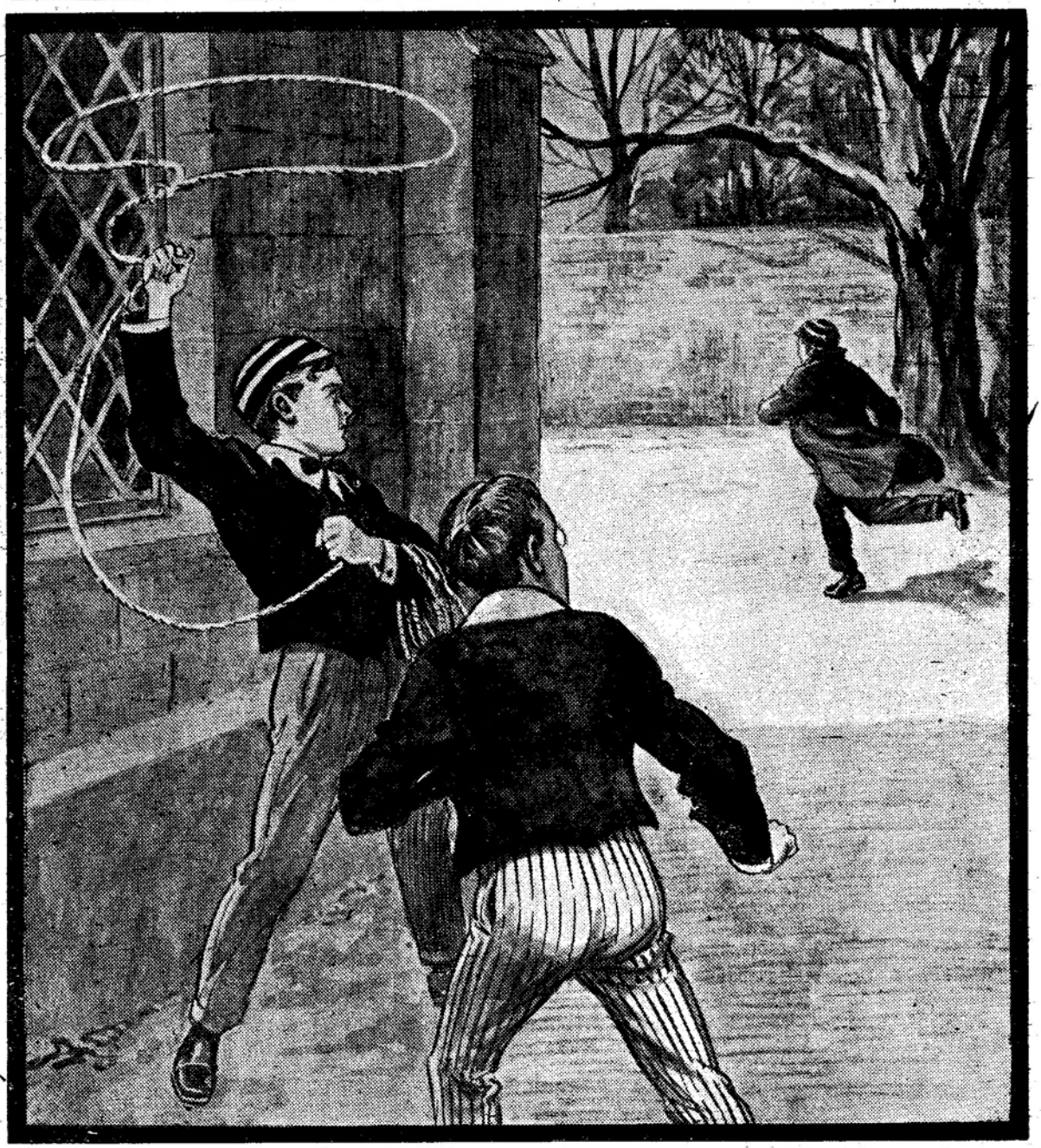
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WILDRAKE'S KNOCK AT KNOX



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Grand Long Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling how Wildrake of the Fourth "pulls the leg" of the bullying prefect, Knox.

CHAPTER 1.
Knox Looks In!

"THAT rotter Knox——"

Knox of the Sixth stopped suddenly.

He was passing the door of Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. The door was ajar, and from the study the words came clearly to the prefect's ears. He knew the clear, ringing voice of Wildrake of the Fourth.

Knox hadn't made a sound as he came along the Fourth Form passage. That was a little way of his, which did not make him popular. He had a tread as stealthy as a cat's. Often and often the juniors wondered how things came to Gerald Knox's knowledge. He owed many little discoveries to his stealthy tread.

"That rotter Knox——" Kit Wildrake was speaking with emphasis, blissfully unconscious of the fact that Knox of the Sixth was outside the study door. "I guess I'm fed up with him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" That was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard him as a beast, deah boy!"

"A hundred lines for sliding down the banisters!" continued Wildrake. "And I hadn't started to slide when he spotted me."

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Knox has his knife into you, old scout!" he said. "You made him look a silly ass the other day, and Knox doesn't forget it. Better do your lines and take it smiling. You can't argue with a prefect."

"The rotter oughtn't to be a prefect, I guess."

"He wouldn't be if the Head knew him as well as we do!" remarked Digby.

"Wathah not!"

"Beastly bully!" said Herries. "He caned me the other day for bringing Towser into the study. Towser, you know! Old Towser!"

"Weally, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Knox has vewy sewious faults, but I must wemark that he was quite wight there. The studay is not the pwopah place for a fewocious bulldog."

"Ass!" said Herries politely.

"I object vewy stwongly myself to bulldogs in the studay," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

Knox of the Sixth, outside the study door, made no movement. He was quite interested in the conversation. The passage happened to be vacant, excepting for the prefect. Even Knox would not have cared to be discovered in the act of eavesdropping. He kept his eye on the passage and his ear at the door, and remained quiet.

Blake & Co., in Study No. 6, were entertaining Kit Wildrake to tea. The talk ran on the bully of the Sixth, who was equally obnoxious to the guest and to his hosts. The free-and-easy Canadian junior had already fallen foul of Knox, and since that occasion the Sixth Form bully had been down on Wildrake with a very heavy "down." And Wildrake, as he had remarked, was growing "fed" with Knox.

"I guess I shall get my mad up in the long run," he said. "The galoot is getting to be a worry. And he is a rotter through and through!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Knox started.

Three juniors turned the corner, coming along from the Shell passage—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther. They came along rather quickly, and Knox had only just time to quit his listening attitude before he was seen. He thumped on the door of Study No. 6, and sent it flying open, and strode into the study.

"Bai Jove!"

The five juniors in the study stared at Knox. His sudden apparition startled them.

They jumped to their feet at once.

"Hallo, Knox!" said Blake feebly. He wondered whether Knox had heard the remarks made in the study. His doubts on that point were very quickly set at rest.

Knox's eyes glittered at the juniors.

"So that is how you discuss prefects in the Fourth Form studies!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Knox——"

"I guess I don't see how you know we were discussing prefects," said Kit Wildrake, his lip curling. "Not unless you were listening at the door."

"As I was passing I heard——" began Knox.

"Anybody hear Knox passing?" asked Wildrake.

Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"We can generally hear a chap coming along from the head of the stairs," continued the Canadian junior coolly. "How do you manage to get along without making a sound, Knox?"

Blake gave the Canadian junior a warning glance. It was pretty clear that Knox had played the spy. But a Sixth Form prefect was too important a person to be defied. But Wildrake was in a reckless mood. Knox's petty persecutions for the last two or three weeks had exhausted his patience.

"We always hear Kildare or Darrel or any other prefect that comes along," he said. "I guess you've dropped in on us like a spook, Knox, without making a sound. Is it a custom here for prefects to creep about and listen at study doors?"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Blake and Herries and Dig were silent. Knox fully deserved "straight talk." But straight talk of that kind to a prefect rather scared them. Then there was a chuckle in the passage. Tom Merry & Co. had paused outside the open door, and they seemed rather tickled by Wildrake's remarks.

Knox stared round at them.

"Clear off, you!" he snapped.

"Certainly!" said Monty Lowther urbanely. "Come on, you fellows! Knox is awfully down on chaps who hang around study doors, listening."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three walked on.

Blake & Co. grinned faintly. Knox's face was almost purple. He had his ashplant under his arm, and he let it slide into his hand.

"You, Wildrake, and you, D'Arcy, were applying disgraceful epithets to a Sixth Form prefect!" he said. "I shall cane you both. Hold out your hands!"

"Weally, Knox——"

Wildrake put his hands behind him.

"I guess you won't cane me, Knox!" he said coolly.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Knox.

"I guess not."

Knox gripped the ashplant, and seemed, for a moment, about to hurl himself at the Canadian junior.

Wildrake stiffened up, and his eyes gleamed.

The sturdy, powerfully-built youth from the Boot Leg Ranch was quite able to give a good account of himself in a tussle, even against a Sixth-Former. And there was no doubt whatever that he intended to show fight. Knox paused. He had not come there for a rough-and-tumble with a Fourth-Former.

"Wildrake, if you do not hold out your hand, I shall take you before the Housemaster!" he snapped.

"I guess I'll go to Mr. Railton, if you like," answered Wildrake. "But I'm not taking any more canings from you, Knox. I've had enough!"

"I will take you to the Housemaster! D'Arcy, hold out your hand!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"As Wildwake wefuses, Knox, I feel bound to follow his example," he replied. "You have no wight to come eaves-

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dwoppin' wound our studay. I wegard such conduct, Knox, as extwemely unworthy of a pwefect. Kildare or Dawwel or Langton would be ashamed to act in such a mannah. In the circs, Knox, I uttahly wefuse to be caned by you!"

Knox seemed on the point of choking. Arthur Augustus' little lecture had not improved his temper in the least.

"Both of you follow me!" he gasped.

"I am quite pwepared to do that, Knox! Come on, Wildwake, old fellow!"

Knox strode from the study, and the two juniors followed him. Blake & Co. exchanged a dismayed glance.

"Lickings for two!" he growled. "That rotter Knox ought to be suppressed. Poor old Gussy!"

"Railton won't believe that Knox was listening, and a Housemaster is bound to uphold a prefect," said Digby, with a shake of the head. "It's no good backing up against the Sixth!"

"Blow the Sixth!" grunted Herries.

And Study No. 6 finished tea in a rather dismal mood.

CHAPTER 2.
Going Through It.

MR. RAILTON put down his pipe and glanced at Knox as the prefect ushered the two delinquents into his study. Wildrake and D'Arcy came in quietly, but with determined looks.

"What is the matter, Knox?" asked the Housemaster mildly.

"I was bound to bring these two juniors before you, sir," said Knox. "They have refused to be caned by me for a very serious fault."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Indeed! Wildrake, D'Arcy, what does this mean?"

"Weally, Mr. Wailton——"

"You see, sir——" began Wildrake.

"Pway leave the talkin' to me, Wildwake, old chap. I think I can put it in a pwopah mannah to Mr. Wailton. If you will allow me to explain, sir——"

"I am waiting for you to explain," said Mr. Railton. "Kindly be brief, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir! I quite wealise that your time is valuable, Mr. Wailton, and I should not think of takin' it up. We have wefused to be caned by that uttah wottah——"

"What!"

"I wefer to Knox, sir."

"How dare you refer to a prefect in my presence in such terms?" demanded the School House master, in a voice of thunder.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"The—the fact is, sir——"

"Silence! Knox, of what fault were these juniors guilty?"

"Of discussing a prefect, sir—myself—in disgraceful terms. I was going to Study No. 9, to inquire for some lines that Cardew should have handed in before tea, when I heard them. They were, in fact, shouting, and I have no doubt they intended me to hear. Wildrake called me a rotter, and D'Arcy alluded to me as a beast. I am sure you will agree, sir, that juniors should not speak of the Sixth in such terms."

"Most decidedly!" exclaimed Mr. Railton warmly.

"Bai Jove! Knox is not tellin' the twuth, sir!"

"I guess——"

Mr. Railton reached for his cane.

"Do you deny using the expression Knox refers to, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir. But——"

"Do you deny it, Wildrake?"

"No, sir. But——"

"You need say no more," interrupted Mr. Railton. "I am quite shocked! You are perfectly well aware that prefects of the Sixth Form should be spoken of respectfully if spoken of at all. I shall cane you for using such expressions, and I shall cane you for refusing to be punished by Knox, in whose hands the Head has placed authority. There is such a thing as discipline, my boys, and you must learn to observe it."

"But, sir——"

"Hold out your hand, Wildrake!"

"If you'll allow me, sir——"

"I will allow you to hold out your hand," said Mr. Railton sternly; "and if you do not immediately do so I shall report your conduct to the Head, who will administer a flogging."

There was no possibility of argument after that. Kit Wildrake held out his hand in silence.

Swish!

"The other hand, Wildrake."

Swish!

"Now, D'Arcy——"

"Weally, sir——"

"Hold out your hand!"

"Oh deah!"

Swish! Swish!

"You may go," said Mr. Railton, laying down the cane. "Kindly remember, in future, that when the Head delegates his authority into the hands of a member of the Sixth Form he expects it to be regarded. Leave my study!"

The two juniors left, and Knox followed them out, closing the door after him.

In the passage the Sixth-Form bully grinned at the hapless Fourth-Formers. They were squeezing their hands in anguish.

Mr. Railton had felt it his duty to be severe, and he had done his duty thoroughly, as he always did. Thoroughness was a virtue; but the two juniors would willingly have dispensed with that virtue in this case.

"Oh deah!" murmured D'Arcy feebly. "I have a fearful pain, old fellow!"

"Ow, wow!" said Wildrake. "Same here!"

Knox chuckled.

