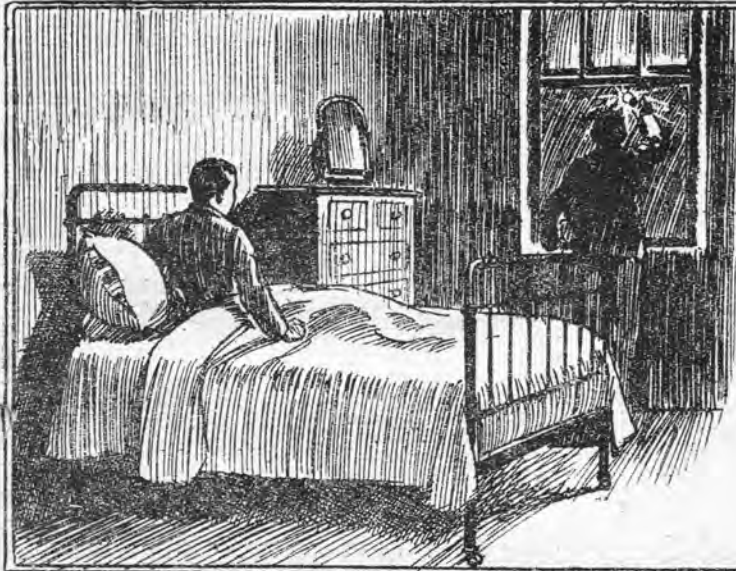


Every

Thursday.



Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem.



TOM MERRY'S PERIL!

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

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

The Letter From India.

TOM MERRY!

"Where's Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, glanced round as his name was called. But he was too busy to reply. He was at the wicket, on the junior cricket ground at St. Jim's, and Fatty Wynn, of the New House, was bowling. And when Fatty Wynn was bowling, it behoved the batsman to keep his attention for the ball, and for nothing else.

Click!

The ball came down, and the nimble willow met it, and sent it on its journey. Then Tom Merry glanced round again at the juniors who were calling him. They were Manners and Lowther, his chums on the Shell.

"Tom Merry! Tommy, my boy, there's a letter for you!" called out Manners.

"Keep it!" said Tom Merry. "I'm batting now, ass, and I haven't any time to read letters."

"But it's from India!"

"I don't care if it's from China—I'm bowling now."

Fatty Wynn had the ball again; Figgins had fielded it in next to no time. The fat Fourth Former took his little run, and sent the ball down again with the force of a four-point-seven shell.

"But I say, Tommy—" called out Lowther.

"Oh, rats! I—OH!"

Squash!

Tom Merry swiped at the ball a second too late, and his balls went flying. Fatty Wynn gave his fat little chuckle.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned Blake, of the Fourth.

Tom Merry grunted.

"All the fault of that ass Lowther! You champion chump, what do you mean by yelling at me when I'm batting?" demanded Tom Merry indignantly.

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther. "It's only practice, anyway."

Tom Merry grunted again, and walked off the pitch. Fatty Wynn was the most dangerous junior bowler at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry had been keeping his wicket up against him in fine style. But it was down now. But Tom Merry's face cleared as he joined his chums by the pavilion, and Kangaroo, of the Shell, went in to bat. It was only cricket practice, after all, not a match.

"You see, it's a giddy letter from India!" Monty Lowther explained blandly.

"Well, it could have waited," growled Tom Merry.

"I dare say it could, but we couldn't," said Lowther, with a grin. "You seem to have forgotten the fact that the whole study has gone stony broke, and that we shall have to have tea in Hall to-day unless something turns up. This letter has dropped from the clouds just in time."

"We were watching for the postman, you see," Manners explained. "We rushed him as soon as he got inside the gate. Nothing for me, and nothing for Lowther, and only this for you. I suppose you haven't got numerous correspondents in India, so it must be from your uncle there. And it stands to reason that a chap's uncle wouldn't write to him from India without sending him a tip. If I had an uncle who did, I'd disown him!"

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther emphatically.

Tom Merry took the letter in his hand. It was addressed to him in a small, fine writing: "T. Merry, St. James's Collegiate School, Sussex, England," but the writing was nothing like the big, heavy hand of his soldier uncle.

"This can't be from my uncle," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because it isn't his writing."

"Oh, he may have got somebody else to address it," said Lowther. "Don't nip our hopes in the bud. I tell you we're all stony, and there simply must be a remittance in this letter."

Next Thursday:

"TOWSER MINOR!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

"Why must there?"

"Because if there isn't we shall have to have tea in Hall instead of in the study!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"His khitmutgar, or whatever you call him, may have addressed the envelope," Manners suggested. "It doesn't look like an English hand. But I suppose you haven't a heap of correspondents in India?"

"Not that I know of," said Tom Merry with a smile.

"Bai Jove! I can suggest a way of proving whether it's from your uncle or not, Tom Merry," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form.

"How's that?"

"Open it, dear boy, and look inside."

Monty Lowther slapped the swell of St. Jim's upon the back.

"Go on!" he exclaimed admiringly. "What a ripping suggestion. Of course, Tom Merry would never have thought of that by himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Anyway, open it, Tommy, and let's see whether there's a tea in the study inside," said Manners.

Tom Merry laughed and slit the envelope with his pen-knife. He felt inside for the letter, and drew his fingers out again with an expression of amazement.

"There's isn't any letter inside," he said.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"There's no letter," said Tom Merry. He opened the envelope wider and looked into it.

"Hold on—there's something," said Lowther. "Oh, it's a card."

Tom Merry, in utter amazement, drew a triangular fragment of cardboard from the envelope. Upon the cardboard was traced a triangle in red ink, and in each of the three corners of the triangle was a tiny red circle.

Tom Merry looked into the envelope again. There was nothing else there. The cardboard triangle was all that the envelope had contained.

The chums of the Shell gazed at the fragment of card that Tom Merry held between his finger and thumb in utter astonishment.

"What on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry in perplexity.

"Bai Jove! It's jolly queer!"

"Your uncle must be off his giddy rocker to send you a thing like that!" said Monty Lowther blankly.

"It's not from my uncle," said Tom Merry decidedly.

"It's not his writing, and he wouldn't play a silly trick like this, anyway. It's a practical joke. I suppose—though why anybody living in India should play a trick like that on a schoolboy in England is a giddy mystery."

"It beats me," said Manners.

A crowd of juniors had gathered round, and all of them were looking in curiosity and amazement at the mysterious card.

"What on earth is it?" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"Looks like the sign of some giddy secret society," said Digby.

Tom Merry smiled.

"I don't suppose an Indian secret society would take the trouble to send this to me, especially as I don't know what it means," he said.

"Bai Jove! It's a mystewy."

"It's some idiotic lark," said Herries.

"Did it really come from India at all?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry showed the envelope. The stamps and the postmarks were Indian; there was no doubt that the mysterious missive had come from India. There were several Indian postmarks upon it, and Tom Merry distinguished the names of Bundelore and Bombay.

"Know anybody in either of those places?" asked Blake.

"My uncle, General Merry, is, or was, stationed at Bundelore," said Tom Merry. "I suppose the letter comes through Bombay, and that accounts for the Bombay postmark."

"It's a lark, of course."

"It must be; but I don't understand it," said Tom Merry. "It beats me. Well, we sha'n't get any tea in the study out of this, you chaps."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"It's rotten," he said. "I was quite expecting a remittance, and it turns out to be a rotten practical joke. I should like to be within easy punching distance of the joker. Chuck the rotten thing away!"

Tom Merry was about to do so; but he paused.

"No; I think I'll keep it," he said. "I may find out

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some time what it means. Blessed if I can make it out now."

And he slipped the card into his waistcoat pocket. Then he went back to the cricket practice; but he was thinking more of the mysterious letter from India than of the cricket now. Was it a practical joke? Why should someone he did not know, thousands of miles away, play a practical joke on him? How did that someone know anything about him, or where he lived? But if it was not a joke, what was it? Tom Merry was utterly perplexed; and, though he strove to drive the strange matter from his mind, it would not go. He was still thinking about it when cricket practice was over, and the juniors went in to tea.

CHAPTER 2.

The Face At The Window.

TOM MERRY'S peculiar letter from India was the talk of St. Jim's that evening. It was so strange, and so mysterious, that it appealed to the imaginations of the juniors. Even the seniors, when they heard about it, were interested. Tom Merry's preparation that evening was subject to many interruptions. Fellows came from all quarters to ask to be allowed to see the letter from India. They came over from the New House on the same errand. Even Kildare, the head of the Sixth, looked into Tom Merry's study to see the red triangle, and stared at it in amazement.

"And you don't know what it means, Merry, or if it means anything?" he asked.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I haven't an idea," he said.

"Nor who sent it?"

"I can't even guess!"

"It's jolly queer," said Kildare, his brows knitting a little as he looked at the strange device upon the card.

"It beats me hollow!" said Tom Merry.

"It's a queer coincidence, too!" Kildare said slowly.

"What's a coincidence?"

"That you should get this extraordinary letter from India at the same time that a new boy—an Indian—is coming to St. Jim's," said Kildare.

Tom Merry started.

"An Indian chap coming here?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; Mr. Railton told me so to-day," said the captain of St. Jim's. "He's a Hindu from Bombay; his name's Kalouth Das. It's strange that this letter should reach you at the same time."

"Jolly queer!" said Tom Merry. "When he comes, I'll ask him if he's ever heard of this giddy red triangle. A chap from India may be able to throw some light on the matter!"

"Yes; that's a good idea!"

And Kildare quitted the study looking very perplexed.

Fellows came in, on and off, all the time, and Tom Merry's work that evening was done in snatches. By the time his prep. was finished, nearly all the School House, and half the New House, had seen the red triangle, and made comments upon the strange affair. After his prep. was over, Tom Merry went down to the common-room with Lowther and Manners for a chat with the fellows before going to bed.

Levison of the Fourth came up to him as he entered the common-room. Levison, the cad of the Fourth, was not on good terms with Tom Merry, but he assumed an extremely cordial manner just now. He wanted to see the triangle.

"May I see the card, Merry?" he asked.

Tom Merry yawned.

"Yes, if you like. I suppose you're about the only fellow who hasn't seen it," he said. "Here it is!"

He handed the mysterious card to Levison.

The narrow, keen eyes of the Fourth-Former scanned it carefully. Some fellows gathered round to hear Levison's opinion. Levison was not liked at St. Jim's; but he was known to be a very keen fellow, and he often saw things that other fellows could not see. He had a gift for investigation which might have made a good detective of him, but which made him decidedly obnoxious as a schoolfellow. He knew everybody's business, and was not particularly scrupulous as to how he came to know it.

But even Levison was puzzled by the mysterious sign on the card.

"It must mean something," he said.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I suppose it's meant to mean something," he said.

"But I can't make out what it may mean!"

"I've read a lot about India," said Levison, "and there was an Indian chap at my old school, Greyfriars, I used to talk to sometimes. India's crammed with secret societies, and they had queer symbols, and this might be one of them."



As the Bully's eyes rested on the Indian, he uttered a sudden cry: "Great Scott! Look!" His strange and startled tone caused the Shell fellows to stare at Kalouth Das's exposed arm in amazement. "It's the red triangle!" shouted Gore. (See Chapter 7.)

Perhaps your uncle out there has got mixed up in some secret society!"

"What rot!" said Tom Merry. "Besides, if he had, why should they send this thing to me?"

"Might be some sort of vendetta—I've heard of such things."

"Good! I'll make a story out of that for the Weekly," said Tom Merry, laughing.

And he returned the card to his pocket.

In the junior common-room, there was a great deal of talk upon the subject, till Tom Merry was tired of it, and was tempted to throw the mysterious card into the fire. But he did not. Before the juniors went to bed, Levison referred to the subject again.

"If I were you, I'd write to your uncle, and ask him if he knows anything about the matter," he said. "It may be important, for all you know."

"It's not worth bothering about! Besides, he's up country in India—it would take months to get an answer!"

"You could telegraph!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Telegraph to a man on the Indian Frontier, because a silly ass has sent me a card with a triangle inked on it? He would think I was off my rocker!"

"Do as you like," said Levison. "If I had had a thing like that sent to me from India, I shouldn't feel so jolly cool about it!"

"Oh, I'm not feeling nervous!"

Tom Merry laughed as he spoke, yet Levison's words had made some impression upon his mind.

Was it possible that that strange missive was a hint of danger? Yet what danger could threaten him, safe in England, within the walls of St. Jim's?

He dismissed the thought with a smile at its absurdity; but it returned. He went up to bed with the other fellows, and turned in, but he did not sleep easily; and when at last he fell into slumber, it was to dream of the red triangle.

His sleep was broken, his dreams strange and troubling. From the dimness he seemed to see a dark and threatening face that looked at him, and a sense of danger oppressed him and held him in thrall, and he stirred and moaned helplessly in his sleep. Even in his sleep he knew that it was a dream, and he strove to break the spell; and suddenly, with a start, he awoke.

The perspiration was thick upon his brow, and he was trembling.

He lay broad awake, and glancing about the dusky dormitory with the uneasiness born of the nightmare. The other fellows were sleeping soundly; there was a sound of steady breathing in the dormitory, and no other sound.

Stay! What was that slight sound, inaudible if his ears had not been strained to an unaccustomed pitch?

Creak!

He looked quickly towards the window.

Outside there was starlight, and it glimmered upon the panes; but across the pane, where all should have been glimmer, a dark shadow lay.

Tom Merry's heart thumped, and his blood seemed to freeze in his veins for a moment.

Was it the shape of a human head he saw there, blotting the starlight on the pane, or was it fancy? Was it a face at the window?

He leaped up in bed with an inarticulate cry.

In an instant the shadow was gone from the window.

Tom Merry dashed towards the window, jumped upon a chair, and threw open the sash. He looked out. Below the window the ivy rustled in the night breeze, the leaves glimmering in the starlight.

The quadrangle was silent and dark.

"Hallo!" came a sleepy voice from Monty Lowther's bed.

"What's that?"

Tom Merry closed the window, laughing at his own fears. It had been a shadow, he told himself—a shadow cast upon the glass by the swaying branches of the big elm outside.

"It's all right, Monty," he said.

"What on earth are you out of bed for?"

"I—I had a dream."

"Poof! Go to sleep, and let me," grunted Lowther.

Tom Merry turned in again, and slept soundly until the morning.

CHAPTER 3.

Kalouth Das!

MR. LINTON, the master of the Shell, was taking that Form in Latin the next morning, when Toby, the page, tapped at the Form-room door and put his shock head into the room. The Shell, not at all displeased to have a rest from the Gallic War, yawned, and bestowed a grateful glance upon Toby. Mr. Linton did not seem so pleased.

"What is it?" he rapped out sharply.

"The dark gentleman, sir," said Toby.

"The what?"

"The noo boy, sir," said Toby, somewhat abashed. "I was told to tell you when he come, sir."

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Linton. "Take Master Kalouth Das into my study, and tell him to wait till I come."

"Yes, sir."

And Toby disappeared.

The Shell looked interested. A new boy always excited some interest, and when the new boy happened to be of a foreign race, the interest was proportionately increased. There had been Indian boys at St. Jim's before, but it was some time ago, and all the fellows were curious to see Kalouth Das. It was not known yet what Form he was going into; but from the fact that Mr. Linton had been specially informed of his arrival, the Shell fellows guessed that he was probably coming into their Form. They already knew that he was to belong to the School House.

Mr. Linton turned to his class.

"I shall send a prefect to take charge of you for last lesson," he said, "and when school is dismissed, I want you, Merry, to come into my study."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry.

And classics being finished, Mr. Linton quitted the room, and Langton, the prefect, came in to look after the Shell till they were dismissed. The Shell were very pleased. Langton was a good-natured fellow, and his taking charge of them meant that they were to have an easy time for the rest of the morning. The hour of dismissal came at last, and the Shell trooped out.

"Don't let Linton keep you long, Tommy," said Monty Lowther; "we want to get some cricket practice before dinner. We've got to beat the New House on Saturday."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I'm blessed if I know what he wants me for," he said.

"But I'll get out as soon as I can. Something to do with the new chap, very likely."

Monty Lowther looked suddenly alarmed.

"Don't let them put him into our study!" he exclaimed.

"We've had several narrow escapes this term. We don't want a fourth in the study."

"Not if I can help it," said Tom Merry laughing.

"Gore's study is next to ours, and he has only Skimpole with him," said Manners. "If Mr. Linton says anything about studies, you can suggest that."

"I'll remember."

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Gore wrathfully. "I don't want a blessed nigger stuck in my study."

"He isn't a nigger; he's a Hindu."

"I don't care what he is; I don't want him."

"There won't be any choice about that, if Mr. Linton says so," said Monty Lowther.

"Dash it all, be reasonable; you are only two, and we're three."

"Oh, rats!"

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DON'T MISS "A FORBIDDEN CHUM!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the "MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1st.

Tom Merry walked away to his Form-master's study. He tapped and went in. Mr. Linton was there with the new boy, and Tom Merry glanced at the latter with some curiosity.

The Hindu was a lad apparently his own age; but he might have been older—it was difficult to tell. He was very slim and slightly built, and did not look strong. But Tom Merry's keen eye noted that he was wiry-looking, and very firm upon his feet. His face was extremely dark, and his eyes were brilliant, and never still. They flashed upon Tom Merry as he entered, and seemed to take him in at a glance. Then he looked away; but Tom Merry remained with the impression that the "dark gentleman," as Toby had called him, was watching him out of the corner of his eye.

Tom Merry's first impression of the Indian was decidedly not favourable. But he would not allow himself to feel an unreasonable repugnance towards a fellow he did not know.

"Merry, I am glad you have come! This is the new boy, Kalouth Das. He is coming into the Shell."

"Yes, sir."

The Indian gave a start.

"Merry!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Linton glanced at him.

"Yes, this is Tom Merry. Do you know the name?"

The Indian's face was impassive again in a moment.

"No, sir."

He spoke excellent English.

"I imagined, from the way you spoke, that you had heard the name before," said Mr. Linton, glancing curiously at the Indian boy.

"I have heard the name of General Merry in India, sir," explained Kalouth Das. "That was why the name struck me for a moment. It is not a common name."

"He is my uncle," said Tom Merry.

"I want you to look after Kalouth Das a little, Merry; that is why I have sent for you," said Mr. Linton. "He is a total stranger in England, and quite new to English schools. As you are head of the Shell, it is your duty to take some care of him."

"I am quite ready to do so, sir," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I will do anything I can for Kalouth Das."

"Thank you, Merry. He will be put in the study next to yours—there are two boys there at present: Gore and Skimpole."

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry, much relieved.

"You may go with Tom Merry now, Kalouth Das, and he will show you your study, and the other things necessary."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Linton made a gesture of dismissal, and the two juniors left the study. In the passage Tom Merry paused for a moment. The Indian boy's bright, bird-like eyes were upon him.

"You've just arrived in England?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yesterday," said Kalouth Das. "I came on from Southampton to-day."

"You came alone, I suppose?"

"Quite alone."

"You speak English jolly well," Tom Merry said admiringly.

Kalouth Das showed his white teeth in a smile.

"Yes; I have spoken English from my childhood," he said.

"But you speak your own language as well, of course?"

"Oh, yes; but I like English best."

"You'll find it more useful here," said Tom Merry with a smile. "Precious few fellows here know any Hindustanee."

"I suppose so."

"Come up to the Shell passage, and I'll show you your

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study. You'd better have your books and things put in there, and your box can be taken up to the dorm."

They ascended the stairs. Kalouth Das looked round with interested eyes that seemed to miss no detail of the place. Tom Merry knocked at the door of Gore's study and opened it.

A youth in a large pair of spectacles was sitting at the table, and he blinked and nodded at the new-comers.

"Hallo, Skimpy!" said Tom Merry. "Where's Gore?"

"I really don't know, Merry; he is not here."

"I can see that. This is your new study-mate, Kalouth Das. Tell Gore when he comes in that Kalouth Das belongs to this study, will you?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Skimpole.

Tom Merry piloted his new charge on his way, and showed him the dormitory and the Form-rooms and other things that he cared to see. The Indian seemed to take a great interest in all he saw, and he thanked Tom Merry in flowing language for the trouble he had taken.

"Rot!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I'm bound to look after a new chap a bit. I hope you'll be comfortable here."

"Thank you so much!"

"If you don't mind I'll buzz off now; the fellows are waiting for me on the cricket-ground," Tom Merry explained. "I've shown you where the dining-room is. You'll hear a bell ring for dinner."

"All right."

And Tom Merry, leaving the new boy in Gore's study with Skimpole, hurried into his own room for his bat, and then raced down to the cricket-ground.

CHAPTER 4.

Not Wanted.

MONTY LOWTHER met the hero of the Shell with a glare when he arrived.

"What on earth have you been doing?" Lowther exclaimed. "Why didn't you come down to the practice, you ass?"

"I couldn't," Tom Merry explained. "Linton asked me to show the new chap round."

"Oh, blow the new chap!" growled Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I couldn't refuse; besides, I didn't want to. It's only decent to be civil to a new kid, especially a foreigner. He's coming into the Shell, and he's going to share Gore's study."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"I imagine Gore will cut up rusty," he remarked.

Tom Merry frowned a little.

