

THE BEST SCHOOL STORIES.

The

GEM

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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

September 17th, 1921.



THE SCHOOLBOY LION HUNTER.

(An Exciting incident from the Magnificent Long Complete School Story inside.)

EDITORIAL

My Dear Chums,—

This week I want to tell you just a little about the new serial which I have secured for the "Gem." This splendid yarn is called, "The Valley of Surprise," and it is a surprise, I assure you. Of course, it is a mistake to suggest that the old world has all been explored. We have Sir Ernest Shackleton starting in his ship, the Quest, to prove the contrary.

Anyway, the author of "The Valley of Surprise," shows that there is plenty of genuine romance left.

Talk about a surprise! You will be ready to admit the coming serial is all that, and more. It describes just those fascinating adventures, which after reading about, you find yourself thinking over later on, wishing all the time that you could find yourself a passenger on some trim-built ship en route for farther lands. I am not going to give away the story. It will suffice to say that the travelers fetch up in a positive wonderland! There is a splendid atmosphere of reality about this serial, and I am sure

you will like it when it commences in a short time now.

Naturally I should like to draw attention to the gasp-spirited "St. Jim's News." The ingenious and smartly edited little supplement has come to stay, and I fancy everybody appreciates the sidelights on the school, and the interesting news concerning the characters—facts for which there is no possible room in the regular stories.

Next week's "Gem" will contain a really magnificent story of the famous chums, and you must not miss this one on any account.

YOUR EDITOR.

MY READERS' OWN CORNER.

Half-a-crown is paid for all contributions printed on this page.

MISTAKEN.

Old Lady: "Where can I get a ticket to Penzance, my man?"
Porter: "Through that pigeon-hole, madam."

Old Lady: "Don't be silly! How can I get through that pigeon-hole—a stout woman like me?"
George, 56, Brunswick Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.

THOROUGH ENJOYMENT.

The last tramp found the pantry supplies exhausted, but the mistress made it a rule never to turn anyone away empty-handed.

"Here's a penny for you, my man," she said to the ragged-looking individual who stood under the porch holding out his hand. "I'm not giving it to you out of charity, but because it pleases me."

"Thankee, mum," said the tramp, "but couldn't you make it a shilling and enjoy yourself thoroughly?"—Miss Edie Davies, 1, Mill Street, Treccyan, Aberdare.

A MISFIT.

Shopkeeper: "What made that customer walk out? Did you offend him?"

Assistant: "No, I don't know. He said he wanted a hat to suit his head, and I showed him a soft one."—E. Cumming, 44, Median Road, Clapton, E. 5.

WONDERS WILL NEVER CEASE.

Grandpa finished telling his grandson, Johnny, about the clever tricks the conjurer had performed at a recent entertainment. "That's nothing," said Johnny, "to what our grocer did!" "And what did he do?" "Why, he took the three-shilling and the two-and-four butter out of the same tub!"—N. Green, 22, New Road, Steyne, E. 1.

THE ONLY WAY.

Landlady: "I believe in letting coffee boil for thirty minutes. That's the only

way to get the goodness out of it." New Boarder (tasting his coffee and leaving it): "You succeeded admirably, ma'am."
—William Fullerton, Camp Lodge, Blaris, Lisburn, Belfast.

MISPLACED ADVICE.

Two countrywomen were arguing about thrift.

"D'ye see that purse?" demanded one, with a triumphant air. "It's the one I bought when I was married, twenty years ago, and it's as good as new now."

"That's nothing!" replied the other woman. "You know my husband—John?"

"Of course I do! What about him, Nell?"

"He's my first husband, and you've had three. Don't you preach thrift to me!"—Miss Jean Laskey, 33, Edithna Street, Stockwell, S.W.9.

A FEAT OF STRENGTH.

Two boys were having an argument concerning their respective strengths.

"Why," said the first boy, "I go to the well and pull up twenty gallons of water every morning."

"That's nothing!" cried the other. "I take a boat and pull up the river every day."

—Miss Nancy Laing, Dunure Terrace, Troon, Ayrshire, N.B.

THE BEST WAY.

The stage was in darkness. The two combatants were engaged in a death struggle. Dead silence reigned as the grim combat went on. A loud crash as the men fell to the ground with a thud.

"What have I done?" cried the other. But the effect was quite spoiled, for a gruff voice from the gallery shouted:

"Strike a match, mate, and 'ave a look!"

—B. R. Moss, 18, Airedale Road, South Ealing, W. 5.

HELD UP.

A little boy was playing with a pin in school, and was ordered to give it to his teacher. "Give me that pin at once, Billy!" said the mistress. "Boohoo!" came from Billy. "Why do you cry?" asked the teacher. "Because that pin held my trousers up!" wailed Billy. —Miss Sara Martin, 34, Church Street, Twickenham.

JUMBO.

Jumbo, made famous by P. T. Barnum, was an African elephant, eleven feet six inches in height, and six tons in weight. He was captured when young, and at three years of age was transferred from the Jardin des Plantes to the Zoological Gardens, London. Mr. Barnum bought Jumbo for ten thousand dollars in 1882, and took him to America, where for three years he was the chief circus attraction. Jumbo came to a sad end. He was killed when crossing a rail-track in Canada. His skin is mounted, and stands in the Barnum Museum, at Tuft's College. The skeleton is at the American Museum of Natural History.—J. A. Dennis, 1, Fort Road, S.E.1.

RATIONAL.

"And what is the dollie called, my dear?" "Margarine." "Why did you give her such a name?" "Because I haven't any but er."—E. Strauss, 54, Broomhall Street, Sheffield.

VERY POLITE.

A young man sitting in a crowded train gave up his seat to a lady. The lady sat down. "Beg your pardon," said the young man, "but did I hear you say anything?" "No," was the reply; "I said nothing." "Oh, I thought you said 'Thank you'!" said the young fellow. —Arthur Grey, 36, Chandos Road, Cricklewood, N.W.

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The Schoolboy Lion Hunter

A Grand Long Complete
By Martin

Story of the Chums of St. Jim's
Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
"Gated."

"ROTTER!"

"It's the limit!"
"The giddy limit!"
"Away be patient, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It is wathah disconcertin' to be gated 'It's all rot!"

"Boah!"
"Undah the ciros," repeated D'Arcy of the Fourth firmly, "the Head is quite wight. It is certainly vewy disconcertin', but I approve of the line Dr. Holmes has taken."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy addressed the group of exasperated juniors in the quadrangle at St. Jim's in his most fatherly manner. Apparently, Arthur Augustus imagined that his approval settled the matter, and that the growling would cease forthwith. He was mistaken. A dozen voices answered him, and the answers were not of a complimentary nature.

"Fathead!"
"Weally, you fellows—"
"We're gated!" growled Jack Blake. "Every dashed fellow in the dashed school has got to keep inside the dashed gates every dashed day—"
"What a lot of dashes!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth. "All because a dashed lion has escaped from a dashed circus!" continued Blake warmly.

"Yaas, but—"
"I guess it would be no joke to meet that pesky lion on the road," remarked Kit Wildrake. "Better to be gated than gobbled, Blake."

"Yaas, wathah!"
"That's all very well," said Tom Merry. "but we don't want to be shut up within gates for goodness knows how long. It's rot, in my opinion. The chaps in the village aren't kept indoors."

"The Head is responsible for us, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus, "and with a fewocious lion pwowlin' around—"

"Rot!" said Baggy Trimble.
"Weally, Twimble—"
"Who's afraid of a lion?" said Baggy Trimble valiantly. "You are, for one, my fat pippin!" remarked Monty Lowther, and there was a laugh.

"You'd jolly well see, if the beast came this way," said Trimble disdainfully. "Nothing to be afraid of in a lion. You've heard of the power of the human eye on animals. All you have to do is to fix him with your eye. It only requires nerve. If I came on the lion, I should fix him with my eye and quell him, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I can see you doing it!" chuckled Manners.
"I jolly well wish I had the chance," said Trimble. "I know what would happen if the lion jumped over the wall at this minute. You fellows would bolt for cover."

