

READ "THE INVISIBLE HAND" INSIDE!

The

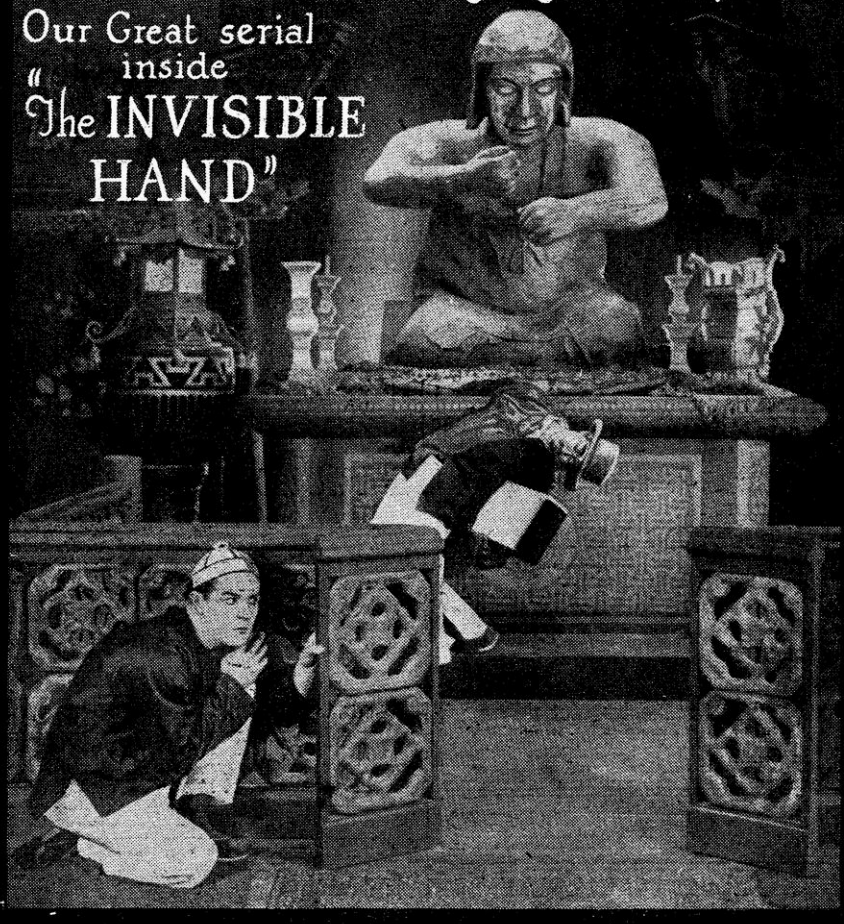
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No. 876, Vol. XIX,
Jan. 22nd, 1921.

Our Great serial
inside
"The INVISIBLE
HAND"



THE WRATH OF THE IDOL!

(A Thrilling Incident from Our Great New Serial. Start reading it at once.)

MY READERS' OWN CORNER.

THE BUTCHER AGAIN.

A little girl was sent by her mother to see if the butcher had pigs' feet. She soon returned. "Well, has he?" asked her mother. "I don't know, mum," was the reply. "I could not possibly see. He had his boots on!"—N. Cole, 1, Cumberland Villas, Church Street, Cirencester, Glos.

VERY CLEVER.

He fancied himself rather, and thought it fine sport to take a rise out of the simple-looking countryman who entered the restaurant. The smart individual winked at his friends, and turned to the newcomer. "I'll get some fun out of this

merchant," he whispered. He looked at the stranger. "Have you been married?" he inquired. "Yes—ex," stammered the labourer. "Whom did you marry?" "A woman, sir." "Come, my good man, of course it was a woman! Did you ever hear of anyone marrying a man?" "Yes, sir—my sister did!"—Sam White, 24, Russell Street, Hyde, Cheshire.

POOR DOG.

Hanky: "My dog has died." Panky: "What was the complaint?" Hanky: "No complaint, everyone was satisfied." "No, no, you don't understand. What was the cause of the dog's death?" "He

swallowed a tape-measure." "Then the poor creature died by inches!" "No, it didn't; and it didn't go out at the back and die by the yard, neither." "Well, how did it die?" "It got on the bed, and died by the foot!"—Miss Hilda Fairbear, 36a, Mersham Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

A PAINFUL TALE.

You never hear a bee complain, Nor hear it weep or wail; But if it wishes it can unfold A very painful tale!

—J. B. Dacre, The Square, Nether Wallop, Hants.

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2379/6, 2382/6, 2385/6, 2388/6, 2391/6, 2394/6, 2397/6, 2400/6, 2403/6, 2406/6, 2409/6, 2412/6, 2415/6, 2418/6, 2421/6, 2424/6, 2427/6, 2430/6, 2433/6, 2436/6, 2439/6, 2442/6, 2445/6, 2448/6, 2451/6, 2454/6, 2457/6, 2460/6, 2463/6, 2466/6, 2469/6, 2472/6, 2475/6, 2478/6, 2481/6, 2484/6, 2487/6, 2490/6, 2493/6, 2496/6, 2499/6, 2502/6, 2505/6, 2508/6, 2511/6, 2514/6, 2517/6, 2520/6, 2523/6, 2526/6, 2529/6, 2532/6, 2535/6, 2538/6, 2541/6, 2544/6, 2547/6, 2550/6, 2553/6, 2556/6, 2559/6, 2562/6, 2565/6, 2568/6, 2571/6, 2574/6, 2577/6, 2580/6, 2583/6, 2586/6, 2589/6, 2592/6, 2595/6, 2598/6, 2601/6, 2604/6, 2607/6, 2610/6, 2613/6, 2616/6, 2619/6, 2622/6, 2625/6, 2628/6, 2631/6, 2634/6, 2637/6, 2640/6, 2643/6, 2646/6, 2649/6, 2652/6, 2655/6, 2658/6, 2661/6, 2664/6, 2667/6, 2670/6, 2673/6, 2676/6, 2679/6, 2682/6, 2685/6, 2688/6, 2691/6, 2694/6, 2697/6, 2700/6, 2703/6, 2706/6, 2709/6, 2712/6, 2715/6, 2718/6, 2721/6, 2724/6, 2727/6, 2730/6, 2733/6, 2736/6, 2739/6, 2742/6, 2745/6, 2748/6, 2751/6, 2754/6, 2757/6, 2760/6, 2763/6, 2766/6, 2769/6, 2772/6, 2775/6, 2778/6, 2781/6, 2784/6, 2787/6, 2790/6, 2793/6, 2796/6, 2799/6, 2802/6, 2805/6, 2808/6, 2811/6, 2814/6, 2817/6, 2820/6, 2823/6, 2826/6, 2829/6, 2832/6, 2835/6, 2838/6, 2841/6, 2844/6, 2847/6, 2850/6, 2853/6, 2856/6, 2859/6, 2862/6, 2865/6, 2868/6, 2871/6, 2874/6, 2877/6, 2880/6, 2883/6, 2886/6, 2889/6, 2892/6, 2895/6, 2898/6, 2901/6, 2904/6, 2907/6, 2910/6, 2913/6, 2916/6, 2919/6, 2922/6, 2925/6, 2928/6, 2931/6, 2934/6, 2937/6, 2940/6, 2943/6, 2946/6, 2949/6, 2952/6, 2955/6, 2958/6, 2961/6, 2964/6, 2967/6, 2970/6, 2973/6, 2976/6, 2979/6, 2982/6, 2985/6, 2988/6, 2991/6, 2994/6, 2997/6, 3000/6, 3003/6, 3006/6, 3009/6, 3012/6, 3015/6, 3018/6, 3021/6, 3024/6, 3027/6, 3030/6, 3033/6, 3036/6, 3039/6, 3042/6, 3045/6, 3048/6, 3051/6, 3054/6, 3057/6, 3060/6, 3063/6, 3066/6, 3069/6, 3072/6, 3075/6, 3078/6, 3081/6, 3084/6, 3087/6, 3090/6, 3093/6, 3096/6, 3099/6, 3102/6, 3105/6, 3108/6, 3111/6, 3114/6, 3117/6, 3120/6, 3123/6, 3126/6, 3129/6, 3132/6, 3135/6, 3138/6, 3141/6, 3144/6, 3147/6, 3150/6, 3153/6, 3156/6, 3159/6, 3162/6, 3165/6, 3168/6, 3171/6, 3174/6, 3177/6, 3180/6, 3183/6, 3186/6, 3189/6, 3192/6, 3195/6, 3198/6, 3201/6, 3204/6, 3207/6, 3210/6, 3213/6, 3216/6, 3219/6, 3222/6, 3225/6, 3228/6, 3231/6, 3234/6, 3237/6, 3240/6, 3243/6, 3246/6, 3249/6, 3252/6, 3255/6, 3258/6, 3261/6, 3264/6, 3267/6, 3270/6, 3273/6, 3276/6, 3279/6, 3282/6, 3285/6, 3288/6, 3291/6, 3294/6, 3297/6, 3300/6, 3303/6, 3306/6, 3309/6, 3312/6, 3315/6, 3318/6, 3321/6, 3324/6, 3327/6, 3330/6, 3333/6, 3336/6, 3339/6, 3342/6, 3345/6, 3348/6, 3351/6, 3354/6, 3357/6, 3360/6, 3363/6, 3366/6, 3369/6, 3372/6, 3375/6, 3378/6, 3381/6, 3384/6, 3387/6, 3390/6, 3393/6, 3396/6, 3399/6, 3402/6, 3405/6, 3408/6, 3411/6, 3414/6, 3417/6, 3420/6, 3423/6, 3426/6, 3429/6, 3432/6, 3435/6, 3438/6, 3441/6, 3444/6, 3447/6, 3450/6, 3453/6, 3456/6, 3459/6, 3462/6, 3465/6, 3468/6, 3471/6, 3474/6, 3477/6, 3480/6, 3483/6, 3486/6, 3489/6, 3492/6, 3495/6, 3498/6, 3501/6, 3504/6, 3507/6, 3510/6, 3513/6, 3516/6, 3519/6, 3522/6, 3525/6, 3528/6, 3531/6, 3534/6, 3537/6, 3540/6, 3543/6, 3546/6, 3549/6, 3552/6, 3555/6, 3558/6, 3561/6, 3564/6, 3567/6, 3570/6, 3573/6, 3576/6, 3579/6, 3582/6, 3585/6, 3588/6, 3591/6, 3594/6, 3597/6, 3600/6, 3603/6, 3606/6, 3609/6, 3612/6, 3615/6, 3618/6, 3621/6, 3624/6, 3627/6, 3630/6, 3633/6, 3636/6, 3639/6, 3642/6, 3645/6, 3648/6, 3651/6, 3654/6, 3657/6, 3660/6, 3663/6, 3666/6, 3669/6, 3672/6, 3675/6, 3678/6, 3681/6, 3684/6, 3687/6, 3690/6, 3693/6, 3696/6, 3699/6, 3702/6, 3705/6, 3708/6, 3711/6, 3714/6, 3717/6, 3720/6, 3723/6, 3726/6, 3729/6, 3732/6, 3735/6, 3738/6, 3741/6, 3744/6, 3747/6, 3750/6, 3753/6, 3756/6, 3759/6, 3762/6, 3765/6, 3768/6, 3771/6, 3774/6, 3777/6, 3780/6, 3783/6, 3786/6, 3789/6, 3792/6, 3795/6, 3798/6, 3801/6, 3804/6, 3807/6, 3810/6, 3813/6, 3816/6, 3819/6, 3822/6, 3825/6, 3828/6, 3831/6, 3834/6, 3837/6, 3840/6, 3843/6, 3846/6, 3849/6, 3852/6, 3855/6, 3858/6, 3861/6, 3864/6, 3867/6, 3870/6, 3873/6, 3876/6, 3879/6, 3882/6, 3885/6, 3888/6, 3891/6, 3894/6, 3897/6, 3900/6, 3903/6, 3906/6, 3909/6, 3912/6, 3915/6, 3918/6, 3921/6, 3924/6, 3927/6, 3930/6, 3933/6, 3936/6, 3939/6, 3942/6, 3945/6, 3948/6, 3951/6, 3954/6, 3957/6, 3960/6, 3963/6, 3966/6, 3969/6, 3972/6, 3975/6, 3978/6, 3981/6, 3984/6, 3987/6, 3990/6, 3993/6, 3996/6, 3999/6, 4002/6, 4005/6, 4008/6, 4011/6, 4014/6, 4017/6, 4020/6, 4023/6, 4026/6, 4029/6, 4032/6, 4035/6, 4038/6, 4041/6, 4044/6, 4047/6, 4050/6, 4053/6, 4056/6, 4059/6, 4062/6, 4065/6, 4068/6, 4071/6, 4074/6, 4077/6,

Redfern's Perilous Mission

A Grand Long Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling of the Perilous Adventures of a Schoolboy Journalist.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Bad News!

"WHERE'S REDDY?"

George Figgins asked that question impatiently.

On Little Side, at St. Jim's, Tom Merry & Co. of the School House and Figgins & Co. of the New House were waiting to commence a House footer match. It was Wednesday afternoon—a school half-holiday—and the players were keen to enter the fray.

"Bai Jove, it's wataah cold, deah boys!" remarked Arthur, Augustus D'Arcy. "Aren't you ready, Figgins, you boundah?"

"No!" growled Figgins. "Redfern isn't here!"

Tom Merry & Co. obligingly looked round the footer-field for the missing player, but could see no signs of Dick Redfern.

"Where the dickens is he?" exclaimed Figgins irritably. "He knows we are starting now. Anybody seen the ass?"

"I think Reddy went upstairs to his study after dinner," said Keri. "Owen and Lawrence ought to know where he is. I say, Lawrence!"

This shout was addressed to two youths who had just strolled over from the tuck-shop.

Lawrence, Redfern's chum and study-mate, looked round.

"Where's Redfern?" bawled Figgins. "Why hasn't he come down to footer?"

"I left him up in the study reading a letter," said Lawrence. "He said he wouldn't be a tick. I expect he'll come down in a minute."

"He ought to be here now!" snorted the New House skipper. "I'll go up and ront him out!"

Figgins, frowning portentously, strode away and entered the New House, leaving the players on Little Side to punt the ball about until he reappeared with Redfern.

Dick Redfern, the scholarship lad, was a valued asset to the New House team, and Figgins wanted him badly. Tom Merry & Co. had been showing great form lately, and Figgins realised that he must put his best team into the field in order to score a victory over the School House fellows.

He strode along the Fourth Form passage, and, not waiting to stand upon ceremony, he flung open the door of Redfern's study.

Redfern was standing by the window, with his back to the door, as Figgins came in.

"Oh, here you are, you blithering chump!" exclaimed Figgins indignantly.

Redfern looked round, and Figgins noted, with considerable surprise, that his face looked drawn and haggard.

"Why, what's the matter, Reddy?" asked Figgins, in real concern.

Dick Redfern forced a smile.

"Oh—nothing, Figgys," he said, a trifle lamely. "I—I suppose you've come to fetch me down to footer?"

"Yes, I have!" said Figgins warmly. "What's detained you, anyway, you chump?"

"I—I—"

Figgins looked curiously at his chum,

and as his glance wandered downward he caught sight of a letter that Redfern was holding.

"I say, Reddy," exclaimed Figgins seriously, "you haven't had bad news from home, I hope?"

Dick Redfern gave a wry smile.

"Yes, I'm afraid it is rather bad news," he said, in a low voice. "It means, Figgys, that unless a stroke of good fortune comes my family's way, I shall have to forfeit my scholarship and leave St. Jim's."

"Don't talk rot, Reddy!" said Figgins awkwardly.

"I'm afraid it's not rot, but the cold, hard truth!" said Redfern wearily. "My pater, who has always been a hard-working, thrifty man, invested his savings two years ago in a motor business. All went rather well for a time, but now this big slump in the motor trade has ruined him. His trade is all gone; he's lost every penny he put into it, and—and my people are as hard up as they can be."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Figgins.



ARTHUR
AUGUSTUS
D'ARCY,
Fourth Form.
Age 15 years.
Height 5 ft.
4 in. Study
No. 6.

He looked quite blankly at his Form-fellow.

Redfern folded the letter and placed it in his pocket. There were hard lines round his mouth as he once more regarded Figgins.

"I can't stay here at St. Jim's, leading the life of a gentleman, while my family could do with me at home, working for my living and helping to keep them," said Dick Redfern, in a low, subdued voice. "You understand, Figgys, don't you? My people need me, and—unless anything turns up I shall have to leave St. Jim's and go home."