"You'll learn to come to heel in time," he said, and he walked away humming a tune.

If Mr. Railton had heard that remark there would have been trouble for Knox, but he could not hear through a thick oaken door. Wildrake cast a dark glance after him.

"Come away, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

The two juniors moved away dispiritedly towards the stairs. The Terrible Three were lounging about the banisters, and they greeted the sufferers with sympathetic looks.

"Had it bad?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It'll pass off," said Manners comfortingly. At which the sufferers groaned. They knew that the ache in their palms wasn't permanent. What troubled them was the fact that it would take time to pass off, and that it was extremely painful while it lasted.

"Knocks from Knox!" said Monty Lowther, who never could resist a pun, good or bad—generally bad. "He's a noxious beast!"

If Monty Lowther expected the Fourth-Formers to laugh he was disappointed. They did not laugh. They grunted dismally.

"And you weren't to blame, of course," continued Lowther. "But what's the good of being innocuous while Knox is obnoxious?"

"Oh, give us a rest!" grunted Wildrake.

And Wildrake and D'Arcy passed up the staircase before Monty Lowther could think out a reference to "nox," which was Latin for "night," and might have been dragged in as another pun if Monty had been given time.

Arthur Augustus went back to No. 6, but Wildrake, no longer in a convivial mood, passed into his own study, No. 3. He found his study-mates, Trimble and Mellish, there. They grinned as he came in, evidently being aware of his misadventure. Equally evidently they weren't oppressed by any deep feelings of sympathy.

"He, he, he!" was Baggy Trimble's remark.

"Catching it again!" said Mellish cheerily. "Knox does seem to be down on you, old top. It's rather rotten for us having you in this study. Knox is always peering about now. A chap daren't put on a cigarette since he got so interested in this study."

"All the better for you, you silly owl!" grunted Wildrake.

Mellish sneered.

"They brought you up very carefully on the Boot Leg Ranch, didn't they?" he remarked. "I jolly well wish you'd go back there. You're too good for this study, anyhow!"

"I guess I know that!" growled Wildrake. "Ow!" He rubbed his hands hard. "Ow! My hat! Ow!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Baggy Trimble. Baggy seemed to find something entertaining in Wildrake's painful ejaculations.

"What are you he-he-he-ing about?" demanded Wildrake warmly.

"He, he, he! You look as if you weren't enjoying life, you know!" giggled Trimble. "My dear chap, don't be soft!"

"Soft!" ejaculated Wildrake.

"Yes—soft!" Baggy's fat lip curled. "My dear fellow, you shouldn't make a fuss about a little pain. Be manly, and bear it stoically—as I do. Take example by me!"

"I guess you can bear it stoically because you haven't got it, you fat jay!" growled Wildrake.

"Oh, it's a manly nature helps me to bear things without grousing," said Baggy loftily. "Fortitude, you know, and pluck, and all that. Really, you know, I'm a bit ashamed to see a fellow making a fuss like that over a little pain! Why not be manly?"

"You fat owl!" said Wildrake, in measured tones. "You howl like a Red Indian if you're hurt the teeniest, weeniest bit. I guess I'll give you a chance to show some of your manly fortitude, though!"

And the exasperated junior grasped Baggy Trimble by the collar, and tapped his bullet head against the study wall. There was a fiendish yell from Baggy Trimble.

"Yow-ow! Yaroooop! Gooooooch! Ooooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish. "Pile in with the manly fortitude, Baggy!"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

Trimble's manly fortitude seemed to have taken unto itself wings and flown away. At all events, it was conspicuous by its absence. The fat junior rubbed his head and yelled, and glared at Wildrake like a basilisk.

"You—you—you beast!" he howled. "Wharrer you banging my napper for, you awful rot er!"

"I guess I'm waiting for the stoicism," remarked Wildrake. "You don't look much of a stoic, so far."

"Yow-ow-ow! Yah! Rotter! Oooooch!"

"Like a little more pain to bear in a manly way?" inquired Wildrake, taking a step towards the fat junior.

"Yow! Keep off!"

Baggy Trimble dodged out of the study. His stoicism was evidently not equal to the test.

CHAPTER 3.
What Knox Knew.

"WHAT about a game of poker?"

Wildrake asked that question in quite a casual manner, and he addressed Levison of the Fourth. Morning lessons had ended at St. Jim's, and the two juniors were chatting in the corridor. They had been talking about football, when Wildrake changed the conversation suddenly in that remarkable way.

"Poker?" repeated Levison, with a stare.

Wildrake nodded, and closed one eye.

"I guess so! Great game! In my study, you know!"

Levison understood the next moment.

Knox of the Sixth was coming round the corner; and Knox, perhaps from force of habit, was treading softly as he heard voices. Neither of the juniors looked at him; but they saw him, as it were, with the tail of their eye.

Levison of the Fourth entered into the game at once. Levison had a quick wit, and he "caught on" instantly. He understood that Wildrake was pulling the spying prefect's leg, and he played up.

"Well, I don't mind," he said, "but isn't it risky?"

"Who's to know?" said Wildrake carelessly.

Knox backed from the corner. He was very silent, and he grinned. Once more he was going to catch the Canadian junior out—and this time on a more serious charge. Playing cards in the studies was a matter that would have to come before the Head himself, and could scarcely fail, if proved, to lead to a flogging. Knox listened with all his ears—which Nature had made unusually long, as if for that very purpose.

"Yes, that's so. Who's to know?" said Levison gravely. "After all, nobody would know. Knox isn't likely to come mooching along the Fourth Form passage."

"Oh, we can lock the door, anyhow."

"That's so. But the things—cards, and so on——"

"Everything we want is in the study ready for poker," answered Wildrake. "If you're game, let's go and rope in Cardew to make a third."

"Done!" said Levison.

The two juniors walked away, quite loudly. When their footsteps had died away, Knox's nose came round the corner—followed by Knox. There was quite a gloating grin on the prefect's face. Once Wildrake had held him up to ridicule—frightening him almost out of his wits by levelling a corkscrew at him, Knox believing that it was a revolver brought from the Boot Leg Ranch.

The juniors had chortled without limit over that episode; it was not forgotten yet—especially by Knox. Now Gerald Knox was going to wipe out that old score along with others. He hurried along to Kildare's study, and found the captain of St. Jim's there, talking to Darrel. Neither Kildare nor Darrel looked very welcoming. There were few fellows in the Sixth Form at St Jim's, if any, that liked Gerald Knox.

"I want you to come with me, Kildare," said Knox.

"Anything on?"

"I hear that some of the juniors have playing-cards in their study, and are going to play poker. I think you ought to take the matter up as head-prefect," said Knox. He sneered slightly. "Wildrake is the ringleader, and you've mentioned once or twice that you think I'm not exactly just to that fellow——"

"I think you're unjustly down on him," said Kildare, in his direct way, "and I've very little doubt that this time you've found a mare's nest!"

"Exactly!" sneered Knox. "So, as I want the thing to be quite clear, I want you to be present when the cards are found."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Darrel quietly. "I've noticed young Wildrake, and I'm quite certain he's not the kind of kid to go in for that kind of dingy business."

"As it happens, I heard it from his own lips!" sneered Knox.

"He told you——"

"I heard him inviting another junior to a game of poker in his study."

Kildare frowned.

"I've mentioned to you, Knox, that you bring the prefects into contempt by the way you happen to overhear talk among the juniors!" he exclaimed.

"Does that mean that you refuse to take any notice of a serious breach of rules, because I heard it by chance?"

"No; I'm bound to act on what you say. Let's go and see, anyhow," said Kildare abruptly. "I can't believe there's anything in it. Wildrake is as decent a kid as any in the school, I believe."

"You'll see!" sneered Knox.

Kildare nodded to Darrel, and left the study. With a frowning brow, he followed Knox up the staircase; reluctant to enter into the matter at all, but not seeing how he could well avoid it.

They entered Study No. 3, which was quite vacant. Mellish and Trimble were in the quadrangle, with most of the juniors, after morning lessons, Wildrake was not to be seen. Knox closed the door.

"The cards are here," he said. "Wildrake distinctly said so. It's only a question of finding them, and the young rascals will be here in a few minutes to play."

"I'm not going to search their things!" growled Kildare. "If they'll be here in a few minutes, we'll wait for them, and make them hand over the things themselves."

"Oh, I don't mind!"

Click!

Kildare started.

The sudden click came from the door, and was evidently caused by the key turning in the lock outside.

It was followed by the sound of feet scudding away down the passage.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kildare.

He strode to the door and turned the handle, and jerked at it. The door remained fast. It was locked on the outside.

"Open this door, you young rascal!" roared Kildare.

But the footsteps were gone.

The St. Jim's captain swung round towards Knox, who was staring blankly.

"You utter dummy!" he said.

"Look here, Kildare——"

"The fags were pulling your silly leg!" growled Kildare. "They've brought you here and locked you in—and me, too! It doesn't matter about you——"

"Doesn't it?" howled Knox wrathfully.

"No!" snapped Kildare. "You walk about asking to have your silly leg pulled. But it does matter about me. Confound!"

Footsteps came along the passage, and Kildare tapped on the door.

"Open this door, please!"

"Hallo!" It was Tom Merry's voice. "That you, Kildare?"

"Yes; unlock the door, Merry."

"Isn't the key inside?"

"Of course it isn't, you young ass, when it's outside!" snapped the captain of St. Jim's.

"But it's not outside," answered Tom Merry. "There's no key in the lock, Kildare."

"Oh, my hat! The young rogue has taken it away, then!"

There was a sound suspiciously like a chuckle from the passage. Tom



"What about a game of poker?" asked Wildrake of Levison, as the two juniors stood chatting in the corridor. They had been talking football, when Wildrake suddenly heard Knox's stealthy tread. *(See this page.)*

Merry seemed to find something amusing in the situation.

"What young rogue—Kildare?" he asked.

"Wildrake, I suppose. Somebody locked the door on us. Find Wildrake, anyhow, and tell him to come here."

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

Tom Merry went on to the stairs, smiling. He hurried out into the quadrangle, and looked for the Canadian junior. Kit Wildrake was standing in the midst of a grinning group of Fourth-Formers, and Tom heard his words as he came up.

"I guess I knew Knox would be on to it, so I waited in the next study till I heard him go into Study No. 3, and then I slipped out and locked him in!"

"Bai Jove! Locked Knox in your study, deah boy?"

"Yep!"

"Poor old Knox!" chuckled Blake. "When are you going to let him out?"

"I'm not going to let him out at all," answered Wildrake coolly. "A fellow has a right to keep his study door locked if he likes, I suppose. I'm not supposed to know that a spying prefect is rooting about in my study. I'm keeping that door locked. I sha'n't want the study till this evening."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Yaas, wathah!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "Keep the wottah bottled up till this evenin'. Let him hammah till somebody comes if he wants to get out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry came up, laughing.

"You've bagged two birds with one stone, you young ass, Wildrake!" he said. "Kildare is in the study."

"Kildare!" ejaculated Wildrake.

"Yes; he's called to me to find you and send you there to let him out."

"Oh Jerusalem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Mellish. "You've bagged Kildare instead of Knox, and you'll get no end of a licking."

Wildrake looked dismayed.

"I—I guess I don't want to rag old Kildare," he said. "He's a white man, Kildare is. Sure it was Kildare, Tom Merry?"

"Quite sure," said Tom, laughing.

"What a rotten sell! I reckon I'd betty mosey along and let him loose," said Wildrake.

And he hurried away to the School House.

CHAPTER 4.
Gussy Catches It!

"THE young scoundrel!" Knox muttered savagely.

He strode to and fro in Study No. 3, fuming with rage. He had turned out the table drawers and one or two boxes and other receptacles, in the faint hope of finding something incriminating. But he had found nothing, and he realised that the juniors must have been pulling his leg. The conversation in the corridor had been intended for him to overhear.

For once his stealthy tricks had been turned against him. He had been tricked into the study, and but for the fact that he had brought Kildare with him, he could guess that he would not have been let out in a hurry.

But the most reckless junior would scarcely venture to keep the captain of the school a prisoner, so Knox hoped to get out in time for dinner.

Kildare had watched his fruitless search of the study with a coldly sarcastic eye. He did not suppose for a moment that Knox would find any playing-cards there.

"A precious pair of fools you've made us look!" said Kildare. "As I said before, it doesn't matter about you——"

"I'll make that young scoundrel pay for it!" hissed Knox.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" answered Kildare coolly.

"Who'll prevent me?" roared Knox.

"I will, if necessary. As I happen to be head prefect, I shall deal with the matter—not that I see that Wildrake can be punished. We ought not to be here."

"He said plainly——"

Kildare made an irritable gesture.

"You oughtn't to know what he said. It's not the first time you've let the Sixth down by acting in a rotten way."

"Kildare, mind what you say, or——"

"Or what?" asked Kildare scornfully; and his blue eyes glinted at the bully of the Sixth.

Knox muttered something indistinctly. There was a step in the passage at last, and a key grated into the outside of the lock.

"Are you in there, Kildare?" called out Wildrake.

"Yes."

"Sorry; I'll let you out at once, I guess."

The key turned, and the door was thrown open. Knox made a savage stride towards Wildrake, and then, at a grim look from Kildare, paused.

"It was you who locked us in this study, Wildrake?" demanded the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes, Kildare. I didn't know you were with Knox," said Wildrake honestly. "I was just waiting in the next study, and didn't look out. I wouldn't have locked you in."

"But you meant to lock me in!" shouted Knox furiously.

"I guess so."

"You hear that, Kildare?" panted Knox, almost choking with rage.

"I hear it," answered Kildare quietly. "How did you know Knox was coming to the study at all, Wildrake?"

Wildrake grinned.

