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MAKE THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S YOUR CHUMS!

YOU WILL MEET
THEM INSIDE!

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TOM MERRY & Co's NEW RÔLE!



COUNCILLOR WALKER GETS LEFT!

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



The Editor's Chat.



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers.
Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetsway House,
Arrington Street, London, E.C. 4.

For Next Wednesday.

"TRIMBLE'S TANDEM!"

Next week's story of St. Jim's is one of the most amusing that Mr. Martin Clifford has given us for some time. The sensation which was caused when Trimble's tandem arrived at the school was tremendous—for it was a very different machine from the one which was expected. Skimpole joined Trimble in the first ride, and the result—well, I cannot describe it here. You must read

"TRIMBLE'S TANDEM!"

and the result of that first ride will make you roar with laughter, as will also many other of the exciting events which accompanied the appearance of the wonderful machine. Order your copy of the GEM at once, and make sure of this grand story.

EASTER.

It is rather the fashion to run down the weather at Easter. True, there has been much occasion for this sort of thing in the past. Only too often we see snowflakes falling amidst the pink-and-white almond blossom; but, on the other hand, Easter does sometimes turn up trumps with just that sunny weather which wealthy folk frequently seek for in vain in the South of France. But Easter, which is upon us, is the first real holiday of the season, and contains a cheery little bunch of days, thus enabling the hard worker to get far ahead, if he feels that way and can run to it.

I was talking the other day to a man who knew the Scilly Isles well, and he told me that for a holiday there was no place to compare with them. It is the forty miles of tumbling sea, often extremely rough, which sets some people against these islands where the flowers are grown for Covent Garden Market, or a good many of them. Once you get to Treasco, or St. Martin's, or St. Mary's, you find yourself in a land of balmy breezes and immense charm. The archipelago—there are numerous islands—is the site of old Lyonesse, and the world goes well there. Numbers of the Scilly inhabitants have never troubled to cross to the mainland of Cornwall.

Scilly is good enough for them. The islands have plenty of visitors from the coast of France. That is one of the hundred fascinations of Cornwall—the association of France, with such places as Falmouth, with its amazing harbour and its many steps. In the shops you see copies of the papers published in Brest and Rennes and Vannes.

THE IDEAL HOLIDAY.

Has there ever yet been such a thing? As a rule, something or other happens, especially when there is a party of folks, to mar the pleasure. I suppose the best kind of holiday is the somewhat selfish one taken by the individual who just sort of

of strolls off and sees the world with the "Leave-for-nobody" air about him, in the best style of the old miller of Dee.

If such a jaunt can be taken without any selfishness—and this is but seldom, for we are all dependent one upon another—then the lonely holiday-maker can have the best of times. That is, if he is a philosopher, and likes to chum in with all and sundry. But he is free of a companion who may have different tastes to himself, and most likely has, for we are all different. Moreover, you come to like a friend better if you leave him for a few days or weeks. You have leisure to think him over and admire his good points all the more.

It is no use tramping off for a few days out of the rut with a man who prefers mutton to beef, while you don't care for sheep and vote for the ox. Still, that is neither here nor there. Easter does, at least, give to many a tired worker the chance of finding himself again and seeing new scenes—even if it is out of the question to go as far as Scilly. It really does not signify where you go, so long as you feast your eyes on something fresh and interesting. And any new scene is interesting.

The astonishing part is that so little is known by most of us of the country; also the town. It is nobody's fault. It is just because life is so. The average fellow has his work cut and dried, and his life. He goes from one point to another morning and evening, and that's about all. He might live near the Tower of London, but all the same, never see the famous old pile, far less penetrate into it and see that strangely small suit of armour worn by the Black Prince.

Or he may be within an easy ride of Kew Gardens and never see them. There are few more alluring places than Kew, where you find whole chunks of English History waiting for you—facts worth noting, too—to say nothing of bluebell expanses, and a wilderness, where trees of a myriad varieties are growing. The late Professor Bowdler Sharpe, who knew more about bird life than any man I ever met, used to say that he owned the most magnificent garden that ever existed—namely, the garden at Kew. Well, he could go there when he chose, and that comes to very much the same thing, after all.

THE LEVISOONS.

If there is one thing I would like to do more than another, either at Easter or any old time, it is to satisfy a splendid and a loyal and always interested London correspondent, who has taken the Levisons—Ernest, Frank, and, last but not least, Miss Doris—under her special protection. She writes me fascinating letters about these characters. Thanks to the art of Mr. Martin Clifford and her own receptivity, the three characters named are living entities to her, and she wants a story about them, in which all three are well in the limelight.

The long-suffering Ernest is her hero. This is because of the troubles the finer chap has gone through and borne so well. Women are like that. Where there has been trouble, there they are with tact, encouragement, and sympathy. Now, it is not always easy to fashion out a special story, for arrangements are made far in advance.

Moreover, my valued correspondent is really asking for something a bit older in style than the majority of the GEM garnis—that is, something which goes right to the heart of life and the world, and shows sacrifice and deep thought. Such a story is now and then acceptable, and I mean to have it, but I must ask my girl chum to overlook delay, also to realise that little changes in character description in a long series do not by any means infer that the traditions laid down in the bygone have been cast to the winds.

SWANK.

There was a question tumbled in upon me the other day concerning how far a fellow was justified in being proud of things he has done. It is a query which wants consideration. Circumstances are like the weather, very variable. The cocky personage who is always talking about the prodigious work he has got through is simply an A.I. nuisance.

Still, there is no need to be too humble. Uriah Heap stands out as an example of the wrong kind of humility, which is just as deplorable as cocksureness and swank. Both kinds are kickable!

Personally, I do not fancy self-assertion pays in the long run. The quiet chap wins in the end. Worst of all is the crowing which is on occasion indulged in over others' misfortunes. Oh, it is not called crowing! There is an outward show of sympathy; but, somehow, the words of consolation seem to have a false ring about them.

This is quite different from the feeling expressed in the ancient rhyme:

"Cock-a-doodle-do!
Mother's lost her shoe,
Father's lost his fiddlestick,
And doesn't know what to do.
Cock-a-doodle-do!"

Which just shows a desire to chortle over trouble. Most reprehensible this! And yet, unless the loser of the fiddlestick was a good player, perhaps it was just as well for the neighbours that he did lose the article.

My correspondent can safely leave other folks to do the crowing over his achievements. If you want to blow a trumpet, blow someone else's.

Upon Editor



TOM MERRY & Co.'s NEW ROLE

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy to the Rescue!

"**B**AI Jove, deah boys! No twains!"

"My giddy aunt!"

"What on earth has happened?"

A party of St. Jim's juniors had halted outside Rylcombe Station, and gazed with wonder and dismay at the notice that confronted them, fixed over the booking-office pigeon-hole.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell. "This is lively, I must say! We shall never get over to Abbotsford at this rate!"

"Oh crums!"

There were a dozen fellows congregated in the station vestibule—Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Talbot, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble of the Shell, and Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Digby, Herries, Reilly, and Levison of the Fourth.

The chums of the School House at St. Jim's were on their way to Abbotsford to witness a football match between the Abbotsford Rangers and Sefton United. Tom Merry & Co. were taking a keen interest in that match, for the St. Jim's First Eleven, under the command of stalwart Kildare, were playing the Rangers on Saturday next, and rumour had it that Abbotsford Rangers were "hot stuff."

So Tom Merry & Co., to whom the First Eleven match was as dear as it was to Kildare and his fellow seniors, were making their way over to Abbotsford to watch the form of the Rangers and report to Kildare when they returned.

But, having arrived at Rylcombe Station in order to take train for Abbotsford, they were confronted by this notice, which informed them that no trains were running until further notice.

The chums of the School House blinked dolefully at the notice, and then at each other.

"This was more than they had bargained for."

"There must be a strike on, or a breakdown, or something," said Tom Merry perplexedly. "Oh, hello! Here's

Mr. Roberts, the stationmaster. Let's ask him."

Mr. Roberts, the stationmaster at Rylcombe, emerged from the booking-office door, followed by another man in the railway company's uniform, whom the St. Jim's juniors recognised as the stationmaster at Wayland Junction, the next station to Rylcombe, where the local, linked up with the main line to Abbotsford and London.

Both men wore worried frowns, and they had evidently been discussing together the unusual circumstance which had caused the railway traffic to cease.

Mr. Roberts nodded to the St. Jim's fellows, and stopped as Tom Merry approached.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Roberts!" said Tom. "What's wrong with the trains to-day?"

Mr. Roberts shook his head dolefully.

"A strike, Master Merry," he said.

"All the men working the local lines are out, and we're in a terrible fix!"

"Oh Jemima!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway, Mr. Roberts, for what reason are the men out on strike?"

Mr. Roberts shook his head.

"For a very good reason, I'm afraid,"

he said. "You see, a number of the railwaymen were tenants of cottages built on a piece of ground which stretched along beside the line just outside Wayland. The ground does not belong to the railway company, neither do the cottages. Councillor Walker, of Wayland, owns the land and the cottages, and the company have held them on a lease. Now the lease has run out, and, instead of allowing us to renew it, Councillor Walker wants the land and the cottages back, so that he can let them out to other people at greatly increased rents. That means the railway servants now living in those cottages will be turned out, and will have no place to live in. The railway company is helpless, and I don't see how matters can be improved unless Mr. Walker gives in."

"The wotah!" exclaimed Gussy fiercely. "So the men have gone on strike?"

"Yes, they came out this morning," said the stationmaster. "Men from other local stations have joined the strikers, and all traffic between here and Rylcombe has ceased."

The St. Jim's juniors looked dolefully at each other.

"I—I suppose the men can't be blamed for coming out," said Tom Merry slowly. "Although they are not exactly hitting at the Walker rotter, but at the company, and the public besides."

"That's just it!" agreed the stationmaster. "I don't believe the men would have gone so far, but they have been incited by a rascal named Roakes, whom we discharged a month ago, for stealing goods from loaded trucks. He and a few other men of his kidney have seized this opportunity to create trouble, and now the men are asking for the reinstatement of Roakes and his fellow-rascals."

"Oh crums!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "So there doesn't seem to be much chance of a settlement yet—eh?"

The stationmaster shook his head, and glanced at his companion.

The stationmaster from Wayland growled and, clenching his fists, smote the air wildly, evidently in a state of great exasperation and annoyance.

"It's a confounded shame!" he growled. "The men don't seem to realise what a lot of harm they are doing."

I had a message through from Abbotsford this morning, and they say unless a large consignment of perishable goods are removed by Saturday there'll be the dickens to pay. The trucks are not even loaded, and the goods are due at Wayland this morning. Of course, no train can be run, and—it looks as though the goods will go to ruin. The company would have to pay up a pretty figure for that, and—ah—Oh, confound it!"

The Wayland stationmaster seemed very much put out.

The St. Jim's juniors looked at each other meaningly.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "we shan't get to Abbotsford by train this afternoon, that's a cert! What on earth are we to do?"

"Sorry, young gentlemen!" said Mr.

Roberts. "I can assure you we are in a worse fix than you are. Here's Wednesday, and it doesn't seem likely that the men will return to work this week, at any rate. And there's a market on at Abbotsford, too, on Saturday, and the local people will all be wanting to get there. What we shall do, goodness only knows!"

"Is every man jack of 'em out, then?" inquired Blake.

"All but one or two engine-drivers—who, of course, can't work with the signalmen, guards, and porters out!" replied the stationmaster morosely. "Men can't be spared, either, from other sections of the line, for this is a busy time of the year."

Feeling far from cheerful, Tom Merry & Co. left the station, and wended their footsteps out into the High Street.

"Hang it all!" moaned Monty Lowther. "We can't walk!"

"No, wathah not, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus quite cheerfully. "But I've got an idea."

All eyes were turned upon the noble swell of St. Jim's.

"Anything good?" asked Blake.

"Yass, wathah!" said Gussy. "My patah turned up twumps with a fivah this mornin', and—"

"Hoorsy!" chorled Monty Lowther. "We'll have a giddy motor-car—eh, Gussy?"

"Yass, that's my ideah," replied D'Arcy. "We can get a couple of touring-cars at the garage for about a sovereign each, can't we?"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Gussy, old man, we are proud of you! This way, old scout, to the garage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Gussy!"

The party of juniors moved off to the garage in the High Street, and there Gussy chartered two touring-cars, which, although rather dilapidated and ancient, served their immediate purpose very well.

"Get in, deah boys!" said Gussy, when the cars, each in charge of a chauffeur, were ready in the High Street. "I say, Wobinson!"

Gussy addressed his chauffeur as "Robinson," and the others grinned.

"Yessir?"

"You needn't bothah, deah boy—I can drive!"

The chauffeur shook his head, chuckling.

"I reckon I'll 'ave to go with you, young sir," he said. "Cars is expensive nowdays, you know."

"Weally, I can drive—"

"Oh, don't chinwag, Gus!" implored Blake. "We want to make a start. Hoz inside, and let's be off!"

So Gussy gave up his idea of driving the car to Abbotsford, and climbed into his seat beside the chauffeur.

"Right away!" sang out Tom Merry, and, with a merry toot, the two cars moved off, bearing the heroes of St. Jim's towards Abbotsford and their very important footer match.

They arrived at the football-ground in excellent time, and took their seats in the grand-stand.

Their anticipations that the match would prove worth seeing were more than realised. The Abbotsford Rangers played like very Trojans, and it was an exciting, thrilling game from start to finish. When the final whistle blew the home team trooped victoriously from the field of glory, winners by five goals to two.

"They're jolly hot stuff," said Tom Merry, as, after having partaken of tea in a local bunshop, they clambered once

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more into the chartered motor-cars. "I reckon old Kildare will have a hard nut to crack, if he's going to lick the Rangers!"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Blake. "Our First Eleven is going great guns lately, you know, Tommy! I reckon Kildare will pull off a draw, at least."

"Anyway," put in Clifton Dane, "that match on Saturday is going to be the match of the term, and we musn't miss it."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry decisively. "Even though the local railwaymen are on strike!"