"Reddy!" Figgins strode forward and gripped his chum by the arm. "Reddy, old chap, you can't do that! Surely something can be done—"

Redfern gave a harsh laugh.

"I'm the only one who can do anything," he said. "My pater is ill now, through the worry of everything. My mother is unfit to go to work, and there's only my sister—two years younger than myself—to help them. I'm awfully sorry, Figgins, but I—I'm afraid—"

"Look here, Reddy! You—you can't leave St. Jim's!" gasped Figgins, in dismay. "Something is sure to turn up!"

There was silence in the room for a moment. Redfern, his face drawn and

pale, stood looking wistfully out of the window. Figgins regarded his chum rather sheepishly.

"Cheer up, Reddy!" he exclaimed at last, clapping Redfern on the shoulder. "No need to worry, you know! Come on down to footer!"

Redfern shook his head. "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me this afternoon, Figgins," he said. "You can quite understand, I can't feel much like footer. I—I can't get this worry off my mind. Let me get outside the school somewhere, and—and think."

Figgins stared blankly at his chum.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed, in dismay. "We—we want you in the team, Reddy, you know. Tom Merry's chaps are hot stuff, and—"

"Figgys, you know I want to play, too, but I—I can't!" said Redfern desperately. "I should only muck up the game if I did play. My thoughts are all on—on what I've heard from home. I want to think things out."

Figgins looked ruefully at Redfern, and bit his lip.

"All right!" he said. "I'm sorry, Reddy, that this has happened. I'll get Pratt to take your place—he's a good man. But for goodness' sake don't worry too much over this affair! Let's see you grinning when the match is over!"

With that, Figgins left Redfern, still staring moodily out of the window, and went down to the footer ground.

Tom Merry & Co. and the New House fellows stared when they saw that Figgins was alone.

"Where's Redfern?" asked Jack Blake of the School House Fourth.

"Haven't you found him?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

Figgins shook his head.

"No," he said shortly. "Reddy won't be able to play this afternoon. Pratt! I say, Pratt, I want you to play in Reddy's place!"

"Right-ho!" said Pratt willingly.

Tom Merry & Co. good-naturedly waited for Figgins & Co. As Monty Lowther remarked, the delay made the School House Eleven all the more eager to "get on with the washing," and "mop up the ground with those concerned New House boundaries."

At last Figgins announced that he was ready, the rival teams took their places on the field, and the game commenced.

Tom Merry & Co. attacked hotly, and Figgins & Co., nothing loth, forestalled them in a determined manner.

And soon the football-field was resounding with merry shouts and the thudding of leather meeting leather.

CHAPTER 2. A Friend in Need!

DICK REDFERN put on his cap and overcoat, and, ten minutes later, went downstairs, and passed out of the gates of St. Jim's.

A heavy cloud had settled on the usually sunny brow of the scholarship boy of the New House. Dick's life at St. Jim's, so far, had been a happy

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one, and he had not a care in the world. But now this bad news from home seemed to have blighted all his hopes and prospects.

Dick clenched his fists hard as he thought of these things. His parents needed him in their hour of trial and misfortune. He was a strong, sturdy, healthy lad, and it was "up to him" to set his shoulder to the wheel and earn some money.

Earn money! What could he do? Dick asked himself dully. Latin verbs and Euclid were of no assistance to him in the great struggle of earning a livelihood. But Dick would not shirk manual labour. Anything rather than that his hands should starve.

These gloomy torturing thoughts roused his mind as he walked along the Rycombe Lane, and, unmindful of where direction he took, walked along through Rycombe Wood.

Going to work meant forfeiting his scholarship and leaving St. Jim's. That, to the New House junior, would be the hardest cut of all. He loved the old school—every nook and corner of it. All the decent fellows there were his chums, and life at St. Jim's had been full of happiness for him.

Dick Redfern brooded deeply upon those problems as he made his way through the Rycombe Wood.

He walked on and on, unconscious that he was now out of the wood, and was walking along a desolate path, one side of which was tree-bordered and the other side skirted by a high stone wall.

"Hi, I say, young man!" These words, uttered in a loud, strange voice, broke in upon Dick's reverie with startling suddenness.

He looked round, but, to his surprise, could see nobody.

"Hi, young man, I say!"

Redfern, now quite astonished, looked in every direction, but with the same result. Then, as the words were repeated, he realised that they came from somewhere above, and, looking up, he was amazed to see a fat, red-faced little man clinging to a bough, high up in a tall tree that stood near by.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Dick Redfern, blinking up at the stranger who had hailed him. "What the merry dickens—"

"I say, young man," gasped the stranger in the tree, in an appealing tone of voice, "get a ladder, will you, so that I can get down? I—I'm in an awful fix!"

Dick Redfern could not repress a grin. "Yes, so it seems," he remarked. "I'll see if I can get a ladder, sir, if you wait—"

"Oh, I'll wait all right!" responded the man up the tree. "Confound the luck! What else can I do but wait? If I jump, I'll break my neck! I may be fat, but I won't bounce!"

"Half a tick!" said Redfern, grinning. "I'll get you down, sir!"

He made haste up the path, towards some chimney-pots that showed above some trees in the distance. He knew where he was now. The stone wall enclosed the grounds of Moor Hall, a rambling old house, standing on the edge of Wayland Moor. The chimney-pots in the distance belonged to a little farmhouse. He rained the door of the farmhouse, and knocked. A wizened old rustic answered his knock, and chuckled when he recognised the St. Jim's junior. The boys of St. Jim's often used to call at the cottage for tea after a cycle spin or a ramble over the moor.

"Ha, Master Redfern!" exclaimed the old farmer. "Good-afternoon, sir!" "I've come to borrow a ladder, if you don't mind, Mr. Inkpen," said Redfern. "A friend of mine is up a tree—in more senses than one—and can't get down."

Farmer Inkpen willingly lent Redfern the ladder, and five minutes later the St. Jim's junior returned to the scene of the stranger's predicament.

The man in the tree gave a gasp of relief when he saw Redfern reappear with the ladder.

"Here you are, sir!" said the New House junior cheerfully, setting the ladder against the tree-trunk, and holding it. "I haven't been long, have I?"

The fat little man clambered down the ladder with alacrity. When he reached solid earth again, he drew a deep breath and mopped his brow.

"Whew!" he remarked. "Thank goodness I'm down at last!"

Dick Redfern chuckled, and took stock of the man he had rescued from the tree. He was a cheery-looking individual, with brown, twinkling eyes.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY.
Fourth Form.
Age 15 years,
9 months.
Height 5 ft.
3 in. Study
No. 1.



sandy hair, and a deep, rich voice that seemed to radiate good-humour.

His glance met that of Redfern's, and they both smiled together.

"Properly up a tree, was I, my lad?" said the stranger. "Thanks awfully for getting me down! Much obliged, I'm sure!"

"Oh, don't mention, sir," replied Redfern, with a grin. "May I—ahem!—inquire how you got up there?"

The sandy-headed gentleman seemed to bristle with anger at once.

"How did I get up there?" he demanded. "Why, I got up there by means of a ladder—that's how I got up. Then a funny joker named Parkinson, of the 'Morning Wire,' came along and stole the ladder, leaving me up there like a trapped kitten!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dick Redfern, immensely tickled.

His companion glowered.

"Nothing to laugh about!" he said gruffly. "I've been done brown—done again by that skinky 'Morning Wire' man! You see, my lad, I'm Mr. Edwin Buzzard, special reporter to the 'Daily Recorder,' and I'm down here on the look-out for a scoop. That chap Parkinson also nosed out the story, and has come down here on the same lay. He hates me like poison, and I have to be pretty sick. I can tell you, otherwise he'd knock me out of the running. He properly put one over me," added Mr. Buzzard, rubbing his nose ruefully, "when he pinched my ladder this afternoon!"

Redfern chuckled. The light of intense interest had entered his eyes.

"So you are a journalist, sir—you write for the papers! How ripping!" he exclaimed. "I—I'm awfully inter-

ested in journalism, and hope to become myself one day! As a matter of fact—here Redfern became serious again—"I'm thinking about leaving my school, and taking up that work for a living."

Mr. Buzzard was looking curious at the St. Jim's junior.

"So you're interested in journalism, eh, my lad?" he exclaimed. "Why, you're only a school-kid! What could you do?"

"I've done heaps of things, sir!" replied Redfern eagerly. "Some time ago I had a little experience. And I've written plenty of yarns for the 'Boys' Herald' and other magazines. I've studied shorthand, too, in my spare time! There's nothing I like better than journalism!"

"By gosh!" exclaimed Mr. Buzzard, thumping his right fist into the palm of his left hand. "By gum! You are just the sort of kid I've been looking for! We reporter chaps are busy, you know, and generally have an assistant—a cub—we call him—to help us. My cub is a lazy young dog—I fired him yesterday when he delayed my copy, so that the 'Morning Wire' got the story first. And I want help on this job, too! Look here, my lad, you look game enough. Would you care to help me on this scoop?"

"Just give me a chance, sir!" said Redfern eagerly.

"Well, Master—er—"

"Redfern," prompted the St. Jim's junior.

"Well, Master Redfern, I'll just tell you that if we get this scoop through, it will mean big money for me—and for you, too! I like the look of you, and will take you on as my assistant."

"Oh, good!" breathed Redfern ecstatically.

"Now listen while I tell you just what we've got to do," proceeded Mr. Buzzard. "This old house here—Moor Hall they call it—has been empty for some years, hasn't it?"

"Yes," replied Redfern, nodding. "It used to be the old manor house, in the days of squires and barons. But it is believed to be haunted, and to bring bad luck on whoever tenants it. So, ever since I've been at St. Jim's, anyway, it has been left empty."

"Quite so—quite so!" said little Mr. Buzzard, nodding. "That's just what I've been told. But, my lad, the remarkable thing about that house is that, in spite of the popular belief that it is empty, there are people very much alive in it."

Redfern looked at Mr. Buzzard in astonishment.

"But how can it be?" he said. "The great iron gates are always locked, and the wall is so high that nobody could climb it—"

"I tell you there are inhabitants in Moor Hall!" said the reporter of the 'Daily Recorder' impressively. "Last week I passed over this place in the aeroplane our paper uses for its quick new service, and, looking through my glasses, distinctly saw people moving about in the grounds. We were a bit out of our way, and I was losing, and I could see that the people in Moor Hall were Chinese!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Redfern breathlessly.

"Chinese—in that great place, believed to be empty!" said Mr. Buzzard. "As soon as I saw those people in the grounds I sensed a mystery! There's something very crooked going on in that place, or may I cease to buzz! And, my lad, I'm going to make it my business, as the star reporter of the 'Daily Recorder,' to find out just what is taking place behind these stone walls! If the story is as sensational as I expect it to be, the 'Daily Recorder'

will have the biggest scoop of its whole career!"

Mr. Buzzard finished this statement with an excited flourish of his hands. Dick Redfern's eyes were glittering with the light of adventure. This was just the sort of thing that appealed to him—getting a "scoop" for a paper, and solving a deep mystery! The blood coursed through his veins with excitement.

"We'll find out what's going on in there, sir!" he exclaimed eagerly. "I believe I can suggest a way."

The "Daily Recorder" man looked swiftly at Redfern.

"Eh?" he said. "What's that?"

"I believe," said Redfern eagerly—"mind, I'm not sure, but I have an idea that there's an underground connection between the old manor house—Moore Hall, as it is now known—and the shepherd's hut in the wood. There is, of course, a secret passage from the hut to St. Jim's, and everybody believes that the country round here is simply honeycombed with these passages, built by the monks of St. James, so that they could easily escape from the armies of their persecutors. Anyway, sir, if you are game to meet me after dark to-night, we can explore the passages, and may discover a way to the old manor house. That would be much easier than trying to climb the wall. Those iron spikes on top of it are not exactly comic, are they?"

"You're right, my lad," said Mr. Buzzard, drawing a deep breath. "My word, it's a fine idea! I'll meet you to-night, you bet! Where and when, that's what I want to know!"

"Well," said Redfern, considering, "I'll meet you by the tradesmen's gate, at the school wall of St. Jim's, at eleven to-night. I must leave it until the other fellows are asleep before I can sneak out of the dormitory."

"Good!" chuckled the dapper little journalist. "That will do me a treat! Old Parkinson of the 'Wire' is nosing round my heels like a bloodhound, but I reckon he'll be in his hotel bed-room peacefully sleeping while we are on the track—eh?"

"Yes, rather!" said Redfern. "Then it's all settled!"

Mr. Edwin Buzzard chuckled.

"Sure!" he said. "I'll find my way to St. Jim's all right, young 'un! And now I must be off to see what Mister Nosey Parkinson of the 'Morning Wire' is up to. I went up that tree in order to make a survey of the place. But if Parkinson has used that ladder to get over the wall, and into the grounds—well, I shouldn't like to be in his shoes if those heathen Chinks caught him!"

And, with an affable nod and a warm handshake, the alert little journalist hurried on down the path.

Dick Redfern thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets, and retraced his footsteps back to St. Jim's, his state of mind infinitely more cheerful than it was before he had met Mr. Edwin Buzzard.

"A schoolboy journalist—my hat!" he muttered gleefully to himself, tramping through the Rylcombe Woods. "What ripping luck! I'm really to be engaged on journalistic work—helping to get a scoop for a great London daily!"

of Little Side, and Dick made his way over there.

George Alfred Grundy and his faithful disciples, Wilkins and Guss, were standing by the ropes when Redfern came up.

"How's the match-going?" asked Dick pleasantly.

The great Grundy omitted a grant.

"Kerr's just scored," he said. "That brings the New House level with our chaps, and there's only five minutes more to play. Blessed if I can understand what's the matter with Tom Merry and the others this afternoon. Why, if I was captain of that team, I'd have got New House fellows into a fine pickle."

"Really?" murmured Redfern.

"Yes!" said Grundy loftily. "I'd show 'em how to play footer. I'm Grundy! I'd make you New House wasters sit up!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Grundy!" said Dick Redfern.

"Eh?"

"Don't make yourself out to be a bigger ass than you really are, old chap!" said Redfern sweetly. "You can't play footer for toffee, you know!"

"Why, you—you cheeky New House waster!" spluttered the high and mighty Grundy indignantly. "I—I'll—I'll—"

But Dick Redfern did not wait to hear what Grundy would do. The referee's whistle had sounded, and the players were trooping off the field.

"Hallo, here's Reddy!" came Figgins' voice cheerily. "Have you just come in, old chap? We've drawn with the School House this time. We'll lick the beggars next!"

"Oh, will you, my pippin?" said Tom Merry, coming up with Lowther, Manners, Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy. "Wait and see, old son, as that political Johnny once remarked. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, you know. Will you chaps come up to our den for tea?"

"Yes, rather, Tom Merry!" said Fatty Wynn, with alacrity.

Figgins grinned.

"Yes, Tommy, we'll come—and thanks very much," he said. "I say, Reddy, old son, you look rather bucked. Anything wonderful happened?"

"No—nothing really wonderful," replied Redfern evasively. "I must be going indoors, you fellows. I've got something to do."

"Not just yet, Reddy, old scout," said Jack Blake, gripping Redfern by the arm. "Gussy's standing a ripping spread in our study, and we want you to come along as well. Don't we, Gussy?"

"Yes, wathah!" replied the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "A good feed will buck you up no end, Wedday, dear boy."

Dick Redfern demurred, and would have escaped, but the Terrible Three grasped him, and yanked him along, assisted by Figgins, Keo, and Wynn from the rear.

"That's wight—dwag him along, dear boys!" said Gussy. "We're not goin' to let you bwood in solitude, you know, Wedday."

"Oh, you asses!" gasped Redfern, submitting with a grin. "I—I'll come!"

And the heroes of the New House and the School House went indoors, and proceeded upstairs to Study No. 6 in the Fourth-Form passage.

That famous apartment was quite crowded by the time they were all in, but as Jack Blake cheerfully remarked, "the more the merrier." The kettle was already boiling, the table laid with a goodly supply of tuck, and they all settled down to a good tea.

Merry chatter, chiefly dealing with football matters, arose, but Dick Redfern was silent and subdued. He seemed to be deeply immersed in thought. Several times Tom Merry noticed his pre-occupation. At length he said cheerfully:

"Penny for 'em, Reddy, old chap!"

"Eh?" Redfern exclaimed.

"Penny for 'em!" chuckled Tom Merry.