"He will have to let the new chap alone," he said. "Mr. Linton has put him into the study, and that settles it. Besides, Gore and Skimpole have been only two in a study for a long time, and they can't expect to keep it to themselves for ever. Blake and his crowd go four to a room. If Gore is reasonable—"

"But he isn't," grinned Lowther.

"Well, I sha'n't let him chivvy the Indian, if I can help it."

"Let's get some practice now before dinner," said Manners. "Those New House bounders are slogging away like anything. They want to lick us in the first House match of the season."

"They won't do it, then! Come on!"

And Tom Merry speedily forgot all about the new boy in the interest of battling against bowling from Manners and Lowther alternately. The bell rang only too soon, and the cricketers poured in for dinner.

"I'll take my bat up to the study and join you in a minute," said Tom Merry, as they entered the School House.

"Right-ho! Buck up! Linton is always ratty if we're late."

"I won't be a minute."

Tom Merry ran upstairs and along the Shell passage. As he drew near to his own study there was a sound of loud and angry voices from the adjoining room. He recognised the powerful tones of Gore, of the Shell.

"Outside, I say!"

Tom Merry frowned darkly. Gore was speaking, and it was easy for Tom Merry to guess whom he was addressing. Gore was beginning on the new boy already. George Gore had once had the unenviable distinction of being the bully of the Shell. He had turned over a new leaf since that time, but the old nature broke out sometimes. And this was evidently one of the times. Gore was very much annoyed at having a third fellow put into his study, and he was wreaking his annoyance upon the new junior.

"You've got to get out!" he roared.

"But this is my study!" came the silky tones of the Indian.

"I don't care! You can find another. I'm not going to have a blessed nigger in my study!"

"Really, Gore—" began the mild tones of Skimpole.

"Shut up, Skimpole! It's bad enough having a tame lunatic like you in the study, without having a giddy cannibal too! This study isn't going to start in business as a collection of freaks!" roared Gore.

"But my dear Gore—"

"Shut up, you ass! Now, then, you nigger, I'm going to chuck your books out, and if you don't follow them, I'll chuck you after them! Savvy?"

"But it is my study. I have no other."

"Find another! Some of the other fellows may like niggers, and take you in. Anyway, I'm not going to have you here!"

Crash!

A shower of books descended upon the linoleum in the passage, just as Tom Merry reached the doorway.

"Now out you go, you nigger!"

"I will not go!"

"Then I'll jolly soon chuck you!"

The sound of a struggle followed.

Tom Merry dashed into the study, his face flushed with anger. Fellows objected, as a rule, to having new boys in their studies—there was none too much room in any of them. But to throw out a new fellow who had been assigned to a study by a Housemaster was altogether "too thick," especially under the circumstances of the new fellow being a stranger in a strange land.

Gore had grasped the Indian to hurl him through the doorway after his books, but Kalouth Das was putting up an unexpected struggle. Slim and slight as he was, the Indian was very wiry, and it needed all the burly Shell fellow's brute strength to whirl him round to the door.

"Stop!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Gore. "He's going out!"

"He's not going out—he was sent into this study."

"Well, now he's going to be sent out."

"Look here—"

"Oh, rats! Out you go, you black bounder!"

The Indian was whirling at the doorway in Gore's powerful grip. Tom Merry flung himself upon them, and grasped Gore by the shoulders, and dragged him forcibly away from his victim. Gore let go the Indian to defend himself. He was too strong for Kalouth Das, but he was no match for Tom Merry. After a momentary struggle, Gore was flung bodily into a corner of the study, and he lay there gasping.

Tom Merry looked at him with blazing eyes.

"Now keep your hands off the new fellow, you cad, or you'll get worse than that!" he exclaimed.

"Hang you!" gasped Gore.

Tom Merry turned to the Indian.

To his surprise, the dark junior drew back with a strange glitter in his eyes, and anything but gratitude or good feeling in his face. His eyes seemed to burn with strange fires as they were fixed upon Tom Merry.

"Why do you interfere here?" he exclaimed, in a strange, harsh voice. "I have not asked you to help me."

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Mr. Linton told me to look after you," he said. "And I suppose you don't want to be chucked neck and crop out of the study, do you?"

"I will not have you help me."

"Are you dotty? Why not?"

"I will not—I will not!"

The Indian spoke with a strange excitement that Tom Merry could not understand.

"Look here, Kalouth Das," he said roughly, "you're no match for Gore, and you ought to be jolly thankful there's a fellow to stand up for you."

Kalouth Das set his white teeth.

"I will not have it!" he exclaimed.

"Do you mean to say that you won't have me interfere?"

"Yes—yes!"

"You must be off your rocker!" said Tom Merry in astonishment. "I'm captain of the Shell, and it's my place to put down bullying. What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say—I will not be obliged to you," said the Indian passionately. "Keep out of my quarrels, and I will thank you."

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"If you really mean that, I'll take you at your word," he exclaimed, "but I certainly think that you must be dotty."

"I do mean it."

"Very well, then. You may settle with Gore yourself."

And Tom Merry, with an angry brow, quitted the study.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Please Order Your Copy Early.

He picked up his bat, which he had dropped in the passage, and tossed it into his study, and then went down to dinner, his brow still clouded. As he went downstairs, he heard a loud bump and a cry in the Shell passage, and he knew that Gore had thrown the Indian out of the study. There was no one to stop him this time.

There was a cloud on Tom Merry's brow as he took his place at the Shell table in the dining-room. Manners and Lowther glanced at him curiously. George Gore came in a minute later, and he was grinning. He was as surprised as Tom Merry at the peculiar conduct of the dark junior, but it suited him very well. Kalouth Das came in, too, looking dusty and angry.

"Mr. Linton, who was at the head of the Shell table, glanced sharply at the dusky junior.

"You are late, Kalouth Das. Did you not hear the bell?"

"I did not notice it, sahib."

"Have you been fighting?"

Gore looked uneasy. He did not want his action to come to Mr. Linton's knowledge, for very good reasons. He wondered whether the Indian was a sneak or not. He was very soon enlightened.

"Yes, sir," said Kalouth Das.

"Fighting already!" said Mr. Linton, with a frown. "And with whom, Kalouth Das?"

"With Gore, sir."

Mr. Linton raised his eyebrows.

"What have you been fighting with the new boy for, Gore?" he asked acidly.

Gore flushed red.

"It—it was a little study row—that's all, sir," he stammered.

"Gore did not wish me to be in his study, sir," said the Indian. "He threw me out."

There was a murmur from the Shell fellows round the table. Whatever a fellow suffered at the hands of another, it was an unwritten law at St. Jim's that the masters should not be dragged into private quarrels. Sneaking, whether there was an excuse for it or not, was strictly tabooed. And the gathering storm on Mr. Linton's brow showed that George Gore was likely to suffer for his high-handed proceedings, now that they had come to the Shell-master's knowledge.

"So you objected to Kalouth Das's presence in the study, Gore?" said Mr. Linton grimly.

"I—I—I don't like niggers, sir."

"You knew that I had assigned him to that study?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"And you ejected him with violence?"

"It—it was only a joke, sir."

"Such jokes are not allowed in my Form," said the Shell-master drily. "You will come to my study immediately after dinner, Gore. I shall cane you severely for having bullied the new boy. And you will take five hundred lines for applying an opprobrious term to Kalouth Das."

Gore gulped. He said nothing, but he gave Kalouth Das a look which spoke volumes. The Indian had made a bitter enemy in the School House.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at the Fourth Form table. "Bai Jove! Goah has got it in the neck this time!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" growled Blake. "He had no right to lay his paws on the nigger!"

"But the chap oughtn't to have sneaked, deah boy."

"No; but he wouldn't know any better."

Arthur Augustus nodded thoughtfully.

"Pewwaps I ought to give him a little advice on that subject," he remarked.

Blake grunted.

"Perhaps you ought to mind your own bizney," he suggested.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silence, please!" said little Mr. Lathom.

And Arthur Augustus's remark remained unfinished.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus Is Not Pleased.

GEORGE GORE came out of Mr. Linton's study rubbing his hands together and making a series of wry faces that showed how he had suffered at the Shell-master's hands. He was in a towering rage, and he only grunted in reply to the expressions of sympathy he met with from the juniors in the passage.

"It was rotten of the nigger to sneak," said Kangaroo. "But you deserved all you got, Gore, old man, so let that comfort you."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Gore.

"Going to chuck Kalouth Das out again?" asked Levison, with a grin.

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"Mind your own business!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust you will not think of doin' anythin' of the sort, Goah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "It is wotten bad form to jump on a stwangan in this way. I should feel bound to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean—"

Gore stamped away furiously without waiting to hear what Arthur Augustus meant. He was hurt—Mr. Linton had a sure hand with the cane. And he had five hundred lines to do. Altogether, it certainly was not Gore's day.

Nobody sympathised with Gore very much; but there was a general agreement that the Indian had acted rottenly in sneaking to the Form-master. But, as Jack Blake said, he couldn't be expected to know the customs of St. Jim's, and what they expected of a fellow, when he had only just arrived from India.

"Somebody ought to explain to him," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Yaas, wathah! As it's wathah a delicate mattah, pewwaps it ought to be left to me," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"He's gone up to his study," said Monty Lowther. "Go and pitch into him now, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus went up to the Shell passage. He looked into the study, and found the Indian alone there. Neither Gore nor Skimpole was to be seen. The Indian junior was arranging his books and other belongings, and his dark face was quite calm and inscrutable. He did not even look round as D'Arcy came in.

Arthur Augustus coughed to attract his attention.

"H'm!"

The Indian did not turn his head.

"Ahem!"

Still no sign.

"Kalouth Das, deah boy."

The dark junior looked round at last.

"What do you want?" he asked, fixing his black eyes upon the swell of the School House.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a little taken aback. As he afterwards confided to Blake, the Indian was a decidedly "queeah beggah."

"I want to speak a few words to you in a friendly way," said D'Arcy, after a pause.

"Well?"

The monosyllable was not very inviting, but Arthur Augustus went on manfully.

"It appeahs that Goah ejected you fwom this study, deah boy. It was vewy wuff and wotten of Goah, and if any of us had been here we would have chipped in, I assuah you."

"I haven't asked you to."

"Ahem! We would have done it without bein' asked, deah boy," said D'Arcy mildly. "It would be only playin' the game, deah boy. But you sneaked—ahem!—you told Mr. Linton what Goah had done."

"He asked me."

"Ya-a-s, but we don't tell mastahs things here, you know. We settle all our little wows among ourselves, without dwaggin' the masters in. Tellin' a mastah anythin' is called sneaking, and the fellows don't like it."

"Indeed!"

"And—and they're liable to cut up wusty about it," you know."

"Well?"

"I—I was only goin' to give you a friendly caution, you know," said D'Arcy, rather discouraged by the Indian's manner. "You are a new chap here, and you don't know the wopes, and so I thought I would give you a word of advice."

"Thank you!"

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus more cheerfully. "I'm always weady and willin' to help on you youngstahs. Now, in the future I should advise you not to mention things to the mastahs. It gets the fellows' backs up, and it isn't exactly playin' the game, you know, is it?"

"I shall do as I choose."

"Ya-a-s, I suppose you will, but—"

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Well, no, I don't know that I have."

"Very well!"

And the Indian turned his back upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's went very red.

For a moment he was tempted to hurl himself upon the junior he had come there to befriend and knock him right and left, and wipe up the study with him generally, but he remembered that the fellow was a new boy, strange to St. Jim's and strango to England, and he generously forbore.

Without another word, but with a heightened colour, the swell of St. Jim's quitted the study and walked away.

D'Arcy's face had still a crimson hue as he went out into the quadrangle. Tom Merry and his chums were on the School House steps, chatting. They stopped, and looked at the swell of St. Jim's in surprise as he came out.

"Wherefore that troubled brow?" asked Monty Lowther, grinning. "Did the noble Indian cut up rusty?"

Arthur Augustus halted, his eyes gleaming. "The fellow is an uttah wottah!" he exclaimed.

"What has he done?" asked Manners.

"He has tweated me with the gwossett diswespect. I went to his studay to explain to him, as he doesn't know the wopes, and the uttah wottah actually tweated me with wude-ness, and finished by turnin' his back on me."

"Perhaps he couldn't stand it," said Monty Lowther musingly.

"Couldn't stand what, Lowthah?"

"Your chivvy!" explained Lowther blandly. "He may have turned his back in sheer self-defence, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"The fellow is a queer merchant," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I can't make him out. I chipped in when Gore was chucking him out, and he wouldn't have it. I could have stopped Gore soon enough, and have saved him the trouble of sneaking to Linton. But he preferred it the other way."

"Queer beggar altogether!" commented Lowther.

"And I'm blessed if I like him!" said Tom Merry.

"Although he's a stranger here, he ought to know how to be civil, and he's not civil."

"Wathah not! He's a most uncivil beast!"

"Well, we can let him alone," said Tom Merry. "I suppose we're not bound to come into contact with the fellow."

"I shall certainly let the wottah severely alone!"

"And so will we!" said the Terrible Three together.

But in that the chums of the Shell were not destined to have their own way. After school that day, Mr. Linton signed to Tom Merry to stop at his desk as the Shell fellows went out of the Form-room.

"I have a little favour to ask of you, Merry," said the Shell-master, unbending a little from his usual stiffness.

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom Merry, in some surprise.

"It is about the Indian. He does not seem to be on very good terms so far with the rest of the Form."

"No, sir."

"He must be feeling very strange and lonely here, Merry, without any other boy speaking his own language, or knowing his country or customs."

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"I should like you to show him some little kindness, Merry. You could take him to tea in your study, and talk to him, you know. Something to make him feel more at home. I know it will take up your time, but a certain amount is demanded by the laws of courtesy to a stranger, don't you think so?"

"Certainly, sir; I will do as you say with pleasure."

"Thank you, Merry!"

And Tom Merry followed his chums out of the Form-room.

CHAPTER 6.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study.

MANNERS and Lowther were waiting for Tom Merry in the big doorway of the School House. They were both curious to know what Mr. Linton wanted.

"Row?" asked Manners laconically.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; not a row this time. It's the Indian!"

"What about him?"

"Mr. Linton suggests that we might take him up, and take him into tea, and look after him a bit, and so on."

"Oh, rot!" said Manners, and Monty Lowther grunted disapprovingly.

"Well, I know it's a bit thick," said Tom Merry apologetically. "Linton doesn't know what a queer kid he is. But it's true enough that he must be feeling pretty rotten here all by himself, especially as most of the fellows have turned against him. I think it would be only decent to do as Linton wants, and I've said I'll do it."

"Jolly sort of killjoy to have at a study feed!" growled Lowther.

"Never mind; it's a chap's duty to do the honours, you know."

"Oh, just as you like! You're always getting us in for something of this sort, with your blessed good nature!"

Levison came up and joined the Terrible Three.

"About that giddy red triangle of yours, Merry—" he began.

"Oh, blow the triangle!" said Tom Merry. "I'm fed up with it!"

"I was going to suggest that you should ask Kalouth Das if he knows anything about it. If it's some Indian symbol, he might be able to explain it to you."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Monty Lowther, more brightly. "If we've got to have him to tea, we may as well see if he can tell us anything about it!"

Levison's eyes narrowed in the peculiar way he had when he was curious or interested.

"You're having him to tea?" he asked.

"Yes."

"May I come?"

The Terrible Three were silent. They did not like the spy of the School House, and he never joined them in a study feed. But they did not like actually to refuse a point-blank request.

"Well, I suppose you can come," said Tom Merry, at last.

"Thanks, I will, then!" said Levison, apparently not noticing the half-heartedness of Tom Merry's assent, and he walked away.

"Nice collection we're getting for a tea-party!" growled Monty Lowther. "You'd better ask Mellish next, and Crooke, and see if you can get Knox the prefect to come. Then we shall have the finest collection of rotters you could get together inside the walls of St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry laughed in his cheery way.

"Oh, don't grouse!" he said. "Let's look out the Indian and ask him, and then go and get some cricket before tea."

"Right-ho, let's get it over!"

Kalouth Das was not hard to find. He was in the quadrangle by himself; his queer, dry ways and keen glances did not make him popular, and nobody seemed to want to speak to him. Not that the Indian appeared to wish them to. He seemed quite satisfied to be left to himself, and his dark, inscrutable face revealed nothing of what he thought. He stared at the chums of the Shell, as they came up, like a bronzed image, as Monty Lowther said afterwards.

Tom Merry infused as much affability into his manner as he could, in spite of the forbidding looks of the Indian. He felt really sorry for the lonely junior, and he would have been glad to take a good deal of trouble to make him easy and comfortable in his new surroundings.

"Will you come and have tea with us in our study, Kalouth Das?" he asked.

The Indian started a little, and shook his head.

"Thank you, no!" he replied.

Tom Merry bit his lip.

"Are you having tea with Gore?" he asked.

"No."

"In Hall, then?"

"Yes."

"Tea in the study is much more cosy, and we get a better feed when we stand it ourselves," said Tom Merry. "We all feed in our studies here, when we've got the tin. And Lowther had a postal order this morning, and he's standing a good tea."

"I will not come."

There was an awkward pause. The Indian's manner was so ungracious that it was almost impossible to press the invitation; but Tom Merry did not wish to fail in what he had promised Mr. Linton. Monty Lowther was clenching his hand, and he had to restrain himself from planting it in the dusky face. If any other fellow had refused an invitation to tea in the study in such terms, he would certainly have felt the weight of Monty Lowther's arm.

Mr. Linton came by at that moment. The Shell-master paused, and nodded to the juniors.

"Ah! I'm glad to see you boys are so friendly," he remarked, with an obtuseness which the juniors considered was only to be expected of a master, but which, perhaps, was not wholly unintentional. "You will soon grow accustomed to your new surroundings, Kalouth Das."

"Yes, sir," said Kalouth Das.

"You are going to have tea with Tom Merry in his study?" said Mr. Linton. "I am sure you will find it very pleasant."

"If you please, sir—"

"And you will make many more friends when you have been here longer," said Mr. Linton. "I am sure you will take every care of your guest, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, awkwardly.

And the master of the Shell nodded and passed on. There was silence among the juniors when he was gone.

"Well, are you coming, then?" asked Manners.

The Indian frowned.

"I must come," he said. "That is an order from the master."

"Well, I suppose it amounts to that."

"I will come."

"Six o'clock, then," said Tom Merry, as cheerfully as he could.

The Indian nodded without replying.

Tom Merry & Co. walked on to the cricket field. They did not exchange views till they were out of hearing of the Indian.

"Of all the queer bounders, I think he takes the cake," Monty Lowther burst out at last, wrathfully. "He won't get a second invitation in a hurry."

"I suppose Linton can see that he's a queer, unfriendly sort of rotter, and wants to draw him out, and make him decent," Manners said reflectively.

Tom Merry smiled ruefully.

"And he's tising us to do it," he said. "Well, it's no good grumbling. We're in for it; we've said we'll do it, and we must! Be as kind to the poor beggar as you can. I suppose he doesn't really mean to be a cad."

"Oh, let's get to the cricket, and get the taste of the brute out of our mouths," growled Monty Lowther.

Half an hour on the cricket ground restored the chums of the Shell fully to good humour, and they walked down to the tuck-shop afterwards in the best of spirits, to lay in a supply of provisions for the feed. Funds had been very short in the study; but Monty Lowther's postal order had come providentially and saved them, as Lowther said pathetically, from the danger of cannibalism. A raid was made upon Dame Taggle's stock to the extent of seven shillings and sixpence, and the Terrible Three, laden with their purchases, returned to their study in the School House. Tom Merry looked in at Study No. 6 in the Fourth-form passage in passing.

"You fellows come to tea?" he asked.

"Corn in Egypt!" ejaculated Blake. "We're down to our last sardine."

"Yaas, wathah! This is weally good of you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass benignantly upon the Terrible Three. "I have wiahed to my patah for a fivah, but somehow or othah he hasn't come up to the beastly scwatch, you know."

"We'll feed with you when he does," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Come on."

And quite a crowd poured into Tom Merry's study. The fire was lighted, and the table was spread, and tea was ready when the hour of six boomed out from the clock tower. Promptly to time, Levison arrived. Blake and Digby and Herries and D'Arcy all glanced at the cad of the Fourth, surprised to find him a guest in Tom Merry's study; but they made no remark, of course. And Levison did not appear to notice their surprise.

"All here now?" asked Blake.

"All excepting Kalouth Das."

"Oh! Is the Indian coming?"

"Yes," Tom Merry paused. "Mr. Linton asked us to do it," he explained.

"Oh, it's all right, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy genially.

"It's vewy decent of you to take the wottah up, Tom Mewwy, and we will tweat him well."

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry, somewhat relieved. "I really ought to have told you chaps; but—well, I think, perhaps, it's only his manner that's against him, you know, and if we're all kind to him, he may thaw out."

Jack Blake laughed.

"We'll try to thaw him, anyway," he agreed.

"Here he is!"

Kalouth Das, with his silent footsteps, entered the study. He greeted his hosts with a deep Indian salaam.

"Welcome, my son!" said Tom Merry, with more heartiness in his tones than in his heart; but he could not help that. "Hungry, I hope?"

"I am not hungry."

"Here's your chair," said Monty Lowther, pulling out a chair near the fire. "I dare say you find England cold after India."

"Yes, that is true."

"Well, sit down."

