



The GEM 1^{1d}/₂



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MALCOLM'S SECRET!



TO THE RESCUE!

(A Thrilling Incident in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Number.)



You are always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: The "Gem," The Fleetway House,
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"MICK OF THE MOVIES."

This week will see the second instalment of the great cinema serial in the "Penny Popular." There have been plenty of stories dealing with the film world—tales of bright youngsters who had only to show themselves in the manager's office to get taken on at a princely salary, and so forth—but in the appealing story now running through the "Penny Popular" the reader is introduced to the real thing.

Mick and his dog Chappie go through the mill, and as the tale proceeds we shall be given a chance to see the life at Los Angeles, the metropolis of the cinema world. I hope you will all make a point of reading this fine yarn.

THE FILMS.

The other day I was chatting to a man who has much to do with reels before ever the public sees them, and he referred to the marvellous scenery shown on the American films. It is a fact that many of the cinema plays that have their origin in the land of the Stars and Stripes would be worth seeing if only for the stirring tableaux of canyons and sierras and deepest valleys where the scenes are laid.

People get more and more interested in the cinema as time goes on. The film has become so real, such an intimate part of daily life; and actually there are few pleasanter forms of relaxation to the tired worker than an hour or so in one of the comfortable picture-palaces where the whole world can be passed in review, to say nothing of the mind being stirred by wonderful and dramatic stories, or plays, capably acted by men and women who have devoted their lives to mastering the intricacies of the business.

But it is not easy to get on in the cinema world. I receive letters from aspiring youngsters, who want to be given posts in a film company. There are few things more impossible. To succeed in this branch of art, as in everything else, there has to be steady work, assiduous learning, and a big stock of patience. The would-be cinema actor can only apply for a job, and wait for an opportunity. There is really no other way. The celebrities one hears about are only few in number. There is only one Charlie Chaplin, only one Mary Pickford, and so on.

THE "PENNY POPULAR" AGAIN.

There is one little point concerning the "P. P." to which I must draw your attention—namely, the admirable little character sketches of St. Jim's fellows which are appearing week by week. I know that we can hardly have too much biography. Lots of my correspondents have shown me that fact. "Why is the St. Jim's Gallery closed?" is a question which I read every day. The truth with regard to the old original

is that all the leading figures have been dealt with, and one had to wait for a fresh batch, as it were.

But as time goes on I see the necessity of carrying on this feature, and to my thinking it is better done as now than in the old form. The main point is that the popular characters are described, and their history kept well in view, all which assists in the incidents given in the stories, and heightens interest in the papers.

A FRIENDSHIP CLUB.

A correspondent at Sparkhill, Birmingham, considers the idea of a Friendship Club as splendid.

"I am sure," he writes, "many other readers will agree with me. If a magazine could be run in connection with the scheme it would be sure to be a success. Also something was said some time back about taking a poll among readers as to who is the most popular character in the Companion Papers. If this scheme could cause tremendous interest among your readers, I think it would be a good idea for each to have more than one vote, as most of us have several favourites."

I am much obliged to my correspondent, though I am afraid I am too full up just now with new schemes to start a fresh competition of this magnitude.

As to a Friendship Club, there is any amount to recommend it, though I am disposed to believe that this actually does exist, even if it sounds no trumper. Where there is mutuality of ideas, and a common interest and sympathy, there you have all the raw material for a club. True, nobody could keep the roll, the members are too numerous. There is no entrance-fee either, while a copy of any one of the Companion Papers provides the official magazine.

THE PRINTER.

Only last week I was asked by a correspondent to introduce him to a London printer, as there was an idea of starting a magazine, and the printers in the northern town showed themselves too expensive in their ideas. But it would be the same in London, and so I wrote and told no chum.

Printing is costly, and the prices have gone up and up, while as far as I can see there will be no immediate drop.

And then, again, to print a few copies of an amateur magazine always will be expensive. It is just the fact that there are only a few copies required that makes the figure seem high. The work of reeling off a few thousand copies is the least part of the whole affair. There are many queries referring to this matter. I am asked what would be the cost of setting up a magazine—just a magazine, you understand! Nothing about the size, the number of pages, the kind of type, whether there will be illustrations, and a score of other points of

the utmost importance. Naturally, it is impossible to answer such questions, for one would have to be possessed of all the details before entering into the business at all.

No, printing must remain a luxury. To be a thousand pities for any fellow to be daunted because the cost is prohibitive. Nobody will think the worse of his publication because it is neatly written out. They—the readers—will have a higher opinion than ever of the industry and ability of the editor. In literature, especially, it is not money that counts. I have seen perfectly admirably-written-out magazines of late—everything neat, and with stories which showed just that real literary touch, that appealing little insight into life, which are far more than any questions of printing, cost of same, and high-priced cover designs.

A STUPID HOAX.

The following letter has reached me, and I can assure my correspondent of my profound regret for the annoyance she has been caused. The sense of humour possessed by the perpetrator of the sorry farce seems to be just nil:

To the Editor of the GEM LIBRARY.
Sir,—Having been overwhelmed with letters from readers, I learn that my name and address has been forwarded to you for insertion. I have done a roaring trade! Over two hundred letters have reached me within a week, and I would ask you to insert a small paragraph on my behalf tendering my sincere apologies to your readers who so readily responded to the advertisement. Evidently someone had a humorous, insane attack when thinking of me, and hit upon this idea as a practical joke. I would, therefore, appeal to you to explain the joke.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) IVY M. LAWRENCE.

I am much obliged to my correspondent for the generous manner in which she takes the whole matter. But why should some folks try to be funny? All they are able to achieve is an exhibition of glaring bad taste.

THE SEASON'S GREETINGS.

It is rather late in the day, perhaps, to speak of such things, but it is never too late to express thanks. I want to tell all my myriad friends all over the world how grateful I am to them for the innumerable beautiful cards they sent me. My one regret is that it is impossible for me to thank them all personally for the kindness, but I know I will take the acknowledgment of their appreciation.

Your Editor



MALCOLM'S SECRET!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry and Co., of St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Racke & Co.

WHIZZ!
"Bai Jove!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that startled exclamation and clutched frantically at his elegant silk hat, as a snowball whizzed within an inch of his noble head.

"The young wuffians!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I weally believe the vascals are actually twyin' to knock my toppah off, deah boys!"

"And they'll do it yet, old top!" chuckled Herries. "I should carry it under my arm if I were you, Gussy!"
The shining light of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's glanced anxiously behind him down the snow-clad village street.

Since Blake & Co. had entered the quaint old High Street of Rylcombe a few minutes before, they had been followed by an ever-growing army of village urchins, whose one ambition in life, at the moment, seemed to be to "do in" Gussy's topper.

And the mind of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been in a constant flutter of apprehension, and both he and his chums had been busily engaged dodging the flying snowballs in consequence.

"Blessed if I know what the silly chump wanted to turn out in a topper for, with six inches of snow on the ground!" grunted Blake, skilfully dodging a snowball. "As if any kid could resist such a target. I—ch crumb!"

An accurately aimed snowball broke in a smother of feathery flakes full against the noble Gussy's headgear, and the precious topper sailed through the air and rolled in the snow.

"My toppah!" shrieked Gussy, diving frantically after his precious property. "It will be ruined!"

A howl of victorious laughter came from the crowd of rosy-cheeked urchins as Arthur Augustus saved his topper and eyed it in heartfelt relief.

Fortunately the snow was crisp and

dry, and, taking a delicate cambric handkerchief from his pocket, he flicked it gently, and replaced it tenderly on his aristocratic head.

The action was the signal for a fresh fusillade of snowballs.

D'Arcy's noble eye gleamed behind his famous eyeglass.

"Bai Jove!" The unprincipled wuffians! he gasped. "Pway was a moment, Blake, an' I will wun after them and administrah a feaful twashish; all wound!"

"That you won't!" snorted Blake, gripping his aristocratic chum by the collar. "We'd better get out of this, you chump! Kim on!"

"I uttably wefuse—bai Jove! We lease me, Blake, you wuffian! You are wuffin' my collah an' wumpli' my scerf—yooocp!"

D'Arcy's remarks ended in a shivering gasp, as a snowball crumpled in the nape of his neck.

A moment later he was being rushed at breathless speed across the road and through the little wicket-gate leading on to Rylcombe Station.

"The young beggars won't dare to follow us here!" gasped Blake, leading the way up the tiny platform. "Let this be a lesson to you, Gussy, never to wear a topper when the snow is on the ground! I—"

"Pway we lease my arm, Jack Blake!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Weally, I fail to see why you fellahs wun away from those young wuffians—"

"As!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Do you think we want a scrap with a swarm of village urchins?"

"He has no dignity at all!" observed Digby severely. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy—"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, I nevah thought of that, deah boys!"

"You never do think—hallo!" Blake broke off with a chuckle. "Yonder's Racke and his merry blades!"

A few yards along the platform Racke, Crooke, and Mellish were standing chat-

ting, with hands deep in overcoat pockets and shoulders hunched up.

Bending down, Herries picked up a handful of crisp snow and lunged it with deadly aim. The snowball just flicked Racke's long nose, and he jumped back hurriedly on the slippery platform and sat down with a bump.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers roared as the black sheep of the Shell staggered to his feet and glared viciously at the laughing juniors.

But before Racke could give vent to his feelings in any way, a passenger train rumbled to a standstill at the platform, and from a third-class carriage a youth of fifteen or thereabouts alighted and approached the three black sheep.

He was a cheery, pleasant-faced youth, dressed neatly in a lounge suit, and carrying a small handbag.

"Excuse me," he said, coming to a halt before Racke. "Would you kindly direct me to St. Jim's?"

"My hat! A new chap!" murmured Blake.

Racke eyed the stranger from head to foot with an insolent stare, and he winked slyly at Crooke and Mellish.

"You going to St. Jim's?" he queried.

"Yes," was the quiet answer.

"Then why have you got out here?" asked Racke, in pretended surprise.

"Westwood, the next station, is the station for St. Jim's. Better buck up and get in again, old top!"

Crooke and Mellish chuckled softly as the youth stared steadily at Racke.

"But you chaps are from St. Jim's!"

"Yaas! We'll come with you, my friend. Hallo! There goes the merry whistle. Jump in, old top!"

Blake was about to spring forward angrily to interfere, when the stranger turned swiftly with one foot on the foot-board.

"Then let me help you in, old son!" he said briskly. "One good turn deserves another!"

And, gripping the astonished Racke in a grip of iron, he banded him headlong

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"Bai Jove! Gordon Gay, you wascal— Oh! Ah! Wolease me! Yooop!" D'Arcy's words ended in a muffled howl as he was gripped and rolled over and over in the snow. "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 2.)

covered from their surprise, he tugged D'Arcy's overcoat over his shoulders and hauled him to his feet.

"Run for it!" he gasped, snatching up his bag.

"Pway wait! My toppah!" gasped D'Arcy. "I cannot leave my toppah!" And D'Arcy ran for it by making an eager dash for his silk hat on the gatepost. The delay was fatal.

The four Grammarians surged round Gussy and his would-be rescuer, and there followed a wild scrimmage in the lane amidst the whirling snowflakes.

The odds were four to two, but they were a gallant minority. Gussy, despite his somewhat high-falutin manner, was a useful fellow in a scrap and the stranger was a host in himself.

But the unequal contest could not last. Arthur Augustus went down in the snow with Monk and Wootton major on top of him, and the stranger, struggling mightily with Gay and the other Wootton, was powerless to help him.

Then, suddenly, there came the soft patter of running feet in the snow as

three juniors came rushing along the lane.

"Oh my hat!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Here are Blake and the rest! Break away, you chaps!"

And, snatching himself free from the stranger's grasp, Gordon Gay set the example by leaping the gate and bolting across the white field beyond.

He was followed by his gallant henchmen a second later. Evidently odds of five to four did not appeal to Gordon Gay & Co. And Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed up, only in time to speed their going with a volley of snowballs.