During the journey back to St. Jim's, Tom Merry was very thoughtful. The others discussed the game they had just witnessed in animated tones, but the captain of the Shell was turning over an idea in his head.

Tom did not speak of his thoughts to the others, however, but maintained a profound silence until St. Jim's was reached.

The arrival of the chums of the School House in a couple of motor-cars created great excitement at the school gates.

"Doin' things in style, Gussy—what!" remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew pleasantly, as the juniors alighted. "I had no idea you'd made up a glee-party to see the Abbotsford match."

"Wats, deah boy!" responded Gussy, as he gave "Wobinson" a handsome tip. "The railwaymen are on strike, you know, and as theah were no twains wunning, we took a couple of cahs!"

Cardew whistled, and the other boys congregated at the gates gave vent to other expressions of surprise and dismay.

"I say!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "That will put the tin-hat on us fellows going over to see the First Eleven play at Abbotsford on Saturday, won't it?"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Kerruish.

"Poor old Kildare, too, will have to stump up for a brake or a motor or something, in order to get the team over there!"

"Oh, help!"

"Let's get the morning off, and walk it, Tommy," suggested Blake, as they made their way across the Close towards the School House. "I'd rather take a walk to Abbotsford than mug Latin with Lathom!"

"Yass, wathah!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I'm afraid the Head wouldn't consent to that," he said, grinning faintly.

"But take my tip, old sons—wait and see."

And the heroes of the Lower School departed to their various studies for prep.

CHAPTER 2. Startling News!

"SEEN the notice, you chaps?" inquired Percy Mellish, rushing excitedly into the Common-room on the following evening.

The Common-room was crowded with juniors, and all eyes were turned upon Mellish of the Fourth.

"What notice?" demanded Jack Blake, who was playing chess with Dick Julian.

"The Head's notice—about the railway strike!" gasped Mellish breathlessly. "He wants some of the chaps to go down and work on the railway to-morrow and Saturday!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Come off it, Mellish!"

"He's pulling my leg!"

"I'm not!" hooted Mellish excitedly. "Go down and read the notice yourselves—it's on the board!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, turning to Tom Merry, who was grin-

ning. "I fancy Mellish is telling the truth for once, Tommy. Coming down?"

"Rather!" chuckled Tom.

Within five minutes the junior Common-room was empty, for the boys were dashing downstairs to the notice-board, to read the Head's notice.

Already a crowd had congregated, and everybody seemed amazed and excited.

Jack Blake & Co. and Tom Merry & Co. made their way to the fore of the throng, and gazed upon this notice, written in the well-known handwriting of Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's:

"NOTICE"

"In consequence of a sudden strike on the part of local railway workers, serious dislocation and delay is being caused. Helpers are urgently needed to carry on certain important duties, and, under the circumstances, volunteers for this work will be chosen from boys of this school from the Fourth Form upwards. Applications should be made in writing to your respective Housemasters, who will select the boys better able to be spared. Volunteers chosen will be excused lessons on Saturday morning, and will be expected to work during the afternoon. It is hoped that the railway strikers will resume their duties on Monday morning, but, meanwhile, volunteer help is urgently required, and it is hoped that many boys will offer their services.

(Signed) R. HOLMES, Headmaster."

"Whew!" whistled Blake, slapping his thigh in high enthusiasm. "What merry opportunity! Workers wanted on the railway! My word! I reckon the Head can count me in!"

"Yass, wathah!" chimed in Gussy, beaming up at the notice through his eyeglass. "Me, too! We must forsake the Abbotsford match to-morrow, deah boys, if our services are required on the railway!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was quite a clamour of enthusiasm from the juniors in the crowd.

"What a ripping idea!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "We'll offer our services, Tommy—what?"

"Bet your bonnet!" chuckled Tom Merry. "There's quite a lot we chaps can do on the railway."

"Rather!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"With a little bit of practice I reckon I could drive a giddy engine. After all, it only means starting the beastly thing, and then stopping it when required. Just like a motor-cycle, only more so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I quite approve of the Head's good sense in askin' us to fill the breach!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suppose theah's no openin' for a job as a stationmaster—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorled Blake. "Better urge Mr. Roberts to go on strike, Gussy, so that you can take on his job!"

"Weally, Blake, this is not a subject for wild widdlecude," said Gussy severely. "I am awfully serious, you know."

A fellow with my tact and judgment, and with organism's ability like I possess—"

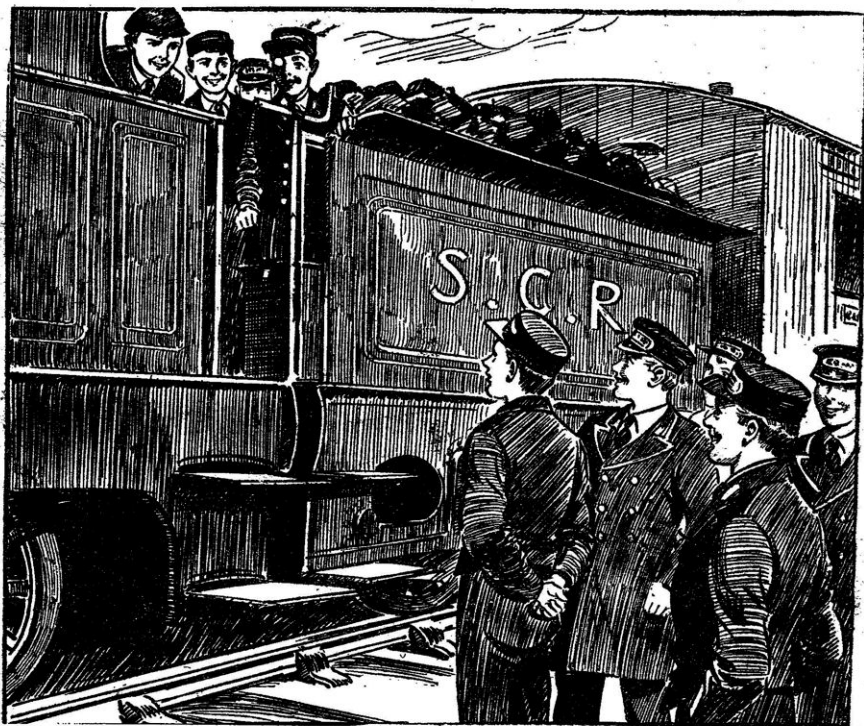
"Blessed is he who bloweth his own trumpet!" chuckled Monty Lowther softly. "Go it, Gussy!"

Gussy glowered at Monty, and the others grinned.

"Of course, I don't intend to put on airs, deah boys," said the swell of St. Jim's. "But I weally considah that I should be quite a success as a rough of a goods yard, or supervisor of the line!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, don't be a chump, Gussy," said Jack Blake, laughing good-humouredly.



"Well, so-long Tommy!" said Jack Blake cheerfully, as he and his chums, bound for Rylcombe, climbed aboard engine No. 1-3. "See you later in the day, I expect!" "Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'll all work like anythin', deah boys!" (See Chapter 3.)

and taking his noble chum by the arm, "Let's get along to the study and write out our applications—our offers, I mean—for volunteer work."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners. "Come on, Tommy; there's no time like the present, you know!"

And the crowd round the notice-board dispersed, quite a number of them eager to offer their services as volunteer railway workers during the period of the local strike.

As Digby shrewdly remarked, mathematics and French were in store for the Fourth Form as lessons on the morrow, and they might just as well be doing useful work on the railway, as swotting in the Form-room.

To which observation Jack Blake & Co. gave hearty concurrence, and they proceeded immediately to write out their offers, and deliver them to Mr. Railton, the master of the School House.

Over in the New House, too, a similar notice had been posted, and the news was received with wild enthusiasm by George Figgins & Co., the heroes of the New House Fourth.

"We'll be on this like a shot!" chuckled Figgins, as he proceeded to write out an epistle, offering his services as a railway volunteer. "We've not been doing badly in the Form-room lately,

and Ratty might let us off. He'd be a cad if he didn't!"

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I wonder if there are any goods trains that require a guard? I'd be just the fellow for that job!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Kerr. "You'd be sacked on your first journey, Fatty, for pilfering—that is, if the goods train carried anything of an eatable nature. I think you'd better apply for a job as a stoker, or a navvy on the line, or some job like that, requiring hard work. You might get rid of some of your superfluous fat!"

"Oh, really, you know," protested Fatty. "I'm not so fat; and, besides, I'd like to be a guard!"

"Oh, well, we shall see!" said Figgins. "It all depends upon whether Ratty will let us go. I reckon there'll be no dearth of applications."

Figgins was right. Quite a sensation was caused throughout the length and breadth of St. Jim's by the Head's important announcement, and nearly every fellow stated his intention of becoming a railway worker.

Of course, it was left to the House-masters' discretion as to which boys should be excused lessons for the emergency task, and it naturally followed that only the boys who were well up in their lessons would be the lucky ones.

Applications poured into Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff by scores.

The Terrible Three, having presented their offers, sat in Study No. 10 to discuss the matter.

"I wonder what put the Head up to it?" said Monty Lowther. "Perhaps Roberts applied for help."

"Tom Merry chuckled. "No, he didn't," said the captain of the Shell. "I was the one who first broached the subject to the Head."

Lowther and Manners gazed at their leader in surprise.

"You?" gasped Manners. "My hat, Tommy, what a nerve!"

"I just pointed out to the Head how seriously the strike would affect local businesses," said Tom Merry quietly. "I also mentioned what the Wayland station-master told us yesterday—about the perishable goods being hung up at Abbotsford. The Head seemed rather impressed by the notion, and he rang up both station-masters. The Wayland station-master told the Head that he'd be only too glad of volunteer workers, and said that he'd got one or two men to drive the engines, if he could send along a few porters and guards and stokers. So the Head thought the matter over, and you know the result!"

"Well," breathed Monty Lowther, "you take the biscuit, old son! It's a THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 531.

really ripping wheeze, and—and we'll miss lessons, shan't we?"

"Rather!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Edison said that a list of the boys chosen to assist on the railway would be posted up on the notice-board to-night. When we've finished prep, we'll go down and have a look."

Nearly an hour later another crowd congregated round the notice-board to read the names of the chosen few.

A chorus of delight arose from Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. when they saw their own names posted up, as well as those of Bernard Glyn and Kangaroo.

Four boys had been chosen from the New House. They were Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern.

There were many boys disappointed at not being selected to perform volunteer service on the railway. Probably some, such as Baggy Trimble, were actuated more by a desire to shirk their lessons than an eagerness to perform a duty of national importance.

However, the fortunate ones looked forward eagerly to Saturday, when their emergency work should commence on the railway.

They were told by the Head to report at Wayland Station at ten in the morning, when the stationmaster there would assign them to their various duties.

CHAPTER 3. Finding Jobs!

"WAYLAND!" said Tom Merry. "Now for work!" chuckled Jack Blake.

A party of thirteen St. Jim's juniors halted outside the stationmaster's office at Wayland Station, and Tom Merry tapped at the door.

Besides the Terrible Three, Bernard Glyn and Kangaroo were there. Jack Blake, Gussy, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth, and Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern of the New House completed the number of selected volunteers.

They had started out from St. Jim's immediately after breakfast, and walked to Wayland across the heath.

It was a crisp, exhilarating morning, and the walk had given them added vigour, so that, in the words of Monty Lowther, they were "ready for anything."

The stationmaster called to them to enter, and the schoolboy volunteers presented themselves before their new master.

"Good-morning, my lads!" said the stationmaster genially. "You are friends in need, and no mistake! Have you come prepared to do a good, hard day's work?"

"Yes, sir!" spoke up Tom Merry. "We are not slackers, and can do any hard job you like to give us!"

"Good!" said the stationmaster, with a twinkle in his eye. "I have a few jobs that will be interesting for you boys, I think. I propose shifting a goods train of perishable stuff from Abbotsford, and also we must run at least one passenger train to and from Rylcombe to Abbotsford. I've secured the services of two reliable engine-drivers, and some of you boys will be required to act as firemen and guards."

"Oh, good!"

The eyes of the St. Jim's juniors shone with the light of enthusiasm. Bernard Glyn especially, who was a mechanical genius himself, displayed the utmost eagerness to stand on the footplate of an engine and assist in its locomotion.

"There is an empty train on the sidings outside this station," proceeded the stationmaster. "Emery—he is one of the drivers—will couple an engine on to that, and take her to Rylcombe. She will arrive there about noon, which will be very convenient for the local farmers to get to Abbotsford market. Her second journey from Rylcombe should be made about two o'clock."

"Yea, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Our First Eleven are playing Abbotsford Rangers this afternoon, and the emergency train will just suit them. We'll ring up Kildare, and let him know that the train is running."

"By all means, my lad!" said the stationmaster. "When the train arrives at Abbotsford—it's only half an hour's run—it will return to Rylcombe, take aboard another complement of passengers, and proceed towards Abbotsford again. Provided that gangs of strikers do not interfere with the working of the train, it should run backwards and forwards between Rylcombe and Abbotsford all the afternoon, until about seven o'clock. As regards signals, they will be set constantly at safety, for there will be no other trains running on that line. For the goods train, the branch line will be utilised."

"How will the goods train be worked, sir?" asked Blake.

"Well," replied the stationmaster, "the train of trucks is waiting on the sidings at Abbotsford, ready to be loaded."

"I'll put my other man—Murray—on an engine, and send him there with some of you boys aboard. You will be required to load the trucks, then Murray will couple the engine, and bring the train down here on the branch line. The points will, of course, be set. Let me see, I had better take your names, and then I can assign you to your respective duties."

Mr. Pavey, the stationmaster, made a list of the boys' names. Then, after deliberating a while, addressed them again:

"Master Blake shall be in charge of the booking-office at Rylcombe," he said. "Two porters will also be required there, and I think we'll give those jobs to Master D'Arcy and Master Herries."

"Bai Jove!" gasped the Honourable Augustus D'Arcy.

The others grinned. The idea of Gussy as a railway-porter struck them as rather funny.

D'Arcy, although he would much rather have been a line superintendent or goods-yard manager, cheerfully accepted the job. Blake and Herries would have preferred the job on the footplate, but they did not dispute the duties assigned them.

