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Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Waiting for the Coach!

QUITE a little crowd of juniors had gathered in the old gateway of St. Jim's. Morning lessons were over, and as a rule the juniors made directly for the cricket field when they were released from the Form-rooms.

But on the present occasion Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell—had walked down to the school gates instead, and taken up a position there. Tom Merry leaned against the gate, and Manners leaned against the wall, and Monty Lowther stood out in the road with his hands in his pockets. And all three of them were watching the road to Rylcombe.

They were joined in a few minutes by Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth. The three Fourth-Formers took up a position in the gateway, and they, too, watched the road. Then came Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, also of the Fourth—and Figgins & Co. also leaned up against the old stonework and watched the road.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen joined them after another minute or two, and not finding anything left to lean against, they stood in the road with Lowther.

Tom Merry looked round at the gathering crowd.

"What do you chaps want?" he demanded.

Blake grinned.

"Same as you, I expect," he replied. "We're waiting for the coach."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"The news has got out, you see," remarked Monty Lowther. "Here they come!"

Kangaroo and several other Shell fellows came along and added themselves to the crowd. The gateway was wide, but it was pretty well filled by this time. And all the fellows there seemed to be very much interested in watching the long, white high-road that stretched away towards the village of Rylcombe.

"Not coming yet," said Manners.

"The train must be in long ago," said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, we'll wait," said Tom Merry. "I'm curious to see what the coach is like, you know. We don't have a new coach every day."

"Bai Jove! I've been lookin' for you fellows, you know!"

An elegant junior came down towards the crowded gateway. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked his usual graceful and elegant self, from the tips of his gleaming boots to the crown of his polished silk hat. He jammed an eyeglass into his right eye, and regarded the crowded juniors in the gateway with some surprise.

"I've been lookin' for you," he repeated. "I wondered where you had all disappeared to, you know. What are you waitin' here for?"

"Waiting for the coach," said Jack Blake.

"The what, deah boy?"

"The coach!"

"What coach?"

"Haven't you heard?" said Monty Lowther blandly. "We're to have a new coach."

D'Arcy looked amazed. He had evidently not heard. This news had only just become known to the other fellows, and D'Arcy had been very much occupied lately with selecting a new pattern for a waistcoat. At such times, smaller matters naturally escaped his attention.

"A new coach!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "Do you mean a cawwiage, Lowthah?"

Next Thursday:

"THE WHIP HAND!" AND "THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!"

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"Ha, ha, ha! No, a coach!"
 "But what is it for?" asked D'Arcy. "Has the Head ordained it?"
 "Certainly!"
 "What has he ordained a coach for?"
 "Us!"

"Bai Jove! It's wathah a good idea," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Do you mean that the coach is for the use of the juniahs?"

"Yes, entirely. The seniors don't need one."
 "I should have preferred a motah-cah, certainly, but I wegard it as a good ideah!" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "When does it awrive?"

"Coming down at once."
 Arthur Augustus looked round at the crowd of juniors. Most of them were grinning, and Arthur Augustus did not see any reason to grin. Certainly it was rather a novelty for the Head of St. Jim's to order a coach for the sole use and benefit of the juniors. It was novel, undoubtedly, but there was nothing comic in it, so far as the swell of St. Jim's could see.

"I fail to see any cause for mewwiment in the mattah, deah boys. If the coach is intended for the use of the juniahs, I suppose a juniah will be called upon to drive it. In that case, I suggest that the mattah is left in my hands. I should be vewy pleased to drive the coach for you chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, you know—"
 "This kind of coach can't be driven," explained Tom Merry.
 "It may be led, but not driven."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "In fact, it's much more likely to drive us," said Monty Lowther.

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah! How could a coach possibly drive us?" demanded D'Arcy. "Pway don't talk out of your silly hat. I shall insist upon dwiwin' the coach. I don't like the ideah of puttin' myself forward in any way; but a thing of this sort requires a fellow of tact and judgment. How many horses will the coach have? Will it be a four-in-hand?"

"Ha, ha, ha! There won't be any horses!"
 "Bai Jove! Is it a motah, then?"
 "Ha, ha! No!"
 "Then how will it get along?" demanded D'Arcy.
 "We don't know till we see it," said Lowther blandly.
 "That's why we're waiting for the coach, to see how we're likely to get along with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I fail to comprehend you, Lowthah! I wegard you as an ass! I wegard all these othah fellows as asses! I considah—"

There was a shout from Redfern in the road.
 "Here he comes!"
 "Bai Jove!"

The fellows all crowded to look out. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye, and stared out into the road. An ancient-looking vehicle, drawn by an almost equally ancient-looking horse, was rumbling towards St. Jim's. It was the station hack from Rylecombe, and a glimpse could be caught of a passenger sitting inside, a handsome and athletic young man with fair hair and a good-humoured expression. But D'Arcy's eyes were fixed upon the old cab.

"Bai Jove! Is that the coach, deah boys?"
 "Yes, rather!"
 "You uttah asses! That is the old station cab from Wylcombe!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "The coach is inside!"
 "What!"

"The coach is inside the cab, ass!"
 "Weally, Lowthah—"

"Fact!" said Blake, grinning.
 "But—but—but!" ejaculated D'Arcy, in astonishment,

"how can the coach be inside the cab, deah boy? Do you mean it is a toy coach?"

"Certainly not. It's full size—six feet long, I think, or nearly."

"But—I don't comprehend!"

The cab halted outside the gates. The door opened, and the athletic young man stepped out, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"Is this St. Jim's?" he asked.
 "Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "Are you the new coach, sir?"

"Exactly."
 Arthur Augustus D'Arcy almost collapsed.

"The—the new coach!" he gasped. "You must be wavin' mad, Tom Mewwy! How can a man be a coach?"

"Oh! I forgot to mention that it was a cricket coach we were waiting for," said Tom Merry blandly.

D'Arcy jumped.

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"THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!"

"A ewicket coach! Oh, you feahful ass!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 And the juniors of St. Jim's walked in with the new coach, who was quite a different kind of coach from the coach Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had expected to see!

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Selby Causes Surprise!

"MY only Aunt Jane!"
 "Rotten, ain't it?"
 "Beastly!"

These remarks were made in cautious whispers in the Third Form-room at St. Jim's.

The Third Form were detained.

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, was seated at his desk, and there was a decidedly grim expression upon his face.

The Third Form were in their places, writing lines.

And they were very restive.

D'Arcy minor—more familiarly known as Wally—the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus, was in a state bordering upon exasperation, and most of the Third Form shared his feelings.

It was exasperating, undoubtedly.

The gentleman who was to act as a cricket coach to the juniors of St. Jim's was expected at the school, and he might arrive at any moment. The Third-Formers felt just as curious about him and interested in him as the rest of the Lower School. Through the open Form-room windows the fags had seen Tom Merry & Co. going down to the school gates to wait for Mr. Fitzgerald. And naturally they wanted to go, too. It was just like old Selby, as Wally viciously remarked, to detain them just then. But that was exactly what the master of the Third had done.

He could not detain the Third Form without detaining himself to look after them, but he did not seem to mind that. Mr. Selby was in a bad temper. Mr. Selby was very frequently in a bad temper. When he was in a bad temper, he was cross, and when he was cross, he came down very heavily upon the Third. Mr. Selby was one of those cross-grained individuals who mistake a feeling of irritation for a sense of duty. The Third had not been specially good that morning, certainly. But there was really no sufficient reason for detaining the whole Form half an hour, excepting that Mr. Selby was in an irritable temper, and that when he was in an irritable temper his sense of duty became painfully acute.

The fags wrote lines, and Mr. Selby watched them frowningly from his high desk. He had told the Third that he would maintain discipline in that Form, or he would know the reason why. And there was not a fellow in the Third who would not have given a whole term's pocket-money for the privilege of hurling Caesar or Todhunter at Mr. Selby as he sat frowning at his desk.

But that was out of the question, and the Third had to endure the infliction as best they could.

Hence their muttered growls.

But Mr. Selby had a keen ear for whispers in class, and he looked round suddenly as Wally murmured his discontent.

"D'Arcy minor!" he rapped out.

Wally grunted.

"Yes, sir."

"You were talking to Jameson."

"Yes, sir."

"And what were you saying?" demanded Mr. Selby, who included inquisitiveness among his many faults. "I insist upon your repeating to me, D'Arcy minor, the remark you made to Jameson."

"I—I was talking about my aunt, sir," said Wally demurely.

"My Aunt Jane, sir."

"Nonsense! What else did you say?"

"Beastly, sir."

"What! Do you mean to say that you described your Aunt Jane as beastly?" demanded Mr. Selby sternly.

"Oh, no, sir."

"Then what did you mean, D'Arcy minor?"

"I meant it was beastly to be detained, sir."

"Indeed! And what has that to do with your Aunt Jane?"

"Oh, nothing, sir."

"You are an utterly stupid boy, D'Arcy minor."

"Thank you, sir."

"Take a hundred lines, in addition to your present imposition!" snapped Mr. Selby. "I will have order kept in this class!"

Wally murmured something under his breath, and fortunately Mr. Selby did not hear him this time.

The master of the Third glanced at the Form-room clock.

Then he rose from his desk.

"Dismiss!" he said curtly.

Gladly enough the fags rose from their desks. They had been detained half an hour, and they were, as Carly Gibson put it, quite fed up.



"Your name may be Arthur Fitzgerald," said Mr. Selby, with a shrug of his shoulders; "but among your associates, and to the police, you are known as pandy Jim." There was a general exclamation from the juniors. "The police!" Mr. Fitzgerald looked astounded. (See Chapter 3.)

Mr. Selby watched them sourly as they filed to the door. He would probably have detained them longer, if he had not been tired of the Form-room himself.

"Don't shuffle your feet like that, Jameson!" he snapped.

"No, sir," said Jameson, with a gleam in his eyes. He had not been shuffling his feet; but it was impossible to argue with a Form-master.

"Gibson! Your hands are inky."

"Are they, sir?" said Curly Gibson submissively.

"They are! Take fifty lines for slovenliness."

"Yes, sir," said Curly, with sulphurous calmness.

"Frayne!"

Joe Frayne gave a jump as his name was rapped out.

"Ye-es, sir."

"If you come into the Form-room in such a dirty collar again, I shall cane you. Take fifty lines."

"Yes, sir."

The Third Form marched out with suppressed feelings. They were glad to escape from the Form-room; there was no telling who would be picked upon next, with Mr. Selby in his present humour.

"Nice man," murmured Wally, when they were out of the Form-room. "Nice kind, gentle, lovable man—I don't think! Groooh!"

"I shall shy Euclid at him some day," said Jameson, "I know I shall! I've felt it for a long time."

"I wonder if that blessed cricket coach has come," said Curly Gibson, "I saw a lot of the Shell and the Fourth going down to the gates. I suppose they were going to wait for him."

"Must be here by now," said Wally. "Yes, rather—here he comes. This must be the chap."

A handsome young man came into the School House, in the midst of a crowd of juniors. He had been chatting to them pleasantly as they crossed the quadrangle, and Tom Merry & Co. already liked the new coach. Arthur Fitzgerald had indeed a very taking way with him, and there was a breeziness about him that quite took the fancy of the juniors.

The Third-Formers crowded round to look at him. He was quite as much their property as that of the Fourth or the Shell, as he had been engaged to come to St. Jim's for the purpose of coaching the whole of the Lower School in the grand old game.

In fact, the Third rather resented the way Tom Merry & Co. seemed to have taken possession of the coach.

Wally planted himself before Mr. Fitzgerald, as the young man paused in the hall.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, sir?" asked Wally cheerfully.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

The young man looked down upon him with a good-natured smile.

"Yes," he said.

"Our coach, sir?"

"Yes, I have that honour."

"Oh, good!" said Wally. "That's ripping. I—"

"Weally, Wally, you must not address Mr. Fitzgerald in that familiar way," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I considah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy."

"Wally, you young wascal—"

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed.

"I see we shall get on together," he said cheerily. "Will one of you lads show me to the Head? I must see him."

"Certainly, sir," exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, sir."

"Follow me, sir," said Wally.

"Faith, and I'll show ye with pleasure, sir," exclaimed Reilly of the Fourth.

"Pray allow me," said Monty Lowther elegantly.

There was a rush to show Mr. Fitzgerald the way. They crowded round him, and the cricket coach would have found it rather difficult to proceed in any direction. He laughed again—a merry, ringing laugh that the juniors liked.

"One at a time, please," he exclaimed. "Or two or three at the most. I shall not need an army."

"Pway stand back, you fellows—"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!"

"I weise to dwy up!"

"Look here—"

"Faith, and I think—"

"What is all this noise about?"

It was a very unpleasant voice—that of Mr. Selby. The Third-Form master had come out of the Form-room, and he frowned as he found the hall full of juniors all talking at once.

The voices died away. Mr. Selby always had the effect of casting a chill wherever he went. The Third-Form master came through the silenced crowd, and looked at the new arrival.

The smile had died away from Arthur Fitzgerald's face as he looked at the Third-Form master. But that was not to be wondered at. Mr. Selby's sour countenance would have driven the smiles from any face.

Mr. Selby fixed his eyes upon the cricket coach.

Then a strange expression came over his face, and he bent his head a little forward as if to take a closer and keener view of the stranger.

His eyes gleamed as he scanned the handsome, sunburnt features.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Good heavens! Dandy Jim, what are you doing here?"

CHAPTER 3.

An Amazing Accusation!

THERE was a gasp of astonishment from the crowd of juniors.

They did not speak; they looked on with wide eyes and open mouths at the strange scene. The new-comer stood in their midst, his eyes fixed calmly upon Mr. Selby, with a look of slight surprise upon the handsome face.

Mr. Selby evidently recognised him.

But he did not call him by his name.

He stared at the cricket-coach as if the handsome athlete had been a ghost, instead of very solid and substantial flesh and blood.

His amazed, and amazing, question was heard by everyone, and they wondered in bewilderment what it meant.

Why Mr. Selby should address the new cricket coach as Dandy Jim was a mystery. The name smacked of the stage, or of the criminal classes.

There was a short deep silence.

Mr. Fitzgerald broke it.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I have not the pleasure of knowing you, sir, but you seem to think that you know me?"

Mr. Selby smiled sneeringly.

"My name is Selby," he said.

The new-comer shook his head.

"You do not remember it?" asked the master of the Third.

"I am sorry to say I do not. But one meets so many people," said the young man easily. "I may have met you, sir."

"You have certainly met me, Dandy Jim."

The young man laughed.

"Why do you call me by that peculiar name?" he asked.

"I must admit that you surprise me very much. My name is Arthur—Arthur Fitzgerald."

Mr. Selby shrugged his shoulders.

"Your name may be Arthur Fitzgerald," he said, "but among your associates and to the police you are called Dandy Jim."

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"THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!"

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There was a general exclamation.

"The police!"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked astounded.

"Is this man intoxicated?" he asked.

Mr. Selby turned purple.

"Intoxicated! How dare you!"

"Unless you are intoxicated, you must be mad, I think," said Mr. Fitzgerald calmly. "I am Arthur Fitzgerald, engaged by Dr. Holmes to coach the juniors of this college in cricket. You have called me by some silly name out of some stage play, and hinted that I am known to the police. I demand an explanation, if you are not, as I said, drunk or mad. If you are sober and sane, you are insulting me."

"Bwavo!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Selby stared hard at the new-comer as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Do you deny it?" he gasped.

"Deny what?"

"That you are the cracksman known to the police as Dandy Jim?"

The young man laughed heartily.

"If you will come with me to Dr. Holmes, I have no doubt that he will satisfy you," he said. "It is a great misfortune for me if I bear any personal resemblance to any of your acquaintances among the criminal classes, certainly."

The juniors chuckled.

A dark frown gathered upon Mr. Selby's brow.

"Very well, come to the Head with me," he exclaimed. "I will state all I know to Dr. Holmes, and we will see."

"Most certainly. You are labouring under some ridiculous mistake, but I have no doubt Dr. Holmes will be able to set it right, and then I trust you will have the decency to apologise."

"I shall apologise if I have made a mistake, certainly," said Mr. Selby grimly. "Kindly follow me."

"Thank you."

And the new-comer followed the master of the Third to the Head's study.

The crowd of juniors watched them go in breathless astonishment.

"Well, if this doesn't beat Banagher!" ejaculated Reilly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Old Selby's off his rocker," said Wally confidently. "He detained us to-day because his brekker didn't agree with him. But I never expected to see even old Selby jump on a man like that, and accuse him of being a giddy burglar. It's too thick."

"He's an ass," said Tom Merry. "Why, the chap is as good as gold, and as honest as—anybody. He's come down here as a cricket coach."

"Selby seems to think he's come for the school silver," grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No chance for anybody to get the school silver since the new safe was put in," remarked Levison of the Fourth. "But what awful rot! As if a burglar would come down in broad daylight calling himself a coach."

"It's piffle, of course."

"Selby is off his rocker."

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as uttally wotten of Selby," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I say, we ought to show Mr. Fitzgerald that we don't take any notice of Selby. Let's wait for him in the passage, and give him a cheer as he comes out."

"Good egg!"

The juniors crowded into the wide passage as near to the Head's study as they could venture to go.

They were feeling very indignant.

Mr. Selby's sour and uncertain temper was known to all—especially to the fags in his own Form—and the juniors were agreed that there never was any telling what he would do next.

But this latest outbreak of the Third-Form master was, as Wally declared, altogether too "thick."

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For the Form-master to "jump" on a young man who had already made a good impression upon the juniors in this way, and fancy that he recognised him as a well-known crackman, was really the limit.

"It's simply rotten of him," said Tom Merry. "The man may resemble a burglar—I suppose that might happen to anybody—but if Selby thought he recognised him he ought to have kept it quiet till he was sure, not have brought it out before everybody like this."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course, it's a silly mistake," said Blake, with a sniff. "I think it's a bit too thick, even for Selby. If I had a Form-master like that I'd boil him in oil."

"It's jolly queer, though," said Levison, of the Fourth, in a very thoughtful sort of way, and with a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

The juniors turned upon him at once. Levison was not popular. He was the cad of the Fourth, and he generally contrived to make himself disagreeable by taking unpopular views. It was exactly like Levison to oppose himself to the general opinion in this matter.

"What's queer?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah—what's queeah, you ass?"

"About this chap," said Levison, obstinately. "I suppose Mr. Selby must have seen this crackman that he's talking about, and knows his face. It's queer that Mr. Fitzgerald should be so like him as to be taken for him."

"Rot! Anybody may resemble anybody else, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Lots of cases of mistaken identity," said Figgins, with a shake of the head. "It's not an uncommon thing."

"Well, I think it's queer, all the same," said Levison, in his obstinate way. "And you all know that there's a lot of stuff at St. Jim's worth stealing. The school silver is worth more than two thousand pounds, and there was a burglar tried to get at it some time back, as you know very well. That's why the Head had the new safe built in his study, instead of the old-fashioned one that anybody could open."

"Does this chap look like a burglar, ass?"

"He may belong to the swell mob. There are lots of crackmen who don't look like burglars. This may be one of them. I shouldn't wonder if Selby is quite right," said Levison.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Shut up!"

"Yaas, dwy up, Levison, d'oh boy," said D'Arcy. "If you say another word like that, you uttah wottah, I shall thump you. You are always wunnin' somebody down."

"I suppose I can say what I like?" growled Levison.

"That's just where you make a mistake, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "You can't. Shut up!"

"Rats! I—"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

"I believe that old Selby—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Tom Merry, exasperated.

Many hands seized upon Levison, and he was promptly bumped. He roared as he smote the floor.

"Ow! Yah! Oh! Leggo!"

Bump! Bump!

The cad of the Fourth was bumped along the passage, and rolled out on the school steps. There the exasperated juniors left him to recover his breath, and crowded back into the passage to wait for Mr. Fitzgerald to come out of the Head's study, with the intention of cheering him enthusiastically—to show their confidence in him—and, incidentally, to show Mr. Selby what they thought of him, too!

CHAPTER 4.

Accused!

DR. HOLMES was expecting the visitor. He rose to his feet as Mr. Fitzgerald came in, and shook hands with him. He seemed a little surprised to see Mr. Selby come in along with the young cricketer.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, of course?" said Dr. Holmes. "I am very glad to see you." The Head was evidently favourably impressed by the handsome, stalwart cricketer. "I have had very favourable accounts of you, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I am glad to hear it, sir. I shall try to give you satisfaction," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "You are very kind. But a most extraordinary thing has happened—"

"Indeed!"

"This gentleman—"

"Mr. Selby?" said the Head.

"Yes. Mr. Selby met me as I entered the house, and spoke to me in a most extraordinary manner. I judge from his attire that he is a master here, and for that reason I wish to treat him with respect, if possible. But it is somewhat difficult to do so, as he has made an amazing and insulting accusation against me."

"Against you, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Yes, sir."

"I—I am afraid I do not quite understand," said the Head, looking bewildered and mortified. "Do you know Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Selby?"

"Not under that name, sir," said the Third-Form master pointedly.

"What!"

"Let Mr. Selby explain, sir," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "The whole matter is so extraordinary that it has led me to suspect this gentleman's sanity."

"Sir!" said Mr. Selby, fiercely.

Dr. Holmes lifted his hand.

"Pray be calm, Mr. Selby. This is most extraordinary. Kindly explain."

Mr. Selby gave the new coach a bitter look.

"Certainly, sir. Last year, during a vacation here I spent a holiday with friends in Surrey. One night there was an attempted burglary, and a man was seized in the house, in attempting to escape. He was taken practically redhanded. The safe, which was a very strong one, had been opened in a mysterious way without violence—in a way which the police believe is only possible to a certain criminal, who is a master in his profession. I knew little of such things, naturally, but on that occasion I had an opportunity of learning something about them. The police were sent for, and the man who had broken open the safe, the man who had been seized in attempting to escape, was handed over to them. I had every opportunity of seeing him, and he certainly saw me. This was the man!"