"I rather fancy we should," agreed Tom Merry. "I shouldn't feel like staying to argue the point with the lion."
"Wathah not!"

"Well, I shouldn't bolt," said Trimble loftily. "I should face him with perfect coolness and iron nerve. Fixing my eye upon him, I should advance, and—"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Baggy Trimble had succeeded in introducing some much-needed comic relief into the strained situation.

The state of affairs at St. Jim's just then was not agreeable, and it was no wonder that the juniors were "grousing."

The previous day the lion had escaped from Sankey's Circus

and it was still at large. The animal had taken to the woods, and though it was being hunted on all sides, it had not been captured yet.

In those circumstances, the Head of St. Jim's had very wisely decided to keep the whole school within gates.

Undoubtedly, the Head's decision was a wise one, but it did not recommend itself to the juniors. They did not want to be gated, and they did not want to be "coddled," as some of them regarded it. They were prepared to take their walks abroad as usual, and chance meeting his Majesty the King of Beasts.

But that was not to be! The fiat had gone forth, and all St. Jim's was gated till news should be received of the capture of the lion, from Kildare, the captain of the school, down to the smallest fag.

Hence the warm discussion in the quadrangle after morning lessons.

"After all, the dashed lion can't be evarywhere at once," said Jack Blake. "If he's in the woods, as they say, we can keep clear of the woods. I don't see why we shouldn't go along the river."

"No reason at all," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "But the Head means business."

"Yaas, wathah! And I weally think—"
"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" implored Blake. "It's bad enough without you giving us a sermon on the subject."

"Weally, Blake—"
"It's utter rot!" said Trimble. "If you fellows will back me up, we'll clear off. I'm quite willing to join in hunting for the lion. In fact, I think we ought to lend a hand. Once I got him fixed with my eye—"

"There's somethin' in what Trimble says," remarked Cardew, in a thoughtful sort of way. "If he could once look the lion full in the face, his features ought to do the rest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, Cardew!" roared Trimble. "I don't mean that. I mean—"

"You fellows know the effect of Trimble's features on a chap who sees them for the first time," continued Cardew.

"If he came suddenly on the lion, the lion might be expected to faint. In a fainting condition he might be secured—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Baggy Trimble snorted angrily.

He did not like his valour being taken as a joke. With the lion a good many miles away, and the high school walls around him, Baggy Trimble's courage was unbounded. He was prepared to face unflinchingly any number of wild beasts that weren't there!

"You can cackle," he snorted. "But if the lion happened to come this way, you'd see. While you fellows were scouting for cover I should fix him with my eye, and—"
"Wha-a-at—the matter, Cardew?"

Trimble broke off suddenly, as he saw a startled look on Cardew's face. Cardew was staring towards the gates, through the metal bars of which a strip of the road could be seen.

"Good heavens!" gasped Cardew.

"Did you fellows see it? Run!" shouted Cardew. "Don't wait till the lion jumps over the gate."

"Yaroooooh!"

Baggy Trimble forgot all about fixing the lion with his bold, unflinching eye. He started for the School House at a frantic run, colliding with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and sending that noble youth staggering aside.

"Ow! Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Oh! Ow! Help!" spluttered Trimble, as he scudded frantically for the open doorway of the School House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Everybody but Trimble knew that it was a false alarm, and that Ralph Reckness Cardew was pulling the fat junior's leg. But Trimble was too terrified to think of that. He bolted breathlessly up the steps and into the School House, and met Kildare of the Sixth in the doorway. The captain of St. Jim's was just stepping out as Trimble bolted in. There was a terrific collision.

Crash!
"Ooooooooooh!" gasped Kildare, as he reeled back and sat on the floor. Baggy Trimble staggered breathlessly.

The captain of St. Jim's was on his feet in a moment. He grasped Trimble's collar as the fat Fourth-Former plunged on for the staircase.

"What are you up to, you fat lunatic?" roared Kildare, shaking Trimble vigorously.

"Yaroooh!"

"You—you—" "The lion!" yelled Trimble. "He's jumping over the gate! Yaroooh! He's got some of the fellows already—Leggo! Help! Rescue! Lions! Yow-ow!"

Kildare, still grasping Trimble by the collar, stared out into the quad. The roars of laughter there showed that the lion certainly was not present.

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Kildare, shaking Trimble again. "There's no lion! You—you silly, funky duffer!"

"Yow-ow!" Cardew said—Yaroooh!"

"Somebody's been pulling your silly leg," said Kildare. "But you shouldn't bolt about like a mad bull, Trimble, and knock prefects over. Hold out your hand."

"Oh dear!"

Whack! Kildare's ashlant whacked on Trimble's fat palm, and then the captain of St. Jim's strode out of the School House, still very much ruffled. And Baggy Trimble squeezed his pody paw, and gasped, and glared out at the yelling juniors in the quad.

"Cardew, you rotter—"

"Why didn't you stop to fix him with your eye?" inquired Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble did not answer that question. He rolled away, with his fat hand tucked under his pody arm, grunting. And no more was heard from Trimble of what he would do if he found himself face to face with the lion.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy is Disgusted.

TOM MERRY & CO. went into the Form-rooms that afternoon, thinking a good deal more about the escaped lion than about their lessons. Masters as well as boys were in an unusually thoughtful frame of mind. Mr. Linton of the Shell looked very serious, and so did Mr. Latham of the Fourth. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, was in a state of nerves that was very trying to his pupils. Wally & Co. of the Third confided to one another in deep, fierce whispers that they wouldn't be able to stand much more of Selby; indeed, Reggie Manners actually expressed a wish that the lion might gobble him up!

It was not only in St. Jim's that the escaped lion caused excitement. In Rylcombe and Woodend and Wayland, and for some miles round the country, there was general alarm. Performances had stopped at Sankey's Circus. Mr. Sankey and his men were seeking the escaped animal, up and down and round about, though as yet quite without success. Mounted constables were on the roads looking for him. The whole countryside, in fact, was alarmed and on the look-out. Cottage doors were locked, and farmhouses shut and barred; cattle driven into shelter. A large and fierce lion at liberty was a decidedly serious matter.

It was probable that the animal was keeping to the woods, which were extensive, and in places very thick and almost inaccessible. But hunted from the woods, it might turn to the lanes or the roads; and it was quite within the bounds of possibility that it might be seen in the High Street of Rylcombe or the quadrangle of St. Jim's!

The St. Jim's fellows did not like being "gated," but most of them acknowledged that the Head was quite right to keep them within bounds, on reflection. Some of the fellows, indeed, were in a blue funk, and showed it plainly—such as Trimble, and Racke of the Shell. Aubrey Racke was seen to glance nervously over his shoulder as he came to the Form-room. George Gerald Crooke actually stared into every dusky corner of the Form-room before he sat down at his desk, as if dreading that the lion might be lurking there.

And undoubtedly all the fellows were graver than was their wont. The roar of the escaped lion had been heard once at the school, and nobody wanted to hear it again. The Head, as he "hooked" the Sixth in Greek that afternoon, hoped every moment to hear the telephone-bell ring, to give him the

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welcome news that the lion had been recaptured. But the telephone-bell did not ring.

There was one fellow in the Shell who took a sarcastic view of the general seriousness. That was George Alfred Grundy. Grundy had already confided to his chums, Wilkins and Gunn, that it was all "rot," and that the best thing the Head could do would be to turn out the whole school to help hunting for the lion. And any sign of trepidation on the part of his Form-fellows brought a contemptuous snort from Grundy.

"Look in the inkpot, Crooke!" he called out, with crushing sarcasm, as Crooke of the Shell sat down. Mr. Linton had not yet arrived in the Form-rooms. He had stopped to speak to Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, in the corridor, no doubt on the subject of the escaped circus lion.

Crooke stared round at Grundy.

"The inkpot?" he repeated.

"Yes. The giddy lion might be there, you know," said Grundy in the same sarcastic vein. "Look in your desk, too! Look up the chimney! You won't be easy in your mind till you've done it!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Crooke.

"No!" not on the form behind you, Racke," continued Grundy.

Racke gave George Alfred a savage look.

"What do you mean?" he snapped at Grundy.