"I knew he was listening round the corner downstairs, and I talked some rot to Levison to pull his leg," he explained. "I guess I'm fed up with Knox listening round corners and at doors."

Knox clenched his hands.

"Kildare, I—I'll——"

"I said we'd play poker here," continued Wildrake cheerfully. "I said there was everything necessary in the study. I was alluding to the poker in the fender. You can see it's there, Knox. Probably Knox thought I was speaking of the game of poker. He would!"

Kildare's face relaxed.

"You are a cheeky young rascal!" he said. "You must not play these tricks on prefects. Cut off, before I lick you!"

Wildrake cut off promptly enough.

"He's going to be licked for this, Kildare!" roared Knox, almost beside himself with rage.

"Nothing of the sort! I won't allow it!"

"I'll take the matter before the Housemaster, then."

"Do so, if you choose, and tell him you were eavesdropping—listening to juniors' talk, hidden round a corner!" Kildare's lip curled. "If you don't tell him that, I will if you report to him at all. Mr. Railton will know what to think of that way of carrying out a prefect's duties."

With that, Kildare strode out of the study.

Knox followed him more slowly, his eyes glinting with rage. But his footsteps did not carry him in the direction of the Housemaster's study. He did know, only too well, what Mr. Railton would have thought of his methods if made acquainted with them.

He passed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the passage. The swell of St. Jim's turned his eyeglass upon Knox, with a pleasant smile. Gussy's smile was quite agreeable, but it had an irritating effect upon Knox. Without a word, and without a pretext, he reached out in passing, and boxed the noble ear of Arthur Augustus.

Smack!

"Yawoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus staggered against the passage wall, overcome with astonishment and indignation.

Knox strode on past him rather hastily.

Boxing ears was not permitted by any of the laws of St. Jim's. It was a personal indignity, and, indeed, a dangerous thing; while caning was all in the day's work as it were. Arthur Augustus could scarcely realise that his ear had been boxed. It sang, it burned, and it was very red, and he rubbed it tenderly, and his eyes gleamed with wrath.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "That uttah wottah has actually ventured to box my yah—actually my yah! Bai Jove!"

Knox had disappeared before Arthur Augustus recovered his self-possession. The swell of St. Jim's detached himself from the wall, rubbed his ear again, and followed the prefect, with a deadly glint in his eyes. In the hall downstairs he found Blake & Co.

"Come with me, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Whither away, old son?" asked Blake, staring at D'Arcy's white, excited face and burning ear. "What on earth's the matter?"

"Knox has boxed my yah!"

"The cad!"

"Come with me——"

"But where——"

"I am goin' to thwash Knox!"

"What?" yelled Blake, catching hold of his excited chum's arm.

"Pway do not detain me, Blake! I have suffahed a personal indignity at the hands of that scoundwel!"

"Draw it mild!" murmured Dig.

"I wefuse to dwaw it mild, Dig! I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

"But—but you can't thrash a prefect!" howled Blake.

"I am goin' to."

"But—but he will mop you up!"

"Wats! My personal dig has been outwaged, and I am bound to avenge the insult, Blake, by thwashin' the insultah."

D'Arcy jerked his arm away from Blake's detaining grasp, and rushed off in the direction of Knox's study.

"After him!" gasped Blake.

The chums of Study No. 6 rushed after their excited comrade; but Gussy was first. He reached Knox's study, and hurled the door open.

"Knox, you scoundwel——"

"Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! He's not here!"

Perhaps fortunately for Arthur Augustus, the study was empty.

"Come away, you howling ass!" gasped Blake, seizing his noble chum again. "We'll pay Knox out; but you can't assault and batter prefects, you howling jabberwock!"

"I am goin' to thwash Knox!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Fathead!"

"Yank him into the Common-room!" said Blake. "We'll sit on his head till he comes round."

"Wats! Leggo! Welease me! I have got to look for Knox! I have got to thwash Knox befoah dinnah——"

"Bundle him along."

"Welease me! Yawoooh!"

Study No. 6 went into the Common-room in an avalanche. The avalanche settled down on the floor with Gussy undermost.

"Now, Gussy——" panted Blake.

"Welease me!"

"We'll make Knox sit up, somehow; but you can't ask for a flogging, you know."

"He has boxed my yah——"

"If there's a row, he'll say he didn't," said Herries. "What's the good of asking for trouble?"

"How could he say he didn't, when he did, you uttah ass?"

"Dear man, there are wicked fibbers in the world, and Knox is one of them," said Blake soothingly. "Now, leave Knox to us——"

"I wefuse to leave Knox to you; I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'! My dignity demands it!"

"Old infant, your dignity is going to have a five-bar rest," answered Blake. "Sit on his head, Dig."

"Groooogh!"

"Now give in, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to—gwoogh!—give in. I am goin' to thwash Knox!"

"Then we'll settle down for a bit," said Blake, taking a comfortable seat on D'Arcy's waistcoat. "All for your own good, Gussy! Say when!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With three juniors sitting on him, it was a full minute before Gussy said "when." But it was clear that his devoted chums weren't going to let him begin thrashing Sixth Form prefects; so Arthur Augustus yielded to the inevitable at last. And Knox of the Sixth never knew how narrowly he had escaped a fearful thrashing!

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CHAPTER 5.
Having Taggles to Tea!

"TAGGLES, old gun!"

Taggles grunted.

Kit Wildrake sauntered up to the old porter's lodge, and addressed him in honeyed tones. But his sweet voice and his sweet smile had little effect on Taggles. The crusty old gentleman did not trust the smiles of innocent youth. When a junior smiled sweetly upon Taggles, Taggles suspected that his venerable leg was going to be pulled; and perhaps Taggles was often right. Taggles did not know Latin; but he would have agreed with the ancient gentleman who said "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes." The Trojan priest feared the Greeks when they came with gifts; and Taggles distrusted Youth when it came with polished politeness. So he frowned upon Wildrake, and continued to regard the horizon from the doorway of his lodge, regardless.

"I say, Taggles——"

Taggles condescended to glance at the junior.

"You get hoff, Master Wildrake," he said. "You clear hout! You 'ear me? Hout!"

"But——"

"I says hout," said Taggles, "and I means hout!"

"Well, that's a nice way to talk to a chap who's come to ask you to tea," said the Canadian junior, more in sorrow than in anger.

Taggles stared.

"Whose leg do you think you are a-pulling of?" he inquired.

"Honest Injun!" said Wildrake seriously. "I'm asking you to come to tea in my study, Taggles, and I really want you to come. Gussy wants you, too."

"Yaas, wathah, Taggles!"

Taggles looked a little less crusty. He could not help feeling the compliment.

"I don't 'ave tea with the young gents," he said. "It's very good of you, Master Wildrake, but I can't come."

"Why not?" demanded Wildrake. "You know how we like you, Taggles——"

"Huh!"

"You're the most popular fellow in the school, you know."

"Huh!"

"Nobody's bagged you to tea before," went on Wildrake. "We want to be the first; sort of distinction for my study, you know. Mellish and Trimble are going out to tea. I've got a New House chap to ask them, to clear them off the scene. Just us two and you, Taggles. A nice little party! We've got shrimps."

"But——" began Taggles.

"Nice butter, and new-laid eggs, warranted not pickled," said Wildrake; "and no end of a stunning cake! Don't say no, Taggles!"

"We shall weally be vewy pleased if you will honah us, Mr. Taggles," said Arthur Augustus courteously.

Taggles melted.

Perhaps he had some excuse for being crusty, as a general rule. The late William Shakespeare had remarked upon the difficulty of youth and crabbed age pulling together. Taggles was a teetotaller, and his favourite drink was gin-and-water; and the nicest old gentleman might have found it annoying when he discovered gum in his gin-bottle. It was really too bad, for, being a teetotaller, Taggles couldn't make a fuss about what happened to his gin. Such happenings had helped to sour Taggles' temper. But evidently Taggles had a softer side, revealed under auspicious circumstances; for now he grinned in a positively amiable manner.

"You're wery kind——" he said.

"Not a bit of it, Taggles! We really want you! You can smoke your pipe after tea just the same as usual."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what would Mr. Railton say?" said Taggles.

"How could he object?" asked Wildrake.

"Well, you—you see——"

"It isn't as if you weren't a really nice old gentleman!" said Wildrake. "But you are, and Mr. Railton knows it! Besides, Mr. Railton has gone out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And we've got a special spread for you, Taggles," urged Wildrake. "And—and we want you to tell us about old St. Jim's, and the chaps who went to the Crimean war——"

"Wot should I know about the Crimean war?" demanded Taggles, with a little less amiability. Taggles had often been exasperated by fellows taking it for granted that he remembered the Crimean war, and even the Peninsular war; indeed, Cardew of the Fourth had once asked him, with great gravity, for some particulars concerning the battle of Bannockburn. Taggles wasn't really so old as all that; and on that subject he was touchy.

"I—I mean the Zulu war," said Wildrake hastily. "And—and the old Head, before Dr. Holmes came, and—and so on. Do come, old chap!"

"We shall be honahed, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Well, if you young gents reely mean it——" said Taggles.

"Honah bwight, deah boy!"

How could Taggles, crusty or not, resist being called a "dear boy" by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his sweetest tones. He couldn't!

"I'll jest change my coat!" said Taggles.

"We'll wait for you, then," said Wildrake. "Don't be long, Taggy! You're awfully nice as you are, you know."

Taggles was not long. He was a little doubtful about quitting his lodge for a long time; but at his request George came from the garage to mind the lodge for half an hour. Easy in his mind on



Knox had no time to act—no time to think. In a flash the noose that had settled round him was drawn taut, pinning his arms to his sides. He started to struggle, and a jerk of the rope plucked him off his feet. (*See page* 11.)

that subject, Taggles walked off with the triumphant juniors to the School House. They got him in as fast as they could; not knowing exactly what the masters might have thought of their unusual guest, if they had seen him. And there were also other reasons—good reasons—why Taggles shouldn't be seen going to the study. It was not only on account of Taggles' fascinating ways that he was being stood a tea in Study No. 3.

But the time had been chosen well: Mr. Railton was out, and Kildare and most of the prefects were on Big Side, including Knox. Only a few juniors noticed Taggles come in; and, though they stared a little, what they thought on the subject did not matter.

There was a cheery fire burning in Study No. 3, and the table was nicely laid. Redfern of the New House had asked Trimble and Mellish to tea, so they were far away. Mellish and Trimble had been surprised by the invitation, not suspecting that Reddy was obliging Wildrake in the matter, and they did not get so many invitations to tea that they could afford to refuse any. So they were gone. Undoubtedly the study was much nicer lacking their company. Mr. Taggles sank luxuriously into an armchair between the table and the fire, still in a state of surprise, but with the thousand wrinkles on his ancient, crusty face melting into smiles. Taggles had never guessed before that he was liked so much in the Fourth Form.

Wildrake closed the study door.

Then the two juniors set to work feeding Taggles. They had tea themselves, but they didn't trouble much about it. All their attention was given to Taggles, as if he were a gentleman they delighted to honour. And Taggles grew more and more expansively good-humoured. He was quite assured now that his leg was not being pulled, and he was pleased—delighted, in fact. He liked shrimps, and there were unnumbered shrimps; he liked new-laid eggs, and he disposed of three; he liked ham, and there was ham galore; he liked jam, and there was two kinds of jam; he even liked cake, and there was a big, handsome cake. Undoubtedly the two juniors had taken a great deal of trouble in getting a spread worthy of the unique occasion.

Taggles ate, and Taggles drank, and Taggles wondered a little if he was dreaming this.

"A little more cake, Taggles?"

"Jest one slice, Master Wildrake."

"Another cup of tea, deah boy?"

"P'raps I could manage another cup, Master D'Arcy."

Tea was over at last, and Taggles sank back in his chair with a sigh of deep comfort. It had to be admitted that Mrs. Taggles never looked after him like this. The thought even occurred to Taggles that it would be nice to have two boys of his own like these two nice boys. Which was remarkable, for Taggles had often been heard to express the firm opinion that all boys ought to be "drownded" at birth!

"Now put on your pipe, old chap!" said Wildrake.

Taggles hesitated.

"I dunno 'bout smoking in these 'ere quarters," he said doubtfully.

"But we want you to, deah boy!"

"Yes, rather, Taggles!"

Taggles took out his pipe and his tobacco-pouch, and the juniors beamed upon him. But still he paused.

"P'raps I'd better 'ave my smoke arter," he suggested.

"My dear old chap, we want you to make yourself at home. We shall be offended if you don't smoke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what would they say if they found your study smelling of smoke, Master Wildrake?" said Taggles, with a grin.

"Oh, they won't! Besides, I could easily explain, if I liked, that I'd had a gentleman to tea."

"Course you could!" agreed Taggles.

He hesitated no more. The black bowl of the pipe was crammed with tobacco, jammed in by Taggles' horny thumb; and Wildrake struck a match for it. Taggles was soon puffing away to his heart's content, smiling amiably.

Wildrake with tea, and D'Arcy with a plate of tarts, stood near at hand should Taggles want more to eat or drink.

Taggles smoked a strong tobacco; and neither Wildrake nor D'Arcy liked tobacco at close quarters, as a rule. Now they seemed to revel in it. They did not even open the window. They seemed to want to get the study impregnated with tobacco.

Whether they wanted it or not, impregnated it very soon was. Clouds of tobacco-smoke curled round the ceiling, and whiffed into every corner of the room. And both the juniors, keeping quite near Taggles, were soon "whiffy" with tobacco-smoke

"You don't mind the smoke, you young gents?" asked Taggles after a time. They had coughed a little.

"Bai Jove! I wathah like it, now."

"Ripping!" said Wildrake. "Fill your pipe again, Taggy!"

"P'r'aps I ought to be goin'——"

"Oh, don't go yet, Taggles! One more pipe, anyhow!"

