusk, they caught sight of a form scrambling out of the ditch—and

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NEXT THURSDAY: "IN HONOUR BOUND!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co, at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

dark as it was, they could see the hideous convict dress—torn, and splashed with mud, but unmistakable.

It was the convict! They had met him! The thought had crossed their minds that day that they would like to meet the fugitive, for the fun of the thing; but now that it had happened, all the fun seemed to have vanished. Their hearts were beating like hammers, and Manners gave a queer little gasp as the convict came scrambling through the gap in the hedge into the road.

"He's after us!"

"Cut!" gasped Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three dashed down the road. What the convict wanted they did not know, and they certainly did not intend to stay and see. There was an echoing sound of footsteps behind them, and Tom Merry, swerving a little and glancing back over his shoulder, saw a little, thick-set form in full pursuit, dripping mud at every step. In the quiet air of the April evening, the sound of the man's quick, irregular breathing came clearly to their ears.

"He's after us! Put it on, you chaps!"

They ran hard.

But the rapid footsteps behind grew closer and closer—the hurried breathing was nearer and clearer—and, glancing back, the juniors could see a bullet head, and a pale, set face, with eyes that gleamed and glittered in the dusk. It was no shame to the boys that they felt a thrill of terror at the sight so close to them. What did the man want? He might be a murderer for all they knew!

"The—the beast's getting closer!" gasped Manners.

"Dodge him at the plank."

"Good egg!"

On the left, as the juniors ran, was a wide ditch, filled almost to the brim from recent rains. A single plank crossed it, giving access through a gap in the hedge to a footpath across the fields.

Manners, who was leading a little, swung round to the left, and passed across the plank. Monty Lowther followed him, and Tom Merry came last. Had the device been successful, the juniors would have been breaking away in a new direction before the pursuer knew what they had done, and they could easily have dodged him in the dusky fields. But all did not go well. The plank, insecurely fixed in the muddy bank, swayed as the first juniors trod on it with heavy steps, and it slipped under Tom Merry.

The end of it slid down the bank, and Tom Merry's foot slipped from it, and the next moment he was struggling up to his neck in the ditch.

They were close to the Ryll, into which the ditch was flowing, and the water was running hard. Tom Merry's feet were swept from under him, and he was rushed away by the water before he knew what was happening.

He gave a choking cry, and clutched wildly at the herbage on the bank, but it tore away in his grasp from the soft mud.

Manners and Lowther, realising what had happened, turned back, forgetful even of the convict in their anxiety for their chum.

But on the inner side of the ditch was a thick high hedge, and Tom Merry had swept past the gap. They could not get at him, and in the dark they could not see him. Tom Merry gave a suffocating cry as the water swept over his head.

Patter, patter, patter!

The convict's footsteps rang on the hard road.

He would probably have passed the spot in the dark, without even noticing the plank, but for the splashing in the wide ditch and Tom Merry's cry.

The man halted.

He caught a glimpse of a white face on the water, and without a moment's hesitation he plunged waist-deep into the ditch, and caught Tom Merry by the arm as he flung it up.

Tom Merry had been striving in vain to get a hold or a footing, and the horrible prospect of being swept out into the rapid Ryll had danced before him, and he gasped with relief as he was dragged upon the muddy bank.

In the darkness and the confusion of his mind he imagined that it was Manners or Lowther who was dragging him out, and as he was stretched on the edge of the road, gasping for breath, he remembered the convict.

"Look out, old man!" he gasped. "Look out for that scoundrel!"

There was a low chuckle in his ear.

"I'm the scoundrel, my lad!" said his rescuer coolly.

"Eh?"

"Convict 61, at your service!"

Tom Merry sat up, dripping with water and mud, and stared blankly at his rescuer in the gloom.

It was true enough.

There was the short, thick-set man in convict dress,

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splashed with mud, and with a face that was red with running, and yet plainly emaciated and pinched with want and suffering.

"Oh!" panted Tom Merry.

The man chuckled again.

"You didn't expect to see me, young gentleman?"

"No, no!"

"Tom Merry!" shouted Manners along the ditch.

"Where are you? For goodness' sake, shout!"

"I'm all right."

"Where are you?"

"In the road."

"Thank goodness! Is that villain near you?"

"He's saved me!"

"My hat!"

There was a scrambling sound as Manners and Lowther righted the plank, and came back into the road. They ran hard to the spot to where Tom Merry lay, with his head supported on the knee of the convict. They stared at the scene in blank amazement.

"Well, if this doesn't beat everything!" ejaculated Manners.

"Never seen the Good Samaritan with broad arrows on before," said Monty Lowther. "Do you happen to belong to the Humane Society, Mr. Wilde?"

The convict rose to his feet.

"I've saved your friend," he said. "I fancy he would have been washed out into the river."

"I think so, too," said Tom Merry, as his chums helped him up. "You brought me into danger, but you've certainly fished me out of it. You can't be such an utter ruffian, after all."

The convict chuckled again, in a dry, curious way.

"It never occurred to you that perhaps I am not a ruffian at all," he said—"that perhaps I was sent to Blackmoor by mistake?"

The juniors exchanged uncomfortable glances. A case had certainly once come within their own knowledge of a convict turning out to be an innocent man. But they knew well enough that that is the common tale of the convicted man—a mistake has been made, and he is the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Tom Merry was grateful to the man for pulling him out of the ditch, but he was hardly prepared to believe his statement. He could not be expected to do so without any evidence but a convict's bare word.

"You don't believe me?" said the man, peering at the juniors in the gloom. "Well, why should you? But it's true."

"Well, you see—" said Tom Merry hesitatingly.

The convict interrupted him.

"I see!" he said bitterly. "You don't believe me, and I've no reason to expect you to. But I tell you this. I was to blame. I was a reckless fool, and got mixed up in bad company, and the others were cleverer than I was, and they made me the scapegoat. I got three years, and they got all the profits, and they are living on it now, hang them!"

"Why did you run after us?" asked Manners.

"Because I am starving!" The man cast a look up and down the road. "Because I'm starving! I must have money—food!"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"And now you can go and tell the police you have seen me, and put them on the track," said Wilde bitterly.

"I shall not do that," said Tom Merry quietly. "You had no right to run after us, but you pulled me out of the water, and, whatever you are, I can't do anything against you after that."

"Right—ho!" said Manners.

"We sha'n't say we have seen you," said Tom Merry. "You can get off, and you have nothing to fear from us." He felt in his pockets. "And what money I've got you're welcome to."

"Same here," said Lowther and Manners.

The juniors turned out their pockets. After what the man had done for Tom Merry, they did not feel that they were doing wrong. What money they had they placed in the outstretched palm of the convict. He transferred it to some recess of his rags.

"You haven't anything to eat?" he said wistfully.

"I've got some milk chocolate," said Manners.

"Give it me."

Manners handed him the milk chocolate, and the convict's hand went straight to his mouth. It was horribly pitiful to see the wolfish eagerness with which he devoured the morsel.

"Thank you!" he said. "Look here, I wouldn't have hurt you. I didn't mean that. I'm not a bad man, though Heaven knows I've suffered enough to make me bad. Good-bye, and God bless you for what you've done!"

The convict plunged into the wood.

CHAPTER 8.

Catching It.

TOM MERRY & CO. stood silent, without moving, for some moments. The strange affair had surprised them, and they hardly knew what to think for the moment. Was the man's story true? Was he less sinning than sinned against? Truly, it was quite possible that he had been a less cunning rogue than his associates, and that he had suffered the full penalty for wrongdoing, while others more guilty had escaped. Such occurrences as that were not uncommon. And there was always the possibility that he was an innocent man. Such cases had been known—they had known of one themselves—the wretched victim of a mistake of the law having been a relation of a St. Jim's fellow they knew.

"Better get on," said Manners at last. "I say, it would be horrible if what he said was true—if he were innocent!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's not likely," he said.

"No, I suppose not."

"Evenin', young gents."

The juniors started violently. There was a gleam of a bullseye lantern on the road, and a helmeted head loomed into view. It belonged to Police-constable Crump, a heroic member of the great Force, who had lately distinguished himself by marching Levison of the Fourth up to the school for smoking a cigarette in public.

"G-good-evening!" stammered Tom Merry.

The thought came into the minds of the juniors at once that the constable had seen them in talk with the convict. It made their hearts almost die within them to think that it would be reported to the Head of St. Jim's. Whatever reasons had satisfied them, it was not likely that Dr. Holmes would approve of their having handed money to an escaped convict, and promised not to mention having seen him.

But the policeman's face was quite placid. He had arrived a minute or two too late to see the unfortunate Number 61.

"Nice hevening for the time of year?" he remarked. "Wot may you young gents, be doin' out of school at this time of night?"

"Falling into the ditch," said Tom Merry, recovering his coolness as he realised that the officer knew nothing.

Police-constable Crump whistled as he looked at him.

"My word!" he said. "You are muddy, and no mistake, Master Merry! My advice to you is to run 'ome to school as 'ard as you can go, or you'll catch cold."

"Jolly good advice, too," said Monty Lowther. "Come on, you chaps. Good-night, Crumpy!"

"Good-night, young gents."

The Terrible Three broke into a run, only too glad of the excuse of getting rid of Mr. Crump without more words. They did not speak until they were near the gates of St. Jim's.

"Jolly narrow escape!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Yes, rather. But he doesn't know anything."

"Not a thing. I don't think Crumpy will ever do anything but arrest kids for smoking fags," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry rang at the school bell. The gates, of course, were closed. Taggles came out of his lodge, and grumbled down to the gate.

"Nice goings hon!" he exclaimed. "You're to report yourselves in Master Kildare's study. Nice goings hon, I must say!"

"Of course you must!" agreed Monty Lowther. "You must always say something nice and pleasant. You're such a nice, cheerful, fatherly old chap. If you had some nice boys like us, they would worship the ground you walk on. I don't think!"

Taggles snorted.

"Are you coming in, or are you staying hout?" he roared, as he threw open the gates, and the Terrible Three entered in a very leisurely way.

"Hin!" said Lowther. "We've been hout too much already."

Taggles slammed the gate with a clang that rang across the quadrangle.

The chums of the Shell, chuckling, crossed towards the School House.

"Jolly glad we've got to report to Kildare instead of to Railton," said Monty Lowther. "Railton might have smelt a rat."

"He's bound to smell that blessed mud Tommy's brought home on his trucks, anyway!" said Manners, with a sniff.

The Shell fellows entered the School House, and presented themselves in Kildare's study. The captain of St. Jim's was talking in his study with Darrel and Rushden and Langton of the Sixth, and all the seniors turned to look at the muddy

juniors as they came in. All three of them were muddy enough, but Tom Merry was a monument of it.

"Great Scott!" Kildare exclaimed. "What have you been doing, Merry?"

"Falling into a ditch."

"You are late for looking-up."

"Yes; but we know you'll let us off this time," said Lowther, in his most persuasive tones.

"You know more about it than I do, then," said Kildare, taking down a cane. "Rub your hand on something before I cane you, Merry. I don't want to splash mud all over the study."

Tom Merry grinned, and feebly complied.

"Whack, whack!"

"Ow! Ow!"

"Now you two!" said Kildare.

Manners and Lowther went through the ordeal with the patience and the looks of martyrs. Kildare threw down the cane, and pointed to the door.

"Now get out!" he exclaimed. "I don't like the smell of that mud. Go and get yourselves clean."

And the Terrible Three retired, rubbing their hands.

"Kildare's rather a beast!" said Monty Lowther. "When I'm captain of St. Jim's I shall always make allowance for chaps coming in late. Anybody would think Kildare had forgotten what it was like to be a junior."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, meeting the Shell fellows as they came upstairs. "Bai Jove! Whatevah have you been doin'? You look a frightful sight, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Been wollin' in a ditch?" asked D'Arcy, in amazement.

"Pway don't come too close to me, deah boy! I don't like the smell of that mud! It's howwid!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Arthur Augustus glanced back into Study No. 6.

"Come and have a look at Tom Mewwy, deah boys! It is weally vevy intwestin'—quite a specimen of mud-collectin', you know! Hold your noses!"

"You can have a look at Gussy, instead!" said Tom Merry, rushing at the swell of St. Jim's, and clapping him lovingly round the neck.

"Ow! Ow! Gewwoff, you howwid boundah! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Go it! Give him some of the mud!"

Tom Merry was doing so. Half the mud and water upon his clothes brushed off upon the elegant attire of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he clasped the swell of St. Jim's to his bosom, and waltzed round the passage with him. Blake and Herries and Digby came to the doorway of the study to look on, as Arthur Augustus had invited them to do. But there was more to see than D'Arcy had intended.

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it!" roared the Fourth-Formers.

"Bai Jove! Ow! Wesene! Yow! Yawwoh!"

Arthur Augustus tore himself away at last, with such force that he spun round and sat down violently on the floor, amid a shower of mud. Tom Merry gasped.

"There you are! You can look at Gussy. I think he's rather muddy. Ha, ha, ha!" And the Terrible Three rushed on to the dormitory, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sitting upon the floor, and gasping.

"Well, you are muddy, and no mistake," said Blake, gazing down at Arthur Augustus. "And, look here, I don't like the niff of that mud. You'd better go and clean it off."

"Bai Jove!"

And Blake & Co. went into Study No. 6, and closed the door firmly, as a hint to their elegant chum that he was not to enter until he was a little less highly scented.

CHAPTER 9.

Convict 99.

MR. WIGGS kept his promise, and he arrived at St. Jim's with an assortment of costumes that would have delighted the hearts of any amateur theatrical society. Some of them, perhaps, were a little worn, but it was agreed that Mr. Wiggs had done very well, considering the short time at his disposal. He succeeded in satisfying almost all the fellows who were going to the masquerade at Glyn House, and that was a great deal for any human individual to do. After Mr. Wiggs had taken his departure there was a tremendous trying on of costumes, and all the fellows were very busy. Some of the seniors were going to the dance, including Kildare and Monteith and Darrel and Langton of the Sixth, and Lefevre of the Fifth, and they were as busy as the juniors. In Tom Merry's study the Terrible Three tried on their outfit with the greatest of satisfaction. Tom Merry, in the garb of Convict 99, was simply a picture of haunted guilt. The baggy, broad-shouldered clothes, the striped stockings, and the artificial cropped head of hair were quite convincing. Monty Lowther declared that he was truer to life than the convict they had met that

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evening in the lane, and, indeed, there was something in it. It only needed a glance from Police-constable Crump for the captain of the Shell to be arrested on the spot.

"It's simply ripping!" said Manners. "I say, Tommy—

Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you ha, ha-ing about if it's simply ripping?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I was thinking— Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I suppose it's rather funny for you to do any thinking," agreed Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha, then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Lowther.

"Ass!" said Manners. "I was thinking of a jape. Why not take a run in the quad. The fellows don't know that you're rigged-up as Convict 99, and they'd take you for Convict 61!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Give 'em a look in in the New House, and Figgins & Co. a fright."

Tom Merry roared. The idea struck him as funny. All the school was talking about the escaped convict of Blackmoor, especially since the restriction of bounds for the juniors.

"Give me a coat, then," said Tom Merry. "I can cover this rig up from head to foot, and put a big cap on. Ha, ha, ha!"

He was soon arrayed in a long coat which reached to his feet, and a cap which was pulled down over his ears. The Terrible Three strolled out into the dusky quadrangle, Manners and Lowther also wearing their coats, so as not to attract attention specially to Tom Merry's being muffled up. In the quadrangle it was very dusky, only a few stars gleaming in the clear dark sky.

Tom Merry slipped off the coat and cap, and handed them to his chums. A light was gleaming from the doorway of Taggles's lodge, and the school porter could be seen in the doorway, looking out into the quad., perhaps thinking of the caning the Terrible Three had had for being late for locking-up.

"Begin on Taggles!" murmured Monty Lowther joyously, and Tom Merry nodded, and glided away into the darkness.

Taggles, as he gazed thoughtfully into the dusk of the quad., was suddenly aware of a figure that was slinking along by the school wall, and apparently seeking to keep in the shadows. Taggles's eye gleamed. He suspected at once that it was some fellow who had been out of bounds, and had climbed in over the wall, and in that case it was Taggy's duty to spot him and report him; and on such occasions duty was pleasure to Taggles. The porter quitted his doorway, and darted in the direction of the slinking figure.

It stopped, and Taggles rushed up to it. He halted as he saw the convict. Convict 99 faced him, as if about to spring upon him.

"My heye!" gasped Taggles. "My heye!"

The convict made a movement.

Taggles backed away a pace, and then turned and fled. The convict was between him and the school buildings, and Taggles dashed away towards the gates. There was a patter of feet as Convict 99 pursued him.

"Ow!" gasped Taggles. "He's arter me!"

He swerved towards his lodge, but the convict was quicker, and headed him off from the lodge.

"Stop, will yer?" came a hoarse voice from the pursuer.

"I'll out yer! Yer ear? Stop, I tells yer!"

Taggles would just as soon have stopped if a mad bull had been after him. There was only one way of escape for him—by the gates. He had his keys with him, and he unlocked the gates more quickly than he had ever unlocked them before, slammed them behind him, and darted out into the road.