"For the passenger-train which will start in half an hour's time from here," proceeded Mr. Pavey, "Figgins and Wynn shall travel on the footplate to assist Emery, the driver, and Kerr shall act as guard!"

"Oh, good!" said the chums of the New House.

"The booking-office clerk at Abbotsford is still loyal to the company," said Mr. Pavey, "so that the only boy I shall require on duty there will be Redfern—he can act as porter and ticket-collector."

"Am on!" said Redfern heartily.

"As to now as regards the goods train," said Mr. Pavey, "Murray, who is a reliable man, will drive the engine up from here, and Merry, Glyn, Lowther, Dane, Digby and Masters, shall go with him. There is much to be done at Abbotsford, and you will all be required. When the train is loaded, and brought back to Wayland, Glyn shall be on the footplate to assist Murray, and four others shall act as guards!"

"Oh, good!"

"That is all, I think," said the stationmaster pleasantly. "I think I can rely on you boys to do your best, and, providing, of course, that you are not interfered with by the strikers, you should make quite a success of your work."

"Oh, bother the strikers," said Tom Merry. "They'll find us tough nuts to crack if they start on us!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the spirit, boys!"

"And do we start work at once, sir?" asked Blake.

"Yes, rather, my lads," replied Mr. Pavey. "I'll take you down the yard, where you can get into some suitable attire."

The Wayland stationmaster led the way out of his office, along the platform, and on to the line, followed by the boys of St. Jim's.

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "This is better than grinding Latin in the Form-room, eh, what?"

"What-ho!" responded Blake. "I reckon those other poor blighters are envying us. A porter's job is not so bad, is it, Gussy?"

"N-no, dear boy," said Gussy, polishing his monocle. "I regard it as quite a useful sort of occupation, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The stores in the railway yard were reached, and the stationmaster selected

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Gussey was attired in the regulation uniform of a porter, resplendent in his own patent-leather boots and his famous monocle, busily sweeping with a large broom. "Bai Jove!" gasped Gussey, ceasing to ply the broom and gazing at his schoolfellows. "Hallo, deah boys!" (See Chapter 4.)

porters' uniforms for D'Arcy, Herries, and Rodfern. Tom Merry, Lowther, Kangaroo, Digby and Kerr were provided with guards' uniforms, whilst Figgins, Wynn, and Bernard Glyn donned overalls.

The boys hastily scrambled into their uniforms. Gussey looked rather askance at the sleeved waistcoat, corduroy trousers, and peaked cap given him to put on, but cheerfully followed Herries' example, and arrayed himself in them.

They were not exactly a good fit, for the trousers were baggy, and the sleeves of the waistcoat rather too short, and the cap was somewhat small. However, Gussey made the best of it, and when he was dressed, he looked quite remarkable.

The St. Jim's schoolboys regarded each other when they were dressed in their various uniforms, and grinned.

"My word, Gussey, you look fine!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "You are the first railway porter I've seen with a monocle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah," said Gussey with asperity. "I considah that you have no woom to talk. Your uniform jacket is miles too long, and the trowsals are vewy tight-fittin' and short!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther grinned good-humouredly, and surveyed Fatty Wynn, who was making

superhuman struggles to garb himself in blue overalls.

Fatty's corpulent figure was much too large for the overalls, but at last, by dint of great perseverance, and with assistance from Kerr, he managed it.

"Whew!" gasped the Falstaff of St. Jim's, mopping a perspiring brow. "That was rather a tight fit. I reckon I'll have a hot time stoking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The others were already in their uniforms, which, although not fitting very well, gave their wearers an extremely business-like appearance.

"Ready, boys?" asked Mr. Pavey, with a smile.

"Yass, wathah, sir!"

The Wayland station-master led the way out into the yard, and called over to him two men in overalls, who had been sitting on the step of an engine conversing together.

The two came up at the station-master's call, and regarded the St. Jim's juniors with surprised looks.

"These are the lads who have so kindly volunteered to help us to-day," said Mr. Pavey. "Boys, this is Murray, who will work the goods train from Abbotsford, and this is Emery, whom I have placed in charge of the passenger to Abbotsford."

Murray was a young fellow, with a frank, open face and laughing eyes. He

smiled cheerfully at the boys, and the station-master introduced him to Tom Merry and his companions.

The other engine-driver, Emery, was, as Blake confided to Herries, "a queer card." His eyes seemed to glint as he surveyed the boys, and the St. Jim's volunteers took an instinctive dislike to him.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, who were detailed to work with Emery, mentally voted him a shady fellow. Figgins was of the opinion that he had not joined the strikers for fear of losing his job, but Kerr, the canny Scots junior, was silent, and he watched Emery closely.

"Well, my lads," said Mr. Pavey, "I think you can start straight away to work now. Emery, get No. 145 coupled on to that train of coaches, and take her down to Rykcombe. You will take Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy with you. They know their duties. Murray, take these other lads aboard No. 85, and run her up to Abbotsford."

"Very well, sir!"

The two engineers and the party of St. Jim's juniors moved off, stepping over the metal lines to where two engines were standing with steam already up.

"Well, so-long, Tommy!" said Jack cheerfully, as he and his chums, bound for Rykcombe, climbed aboard engine

No. 143. "See you later on in the day, I expect!"

"Yass, wathab!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'll all work like anythin', deah boys! Bai Jove, this is quite a new experience—bein' on the footplate of a railway engine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No. 143 was duly coupled on to the waiting train of coaches, and, followed by cheers from Tom Merry & Co., it moved off. Mr. Pavay worked the points, and the passenger train was soon steaming on its way to Rylcombe, with the chums of the Fourth Form and the New House heroes aboard.

"Jump up, mates!" chuckled Murray from the footplate of engine No. 85, and the Terrible Three, Glyn, Kangaroo, Digby, and Redfern clambered aboard. Glyn and Tom Merry stayed in the driver's cabin, and were initiated in the art of stoking, while the others made themselves comfortable on top of the coal in the tender.

"Right away!" sang out Monty Lowther, and under Murray's expert hand, the engine steamed slowly off, took her points, and then gathered speed on her way to Abbotsford.

"This is O.K., chaps!" chuckled Bernard Glyn enthusiastically. "I think I'll be an engine-driver when I grow up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway," said Tom Merry, "we'll get those perishable goods down to Wayland. And if Figgy and his chums manage the passenger train all right, old Kildare and his merry men will get to Abbotsford in good time for the match!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, though," said Manners quietly. "I don't quite like the look of that chap Emery. He seemed a shifty sort of bouncer to me."

Murray shook his head, and looked grave.

"I've nothing definite to say against the chap," he said, "but I'm of opinion he's not quite straight. I saw him talking to that rascal Roakes and a gang of his fellow hot-heads last night, and I'm afraid they were up to no good!"

"Oh," said Tom Merry. "Do you think he's a traitor?"

"That I couldn't say," replied the young engine-driver. "But Roakes and his gang seem to be brewing mischief this mornin', and it wouldn't surprise me if we didn't meet trouble before our mornin's work is finished."

"Oh, crums!" said Redfern. "It would be a howling shame to have our first eleven match messed up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, rely on Figgy!" said Tom Merry heartily. "Blake's going to telephone Kildare when he reaches Rylcombe. Everything will be all right, I expect."

And the engine sped on its way to Abbotsford, bearing the schoolboy volunteers towards the work they looked forward to with eagerness.

CHAPTER 4.

Fun at Rylcombe!

"GREAT pip!"

"It's Gussy!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

A chorus of amazed and amused shouts burst from the throats of a crowd of St. Jim's fellows who arrived at Rylcombe station at two o'clock that afternoon.

Their startled eyes beheld the apparition of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the noble swell of St. Jim's, clad in an outrageous sleeved waistcoat, baggy cor-

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surry trousers, and a peaked cap on his head, sweeping out the vestibule of the station.

Gussy, to all intents and purposes, was a railway porter. There he was, attired in the regulation uniform, resplendent in his own patent leather boots and his famous monocle, busily sweeping with a large broom.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, ceasing to ply the broom, and gazing at his school-fellows. "Hallo, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" thus addressed chuckled mightily.

Dinner was over at St. Jim's, and news having been received that a passenger train was being run between Rylcombe and Abbotsford, nearly all St. Jim's, Lower School and seniors alike, had turned out in the hope of catching the train to Abbotsford, so that they might see the great football match between the first eleven and the Rangers.

Eric Kildare, the captain of the school, and his team were there, clad in footer togs and overcoats. Members of the Sixth and Fifth were also there, but the majority of the crowd consisted of juniors from the Shell and Fourth and Third.

They were not expected to see the one and only Gussy engaged in such menial work as sweeping out the station.

Gussy, however, bore himself with great dignity. His eyeglass was screwed into his eye, and he regarded the grinning crowd loftily.

"Heah I am, deah boys," he said.

"I'm a railway portab, bai Jove!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

Wally D'Arcy & Co., the heroes of the Third, marched up and gazed in high glee at Gussy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared D'Arcy minor, holding his sides. "Where did you get that rig-out, Gussy? Your waistcoat doesn't quite fit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" retorted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm performin' a duty of national importance, bai Jove! Come to take the twain for Abbotsford, deah boys!"

"Here, steady on, my lad!" said Harry Noble severely. "You should address us as 'sirs'!"

"Oh, Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

The crowd fairly chortled, and even the mighty men of the Sixth gave vent to subdued chuckles.

"What time does the next train leave, portab?" inquired Wally D'Arcy pleasantly.

"Wontly, Wally, I—I—I—"

"Really, be impertinent, you common portab fellow!" said the hero of the Third. "What time does the next train leave for Abbotsford?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to gulp, and it was probable he would have hurled himself upon the humbugger Wally had not Jack Blake and Herries come sauntering out into the station yard.

"Hallo, here's Herries rigged up as a porter as well!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "My hat, you're doing things in style, aren't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is your job, Blake?" inquired Reginald Talbot. "Ticket collecting?"

"No," said Blake, grinning. "Herries is doing that. I'm booking-office clerk, you know. Figgy and Kerr and Fatty Wynn are working the passenger train with a regular driver. It's been to Abbotsford once, and is due back again any minute. You should see old Fatty Wynn as a fireman! He's working his fat down with a vengeance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are Tom Merry & Co. doing?" inquired Levinson.

"Oh, they're engaged at Abbotsford loading up the goods train!" replied Blake. "When it's loaded, they're bringing it down the branch line to Wayland, where they will unload again."

The St. Jim's schoolboys chuckled hugely. They seemed to regard this as a fine joke. Herries looked a perfect porter, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the main attraction.

Gussy, however, ignored the many humorous remarks passed upon him, and continued to sweep out the vestibule.

Quite a crowd of other people had congregated, too. They were mostly farmers, bent on reaching Abbotsford for the market.

Kildare strode up to Blake, an amused look on his face.

"You chaps are doing fine," said the captain of St. Jim's heartily. "You are booking-office clerk, I hear, Blake?"

"That's me!" chuckled the hero of the Fourth.

"Then I think we'll take our tickets," said Kildare laughingly. "The train won't be long now, will it?"

"Hope not," responded Blake. "I heard that there was a gang of strikers, headed by that rotter Roakes, but so far I've heard of nothing serious. I-hallo! Here comes the train!"

Chuff! Chuff! Chuff!

The sound of a steam-engine's steady puffing became audible, and, looking over the platform fence, they could see the train approaching in the distance.

"Here she comes!" roared Wally D'Arcy. "Take your tickets, boys!"

Blake made a dash for the booking-office, whilst the crowd made a dash, too. They were all eager to get their tickets.

"Hi!" roared Herries in a stentorian voice. "Crushing there! You've got to line up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was all very well for Herries to ask the crowd to line up, but the crowd was very excited. The villagers and farmers would not listen to reason, anyway, and there was quite a scramble of struggling humanity outside the booking-office.

"Gwreat Scott!" gasped Gussy, striving with Herries to control the surging mob. "I say, deah boys, keep back, or—Yawwoooooh!"

A foot was planted in front of Gussy, and the schoolboy porter went sprawling. Gussy had previously been scrubbing out the waiting-room, and his pail of water was still on the floor of the vestibule.

There was a clatter, a splash, and a fiendish howl from Gussy, as he flopped down into the pail and overturned it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the amused crowd.

Gussy sat up in a puddle of water, and blinked dazedly up at the surging mob. "Yow-owow!" he moaned. "Bai Jove!"

"Get up, you ass!" bellowed Herries, who was making valiant efforts to keep the crowd in check. "Lend a hand with these burbling chumps! The train's already in!"

"Ow! Gwooooh! Oh, deah!" gasped Gussy, scrambling to his feet.

At last, by dint of much shouting and pushing, order was restored from the chaos. The crowd of would-be passengers queued up outside the booking-office, and Blake cheerfully handed out the tickets—steadfastly refusing to allow Wally D'Arcy & Co. to travel half fare.

Herries stationed himself at the barrier, and collected the tickets of the people who had alighted from the returned passenger train. Herries carried out his job in quite a masterly manner.

Attracted by the noise of the late

tumult. Mr. Roberts the station-master came upon the scene and watched operations.

He gave a start of surprise as he recognised a large, portly man who strode into the station.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Roberts in an undertone, but sufficiently loud for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to hear him. "That's Councillor Walkah, the man who has caused this strike!"

D'Arcy looked with great interest at the fat, bloated man, clad in a heavy overcoat and wearing a glistening top-hat, who strode into view.

"Boi Jove!" murmured Gussy. His eyes glistening. "Theah! the wotah! I wondah what he wants?"

Councillor Walker soon made his business known.

"Haw, Roberts!" he exclaimed, seeing the station-master. "I hear you've got an emergency service running."

"We have, sir," replied the station-master tartly. "But it is very overcrowded!"

"Is it?" snapped Councillor Walker pettishly. "Well, it's convenient for me, for my car has just broken down, and I want to get to Wayland to attend a meeting."

"Oh!" muttered Gussy, clenching his fists.

Walker gave a contemptuous look at the waiting crowd at the booking-office, and strode towards the barrier.