"Bai Jove! I am vewy glad to see you, Blake, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, evidently forgetting he no longer regarded Blake as a friend. "You fellahs awwired in the nick of time!"

"This business serves you jolly well right!" snorted Jack Blake. "Perhaps you'll not run away from your keepers again, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus, fortunately, did not hear that remark. He was groping about in the snow for his eyeglasses. Then he staggered to his feet, and looked down in dismay at his dishevelled attire.

"The wottahs!" he ejaculated warmly. "My clobber is neatly wuined, and if my fiend Malcoln had not hewically come to my rescue, those fearful wuffians would have uttally destroyed my toppah!"

Arthur Augustus approached the youth who was busily knocking the snow from his clothes, and held out his hand with a beaming smile.

"Pway do me the honah of shaking hands, deah boy!" he exclaimed gracefully. "You are a hewo! You have saved my toppah from uttath destruction!"

The boy who had given his name as Malcoln hesitated a moment; then he slowly held out his hand.

"Glad I've been of service!" he exclaimed, somewhat nervously. "I remembered you at the station, y'know. And when I saw those chaps weren't wearing St. Jim's caps, I decided it was up to me to chip in. I'm glad now I stayed in the village for a wash and brush up before coming along."

"Bai Jove—yaas, wathah! I'm vewy much obliged to you, deah boy!" said THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 624.

Arthur Augustus warmly. "I weeped, you are a hero! It was very plucky of you to chip in against such fearful odds!"

Herries wiped away an imaginary tear. "What an affecting scene!" he murmured, with a sob. "Malcolm, forgive these tears. You are Gussy's friend for life. You have saved his topper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Malcolm smiled, and stooped and picked up his handbag.

And Arthur Augustus, giving his chum a reproving glance through his eyeglasses, linked his arm through Malcolm's, and the five juniors tramped on through the driving snow towards St. Jim's.

"Pway allow me to carry your bag, Malcolm!"

"You are very kind. But it's not heavy, really!"

"Pewhaps I was walkin' too fast for you, deah boy?"

"Ahem! Not at all," gasped Malcolm. "That's quite all right, thanks!"

"I trust, you are not homesick already, Malcolm?"

"Oh, my ha— Nanno! Not at all. The fact is—"

Malcolm stammered and stopped.

Whatever the fact was, the new fellow seemed strangely reluctant to tell it.

"Bai Jove!"

There was a soft chuckle from Blake, Herries, and Digby, trudging behind, and D'Arcy cast a severe glance over his shoulder. Then he turned his monotonous, concerned glance at the fact of the youth tramping along by his side.

The noble Arthur Augustus was not a little puzzled.

Blake & Co. had been chatting cheerfully as they trudged through the snow in the falling dusk towards St. Jim's that wintry afternoon.

But Malcolm, the new fellow, was looking strangely worried and preoccupied, and took little or no part in the conversation.

Several times he had attempted to withdraw his arm from the affectionate grasp of D'Arcy. But Gussy, having taken the new boy under his wing, so to speak, would have none of it.

That, like most new boys, he was shy and nervous, was hardly likely, in view of his bold and aggressive treatment of Racke & Co. at the station.

And yet he seemed strangely ill at ease

in the company of Blake & Co., and Gussy could not understand it.

He began again.

"You appear to be vewy wowied, Malcolm. I trust you are not afraid of the consequences of the wippin' twick you played on Wacke and his wascally associates, deah boy?"

"Ahem! Nanno! It isn't exactly that. The— the fact is—"

"Pway proceed, deah boy!"

"The fact is, I—I— You fellows are making a mistake. I—I'm not coming to St. Jim's."

"Bai Jove! You're not comin' to St. Jim's!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "B-but I uttally fail to undahstand, deah boy."

"I—I mean to say, I'm coming to St. Jim's, but I shall not be with you fellows."

"Bai Jove, I undahstand now. You mean you are not booked for the School House, Malcolm. Nevah mind! I am vewy sowwy to heah that; but theah are some vewy decent chaps in the New House."

"It's not that," gasped Malcolm, desperately. "The—the fact is—"

"Pway do not wowwy, then, deah boy! We shall remain gweat friends, I trust. And we shall still see a gweat deal of each othah. Pewhaps you will come and heah tea with me, after you have reported to Mr. Watchiff?"

"I—I was told to report to Mrs. Minims."

"That is vewy etwange! Mrs. Minims is the School House dame, deah boy. Suahly you have made a mistake— Hallo!"

D'Arcy broke off as, turning a corner of the lane, St. Jim's appeared in sight.

"Heah we are at St. Jim's, deah boy. I hope you will like St. Jim's, Malcolm," he said gracefully.

"It looks a ripping place," said Malcolm.

And the strange new fellow glanced along the snowed lane, and through the massive gates, with obvious approval.

CHAPTER 3.

Tom Merry is Interested.

JACK BLAKE gave a grunt as he looked inside the dark study.

"Just what I feared!" he grumbled. "The blessed fire's out!"

"And there's nothing to eat in the cupboard, except a loaf and the tail of a sar-

dine," said Digby, peering inside the study cupboard.

"And I'm hungry as a hunter!" snorted Blake. "This is all your fault, Gussy!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglasses frigidly upon his study-mate.

"And, pway, why is it my fault, Blake?" he asked, with lofty dignity.

"Aren't you the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this study?" demanded Blake. "And aren't you supposed to keep this study well supplied with funds, and the cupboard well stocked with grub?"

"Wellly, Blake—"

"If I had a pater like Gussy's, who only sends him tenners and fivers every week, instead of every day," said Herries dully, "I'd disown him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And that's the fellow who wanted to offer on hospitality the Chancellor," said Blake, gazing severely at the astonished D'Arcy. "No fire, no grub, no anything! As it is, we've got to look for hospitality elsewhere ourselves. Better trot along and pay Tom Merry a visit, you chaps. Perhaps they've not finished tea yet."

And before the indignant D'Arcy had recovered from his chums' remarks, Blake was leading the way out of the study.

And D'Arcy decided to follow. The fire was out, and it was past time for tea in Hall, and there was nothing else to do.

At the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, Blake paused. From within came the sound of frizzling, the clatter of dishes, and a hum of cheery voices. As Blake kicked open the door a pleasant smell of cooking assailed his nostrils, and he gave a satisfied grunt as he glanced inside.

The Terrible Three were busy. Before a roaring fire, where he was busy with a frying-pan, crouched Manners, with ruddy, and perspiring face; while at the table Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were getting the tea ready.

The whole room and its occupants looked bright and cosy and inviting.

"Good!" said Blake, marching into the room. "We're just in time, you fellows!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, looking up. "What the Dickens—"

"We've come to share the festive kipper, if you chaps don't mind," said Blake cheerfully. "Our fire's out, we're out of grub, and—"

"Not another word!" grinned Tom Merry. "Trot right in! You're welcome as butter in peace time. Though it's not the festive kipper this time, but the frisky sossy. I hope you don't mind sossies!"

"Splendid!" said Blake. "Hot sausages are just the thing for this cold weather."

"Then shove some more sossies in the frying-pan, Manners, old man," said Tom Merry. "Hallo! Where's Gussy?"

"He's stopped behind to put his topper to bed, I expect!" remarked Blake. "He'll be along pres— Here he is!"

An eyeglass gleamed in the doorway, and Arthur Augustus followed it into the room.

"Cheerio, Gussy!" remarked Tom Merry. "Take a chair and make yourself at home."

"Sorry we can't offer you two chairs. There wouldn't be enough to go round!" explained Monty Lowther.

And after glancing frigidly at Blake, Herries, and Digby, Arthur Augustus sat down.

He was still feeling wrathful, but it

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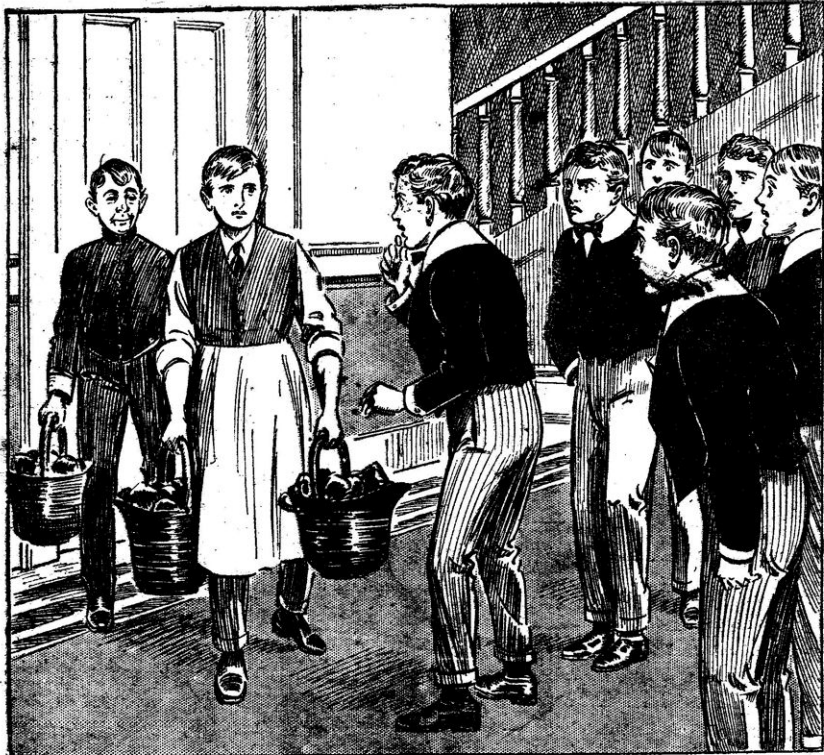
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"M-m-m-my!" gasped Blake. "What the dickens—" The new fellow was half-way across the hall when he stopped dead as he recognised the juniors in his path. "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway what are you doin' in that wig-out, Malcolm?" (See this page.)

was next to impossible for anyone—much less the good-natured Gussy—to remain, wrathful in such cheery surroundings.

And presently, as Tom Merry beamed with his cheery smile over the festive board, even Gussy forgot his grievances, and was soon smiling and chatting genially.

Naturally, Blake & Co. lost no time in relating the experiences of the afternoon, and Tom Merry & Co. laughed heartily over the story of how the strange new fellow had scored over Racke & Co. at the station.

"So you chaps think this new chap is looked for the New House?" asked Tom Merry presently. "Did he say he was?"

"Well, he didn't exactly say he was," explained Blake. "He said something about not being with us, though; and I fancy he must be. If he had been booked for the School House, we should have heard something about his coming."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that's so," he admitted thoughtfully. "Anyway, if he's as hefty a chap as you say, I've no doubt he can play footer. I think I'd better look the merchant up after tea wherever he is."

"Yaas, wathah! That is precisely

what I wproposed to do!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus eagerly. "Malcolm did me a vewy gweat service, and I am vewy desirous of wnewin' his acquaintance."

Tea proceeded merrily, and at last Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"If you chaps have finished, we'll all make a move," he said. "I am rather keen to see this new chap."

"May as well all come," said Blake. "Though the chap did not seem over keen about our company, I must say he struck me as being a very decent sort. I suggest we try the Shell and Fourth studies."

All agreeing, the two famous Co.'s of St. Jim's trooped out to search the studies for the new fellow.

But it proved to be a vain search. Nobody on either the Shell or Fourth passages had seen or heard anything of the new fellow, Malcolm.

"Better trot over to the New House," said Tom Merry, after visiting the junior Common-room to no purpose. "Come along!"

And next moment the seven juniors were descending the stairs with the intention of continuing their search for the elusive new boy over in the New House.

CHAPTER 4.

Racke Gets Hurt.

"MY hat!" Blake stopped suddenly, and stared, as if petrified, along a passage leading to the kitchen regions below.

"Bai Jove! What is the matter, Blake?" D'Arcy was beginning, when he, too, stopped and almost fell down in sheer amazement.