Levison's eyes were upon the Indian, and indeed they hardly left the dark face from the moment Kalouth Das entered the study. Tom Merry poured out the tea, and Manners lifted a big dish of toast from the fender, and Monty Lowther turned out a saucypanful of eggs. Jam-tarts and cake graced the table, and altogether it was a very respectable feed. The juniors all looked contented as they gathered round the table, with the exception of Kalouth Das. His dark face expressed nothing.

"Pile in, my sons!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"What-ho!" said Blake.

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Kalouth Das allowed his plate to be filled. Levison was watching him with keen and curious eyes.

"You're not eating anything, Kalouth Das," he said suddenly.

"Fire away, kid!" said Manners hospitably. "Don't you like the toast?"

"Yes."

"You eat eggs in India, I suppose?" said Digby.

"But I am not hungry."

"Come, take just a mouthful!" said Tom Merry.

"Thank you, but I do not care to eat."

Tom Merry coloured. It was absurd for a fellow not to be hungry at tea-time, and it was quite in keeping with the Indian's curious manners to refuse to eat at his table. It was as if the fellow meant purposely to be offensive.

"Better take something," said Levison, in his cool, cutting tones. "You haven't any enemies in this study, have you, Kalouth Das?"

The Indian started, and his sharp eyes rested upon Levison's face for a moment with keen and anxious scrutiny.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed abruptly.

Levison laughed easily.

"I've read a lot about the East," he explained. "You have a dodge in your country of not eating bread or salt with a fellow you hate. If you eat with a chap, you can't be his enemy afterwards. Isn't that it?"

"That is all nonsense," said Kalouth Das. But there was a new glow of colour under his dark skin, and his eyes snapped at Levison with a strange glitter.

"Oh, cheese it, Levison!" said Tom Merry. "Kalouth Das can eat or not, as he likes."

"We eat little in India," said Kalouth Das. "I am not hungry. In time, perhaps, I shall learn to eat as you English do. But now I eat little."

"But just a taste of something, to show that you're friends with everybody here," said Levison persistently.

"I have said that I am not hungry."

And the Indian touched nothing.

"Don't bother him, Levison!" said Tom Merry, with a note of command in his voice. And the Fourth-Former let the subject drop.

It was not a cheerful meal. With the dark, immovable face of Kalouth Das at the board, no one felt cheerful, or much inclined to talk. The Indian was certainly not likely to add to the gaiety of any study he should enter. His presence hung heavily upon the juniors, accustomed to being merry and unrestrained at a study feed.

"You haven't shown Kalouth Das your letter, Tommy," said Monty Lowther presently, more to break the awkward silence that had fallen upon the little party than for any other reason.

"Ah! Look at this, will you, Kalouth Das?" said Tom Merry. He took the card from his pocket, and showed the red triangle with the three little red circles to the Indian.

Kalouth Das looked at it with unmoved features. If he had seen anything of the kind before, his face did not betray him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I don't know, but it came to me in a letter from India," said Tom Merry.

"Indeed! And you do not understand it?"

"Not the least in the world, and I don't know who sent it. Have you ever seen anything of the kind in India?"

The Indian shook his head.

"Never!"

"You have never seen that queer symbol before?"

"No!"

"Then you can't enlighten me," said Tom Merry.

"It is quite strange to me. I do not understand it," said Kalouth Das. "Perhaps it is a—what you call a practical joke."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

And Tom Merry returned the card to his pocket.

Kalouth Das rose from the table.

"You will excuse me," he said. "I have letters to write."

And without waiting for a reply he quitted the study. There was silence for some minutes after he had gone. Levison rose; he had finished his tea.

"I suppose you won't take any notice of what I say, Tom Merry," he said quietly. "But that fellow is your enemy."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Whether he's really seen that queer sign before I don't know, but I know that nothing would have made him eat at your table," said Levison, "and that means a jolly great deal in the East. I should advise you to keep an eye on that chap. I shouldn't feel quite safe if I were you!"

Tom Merry laughed.

Levison left the study. Tom Merry was still laughing, but he was the only one who laughed. The other fellows were



Lord Mauleverer sauntered up to the group of juniors, and Harry Wharton performed the introduction in due form. "Tadger, an old pal of Bolsover Minor—Lord Mauleverer," he said. "Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer, holding out his hand. "Very pleased to meet you! New kid—eh?" "He, he, he!" cackled Tadger, much tickled at the notion. "No, I ain't a new kid, your lordship. I'm just an old pal of Billy's!" (For this incident see the grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., and Bolsover Minor, entitled "A Forbidden Chum," by Frank Richards, which is contained in our popular companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale at all newsagents'. Price One Penny.)

strangely grave and quiet. Tom Merry looked round at their serious faces, and his laugh died away.

"My dear chaps," he exclaimed, "surely you don't think there's anything in what Levison said!"

"Well, I—I suppose not," said Blake, after a pause. "But it's queer, as he said. Why didn't the Indian eat anything here?"

"Oh, he's a queer beggar, that's all!"

"I don't quite like such vewy queeah beggahs myself," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, very thoughtfully.

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther. And the other fellows nodded assent.

"Oh, it's all rot!" said Tom Merry.

But in spite of his words, there was a curious feeling of uneasiness in his heart. Was it possible that the coming of the Indian junior to St. Jim's had some connection with the mysterious sign of the triangle and the red circles, and that either, or both, meant danger to Tom Merry? He laughed at the thought, and yet it would not leave his mind.

CHAPTER 7.

A Startling Discovery.

GEORGE GORE was still grinding away at lines when the time came for the Shell to go to bed. Five hundred lines was a very large imposition, and Gore was not a quick writer. And after his severe caning he did not feel equal to great exertions in that line. Skimpole

looked into the study at half-past nine, blinking benevolently through his big spectacles.

"Are you finished, my dear Gore?" asked Skimpole.

Gore looked up with a scowl.

"No!" he growled. "More than a hundred to do yet."

"It is bedtime."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"My dear Gore—"

Gore rose and laid down his pen. He placed an inkpot upon the sheet he had written, by way of paper-weight. He was tired out with his unaccustomed exertions.

"I'll make that nigger pay for it!" he said, between his teeth.

"Indeed, he does seem a rather unpleasant person," said the mild Skimpole. "But would it not be better to leave him alone, Gore? If he complains to Mr. Linton again—"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Gore.

"Ahem!"

Skimpole left the study, and Gore followed him, turning the gas out. He had spent most of the evening grinding at his lines, and he was very tired and ill-tempered. He was the last in the Shell dormitory. Kalouth Das was undressing to go to bed, and he did not look at Gore. But Gore looked at him with savage eyes.

"Finished, old chap?" asked Crooke sympathetically.

"No!" growled Gore. "I've wasted my evening over that rotten nigger. I'm going to make him sit up for it now!"

"Oh, let him alone!" said Tom Merry.

Gore looked at the captain of the Shell with a bitter sneer.

"Are you going to interfere again?" he exclaimed. "You know how much thanks you will get from the nigger?"

Tom Merry flushed. It was difficult for him to interfere, when the Indian junior had so directly and rudely contemned his interference on the previous occasion. Gore grinned, feeling that he had scored. Langton, the prefect, came in to see lights out, and the talk ceased, but when lights were out, and the prefect had retired, Gore sat up in bed.

"Anybody got a candle?" he asked.

"Oh, go to sleep!" growled Monty Lowther.

"I'll go to sleep when I've licked the nigger."

"Shut up!" said Kangaroo.

"Rats!"

"I've got a candle," said Crooke.

A match was struck in the gloom of the dormitory, and Crooke lighted his candle. George Gore slipped out of bed. The wakeful eyes of the Indian watched him, but Kalouth Das did not move. Gore tramped to his bedside.

"Get up!" he said roughly.

The Indian watched him like a cat.

"Why should I get up?" he asked.

"I'm going to lick you."

"I shall not get up."

Gore laughed savagely.

"I'll soon have you out!" he exclaimed.

He grasped the bedclothes, and dragged them off the Indian. Kalouth Das jumped up in bed, breathing hard through his nose. Gore grasped him off the bed, with a bump to the floor.

"Now then, you black brute—"

"Stop that row!" called out Bernard Glyn.

"Go and eat coke!" replied Gore. "Now then, you nigger— Oh!"

The Indian was fighting like a wildcat, and Gore had no breath left for words. He was much bigger and heavier than the Indian, and he had had no doubt of licking him with the greatest of ease. But Kalouth Das was not particular in his methods of fighting. He fought with hands and feet, teeth and nails. Gore shrieked as the Indian's nails clawed down his face, leaving a red track on the skin behind them.

He gritted his teeth, and hurled the Indian with a crash to the floor, and then staggered back, gasping for breath, and pressing his hands to his face. There was red upon his fingers as he drew them away.

"The—the savage beast!" panted Gore. "Look what he's done!"

The Indian looked, indeed, like a savage beast as he crouched upon the floor panting, his white teeth showing, and his eyes gleaming.

The Shell fellows looked on grimly.

Gore deserved all he had received, but even Crooke was disgusted at the Indian's methods of fighting. Even a fellow attacked by one bigger than himself had no right to use teeth and claws like a wild animal!

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther under his breath. "We've got a splendid specimen of a wildcat in the Shell this time, and no mistake!"

"By Jove, we have!" said Tom Merry.

Gore plunged a sponge into water, and dabbed it over his face. He was badly scratched, and he knew that the marks would remain for a long time. He was wild with rage, but he hesitated to tackle so savage an opponent again. He was afraid that his eyes might be scratched out if he did. The Indian looked capable of anything.

Gore advanced upon the crouching, panting Indian, and paused. Kalouth Das watched him with scintillating eyes.

As the Shell bully's eyes rested upon the Indian, he uttered a sudden cry.

"Great Scott! Look!"

His strange and startled tone caused the Shell fellows to stare at him in amazement. Gore was pointing to the Indian's arm. In the struggle the sleeve of Kalouth's pyjamas had been torn from wrist to shoulder, and the long, slim arm, deep bronze in colour, was revealed as he half-stood, half-crouched, waiting for Gore's attack. The arm was thrown forward to defend himself, and the candle-light glimmered upon the bronze skin.

"The red triangle!" shouted Gore.

There was a shout from some of the Shell fellows as Gore pointed.

There it was, clearly visible, now that they looked. Tattooed upon the bronze skin was the same mysterious symbol as that upon the card so strangely sent to Tom Merry from far-off India—the triangle, with a tiny circle in each of the angles.

There it was—clear to all eyes! The Indian for a moment

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did not understand the cry that went up in the dormitory, but Gore's pointing finger enlightened him, and he looked down at his arm, and saw that the sleeve was torn and open. A strange pallor swept over his dusky face, and he hurriedly caught the torn sleeve together, and covered up the bronze skin with the tell-tale mark upon it.

There was dead silence in the dormitory for some moments. Tom Merry broke it.

"What does that mark on your arm mean, Kalouth Das?" Kalouth Das did not reply.

"When I showed you the card in the study, you said that you did not understand the symbol, and that you had never seen it before," said Tom Merry sternly.

Still the Indian was silent, breathing hard.

"Can you explain?"

Silence.

"He was lying," said Monty Lowther. "He must have seen the sign before when it's tattooed on his own arm."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "And that shows that he knows something about that letter being sent to you, Tommy."

Tom Merry's face was very hard and stern.

"Have you anything to say, Kalouth Das?" he asked.

"I have nothing to say," said the Indian sullenly.

"You cannot explain?"

"I have nothing to say."

"How did that mark come on your arm?"

"It is nothing—a mere trick when I was a child," muttered the Indian.

"But you knew it was there."

Kalouth Das was silent.

"Yet you told me you have never seen such a sign."

"I had forgotten."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed with scorn. It was plain to all that the Indian was lying, but why he should have lied was a mystery. Why had he not told the truth in the first place? What was the strange mystery of the red triangle? Why had it been sent to Tom Merry, and why had the Indian the same brand upon his arm? Tom Merry felt as if his head were turning round.

Kalouth Das stepped back into bed. Gore did not interfere with him again—he had had enough of wildcat fighting. And he had effected more than his purpose. He had intended to thrash Kalouth Das; he had not done so, but he had shown him up to the whole Form as a liar, and perhaps something worse. Gore was not dissatisfied as he turned into bed again. The Indian was not likely to have a pleasant time henceforward in the Shell, with the opinion the fellows had of him.

Crooke blew the candle out, and the dormitory was in darkness again. One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep, but Tom Merry did not sleep. He could not. That strange and mysterious symbol was still before his eyes, and he could no longer laugh at Levison's hint of danger. He remembered the face he had fancied that he had seen at the dormitory window the previous night. He had set that down to fancy; in the daylight it had seemed to him that his excited imagination had deceived him, and he had laughed at the recollection. But he did not laugh now. Had that fancied face at the window been real after all? Had the Indian come to St. Jim's to do him some injury, and had he an accomplice at hand to aid him? It seemed a wild and improbable theory, for he could imagine no motive for it all. Yet he could not sleep.

And as the night grew older Tom Merry was glad that his startled nerves had kept him awake. As he lay silent in bed, thinking ceaselessly, his eyes were turned in the gloom towards the bed of Kalouth Das. In the dusky gloom of the dormitory he could just make out the form of the bed. Midnight had tolled out from the clock-tower, and all St. Jim's was asleep. Some minutes after the last stroke of twelve had died away there was a sound of a movement, and Tom Merry's heart leaped within him as he saw the Indian junior rising from his bed.

CHAPTER 8.

The Midnight Signal.

KALOUTH DAS stood beside his bed, his head bent a little, listening. The attitude, and the low, quick breathing, almost still, showed plainly enough that he was straining his ears to listen, to know whether his rising had awakened anybody else in the Shell dormitory.

Tom Merry lay perfectly still.

His suspicions of the Indian were certainties now. He could hardly believe that the dark junior meant actually to harm him, but certainly there was some secret intention on the Indian's part, and his stealthiness showed that it was not an innocent intention. Why had Kalouth Das left his bed at that hour of the night? He had evidently been waiting, awake all the time, for midnight to strike, so as to rise when all the rest of the Shell fellows were asleep.

For several minutes the dark figure stood there, quite still, quite silent, listening.

Then it moved.

Tom Merry caught his breath.

Kalouth Das was coming towards his bed. Tom Merry's heart beat so hard that he feared that the Indian would hear its beating. But he forced himself to lie still, and to breathe steadily and regularly.

The Indian stopped near his bed, and again his dark head was bent to listen.

Tom Merry understood.

The Indian wished to make sure that he was asleep. It was Tom Merry that he feared more than any other fellow in the dormitory. He was listening for Tom Merry's breathing, and Tom Merry breathed steadily, uninterruptedly, like a healthy sleeper, his eyes almost closed, but open just sufficiently to enable him to watch the Indian.

Kalouth Das seemed satisfied at last.

"Are you asleep?"

His voice came softly through the stillness.

Tom Merry made no sound save that regular, steady breathing.

The Indian raised his head; and Tom Merry could hear the low sigh of relief that left his lips. So close was he that Tom Merry could see the glimmer of the faint starlight from the window upon the darkly bronze Hindu face.

Kalouth Das remained motionless for some moments more, and then he moved away. He moved towards the window at the end of the dormitory—the same window that Tom Merry had opened the previous night when he had fancied that dark face against the starlit pane.

Tom Merry watched him breathlessly.

Kalouth Das moved a chair under the window, just as Tom Merry had done the previous night in his alarm, and mounted upon it. The chair creaked slightly, and the Indian remained still for several minutes. He had all the impassive patience of the Oriental, and he was as cautious as a wild animal stealing upon its prey.

He moved again at last, and began to open the window. He opened it with slow caution, to make no sound, and it was ten minutes or more before the sash was fairly raised. A faint chill breath of air from the quadrangle stole into the dormitory. The top of the window was already opened, as always—the Indian had not had to move the catch. He released the lower sash when it was level with the upper one, and the window was now almost wide open.

Tom Merry's heart beat as he watched.

Kalouth Das leaned out of the window and scanned the dark quadrangle below.

Suddenly there was a gleam of light.

It dazzled Tom Merry's eyes for a moment.

He looked again.

Kalouth Das had in his hand what was evidently a tiny electric torch, which could be turned on by the slightest pressure of a finger.

A long, thin streak of light shot from the dormitory window into the quadrangle.

It was repeated twice.

Then the light shone no more.

Kalouth Das stood silent at the window, looking out.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

There was no doubt in his mind. How could there be? It was only too clear that the Indian junior was making signals to someone outside the School House.

Who was it—if not the dark figure Tom Merry had seen for a brief moment the previous night?

Was the Indian junior about to admit a thief to the school? That he intended to admit someone, to whom he had signalled, was certain to Tom Merry's mind.

A thief, whose object was robbery, or—

Tom Merry shuddered as he realised all that it might mean. If he was in danger, was it some desperate wretch, with murder in his heart, whom the Indian intended to admit to the Shell dormitory?

Was it really, as Levison had surmised, some strange Indian vendetta—in which his uncle had become concerned in India, and which was thus transferred to England, because he was of the blood of General Merry?

Whatever it might mean, it was evidently impossible to wait longer in silence, until the Hindu had accomplished his object. Whoever was the unknown man outside, he must not be allowed to enter.

Tom Merry sprang from his bed.

At the sound he made the Indian turned his head from the window.

"Kalouth Das!"

Tom Merry's voice rang through the dormitory.

He heard a long, shuddering gasp from the Indian at the window. The terror of discovery was upon the dark junior.

"Kalouth Das, what are you doing there?"

Tom Merry ran along to the window. Several fellows had been awakened by his voice, and they were sitting up in bed, calling out in alarm. Tom Merry did not heed them. He ran to the Indian and grasped him and dragged him from the window.

"Kalouth Das, what does this mean?"

"Oh, you are awake!"

"I have been watching you all the time."

"Ah!"

"What are you doing?" demanded Tom Merry. "To whom were you signalling from the window?"

The Indian trembled. In the gloom his eyes seemed to burn.

There was a sound without, as of the wind rustling the ivy. Or was it the rustle made by a climber?

Kalouth Das heard it; and suddenly, wrenching himself free from Tom Merry's grasp, he sprang to the window and slammed it shut, with a slam that rang out in the silent quadrangle.

Then he leaped down from the chair again and stood facing Tom Merry, trembling in every limb, his eyes burning strangely.

"It is nothing!" he stammered. "You—you do not understand!"

"What's the row, there?" came Lowther's voice. "What on earth is the matter?"

"I saw this chap signalling with a light from the window," said Tom Merry. "There is someone in the quadrangle, and he was signalling to him."

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"It—it is false!" gasped the Indian, and his voice was dry and husky. "I mean, it is a mistake. It was not a signal. There is no one there. You do not understand."

"But I mean to understand!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"It—it is nothing! I will explain. It is in connection with my religion," stammered the Indian.

"Your religion!"

"Yes. You do not understand." Kalouth Das was regaining his nerve. "I will explain—I will explain to the Head, if you wish, to-morrow. It is my religion—the worship of the stars. You do not understand, and you had no right to interrupt me!"

Tom Merry looked at him long and hard.

It was a plausible explanation. There were strange religions in the strange land of India that he had never heard of, he knew that. Whether star-worship was one of them he did not know; but it was probable enough. Was it possible that he had been mistaken, and that he had only interrupted some strange Eastern rite?

There came a chuckle from Monty Lowther's bed.

"You're off side, Tommy! Let his giddy religion alone and turn in!"

"I don't believe him," said Tom Merry hesitatingly.

"But—"

"It is true!" said Kalouth Das.

"I believe you slammed the window as a warning to the fellow outside not to come, as someone was awake!"

"Ah! You are dreaming! Why should I make signals to anyone from the window?"

That was a question Tom Merry could not answer. Truly his suspicions seemed wild enough, when he was called upon to explain them.

"I cannot believe you," he said.

Kalouth Das shrugged his shoulders. He had recovered all his coolness now.

"You may please yourself," he said. "You can report this to the Housemaster to-morrow, if you like, and I will explain to him. To you I will explain nothing further!"

He walked to his bed and turned in.

Tom Merry stood hesitating.

"Better go to bed, Tommy," said Manners. "It must be as the Indian says. I can't imagine that he came here to let burglars into the school."

"I don't trust him," said Tom Merry.

He mounted upon the chair, closed the top of the window, and secured the catch. Then he returned slowly to his bed. With the vague and unformed suspicions that were in his mind, he could not alarm the house. The Indian's explanation was plausible enough, and it would be believed; and the man outside, if there were anybody, had certainly disappeared by this time.

Tom Merry went back to bed. But he did not sleep again that night; and when the morning came, he was still wakeful, and very pale and fatigued. When the morning sun streamed into the windows of the dormitory, Tom Merry glanced at the bed of Kalouth Das. The Indian junior was sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER 9.

Dark Suspicions.

TOM MERRY rose as the rising-bell clanged out on the morning air. He was looking, and feeling, very much out of sorts, a natural consequence of losing his night's rest. Kalouth Das rose, with his face as calm and inscrutable as ever. Tom Merry had thought the matter over during those sleepless hours, and he had made up his mind. The Shell fellows all wanted to hear of the happenings of the previous night, and Tom Merry told them, and the Indian listened with an expressionless face.

"It may be as Kalouth Das says," Tom Merry concluded. "I don't want to be hard on him, but I can't believe what he says, and that's flat. We all know that he lied about the triangle, when he said he had never seen it before."