"Elp!" gasped Taggles, as he fled. "Oh, 'elp! The villain! Oh, 'elp!"

The convict halted at the gates, almost exploding with suppressed laughter. Taggles disappeared down the road in the dark.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Convict 99 turned back into the quadrangle. Taggles was running as if terror had lent him wings, and he was not likely to stop till he was half way to Rylcombe.

The disguised junior skirted round the New House, and climbed into a back window, a window Tom Merry had used before on the occasion of a House raid. He reached the Fourth-Form passage in the New House from the back, and stepped cautiously along towards Figgins's study. Pratt of the Fourth was just coming out of his room as Convict 99 reached Figgins's study, and opened the door. Pratt stopped, petrified at the sight of the convict. He did not recognise Tom Merry for a moment, and he had no suspicion but that it was the convict, of whom the whole school had been talking.

"My hat!" gasped Pratt.

He darted back into his study in great alarm.

Convict 99 entered Figgins's room, and closed the door. He had not glanced towards Pratt, but he knew that Pratt had

seen him. There was no one in Figgins's study. Tom Merry closed the door, and listened within. He was not surprised to hear Pratt steal past on tip-toe a few minutes later. Tom Merry chuckled softly. He knew that Pratt was going down to carry the news that the escaped convict had entered the New House.

He was right. Pratt burst into the common-room in the New House with a wildly excited face.

"You fellows!" he gasped.

Then his voice failed him from sheer excitement and terror, and he staggered against the door, gasping for breath.

Figgins & Co. were there, with most of the New House juniors. Preparation was over, and it was getting near bedtime.

"Hallo, what's the matter with you?" asked Figgins, looking up from the chess-table, where he was playing with Kerr.

"Oh!" panted Pratt.

"Seen a giddy ghost?" asked Redfern.

"Ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Somebody been raiding your grub?"

"No! I—I've seen him!"

"Seen whom, you ass!" asked Thompson, of the Shell.

"The convict!"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Fathead!"

"I've seen him, I tell you!" gasped Pratt. "He's sneaked into the House to hide himself, I suppose, or to steal something. I've seen him."

"Seen the escaped convict!" said Redfern, in amazement.

"Yes, yes, yes."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Your move, Kerr."

"He's in your study!" shrieked Pratt.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Figgins. "You can't pile up yarns like that on me! Go and eat coke! Are you going to shift your rook, Kerr?"

Pratt rushed up to Figgins, and grabbed him by the shoulder, and dragged him away from the chess-table. Figgins's arm swept over it, and knocked half the pieces to the floor.

Figgins gave a roar of wrath.

"You ass! Look what you've done!"

"Mucked up the game!" hooted Kerr.

"Blow the game!" gasped Pratt. "I tell you I've seen the convict—that man Wilde. He was in the passage as I came out of my study. You—you could have knocked me down with a feather. He's in your study."

"Look here, if you're being funny—"

"I'm not!" shrieked Pratt. "You ass! The convict is hiding in your study. I tell you I saw him. He ought to be arrested!"

"Oh, Pratt's been dreaming!" said Lawrence. "May as well go up and have a look, though. I'm game to go!"

"Oh, come on!" said Figgins resignedly. "I suppose it's somebody having a lark, and Pratt's had his leg pulled."

"Better get some of the masters to go," said Pratt. "He's an awfully desperate character. He may have a revolver."

"Oh, rats! They don't provide escaped convicts with revolvers at Blackmoor," said Kerr. "Come on, you fellows!"

"It's somebody having a lark!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Of course it is."

"It's the convict, I tell you!" yelled Pratt.

"Well, we'll soon have him out, if it is!" said Figgins.

A crowd of juniors hurried up the stairs to the Fourth-Form passage. Pratt's excitement had made some impression upon them; but they could not help thinking it extremely unlikely that the hunted convict of Blackmoor had taken refuge in a junior study in their House.

Figgins's study door was closed, and there was no light under it. Figgins opened it boldly enough. He did not believe that the convict was there; and he wasn't afraid of the convict, anyway.

"Take care!" called out Pratt from the rear of the crowd.

"Mind he doesn't rush at you!"

"Oh, rats!"

"There's nobody here!" said Kerr. "I—"

He broke off.

For as he was speaking, there came a sound of a movement in the dark study. The juniors backed away a little. There was evidently somebody there, whether it was the fugitive from Blackmoor or not.

"Get a light!" said Kerr hurriedly.

ANSWERS

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"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

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"It's only some japer," said Figgins.

He struck a wax vesta and held it up in the doorway, and looked into the study, and a crowd of anxious faces looked over his shoulders.

The light glimmered into the study, and it revealed a figure standing in full view—the figure of a desperate ruffian with cropped head, and a broad-arrow suit, and striped stockings!

The match dropped from Figgins's fingers.

"The convict!"

The next instant there was a wild rush. Figgins did not even stop to close the study door. The juniors streamed pell-mell down the stairs into the hall in wild alarm.

CHAPTER 10.

In the Name of the Law!

THE convict had been there.

"I saw him!"

"So did I!"

"Great Scott! Fancy his coming here!"

"Look out!"

"Did he come out of the study, Figgins?"

"No!" gasped Figgins. "He's still there! My hat!"

Monteith of the Sixth came out of his study with a frowning brow. Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, had a tart temper.

"What's all this row about?" he exclaimed, looking angrily at the excited crowd of juniors, who were watching the staircase as an army of cats might have watched a rathole.

"The convict!"

"He's here, Monteith!"

Monteith stared.

"The convict! What convict? What are you babbling about?"

"The convict!"

"The man Wilde, you know, who escaped from Blackmoor!"

"He's here!"

"I've seen him!"

"We've all seen him!"

"A horrible-looking ruffian, nearly six feet high!" gasped Pratt.

"You silly young asses!" said Monteith. "Do you mean to say that the escaped convict Wilde is in this House?"

"Yes, yes!"

"We've seen him!"

"I think he's got a knife, Monteith."

"I believe I saw a revolver in his hand."

"He looks like a murderer!"

"Pratt saw him first!" said Figgins breathlessly. "We thought it was somebody japing Pratt, and we went up to see—and there he was in my study. It's the giddy convict!"

"As large as life!" said Redfern.

"But it's impossible!" said Monteith, impressed in spite of himself by the earnestness of the juniors. "How could the escaped convict get into this House?"

"Well, he's got in!"

"It's the horrible villain himself, Monteith. We've seen him!" chorussed the juniors.

"Nonsense! I'll go and see!"

The prefect turned towards the stairs.

"Look out!" panted Figgins. "He might go for you, you know. Better send for the police, or get a dozen of the Sixth to go with you!"

"Oh, stuff!"

Monteith strode up the stairs. But his stride became a little slacker as he came to the top. After all, if the convict should by any chance have penetrated into the New House of St. Jim's, it would be no joke to encounter him single-handed. But Monteith was in for it now. He advanced towards the doorway of Figgins's study. The gas was alight there now, and the door was ajar.

Monteith looked in, and his eyes almost started from his head at the sight of a dreadful-looking ruffian in convict garb, busily engaged in transferring articles of diet from Figgins's cupboard to a bag he carried. Monteith understood at once. The hunted fugitive, driven by hunger, had penetrated into the school in search of food. For a moment the prefect stood transfixed.

But he had made a sound, and the convict turned round towards him.

As the ruffian's eyes fastened upon him, the prefect turned and ran. He came down the stairs much faster than he had ascended them.

A general shout greeted him.

"Seen him, Monteith?"

"Yes!" gasped the prefect.

"Listen, I can hear him!" shouted Figgins.

There was a sound of footsteps above.

"He was taking the grub out of the cupboard!" gasped

Monteith. "I suppose he's almost famished, and that accounts for his coming in here!"

"He's going to escape!" exclaimed Figgins.

"After him!" said Redfern.

Redfern ran up the stairs.

He caught a glimpse of the convict hurrying along the Fourth-Form passage towards the back window. He took a few steps in pursuit—and the convict halted and swung round.

Redfern's pursuit stopped abruptly; and he fled down the stairs.

"Did you see him, Reddy?"

"Yes!" gasped Redfern. "He's bunking by the back window!"

"He will have to be seized," said Monteith, not very energetically, however. "I—I'll call up the Sixth!"

The news was all through the House by this time. Seniors and juniors crowded up the stairs—rather cautiously. There was a sound of a sash slamming down, and they knew that the convict was gone. Monteith and Baker dashed along the passage, and the latter threw open the window. They caught a glimpse of the escaped convict as he ran round the House to gain the quadrangle.

"He's gone!" gasped Baker.

"We'll have him, though!"

Out of the House the fellows crowded. With so many of them, the convict, armed or not, was not likely to have much chance, and it was an exciting adventure to hunt down an escaped convict who had had the nerve to enter St. Jim's in quest of refreshments.

A helmet gleamed in the light by the gates, and Figgins gave a shout.

"Here's the bobby!"

It was P.-c. Crump.

Taggles had encountered the constable in the lane, and had brought him back to the school with the news that the escaped convict was lurking in the quadrangle there. P.-c. Crump might or might not have been a heroic person, but he was certainly burning to distinguish himself by capturing the escaped convict, and leading him in triumph and handcuffs to the local police-station. That exploit would be enough to make Mr. Crump celebrated for life in the quiet countryside.

"E's 'ere!" said Taggles breathlessly. "I seed him! I seed him as plain as I see you, Mr. Crump!"

"Looks as if somebody else 'ave seen 'im, too," said Mr. Crump, as the excited crowd came streaming out of the New House.

"Crump! Crumpy! This way, old man!"

"Look after the gates!"

"Look out!"

"The convict's here!"

"Arrest him, Crumpy!"

"Which I've already received information that the oonwick is 'ere, Master Monteith!" said Mr. Crump. "I've come 'ere to do my dooty!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go for him, Crumpy!" shouted the juniors.

There was a yell.

"Here he is!"

"After him!"

In the light from the School House windows a glimpse was caught of a figure in broad-arrow garb. The crowd streamed after him at once, Mr. Crump's helmet gleaming in advance, like the white plume of the brave Navarre leading on the Huguenots at Ivry.

"Here he is!"

"After him!"

"I calls on all you young gents in his Majesty's name to 'elp me in the execution of my dooty!" gasped Mr. Crump.

"That's all right, Crump; we'll back you up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Pile on him!"

Mr. Crump, considering his plumpness of figure, put on a really good burst of speed, and the New House fellows streamed after him. The amazing thing was that the convict, though he must have known that nearly a hundred fellows were swarming at his heels, was making straight for the open doorway of the School House. It was surely the least safe refuge for an escaping convict, under the circumstances, but the fugitive did not appear to think so. He dashed on at top speed, and ran up the School House steps. In the broad lighted doorway the desperate figure was clearly seen.

"We've got 'im now!" panted Mr. Crump.

And Mr. Crump and his excited followers swarmed into the School House doorway. The heavy hand of P.-c. Crump descended upon the shoulder of the gasping convict.

"I arrest you!" spluttered Mr. Crump. "I arrest you in the name of the lor! Surrender, you willian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To Mr. Crump's amazement the captured convict burst into a roar of laughter.

Mr. Crump, in his surprise, released the prisoner, and staggered back a pace. The convict yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My heye! I arrest you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's gone mad!" said Figgins. "That's what it is! Collar him!"

A dozen pairs of hands grasped the escaped convict on all sides, and he was a prisoner; and Mr. Crump felt in his tail pocket for the handcuffs.

CHAPTER 11.

Not Arrested.

MR. RAILTON came out of his study, and looked on at the peculiar scene in amazement. School-House fellows were gathering from far and near, and most of them were laughing. They knew of Tom Merry's little jape on the New House, and they understood how matters really were. But the New-House fellows were still in deadly earnest, and Mr. Crump was fairly gloating over his prize.

"I've got 'im, sir!" he said to the School House master.

"But—but what—who——" gasped Mr. Railton.

"The escaped convict, sir!" said Mr. Crump importantly. "From information received, sir, I came 'ere to look for 'im, and 'ere he is!"

"Good heavens!"

"I've got 'im, sir; no need for anybody to be afraid now," said Mr. Crump. "I've got 'im right enough. 'Old his 'ands, young gents, while I clap the darbies on!"

"Here you are!" said Redfern.

"Here's his paws, Crumpy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the prisoner. "Oh, my hat! Rescue, School House!"

"Wh-wh-what!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's Tom Merry's voice!"

"Phew!"

Mr. Crump staggered back, and the handcuffs fell to the floor with a musical clink. The portly constable had never been so taken aback in his life.

"Master Merry!" he said faintly.

"Tom Merry!" yelled Figgins. "Oh, you spoofing bounder!"

"T-t-tom Merry!" stuttered Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rescue, School House!" gurgled Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But there was no need for the School House to rescue him. His captors had released him as suddenly as if he had become all at once red-hot. They were staring at him in stupefaction.

"Tom Merry!" murmured Monteith. "Oh, you young rascal!"

Mr. Railton strode forward, frowning.

"Merry! Is it indeed you?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, yes, sir!" stammered Tom Merry.

"What is the meaning of this absurd masquerade?"

"If—if you please, sir, I was trying on my new dress for the fancy ball at Glyn's, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"These chaps seem, somehow, to have taken me for a real convict, sir. Quite a mistake, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House fellows, in chorus.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Silence at once!"

The laughter died away, but the juniors were still chuckling.

"Merry, do you mean to tell me that you are going in that extraordinary dress to the masquerade at Glyn House?"

"Yes, sir. I'm Convict 99, sir," said Tom Merry very meekly. "These chaps seem to have taken me for Convict 61. I don't know why."

"Oh, you spoofer!" murmured Figgins.

"Taggles made the same mistake, sir," said Tom Merry blandly. "He left in such a hurry to fetch Mr. Crump that I had no time to explain."

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"My heye!" gasped Taggles. "I've allus said, and I says it agin, that all boys orter be drowned especially Master Merry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton tried not to smile, but he did not quite succeed.

"You must have known that if you went out in this costume, Merry, that it would lead to—well, misapprehension," he said.

"Well, you—you see, sir——"

"I am afraid that you knew that very well, Merry. You must have caused some of these boys a great fright——"

"No fear, sir!" said Figgins. "We weren't frightened in the least, sir! Nothing at all like that! Only a little surprised!"

"That's it—just a bit surprised!" said Redfern.

"Yes; you looked surprised when you bolted away from your study, Figg!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "More than a little surprised! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins, turning red.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"You should certainly not have gone out of the School House in this absurd disguise, Merry!" he said. "You will take two hundred lines, and I forbid you to do anything of the sort again!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, with exemplary meekness. He thought that the jape on the New House was cheap at two hundred lines.

"I am sorry you should have been troubled for nothing, Mr. Crump," said the School House master courteously. "If Taggles had looked a little before he ran away, the mistake might not have arisen. I am very sorry!"

"Oh, never mind, sir," said Mr. Crump, into whose hand Mr. Railton had slipped something as he accompanied him to the door. "Boys will be boys, I s'pose, sir! They're always the same!"

"They are, indeed!" said Mr. Railton, laughing.

And Police-constable Crump departed without a convict, but with half-a-crown.

The crowd in the School House broke up, the New House fellows going back to their own House looking very sheepish. Figgins & Co. had to admit that they had been completely done this time. And when Figgins thought of the way he had bolted from his study on seeing the disguised School House junior there, he grew quite crimson.

"We ought to have known!" growled Figgins. "As if a giddy escaped convict would come into a school to hide himself! We were a set of asses!"

"It's all Pratt's fault!" said Kerr.

"Oh, rats!" said Pratt crossly. "I saw the giddy broad-
arrows, and what was I to think? He might have been driven in here by hunger. He was taking the grub in the study when Monteith saw him."

Fatty Wynn uttered an exclamation.

"The grub! He's raided our grub!"

"Yes, rather!" said Redfern, with a chuckle. "Spoils of war, my son!"

"He's jolly well not going to have my rabbit-pie!"

exclaimed Fatty Wynn wrathfully. "Come back with me, you fellows!"

"Ass! We can't raid the School House now!" said Lawrence.

"But my pie——"

"I expect they're bolting that already," said Figgins. "Never mind the pie. We've been done, and it's all Pratt's fault."

"Look here——" began Pratt, in some alarm.

"Pratt first spread the alarm that there was a giddy convict in the House," said Figgins.

"We can bump Pratt for giving a false alarm, anyway!"

"Good egg!" said Kerr.

"Bump him!"

"I—I say!" roared Pratt.

"Hold on—I mean, leggo! Yow! Yaro-oh!"

It was a satisfaction to the exasperated New House juniors to bump somebody, and they did not really care very much who it was. They bumped Pratt, and bumped him with great heartiness.