"I mean what I say. He's not on the form behind you, so you needn't keep on peering over your shoulder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think I'm afraid?" howled Racke angrily.

"I know you are," answered Grundy coolly. "So's Crooke, so's Clampe, so's Gore—"

"I'm not!" roared Gore.

"Yes, you are! So's Skimpole—"

Skimpole blinked at Grundy mildly through his spectacles.

"My dear Grundy," he said, "I do not boast of being cast in heroic mould, but I trust I should not give way to unworthy trepidation if I found myself in a situation that approximated to actual jeopardy—"

"Go it, Skimmy!" said Monty Lowther admiringly. "Give him the whole giddy dictionary!"

"Lots of you fellows are shaking in your shoes," continued Grundy, with a disdainful glance around. "You, Wilkins, and you, Gunny—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" remonstrated Wilkins. Gunn shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing. He had long ago given up arguing with George Alfred Grundy.

Manners looks jolly solemn—"So," continued Grundy.

"So would you, if a silly owl had sat on your films in the study," said the amateur photographer of the Shell.

"Well, if it's your dashed films, it's all right, but if you're worrying about the lion—"

"I'm not worrying about the lion," said Manners, "I'm being worried by the ass!"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Manners unceremoniously. "Why, don't you ever give your chin a rest, Grundy?"

"After, too—"

"What about little me?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Well, you're not so jolly funny as usual," sneered Grundy.

"I fancy you're a bit cold about the feet."

"You cheeky ass!"

"And Tom Merry—"

"Hallo!" said the captain of the Shell.

"You look jolly thoughtful all of a sudden," jeered Grundy.

"Thinking about that idiotic lion—what?"

"I was thinking whether Linton would come in and interrupt me if I rubbed your silly, cheeky nose on the hearth-rug," answered Tom Merry.

Grundy snorted. Grundy, in truth, was not afraid. He had plenty of bulldog courage, and very little reflection. But Grundy was not content with being unafraid himself. He could not be satisfied without thinking that he was the only fellow in the School House who wasn't afraid. Grundy was often conscious of a considerable superiority over the other fellows in many ways, and he liked to think of himself as the stern, strong character standing erect and steadfast amid a shivering crowd. As a matter of fact, there were not more than two or three funks in the whole of the Shell. But the facts did not matter to Grundy. He was above facts.

"Disgraceful, I call it!" he said. "Tain't as if you hadn't somebody to show you an example. Look at me! Keep your eye on me, and for goodness' sake stop shaking in your shoes!"

"Who's shaking in his shoes?" roared Kangaroo.

"You are, for one!" retorted Grundy unadventurously.

"Why, I—I—I!" spluttered the Australian junior, jumping up.

"Hold on, Kangy," exclaimed Talbot, "Linton's just outside—"

"The silly owl isn't worth bothering about, old son," said Tom Merry. "Let him blow off gas."

"Serve you all jolly well right if the lion did hop in,"

said Grundy. "It would be a lesson to you. I'm ashamed of the whole lot of you—afraid of a lion! Bah!"

"Who's afraid, you blithering blatherskite?" hissed Bernard Glyn.

"Look at Racke—" jeered Grundy.

"Here comes Linton!"

Mr. Linton entered the Form-room only just in time. Three or four juniors were on their feet, with the intention of collaring Grundy and rubbing his nose in the hearthrug. The master of the Shell glanced at the juniors icily.

"What are you doing out of your places?"

"Oh! Ah! Ahem!"

The Shell fellows dropped hurriedly back into their seats. Mr. Linton gave his Form a severe glance, and lessons began.

But certainly attention was not very firmly fixed on lessons that afternoon. Fellows' thoughts would wander to the escaped lion, and the hunt that was going on for him. Racke and Crooke cast many uneasy glances at the door, which had been left open, as the afternoon was warm. If the Form-room had been like an oven, Racke and Crooke would have preferred the door shut.

When lessons were over, Racke and Crooke went directly to their study; they did not care even to walk in the quad. But the quad was crowded by other fellows, most of whom gathered round the gates, or surreptitiously mounted to the top of the wall, screened by the trees, in the hope of seeing something of the lion hunters. And there was great excitement when the report of a rifle was heard echoing from the direction of Rylcombe Wood.

CHAPTER 3.

The Ass in the Lion's Skin.

"I'M chipping in!"

Grundy made that remark, some time after tea, in Study No. 3 in the Shell, in the School House.

Wilkins and Gunn were thinking of going down, after tea, but the great George Alfred signed to them to remain.

"Chipping in!" repeated Wilkins vaguely.

Grundy nodded.

"That's it! I call it disgraceful!"

"You're chipping in!" asked Gunn, puzzled. "If it's disgraceful, why do it?"

"Don't misunderstand me, Gunn. Don't be a bigger fool than you can help, old chap," said Grundy kindly. "I mean it's disgraceful the way fellows are going about shivering and trembling on account of that dashed lion escaping from the circus!"

"Are they?" yawned Wilkins.

"Yes, they are!" hooted Grundy.

"I haven't noticed it."

"Well, I have, and I think it's disgraceful!"

"Look here, Grundy, old man," said Wilkins seriously, "I dare say you're not afraid of the lion, as you say so; but other fellows have got quite as much pluck as you have. And they don't like your trying to glorify yourself by making out that they're funks. There'll be trouble in the Shell if you don't chuck it. That's a tip."

"There'll be trouble in this study, George Wilkins, if you give me any of your cheeky rot," said Grundy truculently. "It's not only the Shell, either; the Fourth are in a blue funk, too. I can excuse it in the Third; they're only fags. But fellows of our standing ought to show a little more grit. I'm going to chip in and give 'em a lesson."

"Oh, have it your way!" said Wilkins resignedly. "You'll get scragged by the Form if you keep on, that's all."

"I've got an idea," pursued Grundy, unheeding. "I'm going to give 'em a jolly good fright, by springing the lion on them."

"Eh?"

"You know that old lion-skin in Raitton's study," said Grundy. "The head's pretty complete, with glass eyes; the rest of it is a bit scraggy, but it will do. I'm going to borrow that lion-skin, and put it on—"

"Put it on?" repeated Gunn.

"That's it. Raitton has gone out to help hunt for the lion, I hear; anyhow, he's gone out, and there's nobody in his study. I'm going to bag the skin, put it on, and go roaring—"

"Roaring!" murmured Wilkins faintly.

"Yes, roaring," said Grundy impressively; "and you'll see all the funks, jolly well shown up. I fancy they'll all be ashamed of themselves when they find it's only me in a lion-skin. It will be a lesson to them. What do you think of the idea?"

"Potty!" said Wilkins, without hesitation.

"Absolutely barmy!" concurred Gunn.

Grundy started to his feet. Grundy did not like opposition at any time; but opposition in his own study was not to be borne. He pushed back his cuffs and glared at his study-mates.

"Where will you have it?" he roared.

"I—I say, Grundy—" stammered Wilkins.

"Are you going to help me in this stunt, or not?" demanded Grundy. "If you're not, you're no pals of mine, and I'm jolly well going to hide you. I can't speak fairer than that."

"But think how idiotic it is!" objected Gunn.

"Yes or no!" roared Grundy.

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a helpless glance. They did not want to fight Grundy; besides, they were expecting Grundy to stand a handsome supper in the study that evening, and that was a consideration. Grundy certainly wouldn't stand a handsome supper to fellows whose friendship he had cast off, and who had scrapped with him in consequence. So Wilkins and Gunn resigned themselves to their fate, as they usually did in dealing with the great George Alfred.

"Keep your wool on, old top," said Wilkins pacifically. "We'll help you, of—of course. In—in fact, it—it's quite a funny idea. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed Gunn feebly.

"No need to cackle 'Ha, ha!' like a pair of giddy parrots," said Grundy, only half-placated. "However, if you can see that it's a good wheeze—"

"Oh, splendid!"

"T-t-topping!"