"Well, as you young gents are so pressin'," said the gratified Taggles. And he filled his pipe again, and turned himself into a very good imitation of a factory chimney.

Wildrake glanced carelessly from the study windows, which gave a distant view of the playing-fields. The Sixth-Formers were still "urging the flying ball," and Wildrake distinguished Knox still among them. Gerald Knox had ambitions of getting into the first eleven, ambitions that were not likely to be realised unless he changed his manners and customs very much indeed.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened, and Wildrake turned round from the window. Levison of the Fourth glanced in, and coughed violently.

"What the thump——" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, Levison! Trot in!"

"Yaas, twot in, deah boy!"

"Thanks! I'll stand here," answered Levison. "My lungs ain't made of leather. I looked in to remind you about your lines, Wildrake."

"Lines!" repeated Wildrake.

"Yes. You know Knox gave you lines—a hundred of Virgil—this afternoon, for bumping into him in the passage——"

"I didn't really bump into him——"

"I know he gave you the lines," said Levison. "I heard him tell you to take them to him at five. It's just on five now, so I thought I'd give you the tip."

"Awfully good of you, old chap!" answered Wildrake. "I've done the lines."

"Good! Don't forget to take them to him, or it will give him another chance at you," said Levison.

"H'm! I'm not going to take them, I guess."

"He'll come for them, and double them, very likely, if you don't."

"Oh, let him come!"

Levison eyed him curiously.

"Look here, Wildrake. Knox is down on you, and you've given him a handle. He'll be jolly glad if you don't take in the lines. He will jump at the chance of coming here and going for you——"

Wildrake nodded.

"I know."

"Well, then——" said Levison, who was really good-naturedly anxious on the Canadian junior's account.

Wildrake closed one eye at him.

"I guess it's all O K, old scout," he said.

"Oh, all right!" said Levison; and he withdrew and closed the door, rather perplexed, but realising that there was some jape in progress, and guessing, too, that it had something to do with Taggles' presence in the study.

Wildrake glanced at the clock. It was ten minutes to five. Taggles had finished his last pipe, and he knocked the bowl out on the bars of the grate, and rose.

"Thank you kindly, young gents!" he said. "I sha'n't forget this. You know how to treat a genelman, you do."

"I twust we always shall, Taggles," said Arthur Augustus gravely.

Arthur Augustus accompanied Taggles as far as the foot of the staircase, and then returned hurriedly to Study No. 3. He came in quickly and closed the door, and grinned at Wildrake through the curls and wreaths of smoke left behind by Taggles.

"How does the atmosphere strike you, coming in fresh?" asked Wildrake.

"Simply weekin', deah boy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"I guess the study will whiff of it for hours to come!" said Wildrake complacently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And Knox won't be long. Levison was quite right in thinking he would jump at a chance to be down on me again!" smiled Wildrake. "Dear old Knox! He doesn't know how much trouble we've taken to gratify him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was rather disagreeable for the juniors to wait in that smoky atmosphere, and they coughed a little, but they bore it. Not for a moment did they open the door or window to clear off the smoke. Not that it could have been cleared off easily, for the worthy Taggles had made the study fairly reek.

There was a sound in the passage. Wildrake winked at his comrade. He knew that stealthy step. The study door was thrown suddenly open, and Knox of the Sixth appeared.

CHAPTER 6.

A Very Serious Matter!

GERALD KNOX coughed.

The tobacco-laden atmosphere of the study smote him like a buffet on the chest.

After the fresh, pure air of the football field it smote him all the harder. Gerald Knox had been mindful of Wildrake's imposition, and he had only stopped to change, after coming in from the footer, before visiting the study. He had rather hoped than otherwise that the lines would not be done to time, and as they were not delivered to him at five sharp he did not intend to give the junior a minute of grace. He was down on Wildrake, and it was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again.

He had expected to find that Wildrake had done the lines. But he had not expected what he actually found—a study reeking with tobacco-smoke, and two juniors staring at him with startled looks. How was Knox to guess that those startled looks were specially adopted for the occasion? Knox wasn't a thought-reader.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It's—it's Knox!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!" ejaculated Wildrake.

He seized a sheet of paper, and began

waving it in the air, as if in a late desperate attempt to clear off the smoke.

Knox gasped.

The sudden smite of the tobacco-laden atmosphere made him gasp. But he recovered in a moment. Knox wasn't altogether unaccustomed to a tobacco-laden atmosphere!

His eyes glinted as he advanced into the study. He fairly gloated over the two juniors.

"So I've caught you!" he said. He could not have concealed his satisfaction if he had tried.

"C-c-caught us?" stammered Wildrake.

"Yes."

"Wha-at do you mean, Knox?"

"Smoking in your study!"

"We—we haven't been smoking, Knox."

Knox laughed loudly. The denial seemed simply puerile, considering that the whole room reeked of tobacco.

"Will you tell the Head that?" he grinned.

"The—the Head! We—we're not going to see the Head, are—are we?"

"Weally, Knox——"

"You are, my boy!" gloated Knox. "Oh, yes, you're going to see the Head! You can bet on that! The Housemaster is out; but, in any case, this is too serious a matter for Mr. Railton. I'm bound to report this to the Head. I shouldn't be doing my duty as a prefect otherwise. You horrid little, smoky beasts! Ain't you jolly well ashamed of yourselves?"

"I—I say, Knox——"

"M-m-must we weally go befoah the Head, Knox?" asked Arthur Augustus feebly.

Knox laughed with sheer enjoyment.

"Yes, rather! I'm going to take you at once. Perhaps you'll have the nerve to tell him that you've not been smoking!" And Knox laughed again.

"I—I guess I shall—shall tell him so, Knox. You—you see——"

"Well, tell him!" grinned Knox. "Come on!"

"Wait till I've opened the window——"

"Let that window alone!" thundered Knox. "It may be necessary for the Head to come here and see the disgraceful state the study is in. You're not sneaking out of it so easily, I assure you."

"But a—a chap has a right to open his study window if he likes——"

"Let that window alone, I tell you! Now, then, out of the study, both of you!" snapped the prefect.

"Weally, Knox——"

"Get a move on!"

"But—but I give you my word we haven't been smoking, Knox!"

"Don't tell me any more lies, Wildrake! Get on!"

Knox bundled the two juniors out of the study, and closed the door as he left. The smoke was to be preserved, as far as possible, in case it was wanted as evidence.

Wildrake and D'Arcy accompanied him to the Head's study. Their faces were very serious. Knox tapped at the Head's door, and Dr. Holmes' deep voice bade him enter. The Head looked slightly surprised as he marshalled in the delinquents.

"I am very sorry to interrupt you, sir," said Knox, in his most respectful manner. Knox was always careful how he dealt with the Head. "These two juniors, sir, have been indulging in a regular orgy——"

"Eh?"

"An orgy, sir, of smoking in their study!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head greatly shocked.

"If it had been a case, sir, of a cigarette or so, I should have dealt with it myself, without troubling you. But the fact is, their study reeks of smoke, like some tap-room!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the Head.

"The smoke can be smelt in the passage outside the study, sir. The wonder is that they are not sick. They must be very much hardened to the practice, for they do not look ill, and the study simply reeks of smoke. Even their clothes smell of it!"

The Head sniffed.

Undoubtedly the two juniors had brought a whiff of strong tobacco with them into that sacred apartment.

Dr. Holmes frowned sternly.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed.

"I felt sir, that I ought to place the matter in your hands," said Knox glibly. "It is plainly not a momentary act of folly. A considerable amount of tobacco has been consumed—cigarettes could not possibly make so much smoke. Perhaps you would step to their study and see, sir. I assure you it is difficult to see across the room."

"That is not necessary, Knox; your assurance is sufficient. Wildrake—D'Arcy, I am grieved and shocked at this! I never supposed that either of you was addicted to this foolish and vicious practice—excessively foolish and vicious in boys of your age. You are well aware of the severe rules on the subject of boys smoking in this school?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Oh, yaas, sir!"

"Yet you have turned your study, as Knox says, into a kind of—of tap-room——"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Nothin' of the kind, sir!"

"You have not the audacity to deny Knox's statement?" exclaimed the Head sternly.

"Yaas, wathah, sir! I have certainly nevah smoked!"

"Neither have I, sir!" said Wildrake. "We both told Knox that we hadn't smoked, but he wouldn't believe us, sir."

"Do you deny that your study is full of smoke?"

"No, sir!"

"Someone has smoked there, then?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"If someone has smoked in your study without your permission, of course——" said the Head more mildly.

"We—we gave our permission, sir," said Wildrake meekly. "We—we didn't think we ought to criticise an old gentleman, sir."

"An old gentleman!" exclaimed the Head. "Is it your meaning that one of the masters has visited your study and smoked there?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Who was it, then?"

"Taggles, sir."

"The school porter?" exclaimed the Head, in amazement.

Knox hardly checked a laugh. This seemed to Knox the most reckless falsehood he had ever listened to.

"Taggles, sir," continued Wildrake. "We had him to tea, sir. No harm in that, is there? Taggles isn't a bad sort, sir, and sometimes he gets a bit ragged by the fellows, so—so we stood him a tea, and parted ever such good friends, sir."

"It is—is—is unusual," said the Head. "But I should be far from blaming any boy for a kindly impulse towards an old man in employment here. So it was Taggles who smoked in your study?"

"Yes, sir. We thought he'd like his pipe after tea, as usual, so we let him smoke."

"Oh!" ejaculated the Head.

"Surely, sir, you don't believe such a statement?" exclaimed Knox.

Dr. Holmes gave the prefect a cold glance.

"On the contrary, Knox, I certainly do believe it, and it is not necessary to send for Taggles to confirm it. Wildrake and D'Arcy, why did you not tell Knox that it was Taggles who smoked in your study?"

"He didn't want to hear, sir. We told him we hadn't smoked."

"Yaas, wathah, sir. We gave him our word——"

"He accused me of telling lies, sir," said Wildrake. "So he wouldn't have believed me if I'd told him it was Taggles."

And the two juniors smiled innocently at the Head. Knox looked at them as if he could eat them. He was realising now that his leg had been pulled again—that Taggles had been brought into Study No. 3 specially to smoke there, the juniors being well aware that the bully of the Sixth would jump to a false conclusion, and put his foot in it.

Knox's cheeks began to burn.

He had discovered a mare's nest once more, and he had reported it to the Head. And the look the Head was giving him made Knox feel uneasy.

"Wildrake—D'Arcy—you may leave my study for a few minutes, but wait outside. I shall call you in again."

"Yes, sir."

The two juniors quitted the study and closed the door. Outside in the passage they exchanged blissful glances.

"Knox is goin' to get a woyal and impewial jaw!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I could see it in the old scout's eye!"

"I guess Knox wishes he hadn't looked into my study!" murmured Wildrake.

And the two juniors chortled softly.

NEXT WEEK!

Next Week's "GEM" Story entitled:

"Through a Terrible Ordeal!"

will create a profound impression. It is undoubtedly one of the finest stories which has ever appeared in this paper, and it is not too much to say that it will live long in the memory of our readers.

"Through a Terrible Ordeal!"

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CHAPTER 7.
Unexpected!

DR. HOLMES waited till the door had closed on the Fourth-Formers. He would not let the juniors hear him "wigging" a prefect. But as soon as the door was shut he started in with a "royal and imperial jaw," just as the sage Gussy suspected.

"Knox!" The name came like a bullet.

"Ye-es, sir?" faltered Knox.

"You have acted in an utterly foolish and thoughtless manner, Knox!"

"I—I thought——"

"You accused the boys of lying when they stated that they had not smoked," said the Head. "You should have known, Knox, that such an accusation should not be lightly brought. You should have inquired into the circumstances. If you had even asked them a few questions you would have elicited the fact that they had had the school porter in the study, and that he had smoked there. I fear, Knox, that you were not at all eager to ascertain the facts, but rather to bring punishment upon these boys."

"Oh, sir! I—I——"

"Your foolish—in fact, flighty—conduct is calculated to bring the order of prefects into contempt!" said the Head. "You have fallen into an obvious trap. The boys prepared this ridiculous scene for you, and instead of seeing through it, or inquiring into the facts, you bring me into the matter, and practically cause me to share the ridicule. You found these juniors in a study reeking with smoke——"

"Yes, sir, I did, and——"

"How did they know you were coming to the study at that moment?"

"They didn't, sir. I——"

"They must have known, or they could not have had the scene prepared for you."

"I—I had given Wildrake lines to do, ordering him to bring them to me at five, and——"

"I understand. The juniors have some grudge against you, and have made you look ridiculous in payment of it. You are at liberty, Knox, to look as ridiculous as you please, but you are not at liberty to bring ridicule upon me. I shall have to consider very seriously, Knox, whether I can allow you to retain the rank of prefect. You have acted hastily, foolishly, and inconsiderately."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Knox.

"You may go now, Knox. Send the juniors in."

Knox almost limped from the study. This was his triumph.

He was glad to get out into the passage, away from the Head's icy, accusing eyes. He made a gesture to the juniors to enter; he could not trust himself to speak just then. Wildrake and D'Arcy re-entered the study, still with the smiles of perfect innocence adorning their countenances.

To their dismay, they found the Head selecting a cane.

Being perfectly innocent of anything in the nature of wrong-doing, they did not see what a cane had to do with the matter. Apparently the Head did, for, having selected a serviceable cane, he stepped towards the juniors.

"Wildrake—D'Arcy—I hold you completely innocent of the charge of having smoked in your study."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I am quite sure that the account you have given me is perfectly truthful," continued the Head.

"M-m-may we go, sir?"