Click! The sound came from below them, and, looking down, they were amazed to see that one of the stone flags in the floor had fallen in, leaving a large black hole. "Whow!" whistled Redfern. (See page 6.)

CHAPTER 3. Redfern's Story!

"G OAL!"

"Bravo, Kerr!"

"Played, old chap!"

Those were the shouts that greeted Dick Redfern's ears as he entered the gates of St. Jim's.

There was a crowd round the ropes

"Oh—er—I was thinking," said Redfern, going red.

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "Mind you don't overdo it, Reddy!" "Oh, don't rot!" said Redfern. "I suppose a chap can think if he likes?" "Certainly, old chap," said Tom Merry. "But what weighty subject occupied your massive mind?"

"Good words, those, Tommy!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ring off, you ass! Aren't you going to confide in your old uncles, Reddy?" "Ahem!" coughed Redfern. "I—I was thinking about writing a story for one of the magazines. I can write stories, you know."

Tom Merry nodded. "Yes, you're a clever old ass, Reddy," he said. "What's the story to be about?"

"About a man up a tree—"

"Eh?" "A man up a tree—a detective, wouldn't be a bad idea," went on Redfern ruminatively. "Yes, a detective, trying to get a view over a high, spiked wall, gets up a tree just by it, and while he is up there, his rival comes along and pushes the ladder, and leaves him up there."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in Study No. 6.

"Be—ow! That's not a bad plot, dear old!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Are you weally goin' to write a stowey, Weddy?"

"What—ho!" said Redfern. "I—I'm rather in need of some cash, you know, and some editors pay good prices for good stories. I'll have a shot, anyway. Mr. Latham will lend me his typewriter, if I ask him nicely."

"Bravo, Reddy!" said Figgins proudly. "I wish you luck, old man. You've written jolly good stories before, and had them published, and there's no reason why you shouldn't do it again. I can tell you, Tom Merry, we've got some brains over there in the New House."

"Oh, bosh!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Reddy is only a flash in the pan, you know. You New House fellows are a scatter-brained crew, really."

"Look here, Tom Merry," began Figgins, rising wrathfully to his feet, and pushing back his cuffs, "if you're asking for a row—"

"Pax, you chumps!" exclaimed Jack Blake pacifically. "We asked you here to tea—not a dog-fight. Sit down and finish the grub, you burbling idiots; there's plenty left."

Figgins glared, and Tom Merry grinned sweetly, and tea proceeded.

Dick Redfern was still thinking about his story, whilst the others "jawed" four. At length he rose, and asking to be excused, declared he wished to commence writing his story, he withdrew.

Redfern went over to the New House, and settled down in his study to write. Owen and Lawrence, his chums and study-mates, had been invited in to tea by Pratt, so he was undisturbed.

Redfern worked diligently, and soon had his story completed.

Having read and corrected it, Redfern was satisfied. Then he went over to Mr. Latham, in the School House, and requested the use of the Fourth-Form master's typewriter. Mr. Latham agreed readily, and in the quiet solitude of the Fourth-Form room, Dick Redfern typed his story, and took a carbon copy of it. Then he wrote a letter to the editor of the "Leader Magazine," and, placing the cover on the typewriter, went downstairs to post his story.

That having been done, Redfern went up to his own study with the carbon copy.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 676.

of his story in his hand. This he placed in the drawer of his desk. Owen and Lawrence were in there when he came in, doing prep. They read their chum's story, whilst Redfern took out his books for his own prep.

"Topping!" said Lawrence.

"First rate!" remarked Owen. "Did you think of that all yourself, Dicky?" "It reads almost as though it were a personal experience of yours," said Lawrence.

Redfern smiled, and, folding the copy, placed it in his desk.

"It's the best plot I've hit on yet," he said briefly. "And I hope to goodness the giddy editor of the 'Leader' takes it! I could do with some cash!"

And the schoolboy journalist of St. Jim's proceeded with his preparation, his heart full of hope for good luck in the future.

CHAPTER 4. In the Vaults!

"I S that you, Redfern?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

Those words were spoken in low tones, for it was night-time at St. Jim's, and everybody was supposed to be in bed.

Dick Redfern had stolen from his dormitory, and gone down to the trades-



TAGGLES,
the School
porter.

men's gate, in accordance to his arrangement with Mr. Edwin Buzzard, of the "Daily Recorder."

Redfern threw a rope up to Mr. Buzzard, who had clambered upon the wall. Next minute the journalist and his schoolboy assistant were standing together within the school walls of St. Jim's.

"All serene, sir!" said Redfern cheerfully. "Nobody knows I'm out of the dormitory. This way to the vaults!"

The New House junior led the way across to the old cloisters underneath the elm-trees. Mr. Buzzard followed, looking curiously round upon the massive pile of St. Jim's standing gaunt and majestic against the semi-gloom of the night sky.

Redfern and his companion entered the ruined chapel. All was pitch black, and silent as the grave. With almost hallowed steps they went over to where the old stone in the floor gave access to the vaults. Redfern pulled up the stone, and switching on an electric pocket-lamp which he had thoughtfully brought with him, directed a beam of light into the yawning gap beneath.

"Get down there, sir," he said. "A flight of stone steps takes you right down into the vaults."

Mr. Buzzard went first, and Redfern followed.

They could not repress their shudders as the cold, earthy atmosphere of the vaults struck them.

Down here, centuries ago, the old monks of St. James' Monastery used to hold secret conclaves, and hide, with all the treasures of the chapel, when the soldiers of the king attacked them. It

was still believed that, secreted in the vaults somewhere, lay the treasure of St. James' Monastery; but nobody yet had succeeded in discovering it.

The underground darkness was pierced by the rays from the pocket-torches of Redfern and Mr. Buzzard, showing up the great stone arches and the massive pillars, crusted with the dust of ages.

"This way," said Redfern, quietly, plunging into a long tunnel between the vaults.

They proceeded along this dark tunnel for some time, their footsteps echoing hollowly. Redfern, sturdy as he was, could not help conjuring up visions of ghosts down there in the black, mysterious depths of the school vaults.

At length Redfern halted before a large oak door bound with iron.

"This is the door that leads to the vault beneath the shepherd's hut in the wood," he said tensely. "We St. Jim's chaps often used to come down here for a rag. The authorities believe that the door is locked, but it isn't—look!"

Redfern reached at the iron handle, and then applied his whole weight to the door. The great oak structure swung inward easily and noiselessly.

"By gum!" breathed Mr. Buzzard.

"That door has been oiled!"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Redfern. "Our chaps have done that, you know. Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins sometimes pop down here and oil the hinges. One never knows when it may be useful."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the journalist.

"You young scamps!"

They entered the vault beyond the door, and examined it by means of their electric torches. The stone walls were bare and crumbling with age. Not a stick of furniture remained in the vault. It was like an empty tomb.

Cheerful sort of hole, I must say!" remarked Mr. Buzzard critically. "Now, my lad, is this where we've got to begin searching for a passage to the old manor house?"

The St. Jim's junior nodded.

"Yes," he said swiftly. "Ten to one there is a subterranean passage somewhere—the whole place is full of 'em." Generally one of the stone slabs in the wall moves by means of a secret spring. Let's have a look."

Redfern examined the wall nearest him, whilst Mr. Buzzard went over to the opposite wall and commenced to tap at the stone slabs.

Tap, tap, tap!

Not an inch of the walls within reach escaped their observation. Mr. Buzzard came over to Redfern at last with a despondent look.

"No luck!" he said. "I've tapped the wall all over, so far as I can reach. Perhaps there is a secret spring higher up."

"By Jove, sir, you may be right!" exclaimed Redfern. "Can I get on your shoulders?"

Mr. Buzzard agreed. Redfern mounted his back, and then balanced himself on the stout little journalist's shoulders, and commenced to tap the wall above where they had previously searched.

Suddenly Redfern discovered a gleam of metal through the crumbling mortar between the stone blocks.

"My hat! I believe I've got it now, sir!"

He pressed upon the stone and all round it.

Click!

The sound came from below them, and, looking down, they were amazed to see that one of the stone flags in the floor had fallen in, leaving a large, black hole.

"Whew!" whistled Redfern, jumping

down from Mr. Buzzard's back. "Here's a giddy discovery, if you like! Come on, sir! We'll investigate this!"

Mr. Buzzard chuckled, and switched his light down the aperture. A dank, fragrant smell greeted their nostrils as they bent over.

"There is a ledge below us," said Mr. Buzzard, directing his light still lower. "And it looks like a well underneath that."

"Let's get on the ledge, sir!" exclaimed Redfern. "I'll go first, you hang on here while I test whether it will hold us or not."

Redfern swung himself over, and allowed his whole weight to rest upon the stone ledge.

"All serene, sir?" he called. "It seems as solid as a rock!"

Mr. Buzzard joined him on the ledge next minute.

There, surrounded by inky black silence, they stood, watching tensely. Below them yawned a deep well. What lay at the bottom they did not know. All around them loomed gaunt stone walls, solemn and towering and crumbling with age.

Redfern switched his light towards the opposite wall, and gave vent to a sudden cry of delight.

"Why, there's a tunnel over there! If we could only gain the ledge opposite this!"

Across the black hole of the well-mouth was another stone ledge, similar to the one they were standing on. And behind the ledge was the gaping entrance to another tunnel.

Probably that tunnel was the one they had been looking for. But how were they to cross the intervening gulf in order to reach the tunnel?

Redfern looked desperately round him, but nothing of any use to them could be seen. If a ladder, or a board, had originally been there, it had either been taken away by the monks who had used this secret retreat, or it had fallen into the depths of the well beneath.

"Well, here's a fine mess-up!" said Redfern. "It's too far to jump. If we fell down into the well—" He looked down and shuddered.

The journalist had been looking intently across at the tunnel. Suddenly he gripped Redfern by the arm and pointed. "Look!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

In the dim light afforded by their electric torches, Redfern looked, and saw a figure standing in the tunnel-mouth that made him recoil with dismay.

The face was evil and cadaverous, the eyes glinting from between half-closed slits, the mouth open in a malevolent leer. It was the face of an old Chinaman. The man was dressed in the flowing garments of his race, his body bowed and bent forward. He was regarding Redfern and Mr. Buzzard with evil eyes.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the St. Jim's junior, when he had recovered from his amazement. "We—we're trapped!"

A low, cackling laugh rang out, breaking into the deep, gloomy silence like the crack of a whip.

The journalist's hand went instinctively to his hip pocket, but again that mocking laugh rang out, and they saw something in the Chinaman's claw-like hand that gleamed blue-black in the light of the electric torches.

"Do not move!" came spitefully in perfect English. "I shall shoot you if you do!"

Redfern and his companion, faced by that menacing revolver, had no alternative.

Then other Chinese figures appeared, and a wooden plank was placed across the well-mouth. The aged Chinaman, still

with the revolver raised, grinned evilly at his two victims.

"Come across this plank!" he said.

"Come over here now!"

Redfern and his companion looked at each other, and they ground their teeth in helpless rage.

"We—we can't refuse to do what the yellow rascal says, young'un," said Buzzard gloomily. "We are caught in a trap properly. I'll go over first, and you follow. Mind how you go!"

And the Fleet Street man stepped on to the plank. Redfern watched with bated breath, fearful lest Buzzard should fall. But the dapper little man went across fearlessly. When he reached the other side, he was seized by two Chinese.

Then, at a motion from the aged Chinaman, Redfern had to walk across. He went with head erect, not daring to look down, for if he lost his nerve and fell, a nameless death awaited him at the bottom of that horrible well.

When the St. Jim's junior arrived at the other side, he also was seized by the Celestials, and his hands tied behind him.

"You rascals!" exclaimed Buzzard, glaring at the aged Chinaman. "What the blazes are you doing here, and where are you taking us?"

No reply was given, but the Chinaman, with a gesture, beckoned to his men.

Redfern and the Fleet Street journalist were hustled away into the impenetrable blackness of the tunnel, going they knew not where.

CHAPTER 5.

The Tragedy at St. Jim's!

"WHAT'S up, Figgy?"

Tom Merry asked that question in a surprised tone of voice. The Terrible Three of the Shell, and Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth were standing in the quadrangle at St. Jim's next morning, chatting about the forthcoming football fixture with Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, when Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House came up.

They were looking extremely unhappy, and seemed to be in the throes of great anxiety.

"You chaps are looking jolly blue," remarked Jack Blake. "Ratty, been ragging you again?"

"No," said Figgins, his voice a trifle harsh. "We can't find Reddy!"

"Wha-a-a?"

"He wasn't in the dorm when rising-bell went this morning," said Figgins. "His bed has been slept in, and his clobber is missing. So he must be out somewhere. We've asked Taggles, and he says that no fellow has gone out of the school this morning. Where on earth can Reddy be? I suppose you chaps haven't seen him?"

Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of the Fourth shook their heads.

"Bai Jove, I hope nothin' serious has happened to Western, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle firmly in his eye. "Pewpaws he is in the school somewhere."

"I jolly well hope so!" said Figgins anxiously. "But I can't help thinking Reddy went out in the night, and—and hasn't come back!"

"Great pip!"

The chums of the Lower School looked very grave. They all liked Redfern, the scholarship boy, and were really concerned in the hard luck that had befallen his family. There were several other fellows in the quadrangle, and they made anxious inquiries all round.

But nobody had seen anything of Dick Redfern that morning. Figgins & Co., and Tom Merry & Co. abandoned their search when breakfast-bell went.

They hoped that Redfern would turn up to breakfast, but his place at the breakfast-table was empty, and Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-faced Housemaster, glared round upon the boys assembled there.

"Where is Redfern?"

Nobody answered.

"Figgins!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff testily. "Do you know where Redfern is?"



Suddenly Mr. Buzzard gripped Redfern by the arm and pointed. "Look!" he exclaimed hoarsely. In the dim light afforded by their electric torches, Redfern looked, and saw a figure standing in the tunnel-mouth. It was that of an old Chinaman. (See this page.)

"No, sir," replied Figgins lugubriously.

"Has he not descended from the dormitory?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, becoming testier than ever.

"No, no, sir!" said Figgins desperately. "He—he wasn't in bed when we woke up, and we haven't seen him at all this morning."

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Ratcliff hastily gulped down his breakfast, and hurried away. The New House juniors looked meaningly at each other. They knew that Mr. Ratcliff had gone to inform the Head of Redfern's disappearance.

After breakfast the boys assembled in the quadrangle and in the corridors, discussing the strange affair in animated tones.

Figgins and Kerr, and Lawrence, Redfern's studymates, were called into the Head's study; but neither of the juniors could furnish any information.

Dr. Holmes' kind old face plainly showed the anxiety he felt over the mysterious disappearance of the Fourth-Former.

"You may go, Figgins," he said. "I shall inform the police authorities immediately. Moreover, Mr. Ferrers Locke, the celebrated London detective, whom you already know is a great friend of mine, will be in the neighbourhood of Wayland this morning. I will telephone him, and ask him to come here and investigate this most distressing affair."

Figgins, Kerr, and Lawrence went, full of the news.

Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Blake, and D'Arcy met them in the passage outside.

"Anything doing?" asked Tom eagerly.

"No—except that the Head is going to ask Ferrers Locke to come over this morning and investigate Reddy's disappearance," said the long-legged hero of the New House.

The School House juniors were interested at once.

"Ferrers Locke!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically. "Oh, how ripping! If anything terrible has happened to Reddy, you may be sure Ferrers Locke will find it out!"

The St. Jim's juniors had brightened considerably at the news that Ferrers Locke was in the vicinity and was coming over. They had met the celebrated detective several times before, and helped him in various cases. Tom Merry, especially, was on friendly terms with Ferrers Locke, who had enlisted Tom's services many times in the past.

The bell for lessons rang, and the boys trooped into the Form-rooms still discussing the affair.

Great was the excitement that had been caused throughout the school, and the masters had a very trying time with the boys that morning. They were as thankful as the pupils themselves when at last the bell rang and the Form-rooms emptied again.

Tom Merry & Co. learned that Ferrers Locke was expected any minute, so they waited at the gates for the great detective to arrive.

A large open motor-car drove through the gates, and a cheer arose as Ferrers Locke was recognised.

The car stopped, and the detective stepped out. Immediately he was surrounded by a throng of eager schoolboys, in the forefront of whom were Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co.

"Hallo, Tom!" exclaimed Ferrers Locke, striding up to Tom Merry and shaking him warmly by the hand. "Pleased to see you all again! I hear that one of our boys is missing?"