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Selby!"

"He escaped from the police as they were taking him away," continued Mr. Selby. "He has never been captured since. I have kept in communication with the Scotland Yard inspector who was in charge of the case, because I was keenly interested in the matter, and I wished to learn whether the scoundrel was captured. He never was. Little was known about him. He was known to his associates and to the police as Dandy Jim—his real name appears to be a mystery. He has a wonderful gift for cracking safes, and my friend the inspector assures me that a score of daring robberies have been traced to his hand in the last few years. The police know his work wherever they see it, but they cannot lay hands on the man. They suspect when he is not at work on his nefarious profession, he keeps up respectable appearances in some other character. I have now discovered what that character is—a cricketer coach!" said Mr. Selby, bitterly.

Dr. Holmes sank back into his chair.

"Impossible!" he gasped.

"It is perfectly true, sir, and perfectly certain."

"This—this man—a crackman?"

"Yes, sir."

"Known to the police?"

"Very well known to them."

The Head turned his glance upon the young man. Mr. Fitzgerald was standing with a smile upon his handsome face, a smile that expressed a mingling of amusement and contempt.

"What have you to say, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Only that Mr. Selby is dreaming, sir."

"You deny the charge, of course?"

"Of course."

"Have you ever seen Mr. Selby before?"

"That is very difficult to say, sir. But certainly Mr. Selby is labouring under a most peculiar delusion when he imagines that he recognises me as a man whom he calls Dandy Jim."

Dr. Holmes pursed his lips.

"This is simply extraordinary," he exclaimed. "Of course, Mr. Fitzgerald, you understand that with a charge like this made against you, it will be necessary for me to make every investigation before you can take up your place here?"

Mr. Fitzgerald nodded.

"Naturally, sir."

"You have no objection?"

"None whatever."

Mr. Selby's lips tightened.

"You have no objection to meeting Inspector Buxton, of Scotland Yard?" he asked.

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed.

"Certainly not."

"You will remain here to face him?"

"Undoubtedly," Mr. Fitzgerald laughed again. "If I were the man you take me to be, I should hardly care to do so, and, indeed, what would prevent me from escaping at the present moment?"

"That is true," said the Head.

Mr. Selby smiled sourly.

"If you remain to face Inspector Buxton I shall believe that you are not the man I suppose you to be," he said.

"Then I shall easily convince you, for I shall remain."

"I can send Mr. Buxton a wire to-day, sir, and he will come down at once," said Mr. Selby, turning to the Head. "Shall I do so?"

"Most certainly."

"The inspector assured me that, once Dandy Jim is in his hands, he will be sure to get him."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

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

hands, he has an infallible mode of proving his identity, from information received from one of the scoundrel's former associates now in prison," said Mr. Selby. "I believe that the inspector's arrival will settle the matter."

"Telegraph to him at once, then," said the Head. "Undoubtedly the matter must be settled as quickly as possible."

"Meanwhile, sir—"

"Meanwhile, we must wait."

"But this man, sir—he must not be allowed to escape," said Mr. Selby. "He is undoubtedly the famous cracksman, and now he is here—"

"I do not think you could stop me, Mr. Selby, if I wished to escape," said Mr. Fitzgerald, laughing. "The fact that I have not gone already should convince you that I have no desire to do anything of the sort."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"That seems so to me, Mr. Selby."

"But, sir—" urged the Third-Form master.

"I cannot consent to placing any kind of restraint upon this gentleman, sir," said the Head. "I cannot help thinking that you are labouring under a very strange delusion."

"I am perfectly convinced, sir."

"I know that, Mr. Selby, or you would not speak as you do, of course; but I am not convinced. Mr. Fitzgerald will remain quite free, to do as he chooses, until Mr. Buxton arrives. If Mr. Buxton thinks fit to arrest him on suspicion, I shall have no authority to say anything in the matter. Meanwhile, he will do as he chooses."

"Thank you, sir," said Fitzgerald, gratefully. "You will not find your confidence in me misplaced, Dr. Holmes."

"Pray send your telegram at once, Mr. Selby."

The Form-master bit his lip.

"Very well, sir."

And he left the study.

Dr. Holmes looked at the new coach, and there was an expression of great distress upon his kind old face.

"I am very sorry this has happened, Mr. Fitzgerald. Mr. Selby has evidently made a most extraordinary mistake. I cannot believe for one moment that there is anything whatever in the charge he has brought against you."

"Thank you, sir."

"You have come here with the best recommendations," said the Head. "Two of the governors of the school vouch for you, having known your father at the University. The Rector of Wayland also speaks highly of you, too. Your record is known to your friends, I believe, and it is too much to suspect that all the time you have been leading a double life—as an amateur cricketer in public, and as a professional cracksman in secret." The Head smiled at the thought. "It is too absurd."

Arthur Fitzgerald smiled, too.

"It is certainly absurd enough, sir," he said.

"Mr. Selby was probably very much startled on the occasion he refers to, and his memory of faces is doubtless at fault," said Dr. Holmes. "When Inspector Buxton arrives, all will be cleared up. Mr. Selby says that the inspector has an infallible method of identifying this Dandy Jim, and so the matter can be cleared up beyond the shadow of a doubt. It is a most unpleasant occurrence, and I hope it will not give you an unpleasant impression of St. Jim's."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "I have already made friends with some of the boys, and I shall get on with all of them excellently, I think."

"Very good. You have no objection, of course, to meeting the inspector?"

"Certainly not, sir—not the slightest."

"Then you shall meet him here, in my presence, and in Mr. Selby's."

"Very good, sir."

And the Head shook hands with the young man again, and Mr. Fitzgerald left the study. There was a roar in the passage.

"Here he is!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Fitz!"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"The juniors certainly seem to have been impressed favourably by Mr. Fitzgerald," he murmured. "and I have great faith in boyish instinct. What a very extraordinary idea for Mr. Selby to have taken into his head? Most extraordinary!"

CHAPTER 5.

Backing Up.

"HURRAY!"

"Hip-pip, hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

Mr. Fitzgerald smiled genially as he walked down the passage between rows of cheering juniors.

Tom Merry and Co. were certainly making it clear that they meant to stand by the new coach.

"Hurrah!"

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"THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD!"

is the title of the Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., appearing in this week's "MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

"We believe in you, sir."

"We know you're all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We all back you up, sir."

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Selby, in his study, heard the shouting, and he gritted his teeth. He consoled himself with the thought that matters would wear a very different complexion when Inspector Buxton arrived from Scotland Yard. He had already sent off a telegram by Toby, the page, and that telegram was a lengthy one. Mr. Selby was usually very careful of his money; but on this occasion he did not spare the extra shilling or so in making himself clear. The telegram was worded in a way that would have sent Inspector Buxton racing across the Atlantic if necessary, and certainly it would be sure to bring him down to St. Jim's by the first available train.

Mr. Selby rubbed his thin hands together with satisfaction as he thought of it. If Mr. Fitzgerald was a cracksman who was leading a double life, certainly it was Mr. Selby's duty to denounce him. But he might have felt some compassion for one so young, and so evidently fitted for better things, who had gone to the bad. But there was no compassion in Mr. Selby's breast. There was spiteful animosity, which he called by the pleasanter-sounding name of an unbending sense of rectitude.

If the stranger had the effrontery to remain at the school, in the hope of deceiving the inspector as to his identity, he would be arrested—and if he fled before the gentleman from Scotland Yard arrived, it would be proof of his guilt, and he would be tracked down and taken. And that reflection afforded Mr. Selby the liveliest satisfaction, and enabled him to listen to the sneering of the juniors with equanimity.

But what Mr. Selby was thinking was a matter of not the slightest interest to anybody but Mr. Selby. He was disregarded. The juniors cheered the new cricket coach loyally; and the noise bringing Mr. Railton out of his study, Mr. Railton shook hands warmly with the young man.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Fitzgerald," the School House master exclaimed warmly. "You do not know me, but I have seen you."

Fitzgerald smiled.

"Indeed! Do you recognise me?"

"Certainly."

"As what, may I ask?"

"As a first-class cricketer," said Mr. Railton. "I saw you play for your county at Lord's last summer, and I was delighted."

"Oh, good," said Mr. Fitzgerald, laughing. "That is decidedly better."

Mr. Railton looked puzzled.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"I have already been recognised here," explained Mr. Fitzgerald, smiling. "Mr. Selby—you know Mr. Selby—"

"The master of the Third Form here, certainly."

"He has recognised me, too."

"I did not know that Mr. Selby was interested in cricket," said Mr. Railton. "I certainly understood that he never cared to go to Lord's."

"He did not recognise me as a cricketer."

"Indeed! As what, then?"

"As a cracksman!"

"You are joking, I presume?"

"Not at all. Seriously, Mr. Selby declares that he recognises me as a cracksman who broke into a house where he was staying last summer, and narrowly escaped the police."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton in amazement. "Has Mr. Selby taken leave of his senses?"

Fitzgerald laughed.

"I really do not know. Certainly he has denounced me to the Head as a person whom he calls Dandy Jim—rather a taking name that, I must say—and he is wiring to Scotland Yard for a detective to come here to identify me."

"What utter nonsense."

"Yes, it does seem rather peculiar; but doubtless when the inspector has seen me here, Mr. Selby will admit that he was mistaken."

"And apologise, too, I hope," said Mr. Railton, warmly. "Step into my study; I should like to have a chat with you before dinner."

"With pleasure."

And the young cricketer entered the Housemaster's study.

The door closed behind him, and there was a buzz of voices.

"Railton knows him, you see," said Jack Blake. "He's played for his county at Lord's. Why, Selby must be simply rocky in the topper."

"Quite wockay, deah boy."

"It's all rot, of course," said Tom Merry. "The man looks thoroughly decent, and it's rot to suppose that the Head would have him here without recommendations with him. His record must be known since he left school, or he wouldn't get a post at St. Jim's, even as a cricket coach."

"Yaas, wathah."

"I always thought Selby was cranky, but I never expected him to break out like this," said Wally, in disgust. "I only hope the Head will sack him for playing the giddy goat, and insulting a chap who's worth fifty of him."

And Wally's hope in that respect was shared by many others. There were few at St. Jim's who would have been sorry if Mr. Selby had taken his departure from the old school.

The juniors discussed the strange affair with much interest till dinner. The story was over the whole school in a very short time. So extraordinary an occurrence was naturally a topic in every quarter. In both Houses, seniors and juniors talked of it, and wondered what on earth the master of the Third was thinking of.

No one, with the possible exception of Levison of the Fourth, believed for a moment that there was anything in Mr. Selby's accusation.

The thing was too utterly absurd.

Fellows compared notes on the subject, and told one another all they knew about the man, and all that was known to his credit.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had seen him playing in a county team at Lord's, as Mr. Railton had, and remembered him perfectly well. He knew, too—and other fellows soon knew from him—that the man was well-known to two of the Governors of St. Jim's.

A relative of the Rector of Wayland who was in the Fifth Form too, related how the Rector had spoken of Arthur Fitzgerald, and how much he thought of him.

Darrel of the Sixth, indeed, brought out some old cricket reports, and the name of Arthur Fitzgerald was read out in glowing accounts of county matches.

He was a stranger to Tom Merry and Co.; but during the day it came out that he was a quite a well-known man outside the school, and that his name had been much before the public in connection with first-class cricket.

It was really an honour to the school to get such a man for a cricket coach, and the fellows all felt it so.

"It's utter rot," Kildare said to Darrel of the Sixth, "Selby must be completely balmy. Mr. Fitzgerald's record is well known—it's in print, for that matter. He was at a public school and at Oxford, and he's been connected with first-class cricket ever since he left his college. There never seems to have been a breath against him, of any kind. He is poor, certainly—his father failed and died just before he left Oxford, and he was thrown on his own resources. He may have made something out of cricket—but that's nothing against him. If he lived on the game, he certainly played it jolly well. And the fact that he's taken a job as cricket coach in a school shows that he's willing to work for his living."

Darrel nodded.

"It's just Selby's crankiness," he said. "He will look an awful ass when the inspector man comes down, and laughs at him—as he will do."

"Yes, rather."

That was the opinion of all St. Jim's, New House and School House alike, and all of the masters.

Even Mr. Selby himself began to feel a little dubious.

He had been so utterly certain of his ground that he had not had the slightest hesitation in denouncing the supposed cracksmen to the Head.

But public opinion was not without weight even with the hard and obstinate master of the Third.

The whole school was against him, and he knew it, and he felt very uncomfortable at the thought that possibly the whole school might turn out to be in the right, and himself in the wrong.

He became very anxious for the arrival of the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

He had received a wire from Mr. Buxton, announcing that he would come down by the next express, and that he would arrive at St. Jim's soon after six.

With that Mr. Selby had to be content.

But as the day wore on, and Mr. Fitzgerald made no attempt to leave the school, very unpleasant qualms began to assail Mr. Selby. The inspector was coming, and the suspected man knew it. If he was really Dandy Jim the cracksmen, why did he not go? If he was the man Mr. Selby believed him to be, how dared he remain to face the Scotland Yard official, who had been hunting unsuccessfully for the redoubtable Dandy Jim for several years, and was as keen as mustard for a chance of capturing him. Mr. Selby could not answer that question. One thing was certain, inexplicable as it was. Arthur Fitzgerald remained, and he showed no sign of trepidation whatever as the time drew nearer for the arrival of the inspector from Scotland Yard. And the master of the Third had to confess that he did not understand it.

CHAPTER 6.

Something at Cricket.

TOM MERRY & CO. felt afternoon lessons an infliction that day.

It was a glorious June day, and the soft sunny skies and the green cricket field seemed to call them to the open air. And they were very keen to see the new arrival, Mr. Arthur Fitzgerald, upon the cricket field. The talk on the subject of Mr. Fitzgerald, following the amazing scene in the hall, had brought to light all that was known about the cricket coach, and the St. Jim's juniors knew Mr. Fitzgerald's public career almost as well as he knew it himself.

Certainly it was an honour to have him for a coach. Mr. Fitzgerald had been born rich, and he had been practically ruined by his father's death, a bankrupt, at the time the young man left college. He could certainly have obtained employment as a professional cricketer, but he had always played as an amateur. Certainly, amateur cricketers in county clubs frequently made more than professionals; but surely that was excusable in the case of a young man suddenly thrown upon his own resources without a profession to support him. And besides, nobody hinted that Mr. Fitzgerald had made anything out of county cricket. Reduced as he was in circumstances, doubtless he had saved enough from the wreck to enable him to supply his modest needs, and to keep on playing the game he loved. Probably, in the long run, he had had to take the choice of becoming a professional player, and of taking the chance that was offered him at St. Jim's. Naturally the Head was glad to get such a man as a coach for the juniors, in preference to the ordinary retired professional. Certainly Mr. Fitzgerald was fitted in every way for the work, and certainly the work would be exacting enough, and the pay slight enough. It was too absurd to suppose that a professional cracksmen would take on such a post—unless, indeed, it was simply an excuse for getting into St. Jim's with nefarious views upon the Head's safe. That was evidently Mr. Selby's suspicion—which was laughed at by all St. Jim's. And all the fellows were keen to show Mr. Fitzgerald that they had faith in him.

Mr. Linton dismissed the Shell at last, and Tom Merry & Co. came out of the Form-room joyously enough. They swarmed out into the quadrangle with a loud whoop.

"Here we are again!" said Kangaroo. "Who says cricket?"

And there was a roar.

"Cricket!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on, then!"

"I want to see that chap play," said Tom Merry. "If he's batted for his county at Lord's, there must be something in him."

"What ho!"

"Jolly good coach for us to get," said Monty Lowther. "I think we're in luck."

"You bet!" said Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "There's the chap, talking to Mr. Railton outside the pavilion."

Mr. Fitzgerald greeted the juniors with a cheery nod as they came up.

"Doesn't look as if he's afraid of the giddy man from Scotland Yard," murmured Manners.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"You lads ready for practice?" asked Mr. Fitzgerald genially.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Then we'll begin," said the coach cheerfully. "I hear that you are very keen on cricket here. That's right."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! We always twy to play the game, sir."

"Quite a good maxim," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The stumps were pitched, and the juniors prepared for practice. Some of them pressed Mr. Fitzgerald to give them an exhibition of batting, as he had done at Lord's. The coach smilingly assented.

"We've got some jolly good bowlers here, sir," said Tom Merry. "Fatty Wynn and Redfern are very hot stuff. I'd like to see you handle their bowling, sir, if you would."

"Trot them along," said Mr. Fitzgerald good-naturedly.

Fatty Wynn was in the tuck-shop, and Figgins and Kerr rushed to drag him out. Redfern was ready, however, and he began to bowl to Mr. Fitzgerald's wicket.

Redfern was a wonderful bowler for a junior, and there were a good many county batsmen who could not have stood long against his bowling.

But Mr. Fitzgerald was evidently not one of them.

He dealt easily with the bowling, and Redfern sent down ball after ball, of every variety, and the cricket coach sent them all back.

Tom Merry & Co. were given a considerable amount of leather-hunting, which they took in very good part. This proof of Mr. Fitzgerald's batting powers delighted them. Redfern refused to take the ball again at last.

"It's no good," he said, "I might as well bowl against the school wall."

"Yaas, wathah! I couldn't take that wicket myself, deah boy."

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ANSWERS

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"Go hon!" said Redfern.

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Here's Wynn!" shouted Blake. "Come on, Fatty! You've got to take this wicket."

Fatty Wynn grinned as he caught the ball that was tossed to him. Fatty Wynn was a marvellous performer with the ball, and he had once played for St. Jim's First Eleven with distinction. But he could make no impression upon Arthur Fitzgerald's wicket. The young man did not seem to exert himself in any way. His movements were almost lazy. But he drove away every ball that was sent down, and the juniors who were fielding had a considerable amount of experience as long-distance runners.

"My hat!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn at last. "It's no good; I can't touch him!"

"Ask Langton to try!"

"Langton! Langton!"

"Come and bowl, old man."

Langton of the Sixth was going down to the junior ground, but he good-naturedly came at the juniors' call. Langton was the champion senior bowler, and he had a most deadly delivery.

"Would you like me to send you a few, Mr. Fitzgerald?" he asked.

Fitzgerald smiled.

"Certainly," he said.

And Langton sent him a few—very hot ones, too. Langton threw into it all he knew. But he could make no more impression upon Mr. Fitzgerald's wicket than the juniors had done. He tossed the ball back to Tom Merry at last, with a laugh.

"No go," he said.

Mr. Fitzgerald laughed genially.

"So much for fun, and now for work," he said.

"Bai Jove! But you're a wondah, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'd like to get you down to our place at Eastwood in the vac. for a cricket week, sir."

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Fitzgerald gravely.

Then the practice began.

Mr. Fitzgerald soon proved that he was not only a good cricketer himself, but that he knew how to impart a great deal of his knowledge to others. He was most decidedly the best coach the St. Jim's juniors had ever had, and they had had several. Cricket was compulsory at St. Jim's, but there were few fellows who ever thought of wishing to avoid it. Levison was one of the few. He was standing looking on—or rather looking at Arthur Fitzgerald, with his hands in his pockets and a sneering smile upon his face, when the coach's glance fell upon him. Mr. Fitzgerald signed to him.

"You have neither bowled nor batted, I think," he said.

"No," said Levison. He did not say "No, sir," and the omission of the title of respect made Tom Merry's eyes gleam. Mr. Fitzgerald did not seem to notice it.

"Well, well, come on," he said.

"Don't care about it now, Fitzgerald," said Levison.

Mr. Fitzgerald's eyes gleamed for a moment. But he took no notice of Levison's insolence otherwise. The cad of the Fourth walked away, and as he entered the School House he found himself joined by Tom Merry and Blake. They took hold of his arms, and walked into the house with him.

Levison looked at them in some alarm.

"You were impertinent to Mr. Fitzgerald just now," said Tom Merry.

Levison scowled.

"I suppose there's no need to stand on ceremony with a cricket coach," he said.

"That depends," said Blake. "There are cricket coaches and cricket coaches. Mr. Fitzgerald is a bit out of the ordinary; but anyway, there's no harm in treating a decent man decently. Do you catch on?"

"No, I don't," growled Levison. "Leggo!"

"If you can't understand, we're going to make you," said Tom Merry grimly. "You've got to treat Mr. Fitzgerald with proper respect, Levison."

"I shall treat him as I like."

"No, you won't," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "You'll treat him as we like! You'll go straight back to Mr. Fitzgerald this minute, and tell him you're sorry you were rude, or—"

"Or what?"

"Or you'll come into the gym. with me, and I'll give you the kicking of your life," said Tom Merry, with gleaming eyes.

Levison looked at him and quailed.

"I—I don't mind speaking to him civilly, if that's all," he muttered.

"We'll hear you do it," said Blake. "Come on!"

And Levison walked back to the cricket field between the two juniors, and muttered an apology to Mr. Fitzgerald. He strode away afterwards with his hands driven deep in his pockets, and his eyes glinting with rage.

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CHAPTER 7.

Tea in Tom Merry's Study!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY threw his bat down in Study No. 6, and looked in a thoughtful way at the three juniors who shared with him that famous apartment in the Fourth-Form passage.

Blake and Herries and Digby were getting tea; and as they had come in very hungry after the cricket, they were in a hurry. Digby lighted the fire, and Herries filled the kettle, and Blake laid the table. Blake paused in the midst of that labour to glare at Arthur Augustus.

"No use here for ornamental effigies," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Lend a hand, my son. Scrape out the jam—there's still some left in the jar, and you can get out enough for tea if you try hard."

"Undah the cires, deah boy—"

"Blow the cires," said Blake briskly. "I'm hungry."

"I was thin'v'—"

"You can do that afterwards," said Digby, looking up with a ruddy and smoky face from the fire. "Cut the bread for the toast."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Make yourself useful!" roared Blake.

"I was thinkin' that undah the cires, it would be a good ideah to invite Mr. Fitzgerald to tea in the study," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Blake paused.