"Ticket, sir?" said Herries brusquely.

"Season!" snorted the councillor, and he shouldered his way through and strode upon the platform.

"The surly cad!" muttered Herries.

"Sav, Gussy, who's that chap?"

"That's Councillor Walkah, deah boy," confided D'Arcy. "The boundah who caused this strike, you know!"

"Oh, is it?" said Herries.

By this time most of the fellows had taken their tickets, and were crowding on the platform.

Councillor Walker had entered a first-class compartment in the last coach but one. The rest of the train was rapidly filling.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn, looking quite red in the face but cheerful in their blue overalls, suntered down the platform, having left the engine.

Kerr, resplendent in his guard's uniform, climbed out of his van, after having unloaded a few parcels he had taken aboard at Abbotsford, and he met his chums on the platform.

"All serene, Kerr?" inquired Figgins.

"Not bad," replied the Scotch junior.

"Did you notice, though, when we stopped at Abbotsford, that Emery left the engine, and spoke to three rough-looking chaps at the station entrance?"

"Ye-es," said Figgins uneasily. "You don't think he's in league with the strikers, do you? He's run the train all right so far."

"I know," said Kerr quietly. "But he may be up to mischief, all the same. If I were you, Figg, I'd keep an eye on him."

"I will," said Figgins. "Hallo! Here are all the chaps!"

The chums of the New House were quickly recognised, and were surrounded by an admiring and amused crowd of St. Jim's fellows.

"My word!" said Lawrence. "You look a perfect picture, Fatty! Find it hot on the footplate?"

"Rather!" said Fatty Wynn feelingly. "I—I think I'll lay in a supply of tuck at the station buffet. Stoking gives a chap an appetite, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How are Tom Merry & Co. getting on, Figg?" inquired Talbot. "I sup-

pose you saw something of them when you were at Abbotsford?"

"Yes, rather," said Figgins. "They were busy loading up the goods train. They had nearly finished when we left. I dare say they'll be starting on their journey to Wayland by now."

"See anything of the strikers?" inquired Cardew. "I wonder that fellow Roakes hasn't been tamperin' with your good work this afternoon."

"No, we haven't been interfered with so far," said Figgins. "Though I have my suspicions of my engine-driver."

"That so?" said Cardew. "For goodness' sake, don't let him run the engine

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off the line, or something like that! Our merry First Eleven is aboard, and the match commences at three, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Eric Kidare and the St. Jim's First Eleven players were already seated in the train. It was an extra-long train, but by the time everybody had got aboard it was quite crowded.

"Here comes the One and Only!" grinned Figgins, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stroled up. "Cheer-ho, Gus! How are things?"

"I'm gettin' on wippinly, deah boy," replied Gussy. "I say, Figg, that howid boundah Walkah is in the last carriage but one."

"Walker?" queried Figgins. "Do you mean that rotter who wants to turn the railwaymen out of their cottages, and has caused them to strike?"

"That's right, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I considah we ought not to cawvy the wotah in this twain. Can't we turn him off?"

"Hardly!" grinned Figgins. "But we might manage to get rid of him somehow. What do you say, Kerr?"

"It's possible," grinned Kerr. "Got a suggestion to make, Figg?"

Figgins thought awhile, and his brain acted swiftly. Suddenly he burst into a deep chuckle, and slapped his thigh.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "You know, Kerr, we took on those last two coaches on the train at Abbotsford, didn't we?"

"Yes," agreed Kerr. "The third coach from the rear is also a guard's van."

"Exactly!" chuckled Figgins. "Well, old chap, I think we could dispense with those last two carriages, don't you? We could turn the other people out of them, and tell them to go in higher up the train, and leave old Walker where he is. Then I'll uncouple those last two carriages, and when the train starts off, Walker will be left—see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Figg!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "The stationmaster at Abbotsford showed us how to uncouple, and couple up, didn't he?"

"Rather!" chuckled Figgins. "I'll hop down on the line now, chaps, while you go down and hustle the other passengers into the carriages higher up."

"Yaa, wathah!" said Gussy delightedly. "It's a wippin' ideah, Figg, deah boy!"

Figgins scrambled through between two carriages, so that he gained the line at the other side of the train. Then he proceeded down to the rear of the train, and, working deftly and swiftly, uncoupled the last two carriages.

Meanwhile, Gussy and Herries were at work, turning out the other passengers from those two carriages. Fortunately, Councillor Walker had his first-class compartment to himself, so he was not disturbed. Neither had he any idea of what was going on outside.

The train was now full to overflowing. Nearly all St. Jim's, besides the First Eleven, were in the train, bound for Abbotsford. Tom Merry & Co., by volunteering for railway work, had not only performed a service to the railway company, but done their schoolfellows a good turn.

They were all eager to get to Abbotsford, to witness the all-important football match.

D'Arcy and Herries performed their duties like Trojans. The spectacle of Gussy trundling along trucks full of luggage, and getting into everybody's way, provoked much mirth from the St. Jim's fellows, who leaned out of the carriage windows and urged Gussy on.

Herries, too, was quite professional in his manner, slamming the doors, and his stentorian voice stood him in good stead.

At last all were aboard. Figgins and Fatty Wynn returned to their positions on the footplate of the engine; and Kerr, with his flag in his hand, stood at the end of the train, to give the signal for the train to leave.

"Right away, guard!" bawled Wally D'Arcy from his compartment window.

"Farewell, Gussy! Collected any tips yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr waved his flag. Emery started the engine, and the passenger train rattled out of the station.

As it began to move, people on the platform were startled to see that the last two carriages had ceased to move after the first tug, and were standing quite stationary by the platform, whilst the train itself continued on its way.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries. "Somebody's got left behind!"

A red, fat, wrathful face appeared at the window of a first-class compartment and glared forth.

"What's happened?" howled Councillor Walker.

cillor Walker, leaning out of the window, and glaring at D'Arcy and Herries. "The train ought to have started and— Gugg-gug heavens!"

His glance wandered over the platform, and his startled eyes beheld the passenger train to Wayland and Abbotsford disappearing round the bend and out of view.

Councillor Walker dragged the carriage door open, and strode down upon the platform. His eyes nearly started from his head when he saw the two carriages that had been left behind.

"What the—," he began, and his voice trailed off into a sulphurous gurgle. "You idiots! What are you grinning for? What does this mean?"

"Dunno, sir," replied Herries gruffly. "It seems that the last two carriages weren't wanted, and so were uncoupled."

"Uncoupled!" hooted the wrathful councillor. "I wanted to travel by that train. I have been deliberately left behind. This is an outrage! I—I—"

"Sowwy, sir," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "The othah passengahs were removed from those cawriages. You must have been ova'looked!"

Councillor Walker glared at Gussy as if he would have liked to eat him. Then, mumbling drastic phrases underneath his breath, he stamped through the barrier and out into the street.

Herries, strolling out into the station-yard a little later, was in time to see the councillor climb into the old station hack; and Herries chuckled mightily as the cabbie's tired old horses dragged the hack wearily out into the High Street.

"Done him in the eye properly!" chuckled Herries gleefully. "If that Johnny has got to attend a meeting at Wayland—well, he'll be late, I reckon!"

And Herries smiled and came more into the station, to assist Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the arduous duty of cleaning the lamps.

CHAPTER 5.

Treachery!

"**W**HEW!" gasped Fatty Wynn, who had just stoked up the engine fire. "This is hot workah, Figgis!"

"Rather!" agreed Figgis.

The passenger-train was now well out of Ryelcombe, and speeding on its way to Wayland Junction.

Emery, the driver, was very taciturn, and hardly spoke to the schoolboy volunteers on the footplate with him, except to give them early orders, or growl at them when they did anything wrong.

Figgis had asked him on the previous journey to show him how to drive the engine, but Emery refused abruptly.

"How far are we off Wayland now, Figgis?" asked Fatty Wynn pathetically. "We stop there, don't we? There's a decent buffet on the platform, and I'll hop down and get some sandwiches and ginger-pop."

Figgis scanned the landscape from the engine footplate as they sped along the metal track.

"We're going into Wayland Junction now," he said. "I—I say, Emery, hadn't you better slow down a bit?"

Emery looked round and scowled.

"Mind your own business!" he said. "Who's driving this 'ere train—me or you?"

Figgis' hands clenched, but he restrained his anger.

"You are!" he said between his teeth. "But it's my belief, Emery, that you're not so loyal to the company as you made out to be this morning."

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Emery scowled and looked out through the cabin window.

The train was now jolting over the points, previous to entering the platforms of the junction station.

Emery had not relaxed the speed of the train, and Figgis and Fatty Wynn exchanged glances.

"Look here, Emery," said Figgis, as they entered the station at a speed of twenty-five miles an hour, "you're supposed to stop here!"

"Am I!" snapped Emery, with a leer. "Then I'm not, young noodle—see? I reckon I've hooch-winked old Pavey fine to-day."

"Haw, haw, haw! I've only been waiting till that confounded goods train gets on the line. It should be coming down the branch track now, and I'm goin' to stop it!"

Figgis and Fatty Wynn looked in amazement and dismay at Emery.

The treacherous driver had not stopped the train, which was now swinging through Wayland station at a good pace.

From the footplate of the engine Figgis and Wynn could see Mr. Pavey and other people on the platform waving frantically to them. The St. Jim's juniors knew that it would be futile to shout back. They realised now that Kerr's suspicions were correct.

Emery was in league with Roakes and his rascally gang of strikers. What his plan was Figgis could not guess.

"You rotter!" panted Figgis, dragging at the man's arm. "You treacherous cad! You don't mean this train to reach Abbotsford—"

"No, I don't, my buck!" sneered Emery. "This 'ere train is goin' up the branch line—on the same line as the goods train will be comin' down. Murray's drivin' that, and as soon as 'e sees us in 'is path 'ell 'ave to stop, or else cause a collision. So, yer see, the goods train and this 'ere blessed train will both be blocked on the branch line. The goods won't reach Wayland, neither will the people aboard this 'ere train get to Abbotsford, unless they get out and walk!"

Figgis and Fatty Wynn looked in horror at the traitor.

"Oh, you—you hound!" exclaimed Figgis, his eyes flashing. "I—I'll chuck you off this engine!"

"Better try it, sonny!" cackled Emery. "Perhaps you two might manage to get me off the footplate, but what I want to know is, 'ow are you goin' to stop the train? You know no more 'ow to drive this engine than the man in the moon!"

The St. Jim's juniors gasped in dismay. They realised that they were helpless.

The communication-bell was tinkling incessantly, rung by alarmed passengers in the coaches behind.

At a point some two miles out of Wayland a set of points connected the main line to the branch line. As they neared this point Figgis and Kerr became aware of a number of men standing by the track outside the signal-box.

Emery caught sight of these men, and slowed the engine down.

"Aho, Emery!" called a man, leaning out of the signal-cabin window. "I've set the points for the branch track!"

Emery chuckled. Figgis and Fatty Wynn realised that these men who had altered the points were strikers, and that they were deviating the train from the up-main track to the down-track of the branch line, over which the goods train, in charge of Murray and Tom Merry, Lowther and Glyn, must now be proceeding.

The engine took the points, and swerved away from the main track.

"So-long, boys!" bawled Emery from the footplate. "We've done 'em this time!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the strikers.

Emery looked triumphantly at the boys as the train sped forward.

Figgis ground his teeth in helpless passion. Fatty Wynn stood there and blinked helplessly, too.

They realised that the traitor Emery held the whip-hand.

Meanwhile, consternation and dismay reigned in the coaches behind the engine.

The St. Jim's fellows realised that something was wrong when the train dashed through Wayland without stopping. And when they branched off on to the side-line, and saw the strikers hail the driver, they knew that mischief and treachery were afoot.

Kildare and the members of the St. Jim's first eleven ground their teeth in rage and chagrin. It seemed that after all their trouble they would be prevented from keeping their appointment with the Rangers at Abbotsford.

Kerr, in his guard's van at the rear, which was in consternation.

"That fellow Emery is playing us a dirty trick!" he muttered. "I thought as much! Oh, crumbs! How on earth will the first eleven get to Abbotsford now?"

Kerr at once realised the full significance of the traitor's plot. He knew that by now Tom Merry & Co., assisting Murray, had started off with the goods train for Wayland, on that same line on which the passenger train was now travelling.

Murray, driving the goods train, would see the oncoming passenger, and would be forced to stop. Thus each train would block the other, and the work of the schoolboy volunteers would have been done for comparatively nothing.

"The cad!" burst out Kerr, looking out of the window. "Kildare and the others simply must get to Abbotsford by three! I—I wonder—"

Kerr opened the door of the guard's van and looked out.

The train was not proceeding at any great speed. Kerr sat his teeth, and nerved himself for the hazardous risk he determined to take.

He stepped out upon the footboard of the coach, and, clinging on to the handrails, he made his way cautiously along, stepping firmly on the footboard and gripping the handrails as he went.

The guard's van was not as low as the ordinary passenger coaches, and by dint of infinite caution Kerr reached the end.

Then he swung himself over, so that he gained the foot-rests that were fixed to the back of the next coach. Grasping the handrail at the side, Kerr climbed up on to the roof of the carriage.

Then commenced a risky, perilous journey along the roof of the train from one end to the other.

Kerr brought all his nerve and resource into full play in those moments of tense uncertainty. He gripped the ventilators and made his way along from one coach to the other, never losing confidence. All the while the train was in motion, but, fortunately for the plucky boy on the roof, it did not sway much.

At last, with a sigh of relief, Kerr reached the front coach, the next one to the engine.

A desperate scheme had entered his head.

They were just nearing a small station. There were other engines at Wayland with steam up, for during the



Emery had his eyes glued upon the line in front, eagerly searching for the first sign of the goods train. Figgins watched Kerr's exploits in wonder and amazement. Kerr clambered down the back of the last coach, until he was lost to Figgins' sight behind the tender. (See Chapter 5.)

morning one or two more drivers had returned to work, and were engaged on shunting duties at the sidings.

Kerr reasoned that if he could manage to uncouple the whole of the train from the engine he could telephone to Wayland and have an engine sent up quickly, in order to take the train back again and convey it on its right course.