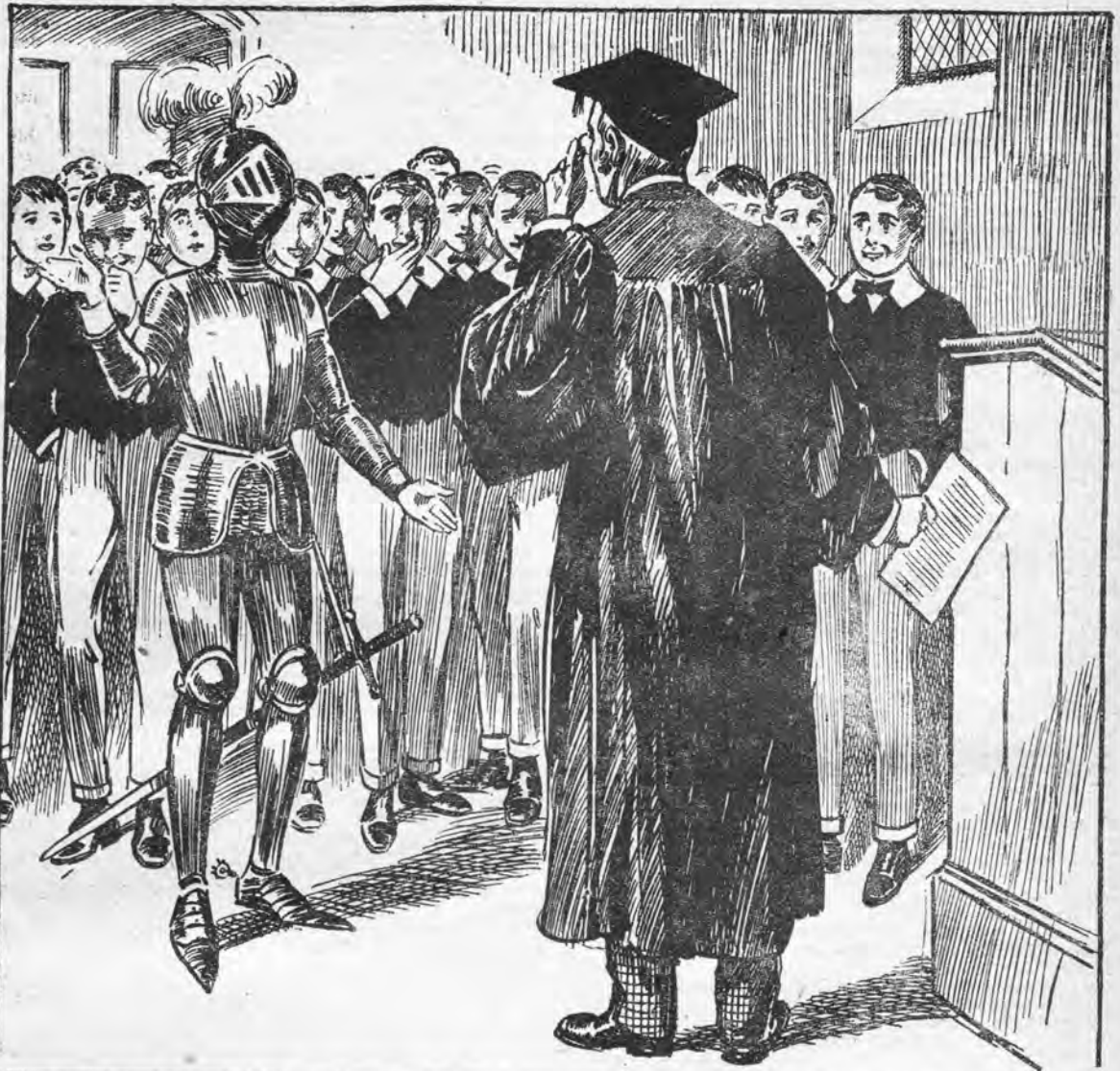
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"How dare you come into calling-over in this ridiculous manner, D'Arcy?" thundered Mr. Railton. "Weally, sir, it is not widiculous! My anecstahs used to go to battle wiggged up like this, sir!" came the muffled voice of Arthur Augustus from behind the bars of his helmet. (See Chapter 5.)

Meanwhile, seven or eight juniors were gathered round the supper-table in Tom Merry's study in the School House.

On the table was a large rabbit-pie, flanked by several lesser articles, and the School House juniors were doing full justice to all of them.

The guests in Tom Merry's study at that little supper were in a remarkable variety of costumes.

Tom Merry was a convict, Monty Lowther was Don Quixote, and Manners was a cavalier. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a knight in armour, Blake was Mephistopheles, Digby was a Roundhead, and Herries was an Italian bravo, and Kangaroo was an Australian stockman. They looked a very queer company as they sat round the New House provisions.

"To the victor the spoils!" grinned Tom Merry, as he disposed of the last of the big rabbit-pie in large helpings to his guests.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good pie!" said Bernard Glyn, who was a Spanish matador for the nonce. "You can always trust Fatty Wynn's taste in pies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare looked into the study. He grinned as he saw the strange assortment of attires.

"Bedtime, you young rascals!" he said.

"Right-ho, Kildare! Have some pie?"

"Whose is it?" asked Kildare, laughing.

"Ours!" said Tom Merry. "It was Fatty Wynn's, but it's ours now! To the victor the spoils, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare accepted some rabbit-pie, and pronounced it very good. And the juniors of the School House marched off to bed feeling extremely well satisfied with themselves.

CHAPTER 12.

The Night of the Party.

THE next day was a day of excitement to Tom Merry & Co.

The masquerade at Glyn House was arranged for that evening, and they were going, and they were anticipating a really first-class time.

In the fulness of their hearts, Figgins & Co., of the New House, forgave the jape of the previous evening, and they were on the best of terms with the School House fellows.

After morning lessons, the juniors were very busy putting the finishing touches to their costumes, which were all voted a great success.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tried on his armour once more in Study No. 6, and surveyed himself in the glass with considerable satisfaction.

"You fellows must admit that this looks wathah wippin'!" he remarked.

"Ripping enough!" said Blake. "It will rip anything you catch that nose-piece on, anyway!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake!"

"Can you dance in it?" asked Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, this is made specially light, you ass! It doesn't weigh like that armour those New House boundahs sent me. That would have been wathah heavy, even for me, though, as you know, I am an awfully stwong chap!"

"Yes, we know," said Blake, with a nod. "The helmet would have been rather rough on you, though. You're not strong at that end."

"Weally, Blake—"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" said Blake, thinking that it was one of the Terrible Three coming to see the costumes.

The door opened, and a handsome young man entered, with a smile upon his face. The juniors jumped up at once. It was Arthur Wodyer, erstwhile New House master at St. Jim's, and the happy fiancé of Edith Glyn, the sister of Glyn, of the Shell, in whose honour the masquerade was being given at Glyn House.

"Thanks!" said Mr. Wodyer cheerfully.

Blake turned red.

"Sorry, sir!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know it was you, of course!"

"No; I know you didn't, of course!" said Mr. Wodyer, laughing. "Is Glyn here? I've come over to tell him about the arrangements."

"I expect you'll dig him up in the end study, sir," said Blake. "What do you think of our costumes?"

"Splendid!" said Mr. Wodyer. "Who is this in the armour?"

"My deah sir—"

"Oh, it is D'Arcy!" said Mr. Wodyer, with a smile.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I am going to the masquedade as Wichard Cœur-de-Leong, sir, and I wathah think it will look wippin'. As a mattah of fact, you know, I have Plantagenet blood in my veins, and Wichard Cœur-de-Leong was a distant welation of mine."

"Very distant!" murmured Digby.

"What did you say, Dig?"

"I think Richard Cœur-de-Lion must have looked like that at the Battle of Waterloo!" said Digby.

"You uttah ass! Wichard Cœur-de-Leong was dead hundweds of years before the Battle of Watahloo!"

"My mistake! I meant the Battle of Spion Kop!" said Digby blandly.

"Weally, Digby—"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, coming into the study in the garb of Convict 99. "Is that Mr. Wodyer? How do you do, sir?"

Mr. Wodyer started as he looked at Convict 99.

"Dear me! Is that you, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Yes, sir; though I have some doubts myself, when I look in the glass. Did you think it was the Blackmoor chap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I came over to speak about that," said Mr. Wodyer. "A gardener belonging to Glyn House declares that he has seen the convict lurking in the plantation near the house. The police have been informed, and he is being searched for. Mr. Glyn is a little anxious about you boys."

"Oh, we shall be all right, sir!" said Tom Merry. "Number 51 won't hurt us."

"He is said to be a very desperate man," said Mr. Wodyer, "and it occurred to me that he might try to get a change of clothes during the ball. That is what he needs in order to be able to leave the woods and take to flight. Mr. Glyn is sending a brake over for all the guests from St. Jim's, and he specially wants you all to promise to keep together, and not separate at all."

"It's all wight, sir! I shall be with them, and I will look aftah them, sir!" said Arthur Augustus generously.

"Ass!" said Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I must go and tell Bernard," said Mr. Wodyer, and he left the study with a smile.

"Jollay decent chap, Mr. Wodyah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm glad we're goin', you know. We ought to back him up on an occasion like this. It's a wathah sewious mattah bein' engaged, you know."

"I don't know," said Blake; "I've never been engaged."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Gussy has, and he knows all about it!" said Tom Merry. "He was engaged to Miss Glyn himself once. I think it was humorous on Miss Glyn's part, but Gussy was in deadly earnest, weren't you, Gussy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

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"I wefuse to entah into a wiculous discuss., Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "And it is wathah bad taste to allude to that now. It would be wathah wotten to make poor old Wodyah jealous!"

"Jealous! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors burst into a roar of laughter. Arthur Augustus groped for his eyeglass, to crush them with a stare, but he could not fix it on in conjunction with the helmet of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and he had to give it up.

Mr. Wodyer stayed to lunch with the Head, and a crowd of juniors walked down to the gates with him when he went. Tom Merry & Co. had promised to go in the brake that Mr. Glyn was to send for them, and to keep together. Not that the escaped convict was likely to do them any harm; the Terrible Three had the best reasons for knowing that he would not seek to hurt them, even if they met him. But the chums of the Shell had said nothing about the meeting with Convict 61.

Afternoon lessons were little more than a farce for the fellows who were going to the masquerade, but the Form-masters were very patient, under the circumstances. Glad enough were Tom Merry & Co. when lessons were over, and they were free to devote themselves to the final preparations for the fancy-dress ball.

After tea there was much trying on, and dressing, and redressing, and parading before looking-glasses, but the guests were finished at last, and quite satisfied with themselves. Six New House juniors came over to join the School House party in time for the brake—Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen. Fatty Wynn was in the garb of Sir John Falstaff, and he had not required any padding.

The fat Fourth-Former was in the best of tempers, beaming with good-humour. All the juniors had had some experience of the hospitality of Glyn House, and Fatty Wynn knew that the refreshments would be on the most lavish scale. He was willing to forget and forgive the raid of the rabbit-pie now. While the other fellows questioned Bernard Glyn as to the arrangements for the dance, Fatty Wynn required information only on one point—the arrangements for the supper. He asked Glyn many questions on that subject, and the Liverpool lad's replies made him beatifically happy.

"It will be simply ripping!" Fatty Wynn confided to Figgins, as the crowd of fellows stood in the hall of the School House, ready for the brake to arrive.

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "I wonder whether she is there now?"

Fatty Wynn stared at him.

"Miss Glyn, do you mean? Of course, she is! I wasn't thinking of Miss Glyn!"

"I wasn't, either," said Figgins, colouring; "I was thinking of Cousin Ethel!"

Fatty Wynn grunted.

"I was thinking of the tommy," he said. "According to Glyn's account, his pater is standing a really ripping feed."

"Oh, blow the feed!" said Figgins.

"Well, you must be an ass!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I call that ungrateful! Lots of people giving dances are very skinny about the supper. I've been to dances where they think a fellow can be satisfied with a sandwich and a bun and a glass of lemonade. Ugh! Catch me dancing on those terms!"

"Weally, Wynn—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his most magisterial tone.

Fatty Wynn turned towards him, thinking that he had secured a more sympathetic listener than Figgins.

"Glyn says there will be rabbit-pies and steak-and-kidney pies," he said. "He says he mentioned it specially to his governor."

"Wats!"

"Oh, it's all right—Glyn's a chap of his word!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "And there will be jam-tarts and marmalade-tarts and cream-puffs and meringues and—"

"Weally, you ass, you make me feel—"

"Hungry!" said Fatty Wynn. "Yes, rather; it makes me feel hungry myself!"

"No, you ass; you make me feel tired!"

"Oh, rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "Don't be funny! I expect you'll be glad enough to get into the supper-room in the interval. I've always considered it a good dodge to cut the last dance before the interval. It's useful, in case there's a crowd, you know; and there's bound to be, if the supper's up to what Glyn says. That's a good tip, Gussy!"

"Oh, wats! I shall certainly dance ewery dance. Good dancas are bound to do that, out of consideration to the gals, you know! It's only playin' the game!"

"Jam-tarts—twopenny ones very likely!" pursued Fatty Wynn, with beatific smiles upon his plump face. "Fancy having as many jam-tarts as you like, Gussy, without having to shell out for them! Think of that, my boy!"

"I refuse to think of anythin' of the sort, Wynn! I wegard you—"

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was interrupted. There was a shout:

"Here's the brake!"

"I was speakin', Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes, I know you were, Gussy; you generally are! Here's the brake! Come on!"

And the masqueraders made a rush for the brake.

CHAPTER 13.

The Masked Ball.

"HERE we are!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn.

The grounds of Glyn House were brilliantly illuminated. Carriages and cars were arriving from all quarters. The brake from St. Jim's drew in with the rest in line, and the Saints alighted and entered the broad portico. They were genially welcomed by Mr. Glyn. The millionaire, like Sir Jacob in the ballad, was chiefly occupied in washing his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water. He was beaming with good-humour, and his genial, round, red face looked out of the tight collar of his dress-clothes like a harvest moon.

A crowd had already arrived, and the St. Jim's fellows, numerous as they were, were mere drops in the ocean.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked to Tom Merry, "They are doin' this thing quite in good style, you know."

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! So fah, I don't see that I could have awanged it bettah myself!" declared the swell of St. Jim's.

Many remarks were made upon Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and still more upon Convict 99. Indeed, several persons had an impression at first that Tom Merry was the escaped convict whose flight from Blackmoor was the talk of the countryside.

Figgins suddenly left the party, and sprinted off towards a Queen of the May—a very pretty Queen of the May, whose other name was Cousin Ethel. Arthur Augustus, rather distressed because his eyeglass could not be worked in conjunction with the vizor of Cœur-de-Lion, looked round in surprise.

"What's the matter with Figgay?" he asked.

Tom Merry nodded in the direction of the Queen of the May.

"Cousin Ethel!" he exclaimed.

Richard Cœur-de-Lion drew himself up.

"I fail to see why Figgins should be in such a huiwuy to see my cousin," he said, somewhat stiffly.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There are lots of things that you fail to see, Gussy, old man!" said Jack Blake, slapping Richard Cœur-de-Lion on the back, and then uttering a howl.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You ass!" roared Blake.

"Anythin' the mattah, deah boy?"

"Yes, fathead; I've hurt my hand!" growled Mephistopheles, sucking it. "What do you mean by dressing yourself up in tin?"

"Weally, you know—"

"Never mind—only one more of the sorrows of Satan!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

Cousin Ethel smiled very brightly upon the juniors. Her companion, Miss Hazeldene, was well-known to the juniors, who had met her when they went over to Greyfriars to play cricket. The two girls looked very bright and happy, as indeed they had reason to do, for where was there ever a young girl who did not enjoy a dance, especially when partners were in the majority.

Arthur Augustus was not quite sure whether he approved of girls so young coming to such a very big dance, but fortunately he kept his doubts upon the subject to himself. Only to Tom Merry did he confide his opinion that a school-room dance was all very well for the gals, but a weally big affair like this—To which Tom Merry cheerfully rejoined that he was an ass, and there the discussion ceased.

Everybody looked very bright and cheerful, especially the youngsters. Figgins was not usually very much to the fore at a dance, but he secured Cousin Ethel's programme before anybody else had a chance, in quite a businesslike way. Tom Merry came next, and Monty Lowther, and D'Arcy was rather exasperated at being elbowed off for a time.

But there were some dances left for him, though he elevated his aristocratic eyebrows inside Cœur-de-Lion's helmet when he found that Figgins had secured the supper dance. He made a remark to Cousin Ethel on the subject, but Ethel seemed to be afflicted with a sudden unaccountable deafness.

"Yes; the flowers are arranged beautifully," she agreed,

which was not in the least a reply to what Arthur Augustus had said.

"I wasn't speakin' of the flowahs, deah gal," said D'Arcy, in surprise; "I was wemarkin' that, undah the circs—"

"And they say the orchestra is splendid," said Cousin Ethel. "Mr. Glyn has had a special band of the Pink Hungarians sent down from London."

"Vewy well. But I was sayin'—"

"And it isn't a Cinderella, either!" said Marjorie Hazeldene joyously.

"I wathah appwove of Cindewallahs, you know," said D'Arcy. "It isn't good for you young people to be up too late. But I was sayin'—"

"It was so startlin', when we were coming," said Cousin Ethel. "We saw somebody by the roadside, from the carriage, and somebody said that it was the escaped convict."

"Oh, he won't come neah heah, deah gal!" said D'Arcy.

"I wemarked—"

"Poor man! How hungry he must be!" said Marjorie.

"I can't help feeling very sorry for him, you know."

"Yaas; he must be havin' a wathah wuff time. But people shouldn't be criminals, you know," said D'Arcy.