"Well, then," said Grundy, "I'll cut down and borrow Raitton's skin. I'll take a bag to shove it in, so that the



"What are you up to, you fat lunatic?" roared Kildare, shaking Trimble vigorously. "The lion!" yelled Trimble. "He's jumping over the gate! Yaroooh! He's got some of the other fellows already—Leggo! Help! Rescue! Lions! Yow-ow!" "Somebody's been pulling your silly leg," said Kildare. "But you shouldn't bolt about like a mad bull, Trimble, and knock prefects over. Hold out your hand." Whack! Kildare's ashplant whacked on Trimble's fat palm.

fellows won't notice. You chaps stop here till I come back.

"Oh, all right!"

Grundy left the study, and Wilkins and Gunn looked at one another. Wilkins tapped his forehead significantly. Gunn nodded in a dismal sort of way.

"Grundy isn't a bad chap," he said. "A fellow can stand him—sometimes. But what does he want to be such a silly idiot for?"

"Goodness knows! Born so, I suppose."

"I don't mind his thinking he can play cricket and footer. Lots of silly idiots play nearly as bad as Grundy. But this, you know—"

"It's the limit," said Wilkins. "There'll be a row if he's caught playing the fool with old Railton's lion-skin. If he gets a jolly good licking it may do him good, though."

"I hope so!" said Gunn, though whether he hoped that Grundy would get the licking, or that it would do him good, was not clear.

The great George Alfred returned to the study, bag in hand, in a few minutes. He locked the door after him, opened the bag, and the grim head of a lion, with red, open jaws, looked out. But Wilkins and Gunn were not alarmed; they had seen that awesome head often enough in the Housemaster's study. They only wondered where Grundy found the awful cheek to borrow the Housemaster's lion-skin.

"Here it is," said Grundy, turning it out on the floor. "The head's splendid, you know; I can get my head inside it. The skin will cover me mostly, and I've got some old canvas that will do the rest. You fellows will fit me up in it—see?"

"I—I see."

"Well, lend a hand, and don't stand there gaping!" said Grundy encouragingly.

Wilkins and Gunn lent a hand. Grundy, with the lion's head over his own, certainly looked a fearsome object. The fore-paws were complete, and what remained of the foreleg skin was fastened on to Grundy's arms with twine. The rest of the skin hung down his back, and more twine was called upon to fix it. The hind legs and the tail seemed rather a misfit; but as Grundy could not see it, he could not remark upon it, and Wilkins and Gunn did not worry. So long as they satisfied Grundy, and kept him quiet, that was all they cared about.

Grundy looked at himself in the glass, looking out between the open jaws of the lion's head, and he grinned at the effect.

"Looks a bit terrifying, what?" he chuckled.

"Oh, no end!" said Wilkins.

"I fancy the fellows will jump when they see me creeping along the passage," said Grundy.

"I say, I've heard that that Canadian chap, Wildrake, brought a revolver with him from Canada," remarked Wilkins casually. "I suppose you wouldn't mind if he potted at you, Grundy!"

"It might damage the skin," said Gunn. "Railton thinks a lot of that skin. He would kick up a row if he found it with a hole in it and smothered with blood."

"That's all rot," said Grundy calmly. "Wildrake hasn't any revolver. It was only Trimble's yarn. He's got a lasso, but I fancy he hasn't nerve enough to try lassoing a lion."

"He's struck me as having lots of nerve," remarked Gunn.

"Oh, rot!"

Grundy dropped on his hands and knees, and blinked up at his chums through the lion's jaws.

"Do I look natural?" he inquired.

Wilkins almost choked, and Gunn coughed violently. Grundy looked exactly like what he was—a junior with a lion's skin roughly fastened over him. But it was no use arguing with Grundy, and his chums did not attempt it.

"Natural as life, if not more so," gurgled Wilkins.

"Well, it couldn't be more natural than life," said Grundy. "That's rather idiotic, Wilkins!"

"Oh!"

"But if it looks like a real lion, that's enough," said Grundy. "You fellows go out of the study. Turn the light out first. When you hear me roar, just raise a shout of 'The lion!' See?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes."

Wilkins turned out the light, and quitted the study with Gunn. In the Shell passage they looked at one another for a moment, and then Wilkins whispered, "Come on!" He hurried along to the Fourth Form passage, and threw open the door of Study No. 2. That study belonged to Trimble, Mellish, and Kit Wildrake, of the Boot Leg Ranch, British Columbia. Trimble and Mellish had not yet turned up for prep. But Wildrake was there, just sitting down to work. He glanced up inquiringly as the two Shell fellows looked in.

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"Got that lasso of yours handy?" asked Wilkins, in a hurried whisper.

"I guess so." Wildrake nodded towards the coiled lasso that hung on a nail on the study wall. "What about it?"

"Like a chance of lassoing a lion?"

The Canadian junior jumped.

"A—a what?"

"I mean an ass in a lion's skin," said Wilkins. "I suppose you've read old Æsop's fable about the ass that went around in a lion's skin—"

"Sure!"

"Well, he's come to St. Jim's, and will be loose in the Shell passage in a few minutes. His name's Grundy. Don't mention that I told you. Ta-ta!"

Wilkins hurried away with Gunn, and they went downstairs, chuckling. Kit Wildrake stared after them blankly for a moment or two, then he grinned. He rose from the table, took down the lasso, and stepped out into the passage. And as he did so there came a formidable roar from the Shell passage, a roar that might have been that of a lion, but sounded much more like the roar of George Alfred Grundy.

CHAPTER 4.

Grundy Tries it On!

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther were chatting in Study No. 10, in the Shell, lazily away a few minutes before beginning prep. Their cheery chat was suddenly interrupted by a peculiar sound in the passage, echoing through the open doorway. It was something like a roar, something like a bellow, and something like a yell. It startled the Terrible Three. They had never heard anything like it before. But they did not take it for a lion's roar for one moment. Grundy was not so expert as he supposed in imitating the majestic voice of the king of beasts.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment.

Roar!

"Hallo! Look! What—what— My hat!" yelled Lowther.

Something came in view outside the doorway. For a moment the hearts of the Terrible Three stood still as they saw the grisly outlines of a huge lion's head. The next instant, however, they saw Grundy's sleeves and trousers, which did not match the lion-like part of his attire, and relieved the chums of the Shell at once.

They stared blankly, speechlessly, at the extraordinary apparition. Grundy roared again, and passed the doorway, going along the passage.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" stuttered Lowther.

"Some silly owl playing tricks with Railton's old skin!" gasped Manners. "Railton will skin him!"

Roar!

There was a yell in the passage. Racke and Crooke had looked out of their study to see what the row was about, not dreaming that it was a lion's roar they heard. A glimpse of the lion's head was enough for them. They fell over one another in backing into the study.

"Shut the door!" screamed Racke. "Lock it!"

But Crooke had already bolted into a corner, and was frantically trying to climb to the top of the bookcase.

"Help! Lions! Help!" yelled Racke.

Roar!

The lion's head appeared in the half-open doorway, and Racke, with the courage of desperation, sprang to the door and slammed it. It slammed on the lion's head, and there was another roar from the lion, which sounded more human than leonine.

"Yaroooooh!"

Racke turned the key and dropped palpitating into a chair. Roar, roar!

Grundy was going it again. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther rushed out of Study No. 10. Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn came running along. Gore and Talbot turned out, and from the Fourth Form quarters there came a rush of juniors—Blake and Digby, Herries and D'Arcy, Julian and Kerruish, and Reilly—but first of them all came Kit Wildrake, with a lasso in his grasp. There were shouts of surprise on all sides as the lion was sighted, or, rather, the lion's skin, with Grundy's arms and legs trailing about underneath it.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's some thundewin' ass—"

"The ass in the lion's skin!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Roar!

Grundy put the whole strength of his lungs into that terrific bellow, puzzled by the sounds of laughter in the place of the expected cries of terror. He had expected to spread panic far and wide, being too obtuse to realise what direful results might have followed if he had succeeded. Fortunately, he was not likely to succeed. The juniors were yelling with

laughter, and the sounds of merriment drew even Racke and Crooke out of their study.

"It's the gaily lion," chuckled Wildrake. "Stand clear, you galoots, while I rope him in!"