"Well, that's a jolly good idea," he remarked. "Only the grub is rather short, and money's rather tight. I don't know what we can feed him on. I don't know what cricket coaches are accustomed to, but the scrapings of a jam jar ain't very gorgeous to offer to a distinguished guest."

"Yaas, and my governah hasn't sent me a tip this week, though I've witten for one," said D'Arcy. "But we can bow-wow some cash of Tom Mewwy."

"Good egg! Go and dig up Fitzgerald then, while we dig up Tom Merry, and make him shell out," said Blake. "It will be a good idea to have Mr. Fitzgerald, if he will come. It will show all the school that we know he's the right sort."

"And it will show old Selby that we don't care twopence for his rubbish," Digby remarked.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps it had bettah be left to me to ask him, as it will wequire to be put delicately."

And Arthur Augustus stepped out of the study.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Here he is, and Tom Mewwy too."

The chums of Study No. 6 looked out into the passage. Mr. Fitzgerald was coming along the passage with the Terrible Three, who had evidently taken possession of him. The young cricketer was chatting cheerily with the chums of the Shell. Arthur Augustus bowed most gracefully to the coach.

"Pwavy excuse me, Mr. Fitzgewald—"

"Certainly," said Mr. Fitzgerald genially.

"We should be vewwy much honahed, sir, if you would come to tea in our study," said the swell of St. Jim's, with elaborate courtesy.

Mr. Fitzgerald smiled.

"Thank you very much," he said. "I am afraid under the circumstances it is impossible, as I have already promised my young friends here."

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as an awful cheek on your part, Tom Mewwy, to bag Mr. Fitzgewald in this way."

Tom Merry laughed.

"First come, first served," he remarked. "We bagged Mr. Fitzgerald on the field, and he's promised us. This is where we score."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"All serene," said Blake. "We wanted very much to have Mr. Fitzgerald to tea, but we should be equally pleased to come and have tea with him. We'll come."

"Certainly," said Digby. "As Tom Merry is so pressing, we couldn't think of refusing."

"You can count on us," said Herries, with a nod.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, chuckling.

"Come on, deah boys. We'll all go to tea with Tom Mewwy."

"Well, of all the cheek, I think this takes the giddy biscuit," said Tom Merry. "But come on, you bounders; the more the merrier."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of No. 6 joined the Terrible Three, and the seven juniors escorted Mr. Fitzgerald along the Shell passage, to Tom Merry's study.

Tom Merry's study was already prepared. Tom Merry had tipped Toby the page to prepare it. There was a fire in the grate, and the kettle was singing on the hob, and the table was covered with a clean cloth, procured from goodness knew where by the obliging Toby. Mr. Fitzgerald was ushered into the study, and made to sit down in the arm-chair, which he smilingly accepted.



The juniors descended from the trap. Then Bob Cherry gave a roar, and pointed to the inscription on the back of the vehicle, which he had seen for the first time. "Look!" he bellowed. "No wonder every idiot we've passed on the road has shied something at us!" (The above incident is taken from the splendid, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "THE REMOVE FORM'S FEUD," which is contained in our popular companion paper "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

There was something very boyish about Arthur Fitzgerald himself, and he certainly had the gift of getting on with boys. His wonderful cricket had earned their respect, and his pleasant manners and cheery ways earned their personal liking. And all the juniors were eager to show the new coach that they did not attach the slightest importance to the allegations made by the master of the Third.

The Terrible Three, as it happened most fortunately, were in funds; and while some of the juniors entertained Mr. Fitzgerald with conversation, a couple of them slipped away to the tuck-shop, and returned laden with good things.

"We sha'n't keep you waiting long, sir," said Monty Lowther. "You see, we don't employ a French chef in the study, but we do the cooking better ourselves."

Arthur Fitzgerald laughed merrily.

"I can cook, too," he remarked. "It's about twelve or fourteen years since I was a junior with a study of my own, but I haven't forgotten how to cook bacon and tomatoes. Let me try my hand."

"Oh, sir,"

"I'd like to, really," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Then go ahead, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Tom Merry, cordially.

And Mr. Fitzgerald went ahead.

It was warm in the study, between the fire and the June sunshine. Mr. Fitzgerald removed his coat, and took the frying-pan, and did the cooking. Certainly he turned out the bacon and tomatoes and poached eggs in as masterly a manner as Fatty

Wynn himself could have done. The juniors were delighted, and they exchanged glances of admiration. A chap who had played for his county at Lord's, who enjoyed a study feed, and could cook bacon and tomatoes to a turn, was a chap they could like and respect. The crusty, sour master of the Third, who hated cricket and could not have cooked a tomato to save his life, was not likely to poison their minds against such a man as this.

Tom Merry made the tea, and the cooking being done, a very cheerful party sat down round the study table.

There certainly was none too much room for so numerous a party; but Mr. Fitzgerald was given plenty of room, and the juniors did the best they could. Some of them sat at the table, and others on boxes or the window-seat. But there were plenty of good things to go round, and that, after all, was the main point.

"Bai Jove, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "bai Jove! it's simply wippin' havin' you here, sir. We wegard it as a gweat honab."

"The honour is mine," said Mr. Fitzgerald, with a bow. "By Jove! This makes me feel a boy again! I'm jolly glad I came to St. Jim's."

"You'll find it rather quiet, sir, perhaps, after what you've been accustomed to," said Manners.

Mr. Fitzgerald started, and looked sharply at Manners.

"After what?" he exclaimed.

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"I mean playing for your county, sir, and cutting a show in matches at Lord's," Manners explained.

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "Quite so! But no, I think I shall enjoy life here, so long as the cricket lasts at all events; and I may stay on to coach you lads in footer, perhaps, in the winter. I hope so. It is a very satisfactory thing to have a permanent post after knocking about a long time."

"It will be wippin' for us to have you, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I must remark that you are a great improvement upon the average cricket coach, sir."

"Yes, rather," said the juniors, heartily.

"And you all appear to trust me, even after what you have heard to my discredit to-day," said Mr. Fitzgerald, with a rather queer smile.

"We know that's all rot, sir."

"Of course, it's perfectly plain to every reasonable chap that Mr. Selby was mistaken," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I hope I shall never do anything to make you lose your faith in me, at all events," said Mr. Fitzgerald, very gravely.

"Oh, we're quite sure of that, sir," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Fitzgerald changed the conversation to cricket; a subject that was naturally of endless interest to the juniors of St. Jim's. They were all keen cricketers, and Mr. Fitzgerald had the whole game at his finger-tips. In his career as a county amateur, too, he had met many of the best-known men in first-class cricket, and he could tell anecdotes of Fry, and Hayward, and Jessop, and the Graces, to which the juniors listened with such breathless interest that they were almost in danger of neglecting the rashers and the tomatoes.

The time passed away very quickly, and Tom Merry & Co. remembered that feed afterwards as one of the pleasantest they had ever had in the study. Tea was over, but the talk was running on cheerily, when there came a tap at the study door, and Toby, the School House page, put his shock head in.

"Mr. Fitzgerald here?" he asked.

The cricket coach rose.

"I am here," he said.

"Dr. Holmes wishes you to step into his study, sir," said Toby.

"Very well!"

The juniors became suddenly grave; they knew what that meant; the cricket coach was about to face the gentleman from Scotland Yard, who had come down to discover whether he was really Dandy Jim the crackman. The fact that he had remained to go through the ordeal seemed to the juniors conclusive proof—if such was needed—that he was not! They all rose as Mr. Fitzgerald took his leave.

"Thank you very much, my lads," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "You've given me a ripping time, and I shall not forget it. Thank you very much."

And with a cheery nod he departed, following the house page to the Head's study. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"True blue, and no mistake," said Tom Merry. "Selby is simply off his rocker."

"Wight off, deah boy."

"Fitz will come out of it with flying colours," said Blake.

"He's a ripping chap, and what he doesn't know about cricket isn't worth knowing. We're going to back him up."

And all the juniors heartily agreed that they were!

CHAPTER 8.

The Man from Scotland Yard.

"GLAD to see you, inspector—very glad indeed!"

Mr. Selby infused a very unusual warmth into his tone as he greeted the stout, purple-complexioned gentleman from Scotland Yard. Inspector Buxton had been shown into the Third-Form master's study, previous to seeing the Head. As he was a personal acquaintance of Mr. Selby's, Mr. Selby had a right to a chat with him first. And Selby wanted to prepare him for the great artfulness of the cricket coach, who had succeeded in pulling the wool over the doctor's eyes—in Mr. Selby's opinion.

Inspector Buxton disposed his ample form in Mr. Selby's arm-chair.

"You've lost no time," the Form-master added.

The inspector smiled a fat smile.

"Not likely," he said, "if there's a chance of laying Dandy Jim by the heels. I can hardly believe he's here—but I'd run across the United Kingdom for a chance of laying hands on the rascal."

"He is, of course, still at large?" said Mr. Selby.

"Certainly. For a long time past there have been no Dandy Jim jobs, and some of us wondered whether he had gone out of the business. My opinion was that he was lying low. Your telegram told me that he was here," the inspector added, briskly.

"Where?"

"The man I suspect arrived at St. Jim's to-day."

"Arrived!" repeated the inspector puzzled.

"We have engaged a new cricket coach for the juniors, and the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 229.

man who came—calling himself Arthur Fitzgerald—I recognised as the crackman I had seen."

"Cricket coach! Cool, by jingo."

"I am certain of the man. I remember every feature, and especially his fingers—long and slim."

"Quite so; Dandy Jim's fingers are like that. He has a wonderful touch with a safe. He can open any safe in the dark, if he chooses. Give him a hairpin or a penknife, and he'll pick a lock for you—the strongest lock—how he does it is a wonder. It's a gift, I suppose—a gift that will get him landed for a long stretch some day. We always know Dandy Jim's work when we see it—but we've never dropped on him. But where is this man you suspect? Is he detained?"

"No! But he is here."

The inspector started.

"Does he deny it?"

"Entirely."

"And he has remained of his own accord to face me?"

"Yes," admitted Mr. Selby.

"That hardly looks as if he can be the man," said the inspector, musingly. "But if he is Dandy Jim, we can prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Dandy Jim has an old bullet scar on his shoulder, and he can't have got rid of it. An old pal of his gave it away to me—and I've had confirmation of it from other quarters. Dandy Jim kept it a secret, but his intimates saw it, and it's leaked out. If this man is Dandy Jim, the scar will give him away, and once let me be sure of him, and I'll have the darbies on fast enough."

"I am quite sure of him, myself, and the scar will prove it," said Mr. Selby. "He is not the kind of man one would suspect, and I may add that if he is Dandy Jim, as I believe, he has kept up appearances wonderfully well in public."

"Quite so. We've always been pretty certain that Dandy Jim was leading a double life," said the inspector. "He disappeared so completely, that it was pretty certain proof that he did not belong to the regular criminal classes. He had associates, or rather tools, among them, but he never lived with them. It was always pretty clear that somewhere or other he was living a normal life—on the proceeds of his robberies."

"Possibly that of a county cricketer?"

Inspector Buxton pursed his lips.

"Possibly, of course," he assented. "But it sounds rather steep. But I won't deny the possibility. Tell me all you can about this man Fitzgerald."

"He was at a public school and Oxford; and would have been rich, but his father became a bankrupt, and he left his college suddenly," said Mr. Selby, "so much seems to be well known. Since then he has been a county cricketer."

"What has he lived on?"

"Apparently on whatever he had left from his father's fortune, and on his expenses as a cricketer."

"Amateur or professional?"

"Amateur."

"Some county amateurs live very well on it, I believe," said the inspector, with a smile. "I have heard so—better than the professionals. But now, it seems, he has taken a post as cricket coach in this school."

"Exactly."

"Not a very handsome position for a man of his training, and not a particularly handsome salary, I suspect?"

"Quite so."

"But it is a certainty, I suppose, and he has settled down upon it after knocking about for some years. That looks fair and square enough."

"Unless he has come here to crack the school safe."

"What is the value of that to a crackman, do you know?"

"The school silver has been valued at over two thousand pounds, and there are other valuables."

"Pshaw!"

"There was an attempt at burglary recently," continued Mr. Selby. "It created great alarm in the school, and for a long time the boys were in the habit of taking cricket stumps or pokers to their dormitories at night. Since then, the Head's old-fashioned safe has been taken away, and a new large safe has been built in the wall of his study—a very powerful one, which would defy the ordinary burglar."

"It wouldn't defy Dandy Jim," the inspector chuckled. "There isn't a safe in the kingdom he couldn't crack with his eyes shut. I know his work."

"My belief is that that is what he has come for," said Mr. Selby.

"Quite possible."

"As for his staying to face you, that is sheer effrontery. But as you say that there is an infallible mode of identifying him—"

"Perfectly infallible—absolutely!" said the inspector.

"Then we shall have him."

"Yes, if he is the man."

"You doubt it?"

"Well, yes," confessed the inspector. "Of course, it is possible; but I think the chances are that you have been

deceived by a chance resemblance. The man's record seems clear enough."

"But if Dandy Jim had been leading a double life, as you suggest, his public record would be clear. He would purposely be careful to keep it so."

"Yes, that is true."

"And as for his coolness and nerve in facing you, inspector, you have said yourself that he is a remarkably cool hand."

"Quite true."

"I believe he is the man," Mr. Selby repeated, and his lips tightened.

The inspector gave him a quick look from under his eyelids. It was plain enough to him that Mr. Selby had taken a bitter dislike to the young cricketer, and that he wanted it to be proved that Arthur Fitzgerald was Dandy Jim. But the astute Scotland Yard official was not likely to be used as a tool to gratify anyone's private dislikes.

"Well, we shall see," said the inspector, rising. "I am glad, at all events, that you brought me here, and I thank you. Can I see the man now?"

"Yes. Pray come with me to the Head's study."

Inspector Buxton followed the Form-master. Dr. Holmes received him courteously, showing very plainly by his manner, however, that he considered the inspector had come down to St. Jim's upon a wild-goose chase.

The inspector was thinking so himself, as a matter of fact; but he intended to put the matter to every test. He was too keenly anxious to get the handcuffs upon the famous crackman to let the smallest chance slip by.

"I will send for Mr. Fitzgerald, and you shall see him here, inspector," said Dr. Holmes.

"Thank you, sir."

And Toby was despatched for the cricket coach.

A few minutes later Mr. Fitzgerald entered the study. He bowed to the three gentlemen as he came in perfectly cool and collected. Inspector Buxton fixed his eyes upon the young man.

"Good heavens," he muttered, "Dandy Jim—or his twin brother!"

CHAPTER 9.

No Scar!

ARTHUR FITZGERALD smiled genially as he caught the muttered words of the inspector.

Mr. Buxton moved round a little, placing himself between the cricketer and the door of the study. Fitzgerald's smile broadened. It was only too evident that at the sight of him the inspector had come round suddenly to Mr. Selby's opinion, and did not mean to run any risks of the young man making a sudden bolt.

Dr. Holmes observed the movement, which was obvious enough, and a troubled frown came over his face. He glanced quickly at Arthur Fitzgerald. But the cricketer did not look uneasy; he only smiled. The Head was relieved to see that he took the inspector's movement simply as a joke.

"By George!" the inspector muttered. "By George!"

Fitzgerald laughed.

"I take it that you, too, see some resemblance between myself and that unfortunate crackman Dandy Jim, inspector?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the inspector.

"It is very unlucky for me, certainly."

"You deny that you are Dandy Jim?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Fitzgerald's laugh rang heartily through the study. There was nothing forced or unreal about it; it was an outburst of spontaneous merriment. It was infectious, too, and the Head began to smile.

"You see that Mr. Fitzgerald does not look alarmed, inspector," he said.

"Quite so," agreed the inspector. "I hope all this will be cleared up quite satisfactorily, but Mr. Fitzgerald must allow us to make every investigation."

"Most decidedly," said Mr. Fitzgerald readily. "My record is open to inspection; in fact, I believe there are scarcely a couple of days since I was at college in which I have not been seen somewhere, generally on a cricket or footer ground. If you read up county cricket and Rugby football for the last few years, you can satisfy yourself as to what I have been doing."

"By day," said the inspector.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes; I suppose a man could play cricket and Rugby by day, and burgle by night," said Mr. Fitzgerald, laughing. "Excuse me, but it really appeals to me as funny. I did not anticipate anything of this sort when I accepted the post of cricket coach for the Lower Forms at St. Jim's."

"It is very unpleasant," said the Head. "I can only say that I am sorry you should be subjected to this, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Oh, never mind, sir; I really don't object if it will have

the result of satisfying Mr. Selby that I am really a very harmless character."

"If you are Dandy Jim, I shall soon know you," said the inspector grimly. "Have you any objection to removing your coat?"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked surprised.

"My coat!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir."

"You are joking, I suppose?"

"I am not joking."

"Then why do you ask me to remove my coat?"

"Because I wish to identify you. If you are innocent, sir, you will do well to accede to my wishes," said the inspector.

"Pray do as Inspector Buxton asks, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head.

"Very well, sir. I cannot help regarding this as mere fooling, however. I do not see why I should remove my coat. But there it is."

Arthur Fitzgerald stripped off his coat, and threw it upon a chair.

"Now your collar," said the inspector.

"Sir!"

"Your collar next, please."

"I decline to do anything of the sort."

Inspector Buxton's eyes glittered.

"Oh, you decline!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly. This is mere buffoonery."

"Listen to me," said the inspector. "I have a reason, and if you decline to allow me to carry out my investigation I shall put the handcuffs upon you, sir, and carry it out without your assent."

Mr. Fitzgerald clenched his hands hard.

"You are insulting," he said.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand pacifically.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he said, "patience! It certainly appears to me, Mr. Buxton, that this is an extraordinary proceeding. If you will have the kindness to explain your object to Mr. Fitzgerald, however, I am sure that he will make no objection to acceding to your wishes."

And Mr. Fitzgerald nodded assent to that remark.

"Very well," said the inspector, with his eyes fixed upon the cricketer's face. "Dandy Jim, the crackman, has a scar from a bullet-wound upon his left shoulder. There is a great deal of evidence about it, and it is a certain proof of identity. I wish to see Mr. Fitzgerald's shoulder."

The young man smiled.

"Is that all, inspector?"

"That is all, sir."

"In that case I have no objection to make. It is merely a waste of time," said the young man. "I certainly have no scar upon my left shoulder."

"We shall see."

"Pray let the inspector make the examination, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Fitzgerald removed his collar and tie, and unfastened the stud of his shirt and dragged it open over the shoulder. He pulled down the edge of the undervest, and a clear, hard white skin was revealed. There was certainly no trace of a scar upon it, even to the keen, searching eyes of the inspector.

Mr. Buxton looked and looked. He rubbed the skin with his fingers to make sure that there was no deception. The pink colour came up through the skin naturally enough; it was evident that there was no disguise there.

Mr. Fitzgerald looked at him with a quizzical smile.

"Are you satisfied, sir?"

Inspector Buxton was silent. He was dumbfounded.

Mr. Fitzgerald allowed his vest and shirt to slip back into their place. The inspector made a gesture.

"The other shoulder, please," he said, "Let me see the other shoulder."

Mr. Fitzgerald looked impatient.

"Come, come! This is simply farce," he exclaimed. "You said the left shoulder, and you have seen my left shoulder. What more do you want?"

"There may have been an error in the information; it may have been the right shoulder," said the inspector, gritting his teeth. "At all events, I don't leave this room till I've seen your right shoulder, sir."

"Pray permit him to do so, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head gently. "I can understand your feelings, but it is wiser to satisfy Mr. Buxton in every possible way."

"Oh, very well, sir," said Arthur Fitzgerald resignedly.

He uncovered the right shoulder. Inspector Buxton scanned it. Mr. Selby made a step forward, and turned his sour glance upon it. There was no sign of a scar.

"Well?" said the cricketer.

Inspector Buxton stepped back, looking chagrined and disappointed.

"It is all right," he said.

"You are satisfied?"

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

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Fitzgerald calmly replaced his collar and tie, and put on his coat. The inspector was looking morose and Mr. Selby savage. Mr. Buxton's hopes had evidently risen at the sight of Arthur Fitzgerald's face, but they had been dashed to the ground again by his failure to discover the identifying scar.

"You are quite satisfied now, inspector, I presume?" said Dr. Holmes.

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"You no longer have any suspicion of Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"It's hardly possible to suspect him now, sir."

"And you, Mr. Selby?"

The Third-Form master bit his lip till the blood came.

"I must, of course, abide by what Inspector Buxton says," he replied.

"Then the matter is now closed. Mr. Fitzgerald's honour is completely vindicated, as I fully expected all along. I am only sorry that this has happened, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I shall forget all about it, sir," said the young man. "I, too, am very pleased that I have been able to satisfy Mr. Selby."

And he bowed and quitted the study.

Mr. Selby left a few moments later. He was in such a rage that he could scarcely control his features. He realised that he had been made to look ridiculous, and he would have given a great deal for the young cricketer to have turned out to be the famous cracksmen. Inspector Buxton lingered in the study.

Dr. Holmes glanced at him, and rose.

"Your work is quite finished here?" he asked.

"Quite so, sir. It is a case of a very remarkable resemblance, and that is all," said Mr. Buxton slowly. "Very few people have seen Dandy Jim, but I am one of the few, and I could have sworn—Do you know whether Mr. Fitzgerald is a twin?"

The Head smiled.

"I happen to know that he is an only son," he replied.

"Floored again!" murmured the inspector, with a baffled look. "It is really very extraordinary. Well, well, good-day, sir! I am sorry to have troubled you."

Inspector Buxton took his leave. Mr. Selby joined him as he put his hat on in the hall. Mr. Selby's face was quite pale.

"All moonshine!" said the inspector grimly.

"Do you really think so, inspector?" asked the Form-master, in a low voice.

"It's evident enough. He's not the man."

"Is there not some means of eradicating old scars?" asked the Form-master.

"Not so completely as that. The skin was quite smooth and untouched. There never had been a scar on either shoulder."