Coming along the passage were two youthful figures. One was Toby Marsh, the page-boy, and the other—Blake & Co. stared as if they could scarcely believe their eyes.

He was Roy Malcolm, the new fellow, without a doubt; but he was in his shirt-sleeves, and wore an apron, and in each hand he carried a scuttle full of coal.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Blake. "What the dickens—"

The new fellow was half-way across the hall when he stopped dead as he recognised the juniors in his path.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway what are you doin' in that wig-out, Malcolm!"

"I—I'm just helping this chap with the coal!" stammered Malcolm, flush.

ing: "You—you see, I—I'm not—You chaps make a mistake this afternoon. The fact is, I'm the—the new boot-boy!"

"Bai Jove!"
"The—the—the new b-boot-boy?" stammered Blake.

"Yes," said Malcolm quietly. "I'm awfully sorry, you chaps, but—but, you know, I tried to tell you several times, and—"

"Then you've not lost much time getting to work!"

Blake said that because he simply couldn't think of anything else to say.

"Yes, I hate being idle!" said Malcolm, with a slight smile. "And I thought I might as well be doing something useful as hanging about."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, recovering himself a little. "But waway, why did you run away from us this afternoon, deah boy? I was hopin'—"

"I thought perhaps you fellows would be well, a bit wild when you found out I was the boot-boy," said Malcolm slowly, "and so I—"

"Wot!" said Arthur Augustus, looking round at his chums. "I trust that my friends will agree with me that your position here will not make the slightest difference to the friendship formed this afternoon?"

"Certainly not!" said Blake promptly.

"Malcolm, old scout—"

Blake paused as three bedraggled figures, looking like snow-men, tramped wearily into the lighted hall.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Here comes Racke & Co.! What price Westwood as the station for St. Jim's, Racke, old sport?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke shook the snow savagely from his coat, and advanced towards the group of laughing juniors, scowling furiously.

He stopped and stared in amazement as his eyes fell upon the new boot-boy. Only for a moment, though; then, with a growl of rage, his fist shot out and caught the new fellow full in the mouth.

It was a cowardly blow, for Malcolm's hands were helpless to defend himself. But vengeance was not long in coming.

The coal-scuttles fell from Malcolm's grasp with a crash, and one of them fell upon Racke's foot.

But that was not all, for even as Racke, with a howl of pain, lifted his foot to caress it, the boot-boy's fist shot out like lightning.

Thump!
Racke went over and dropped to the floor like a poleaxed ox. He was up again the next moment, however; but before he could fling himself at Malcolm an interruption occurred.

Down the stairs came the quick patter of feet, and the tall, stalwart figure of Kildare strode across the hall, and stopped between the two.

"I—I'll smash the cad!" shouted Racke, wildly. "I—I'll—"

"No you won't!" snapped the captain of St. Jim's harshly. "What does this mean?"

"He—he struck me for—for no reason whatever!" exclaimed Racke viciously. "I was—"

"That's not true!" said Kildare quietly. "I saw all that happened from the landing above. I don't know what is behind this affair, but you struck that boy a cowardly blow. You deserved all you got!"

"I—I tell you—"
"Shut up!" snapped Kildare, in disgust. "And now you'll get down on your knees and pick this coal up—at once!"

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For a moment Aubrey Racke hesitated, fuming with rage. But a glance at Kildare's determined face told him what refusal would mean.

And a moment later he was on his knees, dropping the pieces of coal one by one into the scuttle, his eyes gleaming with fury.

Then Kildare turned and stared curiously at Malcolm, who was standing by silently.

"I suppose you are the new boot-boy?" he said, not unkindly. "If so,

NO. 31.—STANLEY GIBSON.



A youthful member of the Third, known to his chums as "Curly" on account of his curly head. Has not a great deal of strength of character; perhaps the weakest of Wally's band of seven, the others of which are Levison, minor, Manners, minor, Frayne, Hobbs, and Jameson. No duffer at games, and can run well. Has a real good singing voice.

then I would offer you a word of advice. It isn't—er—usual for any member of the domestic staff to attack any of the boys, whatever the provocation. In a case of this sort your duty was to report the matter through the proper channels to someone in authority. And now, clear off—the lot of you!"

Without a word, Malcolm picked up his coal-scuttles again, and went on along the passage with the terrified Toby.

And the next moment Blake & Co., with Tom Merry & Co., were following the fuming Racke and his shady chums up the stairs.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Jack Blake. "Who'd have thought it? Another blessed boot-boy! That's the second time within a few weeks we've pulled out with a new chap and he's turned out to be the new boot-

boy! Remember the other one—turned out to be Dalton Hawke, the detective?"

"I'm jolly sure this chap ain't a detective, though," said Tom Merry. "He seems a jolly decent sort; but, all the same, he's a blessed mystery. That chap has no more right to be cleaning boots than old Gussy has!"

"Bai Jove, you are wight, Tom Merry! He appears to be a very superior chap, and speaks and acts like a gentleman!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I will nevah allow Malcolm to clean my boots, deah boys!"

"That's how I feel about it," said Blake thoughtfully. "That chap's fit for something better than cleaning boots. If he'd been used to cleaning boots, and other menial employment, he'd have been a little more humble than he was. There's something jolly mysterious about him."

And that, indeed, was the opinion of both Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three, as they went to their respective studies to do their prep.

There certainly was something very queer about Malcolm, the new boot-boy.

CHAPTER 5.

An Amazing Discovery.

"A T last, deah boys!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered Study No. 6 next day after tea with a beaming smile on his face, and waving a letter above his head.

"What's that, Gussy—your remittance come at last?" asked Blake eagerly.

"Yaas—a fiver!" smiled Arthur Augustus. "Happily, my patah suddenly wemembahd yestaday that he had not sent my usual remittance. However, heah it is, and now we shall be livin' in a land flowin' with milk and honey once again, deah boys!"

"Good! Still, it's a pity your pater didn't remember to post it earlier; then we should have had a real peace-time spread instead of a war-time tea!" grumbled Blake. "Your aristocratic pater's getting slack, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove, Blake—"

"Why doesn't your pater B Gussy?" demanded Blake, with a look at Digby and Herries. "I suppose his noble mind was wandering on his next House of Lords speech, instead of concentrating on more vital business—Hullo! What's that you've got there—and a letter?"

"I refuse to answer that question until you have apologised for your witty and inept remarks about my patah, Blake!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "You have hurt my feelings very—"

"Blow your feelings!" roared Blake. "If that letter's for me, dummy, hand it over, you—"

"It is not for you, Jack Blake!" replied D'Arcy loftily. "It is addressed to Hewies—"

"Then, hand it over to Herries!" snorted Blake. "Let's hope it's another fiver, and then we'll be living in the lap of luxury!"

"No such luck!" grinned Herries, as Arthur Augustus handed a large envelope to him with haughty dignity. "I expect it's the price-list of patent dog foods I wrote about. Poor old Towser doesn't seem to care about the dog-biscuits I get him from the village. You chaps have no idea what sense that dog's got!"

"Quite so!" said Blake hastily. "But why not open it and see, instead of standing gassing—"

"Ain't I doing so?" grumbled Herries, opening the envelope with tantalising slowness. "You chaps don't take a bit of interest in old Towser. As I was saying, that dog's got more brains than most—Hullo! It's from my cousin at Hardinge—"

"Didn't know you had a cousin," said Jack Blake. "Who, what, and where's Hardinge, anyway?"

"Hardinge is in Surrey, of course," snorted Herries witheringly. "Mean to say you've never heard of Hardinge, Blake?"

"H'm! Come to think of it, I believe I have heard you mention the place!" admitted Blake. "It's a Zoo, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "You—you ass, Blake!" breathed Herries warmly. "You know jolly well it's a college—Hardinge College. And my cousin, Cyril Malby, is captain of the Junior Eleven, and goodness knows what—Phew!"

Herries whistled as he withdrew a large photograph from its cover of tissue paper and glanced at it with a grin.

"My hat! They do things in style at Hardinge, and no mistake!" he chuckled, handing the photo to Blake.

"It's a photo of their junior football team—swank, I call it! That's my cousin in the centre!"

"Yes," He strongly resembles you—

"Well—yes, rather a strong family likeness!" admitted Herries agreeably.

"About the feet, I mean?" said Blake blandly. "I could tell him by the size of his feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries glared; the size of his feet was rather a sore subject with George Herries.

"All the same," went on Blake hastily, "it's not a bad photo, and they're rather a hefty-looking crowd, I must say. Better not let Tom Merry see it, or he'll never sleep o' nights until he's fixed up a match with 'em. You—Well I'm blessed! Talk about angels—"

"And angels appear!" finished Tom Merry, entering the study with Monty Lowther and Manners behind him.

"Hullo! What's that—your family group, Herries?"

"Yes, rather! They're a tip-top team!" exclaimed Tom Merry, eyeing the group keenly. "My hat! I only wish we could fix up a match with 'em! I say, where did you dig this up, Herries? You don't happen to know any of the fellows there, surely?"

"My cousin—that chap in the centre," said Herries, in a casual sort of way. "He's captain!"

"Well I'm blessed!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with gleaming eyes. "Why didn't you mention that fact before, Herries? Look here! Couldn't you write and ask him for a fixture? It's rather late, but I don't see why they shouldn't meet us. We'd give 'em a good game, anyway!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Certainly," said Herries. "I'll write to-night after prep, if you like. He's not a bad sort, and I rather fancy he'll be glad to meet us."

"Good!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "We could easily give them a return match. What do you think, Blake?"

"I see no reason why we shouldn't!" exclaimed Blake. "It'll be a change. Come in, dummy!"

The door opened, and Malcolm, the

new boot-boy entered, carrying a scuttleful of coal.

"Twot wight in, deah boy!" exclaimed D'Arcy affably. "You are quite a swanger, Malcolm."

"Yes," replied the boot-boy, somewhat nervously. "I've been rather busy lately."

There was an awkward silence for a moment as the youth carried the coal across to the fireplace; then Blake went on hurriedly:

"As I was saying, it'll be a change to meet a new lot. And now I remember,

No. 32. — GEORGE BRUCE RICHARD DARRELL.



A prefect of the School House Sixth, and the most intimate chum of the skipper. Has not the fine qualities of leadership that Kidare possesses, but is a fine all-round sportsman. In both the football and cricket eleven teams. Has more resolution and balance than the average boy of his age.

Hardinge are supposed to be rather a stiff—"

Crash!

The juniors wheeled round, not a little startled as the coal-scuttle fell from the boot-boy's hand, and the coal scattered over the carpet.

"Hullo! What's the matter, Malcolm, old chap?" asked Blake, in concern.

The juniors glanced curiously at the boot-boy, who was staring at Blake with white, set face.

"It is—nothing!" stammered Malcolm.

And with obvious distress the strange boot-boy turned abruptly, and was picking up the photo which had fallen from the mantelpiece, when he happened to glance at it.

He gave a violent start, and stared at it fixedly for a brief moment; and then,

seeming to become aware that the juniors' eyes were upon him, he placed it with trembling hand back on the mantelpiece.

"Bai Jove! You look as though you'd seen a ghost, Malcolm, deah boy!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "I trust you are not ill!"

"I—I'm quite all right!" muttered the boot-boy, beginning to pick up the scattered coal.

"I—I say, I'm beastly sorry I've made such a mess!"

"That's quite all right, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus, with a smile.

"Don't worry about that!"

But Malcolm certainly looked as though he was worrying about it—or something else—as he dropped the last bit of coal in the scuttle and walked to the door, his face still white and agitated.

The door closed, and the seven startled juniors stared at each other.

"Queer fish—that!" rasped Blake.

"What on earth was biting him? I thought he was going to eat that blessed photo."

"Dunno!" said Tom Merry, frowning.

"Unless—My hat!"