Whiz! Grundy may have known that the rope was coming. But he was too incommode by the lion's skin to be able to dodge it. The loop settled over the lion's head, and down over Grundy's shoulders, and it was instantly dragged taut. The amateur lion rolled over in the passage, gasping and spluttering, amid shrieks of laughter.

"Drag him into my study!" shouted Tom Merry. "We'll make sure of him now we've caught him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooooh!" spluttered the lion.

Half a dozen juniors grasped the rope, and the hapless lion was dragged heels-over-head into Study No. 10. By this time Grundy was roaring, not as a lion, but plainly as George Alfred Grundy. But his roars were not heeded. He had started on a career as a lion, and Tom Merry & Co. chose to take him at his own valuation, as it were.

"Tie him up before he can bite!" shouted Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sit on his head!"

"Jump on his legs!"

"Grab him!"

If it had been a real lion, certainly the juniors would not have thought of sitting on his head and jumping on him. But they were quite prepared to sit on Grundy's head and to jump on Grundy. And they did.

"Leggo! Gerroff! Chuck it!" roared the lion. "Yow-wow-woooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well roared, lion!" chuckled Lowther.

"Gerroff!" yelled Grundy. "I—I—I'm not a lion! Yow-wow! I'm Grundy! Wow-wow!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Tom. "Get the poker, Manners, and bash him on the head! Smash his head right in, and make sure of him!"

"What-ho!" said Manners.

Grundy struggled frantically.

"I'm not a lion!" he roared. "Yaroooh! Gerroff! Keep him away with that poker! Help!"

"Stand clear while I smash his head in!" shouted Manners, brandishing the poker.

"Give him a weally fwightful whack, Mannahs, and finish him off!"

"Put your beef into it, Manners!"

The juniors stood clear, and Grundy struggled frantically up, with the lion's skin hanging round him, and the lion's head hanging down his back. The aspect he presented made the juniors howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy made a spring for the doorway, but he had forgotten the lasso. The pull of the rope brought him up sharp, and he tumbled over on his back.

"Now then, Manners!"

"Lay into him with the poker!"

Crash!

Manners brought the poker down a yard from Grundy's head with a terrific crash. There was a yell of terror from Grundy.

"Yoop! Help! Do you want to murder me, you mad idiot? Oh dear! Let me loose! Can't you see I'm not a lion, you blithering owls? I'm Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!" piped a voice from the passage. "Here comes Linton!"

There was a scattering crowd as the master of the Shell strode up to the doorway of Study No. 10. But the crowd of fellows inside the study couldn't scatter, and Grundy couldn't. Wildrake hurriedly jerked the lasso off the captured lion as Mr. Linton rustled up.

"Whatever is the meaning of this dreadful din?" exclaimed the master of the Shell. "Merry—why—why—what—what—"

Mr. Linton stopped, fairly dumfounded. He stared at George Alfred Grundy as if Grundy mesmerised him.

"What-a-at—what—what—"

tered the Form-master at last. "Is—is—is that you, Grundy? Are you out of your senses? What are you doing with Mr. Railton's lion's skin? How dare you? Boy, are you insane?"

"Nunno, sir! Oh dear! I—I—"

"What do you mean by this absurd prank, Grundy?" thundered the master of the Shell.

"I—I—I did it to scare the—felloes, sir!" gasped Grundy.

"Wha?"

"To—to teach 'em to have some pluck, sir!"

"You utterly obtuse and ridiculous boy," exclaimed Mr. Linton, aghast, "can you suppose for one moment that anyone would take you for anything but an excessively foolish young rascal? Your trick might have been dangerous. You stupid fool—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Follow me!" thundered Mr. Linton.

Grundy followed his Form-master. He made desperate efforts to get rid of his lionine adornment as he went, but Wilkins and Gunn had fastened it on too well. The lion-skin was still trailing round about Grundy as he limped into Mr. Linton's study.

He left the Shell passage rocking with laughter.

But Grundy had nothing to laugh at personally. He received a severe caning for meddling with the lion's skin, and five hundred lines for attempting to cause a panic in the school, and he limped back to his study a sadder if not wiser Grundy. And at intervals till bedtime he had the pleasure of hearing howls of laughter echo along the Shell passage, and even Wilkins and Gunn, when they came in to prep, were grinning. And Grundy, in a mood of dismal pessimism, felt that he was a much misunderstood fellow—as he had often, often thought before.

CHAPTER 5.

His Majesty Looks In.

MONTY LOWTHER certainly was to blame. The Shell were in their Form-room, in the morning, and their attention was supposed to be fixed entirely upon P. Virgilius Maro and the construing thereof.



"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment. Roar! "Hallo! Look! What—what— My hat!" yelled Lowther. Something came in view outside the doorway. For a second the hearts of the Terrible Three stood still as they saw the grisly outlines of a huge lion's head. The next instant, however, they saw Grundy's sleeves and trousers, which did not match the lion-like part of his attire, and relieved the chums of the Shell at once.

That ancient classical gentleman, who has bored so many generations of schoolboys, ought to have been boring Monty Lowther along with the rest of the Shell.

Instead of which, Monty Lowther had found a little harmless and necessary relaxation in scribbling on the fly-leaf of his book—scribbling there, to preserve his brain-waves, in order to copy them out afterwards. Two or three fellows who could read over Lowther's shoulder, grinned.

The humorist of the Shell was celebrating Baggy Trimble's flight from the imaginary lion the previous day.

It had occurred to Lowther's humorous brain that a Latin ode to Trimble would "go down" splendidly in the next number of the "St. Jim's News." Fellows who were able to read the Latin would be greatly tickled—fellows who couldn't read it would at least be greatly impressed by the Latin. Latin verses would give the paper a tone, at the very least. Besides, the whole thing would show how jolly clever Monty Lowther was, which was something.

So Monty Lowther had started on an "ODE TO TRIMBLE," and he started with a pun on Virgil.

Instead of the familiar "Arma virumque cano" of the *Æneid*, Monty Lowther brilliantly started with "Crura puerumque cano."

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled over his shoulder as they saw it. It struck them as funny.

Instead of beginning, like Virgil, "Arms and the man I sing," Lowther was beginning, "Legs and the boy I sing." This was an allusion to Trimble's running powers in the hour of danger.

After that brilliant beginning, Lowther stopped. Making Latin verses of a humorous turn was not really easy; and, deep in thought on the subject, Monty Lowther forgot that he was in class, and that the eagle eye of Mr. Linton might fall on him at any moment.

"Lowther!"

Monty gave a sudden start.

"You will go on from where Talbot left off, Lowther," said Mr. Linton, in a grinding voice.

"Oh!" murmured Lowther, in dismay.

He hadn't the faintest idea where Talbot had left off; he had not been listening at all.

"I am waiting for you, Lowther," remarked Mr. Linton icily.

"Yes, sir; I—" stammered Lowther.

"You need not speak to Lowther, Merry!" rapped out Mr. Linton suddenly.

"Oh, no, sir!" stammered Tom.

"You are not aware of the place, Lowther?"

"I—I—"

"Bring your book here, Lowther."

Monty Lowther came out before the class with his book. He understood now that Mr. Linton's eye had been on him, and that he had been seen scribbling on the fly-leaf of P. Virgilus Maro. There was no help for it, and he handed the book to the master of the Shell, who opened it at the scribbled page, and looked at the commencement of the "Ode to Trimble" with a brow of thunder.

"What is this, Lowther?" rumbled Mr. Linton.

"It—it—it's an ode, sir," stammered Lowther.

"Crura puerumque cano!" said Mr. Linton, with a puzzled brow. "So far as I can see, Lowther, this is an idiotic pun on the opening line of the *Æneid*."

Lowther was silent. He had to admit that it was a pun; but he wasn't inclined to admit that it was an idiotic one. But he knew better than to argue that point with his Form-master. Form-masters, like lunatics, had to be humoured.

"So this is how you occupy yourself in class, Lowther, to the exclusion of such trifling matters as lessons," said Mr. Linton, in a sarcastic vein.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Lowther.

"You will take this specimen of imbecility to Dr. Holmes, in the Sixth Form-room, and request him, in my name, to punish you," said Mr. Linton.