Mr. Selby set his teeth.

"Then you believe that he is not the man?"

"I am bound to believe it."

The Form-master's eyes searched his face.

"But you have a lingering doubt, in spite of what you are bound to believe?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Buxton laughed slightly.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "No, I cannot say I have. I am feeling disappointed at not laying my hands on Dandy Jim. That is all."

"Well," said Mr. Selby deliberately, "I have not altered my opinion. I believe that this man is Dandy Jim, and that he has somehow hoodwinked us!"

"I am afraid that you allow personal dislike to influence your judgment, sir," said the inspector, with a shake of the head.

Mr. Selby started and reddened.

"What do you mean, sir? Why should I dislike him?"

The inspector smiled.

"I don't know why you should, but it's pretty clear that you do, sir," he said. "I think that is why you feel as you do. The evidence is all in his favour."

"I believe that he is the cracksmen," said Mr. Selby deliberately, "and I shall keep my eyes upon him, and bring it home to him if I can!"

"I wish you luck, sir. If you really think that, you would certainly be justified in keeping your eyes upon him. And if you should by any chance discover anything, remember that a telegram will bring me here instantly."

And Inspector Buxton departed from St. Jim's. Why did he speak those final words? Was it as Mr. Selby had said? Did a doubt still linger in the inspector's mind, in spite of the plainest evidence? Possibly. In Mr. Selby's mind, at all events, there was not a doubt, there was a conviction! The deep and bitter dislike he had taken to the young cricketer was only intensified by finding that he was in the wrong, and he refused to admit the possibility that he had made a mistake. Henceforth, to Mr. Selby, Arthur Fitzgerald was Dandy Jim the cracksmen, and it was only a question of time before the master of the Third would catch him tripping.

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CHAPTER 10. Quite Cleared!

TOM MERRY & CO. saw the inspector depart—alone, and they drew their own conclusions from that circumstance. If Mr. Fitzgerald had by any chance turned out to be Dandy Jim the cracksmen, the inspector would certainly not have departed alone. Dandy Jim would have gone with him with handcuffs on his wrists.

The juniors had no doubt; but this proof positive was very satisfactory to them. And the whole school soon knew all about it. The suspicion against Mr. Fitzgerald had been the talk of St. Jim's all the afternoon; and Dr. Holmes considered it only just that the clearing of his name from all suspicion should be made equally public.

The story of the scar, which was a certain means of identifying Dandy Jim, and which was not to be found upon Mr. Fitzgerald, was therefore explained, Dr. Holmes calling the prefects into his study to explain to them, and requesting them to give the information to the school. He was very anxious that not a shadow of suspicion should remain against the young cricketer. St. Jim's knew it all now, and St. Jim's was satisfied.

Tom Merry & Co. went to bed that night still discussing the matter, but all their remarks were in favour of Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Old Selby still thinks the same. You can see it from his chivvy," said Monty Lowther. "He's been looking as black as thunder ever since Inspector Buxton buzzed. Just like him to take a dislike to a really decent chap like Fitz."

"Exactly," said Manners.

"The more decent a chap is, the more Selby dislikes him," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "Why, he dislikes us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, indeed, there was no doubt that the Third-Form master was guilty of that enormity. He certainly did dislike the Terrible Three cordially, and they reciprocated his feeling most heartily.

In the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, when the juniors went up to bed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Levison with a severe glance.

"I trust, Levison, that you are satisfied now," he said.

Levison shrugged his shoulders, and did not reply.

"Does that mean that you are not satisfied, you awful wottah?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's, raising his voice a little.

"Well, I'm not, if you want to know!" said Levison coolly.

There was a chorus of angry voices at once. It was simply exasperating to the Fourth to discover that Levison maintained his obstinate opinion in spite of the plainest evidence. It was all very well for Mr. Selby. They could not argue with a Form-master. But they could argue with a junior—and they did!

"You ass!"

"You fathead!"

"You silly, obstinate chump!"

"Bump the cad!"

"Pwax explain why you still maintain this ridiculous posish Levison," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with majestic calm.

Levison gave another shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, I'm not to be taken in!" he said. "I don't trust the chap! I don't believe in these wonderful resemblances, either. It's too thick!"

"Do you mean to say that you believe that Mr. Fitzgerald is really Dandy Jim, as Mr. Selby suggested?" roared Blake.

"Yes, I do."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

"Oh, he's lying!" said Lumsley-Lumsley. "I guess he doesn't think anything of the sort."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about the scar?" demanded Herries. "The inspector says that Dandy Jim has a scar on his shoulder, and Mr. Fitzgerald has nothing of the sort."

"I darsay that could be worked somehow."

"Somehow!" sniffed Blake. "The fact is you don't like Fitz, because you're a rotter and he's decent! Shut up! You shan't say a word against him in my presence, anyway!"

"I don't want to," yawned Levison. "You asked me, and I answered, that's all. I'm going to bed."

"But you still think the same, you spalpeen?" asked Reilly.

"Yes."

"Sure, and ye're a cad, then!"

"And a rotter!"

"And a rank outsider!"

"And an awful wascal!"

Levison grinned and turned in. The gentle names applied to him did not seem to hurt his feelings in any way. Hard words broke no bones, and Levison was accustomed to hard words, too. He had earned a good many.

The indignation of the Fourth only amused him. Levison had a way of setting up as a judge of character, and his way was most exasperating. It was an easy way, and did not require

very much intelligence or judgment. He set down everybody's motives as bad. If he turned out to be correct, he could crow triumphantly; if he turned out to be incorrect, he could persist that the party concerned was hoodwinking everybody but himself. It was quite an easy way to be always right.

Kildare saw lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory, and its arrival probably saved Levison from being jerked out of bed and bumped. If he had said any more on the subject, he would probably have been bumped after the captain of St. Jim's was gone. But he was too cautious for that, and, although several of the fellows threw out remarks to draw him out, Levison went to sleep instead of replying.

When the rising bell clanged out in the morning, Jack Blake and his chums turned out of bed cheerfully. They intended to get in some cricket practice before breakfast, and Mr. Fitzgerald was to meet them on the ground. Levison sat up in bed, and grinned at them in a sarcastic way.

"Turn out, you lazy slacker!" said Blake. "Why don't you come and get in some batting, and get some tips from Fitz?"

"No, fear! Compulsory cricket's enough for me, and I don't want any extra," yawned Levison.

"You would be some loss of a cad if you played, perhaps!" suggested Lumley-Lumley. "It might work some of the cad-dishness out of you!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"What are you getting up for if you're not coming down to the cricket?" demanded Digby.

"I'm going to see if the Head's safe's all right."

The Fourth-Formers glared at him.

"Beginning that again, are you?" exclaimed Blake. "Look here, you've got to shut up on that subject! Mr. Selby can gas about it as much as he likes, but you can't. See?"

"Oh, rats!"

"I'll give you rats!" roared Blake.

He rushed at Levison, and jerked him out of bed, bedclothes and all. The cad of the Fourth gave a roar as he rolled upon the dormitory floor.

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"There!" gasped Blake. "Now shut up!"

"Yaas, wathah! If you make any further remarks derogatory to Mr. Fitzgerald, Levison, I shall give you a fearful thrashing!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy impressively.

Levison did not make any further derogatory remarks. He rubbed his aching bones, and scowled; and the chums of the Fourth quitted the dormitory, and went down to early cricket. They met the Terrible Three in the passage, and in the early sunny morning the juniors and the new cricket coach got on famously at the nets. They came in to breakfast in high spirits, and quite prepared to punch Levison black and blue if he ventured to utter a word against the popular "Fitz." But Levison had learned to hold his tongue by this time.

CHAPTER II.

A Stump for Levison!

KILDARE paused, and frowned.

The captain of St. Jim's had just entered one of the upper box-rooms in the School House to look for something he needed; and a smell of cigarette smoke came to his nostrils as he opened the door. It was evident that he had dropped by chance upon some "doggish" youth who was breaking the strict rule of St. Jim's.

He threw the door wide open, and stared into the room.

Two juniors, who were seated upon an empty trunk, jumped up. Levison slipped his cigarette into his sleeve, and Mellish dropped his upon the floor. They both looked in dismay at the St. Jim's captain. They were fairly caught.

Kildare looked at them grimly.

"Smoking!" he said.

"Oh!" gasped Mellish.

"Just trying a fag," said Levison, with an air of bravado.

"Indeed! Give me your cigarettes!"

The juniors obeyed.

"Now, all that you have in your pockets."

"I—I haven't any," faltered Mellish.

"But you have, Levison, you young rascal!"

Levison hesitated a moment, and then handed a packet of cheap cigarettes to the Sixth-Former. Kildare broke the cigarettes into little pieces, and scattered the fragments over the floor of the box-room.

"Why aren't you at cricket practice?" demanded Kildare.

"I—I forgot," muttered Mellish.

"Don't lie, Mellish! You two are always sneaking out of the practice," said Kildare sternly. "Come with me!"

The two juniors followed the captain of St. Jim's downstairs, and into his study. There Kildare gave them two cuts each. Levison turned towards the door as the St. Jim's captain laid down his cane.

"Hold on!" said Kildare quietly.

"What do you want?" demanded Levison, savagely.

"Follow me!"

Kildare strode out into the quadrangle, and made his way to the cricket ground. The two cads of the Fourth followed him sullenly. Afternoon lessons were over, and the playing-fields were swarmed. Mr. Fitzgerald was there with a crowd of juniors, and they were very busy. Arthur Fitzgerald nodded cordially to Kildare. There was a great liking already between the captain of St. Jim's and the former county cricketer.

"Will you look after these two young rotters a bit, Mr. Fitzgerald?" asked Kildare. "They have been dodging cricket practice. I want them kept at the nets a good half-hour."

Mr. Fitzgerald smiled.

"Certainly!" he said.

Kildare went back to the house. Mellish was looking sullen, and Levison savage. He had consumed a good many cigarettes in the box-room before the captain of St. Jim's discovered him there, and he was far from feeling in a state for exertion.

"Come, my lads!" said Mr. Fitzgerald, kindly. "Here, Levison, take this bat."

Levison put his hands into his pockets.

"Did you hear me, Levison?" said Mr. Fitzgerald, quietly.

"I don't want to play cricket!"

"You know perfectly well that practice is compulsory, Levison, and that I have the directions of your School captain."

"I'm not going to play!"

"Bai Jove, Levison—"

"Cheese it, Gussy!" said Blake. "Fitz can deal with him."

"But weally—"

"Dry up!"

"You heard your captain's orders," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"I shall not allow you to talk nonsense, Levison. Take that bat at once!"

Levison did not move.

"Will you obey me?"

"No, I won't!"

Mr. Fitzgerald set his lips. He made one grasp at Levison, and caught him by the shoulder. The cad of the Fourth was swung almost off his feet.

"You're not allowed to touch us, you rotter!" panted Levison. "You know that. You're a cricket coach, and you're paid to be useful to us, you cad!"

"Give me a stump, please," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

Tom Merry handed him a stump.

Mr. Fitzgerald made a knee, laid Levison across it, and gave him a dozen lashes with the stump. Levison roared and wriggled, but he could not escape from the iron grasp of the cricket coach.

The juniors stood round in a ring, roaring with laughter. They had no sympathy to waste upon the cad of the Fourth. He had looked for trouble, and he had found it, that was all. He had imagined that he could insult the coach with impunity, and he had discovered his mistake!

Mr. Fitzgerald dropped the stump at last, and set Levison upon his feet. The cad of the Fourth was gasping with pain and rage.

"Will you obey orders now?" asked the cricket coach quietly.

Levison set his teeth.

"No!" he yelled.

"Very well, I shall take you to the Head now!"

And Mr. Fitzgerald took Levison by the collar. Then the cad of the Fourth weakened.

"I—I—hang you—hang it all—I'll play!" he gasped.

"Take that bat, then!"

Levison took the bat. Mr. Fitzgerald placed him at the wicket, and kept him batting. Levison began to bat in a very slovenly way, and the ball knocked down the bails every time. But that kind of thing was not allowed to continue.

"You can bat better than that, Levison," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"I can't!" snarled Levison. "And I don't want to!"

"You must, however, whether you want to or not. You will bat better than that, or I shall lick you again with a cricket stump."

"You won't dare!" yelled the exasperated cad of the Fourth.

"You ain't allowed to!"

Mr. Fitzgerald picked up a stump, and came towards him.

"Will you do your best?" he asked.

Levison faltered.

"Ye-es."

"Then wire in."

And Levison's batting improved very much from that moment! At the end of half an hour he was allowed to go, and he slouched off the field with Mellish, with a scowling face. Mellish had taken the cricket quietly, as a necessary evil. He was sullen, but Levison was raging.

"The rotter!" snarled Levison, as they walked away. "The cheeky hound! To dare to lay hands on a St. Jim's fellow; and he's a paid coach!"

Mellish grinned.

"I think the Head would uphold him, as you shirked the cricket," he remarked.

Levison ground his teeth.

"The rotten cad! A rotten cracksman, too—a burglar—"

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NEXT THURSDAY: "THE WHIP HAND!"

"Oh, draw it mild," said his chum. "You know he isn't that."

"I know he is. Selby was right all the time."

"Rats!" said Mellish.

"I'll jolly well prove it, too, somehow," said Levison, taking no notice of his chum's disrespectful interjection. "I know he's a rotter, and I'll fix it on him somehow. He ought to be exposed!"

"Bosh!"

"You'll see I'm right when you wake up some morning, and find that the Head's safe has been robbed," growled Levison.

Mellish chuckled.

"Yes—when!" he said. "But if the safe isn't robbed till Fitzgerald robs it, it will be all serene, I think. You're simply dotty about that, Levison, same as old Selby. The whole school's laughing at him now."

"They'll laugh another way when it's proved that he's in the right."

"Oh, rot!"

And Mellish left his chum. Levison went into the School House scowling. His incipient dislike of Mr. Fitzgerald had changed to a bitter hatred since that licking on the cricket ground; and a scheme was working in Levison's mind for the discomfiture of the new coach. When the Fourth Form went up to bed that night, Levison was very quiet; and when all the School House was asleep, the cad of the Fourth rose quietly from his bed, and quitted the dormitory.

It was an hour later when he returned, and he crept silently into bed, with a face rather pale in the darkness.

The Fourth Form slept on undisturbed.

CHAPTER 12.

What Happened in the Night.

TOM MERRY & CO. were down early, as usual the next morning. But when they came down, they did not leave the School House immediately for the cricket-field, as usual. There was an atmosphere of unusual commotion in the School House that morning, and it was evident at once that something had happened.

Kildare and Darrel were up, and the juniors saw them in the passage, looking very grave. Mr. Railton passed them on the way to the Head's study, and he was very serious. The juniors caught a glimpse of the Head himself in the distance, and his brow was knitted. Early as the hour was, they heard the telephone bell ring in Dr. Holmes's study.

"Something's up!" said Monty Lowther.

"Looks like it."

"Let's ask Kildare," said Tom Merry.

And they approached the captain of St. Jim's very politely.

"Good-morning, Kildare!" said Tom Merry urbanely.

"Oh, buzz off, and don't bother," said Kildare.

"Has something happened?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Somebody got into the Head's study last night."

"My hat!"

The news came as a sudden shock to the juniors.

"Do you mean a burglar?"

exclaimed Tom Merry, in startled tones.

"Well, it could hardly have been anybody else."

"By the window?"

"No; the door!"

"Then the House was entered?"

"Of course!"

"Where? Have you found any signs of it?"

"No."

"Oh!"

Kildare turned away, evidently very much disturbed. The Terrible Three exchanged glances. A wretched thought had come into their minds—a thought they did not welcome, but which forced itself in. Mr. Fitzgerald had a room in the School House.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry, in a low voice. "This is pretty rotten!"

"Beastly!" said Manners. "It will make old Selby giggle. He will say at once—or think, at any rate—that it was Fitz."

Tom Merry was silent. In THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 229.

spite of himself, a doubt crept into his mind. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, came down the passage, hastily dressed, and looking unusually excited.

"What is this? What is this?" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of the chums of the Shell. "I hear that the Head's study has been entered?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry reluctantly.

"Was it from within the house?"

"Kildare says so, sir."

"Ah! Has there been a robbery?"

"I do not know, sir."

"I have no doubt of it! I have not the slightest doubt of it!" Mr. Selby hurried away towards the Head's study, leaving Tom Merry and his chums looking very lugubrious.

Mr. Selby's face was looking quite cheerful, however, as he entered Dr. Holmes's study. Dr. Holmes was already there, with Mr. Railton. The good old doctor gave Mr. Selby a startled glance.

"May I know what has occurred, sir?" asked the master of the Third.

"Certainly, Mr. Selby! It is a very strange and very alarming occurrence. The door of my study is kept locked at night, and the lock has been forced, and the door opened. The safe has been tampered with, but it has not been opened fortunately. The thief was unable to effect it."

"Then there has been no robbery?"

"Fortunately, none."

Mr. Selby did not look as if he regarded it as fortunate. Perhaps he would have been better pleased if there had been a robbery.

"I suggest sending a wire to Inspector Buxton," he said.

Dr. Holmes frowned thoughtfully.

"There seems to be no sign of anybody having entered the house from outside," he said. "It is very remarkable. I was debating in my mind whether to communicate with the police or not."

Mr. Selby's eyes glinted.

"Inspector Buxton has a right to know," he said. "I do not suggest sending for the local police; but undoubtedly Inspector Buxton should be sent for. He has every right to know this."

"I fail to see why," Mr. Railton remarked.

"He has a right, Mr. Railton, because a suspected man is on the premises, and Mr. Buxton is in charge of the case dealing with that suspected man."

"If you are referring to Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mr. Railton tartly; "he is no longer suspected, as Inspector Buxton proved clearly that he is above suspicion."

"Not to my satisfaction, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you reject the evidence which satisfied the inspector from Scotland Yard?"

"I do."

"Then I have nothing more to say," replied the School House master, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Mr. Selby flushed angrily.

"I consider that Mr. Buxton ought to be informed," he rapped out, "and I shall certainly send him a wire unless Dr. Holmes positively forbids me to do so!"

"I cannot go so far as that," said the Head.

"Then I will send the wire, sir."

And Mr. Selby hurried away to do it, perhaps with some secret fear that the Head might change his mind if allowed time. Toby was sent down to Wayland with the telegram, as the local post-office in Rylcombe would not yet be open. Mr. Selby was certainly not letting the grass grow under his feet.

When the boys came down, the House was in a buzz from end to end.

The New House fellows heard about it, and came over for information.

To say that it was a shock to the school would hardly be enough. The fellows were simply staggered.

They had all believed in Mr. Fitzgerald. They had laughed openly at Mr. Selby's suspicions of the former county cricketer.

But now—

The Head's study door had been forced open—the safe had been attempted—and it had pretty evidently been done by someone within the house. Arthur Fitzgerald was within

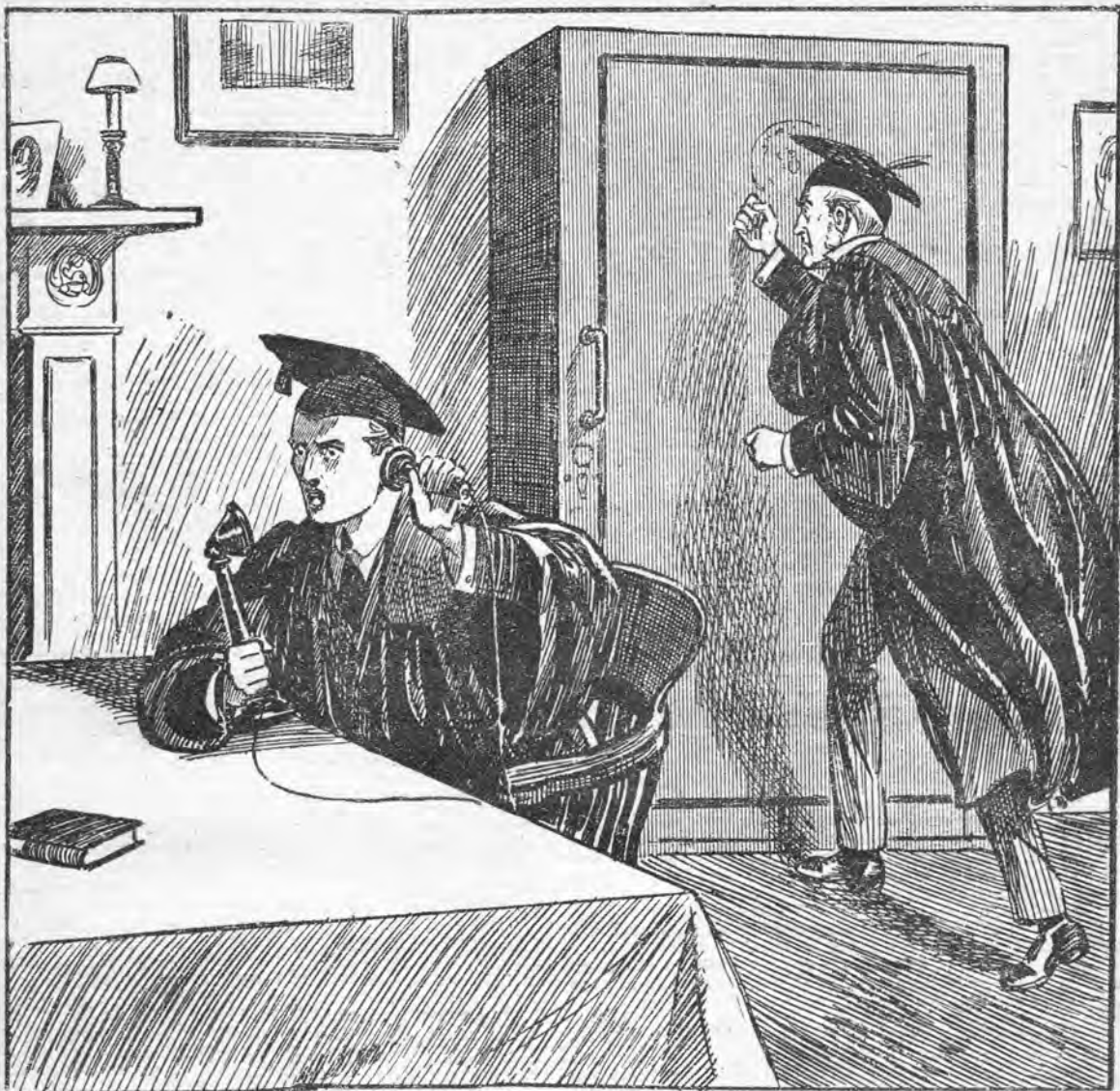
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Mr. Railton spoke into the telephone. From the iron safe came intermittent knocking, fainter than before. Dr. Holmes knocked upon the door of the safe. It was to let the wretched prisoner within know that his appeal was heard—that they were trying to save him. (See Chapter 18.)

the house. This had happened a couple of days after his installation at St. Jim's. What did it mean?