"Not just yet, Wildrake. I have a few more words to say, and something to do," said the Head grimly. "Your conduct appears to have been innocence itself—there are no grounds for punishment. A Sixth Form prefect has jumped hastily to a wrong conclusion, and has wasted his time and mine—and you two juniors have done nothing wrong. I am now about to cane you."

"Oh!" gasped the two juniors who had done nothing wrong.

"I will explain," said the Head. "Sixth Form prefects are not appointed in order to be made fun of by hilarious youths in the Fourth Form. It is what is called in the Lower School, I believe, 'leg-pulling.' It was kindness itself on your part to ask old Mr. Taggles to tea. It was true hospitality to allow the old gentleman to smoke his pipe in your study. And nobody, of course, was more surprised than yourselves when Knox accused you of smoking."

The juniors were silent.

They did not quite like the Head's tone, and still less did they like the look in his eye. And, above all, they did not like the cane in his hand.

"Having acted in a meritorious manner all round," continued the Head, "it may surprise you that I am going to cane you."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Doubtless, if you reflect upon the matter, my reason will become clear to you," said the Head. "Probably you will learn to restrain your sense of humour within more appropriate limits. You first, Wildrake. Kindly hold out your hand."

Swish!

"Now the other hand."

Swish!

"Thank you! Now your hand, D'Arcy—and the other."

Swish, swish!

"You may go, boys," said the Head, laying down his cane. "I sincerely hope that you do not look upon your punishment as unjust. If you do, you are a little less intelligent than I give you credit for being. Shut the door, please."

In the corridor Wildrake and D'Arcy squeezed their hands and looked at one another.

"Ow!" said Wildrake.

"Wow!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Horrid—unjust——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What the thump does he mean by caning us when we haven't done anything? Ow, wow!"

Arthur Augustus grinned faintly.

"Pewwaps we'd bettah deal with Knox in some othah way, Wildwake, next time. I am wathah fed with makin' a fool of him befoah the Head. It is—ow!—wathah painful in its wesults!"

"Ow! I guess so—yow!"

The two juniors drifted disconsolately away.

"Nevah mind—Knox had a feahful jaw!" said Arthur Augustus. "I could see that in his chivvay!"

"Yow-wow!"

"But—but we'll be wathah careful not to dwag the Head into it next time."

"Wow!"

"Pewwaps it was wathah thick to waste the old boy's time; and he did look a bit of an ass, aftah spoutin' at us, to find there was nothin' in it. Headmastahs don't like bein' made to look asses!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

It was not till the anguish had died away—which was some time later—that Wildrake was able to take a dispassionate view of the matter. Then he was willing to admit that the Head was right—according to his lights, at least. And, like Arthur Augustus, he resolved that the next move against Knox should be planned without the involuntary co-operation of the Head.

CHAPTER 8.
In the Dead of Night.

TRIMBLE solved the problem!

The general opinion about Baggy Trimble in the Fourth was that he was neither useful nor ornamental. Yet it was Trimble, the fat and the fatuous, who solved the problem to which Wildrake was giving his deepest thought.

The problem was how to deal with Gerald Knox of the Sixth. Wildrake was on the warpath, and he meant business; but so far it could not be said that Knox had had the worst of it. Certainly he had had an imperial jaw from the Head; but Wildrake and D'Arcy had been caned, so Knox had really come off best. And he was more unpleasant than ever. A prefect in the Sixth Form has many little ways of making himself obnoxious to a junior, and Knox knew them all and used them all. Wildrake found him more than a worry, and he was quite determined to "bottle up" Knox of the Sixth. But how? That was the question. And it was from Baggy Trimble that the hint came—all unconsciously on Baggy's part.

Wildrake was thinking the problem out after prep in his study. As well as prep he had a hundred lines to do for Knox that evening. Baggy Trimble, having loafed through his prep, was chattering. Baggy loved dearly the sound of his own voice, which Monty Lowther accounted for by the fact that Baggy hadn't a musical ear. And Baggy's chatter ran on Knox. Baggy had been at his usual game of hearing that which was not intended for his ears, and he was relating his discoveries with many fat chortles.

"To-night's the night," said Baggy, addressing Mellish. "I heard Knox tell Cutts of the Fifth. Fancy a prefect, you know, sneaking out of his study window after lights-out! Suppose Railton happened to be taking a stroll in the quad by starlight. He, he, he!"

Wildrake looked up at that.

"Surely Knox doesn't do anything of the kind?" he said.

Baggy smiled the smile of superior knowledge.

"You're a new chap here," he answered. "Knox is a regular sportsman—Knox and Cutts of the Fifth, and St. Leger and that crowd. Lots of fellows know that Knox backs horses, and that he drops in at the Green Man o' nights when he feels safe to play billiards with Lodgey. Of course, nobody could prove it, but lots of fellows know."

"Do you really mean that Knox is going out of bounds to-night to play billiards at a pub?" ejaculated Wildrake.

"Of course!"

"But the Head——"

Baggy chortled.

"If the Head knew, it would be bag and baggage for Knox!" he said. "But Knox is too jolly careful. If he knew I'd heard him jawing to Cutts he would give me jip, I can tell you!"

"You might give him away," said Wildrake.

"Oh, I wouldn't sneak!" said Baggy loftily. "But if I did it wouldn't make any difference. Knox would have some excuse ready. He would say he heard a fag in the quad, or thought it was burglars, or something. They won't catch Knox napping in a hurry."

"When is he going?"

"He told Cutts he was going at eleven," answered Baggy. "Cutts isn't going; he says he was cleared out last time."

"A precious pair of rotters!" said Kit Wildrake, with a curl of the lip.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Baggy, with

an air which he fondly imagined to be that of a man of the world. "I'm a bit of a goer myself. I'd go along with Knox if he asked me."

"You fat chump!"

Wildrake turned his attention to his prep then, and said no more. But he was thinking as well as working. When prep was over he rose.

"Ain't you going to do your lines for Knox?" asked Mcilish, with a grin.

"I guess not."

"You'll get a ragging to-morrow."

"We'll see."

Wildrake left the study and directed his steps to the box-room, where he had a big trunk that had accompanied him from the Boot Leg Ranch, in British Columbia. In that trunk he kept many things he had brought from his home, including a lasso, with which he had performed many times, to the admiration of the St. Jim's juniors. He took out the coiled rope and scudded away with it to the Fourth Form dormitory and concealed it under the mattress of his bed.

Then he went down cheerfully to the Common-room.

A little later Knox of the Sixth looked in and singled out the Canadian junior with his eye.

"Wildrake, have you done your lines?"

"I guess not, Knox," drawled Wildrake.

"They are doubled!" said Knox.

"Thanks!"

"If they're not shown up by tea-time to-morrow you'll go before the Housemaster!"

"Perhaps you will have let me off by then, Knox," suggested Wildrake.

The prefect stared at him. But he said no more, and left the Common-room. Some of the fellows looked very curiously at Wildrake.

"Knox isn't likely to let you off your impot, I should think, kid," Tom Merry remarked.

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"Oh, you never know!" answered Wildrake carelessly. "I've got an idea that Knox may be quite amiable to-morrow."

"It will be a change for him, then," said Tom, laughing. "I hope you're right. But I don't think so."

Darrel of the Sixth came in to shepherd the juniors off to their dormitory. Wildrake turned in with the rest of the Fourth Form—but not to sleep. It was easy enough for the Canadian junior to keep awake; he had often spent wakeful nights on hunting-trails in the Canadian West. The other juniors dropped off to sleep, but Wildrake counted the strokes from the clock-tower.

All was silent in the dormitory when ten struck; and then the quarters chimed. At a quarter to eleven Wildrake slipped quietly from his bed and dressed rapidly in the dark. Outside, in the quadrangle, there was a glimmer of moonlight.

"Bai Jove! What's that?" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sleepily, as he was lightly shaken.

"Hush!"

"Is that you, Wildwake?"

"Yep! Like to come?"

Arthur Augustus sat up.

"Bai Jove! It isn't wisin'-bell, deah boy; it's quite dark."

"It's turned a quarter to eleven. I'm going to look for Knox of the Sixth," whispered Wildrake. "He's breaking bounds to-night, and I'm going to see him in the quad——"

"Gweat Scott!"

"With my lasso——"

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Like to come?"

There was a gurgle of merriment from Arthur Augustus. He was wide awake now.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Let me get my clobbah on."

A few minutes later, and two juniors trod on tiptoe from the Fourth Form dormitory—Wildrake with his coiled lariat on his arm.

CHAPTER 9.
Brought to Terms.

KNOX of the Sixth extinguished the light in his study and locked the door. Anyone passing the study would have supposed that Gerald Knox was gone to bed. Instead of which, Gerald Knox was dressed for going out, in a dark coat, with a cap pulled well down over his face. His window was within easy reach of the ground—it was an easy drop. He opened the window very silently and cautiously, and stood for a good five minutes in the dark, waiting, watching, and listening.

There was considerable risk attached to Knox's nocturnal expeditions, but long impunity had made him confident. To drop from the window in the dark, scuttle out of the school grounds, and return later in the same way was simple enough so long as he was not suspected. Even when the moon was bright he was able to scuttle along in the shadow of trees or buildings till he reached the school wall. And though a surprise visit might sometimes be paid to a junior dormitory, such things did not happen in Sixth Form rooms. The august Sixth were above suspicion.

Certainly, discovery of a prefect engaged in such proceedings would have meant instant expulsion from the school. But Knox did not mean to be discovered.

Having satisfied himself that the coast was clear, and the moon having passed behind a cloud, Knox slipped from the window, pausing a moment on the sill to shut the sash nearly down. He dropped lightly to the ground and scudded away at once. As a prefect, he had a key to the side gate, though most certainly he was not supposed to use it at that hour of the night.

The moon emerged from the clouds, and silvery light streamed down into the wide quadrangle. Knox muttered a curse and drew himself close in the shadow of an elm and waited for the light to pass. Again the clouds engulfed the silver crescent, and Gerald Knox scuttled on towards the little gate.

Whiz!

That sudden swishing sound startled Knox. Before he could even guess what it might possibly mean, something touched him—a rope that settled down over his shoulders.

Knox gasped with astonishment and alarm.

But he had no time to act—no time to think. In a flash the noose that had settled round him was drawn taut, pinning his arms to his sides.

He started to struggle, and a jerk of the rope plucked him off his feet. He came down with a bump, helplessly, a few yards from the gate.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!" spluttered Knox, as he rolled.

A shadowy figure ran towards him, gathering up the rope as it ran. The moon was still hidden, and Knox's eyes, staring up from the ground, saw little more than the dim outline of a form.

The dim form bent over him, and another turn was taken in the rope. Knox was a helpless prisoner.

"Who—what——" he spluttered.

For one terrible moment Knox had supposed himself caught by a master. But he realised immediately that that could not be. A master would not have "roped him in" like a steer on a ranch. There was only one person at St. Jim's who was accustomed to handling a lasso—or who, indeed, had a lasso to handle. He knew that the shadowy form bending over him was Kit Wildrake of the Fourth.

Knox ground his teeth with fury.

Somehow or other, the Canadian had learned that he was breaking bounds that night, and had laid for him in the quad, and lassoed him; and now he was at the mercy of the junior he had persecuted.

He struggled furiously with the gripping rope, but he struggled in vain. The lasso would have held an angry



Taggles sank back in the easy chair with a sigh of deep comfort. He was soon puffing away to his heart's content, smiling amiably through the thick clouds of smoke, whilst Wildrake and D'Arcy stood near by in attendance.

(*See page 8.*)

bull; and it was too much for Knox of the Sixth.

"Take it easy, old scout!" came Wildrake's cool, drawling voice. "It's a cinch! You can't break away!"

"You young rotters! I—I'll shout, if you don't let me go!" hissed Knox. "I—I'll bring the masters here!"

"Shout away!" said Wildrake. "Mr. Railton would be interested to know why you were going out at eleven o'clock."

"I—I wasn't going out!" muttered Knox. "I—I saw you in the quad, and —and came out to investigate——"

"Bai Jove! That is wathah stwong!"

"And why did you close down your study-window after coming out?" chuckled Wildrake. "Why did you put your light out? Why did you put on a big overcoat and a cap? Knox, old scout, that yarn wouldn't do for Mr. Railton. But you can put it to the test if you like."

Knox was silent.

Not for worlds would he have brought his Housemaster on the scene. Such a "yarn" might have served his turn as a last desperate resource if he had been discovered; but he did not want to put it to the test. It was evident that he had to make terms with the juniors who had captured him, before an alarm was given, and he tried to choke back his rage, and speak quietly.

"Aren't you going to shout?" grinned Wildrake.

"I—I——" Knox panted. "Let me go, kid!"

"I was a young rotter a minute ago."

"I—I'm sorry I—called you names!" Knox gulped. "Look here, let me go, I'll let you off your lines!"

"Good man! But I'm not letting you off the lasso just yet!"

"Wathah not!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"What are you going to do?" hissed Knox.

He made another desperate attempt to burst open the gripping rope, and panted feebly as he failed.

"Get on your feet!"

"I—I—I will——"

"Gerrup!"

Knox scrambled to his feet, as Wildrake jerked the rope. His rage overcame him, and he landed out with a fierce kick at the junior. But the Canadian was on the look-out for that. He leaped back, and dragged on the rope, and Knox went crashing down again.

"Oooooooop!"

"You'll take a tumble every time you kick, old scout," said Wildrake coolly. "I guess I'll keep it up as long as you do."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Arthur Augustus.

"Now get up, Knox!"

Knox staggered up again, dazed and breathless. He did not try to kick this time.

"Come along, old scout!" said Wildrake.

Wildrake led him a good distance, and Knox found himself on the football-ground. Wildrake took a turn of the rope round a goal-post. Then he took a whipcord from his pocket, threw it round Knox's legs, and tied it round the post. Knox had to submit, but the looks he gave his captors were slaughterous.