"And he's lying now!" said Gore.

"We can't be sure of that, and we can't find him guilty without proof; but he has offered to explain to the House-master, and I'm willing to leave it to Mr. Railton to decide the matter. Kalouth Das will have to come with me, and let Mr. Railton hear the whole story, after breakfast. Are you willing to do that, Kalouth Das?"

"Quite willing!" said the Indian coldly.

"Very well, that settles it!"

The Shell went down to breakfast, and Tom Merry's pale looks caused a good deal of remark. After breakfast, Tom Merry signed to Kalouth Das as they left the dining-room, and they followed Mr. Railton to his study. The master of the School House glanced at the two juniors as they stood in his doorway. Mr. Linton had come into his study to speak to him, and he, too, looked curiously at Tom Merry and the Indian.

"What is it?" the Housemaster asked.

Tom Merry came to the point at once.

"I want to tell you something, sir, that I think you ought to know, and then you can hear what Kalouth Das has to say," he replied. "I think it is important, and I want you to decide whether anything ought to be done."

Mr. Railton looked surprised.

"Very well," he said, "go on!"

Tom Merry laid upon the Housemaster's table the card he had received in the letter from India.

"Will you look at that, sir?"

Mr. Railton's brow grew a little stern.

"Is that a joke, Merry?"

"It is not a joke, sir. I can't help thinking, now, that it must be something serious, though I didn't think so at first. Here is the envelope I received that card in. It came to me the day before yesterday, from India."

Mr. Railton looked at the envelope, and passed it to Mr. Linton, who examined it carefully, putting on his glasses to do so. The Shell-master looked amazed.

"This certainly came from India," he said. "It has the postmarks of Bundel-pore and Bombay."

"Was there nothing else in the letter, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Nothing else, sir."

"You do not know who sent it?"

"No, sir."

"It is very strange."

"The postmark shows that it was posted first in Bundel-pore, sir, where my uncle is stationed. But, of course, my uncle could not be the person who sent it. I showed it to Kalouth Das last night, and he said he had never seen anything of the kind before. But last night, by accident, we discovered that he has a similar mark tattooed upon his arm."

"That is very singular! Show me the mark, Kalouth Das."

Kalouth Das's dark eyes burnt for a moment, but he obediently pulled up his sleeve, and revealed the curious sign.

"How did that come there, Kalouth Das?"

"It was done in play, sir, when I was a child, and I had forgotten it," said the Indian. "It was merely a childish fancy."

"Is that all you have to tell me, Merry?"

"No, sir."

And Tom Merry related the happenings of the previous night. The two masters listened with the deepest attention.

Mr. Railton's keen eyes scanned the face of the Hindu. But the dark, bronze face was perfectly impassive.

"How do you explain this, Kalouth Das?" he asked sternly.

The Indian's explanation was ready.

"It is in connection with my religion, sir," he said respectfully and quietly. "I belong to the sect of star-worshippers. I do not expect Merry to understand. It is part of my

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religion to perform certain rites at midnight, when the stars are shining. I am sorry that Merry was alarmed, but I imagined that everybody in the dormitory was asleep. I was very careful to make no noise, and I asked Merry specially if he was asleep, as I had a fancy that he was watching me perhaps. He cannot deny that."

"I don't want to deny it," said Tom Merry indignantly. "And I don't believe a word you say. It's all rot. You were signalling into the quad with an electric lantern."

"Patience, Merry," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I am not surprised that you were uneasy and alarmed. But Kalouth Das came to this school with the best possible recommendations, from two gentlemen in Bombay—one a clergyman, and the other an Army officer. I cannot believe that there was harm in what he was doing, though it was certainly very strange and surprising. The incident of this peculiar card is certainly astonishing, but I cannot see that it proves anything against Kalouth Das. But certainly, if this boy's religion requires the performance of such strange rites, he cannot continue to share the dormitory with the rest of the Form. I will speak to the Head about the matter, and it shall be arranged for Kalouth Das to have a room to himself, and he will not sleep in the dormitory again. I suppose that will satisfy you, Merry?"

Tom Merry drew a breath of relief.

"Yes, sir," he replied at once.

"Very well," Mr. Railton took the card in his hand again. "Will you allow me to keep this, Merry? I am curious about it."

"Certainly, sir."

The two juniors quitted the study. They did not speak in the passage, but went different ways. Friendly words were out of the question between them now; Tom Merry disliked and distrusted the dark junior, and he did not attempt to conceal it.

After the door had closed behind the juniors, Mr. Railton looked at the master of the Shell. Mr. Linton's face was very grave.

"This is very peculiar," said the School House master, after a pause.

"Very peculiar indeed," said Mr. Linton. "I cannot imagine why the card was sent to Merry, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless it is a threat or a warning of danger. I have read deeply in Indian history and Indian customs," said Mr. Linton gravely. "India is a hotbed of secret societies, and their ways are strange to us. The Hindu is a natural dramatist. If he is going to deal a blow, he must make a parade of his intentions. You remember that before the Indian Mutiny broke out, the intended mutineers gave warning of their intentions in a somewhat similar way—things symbolic of the intended treachery were flung into the British cantonments, and would have warned a more alert Government of what was coming. Curious that they should act so, and thus risk placing intended victims upon their guard; but it is a matter of history, and is explained by the peculiar nature of the people. If this symbol had been received by a white man stationed in India, he would know that it was a threat, perhaps to be followed by action. But here in England—"

"Tom Merry has an uncle in India, who may have made himself unpopular among the natives," said Mr. Railton musingly.

Mr. Linton nodded.

"Yes; and the vendetta may embrace all of his family," said Mr. Linton. "Such things are possible and probable in India. It seems too much to connect this boy, Kalouth Das, with a scheme of vengeance, however—yet the mark upon his arm points to a strange conclusion. Is it possible that there is anything amiss with the recommendations with which the boy was sent here? Hindus are past-masters of the art of forgery. To forge such papers would be merely child's play to thousands of native scribes in Bombay."

Mr. Railton grew very pale.

"I shall certainly consult the Head about the matter," he said; "and it might be advisable to cable to the two gentlemen in Bombay who are concerned. But it is very difficult to believe that there is harm in a mere lad like this. However, I shall see that he has a separate room, at all events, and I shall keep an eye upon him."

"I shall do the same," said the master of the Shell.

And the matter dropped.

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 10.

Bernard Glyn is Useful.

THE strange happenings of the night in the Shell dormitory excited much interest among the juniors of St. Jim's. After morning lessons, the juniors talked the matter over, and the whole school knew all about it. Figgins & Co. came over from the New House for all particulars; and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence cornered Tom Merry in the quadrangle, and made him tell the story all over again. Levison was inclined to be triumphant. He had told Tom Merry in advance that the Indian junior was not to be trusted, and that he had come to St. Jim's as Tom Merry's enemy. Tom Merry more than half believed it now, and a great many fellows in the Shell agreed with him.

"I wouldn't sleep in the same dorm. with that black bouncer, for something!" said Levison emphatically. "I should be afraid of not waking up again!"

"He is going to have a separate room in future," said Tom Merry. "Mr. Railton has arranged that."

"Good for you!" said Levison. "We haven't been very good friends, Merry, but I shouldn't like to see you done in. And it's my firm belief that that black villain has come to St. Jim's to do you some harm."

Tom Merry nodded. He had never liked Levison's character, but he felt more friendly towards the cad of the Fourth now than he had believed possible before. Levison had certainly read the new junior's character correctly.

"And I'd suggest locking the dormitory door of a night," Levison remarked.

"Good idea!"

"And it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to get Bernard Glyn to fix up that giddy burglar alarm of his in the Shell dorm.," said Levison shrewdly.

Tom Merry's face brightened.

"Thanks for the suggestion," he said. "We'll do it."

"And you'll admit that I'm right sometimes, now?" grinned Levison.

"Well, you're generally wrong," said Tom Merry. "You were suspicious of that Russian chap, and he turned out all right. But in this case I admit it seems as if you were right all along."

"Well, I'm glad you admit that, anyway."

Tom Merry sought out Bernard Glyn. Glyn of the Shell was an amateur inventor, and some of his inventions were fearful and wonderful. The juniors still chuckled sometimes over the recollection of the mechanical figure Glyn had made in exact likeness of Skimpole of the Shell.

There had been an attempted burglary at St. Jim's lately, and it had set the schoolboy inventor going upon the subject of burglar alarms. But a prophet, as was said of old, is usually without honour in his own country, and it was the same with the inventor of St. Jim's.

Glyn's father declined, without thanks, to have the burglar alarm fitted up in his house, and Glyn had got into trouble for trying to fix it up in the School House at St. Jim's. Since then, as Monty Lowther put it, he had used no other. He had turned his attention to an invention for making indelible ink—and, to judge by the state of his hands after his experiments, he had succeeded.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's, as it was a Wednesday, and Tom Merry found the schoolboy inventor busy in his study. The study was shared by Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, but they were not there now. When Glyn was making his experiments, he was not a comfortable neighbour, and just now the other fellows were gone down to the cricket-ground.

Glyn was standing at his table, with inky fingers, and a smudge of ink on his nose. He looked round rather irritably as Tom Merry came in.

"Don't speak!" he said.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I shall be finished in a minute. If this goes all right, I've got it."

"Got what?"

"The indelible ink. Wait till this is finished."

Tom Merry waited patiently. Glyn was finished at last, and he turned from the table with a sigh of satisfaction and fatigue, and inkier than ever.

"I think it will be all right," he remarked. "Now, what is it, my boy?"

"I want to make use of one of your giddy inventions," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"I haven't got the ink made up yet, you know—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Thanks! I'm not in want of any ink!"

"You want a mechanical figure—"

"No, I don't!"

"What is it, then?" asked Glyn, a little peevishly.

"I want a burglar alarm."

Bernard Glyn was interested at once.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I don't mind leaving the indelible ink over for the present, and beginning on the burglar alarm again. In fact, it's a rest to turn from one invention to another for a time. I suppose you're thinking of that queer beggar last night?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I feel almost certain that he was pointing out the window of my dorm. to somebody in the quad., and opening it for the man to get in. He's going to sleep in a room by himself to-night, and I'm going to lock the door of the Shell dorm. But now that his confederate knows the dorm. window he can get into the Shell dorm. without help. I'm certain that it was he I saw at the window on Monday night."

"Before Kalouth Das came to St. Jim's?"

"Yes; the man was hanging about the school ready for Kalouth Das to arrive," said Tom Merry, with conviction. "He was probably spying round the school, and I don't suppose he knew that was my window. He may have looked into a dozen others. But now that Kalouth Das has signalled to him from the window he knows."

"You speak as if you were quite sure about it," said Glyn seriously.

"I do feel quite sure. If I had not been awake last night I believe that that man, whoever he is, would have climbed into the window," said Tom Merry quietly. "What he wanted I don't know, but it was no good."

"And you think he may come to-night?"

"Quite likely. I think the rascals won't lose any time now that they've made us suspicious. I'm sure Mr. Railton will make some inquiry into Kalouth Das's antecedents, and may find out something about him. I was thinking of staying awake all night again, but that would knock me up."

Bernard Glyn whistled.

"I should say it would," he replied. "But it's all serene. I'll have the burglar alarm all ready, and get it into the dorm. ready to fix after we go up."

"And not a word about it. Kalouth Das is all ears."

"Not a syllable!" agreed Glyn.

And Tom Merry left the study, feeling more easy in his mind.

He stopped in his own room to pick up his bat, and then hurried out of the School House to join the cricketers. There was a practice match on that afternoon among the School House boys—Fourth Form against Shell—and Tom Merry was wanted to captain the latter. He found Levison, of the Fourth, standing on the School House steps, with his hands in his pockets.

"Seen Glyn?" asked Levison.

Tom Merry paused.

"Yes," he said; "it's all right."

"Better say nothing about it, if you want to catch your bird."

"We're keeping it dark."

"Good! I may be able to tell you something later."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom Merry curiously.

"I'm waiting here to see Kalouth Das. When he goes out—"

"How do you know he's going out?"

Levison smiled.

"I think I know it. If he was really signalling to someone in the quad. last night, don't you think he'll take advantage of a half-holiday to get out and see the chap, and explain to him how it turned out badly—and explain to him, too, that his room is changed?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I think it's very likely. When he goes out I follow," said Levison, with considerable satisfaction at his own astuteness.

Tom Merry's face expressed repugnance for the moment. He strongly suspected the Indian junior of intending him harm, but it went against the grain with him to think of dogging a fellow's footsteps and watching him. But he did not like to say as much to Levison, who was certainly intending to be friendly. He nodded, and passed on, and soon forgot both Levison and Kalouth Das on the cricket-ground.

Levison did not forget. He remained looking out for the Indian, and he was gratified about half an hour later, when the dark junior came out.

Kalouth Das walked away directly to the gates, and Levison followed in his track. The Indian did not look back. He walked away quickly down the lane in the direction of Rylcombe, without once turning his head, and stopped at the stile, crossed it, and followed the path through the wood.

Levison followed, congratulating himself. He believed that the Indian had not observed that he was shadowed, and, once in the wood, there would be more cover to hide the

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shadower if the Indian should look round. Levison, in his mind's eye, had already run the dark junior down, and witnessed his meeting with his unknown confederate; but all of a sudden a change came over the spirit of his dream. Kalouth Das had turned a corner in the footpath. Levison hurried on, and turned the corner; there was a long, straight stretch of the path before him, but the Indian junior had vanished.

Levison paused, gritting his teeth.

It dawned upon his mind then that Kalouth Das had known all the time that he was being followed, and had only been awaiting a favourable opportunity of tricking his pursuer, and shaking him off.

After turning the corner, the Indian had taken to the wood; but where, and in what direction, there was no trace to show.

Levison ran along the path, and listened for a sound of footsteps or a rustle of the underbrush; but no sound came to his ears. He searched up and down the path, and through the thickets that bordered it, for the best part of an hour. But he found nothing to reward his toil.

The Hindu had disappeared. Levison had gained one point—he was certain now that the mission of Kalouth Das was not an innocent one, or why should he have taken the trouble to shake off the shadower in that cunning way? But Levison had been sure enough of that before—sure enough to satisfy himself, at all events. The spy of the Fourth took his way back to St. Jim's at last, very much exasperated and disappointed.

CHAPTER 11.

Trapped!

WHEN the Shell went to bed that night, Kalouth Das did not accompany them. The Hindu had been assigned a bed-room at some distance from the Shell dormitory, and he turned in alone. If he had any mysterious religious rites to perform that night, he was not likely to be interrupted in the performance of them. It was a relief to all the Shell fellows not to have him in the dormitory. His dark, forbidding face had a chilling effect upon them, apart from the suspicion he had drawn upon himself by his peculiar conduct.

Kildare saw lights out in the Shell dormitory; and when he was gone, Tom Merry slipped out of bed, and locked the dormitory door. So far as Kalouth Das was concerned, the dormitory could not be entered now; and as for the windows, and the unknown man whom Kalouth Das was suspected of having signalled to, Bernard Glyn's invention would take care of that.

Glyn's contrivance was simple enough, and the Shell fellows had seen it worked, and knew that it would answer the purpose. A powerful dry battery was concealed under a bed, and from the battery a wire ran to the windows, and another to an electric bell fastened to the head of Tom Merry's bed. To each of the windows a short wire was attached to the lower sash. If the lower sash was raised, the wire was pulled, and that made the necessary connection, and the bell rang. The terminals attached to the bell required only a slight pressure to bring them together. If a window was opened the electric buzz would begin at once, and would continue until the sash was closed again.

The contrivance was simple enough, but the Shell fellows admired it very much.

It took Bernard Glyn half an hour to make the necessary dispositions of the wires, the battery, and the bell, although the whole thing was already in the dormitory, hidden under Glyn's bed. He had placed it there earlier in the evening. He worked by candle-light, all the fellows lending a hand when required.

"There," said Glyn, when he had finished, "I don't think anybody will get into this dorm without our knowing it."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry. "The bell will wake me in a second."

"Better try it!" said Man-

"Just for a second, then," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to make a row."

Bernard Glyn nodded, and pushed up the sash of the big end window.

"Buzz!"

The bell started immediately.

Glyn closed the window again.

"How's that for high?" he demanded.

"Ripping!"

"Splendid, old chap!"

"Sleep in peace, my sons," said Glyn, with a wave of the hand.

And the Shell fellows laughed and went back to bed.

They were soon asleep.

Tom Merry was especially sleepy that night, having had no sleep the night before; indeed, he had nodded off once or twice during the day.

But he would probably not have slept but for the contrivance which made it safe for him to do so.

Many of the Shell fellows had brought cricket-stumps and bats to the dormitory, to be ready in case of trouble. Tom Merry had his bat under the mattress of his bed, and if the enemy came, and Tom Merry were awakened, the unknown was likely to meet with a warm reception.

The hours of the night wore away. The last door had closed below; the last light had ceased to gleam from the windows of the School House.

"One!"

The deep boom of the hour from the clock-tower sounded dully through the night.

Slumber reigned unbroken in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

Two strokes.

It was two o'clock.

Then, if anybody had been awake and listening in the School House, a sound might have been heard. Was it the wind that was rustling the ivy under the windows of the Shell dormitory?

It was a faint sound, but steady and long-continued. Tom Merry did not hear it—the hero of the Shell was deep in slumber. He was dreaming—a strange and broken dream, in which were mingled strange symbols of red triangles and circles, and dark, threatening faces, and dusky hands that menaced him from lowering shadows. And suddenly, in the midst of his heavy, troubled sleep, he started into broad wakefulness.

Buzzzzzz!

It was the bell.

Buzzzzzz!

With steady, raucous persistence the electric bell was buzzing at the head of his bed, and a shiver ran through him as he sat up in the darkness, for he knew that the dormitory window must be open—that it must have been opened by a hand from without.

His eyes swept towards the end window.

A cold breath came from the open air, the sash was raised, and a dark head and shoulders appeared at the opening.

There was no doubt now.

In the pale glimmer of the stars Tom Merry's eyes made out a dark face—as dark as Kalouth Das's—and two eyes that gleamed and scintillated like precious stones.

"Wake up!"

Tom Merry shouted the words.

The Hindu—for such he evidently was—had been prepared to leap into the dormitory through the open window, but the sudden buzz of the electric bell breaking upon the stillness had arrested him.

He had remained, struck motionless, as it were, in vague alarm.

Buzzzzzz!

The bell was still buzzing away.

The bell, and Tom Merry's shout, awoke every fellow in the dormitory.

Crooke, and perhaps one or two others, crouched under the bedclothes in alarm.

But almost all the dormitory leaped up at the sound, and there was a roar of voices.

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Tom Merry made a wild effort, and a cry burst chokingly from his dry lips. "Towser! Towser!" The great bulldog came leaping from the heather to the rescue, and sprang at the Indian with open jaws. (See Chap. 16.)

"There he is!"

"He's come!"

"It's a nigger!"

The head disappeared from the window.

Twice before the unknown had come and gone, and now for the third time he had been baffled.

Tom Merry dashed towards the window, his cricket-bat in his grasp.

But the man was gone.

The ivy was rustling and shaking under his hurried descent. In the starlight Tom Merry could see the man, a dozen feet below, scrambling downward.

From deep down in the quadrangle came a sudden, furious barking.

Tom Merry shouted from the window.

"Fangs—Fangs! Seize him!"

Taggles's mastiff was loose in the quadrangle. Ever since the attempted burglary at St. Jim's the mastiff had slept in his kennel with the chain off. And the mastiff was a good watchdog. Lowther had turned on the electric light in the dormitory, and the flood of it beamed out into the darkness. That, and the noise, had alarmed the mastiff, and the great

dog was now bounding towards the spot, barking loudly and furiously.

"Seize him, Fangs!"

Gr-r-r-r!

The descent of the housebreaker ceased.

The mastiff was below.

The dog had sighted his quarry now, and was running up and down below the dormitory windows, barking furiously, and waiting for the burglar to drop fairly into his jaws.

The man's rolling black eyes looked down, and he saw the great dog, with his teeth showing, his eyes blazing, and he ceased to descend.

To reach the ground was to throw himself into the grip of the mastiff, and the huge animal was quite capable of holding a man, even a powerful one. And the man who was clinging to the ivy was neither big nor powerful. He was a slightly-built Hindu, lithe, quick, nimble, but by no means powerful. Taggles's mastiff would have had no trouble in holding him fast. The ivy ceased to sway; the man hung there, looking fearfully downwards, while the dog ran to and fro, making the quadrangle ring with his barking.

"We've got him!" yelled Tom Merry. "The dog's guarding him—he can't get away! Wake the house!"

The house was already awakened.

The mastiff's furious barking rang through every recess of the old school, and over in the New House doors were opening and lights were flashing.

The big door of the School House opened, and light blazed out upon the quadrangle. Mr. Railton, half-dressed, and with a poker in his hand, rushed out, followed by Kildare.

"Fangs! Good dog! What is it?"

The dog barked louder than ever.

Mr. Railton and Kildare came running towards the dormitory window. The moon sailed out from behind a cloud and shone upon the scene. Tom Merry leaned out of the window.

"Mr. Railton! Kildare!"

The Housemaster and the Sixth-Former looked up.

"He's here!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Good heavens!"