That, at least, would enable the St. Jim's match with Abbotsford Rangers to be played, and no doubt something might also be done to relieve the oncoming goods train.

Kerr set his teeth grimly, and clambered over the top of the last coach. Figgins happened to be looking that way, and Kerr motioned to him for silence. Emery had his eyes glued upon the line in front, eagerly searching for the first sign of the goods train.

Figgins watched Kerr's exploits in wonder and amazement.

Kerr clambered down the back of the last coach, until he was lost to Figgins' sight behind the tender. Hanging on grimly with one hand, Kerr worked desperately at the couplings with the other. At last he succeeded, and with a wrench the engine was free from the coaches.

"Hooray!" roared Figgins, as the engine spurted forward, released from the load behind it. "Good old Kerr! Don't mind us; we'll settle with this rotter!"

Emery wheeled round on his heel, and gazed with goggling eyes at the receding coaches.

They were still moving forward, propelled by their own momentum; but the engine, proceeding at its present pace, quickly got farther and farther away.

"You young sweeps!" snarled Emery. "You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "You're dished, diddled, and done, you rotter! Kerr will get another engine from Wayland and take that train back again on the right track. Ha, ha, ha! Hicor me smile!"

Looking down the track, they could see that at last the uncoupled train of coaches had come to a standstill, and that passengers were pouring out of the carriages, upon the track.

Emery realised that to reverse his engine and travel back would be futile, for he would instantly be called to account for his treachery by the outraged passengers.

With a snarl of baffled rage and hatred, he swung round upon the boys with him upon the footplate.

"You young devils!" he cried passionately. "Think you'll make a fool of me? I'll do some damage to this line yet!"

Before Figgins and Fatty Wynn knew what he intended doing, he dashed to the

side of the footplate and leaped from the engine.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Figgins, pale with horror. "He—he's—"

"He's set the engine at full speed, Figgy!" cried Fatty Wynn. "Look! There he is! The cad's getting up, and not hurt a bit!"

A mocking shout from Emery was drowned by the fierce roar of the engine as it thundered forward at top speed.

Figgins and Wynn, glancing back, saw the treacherous engine-driver standing in the middle of the track, waving his arms derisively at them.

Figgins, feeling sick at heart with the horror of the situation, turned towards Fatty Wynn.

Fatty was pale, and his eyes hard and strained.

"Figgy!" he cried. "Figgy! Can you stop this engine?"

Figgins shook his head.

"No, Fatty," he said dully. "That scoundrel has left us to—death, perhaps! Tom Merry and the others are somewhere in front of us on the goods train, and—and we shall dash into them, and—and—"

"Figgy!"

Figgins clutched desperately at the brake-levers, but to no purpose. He was not a mechanical boy, neither was Fatty Wynn, and aboard the runaway engine

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they were helpless. Fatty Wynn grasped his leader's arm, and gazed, with straining eyes, before him along the track.

Piggins did not move a muscle. It was death to jump from the thundering monster, and yet the two St. Jim's juniors realised that a death, more horrible even than that, awaited them if the engine crashed into the oncoming goods train.

CHAPTER 6.

Running the Goods!

TOM MERRY, Lowther, Manners, Glyn, Kangaroo, and Digby had been busy that afternoon.

Murray had driven them on his engine to Abbotsford, and there the work of loading the trucks had commenced.

The goods to be loaded were provisions for the large stores at Wayland, consisting of flour and rice and butter, besides crates of sundry goods the nature of which the boys did not trouble to inquire.

Their jobs were to load the trucks, and then to help Murray with the train to Wayland.

The heroes of the School House at St. Jim's were not slackers, and tackled their work cheerfully and manfully.

Murray lent them a hand, so did Redfern, whose real duty was as ticket-collector at the station. By two o'clock the trucks were loaded, the engine coupled, and everything ready for the journey to Wayland.

"So far, so good, Tommy," said Monty Lowther, sitting down on a buffer and mopping his perspiring brow. "Whew! We've worked like niggers this morning!"

"You're right," smiled Tom Merry. "But we've got a cushy job now, Monty, acting as guards on the train. Glyn's going on the footplate to help the driver. That job just suits old Glyn; he's a bit of a mechanical genius, you know!"

"Am I?" broke in the cheery voice of Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor of the Shell. "Well, old son, I've learned how to run an engine this morning, anyway. I offered to relieve Murray of his job and drove the train myself, but the silly chump refused."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still," said Glyn, "Murray's a good old sport, and I like him no end. He's calling me now, so I suppose everything's ready for a start. So-long, chaps!"

And Bernard Glyn sprang off up the line to the footplate of the engine. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther buttoned up their guards' jackets and prepared for business. Manners was remaining at the station to help Redfern. Kangaroo and Digby took up their positions as guards in the middle of the line of trucks.

Already the passenger train from Rylcombe had arrived, and departed again. Things, so far, seemed to be going on swimmingly for the schoolboy railway-workers.

Tom Merry swung himself into the rear guard's van of the train, and Monty Lowther followed.

From across the yard Redfern and Manners were standing, waving brooms in farewell.

The stationmaster and his son were seeing to the points, and when he shouted "Right away!" Murray started the engine and the goods train rattled away.

"So-long, boys!" cried the stationmaster, a bluff, cheery old fellow. "Look out for the strikers, for I hear they are prowling along the line somewhere, and they might attempt to hold up the train."

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"All serene, sir!" called Tom Merry, as the guard's van swept past. "We've got our eyes open—trust little us!"

The long line of loaded trucks glided on to the branch line, and Murray, having a clear road before him, put on speed.

He had a good, powerful engine, and reckoned on making Wayland in half an hour.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther settled themselves comfortably in the guard's van, and munching some chocolate they had procured at Abbotsford.

"Lemme see," said Tom Merry. "I expect our First Eleven will be on the next passenger train from Rylcombe. I hope to goodness nothing prevents them getting to Abbotsford. I should have liked to see the match, of course, but the work we are doing now is more important."

"Rather!" agreed Monty Lowther cheerfully. "I wonder how old Gussy is getting on as porter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By now, the train was gathering speed, and travelling along the track at a good pace. There was a good deal of jolting and rattling, of course, but that was to be expected on a goods train.

Suddenly, the two chums in the guard's van heard the piercing blast of the engine-whistle, shrieking persistently. Tom looked out of the window and saw, his dismay, a gang of men occupying the line ahead of the engine, and realised that Murray was bringing the train to a halt.

Tom and Monty applied the brakes, and the train rattled to a halt.

"We're being held up by strikers!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, looking out of the other window. "And—oh, my hat!—they've shoved a tree-trunk across the line!"

A loud shout of derision came from the gang of strikers in front.

A tall, burly, rascally-looking fellow was striding up to the engine. The schoolboys in the guard's van realised that this man was, in all probability, the fellow Roakes who had incited the men to strike, where, perhaps, less drastic methods would have sufficed.

"Afternoon, Murray!" cried Roakes sneeringly, addressing the engineer on the footplate. "Fat lot of good your little-boy helpers 'ave done—eh?"

"The cad!" muttered Tom Merry. "Goodness knows how we are to get along now!"

"It's rotten luck!" growled Monty Lowther.

Roakes strode nearer the engine, and his confederates advanced, too.

"Ere you are, and 'ere you'll stay all the week-end!" Roakes said sneeringly. "I—Yow! Ow! Yarooooogh!"

The rascal broke off and uttered these weird cries, as a huge chunk of coal, propelled from the footplate of the engine, caught him in the chest and sent him staggering back.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Bravo, Glyn!"

Bernard Glyn had seen the possibilities that the coal in the tender presented. His first aim had been true, and next minute a perfect fusillade of coal proceeded from the engine, and harassed the strikers who were advancing.

Murray and Glyn flung out the knobs of coal merrily.

Howls of anger, pain and fury arose from the mob of hooligans, and they staggered back from the line in great confusion.

"Hurrah!" roared Tom Merry, springing from the guard's van. "Keep it up, old sports! We'll be along in a minute!"

"Betcher life!" muttered Monty Lowther, following Tom upon the line.

Way up in front confusion reigned. The strikers had broken up into two parties, and attacked the engine on either side of it. Their intentions were, most probably, to cripple the engine, and render it useless for further service.

But Murray, the driver, and Bernard Glyn were alive to the situation. Standing one each side of the engine cabin, they flung coal at their attackers, and kept them at bay.

"Buck up, Monty!" panted Tom Merry. "The rotters have forgotten us in the rear. If we can get that rotten tree-trunk shifted from the line, Murray can start up again, and the strikers will be kyboshed!"

"I say, Tommy!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, a gleam of excitement lighting his eyes. "Are the bags of flour we loaded on those flat trucks? Why not give the strikers a dose?"

"How many of 'em are there?" said Tom quickly. "About a dozen. Come on, then, Monty! We shall get into a mess, handling the flour, but, by gum, we can give those rotters a licking with it. Here's a truck-load!"

They clambered up on to a truck which was stacked with sacks of flour. Tom Merry whipped out his penknife, and cut the top of one of the sacks.

At that moment Kangaroo and Digby came dashing up.

They had left their compartment in the middle of the train, and, seeing Tom Merry and Lowther clambering upon the flour trucks, they had come along to render what assistance they could.

"Come along, old sons!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to dose those strikers with flour!"

"Good egg!"

The next truck contained wooden boxes, filled with paper bags of cereals. Kangaroo and Digby swiftly broke open the boxes, emptied the paper bags, whilst Monty Lowther and Tom Merry took them and filled them with flour.

"These will make fine ammunition!" chuckled Monty Lowther, scooping away at the flour. "Keep it up, Glyn! That's right, old son—one for his knob!"

Howls of anger arose from the strikers when they became aware of the four boys on the truck behind the engine.

Many of the men bore drastic signs of the coal bombardment.

Their faces were bruised, one or two had black eyes and cut lips, and all were feeling much the worse for wear.

"Get after those other young devils!" bellowed Roakes, who was now keeping discreetly in the rear of his attacking force. "After 'em, mates!"

Four of the "mates" dashed down towards Tom Merry & Co., but staggered back when a perfect hurricane of missiles were flung at them.

Bags of flour hurtled in their midst, caught them full in the face, and burst, plastering them with flour.

"Yerrugh!"

"Yabbergh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Keep it up, boys!" yelled Tom Merry, hurling bags of flour as fast as Kangaroo filled them. "This is where we score!"

The strikers staggered back, gouging flour from their eyes, their mouths, and noses.

"My hat!" exclaimed Digby suddenly, as he whipped open a flat wooden case. "Here's a box of pepper, boys. Ah-ti-shoo! How will this do?"

"Fine!" cried Monty Lowther. "Hand it over here, old son. I'll mix it with the flour!"

The paper bags were now loaded with pepper as well as with flour, and when these bags burst upon the luckless strikers, wild confusion resulted.

"Ah-ti-shoo! Yerrugh!"

"Gerrugh-gug-gug!"

The angry snouts of the strikers now gave place to stentorian sneezes, wild gurgles, and fiendish howls.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" chuckled Monty Lowther, firing away at the attacking mob. "My word, they'll blow their brains out in a minute, if they sneeze much more! Ha, ha, ha! More pepper, Kangaroo?"

"Here you are!" responded Kangaroo cheerfully. "I reckon you've got enough to get on with. Let's go and shift that blessed tree-trunk from the line!"

"I'll come!" said Tom Merry. "Keep up the fire, Murray. I'll take along some pepper, and give it to Glyn and Murray. They can keep the strikers off while we shift the obstruction!"

Taking with them a load of pepper and flour, Tom Merry and Kangaroo vaulted from the other side of the truck, and sped up the line towards the engine.

Two of Roakes' men dashed at them, but were sent staggering back, clutching wildly at their faces, as a couple of bags of flour and pepper, propelled with deadly aim, caught them in the face and smothered them.

"Bravo, Tommy!" cried Glyn joyfully, leaning down from the step of the engine, and grasping the ammunition that Tom Merry and Kangaroo handed up to him. "We'll keep those rotters away! Here you are, Murray!"

Roakes and his surviving confederates made a desperate rush at the two schoolboys on the line, but Glyn and Murray scattered them in confusion by means of the deadly pepper.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo gained the tree-trunk. It was a huge, heavy thing, and they could hardly move it. But then Digby dashed up and lent his aid. The strikers round the flour-truck were too busy sneezing and getting the flour out of their eyes to be able to attend to their business, and Monty Lowther was quite capable of keeping them at bay with the ample ammunition still remaining.

The three boys tugged at the tree-trunk, and gradually shifted it from the line. At last, with a final heave, it went rolling down the bank, and a cheer from Murray and Glyn heralded the removal of the obstruction.

"Now to get back!" said Tom Merry. "I reckon we can clear away from those rotters now!"

Roakes & Co., bellowing with fury, and sneezing energetically, made frantic grabs at Tom Merry & Co., as those enterprising youths dashed for the nearest truck.

"Get on—quick!" bawled Tom Merry.

"Start her, Murray!"

"What-ho!" called Murray.

Chuff! Chuff! Chuff!

The engine moved slowly forward, and with a rattle the trucks moved, too. Tom Merry, Kangaroo, and Digby darted for the trucks as they passed. The strikers, sneezing violently, dashed at them, but Tom and his chums were already clinging to the moving trucks, and by means of their feet, they sent their attackers staggering back.

"Hurrah!" roared Glyn excitedly.

"All serene, Tommy?"

"We're on!" called back Tom Merry, clambering up on top of a wagon. "Full speed ahead, Murray!"

"Bravo, Tommy!" came Monty Lowther's excited voice. "My word, we're given them jip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The goods train now moved rapidly forward. The strikers on the line darted out of the way to avoid being run over. Their faces, where the flour and coal had not covered them, were livid with passion.

As the goods train rattled past them they shook their fists savagely, and uttered most lurid language.

The victorious schoolboys, their uniforms plastered with flour, sent up a shout of victory, and Murray tooted merrily on the whistle—as he sent his ehging careering merrily on her way towards Wayland.

No. 54.—ERIC KERRUSH.