"Now, that's all right," said Wildrake, with satisfaction. "Now I'm going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle, Knoxey!"

"I'll smash you! I'll——" Knox choked.

"Weally, Knox——"

"I'll slaughter you! I'll——"

"You are wastin' time in blowin' off steam, Knox!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "Also, you are keepin' us out of bed. You should wemembah, Knox, that we are not so accustomed to late hours as you are!"

"You—you——" spluttered Knox.

"Shut up, Knox!" said Wildrake. "No time to listen to your gas! You've been on my trail for weeks now, worrying me, and you're going to chuck it! That's why I've roped you in to-night—to draw your teeth!"

"Just wait till to-morrow!" gasped Knox. "I—I'll——"

"To-morrow you'll be tame enough to feed out of my hand," said Wildrake coolly. "You're going to write a little note in my pocket-book, and sign it. I guess I've brought a fountain-pen ready. Will you?"

"No!" howled Knox.

"I'm going to shave your eyebrows, Knox, old chap. Tell me when to stop."

Wildrake opened his penknife.

Knox gazed at him in horror.

"You—you won't dare!" he shrieked.

"I guess you'll see whether I dare!" said Wildrake contemptuously. "Here goes! I'll stop when you tell me you'll do as you're ordered!"

"Yow-ow!" roared Knox, as the keen blade of the penknife glided over his eyebrow, and loose hairs fell into his eyes. "Stop!"

"I guess that's only one little cut, so far. Will you write as I tell you?"

"Yes!" hissed Knox.

"Good! I'll loosen one of your paws, just enough to write. If you try any tricks, say good-bye to your eyebrows!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Knox was not likely to try any tricks now that he knew the youth from the Boot Leg Ranch was in deadly earnest. Wildrake loosened the lariat sufficiently to allow Knox to use his right hand. He put a fountain-pen in his fingers, and held a pocket-book open before him.

"You'll write in your usual fist," he said. "The moon's clear enough. I shall see if you try any gum-games! I know your scrawl. Write as I dictate."

Knox panted.

Wildrake proceeded to dictate calmly:

"Whereas I, Gerald Knox, Sixth Form, have been caught breaking bounds at eleven-thirty, by Wildrake of the Fourth, I beg Wildrake not to report my conduct to the Housemaster, and promise that I will leave off persecuting him, and try not to be such a beastly bully in the future.

"(Signed) GERALD KNOX."

Knox fairly spluttered.

"I—I dare not write anything of the kind. I—I—— Suppose it was seen—it would mean the sack for me——"

"It won't be seen, so long as you keep to the agreement," said Wildrake quietly. "I shall put it away in a safe place, and hand it back to you at the end of the term. Till then it will keep you on your good behaviour. Are you going to write?"

"I—I can't trust you——"

"I guess you've no choice about that. You've got to."

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"I—I can't—— Stop!" howled Knox, as the penknife approached his eyebrows. "I—I'll write it!"

"Go ahead, then! I'm losing patience, I guess."

Knox wrote—hurriedly, savagely. Wildrake took the pocket-book, which he had been holding for Knox to write in, and lifted it to the light, and examined it. Then he tore out the leaf.

"Now write it again in your usual hand, Knox; and this is your last chance," he said quietly.

Knox ground his teeth with speechless rage. He dared not prevaricate further; and he did as he was bidden. Again Wildrake examined the writing, and this time he was satisfied.

He waited calmly for the leaf to dry, and then put the pocket-book away.

"Done!" he said. "I guess that will keep you in order, Knox! If you kick over the traces, I reckon that writing of yours will be seen up and down St. Jim's from one end of the school to the other. Keep your word, and it will never be seen. Now we've done with you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Wildrake took off the lasso. Knox was still fastened to the goal-post by the cord round his legs, but his hands were free.

"Let my feet loose!" he hissed.

"So that you can have a try at getting the paper back!" smiled Wildrake. "My dear old scout, I wasn't born yesterday, or the day before. You'll get your hoofs loose in about ten minutes, I reckon. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Knox!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

And the two Fourth-Formers disappeared into the night.

Gerald Knox, grinding his teeth, stooped and wrestled with the cord round his legs. He fumbled long with the knots, but he got them loose at last. Then he jerked himself away from the goal-post.

And then he returned to his room. After what had happened, he did not feel equal to a "night out" at the Green Man. That little excursion was put off for another occasion. Knox went to bed; but it was a long time before he slept. And the thought of that dangerous paper in Wildrake's hands haunted his dreams.

. . . . . .

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

And he stared.

It was the following day, and Wildrake and D'Arcy, coming along the lower passage, met Knox of the Sixth face to face.

For a second Knox's eyes burned; but the next moment a lugubrious grin was forced upon his face.

"Hallo, Knox!" said Wildrake genially.

(Continued on page 16.)





JOHN SHARPE.

The INVISIBLE HAND



IRON HAND.

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 House of Mystery.

John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service of Chicago, to track down the band of organised criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, 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. She is not known to Sharpe.

The mountain den, Eagle's Nest, is run by Potsdam, Iron Hand's lieutenant.

Sharpe spoils many of the plans of the gang. Later he discovers that the gang possess a submarine, and they plot to blow up the Oriental mail steamer. Sharpe sends word for the steamer not to sail, and communicates with a border patrol to have a bombing aeroplane ready for instant use. The submarine is destroyed.

Sharpe follows Iron Hand to Nest No. 2, another lair of the gang, and succeeds in gaining admittance to the house, after a fight with a savage dog. Iron Hand is warned of his presence, and Sharpe is made a prisoner. Anne arrives in time to see Sharpe escape. Sharpe follows Iron Hand to the latter's hotel. Anne also goes there. Iron Hand prepares to receive Sharpe. In the adjoining room, a gas machine is arranged so that a bag is to be dropped over Sharpe's head. Sharpe senses the plan, and adopts means to circumvent it.

Sharpe is enveloped in the folds of the gas-bag. Iron Hand and others secure the bag around Sharpe. Inside the bag Sharpe adjusts a gas-mask, and then pretends to grow weaker and weaker, until he apparently becomes lifeless. A trunk is brought in, unlocked, and Sharpe is thrown in.

Iron Hand orders his men to get a porter, and then dump the trunk in the river. Anne watches, helpless. With a sudden idea she slips out to the hall, lures Iron Hand from the room by a false message, and then returns and unlocks the trunk. She is frightened by a noise in the hall, and goes to her room. Sharpe rises, freed of the gas-bag, and quickly substitutes some rugs and logs from the fireplace, putting them in the trunk, so as to make up the difference in weight. He goes to the other room, and confronts Anne. Anne hides him in the cupboard as Iron Hand returns. Hartmann and others remove the trunk.

Sharpe and some troops under Captain West chase Iron Hand and the gang to Eagle's Nest, but they are ambushed. Owing to a clever ruse of Anne's, they are able to escape.

(Now read on.)

JOHN SHARPE immediately made his way to Broad Street, in accordance with the cryptic message in the "Morning News." He found that Broad Street was composed mainly of dwelling-houses, divided into two parts. About half-way up the street he came to one building with two doors, one of which was labelled A.42, and the other B.42.

"This looks like the place," he mused.

The house numbered A.42, was evidently occupied, but the other one was closed, and the detective noticed that it had a "To Let" board fixed to it. He went closer to it, and read underneath, "Apply to Reams, 175, Carolina Buildings."

He jotted this down in his notebook, and he was feeling fairly satisfied with himself, for this house evidently confirmed his reading of the message which appeared in code in the "Morning News."

John Sharpe, still in an inquiring mood, passed by the house, and he saw a little farther up on the same side a jewellery shop. The detective would not have taken much notice of this, but his attention was suddenly aroused by a negro porter who carelessly swept some rubbish out of a side door, some of which happened to strike Sharpe as he passed by.

It was purely an accident, of course, but as the detective looked down he saw an object which attracted his attention. His naturally curious mind at once made him desire to know more about it. While the porter was apologising for the inconvenience caused, Sharpe bent down and picked up the object.

It was the half of a wooden rose, and appeared to be part of a ceiling decoration.

The detective examined the trifle curiously, and then he glanced up at the jewellery shop again, where his eyes caught sight of a plate bearing the name "Anglo-American Jewellery Company"; but the detective's interest was centred on the ornament which he picked up, and, turning to the porter, he put a question to him concerning it.

"I don't know anything about it, boss, 'cept it was on de floor this morning with a lot of sawdust," was his reply to Sharpe's question. "De shop was puffectly clean when I left it last night."

John Sharpe was, however, still curious, and he decided to investigate, and started to enter the shop; but the porter was ready for him, and barred his progress.

"No, sarr," he said, shaking his woolly head and looking very serious, "they don't let nobody get to look at dem diamonds till der shop does open."

John Sharpe smiled at the quaint speech of the negro porter.

"All right," he said good-naturedly, "I will return when the shop opens." And, with that, he went off round the corner.

A moment or two later, when the porter had gone, he returned in order to make a full study of the shop.

The entrance was flanked by two big show windows, and they were filled with articles of varying value. There was a commissionaire pacing to and fro, and in order not to arouse his suspicions the detective pretended to be interested by a sign in one of the windows. When he got near enough he was able to read the following: "The Ittlesbach Jewels will be sold by auction on the 10th. Intending purchasers are cordially invited to inspect them."

John Sharpe raised his eyebrows.

"Things are getting very interesting," he reflected. "I wonder if Mr. Iron Hand is an intending purchaser."

The detective did not think it wise to delay here any longer, and he hurried off in the direction of the house where application was to be made respecting the letting of B42, Broad Street.

It was a small estate-office, and as he entered the shop he noticed a clerk sitting behind the desk who was making a determined effort to look busy with nothing to do.

Sharpe at once set about his business, and put a question or two to him.

"Sorry, sir," replied the clerk, "but we let B42, Broad Street yesterday to a party named Selfson. They paid a big price for the use of it for a week. Next week I will be glad to let it to you, if you still require it."

John Sharpe replied that he would think it over. Then he casually remarked: "What sort of a man is Selfson?"

The clerk thought for a moment, and shook his head.

"I'm afraid I did not notice him too well," he replied; "but I know he had a moustache, and wore glasses."

The detective thanked him and walked out. Matters were moving in the direction he imagined they would.

John Sharpe's next step in the game was to walk to the headquarters of the police. The Chief was busily engaged on some papers, when a policeman-orderly entered and announced him.

The detective entered at once, and was asked by the Chief of Police to produce his papers proving his identity, and when this was done the officer shook hands with him cordially. After the greeting was over Sharpe addressed a question to him.

"Yes, we had a wire from Burnett to be on the look-out," he replied. "What can I do for you?"

"I want a letter written to the manager of the Anglo-American Jewellery Company," he replied. And the Chief at once scribbled off a few lines according to his instructions, and, putting the letter in an envelope, he handed it to Sharpe.

Once more Sharpe made his way to the jewellery shop. It was now open, and there were a number of passers-by looking in at the windows.

The detective pressed by them and entered the shop. He immediately glanced up at the ceiling, but noticing that the shopman had his eyes upon him Sharpe hastily addressed himself to the man, and asked to be shown a pair of opera-glasses. This was willingly done, and under the pretence of being an intending purchaser he put them to his eyes, and, after focussing them, pointed them up to the ceiling.

It was a high room, and although this fact would not be evident to the naked eye, by the aid of the opera-glasses Sharpe could distinctly see a part of an ornamental rose on the ceiling was missing, and further, it had obviously been sawn through.

Sharpe gave no sign to the shopman that anything was amiss.

"The glasses will suit my purpose," he said, speaking to the man. "I will take them." And taking out sufficient money he handed it in exchange for the glasses.

Whilst he was engaged in wrapping them up, the man jokingly said to his customer:

"Don't go without looking at the wonderful Ittlesbach Jewels in the case in front there."

Armed with his purchase, Sharpe made his way over to the jewel counter in front of the shop. There was a special watchman standing where these valuable jewels were exhibited, and two shopmen behind the counter.

The jewels made a wonderful display. There were necklaces, brooches, bracelets, rings, ear-rings, coronets, and so on, and the eagle eye of the detective was quick to see that they were all apparently of great value.

As he turned away he thought to himself: "Fermain. Important business. I should say so!"

The meaning of the message in code was now quite clear to him. The clever brain of the detective could see through the whole scheme.

The shopman on this side had noticed Sharpe's look of interest, and also his purchase of the opera-glasses, and he, too, was eager to sell something.

"Is there anything more you are requiring?" he asked. "We have some excellent bronzes on the floor above, if you are interested."

An inspiration came to the detective.

"Yes, I should like to see them," he replied casually. "Will you take me upstairs?"

They both made their way over to the lift.

Arriving at the next floor, Sharpe noticed that it was full of various articles such as clocks, and marble and bronze ornaments. He noticed particularly that there was a very big fireplace in the room, and on the mantelshelf there were also a number of large ornaments. The whole scene he took in rapidly with his eagle eye.

The detective was thoughtful for a moment; then, turning to the shopman, he said: "Please ask the manager to come up here for a moment?"

The man's face wore a puzzled expression. He wondered why the manager was required; but he obeyed the order of this important-looking customer. He went over to the lift, and, entering, closed the door behind him.

Estimating the position of the ornamental rose on the ceiling beneath, Sharpe walked towards it, and located the spot near a table on which were some bronze articles. The table was on a corner of a rug. Sharpe moved it, and then stooped and lifted aside the rug, which immediately disclosed a loose section of the floor. He lifted this up, thus proving to his satisfaction that his conjecture was correct, and that a section of the floor had been sawn through, forming it into a trap-door communicating with the room below. This, then, accounted for the ornamental rose being in two pieces.