The master and the prefect caught sight of the dark figure clinging to the ivy at the same moment.

"He is caught!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

"It's a Hindu, sir," muttered Kildare.

"I see that it is. You scoundrel, come down and surrender yourself!"

It seemed that the rascal had no alternative. Fellows were crowding out into the quad. now and gathering upon the scene, some carrying lanterns, some sticks or pokers, and all of them only half-dressed. There was a roar of excited voices.

"Come down!"

"We've got him!"

"Good dog!"

The dark, despairing face was turned upon the crowd. The man did not descend. Descent meant instant capture. Villain he undoubtedly was, but he had presence of mind. He turned again and began to climb up the ivy once more.

"My hat! He's coming up!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Go in, and close the window, Merry!" shouted Mr. Railton. "Go in, I command you!"

Tom Merry reluctantly obeyed. He had his bat ready, and would have been glad of a chance at the midnight intruder. But he did as he was told. He slammed the window shut, and pushed the catch to, and the Shell fellows stood inside, with their bats and stumps ready. If the Hindu had attempted to escape the crowd below by forcing an entry into the Shell dormitory, they were ready for him—and in their excitement they would probably not have left a whole bone in his body. A dark face was pressed to the window-pane, and two fierce black eyes gleamed into the room.

"Come in, if you like," yelled Monty Lowther, brandishing a stump.

But the wretch saw that it was hopeless. He dared not enter, and he dared not descend. He remained for some moments, staring into the lighted dormitory with wild, rolling eyes, and then climbed higher and disappeared.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "He's climbing on the roof!"

It was the man's last desperate resource. Probably he had a hope of being able to escape across the roofs, and descend in some unwatched spot, and yet escape. But there was little chance for him—all St. Jim's was buzzing like a hive of bees now, and both Houses had turned out to join in the hunt.

CHAPTER 12.

A Terrible Fate.

TOM MERRY hurried on his clothes and dashed out of the School House. The Shell fellows crowded out with him. The whole school was in an uproar. All the Sixth had turned out, with some weapons or other in their hands, to hunt down the burglar. That the man was a burglar was the general impression, as was natural, as there had been an attempted burglary at the school only a short time before.

Tom Merry knew that it was something more than that. It was not for purposes of robbery that the Hindu had tried to enter the Shell dormitory. Why had he come?

Tom Merry could not repress a shudder as he thought of the only possible conclusion. Yet that was so terrible that he could hardly entertain it. Why should a man whom he did not know, and whom he had never seen before, have designs on his life?

It was a terrible mystery, and that explanation, terrible as it was, was the only probable one—though the man's motive was utterly incomprehensible. It was rather with a desire to clear up the mystery, by capturing the rascal, than for his punishment, that Tom Merry joined eagerly in the chase.

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DON'T MISS "A FORBIDDEN CHUM!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the "MAGNET" LIBRARY, 1st.

Fellows were crowding over from the New House with lanterns and sticks in their hands. Redfern, of the Fourth, caught Tom Merry by the arm.

"What on earth's the row?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Burglars!" gasped Jack Blake.

"Or something worse," said Tom Merry. "A Hindu tried to break in—and he's on the roof now—and we'll have him!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Figgins. "He can't get away!"

It certainly looked as if the ruffian could not get away. There were more than two hundred fellows looking for him, as well as the masters, and, as if to banish his last chance, the moon came brightly out, and shone with silver light over the rambling buildings of the School House.

Many eyes scanned the walls and the sloping red roofs of the old buildings in quest of the desperate fugitive.

The School House at St. Jim's was a large and rambling building. It occupied almost a whole side of the great quadrangle, with the Head's house, which was a part of it. At one end were other buildings, which connected it with the New House across the way.

A daring climber could have climbed from roof to roof, and reached the New House, but it would have been at the risk of his life. And if the Hindu did that it would avail him little. Mr. Railton had taken every measure to prevent his escape. The School House master had risen to the occasion at once with unfailing energy and presence of mind.

There were so many fellows joining in the search that it was easy to surround both Houses and all the buildings connected with watchful eyes, and all the windows, too, were watched from inside, so that the man could not have entered at one of them without the alarm being immediately given.

Every light in the school was turned on, and all the buildings were ablaze with illumination.

Even the fags had turned out to join in the fun, as they deemed it, and the wildest excitement reigned.

Herries had rushed off to the kennels to loose his bulldog; and D'Arcy minor of the Third had brought his dog Pongo on the scene, so that there was a chorus of barks and howls in every key. Certainly if the marauder ventured to the ground one or another of the three dogs would have sighted him, and he would have been run down.

The man was cornered, and it was only a question of time before he was captured.

Some of the more excited fellows were for clambering on the roofs and seeking the ruffian there, but that Mr. Railton sternly forbade. He would not allow a life to be risked in the hunt for the rascal.

In the midst of the din the window of Kalouth Das's room opened, and the face of the Indian junior looked out.

Between the moon and the hundreds of lamps and lanterns the quadrangle was as light as by day. A dozen pairs of eyes spotted the Indian at the window immediately, and there was a howl from Tom Merry's friends in the Shell.

"Yah! We're after your friend, Kalouth Das!"

"We'll have him in a minute, you black bouncer!"

Kalouth Das looked down at them, and his face was pallid. Mr. Railton interposed.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "There is no reason to imagine any connection between Kalouth Das and the burglar, although the man is a Hindu. I forbid you to say a word like that again. Silence, I say! Kalouth Das, go in and close your window."

The dark junior obeyed.

"I jolly well know he's a friend of the burglar, all the same!" Levison muttered.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for once in complete accord with Levison. "I fully agree with you, deah boy!"

"Where is the rotter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, scanning the roofs so far as he could see them. "He's hiding among the chimney-stacks, I suppose."

"We ought to rout him out!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Railton says 'No!'" grunted Manners.

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps I had better speak to Mr. Wailton on the subject. I weally think that I could climb up there and capchah the wuffian, you know."

"Yes, I think I can see you doing it!" grinned Redfern.

"Weally, Wedfern—"

There was a sudden roar!

"There he is!"

"He's on the New House!" yelled Figgins.

There was a rush to look.

In the rays of the moon a dark figure appeared upon the New House, clinging to the red brick chimney-stack. Dangerous as the task was, the fugitive had escaped from one House to the other by clambering over a succession of roofs at unequal altitudes. But he had not bettered his position by so doing. For the New House was as keenly watched as the

School House, and every window was fastened, and watched from within as well as without.

The man's dark face could be seen as he glared at the crowd below. A yell went up to greet him, and it rang far into the night.

"We've spotted him, sir!" shouted Kildare.

Mr. Railton hurried up.

"Where is he?"

"There—by the chimney-stack!"

"We could get out by the fire-escape in the roof, sir, and seize him!" exclaimed Monteith, the head prefect of the New House eagerly.

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"Life must not be risked, Monteith. And his capture is only a question of hours. I have already sent for the police."

"Fancy P.-c. Crump climbing over the roofs after that Johnny!" murmured Jack Blake. And the juniors chuckled at the thought.

They could not imagine Police-constable Crump, of Rylcombe, doing anything of the sort.

"He will have to come down sooner or later," said Langton.

"And then we'll have him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Langton's words were too true—and his prediction was terribly fulfilled. The Hindu stood upon the roof, looking down upon the excited crowd. They could see the dark-bronze face, but not the expression upon it; but something in the man's attitude caused Tom Merry to utter a sharp cry.

"He's going to jump!"

"Good heavens!"

"He will be killed!"

"Stand clear!"

"Oh, heavens!"

"He's falling!"

There was the scraping of a falling body on the sliding slates, and a whiz in the air as it rushed down, and then—
Thud!

It was a soft, sickening sound, but it reached every ear, and it sent a shudder through every fellow there. For a moment no one moved, no one spoke. Then Mr. Railton said quickly:

"Lights here!"

Kildare and Monteith advanced with lights. Mr. Railton bent over a dark, huddled form on the ground. The fellows gathered round, white, shuddering, horrified. The light gleamed upon a dark-bronze face, from which all expression was gone.

"He is dead!" said Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 13.

Under Lock and Key.

DEAD!"

The word was echoed by a hundred hushed voices.

The excitement had died away now—every face was pale and strained.

The man had been a villain; it could hardly be doubted now that his intent was murderous in entering the school! But he had paid for his intended crime. The fall from the roof of the New House had killed him instantly.

"The poor wretch!" muttered Tom Merry, white to the lips. "I—I never looked for this!"

"He jumped down!" whispered Figgins. "That wasn't a fall! He knew he had to be taken, and he preferred—that!"

"I—I suppose so! He may have fallen, though!"

"He jumped!" said Levison. "That shows how much he had to fear from the police. Most likely he's done things to be hung for if he was caught. Let me pass, you fellows, I want to see him!"

"Blessed if I do," said Blake, with a shudder.

"I want to see his arm!"

"His arm! What for?"

"To see if there is a sign on it!" said Levison quietly.

"Oh, I understand!"

Levison's nerve seemed to be of iron. While the other fellows shrank shuddering from the terrible sight, Levison pressed forward, and bent beside the still form. Mr. Railton called out sharply:

"Levison, stand back!"

"Yes, sir; but look here!"

Levison, touching the silent form with a hand that did not tremble, pushed back the sleeve, and the light of Kildare's lantern fell upon the dark, bronzed skin of the arm. Upon the bronze of the arm a tattooed mark showed plainly in the light—the sign of the red triangle and the three red circles

in the angles. It was tattooed large and clearly on the dark skin.

Mr. Railton started violently.

"Good heavens!" he muttered.

"It's the same mark that's on Kalouth Das's arm, sir!" said Levison.

"I know—go back, Levison!"

"Yes, sir!"

Levison rejoined the juniors. The strangeness of his discovery banished to some extent the horror that had seized upon the fellows. They were amazed. That the man's presence at St. Jim's had something to do with the mysterious symbol Tom Merry had received from India, all were sure. And the same brand was upon the arm of Kalouth Das, the Indian junior in the Shell. What did that mean?

The juniors talked in hushed tones as they returned to their dormitories. Tom Merry touched Bernard Glyn's arm as he went into the School House, and the Liverpool lad looked at him in silence.

"Your burglar alarm has been useful, Glyn, old man!" said Tom Merry, in a strained voice. "I believe it has saved my life to-night!"

"I believe it has, kid," said Bernard Glyn, with a shiver. "That man must have come from India to—to—" He did not finish.

"It's something my uncle has got mixed up in in India," said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "And they have included me in it. That's the only explanation."

"That's what it looks like."

The fellows returned to bed, though not to sleep. The body of the Hindu was carried into the tool-shed, to remain there until the police should arrive. After that Mr. Railton and the Head proceeded to the room occupied by Kalouth Das.

The two masters entered, and found the room in darkness, and the Indian junior in bed. Mr. Railton lighted the gas.

Dr. Holmes looked towards the bed. Kalouth Das was there, lying quite quiet, his face resting upon one arm on the pillow, and breathing quite regularly. He was asleep, or he was feigning sleep with great skill.

"He is asleep, Mr. Railton," said the Head, in a low tone.

"Kalouth Das!" said the School Housemaster, in his deep tones.

The Indian junior's eyes opened.

He gazed at the two masters with an expression of surprise.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Do you want me?"

"Were you asleep?" said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Even in all this excitement?" asked Mr. Railton, with a searching glance at the dark, impassive face of the Indian.

"You ordered me from my window, sir," said Kalouth Das submissively, "so I returned to my bed, sir, and fell asleep."

"A Hindu tried to break into the Shell dormitory, Kalouth Das, by the window that Tom Merry suspected you of signalling from last night," said the Head.

"Indeed, sir."

"He has fallen from the roof of the New House, and was killed."

The dark face did not move a muscle.

"That is terrible, sir," said Kalouth Das. And his voice did not shake.

If the two masters had hoped to discover anything from the face of the Hindu they were disappointed. It was expressionless, and if the terrible news caused Kalouth Das any emotion at all he showed not the slightest sign of it.

"You know nothing about the matter, Kalouth Das?" asked the Head.

"I, sir!" exclaimed the Indian, in astonishment. "What should I know about it, sir?"

"You should, of course, know nothing," said the Head quietly. "But the suspicion is very strong that you do know something, Kalouth Das. You have upon your arm a strange mark, which was sent to Tom Merry in a letter from India inscribed upon a card, and the same mark has been found upon the arm of the dead man."

"Indeed, sir."

"Can you account for that, Kalouth Das?"

The Indian shook his head.

"Indeed, no, sir. You surprise me very much. The mark upon my arm was a childish trick, as I have already explained to Mr. Railton, and I did not know that it was to be found anywhere else, though the form of a triangle is not uncommon, and other boys may have amused themselves in the same way."

"It is not a sign, then, of any secret society in India?" asked Mr. Railton, bending a very keen and searching glance upon the Indian junior.

Kalouth Das answered with perfect composure:

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"Not that I am aware of, sir, certainly."

"You know nothing of the man who tried to enter the Shell dormitory to-night?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"You were not signalling to him from the window last night?"

"No, sir. I have already explained my action, which Merry misunderstood, owing to his ignorance of Indian customs."

There was a short silence. The Indian had answered with perfect coolness, and it seemed incredible that he could have been concerned in what had happened, and yet could retain so marvellous a composure.

"Very well," said the Head at last, "if you are innocent of all complicity in this affair, Kalouth Das, I am very sorry that suspicion has fallen upon you. There will be a searching inquiry. I need not tell you; the matter will pass into the hands of the police now."

"I have nothing to fear from the police, sir."

"I hope not. I hope that you will emerge unstained from the inquiry," said the Head more cordially, for the Indian's composure impressed him very much. "In the meantime, you must not take it amiss if we take precautions. I shall lock you in your room to-night, but this is merely a measure of precaution, and you must not take it as implying that I look upon you as guilty in any way."

The Indian met his gaze unflinchingly.

"You may do as you please, sir, of course. I am sorry that this has happened, and I am quite willing to admit, sir, that the burglar being a Hindu, the coincidence is a strange one, but to suppose that I have any connection with him is very unjust. Of course, I do not blame you for being careful in the matter; that is only to be expected. I am perfectly willing to be locked in for the night."

"Very well," said the Head; "we will say no more about it now."

And the two masters quitted the room, the Head turning the key in the outside of the lock.

"What do you think, Mr. Railton?" asked Dr. Holmes after a pause.

The School House master shook his head.

"I do not know what to think, sir. But, under any circumstances, we must take all precautions, until we get the answers to the cables to Bombay."

"Quite so."

In his room, Kalouth Das heard the key turn in the lock. He extinguished the light, and went back to bed, but he did not sleep. Through the long hours of darkness, the Indian junior lay there with wide-open eyes that seemed to burn in the gloom.

CHAPTER 14.

A Hindu Vendetta.

ST. JIM'S hardly slept again that night.

And in the morning the whole school was in a hushed buzz of excitement. The fearful happening of the night was the one topic.

The police had visited the school at dawn, and the dead Hindu had been taken away.

Inspector Skeat, of Wayland, had the matter in hand. He told the Head that nothing whatever leading to identification had been found upon the dead man. His pockets were perfectly empty, save for a handkerchief of red Indian silk, which the inspector brought into the Head's study to show him. Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton were there, and the latter gentleman examined the silken scarf with careful attention.

"It is such a silken scarf as the Thugs in India use for strangling their victims," said Mr. Linton quietly. "They call it the roomal. This was evidently not carried as a handkerchief by the Hindu. It is the noose of the strangler."

The doctor shuddered.

"Then the man's intention must have been—"

"It is terrible to think what his intention must have been," said the master of the Shell, with a shiver.

"And you have not learned his name, sir; nor his history in any way?" the Head asked, turning to the inspector.

Mr. Skeat shook his head.

"No, sir. His pockets were absolutely empty, excepting for this. It's pretty clear that he intended to have nothing about him to identify him, in case of a capture. His name cannot be guessed; nor what part of India he came from. Of course, every inquiry will be made. The mark on his arm may lead to a clue."

"I trust so, inspector."

Dr. Holmes had acquainted the inspector with the whole story, and before leaving St. Jim's, Mr. Skeat interviewed Tom Merry and Kalouth Das. Tom Merry told him everything he could, with perfect frankness. The Indian junior

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appeared to be equally frank, and if he had anything to conceal he concealed it marvellously well.

The dead man was taken to Wayland, where the inquest was to be held, and Mr. Railton and Tom Merry were warned that they would be required at the inquest, as was Kalouth Das. The Indian received the intimation with perfect composure.

Some of Tom Merry's friends obtained permission to accompany him to Wayland for the inquest, and they were present. The inquest revealed nothing that was not known already.

The Hindu's motive in visiting the school by night could only be guessed at. Kalouth Das, in reply to searching questions from the coroner, stated that he knew nothing whatever of the Hindu. And, indeed, it was hard for anyone to believe that a mere schoolboy could have had a hand in so terrible an affair.

Inspector Skeat, more than a little pleased to have so striking a case in hand in his quiet country district, promised the Head of St. Jim's that every possible inquiry should be made, and warned him to keep an eye on Kalouth Das—which the Head had already resolved to do.

Lessons were over for the day at St. Jim's when the party returned from the inquest at Wayland.

A crowd of fellows greeted Tom Merry warmly. The hero of the Shell was very quiet and grave. The shadow of deadly peril was upon him, and he knew it. The midnight intruder had paid for his attempted crime with his life; but there might be others, and the thought of it was enough to make Tom Merry unusually grave. He had already written to his uncle, but it must be a long time before he could obtain a reply, and he was very anxious to hear from General Merry, for he was certain that the explanation of the mysterious happenings at St. Jim's was to be found at Bundelore, in far-off India.

Kalouth Das was locked in his room that night, a proceeding to which he did not raise the slightest objection. All the St. Jim's fellows avoided him, but it did not seem to ruffle the Indian's composure in any way. In fact, he seemed better pleased at being left entirely to himself.

In the Shell dormitory the door was locked, and Bernard Glyn's burglar-alarm was put into its place. But the electric bell did not ring that night in the Shell dormitory. The night passed without incident of any sort.

In the morning Kalouth Das took his place in the Shell Form-room as usual, and there was a wide space left on either side of him as he sat in the Form. Mr. Linton treated him exactly as usual, but the Shell fellows kept as far from him as they could. He was under suspicion, and they could not help showing that they feared and distrusted the dark, silent, impassive Hindu.

Third lesson was proceeding when Toby's shock head was put into the Form-room. Mr. Linton looked round.

"If you please, sir, the Head wants Master Merry, in his study, sir."

There was a movement of interest in the Form. Tom Merry rose in his place at a sign from Mr. Linton.

"Go to the doctor's study, Merry," said the Form-master.

"Yes, sir."

All eyes in the Shell Form-room followed Tom Merry as he went. The juniors felt that there was some new development. Kalouth Das alone kept his eyes upon his desk, as if he alone were uninterested in the matter.

Tom Merry made his way to the Head's study, wondering what he was wanted for. Inspector Skeat was in the study, and Dr. Holmes was seated at his desk, with a newspaper before him.

"Come in, Merry," he said gravely. "Close the door. Inspector Skeat has brought me this paper, and I think it only right that you should see it. As you see, it is a copy of the 'Bombay Gazette,' and two months old. Inspector Skeat considered it advisable to examine all the Indian papers that could be obtained from the district where your uncle is stationed, and this discovery proves that he was right."

And the inspector purred a little with satisfaction.

Tom Merry, in wonder, took the paper the Head handed to him, and looked at a paragraph which had been heavily scored round by the inspector.

"Read it," said the Head.

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry scanned the paragraph, and his face grew paler as he read it. It was brief enough—merely an item of news—but it meant much to Tom Merry, and to those who were investigating the mystery of that strange night at St. Jim's.

The execution of Chandra Dal took place at Bundelore yesterday. He was condemned to death for the murder of General Merry's native servant. The assassin's object was to take the life of the General, and the khitmutgar, who surprised him in the attempt, perished in saving his master. It

will be remembered that General Merry had succeeded in breaking up and almost extirpating a secret society of thieves and assassins whose symbol was a red triangle with three circles in the angles—a symbol of peculiar significance in the sect to which the assassins belonged. The society had twelve members, who were discovered by means of information given by a native, and the fact that each member had the symbol of the society branded upon his arm rendered the work of the law more easy. Ten members of the secret society have now been accounted for, and the remaining two, one of whom is a mere boy, the son of Chandra Dal, have disappeared, but the police hope to discover them yet. The secret society has existed for many years, and was the terror of the Bundelphore district. It was a custom of these wretches to send the symbol of the society to their victims before the blow fell, and on receiving the sign of the red triangle the victim knew that his days were numbered. In some cases, it is understood, victims thus terrorised were able to purchase safety by the payment of heavy ransoms, but in other cases, where the society had cause to fear or hate the victims, they were thus warned of their intended doom, and left in all the torture of fear and doubt until the blow fell, perhaps weeks afterwards. Fortunately, this association of criminals is now broken up for ever, though it is well known that many other such societies exist in India at the present day, under the very eyes of the authorities.

Tom Merry looked up from the paper.

"I thought you should know it, Merry," said the Head. "It is clear that you were the intended object of that man's attack, and I feared that the matter might weigh upon your mind. Now you know that all is safe. It is quite clear that the man who perished by falling from the roof of the New House was the last member of the secret society. The sign upon his arm proves that clearly enough."