Tom Merry snatched the photograph from the mantelpiece and gazed at it intently.

Then he gave a jump.

"Look at that!" he said, in a startled tone. "The outside-right, I mean. I thought I'd seen those features somewhere."

The juniors crowded round Tom Merry and glanced over his shoulder, and then there was a sudden, simultaneous ejaculation.

"M-m-m-y hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They're his features and his figure without a doubt!" ejaculated Blake.

"Oh crickey!"

"And the name underneath—R. Malcolm!" gasped Digby. "Why, it—it's the same chap!"

"Without a doubt—or his double," said Tom Merry blankly. "But what on earth does it mean?"

The startled juniors stared at each other. What was the meaning of it?

The form and features of the outside-right of the Hardinge junior football group, were the form and features of the new St. Jim's boot-boy.

It certainly was amazing.

"But what's he doing here?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That is if it really can be him."

"We can't very well tackle the beggar about it," said Blake. "Whatever it is, it's a secret he doesn't wish to be known, or he wouldn't have acted so jolly suspiciously."

"And I'm jolly sure it's not a dishonourable secret, deah boys," added Arthur Augustus warmly. "Malcolm is a very decent sort, I am convinced. He saved my toppah—"

"Yes; p'raps so," said Tom Merry gravely. "But all the same, I think we ought to investigate the business: Look here, I went on Merry, after a pause.

"I propose Herries asks his cousin about this chap Malcolm on the photo when he writes to-night. We needn't give the chap away. Just ask discreetly and casually who the chap is, and all about him. What?"

"Good idea!" said Blake. "Look here, we'll do it now, and you Shell chaps can help. We shall have to be jolly careful how we word it, though, or Herries' cousin will smell a rat."

"Yaas, wathah! I really think you fellows had better leave such a delicate matter to me," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "It wants a chap of tact and judgment for such—"

"Rats!" snorted Blake. "We'll all help. Seven heads are better than one."

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Then Herries can copy it out and sign it."

And after a little more argument—with D'Arcy—this was agreed upon, and for the next few minutes the only sounds heard from No. 6 were the scratching of a pen, and a low mutter of conversation as the juniors composed the letter to Herries' cousin at Hardinge College—the letter that was to mean a great deal to the new boot-boy.

CHAPTER 8.

The Suspicion Confirmed.

"LETTER for you, Master Herries!"

Blake & Co. were standing chatting with the Terrible Three outside Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, a few days later, when Malcolm, the boot-boy, approached the group of juniors.

Since he had taken up his duties at St. Jim's, the new boy had very quickly become familiar with his work, and, according to Mrs. Mums, the House-squire, he was giving every satisfaction.

But one of the obvious duties which the boot-boy seemed strangely enough to find a difficulty in becoming familiar with, was the proper respect and deference due to his superiors in the social scale—namely, the young gentlemen of St. Jim's.

But Racke & Co., and others of like kidney, soon took upon themselves the task of pointing out to Malcolm his remissness in that respect.

And since then, though certainly never servile nor humble, he rarely forgot to address the boys as "Sir" or "Master."

But to Blake and his chums, who knew—or, rather, suspected—that Malcolm was not what he seemed, this new departure grated horribly on their ears.

"Thanks, Master Malcolm!" said Herries, with a grin. "Strikes me the job of boot-boy embraces that of messenger-boy as well—oh, what?"

"I'm supposed to make myself generally useful, sir," answered Malcolm quietly.

"Oh, for goodness' sake drop that 'Sir' and 'Master' business!" snapped Tom Merry irritably. "I liked you better before you started that rot, Malcolm."

"But some of the other chaps didn't," said Malcolm.

And, with a somewhat frightened glance at the faces of the juniors, the boot-boy passed on his way.

"I believe he's beginning to tumble to the fact that we've spotted something," said Tom Merry, frowning. "I say, Herries, I suppose that letter's not—"

"Yes, it is," said Herries, after a glance at the postmark. "It's from Hardinge right enough!"

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "My hat! I wonder if he spotted the postmark? Anyway, we shall soon know his giddy secret—if any. I—Shush!"

Blake broke off abruptly as he became aware of the fat figure of Baggy Trimble hovering a few yards away, and, making a sudden dash, he gripped the fat youth by the collar.

"You fat, eavesdropping toad!" he roared, raising his foot. "I'll jolly well teach you to come spying on us! Take that—and that—and that!"

"Here, I say—leggo, you beast! Ow! Yoooop!"

Once again Blake lifted his foot, and Baggy Trimble departed along the passage, roaring.

Racke returned to the others, looking grim.

"Good job I spotted the spying worm," he exclaimed warmly, "or

Malcolm's secret, whatever it is, would have soon been everyone's secret."

"Yaas, wathah! Better twot into the stunday, deah boys! We can discuss the mattah safely theah."

A minute later, behind the closed door of No. 6, the juniors crowded round Herries as he eagerly tore open the letter from his cousin at Hardinge.

And, as they expected, it contained news—startling news.

The first part of the letter was a formal acceptance of a match on the St. Jim's ground in three weeks' time. And the second part was a reply to their casual inquiries regarding the footballer named Malcolm on the photograph. It ran:

"What a jolly queer thing your asking about old Malcolm, our outside-right, in your letter. As a matter of fact, there's been the very dickens of a shindy about this same chap. The poor beggar got himself into a frightful mess by striking a master here last week. I didn't see the set-to myself, but it seems he spotted old Haslow—that's the bullying brute's name—savagely thrashing a youngster in the Third, and, being a pretty hefty chap, he set about him and gave him what he's been asking for for a long time. Anyway, as Malcolm had no witnesses save the kid himself, the

at Hardinge are in sympathy with Malcolm, and that he only did what any decent fellow would have done."

"Yaas, wathah! You are quite wight, Tom Mew!"

"But what are we going to do about it?" asked Monty Lowther, looking serious for once. "We can't give the poor beggar away!"

"I'm jolly certain we're not going to do that," replied Tom Merry emphatically. "But, all the same, it seems a jolly shame for a fellow to be wasting his future prospects like this. And that's what he's doing by running away."

"Fancy a fellow like him, blacking boots—the boots of rotters like Racke, Crooke, and Mellish!" remarked Manners warmly.

"I'm not so sure that I'd have not done the same, rather than be publicly flogged and sacked," said Herries.

Tom Merry frowned thoughtfully.

"I'm blessed if I know what we can do," he admitted gloomily. "I feel I want to help the fellow badly. It isn't exactly our business to interfere, and yet we can hardly let the thing go on."

"Why not get the chap here?" suggested Manners. "Tell him we know about the affair, and that he needn't be afraid of our giving the show away. Perhaps when we've heard the full story we can suggest something between us."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I'm inclined to think that's the best thing to do. If you chaps are agreeable, we'll do it."

"There seems nothing else to do," exclaimed Blake. "In any case, I'm jolly sure Malcolm suspects we know something, and if we don't do something to stop him, he'll be doing a bolt again. Suppose you run along and bring him here, Gussy?"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "I will wash away at once!"

And not over-stopping to see if his tie was straight, Arthur Augustus hurried out. He was just in time to see a pair of fat legs disappear round the corner of the passage.

Any other fellow, perhaps, would have connected those fat legs with Baggy Trimble, and would also have connected the strange fact of his fat legs vanishing so suspiciously at that moment with Baggy's incurable complaint of lightheadedness at keyholes.

But Arthur Augustus was too excited and excited at the moment to notice, much less connect the strange phenomenon of Baggy Trimble's vanishing legs with that phase of Baggy's character.

But five minutes later, Racke & Co. knew everything!

CHAPTER 7.

Malcolm Owns Up.

MEANWHILE, the juniors in Study No. 6 waited patiently and in silence for D'Arcy's return.

Even Monty Lowther, the irrepressible humourist of the Shell, was looking gloomy and thoughtful.

Though they had only known Malcolm a few days, they had all taken a deep liking to the strange, new boot-boy, who had so pluckily faced the world alone rather than be disgraced, and all felt sympathetic towards the fellow in his unenviable position.

It was quite five minutes before D'Arcy returned, but with him was Malcolm, looking not a little agitated.

He blushed a little and eyed the juniors apprehensively as he entered, and Gussy closed the door after him.

"Sit down, Malcolm," said Tom Merry quietly. "Now—we'd like a little chat with you, if you're not too busy."

"MICK O' THE MOVIES!"

A GRAND STORY OF
CINEMA LIFE

JUST STARTING IN

THE PENNY POPULAR.

YOU WILL ENJOY IT!

Head naturally took Haslow's part, and the result was a sentence of flogging and expulsion. But poor old Malcolm hasn't waited for either. He's bolted, vanished. And I can't say I blame him. So if you fellows were looking forward to meeting him when we come over to mop you up, you'll be disappointed. Worse luck, for he was a rattling good player and a jolly good sort."

"Phevy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

As they finished reading, the juniors stared at each other in startled surprise. It seemed only too clear, now, that Malcolm, the new boot-boy, was none other than the Malcolm who had bolted from Hardinge College.

"Then that settles it!" said Blake grimly. "It's our Malcolm without a doubt!"

"But what on earth's he doing here?" gasped Tom Merry. "Surely, if he was on his beam-ends, he could get a better job somewhere than boot-boy at a school?"

"And even boot-boy's jobs can't be got without a reference," said Digby. "And where's he got that?"

"It beats me altogether!" exclaimed Tom Merry quietly. "But one thing's pretty clear from his letter—the fellows



Baggy raised a podgy forefinger and wagged it accusingly at the astounded Malcolm. "You're bowled out, you boot-cleaning rotter!" he giggled. "You little thought we chaps knew your guilty secret." (See Chapter 9.)

There was a strangely-anxious expression on the boot-boy's somewhat smudgy face as he took the chair Blake pushed towards him and sat down. "Look here, Malcolm," said Tom Merry bluntly. "I'm not going to beat about the bush as to our reason for sending for you. I fancy you've a fairly strong suspicion yourself, that we chaps have spotted there's something rummy about you, and that you are—well, not what you seem."

Malcolm nodded, but did not reply. "To be quite frank with you, Malcolm," went on Tom Merry, "we thought there was something jolly queer about you the first day you arrived. Neither your speech nor your manners were those of a boot-boy. But it was not until you saw that photo from Hardinge and acted so queerly, that we had any suspicions of the truth. And now a letter we've just had from a fellow at Hardinge has turned our suspicions into a certainty."

"I—I—" Malcolm stammered and stopped as he half-rose from his chair, a hunted expression in his clear, grey eyes.

"But though we know now who and what you are," went on Tom Merry, "you've no need to be afraid. We've no intention of giving you away. All we want to do is to help you in any way we possibly can."

"Yas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Malcolm, dear boy, you

are now among friends, who will be only too eager to help you in your great trouble. You can rely on us to keep your secret, Malcolm!"

"I—I believe you," muttered Malcolm slowly. "You fellows are quite right—I did run away from Hardinge. But—but what do you want me to do?"

"Simply to tell us all about it," said Blake quietly. "Perhaps when we know all details we may be able to suggest something. All we know at present is in this letter. I suppose what that chap says is quite true?"

Malcolm took the letter from Blake with a hand that trembled, and his lips quivered as he read it.

"What Maltby says is quite true," he said hoarsely. "I did thrash a master. He was a brute—a cowardly tyrant, and I'd do it again under the same circumstances. Perhaps I pitched into him harder than I should have done. But I was wild, and—and lost my temper. I suppose I might have expected expulsion for it, but I never expected a flogging and expulsion. I don't blame the Head—he did not know what a rotter Haslow was, and I admit I knocked him about more than I intended. Anyway, I didn't mean to face the disgrace of a public flogging and expulsion. I bore it!"

"And where were you until you came here?" queried Herries, after a pause.

"In London. Luckily, I happened to

have a few pounds by me. I took a bed-sitting-room, and began to look about me for a job. It was then I saw the advertisement for a boot-boy at St. Jim's, and got the post."