Sharpe had seen sufficient, and he hastily replaced the section of floor and the rug. The detective always liked to keep his discoveries to himself until the whole job was completed. Then he knew he had only himself to blame if things went wrong.

How the conspirators had made their exit from the shop without being noticed was the next problem to solve. His gaze wandered in the direction of the fireplace, and he walked over towards it, and took from his pocket a strong magnifying-glass.

"As I imagined!" he muttered, carefully scrutinising the fireplace.

Sharpe had noticed a number of foot-prints outlined rather faintly in soot, heading from the fireplace towards the sawn section of the floor.

He was pretty certain that the gang had used the chimney, but he looked up in order to make quite sure that it was large enough to admit the passage of a man. He pulled himself up just in time, as the manager alighted from the lift. The newcomer walked over to the detective.

"What is the matter?" he asked, imagining that Sharpe was a prospective customer with a complaint about something or other.

The detective produced his letter from the Chief of Police, and handed it to the manager. The man read it, and was evidently impressed by its contents, for he immediately showed a willingness to place himself at the detective's disposal. Sharpe looked at the man, and addressed him somewhat anxiously.

"I have reason to believe that there will be an attempt made within the next few days to steal the Ittlesbach Jewels," the detective told him. "I recommend extra vigilance until I have run the rascals down."

The manager looked decidedly worried when he heard this. Such news came as a shock to him.

"We have two watchmen on duty all night in the shop," he replied. "It is kept well lighted, and there is an outside watchman, and a police-officer with a fixed beat just across the street. Don't you consider this sufficient protection?"

"It should be ample," replied John Sharpe.

"Then do you think they can all be trusted?" he asked pointedly.

The manager nodded.

"They are all to be trusted," he replied confidently. "Besides, all this——"

He went over to Sharpe and whispered something in his ear. He was evidently imparting some great secret.

Sharpe was surprised, and smiled.

"Imitation—paste, do you really mean it?" he asked incredulously.

"That is so!" the manager replied. "Let me explain further. The real jewels are in a safe-deposit vault. These are only for advertising purposes. I did not want to take any risks, they are too valuable."

Sharpe smiled.

"Never fear; I will keep your secret," he told the manager. "I think I can manage to catch them red-handed. Meanwhile, I should like to see the roof—alone."

The manager handed Sharpe a bunch of keys, and rang for the lift, and a moment later both men were carried upwards.

Arriving at the top the manager pointed to a door.

"That is the way to the roof," he explained, and entering the elevator again, he was taken downstairs.

Sharpe climbed the flight of stairs before him, and opened a heavy lock fixed to the door on the roof. A second later he had made his way to the roof. He immediately went over to the big chimney, and closely inspected it. A smile crossed his face.

At the top of the chimney he could see distinctly a number of sooty finger-prints and some hemp, which evidently indicated that a rope had been extended down the chimney. He took out his magnifying-glass again, and closely examined the finger-prints and the hemp strands.

The detective fully realised now how the gang made their entrance to the second floor, and then he suddenly recalled B42. Going to the parapet of the roof, he peered over at the rear of the house.

From that position he was able to see the back of A42 and B42. There was the usual fire-escape, and the fact that the roof of the building joining A42 was connected with that of the roof of B42 did not go unnoticed by the shrewd detective. Sharpe had now finished his investigations, and he was quite satisfied with the result of his labours. He did not begrudge the time spent in solving the coded message, and he was convinced that he was again hot upon the trail of another gigantic scheme planned by the crafty criminal chief and his assistants.

The Gang at Work.

SEATED in a shabby room, used as the temporary hiding-place, Iron Hand, the leader of the gang, was holding a conversation with his second-in-command. Upon the table was the newspaper, opened at the place where the advertisement appeared which contained the message to the other members of the gang.

The avaricious Potsdam was eager to start upon the new plan of action at once, but Iron Hand, who rarely let his greed get the better of his good judgment, restrained his anxious assistant.

"There is no hurry," he said firmly. "We cannot pull off the deal until one o'clock."

Iron Hand was going to make some further observations, but the attention of the two men was suddenly aroused by the sound of a noise outside. They turned to see what it was. Then the door opened, and the figure of Anne Crawford appeared in the doorway.

The two conspirators were terrified. They could not believe their eyes. Was it the ghost of Marna Black? Iron hand and Potsdam shrank back towards the wall away from what they regarded as an apparition of Marna.

The girl walked into the room coolly, taking no notice of their alarm. And, as she advanced, they retreated in terror. The men were half-crazy with alarm. Finally Potsdam produced his revolver, and in order to avert a tragedy, Anne said:

"I am no ghost. One of the party discovered a mine-shaft—you remember it in the plans of the shack? We were in the shaft when the explosion happened. I escaped. Went to Eagle's Nest, and traced you here. Anything for me to do?" she queried, highly amused at the terror-stricken figures before her.

The men had got over their shock now. They had never thought to see Marna

Black again—quite believing that she had perished in the explosion which they had planned.

Iron Hand, of course, was not sorry to see her again, for he did not wish her to be blown up with the rest of his enemies, but Potsdam was of a different mood; he was still vaguely suspicious of the girl, although he was afraid to give voice to these in front of the chief. Still, he could not resist warning Iron Hand not to reveal too much about the scheme which they had on hand.

Iron Hand angrily silenced him, and, turning to Anne, he said defiantly:

"We are going to pull off the biggest thing yet, to-night. You stay here until I come or send for you!"

Anne protested that she was desirous of doing her fair share in the new undertaking, and pleaded to be allowed to take her part.

"I am not afraid of danger," she said.

Iron Hand looked at the appealing face of the girl before him, and for a moment seemed inclined to give in and let her have her way. But Potsdam checked him again.

"We've got to do it—quick! Do you realise that?" he said, turning to his master. "Now that devil Sharpe is loose again, we must not delay an instant, or he will most certainly foil us!

Iron hand nodded.

"Perhaps you're right," he said.

And he repeated his orders to Anne again.

The girl assumed an expression of annoyance at being left alone, but she was not really so cross about it as she pretended to be. There were evidently big developments afoot, and, left to her own devices, she thought she would be able to do something to prevent the success of the plan of the conspirators. How she laughed at the thought of the fright she had given the two men.

As soon as Iron Hand and Potsdam had left the room, she was all activity again, and her attention was first of all directed towards the folded newspaper upon the table. She picked it up, and looked at once at the advertisement which had been marked out in pencil. The girl gazed at it intently for a few minutes, and then, casting the paper aside, she smiled, and said:

"This is too easy." It had not given her much trouble to solve. Without further ado, she left the room.

The Scene of Action.

IT was by now quite dark as John Sharpe walked up to the front door of A42, Broad Street, and rang the bell. The door was soon opened by the landlady. The detective showed the good lady his badge revealing his identity as a Secret Service man, and with a look of astonishment she became all politeness, and in a very agitated manner inquired what she could do for him.

Sharpe explained that for the present he merely wanted to go to the back yard. The woman took him through, and once in the garden, he approached the fence which divided the next house, and cautiously peered through. Then he climbed over.

He was now in the back of B42, and he cautiously went over to the basement door. He tried the handle, but finding it locked, he forced the lock with his jemmy, and the next moment he had entered.

Not long after he had succeeded in forcing his entrance, by a curious stroke of Fate Iron Hand and Potsdam had arrived at the front entrance of the house of mystery.

In answer to their knock, one of the gang, who was on guard, seated in a chair by the door, rose, and, going over, he asked the visitors outside for the password.

Sharpe noticed the movement on the part of the guard, and, taking a great risk, he darted quickly up the stairs when the man's back was turned. So far, his presence had not been discovered.

Half-way up the flight of stairs he heard the front door being opened, and he recognised the voice of his old friends Iron Hand and Potsdam. Immediately after the arrival of the two leaders several of the other members of the gang arrived at the house and entered, after satisfying the guard of their identities.

Iron Hand and Potsdam made their way to the top floor of the house. There was a large room, furnished with a table, some chairs, and other bare furnishings. On one side of the room was a clothes-cupboard. There was no time to be wasted, and the leader immediately commenced to discuss the plans with his second-in-command and four other members of the party who had arrived on the all-important consultation.

They were soon engrossed in conversation, and a further knock at the door was heard by them. The newcomer was Anne Crawford. The guard opened the door, and she applied for admission, and made her way past him and then proceeded upstairs.

She advanced silently towards the door of the top room, and, after listening for a while, she stealthily pushed it open. But Iron Hand and Potsdam had noticed it, and, stopping in the midst of their discussion, they produced their revolvers.

Anne felt the tense silence, and, realising that she was discovered, decided that she must bluff it out as well as possible. She was certainly in a tight corner.

Composing her features, she attempted to smile.

"I told you to stay behind," said Iron Hand, as she appeared in the doorway. "How did you get here?"

He looked exceedingly angry.

Anne was a good actress, and very coolly she replied:

"I read your advertisement in the paper, and came here as a full member of the Inner Circle!"

Iron Hand was forced to admit the logic of her argument. His anger softened a little. Somehow, he could not be stern when confronted by this pretty girl.

The suspicious Potsdam whispered something in his leader's ear, and Iron Hand glanced at her again.

"Why did you disobey me?" he asked, returning to the subject.

Anne tried to look as sympathetic as she could, and, with a pretended concern for the master criminal, she went over to him, and standing quite close to him, said tenderly:

"You are going into danger. I couldn't let you go alone."

Her acting was quite successful.

Iron Hand was greatly flattered, and he told her that she was perfectly right in her decision. Potsdam, however, was far from satisfied.

He went over to Iron Hand, and, drawing him aside, muttered:

"She may be all right, but I don't trust her. I have suspected her for a long time. Anyway, we surely don't want her in this."

Iron Hand allowed himself to be persuaded, and he gently escorted Anne to the door, telling her politely but firmly that it would be better for her to go as the gang did not apparently favour her presence in this important deal. And once more he settled down to the important buiness of the evening.

Anne realised that it would be no use for her to persist further, and reluctantly she emerged from the house, wondering what to do.

It was not long before an idea came to her, and she darted quickly into the entrance of A42, and knocked at the door.

The landlady speedily responded to her signal, and she inquired if there was a room to let. She was asked inside, and the door was closed after her.

The woman took her upstairs to the top floor, and Anne noted the position of the window in the room, and notified the landlady that she would take it. But the good woman was undecided until Anne successfully smoothed her over by offering her a substantial sum of money as a deposit.

As soon as she was left alone the plucky girl immediately went over to the window, and, opening it, she cautiously peered out and took notice of the lay of the land, particularly directing her attention to a coping along which she could climb.

Although it was a perilous undertaking for her, she determined to carry out her intention, and very slowly and carefully made her progress along the narrow edge towards the window in B42, the blinds of which were down.

At length she reached the window, and stealthily looked inside. The scene which met her gaze was an interesting one. Iron Hand was explaining to each man his part in the robbery, and she was considerably amused to see that one of the gang was dressing himself as a woman. Two others of the gang were in the uniform of commissionaires, or watchmen.

Iron Hand was giving them his final instructions, and they were about to set out on their latest undertaking.

"Well, you all understand now," he said. "The motor-cars are in the alley. Potsdam, hand me my cap out of that cupboard!"

Potsdam rose from his chair to carry out his chief's instructions, and, opening

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the cupboard he fumbled about amongst the various clothes which it contained, searching for Iron Hand's cap.

This action on his part came as a terrible shock to John Sharpe, who had some time before concealed himself in the cupboard. He was fearful lest he be discovered, and endeavoured to crouch further back away from the reach of Potsdam's groping hand.

He hoped that the member of the gang would obtain the required article before his presence was revealed; but, as luck would have it, Potsdam was unable to find Iron Hand's head adornment, and he commenced to remove an overcoat from a hook. It was then that he caught sight of the elusive cap, and fortunately he did not discover the hiding-place of the detective.

The whole party were now ready for action, and there was a general movement towards the door. One man was carrying a long coil of rope. Their progress, however was stopped by a very curious turn of Fate.

Potsdam, in searching for the cap, had stirred up a cloud of dust in the cupboard, and this was a considerable annoyance to John Sharpe. For a long time he tried to repress a sneeze, but was now unable to restrain it any longer.

He did his best to muffle the sound, but it reached the quick ears of Iron Hand, and, thoroughly startled, the leader drew his revolver, an action which was quickly followed by a similar movement on the part of Potsdam and other members of the gang.

Two men immediately rushed towards the cupboard and flung open the door, demanding fiercely that the intruder show himself. There was nothing for it but to obey, and defiantly John Sharpe stood before them!

Iron Hand and Potsdam looked at each other in wonderment. Once more this amazing man had tracked them down, and had been almost at their elbows during the proceedings of the last few minutes.

It was uncanny! It seemed that Sharpe possessed some extraordinary powers, for he always turned up when they least expected him, and what pluck the fellow had! Neither Iron Hand nor Potsdam could deny this. He always came to the very heart of things, and did not seem to have any regard at all for his personal safety.

When he had got over the first shock of his surprise an evil look entered Iron Hand's eyes, and he glared at the detective with rage burning fiercely in his heart.

"Seize this man," he instructed his assistants, "and see that he is securely bound and gagged. This is the last time he will dog my footsteps. It will be a bad day's business for anyone who allows him to escape!"

The gangsters willingly obeyed the instructions of their leader, and soon John Sharpe was completely trussed up and securely gagged. Iron Hand stood over him, glaring vindictively at his powerless victim.

Once again he had the hated Sharpe in his grip. There was an evil gloating look on his face as he stood gazing down at the bound form of John Sharpe.