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "it's simply wotten!"

"Who's coming out to the cricket?" said Tom Merry.

There was no reply.

No one felt inclined to play cricket just then, or to do anything that would bring them into contact with Mr. Arthur Fitzgerald.

There was a sudden low exclamation from Blake, as a group of juniors stood in the hall discussing the strange happening in low tones.

"Here comes Fitz!"

Mr. Fitzgerald came up cheerily enough.

"You are cutting the cricket practice this morning, then?" he said.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Anything the matter?" asked the cricket coach, looking in surprise at the shadowed and troubled faces of the juniors.

There was silence.

"What is it, my lads? I can see something has happened."

"Haven't you heard, sir?" asked Tom Merry.

Mr. Fitzgerald shook his head.

"No. I have been out of doors since I rose. What has happened?"

"An attempted burglary, sir."

"What!"

"Somebody's been in the Head's study and tried to bust the safe, sir!"

"Good heavens!"

"And it was somebody from inside the House, sir," said Levison, who had joined the group as Mr. Fitzgerald came in.

"Indeed! This is very distressing," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Was anything stolen?"

"It seems not, sir."

"It is very extraordinary."

Mr. Fitzgerald gave the troubled faces of the juniors one keen, searching glance, and understood. The colour came into his face. He turned away without another word.

Tom Merry sprang after him.

"Mr. Fitzgerald! We don't think you know anything about it. We trust you, sir."

"Ya-as! wathah, sir!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I admit that the thought came into my brain for a moment, sir, but I see it was all wot. I apologise, sir."

"Thank you, my boys," he said. "This is a very unfortunate occurrence. I need not tell you that I know nothing about it."

And he nodded and walked away. The juniors looked at one another. The fresh, handsome face and frank manner of the young cricketer had restored their shaken confidence in him. But what did it all mean? If it was not Fitzgerald, who was it that had broken in the door of the Head's study and tampered with the safe?

The juniors were still thinking about the strange affair when they went into the Form-rooms for morning lessons.

It was during the recess after third lesson, when the juniors were out in the quadrangle, that a portly form, now well-known to them, was seen to enter at the school gates. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and scanned the portly figure as it crossed towards the School House.

"That Scotland Yard merchant, bai Jove!"

It was Inspector Buxton again. The portly inspector entered the School House, and disappeared from view, leaving the St. Jim's fellows excited and anxious. They felt that matters were coming to a head now.

CHAPTER 13.

Suspected!

DR. HOLMES was in the Sixth Form-room, but he came to his study immediately. The Head was looking very anxious. The strange happening in the night was weighing upon his mind, and he had been unable to banish a lurking uneasiness with regard to Arthur Fitzgerald. Mr. Selby had met the inspector immediately he arrived, and placed him in possession of the facts. Dr. Holmes found Mr. Buxton very keen and eager. It was evident that the gentleman from Scotland Yard had come prepared to make a capture.

"Where is the man, sir?" the inspector asked, at once.

"What man?" asked the Head, in surprise.

"Mr. Fitzgerald."

"He is superintending some work on the cricket pitch," said the Head. "The pitch is being rolled. You can see him from my study window."

Inspector Buxton, with a strange expression upon his face, stepped to the study window. Sure enough, in the distance upon the cricket field he could see a pitch being rolled, and the cricket coach standing and giving instructions.

"H'm! So he is still here?" said the inspector.

"As you see."

"Either he is innocent, or he has a nerve of iron," the inspector muttered. "But let me know what happened last night. Mr. Selby has explained that your study door was forced, and an attempt made upon the safe, and that no sign was seen of any entrance from outside the house."

"Exactly, sir."

"May I make an examination now?"

"Pray do anything you wish."

The inspector stepped to the study door and examined it. The lock was broken. It was evident at a glance that some instrument, probably a chisel, had been driven between the door and the jamb, and the lock had been forced by sheer pressure. The inspector gazed at it curiously.

"Did you find the door like this?" he asked.

"Exactly like that. I have given orders that nothing should be disturbed until you came, Mr. Buxton."

"Quite right, sir. This door was forced with a chisel, or perhaps a jemmy of some sort. But it was certainly not the work of Dandy Jim."

Mr. Selby started.

"Was not?" he asked.

Mr. Buxton laughed.

"Certainly not. This door has been forced in a stupid and clumsy way. The noise the lock made as it cracked open must have sounded like a pistol-shot. Dandy Jim would have picked the lock in two seconds. The fool who has done this has burst it open by sheer brute force. This is not the work of a burglar at all; above all, certainly not the work of a crackman like Dandy Jim."

Mr. Selby's face was a study.

"Pray examine the safe, sir!" said the Head urbanely.

"Certainly."

Inspector Buxton stepped to the safe. The new safe that had been built in the wall of the Head's study was very different from the old-fashioned one previously there. It was tall enough for a man to stand almost upright in, and the door was a solid mass of metal of enormous weight. The inspector glanced over the damage that had been done with a smile of amusement. Somebody had hacked and jammed at the safe with some instrument, but evidently had had no chance of opening it.

"Shall I open it for you, sir?" asked the Head.

"If you please."

Dr. Holmes selected a key from his desk and unlocked the safe. The great door swung outwards.

Inspector Buxton looked in, and ran an experienced eye over the valuables stacked away upon the shelves within.

"You have a good haul for a burglar here, sir," he said.

The Head smiled.

"Yes, an attempt was made upon it some time ago," he said. "Fortunately, without success."

"And last night—" said Mr. Selby.

The inspector stepped back from the safe, and the Head relocked the ponderous door.

"There was no attempt made upon it last night, sir," he said.

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Both Mr. Selby and the Head stared at him. There was a slight sound in the passage, but in the interest excited by the inspector they did not notice it. The study door, with its lock broken, did not fasten, and it swung open several inches, and every word spoken in the study could be heard in the passage.

"What can you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Selby. "The study door was forced open, and the surface of the safe door here, near the lock, has been hacked at."

"Not by a burglar. No burglar would act like that. No crackman would fancy for a moment that it was any use hacking at a mass of iron in that way. This is the work of some practical joker."

"What!" exclaimed the Head.

"That is my theory," said the inspector coolly. "It appears that it was done from inside the house. Certainly no burglar would have entered here to act in this manner. It is a trick of some mischievous boy, I imagine, who has heard the talk of Dandy Jim, and has done this to cause excitement. There are boys like that."

"Oh!" muttered Mr. Selby.

"Perhaps somebody who has got upon bad terms with Mr. Fitzgerald, and wanted to throw suspicion upon him," the inspector suggested.

Involuntarily the Head's glance turned upon Mr. Selby.

The Third-Form master flushed scarlet.

"Inspector Buxton! You do not suggest—"

"Of course not, sir. I was speaking of the boys," said the inspector. "Some mischievous schoolboy, I said. It is evidently done for a lark. It would make any crackman laugh to see it. I have wasted my time coming here."

And the inspector, rather huffy and testy, took his leave abruptly.

He stepped out into the passage, and caught sight of a junior vanishing round the nearest corner. The inspector smiled grimly. He guessed that the boy had been listening at the door, and that he would not have had very far to look for the practical joker. But that was no business of the inspector's, and he went his way.

In the study, Dr. Holmes fixed his glance upon Mr. Selby.

"You heard the inspector's opinion, Mr. Selby," said Dr. Holmes, very quietly. "I wonder it did not occur to us before. This man, Dandy Jim, could have picked any safe, according to the inspector, and it would be absurd to suppose that he hammered at it in this way. No burglar has been here. It is simply the work of some foolish boy desirous of making a sensation."

Mr. Selby nodded.

He could not deny what was now perfectly obvious, but he was bitterly chagrined. And he knew, too, that his friend the inspector would think twice before taking the trouble to come down to St. Jim's again in response to a telegram from him.

"We shall inquire into this matter, and the perpetrator of this senseless prank shall be severely punished if he is discovered," said Dr. Holmes. "But perhaps, Mr. Selby, it would be judicious on your part to be a little more careful."

"Dr. Holmes!"

"I mean what I say, sir," said the Head firmly. "Your dislike of Mr. Fitzgerald is only too clear, and it seems to lead you to judge him harshly on the slightest excuse. You were only too willing to believe that he was, in spite of proof to the contrary, the famous criminal called Dandy Jim; and, in spite of the proof of his innocence which Inspector Buxton himself afforded, you believed that he had done this."

"I—I—"

"This kind of thing must not continue. I must ask you to treat this gentleman with courtesy, and if you have any suspicions lingering in your mind, to keep them to yourself, Mr. Selby."

Mr. Selby bowed stiffly and left the study. He could not trust himself to speak. He knew that he had made a fool of himself, and he was galled beyond measure. And still in his mind was the firm belief that he was right—that the cricket coach was indeed the famous crackman, and that he had contrived to hoodwink the inspector. But Mr. Selby could hardly disguise from himself that it was his bitter dislike of Arthur Fitzgerald that made him so certain. The wish was father to the thought.

The boys were coming into the Form-rooms again now, and Mr. Selby went into the Third. Wally & Co. found him more snappish than ever that morning, and they wondered why lines fell so thickly. They knew when school was dismissed and the announcement made of what the inspector had discovered.

"A practical joke!" said Tom Merry. "My hat! Of course, we ought to have guessed it! Some awful cad wanted to make things look rotten for Fitz."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a wise nod of the head. "And I weally think we shan't have to look lah for the wothah."

"Levison!" said half a dozen voices at once.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's Levison?"

"I'm here," said Levison coolly. "What's wanted?"
 The juniors glared at him.
 "You've been playing tricks, trying to make it look as if a burglar had been breaking into the Head's study!" exclaimed Blake.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.
 "Got any proof?" he asked.
 "No; but we know jolly well."
 "Knowing jolly well isn't evidence enough to find a chap guilty," said Levison coolly. "I deny it, of course. You haven't thought of Selby. Why don't you accuse him?"
 "Bai Jove! It's quite poss, you know."
 "I don't believe Selby would play the giddy ox like that," said Tom Merry. "But I believe you would, Levison."

"Well, if you can prove it—"
 "Did anybody see Levison go out of his dormitory last night?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"We were all asleep," said Blake.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "I was asleep, too," said Levison.

Tom Merry looked at him with curling lip.
 "I don't believe you," he said. "Somebody did this to injure Fitz, and I believe you're the chap. That's enough. You're a rotten cad!"

"Yaas, wathah; simply a faithful blightah, you know."
 "Oh, rats!" said Levison.

And he shrugged his narrow shoulders again and walked away. But although Levison brazened it out with his usual coolness, the idea gained ground, and the cad of the Fourth was met with dark and contemptuous looks on all sides. Many of the fellows refused to speak to him at all, and Levison, who had known before what it was like to be sent to Coventry, began to experience it again. There was no proof, certainly; but the juniors knew Levison, and they were quite certain on the subject. And they intended to show the cad of the Fourth very plainly what they thought about it.

CHAPTER 14.

Rough on Levison.

DURING the next few days, Mr. Fitzgerald more than confirmed the good impression he had made upon the juniors of St. Jim's. With hardly more than two or three exceptions, everyone at St. Jim's liked him. He was a splendid cricketer, which went a long way towards winning esteem in a school of enthusiastic cricketers. And his frank and cordial manners made him very popular. He was willing to take any amount of trouble, and he did his work thoroughly and conscientiously. The Head was very kind to him indeed, as if to make up specially for the unpleasant experiences of his first few days at the school. The cricket coach had fallen into his place, and seemed to have become a regular part of the life of the school; and he was evidently quite satisfied with his place and with his work. And one day when he was called away from the school to play in a county match, the juniors gave him a most enthusiastic send off. It was the last touch that was needed to make him almost idolised. A cricket coach who was called away to play for his county was a kind of coach the fellows could be proud of. And the next day the juniors were able to read in the papers about the score he had made—and there was the hero himself, coaching them at their cricket!

"Why, it's simply wippin' to have the chap here as a coach!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard it as a gweat stwoke of luck for St. Jim's."

"What-ho!" said Blake heartily. "Fancy taking a chap like that for a giddy cracksman! Why, it's simply comical."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "If he was going to burgle the Head's safe, he could have done it before now," said Digby, with a grin. "He's been here a week, and the safe is still intact."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I should think even old Selby would admit by this time that he was mistaken," said Tom Merry. "But he won't."

"Wally says he's awfully cwabby lately," said Arthur Augustus. "He doesn't like bein' shown up to be in the w'ong. I have been thinkin' of speakin' to Mr. Selby on the subject."

"Eh?"

"He has done Fitz w'ong," said D'Arcy firmly. "The w'opah thing is for him to apologise. An apology from one gentleman to another would set any mattah wight. But Mr. Selby doesn't seem to see it. If it were pointed out to him by a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, you fellows—"

"He would probably lick you," said Herries; "and serve you jolly well right for your cheek, too."

"I should w'efuse to be licked!"

"Any of you fellows coming out?" said Levison, passing the group, and speaking with unusual amiability.

The juniors stared at him, and did not answer.

"Deaf?" asked Levison, with a sneer.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Look here, Levison, you can sheer off," he said. "We don't want to speak to you."

"Why not?"

"You know jolly well why not!" said the captain of the Shell angrily.

Levison gave a shrug.

"Blessed if I do," he said, "unless you've got the idea still in your heads that I busted the Head's study last week."

"We know you did."

"Do you think it quite fair to find a fellow guilty without a particle of evidence?" asked Levison.

"There's plenty of evidence," said Monty Lowther.

Levison started.

"What do you mean? Do you mean to say that anybody says he saw me go out of the dormitory that night?"

"Somebody would have seen you, if somebody had been awake," said Lowther. "But it isn't that; nobody was awake. The evidence is that you are a cad, and quite capable of doing it. You hate Fitz because he's too decent for you to understand. You tried to plant that thing on him, and we all know it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We haven't forgotten how you forged Dick Brooke's handwriting once," said Tom Merry. "You have no right whatever to expect us to take your word."

"And we jolly well won't take it!" said Blake. "You did it, and you know you did, and we know you did, and you know we know it, and that's quite enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison's lip curled in a bitter sneer.

"And we don't want to have anything to say to you, Levison," said Tom Merry abruptly. "I'll thank you not to speak to me, for one!"

"And I for another!"

"Same here!"

"Yes, rather!"

"You seem to have made up your minds about it," said Levison bitterly. "My belief is that Fitzgerald did try to bust the Head's safe that night."

"Wats!"

"The Inspector from Scotland Yard said that it was only a hoax," said Tom Merry. "If it had been a cracksman, especially Dandy Jim, the safe would have been opened as easily as if the key had been in the lock. Nothing would have been known about it till the Head went to the safe and found the silver missing."

"That may happen yet."

"Well, when it happens, we'll admit that perhaps you're in the right," said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "But until then you can keep your distance."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well," said Levison, between his teeth. "I'll say once again that I believe that Fitzgerald is Dandy Jim the cracksman, and that I believe it will be brought home to him some day. And then I hope you'll have the decency to beg my pardon."

"Oh, rats!"

"Sheer off!"

"Yaas, pway get out, Levison. You make me sick."

Levison scowled and strode away, his hands driven deep into his pockets. He was in a most uncomfortable position, and he realised it. Once before his rascality had led him to such a pass, and he had been very nearly expelled from St. Jim's, and for a long time he had been in Coventry. His wretchedness on that occasion had made him resolve to turn over a new leaf, and it had brought out some glimmer of good qualities in his nature. But he had not been able to keep what he had gained of esteem. The sneering, carping, suspicious nature soon fell into its old ways; and now he was in the same difficulties again, and with no prospect of escaping from them. There was only one thing which could save Levison from general contempt and aversion, and that was for Mr. Fitzgerald to be proved an impostor. And it was no wonder that the cad of the Fourth set his wits to work on that subject.

His first attempt had been clumsy enough. But Levison had been thinking since then, and a scheme had been growing up in his mind.

Mellish was in the quadrangle when Levison came out, and Levison spoke to him. Mellish turned red, and looked another way.

Levison gritted his teeth.

"So you're in it, too!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you see, you shouldn't have done it," said Mellish lamely. "I'm not a particular chap myself, but trying to fix a burglary on a chap is a bit too thick."

"So you think that I did it, like all the rest?"

"You know you did."

"I've denied it," said Levison, glowering at him.

"Well, you would deny it, you know," said Mellish. "Of course you would! But everybody knows you did it, and you're going to be sent to Coventry. Why couldn't you have

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benze enough to leave the man alone as soon as it was proved that he wasn't Dandy Jim?"

"It's not proved, to my mind."

"Oh, rot!"

"He will be shown up some day!" said Levison savagely.

Mellish grinned.

"You mean you've got some new dodge in your mind for fixing it on him," he said.

Levison turned very red. His study-mate had read his thoughts quite easily. Mellish burst into a chuckle as he saw the flush in the Fourth-Former's face.

"You see, I know you," he remarked. "So do the other chaps. If anything happens to put suspicion on Fitzgerald, they won't suspect him—they'll suspect you instead. You'd better let the matter drop, and live this down."

"No fear!"

"Then you have got some scheme in your mind?" said Mellish, quickly.

"Mind your own business, hang you!"

"You'd better let it drop, Levison. You'll only get yourself into trouble. If the Head knew what you'd done now, you'd be sacked from the school. Why don't you chuck it? The fellows will speak to you when this has blown over, if you're sensible."

"I'm going to show that villain up."

"Oh, rats!"

Mellish turned away; he did not want to be seen talking to Levison. The cad of the Fourth was left alone—alone, with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness in his heart.

CHAPTER 15.

The Prisoner of the Safe!

A BLAZING June afternoon!

It was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. In the blazing weather, all St. Jim's was out of doors. There were three cricket matches in progress on the wide playing fields. The First Eleven were playing a visiting team from Wayland. The School House juniors, captained by Tom Merry, were playing New House juniors, led by Figgins. And two scratch teams of the Fifth and the Sixth were playing another match. Nearly every fellow at St. Jim's who was not playing was on the ground looking on. Wally & Co. were perched in the branches of an elm tree to watch the play, and the cricket pavilion was crowded, and fellows were lying in the grass, or sitting in groups, or leaning against the trees. Outside the school tuck-shop in the corner of the old quad, Fatty Wyan and a select party were discussing ginger-pop and jam tarts. The splendid weather had tempted all the masters, even Mr. Selby of the Third, out of doors, and they were chatting and looking on at the cricket. The Head himself was watching the First Eleven match.

The houses of St. Jim's were deserted.

In the New House, certainly, Mr. Rateliff, the Housemaster, was in his study. Mr. Rateliff did not like open air, or exercise, or cricket, or anything of that kind. But in the School House there was simply nobody.

Levison of the Fourth stood on the School House steps and looked away towards the distant cricket field.

Levison's brain was busy.

The scheme he had long had in his mind was matured now; and Levison was ready to carry it out, and he had only been waiting for an opportunity.

The opportunity had come.

The School House was deserted—the Form-rooms, the passages, the studies, all were empty and silent.

There was no one to observe anything that Levison might do. The cad of the Fourth realised it as he stood there on the steps, looking out.

His face was slightly pale; but there was no hesitation in it. He caught sight of the stalwart form of Arthur Fitzgerald on the cricket field. The cricket coach was acting as umpire in the junior House match. Levison's eyes gleamed with hatred as he glanced at him. During the past few days Levison's position had been almost intolerable. He was cut by the whole House, and even Mellish declined to be seen speaking to him. Even Mellish, as a rule his tool and humble follower, had lifted up his heel against the cad of the Fourth. Levison felt that it could not last—he simply could not stand it. And the only way he could be saved from what he had brought upon himself was by Arthur Fitzgerald being suspected of being, in reality, the man Mr. Selby had declared him to be—Dandy Jim the crackman. To do him justice, Levison really believed in Mr. Selby's view. There was no proof—indeed the proof was all the other way—but Levison was always willing to believe evil of anybody. To the tortuous and distorted mind of the cad of the Fourth, what he was planning to do seemed only a somewhat shady way of getting justice done. And the end would justify the means—that was Levison's idea.

For some time Levison stood there, looking out into the quadrangle, and across to the playing fields. Then he turned and sauntered back into the House.

He had the School House quite to himself. He went down THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 229.

the passage, and paused at the door of the Head's study. He knew that it was empty; but he tapped—he was always cautious. There was no reply; and he opened the door.

The study was deserted. Levison stepped in, and closed the door behind him. The lock had of course been repaired since the night of the pretended burglary; but it was not kept locked in the daytime. Levison stepped towards the Head's desk.

He remembered what he had seen and heard on the morning of Inspector Buxton's second visit. Dr. Holmes had taken the key from his desk to open the safe.

Levison knew, therefore, where the key was kept. Through the partly-open door he had watched the Head. He had spied, that morning, to learn whether the true facts of the case were likely to be suspected—and he had made that discovery which he was about to put to use. The key of the safe was kept in the desk, and the desk, of course, was locked. But the lock of the desk was an ordinary one, and presented no great difficulties. Levison drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and tried one after another upon the desk lock. He had fifteen or sixteen keys, and he was pretty certain that one of them, at least, would open the desk. He was right; at the fifth attempt the lock clicked open, and he raised the lid of the desk.