"I was sayin', Ethel—"

"Yes, Arthur, I must go to Figgins now, as I have given him the first dance."

"But—"

"Au revoir!"

And Ethel tripped away to Figgins. The Pink Hungarians were already settling down to business, and a wonderful assortment of characters were forming for the first dance. Tom Merry, alias Convict 99, led away Marjorie Hazeldene. Figgins had taken possession of Cousin Ethel, and Mr. Wodger could be seen with Edith Glyn. Fatty Wynn was not dancing the first dance. Sir John Falstaff had mysteriously disappeared, but anybody who knew him could easily have tracked him down by inquiring the way to the supper-room. The fat Fourth-Former had gone investigating to assure himself that Bernard Glyn's descriptions of the "feed" were borne out by the facts. When he reappeared in the ball-room, there were traces of jam upon Sir John Falstaff's beard.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, having missed Cousin Ethel owing to the unusual and unlooked-for enterprise on the part of Figgins, selected a particularly plain lady for his partner, and begged a dance with great courtesy and humility.

Arthur Augustus was a very good dancer, and he was invaluable at any dance, for his courtesy rose superior to any considerations of personal pleasure. He could always be relied upon, as Kerr remarked, to dance with the blind, the halt, and the lame. The worst possible dancer, with the most rigidly fixed determination to take no notice of the music, could not tire out the politeness of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Getting on all serene, Gussy?" murmured Convict 99, as he passed Richard Cœur-de-Lion, a little later.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Mind you don't puncture anybody with the headpiece."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

But then they were separated, and D'Arcy's remark had to remain unfinished.

Tom Merry grinned cheerfully at Mephistopheles as he passed him. Mephistopheles' feather was hanging down, broken, but otherwise Jack Blake was getting on well.

"Beats prep, doesn't it?" grinned Tom Merry.

"What-ho!" said Blake heartily.

"Kildare's going it—he's dancing with Miss Glyn now. Blessed if I knew these Sixth-Form chaps could dance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Darrel of the Sixth, who had heard the remark, looked round with a grin. But it was no time or place to box a junior's ears.

"Oh, ripping, wasn't it?" said Figgins, as, a dance ended, he led Cousin Ethel to a seat overlooking one of the big French windows that opened upon the terrace.

Ethel Cleveland gave a little sigh of content.

"Yes, indeed, and a very great treat for us schoolgirls," she said. "It was so kind of Edith to make us come."

"Miss Glyn is a jolly girl, and that chap Wodger is a lucky bargee," said Figgins. "I wonder what it's like to be engaged?"

"I wonder!" said Ethel.

"Must be jolly nice, I should think!" said Figgins thoughtfully.

"Isn't the terrace lovely?" said Cousin Ethel, with a nod towards the broad, open terrace, adorned with great tubs of tropical plants and flowers, with the open lawns and the shrubberies behind.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Figgins. "There's Tom Merry—isn't he like a giddy convict?"

A figure in broad-arrow garb had appeared for a moment on the terrace, and then disappeared into the shadows.

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"Yes—quite convincing," said Ethel. "If there were a policeman here Tom Merry would be in danger of being arrested."

"He's been arrested once," said Figgins, with a chuckle, and he related the incident in the New House the previous evening, much to the amusement of Cousin Ethel.

Tom Merry came up to claim Ethel for the next dance a few minutes later.

"Cool out there on the terrace?" asked Figgins.

"I dare say," said Tom Merry. "I don't know."

"Why, I just saw you out there," said Figgins, in astonishment.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I haven't been out," he said. "I've just taken Miss Hazeldene to Manners."

"Not been out?"

"No," said Tom Merry.

"But I saw you on the terrace!"

"Dreaming, old chap!" said Tom Merry pleasantly. And he led Cousin Ethel away, leaving Figgins very much astonished.

"But I thought that I saw you on the terrace, too," said Cousin Ethel. "There was certainly someone dressed as a convict."

"Must be another Convict 99 here, then," said Tom Merry carelessly, "unless that chap from Blackmoor has come to the dance. Ha, ha, ha!"

And they both laughed heartily at the thought.

CHAPTER 14.

Hunted Down.

"HANG them! Hang 'em! Look at them—in there—and me here! Hang them!"

A man stood upon a dusky spot on the terrace, concealed by the thick shadows of a group of shrubs, and looked across at a lighted window of the ball-room.

From the open French windows came the strains of a Strauss waltz, and couples passed and repassed the windows continually.

The man who was watching from the darkness was in the hideous convict dress, mud-splashed and torn, white-faced and desperate.

Out there, hungry, in the darkness, he watched the scene of gay animation within with rage and misery in his breast.

Every second or two he looked over his shoulder and listened, as if fearing pursuit—as, indeed, he did.

It was Wilde—Convict 61. Dancers, coming out on the terrace for a breath of cool air, passed sometimes within a few feet of the man crouching there hidden in the shadows, little dreaming of the fierce eyes bent upon them from the shrubs.

Footsteps on the terrace made the hunted man shrink back into the deeper shadows.

Two men came upon the terrace.

One was a stout gentleman in evening clothes, with a red, genial face, and it was easy enough for the hidden man to guess that this was Mr. Glyn, the millionaire, the proprietor of the great house where so many people were making merry. The other was a short, strongly-built police-inspector.

And at the sight of the second man a shudder ran through every limb of the wretched convict.

In that stout form he saw his fate. He hardly breathed as the two men halted within a couple of yards of the shrubs.

"What is it, inspector?" asked Mr. Glyn. "I cannot really understand this! What did you send in that message to me for? It is very awkward for me to leave my guests at this moment."

"I know that, sir, and I'm sorry," said Inspector Skeat; "but I thought it better to speak to you on the quiet, sir, instead of risking alarming the company by coming in."

"Quite right—quite right! But what is the matter?"

"It's about that convict, sir."

"Wilde?"

"Yes—No. 61 from Blackmoor."

"What about him? Has he been seen in this vicinity again?" asked Mr. Glyn, with some alarm in his tones.

"Yes, sir, that's it. He was seen to enter the grounds of this place."

The millionaire started.

"Good heavens!"

"That's what I wanted to speak to you about, sir, and I thought it better to tell you quietly."

"Thank you, inspector! But is it certain?"

"Quite certain, sir. We have been on his track for days, and early this evening we roused him out in Rylcombe Wood. He's been dodging us since—he seems to have all the luck. He was nearly caught half a dozen times, but he gave us the slip. But we sighted him more than once, and he was last seen to jump over the shrubbery wall on the east side of your grounds, sir. That was half an hour ago."

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"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

"Dear me!"

"I think we've got him now, sir," said the inspector, in a tone of great satisfaction. "And it's high time; he's been the terror of the country-side."

"He may be gone—"

Inspector Skeat gave a fat little chuckle.

"Not him, sir! We've drawn a cordon round the place. There's nigh on forty police and warders watching, and not a fly could get out of the grounds again without being caught. He was seen to look over the wall once, but he dared not put a foot over. We'd have had him, sure enough, if he had."

"Then you are certain that he is still within my grounds?" said the millionaire, visibly agitated.

"Quite certain, sir."

"What do you propose to do about it?"

"Search the grounds from end to end, sir. If possible, we'll nab him without giving any alarm—I'd be very sorry to spoil the pleasure 'ere, sir. We'll do it as quietly, as we can. But I thought I would warn you what was going on, and you could keep guests from coming out into the grounds further than the terrace, anyway, sir, if you can. There might be danger if they ran on the man. He might brain a man to get a change of clothes to have a chance to bolt."

"I will see to it, inspector. I am very glad that you have warned me. But this is terrible! Pray leave no stone unturned to find the man, and to get him away quietly."

"I'm going to set about it at once, sir."

"Very good!"

"You might give the servants the tip, sir, in case he should try to dodge into the house—he's a daring customer."

"I will do so, inspector."

"Very good, sir! And we'll do our best, and never fear but we'll nab the scoundrel soon."

And the inspector departed.

Mr. Glyn remained for some moments in deep thought, and then returned to the ball-room.

Behind the shrubs the hidden convict lay panting.

He had heard every word.

Even as he lay there the police and warders were invading the grounds. They would be beating the shrubberies for him—examining every foot of the ground—they would leave no stone unturned to discover him.

After the grounds, the terrace, and then—

He shivered.

The wretched man thought of the prison walls, the grim warders, the stone cell, and his heart was like water within him.

He had been punished heavily already, and his punishment would be increased by this escape, and the trouble he had given the authorities in effecting his recapture.

He was tempted to make a rush for it—to fight his way out—but the thought was no sooner conceived than abandoned.

The attempt was hopeless.

Round the walls there were police and warders watching, and more would be arriving every few minutes—almost the whole police-force of the county had turned out for the convict hunt. There were horsemen on all roads, ready to run him down if he succeeded in making a break.

There was no chance.

But what remained? Slowly and steadily the net had closed round the unhappy man—every desperate attempt to escape from it had been like the unavailing beating of a bird upon the bars of its cage.

And now the net had closed.

In a few minutes—in a quarter of an hour at most—the enemy would be upon him, and he would be dragged back to living death.

He had been hunted down!

As he had watched the masquerade from the terrace, and learned what was going forward, a wild hope had come into the convict's mind that he might secure some costume, and so elude the watchers in disguise. That hope was not dead yet. At all events, he knew that he could not remain upon the terrace—they would be there soon. He moved along the terrace cautiously, and came suddenly upon a couple of lads who were chatting there, one of them a cavalier and the other a matador.

"Hallo! Here's Tom Merry!" exclaimed the matador.

The convict had halted, his hands clenched hard.

Instant discovery was what he had anticipated—instant alarm, and a flight for life—and he had been tempted to rush upon the boys and make a mad attempt to strike them down before they could call out. Bernard Glyn's exclamation petrified him. He was quick-witted, and he understood at once that among the costumes at the dance there must be one that represented a convict, and that he was taken for that character.

"I thought you were dancing, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Jolly warm in there, isn't it?"

"Yes, very warm," muttered Convict 61, in a stifled voice. And he hurried on.

The two Shell fellows glanced after him in surprise.

"What's up with Tommy?" said Bernard Glyn.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Well, time we got in, if we're dancing the next," yawned Glyn, with quite the air of an old man about town.

And the Shell fellows strolled in.

Convict 61, with his heart thumping like a hammer, stole along the terrace past the ball-room windows, and stopped at an unlighted window. It was the window of the library, and he had it open in a couple of minutes, and clambered in. The room inside was not lighted, and he stood there in the darkness, and closed the window, and waited for some minutes to calm his nerves and recover his breath.

A sudden shiver ran through him.

Out of the terrace, from the steps leading down to the garden, appeared a flat-capped head, and a pair of keen eyes looked cautiously up and down the terrace.

The convict knew that it was a warder.

He backed away into the darkened room, as if in fear that the seeker might see him, hidden in the gloom as he was.

They had finished searching the grounds already, then, and were about to search the terrace. And after that they would search the house. And if he were not gone by then—But he must be gone! If he could only find a dressing-room, where some of the guests would have left coats or cloaks, there might be a chance.

He groped his way out of the library, and found himself in a passage, dimly lighted. The distant strains of music guided him in the direction of the ball-room—and near that, he expected, he would find what he sought. This part of the House seemed to be deserted—the servants were probably busy elsewhere.

There was a sudden footstep, and the hunted man started and darted into the nearest room. It was unlighted, save by a few rays of starlight that came into the window, but he made out a door at the end of the room. He could hear the music now, and he could also hear the footsteps close at hand. There was nothing else for it; he had to face instant discovery, or to flee by this door—without knowing whither it led—and taking the chances!

He took his courage in both hands, as it were, and threw open the door.

A sudden blaze of light dazzled him.

Merry strains of music and glancing figures, a band in pink uniforms, flowers everywhere, soft voices and laughter.

He was in the ball-room!

Convict 61 stood in full view of every guest at the masquerade in Glyn House!

CHAPTER 15.

Cousin Ethel's Partner.

THE convict stood dazzled, dazed, almost stunned.

At the worst he had not expected this!

To step right into view in the ball-room itself! It was the worst thing that could have happened for him, and he was lost!

Yet was he lost!

There was no shout of alarm, the dancers did not cease their movements, there was no check to the flow of merry music from the Pink Hungarians.

A junior came gliding towards him—a lad in the garb of Mephistopheles—and clapped him on the shoulder, with a chuckle.

"You bouncer!" he exclaimed, while the convict stood petrified. "You bouncer! You've been down to supper before half-time—eh?"

The convict muttered something.

"Don't you know that you've booked this dance with Cousin Ethel?" demanded Mephistopheles severely. "Come on! She sent me to look for you."

And Blake slipped his arm into Convict 61's and dragged him away.

The man went unresistingly. He understood.

He remembered the incident on the terrace, and he knew that there must be a convict among the characters represented in the masquerade—and that he was taken for someone named Merry.

There was a chance yet!

Cousin Ethel was seated under a big palm, and she smiled brightly at the convict as he came up with Blake.

"Here's the bouncer, Cousin Ethel!" said Blake. "Look here, it would serve him right to chuck him, and give me the dance instead."

Cousin Ethel laughed merrily.

"No, I won't be so severe as that," she said. "Are you ready, Tom?"

The convict gave her his arm, and they joined the dancers. The convict's brain was in a whirl, as well as his feet, as

they glided among the waltzers. The dance was already beginning.

He wondered where the real Tom Merry was. If he had gone out into the grounds he might have been captured by the police who were watching for Convict 61. That would account for his absence.

Five minutes ago Wilde had been a hunted fugitive; now he was dancing to the strains of a Pink Hungarian band with a charming Queen of the May. He could dance, too—and dance well. And insensibly he glided into the spirit of the thing.

Well, it would be a last fling, anyway! If he were to be captured, if he was going back to death-in-life in a convict prison, this would be a pleasant memory for him.

"How entertaining you are!" said Cousin Ethel at last.

The convict started.

"Am I?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. Did you catch a cold on the terrace?"

"A—cold?"

"Yes. Your voice sounds hoarse."

"Does it?"

"Yes, indeed it does. You are dancing much better than you did your last dance with me, too," said Cousin Ethel.

The convict laughed.

"I used to dance a great deal," he said.

"Well, you are improving!" said Cousin Ethel merrily. "But you seem remarkably thoughtful; and I wonder what you are thinking about."

"I am thinking how queer it is to be here, dancing with you."

"Is it?" said Ethel, in surprise.

"I—I mean—that is—you see—"

"I'm afraid you're not very explicit," said Ethel. "Are you tired?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"I'm sure you have caught cold."

"Not in the least!"

"Well, say something amusing, then; and don't make me do all the talking, Tom."

Convict 61 laughed.

"I was just thinking—" he said.

"Yes?"

"Suppose I were not Tom Merry at all, but that Black-moor convict, you know, who had taken a fancy to come to a fancy-dress ball?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"That would be very comic," she said. "By the way, I heard that the man has been seen in the grounds of this house. They were keeping it a secret, but it has leaked out. Someone saw the inspector from Wayland, and they say that the grounds are full of police."

"Do they really?"

"Yes. Poor man!"

Her partner looked at her curiously.

"Why do you say 'Poor man'?" he asked.

"Because I am sorry for him," said Ethel simply.

"But he is a brute—a convict—a criminal!"

"I suppose so. But one cannot help feeling sorry for anyone who is in distress, and without friends to help him," said the girl. "I suppose he has been very wicked; but he is being punished very terribly. Poor man!"

"You are very good to feel sorry for him," said the man, in a low voice. "He—he would be grateful to you if he knew."

"I am not likely to see him," said Ethel, smiling.

"No. But—" The convict broke off. "Hark! What is that?"

It was a sound of a sudden commotion on the terrace.

Many of the dancers paused, and looked in that direction. But the strains of the band went on without a pause, and the dance hardly slackened.

"Something happening on the terrace," said Ethel.

"The convict perhaps."

"Possibly."

Mephistopheles passed them with Marjorie Hazeldene in the waltz.

"They've got him!" he called out.

"Got whom?"

"That convict chap."

"Really?"

"He was on the terrace. I saw the policeman jump on him as I passed the windows. Can't help feeling sorry for the poor beggar!"

And Blake was gone.

"Don't you feel sorry for the wretched man, Tom Merry?" asked Cousin Ethel, looking at her partner, as they waltzed on.

Her partner started.

"I? Oh, yes—none more so! Poor chap!"

"I hope he is not hurt," said Ethel. "They say he is a very desperate man."

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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co, at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

"Yes—I think he is rather desperate at the present moment," assented No. 61 grimly.

The dance ended.

"How delightful!" said Cousin Ethel, as she sank into a seat by the ferns. "I never knew you could waltz so well."

Blake came gliding up.

"Jolly good, isn't it?" he exclaimed. "Next dance is the last before supper, isn't it—or the one after? I say—"

He started forward, and caught the convict as he staggered.

"What's the matter, old man?"

"I—I feel faint! Help me out of this, please!"

"Certainly!"

Jack Blake piloted the convict out of the ball-room, and the blaze of lights and the cheery voices were left behind.

Cousin Ethel was looking rather anxious. Figgins came up and joined her, with a cheery grin. His mask was a little sideways. By this time many of the masks had come off, however, and Figgins jerked his right off as he stopped beside Cousin Ethel.