"Without any references?" asked Blake in surprise.

"Yes—the Head liked my letter, or something. Anyway, here I am!" said Tom Merry bluntly. "But you are a silly fool if you stay here, Malcolm. What about your people?"

Again the new boot-boy's lips quivered. "My father and mother are dead," he said quietly, "and my guardian doesn't seem to care twopenny what happens to me."

Tom Merry frowned. "I can't say I quite blame you for running away," he said. "But what about your education and your future? You cannot remain a boot-boy all your life."

"I know. But I didn't think about those things when I bolted. I rather liked the idea of getting a job, however humble, in a school, because—well, perhaps I was a silly ass, but I hoped I should get better opportunities of studying in my spare time."

There was a silence as Malcolm finished.

Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other gloomily. They

had hoped that on hearing the full story from Malcolm himself, they would be able to think of a way out of his troubles. But it seemed that nothing could be done.

"I hardly like to advise you to go back and face the music, Malcolm," said Tom Merry. "And yet I cannot help feeling that is the wisest plan. I suppose you wouldn't go back even now?"

"No—not to be flogged and expelled!" said Malcolm fiercely.

"Then I'm blessed if I can think of anything better than to hang on here," said Tom Merry. "I wish I could. Perhaps something will turn up to put you right again soon. But if it's any consolation to you, Malcolm, you can rest assured that the secret is safe with us, and that you can look upon us as chums ready and eager to help whenever you need help."

"Hear, hear!" "Maas, wathah! That's the spivit, Tom Merry!"

Malcolm rose to his feet, his eyes shining.

"Thanks, you chaps!" he said gratefully. "I know I can rely upon you fellows keeping my secret. And now I must be going—"

"You're sure we can't help you in any way, dear boy?" called D'Arcy, as the boot-boy was almost at the door.

"I'm afraid not—unless—"
The boot-boy hesitated. "Perhaps you fellows wouldn't mind lending me a few books to go—"

"Certainly," said Blake quickly. "We've got a pile of paper backs on the bookshelves, and there's a pile of 'Boys' Friends' in the corner you're welcome to—"

"Ahem! But I don't mean stories—I mean school books. I—I— You see, I don't want to neglect my—"

Blake laughed.

"Oh, if it's school books you want, then you're more welcome still to 'em," he said, with a chuckle. "But why not come in after tea and do prep with us every—"

"Bai Jove! I've got a better proposal to make than that, dear boys. I asked Malcolm to come and have tea with us the other day. And I propose he does us the honour of staying now to tea, an' afterwards to prep. I am in funds, an' if Tom Merry and his friends will all stay, we shall be quite a merry party. Will you stay, Malcolm?"

"But—but what about the other fellows? They—they'll not like—"

"Wot! I trust," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I trust that there is no wile against a chap askin' his chum to tea—wethah he be on the domestic staff or not."

"Not likely!" snorted Blake. "Sit down, Malcolm, old top—you're staying!"

And Malcolm did stay.

And a few minutes later the runaway's face was very bright as he joined in the merry chatter, and did his share in disposing of the good things on the festive board.

CHAPTER 8.

Mr. Raiton Wants to Know.

COMING up the river, you chaps?"

Tom Merry asked that question as he looked into Study No. 6 after dinner the next day. With him, of course, were Manners and Monty Lowther, and all three were dressed for out of doors, and carried skates slung over their shoulders.

It was Wednesday—a half; but for once football was at a discount. There

had been several days of hard frost, and the ice was thick upon the river.

And practically the whole of St. Jim's had gone skating or were getting ready to go.

Even slackers and stick-in-doors like Racke & Co. had announced their intention of braving the terrors of the keen frosty air by disporting themselves gracefully or otherwise on the frozen surface of the Ryll.

Jack Blake, who was rummaging in the cupboard in the corner, looked up with a grin as Tom Merry asked the question.

"We're waiting for Gussy," he ex-

plained swell of St. Jim's, who looked as elegant and span as ever, was the sturdy figure of Roy Malcolm.

The face of the new-boot-boy was very bright, and it was plain he was delighted with the prospect of an afternoon's enjoyment instead of drudgery.

"The poor old chap was working like a nigger, cleanin' the knives," said D'Arcy, beaming around at the waiting juniors. "But, fortunately, exercisin' a little rest and judgment, I prevailed upon Mrs. Mimms to let him come."

"Here we are!" said Blake, withdrawing a touselled and dusty blade from the depths of the cupboard. "Here are the merry old skates. Are you any good at skating, Malcolm?"

"Can a duck swim?" asked Malcolm cheerily. "I can't skate in Esperanto, but I can do a figure eight and can get along fairly fast."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Then I suggest we go right down the river as far as Wayland and have tea there. The postman told me this morning the river's safe right up past Wayland. It'll be a ripping afternoon's outing."

"Topping!" said Blake. "But we shall have to look slippy if we are to get back before dusk."

And a moment later the eight juniors strewn out of the study and proceeded along the passage, laughing and chattering merrily.

But, unfortunately—or fortunately—they were not destined to reach Wayland that afternoon.

Mr. Raiton, the School House master, was just coming out of his study, and he smiled good-naturedly as he saw the group coming towards him.

"Going up the river, my boys?" he called out cheerily.

"Yes, sir. We're thinking of going as far as Wayland," said Tom Merry, coming to a halt.

"Mind you keep out of mischief!" warned the master, with a smile. "I hope you'll enjoy— Ah!"

The Housemaster stopped suddenly with that exclamation, and Malcolm coloured swiftly as he noticed Mr. Raiton's surprised glance fall upon him.

"Er—let me see. You are the new boot-boy, Malcolm, I believe?" he asked, not unkindly, and staring hard at the youth.

"Yes, sir," said Malcolm awkwardly.

"I—I—"

"We asked him to come with us, sir," exclaimed Tom Merry stoutly. "I know it's rather—or—unusual, sir. But we've chummed up with him, and—"

"There is nothing wrong in that, and I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Raiton quickly. "But, as it happens, I was just on the point of sending for this boy. I am afraid he must follow me to my study now, as I wish to speak to him. I shall not keep him long, and afterwards he will be able to join you. Come, Malcolm."

Malcolm hesitated a moment, and then, with a scared glance at the group of surprised juniors, he followed the master into his study, and the door closed upon them.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, in alarm. "That looks fishy! I hope to goodness poor old Malcolm hasn't been bowled out!"

"I'm afraid it looks like it," growled Blake, as the juniors exchanged startled glances.

And that, indeed, was the dread in Malcolm's own mind as he stood before Mr. Raiton's desk a moment later.

"My boy," said Mr. Raiton, eyeing the youth very keenly. "I wish to ask you one or two questions—questions I

No. 33.—MARTHA TAGGLES.



The wife of Ephraim Taggles, the school porter, and keeper of the tuck-shop. A kindly old lady; rather soft-hearted and slow, but not too slow for the wiles of Baggy and his kind. Experience has been her teacher. Knows the juniors of St. Jim's well, and can trust most of them.

plained. "He's gone down to the kitchen, and won't be a minute."

"My hat! What's he gone there for?" asked Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I suppose he's spotted a speck of rust on his skates, and gone to put 'em on the knife-cleaner?"

"Ha, ha! Nunno!" laughed Blake.

"He's trotted down to ask Malcolm if he'd care to come with us; and I'm just hunting for a spare pair of skates. I him with us?"

"Of course we don't, you silly ass!" laughed Tom Merry. "A jolly good idea of yours to think of him! Hallo! Good! He's managed to get hold of Malcolm!"

Evidently Gussy had, for behind the

hope, for your own sake, you will answer frankly and fully."

Malcolm's face paled and his lips compressed as the suspicion that the master had in some way become possessed of his secret grew stronger.

"Yesterday evening," said Mr. Railton gravely, "an anonymous letter was placed by some unknown person on the headmaster's desk. At first Dr. Holmes was inclined to deal with the letter as such a despicable communications are usually dealt with—by burning it. But, on second thoughts, he decided it was sent as a foolish practical joke, and he handed it to me with a request to find out the offender, if possible, and to deal with him."

The Housemaster paused, his observant eyes fixed steadily upon the face of the boy before him.

"When I had read the missive, however," went on Mr. Railton, "I came to the conclusion, for reasons which I need not relate, that it was quite possible the letter was not intended as a practical joke, but as an act of despicable malice, Malcolm. The cowardly writer made a very grave statement concerning yourself, my boy. And I hope, for your own sake, that, should it be true, you will not be so foolish as to deny or evade it. Here is the letter, Malcolm."

Mr. Railton picked up a sheet of exercise-paper, and handed it to the boy, and Malcolm took it with hands that trembled. Then, as he read it, his lips quivered, and his heart filled with bitterness and anger against his new chums—the fellows who had, so he supposed, whilst proffering friendship and vowing to keep his secret, so basely betrayed him.

For the note addressed to Dr. Holmes ran as follows:

"Are you aware that Malcolm, the new boot-boy, recently engaged by you, is a runaway scholar under sentence of expulsion from Hardinge College, in Surrey? If you care to communicate with the authorities at Hardinge, you will find this correct!"

That was all, but it was enough to tell Malcolm that his secret was a secret no longer, and that the game was up.

"Well!" said Mr. Railton grimly, as the boy looked up with burning eyes. "Is that a foolish practical joke, or are my suspicions correct?"

"I—I—"

Malcolm stopped, and flushed as his eyes fell beneath the master's scrutinising gaze.

"Come—come, my boy!" said Mr. Railton kindly, after a short wait. "Your silence can only mean one thing—that the claim the writer of that despicable letter makes, is true! If that is so, let me warn you my boy, that you are acting very foolishly. Running away from school can rarely be justified. And though I have no knowledge of the facts of the case, I strongly advise you to return to Hardinge, for your own sake."

Still the boot-boy remained silent, and Mr. Railton looked grim.

"Very well, then, Malcolm, I will not detain you any longer now. But I warn you that it is my duty to investigate this matter. I shall now place the facts—as I believe them—before Dr. Holmes, who will, I have no doubt, communicate with the headmaster of Hardinge College without delay. You may go!"

And Malcolm turned slowly, and left the room.

Out in the passage, Tom Merry & Co. were still patiently waiting. They crowded round him anxiously as he came along the passage.

"Bai Jove, Malcolm!" said Arthur

Augustus, in alarm. "What's has happened, dear boy? You look—"

"Let me pass, please!" said Malcolm, in a choking voice. "I—I want nothing more to do with you fellows!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

The startled juniors stared in amazement at the boot-boy; then, as he made a movement to squeeze past them, Tom Merry gripped his arm.

"Not so fast, Malcolm!" he said quietly. "What d'you mean by saying that?"

Malcolm stood and faced the juniors with blazing eyes; he forgot for the

Manners feebly. "What on earth's bitten the fellow?"

Tom Merry's brow was troubled and uneasy as he stared after the boot-boy. "I think I can guess what's happened," he said quietly. "Some rotten cad's found out who he is, and has sent a letter to the Head."

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy, in great distress. "I will run after him and assiah him!"

"No, you wot!" snapped Blake angrily. "He wouldn't listen to you if you did now! Hang the fellow! He's no right to bring such a rotten accusation against us! Anyway, I'm hanged if I'm going to worry myself about him! Let's be making a move."

Tom Merry frowned and hesitated. "We'll see the silly ass when we come back," he said, somewhat doubtfully. "Perhaps he'll be cooler, an' listen to us then."

"But, weally—"

"Catch hold of this chump, you chaps!" growled Blake. "We'll waste the whole afternoon at this rate. What's the good of standing there gassing?"

The next moment, protesting indignantly, Arthur Augustus was being whirled out of the house and towards the gates at a great speed.

But a gloom had settled on the juniors, and it was a very morose and thoughtful party that started out from St. Jim's that bright afternoon, after all.

CHAPTER 9.

Beneath the Ice.