THE GREAT MYSTERY.—No. 676.

"Yes, sir," replied Tom Merry. "Redfern of the New House—you remember him?"

"By Jove, of course!" said the detective seriously. "So Redfern has disappeared?"

Figgins then explained that Redfern was not in the dormitory that morning, and had not been seen since. The detective listened with head lowered, and then he looked up briskly.

"Well, my lads, I shall have to see Dr. Holmes," he said. "So-long!"

And with swift, swinging strides he walked across the quadrangle towards the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. went over to Mrs. Taggles' tuckshop to discuss the affair over hot cordial and doughnuts.

None of them could offer a satisfactory explanation of Redfern's absence from school. Fatty Wynn suggested that Reddy had run away to go to work; but,

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as Tom Merry remarked, Redfern would surely have left a note behind. Besides, if he had intended running away, his belongings would have been gone, too, whereas the things in his study were left just as usual. Not a thing had been touched.

Having refreshed themselves at the tuckshop, the chums of the Lower School walked together into the quadrangle. As they did so, three wildly-excited and scared figures came dashing out from beneath the old elms.

Tom Merry & Co. stopped and looked in amazement at Percy Mellish, Scrope, and Chowle, the black sheep of the Fourth.

"Here, stop a minute, you idiots!" bawled Monty Lowther. "What's the matter? Have you seen a ghost?"

Mellish & Co. halted and came over to the others. Upon their white, pasty faces were looks of indescribable horror.

"Redfern!" gasped Mellish, licking his dry lips. "We—we've seen him!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. brightened.

"Where?" they exclaimed eagerly.

"In—in the ruined chapel!" stuttered Mellish, still gasping. "He—he—"

"Well, you chump? What is there to be frightened at?"

"Redfern's dead!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. gave convulsive starts.

"What?" exclaimed Figgins faintly. "Redfern's dead?"

"Yes!" howled Scrope, finding his voice at last. "We've seen him—in the ruined chapel, lying on his back—dead!"

Mellish & Co. shuddered.

"Bai-fovo!"

The chums of the Lower School looked at the black sheep of the Fourth in speechless amazement. It was evident from their scared looks that they had seen something in the ruined chapel that had frightened them. Mellish & Co. often went secretly into the ruined chapel to indulge in the forbidden luxury of a cigarette.

"Look here, you fellows!" said Figgins, turning with a white face to the others. "There must be some ghastly mistake! Reddy can't be dead! Let's go and have a look!"

"Wun like anythin', deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as they all ran off together.

Mellish, Scrope, and Chowle did not accompany them. Those youths, thoroughly frightened, went indoors to spread the news of their discovery.

In the cold, chilly gloom of the ruined chapel Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. halted. They had caught sight of a still, huddled figure lying on the hard stone floor.

They approached it with bated breath, fearful of what they might behold. The sunlight filtering through the old stained-glass windows fell upon the face of the schoolboy who lay prone on the floor, motionless and still.

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom Merry. "It's Reddy!"

"Is he—is he dead?"

They bent over the inert form of their schoolfellow, and Tom Merry gently raised the closed eyelids. They were quite limp in his fingers, and the eyes did not flicker the slightest. With a face as white as that of the motionless junior before him, Tom undid the waistcoat and felt for the beating of Redfern's heart. But not the remotest sign of animation could he find. The body was not even warm. He drew back with a shudder.

"He—he's dead!"

"Redfern dead!"

The words came hoarsely from the throats of all the juniors standing there. For a few tense moments there was silence. The St. Jim's juniors gazed with horrified fascination at the body of Redfern stretched lifeless at their feet. Then Figgins, with a great, dry sob, flung himself down beside his schoolfellow.

"Reddy!" he cried. "Reddy, old chap! Can't you hear me?"

But the prone figure did not move.

Then there was a tramping of feet outside, and next minute a large number of juniors and seniors, at the head of whom was Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came into the ruined chapel, and gazed, spellbound, at the huddled figure on the floor.

Lawrence and Owen, Redfern's studymates and fellow-scholarship lads, burst their way forward, and knelt, with Figgins, beside the prostrate body.

"Reddy!" cried Lawrence huskily. "Reddy, you can't be dead!"

"He can't be dead!" echoed Owen, his face drawn and haggard.

Kildare bent down, and examined the figure. His face was grave as he stood up.

"He's dead right enough," muttered the stalwart captain of St. Jim's, pallid to the lips. "Oh, thank goodness; here comes the Head and Ferrers Locke!"

Dr. Holmes' face was pale as he looked down upon Redfern, stretched lifeless on the floor.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, in horror. "It is impossible for this monstrous calamity to have befallen the poor lad. Locke, my dear sir, pray examine Redfern."

Ferrers Locke did so, and his face was stern and set as he looked up.

"The boy, I am afraid, is past all human aid," he said quietly.

"Good heavens!"

A hushed silence fell upon those standing round, and the boys who had been wearing caps reverently removed them.

Dr. Holmes seemed to have aged during those tense minutes. He was too overcome with emotion to speak at first, but at last he spoke, gravely and incisively.

"Boys, pray depart from here at once. Kildare, we must fetch the ambulance from the school sanatorium, and have this poor lad removed there."

The boys moved away in silence, and took deep breaths of fresh air when they were outside. The mark of tragedy was written across every face.

"Poor old Reddy!" muttered Jack Blake huskily. "I—I can't believe it."

"Neither can I," said Tom Merry, in a grave voice. "What will Reddy's people say about this? Oh, it's awful!"

"I am weally deeply grieved, deah boys," said D'Arcy, furtively polishing his monocle.

The boys stood in groups in the quadrangle and watched, with averted interest, the ambulance, upon which was Redfern's lifeless body, being conveyed from the ruined chapel to the school sanatorium.

The Head and Ferrers Locke followed. Kildare was dispatched to telephone for a doctor at once.

Not one person at St. Jim's could throw off the air of tragedy that was in the very atmosphere. Grim, white faces were everywhere, and even the fellows who had been enemies of Redfern, because he was a scholarship boy, were hushed and dismayed.

CHAPTER 6.

Ferrers Locke Investigates!

"THIS is a very serious matter, Dr. Holmes."

Ferrers Locke spoke in a quiet, grave voice. He was standing by the window in the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was seated at his desk, looking quite aged and worn. Seated in the armchair was the local doctor, who had been summoned to examine Redfern.

"You say, doctor, that an injection over the heart was the probable cause of the boy's death?" asked the detective.

"Yes," replied the medical man, rubbing his chin in evident perplexity. "There is the mark of a syringe just over the heart."

"Yet the only thing I can attribute death to is heart failure."

The doctor and Ferrers Locke looked significantly at the Head of St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes seemed extremely agitated.

"We must sift this tragedy to its very bottom, Locke, even if only for the poor lad's parents," said the Head, in a low voice. "You will take the matter up, and do all you can to clear the mystery?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes, Dr. Holmes, I promise you that everything I can do shall be done," replied the detective. "First of all, I think it will be necessary to question the boys. I am going along to see Mr. Figgins."

Ferrers Locke walked out of the Head's study, and made his way along towards the Shell passage. He tapped at the door of the end study, and Monty Lowther's voice bade him enter. Usually, Monty's voice was cheery and bright, but now it had lost all that, and was quite morose.

Ferrers Locke found the Terrible Three seated in their study round the fire, apparently doing nothing but brood over the tragedy at the school. They all jumped up when the detective entered.

"Hallo, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry, a glad light leaping into St. Jim's and find out how Reddy died?"

"Yes, my lad," replied the detective gravely. "And for that purpose I have come to ask you a few questions. You and Redfern were on the best of terms, I believe?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" replied Tom rather huskily. "Reddy was one of the best and straightest fellows we've had at St. Jim's. If he has been killed, we—we'll find out who did it, and then—"

Tom paused. Monty Lowther and Manners were looking grim. Ferrers Locke sat on the end of the table, and proceeded to ask the chums of the Shell various questions concerning Redfern.

Figgins happened to look in soon afterwards, and he stayed to answer the detective's questions.

The St. Jim's juniors told Ferrers Locke of the misfortune that had overtaken Redfern's people, and his consequent anxiety that he would have to leave St. Jim's and work for them. They recounted how yesterday Redfern had



GEORGE FRANCIS KERR,
New House.
Age 15 years
5 months.
Height 5ft.
4in. St. Jim's
No. 4.

gone out to brood, and came back in more cheerful spirits, and had written a story during the evening, and sent it to the "Leader Magazine" in the hope that it would be accepted, and paid for.

Ferrers Locke listened keenly, his face calm and immobile. When he had learnt all that he could, he jumped off the end of the table where he had been seated.

"Are you going back to the New House, Figgins?" asked the detective.

"If so, I will accompany you and make an examination of Redfern's study. I may discover something of importance there."

"Right-ho, sir!" said Figgins, and he and the detective departed, leaving Tom Merry & Co. to discuss the matter between themselves.

In the New House, Ferrers Locke went up to the Fourth Form passage, and Figgins showed him Redfern's study. Lawrence and Owen were there, looking dismal and gloomy. The loss of their chum had hit them very hard indeed. They willingly agreed to Ferrers Locke's request to make an examination, and assisted him when it was necessary. But the search of Redfern's belongings revealed nothing, except two letters he had received from his father, saying that business was very bad. The detective found the carbon copy of Redfern's story in the desk, however, and took charge of it.

"I should like to read this story," he told Lawrence and Owen, as he went out of the study. "Not that it will be of any use to me in my investigations, but it will be interesting."

The dinner-bell was ringing as Ferrers Locke crossed the quadrangle, and the boys were trooping indoors. Toby, the school page, was standing at the foot of the steps, with a sheaf of letters in his hand, which the postman had just delivered. Ferrers Locke stopped.

"Any letters for me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Toby, and he commenced to scan each letter, mumbling the name of each as he passed it. Ferrers Locke's eyes gleamed when he heard the name "Master Richard Redfern."

"Give me that letter!" he commanded.

Toby handed the letter to the detective, together with the letters addressed to him, and Ferrers Locke went up to his room.

He opened the letter addressed to Redfern, and found it to be from the editor of the "Leader Magazine," accepting the story, and offering five guineas for it. When he had perused his own letters, Ferrers Locke took the carbon copy of Redfern's story from his pocket, and proceeded to read it, smoking his pipe meanwhile.

It took the detective a quarter of an hour to read the story, and when he laid it down, a gleam of intense excitement had entered his eyes.

"By Jove!" muttered the detective, drawing deeply at his pipe. "I wonder! Is it possible that the story was founded on fact—written by Redfern after having met with such an adventure as described in his story, which impressed him so deeply that he set it down in words? The story reads as though it were an account of the author's actual experience. Great Scott! I wonder!"

The detective folded up the story, and placed it back in his pocket. Then he proceeded to eat his dinner, which Toby brought up to him.

After dinner the detective put on his hat and overcoat, and went out. He met the Terrible Three and Jack Blake & Co. in the Close.

"Ah, my lads, just a few more questions!" said the detective, going over to them. "Can you tell me if there is a large empty manor house in the neighbourhood here, whose large, tree-covered grounds are enclosed by a high, spiked wall? The house is supposed to be haunted, and has been untenanted for some time. I should say that the house stood on the outskirts of the wood, and that trees were growing near the wall."

The St. Jim's juniors looked in amazement at the detective.

"Why, you must refer to Moor Hall!" explained Jack Blake. "That place just about fits your description. It stands just on the outskirts of Rycombe Wood and Wayland Moor, and has a high, spiked wall. By gum! Reddy has nothing to do with it, has he?"

"I don't know—yet," replied Ferrers Locke; and, with a thoughtful look upon his face, he walked away.

Tom Merry & Co. watched his tall, stalwart figure pass through the gates, and then they went up to prepare their books for afternoon lessons.

CHAPTER 7.

An Amazing Mystery!

BOOM!

The last stroke of eleven tolled from the school clock-tower at St. Jim's. All was dark and still in the Shell dormitory. The boys were asleep, with one exception.

Tom Merry sat up in bed, and looked round him.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked.

There was no reply to Tom's question. The captain of the Shell could not

sleep that night. Thoughts of Dick Redfern, lying lifeless in the school sanatorium, done to death in some mysterious manner, tortured him. Try as he would, he was unable to banish those thoughts from his mind and repose himself.

Tom had been lying in bed, thinking over the events of the day. Ferrers Locke had come in just after tea-time, looking tired, but cheerful. Had the detective discovered anything? Had the grim, dreary place known as Moor Hall anything to do with the tragedy that had befallen Dick Redfern?

The more Tom Merry thought, the more he became convinced that, in some way, Moor Hall held the secret of today's tragedy.

Tom Merry scrambled out of bed, and hastily dressed himself. Taking his boots in his hands, he left the Shell dormitory, and made his way along the main corridor towards the room that had been appointed for Ferrers Locke's use.

Tom knew that the detective would be up. A light was shining under the door of the room when he approached. He tapped, and the grave voice of Ferrers Locke answered.

"Come in."

Tom Merry entered. The detective was seated at the table, smoking heavily. A thick haze of tobacco-smoke hung about the room. Tom closed the door.

"Great Scott! Do you want me, Merry?"

"Yes, sir," replied the captain of the Shell. "I—I can't go to sleep to-night. I feel that somehow I must be up and doing something for Reddy. So I came along to see you. Have you discovered anything?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes, Tom. There are inhabitants in Moor Hall. I found the place this afternoon, and looked for a high tree overlooking the wall. A neighbouring farmer told me that Redfern had borrowed a ladder from him on Wednesday afternoon, to assist a friend in getting down from a tree. Why Redfern's friend was I did not know, until I ran into a fellow named Parkinson, who turns out to be a special correspondent of the 'Morning Wire.' It appears, from what Parkinson told me, that he had a rival on the lay, named Buzzard, whom he discovered up the tree on Wednesday, and took the ladder away.

"So this fellow, Buzzard, of the 'Daily Recorder,' is the one Redfern helped down from the tree. Both those newspaper fellows are after getting at the secret of Moor Hall. Undoubtedly, there is something mysterious going on in there. Parkinson says they are Chinamen—in that case, there is something very much wrong. Chinamen do not inhabit empty houses in England, and keep their presence secret, for nothing.

"It's my belief that Redfern, whom we know has a leaning towards journalism, undertook to assist this man Buzzard, and that they somehow managed to get into Moor Hall on Wednesday night, and were captured. The Chinamen in there must have injected some poison in Redfern's heart, and left his dead body in the ruined chapel of St. Jim's. Mark that, Tom—the Chinamen left Redfern's body in the ruined chapel. Now, what does that suggest to you?"

"My hat!" said Tom, who had been thinking swiftly. "It means that there must be some sort of communication between Moor Hall and St. Jim's. They surely wouldn't have carried Redfern all the way through the wood from Moor Hall, over the wall, and dumped him in the chapel. They must have used an underground passage."

"Exactly!" smiled the detective. "You've hit on the real explanation. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 676.

Tom, in my opinion. There are innumerable secret passages underneath the ground in this neighbourhood, and it is more than probable that a subterranean communication exists between St. Jim's and Moor Hall, which used to be the old manor house. Tom, I'm going to see if I can discover that secret passage."

"And—and get into Moor Hall—among the Chinamen!" breathed Tom.

The detective nodded, and looked keenly at the captain of the Shell.

"I might require some assistance, Tom," he said. "Would you care to take on the job?"

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.

"Yes, rather, sir!" he exclaimed.

"When do we start—now?"

The detective pursed his lips.

"Well, I intended starting to-night, Tom," he said. "I don't know, though, whether I ought to take you out at this time at night. You must bear in mind that we may enter into great danger. I had better see Dr. Holmes, before I take you out with me. Wait here, Tom. I shan't be long."

The detective was gone ten minutes. When he returned Tom greeted him eagerly.

"Well, sir?"

"I have obtained the Head's permission to take you and Blake and Talbot," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "Let us rouse them at once, and proceed with our investigations."

"Oh, how ripping!"

Tom Merry hastened back to the Fourth Form dormitory. Sounds of slumber greeted his ears as he entered. The deep bass noise of Baggy Trimble



GEORGE
ALFRED
GRUNDY,
Shell Form.
Age 15 years
11 months.
Height 5 ft.
Gin. Study
No. 3.

struck through the gloom with reverberating intonation. Tom went over to Blake's bed, and shook the occupant.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" grunted Blake, stirring sleepily. "Get away! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"Wake up, old son!" said Tom Merry swiftly. "Ferrers Locke wants you to come with us, to find out things about Reddy. Get up!"