"If—if you please, sir, I—I—"

"Go!"

Monty Lowther went. He knew perfectly well that the escaped lion in the neighbourhood was on Mr. Linton's nerves, as it was, irritating him, or the master of the Shell would not have been so severe. But it was no use pointing that out to Mr. Linton. With a grim face, the humorist of the Shell—no longer humorous—left the Form-room, followed by sympathetic glances from his comrades.

"What rotten luck!" growled Lowther, as he found himself in the passage.

He was in no hurry to arrive at the Sixth Form-room.

He knew that the Head did not like being interrupted when he was taking the Sixth on a personally-conducted tour among Greek roots. And certainly Monty Lowther did not want to interrupt him.

There was a door open at the end of the corridor, giving a glimpse of the green and sunny quadrangle. Feeling that he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, so to speak, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 710.

Monty Lowther strolled along to the door, and strolled out into the quad. Ten minutes or so out of class would be some compensation for the caning he was going to get from the Head.

But Lowther's luck was out again. Whether Mr. Linton was suspicious, or whether it was by chance, the master of the Shell certainly glanced out of the Form-room window, and beheld Monty Lowther sauntering at ease in the quadrangle, his hands in his pockets, apparently enjoying himself serenely.

"Upa my word!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. He turned to the class. "Merry! Kindly keep order here for a few minutes!"

Mr. Linton hurried out of the Form-room, whisked along the passage, and rustled out into the sunny quad.

There he looked round for Lowther.

That cheery youth was sauntering a dozen yards away, with his back to the Form-master, unconscious of him.

Mr. Linton was about to call him, sharply and angrily, when a sudden sound from the direction of the gates drew his attention. There was a shout, followed by a louder shout, then a perfect roar of voices, and a sharp, ringing report of a firearm. Then a deep, resonant roar that woke every echo of the old quad.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "The—the—the lion!"

Something long and sinuous flashed in the air from the road. It came down inside the school wall. The lion, hunted and driven from the woods, fleeing in the lanes, had been run down at last by the hunters—right up to the walls of St. Jim's. And as the hunters closed in on it, the animal had leaped the wall and was now loping across the quadrangle, with foaming jaws, right towards Mr. Linton.

The lion was evidently wild and excited and enraged—the natural result of the hunting. Mr. Linton blinked at him for a moment, rooted to the ground with horror. Monty Lowther was staring at him, too; and Monty Lowther came back towards the open doorway with the speed of an arrow in flight.

"Run, boy!" gasped Mr. Linton.

He tore after the junior to the door.

There was a loud, reverberating roar in the quadrangle. The lion, enraged, ruthless, savage, rushed in pursuit of the fleeing figure. Lowther darted in and stood holding the door, ready to slam it as soon as Mr. Linton was inside.

But the master of the Shell was not a practised sprinter. He ran frantically, puffing and blowing, and caught his legs in his gown and tumbled over. He rolled over just outside the door.

"Quick, sir!" panted Lowther.

He did not stop to think. The savage beast was close at hand; but Monty Lowther cushed out again, grabbed hold of the fallen and breathless Form-master, and fairly dragged him into the house. Unceremoniously he rolled Mr. Linton on the floor inside, and sprang back, with throbbing heart, to the door. As he slammed it, a savage muzzle and glaring eyes were within two feet of him.

Slam!

A frightful roar sounded outside.

The lion was so close, that the slamming door struck him on the nose, and evidently hurt him a little.

In frantic haste Lowther locked and bolted the door, with the lion roaring and raging outside.

Mr. Linton sat up dazed.

"G-g-g-good heavens!" he panted.

"All right now, sir," stammered Lowther, white as a sheet.

"He—he's shut out!"

The master of the Shell staggered up, leaning against the wall, and gasping for breath.

"Thank you, Lowther!" he stammered. "You—you pulled me in just in time! You—you should not have gone out, however. I had sent you to the Head! You— But never mind now. Give the alarm at once! Oh dear!"

There was no need for Monty Lowther to give the alarm; the roaring of the lion had given it effectually enough. In every corner of St. Jim's echoed the loud and savage roar, carrying consternation to every heart. Windows and doors were slammed and fastened, and the lion, baffled and enraged, stalked to and fro in the quadrangle, roaring furiously.

CHAPTER 6.

The Lion at St. Jim's.

"B A I Jove! It's the mewwy old lion!"

Lessons, needless to say, had stopped at once.

In every Form-room wild excitement reigned.

Many of the fellows crowded out from the Form-rooms into the corridors in a buzz of excitement and alarm.

The great door of the School House was, fortunately, closed; it usually stood open in the daytime, but since the escape of the circus lion, Mr. Railton had given instructions for it to be kept shut. That was fortunate, for had it been otherwise, the lion would certainly have been raging in the

House by this time. The hunters were already in the quadrangle, closing in on the savage brute.

Mr. Railton, Kildare, Darrel, and the other prefects hurried about the house, looking to doors and windows. Mr. Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House, looked out of the Fifth Form-room with a face like chalk.

"Is—is it that the—the lion?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes!" said Mr. Railton tersely.

"Good heavens! It is—is scandalous! The—the brute should have been—been caught long ago! Good heavens!"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School Housemaster, in a low tone. "Pray think of the example to the boys!"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Ratcliff couldn't think of the example to the boys; he could only think of the danger to his skin. He retreated into the Fifth Form-room, palpitating.

"Barricade the door, my boys!" he said faintly.

Cutts of the Fifth winked at St. Leger. Mr. Ratcliff was master of the Fifth, and not a popular master.

"Suppose the lion gets in at the window, sir?" suggested Cutts.

Mr. Ratcliff started.

"The windows are closed—"

"He could easily bump through the glass, sir."

"True! Whatever shall we do? Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Mr. Ratcliff leaped out into the corridor.

"Blessed old funk!" growled Lefevre.

Mr. Ratcliff was not the only terrified person. Baggy Trimble, howling with dread, had bolted into a cupboard in the Fourth Form-room, and was squatting, palpitating, among easels and blackboards. Racke and Crooke had fled to their study and locked themselves in.

But most of the fellows remained cool enough.

Mr. Railton's coolness and calmness, and the example of the prefects, encouraged them.

"Aftah all, where's the dangah, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy saptily. "The lion can't get through bwick walls, you know. We needn't mind his woarin'. Let him roar."

"He could bump through a window," said Mellish, with chattering teeth.

"Wats! He could, but he wouldn't!"

"Not likely," said Jack Blake. "Besides, they're after him, and they'll have him soon. Chance for you with your giddy lasso, Wildrake!"

"I guess I'd be willing to take the chance," said the Canadian junior. "No good asking Mr. Railton, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! Not much! It wouldn't be quite as safe as lassoing Grundy."

Tom Merry was looking from a window in the corridor. There was a crowd in the quadrangle now. Mr. Sankey, the circus proprietor, with a gun in his plump hands—Hercules, the lion-tamer, Joey Jorrocks, the clown, and the "Lamb," the circus boxer, and five or six other men with guns and pitchforks, and two or three policemen armed with rifles.

But numerous and formidable as they were, they scattered back when the enraged lion made a sudden desperate rush at them. There were two or three shots, but only one of them grazed the lion, and the animal fled across towards the New House.

In school hours the New House was almost deserted, the Form-rooms being in the School House. But the servants there had already closed and barred doors and windows, and the lion skulked round the house without being able to enter and take refuge there.

After him went the shouting hunters. The crowd disappeared from Tom Merry's view.

"This is getting rather exciting," remarked the captain of the Shell.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where's Trimble?" asked Monty Lowther. "Chance now for Trimble to fix him with his glittering eye?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Trimble's lyn' low in the Form-room," chuckled Cardew.

"I heard an easel fall over in the cupboard. I fancy Trimble's under it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here's Grundy! What's the row, Grundy?"

Grundy was frowning blackly with wrath.

"What do you fellows think?" he spluttered. "I asked Railton to let me have his old service revolver, to have a go at the lion, and what do you think he said? Told me not to be a fool! Me, you know!"

"Bai Jove!"