The boy from the Isle of Man, also of the Fourth, Shares Study No. 5 with Julian, Hammond, and Reilly, with whom he gets on well. Quite a good little sportsman, and a thoroughly decent sort in every way. A credit to St. Jim's.

"Dished, diddled, and done in the eye properly!" chuckled Monty Lowther, as his chums rejoined him. "My word, you chaps, I don't reckon we shall be bothered with Roakes and his gang again. Didn't they look a happy crowd when we left 'em alone in their glory?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sitting on top of the loaded trucks, Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to clean themselves as far as it was possible. They had scored a decided victory over the strikers, and felt that they deserved well of their country.

"Exciting while it lasted!" commented Tom Merry. "Now we've got a non-stop run to Wayland! Hang on, boys—we're crossing over some points!"

Perched on top of the swaying wagons, the boys had to hold on to prevent themselves being pitched over the side, for Murray was making up for lost time now, and letting his engine go "all out." They slowed down to pass over a set of points, which provided a branch line on to some sidings. Barely had the goods train rattled over these points, than Tom Merry & Co. heard a wild shout of horror proceeding from the lips of Glyn and Murray on the footplate.

"Glyn!" cried Tom Merry. "What's wrong?"

Glyn turned a white, strained face towards his chum perched on the trucks behind.

"There's an engine coming down the line towards us!" he cried. "By the way it's coming it looks like a runaway! Some strikers at the other end must have seen an engine loose!"

"Good heavens!"

Murray caused his whistle to shrill loudly, but the engine bearing down upon them in front showed no signs of relaxing its speed. Fortunately, it was still a good way off.

"Oh, goodness!" muttered Tom Merry, regarding the oncoming monster. "There'll be a collision very soon, and then— Oh, good old Murray!"

Murray had stopped the goods train, and had now reversed his engine.

With a roar and a rattle the goods train sped backwards the way it had just come.

Murray was seen to say something to Glyn, and then Glyn climbed over the tender, over the intervening trucks, until he reached the one occupied by Tom Merry and the others.

"Chaps," said Glyn huskily, and it was apparent that there was fear and anxiety gnawing at his heart, "we've got one chance to save ourselves. See that set of points we passed over a short while ago?"

The others nodded in silence.

"Well, Murray says if a couple of you can get to the end of this train, he'll stop just before the end van reaches those points," went on Glyn breathlessly.

"You must then shift these points so that Murray can send this train on to that siding, and as soon as the engine is clear of the main track, you must put the points over again before that runaway engine reaches it. We shall then be on the siding, and if you shift the points back in time, the runaway will keep to the main track, and then—"

The schoolboys shuddered.

"I'll do it!" said Tom Merry, his teeth clenched, and his face stern and set. "Who'll come with me?"

"Rely on me, Tommy," said Kangaroo quietly.

"Good!" breathed Glyn. "It's our only chance. We're nearing those points now, and the runaway is gaining on us. For the love of Heaven, Tommy, buck up!"

Without another word, Tom Merry and Kangaroo proceeded to climb across to the next truck, and then to the other, and the next, and so on, making their way down to the end of the train-load of trucks. Glyn clambered back to the engine, and the others watched the progress of Tom Merry and Kangaroo with breathless anxiety.

Murray sent the train along towards the points for all the engine was worth. The runaway engine in front was bearing rapidly nearer and nearer, and the heart of everybody on the goods train thumped wildly in those tense moments of uncertainty.

"Clinging anywhere, and clutching desperately to save themselves being pitched headlong from the swaying trucks, the two fearless schoolboys proceeded on their perilous journey to the end of the train.

At last the journey was accomplished, and Tom Merry stood on top of the last truck but one, and waved to Murray.

The points, in which lay their only hope of deliverance, were barely a hundred yards away from the end van.

The train slowed down, and, almost upon the points, halted.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo leaped from the train. The points, fortunately for

them, were worked by means of a hand-lever.

They grasped the lever, and pulled with all their strength.

There was a sharp click on the line, and the points moved.

Kangaroo waded to Murray, and next minute the goods train started.

Tom Merry and his companion strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the oncoming runaway.

Only a short distance seemed to separate it from the engine of the goods train. The two St. Jim's juniors stood rigid, whilst Murray sent his train back-wards at the utmost speed consistent with safety, for he had to take the points.

The trucks swung away from the main track, over which they had passed barely five minutes ago, and rattled upon the siding.

The runaway engine was thundering nearer and nearer.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo grasped the lever, and held it in readiness to thrust it back again as soon as the engine was clear of the points.

The roar of the thundering monster in front, mingled with the roar of the goods train engine and the clattering of the trucks as they made their bid for safety against time.

The engine dashed on to the points in the wake of the trucks, took them nicely, and proceeded on to the siding.

"Now!" muttered Tom Merry.

"With all your might!"

The runaway was now bearing down, swaying on its career.

They swung the lever forward again, and the points clicked.

A minute later the runaway engine flashed past, over the returned points, and down the track from which, in the nick of time, the goods train had been removed.

And, as the monster thundered past, Tom Merry and Kangaroo caught a glimpse of two pale faces standing on the footplate, their pale faces staring at them, wild-eyed.

"Figgins and Fatty Wynn!" cried Tom Merry hoarsely. "Oh, good heavens! They are aboard the runaway!"

Bernard Glyn had also seen the two helpless schoolboys aboard the fugitive engine; so had Murray.

The goods train was now motionless on the side track.

Murray leaned down from the footplate, and addressed the two white-faced juniors by the points.

"Uncouple me—quick!" he cried.

"You know how?"

Tom Merry nodded. He had helped couple up the trucks at Abbotsford before starting off. He darted between the tender and the foremost truck, and, working desperately, undid the couplings.

Kangaroo shifted the points back, and the goods train engine moved forward, leaving the line of trucks on the siding.

It crossed on to the other line, and Kangaroo again moved the lever.

Murray opened out the throttle, and his locomotive thundered forward, clanking over the points, and tearing along the steel track in the wake of the runaway.

"We might catch her up before Abbotsford is reached!" he shouted to Glyn, above the roar of the engine. "No. 143 is a rebuilt engine, and this one is a powerful type. I'll put on every ounce of speed she is capable of, and we might catch up to the other!"

Glyn set his teeth and nodded. Then he proceeded to feed the furnace with coal.

The engine tore along in pursuit of the fugitive that was bearing Figgins and Glyn to their doom.

And, back on the siding, the goods

train, minus its engine, remained, with four St. Jim's juniors in charge. They knew that Murray and Glyn had embarked upon a race against time.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Nick of Time.

"THERE she is!" exclaimed Glyn, peering through the cabin windows of the locomotive. "A hundred yards in front!"

"And about a mile and a half to Abbotsford—the end of the line!" jerked Murray grimly.

Perspiration stood in great beads upon the brows of the two brave fellows on the footplate. Ahead of them, the locomotive set loose by the traitor Emery, with two helpless schoolboys aboard, was thundering. It was now rapidly losing speed, for her pressure of steam had by now become nigh exhausted; and, of course, neither Figgins nor Wynn had done any stoking.

"We'll do it," muttered Glyn, between his clenched teeth. "We're nearly on her!"

Murray's eyes were strained upon the rear of the engine they were now rapidly nearing.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn were uttering hoarse cries of relief. The strain, the horror of their peril, had overstrung their nerves, and now that the hope of salvation had come, the relief was overwhelming.

Yard by yard the pursuing engine crept up, until only a short space intervened between the two.

Murray turned to Glyn.

"I'm going across to that engine in front!" he said grimly. "Can you manage this one?"

"Yes," replied Glyn quickly. "As soon as I see you safe aboard the other, I'll slow down and stop when you stop!"

"Right!" jerked Murray, and he hurled himself across the tender.

Glyn clutched the controlling levers and sent the engine to within two feet of the other, so far as he could gauge.

Murray was on the edge of the tender, and he leapt forward, landing on the tender of the front engine.

"Oh, good!" breathed Figgins, clutching the handrail for support. "Fatty, old chap, we're saved!"

"Yes, Figgys," said Fatty Wynn, pressing the arm of his chum.

Murray gained the cab of the engine, and sprang to the controls.

"Slow up!" he called to Glyn. "I'm going to stop!"

"Right—ho!" cried Glyn.

Two minutes later both engines were at a standstill, and both Figgins and Fatty Wynn were wringing the hands of Murray, whose resource and courage had saved them from a death too horrible to contemplate.

"Don't thank me!" said Murray cheerfully. "Thank those brave chums of yours, and Master Glyn, who was in the cab with me! Who set you loose—Emery?"

"Yes, the bound!" replied Figgins.

"Fatty, old chap, is my hair white?"

"No, Figgys," said Fatty Wynn, grinning faintly. "I feel as limp as a rag after that ordeal, and—and—fished!"

"Cheerio, Figgys!" cried Bernard Glyn, from the platform of the rear engine.

"My word, I wouldn't have been in your shoes for a fortune!"

"We're all right now, old chap, thanks to you!" replied Figgins huskily.

"Where are the others?"

"A couple of miles up the line!" said Murray, smiling. "I think I'll couple you on to my own engine, and we'll run back to them, and take the old trucks to Wayland, as we at first set out to do!"

The engines were coupled together, and Murray and Glyn drove them back the way they had come.

Tom Merry & Co. greeted them with cheers of joy and relief, and when Figgins and Wynn told of the treachery of Emery, their brows lowered.

"We'll set the police on his track!" said Tom Merry grimly. "I suppose Kerr rang up Wayland and procured another engine for the passenger?"

"I suppose so," said Figgins. "I wonder how the First Eleven match is going?"

The two engines were then coupled on to the trucks, the points set, and at last the long-belated goods-train set out on the last lap of its journey to Wayland, with two engines to haul it.

Wayland was reached in fifteen minutes, and their first job was to inform the police of Emery's mad treachery.

As it happened, a meeting of all the railway strikers was in progress outside Wayland Station when Tom Merry & Co. and Murray arrived with Figgins and Fatty Wynn.

The news of Emery's infamy rapidly spread, and Murray seized this opportunity to address the strikers.

In ringing, impressive tones, he told the men of how their leaders had attempted to bring disaster and disgrace upon the company, and then Tom Merry and Figgins stepped upon the platform to give their testimony.

Neither Figgins nor Tom Merry minced their words, but told the men exactly what had happened, and rebuked them for backing up such scoundrelly men.

These words had the desired effect. The strikers, apart from Roakes and his gang, were honest, straightforward men enough, and they were loud in their condemnation of their leaders, and vowed to find Emery and Roakes, and hand them over to justice.

Mr. Bayne then addressed the men, and informed them that the mayor of Wayland had been consulted in the matter, and he had used his influence upon Councillor Walker and persuaded him to allow the lease of the railwaymen's cottages to be renewed.

Loud cheers greeted this news, and the striko was voted over.

A party of men were sent up the line to look for Roakes and his gang, who were eventually found in a public-house at Abbotsford.

Emery was hounded out of his lodgings, and after being subjected to a grueling time from the other railway workers, was handed over to the police.

"My boys, you have done wonderfully well," said Mr. Pavey, the station-master, as he met Tom Merry, Lowther, Kangaroo, Glyn, Digby, Fatty Wynn, and Figgins in his office half an hour later. "You saved the goods-train from wreckage, and succeeded in conveying it here, after all. The passenger train, too, is quite all right. Master Kerr rang me up from Kesley, and I sent on a spare engine at once. The train was brought back to the place where the strikers shifted it to the branch line, and it was sent on again to Abbotsford, where it arrived at three o'clock, without any further trouble."

"Oh, good old Kerr!" breathed Figgins delightedly. "So the match was played, after all!"

"I have telephoned to the station-master to release your other schoolfellows from duty," said Mr. Pavey. "Most of the men have returned to work for the rest of to-day, and an emergency service will be possible. The men are already unloading the goods-train you so splendidly got here. I—Come in!"

A tap had sounded at the door, and at Mr. Pavey's invitation the door opened and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Blake and Herries entered.

Gussy and Herries were still in their uniforms, and looked rather grimy, but very cheerful.

"Bai Jove! Heah you are, deah boys!" cried Gussy, on seeing the others. "Mr. Roberts told us that the stwike was ovah, so that, when the wegulah men turned up at Wylcombe we came on heah. What has happened, Tom Mewway?"

Tom Merry smilingly explained, and the chums of the Fourth Form listened in amazement and wonder.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" was Blake's comment. "You chaps played up like heroes, I must say!"

"Your headmaster should be proud of all of you!" said Mr. Pavey. "I cannot thank you enough, my lads, for the splendid service you have rendered the railway company to-day."

"Oh, that's nothing, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "In fact, we quite enjoyed the experience, didn't we, chaps?"

"Yass, wathah!"
"Hear, hear!"

After that, the heroes of St. Jim's changed into their ordinary clothes, and, after having partaken of a glorious spread in the station-master's house, they set out for Rycombe.

It was now nearly half-past six, but already the returned railwaymen had managed to get things going.

Arriving at Rycombe, they went in to see Mr. Roberts, who commended them very heartily for their wonderful work.

Ten minutes later there was a commotion in the station as a train from Abbotsford arrived, bringing back the crowd of St. Jim's fellows and the school first eleven.

"Here are the chaps!" said Jack Blake. "I'm itching to know how the match progressed!"

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" exclaimed Gussy, as they made their way from the station-master's office. "By the sound of things, I should imagine that old Kildare has scored a victory!"

Gussy's imagination proved correct.

Thanks to Kerr's timely rise of uncoupling the train from Emery's engine, Kildare & Co. had arrived at Abbotsford on the stroke of three. They were half an hour late in commencing the match, but the Rangers' skipper understood, and the game was soon in full progress, watched eagerly by scores of St. Jim's boys.

It had been a gruelling struggle between the townsmen and the St. Jim's seniors, but possibly the difficulties they

had encountered in reaching Abbotsford inspired Kildare and his fellow-warriors to deeds of valour unsurpassed on any other amateur football field.

Though hard-pressed at times, they had defended, then attacked with precision and unanimity, so that, when the game was over, Eric Kildare & Co. left the field, victors by two goals to one.