"YOOOP! Ow! Wow! Stoppit, Racke, you beast! Leggo!"

Those sounds of woe assailed Roy Malcolm's ears as he entered the Shell passage on his way to the kitchen, after leaving Tom Merry and his chums.

Standing outside Racke's study door were Racke, Crooke, and Mellish, wearing overcoats and thick mufflers, and from their shoulders dangled skates.

The fourth member of the troupe was the fat and greasy Trimble, who was wriggling and yelling, with one fat ear gripped between the finger and thumb of Aubrey Racke.

The troubles and sorrows of the egregious Baggy were many and oft, and wherever his fat form was to be seen, the sounds of his wails and lamentations were invariably to be heard also.

At any other time Malcolm would, perhaps, have been amused at the scene, but now he merely raised his head, and glanced duly, and with little interest along the passage as he approached the group.

"There you fat, sneaky frog!" hissed Racke, twisting the unfortunate Baggy's ear. "That's just a taste of what you'll get if you open your dashed trap until I tell— Oh, my hat!"

Racke broke off, and released Trimble's ear as he saw Malcolm approaching.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he exclaimed loudly, with a sneer. "Here's our noble and aristocratic boot-boy fellow goin' skatin'! We shall be havin' Mrs. Minmus and Toby Marsh leaving their dashed work to go skatin' soon!"

Malcolm gave a start as he heard the words, and became aware that Blake's skates were still hanging from his shoulder.

Crooke chuckled.

"I should have thought scotting would have been more in his line," he said.

Racke gave his chum a quick, warning glance; but the damage was already done. The cue had been given to Baggy, who thought he saw a splendid chance of ingratiating himself with the angry Racke.

No. 34.—MICHAEL MULVANEY.



Mulvaney minor—known as "Micky." A lively young junior from Ireland. A brother of a boy! Shares Study No. 4 in the Fourth, with Tompkins, a bright young character like himself, with whom he gets on well. A thoroughly decent youngster in every way. Has a brother in the Sixth.

moment that he was supposed to be only the boot-boy—forgot everything but the thought that these fellows had professed to be his friends, and had betrayed his trust.

"You know jolly well what I mean—or you ought to!" he said bitterly. "I told you chaps my secret because I believed in you. I thought you were decent chaps. But I never dreamed you could be such cads as to betray me—and by means of a dirty anonymous letter, too!"

And while the juniors were still staring, too stupefied to move or speak, the boot-boy shock himself free from Tom Merry's detaining hand, and strode along the passage.

"Well, I'm—I'm hanged!" gasped

He raised a podgy forefinger, and wagged it accusingly at the astounded Malcolm.

"You're bowled out, you boot-cleaning rotter!" he giggled. "You little thought we chaps knew your guilty secret! I bet you never dreamed we should find out you'd run away from school!"

Trimble stopped abruptly, and backed in alarm as Malcolm made a threatening step towards him, with his fists clenched. "I—I say, you—you keep off!" gasped Baggy, in great alarm. "It wasn't me! I mean, I know nothing about you being expelled from Hardinge——"

"What?"

"Ow!" I mean, I know nothing about it! I wasn't listening outside Study No. 6 at all last night, and I never heard you tell Blake and those rotters anything! Honour bright! And as for telling Racke—— Woopoo! Stoppit, Racke, you beast! Oh crickey!"

Trimble yelled lustily as Racke, rushing suddenly at him, began to thump him savagely, and he departed along the passage roaring with pain and surprise.

Racke returned along the passage, growling furiously. Crooke's indiscreet joke had been bad enough, but Trimble had fairly given the game away.

He glanced somewhat apprehensively at the boot-boy, but, to his great relief, Malcolm merely gave him one contemptuous glance, and passed on his way.

He was still fuming with hot anger, but the bitterness and disappointment had gone from his heart.

He hadn't the slightest doubt now as to who had really betrayed him.

Though he had only been at St. Jim's a few days, he was well aware of Baggy Trimble's propensities for eavesdropping, and it was easy to guess that Racke had sent the anonymous letter out of malicious revenge.

He saw plainly that his new chums had not betrayed his confidence, after all, and he bitterly regretted his hasty words and accusation.

But it was too late now for vain regrets. Blake and Merry, and the rest of them, even if they could have forgiven him, had gone, and by the time they returned, he had every intention of being miles away from St. Jim's. Mr. Railton's warning to communicate with the Headmaster of Hardinge had already made him decide upon that, and rather than be captured and taken back to Hardinge like a criminal, he was determined to shake the dust of St. Jim's from his feet for ever.

He left St. Jim's without seeing D'Arcy and the rest, or thanking them for their many acts of kindness and friendship, was hateful; but now his real identity was known, to stay even an hour longer was dangerous.

A few minutes later, up in his small bed-room in the servants' quarters, Malcolm was packing his few belongings into the small handbag, when his eyes fell upon Blake's skates, still lying on the bed where he had thrown them.

And suddenly an idea occurred to him—an idea whereby he could kill two birds with one stone.

If, as Tom Merry had said, the Ryll was safe right down to Wayland, then why not skate there instead of walking to Rylcombe and waiting for the next train to Wayland?

It would be the quicker way, and he would doubtless meet Blake and the rest, which would give him the opportunity he longed for, to say what he had to say to them.

Malcolm made his decision quickly, and slipping the skates into the bag, he

left the school by the tradesmen's entrance, and, with a last look at the ancient school buildings, he turned with a heavy heart, and a moment later was walking with rapid strides towards the river.

Arrived on the frosty bank, Malcolm sat down, and, putting on his skates, he picked up his handbag, and was soon skimming over the ice at a good pace.

At any other time he would have thoroughly enjoyed that exhilarating rush through the keen, frosty air, but he was not in the mood to enjoy anything just then.

Considering everything, those few days had not been unhappy days for him, and he was looking forward with anything but pleasure to facing the world again in search of work.

So far he had passed, or met, very few fellows on the river, for the majority of St. Jim's had chosen the opposite direction to spin up to the island and back.

Presently he saw three juniors skating ahead; they were moving over the ice with as much speed and grace as elephants walking a tight-rope.

And, as he drew closer, he recognized them as Racke, Crooke, and Mellish.

Just then Racke looked round, and, evidently he also recognized Malcolm, for he said something to his companions, and a loud guffaw of laughter followed.

Next moment the juniors ahead spread themselves out with linked arms, and as the river narrowed at that point, Malcolm had perforce to slow down to avoid a collision.

For some moments he skated slowly and patiently, waiting an opportunity to get past, and then, as he realised their intention, his eyes gleamed.

"So that's their little game," he muttered grimly. "Well, here goes!" And with a sudden burst of speed, he shot forward, and crashed into the three, between the linked hands of Racke and Crooke.

The next moment followed a wild clashing and clattering of skates, and wild yells of alarm from Racke & Co., as the human barrier crumbled.

Crooke and Mellish spun round helplessly, and after futile efforts to keep their balance, clutched desperately at each other, and went down with a crash on to the ice.

But Racke was not so lucky; he had borne the brunt of the impact, and he was sent spinning and clattering along, making frantic efforts to regain his balance, but in vain.

Malcolm had cut through the three like a knife through butter, but he pulled up skilfully as he perceived something which the others had apparently not noticed.

A little distance away a tiny stream ran into the Ryll, and the spot was marked by a board, on which was inscribed the one word: "DANGER!"

And towards this, making desperate efforts to stop himself, the unfortunate Racke was spinning and clattering helplessly.

"Look out—stop!" yelled Malcolm. Clatter, clatter, crash!

It was too late. There was a sudden ominous crack, and even as the four stared horror-stricken, Racke smashed through, and nothing but a black, bubbling gap showed where he had fallen.

Racke had vanished!

"Good heavens!" gasped Crooke, with face as white as chalk.

The tragedy was so sudden, so unexpected, that all three stood as if petrified for a brief moment, and then a form

dashed past the shivering Crooke and Mellish.

With three or four swift movements, Malcolm shot to the crumbling edge of the gap and plunged in.

A moment passed that seemed like eternity to Crooke and Mellish, and then, to their intense relief, a black head and the white face of Malcolm appeared, followed at once by the head and face of Racke.

Malcolm was supporting the Shell fellow in his arms, but his face was whiter, if anything, than Racke's, and there was a curious dazed expression on his chaly features.

Racke was conscious, but almost mad with fear. He clutched frantically at the floating ice around him with futile desperation.

Then Malcolm's hand shot up, and caught the crumbling edge of the ice, but it broke from his grasp. Again he clutched, but again it crumbled as he gripped it.

And still Crooke and Mellish stared stupidly at the gap.

"Help!" cried Malcolm faintly. "Go for help, you—you fools!"

"What can we do?" wailed Crooke, looking round helplessly. "Oh, dear

—Crooke broke off suddenly, with a gasp, as the figures of three seniors—Kildare, Darrel, and Rusden—came speeding round a curve in the distance.

"Help!" shouted Crooke, waving his arms frantically. "Shout for help, Mellish, you fool!"

The three seniors came along in a burst of terrific speed, their eyes fixed in surprise on the contortions of Crooke and Mellish.

Suddenly Kildare seemed to see the gap in the ice, and he swerved towards it.

"Gas, ropes—fences—anything!" he called over his shoulder tensely.

And next moment he reached the gap and plunged in.

"Take him!" muttered Malcolm feebly. "I—I'm done!"

Kildare took Racke from the junior's arms, and swam strongly, as Darrel and Rusden came speeding up from the bank with a hurdle between them.

The two seniors rushed it over the ice, and when near slid it cautiously towards the gap.

Darrel crawled along it, and, taking Racke from the captain's arms, handed him on to Rusden.

Kildare turned, treading water—just in time to see Malcolm disappear beneath the black water as his hands slipped from the ice he was gripping.

He dived like a flash, and when he reappeared he was supporting the limp form of the boot-boy in his strong arms. "Carefully, Darrel!" gasped Kildare, handing up the junior. "He's had a nasty knock on the head, and is unconscious!"

Kildare climbed out, unaided, and a moment later he was helping to carry the insensible form of Malcolm towards the bank.

By this time quite a crowd of wondering St. Jim's fellows had arrived, and with them were Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., who had abandoned their intention of staying to tea at Wayland.

"There's a farmhouse yonder," said Kildare, pointing across the white field. "If Merry and some of you fellows will help to carry Malcolm there, I'll take Racke home. He looks not much the worse, and a good spin will put us both right."

Racke had recovered rapidly, and, save for his white face and bedraggled ap-

pearance, he certainly looked little the worse for his immersion.

And a moment later Kildare had gripped his arm, and he was rushed on towards St. Jim's at a speed that soon sent the warm blood tingling through the veins of both.

They arrived at St. Jim's in a warm glow, and Kildare, without a moment's delay, rushed Racke up to the bath-room; then, after a hot bath and change of clothing himself, he reported the accident to the Head, and thence down to the gates to wait.

Presently Blake & Co., the Terrible Three, with a crowd of other fellows, came swarming up, and almost immediately after a farmer's trap dashed through the gates, and stopped as Kildare stepped forward.

Darrel was driving, and seated behind him were Rushden and Malcolm.

The boot-boy, with head bandaged and body wrapped in rugs, was leaning against Rushden, and his face was ashen.

"Well," asked Kildare anxiously, "how is he?"

"In a bad way, I'm afraid," said Darrel gravely. "He's had a nasty knock at the back of the head with a piece of ice."

"Better get him to the sunny at once," said Kildare, stepping away from the trap.

Darrel whipped up the pony, and the trap bowled across the dusky quad towards the sanatorium.

The crowd dispersed and went indoors, discussing the affair almost in whispers. The accident had cast a shadow over all St. Jim's, and even Aubrey Racke, as

his glance wandered towards the twinkling lights over in the sunny that evening, felt more than a twinge of conscience and found himself regretting his cowardly betrayal of the fellow who had risked his life to save his own.