"No good his telling you that!" remarked Manners. "You can't help it, can you, Grundy?"

And the juniors chuckled.

A terrific roar, close up to the big door of the School House, put a sudden end to the chuckling. The lion was close at hand. Only the strong oak separated the crowd of St. Jim's fellows from the savage claws of the king of beasts.

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Blake tensely.

"He can't get at us!" said Tom Merry.

"N-n-no; but he's jolly close—"

Crack! Crack!

"They're firing at him—"

There was another roar, loud and fierce, but more distant.

Tom Merry climbed to the window again.

In the distance he caught a glimpse of the lion, loping away under the elms with the pursuers hot after him.

Driven almost to the wall, the hunted animal made a desperate leap, and cleared it.

"He's gone!" shouted Tom.

"Gone!"

"He's jumped the wall."

"Thank goodness!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Now we can get out!" growled Grundy.

But the doors were not opened yet. A little later the stout figure of Mr. Sankey, the proprietor of Sankey's World-Renowned Circus, Hippodrome, and Menagerie, came up the steps of the School House, and the door was opened.

Mr. Railton met the circus proprietor.

"Morning, sir," said Mr. Sankey, mopping his brow, and then fanning himself with his silk hat. "Awfully sorry you've been put to all this trouble and alarm, sir. It's all safe now; he's gone."

"Thank you for coming to tell us," said the School House master courteously.

"Don't mench, sir," said Mr. Sankey. "This 'ere is a go, it is, indeed! The blooming circus is shut up till we get that blooming lion, sir. It's a dead loss to me. Never known an animal give so much trouble. But he's been grazed by some of the bullets, and that makes him extra savage. Course, I don't want that lion killed—lions is expensive, as you know, sir—price has rose since the war, like everything else. But he'll have to be shot if we can't get him back to his cage. He's killed two sheep already, and I shall have to pay for them. It's a'ard on a man, sir."

And Mr. Sankey jammed his silk hat on his perspiring brow, and rolled away disconsolately.

Mr. Railton directed the St. Jim's fellows to return to their Form-rooms; and lessons were resumed. But there was little attention given to lessons, by boys or masters either. Lessons were a very perfunctory performance for the remainder of the morning; and all were glad when they were over.

CHAPTER 7.

Wildrake's Resolve!

"HOUSE bounds!" said Jack Blake, with deep disgust.

"That's wathah wotten."

"I guess it's the pesky limit," said Kit Wildrake.

"The Head's right," said Tom Merry. "That dashed lion may get into the quad or the playing-fields again! It would be a precious go if he landed among us some time."

"Yaas, wathah."

No doubt the Head was right; but "House bounds" were a very painful infliction. Not only were the St. Jim's fellows unable to go out of gates, but they were now confined to the limits of their houses. Even the quadrangle and the playing-fields were barred to them.

It was the only safe way; for there was no telling whether the hunted and driven animal might return, whether in fleeing from the hunters he might not penetrate again into the school precincts.

"But dash it all, this can't go on!" exclaimed Grundy of the Shell, in great wrath. "We're dashed prisoners now."

"Rotten!" growled Blake.

"It's only safe," said Talbot mildly.

Snort, from Grundy.

"We don't want to be safe; we want to be let alone," he retorted. "I'm willing to take my chance."

"Wats, Gwunday. The Head is responsible—"

"Rubbish!" snorted Grundy. "Why, do you fellows know that the grub's running short? The tradesmen won't come along to the school because of that dashed lion."

"That'll be serious for Trimble and Fatty Wynn!" said Lowther.

"Well, I like my dinner, too," said Grundy. "I can tell you I don't want a lunch of bread and cheese instead of a dinner! Not much! I'm willing to go down to Rylcombe and fetch up the stuff. I told Mr. Railton so. And he called me a young donkey. Called me a fool before! Me, you know! Nice, isn't it?"

"Mr. Railton evidently knows you!" remarked Lowther.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass! Bread and cheese, because they funk meeting a dashed old lion!" said Grundy indignantly. "Something ought to be done."

"They're doing all that can be done," said Tom Merry.

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"I believe there's twenty or thirty people hunting that giddy lion now."

"Why don't they catch him, then?" growled Grundy.

"A real lion isn't so easy to catch as an ass in a lion's skin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

St. Jim's was eager for news of the lion, and several times there was a ring on the Head's telephone. But the only news that was received was not very hopeful.

The lion had fled to Wayland Moor, and he, being pursued there, was supposed to have taken refuge in the depths of Wayland Wood, on the other side of the moor.

Since then he had not been seen, and whether he was still lurking in the woods, or had fled across the open downs, was not known. But the alarm was spreading far and wide in the countryside; sportsmen were turning out everywhere to help in the hunt—three or four hundred men with guns were seeking the lion by this time. But the animal seemed to be lying low in some obscure corner, and all trace of him was lost.

That was all the news St. Jim's received that day; with the result that "House bounds" continued to be enforced.

It was "rotten"; all the fellows agreed on that; but it couldn't be helped, and they had to make the best of it. That evening, Kit Wildrake of the Fourth dropped into Tom Merry's study, with a serious expression on his sunburnt face.

"No more news of the pesky lion," he began.

"None!" said Tom. "I fancy the poor brute has had a scare, and is lying low in some corner. Mayn't be seen again for a day or two."

"And may maul anybody who comes near him, in the meantime," said Wildrake.

"People will have to be careful."

"Well, everybody can't be gated like us," said Wildrake. "I guess the farmers and their men are carrying on, just as usual, and chancing it."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It's a rotten business," he said. "It's rough on poor old Sankey, too. What have you got in your noddle, Wildrake? I can see you're up to something."

"I guess I've been doing some thinking," said the Canadian junior, taking a seat on the corner of the study table. "I reckon that I could be jolly useful in this business."

"How?" asked Manners. "You can't lasso a real lion?"

"I guess I could," said Wildrake confidently. "I lassoed a painter once in British Columbia—"

"My hat! What did the painter say?"

"He growled and clawed, but I had him."

"Growled and clawed," said Lowther, in wonder. "I can tell you that if you lassoed a painter in England, he would jolly well have you up before the county court."

"Eh! What?" Wildrake burst into a laugh. "I don't mean your sort of a painter, you see! I mean a panther."

"Oh, a panther! I see!" Tom Merry laughed. "But a lion is a rather more serious proposition, Wildrake. The Head would never allow you to try. He's answerable for you to your people in Canada."

"I guess my folks would want me to lend a hand if they knew how matters stood."

"British Columbia is rather too far off to ask them," said Tom, with a smile. "I suppose the Boot Leg Ranch isn't on the telephone."

"I guess it is!" answered Wildrake. "I can tell you the Canadian telephone system would make you pretty sick to your telephones if you saw a work. But it's too far to phone, of course, from this little island. Never mind that. I'm bound sure that my popper would want me to chip in, and that lets me out. You see, it's not only using the rope, but I can run down the lion and give them a chance at him. He's disappeared, but I guess I could pick up his trail easy enough."

"I dare say you could," assented Tom. "I've seen you at that, Wildrake. But you're gated."

"You don't think the Head would let me go and join Sankey's hunting-party if I put it to him?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm jolly sure he wouldn't."

"Quite sure?" said Manners.

Wildrake nodded thoughtfully.

"I guess I wanted your opinion," he said. "Of course, if I asked the Head, and he gave me a direct order to keep clear of the business, I couldn't disobey him. So perhaps it would be safer not to ask him."

"But, my dear chap," said Tom Merry, "you can't—"

"I guess I'm going to," said Wildrake coolly. "You see, I can be of more use than a hundred of the fox-hunters and rabbit-shooters that are turning out to look for the lion. I've done real hunting in British Columbia, not your English style of rooting after poor little beasts that can't help themselves. Excuse me," added Wildrake, colouring a little.

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"Perhaps I shouldn't have put it quite like that. What I mean is, I've had some experience of real hunting, not fooling after foxes and rabbits, and I guess I'm the antelope that ought to be looking for his nibs, the lion. And if we don't get news of him in the morning I'm jolly well going."

"But—" said Tom.

"Keep it dark, of course."