His eyes gleamed.

He knew exactly from where the Head had taken the safe key the morning that Inspector Buxton was there. He peered into the desk, and removed an inkpot from a little socket, and there, under it, lay the safe key. It was a little, peculiarly-twisted key of steel.

Levison's heart beat hard as he picked it up.

He stood for a moment listening.

If he should be caught in the Head's study, it would go hard with him. But there was really little risk. Everybody was out of doors that blazing afternoon; and the Head had gone down specially to see the Sixth play. He was not likely to return.

Levison closed the lid of the desk and stepped towards the safe. He inserted the key in the narrow opening, and it turned quite easily.

The heavy door swung open.

Levison's heart throbbed.

The safe was open before him—and in the dim interior he caught the glimmer of the heavy masses of silver. In the little compartments, too, there were other valuables of a more portable kind—money, banknotes, and jewellery. To a crackman it would have meant a fortune, even if he had merely filled his pockets, and left the heavier articles there. Not that Levison intended to become a thief. He intended to hide, perhaps bury in some remote place, or throw into the river—what he abstracted from the safe.

Then he would re-lock the door, return the key to its place in the desk, and lock up the desk again.

There would not be a trace to show that he had been there.

Not till the Head went to the safe himself would he learn that some of the valuables had been taken away.

Then, as the key would be found in its usual place, the only possible inference would be that the safe lock had been picked.

And that would drive him to one conclusion—that it had been picked by the most skilful of crackmen—in short, that Dandy Jim was after all in the House.

Inspector Buxton would not hesitate to arrest Arthur Fitzgerald then. The proof against him would be absolute.

Levison chuckled aloud at the thought.

He stood looking into the safe, debating what he should take. Heavy silver plate he could not take away, but some of the gold plate he could cram into his pockets, and the bag of sovereigns, the bundle of banknotes—he could take them easily enough. He might even get an opportunity of leaving the banknotes somewhere in Mr. Fitzgerald's room; that would make the chain of evidence more than irresistible.

The junior stepped into the safe, and with hands that trembled a little, he selected the most portable of the plunder.

Hardly stopping to examine what the various packages contained, the young rascal crammed package after package into his pockets.

Suddenly he paused.

In the silence of the deserted house, a sudden sound had come to his ears—a footstep in the passage.

For a moment Levison's heart ceased to beat.

It might be—most probably it was—only a fellow who had come into the House for something. But it might be the Head, coming to his study.

Levison's brain swam at the thought.

To be caught there—the safe open—the key in his pocket—a vision danced before his eyes of a crowded Hall, of the sentence of expulsion—of disgrace and infamy for ever.

There was only one thing to be done, and he did it quickly. He drew the door of the safe shut upon him. There was a sharp click as it locked.

Even if the Head came into the study, he would not suspect that there was someone inside the safe; and Levison had closed

his desk. He remembered that the desk lock was a catch, so it would not be found unlocked. There was nothing in the study to excite suspicion.

Levison stood in utter darkness, with beating heart.

He listened intently.

There was not a sound.

His fears were relieved, and after a few minutes he began to feel for the keyhole. But a sudden misgiving arrested him. The safe door was of thick, solid iron, and he realised that no sound, unless it was very loud, could be heard through it. He might shout, in the interior of the safe, and no echo of his voice would penetrate into the study. The Head might be seated at his desk—might be holding a conversation with Mr. Railton there; and Levison could not know unless he opened the safe door.

A cold perspiration broke out over the whole body of the wretched junior.

If there was anybody in the study, and he opened the safe door, he betrayed himself at once. But if he remained here, sooner or later the Head must come in, if he was not there now. His brain swam with the horror of that dilemma. He realised that he would have to take the chance—that he must take the risk of opening the safe door, rather than the certainty of opening it later in the presence of the Head.

After all, probably there was no one in the study. The footstep had probably passed on, probably no one had entered the room. And Levison began to make another discovery; the air in the safe was heavy and oppressive. He realised that there was no ventilation; that if he remained inside the iron trap for an hour, or less, perhaps, he would be suffocated!

He had to risk it.

Hastily, with shaking fingers, he removed the articles he had placed in his pockets. If, by cruel ill-luck, he was discovered, he must have nothing in his pockets—he might be able to brazen it out, and pretend that he had acted out of curiosity, and keep his real intentions a secret.

Then he felt over the door for the keyhole.

He could not find it.

He remembered the position of the lock; he felt over the bare, hard surface of the iron; he felt far above and far below where he knew the lock to be.

But he could find no opening.

A sudden terror seized upon him. He reeled against the wall of the safe; there was a deafening crash as some heavy article crashed down.

But Levison did not heed it.

He was frozen with fear.

Slowly, horribly, the dreadful truth forced itself into his mind.

The keyhole of the safe did not penetrate through the door. The lock was in the thickness of the solid iron; the aperture did not come through. There was no opening. On the inside the door presented an unbroken surface of iron and steel. There was no opening; the key was useless. The door, once the spring lock had acted, could be opened only from the outside!

Only from the outside! And the key was in his hand—the only key that could open the safe was inside the safe!

A wild, throbbing cry broke from the unhappy junior.

Already the heavy, oppressive air of the confined space was making his head swim; he was sick and dizzy, and breathed with difficulty.

And the door could not be opened.

He was a prisoner in the safe—caught by his own action, shut up beyond the possibility of rescue, even if he were prepared to face discovery; he had brought it upon himself by his mingled cunning and stupidity.

For some minutes the hapless boy leaned there, overcome. Strange lights were dancing before his eyes in the dense gloom, and he knew that he was going to faint. He fought against it; he knew that if he fainted, he would never waken alive. The safe might not be opened for days—it would not be opened unless the Head had occasion to come to it. The air was already failing him.

He was doomed—doomed to death by his own wicked trickery. He was fated to die there, shut up in the safe, and no one would know what had become of him until the safe was opened, and then only his dead body would be found.

He shrieked aloud in terror at the thought, and his shriek rolled back upon him like thunder in the narrow space.

Fear of discovery, fear of punishment, vanished from him now. All else was swallowed up in that dreadful fear of death.

He caught up the nearest object to his hand, and beat madly upon the iron door.

Crash, crash, crash!

That sound, at all events, would be heard, though even if all St. Jim's heard, how were they to open the safe and save him, when the key was locked up in the safe with him! But it was his only hope, and with throbbing heart and brain, with failing strength, the wretched boy beat and beat upon the iron door that had shut him in to die.

CHAPTER 16.

In the Shadow of Death.

"WHAT—what is that?"

Dr. Holmes uttered the amazed ejaculation as he entered his study with Mr. Railton. The St. Jim's innings was ended, and the cricketers were having tea, and the Head and the School House master had come in. As they entered the study, a sound of dull and muffled knocking startled them. The sound was in the study, but the study, save for themselves, was empty.

Dr. Holmes looked round in utter amazement.

"What is that—what can that be?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Railton stepped across towards the safe.

"It is here," he said.

"In the safe?"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but it is impossible!" exclaimed the Head in bewilderment. "How could anyone be in the safe. It is locked, as you see."

"Listen!"

Knock, knock, knock!

The Head could not doubt his own hearing. The heavy, dull, repeated knocking evidently came from the interior of the iron safe.

"Someone is shut up in the safe," said the Housemaster.

"I—I cannot understand—"

Mr. Railton rapped at the iron door.

"Who is in there?" he called out.

There was no reply, but the dull knocking continued.

"He cannot hear you, whoever he is," said the Head. "The door is too thick—it is of solid steel and iron. He cannot hear your voice, Mr. Railton."

Knock, knock, knock!

"There is no ventilation in the safe, I suppose?" said the School House master.

"None!"

"Then it must be opened at once. Whoever it is, will suffocate. Someone has attempted to rob the safe while the house was deserted, and has been shut up in it," said Mr. Railton. "Even a thief cannot be allowed to die, sir. Will you unlock the door; and I will stand ready to seize the scoundrel as he comes out."

"Very well, Mr. Railton. It is extraordinary! I did not think that the safe could be picked, and it has evidently not been forced. You can see that there are no signs of violence."

"Where is the key, sir?"

"In my desk. I will get it at once."

The Head unlocked his desk, and felt in the place for the key. Then he looked for it, and then he turned a startled, scared face upon the House master.

"The key is not here, Mr. Railton!" he faltered.

"Not there!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"No."

"Good heavens!"

"Somebody has discovered where I kept the key, and has evidently contrived to unlock my desk and take it," said the Head. "Somehow—Heaven knows how—he has shut himself up in the safe!"

"But—if he has the key——"

"The safe does not unlock from inside."

"Good heavens!"

The Housemaster stood dismayed. Evidently it was a thief who was in the safe; but even a thief was a fellow-being, and that dull knocking from the interior of the safe seemed to strike upon the Housemaster's heart.

"You have another key?" he asked.

"No."

"In Heaven's name, then, what is to be done?" exclaimed Mr. Railton in great agitation. "The man will die there, sir."

Dr. Holmes clasped his hands helplessly.

"He has brought it upon himself," he muttered. "But it is horrible! There is no way of opening the safe—no way—it is impossible! It would require a powerful charge of dynamite to burst open the door, and that would kill him. Good heavens! What can we do—what can be done?"

Knock, knock, knock!

The knocking was growing fainter now.

Mr. Railton knitted his brows in an effort to think.

"It is not a burglar," he said. "A burglar would know better. Besides, it is impossible to think that a thief could have entered the house, with the school crowded as it is. The house has been deserted, but the quadrangle is swarmed."

"You do not suspect——"

"Mr. Fitzgerald? It cannot be he. He is umpiring for the School House juniors at this moment. Dr. Holmes, it is some foolish boy who has played this trick, and has been shut up in the safe."

Dr. Holmes wrung his hands.

"My Heaven! And he is doomed—doomed! Nothing can save him!"

"Nothing!" muttered the Housemaster.

He stepped to the door and hurried out. The dreadful

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possibility that it was a St. Jim's fellow who was shut up in the safe almost unmanned him. If it had been a common thief, it would have been bad enough, but some foolish, thoughtless boy—it was too horrible!

Mr. Selby had just come in, and Mr. Railton stopped him in the hall.

"Mr. Selby, will you get the school assembled at once. The cricket must stop—something terrible has happened."

Mr. Selby stared at him.

"What—?"

"Someone has tampered with the Head's safe, and has been shut up in it," said Mr. Railton hurriedly. "I suspect that it is a St. Jim's boy—we must know."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, turning quite pale.

"Get the school assembled, please, and see if anyone is missing, and come to the Head's study and let us know."

"Certainly, certainly!"

Mr. Railton returned to the study.

Knock, knock, knock!

The Head looked at him helplessly.

"What are we to do, Mr. Railton? In Heaven's name, give me some advice."

Mr. Railton went to the telephone.

"I can ring up Rylcombe, sir, and send for a locksmith."

The doctor groaned.

"A locksmith cannot touch that lock. It is impossible to open it. A local locksmith—impossible!"

"It is a chance, sir—a faint chance."

"Yes, yes, ring him up by all means."

Mr. Railton spoke into the telephone. From the iron safe in the corner came intermittent knocking, fainter than before.

Dr. Holmes knocked upon the door of the safe. It was to let the wretched prisoner within know that his appeal was heard—that they were trying to save him. But the Head could do no more than that. Mr. Railton turned from the receiver.

"The man is absent," he said. "Goodness knows, he would probably have been of little use. Give me the number of the makers. They can send a man down—"

"It will take hours, from London!"

"It is the only chance, sir."

"True, true! I will get the number."

The Head searched in his desk, and read out the number. Mr. Railton rang it up immediately, and talked on the telephone for several minutes. Then he hung up the receiver.

"They are sending a man by the first express, sir, but he cannot get here for three hours at the least."

"My Heaven! Three hours—in an hour—"

"I know it, sir. Heaven have mercy on this wretched boy!"

"But—but we cannot be sure—"

"We shall soon know."

Mr. Selby entered the study, with a grave, pale face. The Third-Form master was a hard man, but this terrible occurrence had moved him.

"The school is assembled, sir," he said. "I have called over the names. Many boys are absent—more than twenty—but—all can be accounted for with one exception."

"And that one?"

"Levison of the Fourth. It seems, from what I have been able to learn, that he was on bad terms with the rest of the Fourth, and nobody would go out with him. The others who have gone on excursions can be accounted for; but if Levison went out, he told no one, and two or three boys say that they saw him quite lately hanging about the house. I am afraid that it is Levison."

"But what—what can he have acted in such a way for?" muttered the Head. "Why should he tamper with the safe? The foolish, foolish boy!"

"I am afraid there is no other conclusion, sir," said Mr. Selby. "It is terrible, but everything points to its being a boy belonging to this school who has entered the safe, and—"

"He is doomed!"

A very strange look came over Mr. Selby's face. He glanced at the Head, and he glanced at the Housemaster, and hesitated. Mr. Railton gave him a sharp look.

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Selby? If you have any suggestion to make, make it."

"I was thinking, sir. We cannot open that safe—"

"Impossible!"

"There may be one means—"

The Head's pale face flushed with hope.

"Mr. Selby! If there is a chance—quick—what do you mean?"

"We cannot open the safe, sir," said Mr. Selby deliberately. "But if there were a man here skilled in such things—a man who could pick locks—a man famous for his skill as a cracksman—"

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking of Dandy Jim!"

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CHAPTER 17.

The Rescuer.

"DANDY JIM!"

The Head and Mr. Railton repeated the name simultaneously.

Mr. Selby nodded.

"I am thinking of Dandy Jim," he repeated. "You know, sir, that I have never wavered in my belief that Mr. Fitzgerald has deceived you—that he is in reality the famous—or rather infamous—cracksman, known as Dandy Jim. If he is the man, he can open this safe; if he is not, the wretched boy shut up there is doomed to death."

"This is mere nonsense," said Mr. Railton brusquely. "Mr. Fitzgerald's innocence has been proved."

"Mr. Fitzgerald cannot help this wretched boy any more than we can," said the Head heavily.

"I think otherwise, sir," said Mr. Selby firmly. "And as a last chance—even if you do not believe me—I call upon you to make the attempt to save this boy's life."

"It is impossible—impossible!"

"Will you put it to the test, sir? Remember, the life of a boy committed to your charge hangs upon your decision!"

"I cannot insult Mr. Fitzgerald by the mere suggestion."

"Mr. Fitzgerald's personal feelings cannot be considered in a question of life or death, sir!" said the Third-Form master.

"Nonsense!" broke out Mr. Railton. "Even if Mr. Fitzgerald were the man you take him to be, do you think he will convict himself by admitting that he can open the safe?"

"I trust so—for that boy's sake!"

"But—but—" stammered the Head.

"I will take the whole responsibility, sir," said Mr. Selby quietly. "I believe he is the man! I believe he can open the safe! I believe he will do so, criminal as he is, rather than allow a boy to die under his eyes! Dr. Holmes! You cannot refuse to let it be tried. You must answer it to that boy's parents, sir, and to Heaven, if you leave a chance untried!"

Knock! knock! knock!

The dull sound from the safe seemed to emphasise the Form-master's words.

Dr. Holmes looked helplessly at Mr. Railton.

"What shall I do?" he whispered.

"I believe Mr. Selby is wrong, sir. But there is the thousandth part of a chance that he is right," said the House-master slowly. "Let that chance be tried."

The Head turned to Mr. Selby.

"Call Mr. Fitzgerald!" he said hoarsely.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Selby touched the bell, and Toby came to the study door.

"Desire Mr. Fitzgerald to come here immediately!" said Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir!"

The page hurried away, with a scared face. All St. Jim's knew what had happened, and the school was in a ferment.

There was silence in the study. Dr. Holmes was pale as death. Mr. Selby was very quiet and very firm; and there was a gleam of anticipated triumph in his eyes. But it would not be just to attribute only satisfaction to the Form-master. He was thinking as much of the wretched boy in the safe as of the coming triumph over the man he suspected.

The clock ticked loudly in the silence.

There was a step in the passage, the stalwart form of the cricket coach appeared, at last, in the open doorway.

Mr. Fitzgerald was very grave.

He knew, like the rest of St. Jim's, what had happened—that someone who had tampered with the safe was shut up in it; that there was no escape for the wretched prisoner. His handsome, sunburnt face was pale.

He came into the study, and bowed to the Head.

"You sent for me, sir."

"Yes, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head, almost inaudibly.

"Mr. Selby will explain."

Mr. Selby closed the study door, and fixed his eyes upon the young cricketer.

"I have advised Dr. Holmes to send for you, sir," he said, in a cold, steady voice. "Neither Dr. Holmes nor Mr. Railton takes my view of the case. Mr. Fitzgerald, in that safe there is a boy, shut in to die! No help can come to him; he is doomed to a fearful death unless the safe can be opened. Listen!"

Knock! knock! knock!

Knock! knock!

The young cricketer's face became a shade paler.

"You hear that, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I hear it."

"You know what it means?"

"Yes."

"Unless that door is opened at once—unless that boy is brought into the air, he will die, and we cannot help him!"

Mr. Fitzgerald nodded, without speaking.

"Very well!" said Mr. Selby quietly. "Can you—and will you—open that safe?"

Arthur Fitzgerald gave a violent start.

"I!" he exclaimed.

"You!"

"Why should you suppose that I can open the safe?"

Short and sharp came the answer:

"Because I believe, in my soul and conscience, that you are Dandy Jim the cracksmen!"

Mr. Fitzgerald clenched his hands. For a moment it seemed as if he would spring upon the Third-form master.

Dr. Holmes made a step forward, with raised hand.

"Mr. Fitzgerald! Calm yourself! I do not believe, for one moment, that you are the man Mr. Selby believes you to be. That has all been threshed out and settled. I believe in you, and Mr. Raiton believes in you. I have allowed Mr. Selby to make this appeal to you, because I would not have the remotest chance left untried. That is all. Understand me, I know you cannot open that safe, and I do not expect you to do so."

"I—I understand, sir."

Knock! knock!

Mr. Selby's eyes were fixed upon the young cricketer's face. That face was growing whiter, strangely haggard.

"Cannot you send to the maker, sir?"

"Mr. Raiton has telephoned. They cannot get a man here under three hours."

"And in that time the boy will perish," said Mr. Selby coldly. "He will be taken dead from the safe, unless you can save him, and will!"

"How dare you suggest that I can save him!" the young man muttered hoarsely. "This is unfair to me, it is cowardly!"

"I believe you can save him!"

"It is false—false!"

"Enough!" said Dr. Holmes. "Mr. Selby, I could not refuse to allow you to make this appeal to Mr. Fitzgerald. But this has gone far enough. I will not have an honourable man insulted in my presence!"

"Dr. Holmes—"

"Enough, I say! Mr. Fitzgerald, I am ashamed that I permitted this, and I am sorry. You may leave us, sir, and remember that my confidence in you is unshaken."

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Mr. Fitzgerald.

He turned to the door.

Mr. Selby bit his lip hard.

"Let it be left upon your conscience, then, that you abandoned a boy to death!" he said bitterly. "If you are not Dandy Jim, I ask your pardon; but if you are Dandy Jim, you are a murderer! Now go!"

"Silence, Mr. Selby!"

"I have finished, sir! Let him go!"

Mr. Fitzgerald's hand was upon the door. But he turned back with the door unopened. From the safe had come a faint sound again.

Knock! Knock!

"Oh, God help me!" murmured the unhappy young man.

"What can I do?"

"You can do nothing, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the Head kindly.

"I am only sorry you should have been insulted in this way."

But the young man turned back from the door.

His face was white as death, but his eyes were shining.

"It needed only this," he said, in a broken voice. "The past has to be paid for, it is always so! God help me! It is worse than death to me, but I cannot let that boy die! God help me!"

He stepped firmly towards the safe.

They watched him dumbfounded.

"What—what!" muttered the Head, bewildered. "You—you mean—"

"I must have some tools!"

"Man!" shrieked the Head. "What do you mean? Can you open that safe?"

"I can—and will!"

"Then you are—you are—"

Arthur Fitzgerald bowed his head in shame.

"I am Dandy Jim, and I will save that boy's life! And then, God have mercy upon me!"

CHAPTER 18.

The Last of Dandy Jim!

SILENCE, grim as death, reigned in the room.

It was broken only by the sounds made by the cracksmen, as he worked upon the safe, and by the faint knocking that came from the interior, showing that the wretched boy within was still alive.

But the knocking was faint and slow now, with long intervals of silence; death was creeping upon the prisoner of the safe. Minutes now meant everything—minutes, perhaps seconds, told the difference between life and death for Levison. And the man he had sought to injure, the man he had striven to ruin, was working to save him, and in that work sacrificing all that made life dear to him.

Hardly a word was spoken.

Once or twice Dandy Jim muttered something that he required, and it was brought—that was all.

With a face white as death, with the sweat in clots upon his handsome brow, the man worked to save his enemy.

Dr. Holmes sank helplessly into a chair.

His brain was in a whirl.

Dandy Jim!

It was true after all. Arthur Fitzgerald, the college man and county cricketer, the man he would have trusted with his life, was Dandy Jim, the cracksmen for whom the police of a dozen cities had been hunting for years. The criminal who had led a double life—an honourable career open to the public eye, and a secret career of crime and shame!

Crime and shame and secret guilt! And yet he was working to save the life of one who was nothing to him, and in that act betraying himself to justice, facing the penalty of a life of law-breaking, facing the music, at last, for the sake of another; facing shame and degradation, the convict prison and black ruin.

They watched him as if fascinated.

If they had wanted proof, more than his word, they had it now. The slim fingers were sure of their work; the skilled cracksmen was faced with one of the hardest tasks of his life, and he was succeeding. What no other man could have done, Dandy Jim was doing—slowly, surely!

Knock!

It was the last sound from within the safe!