CHAPTER 10.

All Serene!

"A NY news, Kildare?"

Tom Merry asked that question as Eric Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, came striding along the Shell passage after tea.

Tom Merry, with a crowd of Shell and Fourth fellows, was standing outside Study No. 10, and they were discussing in subdued tones the one absorbing topic at St. Jim's that evening—the accident on the river, and the heroic part played by Malcolm, the boot-boy.

Kildare stopped and smiled good-naturedly at the group of anxious juniors.

"Yes, Merry, the best of news," he said quietly. "Malcolm's injury is not so serious as we at first feared. He has had a severe shaking up; but, in the doctor's opinion, he should be up and about in a few days."

"Good! That's splendid news!" exclaimed Tom Merry quietly.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus fervently. "I am very glad to hear that, dear boy!"

Kildare nodded cheerfully, and passed on along the passage.

But the faces of Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three, at least, were anything but cheerful, despite the good news that Malcolm was out of danger.

Though all anxiety was now allayed, they knew for a certainty now that Malcolm's secret was a secret no longer, and that it was only a matter of time before the unfortunate runaway would be hauled back in disgrace to Hardinge.

With the name of Malcolm in everyone's mouth, it was only to be expected that Baggy Trimble proved unable to resist the temptation to chatter, and the startling story of Malcolm's secret was now on everyone's lips.

"It—it's rotten!" muttered Tom Merry thickly. "And the worst of it is, he thinks we betrayed him. He must be feeling frightfully sick about it all, poor beggar!"

"I feel I could smash that cowardly sweep Racke!" said Blake fiercely. "I suppose there is no doubt he sent that beastly anonymous letter to the Head?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid not. Manners overheard Railton tell Kildare that the Head found it lying on his desk when he returned to his study after tea last night, and we ourselves spotted the cad sneaking out of the Head's study when we left you last night."

"It beats me how on earth Racke & Co. got wind of it at all," said Blake, in a puzzled tone. "Only we chaps know—"

Tom Merry grinned faintly.

"Better ask Trimble," he said. "When we found the yarn spreading we took the trouble to trace it to its source, and, as we expected, the source proved to be our friend Baggy. And, to save his own skin, he babbled out the truth. It appears the fat rotter was listening at the keyhole of

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Study No. 6 last night and heard every word we said. And it was he who told Rake."

"Bai Jove! The frightful wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"But don't worry about him," chuckled Tom Merry. "When we'd finished with him he was like a pricked balloon. I fancy it will be a long time before he listens at keyholes again."

Blake grinned.

"All the same," he said grimly. "I don't think that rotter Rake ought to escape scot-free. I vote we go and settle with him now."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I fancy he's been punished enough," he said quietly. "He stopped me in the Shell passage about half an hour ago and asked me if I knew how Malcolm was going on. And he looked frightfully sick, I can tell you. I really believe he's thoroughly ashamed of himself for once. This affair has shaken him up more."

Tom Merry paused at Mr. Raiton came along the passage, his face grave.

"Ah, Merry," he said grimly. "I've been looking for you! Will you follow me to the Head's study, please?"

And Tom Merry, exchanging a quick glance with his chums, followed the Housemaster along the passage.

Mr. Raiton knocked on the Head's door, and was about to enter, when he caught as the voice of Dr. Holmes was heard within.

"One moment, Merry!" he said, closing the door again gently. "Dr. Holmes appears to be engaged on the telephone."

The master and junior waited in the passage until the tinkle of a bell and the sound of the receiver being jammed on the desk told them that the Head had finished his conversation on the telephone.

"Come in, Merry!" said Mr. Raiton. "Dr. Holmes is again. Mr. Raiton entered, and the junior followed him into the room."

Dr. Holmes was standing by the table, with one hand still on the telephone, and a curious mixture of surprise and pleasure on his kindly face.

"I have brought Merry to be questioned, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Raiton, with a glance of surprise at the doctor's face.

"Ah, yes, Merry, of course!" said Dr. Holmes. "But since you left the room, Mr. Raiton, an extraordinary thing has happened, and it will not now be necessary to question Merry with regard to Malcolm."

Tom Merry gave a start, and Mr. Raiton raised his eyebrows in astonishment.

"I have just received a telephonic communication from Dr. Mason, the headmaster of Hardinge College, with regard to the runaway boy Malcolm," said Dr. Holmes.

"Then the statements made in that—that anonymous letter are quite correct, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Raiton, in great surprise.

"Quite! The boy is undoubtedly the Roy Malcolm who was sentenced to a flogging and expulsion for striking a master at Hardinge College."

"And Dr. Mason desires that the boy be detained, I presume, sir?"

"Happily, that proceeding is not now necessary," said Dr. Holmes, with a smile. "Since Malcolm left Hardinge a very unpleasant incident occurred there. A few days ago, I understand, this Mr. Haslow—the master whom Malcolm at-

tunate that Malcolm's illness will delay matters."

"I have explained all that to Dr. Mason, who has expressed his delight and pride that one of his boys has performed such an heroic action."

Mr. Raiton turned, smiling, to Tom Merry, who was standing with radiant face as he began to realise what the good news would mean to Malcolm.

"You may go now, Merry," he said. "As you, no doubt, have guessed, Dr. Holmes wished to question you in regard to the real identity of Malcolm, the boot boy. It had come to our knowledge that you were friendly with the boy, and we concluded it quite possible he had confided in you."

And Mr. Raiton gave the junior a kindly nod of dismissal; but Tom Merry, after hesitating a moment, turned to the Head.

"May I go to the sanatorium and tell Malcolm the good news, sir?" he pleaded eagerly.

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"Yes, you may, my boy," he answered. "I am glad to say that Malcolm is now out of danger, and I've no doubt the good news will prove to be the finest possible medicine for him."

And Tom Merry, with a happy flush on his smiling face, went.

A week later Malcolm was better and returned to Hardinge College. He was escorted in triumph to the station by the Terrible Three, Blake & Co., and a host of St. Jim's fellows. He went gladly and cheerfully, knowing that his troubles were over, and that a welcome awaited him at Hardinge by his old chums and all who knew him there.

And a fortnight later St. Jim's saw him again. But this time he came, not as a boot-boy, but as a member of the Hardinge Junior Football Team. And all St. Jim's cheered him to the echo as he scored the winning goal for Hardinge—though St. Jim's lost the match.

THE END.

(Another grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, next week, entitled: "The Fall of Mr. Ratcliff." Order your copy early.)

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tacked—was caught by Dr. Mason himself in an act of brutal savagery to one of the juniors, and instantly dismissed from the college staff."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Raiton.

"In the circumstances, Dr. Mason is satisfied that Malcolm's act of violence, though extremely insubordinate, was fully justified," went on the Head grimly. "And he wishes me to assure the boy that the sentence of flogging and expulsion are now rescinded, and that if he will return to Hardinge without delay his action in running away will be overlooked."

"I am glad, indeed, to hear that," said Mr. Raiton quietly. "But it is unfor-

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The End of the Fight.

DICK DANBY looked sternly at the Chinaman.

"It seems that you are the thief, Wang Su. How did you come by this stone?" he demanded angrily.

But ere the other could reply Dick had thrust the Dragon's Eye into his pocket, and the next moment was clambering up the mainmast, urged to action by a cry for help from Stella that came from the mist above his head.

"Mastel Dick—Mastel Dick!" cried Wang Su, trying to rise, but only to fall back on the deck with a moan of pain.

But Dick Danby had already reached the main trunk.

Peering through the mist, he saw his girl chum at the extreme end of the mainyard, holding at bay a brawny savage, who was striving to get past the glittering point of the long knife with which she was armed.

A single glance sufficed to show Dick Danby that in another second the burly savage would be within striking distance of Stella, and well he knew that her pony weapon would avail her naught against the short, but deadly stone club with which her foe was armed.

Springing forward, he landed astride the savage's back, and seized his throat with both hands.

For several seconds they swayed backwards and forwards on the rounded spar, then a cry of horror and dismay burst from Stella Kidd's lips as Britisher and Islander rolled off the yard-arm and hurtled through the mist; but whether to fall shattered and with broken limbs on the deck, or into the sea alongside the schooner he could not tell.

Springing to her feet, she ran nimbly along the yard, and, seizing some running rigging, slid swiftly to the deck.

"Hallo, Stella, my girl, you are safe!" cried her father, who almost cannoned against her as he was hastening to find out the reason of the sudden commotion that had broken out alongside the schooner.

Swiftly Stella glanced around her, then joined her father, who was slashing away at something which the bulwarks hid from view.

She reached his side just in time to see a savage roll back from the beading to which he had been clinging, and fall into the sea, which was dark with swimming forms.

"Dad, Dick is there!" she cried, pointing with trembling hand to the water.

"I was being forced off the mainyard by a savage, when he appeared out of

nowhere, jumped on my attacker's back, and both rolled into the sea."

Captain Kidd's bronzed face paled beneath its tan.

"Then heaven help him! If the Islanders don't have him the sharks will," came in despairing tones from his lips.

But even as he spoke, a renewal of the firing, which had died down when, warned by the terrified shouts that their savage allies had fled, the Malays had drawn off, told that they had resumed the attack, and he hastened off to the threatened point.

Rapidly reloading the automatic pistol which she had emptied from the main-trunk into the almost invisible savages who had thronged the decks, Wang Su's stratagem had put them to flight. Stella watched the swimmers, ready to open fire should any attempt to board be made, and straining her eyes in the vain hope of beholding her boy chum.

But Dick Danby was not amongst the swimmers.

As a matter of fact, he never had been. As luck would have it, his dusky opponent and himself had fallen like a bomb-shell in the centre of a war-canoe, the occupants of which, recovering from their panic, were seeking to regain the deck of the schooner unperceived. They had just made fast alongside the Foam when the two bodies had struck their canoe amidships, crumpling her up like a paper boat, and sending her savage crew floundering in the shark-infested sea.

Fortunately for Dick, the savage was beneath him, so received the full force of the impact; but whether he was injured or not the young Britisher did not stop to find out, for directly the waters closed over his head he dived beneath the schooner.

Rising on the other side, he made his way to the reef, and, clinging to a jutting piece of coral, remained perfectly still, both to recover breath, and to find out if all was clear before seeking to rejoin the Foam.

Realising that if he thrust his head over the stern-sheets without hailing his comrades he would most likely be received with a bullet or the butt-end of a rifle, he was about to rise to his feet and shout, when a sudden burst of fire came from the reef, and the next moment a number of dark forms, whom he recognised as Malays, dashed themselves against the vessel's stern, shouting madly and firing at the defenders.

From the first appearance of the Malays Dick had realised that they were not in earnest, and he was just beginning to wonder what fiendish scheme the attack was masking, when he saw a man in European clothes, who he knew could

only be the Portuguese renegade Mendoza, hang a round object against the vessel's rudder by means of small iron hooks, then retreat whence he had come, followed by his companions.

The Malays seemed likely to pay dearly for their temerity, for at that moment a sudden gust of wind blew aside the mist, revealing their retreating forms, an easy mark to the defenders, who began to take heavy toll of their ranks as they hastened over the surf-covered reef.

But of this Dick knew nothing. He had sprung to his feet, and was already disengaging the deadly bomb from its resting-place, half expecting that it would explode and blow him to pieces ere he could hurl it away from the ship.

With feverish haste, he turned and sent the missile flying after the fleeing men, who, caught in the open at point-blank range, were making every effort to escape.

Anxiously Dick watched the deadly sphere circle through the air until it exploded with a deafening report just above where Mendoza and two men were stumbling over the uneven reef.

For a fraction of a second a blinding flash of light hid the spot from view, and when the thin wreaths of smoke had cleared Mendoza and those nearest him had disappeared.

At that moment Harry Fielding thrust his head over the stern.

"Dick, you perambulating perisher, what are you doing there?" he demanded, in amazement.