Blake needed no second bidding. He jumped out of bed, and scrambled into his clothes. Tom Merry hastily explained, and then went to rouse Talbot.

The three juniors met Ferrers Locke on the stairs, and they went along to the box-room together, and climbed out of the window.

The moon was shining in the quadrangle, shedding a soft light over the sleeping school.

"Over to the cloisters!" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

Then, all of a sudden, a burly form dashed up from round a buttress of the school buildings. Tom Merry and the others were amazed to see Gerald Knox, the prefect of the Sixth. Knox's face was white as death in the moonlight, and he stared, wild-eyed, before him.

Knox had probably been out on one of those secret midnight expeditions to

which he was so addicted. Knox was a prefect, but he would not have retained that position a day after the Head knew of his rascally habits.

"Knox!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Stop, you chump! What's the matter?"

Knox halted before them, panting for breath.

"Don't go over there!" he gasped, pointing back towards the elms in the quadrangle. "Don't go over there!"

"What are you burling about, Knox?" demanded Tom Merry wonderingly. "What's wrong over there?"

"His ghost!" cried the prefect, in terror-stricken tones. "Redfern—his ghost! I've seen it walking across the quad into the cloisters!"

"Great Scott!"

Evidently Knox was speaking the truth—or what he imagined to be the truth. He seemed to be frightened out of his wits.

"Redfern's ghost! That is impossible!" said Ferrers Locke. "Knox, are you sure your imagination is not running away with you?"

"I tell you I saw Redfern as clearly as I can see you!" gasped Knox. "He was walking steadily towards the cloisters, his eyes glaring in front of him, like—like a dead body. Redfern is dead! It can't be him! It's a ghost! Oh, it's awful!"

Knox panted for breath.

Ferrers Locke and the others regarded the prefect in astounded silence for a few minutes. Then the detective spoke abruptly.

"A ghost is impossible! Either Knox is labouring under a delusion, or—"

"Or what, sir?" breathed Jack Blake.

"I don't know. Come on, my lads! We'll find out."

And the detective set off at a run towards the cloisters. Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot followed.

Gerald Knox, thoroughly frightened, went indoors.

The detective and his three schoolboy assistants dashed over to the cloisters at top speed. Emerging from beneath the elms, they saw a figure walking beneath the stone arches of the cloisters that made them pause in awe.

"Redfern!" gasped Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot together.

It was the figure of Redfern, erect, and fully dressed, walking with slow, but steady steps. The schoolboys clenched their teeth to prevent cries escaping from their lips.

Redfern was in the sanatorium, dead. They believed. Yet here he was, in the flesh! Or was it something supernatural? Was it the ghost of Redfern walking the school cloisters?

Ferrers Locke gripped Tom Merry by the arm.

"Let us get in front of him," whispered the detective, in a hoarse voice. "We shall then be better able to judge."

They sped swiftly among the arches, until they had overtaken the slow, plodding figure of the dead schoolboy. Peering from behind a large stone arch, they examined the approaching figure closely.

The moonlight fell across the white face, revealing the unmistakable features of Dick Redfern. His eyes were open, and staring unnaturally. His arms hung straight down by his sides, his hands clenched. It was Dick Redfern right enough.

Redfern walked slowly past, looking neither to the right nor left, but staring straight before him, in the manner of a sleep-walker.

When he had passed, Ferrers Locke turned to the white-faced schoolboys with him.

"It is Redfern," he said, in a low voice. "Amazing as it may seem, he cannot be dead. There he is before us now—as alive as you or I. This affair is

the most uncanny I have ever come across in the whole course of my detective work. The boy was dead yesterday—that I can swear to! Yet a miracle has happened. He has come to life."

Tom Merry licked his dry lips. "Oh, I am glad—glad that Reddy is alive!" he breathed. "What are we going to do now, sir?"

"Follow him!" replied the detective tersely. "In my opinion, Redfern is in the hypnotic state, and that means he is making his way towards the man whose will is controlling him. These Chinese devils are past-masters in the art of wizardry and hypnotism. Redfern is going back to Moor Hall—via the vaults of this school."

"Great Scott!"

"I am going to follow him," said Ferrers Locke, taking a revolver from his hip-pocket. "Are you lads game to risk it with me?"

"I'm game, sir!" said Tom Merry. "So am I, sir!" said Blake. "And I!" said Talbot. "This way, then!" said Ferrers Locke.

"Creeping softly, so as not to disclose their presence to the junior in front, they followed him into the ruined chapel. Redfern made straight towards the secret stone, raised it, and clambered through, replacing the stone into position.

"That settles it!" said Ferrers Locke, with a snap of the teeth. "A ghost wouldn't do that! Redfern is in a trance, and is quite oblivious to us behind him. Down into the vaults, my lads!"

"They removed the stone, and, one by one, clambered through. Ferrers Locke had a pocket-torch, which he switched on. In front of them, walking like a spectre among the stone arches, was Redfern. He also had a light. It was the pocket-torch he had taken with him the previous evening, and which had remained in his pocket.

"They stalked Redfern through the vaults, moving silently among the arches. At last the door leading to the vault beneath the shepherd's hut was reached. Redfern walked through, closing the door. Ferrers Locke and the St. Jim's juniors were close behind. They held the door half open, and watched Redfern tensely.

Redfern, still in a mechanical manner, gave a jump upwards, and touched a certain stone in the wall above him. Ferrers Locke grimly made a mental note of the stone's position. No sooner had Redfern touched it than a large stone slab in the floor moved inwards, displaying a dark gap. Watched in breathless silence by those at the door, Redfern climbed through the hole, and the stone moved back into position.

The vault was empty.

CHAPTER 8.

The House of Fear!

FERRERS LOCKE, Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot stood there in silence for some moments. Then the detective spoke briskly.

"There's no time to waste, my lads! Are you going to follow?"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry, gritting his teeth.

They went into the vault, and Ferrers Locke switched on his electric light. He gave a lithe jump, and pressed against the stone that Redfern had touched. At first he did not succeed in opening the stone slab in the floor, but his second attempt released the secret spring. With a faint, grinding noise, the stone slab swung inwards, leaving the great yawning gap for the stalkers of Dick Redfern to climb through.

Ferrers Locke went first, and discovered the ledge over the well. He

swung himself down, and then Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot followed.

There was barely room for the four of them on the small ledge. They looked down into the dark depths of the well, and shuddered.

Redfern was gone—where? Not into the well, surely. The detective's flash-lamp swept across the gulf, illuminating the other ledge and the tunnel-mouth opposite.

"By jingo!" muttered Ferrers Locke. "We are up against it now, my lads, and no mistake! Redfern has presumably crossed the gulf, and has gone down that tunnel, which must lead to Moor Hall. But how did he get across? He could not have jumped it!"

"There must have been somebody there to shove a plank across, sir," said Tom Merry. "I—I hope to goodness nobody is watching us now!"

The detective's jaw set grimly, and he looked round him in the gloomy silence of the underground vault.

"We've got to cross this well!" he said grimly. "If we don't, we might as well give up all hope of unravelling this mystery!"

He knelt down and bent over the end of the ledge, flashing his torchlight round the crumbling stone walls of the well. Then Ferrers Locke gave a sudden swift exclamation.

"I think I know how to manage it, my lads. Hold the light for me, Tom, will you?"

They watched the detective wonderingly, as he swung himself over the end of the ledge. Tom Merry bent down and directed the beams of the torchlight upon the wall of the well.

The wall of the well was crumbling with age, and stones had become dislodged and fallen to the bottom, leaving holes in the wall that would enable the detective to gain foot and hand hold. Ferrers Locke proceeded cautiously, and grasped with his hands one of these niches supplied by the missing bricks.

His feet sought another, and rested in the hole. Then the detective bent sideways and grasped another of these niches, swung himself over, and hung there, balanced in the air.

The watching schoolboys on the ledge above held their breath. Tom Merry directed the light upon the wall, and found another niche. This the detective reached, using his strength and athletic powers to their full advantage. Then there were plenty of holes in the wall, and, slowly but surely, Ferrers Locke worked himself half-way round the well, until he was underneath the ledge opposite the one on which the schoolboys were standing. Then he raised an arm, pulled himself up, and at last clambered on to the ledge.

Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths of relief. The detective's feat was accomplished, and he was now standing in the tunnel mouth. Tom Merry had the torch, which would have been broken had he thrown it across to Ferrers Locke. The detective therefore had to grope his way into the tunnel. A swift exclamation of satisfaction escaped his lips when he barked his shins up against a hard substance which, upon examination, proved to be a long wooden plank—evidently used by the Chinamen for crossing the well-mouth. Redfern had probably crossed by that, too, and taken it away when he had reached the other side.

Ferrers Locke bore the plank back to the ledge, and placed it across the intervening gulf. Tom Merry crossed over first, and then came Blake and Talbot.

"Jolly good, sir!" said Tom Merry, when they were all four congregated in the tunnel-mouth. "Now we can go right on to Moor Hall. This tunnel must lead there."

They trod warily, fearful of lurking enemies in the thick gloom ahead of them. A musty, earthy smell was in the atmosphere of the tunnel. Where would it lead them?

Ferrers Locke's electric torch pierced



The Chinaman tapped a button, and a thin dart of blue light leapt from the glass tube on his apparatus and focused itself direct upon Ferrers Locke's wrist. Immediately a numb feeling came over his arm. (See page 12).

the blackness, and at length they reached a door that barred further progress along the tunnel. They halted, and the detective examined the lock. With a grunt of satisfaction, he pulled an oiled bolt and swung the door open. With his revolver gripped in readiness, he went through. There was a swift patter of feet, and a gasping cry. Then, as Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot followed Ferrers Locke through the door, they saw him standing over a prone figure. The man on the floor was an ugly Chinaman.

"That's settled his hash," said the detective grimly. "A knock on the head with the butt of my revolver soon put him out of mischief. Come on, my lads. It seems that we have now to climb some steps."

A long flight of crumbling stone steps confronted them. Ferrers Locke went first, his revolver poised in readiness, and they ascended the stairs. It took them five minutes to reach the top.

"We must be on the roof of the house now, my lads," said Ferrers Locke, halting before a grating. "Ah! This slides back. Mind how you step through!"

They clambered through the grating, and found themselves in the dirty, noisome depths of an old-fashioned chimney. Niches in the walls of the chimney enabled one to climb up or down, in the manner of the chimney-sweeps in days gone by. Ferrers Locke and the St. Jim's juniors looked at each other in amazement.

"We're in Moor Hall—inside one of the chimneys," said the detective quietly. "Now comes the most perilous part of our job. We've got to get down, and our chance where it may lead us. I'm going first. Tom, will you come down afterwards? I should like Blake and Talbot to remain here on guard."

The plucky juniors agreed to this arrangement, and Ferrers Locke proceeded to climb down the chimney, followed by Tom Merry.

Tom's blood coursed swiftly through his veins. He did not know what danger awaited him at the bottom, but this he did know—Dick Redfern was there, and in the hands of enemies. Tom set his teeth hard. There could be no thoughts of turning back now. He would see it through. The presence of Ferrers Locke, the intrepid detective, gave him confidence.

"Mind, Tom!" came the detective's voice in a whisper. "We land here. I dare not flash the light on."

Tom climbed down cautiously, and felt the detective's shoulder. When he jumped by Ferrers Locke's side he found himself cramped in a small space, stone-walled on either side.

Not a sound broke through the eerie darkness. Ferrers Locke stretched an arm forward, and felt what appeared to be a door in front of him. Then, with swift suddenness, a startling thing happened.

Tom Merry found himself being turned round slowly. The small chamber in which he stood was revolving. Ferrers Locke gripped Tom's arm and hissed for silence. There was a sudden jolt and a vision of soft light, and then the two were hurled forward, to crash upon a thickly carpeted floor.

A click came from behind them, and a cackling laugh sounded in the room. The detective and the St. Jim's boy struggled to their feet and stood upright, blinking dazedly round them.

They were in a sumptuously-furnished room, draped in Eastern tapestries, lighted with coloured hanging-lamps, which shed a mystic radiance round them. A sickly perfume was in the air, and they

could see the smoke of incense rising from a quaintly-carved pedestal bowl in a corner of the room. Tom Merry and Ferrers Locke drew deep breaths of awe. All the mysterious luxuries of the Orient was in this room, from the heavy carpet on the floor to the gorgeous tapestries, the cushions, and the screens.

All this they took in bewilderedly, and for a moment they were lost in wonder. Then it flashed across them that this was the lair of the enemy, and that they were in deadly peril.

That cackling laugh sounded again, and instinctively they turned to where it had proceeded from. Their startled eyes beheld an aged Chinaman, dressed in the robes of a mandarin of his race, squatting among a cluster of cushions at the farther end of the room. A fearsome-looking wooden god loomed behind him, and from three hanging thuribles the sickly smoke of incense cast a blue haze among the tapestries.

Tom Merry was about to utter a cry of amazement, but Ferrers Locke checked him with a hard grip on his arm.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" came a soft, purring voice from the Chinaman squatting before the idol. "You are unexpected visitors."

He was looking at them with evil, beady eyes, a leer upon his yellow, furrowed face. Ferrers Locke, gripping the revolver he had thrust into his pocket, looked steadily at the aged Celestial before him.

"Unexpected—yes. And our entrance was rather unceremonious, too, I think," he said dryly. "Perhaps, before we go any further, you will enlighten me on a few points. Is this Moor Hall?"

"You guess correctly," chuckled the Chinaman. "You are, I suppose, another of these bothersome newspaper reporters, and who cannot mind his own business. And you, too, I see, have a schoolboy assistant. Is that the fashion among Press-men, to take boys from their school-masters and lead them into danger?"

Ferrers Locke's grip on his revolver tightened.

"Danger!" he echoed, as though in perfect self-composure. "What danger is there here? Is this a temple to Confucius, established in England for the Yellow Men? Surely, danger would not lurk in a temple?"

The Chinaman before them chuckled, and struck a silver gong. Immediately two evil-visaged Chinamen stepped noiselessly from behind the tapestries and bowed before their master. They received terse orders, spoken in Chinese, and then moved away as noiselessly as they had entered.

Soon they returned, bearing a small wooden box, and handed it to their master. The aged Chinaman opened it, displaying an apparatus that resembled an electric battery. A small glass tube was affixed to a series of coiled wires.

There was an evil smile on the Chinaman's face as his long, talon-like fingers affixed these wires to terminals. A grim look crossed Ferrers Locke's brow. He did not know what the Chinaman intended doing, but he realised that he must take immediate precautions. With a swift movement he whipped the revolver from his pocket and covered the Chinaman.

"Hands up!" rapped the detective.

The Chinaman looked up quickly, and his small eyes seemed to glint. He tapped a button, and a thin dart of blue light leapt from the glass tube on his apparatus. Ferrers Locke was about to fire, but the blue light focused itself directly upon his wrist. His face went

grey, and his whole frame quivered. A numb feeling came over his arm, and the revolver fell from his paralysed fingers on the floor.

"Good heavens!" cried Tom Merry, dashing forward and pulling the detective out of the radius of the blue ray. "What have you done, you Chinese villain? I—"

Tom broke off with a sharp cry, for the evil blue light had sought his wrist, making his whole arm numb and stiff.

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the Chinaman, switching off the blue ray. "Thus you see the power of my paralytic ray, which acts so swiftly upon the human nerves. Your arms will be powerless until I will that the paralysed nerves shall be revived."

Ferrers Locke and Tom Merry, their arms hanging limply by their sides, looked in speechless horror at the heathen miscreant before them.

"Now you shall see the wonders of my house!" he said, with a hoarse chuckle. "You came here seeking information, and your wish shall be gratified. But you shall never divulge your information to your fellow-creatures, for those who interfere with Wu Fang are doomed."

He again struck the gong, and the two Chinese servants appeared. At signals from their master they grasped Ferrers Locke and the St. Jim's junior, and led them into a room adjoining.

Involuntary gasps of amazement arose from the lips of the detective and Tom Merry when they beheld the wonders of this room.

Gigantic machines, whose flywheels towered high to the roof, stood at the farther end. These huge wheels were spinning round at thousands of revolutions to the minute, yet not the faintest hum came from them. Giant dynamos, emitting blue sparks of electric light, were working silently. The machine-room was elaborately equipped as a laboratory also, and huge glass retorts and distillers, attached to a complicated apparatus, stood upon the benches.