It was a thrilling victory, and the St. Jim's fellows had gone almost delirious with delight.

And then came the crowning sensation. When they reached the station they were met by Redfern and Manners, who informed them that the strike was over, and that Tom Merry & Co. had saved the goods-train, and had had Emery arrested.

A train was already in waiting, and the St. Jim's boys, juniors and seniors, returned to Rycombe bursting with glee and satisfaction.

Tom Merry & Co. received a great ovation when their schoolfellows poured out of Rycombe Station.

Eric Kildare strode through the crowd, and his face was radiant as he addressed the schoolboy railway volunteers.

"You ought to be proud of yourselves, you young beggars!" said the captain of St. Jim's frankly. "I didn't think you'd be able to pull it off!"

"Oh, spare our blushes!" grinned Lowther. "Congrats, Kildare, old man, on your victory, this afternoon! We didn't think you'd pull that off, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got Kerr to thank for that!" interposed Tom Merry. "He and Glyn have been regular heroes this afternoon!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Kerr, who, of course, had returned with Redfern and Manners. "The strike is over, anyhow, and St. Jim's won the footer-match, so I think we ought to cheer, boys!"

"Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Hip, hip—"
"Hurrah!"

The old station-yard at Rycombe fairly rang with the cheering.

It was a victorious procession of St. Jim's schoolboys who marched up the High Street and back to the school that evening.

They cheered Kildare & Co. for the victory they had gained on the footer field, and, with no less enthusiasm, they cheered Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. to the echo, who had gained so much glory that day and made a name for themselves as the St. Jim's Railway Workers.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "TRIMBLE'S TANDEM!" Order your copy EARLY!)

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QUINTON'S HERITAGE

BY

Anthony Thomas



The Cavern of Wonder.

ON all his visits, Daly was accompanied by Jim and Dick Willoughby. Quinton was keen to learn every little detail, and in those few days made amazing progress in his understanding of the customs of the country. His knowledge of the language, too, began to progress.

He visited the king, and presented to him the different presents which he had managed to bring through, and on this occasion he wore the wonderful chain which Nijellah had presented to him in the room at the Bigglesdale hotel.

It was Dick Willoughby who raised a question which Quinton had been anxious to ask concerning this chain and the brilliant jewel which adorned it.

"What I can't understand is how you managed to get a chain of that sort out here, Tim," he remarked to Daly, as they came back from the king's house. "But I've noticed one or two important fellows knocking round with belts and wristlets that look like gold. You haven't got a private gold-mine or something of that sort on the premises, have you?"

Daly laughed cheerfully.

"I was wondering when Jim was going to ask about that part of his inheritance," he said. "We haven't exhausted the wonders of the Karradon country yet. To-morrow I'll show you something that will make everything else look small."

They were up early the following morning, and Tim Daly made a few suggestions regarding their dress. In-
 stead of the thin canvas suits they had been wearing of late, they dressed in fairly stout tweeds.

The main valley of the Karradon country lay in a fertile valley, beyond which were wooded uplands. It was towards the woods that Daly led his party this morning. Apart from the three white men and Erik, there were a dozen or so natives and eight or nine donkeys, some of which carried packs, while others were reserved for the task of taking passengers on occasion.

Jim had had some experience of the forest lands, and the woods which they entered this morning were equally impressive. They had one advantage, however, in the fact that there was quite a good pathway, and one that was apparently used frequently.

"There's plenty of sport in these woods, and we'll spend a day or two here when things have settled down," Daly told Jim. "Just at present I prefer to spend as much time as possible in the village, only I wanted to show you the real wonder of the country, so that you'd

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know that this dream of your father's about a railway, and so on, isn't exactly an impossibility. He knew, Jim!"

It would be within half an hour of midday when they reached a big clearing in the wood. Inside a great stout fence of tree-trunks was a fairly large hut, which was equally well made of timber, even to the roof. Almost as soon as Daly's party appeared, two natives came from the hut and ran to open the gate in the fence.

There was a certain amount of excitement in the next few minutes. The unsaddling of the donkeys, the carrying indoors of their loads, and the preparations which had to be made hastily for the welcome of Bazar Quinton and Mel-jor Daly, all inspired the Karradons to much wordiness and gesticulation.

Just as the house in the village, the interior of this hut had one or two rooms which were furnished in quite decent fashion, and they were glad to rest for a time. But they had not yet reached the end of their journey, and Daly was anxious to get on.

When they started again only two of the natives accompanied them. Erik of course, came with them, and after a time he went ahead with the two Karradons, while Jim Quinton, Daly and Willoughby followed more leisurely.

They came suddenly to the end of the

wood. The effect at first was startling, for they seemed to be on the edge of a precipice, with nothing but space beyond. Not for some little time did Quinton make out that far away another great cliff arose, the top of which was covered with trees.

Then, as he looked down, he realised that two or three hundred feet below them stretched a great lake. So far as he could judge, it was entirely closed in by the cliffs, and there was apparently no way of getting down to the water-level.

"It's a wonderful view!" Dick Willoughby was the first to voice his thoughts, and for a time he and Quinton stood together, content to feast their eyes on the impressive scene. The sun was shining brilliantly, but the air was delightfully fresh and cool, tinged with the sweet aromas of the woods behind them.

"Fine!" Quinton agreed at last, and turned to Tim Daly. "What's this place, Tim? Is this the boundary of the Karradon country?"

Daly laughed cheerfully.

"It's Quinton Lake, so you'll remember it easily enough! There hasn't been any argument about the boundary yet, and, anyway, our property is on this side. We'll go down."

He led the way along the top of the cliff for another two or three hundred yards, and here they came upon Erik and the two Karradons. They were standing by the side of what appeared to be a huge tank. At this point, too, the cliff had a fairly extensive fissure, and various pieces of machinery were lying about, but did not appear to have been used.

"We haven't fixed up our wonderful lift yet," Daly said, almost before Jim had quite grasped everything. "We shall get it done soon, now that you've come along. But to-day you'll have to go down the best way you can."

Without very much more explanation he took the lead in stepping very carefully over the side of the fissure. A rope ladder had been fixed up here, and Jim followed Daly in a few moments. The ladder went down about thirty feet, and brought them to a narrow platform of rock. After this they were able to descend a considerable distance by a queer, zig-zag path, which brought them at last to the face of the cliff.

For a time after this they went down by rough-hewn steps, then on to another difficult pathway. It was fairly stiff going, and took them the best part of half an hour to reach a broad, flat pathway, which ran for some considerable distance only a few feet above the level of the lake.

READ THIS FIRST.

Jim Quinton, by the will of John Quinton, his father, is to succeed to a mysterious position at Karradon, in Africa.

Jim is accompanied by Tim Daly, Erik, and Nijellah, who have come to escort him to Karradon, also his school chum, Dick Willoughby.

Eventually the party reaches Africa, also a rival party known as the Karradon Syndicate, which includes Dillon Braceter, a cad of the Sixth Form at Harwood's School, Braceter senior, and Cyrus Keelson. A fellow named Flaxman, head of the Syndicate, remains in England.

Later Daly and Nijellah are captured by the rival party, known as the Karradon, on arriving there, they find Dillon Braceter installed in Jim's place with the native king, Malkura. A fight ensues, and the king, Jim, Dick, and Erik are overpowered, the two chums being thrown into a hut.

Later Tim Daly returns. Dillon Braceter and Keelson are ejected, and Jim retrieves his position.

(Not read on.)

Jim could walk alongside Tim Daly again, and as they went along, the older man explained how many years they had been in trying to fix up a proper hydraulic lift, and what Quinton's father had planned to do eventually.

The pathway by the lake-side ended abruptly and seemed to disappear into a great cavern in the cliff-side. Tim Daly stood for a moment, then shouted aloud, and his voice echoed and reverberated down the cave.

Then, to Jim's amazement, two Karradon men came running out of the darkness into the light, and a few seconds later half a dozen others appeared!

Daly spoke to them, and then waved his hands towards Jim. In turn, each of the men came forward, waved down on one knee, and touched Jim's hand for a brief instant. It was all done very quickly and naturally, and as they rose, each man made a queer noise with his mouth, which Jim recognised at last as his own name—"Bazar Quinton!"

"We've always tried to keep a party of six or eight at least on this job," Daly explained. "They come for two or three months at a time, and they're volunteers always. They have quite a good time here really, as you'll find out presently, and by the time they have done a couple of turns here they're more or less made their fortunes, and are in the position of sub-chiefs. And, meantime, your fortune—and mine—is steadily increasing. Come along! I'll show you the sights." He led the way into the darkness, but they had not gone more than twenty yards before the place was suddenly illuminated. From various projecting rocks hung wire-protected electric lights.

"Great Scott!" Willoughby gasped in his astonishment. "Electric light in a place of this sort! How's it managed?"

"We fixed it up quite a long time ago," Daly told him quietly. "There's a fairly decent waterfall not so very far down the lake, and Quinton's father was an expert engineer. All the machinery and fittings, of course, came from England. It took us a year or two—What do you think of this?"

So far the cavern had been nothing out of the ordinary, but as they came through a narrow passage they found themselves in a great lofty place, only dimly illumined with lamps. Yet the walls of the cavern sparkled and glistened with light reflected from a thousand tiny points.

Tim Daly barely gave them time to marvel at the impressiveness of the place, but led them to the side, where there stood a roughly-made box, five or six feet long, and about half as deep. With the aid of one of the natives he lifted the heavy lid.

"What do you think of that, Jim?" he asked.

Quinton looked inside the box, but at first was not greatly impressed by what he saw. It was packed with rough pieces of some dull, yellowish-looking stuff—and he already had a suspicion of what it was even before Daly explained.

"Gold!" Daly said briefly. "These are the pick of the nuggets we've found in the places. Now you can understand why Kerzon and his friends are so anxious to run the Karradon country!"

Kerzon's New Move.

FOR the next two hours Quinton and Willoughby passed from wonder to wonder in this underground world.

During the past fifteen years "Old man" Quinton and his junior partner, as Tim Daly styled himself, had struggled

with all the natural difficulties in order to achieve the aim they had in view.

They could have cleared out and left the Karradon country with all the wealth they desired, or they could have taken half-a-dozen other courses which would have enriched them, and left the country to the mercy of others.

But because the Karradons in the beginning had dealt fairly with him, John Quinton had determined to deal fairly with them in return. He had big schemes in hand when he died, and it was left to his son to carry them on with Tim Daly.

There was no doubt that, at one time, the caverns in which they now were had been known and worked to a small extent by some unknown race, of whom, perhaps the Karradons were the descendants.

"That was your father's theory," Daly

and something of its possibilities, he realised all that his father's dreams and plans would mean.

The great railway, which should bring Karradon within easy reach of civilisation, the building up of great industries in the country, and the improvement in the native's life, were all tasks which would demand the best of his powers.

When they came from the caverns there was still a good deal more to be seen. Below the broad pathway there was another strip of land on the edge of the lake, and it was here that those who worked in the caverns generally lived.

Both Willoughby and Quinton could have spent some hours in exploring this new world into which they had been brought.

"But we'll come along again as soon



With the aid of one of the natives Tim Daly lifted the lid of the box. "What do you think of that, Jim?" he asked. (See this page.)

explained. "They have various traditions which point to it, and even to-day quite a lot of them seem to have a natural aptitude for carving and for metal-work. That gold belt you saw on the fellow who was going to put an arrow into you is an example. A trifle crude, I suppose, but then we haven't got the latest instruments out here."

Now was the gold the only precious thing which was to be found in these caverns. It was a veritable treasure-house, and Quinton was shown a piece of rock in which were embedded two pieces of crystal. In the fulness of time, so Daly told him, these would be taken out and laboriously cut and polished even in the Karradon country, and their worth as diamonds would be more than the largest nugget of gold he had seen.

They spent more than two hours in these caverns of wonder, and very gradually, but very clearly, it came into Quinton's mind all that his heritage meant to him. It was not only the wealth and the power which that gave him, but now that he knew the country

as things have settled down in the villages," Daly explained. "You've got a fair idea now of what has to be done. We'll get back to the main hut in the forest, and spend the night there, and then on to Karradon in the morning."

The climb to the top of the cliff was, if anything, a little more arduous than the descent had been, and by the time they reached the hut again Quinton was glad that Daly had decided to rest here for the night.

There was much to talk about that night, and even in the hut there were quite a number of details of interest. John Quinton had had a weakness for using electrical devices wherever it was possible, since, apart from their usefulness, they impressed the natives.

"This bell, for instance," Daly said, and pointed to an ordinary electric-bell in one corner of the room, "is connected with the gate at the entrance. If anyone starts to fool around there the people who are in this hut know of it at once. I don't know that it serves any particular

purpose really, only at the time your father thought that it—

He stopped abruptly, a puzzled smile on his face, as the bell to which he was pointing began to ring violently.

"Probably some animal strolling round, though it wants a fair amount of pressure against the gates to make the thing work," he told them, but the smile began to fade, and a look of perplexity came into his eyes.

Already they could hear the sound of the natives who were in the main portion of the hut calling to each other. Doubtless they invested the bell with more superstition than anything else. It was a warning to them, and they did not seek for some plausible explanation as the white men did.

"Queer!" Daly began to feel rather annoyed as the bell went on ringing violently. "I'm afraid it will upset the boys outside."

He went to the door of their own small room with the intention of speaking to the Karradons, but even as he opened the door there came a crashing and a banging at the main door of the hut:

The bell still tingled noisily, and there was something insistent and commanding in its tone. Even Tim Daly turned from the doorway to stare at it in puzzled wonder, but immediately the banging began he called out to Quinton and Willoughby.

Daly had taken the precaution of seeing that both the youngsters were properly armed before they set out on this present journey. They had all laid their revolvers on the table when they had sat down to talk, but immediately Daly called to them they picked them up, and were ready to follow his instructions.

He himself came back into the room and picked up his own weapon. The noise had grown now; the bell, the cries of the Karradon boys, and the banging at the door, all combined to add to the excitement of the moment.