"Just mouching round," laughed Dick, as he grasped his friend's extended hand and half-clambered and was half-dragged on board.

"Where's Stella?" he asked, as he squeezed past the Bull Pup.

"Weeping over your watery grave," grinned the skipper, pointing to where the girl was standing by the starboard bulwark, searching the sea with tear-dimmed, misery-filled eyes. "Fow her over to port, and let me get a line on the beggars," he added, swinging the quick-firer round and pointing the muzzle to where some half-dozen big war canoes, filled with men, were assembled some half a mile away.

A priest was standing up in the centre canoe gesticulating violently, and, doubtless, from the way he pointed towards the Foam, urging his unwilling men to another attack.

Wondering what made his heart beat so rapidly, Dick Danby approached the weeping girl, and touched her on the shoulder.

"Come over the other side, Stella,"

"You're in the line of fire," he said, with a low laugh.
The girl turned swiftly round, gazed incredulously at her boy-chum for a few seconds then, with a glad cry of: "Dick—dear old Dick—I thought you had gone under!" flung her arms round his neck.
"You'll get your soft head blown off by your silly shoulders if you don't sheer off!" roared Captain Kidd, and, blushing furiously, Stella and Dick sprang apart.
The next moment the deep woot of the Bull Pup thundered in their ears, and a well-aimed shell hurtled unpleasantly close to the gesticulating priest, who, letting out a yell a railway-engine could not have surpassed, fell headlong out of the canoe, to the stern of which he clung whilst his terror-stricken followers sent the light craft flying over the waves, their pace accelerated by the occasional shells which Captain Kidd sent after them until they disappeared round a jutting promontory.

The Story of the Dragon's Eye.

THE Islanders had suffered terribly. The stern of the vessel was a veritable shambles, and whilst they waited for the tide to rise sufficiently to float the Foam, the enemy's dead were consigned to the waves, and the decks scrubbed down by Kao and two Kanakas, all that were left of the schooner's native crew.

All the white men had honourable scars to show that it was no cheap victory they had gained; but Wang Su had been carried downstairs below to Dick's bunk, where he lay unconscious, though Captain Kidd, who possessed a deep-sea skipper's knowledge of rough surgery, had successfully withdrawn the spear, and had skillfully bound up the wound.

By the time the little craft had been made ship-shape the tide had risen sufficiently for her to be hauled off the beach of rock into which the Malays had hauled her.

"Seems a pity to leave that gold behind, Dick," Schwab and Mendoza are dead, unless they have the eighteen lives of two cats between them, and I don't think the Islanders will be anxious to huckle us again," said Captain Kidd, as the Foam's petrol engine thrust her slowly towards her former anchorage.

"As you like, sir. I can bring it up in a couple of hours," agreed Dick.

Captain Kidd's answer was to order the anchor to be dropped, then, on board, except Stella, who was nursing Wang Su, he insisted in launching the gig and the canvas boat and getting the diving-gear on board.

But the bars were never recovered. Just as Dick Danby, with Joe Maddox to man the canvas boat, and to haul the treasure on to the rock, stepped into the boat, a Kanaka uttered a cry of alarm, and pointed excitedly to where a huge fleet of, at least, forty strongly-manned war canoes was bearing down on them from behind the tall cliffs, less than half a mile to eastwards of where they lay.

With a cry of rage, Captain Kidd rushed to the Bull Pup, and, thrusting a cartridge into the breech, swung her muzzle round.

But, even with his finger on the trigger, he paused, and, turning round, cried:

"A few bars of gold isn't worth more bloodshed! Cut the cable! Start the petrol engines; then all hands aloft to hoist sail!"

A cheer from the Britishers told how thoroughly they were in agreement with

him, as, despite the smart of their wounds, the three chums and the Kanakas sprang into the rigging. Soon the Foam was under weigh and turning her stern to her pursuers.

A howl of rage burst from the canoes as the Islanders saw that their prey was escaping, and, urging forward their swift craft with paddle and sail, followed in pursuit.

At first they overhauled their quarry; but as sail after sail was set, and the Foam leant over before a favouring breeze, they were gradually left behind.

But the swifter of the canoes stuck like leeches in the wake of the schooner, until the island was but a speck in the distance, and the sun low down in the heavens when they gave up the chase, and hastened back.

It was as well that the Foam ran into

above his head, was his erstwhile merry little Chinese servant.

"Hallo, Wang! How goes it, old chap?" he asked cheerily.

The Chinaman looked with lack-lustre eyes at his master, but said nothing.

"Buck up, man! You're surely not going to get up when, thanks to you, we have got what we sought! Think what a top-dog mandarin you'll be in China, with your share of the treasure!" persisted Dick.

Wang Su shook his head, and two tears rolled down his cheek.

"Wang Su nevel see China—nevel no mole! Fathel diee, Wang Su diee!" he said, almost indifferently, as though death was of no consequence.

"Nonsense, old chap! Your wound is going on splendidly! Besides, Wang, I can't spare you!" cried Dick earnestly.



Anxiously Dick watched the deadly sphere circle through the air, until it exploded, with a deafening report, just above where Mendoza and the two men were stumbling over the uneven reef. (See page 17.)

fine weather, for the following morning the whole crew was almost incapacitated.

Now the excitement was over, and the need for action passed, all felt the strain of the past strenuous days, to say nothing of the pain and weakness, consequent upon the wounds they had received during their last fight for the Pathan's drowned gold.

But a day's rest, and the clean, pure sea air worked wonders, and by the third day they were on the high-road to recovery.

All but Wang Su, and he was growing weaker and weaker every hour, until Stella, who had nursed him assiduously, told Dick that she very much feared that the brave little Chinaman, to whom they all owed their lives, would not live to see land.

Alarmed by the girl's words, Dick Danby hastened into the tiny cabin in which Wang lay. He could scarcely believe that the wasted, forlorn-looking, little figure, laying with wide-open, staring eyes, gazing unseeing at the boards

"Chinaman wantee diee! Chinaman diee!" returned Wang Su obstinately.

Dick Danby looked at the man who had so often saved his life, and who had served him with such devotion in alarm.

He knew that, in common with many other Eastern races, even a perfectly sound Chinaman may, under certain circumstances, lay down and die without having anything organically wrong with him—how much more one suffering with so painful a wound as that which had stretched the gallant little Chinaman low?

A sudden thought caused him to thrust his hand into his pocket.

"Is it this that is troubling you, Wang?" he asked, producing the Dragon's Eye.

An almost miraculous change took place in the Chinaman's face.

His eyes flashed, his face flushed, and his very cheeks seemed to fill out as he seized the diamond, and his lips moving as though in prayer, placed it first on his forehead, then on his heart, and, finally, pressed it to his lips.

"Shutree dool!" he said at last; and Dick complied.

Half an hour later Dick Danby appeared on deck carrying Wang Su in his arms. Hastening to the stern, where his friends were chatting over their adventures, he placed his burden in a deck chair.

"Why, Dick, what have you been doing to Wang? He looks almost well again!" cried Stella.

The Chinaman smiled.

"Mastel Dick list chop doctol," he declared.

"He's well on the way to making a cure of you, at any rate," laughed Stella. "But what is that you have got in your hand?"

A momentary look of alarm flashed into the Chinaman's eyes; but Dick Danby laid a hand reassuringly on his arm.

"It is the Dragon's Eye," he explained. "The Dragon's Eye" echoed the others.

"Yes, and when you have heard all, I think you will agree that no one has a better right to it than our friend Wang," asserted Dick confidently. "But I'd better tell the tale as Wang has just told it to me."

The others eagerly agreeing, Dick continued:

"The most closely-guarded, and venerated treasure of the Temple of Tin Tope, situated amongst the mountains of Western China, is the golden dragon of Wo Yang, a gentleman who, I understand, holds a very high position amongst the ten thousand gods worshipped in that temple. It was upon this dragon that Wo Yang was borne to the Better Land, whence now the animal got back to earth, its informant is unable to say."

"He bears a god's likeness, the dragon is covered with scales of gold, each one of which is worth precious stones; but its greatest treasure is its single eye, which you now see in Wang Su's hand."

The little Chinaman nodded with a look of vigour as he held up the stone for inspection.

"So revered was this dragon, that it was kept behind great railings, beyond which no one but Wang's father was allowed to pass. In fact, he alone was entrusted with the key of the door leading into the inner sanctuary," resumed Dick. "Now, to trace the cackle and come to the horses, it happened one day that the Dragon's Eye was stolen, and, as the thieves achieved their object without breaking, or in any way disturbing the gilded case in which his dragonship resided, Wang's father was accused of the theft, and sentenced to death. On this Wang, who was a victim in the priest-loom to which his father belonged, stepped forward, and, with filial piety, offered himself as a victim in his father's place. To this the abbot, or, whoever the old Johnnie was who ruled the monastery to which the temple belonged, would not consent, but kindly released the prisoner for a year, announcing that if by the end of that time Wang Su succeeded in recovering the missing eye, his father's life would be spared. Should he fail, however, his father would die with all the tortures for which the Chinese are famed."

"Determined to succeed if it was in the power of man to do so, Wang started on his journey, and don't ask me how he did it—traced the diamond from the original thieves to a trader, and from him to a European, who placed it in the hands of a safe. Now can I tell you how he found out that we were after the Parthian's gold. But he did, and—well, I don't think I need bore you with what we all know."

"Except how he got possession of the stone," interposed Captain Kidd.

This, Dick explained.

"Might have told us what he wanted," growled the skipper. "If he'd wanted a dozen dragon's eyes he could have them. He's earned them, anyhow."

"I told you so, Wang! The Dragon's Eye is yours, though missie will have to go without her souvenir," said Dick.

Wang Su smiled urbanely at the girl.

"Me give miss list chop big stone when she muffed," he promised, at which Stella blushed, and, strangely enough, Dick Danby blushed also.

From that day Wang Su regained health.

"And now, lads, what next?" demanded the skipper, a few minutes later.

Dick Danby looked at the speaker in surprise.

"Why, I thought we had decided to make for Sydney, and deposit the gold in the Bank of Australia," he replied.

"I know all about that. What I mean is, what are you boys going to do with the huge fortunes you will have at your disposal?" demanded Captain Kidd.

"Harry Fielding and Joe Maddox looked at Dick as though asking him to be their spokesman."

He nodded back, and asked:

"What do you intend to do, skipper?"

Captain Kidd laid his hand affectionately on the skipper's bulwark.

"The old Foam has stuck to me in bad times, and I'm going to stick to her in good," he replied. "But no more trading for us. I'll deck her out with paint and brass-work until the saucy old beauty won't know herself. Then I'll buy an island I have my eye on, and turn it into a safe anchorage for my old age, where Stella and I'll live, when the sea isn't calling."

"And, of course, our island home will be yours wherever you care to use it," interposed Stella; her sharp eyes detecting a certain disappointment in the boys' faces.

"We had thought of buying a sea-going steam yacht, and seeing something of the world before settling down," declared Dick Danby.

"By and sea, why not? There's that about the sea that keeps a man fresh and clean, and I don't see how you could spend your money better," agreed Captain Kidd.

"And we had hoped that you would command her?" went on Dick eagerly. Captain Kidd ran his fingers thoughtfully through his beard.

"Maybe maybe," he said, at last. "you boys will want someone to look after you." But I'll have my island, and the old Foam all the same."

Dick Danby sprang excitedly to his feet.

"Hurrah! Then we'll be together, after all," he cried, delighted at the prospect of their not being separated.

"All but Wang Su," he added, more soberly as he looked regretfully at his faithful Chinese servant.

"Wang Su come, too," declared the Chinaman. "He goes China. Give up Dragon's Eye. Come lackee. Be Mastel Dick's boy."

"So you shall, old chap! Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!" cried Dick.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" echoed the others. Their stirring cheers seemed not only a fitting close to their late adventurous travels as treasure seekers, but also to hail a new career of travel and adventure on many seas.

THE END.

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