Silence followed.

And still the door remained fast.

Dandy Jim paused, and passed a hand over his wet brow. Was he baffled? Was even the famous cracksmen to fail, after all?

The Head made a gesture of appeal.

"One more effort! Save him—save him!"

"I will save him!"

They watched him—dumb!

A cry broke from the Head as the heavy iron door swung open at last—open. The cracksmen had succeeded!

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A body rolled from the safe as the door opened. The fainting boy had been huddled against the door.

"Levison!" muttered Mr. Railton.

"Heavens! He is dead!"

Dandy Jim stooped over the insensible junior.

"He is not dead!" he said quietly. "He has been overcome, but he is only unconscious. He is not dead; he will not die! But it was very close!"

Mr. Railton raised the insensible boy in his arms, and carried him from the study. Outside, the passage was swarming with anxious boys. There was a cry as the Housemaster came out with the junior in his arms.

The door closed again; the interior of the study was shut out from view. But the crowd had had a glimpse of the open safe, of the young man in his shirt-sleeves, with sweating brow.

There was silence in the study. Dandy Jim slowly and mechanically, and breathing hard, put on his coat.

"Now send for the police," he said quietly.

"Oh, heaven!" muttered the Head. "You—you—Dandy Jim the cracksmen! I can scarcely believe it now! Then Mr. Selby was right?"

"He was right."

"I knew it!" said Mr. Selby. But there was no triumph in his tone now. He was strangely subdued. "I knew I was not mistaken!"

"It is finished!" said Dandy Jim. "Everything is finished for me! My first and last attempt to lead an honest life—it is over and done with! Now the prison, and then crime again! I have nothing left but that!"

"Stay! Surely you cannot imagine that I shall hand you over to the police, after what you have done?" said the Head huskily. "Whatever you are, whatever you have been, I know you for a brave and noble man! Only a good and brave man would have done as you have done. I know that."

Arthur Fitzgerald smiled bitterly.

"You say that, sir, to a criminal—a cracksmen—a man the police are hunting for at this moment!"

"Yes, I say it. It is true! But, in Heaven's name, man, how did it happen that you are what you are—you, with your chances, with your courage and noble qualities—you, a criminal?" muttered the Head. "What is the meaning of it?"

Mr. Fitzgerald looked at him with grim bitterness in his face. "I had no chances," he said. "I was brought up to be idle, not to work. My father failed. I was thrown upon my own resources. I was in debt, and I could do nothing but play cricket! What does the story matter? Bad company and temptation; at last, the fall to dishonesty. And once that step taken, there was no going back. I had expensive tastes—I had been trained to have them—they had to be gratified. What would you have? I do not attempt to excuse myself. Even hunger is no excuse for dishonesty, and I had not even the excuse of hunger. It was not so bad as that! But life and leisure and decent society, everything I valued in life, depended upon my having money, and I took it where I could! I found that I had a peculiar gift. I was invaluable to the scoundrels with whom I associated. I was above them in every way, in intellect and education. It was easy for me to rise to the top, and so it came about that the man who in public was known as the county cricketer—a cheery and pleasant companion—became in secret Dandy Jim the cracksmen—the most dangerous cracksmen in London! It was gradual, but inevitable. And I confess, too, that the adventure and the excitement of it all had attractions for me. And the danger—that, too, fascinated me. But I will make no excuses. There are none to be made."

"And—and you were never suspected?"

Dandy Jim smiled grimly.

"Not even by my associates in crime. I was too careful for that. You are thinking of the scar—the scar by which Inspector Buxton was so certain of identifying me."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"It was not a real scar. It was adopted as a disguise. I allowed it to be seen. I knew I was playing with edge tools, and that I should be betrayed sooner or later, and that scar was painted upon my shoulder to deceive those I worked with, and who would have sold me to the police whenever it suited their purpose. They fancied they saw it by chance—when they betrayed me, that was the information they gave to the police—but it was my safety, and not my undoing. Our worthy inspector

from Scotland Yard never suspected that. When I was not with the cracksmen I had no scar, and when I gave up the life—"

"You gave it up?"

"I have said so."

"You did not come here to rob me?"

Arthur Fitzgerald threw up his head proudly.

"No! I came here because I had come to my senses, because I realised that I was wasting my life, and I wanted to reform. I thought I had every opportunity. I had never even been suspected. I had only to drop my secret life, and to live as I had always been supposed to live, and Dandy Jim would be dead for ever, and Arthur Fitzgerald would keep, and deserve, his place among honest men. That was my object in accepting a post here, and no one can say that I have not done my duty. If I had wanted to crack that safe, I could have done it. You have seen me do it, not—not for gain, but to ruin myself! That alone should prove to you that I came here an honest man, whatever I had been in the past."

"I do not need proof, I believe you!"

"And now it is ended. All is over. It only remains for me to go and face the world! Fool that I was to imagine that I could escape the past! Every crime has to be paid for—and, indeed, in my heart I knew all the time that some day it must come—that I should have to face the music!"

Dr. Holmes rose.

"Through me, at all events, you will suffer nothing from your noble act of to-day," he said. "You have thrown up everything for duty's sake, for the sake of a boy who was nothing to you—and I cannot forget that. You will leave here a free man, and any assistance you need to lead a new life you shall receive from me! While I live you shall never need a friend."

"God bless you, sir!"

Mr. Selby stepped forward. There was a strange expression upon the Form-master's face. He could not himself understand the feelings that were working in his breast. But that day Mr. Selby was a better man than he had ever been before. He was an honest man, and Dandy Jim was a thief, but Mr. Selby knew that he would never have done what the cracksmen had done that day. If Mr. Selby had been Dandy Jim, Levison would have perished in the iron safe. Mr. Selby knew it, and the knowledge of it humbled him. He held out his hand to the shame-faced man.

"I am sorry!" he said, in a low voice. "I have done you wrong, Mr. Fitzgerald. From me you have nothing to fear. My lips are sealed. You are a brave man, and I have wronged you. Will you take my hand?"

Arthur Fitzgerald took his hand in silence, and Mr. Selby left the study. There was a strange look upon the young cricketer's face.

"I am free, then?" he said.

"Free!" said Dr. Holmes. "You leave us a free man, and your secret will be kept. But Dandy Jim is dead for ever! That is agreed."

"Heaven bless you for those words, sir!" he said. "I swear to you that nothing shall tempt me again—that the resolve I made when I gave up my old life I will keep, and whatever the struggle may be before me, I shall face the music like a man! Good-bye, sir; and you shall never be sorry that you were merciful!"

Dr. Holmes held out his hand. The cracksmen grasped it, and was gone!

Tom Merry & Co. never knew all, though they suspected much. Levison could tell nothing. Indeed, the cad of the Fourth had suffered so much from his imprisonment in the safe, that he had to leave St. Jim's to be placed under medical care, and even the story of how he had come to be imprisoned in the safe was never fully known.

The St. Jim's juniors had lost their cricket coach, and they missed him. But, little as they knew of the facts of the case, they knew or suspected enough to make them realise that it was better for him to go. And so St. Jim's knew him no more.

"But, all the same," Arthur Augustus said, in Study No. 6. "I don't know, and I don't care, what he was. All the same, he was a jolly, splendid chap, and a good cricketer, and I'm jolly sorry he's gone, and I shall always regard him as a friend."

In which opinion Tom Merry & Co. fully concurred.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK:

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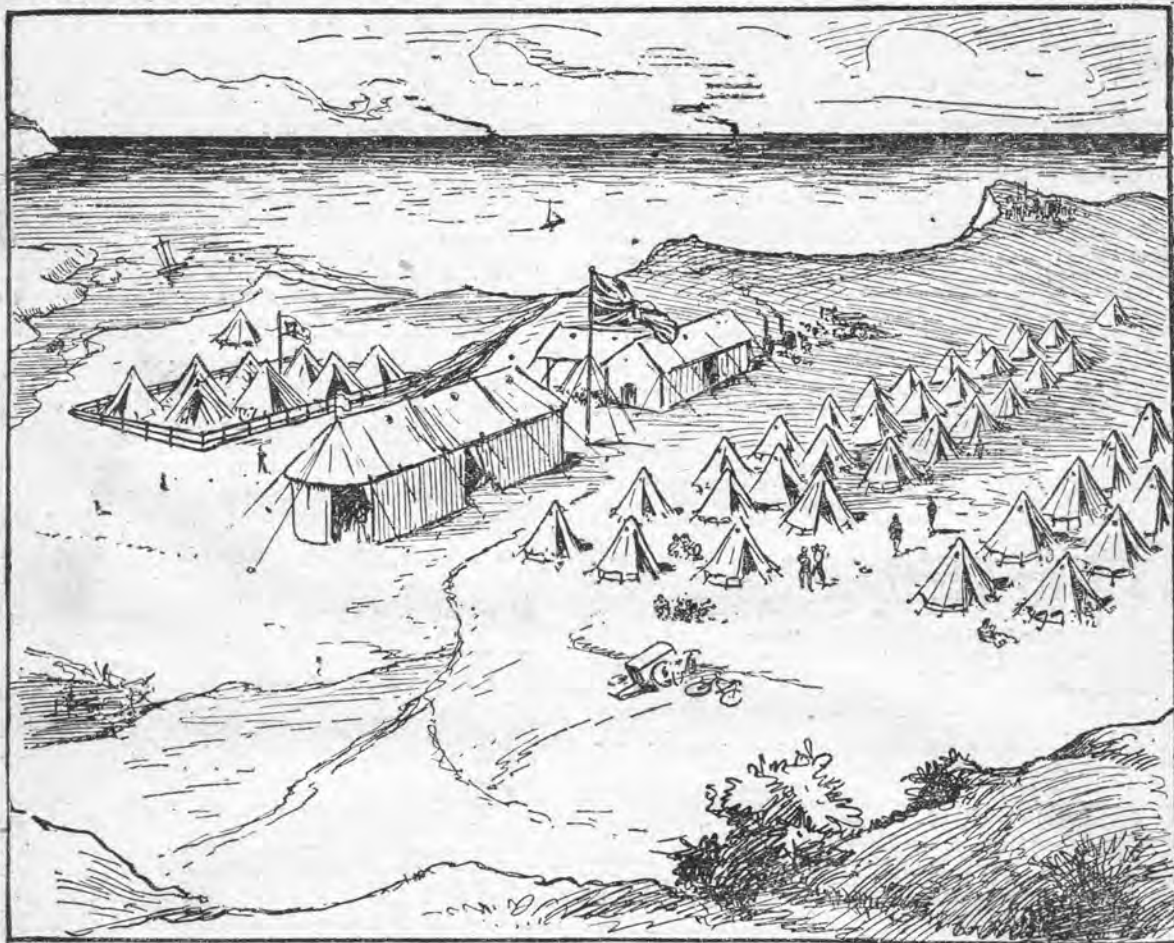
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THE FIRST INSTALMENT BRIEFLY RE-WITTEN.

"The school will assemble in Big Hall at half-past six o'clock. An important announcement will be made.

"(Signed) E. MONK, Headmaster."

Great is the excitement and speculation caused by the above notice throughout Rylcombe Grammar School, and especially in the Fourth Form, where the expected arrival of a new boy—and a foreign youth at that—creates an additional interest. The three Wallabies, as Gordon Gay and the brothers Frank and Harry Wootton are commonly called, are not long in obtaining permission to go and meet Gustave Blanc, their new Form-fellow, and thus forestalling the Old Co.—Frank Monk, Carboy, and Lane—and ensuring for themselves an early escape from the German class and the clutches of Herr Hentzel, the unpopular German master.

Gustave Blanc—or Mont Blong, as he is immediately christened—turns out to be a youth of the most elegant appearance and amiable disposition, who immediately claims

A Very Important Announcement.

The Big Hall of Rylcombe Grammar School was crammed. The whole school had been assembled, and every fellow there, from Delamere, the captain, to the smallest fag, was in a state of eager expectancy.

The Head's notice on the board had informed the Grammarians that an important announcement was to be made, and all the Grammarians were very keen to hear that important announcement. No one, as yet, had any idea of what it was to be about. Gustave Blanc—otherwise Mont Blong—the new junior in the Fourth, tugged at Gordon Gay's sleeve in great curiosity.

Gordon Gay & Co. as his "dear shums." Mont Blong, however, is by no means so "soft" as he appears at first sight—as Carker, the bully of the Fourth Form, soon learns, to his cost. Before he has been in the Grammar School five minutes the French lad knocks Carker down, amidst a roar of surprise and approval. Carker is still lying on the ground in a dazed state when the school-bell rings, and there is an immediate rush for the Big Hall to hear the Head's announcement, Mont Blong being borne along with his chums.

"Mon Dieu!" gasps the new boy. "Vat is it? Vat is it, my shums? I zink zat I am out of ze breath! Vat is going on, zen?"

"Speech from the Head!" explains Gordon Gay breathlessly. "Here he comes!"

Dr. Monk rustles into Big Hall, and there is a hush as the Grammarians listen with intense keenness for the important announcement to be made.

(Read on from here.)

"Vat is zat all about, mon ami?" he asked. "Vy is it zat ve are here, zen?"

Hake, the prefect, glared at the French junior.

"Silence, there! Silence in the Fourth!"

"Is zat you speak viz me, monsieur?"

"Shut up, fathead!" whispered Wootton major. "You mustn't jaw here. The Head's going to speak!"

"Ze Head! Is zat ze old gentleman in ze shirt?"

Gordon Gay nearly exploded.

"Shirt, you ass? That's a gown!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

"Silence, you juniors!" called out Delamere, the captain of the Grammar School, with a frown.

"Shut up, Mont Blong!"

"I am silent as ze tomb."

Dr. Monk, on the platform at the upper end of the Big Hall, raised his hand. The buzz of voices died away.

The secret was about to be revealed. The Head was looking very serious; and the masters were all looking becomingly grave. But it was easy to see that the masters were not in the secret, with the exception of Mr. Hilton, the master of the Fifth. Herr Hentzel, the German master, looked very curious. It was possible that the Herr had a suspicion of what was coming. Herr Hentzel, since he had been at Rylcombe, had given the boys the impression that he was somewhat of the nature of a Paul Pry, and that he generally knew what was going on, whether it was his business or not.

"Now we're going to get the giddy history of the giddy mystery!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Silence!"

"My boys!" Dr. Monk's deep voice, though low in tone, came clearly through the hall, and every fellow present heard it, every word. "My boys, I have a very important announcement to make—an announcement which will cause you great surprise, and, I think, great pleasure. At least, I hope so."

"Must be going to give us a whole holiday, I should think," murmured Frank Monk. Frank Monk was the headmaster's son, but he knew no more than the others what was coming.

"Praps a week off!" whispered Lanc.

"Listen!"

"We are now in the heart of the summer," the Head went on. "At such a time the thoughts of all turn to the open air, the country, and the sea-side."

"Must be a holiday!" murmured Carboy.

"Silence!" rapped out Hake, of the Sixth.

"It is my intention to try an experiment—a great experiment, which I think will be of great and lasting benefit to the school," the Head continued. "For the remainder of this term, the Grammar School will be transferred to another place—by the sea. The buildings here will be closed for the rest of the summer, and the whole school will be transported to a place on the coast, where arrangements have been made for its reception."

"Oh!"

It was a general exclamation of astonishment.

The Head had said that his announcement would be a surprising one, and certainly he was quite right.

The Grammarians could only stare.

The surprise took their breath away.

Dr. Monk smiled.

"I can see that you are surprised, my boys," he said. "I hope that you will be equally pleased when you have had time to think over the matter. The whole school will go into camp, under canvas, for the remainder of the summer term. I think that this will be very beneficial to the health of the whole school. Lessons will continue as usual, after a few days which will be occupied in settling down into our new quarters. Rylcombe Grammar School will, in fact, go on unchanged, but in different quarters, where the conditions will be better calculated for health and for pleasure."

There was a pause.

Delamere, the head of the Sixth, and captain of the Grammar School, broke the silence.

"Will you tell us where we are going, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, Delamere," said the Head graciously. "The place selected is on the coast of Essex, facing the North Sea—a very healthy district."

Herr Hentzel started a little.

"On to Essex coast, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Herr Hentzel."

"And to name of te place, sir?"

"The school camp is pitched within a short distance of the village of Netherby."

"Ach!"

"You know the place, perhaps, Herr Hentzel?" asked the Head, looking at the German master in some little surprise.

"Ach! Yes, sir. I have a friend dere—I tink I know te name," said the German master.

"Very good. My boys, the school camp is well outside the village of Netherby, and at an equal distance from a public school called Netherby Abbey, a very old and historical place. We shall be neighbours of Netherby Abbey. The camp is on the shore of an inlet, where it will be possible to obtain good boating and sailing practice. I think that the school will like this change of quarters. I trust so, at all events."

"Huray!" shouted Gordon Gay.

It was really rather cheeky of a Fourth-former to take it upon himself to approve of the Head's speech in this way; but Gordon Gay was famous for his sublime cheek. And the cheer he gave was echoed from all parts of the crowded hall. The fellows, seniors and juniors, simply roared.

The idea just jumped with their inclinations. There was nothing that could have suited them better.

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To get out of stuffy class-rooms, and live under canvas for months at a time—it was a prospect that was simply dazzling.

And to live by the sea—the sea, always so romantic and strangely fascinating to every British boy—that, as Gordon Gay remarked, put the cap on the wheeze.

And the whole school shouted approval.

"Huray! Hip-pip!"

The Head smiled.

"I see that you like the idea, my boys," he said, as soon as there was a lull.

"Yes, rather, sir."

"It's ripping."

"Spiffing."

"Gorgeous."

"Three cheers for the Head!" shouted Punter, of the Fifth. And they were given with a will.

"Hip, hip, huray!"

As the roar rang through the hall, Dr. Monk disappeared by the upper door. The assembly broke up, and the fellows poured out of the hall, eagerly discussing the Head's announcement.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "This beats a whole holiday—rather!"

"Oh, quite!" said Carboy.

"Why, it's ripping!" said Gordon Gay, his eyes dancing. "I don't think there's a fellow or a master here who doesn't like the wheeze."

"There's one, I fancy," grinned Jack Wootton. "Look there."

He made a gesture towards Herr Hentzel, the German master. Herr Hentzel was crossing the hall to go to his study. His face was strangely pale, and his eyes were gleaming from under his knitted brows. Potty Benson blundered in his way, and the German master boxed his ears savagely, and Benson yelled and backed away. Herr Hentzel strode into his study, and closed the door with a slam.

The chums of the Fourth looked at one another in wonder.

"What on earth's wrong with the Deutcher?" said Wootton major.

"He doesn't seem to cotton to the wheeze," grinned Gordon Gay. "Perhaps he's afraid of the fresh air. But if he doesn't like it, he'll have to lump it, that's one comfort. Never mind the Herr. We're satisfied."

"We are! Huray!"

"And that's the important point, after all," grinned Jack Wootton. "What do you think of the idea, Froggy?"

"I zink zat I like him," said Mont Blong, with a beaming smile. "I zink zat I shall be 'appy anywhere vere I see my shums. It is vat you call scrumptious. My dear shums, I feel so 'appy zat I zink I embrace you!"

But his dear chums fled.

Herr Hentzel does not Approve.

Tap! Dr. Monk was seated in his study, discussing with Mr. Hilton the plans for the transference of the Grammar School to the Essex coast, when the knock came at his door.

Herr Hentzel entered the study.

The German master's face was clouded, but he had the urbane manner he always cultivated towards Dr. Monk. The juniors did not find him nearly so urbane; but Herr Otto Hentzel was not under the necessity of conciliating them—which made all the difference.

"Tat you excuse me, mein Herr," said the German, with a bow.

"Certainly, Herr Hentzel. You wish to speak to me?"

"Tat is so."

Mr. Hilton rose, but the Head signed to him not to go.

"Herr Hentzel will not detain me more than a few minutes, Mr. Hilton," he said.

The German's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Ferry well, Dr. Monk," he said. "I wish to speak mit you. You take us all ferry much by surprise dis evening."

Dr. Monk smiled.

"Yes, I daresay that is so," he assented. "I have been preparing the scheme since early summer, but I would not make the announcement until all was finished. The boys are naturally keen for such an experience, and it would have made them dissatisfied with present conditions if the announcement had been made too soon."

"Quite so, mein Herr. But I tink it is a great surprise. I suppose tat everything is settled now?"

"Yes, Herr Hentzel."

"You not change te mind?"

"Oh, no; all is prepared."

The German looked restless.

"It is not for me to offer advice to mein employer," he said. "But may I suggest tat you consider, Herr Doktor. It is a ferry great change."

Dr. Monk looked at him in surprise.

"Surely you do not think I have made such an arrangement without consideration and due reflection," he replied. "I have considered the matter from every point of view, and have



In the midst of the terrific uproar, an awe-inspiring figure appeared in the doorway of the common room. There was a yell of alarm from Tadpole. "Cave! The Head!"

consulted Mr. Hilton all the time. I have also taken medical advice in the matter, and Dr. Short fully approves of the idea. Surely that is enough."

"But the ferry great inconvenience for te masters, mein Herr."

"Ah, I understand. You do not care to live at the seaside, perhaps?"

The German nodded.

"In that case," said the Head, "I should not think of holding you to your engagements with me, Herr Hentzel. I should be sorry to part with you, of course, but I should not ask you to accompany us against your wish."

The German bit his lip.

"I do not mean tat," he said. "I speak only of te surprise, and te inconvenience of such a change. Ve all live under canvas, ain't it?"

"Exactly."

"Tat is ferry good for poys, perhaps, but for men like ourselves—"

"I think I shall stand it very well, Herr Hentzel, and I am considerably older than you," said the Head, with a smile. "I think that you will like the change when you have grown accustomed to the idea."

"In any case, den, it is fixed?"

"Oh, quite decided."

"Ferry well, mein Herr; tat is all tat I vish to know."

"Will you come to Netherby with the school, Herr Hentzel?"

"Ach! yes! I come."

"Very good."

The German master hesitated.