"Did you hear a row yonder?" he asked.

"Yes. Was it the convict?"

"Yes. He came on the terrace, it seems, and they've got him."

"There seems to be something going on there now," said Ethel, as a noise was heard; and many of the dancers turned towards the French windows.

"Let's go and see."

They moved away towards the windows.

There certainly was something going on on the terrace, and it was something very peculiar indeed; and there were exclamations of wonder from the dancers as they crowded out into the light of the coloured lamps.

CHAPTER 16.

Out of the Net!

TOM MERRY had taken a turn in the grounds after a dance, to get a breath of cool air. As he stepped upon the terrace again to return to the ball-room three figures had rushed upon him, and he was seized in a second. There was a clink as a pair of handcuffs fastened upon his wrists, and his captors dragged him away. That was the first commotion that was heard, as Tom Merry struggled furiously, gasping in rage and wonder.

"You'd better come quietly!" said Inspector Skeat in his ear. "You'll only make it worse for yourself if you struggle."

"Let me go!" yelled Tom Merry.

The inspector chuckled.

"That's likely—I don't think!" he remarked. "Get him along, men. I told Mr. Glyn I would get him away as quietly as possible. We don't want a disturbance here."

"Let me go, you idiots!"

"Quick with him!"

Tom Merry was hustled off the terrace and rushed through the gardens. Policemen and warders seemed to spring up out of every shadow.

Inspector Skeat blew his whistle as a signal to the watchers that the capture had been made, and that there was no further need for their vigilance.

Tom Merry realised now the mistake that had been made. He had heard the rumour, like nearly everybody else at the masquerade, that the escaped convict had been seen in the grounds of Glyn House.

He understood that the police had been hunting there for the escaped man from Blackmoor, and that they had taken him for No. 61.

The trick he had played at St. Jim's on the New House fellows was happening over again; only this time it was without his own wish, and was something rather more than a joke.

A rough hand had been jammed over his mouth to stop his voice in order that the alarm might not be given to the merry-makers.

It was not till he was at a distance from the house that the hand was removed and he was able to speak again.

"You utter asses!" he gasped breathlessly.

"Enough of that!" said the inspector roughly. "You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, my fine fellow! You'll get it stiff enough as it is."

"I'm not the convict!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Oh, don't be a fool, my man!"

"I'm Tom Merry, of St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The inspector burst into a roar of laughter. The utter impudence of the statement, as he regarded it, amused him.

"You ass!" shouted the exasperated junior. "Take these things off my wrists at once! Do you hear?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the inspector. "Of all the cheek

"You dummy!"

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"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

"Here, stow that!" said Inspector Skeat, feeling that his dignity was suffering. "Hold your jaw, my man. Take him away!"

"I tell you I'm Tom Merry, of the Shell at St. Jim's! I'm in fancy-dress; I'm Convict 99!" yelled the junior.

"You're Convict 61, my fine fellow, and you're going back to Blackmoor!" said Mr. Skeat.

"Look here, feel this cropped hair on my head—it's false," said Tom Merry. "The whole thing will come off if you pull it!"

"Nonsense!"

One of the policemen jerked at the cropped head, and gave a gasp of stupefaction as the close-fitting skull-cap came off, revealing Tom Merry's head of curly hair underneath.

"W-w-w-what!" gasped Mr. Skeat.

"You've seen me before, at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "You ought to know my voice. Take these things off my wrists!"

"My word!" said the inspector. "Here, bring him back to the house, and we'll ask Mr. Glyn to look at him, and see if he's one of the guests. This looks to me like a plot to defeat the aims of justice."

Tom Merry was marched back to the terrace.

"You've caught him, inspector?" exclaimed Mr. Glyn eagerly, meeting the party on the terrace. "Get him away quietly, please—no noise—"

"They've caught me, Mr. Glyn!" said Tom Merry. "Will you tell Mr. Skeat that I'm Tom Merry of St. Jim's, and not Convict 61 of Blackmoor."

"Dear me! Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Glyn.

"Is that correct, sir?" asked the inspector anxiously.

"Yes, quite correct!" said Mr. Glyn. "I know the boy's voice. That is Tom Merry; I remember he came as Convict 99."

"Take the darbies off," said the inspector gruffly.

Tom Merry's wrists were released from the cold, unpleasant contact of the handcuffs.

"It was a natural mistake to make, inspector," said Mr. Glyn, taking pity upon the discomfiture of Mr. Skeat. "But the real convict, I suppose, is still at large. You had better look for him."

"My hat!" exclaimed Figgins, as he came out on the terrace. "Have they been arresting you, Tom Merry?"

"I've had a jolly narrow escape of going to Blackmoor, Figg!" grinned Tom Merry.

There was a laugh from the crowd of dancers. But Cousin Ethel turned pale.

"Tom Merry! You here!"

"Here I am!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"But—but I danced the last dance with you!" Cousin Ethel exclaimed, in amazement.

Tom Merry stared.

"That you jolly well didn't!" he said. "I was coming in to claim the dance, when these bobbies jumped on me on the terrace, and yanked me off without giving me a chance to explain."

"But—but I danced with you—or—or with someone whom I took to be you!" gasped the girl. "He was pretending to be you."

"Who was?"

"The person in convict dress whom I danced with."

"What!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Inspector Skeat, his eyes gleaming. "You danced with somebody dressed as a convict, miss?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was there more than one fancy dress of this sort here, Mr. Glyn, sir?" demanded the inspector eagerly.

Mr. Glyn shook his head.

"No," he replied, "certainly not. I remember noticing Tom Merry's costume particularly, because of the fact that there was an escaped convict in the neighbourhood. There certainly was no other in the house."

"I am quite sure of that, too," said Mr. Wodger.

"Then the person I danced with—" gasped Cousin Ethel.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "It must have been the convict himself!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What—what unparalleled insolence!" gasped Mr. Glyn. "I—I should never have dreamed of such a thing! Inspector, your man is in the house, and has the insolence to pass himself off as a guest at the ball."

"He was always a cool customer," said Mr. Skeat. "But we've got him now. Where did he leave you, young lady?"

"He was faint, and Blake took him away," said Ethel dazedly. "Perhaps he was pretending, to get out of the ball-room, if he was really the convict. Blake took him to the dressing-rooms, I think."

"Here's Blake!" exclaimed Figgins, as the figure of Mephistopheles appeared on the terrace further down. "I say, Blake!"

Mephistopheles halted. He had a coat hanging on his arm. His eyes turned towards the group, gleaming through the holes in his mask.

"I say, Blake!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That chap you took out of the ball-room wasn't me—it was the giddy convict!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Mephistopheles.

"Yes, rather! Where did he go?"

"I left him in the dressing-room."

"Show me the way, quick!" Inspector Skeat muttered to Mr. Wodger. "Come on, my men!"

"This way!" said Mr. Wodger.

Mr. Wodger and the inspector and the constables rushed into the house. An excited group discussed the strange occurrence on the terrace. Mephistopheles went down the steps into the garden, and vanished into the darkness.

Cousin Ethel leaned upon Marjorie Hazeldene's arm. The thought that she had been dancing with the escaped convict made her feel quite dazed.

"The cheeky bounder!" said Figgins. "I wish I'd known!"

"Bai Jove! It's uttely amazin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nevah heard of such feafish cheek in my life! Blake, deah boy—where's Blake?"

"He went into the garden, I think," said Tom Merry.

"Blake, Blake!"

But no answer came from Mephistopheles. He had disappeared. Figgins remained with Cousin Ethel, but most of the guests crowded after Mr. Wodger and the police, to see whether the daring convict was still in the dressing-room.

Inspector Skeat rushed into the room, and glared round him, ready to spring upon the convict if he were there.

"Here is his dress!" exclaimed Mr. Wodger.

On the floor lay a convict's garb, evidently discarded by the fugitive. From a bundle of coats in a corner came a muffled groan.

"Here he is!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Here's the giddy convict!"

A figure was lying in the corner of the room. It was bound hand and foot, and gagged, coats and handkerchiefs having been used for the purpose. But the figure was not that of Convict 61 of Blackmoor Prison. It was Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. He was no longer in his Satanic garb, but in his underclothing, and he was red and breathless with efforts to escape his bonds. The inspector stared at him in stupefied amazement. Digby dashed forward and jerked the gag from his mouth, and dragged at his bonds till he was free. Jack Blake sat up, panting.

"My hat! I'm glad you've come—I was nearly suffocated!" he gasped.

"Who are you?" roared the inspector.

"I? I'm Blake!"

"Where is the convict?"

"He's gone!" growled Blake.

"Tell the inspector what has happened," said Mr. Glyn quietly—though he guessed.

Blake gasped for breath.

"All right, sir. I brought the awful bounder out of the ball-room, thinking that it was Tom Merry—as he pretended he was. The moment we were in here, he turned on me—and he had me down and bound up in next to no time. Then I guessed who he was, but I hadn't a chance to yell. He took my Mephistopheles rig-out, and tied me up with these things, but—but he isn't a bad sort, either. He could have bashed me on the head and saved time by that, if he'd liked. I thought he was going to, but he didn't—he tied me up and gagged me and left me here, and went off in my duds!"

"As Mephistopheles!" yelled Inspector Skeat.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then—then the fellow who passed us on the terrace just now—"

"Did Mephistopheles pass you on the terrace?"

"Yes."

Blake chuckled breathlessly.

"Then it was the giddy convict, sir!"

Inspector Skeat rushed away furiously. He had been clean done, there was no mistake about that—but he hoped yet to find Mephistopheles in the grounds. Blake was surrounded by his chums, and Fatty Wynn brought him a glass of lemonade to refresh him, and he had to relate his experiences a dozen times over to the eager listeners.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's amazin', you know! That chap deserves to escape for bein' such a cool beggar, you know."

"By George he does!" said Blake. "I don't bear him any malice for handling me roughly. He wasn't nearly so bad as he might have been."

"And he had the nerve to dance with Miss Cleveland," said Redfern.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A jolly cool beggar!" said Kangaroo. "It almost makes

one hope that he will get away. But Mephistopheles will be rather conspicuous in the roads—"

Blake grinned.

"He took a coat on his arm," he said, "and he took a lot of things and shoved them under his cloak. I fancy that he's got plenty of clothes to disguise himself in—and I shouldn't wonder if he's got plenty of money, too!"

"Phew!"

Blake's surmise turned out to be correct, when the dancers looked among their property. Convict 61 had certainly helped himself liberally. A good many of the guests at Glyn House sincerely hoped that the rascal would be caught, and most of them went on the terrace to wait for news. Lights could be seen flashing about the grounds. Inspector Skeat came panting up to the house at last.

He had the garb of Mephistopheles hanging over his arm—but of the man who had worn it there was no sign.

"You have not found him?" asked Mr. Glyn.

The inspector shook his head.

"No, sir. We found this rig-out under a tree; he must have thrown it off there, and dressed in something else he had with him. He must have taken to the open country again by this time. But we'll have him yet!"

And the inspector hurried off, breathing vengeance upon the missing convict.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I've wathah an ideah, you know, that Inspector Skeat won't capchah that chap at all!"

And many of the others fully agreed with the swell of St. Jim's.

But the convict was gone now, and the police and the warders were gone after him; and the dancing was resumed, and the startling incidents of the evening were soon forgotten.

The merry masquerade came to an end all too soon; and Figgins saw Cousin Ethel and Marjorie to their carriage, and the juniors all came round to say good-bye; and then they mounted their own brake to return to St. Jim's.

"Good-bye, Cousin Ethel!" said Figgins, as he shook hands with Miss Cleveland. "Good-bye! You won't forget the evening you danced with a giddy convict!"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"No," she said, "I sha'n't forget."

"I sha'n't forget this evening, either," said Figgins. "It's been jolly, hasn't it?"

"Very jolly!" said Cousin Ethel.

"Yes, I think—"

"Pwax excuse me, Figgay, I am waitin' to say good-night to my cousin," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy loftily.

"Oh!" said Figgins. "All serene! Good-bye, Cousin Ethel!"

"Good-bye!"

And the carriage rolled away.

"Well, it's been a jolly ripping evening!" said Tom Merry, as the brake crowded with St. Jim's fellows rolled back to the school. "Convict 61 helped to make it exciting, and I can't help half wishing that the bounder gets away."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors of St. Jim's went to bed very happy and very tired.

The next morning they were eager for news. But no news came of the capture of Convict 61, and after another week had elapsed, and he had not been found, it was generally supposed that he had succeeded in quitting the country. And Tom Merry hoped—not without reason—that in another land he would turn over a new leaf, and would make the best use of the chance that had been given him by his escape on the night of Tom Merry's Masquerade.

THE END.

Next Thursday!

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

Another grand, long, complete tale of the Juniors of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

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The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made By Man.

Edited from the Notes of Maurice Fordham, Esq.

By SIDNEY DREW.

CHARACTERS IN THIS GRAND STORY.

MAURICE FORDHAM and **LANCE MORTON**—Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht *Foamwitch*, and the wonderful aeronef, *Wings of Gold*.

PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.

CROOKS—The ship's cook.

JOSEPH JACKSON or **SHOREDITCH JOSE**—A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the *Smacker*.

TEDDY MORGAN—Ship's engineer.

WILLIAM TOOTER—The hairy first mate.

The *Foamwitch* is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole.

As soon as the first land is reached the construction of the aeronef, *Wings of Gold*—which has been carried in pieces on the *Foamwitch*—is proceeded with, and in it begins a wonderful voyage into the heart of the Antarctic.

Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysteri-

ous mountain country never before trodden by the foot of civilised man.

Once the aeronef is wrecked; but, by dint of much ingenuity and hard work, is repaired, and her head is turned towards the North. A terrific wind, however, springs up, and *Wings of Gold* is forced through a ravine in the mountains, and the crew find themselves flying over a large inland lake, surrounded by the vast, unknown mountains. They encounter such fearful creatures here that they decide to go back and return to the *Foamwitch*; but investigation reveals that the ravine is now blocked up, and they are prisoners in that vast enclosure.

Their tinned provisions have all gone bad, but the larder is replenished by Lance, who shoots a huge elk.

To their intense excitement, the adventurers, cruising gently along, came across a huge ruined aqueduct, obviously the work of men's hands. *Wings of Gold* follows the aqueduct through the mountains, and at last comes upon signs of human habitation. While the voyagers are gazing at the rude dwelling, protected by an enormous catapult, formed by growing trees, a man bounds into view. He is black, and clad in tattered skins, and stands full nine feet high—a jet-black Hercules.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Guardian of the Cave.

"Good for Barnum's. Why not?" said Crooks, breaking the silence. "We ought to get up a sparrin' match between him and Jackson. Why not? He was Hokey-Pokey-Winky-Wum, King of the Cannibal Islands. Why not? Jackson ought to win if he boxed with a revolver in each fist. Haw, haw!"

No one else wanted to speak just then except the incorrigible Crooks. The bravery of the giant amused them all. Proudly, unflinchingly he stared up at what to him must have seemed a shrieking phantom or hideous nightmare.

"By Jove, I admire his pluck!" thought Lance.

The giant threw back his right arm. Maurice yelled a warning.

The grindstone was in motion, and the point of the stake in the ballista moved swiftly into a perpendicular.

"He's going to shoot, Teddy! By Harry, he'll slap that right through us! Quick, Teddy! Quick, old chap!"

"Not much!" said Morgan, with a deep laugh. "Move, my darling!"

The stake whizzed into the air as the saplings straightened; but the aeronef was clear, and the heavy wooden missile hurtled to the ground with a crash.

Wings of Gold sailed back, and hung poised in the air.

The giant had resumed his characteristic attitude, but now he was leaning on a massive club, ready to do battle.

"You can't scare him a big lot, Lance," said Fordham.

"Not a bit, old boy. Isn't he a picture of brute strength and courage? What a bother it is we can't speak his lingo, if any!"

"He's got a larder down there, sir!" shouted Teddy, looking out of the wheelhouse.

For the first time they noticed a heap of flesh and offal lying under the hole in the barricade.

The inert figure suddenly sprang into activity. He tore up another stake and pushed it in between the barricade. Then he worked at the wheel until the saplings were bent back, and, clambering up the cliff, gazed down the aqueduct. His movements were evidently not hostile, for he did not

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pack!" said Lance. "He is! I'm going to be on as well in this scene."

The bloodthirsty baboons howled in chorus when they realised that a human being stood between them and the meat their hungry noses had scented. They increased their pace. One, swifter than the others, drew ahead. Lance raised the elephant gun, but Maurice caught his wrist.

"Don't shoot yet. Hercules knows his business, old chap. Watch him a minute."

The native did not move a muscle. With waving arms and gnashing jaws, the baboon lunged itself at him. Hercules, as Fordham had christened him, stepped nimbly aside, and the axe bit down into the base of the brute's skull. It pounded over without even a writhe, its head almost severed from its body.

"Bravo! Bravo! Splendid! Well done!" shouted the watchers. "Look out!"

One glance told the savage that he could not face such heavy odds in the open. He glided through the hole.

"I'll stop one of them," said Lance. "Oh, confound it!"