"But one more is mentioned, sir—a boy, the son of Chandra Dal."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Yes, a boy. And there is a boy at this school whom we have suspected of connection with the dead Hindu, and who bears upon his arm the symbol of that fearful society."

"Kalouth Das!" murmured Tom Merry. "Kalouth Das is the son of Chandra Dal, the man who tried to kill my uncle!"

"No doubt about that, in my mind," said Inspector Skeat confidently. "It looks to me pretty clear, Dr. Holmes. Of course, he would change his name in coming here, and the recommendations you had from Bombay are forged."

"I think you must be right, inspector."

"If it were not for the danger to Master Merry from the boy remaining here, I should suggest leaving him here till I have certain information from India," said the inspector; "but under the circumstances, I think it will be better for him to be detained."

"I think so, too," said the Head gravely. "The sooner he leaves the school the better. If it turns out to be a mistake, and that he is really what he represents himself to be, then he can return."

"Quite so, sir."

"Merry can send him here when he returns to his Form-room," the Head suggested, "then you can take him away with you while the boys are still at their lessons, and so avoid any excitement."

"Very good, sir."

"Tell Kalouth Das to come to my study, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry returned to the Shell Form-room. The fellows all looked at him eagerly, and Kalouth Das raised his dark eyes, and they dwelt searchingly on Tom Merry's face for a moment. Then they dropped again.

"Dr. Holmes wishes Kalouth Das to go to his study, sir," said Tom Merry to the master of the Shell.

"Very well, Merry. You hear, Kalouth Das?" said Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir," said the Indian.

He rose and quitted the Form-room, without a change of his dark, impassive face. The door closed behind him, and the lessons went on in the Shell Form-room. Monty Lowther leaned towards Tom Merry and whispered excitedly:

"What does the Head want the black bounder for, Tommy?"

"Inspector Skeat's there. Kalouth Das is going to be detained on suspicion."

"Good!" said Lowther.

In whispers the news ran through the Form. Mr. Linton frowned, and called his class sharply to order, and the juniors concentrated their attention as well as they could upon the ancient battles which Caesar had waged against the Gauls and the Helvetians.

CHAPTER 15.

The Flight of Kalouth Das.

TOMBY, the School House page, tapped at the door of the Form-room five minutes later and opened it, and the lesson was again interrupted. Mr. Linton looked round quite irritably. He did not like these constant interruptions.

"What is it?" he said sharply.

"If you please, sir, Dr. Holmes wants Master Kalouth Das in his study, sir. He told Master Merry to tell you, sir."

Mr. Linton stared.

"Master Kalouth Das has gone to Dr. Holmes's study five minutes ago or more," he replied. "Please return and tell Dr. Holmes so."

"Yessir."

Toby retired.

The door had not been closed one minute when it was thrown open again, and the portly form of Inspector Skeat strode into the room. Mr. Linton looked at him with a resignation that would have suited the countenance of an early Christian martyr.

"What is it, Mr. Skeat?" he asked wearily.

"Kalouth Das—"

"I sent him to the Head's study seven or eight minutes ago."

"He did not come," exclaimed the inspector, his face growing purple with anger and alarm. "I was waiting there for him."

"Then he is loitering by the way, I suppose, and I shall cane him for it," said Mr. Linton, his eyes gleaming angrily.

Inspector Skeat gave a grunt.

"I don't think you'll have a chance of caning that bright youth again, sir," he said.

"Indeed! Why not?"

"Because he's bolted, sir, that's why!" said the inspector. And he dashed out of the Form-room, breathing in short, quick pants from his unaccustomed exertion.

There was a buzz in the Form.

"Bolted!"

"My hat!"

"He guessed what he was wanted for," murmured Tom Merry. "He guessed that the inspector was there—listened outside the Head's study very likely, and heard his voice. He must have been expecting this."

"Bolted, by Jove!" said Manners. "But they're bound to catch him."

"Good riddance, I say!" said Gore. "Good riddance to bad rubbish! I'm jolly glad to have seen the last of the black bounder! Blessed if I liked having him in my study!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "The lesson will continue. Silence at once!"

But in spite of Mr. Linton's frowns the Shell gave but little attention to the remainder of the morning's lessons. They were too keenly interested in the flight of the Indian junior, and in wondering whether Inspector Skeat would succeed in running him to earth. The inspector, at all events, was losing no time. He realised that he had been a little lax in giving the Indian this chance, and yet he was not wholly dissatisfied, for the flight of the Indian was a proof and a confession of his guilt.

That the dark junior had indeed "bolted" was soon clear. Inspector Skeat dashed down to the porter's lodge at once. Taggles was at his door, and the inspector clapped a hand on his shoulder and shook him in his excitement.

"Has anybody passed?" he gasped.

"Yes," said Taggles, in surprise. "Whatcher drivin' at?"

"A dark boy—Kalouth Das—has he passed?"

"Yes; he went out more'n ten minues ago," said Taggles.

"He said he had an important message to take for the 'Ead.' The inspector snorted.

"Important message be blowed!" he said, emphatically and inelegantly. "The young villain's bolted."

"Bolted! My heye!"

"Which way did he go?"

"I dunno. I hain't in the 'abit of watching which way junior boys go," said Taggles, with considerable dignity.

The inspector snorted again, and rushed out into the road. There was no sign to be seen of the Indian.

He had probably taken to the wood immediately after quitting the school, in order to gain cover; and although he could not yet be far away, there was no trace of him left to guide the inspector.

Without returning to the school, Mr. Skeat hurried on to Rylcombe, and within twenty minutes the telegraph was at work, flashing a description of the fugitive up and down the countryside.

Inspector Skeat returned to Wayland fully satisfied that within a few hours, or by the next day at the latest, the Indian boy would be seized.

When the St. Jim's fellows were dismissed after morning lessons, the whole school heard the news.

Kalouth Das had bolted!

From the head of the Sixth to the youngest fag, St. Jim's discussed the matter with undying interest and excitement.

Kalouth Das had been a confederate of the man who had sought to enter St. Jim's at night; the suspicion the boys had had of him had been well founded.

There was no longer any possibility of doubt upon that subject.

Levison, of the Fourth, was triumphant; and indeed on this occasion there was some excuse for his satisfaction. He had been the first to "spot" the rascal, and his predictions had been borne out by events.

"What did I tell you?" Levison remarked at least fifty times that day.

"Yaas, so you did, deah boy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rejoined at last; "but don't tell us any more. Enough's as good as a giddy feast, you know."

"Quite so!" said Blake. "Besides, it isn't such a giddy success for you, Levison. You suspect everybody of everything, and so you are bound to spot a winner sometimes, in the long run, if you keep on."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats!" said Levison, who did not like having his cleverness minimised in this way. "It was jolly lucky for Tom Merry I bowled him out, anyway."

"Pity you didn't foresee that he was going to bolt, too," remarked Monty Lowther. "Might have saved a lot of trouble if you had done the Sherlock Holmes act this morning."

"Well, anybody might have guessed it," said Levison. "Skeat was an ass to let the chap slip through his fingers like that, and he won't find it so jolly easy to capture him, I can tell you that."

And Levison was right again on that point. Inspector Skeat did not find it easy; in fact, he did not find it possible. At first, it had seemed certain that the Indian junior would be caught in a few days at the most. His complexion marked him out for recognition, and he could hardly have obtained a change of clothes without the fact becoming known to the police sooner or later. Yet the time passed, and no news of his arrest was received.

Saturday and Sunday passed, and then Monday; but still no news had been received of the Indian junior who had fled.

"He's left the neighbourhood, of course," said Jack Blake, with a sage nod. "He wouldn't stay near St. Jim's. I'll wager he made a bee-line for Southampton, where there are plenty of fellows his colour about the docks, and I expect he's on board a ship for India before this."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. And Tom Merry nodded assent. Levison, who heard Blake's remark, shook his head decidedly.

"I don't think so," he said.

"Where do you think he is, then?" asked Tom Merry, who had come to have some regard for Levison's judgment, in this matter at least.

"I believe he's sticking to his game; and if I were in your shoes, I'd keep a jolly sharp look-out for him," said Levison.

Tom Merry laughed carelessly.

"I don't think he could hurt me, even if he had the pluck to try," he said. "And we're still keeping the burglar alarm going in the Shell dorm. And I don't quite agree with you, Levison; I think he's gone."

Levison shook his head. And Levison's opinion had a startling confirmation when the juniors came out of the Form-rooms after school that day. A shout from Jack Blake drew Tom Merry's attention to the letter rack. Tom Merry turned quickly towards the Fourth-Former.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "Another letter from India?"

"No; it's a postcard—look!"

Blake had taken a postcard from the rack.

"It's in Kalouth Das's handwriting, the address," he explained.

"My hat!"

"What's on it?" asked Blake. "Look—quick!"

A crowd of fellows gathered round excitedly. Tom Merry turned the postcard for them all to see what was on the back. There was no writing. In red ink was traced the symbol of a triangle, with a tiny circle in each angle. The juniors gazed at it, their voices dying away in silence. A kind of chill crept over them as they looked upon the fatal sign—a sign which told that Kalouth Das had not fled, and that he was lurking near at hand to execute the vengeance which had been planned in the far-off land of India.

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CHAPTER 16.

Good Old Towser.

GRR-RRRR-RRR!

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Steady, Towser! Gussy isn't the fellow! Hold on!"

"Keep that uthah beast away, Hewwies—"

"Steady, Towser!"

Herries dragged on the chain, and Towser, who seemed to have taken a great fancy for sampling D'Arcy's beautiful trousers with his teeth, reluctantly abandoned his design. The swell of St. Jim's jammed his eyeglass into his eyes, and surveyed Towser with great disapproval from a safe distance.

"Pway keep that feahful beast at a distance fwom me, Hewwies. The wotten bwute has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries.

Perhaps the word "rats!" attracted Towser's attention, for he growled again, and there was a clink of the chain as he dragged upon it. Arthur Augustus gave a startled jump.

"Keep that beastly bulldog away fwom my twousahs!" he shrieked.

"Keep your beastly trousers away from my bulldog!" retorted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, you ass—"

"Ready, you fellows?" exclaimed Tom Merry as the Terrible Three came out of the School House, each with a thick stick in his hand.

"Yaas, wathah! I was pointin' out to Hewwies—"

"Quite ready," said Blake.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Blake—"

"Yes, come on!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"We're all ready," said Herries. "Towser will nose the bounder out. I've shown him a book belonging to Kalouth Das, and he will track him down like a giddy bloodhound."

"I don't think," murmured Blake.

"Look here, Blake—" began Herries wrathfully.

"Well, we'll give him a chance," said Tom Merry, hastily pouring oil upon the troubled waters, as it were. "Towser won't do any harm, if he doesn't do any good."

"He'll run down that black bounder, if you give him a chance," said Herries, with great satisfaction. "Blake remembers perfectly well how Towser can follow a track—"

"Yes, I remember his tracking down Gussy, on the first of April—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't jaw; come on!" said Herries crossly.

And the juniors started. The chums of the School House had decided to expend that half-holiday in hunting the wood for the Hindu junior. If the masters had known of their intention, they would certainly have been forbidden to do anything of the sort, and perhaps, for that reason, they forgot to mention their project to anybody. Kildare glanced at them as they quitted the school gates.

"If you kids are going out, keep all together," he said. "We never know whether that Hindu chap is hanging about or not, till he's caught!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'll look aftah them," said D'Arcy reassuringly.

And the juniors tramped on, glad that the captain of St. Jim's had not thought of questioning them. No one but Herries had much faith in the powers of Towser; and the big bulldog would be a useful ally if there should be any fighting and the Hindu proved dangerous. For that reason no one raised any objection to his presence; though, as Jack Blake remarked, Towser might be equal to tracking down a herring or a mutton chop, greater things were not to be expected of him. Towser also had a gift of chasing rabbits, as he proved as soon as the juniors entered the wood.

Towser scented or sighted a rabbit within the first five minutes, and, with a sudden jerk, he freed himself from Herries, and dashed away into the underwood.

"Towser!" roared Herries, dashing after the bulldog.

"Towser! Stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's gone!"

"Towser! Towsy, old boy!"

But Towser was gone, the loose chain whisking and clinking behind him through the thickets.

Herries came back, panting and disgusted.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's on the track," he said. "Anyway, he'll turn up again."

"Like the bad penny!" grinned Blake.

"Oh, rats!"

Minus Towser, the School House juniors searched through the wood. They had agreed to drop cricket for that afternoon in order to make the search. The postcard Tom Merry had

received from the Indian made them assured that he was lurking somewhere near St. Jim's, and the wood was full of recesses where he might have hidden. But as they searched they realised that the hunt was like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay.

The old hut in the wood and the ruined castle on the slope of Wayland Hill were drawn blank, and as the afternoon wore on the juniors came out upon the wide expanse of the moor.

Among the abandoned quarries upon the moor Monty Lowther suggested that the Indian might have found a hiding-place, and so the search was extended in that direction.

"The police have searched the moor once already," Manners remarked.

"It would take weeks to search it thoroughly," said Digby. "There are dozens of those old quarries. You remember you tumbled into one once, Tom Merry."

"Not much good our spending an afternoon on it, then," said Kangaroo.

"Well, we can do our best, anyway," remarked Blake. "So long as that Hindu brute is at liberty Tom Merry's life isn't safe. It's worth any amount of trouble to lay him by the heels, I think."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We sha'n't cover much ground if we stick together," said Kangaroo, after a pause. "Look here, let's separate, and keep in sight of one another. We needn't lose sight of each other, you know, if we keep about a hundred yards apart. We're more likely to hit on some traces of the fellow that way, if there are any here."

"Good egg!"

It was evidently the only way to make the search with any prospect of success. The juniors were soon strung out in an irregular line, keeping sight of one another, and occasionally calling across the heathery moor. Sometimes, in the rough hollows of the ground, they vanished from each other's view for a few minutes, always to emerge again.

Suddenly there was the sound of a bark and a clinking chain in the distance.

"Hallo! There's Towser again!" said Blake.

The bulldog could not be seen in the heather, but he was evidently not far away. Herries dashed off in pursuit of him.

In this place the moor was honeycombed with deep rifts and chasms, the remains of old quarries long since abandoned. Some of them were filled up with the rain, and transformed into lakes and ponds; but some were empty and cavernous—great black gaps opening in the ground, unfenced and dangerous after dark. The grass and heather grew to the very edge of the deep chasms, sometimes concealing them from view until one was quite close to them. But the juniors of St. Jim's knew the ground well, and they were not likely to meet with any accident among the old quarries.

Tom Merry paused by the edge of one of these deep rifts in the earth, and turned from the line he had been following to pass along the edge till he came to the further end. He descended a slope into a hollow of the moor, a lake of gorse and heather. The old quarry-edge was on his left, and a steep acclivity on his right, and as he descended into the hollow he was lost to sight by his comrades. He hardly noticed the circumstance, for he expected to emerge from the hollow in a few minutes, when he would have caught sight of them on the moor again. Little did he dream that from the thick gorse a pair of black eyes were watching him with a savage gleam in their depths. Tom Merry had come upon his enemy; but he did not know it. He walked carelessly along, glancing to right and left from habit, but not really thinking that the heather and gorse concealed a foe. He heard a rustle, and paused, but even then it was only with the thought that Herries' bulldog was coming towards him. He turned his head, and as he did so, he was seized from behind, and hurled upon his face.

Then he realised the truth!

He twisted himself over, and came face upward; but the weight of his foe was upon his chest, and he was crushed heavily into the ground, on the very edge of the deep pit. A foot more to one side, and he and his assailant would be over the verge. Two dusky hands were at his throat, and two savage eyes glared down at him with savage spite.

"At last!" said Kalouth Das.

Tom Merry looked up at him.

In the dark-bronze face of the Indian he read no mercy; only hard and relentless revenge. There was bitter hate and triumph in the face of the Indian. The dark face showed, too, want and hunger; it was emaciated, and the Indian's clothes were torn and muddy. The dark junior had suffered since he had fled from St. Jim's. But only triumph and hate blazed in his eyes now. His dusky hands compressed Tom Merry's throat, and choked back the cry the junior would have uttered.

A chill of horror crept into Tom Merry's heart. Round them the gorse and heather waved thickly, and hid

them from sight. Tom Merry was invisible to the eye, and the Indian was crouching low over him, and was not to be seen by anyone looking into the hollow unless he came very close. And within a foot of them yawned the terrible pit, extending to unknown depths into the earth. Tom Merry realised the savage purpose in the face of the Hindu, and his face went very white.

"You dog!" The Indian's voice was low and grating and harsh. "You dog! All have perished excepting myself, but a new Society of the Red Triangle will arise in Bombay to defy the power of the British raj! You dog! The Sahib Merry destroyed us, but he and his kin shall perish in their turn! The man, who perished at the school was my uncle—the Chandra Dal who was shot at Bundelpore was my father! My name is not Kalouth Das—the papers I brought from Bombay were forged. Do you comprehend now? I was sent from India to complete our vengeance—my uncle and myself. My uncle failed, but I shall not fail. Do you understand, you dog? You have but a few moments to live!"

Harder grew the grip upon Tom Merry's throat. The junior struggled desperately.

The dark face bending over him, the glittering eyes, seemed to dance before him as his senses reeled. His consciousness was going; his struggles grew feeble and feebler. A red mist swam before his eyes. As his senses swam he heard a sound in the heather—the sound of a metallic clinking. The Indian heard it, too, and he turned his head for an instant, and involuntarily his grip relaxed for the moment. Tom Merry made a wild effort, and a cry burst chokingly from his dry lips.

"Towser—Towser!"

The great bulldog came leaping from the heather.

Kalouth Das gave a cry, and swung half round. In a second the bulldog was upon him, with flaming eyes and gleaming teeth. The noble animal knelt at once Tom Merry's peril, and he leaped at the Indian with open jaws.

Kalouth Das leaped away to escape him, forgetful of the terrible gulf that yawned at his side. He remembered it as his foot stumbled on the crumbling edge—but he remembered it too late. For a single moment he hung there, over the edge, and striving wildly, frantically, to recover his balance, and throw himself back upon the firm earth. But it was in vain, and the struggle lasted only a moment. Then he sank out of sight away from Tom Merry's horrified eyes, and a faint cry echoed up from the depths of the chasm. Tom Merry did not hear the terrible thud that followed far, far below, for he had fainted.

The juniors, attracted by the deep voice of the bulldog, came hurrying up to the spot. They found Tom Merry insensible, and the faithful Towser licking his face.

The crumbled edge of the gulf, the footmarks to be seen there, and the cruel thumb-prints on Tom Merry's throat, warned them of what had happened.

Sick with horror, they gathered round Tom Merry and restored him. The hero of the Shell opened his eyes at last; his head was resting upon Monty Lowther's arm, and Manners was bathing his face with water he had brought in his cap. Tom Merry gave a long, shuddering breath.

"Thank Heaven you are safe!" said Blake, with a shiver.

"You found him?"

Tom Merry nodded without speaking.

"And he—?" Blake hesitated.

"Yes, I saw him go over. Towser saved my life. But for Towser I should have gone over instead of him."

Herries fondled the huge head of his favourite.

"You saved Towser's life once," he said, in a whisper. "You remember? Good old Towser! And now he's saved yours. And Kalouth Das—"

"We shall never see him again!"

The juniors shuddered, and were silent.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to St. Jim's pale and subdued, to tell there what had happened. The body of the Indian was searched for, but it was not recovered. In some deep recess of the old quarry it rested, and it was never found.

It seemed as if a shadow rested upon the school for days after the terrible occurrence. But the shadow of dire peril was gone from Tom Merry's life, and in time the juniors ceased to think of the terrible events that had followed the coming of Kalouth Das to the old school. But it was likely to be a long time before Tom Merry forgot the dark, sinister face of Kalouth Das, and the days he had passed in direst peril.

THE END.

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Fearful creatures, thought to be extinct since prehistoric times, are encountered when the adventurers reach a mysterious 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, come across a human being, a jet-black giant full nine feet high. Having made friends with him by signs, they push on further, and discover a city, which, by reason of its peculiar construction, they name the City of Triangles. They encounter another giant, evidently the king of the strange race, who comes on board, bringing with him fresh meat, and a huge diamond, which is presented to Crooks.

As the aeronef floats over the centre of the town Jackson, the invalid, comes on deck, where he is tended to by Tooter.

(Now go on with the story!)

The Plesiosaurus.

Not a sound trembled in the still air. The inhabitants of the city were mute and dumb. The slopes behind showed patches of green and brown, telling that this strange race understood at least the rudiments of agriculture.

Then, all of a sudden, the stillness of the air was broken by a shout that became a roar. The motionless figures became animated, and the impassive warriors, who had stood like so many images, broke asunder. Half of them hurled themselves into the canal that threaded the ravine and joined the moat. They swam for the bank.

"Hao, hao, hao!"

The cry swelled up. What had caused the commotion? Tooter saw first.

"Look sir—look!"

Morgan swung round. Tooter was pointing towards the ravine. The blue-grey water was surging over the banks, along which the warriors were racing. The two giants had gained the deck. They screamed out some strange, harsh words. Then something tossed like a great whip above the swelling waters.

"A plesiosaurus, Teddy!" roared Lance. "He's broken through the dams!"