"Like a bad penny, you always turn up, Mr. Sharpe!" he growled, in a harsh, deep voice. "As you like the cupboard, you may remain in there, and when we have the jewels we shall set fire to the house. Thank you for your company," he added, with mock politeness. "This is my final good-bye."

With fiendish delight written all over his crafty countenance, the leader of the Crime Trust gave his men another order, and they at once commenced to deposit him in the cupboard. Without any regard for his feelings, they dumped him heavily at the bottom, face downwards.

When this was done Iron Hand pointed over to the window. "Better put the shutters up there," he said.

One of the men went over to do his bidding, and Anne Crawford, who was on the ledge, peering slyly into the window, overhearing all that had taken place, crouched lower down in order to remain hidden from the man's view, as he walked over to the window.

She scarcely dared breathe, for fear of attracting his attention. Would she be discovered?

(This amazing story will be continued in next week's "Gem." Get your copy early, before your newsagent is sold out.)

WILDRAKE'S KNOCK AT KNOX.

(Continued from page 12.

Knox muttered something.

"I think you're letting me off my lines, Knox?"

"Yes," gasped Knox; "certainly."

"Thank you very much," said Wildrake demurely.

Knox passed on without another word.

"What the merry thump does that mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Didn't I tell you Knox might let me off my lines, old scout?" answered Wildrake.

"Yes; but——"

"Well, he's done it."

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Deah old Knox is quite amiable to-day. He is learnin' to keep his beastly tempah."

"Blessed if I catch on," said Tom Merry. "What on earth have you been doing to Knox?"

"Only talking to him like a Dutch uncle!" said Wildrake cheerily. "I fancy Knox is going to behave himself for a bit. Just watch out and see."

Tom Merry did "watch out and see." And what he saw surprised him. For Knox's "down" on the Canadian junior seemed quite at an end. He avoided Kit Wildrake as much as he could; and when they happened to come into contact, Knox was feebly civil, indeed sometimes painfully polite. It was amazing to most of the juniors, and they wondered how Wildrake had done it. For—though the Canadian kept the secret—Tom Merry & Co. could not doubt that the remarkable improvement in Gerald Knox was due to the proceedings of Wildrake's Knock at Knox!

(Another grand long story of the chums of St. Jim's next week, entitled: "THROUGH A TERRIBLE ORDEAL!" by Martin Clifford. Make a point of ordering your copy of the "Gem" early, as I feel sure you will vote this fine story the best you have ever read.—Editor.)

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...ior,—There is going ... this time. It is about ...—that is, some of ... favourably with ... boys at St. Jim's. I ... alter my opinion ... to the end. If I ... script. But it is this ... to know things, ... and other quad- ... understand cooking ... that reminds me that ... Denise Brown, whose ... lots of money, is ..., pretty nearly. ... just one of those ... that girls who flop ... dresses, and get ... a slang word.

... the point. Uncle ... working in an office. ... it was just so that ... goey on the jolly ... as his secretary. ... I am sure; but, of ... about knowing ... to earn my own ... You never know.

... an office, and had a ... there was a fair old ... and a cough. I ... a bonza time of it, ... going to make any ... lest it would make ... Maybe, I struck ... the girls I met were not up to St. Jim's model. How they did talk! How mean some of them were, and small! It made me feel that all over kind of sensation, as if I wanted to pitch ink-bottles round.

There was Phyllis, red hair, if you please, called it Titianskew. It wasn't picturesque, anyway. Then we had Gladys Lake, with dark hair, all dragged back, and a temperament like a cat. Why are folks so mean? Telling tales out of school was not in it! Some of the girls revelled in malice. I got up one afternoon at tea-time and boxed Doris Robinson's ears, and advised her to study Tom Merry. There was a row.

SNUBS GALORE.

When the smoke had cleared, Specs came in and let us have it. Certainly the place did look a bit like a rag, but I never damaged the picture of the Runaway Marriage, and it was a wretched daub, in any case. It was Doris whose foot went through the canvas. There, I am telling tales now! But as to business. Why are there so many snubs? Snubs and sarcasm, and what they call in the love tales, cutting rejoinders, and supercilious stares, do not help.

I caught it because I made a friend of dear old Symes, the doorkeeper, and talked to him about his family at Wimbledon. He has eight children, and Bill is the eldest, and earns seven bob a week as an errand boy. Doris said "He's only a common doorkeeper, you know." I said, "No, I don't know. What I know is, he is a gentleman."

My uncle says it is all wrong about girls in the old days being very quiet. There were madcaps then, just as there are now. Uncle says I am a madcap, but he doesn't seem to mind.

THE GREAT QUEEN.

Now, Doris Levison is more in the style of the girls who are said to have lived way back when that dear old lady, Queen Victoria, was on the Throne. You should see what a lot we in Australia think of her. I find the Levisons rather puzzling. Doris does not quite fit in with Frank and Ernest. She has not enough to say for herself—stands and looks on and lets others do the hard part, when a few words from her would assist matters wonderfully. I am always glad when the girls come into the tales, not that I should like any love stuff. That would spoil everything.

Perhaps I had better tell you at once how much I liked that story, "The Boy From the Wild West." Wildrake has come to stay, I hope, not that he has much to learn, it seems. The way he managed the horse he "borrowed" from the stables at Rylcombe was ripping, I must say, and even Mr. Railton admired his pluck. Racke's funny tricks have not often ended up so well, for Tom Merry was easily shown to be innocent. But I think he was badly dealt with. Kit Wildrake will make a fine addition to St. Jim's. But poor Gussy! I was sorry for him.

"The Invisible Hand" thrills me ever so, but Iron Hand has far too many triumphs. I should like him to meet the big policeman I saw the other day in the city. He held up his lordly hand, and about half a hundred motor-omnibuses stopped dead, just to let me go by. A friend of mine says John Sharpe is too clever, but she did not understand detectives. Detectives are always like that. They see things which others don't, or they would not be detectives. Sharpe saw the paint on Black's clothes, and thought it was odd. Sharpe guessed the scamp would go to the Central Telegraph Office. That's all right. I have nothing but praise for him. But as for Iron Hand, I should like to give him a piece of my mind—the mean, underhand, heartless monster, with his nasty mask, and his simply horrid chin! He is just the sort I hate.—Your chirpy chum,

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... made of paper, which ... by chewing wood ... then spreading it into ... which the material ... building. Frogs can ... just the same as ... a yellow frog can ... he goes into dark ... frog can change to a ... the open. When ... raining immediately ... overhead; when ... between the flash and ... then the storm is ... away. Toads are not ... be handled without ... as useful as frogs in ... they eat insects.—Miss ... Telford Street, White-

...R ORDERS.

... a hen which insisted ... her comfortable nest, ... in the coalshed. "I ... Mrs. Smith, as she and her small son John hunted for that particular egg, "why this one hen insists upon using the coalshed." "Why, that's easy, mother!" exclaimed John. "I suppose she's seen the sign, 'Now is the time to lay in your coal!'"—T. Young, 3, Bellevue Terrace, Harefield, Middlesex.

THE SEVENTEEN DONKEYS.

A donkey dealer died, leaving three sons. His will stated that his eldest son was to have one half of his donkeys, the next son, one third, and the other a ninth. But the dealer only left seventeen donkeys, and, therefore, it was impossible to divide them in the proportions which the testator wished. An executor of the will offered to lend a donkey, which offer was gladly accepted. This made a total of eighteen donkeys, and when divided the sons received nine, six, and two respectively. But nine, six, and two made seventeen, so the executor took his donkey home again.—Frank Armstrong, Middleton Tyas, Yorks.

THOSE MOTHS.

A man, whose clothes had been eaten by moths, asked a chemist what he should do. The chemist advised him to use camphor balls. So the customer bought sixpennyworth. A week or two later the man came in again, and bought another sixpennyworth. "Well, how are you getting on? Have you got rid of any of your moths yet?" asked the chemist. "Yes," replied the other; "I've destroyed some of them. But aren't those moths hard to hit with the little balls?"—A. L. S. Skingle, 56, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, S.E.24.

THE SENATE.

The higher governing assembly of a legislature in Rome comprised a hundred members, all of whom were nobles. The number was increased from time to time, until under Julius Cæsar it totalled nine hundred. The French Senate dates from 1799, while that of the United States began with the establishment of the Republic.—W. Evans, Plas-y-Don, Deganwy, North Wales.

:: :: EDITORIAL. ::

My Dear Chums,—

I have received hosts of letters from my readers during the last few days, and they contain heaps of praise in reference to the splendid portraits of the chums of St. Jim's which are appearing on the back page of the "Gem." This feature you will no doubt be pleased to know, will continue, and in time all the heroes—and villains—of the famous school will appear in the place of honour. If any of you desire a special portrait, drop me a line and let me know which it is. I wonder how you liked our special Cardew number? No doubt by the time this appears, I shall have received some expressions of opinion. If this little experiment proves popular, we may have some more special numbers in the near future. The "Gem," I am pleased to state, grows in popularity each week, and the general opinion of all readers is that never were the contents more interesting, or the stories better. I need hardly say that the high stand and, if possible, your will improve even mo story will be entitle Terrible Ordeal," and read it, you will agree the finest we have yet not say more now tha an unusual story, and undoubtedly creats a sion.

YO

:: ANSWERS TO READERS.

"An Ardent Reader," Church Village, Glam.—Thanks for your letter. Stanley Baker of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's has always been in the School House. I should be very interested if you would write and inform me where you have seen him mentioned as a New House senior? Dudley has always been a prefect, to my knowledge. Don't worry about Langton, or Gibbs, and the lights of other days. There is every possibility of them drifting into a story now and again. Write again, won't you?

"Oberon," Walthamstow.—My "Answers to Readers" column in the Gem is strictly for St. Jim's. Yes, Harry Noble is "Kangaroo." What a giddy lot of favourites you have; nearly all the school. Smith is a decent enough fellow, it seems, if kept in decent company. Otherwise, rather weak. Clive comes from S. Africa. Hammond is a cockney. Noble is a Cornstalk, Kerruish comes from the Isle of Man. The other fellows you mention are worth about 2d. a dozen. You are 11 years old. I expect they'd put you in the Third Form. You'd like that, I expect, under Mr. Selby.

"Buster B.," Windsor.—What did you think of our special Cardew number? Blake, Gussy, and Cardew have been dealt with in our gallery. Figgins, Trimble, and Racke, and the rest will all follow in due course. Whose portrait would you like next? There will be more special numbers of the Gem soon. Glad you like the "Boys' Herald," so much. It is certainly a splendid paper.

"Inquisitive" (Hampstead).—Here are some of the answers to your questions: No. 1. Is Tom Merry an orphan? Yes. No. 2. How old are Tom Merry, Jack Blake, A. A., D'Arcy, Manners, Doris Levison, Erie Kildare, and Mr. Railton? 16.6; 15.4 months; 15.3; 16.11; 15.6; 17.10; Mr. Railton prefers his age to be left unpublished. No. 3. Where are the homes of the following: T. Merry, Jack B., Monty Lowther, Harry Manners, and Gussy? Laurel Villa, Huckleberry Heath; West Riding, Yorkshire; London; Surrey; Eastwood House, Sussex. Cardew's home is in Berkshire. No. 4. Are Tom Merry and Jack Blake good looking boys? Yes. No. 5. Who is the most handsome boy in the Shell? Tom Merry or Harry Noble, just as you wish. No. 6. Who is Tom Merry's favourite [illegible] think you will find I a week. No. 7. Is the lower than the Fourth? higher. No. 8. Has Cardew [illegible] as before? Don't you dew by now? No. 9. the boys refer to as the "rag" is a shortened w room. It is a long, ol parquet floor, and high used generally for [illegible] roller-skating, and big [illegible] ings. No. 10. Are the [illegible] all rotters? The gre there are a few excepti either St. Jim's or Gre House? The latter is a but the former is ever The "Invisible Hand melodramatic series, a discovered by now.

"Dick Turpin" (Le son, per Anne Catherine Dunraven, and Levison pendability, all figure yarn sturdily, so look

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS

We hear indirectly that Herbert Skimpole has decided to join the noble band of leather-chasers. It's "gaiters-on," isn't it?

Owing to the various excuses that William George Bunter of the "Greyfriars Boys' Herald" has made for the non-payment of his debts, Claude Hoskins has kindly condescended to put them to music.

Great excitement prevails at Greyfriars owing to the fact that some money was been found under the pillow of William George Bunter's bed. Probably some hard cash he had put aside to "fall back upon."

One thoughtful reader has written to ask why we did not have a photo of Little Tich on our back cover when we were carrying on "Our Popular Favourite" feature. As a matter of fact, we were of the opinion that this would have proved too big a "feat-ure."

We are told that Tom Merry will be unable to fulfil the duties of editor in his "Weekly" this week. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that he is "poorly."

Herbert Marlborough is said to possess a larger banking account than any other junior at Greyfriars or St. Jim's. This apparently accounts for the lack of his drawing so much "interest."

Further excitement is reported at Greyfriars owing to the fact that Paul Pontefex Prout has returned from a shooting expedition the proud owner of "shot" socks.

It has just been brought to our notice that Horace Coker has had to be admitted to the sanatorium. On inquiries, we were told that he met with an unfortunate accident whilst out on his motor-cycle, dashing into a bull, and coming a nasty cropper. Probably the bull neglected to sound its "horn."

We are informed that Wynn has voted his pet as being Saturday. opinion that it was "C

Information to hand Blake contemplates ad as a hobby. We sh pleased to render a quested by this "buddi

Bagley Trimble ha along the corridors tim approached Dr. Holm worthy's permission if bird in his study. No bird in the "hut!" bad "manners," thoug

Arthur Augustus D'A recently purchased a sou from the celebrated "Fleecem." has just re twelve guineas. The is now threatened wi attack.

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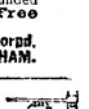


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