The trigger clicked harmlessly. The yelling monsters rushed for the hole. Down hurtled the mass of rock, smashing the spine of one. And then the ballista twanged like a bow, impaling another. But the brutes could not be dismayed. The two survivors ran up the wall as easily as if it had been a ladder.

"Shoot, sir, shoot!" yelled Tooter, almost mad with excitement.

Boom! Lance fired full at the shaggy breast of the beast, and it toppled backward. The survivor leapt like a tiger into the circle where Hercules stood with poised axe.

"He's down!" yelled Fordham.

Man and brute were grappling together, scattering the embers in all directions.

"He's lost his weapon," said Tooter.

"Teddy, Teddy!" cried Lance appealingly.

They dared not fire. Morgan seized the levers, and Wings of Gold sunk almost to the ground. Crooks, Tooter, Lance, and Fordham sprang down and climbed the barricade. Out of the dust raised by the conflict rang the reports of a revolver. The cook's knife drove hilt deep into the shaggy side again and again. The dust cleared. The giant was leaning against the wall, panting, and covered with blood, gazing at the strange beings who had come to his rescue from the sky. He started a little when Lance emptied his revolver into the dog-ape's skull.

"Be careful, he may take it into his head to smash one of you," said Teddy from the deck.

Slowly the giant swept back his extraordinary mane of grey hair. His mighty chest heaved, and his breath poured out like smoke. His limbs showed him to be a man of colossal strength.

"Are you hurt, old boy?" asked Lance, pointing to the great gash in the native's shoulder. He took no notice, but continued to pant like an over-driven horse. Then he looked at his dead foe, and saw the handle of the cook's knife protruding from the hair. He stooped and pulled it out. A rifle was levelled at his heart, for the cautious Morgan would take no risks. He was ready to shoot at the first hint of treachery.

"Old Hercules seems a bit dazed to me," said Fordham, whose fingers were on the trigger of his six shooter. "How about giving him a drink? Fetch a pail of water, William, and a cup."

"Fetch the barrel, why not?" growled the cook. "He was big enough to drink it."

Mr. Tooter swung down the ladder with a bucket and a pannikin. The black man's eyes sparkled. To the huge admiration of Tooter and Crooks, he took the pail of water in both hands, and drank a good gallon of water without a halt. Then came a roar of laughter. Crooks had lighted his pipe. The big man opened his mouth in terror, bellowed like a bull, and dived into the cave.

"I'll not start no 'baccey shop round here!" grinned the cook. "Why not? It would not pay."

"I'm sorry you scared him," said Lance.

"Not a bit of it," murmured Tooter. "Here he comes again."

The giant emerged cautiously, and Crooks put away his pipe. "Here, old blacklead," he said, "that's my knife! Why not? I bought it, and paid for it, and it cost one sovereign and a bob, which was money. Cheap knives are no good, and good huntin' knives are dear. Turn up that sticker. Why not?"

"Mind! He may stab you!"

"Turn it up," repeated the cook—"turn it up, you huggy lump of stove-polish! Why not? Would you like me to punch your 'ead? Haw, haw!"

The knife was held out hilt foremost, and Crooks accepted it with a low bow. The giant had no eyes for anyone except for the lean cook.

"He seems to understand you," said Fordham.

"Why not?" growled the cook, with a huge grin. "How are you, you bottle-nosed, big-footed, tar-faced himage? You was, barrin' our Willie Tooter, the hugliest man I ever seed. There was my fist. Take 'old of it, or I'll push yer face in. I was a lion-tamer, I was. Why not?"

To their surprise, the giant smiled, and grasped the cook's hand. Crooks was tall, but the savage towered almost a yard above him. There was great laughter when the cook solemnly presented him with a trousers button, an old red handkerchief, and a small ball of twine. The dusky Hercules accepted them with the same solemnity, and with a wave of his arm disappeared into the cave. He returned with a small, beautifully engraved copper axe-head.

"Thank you, blacking-pot," said Crooks. "That was for me, the lion-tamer. Why not?"

"Hold on," said Maurice. "This is a lovely thing. Swop fair, Crooks. Give him your knife, and I'll give you another."

The native's black eyes danced with delight as he drew the knife from the sheath.

"Try and get him to come aboard," said Lance.

Crooks pointed from the ship to the giant, and from the giant to the ship, and almost twisted his lean body into a knot with violent gesticulations. It was plain that the savage grasped his meaning. He fixed another stake into the great catapult, and turned the stone wheel, spat on the dead baboon, swung his axe, and pointed through the hole; then he gave a splendid imitation of a fight with a baboon, and shook his head.

"Can you see what he's driving at, Morry?"

"Of course, I can, old chap," answered Maurice. "He's the guardian of the cave. He means that he has to stop here and fight the apes."

"That was fact. Why not?" growled the cook. "Other facts follows?"

"What facts?"

"He was on duty. Why not? He was here to punch the big monkeys. Why not? Them was facts. He was keepin' them back. Why? There was a village further on, or a town. I was a philosopher. Haw, haw!"

"Bonny blackbirds, he talks like a book with no pages in!" said Tooter, with sarcasm.

"And there was 'air and whiskers ad lib.," grinned the cook.

"He talks much nonsense and little sense," said Lance. "All aboard! I want to find that village before dark."

The savage waved his axe as a farewell, and returned to his solitary and perilous vigil. Von Haegel, disgusted with everything, had slept through it all. Crooks, proud of his gift, soon found a handle for his axe-head, and displayed the weapon.

"What is dot you haf got?" asked Von Haegel, who had come on deck.

"A chopper. Why not, sir?" replied Crooks.

The professor took it, but before he could examine it, something dropped at his feet with a clack, and slid across the deck into the wheelhouse.

"Why what is dot? Who—" panted the professor.

Maurice and Tooter and Jackson were below. Crooks spat out an oath, the first he had been known to utter. A spasm of pain had wrung it from his lips. He caught the professor by the nape of his neck, and bundled him into the wheelhouse. Click! Clatter! Zip, zip! A cloud of arrows swept over the deck, striking against the uprights, or passing clear.

Fr-r-r! The screws shrieked, and the aeronef leapt up out of danger. They saw figures swarming on the slopes of the hill.

"Why not?" growled Crooks, lifting his lean, bare arm, "That was almost a bull's-eye!"

An arrow had transfixed the flesh. Lance turned pale as the hideous thought flashed across his mind. Was the arrow poisoned?

Prisoners.

Professor Von Haegel was an expert in all the sciences, but his clumsiness prevented him from becoming a good surgeon. All the same, he understood the theory of the art, and, acting under his instructions, Lance skilfully pared down the shaft of the arrow, smoothed it, oiled it, disinfected it, cut away the plume, and drew it out so deftly and gently that Crooks did not even wince. Then Lance whispered his fears to the professor. Von Haegel, looking scared, puffed away with the arrow-head, and spent the next hour surrounded by bottles and test-tubes.

He could find no trace of any poison.

"Ach, dot is goot—dot is goot!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "I am so glad of dot. It is man and peast dot we have now to fight. Ach, yes!"

Mr. Crooks was a most resourceful man, but he wore a worried and perplexed look. He could have managed to cook

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with one hand had there been anything to cook. When Tooter placed a lump of elk-flesh on the galley table, Crooks heaved a sigh, and sadly shook his head.

"Rations was low, Willie," he said, "though meat was not scarce. Was that stuff meat?"

"It's a lot more like corrugated injyrubber," said Tooter. "Shall I bile it?"

"You might do wuss, Bill. Will it bile? I think not. Will it bake? I reckon not. And it won't roast. Dynamite might shift it, but not teeth. Why not? Haw, haw!"

The matter was sufficiently serious. Tooter examined the mass, and began to like it less and less.

"It ain't much like a nice prime steak," he said. "We're pretty nigh out of bacon, and cheese gets tiring for every meal. I should say the stuff was good enough to eat if it was done proper. Look 'ere," he added, more hopefully, "cooking is a hart."

"Was it? Why not?" growled Crooks.

"In course," said Tooter; "if I was to cut that up fine, and slap the pepper about strong. What-ho!"

"It would be 'ot, Willie."

"Blackbirds! Did you ever know pepper that froze you? Don't be an ass, Wall-eye! Tell you what, I'll make a pie."

"Help!" said the cook faintly, as he fanned himself with a plate. "Our number was up!"

"Do you think I can't make a pie, then?"

"There was 'air!'" sighed Crooks. "Why not? I will take a front seat to watch the circus. Why not? Go it!"

Tooter was rather nettled, but he meant to show the cook that he possessed a good deal of culinary skill. He chopped up about three pounds of the best portion of the meat, and selected a large enamel pie-dish. In went the meat, followed by vinegar, pepper, dry mustard, cloves, and pickles.

"It will be 'ot, and werry much so," growled Crooks. "We shall need the fire-engines if we eat that!"

"Will!" called a voice.

"That was Mr. Lance," said Crooks. "He was wanting you."

Tooter scraped the dough from his fingers and hurried out. The cook arose with a grin.

"It was 'ottish, but not 'ottish enough," he murmured. "I will warm 'em. Haw, haw!"

Then he dusted the cayenne and mustard into the pie-dish with great liberality. Tooter had seasoned the meat highly already. When he returned Crooks had his eye fixed on the stove, and was humming softly.

Tooter put on the crust, cut out the letters to form "Wings of Gold," and decorated the crust with a pattern. It looked a beautiful pie. Tooter was proud of it.

"It was good-lookin'," said Crooks; "but beauty was only skin deep."

"I'll bet they eat it," said Tooter, poking the patent fuel till the fire roared again. "Blackbirds! You might think you was the only chap who knows how to cook a hegg."

"There was a hart in cooking heggs. Why not? Fresh heggs from Russia must be cooked delicate, or they will bust their top shell off and bark at you. Haw, haw! You was a good fellow, Bill; but you was most hairy, and it was a grand pie. Cook him! But why waste coals? It was 'ot enough to cook itself."

Mr. Crooks, acting under orders, went off to have his arm attended to by Lance. The food question again cropped up.

"It is not pleasant," Von Haegel was saying. "I do not love bread and cheese much, but I shudder at dot meat, though I have not ein weak stomach."

"One mouthful of it would knock me over, dad," said Lance. "Put your arm flat down, Cookey. That's the way. Does it hurt?"

"Not a bit, sir. There was 'otter things than arrers," he muttered, "and some of them was pies."

Von Haegel leaned out through the open porthole to rap the ashes out of his pipe.

"Shaf!" he puffed. "We may find yet food dot shall not poison us."

"Not that pie. Why not?" thought the cook.

"Hope so," said Lance. "Everything seems on such a big scale except the men. I don't mean of Hercules, but the fellows who shot at us. They seemed a bit undersized, if anything."

"They was not big, sir," growled the cook. "I seed 'em plain enough. Why not? They gave me a present."

Morgan came in just then for his tobacco-pouch.

"It will be pretty dark soon, and we'd better shut up shop and get well out over the lake. It's going to be misty. I'll try for a fish or two."

"All right, sonny," said Lance. "I'll be with you presently."

There was evidently going to be a change in the weather. Mist was rolling down the slopes in white masses, and the sky was greyish-black above them. Tooter said he did not like it.

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"Hang it, William," said Maurice, "we can't get much of a blow here! We're too shut in and sheltered."

"You never can tell, sir," answered Tooter. "It's calm enough now, but I can smell rain."

"How far off?"

"Perhaps an hour, sir, or two at the most. I can smell it."

"And I can smell the pie," grinned the cook.

Von Haegel watched Morgan fishing for a time; then he walked forward. The grapnel was swinging over the rail. The professor was deep in thought. He began to fumble with the rope. The hitch gave, and the grapnel dropped. Von Haegel did not notice what he had done.

It was almost dark.

Morgan fished in vain. He pulled in his line at last.

"The fish aren't here," he said; "or if they are, they aren't hungry."

"There's some big brute about that's scared them away, I suppose," said Maurice. "I wonder what Hercules eats? It wouldn't be a bad idea to visit him again to-morrow and find out."

"Ten to one he doesn't turn up his nose at dog-ape, Morry."

"Rats! There's good food about if we could only find it. Isn't it odd that we've seen no birds?"

"What about the pterodactyls?"

"Oh, they're lizards. Isn't it beastly dark! Shall I light up, Teddy?"

"Just as you like, sir," replied Morgan.

Only one lamp was lighted, for the dynamos had not been running for two days, and their supply of electricity was getting short.

Down in the galley there was a most savoury and appetising smell. Von Haegel paused to sniff it. He turned back and entered the galley.

Tooter had just taken the pie out of the oven, and was gloating over it. There it stood on the table, brown and shiny, as handsome a pie as had ever been cooked.

"Ach, dot smell goot, Dooter!" said the professor. "Of what have you made him?"

"Elk, sir."

"Nefer!" puffed the professor. "You choke mit me, Dooter!"

"It was elk right enough," growled Crooks. "Why not? I seed her built."

"Shaf! Dot surprise me. Der smell is most delicious, and der pie is beautiful. You are ein grand cook, Dooter. I shall try der pie. Ach, it will be for us comfortable if der meat is as good as it smells."

"'Otish!" murmured the cook. "Why not?"

The pie was carried in, shedding its delicious odour. In spite of its tempting exterior, Lance and Maurice hung back when they learned what was inside.

"I'm not hungry," said Lance.

"Bread and cheese is good enough for me," said Morton.

"Now, dot was foolish, dear lads," protested Von Haegel. "You English are the most prejudiced people in der world. Der Vrench eat frogs and snails. You laugh at dot. But why? They are lofely to eat. You laugh at der sauerkraut of mine land, but it is goot. I care not. I shall try der pie, and so shall Dooter and Crooks."

"No, thanks. None was enough for me, sir," said Crooks promptly.

"Shaf! You are all der same. I shall set der example."

He dug a knife through the crust. The pie was cooked to a turn. Tooter did not look quite happy when he received his helping.

"Why don't you start, William?" asked Lance.

"It is—er—er—'ot, sir."

"It was. Why not?" chuckled Crooks. "I was aware of that."

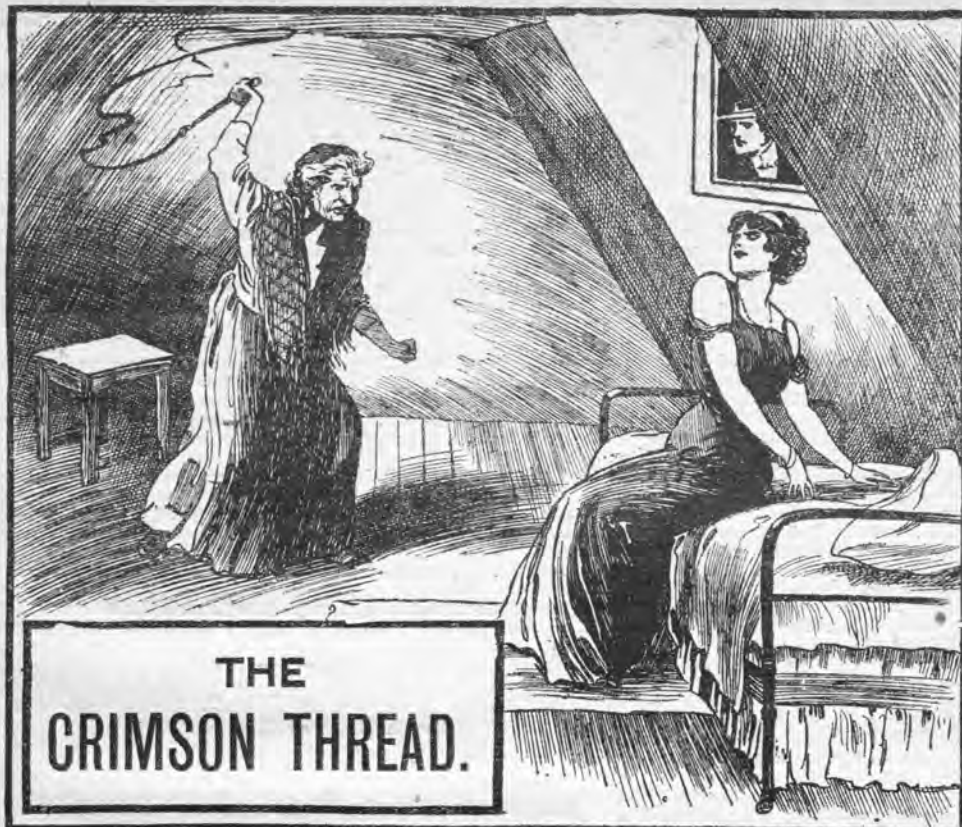
Like a hero Von Haegel raised his fork. Not to be outdone, the maker of the pie did the same. An instant later two chairs went down with a loud crash, and Tooter and Von Haegel were holding their jaws and yelling, gasping, spluttering, and coughing.

Bang, bang!

There were two reports, and a choked call for help. Then came a patter of feet, and a clamour of fierce yells. A dozen wild-looking, half-naked figures burst into the room, and with upraised clubs fiercely attacked the startled men. In a moment the explorers were prisoners.

Another exciting instalment of this
thrilling Adventure Serial

- - - NEXT THURSDAY. - - -



THE CRIMSON THREAD.

CHAPTER 1. In the Enemy's Hands.