"Maxim—why not?"

They had a Maxim—they had everything necessary for an expedition into the unknown. The monster leapt up and rode the water like a hideous swan. It was a mile away.

"Take charge, sir," said Morgan to Lance. "Tooter, Crooks, you, sir, out with that gun!"

It rumbled along the corridor, and was placed upon the lift. It rose through the hatch. Crooks, an old man-o'-war's man, chuckled as he roped up the wheels.

"We'll show 'em now!" he grinned. "Why not?"

Fr-r-r! *Wings of Gold* whizzed above the heads of the running warriors and left them far behind. She sank at a slant. Morgan was watching Crooks.

"Haw, haw!" laughed the cook. "Gently! I was ready!"

He tilted the gun. The monster writhed its long neck and

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hissed. Then the Maxim clattered and roared as the cartridges flew through the breach.

The warriors of the City of Triangles evinced no alarm at the extraordinary sound made by the gun. It is true both Big Ben and Hercules gave an involuntary backward jump at first, but they leaned forward, curious and amazed. The aeronef dropped again and slid gently forward.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Crooks. "She was tickled a bit! I have biffed her! Look, my twin nigger minstrels! Why not? Haw!"

And the two men looked. The plesiosaurus was headless. It lay on its side in the crimson pool. One of its great paddles had been ripped away, and its armoured breast was riddled and torn. Mr. Crooks's eye shone with more than its usual brilliancy.

"She was biffed!" he grinned. "Why not? She was busted!"

"By thunder," said Morgan, "you didn't do it by halves, Crooks!"

Lance and Fordham laughed. The two giants kept looking from the dead plesiosaurus to the gun, and from the gun to Crooks. Hercules put his eye to the muzzle to see where the fire came from. Then Big Ben had a glance. The warriors streamed along the banks. When they saw that their terrible foe was dead they set up a yell. Scores of them leapt upon and drove their spears into it.

"Dot should gif them something to think about," said the professor. "We haf killed der plesiosaurus in ein few minutes. In many hours they could not kill him mit dose miserable spears. Is it not supline, dear lads? Shaf! Dot cook is ein strange peast—ein most strange peast! If he did kill his own father he would only say, 'Why not? Haw, haw!' Is dot so?"

"I shouldn't wonder, dad," said Lance. "He's a bit of an old fossil."

The amount of hair on Tooter's visage seemed greatly to interest the native. He gingerly pulled William's beard,

as it he fancied it might come off. Then he drew the attention of Hercules to the remarkable sight.

"They take you for a small dog-ape, Willie," said Fordham.

"One that we have caught and tamed," added Lance.

"Wi' a barrel-horgan an' Tooter there was a livin' for any man. Why not?" growled the cook.

Tooter was being goaded too far. He scowled. With the flat of his hand he gave the cook a staggering box on the ear that sent Crooks reeling into the arms of the professor.

"Blackbirds!" said Mr. Tooter. "Rub that orf fust, and then 'ave some more."

There was something that attracted their attention from the little tiff between Tooter and Crooks. Several harpoons had been driven into the flesh of the plesiosaurus, and the warriors were hauling at the ropes, endeavouring to move the heavy mass. The brute, however, had, in its death flurry, flung itself on the shallows, and all the efforts of eighty men failed to drag it clear.

"That's a cutting-up job," said Teddy Morgan. "They'll never shift it whole."

"Ach," said Von Haegel, "dot is so. Meat will not keep long in this climate, und if der wind blow from dis side I would not be mitin dot city mitin six hours from now for mooch money. Pouf! Der ugly brute smell bad enough now, though it is fresh. It will poison eferybody."

Morgan felt pretty secure now. The natives seemed peaceful and friendly. He sank the aeronef over the monster. Hercules and Big Ben leapt upon the carcass; the pullers strained at the ropes. Two of the harpoons were torn out, but the carcass remained stranded.

"We could shift it," said Teddy. "What do you think, Mr. Maurice?"

"I think if we could help them they'll help us," answered Fordham; "and I'm sure they won't go back on us now."

"Not a bit," said Lance. "Of course, we can't blame the beggars for attacking us in the first place. It was only natural. Give them a hand, Teddy."

Morgan went down the ladder. His arrival was the signal to cease pulling. As he walked up and down the carcass hundreds of eyes were fixed on him expectantly.

"Put a noose in the big cable, cook," he called, "and fasten it astern."

"Why not?" growled the cook. "Mind your head, Teddy!"

Crooks had done it already. He made signs to Hercules. The next instant, at a word from the giant, six men were in the water. They dived like seals, taking their spears with them. When they rose, panting and exhausted, six others took their places.

"Ach! Dot cook he is most vunderful!" puffed Von Haegel. "He can, mitout a voice, talk all the languages. What is dot dey do, dear Lance?"

"They're cutting a groove below to put the cable under," explained Lance. "There they go with it."

The cable was taken down and brought up dripping on the other side, then the end was passed through the loop and made fast. Teddy Morgan went aboard.

"You're more likely to cut the beast in two than shift it, Teddy."

"If I do that it will be useful, sir," said Morgan; "but I don't think that will happen. Now, my little beauty, show 'em what you can do!"

"Yo-heave-ho!" cried Tooter.

The screws whirled. For a time the ponderous weight was too much for Wings of Gold. Then came a yell from the warriors. They began to dance and wave their spears. The carcass was moving. It slid forward foot by foot until it was floating in deep water.

"You can do the rest yourselves, my gentlemen," said Teddy. "Wings of Gold isn't a common tug-boat built for towing stuff about. How's that venison going along, cooky?"

"It was not started yet," said Crooks.

"Then start it at once, you blackguard!" said Lance. "I'm just longing to get my teeth into it. How are you going to do it?"

"A pie—a venison pie!" grinned the cook.

At the word "pie" Von Haegel paled. He had not forgotten the other one, for there were still blisters on his tongue. But the pie that Crooks concocted made ample amends. It was a masterpiece.

Crooks pays a Visit to the City of Triangles—A Flattering Reception—The Panic—An Army of Beasts.

"You wouldn't be any safer in London, and that's my candid opinion," said Lance.

It was late in the afternoon. They had seen a band of warriors mounting the hill towards a narrow pass. They were evidently going to relieve the plucky lad who was guarding the aqueduct. Fordham gazed pensively at the City of Triangles, over which the aeronef hung.

Hercules was still with them, but the other giant, who was evidently his brother, had gone.

"I'd like to see the place myself, and old Hercules wants us to. I never saw a rummier show nor dreamed of one after a lobster salad!"

"Crooks thinks it's all right."

"It was as right as rain—why not?" growled the deep voice of Mr. Crooks. "Me an' Blackin-pot was pals. Haw, haw! May I go fust, sir, along of Day & Martin, and look round?"

"May he, Teddy?" asked Fordham.

"Why not, Teddy?" asked the cook.

"If you like," said Morgan, somewhat ungraciously. "I don't think myself there's any danger, but anyhow, there's a jolly lot less danger up here."

"But we must risk something, in order to fill up our larder, Teddy," said Maurice. "One stag won't last us for ever. We're bound to have grub, and here we have a chance of getting it. And Crooks is the best man for the job."

So it was settled. The aeronef swept clear of the city, and descended. Crooks took a rifle and two revolvers. He stuffed his pockets with cheap looking-glasses and beads. Then he winked, kissed his hand, and strode away beside the giant. The aeronef rose and soared above them.

"I was invited to tea, Ebony-warnish, I suppose?" asked the cook. "I hope there was muffins. I was fond of muffins—why not? They was nice for tea, and so was watercress and shrimps. Haw, haw! Whoa! Go steady! I was not going to swim!"

Crooks stopped at the edge of the moat. There was no necessity for swimming. A canoe shot from beneath the dark archway, and touched the bank. The cook scrambled in, followed by the giant. Suddenly the ramparts above became crowded with natives. They uttered a shrill yell, but the cook was rather uncertain as to whether the yell was intended for a welcome or not. The giant smiled at him reassuringly.

"Your folks has rummy voices, Snowball!" said the cook. "They're not musical. Whoa, why not? Strike a match!"

The paddles sent the canoe skimming into the arch, where all was as black as the giant's hide. Crooks struck a vesta for himself. With a scream of terror one of the natives dropped his paddle and rolled overboard, almost upsetting the canoe. The other man glared. He thought it was witchcraft. When Crooks put the match to his pipe and puffed out a mouthful of smoke, the remaining native followed his friend.

"They was fond of bathin' in these parts, Stove-polish!" said Crooks calmly. "Haw, haw!"

Hercules answered his laugh, and seized a paddle. He churned the canoe into the light. Crooks found himself at the bottom of a flight of steps. Above him, watchful and vigilant, was Wings of Gold. Two lines of armed warriors guarded the steps.

Clash!

Like a machine the glittering spearheads clanged together, forming a long arch of wood and gleaming metal. It was a splendid sight. The warriors stood like twin rows of ebony statues, forming a living corridor arched over by their spears. A mass of human beings were packed together on either side, kept back by the warriors. In the whole history of cookery no cook had ever received such a royal welcome. He grinned as he passed along the avenue.

"Why not?" he grinned. "We come over with William the Conqueror. Haw, haw! Ow! What's that?"

Crooks heard something that made his hair feel as if it wanted to curl. At first he thought it must be a pitched battle between two armies of cats. It was nothing more serious than the native band. The musicians were playing on reeds and little, skin-covered drums. There were quite two hundred of them.

"Oh, for a harmful of bricks!" groaned Crooks. "Was that music? Choke it off, for I was young and tender. I wish I had some cotting-wool!"

He emerged before the pyramid. It was much larger than it looked from the aeronef. The triangular space before it was also guarded by troops. The slanting front of the pyramid was gaudily painted with stripes, triangles, circles and stars. There were several doors, but these were all closed. The giant folded his arms.

Clash!

Five thousand spearheads met with a reverberating sound. The great door in the centre of the pyramid rolled back. Then came a thunderous roar of voices. Clad from neck to heel in a robe made from the feathers of the bird-lizards with golden wings, a giant form emerged.

"It was Big Ben—why not?" chuckled Crooks.

The giant did not look at his guest. He advanced a few paces, and then pointed to the aeronef. All eyes followed the direction of his upraised finger. Morgan, after making sure that none of the warriors were armed with a bow, slowed

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"TOWSER MINOR!"

the suspensory screws. The aeronef sank slowly, until it was hovering over the pointed top of the pyramid.

"How goes it, cooky?" roared Tooter.
"It was going like a paraffin shop afire—why not?" said the cook. "Or like your whiskers a-growing—why not?"
"Go and boil yourself!" retorted Tooter.
"I will when you are bald," grinned Crooks. "Haw, haw!"

The king—for the king he must have been—began to speak. Von Haagel's face shone over the stern-rail like a full moon. Lance and Maurice had their rifles in readiness, though they were confident that they would not have to use them. There was another roar and clapping of hands as the king ended. Crooks winked upwards.

"They was goin' to make me hemperor—why not?" he shouted. "Haw, haw! I shall make a law at once. Why not? Them as does not obey that law at once shall have their heads sawed off."

"What will that law be?" laughed Morton.
"A law to make Tooter shave!" said the cook.
"Go away and roast your face!" growled Tooter. "Black-birds! The pig is allus at me! If—"

He brandished his clenched fist, but said no more, for Crooks was shaking hands with the king. Between the two giants he walked into the pyramid. Five slanting shafts of light from openings made above made the place brilliant. Crooks found himself standing on a tiled floor, well strewn with skins. A big wood fire was blazing at one end of the room. It was raised above the floor, and was certainly an altar. He heard a splashing sound. A stream of water ran through the place from angle to angle. And then his hand leapt to his revolver at the sound of a terrific clash.

The place was as bright as day. Before, except where the five beams met, there had been a shadowy circle all round. Now this had vanished. The pyramid was packed with warriors. In one hand each man held a flaming torch; in the other an upraised spear. The smoke rolled up in swirling clouds.

Clash!
The living circle closed in. The two giants had disappeared. Crooks was surrounded by a wall of spears. The sharp points almost touched him. Crooks looked at the dark faces.

"Why not?" he growled; and striking a match he put it to his pipe. "This was joyful. Haw, haw!"
In a moment spears, torches, and warriors had vanished. A hand fell upon each of his shoulders. The two giants were smiling and laughing.

"Blackin'-pots!" growled Crooks severely. "Them little jokes was not nice for a nervous man. Why not? I was surprised at you. Think of my feelings. Spears was out of date. And they was better in a museum than in a man's ribs. Haw, haw! What about this?"

Crooks was about to throw up his cap and take a flying shot at it with his revolver, but he thought better of it. In the first place, he might miss, and that would make him look foolish; and in the second place, his friends might hear the shot, and, thinking him in danger, do something that they might afterwards regret. He contented himself with grinning at the two men.

A woman glided out of the shadow, carrying a large cup. Big Ben took a sip and, with a smile, passed it to the cook. Mr. Crooks tasted it. It was a sweet kind of beer, and rather pleasant. In turn, after a long pull, he handed it to Hercules.
"I was getting on like fourteen houses afire!" thought Crooks. "Haw, haw! Why not?"

He sat down on a pile of skins. The giants seemed pleased about something, for they kept showing their magnificent teeth to great advantage.

The woman came again with several dishes of food. As a cook, Crooks thought it his duty to try them all. They were very good, especially the fish, which was cooked with a miserable kind of rice, smaller than canary seed.

"Why not?" growled a voice.
Crooks, who was eating with his jack-knife, came within an ace of cutting himself.

"Haw, haw!" sounded his own particular and peculiar chuckle.

"Dashed if it ain't 'Ercules!" said the cook. "Haw, haw! That was smart. I thought it was a spook. Why not?"

"Why not?" grinned Hercules.
"Haw, haw!" giggled Big Ben.

They had soon managed to pick up Crooks's favourite expressions. Then they rose. Magically the pyramid blazed with torches and flashed with spears. Big Ben shouted. Spear rang against spear, and the torches began to spin and whirl amid a thud of naked feet. The warriors rolled forward like a wave, and retreated. It was a magnificent spectacle—a war-dance in which eight thousand men took part.

It ended as suddenly as it began. And then a figure, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 219.

breathless and panting, rushed in and dropped at the king's feet.

It was the son of Hercules, the lad who had been left to guard the gate.

He gasped out something. With a yell, the king bounded away. Hercules sprang after them. A stream of warriors poured into the darkness. They swept Crooks along with them.

All the City of Triangles seemed to suddenly have gone mad. Down every narrow street troops came swinging, to surge into the triangle. Drums beat and whistles shrilled. Crooks was a strong man, but he was tossed about like a cork in a rapid stream. Suddenly he was driven against some steps. He scrambled up, and saw the steps led to the summit of the pyramid. Some time later Morgan, who had been wondering what had happened, glanced over his shoulder, and was amazed to see the cook squatting on the very apex of the pyramid, smoking his pipe.

"Aho, Teddy!" cried the cook. "This was fresh air. Why not?"

A touch brought the aeronef alongside, and Crooks put his foot upon the ladder.

"By thunder! What are you doing there?"
"I was burnin' 'bacca," answered the cook.

"But what has happened?" asked Lance and Maurice at once.

"Dunno," growled Crooks. "It was a pity. Five minutes more, and I was a hemperor. Haw, haw! I have saved Tooter's whiskers. Why not?"

Crooks scrambled on board. The whole town seethed with human beings, and the noise that ascended was terrific.

"Ach!" said Von Haagel. "Dear lads, they are mooch eggscited. It is as if—"

"Somebody was givin' beer away!" growled the incorrigible Crooks.

Fordham turned on him with a brave attempt at sternness.

"Cook, I am ashamed of you! You are impertinent! Go below, and remain there."

Crooks saluted, and, just getting his head below deck, took his seat on the ladder.

"Ach!" panted the professor. "Be not hard on him, dear lads. He mean-dot as ein choke."

"He wants choking," said Lance, with a grin. "Hallo! Aren't they busy?"

The warriors were crowding to the ramparts, and rows of catapults were quickly manned.

"By thunder! They must be expecting an attack," said Teddy Morgan.

"I fancy it's a kind of review business for our benefit," said Maurice.

"Very likely, old chap. All the same, I can't understand why they keep up such an army of drilled men. How many people do you think there are in this place?"

"About ninety or a hundred thousand. I suppose all men are fighters. Take the women and children at seventy thousand or more, they ought to put fifteen or sixteen thousand warriors in the field. What fine chaps they are! Is this a review, or what is it?"

The sun was dropping behind the peaks. The clamour of the town died into silence.

"Saf!" grunted Von Haagel. "I did hear something."

"So did I."

It was a curious sound like the muttering of a distant storm. It made Teddy Morgan glance at the sky. But the sky, though rapidly turning grey, was perfectly clear. The sun dropped behind the peaks. In a moment the darkness fell. A chorus of far-away yells and howls sounded in their ears.

"What can it be?" asked Maurice.
"Ach! It is war!" said Von Haagel.

At that moment a voice grunted:

"I was sorry. Why not? I was apologising. Why not? May I come up? Why not?"

"Certainly not!" said Maurice.

"Yes, yes!" said Von Haagel. "I am not angry, dear lads, and Crooks is sorry. Ash, he shall come oop!"

"Well, you may, cook."

The sound came again.

As the cook returned from his short exile, Morgan turned the vessel. Hardly a star was showing. Below them a torch blinked here and there. Wings of Gold rushed towards the peaks. Again, except for the fr-r-r of the suspensory screws and propellers, all was still.

"Turn it on, Crooks!" called Morgan.

The powerful searchlight shot its beams groundwards. They held their breath. There was another army there—not an army of men, but an army of beasts.

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**"THE BAND
OF STEEL."**

CHAPTER 1.

Tim Curtis Accidentally Hits on Something Big.

TIM CURTIS, Frank Kingston's smart young assistant, whistled rather unmusically as he slouched down Fulham Road. It is doubtful whether his most intimate friends would have recognised him in his present character. For Tim was disguised as a street urchin, and he acted his part to the life. His clothes were dingy and threadbare, and his boots anything but watertight.

Nevertheless, the youngster was enjoying himself hugely. He always did when he was engaged on some kind of detective work to assist his master. At present he had just come off duty after following a criminal and noting the address to which he had gone.

"Well, the guv'nor oughtn't to have much trouble now in nabbing the feller," Tim told himself. "He's not much of a smart 'un, anyhow. I should think— Hallo, what's the matter with you?"

A hand had been laid on his shoulder, and he found himself standing before a tall, well-dressed gentleman, attired in frock-coat and top hat. Tim looked at him in surprise.

"Do you want to earn half-a-crown, boy?" asked the man sharply.

"Wot ho!" exclaimed Tim promptly.

"Then take this letter to the address written upon it, and get there before noon. The time's just half-past eleven now, so you'll have to be quick."

"Any special 'urry?" inquired Tim.

"Yes, there is hurry, and if you deliver the letter before twelve you'll receive half-a-crown," replied the stranger sharply. "If you're later than twelve you'll only get a shilling. Understand?"

"Rather, guv'nor!" Tim grinned. "I'll streak off like lightnin' for that half-a-bull! I'll be there afore twelve, don't you worry! It's worth eighteenpence to do a bit of 'urrying!"

The man watched Tim as he hastened off.

"It's the quickest way," he told himself, "and as safe as any. With half-a-crown at the end of it the boy will certainly not fail to do as I ordered him. And there's nothing that matters in the letter."

But the stranger had not the faintest idea as to whom he had entrusted the letter; he had given it to the first urchin available. And Tim, as soon as he had turned a corner,

whistled softly to himself, and let out an exclamation of surprise.

"Great pip! Of all the rummy goes this is the rummiest! I'll bet half-a-quid that that feller who just spoke to me was Wally Fletcher. I'd know 'im anywhere!"

Tim looked at the letter thoughtfully.

"No. 52, Durban Grove, East Putney, eh?" murmured Tim to himself. "Crikey, I shall have to buck up if I'm goin' to get the 'arf-a-crown! Wally Fletcher, though! What's 'e up to, I wonder? I mean to find out before I've finished!"

For, by sheer chance, Tim had hit upon something that looked like developing. He had instantly recognised the well-dressed stranger as Walter Fletcher, a man who had been acquitted of a charge of fraud some months previously. His accomplices had managed to collect false evidence, and he had got off. But Tim had seen him in the dock, and Fletcher's features were still fresh in his mind.

"I wonder what I'd better do?" the lad mused. "Ten to one the boulder's on some new lay, an' it would be ripping if I could muck it all up."

He held the letter to the light of the sun, and, although the paper was thin, he could only make out the words "meet . . . same place . . . evening at about nine." The envelope was addressed to J. Mason, Esq.

"Wonder who Mason is? Anyhow, he's got to meet Fletcher at some place at nine o'clock to-night. Lummy, I mean to see this game through!"

And Tim, without wasting further time, boarded a motor-bus, and was soon being borne Putney-wards. His mind was full of thoughts. It seemed almost providential that Fletcher had given him the letter to deliver. Tim looked his part, true enough, and Fletcher would have been surprised had he known that he had practically played into the hands of his enemies.

No. 52, Durban Grove was a neat little house, and a small, foxy-eyed man of about forty opened the door. He admitted that his name was Mason, received the letter, and grudgingly parted with a half-crown, Tim having arrived just upon time. The boy did not hang about, but went off whistling cheerfully. He did not wish to give Mason any cause for suspicion.