"Here you see my chief workshop," chuckled Wu Fang, who had followed them noiselessly into the room. "These machines, when sufficient power is stored, will control the wireless waves of the world. There will be no limit to the power of Wu Fang; he will become ruler of the world, and conquer it for the Yellow Nation. Here, also, you see my laboratories, where I manufacture strange fluids, unknown to your greatest men of science. These things cause your hearts to beat with wonder—eh?"

Ferrers Locke and Tom Merry looked round them in speechless amazement. The wonders of the room fascinated them. They had never seen such marvels before.

"I must congratulate you on your cleverness, Wu Fang," said Ferrers Locke, at length. "Your inventions certainly excite my deepest admiration. I see now why you have installed yourself in this rambling old house in secret. Your silent machinery, and the absence of smoke, keep your secret extremely well."

Wu Fang sneered. "My secret shall be kept until I have complete power of the world, and secrecy is no longer necessary!" he said. "See how I have dealt with Mr. Buzzard and his fearless schoolboy assistant!"

He pulled a string, and a screen at the farther end of the room fell back, revealing a small compartment luxuriously furnished.

Upon a couch was stretched the inert body of Mr. Edwin Buzzard, of the "Daily Recorder." Seated in a low chair was Dick Redfern, alive, but star-

ing straight before him, as though in a trance.

"Dick!" exclaimed Tom Merry, striving forward, still with the grip of the steel Chinaman on his shoulder. "Reddy, old chap!"

But Redfern made no reply. He looked at Tom vacantly.

"He is completely under my power!" said Wu Fang, chuckling. "I control his nerves, even as my silent machinery controls the wireless waves of the world."

"Oh, you—you villain!" exclaimed Tom, turning fiercely on Wu Fang, but powerless to attack him because of his numbed nerves. "You shall be punished for this! You cannot remain here for always, safe and sound, to carry on your devilish work!"

Even as Tom spoke a shrill shriek sounded from the room behind, from which they had just come. This shriek was followed by a thudding of feet and a rousing cry in Jack Blake's voice:

"We're coming, Tommy!"

CHAPTER 9. The Tables Turned!

NEXT minute Jack Blake dashed into the room, followed by Reginald Talbot.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, a joyous light leaping into his eyes. "Bravo, Blake!"

Wu Fang stepped back, a look of livid rage on his yellow face.

He had seen a wooden box in Talbot's hand. It was the box containing that deadly blue ray which had paralysed the nerves of Ferrers Locke and Tom Merry.

Ferrers Locke and his schoolboy companion found the grip on their shoulders relax. The Chinese servants darted back to where their master stood.

"Devils!" shrieked Wu Fang in a voice pent with terror. "Put down that box! Put it down!"

"Hands up!" chuckled Blake, presenting the revolver Ferrers Locke had dropped on the floor when his wrist had been subjected to the blue ray.

Wu Fang seemed to choke, but he obeyed Blake's command and raised his arms on high.

"The three of you!" ordered Blake tersely.

He pointed the revolver menacingly at the two yellow servants, and they both elevated their hands in the air.

"Got that giddy ray working, Talbot?" asked Blake quite cheerfully.

Talbot had the lid of the box open, and he pressed a button. There was a faint buzz, and then from the glass tube that penetrating blue dart shot forth. Talbot directed the ray towards Wu Fang's wrist, and the yellow man seemed to crumble, and his arm fell limp to his side. There was no longer any necessity for Blake to menace him with the revolver. Each of his two servants were subjected to the ray in turn. Within the space of five minutes all three Chinamen were powerless.

Then a marvellous thing happened. Dick Redfern, who had been sitting in the armchair staring vacantly at these proceedings, sprang suddenly into active life. At first he seemed to jump, and then he rubbed his eyes. He looked at the scene before him in amazement.

"Great Scott!" was his first ejaculation. "Tom Merry—Blake—Talbot, and—Ferrers Locke!"

Jack Blake sprang forward and gripped Redfern's hand.

"Then you're really alive, Reddy!" he exclaimed joyfully. "We—we thought you were dead!"

Redfern looked round him, and swift understanding entered his head.

"I see it all now!" he said. "That

heathen rascal, Wu Fang, has had me hypnotised. By paralysing his nerves with that blue ray, his influence over me is destroyed, and I've just regained consciousness. I can tell you why you thought I was dead. This villain has discovered a liquid which, being injected into the heart, will suspend animation for a period, and make it appear that the person is dead. But as soon as the effect of the injection works off into the blood, the heart commences to beat again, and the person regains life. That's what Wu Fang has done to me—he explained it all to me before he did it!" Redfern shuddered, and went on: "He caught Mr. Buzzard and I when we were finding our way through the secret passage, and we were both brought here. Wu Fang explained to us all the mysteries of this place, and then said we should never tell another soul. My fate was to be buried alive. I was to receive the injection, and be placed back at St. Jim's and found there. They would think me dead—as you all did think—and I should eventually be buried before the effects of the injection had worked off."

"But Wu Fang made a mistake as to the amount of the injection he gave me. He didn't inject enough, and he knew that if I regained consciousness before they buried me I should give his whole game away. So he decided to exert his hypnotic powers, so that when I came back to life I should return to this place at night-time. I can remember all my sensations during the time that I was hypnotised."

"When I awoke in the school sanatorium it seemed that somebody was telling me to lay there until the nurse had retired, and then get up, dress myself, and return here by the way I had come. I had to do it—you see, I was hypnotised. It all sounds uncanny, but it's true. And I remained in that dazed state until just now. By killing his nerve-power you have destroyed his influence over me."

Ferrers Locke and the other St. Jim's juniors had listened to Redfern's story with bated breath. It all seemed so unreal, so much like a horrible detective story, and yet it was all true. Tom Merry gave vent to a deep exclamation of wonder.

"It's all like a dream, Reddy!" he said. And then he looked down at his powerless right arm. "Ferrers Locke and I have been treated to that beastly blue ray! Look at my arm!"

Dick Redfern smiled. "Oh, that will be all right! There is a little apparatus over there that absorbs the power and brings your nerves back to their normal state. Jolly lucky old Wu Fang told me everything, isn't it?"

Wu Fang, standing there powerless with his two servants, scowled. Dearly did he regret his self-confidence and pride in his inventions that had prompted him to reveal their secrets to his two victims the previous night, when he thought he was laughing them and that they would never be able to reveal his secrets.

Dick Redfern went over to a cupboard underneath one of the benches, and withdrew a small apparatus that resembled the one that evolved the blue ray. Instead of the blue glass there was attached to the coils a thin wire plunger. Redfern carried the box over to where Ferrers Locke was standing, inserted the wire plunger into the skin, and turned a small switch. There came a faint buzz from the interior of the box, and the detective gave an involuntary gasp, for the pain in his arm, as the batteries absorbed the power that had paralysed it, was severe. But the ordeal lasted only two minutes, and Ferrers Locke's

arm was quite free again and strong as ever. Then Tom Merry's arm was treated in a similar way, and soon his arm, too, was released from the numbing influence the blue ray had produced.

Wu Fang and his servants looked on scowlingly. The Chinese inventor had other men in the place, but they were out in the grounds, or engaged in the various workshops, unconscious of their employer's dilemma.

"Thanks, Redfern!" said Ferrers Locke gratefully. "We have turned the tables on this rascal properly! Who is that man lying senseless on the couch—your friend Buzzard?"

"Yes, poor chap!" said Redfern. "He has been treated with the injection. Wu Fang intended keeping him to experiment upon. But he'll return to life soon, I expect. Mr. Buzzard is on the staff of the 'Daily Recorder,' you know, and I am helping him get the story of this place as a scoop for his paper. I reckon we've got a fine scoop now—eh?"

Ferrers Locke chuckled.

"That's a fact, my lad! When the story gets into the paper, it will provide startling reading. Well, the question now is: How did Blake and Talbot get down here and interfere at such an opportune moment? You must have followed us down the chimney, Blake."

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Blake. "You see, we heard Tom yell out, and climbed down the chimney at once. You and Tom had disappeared, so we were at a loss what to do. All of a sudden Talbot discovered a peephole, and we saw everything that took place between you and Wu Fang. We did not chip in before for the simple reason we didn't know how the dickens to get into the room. But when you and Wu Fang came in here, we fiddled about, and suddenly found ourselves going round and pitched on our necks into the room. I reckon we touched the secret spring that operates that revolving fireplace. Anyhow, we caught one of the yellow chaps by surprise, and knocked him out with the revolver which we found on the floor. Then Talbot took charge of the giddy mystery-box, and we came in. You know the rest."

"Good old Blake!" said Tom Merry gratefully.

Ferrers Locke was smiling broadly. "I can't say how glad I am that you lads came with me to-night," he said. "You have given me invaluable service. Now we've got to get out of this place, and send the police here to round up the occupants. I expect there are swarms of yellow men in here. We are fortunate in being comparatively alone. Do you know where the others are, Redfern?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" replied the New House junior eagerly. "All the rooms in this place have been converted into workshops, the windows barred, and the doors strengthened, in case of attack. Well, Wu Fang has got the keys of all those rooms on him, and I reckon if we sneak along and lock the yellow blighters in, we—"

"By Jove! That's an excellent suggestion, Redfern!" exclaimed Ferrers Locke. "We'll have the whole bunch of them prisoners, ready for when the police arrive. Wu Fang, my friend, I must relieve you of your keys."

The look upon Wu Fang's face, as the detective stepped up to him and unhooked the chain of keys from the inner folds of his silk gown, was murderous. But the Chinese arch-fiend was powerless to resist. Leaving Blake and Talbot and Tom Merry to bring the prisoners with

rope, Ferrers Locke and Redfern went away to complete their task.

Ten minutes later they returned, with five cowering Chinamen before them. Ferrers Locke was menacing them with the revolver.

"We've locked the doors, and the other yellow devils are prisoners!" chuckled the detective. "We rounded up these chaps in the passages. There's plenty of rope to lead 'em, lad. You might trust these fellows up, will you?"

"Yes, rather!"

Soon there were seven Chinese servants and their scowling master prisoners in the room of silent machinery, in the hands of Ferrers Locke and the St. Jim's juniors.

Then Mr. Buzzard, with a loud gasp, sat up and rubbed his head. He blinked round him in stupid wonderment.

"Why, what the blazes—" he began. "It's all right, sir!" laughed Redfern happily. "We've rounded up the lot of them, and the place is in our hands. We'll have a fine story for the 'Recorder' now!"

He then proceeded to explain everything to the plump little journalist. Mr. Buzzard kept scratching his head, and giving loud exclamations of amazement and wonder from time to time.

"Well, I'm blowed!" was his remark, as he jumped from the couch. "So I've just come back to life, have I? Wu Fang, you yellow devil, we're top dogs now! This has nipped your little game in the bud, of becoming the man who will rule the world!"

Wu Fang did not reply in English, but to judge from his volubility in Chinese, his remarks were extremely expressive of the rage and chagrin he felt.

Ferrers Locke then had the feet of their prisoners released, so that they could walk.

"We are going to take you out via the tunnel," he said. "The first who attempts to disobey my orders I shall shoot. Now, then—quick march!"

Tom Merry and Redfern procured oil-lamps from the adjoining room, and they all armed themselves with swords, plenty of which hung on the walls. Not that they intended using them, but they inspired confidence, as Jack Blake remarked.

The revolving fireplace was switched round, leaving the chimney open for them to climb up. Ferrers Locke went first, and bade Wu Fang follow him. Then came the rest of the Chinamen, and Mr. Buzzard and the St. Jim's juniors brought up the rear.

In this fashion they reached the tunnel, and eventually they reached the vault where the well yawned beneath them.

Tom Merry and Talbot placed the wooden plank across, and Ferrers Locke ordered Wu Fang to go first.

The Chinese inventor did so, and Ferrers Locke followed him closely, the revolver poised. Wu Fang's eyes were gleaming with the light of treachery. Suddenly, with a yell, he gave a leap from the plank, evidently with the intention of reaching the ledge opposite and pulling the plank away, thus hurling Ferrers Locke to his death.

But Wu Fang missed his mark. He clobbered wildly towards the ledge in a vain endeavour to reach it. His long, talon-like hands only grazed the stone-work, and then Wu Fang fell headlong into space. His wild, shrieking cry echoed tragically in the vault, and then it was swallowed up by the dreadful confines of that underground world. Ferrers Locke looked down, but Wu Fang had disappeared for ever.

"Perhaps it's as well," said Ferrers Locke in a quiet voice. "That rascal has met his death suddenly and certain. He

will engineer no more mischief in this world, which he sought to become ruler of. The secrets of his inventions go with him to death, and I think that also is as well. Boys, send those other prisoners over. We shall give the local police-inspector quite a shock when we all visit him!"

They all crossed over, and then entered the vault above. This gave access to the shepherd's hut in Ryelcombe Wood, and the boys breathed deeply of the cool, fresh air of the woods. Piloting their prisoners, they tramped through the wood towards the village, listening to the parish church clock as it struck two.

CHAPTER 10.

All Serene!

"BLESSED my soul!"

Dr. Holmes, the venerable Head of St. Jim's, gave vent to that exclamation in tones of considerable surprise.

The gas was alight in his study, and the clock showed that it was five minutes to three in the morning. It was three and a half hours since Ferrers Locke had departed from the school, taking with him Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot.

The Head had received a shock when Knox of the Sixth had dashed into his room and informed him that the ghost of Dick Redfern was walking in the quadrangle. Knox had appeared so convinced that Dr. Holmes had gone down to the sanatorium, and there made the startling discovery that the body of Redfern was missing—also the dead junior's clothes and boots. This had alarmed the Head, and he had rung up the police at once. Then he had waited in his study, pacing up and down, for further news and the return of Ferrers Locke and the boys.

"Bless my soul!"

The door of the Head's study had opened, and Ferrers Locke entered. Behind him came Dick Redfern, and Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot brought up the rear, smiling.

"Rather late for a visit, Dr. Holmes, but I thought you'd rather be acquainted with the facts at once," said Ferrers Locke, with a chuckle.

The Head was looking at Redfern like one in a dream.

"Redfern! Good heavens! You are alive and well!"

"I'm as right as rain, sir," replied Redfern cheerfully.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head again.

To relieve the worthy doctor of his wonderment, Ferrers Locke then proceeded to outline the facts, and he told of the amazing events of the evening. Dr. Holmes listened with intense interest. He drew a deep breath when the detective had finished.

"Dear me! This is a most amazing affair! Really, it seems impossible to believe that such things could happen in the neighbourhood of the school! Redfern, my lad, are you sure you feel no ill-effects of your dreadful experiences?"

"None whatever, sir," replied the New House junior cheerfully. "As a matter of fact, sir, I feel awfully bucked because Mr. Buzzard has gone straight back to his hotel to write up the story for the 'Daily Recorder,' and he reckons it will be the greatest sensation in modern journalism. And I am going to reap some profits, too."

"Dear me!" gasped the Head. "You are to be congratulated, Redfern. Also, you will be glad to hear that your story has been accepted by the editor of the 'Leader Magazine,' and he offers you five guineas for it. Had you not written that story, my friend, Ferrers Locke, would

not have been able to reach you at Moor Hall to-night."

"Yes; he has told me how that set him on the track, sir," replied Redfern, a glad light shining in his eyes. "I'm jolly pleased, I can assure you. This stroke of luck will enable my pater to carry on."

"Your father has a son to be proud of, my lad," said the Head gravely. "I shall follow with great interest your future essays into spare-time journalism. Although, my boy, you must not allow your enthusiasm to impair your school work."

"No, rather not, sir!" said Redfern. "St. Jim's is the place for me—for another few years, anyhow!"

"And now return to your dormitories, my lads," said the Head. "I shall discuss this matter further in the morning."

"Here he is!"

Dick Redfern, appeared in the quadrangle the next morning with Figgins & Co. of the New House. They were all looking radiantly happy.

"Reddy, by gum!"

Redfern was soon surrounded by scores of excited fellows, who looked at him as though he were a ghost.

"I—I say, Reddy, are you really alive, you know?" said Cardew. "Let's pinch you!"

"Yarcoogh!" roared Redfern, as Cardew pinched him. "Shurrup, you ass! I'm alive all right!"

"By Jove! So you are!" said Cardew, with a grin.

Redfern was the cynosure of all eyes at St. Jim's that morning. But he did not mind. He was radiantly happy, especially when he returned to St. Jim's, after having visited Mr. Buzzard at his hotel.