FRANK KINGSTON lay back in his chair and gazed lazily out of the window on to Trafalgar Square. The bright April sun shone dazzlingly, and the Nelson Monument, recently cleaned, looked magnificent.

"Jove, Dolores, but it's a shame to remain indoors to-day," declared the famous detective, shifting his gaze from the window to an exceedingly pretty girl who sat opposite to him—Miss Kathleen O'Brien, his fiancée. She had only arrived a few minutes previous, and had come for the especial purpose of asking Kingston how a certain case was progressing—a case of vital importance which she was greatly interested in. Yet she found her lover reclining languidly in one of the easiest of easy-chairs.

The detective was engaged in proving the innocence of a man even then undergoing his trial for murder. Both he and Dolores knew the man to be innocent, and the girl very naturally took a great interest in the affair. The police were confident that they had made no mistake, and if Kingston did not bring forward his proof very soon he would be too late.

"Oh, Frank, you are fond of teasing me!" cried Dolores, rising to her feet and looking unseeingly out of the window. "What do I care about the weather at a time like this? I came to ask you about John Simmonds. Have you found the proof of his innocence yet? Do you think you'll be in time? It will be terrible if—"

"Wait a moment, little girl," interrupted Kingston. "Don't jump to conclusions too quickly. Possibly you think it very wrong of me to be here doing nothing while Simmonds is at the New Bailey undergoing his trial. Well, to tell the truth," he added, with a twinkle of his keen eyes, "I haven't found a single clue which will prove his innocence."

"Oh, Frank!" Dolores' tone was filled with consternation. "But," continued Kingston, "I've got my case cut and dried against a gentleman known as 'Bishop' Lamley, who really committed the murder. Jim Lamley is his name, but he's always referred to as 'The Bishop'—apparently because he is a refined, clerical-looking individual."

"You say you've got proof against him!" exclaimed Dolores eagerly.

"He's as good as arrested," declared Kingston. "Yes; but why isn't he arrested already? He might get wind of his danger and—and give you the slip!"

"I don't think he'll do that, Dolores," said Kingston quietly,

and something in his tone told the girl not to worry. "At the present moment he is aboard a steamer on his way from France. There is not a breath of suspicion against him, you know, the police being quite convinced that Simmonds committed the crime. Lamley is disguised, and will arrive in London—"

Kingston broke off abruptly, and in one stride was across the room and had wrenched the door open. The passage was quite deserted and silent. Dolores looked on in surprise.

"I suppose I was mistaken," said the detective, "but I could have sworn I heard a sound outside the door. Ah! By Jove, what a nuisance!"

While he was speaking the front door closed with a bang, and Kingston knew quite well that he had made no mistake; someone had been listening at the consulting-room door. Tim Curtis, the page-boy—and Kingston's frequent assistant—appeared at the sound of the front-door slam.

"Who was it called just now, Tim?" asked Kingston.

"Some gent said as he particularly wanted to see you, sir," replied Tim readily. "I knew you was engaged, so I showed him into the outer room to wait. What's up, sir? Has he gone already?"

"Yes, young 'un; he's taken himself off before seeing me," replied the detective grimly. "Confound it, Dolores!" he added. "I ought to be kicked for letting the fellow get away. He was smart, though."

"Who do you think it was, Frank?"

"I have a strong suspicion he is one of the Bishop's pals. They must have got wind that I was looking into the case and decided to take steps. And, by sheer chance, he managed to overhear the very thing he wants! I must look alive now, or I shall fail to trap my hare!"

"Can't you have Lamley arrested immediately?" asked Dolores quickly.

"You forget he is in the middle of the Channel," replied Kingston, resuming his seat. "As I was saying, he will arrive in London to-night—or would have done under ordinary circumstances. Now, he will probably be warned, and will try to give me the slip. You see, he went to France immediately after his crime, but when he got there he found another man had been arrested, and that he, himself, was not even suspected. So now he's coming home again."

Kingston told his fiancée exactly how he had got on the scent, how he had followed his clues up, and how, in the end, he had found certain proof that Bishop Lamley was the

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

murderer. The story of the crime need not be set down here, for, besides being harassing and uninteresting, it has nothing to do with this tale.

Dolores took her departure after half an hour had elapsed. Kingston had already rung up Scotland Yard, and had asked Sir Nigel Kane, the chief, to have a warrant for Lamley's arrest prepared. But when the Yard wired to Dover to have the Bishop detained on suspicion, the reply came that the mailboat had already arrived and that the passengers had dispersed.

Meanwhile, Dolores had been escorted to the front door by Tim, and for a moment she paused to fasten one of her gloves. Then she noticed a taxi crawling along close by, and the driver lifted his eyebrows inquiringly. Dolores hesitated; it was only a few minutes' walk up the Strand to the Hotel Cyril, and the morning was glorious. Then she remembered a call she wished to make in the West, and nodded her head.

The taxi came to a stop, and Dolores stepped in, never a suspicion of danger entering her mind. Certainly she was not to be blamed, for even Kingston himself—cautious man that he was—would never have scented danger in the taxicab.

The taxi drove off, and the girl lay back thinking of the matter which Kingston had in hand. For a mile everything went perfectly, then the driver—plainly visible to Dolores—placed his lips to the speaking-tube. Evidently he wished to say something to his fare.

"Forgotten the address, I suppose," thought Dolores.

She bent forward, and then, with surprise, saw the man blow vigorously through the speaking-tube. It was very short, and in a second Dolores felt a stinging sensation in her nostrils, accompanied by a dizziness which caused her to sway back on to the cushions. Then everything was blank, and the girl lay back unconscious.

The driver gave one glance through the glass, then, chuckling to himself, sent the little vehicle forward at greater speed. But he altered the direction now, and soon the taxi was in the neighbourhood of Walworth. Dolores lay back quite senseless, the drug having had full effect. The method of administering it, although not new, was very effective.

At last the cab came to a standstill before a dull, ugly little house at the extreme end of a side street. Several grimy urchins were playing in the road and they paused to look on with evident interest. But their curiosity was rewarded meagrely, for the driver hopped from his seat, opened two large doors of an outhouse adjoining the building, and drove the taxi into it. Then the doors were closed again, and the urchins, after looking at the closed doors disappointedly for a few minutes, resumed their play.

The taxi-driver, meanwhile, had opened the side door of his cab and surveyed his prisoner with satisfaction. Chuckling, he hurried out of the outhouse through a small doorway at the back, and found himself in the backyard of the dingy dwelling to which it belonged. In a moment he was indoors.

"I've caught her, Josh!" he cried, to a man of forty or so, who sat in the kitchen. "She's out in the taxi as quiet as a dead mouse!"

The other man leapt to his feet.

"Not in the road?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "You ain't left her—"

"Oh, shut up!" cried the taxi-driver. "What do you take me for? Hallo, ma! Come and have a look at the nice visitor I've brought to see you!"

The latter part of his sentence was addressed to a short, slovenly-dressed old woman who had just entered the room. Her face was harsh, wrinkled and forbidding. And from beneath heavy brows a pair of cunning eyes darted from one man to the other. Her hair was dingy grey, and tied up in an untidy bunch, straggling whiskers of it escaping and lying on a dilapidated shawl which covered her shoulders.

"What's that?" she exclaimed, in a shrill, grating voice. "Why, Phil, 'ave you really done it? Is that gel out in the shed? My, but I never thought you meant it when you telephoned to Josh!"

Philip Lamley grinned and led the way out. It was he who had been in Kingston's rooms earlier in the morning, and he had formulated a plan on the spur of the moment which looked like proving successful. For Philip was the Bishop's brother, and he intended saving him from the gallows if possible. He had 'phoned to Josh Daniels, a rascally public-house keeper, as to his intentions, asking Daniels to tell Mrs. Lamley what to expect. And Ma Lamley, being a hardened old criminal herself, was delighted at the prospect of having something to amuse herself with.

Dolores was quickly removed from the taxi to a bare attic at the top of the house, and laid on an old bed which stood up one side of the apartment—the only article of furniture the attic contained, with the exception of a rough stool.

"He, he, he!" cackled the old hag, rubbing her hands together with satisfaction as she stood looking at the prisoner.

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"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

"My word, boys, don't she look a picture? Them clothes of 'ers is worth something, I'll swear. An' look at the rings, too! Diamonds, an' real gold!"

The old woman bent over Dolores with eager greed, and was on the point of removing the valuable rings when she checked herself.

"No, I won't do it now!" she chuckled, turning to the men and leaving the little room. "I'll wait till she's 'erself agin, an' then force 'er to give 'em to me! Jest a little bit of amusement, boys!"

They laughed as Ma Lamley securely locked the attic door. They could guess which form her amusement would take. And while they retired below to discuss the hastily-formed plan Dolores slowly came back to herself. The drug was not chloroform, and the effects of it wore off rapidly. As a matter of fact, Dolores roused herself and sat up as though she had merely been asleep.

"Why, where ever am I?" she asked herself, looking round in bewilderment. Then her keen wits went back to the incident in the taxi. "Oh, I remember! I bent forward to speak to the driver, and then felt something. It was a drug! I was made insensible and carried to this place!" Dolores looked round apprehensively. "Oh, dear, what can be the meaning of it?"

She rose, crossed the little attic, and examined the door. Unlike most attic doors it was fitted with a strong patent lock, defying all efforts to prise it open. From the door Dolores crossed to the window; this looked out on a bare piece of waste land, with a factory of some kind in the distance. Immediately below was the back yard of the house.

Escape seemed out of the question, and Dolores turned just a trifle pale as she seated herself on the bed to think things out.

CHAPTER 2.

Frank Kingston Gets to Work.

"LETTER for you, sir!"

"Thanks, Tim; put it on the table, there!" Tim did so, and Frank Kingston resumed his reading of the warrant for James Lamley's arrest which he had just brought away from Scotland Yard. Sir Nigel Kane had let the detective have the warrant immediately, for he knew Kingston would make no mistake. So far the police had not an atom of proof against the Bishop, but Kingston assured them he would bring forward evidence enough to convict the man twice over at the trial.

The famous detective had made inquiries, but he had been unable to discover the whereabouts of the Bishop; evidently he had been warned of his danger by telegraph, and had made himself scarce. And this is exactly what did happen, for the murderer's brother, Phil, had immediately sent a wire to Dover to be handed to Lamley on his arrival.

Kingston picked up the letter which had just been delivered, and noted that it had not passed through the post—that it had been brought by hand. A few moments later he was pacing up and down the room, obviously agitated. As a rule Kingston allowed none of his emotions to be apparent, even when he was alone, but on this occasion he showed quite distinctly that the letter had disturbed his customary equanimity.

"The hounds!" he muttered angrily, flinging the letter on the table. It was written on a common sheet of paper torn from an exercise-book, and ran as follows:

"When Miss Kathleen O'Brien left your house this morning she was taken prisoner, and is now in my power. You have the power to convict my brother of murder, although the police are content to hang John Simmonds for the crime. Let them do it, and your fiancée will be set free immediately. Drop all your efforts to have the Bishop arrested. If you don't you'll be sorry for it. Miss O'Brien is where you'll never find her. Send answer at once to P. L., Camberwell Post Office."

At the bottom left-hand corner of the sheet was a thin length of crimson-coloured thread, and it was stuck to the paper in the form of a hangman's noose. Underneath it were scrawled the words:

"If Jim's neck is shoved into a thing like this, then your lovely young lady will be treated in the same way!"

Kingston paced up and down thoughtfully for a while; then he rang the bell for Tim.

"Did you see Miss O'Brien leave to-day?" he asked abruptly, when the lad appeared.

"Yes, sir. I was watching from one of the windows," replied Tim Curtis wonderingly. "She got into a taxi which happened to be crawlin' past."

"Ah!" exclaimed the detective quickly. "Now, young

"un, did you happen to notice the number of the taxi? It's a tall order to expect you to—"

"I didn't see it, sir!" interrupted Tim regretfully. "You see, I didn't know as you wanted—" He broke off and looked excited. "I'll tell you what I did see, though!" he cried. "The left-hand mudguard was all bent and twisted up, as though there'd been a smash. I thought of it at the time!"

"Good-bye, Tim!" said Kingston briskly. "You've used your eyes to advantage. What colour was the taxi?"

"Dark blue, bottom half, sir, an' the top yellow," replied Tim promptly.

"You're sure of that, youngster?"

"Abso-blessed-lutely, sir!"

"Good! That's all, my lad!"

Armed with his somewhat meagre information, Kingston made a tour of inquiry. And at last, after an hour's hard work, he found the taxi which had driven Dolores away from No. 100, Charing Cross. The driver was obstinate at first, but a tip soon elicited the information that a young fellow had approached him that morning, and had hired his taxi for an hour or two—for the vehicle was a privately-owned one.

"Three pun 'e agreed to give me," declared the cabby, "an' when he brought the ole 'bus back he 'anded me a fiver. O' course, I adn't got change—jest as if I should 'ave!—so 'e's comin' back about nine o'clock for 'is two quid. But it wasn't a bad deal, guv'nor!"

He thought it a still better one when Kingston handed him a sovereign with instructions to say nothing to Phil Lamley with regard to his questioning. The time was only now seven, but Kingston did not leave the neighbourhood of the stand. His action was wise, for Lamley turned up at half-past-eight. To follow him was child's play to Kingston, and at about nine-thirty the detective was in the back yard of the Lamleys' dwelling. A light was burning in one of the rooms.

Kingston crept forward with absolute noiselessness and slid along the wall like a shadow. The window was closed, but the detective's singularly acute hearing did not miss anything. Any other man would have had difficulty in distinguishing half a dozen words; but Kingston was different, he was an individual like none other on earth, and a man better fitted for detective work did not exist.

The result of his vigil was better than he had dared hope for. Within the room he could distinguish three distinct voices—those of Mother Lamley, Phil, and the Bishop himself. Evidently he had thought it safe to pay a flying visit to home. They were talking about Dolores, and the word "attic" was mentioned several times.

This was enough for Kingston; a glance round told him which was the attic. Up above him the sloping roof of an outhouse led almost directly to a little window which was sunk into the old roof. It would be just possible for an extraordinarily agile man to scramble up to the window—although the noise he would make in doing so would probably lead to discovery.

But Kingston did not hesitate a moment; he knew the climb would be a difficult one, but he also knew that it was quite possible. With no haste he commenced the perilous ascent, and gradually he neared his goal. And the amazing thing was he made no sound whatever; so carefully did he climb that not a soul in the house was aware of his presence.

At last he was in a position to look in at the window, and

as he did so a feeling of relief took possession of him. Dolores was there, sitting on the edge of the bed, and Kingston was somewhat surprised to see she was in evening-dress. He did not know that she had called at his rooms on her way to her dressmaker's—and her coat, of course, had hidden her white arms and graceful neck. But her coat and hat had been removed now, and as she sat there Kingston thought she looked wonderfully brave.

He was on the point of tapping on the glass when the door was opened and the old hag appeared. Kingston ducked down, but still continued to watch. Ma Lamley held a heavy dogwhip in her hand, and her eyes were alight with cunning enjoyment. In spite of her short stature, she was obviously strong and muscular. She turned the gas on full, and stood glowering over her captive.

"Now, my beauty," she shrilled, "let's 'ave them nice trinkets o' yours! Come on, dear; I won't 'urt you if you do as you're told!"

Dolores did not answer, and Kingston felt pleased.

"Sulky, are yer?" snapped the old woman. "Answer me, yer hussy!"

Still Dolores did not deign to notice the hag.

"Very well, then; I'll make yer say somethink else!" snarled Ma Lamley angrily. "See 'ow yer like this!"

A grin of enjoyment overspread her forbidding face, and she stepped back a couple of paces. Then she raised the dogwhip above her head and cracked it viciously.

Dolores started just a trifle, and half turned away, as though to ward off the cut.

But Ma Lamley was playing with her victim, and she cackled shrilly.

"Now, we'll see who's sulky or not!" she cried.

Again she raised the whip; but before it could be brought down there was a crash at the window, and Frank Kingston dropped into the attic. In a second he had wrenched the whip away, and the old woman staggered back, terrified.

"Frank!" cried Dolores thankfully.

"Elp, boys—elp!" screamed Mrs. Lamley, rushing to the door.

There was a scramble of feet, and as the old woman hastened downstairs so Phil Lamley, the Bishop, and Josh Danniels scrambled up. There was a few seconds' excited talk, and then the trio rushed into the attic with furious exclamations.

But Kingston was ready for them.

Three to one is big odds, but the famous detective was more than equal to the fight. In less than two minutes all three men were lying on the floor dazed and sore, and Kingston stood looking on smilingly rubbing his knuckles. He had already blown his police-whistle at the window, and a glittering revolver kept the three wretches at bay until a couple of constables and a sergeant put in an appearance.

The rest was tame, and as Kingston drove away with Dolores she looked up into his face and smiled trustfully.

"I knew you'd come, Frank," she declared quietly.

The next day Bishop Lamley was formally charged with murder, and, finding Kingston had positive proof against him, he confessed. The police and the public were amazed, and John Simmonds was allowed to go a free man without a stain on his character.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

A splendid, long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A long instalment of

"WINGS OF GOLD!"

By SIDNEY DREW.