When he arrived at No. 100, Charing Cross, he found that Frank Kingston was out, and would not be home until night. Therefore, Tim decided to carry the thing through on his own, and immediately after tea, having disguised himself

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differently, he boarded a District Railway train to East Putney, and was soon in Durban Grove on the watch.

His patience was rewarded at about half-past seven, when Mason appeared, and walked briskly down the street. The night was clear, still, and mild, and Tim had to go warily. But his quarry was apparently in no fear of a shadow, for he did not once look behind him. He took the Tube, and Tim finally found himself in the district of Wormwood Scrubbs.

A short walk across a bare stretch of common, and Mason entered a roughly erected building. Tim crept up unseen, and managed to get in a position where he could hear what was going on. Two voices could be heard, and Tim listened with fast-beating heart. The building was only of thin wood, and any sound made within could be plainly heard outside.

Ten minutes later the youthful detective edged away into the darkness. Not a sound did he make, and those within the shed suspected nothing. Tim broke into a run when he had crept twenty yards.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself breathlessly, his eyes shining with excitement. "The guv'nor's away, an' won't be home till past eleven; then it'll be too late to do anything. Crikey, talk about luck—Half a mo! How about Miss O'Brien? She'd know what to do in a minute, an' can take care of herself as well as any man."

Tim didn't waste much time considering.

"I'll go straight to her," he decided, as he ran, "an' if she don't do somethin' to stop Mister Fletcher's little game, then my name ain't Timmy Curtis. I'd back Miss Dolores against any detective in Scotland Yard!"

CHAPTER 2.

Abducted!

FRANK KINGSTON'S fiancée was in when Tim arrived at the Hotel Cyril. She had been sitting alone reading a novel, when her maid announced the boy, and she immediately gave orders for him to be admitted.

"Well, Tim," she smiled, "have you got a message for me?"

Tim made sure that the door was closed, then advanced towards Dolores. She was an exceedingly pretty girl, and most youngsters would have felt self-conscious. But Tim knew her too well for that; and, besides, he was excited.

"No, miss," he exclaimed quickly, "I ain't got a message. As you can see, I'm disguised, an' I've just found out somethin' that's real startlin'! I hit upon it by accident, an' now I find it's one o' the most darin' kidnappin' cases that's ever been hatched!"

Dolores laid her book down and bent forward.

"Why, Tim, you make me curious," she exclaimed. "And why have you come to me instead of going to Frank—to Mr. Kingston?"

"'Cause the guv'nor is out of London, miss, an' won't be back till after eleven. At twenty past eleven somebody's goin' to be kidnapped—just over an hour from now."

And Tim related to the wondering girl all that had occurred.

"I heard everything Fletcher an' Mason said," he went on quickly. "There ain't time to tell you all, but the pair of 'em have got a scheme on to kidnap Miss Marjorie Dixon, the daughter of Sir Hesketh Dixon. She's stayin' in London with an aunt at present, but her home's at some little village in Ayrshire, Scotland. The whole game's planned even to the littlest detail, miss."

"And do you mean it is to be carried out to-night?" asked Dolores swiftly.

"Yes, Miss Dolores!" cried Tim excitedly. "Fletcher's got a pal up in Scotland with an aeroplane, and Miss Dixon is to be taken aboard this and carried right up into the mountains. I'm blessed if it doesn't sound more like a fairy tale than real facts! This pal has sent a fake telegram to Miss Dixon telling her that Sir Hesketh has had an accident, and that she must travel up by the night train, which leaves London at twenty past eleven. She'll go alone, and there'll be a carriage waiting at the other end to take her to the house."

"And the carriage will be Fletcher's?" asked Dolores.

"That's it! Miss Dixon will be taken away an' shoved aboard the aeroplane. Nobody'll ever have the slightest idea where she's been taken—But she won't have to be taken!" went on Tim excitedly. "We must warn her, and prevent her goin'."

"And then Fletcher and Mason will know that there has been a hitch, and will get off scot-free," put in Dolores thoughtfully. She remained thinking for some few moments, and then a quiet smile passed across her face. She had thought of a way to save Miss Dixon and yet succeed in capturing the villains.

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"Tim," she exclaimed resolutely, "I am now going to Miss Dixon's house to prevent her starting on the journey, and I will take her place. I shall travel up to Scotland as Miss Dixon, and so deceive Fletcher. It is the only plan we can adopt which will ensure the scoundrel's capture. You will return home at once, and tell everything to Mr. Kingston immediately he arrives. He will know what to do," the girl added confidently.

"Love a duck!" gasped Tim. "You ain't lettin' the grass grow under your feet, miss! But you mustn't go all alone," he added anxiously—"the game's too risky."

"There's not much risk about it, Tim. Fletcher doesn't mean to inflict any bodily harm upon Miss Dixon, and I think I am capable of taking care of myself."

"Rather, miss!"

Tim's confidence in his master's fiancée returned, and he remembered how many exciting adventures she had already passed through while helping Kingston.

The time was limited, and presently Dolores was hastening towards Camden Town, where Marjorie Dixon's aunt resided. She found Miss Dixon in a state of great agitation, and in the midst of hurried preparations for an immediate departure. She was a girl of about the same height and figure as Dolores, and she looked at the visitor in surprise.

"You received a telegram a short while ago saying that your father had met with a serious accident?" said Dolores, without beating about the bush—there was no time for polite niceties.

"Yes, but what—"

"And it also told you to travel up to Ayrshire by the 11.20 train from St. Pancras?"

"Yes," replied Marjorie Dixon, looking at the visitor in surprise.

"The telegram was a bogus one," said Dolores quickly.

"Sir Hesketh is as well as ever he was. The whole thing is a plot to kidnap you and extort money from your father for your release."

Marjorie Dixon was amazed at the story Dolores briefly told her, and tremendously relieved at the knowledge that her father was quite well. But she did not like the idea of Dolores taking her place. The latter persisted, however, and to the fresh amazement of Marjorie and her aunt she proceeded to disguise herself as the baronet's daughter. She used Professor Polgrave's wonderful method of disguise, and the transformation was almost startling.

A few words more, and the brave girl set out for St. Pancras, with barely enough time at her disposal to catch the train. Dolores was in no way nervous. On the contrary, the adventure appealed to her immensely. She enjoyed such work as this almost as much as Kingston himself did.

At St. Pancras she found that she had five minutes' time to spare, and so found a comfortable corner seat in a first-class compartment. The train was by no means well filled, and Dolores was alone when it steamed out.

The first stop was a long way up the line, the train being one of the fastest expresses. Here after much fussing about, two old gentlemen stepped into Dolores' compartment. She was not deceived for a moment, but knew instinctively that the pair were Fletcher and Mason. Evidently they intended making sure of everything passing off all right, and were keeping an eye on her.

The rest of the journey was monotonous, and at last the train pulled up, in the grey, early morning, at a small station called Cairnby, Sir Hesketh Dixon's residence being Cairnby Mount, five miles distant. The station was extremely small, and the train only stopped there on account of mails.

At this early hour merely one sleepy porter was on duty, and he touched his cap respectfully to Dolores as she passed out. The two old gentlemen also alighted, and boarded a trap which was waiting. It drove off immediately.

A smart brougham was in attendance for Dolores, and she stepped into it without delay, and five minutes later was moving along at a smart pace across a bleak moorland road. Not a house was visible—nothing but the heather and shrubs.

Dolores was feeling somewhat puzzled. She had instructed Tim to go to Scotland Yard and tell Sir Nigel Kane—the Chief—the whole story, and ask him to wire to Ayrshire and have a trio of police waiting at Cairnby Station in order to make the capture. But they had not been there. Dolores, therefore, had perforce to enter the carriage and be driven off. Some hitch had occurred. As a matter of fact, Horne, the man who had sent the bogus telegram, had learnt of the impending capture, and had, by some ingenious means, caused the police to go to the wrong station.

Across the moor the carriage continued its way.

Suddenly, on rounding a small plantation, two forms appeared, and before Dolores could realise what was happening, the door of the carriage had been wrenched open, and a chloroform pad was placed to her mouth and nostrils. She sank back unconscious—at least, her captors thought she was

unconscious. But Dolores had taken a deep breath before the pad had been applied, and her acting was so good that the scoundrels were completely deceived.

The carriage continued its way, and finally came to a stop in a deep hollow. Here, sheltered from the weather, stood a large biplane, of the very latest and most efficient design. Horne, Fletcher's accomplice, was already attired in overalls, and he smiled cheerfully as the carriage drove up.

"All serene?" he queried calmly.

"We've got her right enough," exclaimed Fletcher, with a grim laugh.

Five minutes later, Dolores was securely fastened in the passenger's seat behind Horne, and the huge rotary engine roared impatiently. At a word, Mason and Fletcher released their hold of the tail, and the aeroplane shot forward. It rose evenly and gracefully, and after a few moments' circling disappeared in the direction of a snow-capped mountain range which could be seen mistily in the distance.

"Well, he's off all right," said Mason, as he lit a cigarette. "I'll bet nobody ever succeeds in locating Miss Dixon when Horne's landed her."

For the object of using the aeroplane was that by its means Dolores could be placed at the extreme top of the mountain in a cavern which had been prepared for her reception. It was possible to climb to the top, but it would have been out of the question to carry Dolores there, insensible, had it not been for the aeroplane.

The flight was not a very long one, and, with admirable precision, the scoundrelly airman succeeded in alighting upon a long, straight plateau nearly at the top of the range. It was but short work to lift Dolores from the biplane, and carry her into the cavern.

But she was by no means senseless. Although her eyes were closed, and she lay inanimate, she was very wide awake indeed.

CHAPTER 3.

Frank Kingston Takes a Hand.

FRANK KINGSTON stood in his consulting-room, facing Tim. The time was exactly half-past eleven, and the great detective had been home precisely seven minutes. And in that seven minutes Tim Curtis had told him, in short, quick sentences, what had occurred.

"And that's everything, Tim?" he inquired quietly.

"Everything, sir. Miss Dolores has gone off on that train, and there's no tellin' what'll happen to her. I didn't hold with her goin', sir, not at first—"

"That's all right, young 'un!" interrupted Kingston confidently. "You did your part of the business splendidly, and I'm proud of you, Tim. But Miss Dolores must not be allowed to carry this thing through herself. I shall follow her immediately, and as you've proved yourself so smart, I'll take you with me."

Tim flushed with pleasure.

"That'll be rippin', sir!" he cried. "But how can we go?" he added suddenly. "There ain't no trains now, not before morning!"

"There are such things as special trains, Tim," replied Kingston grimly; and presently he was at the telephone conversing with the stationmaster of St. Pancras. The expense of a special train would be great, but Kingston did not stop to consider that. When the life of the girl he loved was in peril, money matters were mere details.

So, at a little after twelve-thirty, an express engine, with one coach attached, containing Frank Kingston, Tim, and two Scotland Yard detectives, steamed out of St. Pancras, and was soon in hot chase of the night mail.

The latter, however, was a very fast train, and owing to a slight delay, the special did not arrive at Cairnby until twenty minutes after the departure of the mail. But the special did not stop at the little station. Tim knew that the hollow on the moors could be reached much quicker from a point two miles further on, and here the engine came to a standstill.

"Look!" yelled out Tim suddenly.

He and the others had just alighted on the embankment, and they stared up into the sky as Tim pointed. There, away to the left, about two thousand feet high, flew the aeroplane as steadily as a bird, heading straight for the mountains.

Frank Kingston turned to the Scotland Yard men.

"Something has evidently gone wrong," he exclaimed quickly, "for to all appearances Fletcher's plans are being carried out. You two hasten off across the moor here, and search for Fletcher and Mason; they are bound to be somewhere close. You, Tim, had better go, too."

"And what about you, sir?" inquired Tim.

"I shall get aboard the train again, and alight at the nearest point to those mountains. After that I can't say

exactly what I shall do; but if Miss O'Brien is aboard the aeroplane, she must be rescued at once."

A few more minutes' conversation, and the detectives hurried off across the moor, and Kingston got aboard the special train again. Three miles further on the track ran through a gorge near the mountains, and here Kingston got off, and commenced a perilous climb.

The place was wild and rugged, huge rocks and boulders abounding everywhere. Small shrubs and hardy-looking grass grew about; but after a while, as Kingston continued his ascent, these disappeared, and nothing but the bare, chill rock remained.

He leapt from boulder to boulder with amazing agility, and yet he did not become in the least exhausted. The whole way up he remained cool and collected, his mind busy. Once he looked behind him. Far below was the rough moorland, with the railway track stretching out into the distance. The special train was hidden from view behind the mountainside, and not a single sign of life was visible.

And then Kingston found himself upon a long slope. Up this he ran with swift, sure steps, and, rounding a miniature cliff, he found himself standing upon quite a surprisingly flat plateau. On this, not a hundred yards distant, stood the aeroplane.

And Horne was walking towards it, with his back to Kingston.

Swiftly the famous detective walked up, his eyes looking round in search of Dolores; but she was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly Horne twisted round, and his face blanched as he saw Kingston coming towards him. An oath escaped his lips, and a revolver glittered.

But before it could be used, Kingston was upon the scoundrel, and one blow sent him to the ground. Kingston was in no mood for gentle measures.

Scarcely had Horne dropped when there came to Kingston's ears a harsh series of shrill cries, accompanied by scuffling and flapping of wings. The detective glanced round quickly. Nothing was to be seen—Ah! The large body of a black eagle rose above the rocks a hundred yards or more to the left.

With a dread feeling at his heart Kingston sped across the plateau, and hastened round some loose boulders. Then he paused and caught his breath in, for a strange sight met his gaze.

Crouching on a little ledge, twelve feet below, was Dolores, and round her half a dozen eagles were flapping and pecking furiously. She looked up, as she endeavoured to beat the birds off, and a great look of relief entered her eyes.

"Oh, Frank," she cried gladly, "these terrible things will—Oh, there's a rope just inside the cavern, there!"

Kingston turned round quickly, darted into the opening, and in a moment returned with a long coil of rope. Then, setting himself firmly on the edge of the cliff, he threw the rope down to Dolores. The eagles, half frightened at his presence, kept flapping around Dolores, without touching her.

She grasped the rope, and Kingston swiftly drew her up into safety. The eagles, uttering angry cries, tried to peck at her, but Kingston drove them off by firing his revolver several times into their midst. With many frightened cries they flapped off, thoroughly alarmed.

Dolores clung to her rescuer.

"Oh, I thought I was really gone that time, Frank!" she whispered pantingly. "Those dreadful birds came on me like a whirlwind. The man who brought me here thought I was unconscious, but as soon as he had turned his back I hurried out of the cavern to escape. But the whole piece of ground on which I stood gave way, and I was thrown down on to that ledge."

"Good heavens!" said Kingston. "You're not hurt, little girl, are you?"

"No, Frank, I'm not hurt to speak of," replied Dolores thankfully. "But the ledge was occupied by the eagles, and they didn't like my disturbing them. But I don't mind a bit, now that you're come."

Frank Kingston laughed.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, in his usual languid tone, "it's a lucky man who has got a girl half as plucky as you are!"

When, an hour or so later, Kingston and Dolores arrived at Cairnby, they found that Tim and the Scotland Yard detectives had succeeded in making a smart capture. Mason and Fletcher were both arrested, with the man who had been in charge of the brougham. The whole scheme had been well planned, but Fletcher made a fatal mistake when he commissioned Tim Curtis to deliver the letter to Mason. Had Fletcher gone to Putney himself, he would have missed an appointment, but the scheme would have succeeded, and Sir Hesketh Dixon would have been the poorer by many thousands of pounds.

THE END.

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By MARTIN OLIFFORD.
Please Order Your Copy Early.

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete
School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

"TOWSER MINOR I"

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE—



For Next Thursday.

"TOWSER MINOR,"

By Martin Clifford,

Is the title of next Thursday's grand, long, complete school tale of Tom Merry & Co. The latest of the famous characters at St. Jim's to have a minor, or younger brother, is Towser, the pet bulldog of Herries of the Fourth. The advent of Towser minor, which is due to the fertile brain of Bernard Glyn, the St. Jim's inventor, causes quite a sensation and a great deal of fun, as may well be imagined. Herries, of course, is especially excited about it. Don't miss next week's issue, therefore, containing

"TOWSER MINOR."**In reply to "South African Reader."**

The letter from a "South African Reader," which I published recently in these columns, has brought me a shoal of letters from enthusiastic readers, expressing opinions quite opposite to those held by my "South African Reader." Some of these letters are couched in most vigorous terms, and many are extremely sarcastic at the expense of my "South African Reader." A large number, however, weigh the matter up in a quiet, confident way that is quite convincing. I have picked out two of the latter, extracts from which are published below. The first is from a girl reader, Miss L. E., of Sheffield; while the second hails from Doncaster, and is signed "Factory Lad." This is what my girl champion says, among other things:

"Sheffield.

"Dear Editor,—I have long wanted to write to you, but could not pluck up the courage, but after reading that very critical letter of 'A South African Reader,' published in No. 214 of THE GEM, I can restrain myself no longer. I am sure the majority of your readers will agree with me when I say he has got quite a mistaken idea of THE GEM. I have taken THE GEM since No. 1, and there is no other paper I enjoy reading so well. As for there being no moral in Mr. Clifford's stories, surely 'A South African Reader' cannot truthfully say he has read a number of them, and yet found no moral. It must be he has willfully ignored it, or else is too dense to see it. It quite passes my understanding how any boy's parents should forbid his reading THE GEM. My own parents are rather strict on this matter, but I know they both take a genuine interest in your bright little paper."

Now for "Factory Lad's" remarks:

"Seeing in this week's number that 'A South African Reader' does not agree with the way in which you conduct THE GEM, I must certainly say I do not agree with him. To alter THE GEM, in my own estimation, would spell disaster. I further notice he remarks that no instruction is conveyed to the reader. Whatever books does our friend appreciate? Further, our friend states that it teaches boys nothing, and spoils their taste for literature.

"I may say I can read my GEM every week, and then enjoy 'John Halifax,' 'East Lynne,' etc. As regards teaching, I have profited by reading THE GEM. It teaches us how to play the game, and it teaches how a "bounder" may be converted by the aid of good company. It is a book that should be read by every British boy. My mother and my sister read THE GEM every week. We would rather miss our Sunday dinner than miss THE GEM. I am not a schoolboy, but a working young man, and when I have been working all the week I find THE GEM is a companion which will clear the brain of cobwebs, and give one a happy hour. I must congratulate our author on the tales he writes. Any boy or young man who takes Tom Merry for his example will never go far astray."

Thank you for your support, Miss L. E. and "Factory Lad," both! You both arrive at much the same conclusion in regard to the matter brought up by "South African Reader," and I am pleased to say I am confident that this conclusion is one that the very large majority of my readers will arrive at also.

Replies in Brief.

Cyril H. (Newport).—Thanks for your letter. You are very lucky to have such a cousin as you describe, in my opinion. I received your friend Gordon L.'s letter all right, and was very glad to get it, but it did not seem to me to particularly require a reply. You must remember that I cannot possibly reply to every one of the thousands of welcome letters my readers send me daily.

"A Want-to-Be Chum."—Thanks for your letter. I am sorry you don't like the Frank Kingston tales. They are very popular, however, with a very large number of my readers, as my daily mailbag amply testifies, so that I can hardly feel justified in stopping them at your request. An editor cannot always please everybody, you know. He can only do his best to do so!

Something About Coal.

Coal having been the subject of so much discussion of late, perhaps a few facts concerning this valuable and much-talked-of mineral will be of interest to my readers. Curiously enough, our ancestors were greatly opposed to coal as a heating medium, owing to the smoke it gave off, and it was many years before the real value of coal was generally recognised. The fuel for household fires and factory furnaces consisted entirely of wood, and, in consequence, the woods which once covered a great part of the country became sadly thinned of their trees.

The authorities, however, refused to allow the iron trade to use coal, but, in order to prevent such great consumption of wood, ordered them to restrict their operations; thus was a great industry handicapped. However, so great was the heat-producing quality of coal found to be, in comparison with wood, that people insisted on using it, in spite of regulations to the contrary. When factories began to use it, a great outcry arose from the public, who protested that the nation's health would be ruined by the smoke and gases produced.

Various harsh laws were then passed to prevent the use of coal, which was made a capital offence. In the reign of Edward I. we are told that a man was hanged for breaking this law. Once, in the year 1257, Queen Eleanor visited Nottingham, but the coal, which was by then generally used in the manufactories of the famous city, so disgusted her that she hastily left the town.

In spite of all, however, the use of coal began to grow, especially in the large industrial centres. When this fuel began to be largely used for household fires, chimneys were added to the houses to carry off the fumes. No great headway was made, however, in developing the coal-fields until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when their immense value as a national asset began to be recognised. Great collieries began to spring up, and the people had to resign themselves to the smoke, although numerous attempts were made to put an end to the nuisances arising from this cause.

In 1627 two gentlemen took out a patent for making coal "as useful as charcoal for burning in houses, without offence by the smell"; but nothing seems to have come of it, nor has the question been solved to the present day. The universal popularity of coal in England really dates from the accession of James I., who insisted on using coal in all his palaces, an example that was naturally widely followed by his loyal subjects.

THE EDITOR.