The alert little journalist had got his "scoop," and was very proud of it. Parkinson, his rival, was, to use his own words, "scouring round Moor Hall for the leavings" of the story. It was the "Daily Recorder" that got the "scoop," and they paid well for it, too.

Redfern wrote to his people that evening, and the letter contained news that gladdened their hearts. The money he received he sent home, besides other choques he received from the editor of the "Leader Magazine," who wanted Redfern to write regularly for him.

As for the denizens of Moor Hall, they were rounded up by the police, under the direction of Ferrers Locke, and deported.

The machinery was confiscated, but the secrets of its construction were never made known, because Chi Kang, the doomed Wu Fang's chief assistant, managed to destroy the vital mechanisms before the Government experts arrived.

The house by the moor was soon emptied, and Ferrers Locke regarded the case of Moor Hall as one of the most thrilling and successful in his career.

Tom Merry & Co., of course, thrilled at the newspaper accounts—especially as Mr. Buzzard had taken care to mention the names of Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot, besides Redfern, in his story. The School House fellows regarded it as a great victory for them; but Figgins indignantly claimed the highest honours for the New House, which was proud of Dick Redfern, who had played his part so well in the temporary role of the Schoolboy Journalist!

THE END.

(Another grand long story of the Chums of St. Jim's next week, entitled: "THE BOY FROM THE WILD WEST," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy early. Do not miss next week's wonderful story, it is just one long glorious adventure that will thrill and entertain you from beginning to end.)



John Sharpe, the world-famous detective.

The INVISIBLE HAND



Iron Hand, the leader of the powerful Crime Trust.

This wonderful story has also been filmed by the popular VITAGRAPH Film Company, and readers of the "GEM" should make a point of seeing the picture week by week at their favourite cinemas.

The Globe of Death.

ATTACKED BY THE GANG.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett of the Secret Service in Chicago, to track down the band of organised criminals operating in the West under the guidance of Iron Hand. Red, Burnett's assistant, overhears the plans and informs Iron Hand in the latter's lair in San Francisco. Red is discovered by Sharpe, who disguises as a telegraph operator, and he is traced to the home of his sister, Marna Black, one of the band of crooks. Marna is captured. Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand. Anne leaves for the West. She is not known to Sharpe. The detective starts off for Iron Hand's lair, and engages a compartment on the express. Discovering, however, that the crooks have booked the compartment next to his, Sharpe engages yet another one so that he will have means of escape when attacked by the gang.

At the appointed time for the departure of the train John Sharpe entered the great overland express, and made his way to his compartment. As he did so he was conscious that someone was watching his movements intently.

He closed the door of his carriage, locked it, and, stuffing a cloth in the keyhole, he hung a towel over the knob, and made his way towards his sleeping-bunk.

Soon after the train started one of the members of the gang in the next compartment crept quietly into the corridor and peered through the keyhole. He had to inform his friends, however, that he was not able to see anything. Sharpe distinctly heard them manoeuvring about, and hastily constructed a dummy of pillows and blankets. These he carefully placed in his sleeping-bunk.

Sharpe then unlocked the door of Compartment B, which he had also engaged, and went through to it.

In Compartment D there was a considerable amount of activity. One of the crooks took from his hamper a small box, which he handled very carefully.

The box was slowly opened, and a small globe of glass about the size of an apple was extracted from it.

"Mustard gas! That will settle him!" growled one man to the others. He handed it to one of the crooks, and the two others followed him out into the corridor.

The express was dashing along at great speed now, and the task in front of the members of the gang was a very perilous one indeed. Very carefully two of them climbed to the roof of the train, and

the third gingerly handed the globe of death up to them.

Creeping along the roof, they made for the ventilator over Compartment C. The men produced a folding steel saw, which they rapidly fixed together, and immediately started to cut a hole through the wire ventilator.

A hole large enough to admit a man's hand was soon made, and through this one of the villains pushed the small globe. For an instant he held it, and then he let it fall with a crash to the ground. Soon the compartment was covered with a thick vapour.

Sharpe, from Compartment B, heard the globe fall to the floor. Stealthily he opened the door leading to Compartment C, and some of the vapour at once drifted in. Immediately sensing his great danger the detective hastily closed the door.

Holding his breath, he rushed into the corridor, and started to climb up to the roof of the train.

The two crooks who had thrown the bomb into the compartment, thus hoping to seal the fate of the young detective, were peering down through the ventilator to see the result of their work. As John Sharpe silently approached he heard one of the men say to the other:

"Marwitz will tell us when he's done for, then he'll come up the way we did!"

There was no time to be lost. Sharpe immediately drew his pistol, and ordered the men to hold up their hands.

Startled by the sound of Sharpe's voice, the crooks turned round and did as they were bid. It was then they noted the form of Marwitz creeping along the roof of the train towards John Sharpe.

He took from his pocket a heavy knife, and the next moment pounced upon the detective, and delivered a hard blow with this weapon upon John's head. The force of it knocked him senseless.

The express train was now passing along the banks of the swift-flowing river. The crooks saw their opportunity, and chuckled with delight as they thought of the terrible fate which awaited the plucky young detective.

The three men seized him, and, lifting him bodily from the roof of the train, they threw him well over into the torrents below.

"Believe me, he'll be a wonder if he wakes up from that dose!" grinned Marwitz.

The cold water had the effect, however, of reviving Sharpe immediately, and, conscious but very weak, he rose again to the surface, and battled gallantly for his life with the water.

Before the arrival of the express at the next station the three crooks on the roof, taking a risk, jumped as the train commenced to slow down.

Iron Hand's three assistants then made their way to a livery stable in the dis-

trict, and as it was still dark, and there was no one about, they helped themselves to three horses. It was their intention, to make their way back to Eagle's Nest, the headquarters of Potsdam.

With difficulty John Sharpe managed to swim to the far bank of the river. He was a strong swimmer and a good athlete, and he was considerably aided by the flow of the water. A wood lay on the river bank, and John Sharpe decided to rest here a bit before he continued on his way.

He was about to resume, when he distinctly heard the sound of horses' hoofs, and he paused and listened.

He was soon able to make out in the dim light that there were three men on horseback, and he hurriedly sought shelter behind some bushes, until he became aware who they were. As the men passed by Sharpe discovered that they were the three crooks who had made such a determined attempt to kill him on the night express.

Near the place where the detective was hiding one of the men pulled up his horse suddenly.

Sharpe listened intently, and heard him say:

"My horse is lame. You go on, as you may be wanted by Potsdam. I'll go back to the town and follow on in the morning."

The two other crooks bade him goodbye, and John Sharpe could see Marwitz examining the hoofs of the horse. Presently, he decided to make the best of a bad job, and he started to walk back to the village. As he led the horse past the spot where Sharpe was hiding, the detective leaped out of the thicket upon the villainous Marwitz.

There was a short but terrific struggle, which ended in a victory for John Sharpe, and Marwitz lay like a log, insensible on the ground.

John Sharpe took the man's revolver from his pocket. Then, after catching the horse, he examined the hoof of the animal. He knew a good deal about them, and he quickly discovered that the only trouble was a stone in the shoe. After removing this he mounted the horse, and followed the direction taken by the two crooks.

Meanwhile, the two servants of Iron Hand had arrived at the spot where it was necessary for them to dismount and lead their horses along the side of the road.

The trail through the wood was very difficult here as they approached Eagle's Nest, and they also knew that there was a death-trap in the way, over which they must not ride.

Once past it safely they mounted again, and continued their ride.

In the distance lay Eagle's Nest, a small house built on the edge of a cliff. It was quite isolated and secluded. The

back of the house led right to the edge of the cliff. When they arrived there the two men dismounted, and turned their horses loose in the field which surrounded the house.

Inside, the house was roughly furnished, and there was a strange assembly of people in the main room. First and foremost was Potsdam, Iron Hand's chief lieutenant in the great organisation of crime which he had built up, and four or five crooks, regular rough types of gunmen. The remaining person was Anne Crawford.

This, then, was Eagle's Nest, the headquarters of Potsdam.

Anne Crawford was addressing the villainous-looking man.

"Iron Hand was most particular," she said, "to warn you to look out for Sharpe. He tried to intercept him, but he is a hard man to—"

Potsdam held up a hand to silence Anne, as the sound of footsteps outside came to them. Every man's hand flew to his gun, and the door of the men carefully undid and the door. There was no cause for alarm, however. The two newcomers were the crooks who had, as they fondly imagined, settled the fate of John Sharpe for good.

They were almost exhausted after their long ride, and they looked at Anne strangely.

Potsdam noticed it, and commenced to introduce the girl to them.

"This is Marna Black," he said, "whom Iron Hand has sent to warn us about a detective named Sharpe."

Potsdam's speech was a signal for an outburst of laughter on the part of the two newcomers.

"He won't bother you!" one of them said. "When we failed to gas him we cracked his skull and threw him into the rapids of the San Animas River!"

Then the man briefly informed Potsdam what had happened.

Poor Anne Crawford found it difficult to conceal her concern when she heard of the dreadful death which had been dealt out to Sharpe. But Potsdam smiled with great satisfaction.

Looking around, he asked:

"Where's Marwitz?"
"His horse went lame, and he won't be here till the morning," was the response.

Potsdam nodded, and then asked gruffly:

"Is everybody in?"
"All but Armin. He's on watch," came the answer.

The man indicated that the man Armin was stationed on the doorway outside.

Potsdam then walked over to one corner of the room. Here there was a lever on the wall.

He took hold of it, murmuring:
"Well, I may as well set the trap. One never knows."

He pulled down the lever, and smiled grimly.

Anne watched his movements with wonderment, but she dared not ask questions.

After pulling down the lever, Potsdam chuckled to himself with great satisfaction. And then he went over to a table, and from a drawer he extracted a pack of cards. The other men immediately drew their chairs round the table, and prepared to play. This was their nightly form of amusement.

Meanwhile Anne Crawford, who felt she had really started on her great adventure, left the main room and retired to her bed-room. This was a plain but well-furnished apartment, and Anne was in such a mood that she did not mind putting up with a few discomforts.

Potsdam and his party at once started to play; and on the table were a number of bottles of whisky, from which the men helped themselves continually to generous swigs.

Most of the men were experienced gamblers, and there was soon an air of feverish excitement about the smoke-laden room.

Suddenly there was a pause, and everyone looked instinctively across to the wall to a spot just above the lever, where a little bell was ringing. Then the lever which Potsdam had previously set shot up again.

The men stared at one another with tense expressions on their grim faces. Potsdam was the first to break the silence.

"We've got someone, sure! There's a man in the trap!"

Instantly there was great activity. Everyone rushed to the corner of the room where their weapons were piled, and they seized and loaded them.

The trap referred to by Potsdam was

this he climbed to the top. The men immediately seized him; and, with hands bound, he was made to march back towards Eagle's Nest.

On the return of the party, Anne, in wonder and alarm, unlocked her door, and entering the main room, she saw Potsdam and his gang drag in Sharpe. The men then took the precaution to bind his feet as well as his hands.

An exclamation of surprise came from one of the men who had previously been concerned in the attack upon John Sharpe on the train.

"Sharpe!" he exclaimed, in amazement. "How on earth did he escape death when we threw him into the river?"

A look of hatred passed over Potsdam's face. He knew what a slippery customer the young detective was, and, drawing his revolver and pointing it in a threatening manner at Sharpe's head, he decided to kill him instantly.

Anne immediately realised the danger, and she wondered how she could save Sharpe, and in her nimble brain a plan quickly formed.

"Wait!" she ordered, clutching the arm of Potsdam. "I think I know what Iron Hand would have us do with him!" Sharpe looked at the girl in surprise. He did not know she was a member of the gang, and he wondered how a girl of her beauty could be associated with such a villainous gang. Little did he realise that she was playing the same game as he was, and that her object was to assist in bringing the whole of the Crime Trust to justice.

The other men looked at Anne with puzzled resentment.

Why did she want to prevent their leader from killing the hated detective there and then?

"What's your idea?" growled Potsdam gruffly.

"Iron Hand would not have him killed yet," she persisted. "Hold him prisoner, and send word to Iron Hand asking his orders. This man is far more valuable to us alive than dead."

Potsdam thought there was something in the idea. And after ordering that Sharpe's hands and feet be again bound, he had him carried to the room adjoining that of Anne.

This was very barely furnished, and was probably used as a store-room. There were cans of oil, coils of rope, and many other things in the room such as the men might make use of.

Sharpe was carried in and roughly thrown to the floor. Potsdam superintended the affair, and when it was completed to his satisfaction he strolled to the window, and, looking out, muttered:

"Almost daybreak. No use turning in now. We'll continue the game. I can send word to Iron Hand first thing in the morning."

The gang then left Sharpe alone in his unhappy plight, and returned to the main room, taking the precaution to lock securely the room in which the detective was placed before resuming their game.

When Anne returned to her own room, she went straight over to the partition. It was made of planks, and in some places the wood was warped, leaving cracks between. Anne listened for a moment, and then took out a long, thin knife from her bag.

The game in the main room was again in full swing, and the noise and clinking of glasses effectually drowned the sound of Anne's movements.

Although Sharpe was in a desperate plight, he was not a man to give in easily, and he was straining at his bonds, hoping

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the one which the two crooks took great care to avoid on their return to Eagle's Nest after their attack upon John Sharpe on the express.

The trap consisted of a deep pit dug in the roadway, and skillfully covered over with turf and undergrowth. Anyone could pass over it harmlessly until the lever was set.

Anne, in the next room, was startled when she heard the bell ring. She got up immediately, and applied her ear to the door.

By this time Potsdam and his villainous crew had rushed out of the house, with weapons ready. They made for the pit, which was quite ten feet deep. One of the men peered over, and he saw below a horse lying down, either dead or terribly injured, and standing up was the figure of John Sharpe.

Instantly three or four of the gang hovered him with their weapons.

The young detective at once realised the helplessness of his position in the face of such odds, and he surrendered, tossing aside his pistol and holding up his hands.

"We've got you, my beauty!" snarled the leader.

One of Potsdam's men threw Sharpe the end of a lariat, and by means of

against hope that he would be able to get loose; but the cruel ropes were tied so tightly that they bit through his flesh, and the more he struggled, the more painful it was.

Suddenly he heard a slight tapping at the partition.

John Sharpe looked up and listened; a moment later he noticed the blade of a long, thin knife being inserted in one of the cracks. He could not understand the meaning of this incident at all, but there was the knife, and he decided to make use of it, if he possibly could.

With difficulty he wormed his way across the floor towards it. At last he got near enough, and, raising his legs from the ground, he was able to place the ropes around his ankles against the knife, and thus gradually saw through the lashing, all the time wondering why it was helping him in this unexpected manner. When Sharpe had finished, he pushed the blade back into the room, and as soon as Anne secured it again, she got back into her bed, and, drawing the covers over her, pretended to sleep.

John Sharpe's limbs were now quite free.

He listened intently at the door of the room, and then glanced at the window and noticed that it was dawn. But, although he was no longer securely tied up, he received a bitter disappointment. His window overlooked the cliff where there was a sheer drop of many hundreds of feet.

He knew it would be playing into the hands of death to attempt to escape that way. Could this be one of Potsdam's cruel, but misplaced jokes he wondered? To allow him to get free, only to be hauled again!

Sharpe began to feel desperate. Several times he looked desperately up to the window, but unfortunately there was no means of escape that way. He was just giving up all hope, when a brilliant idea entered his brain.

In the corner of the room was a coil of rope. It would be foolhardy of him to attempt to escape by means of this, for he would most certainly be seen by the gang and caught in the act.

No; there was a better way than that! He tied one end of the rope round a heavy wooden table in the room, and then dropped the other end out of the window. His next move was to close the window, and then he picked up a small can of oil and a heavy iron stake, which was also lying about.

With a smile on his face, John Sharpe then went close to the door, and placed himself right behind it against the wall, so that he would be concealed when the door was opened. He lifted the can of oil, and threw it deliberately at the closed window, smashing the glass to a thousand pieces. There was a resounding crash. The noise was the signal for instant action on the part of Potsdam and his men. They leaped to their feet and rushed to the door of Sharpe's room.

Potsdam unlocked it and threw it wide open. He immediately glanced towards the open window which was right opposite the door. Then the leader of the gang yelled out excitedly:

"He's gone out of that window into the canyon! There's the rope which he climbed down!"

All the members of the gang immediately crowded into the room, their attention focused on the broken window, and they all endeavoured to look out at the same time, in their anxiety to see the broken remains of the detective far below, for they knew it was impossible for anyone to escape this way.