And another short complete story of Frank Kingston, Detective, entitled:

"THE MASKED THREE."

Order your copy of "The Gem Library" Now.

Price One Penny.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



For Next Thursday.

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

By Martin Clifford,

is the title of next Thursday's grand, complete tale of the juniors of St. Jim's. It is a story of excitement, fun, and rivalry, in which a very prominent part is played by Redfern & Co., the new firm at St. Jim's, whose determination to "make things hum" at the old school is amply fulfilled. Don't "get left," but, in order to make sure of reading

"IN HONOUR BOUND!"

order next Thursday's GEM in advance.

"Gem" Cycling Club Wanted.

Master D. G. F. Castle, of 51, Durham Road, Plumstead, Kent, and his chum, B. Willet, are anxious to form a cycling club for the Essex and Kent district, and will be glad if fellow-readers interested in the project will communicate with them.

Concise Replies to My Readers.

S. Reed (Hobart, Tasmania).—I was very interested to receive your letter and to hear about the decision of your Debating Society. It is certainly a good idea to refer controversial matters to the judgment of such a society, but I am afraid that I cannot promise to modify THE GEM Library as you suggest—at present, anyway. I am very glad to hear of the benefit you have received from reading THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries.

M. Agnes S. (Altrincham).—Thanks for your letter. Such a team as you mention may possibly meet St. Jim's some time or other in the future. I cannot tell you definitely when the next tale of Tom Merry & Co. will appear in "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Complete Library. I am afraid I cannot include your request for a correspondent in THE GEM Free Exchange unless you send your name for publication. It is not sufficient to send initials only.

W. A. J. (Belfast).—Reilly, one of the leading lights of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, hails from Belfast. No; Harry Wharton & Co. have not as yet appeared in "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

Thomas W. G. (Kensington Infirmary).—Many thanks for your nice letter. I am so sorry to hear of your ill-luck in being confined to the infirmary so long. You have been unfortunate indeed, and I do sincerely hope that you are quite well again by this. I will insert your request for back numbers under the proper heading in due course.

G. A. C.—I am afraid I cannot supply you with the volume you inquire about. Probably the best way for you to obtain what you want would be to advertise for it under the heading of "Back Numbers Wanted" on this page, which is for the free use of my readers.

"Tigers" (Hull).—The pun in the passage you refer to lies in the double meaning of the word "reign" (rain) in conjunction with the word "hail"—just the sort of bad pun Monty Lowther delights in making. I will insert in our Correspondence Exchange in due course, but I cannot promise to fall in with your last suggestion—I get so many of them, you know. You must not be disappointed at not having received a reply before this, as I take my readers' letters strictly in turn. In any case, it is impossible for a reply to a letter to be published until at least four weeks have elapsed after I have received the letter, owing to the fact of the Chat page going to press in advance.

Of Interest to Amateur Journalists.

"Amateur Editor," of 33, Rookfield Avenue, Muswell Hill, London, N., would be glad to hear from fellow-readers interested in amateur journalism.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

Can any reader supply E. Gould, of 38, Market Street, Widnes, Lancs., with the first number of "The Magnet" Library, entitled "The Making of Harry Wharton"?

Can any reader supply C. G. F. Surney, of "Swinfort," Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, with Nos. 1 to 102 of THE GEM Library, omitting Nos. 57 and 101?

Will any readers oblige E. T. Elderkin, of 183, Castle Road, Bedford, with back numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries?

E. J. Nelis, of 177, Linacre Road, Litherland, Liverpool, is in need of No. 103 of "The Magnet" Library, entitled "The Greyfriars Athletes." Can any reader supply him with it?

Can any reader supply L. Davidson, of 24, Agincourt Road, Landport, Portsmouth, with a few of the first numbers of "The Magnet"?

R. Whitticom, of 10, Campbell Buildings, Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E., has Nos. 50 to 76 of THE GEM Library, and Nos. 52 to 63 of the halfpenny "Magnets," which he is willing to dispose of at three a penny.

B. James, of 5, Royle Road, Phibsboro', Dublin, Ireland, wishes to obtain some back numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries at half-price.

E. B. Rudling, of 2, Watlington Grove, Lower Sydenham, London, would be very glad to receive any back numbers of "The Magnet" and THE GEM.

J. Robinson, 20, Myrtle Road, Heeley, Sheffield, is in need of some halfpenny issues of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries.

F. Kelly, of 9, Argyle Terrace, Kirn, Argyll, has a number of GEMS and "Magnets" which he wishes to dispose of.

Miss M. Welby, of 19, Hope Road, Sale, Cheshire, wishes to obtain some back numbers of THE GEM.

A. Blockley, of 5, Platoff Street, Gedling Street, Nottingham, wishes to obtain Nos. 172, 173, and 174 of "The Magnet" Library.

Will any reader of THE GEM who has any back numbers for sale, kindly communicate the price to W. E. Hinge, of 15, Egliscombe Road, Twerton, Bath?

W. N. Wood, of 32, Coleman Road, London, S.E., has a number of "Magnets" and GEMS he wishes to sell at 4d. each.

D. Davis, Bayham P.O., Ontario, Canada, wishes to obtain halfpenny issues of "The Magnet" and THE GEM. He is willing to pay half price.

Master S. Brandon, of 14, Brown Street, Ontario, E., Montreal, Canada, has some back numbers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" to dispose of free to fellow readers in Montreal.

G. McKennan, of 700, Green Avenue, St. Henry, Montreal, Canada, wishes to exchange numbers 180—208 (except 195) for Nos. 1—25 new series of THE GEM.

Can any reader oblige J. Duffell, c.o. Birch, 39, Queen Margaret Drive, North Kelvinside, Glasgow, with back numbers, ranging from 1—100, of THE GEM or "Magnet"?

L. Wright, Ivy Cottage, Hunsworth Lodge, nr. Gomershal, Leeds, wishes to obtain No. 210 of "The Magnet" (Bolsover Minor's Last Sacrifice), and No. 206 of THE GEM.

G. Streetly, of 36, Lower Hillmorton Road, Rugby, wishes to obtain all halfpenny issues of THE GEM, and Nos. 1—179, 181—183, 186—188, 190—192, and 195 of the penny series; also all the halfpenny numbers of "The Magnet," with Nos. 1—165, 167—185, 187—191, 194, and 197—200 of the penny series.

R. Eadie, of 333, Paisley Road, West, Glasgow, has a great many back numbers of THE GEM, and "The Magnet," which he wishes to sell at halfpenny each.

NOTE.—This week's FREE Correspondence Exchange will be found on the opposite page, and also on Cover Page iii. of our companion paper, "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

(See important announcement at foot of this page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

W. Beaumont, of Burleigh House, Holbrook Street, Langley, nr. Heanor, Notts, would be glad if a girl reader would correspond with him, age 17.

E. Burton, of 41A, St. Leonard's Avenue, Hove, Sussex, age 16, would like to correspond with a girl reader of his own age.

E. Hammonds, age 18, of 231, Shewsbury Road, Forest Gate, London, E., would like to correspond with a girl reader of about the same age.

C. H. Guttridge, of 86, Central Park Road, East Ham, Essex, would like to correspond with a girl reader, age about 15, residing in England or Scotland.

P. H. Holland, of 75, Elm Street, Roath, Cardiff, would like to correspond with a boy or girl reader, age about 15, who is interested in football or stamp-collecting.

Miss Gertie Billington, of 73, Ribble Road, Blackpool, would very much like to correspond with a reader living in England, preferably the Midlands.

Miss E. Pain, of 128, Foord Road, Folkestone, Kent, would like to correspond with a Gemite, either sex, living in England.

E. W. Ravenhill, of Glenmore, Roseberry Avenue, Gloucester, would like to correspond with a boy or girl Gemite, age about 15, living either at home or abroad.

C. Cole, of 80, Boundary Road, Wood Green, N., England, would like to correspond with a girl Gemite, age 18, living in any part of the British Colonies.

H. Baker, of 12, Imperial Avenue, Shirley, Southampton, would like to correspond with any readers of THE GEM, either sex.

A Gaskill, of Lormont, Gt. George's Road, Waterloo, Liverpool, is desirous of corresponding with other readers of about his own age—18.

B. H. Alder, of 25, Kermont Terrace, College Park, London, N.W., England, would very much like to correspond with a girl reader of about his own age—18—residing in the British Isles or the Colonies.

P. D. Madge, of 48, Ridgate Street, Bridgewater, would like to correspond with a young lady reader of THE GEM or "Magnet" Libraries, about 18 years old, living in the United Kingdom.

W. G. Fuller, of 2, Gloucester Road, Acton, London, W., England, age 18, would like to correspond with a girl reader of about the same age, living either in the British Isles or the Colonies.

F. Skinner, of Hayeswood Lodge, West Drive, Streatham Park, London, S.W., England, would very much like to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM or "The Magnet" age about 14 or 15, living in England or Canada.

Miss Annetta H. Zausmer, age 15, of 82, Mile End Road, Bow, London, wishes to correspond with a boy chum of about the same age.

F. Rundle, jun., of 10, Daneville Road, Denmark Hill, London, S.E., would like to correspond with a girl reader of between 18 and 20 years old.

J. Paul, of 57, Union Road, Newington Causeway, London, S.E., would like to correspond with a girl chum of about 16 years of age.

A. Rose, of 117, Fourth Avenue, Manor Park, Essex, would like to correspond with a boy reader about his own age—16.

S. A. Roberts, of 64, Moring Road, Upper Tooting, London, S.W., would like to correspond with a girl reader in London, preferably in or near the same district, whose age is about 17.

Miss R. Pyburn, of 6, Coronation Street, Sunderland, co. Durham, 16, years of age, would very much like a reader of the same age to correspond with her.

Miss B. Udsell, of 186, High Road, Willesden Green, London, N.W., England, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in Canada, London, or Australia.

Miss Elsie Donaldson, of 30, Avenell Road, Highbury, would like to correspond with a boy reader of about 15 or 16 years of age.

Sydney Straw, of 31, St. Paul's Street, Burton-on-Trent, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age about 14 or 15.

P. Dyke, of 86, High Street, Shoreditch, N.E., would very much like to correspond with a girl reader, age 16-17, living in or near London.

J. Close, of 21, Redesdale Road, King's Road, Chelsea, S.W., would like to correspond with a girl chum of about 15-16 years of age, living in Chelsea.

J. Ludford, of 93, Vine Street, Coventry, England, would be glad to correspond with a Gemite in South Africa, if possible with F. Jessett, of Cape Town.

Miss A. Bradey, of Hollington Street, Camberwell, S.E., would like to correspond with a boy reader of about 17 or 18.

G. Reynolds, of 8, Blythe Hill Lane, Catford, S.E., would like to correspond with a girl reader about 16 years of age.

Miss Elsie Wright, age 15, of 14, Osbourne Road, Chester-le-Street, would like a boy reader of about the same age to correspond with her. Her friend, Miss Dora Merry, age 16, would also like a correspondent.

N. McDonald, of 16, Albert Place, Stanwix, Carlisle, would like some reader of THE GEM or "The Magnet" to correspond with him.

Miss Maad Henderson, of 5, Tyne Road, West Stanley, co. Durham, S.O., England, would like a Canadian or Australian boy reader, age about 15 or 16, to correspond with her.

H. Bimington, of Pickwell Rectory, Oakham, Rutland, would like a girl chum of about 18 years of age to correspond with him.

A. Ludlow and B. Brooker, of Dry Hill Farm, Tonbridge, Kent, wish to correspond with two young lady Gemites, age 16-19.

A. Nozaki, Commercial School, Yokkaichi, Japan, wishes to exchange picture-postcards with readers.

Miss J. Robson, of 77, Palatine Road, Stoke Newington, London, N., would like to correspond with a boy or girl Gemite, age about 14 or 15.

Reginald Paton, age 16, wishes to correspond with a girl or boy reader of about the same age. Address: 68, Glovell Avenue, Longsight, Manchester.

E. Paine, age 16, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada, would like to correspond with a girl reader about the same age.

E. O'Brien, of 6, Stirling Street, Liverpool, England, would be pleased to correspond with a girl or boy reader. He would especially correspond with Miss Selver, of Ontario.

H. Alderman, of 33, Wood Street, Chiswick, age 18, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

H. Phillips, of 58, Mattam Road, Forest Hill, would be pleased to correspond with any other boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

N. Wheeler, of 843, Hamilton Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age about 15.

Miss G. M. Booth, of 512, Eyre Street, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, would like to correspond with a reader of "The Magnet."

H. Naslund, age 19, of 419, Pritchard Avenue, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM.

Miss P. Levey, of Agnosta House, 1, Listria Park, Manor Park, Stamford Hill, London, N., would like to correspond with a boy or girl Gemite, age 15-17.

A. Butterworth, of Forrens Road, Alberton, South Australia, would like to correspond with a girl reader, about 16, living in England.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

Owing to it having come to my notice that the facilities offered by "THE GEM" Free Correspondence Exchange have been in some cases abused by unscrupulous persons, resulting in inconvenience and annoyance to a number of readers, the Editor has reluctantly decided to close down the Exchange forthwith. Readers are therefore asked to note that no further requests will be published. The Editor greatly regrets that necessity has compelled him to take this drastic step, and sincerely apologises to those of his readers who have already sent in requests which cannot now be published.

The issue of our famous companion paper, the cover of which is reproduced below, contains

"SCHOOLBOYS' TREASURE!"

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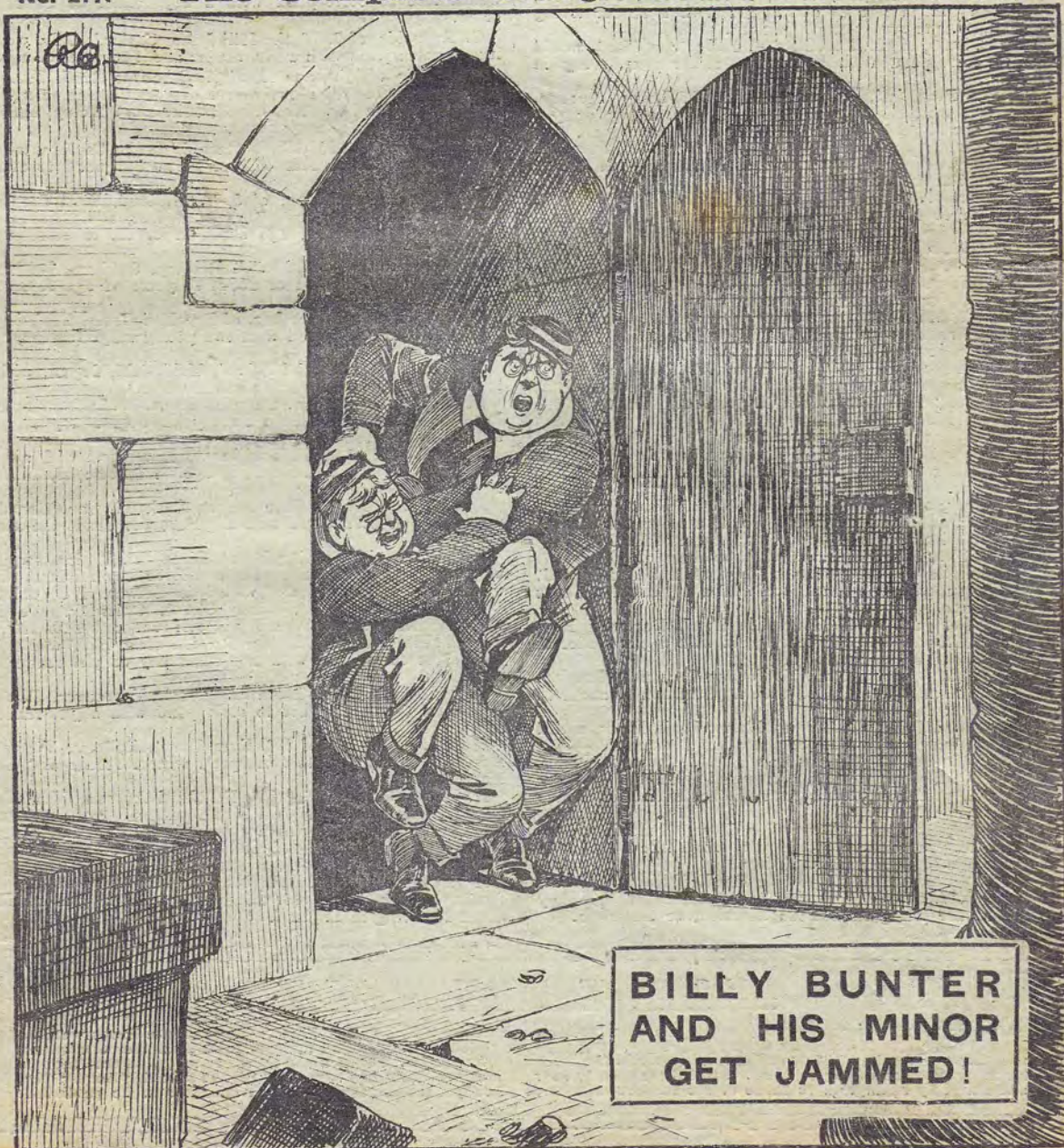
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