Erik suddenly appeared, and whispered a brief message to Daly, who showed the faintest tremor of surprise for an instant. It passed in a moment, and he turned to Jim and Dick Willoughby.

"We've struck more trouble, boys," he said, speaking loudly because of the row. "You keep by me—we'll get to the door and be ready to welcome our callers!"

The hut outside their own room was but dimly lighted with candles. Daly called out to the natives, giving them brief instructions, and Quinton had another very clear lesson on his own part in this.

Until Daly spoke the natives were obviously in a state of semi-panic. In a few moments their chattering had ceased, and they divided themselves quickly into two parties, and ranged themselves in the positions which Daly pointed out.

By now the stout door of the hut was showing signs of giving way. Daly whispered a few words to Jim, and then stepped forward to draw back the great bolts.

The next moment the door flew open. Daly and Quinton stood together, their revolvers raised and ready to bring them to the aiming position instantly.

For five seconds after the doors of the hut had been opened nothing happened. But from outside came the sound of a voice giving quick commands.

On that Daly turned, and also called out to the Karradon boys an order to

come nearer the doorway. As they moved forward, the first figure appeared in the doorway.

In the dim light Quinton recognised him immediately. Cyrus Kerzon was not lacking courage when he believed it would pay, and he imagined that inside this hut were only a couple of natives. His spies had told him this as soon as he had returned from the Karradon country after a very narrow escape.

He had two revolvers, and as he advanced slowly into the hut he was firing one of them, evidently with the object of frightening the two he expected to find.

Tim Daly jumped forward, and brought his own weapon down to the level of Kerzon's face. As he did so two other persons appeared. They came more nervously than Kerzon had done, and one of them was trembling so much he could scarcely hold the weapon he carried. For Dillon Braester, after his experience in the Karradon country, had no liking for these wonderful adventures which were to make him and his father men of great wealth.

Now had the elder Braester the same spirit of bravado which at times inspired Kerzon. He would have preferred quieter methods and more ingenious means of obtaining their objects.

Kerzon had assured them, however, that they ran no risks in this venture, and that it was essential they should get to know the full extent of the Quinton fortune. He himself stepped forward bravely enough into the hut with that belief in his mind, and with the knowledge that besides his two friends there were forty Manzi warriors behind him.

But when he suddenly realised that the muzzle of a revolver was almost touching his nose, Kerzon had a tremendous shock. His hands dropped, and his eyes stared helplessly into Tim Daly's.

By this time, too, Daly had realised from the cries which came from outside that Kerzon was well supported.

"Don't move, Kerzon!" Daly jerked the words out. "I'll pull first if you do! Give your orders—now! Retire—get out! You understand me?"

Even while he was speaking, Jim Quinton had stepped forward, and quite easily twisted from Dillon Braester the weapon which he was holding so nervously. Willoughby was quick to see his opportunity, and had swiftly followed his chum, but had marked down the elder Braester as his victim.

Had either Dillon Braester or his father been more prepared, or less reliant upon Cyrus Kerzon, they might very easily have made a reasonable fight. But they were nervous and uncertain, and had all along been doubtful of Kerzon's plan. They saw for one instant the fear of Kerzon staring helplessly at Daly's weapon; they caught a glimpse of what appeared to be two solid bodies of native defenders—and Kerzon had said that there would be only two!

Terror filled Dillon Braester's mind. He forgot everything that Kerzon had told him of the importance of impressing the natives on all occasions by a brave front, and of how much could be done by bluff. This at least was no time for bluff.

"Don't try any tricks, Braester!" Quinton warned him, as Braester stepped back in the same instant that his weapon was twisted from his hand. "You'll keep quite still, and do—"

But Dillon Braester was at the mercy of his own wild instincts. He gave a

little inarticulate cry of fear, and turned, then ran headlong away from the hut, back to the waiting Manzi.

His father grasped what had happened, and he, too, believed that his only hope was to get away from here. Kerzon had been trapped!

Willoughby was not quite in such a good position as either Daly or Jim Quinton, and he was the last to reach his victim. Before he had time to do very much Henry Braester had flung out his right arm, knocking Willoughby's hand up for the moment.

The next second the elder Braester had followed his son into the darkness. Willoughby, jumping forward as quickly as he could, found himself face to face with Jim Quinton.

"They've cleared!" Quinton said quickly. "Back Daly up!"

But there was not much need to back Tim up. Kerzon had been startled by this sudden surprise, but it did not rob him of the capacity to think, as it had done in the case of the two Braesters. He realised quite clearly that they had deserted him, and that for the moment he was in a dangerous position.

"Right!" He yielded to Daly's command very quickly. "You've got me beat, Daly. I give in! What'd you want?"

"Retire! Take your little crowd right away, and don't try any more of these tricks, Kerzon. We'll beat you every time! Understand? Now then, give the order!"

Even while Henry Braester was struggling to find his way back to the Manzi people, who were backing them up, Kerzon was obeying his orders from Daly. He moved slowly outside, the revolver still covering him. At the doorway he stopped, and called out in a loud voice an order which Daly understood quite well. It was a command to his followers to retire.

Daly's mind was working quickly, debating all the possibilities of this present situation. He did not trust Kerzon, but for the present it was necessary that he should do so. If he attempted to make Kerzon a prisoner the result would in all probability be an attack from his followers. It was better to get rid of him.

"You quit, Kerzon—get right away!" Daly told him. "I'm not wanting to harm you. Let's have Nijellah and the others back, and we shan't interfere with your plans in Manzi country. If you don't, you'll pay for it! You understand? Quit!"

Kerzon did not answer him. Just for an instant he paused hesitantly in the doorway, then took a flying leap, and was racing madly away. In his mind was the fear lest Daly might take a chance shot in the darkness.

But Jim Daly was not built that way. He had given Kerzon his chance to clear out, and he waited for some seconds, then closed the badly-damaged doors again.

Quinton and Willoughby watched him with interest, while the natives still stood motionless, a testimony to the excellence of their old training. Erik stepped forward quietly to help Daly in pushing home the big bolts on the door.

"Well, we've got rid of them for the time, at all events!" Daly stood upright at last and faced Quinton. "We couldn't have risked a fight, Jim. I don't doubt many men he's got out there, but I'm hoping we've given them all a real shock. I'll join you in the room in a few moments."

He nodded to them, and they went back into the smaller room. Daly himself stayed for a minute to give his orders to the Karradons, and to assure them that all was well. After that he had a few words with Erik before rejoining Jim and Willoughby.

He did not say much even when he sat down with them, and for some reason which he could scarcely have explained Quinton had the idea that he was waiting for something or for someone to return. "Where's Erik?" Quinton asked at last.

"He's gone out," Daly told him. "I don't trust Kerzon and his friends. We've got to face this job together, Jim. Kerzon is a clever fellow; I don't think much of the two Braesters, but Kerzon knows the country. If he goes on making himself— Ah! Here's Erik! Have you learned anything, Erik?"

The little man came very quietly into the room, and from his face Quinton could not judge whether his news was bad or good.

He stopped just in front of Tim Daly, and said something very quickly in the Karradon language. Daly shrugged his shoulders and turned to Quinton.

"I thought as much, Jim!" he said, and rose from his chair slowly. "We didn't frighten Kerzon off, after all. They're still waiting their chance, and we are in a state of siege. Better start getting ready for the light that's bound to come!"

The Circle of Flame.

FOR an hour after Erik had brought the news that Kerzon and his friends, with their Manzi followers were besieging the hut, Tim Daly was busy.

He was a tower of strength. One had the feeling that this was all in the day's work, and that in the end Tim would outwit the crowd outside.

"Your father was always prepared for something of this sort," Tim explained to Jim Quinton. "Whether the arrangements will work all right to-night I don't quite know. Still, I think Kerzon and the Braesters are going to have more trouble than they expected!"

Erik had already opened one of the cupboards with which the room they were in was fitted. From this he dragged out various packages, which he proceeded to unpack.

While Quinton and Daly went into the outer hut to give instructions to the Karradon boys, Willoughby assisted Erik in his present task. When Quinton returned to the room he saw on the table various little packets, several sticks of three or four feet in length, and a number of tin canisters.

"Fireworks," Willoughby explained cheerfully. "A regular old Fifth of November stunt we've on now! This is what we really do startle the natives!"

Daly laughed at Dick Willoughby's optimism, then motioned to Jim to come with him.

"You'll come up-later, Erik—as soon as you've fixed up the rockets?" he said, to the little man. "We'll be at the look-out."

At the side of the room Jim had already noticed a panel which had what appeared to be footloose cut out in it. Tim Daly began to climb up this now, and then moved the trapdoor above his head.

Jim followed him and climbed through into a sort of attic above the chief room. In the light of Tim's torch, he saw that it was quite a small place, with barely enough room to stand upright. Just opposite him was a door, and Daly opened this, after he had switched off his light.

"They stood now in a space about five

feet wide and about twelve feet long, which was a sort of gap in the roof. In front of Jim the roof rose almost to the level of his chin.

The night was wonderfully clear, and above them the stars shone brilliantly, suspended, it seemed, from the deep, bluish-blackness of the sky. He could see quite clearly the stout timber and thorn fence which surrounded the hut, and beyond that the foremost trees of the great forest.

As he stood watching, he fancied that he could see the faint outline of human figures, and now and again he caught a glimpse of a dull, red glow.

"They're there all right!" Tim Daly whispered to him. Someone smoking—see the glow?"

Jim nodded, scarcely feeling able to speak. Once again he felt the spell of the forest upon him and the impressiveness of it all gripped him. For a brief space he forgot the sordid side of this business; that somewhere not so very far away were men whose sole concern was to capture or kill him.

"We'll send the rockets up first," Tim Daly was whispering to him again, and with a start Jim was back to the hard facts of the present position. "The idea is that it will signal to Karradon that we're here and want help. We've never had to rely upon the scheme before, and it would take some time for anyone to get here. Meantime, we've got a few other ideas to work off on the crowd!"

A few minutes later Erik and Dick Willoughby joined them. With some little difficulty they had brought up a fair stock of rockets and other fireworks, and Erik now set to work to arrange for the first of the rockets to be sent up.

It was an anxious moment when the first one was fired. They struck the match carefully, shading it as much as possible in order to avoid advertising their exact situation. Then, with a little flare and a fizzle, the rocket shot upwards, leaving behind it a long trail of light, which was followed in a few moments by a burst of vari-coloured stars of brilliant light.

Almost before the last splash of light had finished, Tim Daly was holding what looked like a very heavy pistol, which he pointed just over the edge of the roof.

"Keep your eyes open, Jim!" he whispered to Quinton. "We may be able to see what they are doing out there!"

There was a little crack and a flash as he pulled the trigger. In another second a great ball of white light was floating gently right beyond the fence and almost on a level with the tops of the trees.

It illumined the clearing in which the hut stood almost as though the sun itself had burst forth for a few seconds. Jim Quinton could see quite clearly the tall figure of Cyrus Kerzon, and near him were the two Braesters.

All of them were standing very stiffly and alert, as though too startled to move. Jim could see, too, the little groups of their Manzi followers, crouching on the ground, but, like their leaders, staring up at the ball of light which floated above them.

"Another one!" Tim Daly whispered the words half-jubilantly, and again came the crack and the flash. Before the first ball of light had died away another blaze was drifting above them.

There was a sudden commotion as this second flare burst into flames. The first one had apparently frightened the Manzi boys into wondering, fascinated fear. They dare not move, but could only stare at the light.

The second flare broke the spell. Jim could see them springing up, and could

hear their voices screeching out as they rushed into the blackness of the woods.

Cyrus Kerzon was no longer standing still. He was rushing along, trying to cut off some of the Manzi boys in their endeavours to get into the woods. Jim could see the revolver in his hand, and heard the sharp report as Kerzon used it.

Whether he used it with deliberate aim or merely to frighten the boys into obedience of his commands, Jim could not tell. In any case, the effect was the same. The Manzi were brave enough until their superstitious fears were aroused; when that happened they were seized with terror.

That is what happened at this juncture. Neither the white men's curses nor their weapons could hold the boys in check. They ran like frightened rabbits, each for himself, away from the terrible light and into the protecting darkness of the forest.

"It's worked!" Tim Daly was half-laughing as he fired his pistol again. "I don't think you need worry about any more rockets, Erik! Can you see anything of Kerzon and the Braesters, Jim?"

The last that Quinton observed of Dillon Braester and his father was when the two were standing together at the moment when the screeching and crying of the natives first broke out. After that he had been more interested in Kerzon's movements.

There was now no sign of anyone in the clearing before the hut. Jim had seen Kerzon disappear among the shadows of the forest, still in pursuit of his own boys. When he looked for the two Braesters they, too, had disappeared.

"A very successful pyrotechnic display brought the crowd to a happy end!" Dick Willoughby, standing just behind Jim, was quoting the usual ending to the report of the Baginlesale river carnival.

"It's been quite a first-rate show, Jim! Got the right background here!"

Tim Daly had just sent off another flare, but its light did not seem so powerful as the others. Instead of floating slowly along in a perfectly clear atmosphere it was obscured by the smoke of the earlier flare.

It was queer how the whole outlook had changed during the past few minutes. A curtain of smoke hung over everything, the smell of the powder from the fireworks had grown more powerful, and even the cool night air seemed charged with heavy pungent aromas.

Nor was there the old sense of quietness and peace. From the forest there still came the faint cries of the Manzi boys, evidently calling for their friends to give them guidance. Mingled with these were the screams and cries of the birds and animals, disturbed by the commotion which had been raised.

Erik had disappeared below, but Tim Daly still stood with Jim Quinton and Dick Willoughby looking out towards the forest. The flare died slowly out, but even as it disappeared another light suddenly burst forth.

"Hallo, hallo!" There was a tiny note of wonder in Tim Daly's voice. "What's that? Hope we haven't—"

He stopped abruptly as a sheet of flame shot upwards. It came from the neighbourhood of the fence which was around the hut. This fence was fully six feet high and was about four feet thick, and bristled with pointed stakes and huge thorns.

It had taken many months to construct in the days when John Quinton had been in command.

As they stood watching, they realised that it was now a wall of flame. Once