Others had tried and failed, but their interest in the broken window gave Sharpe a great opportunity.

Noislessly he darted swiftly from

behind the door, and went out through the opening without anyone seeing or hearing him.

Then he rapidly pulled the door after him, and the next moment had turned the key in the lock, leaving the astonished gang cursing with anger. But he had not yet regained his liberty.

The man on guard outside, hearing the commotion, rushed in the direction of the main room. He saw Sharpe, and his hand immediately flew to his pistol. The detective was ready for him, and, lifting the heavy iron stake which he still held high above his head, he brought it down with crushing force on the man's skull. He fell to the ground like a log.

The fury of Potsdam and his men was terrible when they realised the trick which Sharpe had played upon them!

In a body they hurled themselves upon the locked door, but fortunately it withstood all their efforts, and held stoutly.

By this time John Sharpe had seized one of the horses tethered outside, and, mounting it, he galloped off, not stopping for either saddle or bridle.

Potsdam's gang had now succeeded in breaking down the door, and they swarmed into the main room only to see Annin, the watchman, lying on the floor in an insensible condition.

One of the men rushed to the window, and, looking out, cried excitedly:

"He's got a horse-look! There he goes!"

Some of them wanted to run out immediately and pursue Sharpe, but Potsdam ordered them to wait.

"Don't worry!" he growled. "Sharpe won't get away!"

The other men stopped and looked in wonder.

What card had their cunning leader still to play?

Ignoring their questioning glances, Potsdam went to a small cabinet on the wall. He opened the door, and there was disclosed about a dozen small electric switches. The members of the gang looked eagerly at them. They had not seen this thing before.

Potsdam ordered two of the men to station themselves at the window, and report Sharpe's position to him. The district was thickly wooded here, and in order to get away rapidly, Sharpe would have to stick closely to the path, which was fairly clear of undergrowth.

Soon the detective's horse approached the man-trap from which he had only recently escaped.

With a bound the horse cleared it, and John Sharpe, in devilment, turned round and waved his hand in the faces of the gang. But there were bigger perils ahead for him. At that moment Potsdam pulled down one of the first switches in his cabinet, and instantly there was a terrific explosion a few yards behind Sharpe's horse, which was covering the ground at a rapid pace. It uprooted gigantic trees as though they were tufts of grass.

The significance of this great explosion, which sent great clods of earth and trees high into the air, soon came to Sharpe. He guessed Potsdam had mined the road, but even this would not deter him, and he determined to continue and take his chance.

Sharpe had progressed a little farther along the road, when there was another resounding crash. This time the explosion was just a few feet in front.

The horse began to jump and rear wildly with fright, and more than once attempted to throw Sharpe, but tor-

(Continued on the next page.)



Iron Hand pressed a small button secreted on his desk, and before Sharpe realised what was happening the poison gas chamber descended upon him, completely enveloping his head. The detective struggled vainly for his breath, and he felt that he was rapidly losing consciousness.

(A sensational incident from a coming instalment of "The Invisible Hand.")

fortunately he managed to keep control of the animal. The faces of the gang grew blacker in expression. So far, Sharpe had escaped in safety.

One of the men held up his hand as a signal to Potsdam to wait until the detective reached a certain point. Then suddenly he dropped his arm excitedly. There was a short flash, and Anne, who by now had entered the main room, put her hand to her forehead in agony, praying for Sharpe's safety.

The villainous Potsdam had pulled the third switch, and his face was wreathed in smiling wickedness and triumph. Sharpe was caught in the murderous blast! The mighty explosion had blown the rider and his horse high into the air!

Gunpowder!

POTS DAM was preparing to pull the fourth switch, when his hand was stayed by a member of the gang who triumphantly announced the success of the last explosion.

The road along which John Sharpe had been riding was situated quite close to the cliff, the same one, of course, upon which the Eagle's Nest was located.

When the smoke caused by the explosion had cleared away, the detective and his horse had completely disappeared, and the gang cheered wildly, for it was evident that they had been blown over the edge of the cliff.

Anne Crawford turned towards Potsdam, and hiding her true feelings as much as possible, she asked him if the detective had managed to make good his escape.

Iron Hand's second in command looked at her with a cruel smile.

"Lady," he replied, "the vultures will soon be having breakfast!" And Potsdam pointed to a flock of the gruesome, flesh-eating birds who were hovering in the air above the place where the explosion had taken place in anticipation of a meal.

But the destruction had not been quite so complete as Potsdam believed. About half-way down the cliff there was a ledge, and upon this Sharpe and his horse had fallen.

Breised and dazed, but otherwise uninjured, Sharpe slowly sat up and rubbed his eyes. In an instant the truth of the situation dawned upon him. He looked over to the poor animal, which was, unfortunately, quite dead.

Sharpe thought for a moment, then, realising that the gang would try to see his dead body, he hastily took off his coat and hat, and arranged a dummy alongside the horse, so that from above it would appear to be the detective himself. He skillfully placed the dummy so that the horse presumably covered his legs.

It was a good thing that Sharpe took this precaution, for at Eagle's Nest, Potsdam ordered the gang out to make quite sure of his death. From his position it was possible for him to see the gang emerging and heading along the edge of the cliff towards him.

It was evident to the detective that Potsdam's men would soon be there, and he would have to act speedily. He immediately rushed to the shrubbery which was growing on the ledge, and then threw himself down with his face to the cliff, which he pressed as closely to as he was able, in order to escape detection.

Suddenly Sharpe noticed, a little way

ahead, what appeared to him to be the entrance of an abandoned mine, almost choked up with undergrowth and other debris. He saw in this a possible hiding-place, and decided to take a risk and make an investigation.

The detective was soon able to push away the obstructions and force an entry, and the next moment he had disappeared into the mouth of the tunnel. From his pocket he produced his flash-light in order to see what kind of a place he was in. Fortunately it had no battery. To his amazement, the detective found that he was at the beginning of a long tunnel which obviously led to Eagle's Nest.

By this time the gang had arrived at the scene of the explosion, and they pored with glee the huge hole and the destruction wrought by the force of the gunpowder. After a brief examination of this, they walked to the edge of the cliff and carefully peered over.

There, sure enough, half-hidden by foliage and shrubbery, were the mangled remains of John Sharpe and his horse. So that was the end of the Needle, they thought.

One of the men pointed up to the ever-increasing flock of vultures which were circling around waiting their time to pounce upon and devour the flesh of the dead horse. The air was filled with the noise of their terrible screeching.

As they strolled back to Eagle's Nest, Potsdam made a grim joke about the vultures, which, according to him, would very soon pick clean the bones of the detective.

Little did the band of villains imagine that the hated John Sharpe was even now making his way back to Eagle's Nest, and that he was very far from being the dead man they imagined.

About half-way through the tunnel, at the end of a steep upgrade, there was a vertical shaft, in which stood a ladder, and up this the dauntless detective commenced to climb.

At the top, John Sharpe found himself in a cellar, which was dimly lit from a small window. In the gloom he could see the outlines of a number of barrels and boxes and other rubbish. At one side were a flight of stairs evidently leading to a room above.

John Sharpe paused for a moment and listened intently, and then, fully aware of the great risk he was taking, he decided to mount the stairs.

Stealthily he crept up them one by one, pausing after every movement in order to listen in case he had given himself away. Soon he had reached the top, and he congratulated himself that, so far, there was no cause for alarm.

Through a crack in the door, John Sharpe was able to make out the form of Potsdam, and he at once recognised the place as that of the main room at Eagle's Nest. Standing opposite to the leader was Anne Crawford. They were engaged in earnest conversation.

"I should like to know how that cursed spy, Sharpe, managed to free himself!" growled Potsdam, as he paced up and down the room.

The detective could plainly overhear every word that was being uttered.

Anne listened with pretended astonishment.

"So he is quite dead?" the girl asked, and Sharpe thought that there was just a touch of regret in her voice.

"The vultures will be picking his bones by now!" grunted the leader, and there was an expression of evil pleasure on his face.

On the stairs below, John Sharpe smiled grimly.

Although Anne pretended happiness over John Sharpe's death, she was really bitterly sorry.

"Now that's over, I must get back to headquarters," she said. "I will report your success to Iron Hand!"

Potsdam nodded.

"Better have a bite to eat. Then you can ride down to the ranch, and the motor will take you where you wish to go!"

John Sharpe had heard quite enough, and he again descended the stairs; at the bottom he flashed his light round and discovered a coil of rope. After a further search, he came across an axe, and a long, thin file, and taking these useful articles with him, John Sharpe climbed back through the hole and found himself once more in the tunnel. Crouching his way through the dim, evil-smelling passage-way, the detective at length reached the ledge on the cliff.

Several vultures flew near him, and after frightening them away, he tied one end of his rope firmly around a strong bush, and then, dropping the other end out, he commenced to descend.

It was a somewhat perilous task, but eventually he succeeded in reaching the floor of the prairie far below. On more than one occasion as he climbed down, hand over hand, swaying about dangerously, he felt he would have to leave go of the rope, but his good luck remained with him.

Anne Crawford mounted the horse which was brought to her, and at once rode off in the direction of the ranch, where she was informed that she would find a motor-car ready to take her to her destination.

The gang, anxious to keep in her good favour, gave her a rousing cheer as she moved off.

Potsdam watched her for a moment, then turned to one of the men, whom he addressed as Baumann.

"Go up to the observatory," he ordered, "and keep a watch seaward. According to my information from Mexico, that submarine which we seized will be along soon. We must be ready for her!"

The gang crowded around their chief, anxious to hear all about the submarine. They were very enthusiastic over the possibilities of crime with it.

Baumann nodded to the chief and made his way to the observation tower. This was a construction built by the gang near an old shack over-looking the sea. It was completely furnished with the most scientific outfits, and included a heliograph, so arranged that ships out at sea could be signalled.

Baumann entered the tower, and, failing to see anything of the submarine, took up a position where he could make himself comfortable, and also keep a good lookout.

Baumann took out his cigarette-case, and prepared to strike a match, but he paused suddenly, and his attention was riveted on a small object a short distance away.

(NEXT WEEK! This thrilling story will be continued in the next number of the GEM. Do not miss the thrilling account of John Sharpe's amazing visit to Iron Hand. Order your GEM early, boys!)

WHO'S WHO IN THIS WEEK'S "GEM" STORY.

(For the Benefit of New Readers.)

RICHARD REDFERN, a scholarship boy of the New House, and a staunch backer of Figgins, their leader. Takes part in all kinds of sport, and has the makings of a fine journalist. A fellow of character and marked ability. Takes part in all japes upon the School House. Is a staunch chum of all the decent fellows at St. Jim's. Has a sister two years younger than himself.

EPHRAIM TAGGLES, the porter of St. Jim's. Not very alert in the execution of his duties. His usual greeting to the fellows of St. Jim's is either, "Wot I says is this 'ere!" and "You young

ribs!" A great lover of the "bottle." Very polite and affable when he thinks there is a tip forthcoming.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY, a big, burly, robust fellow, with altogether too exalted an opinion of his own brains and capabilities generally. Imagines himself a great detective. A duffer at games, though keen, but can box, and in a fight would probably knock out any of the Lower School, except Tom Merry, Talbot, and Noble. With all his faults, he has many good qualities. Brave as the bravest, thoroughly honest, and a rare stickler. Has a rich uncle, and is

generous with the frequent tip he receives.

GEORGE WILKINS, a faithful henchman of the great George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. A thoroughly decent fellow, with no enemies, except the cads of the Form. A steady worker and a good scholar, and a fair sportsman. Shares Study No. 3 with Grundy and Gurn, the other member of the trio of chums. The names of Grundy, Wilkins, and Gurn invariably occur together.

WILLIAM GUNN, chiefly renowned as a staunch supporter of Grundy. Follows him in all his schemes much more closely than Wilkins, the other member of the trio of chums. A somewhat quiet fellow who has read a great deal; has supplied Grundy with many of his great ideas. Quite one of the best of the Shell juniors in every way. Shares Study No. 3 with Grundy and Wilkins.

YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT.

Address: Editor, THE GEM, The Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Chums,—

The large number of letters, full of praise, which I am now receiving from my readers are very pleasing to me indeed. According to the majority of my correspondents, the good old "Gem" is now better than it has ever been before. But I am not going to rest on my laurels yet, and before very long I am sure you will be still more delighted with your favourite paper. There are many good things in store for you all.

Many readers wish to know if it is possible for them to do me a good turn. Well, this is the kind of spirit which I appreciate very much, and to all those readers who desire to assist me I say, "Recommend the 'Gem' to your

friends!" This is the good turn which will delight me most of all.

If you find enjoyment in our rollicking school yarns, and in our splendid serial, "The Invisible Hand," your friends will be sure to, also, so shout out the good news, boys!

In next week's "Gem" there will undoubtedly be one of the finest yarns we have ever published, and it is so interesting that you will find it difficult to leave off reading, even for a few minutes. This gripping long, complete yarn will be called, "The Boy From the Wild West," and it brings to your notice a splendid new character in the person of Kit Wildrake, from the Land of the Golden West. This yarn is one long, glorious adventure, and you must not miss it.

There will also be another splendid portrait in next week's number, and a long, exciting instalment of "The Invisible Hand."

Just one word—order your "Gem" early, for there will be a big demand.

YOUR EDITOR.

:: BOTTLED BUZZES ::

It is rumoured:—

That George Herries carelessly threw a ball through the window of his study. We are glad to state that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's monacle has come in extremely useful for keeping out the offending draught.

That the above-mentioned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is extremely "pained" at the loss of his "pane."

That William George Bunter of Greyfriars School was rather dubious about accepting an invitation from Wun Lung to a feed in that junior's study. "What menu?" asked the fatted calf of the Remove, remembering full well the kind of feeds Wun Lung had previously laid for him.

That David Llewellyn Wynn is to devote an occasional half-holiday to assist Mrs. Taggles, of "tuckshop" fame. We fear the business will no longer prove to be a paying concern.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 676.

That Patrick Wynne, the prefect, unfortunately broke his ashplant in a recent scrimmage among the Second Form fags. He appealed in the hour of need to Eusebius Twigg, B.A.

That Lord Mauleverer has never been known to be the recipient of a cold. Surely he must be too lazy to catch one!

That Robert Cherry still tops the list of the Remove's best fighters. We regret it is a "fruitless" proposition to try and unseat that worthy.

That Rupert De Courcy, the Caterpillar, would do well to take a leaf out of Archie Howell's book. It would only be with a "crawl," and he would stay thereon.

That William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, has at last enlisted the friendship of George Tubb. (We hear from good authority that the said porpoise has already found himself in hot water!)

ANSWERS TO READERS.

"PRETTY POPPY" (Bonnie Dundee).—Yes, old Horatio Curll is very well-known. At present he is still the pianist at a cinema in Wayland. The stage company to which he belonged is not likely to ever start again. I will, by all means, speak to Mr. Martin Clifford the next time he gives me a look in, and suggest that friend Curll should be brought into a story or two sometimes. Yes, Racke has a sister. You may probably hear something of this interesting young lady soon.

"A GIRL LOVER OF TOM MERRY" (Richmond).—It is quite impossible for Arthur Racke to do anything decent, let alone think of reforming! The very reason that he is at St. Jim's is due to the money which his father wrung from his fellow-countrymen. He is by far the wealthiest scholar at the school now. In fact, he often boasts that his father could buy up the whole of St. Jim's without pausing to think twice.

That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has ordered a goodly supply of stiff shirts. He has openly confessed to the staff here that he very much fancies himself in "Fisti-cuffs."

That Baggy Trimble, caught "prying" outside the Fifth Form stores, received a prize thick ear from Herbert Prye, a worthy of that Form.

That Monty Lowther was awarded five hundred lines for disobedience in the Form-room. When having written "Spare the rod and spoil the child" four hundred and ninety-nine times, he dropped his pen in disgust. "What's up?" asked Tom Merry, looking over his chum's shoulder. "Can't you finish the last line?" "I'm afraid not," replied the humorous Monty. "It's a 'line' that 'baits' me!"

That David Llewellyn Wynn has made a New Year's resolution, and that is: Not to eat more than thirty doughnuts, twenty janc-puffs, and five of Mrs. Taggles' prime pork-pies per diem. We have no hesitation in saying that the said resolution is likely to be carried out.

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PICTURES FOR YOUR DEN!

No. 7. GEORGE ROBEY.

Another Splendid Portrait of a Great Favourite in Next Week's "GEM." Don't Miss It!