"Te coast may not be good for te health of te poys," he suggested, "especially the low-lying coast of te county of Essex. Vat you tink?"

"On the contrary, there is no healthier coast than that of the Eastern Counties," said Dr. Monk. "Besides, I have not acted without advice."

"Ferry well, mein Herr; den dere is noting more to be said."

And the German master withdrew.

Dr. Monk looked at the Fifth-Form master with a rather puzzled expression.

"I do not quite understand Herr Hentzel," she said. "I remember he spent a holiday on the Essex coast in the last vacation, and he should know what it is like. For some reason he appears to object to the intended change. I cannot see why."

Mr. Hilton shook his head.

"He could hardly hope to change my decision," said Dr. Monk, musingly. "However, I hope he will be as pleased as the rest in the long run. Everybody else seems to be perfectly satisfied."

"The boys are quite enthusiastic about it," said Mr. Hilton, with a smile. "Indeed, I feel very keen myself."

"And I—I confess," said the Head. "Now, we were talking about the tents—"

And they talked on. Outside the study door, Herr Hentzel had paused, and his large heavy hands were clenched hard, and his greenish-grey eyes were gleaming.

"Den it is settled—and I never knew!" he muttered, as he moved slowly down the passage, "I suspect something—but I know not tat it is so. Ach! If I had known—but den, it is not possible tat I stop it, if I had known! Vat is to be done—something—something must be done to prevent the school from camping at Netherby—"

He broke off suddenly.

In his anger—an anger which would have bewildered the Head if he had known of it—the German had been muttering aloud; and a slim youth who was coming down the passage heard the muttered words, and the Herr sighted him a moment too late. The youth was Monsieur Blanc, otherwise Mont Blong, and his queer little face was quite unconscious and innocent in its expression. The German frowned darkly, and made a stride towards the French junior and caught him by the shoulder.

"Ach! You play te spy, den!" he muttered.

"Monsieur!"

The German master looked hard at him.

"Who vas you?" he exclaimed. "You not pelong to dis school, before."

"Monsieur! Release me, s'il vous plait," said Mont Blong with a great deal of dignity. "I am Gustave Blanc—I have ze honour to be ze new boy."

"Gustave Blanc!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE WHIP HAND!"

"Zat is my name, monsieur," said Mont Blong, wriggling loose from the German's grasp, and bowing bow.

Herr Hentzel looked at him with unquiet eyes.

"Ven you come to school?" he asked.

"Zis afternoon, monsieur."

"It seem to me tat I see you pefore—not here—far away," said Herr Hentzel, scanning the face of the French junior. "You have live in Paris?"

"Zat is so, monsieur."

"And your name is Blanc?"

"Zat is my name?"

"You are in school in Paris, hein?"

"I am in Paris at ze Lycee Bourbon," said Mont Blong, with cheerful confidence. "My fazer vish me to study ze English in England, monsieur, zefore he send me to zis school. I am glad zat I come, parce que—because it give me ze honour to make ze acquaintance of monsieur!"

And he bowed again.

"Ach! Zat is enough! Go!"

"I kiss ze hands of monsieur."

And the French junior departed.

Herr Hentzel gazed after him till he turned the corner of the passage. There was a troubled look upon the German master's heavy brow.

"I know zat face—but he is but a schoolboy—Ach! I have fancies!" he muttered. "I must write—at vunce, since it is settled tat ve go to Essex."

And Herr Hentzel went into his study.

He sat down at his table with a frowning brow, and wrote—in German—but a kind of German which would have puzzled the best German scholars at Rylcombe Grammar School. For Herr Hentzel was writing in a strange code, and no one not in possession of the key could have read one sentence of what he wrote.

He sealed up the letter, and addressed it, and the address upon the letter ran:

"Herr Pfalz, Photographic Studio, Netherby, Essex."

The German master carried the letter down to the school letter-box with his own hands, and posted it. He heard the letter drop into the box before he turned away. Then with a moody brow he turned back to the house.

A Vote of Thanks!

"Friends, Romans, and Grammarians, lend me your ears!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurrah!"

"For this enthusiastic reception I am much beholden to you—but pray don't enthuse till I've got on with the washing a little."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay stood upon a chair in the junior common-room. The room was crowded. It was dark, and all the fellows had come in from the Close, and very few had as yet gone to their studies for evening preparation. It was understood that Gordon Gay had something to say, and when Gordon Gay had something to say, the Grammarians were generally willing to listen—and to interrupt. Frank Monk, Lane and Carboy—the Old Co.—were there, chiefly to interrupt. Like the famous Irishman who declared that, if there was any sort of a Government, he was "agin" it—so the Old Co. were against the Cornstalks root and branch—though in quite a good-humoured and friendly sort of way.

"Friends, Romans, and—"

"We've had that," said Frank Monk, cheerfully. "Come to the hosses."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll come to the donkeys soon, and give them a set of thick ears," said Gordon Gay wrathfully. "I was about to say—"

"Hurrah!" roared Jack Wootton. "Go ahead!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Our respected Head," continued Gordon Gay, "has made an announcement which I venture to characterise as extremely popular—"

"Hurrah!"

"And we are going to be shifted from this ancient seat of learning—more or less ancient—to the shores of the deep and briny sea, amid the poetic surroundings of waves, and sands, and skies, and cockles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I therefore suggest that the occasion should be marked in a fitting manner. We are about to abandon these historic halls—"

"And the blessed school hasn't been built long," growled Lane.

"These historic halls!" said Gordon Gay, firmly, "and to take up our abode in tents like unto the wandering Arab. Gentlemen, we shall have a ripping time by the sad sea waves. We shall swim, and we shall boat, and we shall sail—and we

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shall give al fresco performances of the Junior Dramatic Society—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Not here, fatheads—there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On such an occasion as this, it is the correct caper to celebrate. We might present Dr. Monk with an illuminated address to show our appreciation—"

"Rats!" said Frank Monk.

"Only we haven't any illuminated addresses handy," said Gordon Gay. "We might present him with a testimonial worth a hundred guineas, only—only we haven't any guineas. I therefore suggest—"

"You've therefore suggested already," said Lane. "Let's have something new."

"Order!" roared Wootton major.

"Oui, oui, oui, zat you order!" exclaimed Mont Blong. "It is not vat you call ze ericket to interrupt ze honourable speaker, I call you to ze ordair."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I therefore suggest—"

"Oh, put a new record on," urged Frank Monk. "You're like a giddy gramophone with only one record."

"I therefore suggest—"

"It's my turn to therefore suggest," interrupted Monk. "I therefore suggest that you put on a new record, or else ring off."

"Shut up, Monkey!"

"Order for the chair!"

"I therefore suggest—"

"Oh, he's wound up," said Lane. "He can't stop this. He's like a cuckoo in a clock. He will go on saying that over and over again."

"I therefore suggest—"

"There he goes again!"

"I therefore suggest—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Ring off!"

"I therefore suggest," continued Gordon Gay, with undisturbed calmness, "Gentlemen, I therefore suggest—"

"Oh!"

"—a vote of thanks to our respected Head. I suggest that a deputation of the Fourth Form shall wait upon Dr. Monk in his study and thank him for having sprung this jolly good wheeze on us—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And as leaders of the Fourth Form, I suggest Wootton major and minor and myself as the leaders of the deputation—"

There was a roar from the Old Co.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Piffle!"

"Order!" roared Wootton major.

"Rats!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Gentlemen—"

But Frank Monk and Co. did not "order." Frank Monk was stamping with both feet, and Lane was hammering on a table, and Lane was kicking the fender. In the uproar Gordon Gay strove to speak, but his voice could not be heard. A crowd of the Old Co's followers in the Fourth added to the din with their feet and their voices. Gordon Gay standing upon the chair, waved his hands and shouted, but his words could no longer be distinguished.

"Shut up, you bounders!" roared Jack Wootton.

"Yah!"

"Order!"

"Rats!"

"Chuck those hooligans out!" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Yah!"

Gordon Gay jumped down off the chair. He rushed at Frank Monk, and his chums backed him up. In a moment there was a wild and whirling scrimmage going on in the junior common-room. Sympathisers on both sides joined in it, and the rest of the juniors stood round yelling with laughter and shouting encouragement.

"Go it, Gay!"

"Give 'em socks, Monkey!"

"Buck up, Cornstalks!"

"Pile in!"

In the midst of the terrific uproar, an awe-inspiring figure appeared in the open doorway of the common-room. There was a yell of alarm from Tadpole.

"Cave! The Head!"

The scrimmage ceased as if by magic.

The struggling juniors separated, and fellows rolling on the floor in deadly embraces scrambled up, and stood rubbing damaged eyes and noses, and looking dusty and sheepish.

Dr. Monk gazed into the room with a frowning brow.

"Whatever is the cause of this disturbance?" he exclaimed. "How dare you fight in the common-room in this outrageous way?"

"Fight, sir!" said Gordon Gay, breathlessly dabbing at his streaming nose with a reddened handkerchief.

"Yes. You——"

"We—we weren't exactly fighting, sir," stammered Gay. "Not what you would call—er fighting, sir."

The Head stared.

"You were not fighting?"

"N-n-not exactly, sir."

"Then what were you doing?"

"It was a—a discussion, sir."

"Indeed! Is that the way you discuss questions in the Fourth?" demanded the Head.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Oh, quite, sir," said Carboy.

Dr. Monk coughed.

"And what was the question you were discussing in this extremely energetic manner?" asked the Head.

"Ahem, sir! It was a vote of thanks, sir," stammered Gordon Gay.

"Indeed! A vote of thanks to whom, and for what?"

"To you, sir," said Gordon Gay, who was not wholly destitute of the wisdom of the serpent, however slightly he had been endowed with the innocence of the dove. "To you, sir, for having made that ripping arrangement about going to the seaside, sir."

Dr. Monk was a little taken aback. He had a cane in his hand, but the hand disappeared behind him as Gordon Gay made that artless explanation.

"And was the vote passed?" he inquired.

"We were just passing it, sir," said Gordon Gay, modestly.

Dr. Monk smiled. He could not help it. The smile widened, and grew into a laugh.

"Well, well," said the Head, "I am very gratified with a vote of thanks from the Fourth, but pray pass the next one a little more quietly. There must be no more of this."

"Oh, no, sir! Certainly not, sir!"

And the Head turned away, still smiling. Gordon Gay grinned at his dusty comrades, and winked with the eye that had not been closed up.

"Gentlemen, the vote of thanks is passed, and is accepted by the Head. I therefore suggest——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I therefore suggest——"

"Yah!"

Delamere, the captain of the school, put his head in at the door.

"If you juniors make any more row, you'll get a hundred lines each!" he shouted.

And Gordon Gay's oration came to a premature end.

Carker Makes Discoveries.

"Pack's the word!" said Gordon Gay.

Tadpole looked up.

"Pax?" he repeated. "We have not been having a row, Gay. Why——"

"Ass!" said Gordon Gay, cheerfully. "Pack, fathead, not pax."

"But you said pax——"

"Ass! To-morrow," said Gordon Gay, solemnly, "to-morrow we take a long farewell of these ancestral halls——"

"Oh, come off!" said Wootton major, yawning. "You ain't on the stage now, Gay. Don't let us have the Junior Dramatic Society all the giddy day and night."

"Well, to-morrow we buzz off for the seaside, if you like that better," said Gordon Gay, laughing. "And now pack's the word. All the stuff has got to be packed up to-night, and to-morrow we buzz. So let's begin."

"I shall want to borrow a trunk or two of you chaps," said Tadpole, thoughtfully. "I have to take plenty of canvas, and my easel, and my colour-boxes. I do not know whether I shall be able to get artist's materials on the Essex coast. I intend to do a great deal of painting while I am there. I shall be able to get in some local colour for my great picture, the 'Landing of Hengist and Horsa.'"

"If you get local colour, what do you want to take colour-boxes for?" asked Gordon Gay, innocently.

"My dear Gay, you misunderstand. I will explain——"

"That you jolly well won't!" said Gordon Gay. "I'm going to pack."

"If you can lend me a trunk——"

"I want my trunk to put my own things in, fathead."

"Well, perhaps you can leave some of your things behind, and you and Wootton could share a trunk?" Tadpole suggested. "I must really have an extra trunk."

"Rats!"

"Let us argue the point——"

"Life's too short—come on, you chaps."

And Gordon Gay & Co. left the study, leaving Tadpole to address the deserted tea-table. It was some days since the announcement the Head had made to the Grammarians in Big Hall, and all was prepared for the transferring of the

Grammar School to the camp at the seaside. Herr Hentzel had apparently made up his mind to the change, for he had made his preparations to go with the school. For some time past the fellows had been sorting out boxes and trunks.

Gordon Gay clapped Gustave Blanc on the shoulder in the passage.

"Going to pack?" he asked.

"Zat is all right," said Mont Blong. "I have not unpack ze trunk, but I come and help my shums viz all ze pleasure de la vie."

And Mont Blong accompanied the Cornstalk Company to the Fourth-Form dormitory. The dormitory was swarming with juniors on a similar mission. Gustave uttered an exclamation at the sight of his box mounted upon Carker's bed. The bully of the Fourth had the box open, and a group of his friends were standing round him looking into it. The French junior ran towards him.

"Vat is zat zat you do?" he exclaimed. "It is dishonourable zat you open ze box of anozer shap!"

"I'm packing it for you," Carker explained. "I wanted to save you trouble, Froggy."

Mont Blong's face cleared.

"Zat is very good of you, Carkair," he said. "But I not trouble you to pack my box. And how vas it zat you open zat box which was lock?"

"Oh, it came open."

"Look here," said Gordon Gay, frowning, "that's rather too thick, Carker. You've busted the lock of Mont Blong's box!"

"Well, I wanted to pack it for him."

"Oh, don't tell whoppers. Leave it alone!"

"Rats!" said Carker.

"Give me zat box," said Mont Blong, pacifically. "I pack him myself."

Carker winked at his chum, Craven.

"Lend a hand, Craven, old man."

"Certainly," said Craven.

The two cads of the Fourth Form grasped the box as if to lift it off the bed. It rolled over sideways, and crashed upon the floor, and the contents rolled out in a shower. Boots, and shoes, and shirts, and pyjamas, and all sorts and conditions of things sprawled out over the dormitory floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Carker. "Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Awfully sorry!" grinned Craven. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mont Blong uttered a cry.

"Rottair! Zat is done on purpose! Rottair!"

He rushed forward to collect up his property. But, before he could do so, Carker picked up an object which had fallen into plain view. It was a beard of brown hair, with wires for fastening. The bully of the Fourth held it up with an exclamation.

"Hallo! Look here!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "What's that?"

"It's a false beard!"

"False beard, by jingo!"

"Great Scott!"

"And here's a moustache!" exclaimed Craven, rummaging among the upset articles. "And another beard! And a wig! And a pair of spectacles! Great Scott! The chap has got a whole set of the things."

Mont Blong changed colour for a moment.

The Fourth-Formers gathered round, staring at the strange discovery, in amazement.

Mont Blong's box had contained a compartment simply packed with disguises. The discovery was enough to amaze the juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School.

"What on earth——" exclaimed Lane.

"He's got a giddy outfit of disguises like a giddy burglar!" ejaculated Carker. "Look here, what does this mean, Frenchy? You'll have to explain this."

"Ass!" said Gordon Gay. "It's simple enough. I've got much the same in my box, in my private theatrical outfit. I didn't know you went in for amateur theatricals, Mont Blong. You never told us."

"Zat is it!" he exclaimed, in great relief. "Vat you call ze amateur theatrical, my dear shums."

"Can you act, Mont Blong?"

"Zat is so."

"And you never told us!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "Why, I've spoken to you about the Junior Dramatic Society three or four times, and you never let on that you could act."

"It is zat I am modest, my dear shum."

"You shall join the Dramatic Society, then," said Gay. "My hat—that's simply a splendid outfit you've got. It must have cost a lot of money, too."

"Yes, razzar."

"Yes, rather," repeated Carker. "I don't believe it. There's something jolly fishy about this, in my opinion."

(Is Carker's suspicion of the new boy justified? Next Thursday's exciting instalment of this splendid new serial will throw more light on this matter, and other interesting developments may also be looked forward to. Don't forget to order next week's "GEM" in advance!)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 229.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Thursday.

"THE WHIP HAND,"

by Martin Clifford, is the title of the extra-long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, which will be contained in our grand, all-school-story issue for next week. A tale of schoolboy rivalry, with all the attendant rollicking fun and ingenious scheming.

"THE WHIP HAND"

will win for itself golden opinions even from those who are accustomed, like all regular Gemites, only to the very best class of school-story. The same may be said also, without fear of contradiction, of our wonderful new school serial,

"THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS."

next week's long instalment of which is absolutely packed with interesting and amusing incident and adventure, which reader-friends of Gordon Gay, Frank Monk & Co., of Rylcombe, have come to expect from those lively young gentlemen now that they are "on the warpath," as it were, once more.

"THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS"

has been specially written in obedience to the popular demand for more really good, original, and high-class school stories of a similar type to the world-famous tale of Tom Merry & Co., and I am in a position to assure my readers that this grand serial will more—much more—than realise all the high hopes and great expectations which the first instalment called forth. So don't forget, my chums, that I am relying on your help in getting new readers for the grand

ALL-SCHOOL-STORY "GEM" LIBRARY.**Replies in Brief.**

C. J. (Australia).—In answer to your query I must tell you that Tom Merry is leader only of the juniors of the School House, Figgins being the leader of the New House Lower School.

G. E. M. (Brighton).—I thank you for your letter and suggestions, which I will make a note of.

"Loyal Manchester Reader" (Winny).—Many thanks for your very interesting letter. I am afraid I cannot definitely promise the favours you ask, but I will see what I can do in regard to some of them, at any rate.

E. W. W. (Leytonstone).—The best thing for you to do is to use your voice for singing as little as possible for a while, and then later go in for a course of training.

W. H. Moore (Tonypandy).—In answer to your question, the value of a four-rouble piece is, approximately, eight shillings and sixpence.

Miss Doris G. (Chester).—Your idea for still further increasing the popularity of "The Gem" Library, and its companion paper, "The Magnet," is certainly a very good one, and I hope it meets with the success it deserves. You will, no doubt, hear more of the characters you speak of before very long.

James Raeburn (Glasgow).—Many thanks for your letter and good wishes. By all means try again at writing. I shall be very pleased to read any manuscripts you may care to send up to me.

"A Blue" (Glasgow).—I cannot promise to devote a regular weekly column to your hobby, but this will not be neglected in the series of articles which are appearing each week on the Chat page.

"Yorkshire Reader" (Leeds).—The distance from England to China (London to Hong Kong) is, roughly, about 10,300 miles, and to Australia (London to Sydney) is 13,100 miles.

"A Gemite" (Liverpool).—The cure of stammering is largely a matter of will-power. Speak slowly, and think of what you want to say, making up your mind that you will not stutter.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

G. Simmers, Mossville, Kemnay, Aberdeenshire, N.B., has forty back numbers of "The Gem" and "The Magnet" for sale at half price.

J. Whinney, 19, Cheetham Place, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, wishes to obtain the first six numbers of "The Magnet" Library.

J. G., 160, Thornley Street, Burton-on-Trent, wishes to exchange Nos. 117, 118, and 121, for Nos. 123, 155, and 174, of "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

H. Bradshaw, 172, Bolton Road (W.), Ramsbottom, Lancs., has twenty-eight "Gems" and twenty-eight "Magnets" for sale.

Hints on Butterfly Collecting.

The bright sunny days which may be expected at this time of year offer plenty of opportunities for butterfly collectors to indulge in their favourite hobby. Many amateur naturalists will, no doubt, be making preparations to hunt the beautiful and interesting insects for the first time, and to these at least among readers of "The Gem" Library a few hints as to the best way of setting about the business will not be un- welcome.

It is one of the advantages of this fascinating hobby that only a very modest and inexpensive outfit is necessary, the items of which are as follows: A butterfly-net, a killing-bottle, a couple of flat collecting-boxes which can be carried in the pocket, and a supply of entomologists' pins.

All these articles can be purchased at any naturalist's shop for a very small sum, or can be manufactured at home (with the exception of the pins) by those possessed of sufficient ingenuity. Chopped-up laurel-leaves placed in the bottom of a clean jar—such as an empty paste-bottle—having a tightly-fitting cork, makes quite a serviceable killing-bottle; but the leaves will want replacing from time to time as their strength goes off.

Capturing butterflies is not such an easy business as beginners sometimes imagine. It is necessary, of course, to catch the insect without injuring it in any way and thus spoiling its value as a specimen, so that the best plan in most cases is to follow the insect up warily, and trap it with a sharp downward sweep of the net as soon as it settles, rather than to dash after it at full speed as soon as it is sighted, and slash wildly at it with the net as it flies. In some cases, of course, where the lie of the ground does not allow of the butterfly being followed far, prompt and vigorous methods must be used to effect its capture.

As soon as the butterfly is enmeshed the way of escape must be closed by a sharp turn of the net, and the killing-bottle must be brought into action. This should be gently introduced into the net with the left hand, and the insect quietly manoeuvred into it, when the cork should be clapped on immediately. The victim should be allowed to remain inside the killing-bottle for some minutes after it appears to be dead, otherwise it may revive on being brought out into the open air.

As soon as the insect is quite dead it should be taken out of the killing-bottle and pinned with great care into the collecting-box by inserting one of the fine entomologists' pins exactly through the middle of the thorax.

The properly-made collecting-box should be deep enough to allow of specimens being pinned to top and bottom as well, both being lined with cork.

It is a good plan to fix by means of pins a small piece of sponge soaked in warm water at either end of each collecting-box. This will prevent the specimens from becoming too brittle while they remain in the box, which, however, they should not be allowed to do longer than is necessary.

Immediately on arrival home the amateur naturalist should proceed to "set" his prizes. This operation is one that requires a good deal of care and skill to carry out properly, so that a detailed description of it must be left until next week.

THE EDITOR.