"Of course," said Tom.

And Kit Wildrake nodded to the Terrible Three, and strolled out of the study. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another.

"I believe he's right," said Tom. "But the Head—"

The Terrible Three did their prep, thinking a good deal of Wildrake and his resolve. It was rather an anxious night at St. Jim's. In the morning Kit Wildrake dodged into the prefects' room at an early hour to borrow the telephone, and rang up the police-station at Wayland. He asked for news of the lion, and received the statement that nothing whatever had been seen or heard of the animal since the previous afternoon. Wildrake hung up the receiver, and quitted the prefects' room with a determined expression on his face. When St. Jim's gathered to breakfast there was an empty place at the Fourth Form table. Kit Wildrake, with his coiled lasso slung on his arm, was breakfasting on bread-and-cheese as he strode swiftly along the lane down to Rycombe, heading for Sankey's Circus.

CHAPTER 8.

Wildrake Takes a Hand!

MR. SANKEY, proprietor of the World-Renowned Circus and Hippodrome, was probably the most worried man in Sussex that morning, if not in all wide England. He bolted an early breakfast, drank the coffee too hot, scalded his mouth, and made remarks that testy gentlemen do make when they drink their coffee too hot. He stepped out of his van, and he stepped into it again. He stepped in and out of the big tent. He grumbled at Joey Jorocks, and he swore, actually swore, when he tripped over a tent-peg. He grouched at Hercules, the lion-tamer, and snorted at Lamb. And altogether Mr. Sankey made himself decidedly unpleasant to everybody connected with Sankey's World-Renowned Circus. And when a sturdy junior of St. Jim's came across the field towards the circus camp, and nodded to him with a smile, Mr. Sankey only gave him a grim glare. His grim face relaxed a little, however, as he recognised Kit Wildrake, who had come to the rescue one evening in the circus and controlled a savage horse. And he contrived to nod almost amiably to the Canadian junior.

"Good-morning, Mr. Sankey!" said Wildrake cheerily.

"Morning to you," said the circus-master. "What the thunder are you doing out of school, young man? Your headmaster ought to keep you safe inside the house till that blinking lion's caught."

"I've come to help you catch the lion, I guess."

In spite of his sorely-trying temper, Mr. Sankey smiled.

"I wish you could," he said. "We can't catch him, that's a cert. Huntin' high and low, up and down, and round about. Nearly had him a dozen times, and now he's given us the slip and bunked, vamoosed, mizzled, vanished into thin air! Next we shall hear of him he'll have mauled somebody into a hospital case, or torn up a farmer's sheep, and give me a big bill to pay. 'Tain't worth living, I can tell you, the life of a circus man! And now we've lost track of him, the whole blessed county seems to have turned out to hunt him," continued Mr. Sankey morosely. "Men with rifles, men with shotguns, dashed old whiskey farmers with blunderbusses of Queen Anne's time. I hope they won't blow each other into small pieces, that's all."

Mr. Sankey paused for breath.

But he ran on again before Wildrake could speak. He was full of grievances.

"You see, that there lion's a vallyble animal," he said. "I'd rather he was shot than anybody hurt, of course; but he's a vallyble animal. I want to catch him. I don't want the whole county of Sussex filling him with lead. You catch my meaning? I'd give anybody a ten-pound note to put me on to where that bally lion is hiding himself."

"I won't ask you for a ten-pound note," said Wildrake, with a smile. "But I'm going to try to put you on to where the lion is."

Mr. Sankey started. He dropped his hand eagerly on the schoolboy's shoulder.

"You've seen him?"

"Not since he came along to St. Jim's yesterday."

"Oh!" The circus-master looked disappointed. "Then how the thump can you tell me anything when you don't know?"

"Let me explain, Mr. Sankey. Take me to where you saw the lion last, and I'll try to pick up his trail—"

"His trail!" repeated Mr. Sankey blankly.

"I'm from the Boot Leg Ranch, B.C.," explained Wildrake. "I've tracked elk and coyote over harder country than this. I've followed a painter through timber bigger'n any you ever see over here. I've trailed a loose mustang miles over the prairie. Let me try my luck on your lion's trail."

"Oh gad!" said Mr. Sankey, staring at the junior. "It was evidently a new idea to the circus-master. 'What's that rope you've got there?'"

"My lasso. I brought it from Canada with me. Like to see me show you how it's done?" asked Wildrake, smiling.

"Let's see," said Sankey. "I've seen you ride, anyhow, and you ride like an angel. Let's see you use the rope."

Wildrake glanced round. A mongrel dog was scuttling away from one of the vans, with a bone in his jaws. Wildrake's arm swept up, and the lasso uncoiled and flew.

The dog was not an easy object to lasso, and he was scuttling away at a good rate, and at a good distance. But the next moment he was rolling over on the ground, caught in the tightening noose. He yelped loudly with alarm and indignation as he was hauled in by the schoolboy lassoer.

"Well done!" exclaimed Mr. Sankey admiringly. "You'd make a turn in my circus, you would, if you wanted a job. Dashed if I wouldn't make room for you, young man, if you wanted to."

Wildrake laughed.

"I guess I'm after circus stunts at present," he said, releasing the dog from the lasso, and patting it kindly. "I'm after your giddy lion. I believe I could pick up his trail, and with half a chance I'd rope him in as I did that dog. If your lion-tamer knows how to handle him he could fix up the brute as soon as he was roped."

"Give Hercules a chance, and he'll be all there," said Mr. Sankey. "If you could do it, by gum—But—"

"Why not try?" said Wildrake. "You're only marking time here, anyhow, as you don't know where to look for the lion."

"Blessed if I don't!" said the circus-master.

"Good egg!"

"Here, Hercules, Jorrocks, Lamb, Bill, Jack, Sam!" shouted Mr. Sankey, and his company gathered round him.

Mr. Sankey explained in a few words, and there were several grins and many curious glances at the Canadian schoolboy. Wildrake coiled up his lasso calmly. Evidently the circus crowd had not very much faith in him, and perhaps Mr. Sankey hadn't very much. But it was agreed that they might as well give the boy a chance to make good his words. It was at least as good as marking time in the circus camp, in hourly expectation of hearing news of a tragedy.

In a very short time the hunting-party was ready to start. Hercules, the lion-tamer, carried a rifle, as did Mr. Sankey, to be used in case of extremity. Joey Jorrocks, the Lamb, and the rest were armed with iron bars or bludgeons, and some of them carried ropes and chains for securing the lion if caught. They started from the circus field, and headed for Wayland Moor, where the lion had last been seen on the previous day.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were going into the Form-rooms at St. Jim's. The absence of Wildrake caused surprise and alarm, but the Terrible Three kept his secret. There was a terrific licking waiting for Wildrake when he came back—breaking school bounds at such a time was quite unpardonable. And the Head, annoyed as he was, would probably have been much more annoyed and alarmed, had he known Wildrake's object in quitting the school without leave. But only Tom Merry & Co. could have enlightened him, and they were careful not to do so. But it was an anxious morning for the Terrible Three in the Shell Form-room.

CHAPTER 9. Tracked to His Lair.

"REST 'ere!" said Mr. Sankey. The hunters halted in the midst of the wide moor, which glistened here and there with golden broom, and bristled with tufts of straggling bushes and thickets.

Rylcombe and the circus-field lay far behind, with Rylcombe Wood, out of which the lion had been routed the day before. In one direction was the town of Wayland, the smoke of which could

be seen against the sky. In another direction, across the moor, was Wayland Wood—an extensive patch of old forest, surviving from the days when Druids had stalked under its ancient trees.

"You saw him here yesterday?" asked Wildrake.

"Late in the afternoon," said Mr. Sankey. "I had my field-glasses on him from the hillock yonder, and I lined him against that old hut. But when we came along he had vanished."

Wildrake approached the hut indicated by Mr. Sankey—the burnt fragments of an old shepherd's shelter. He proceeded to make a careful examination of the ground round it. Already he had examined a track left by the lion in a soft flower-bed at St. Jim's, and familiarised himself with the trail of the paws. Wildrake had trailed many a wild animal in Canada, in his time, but naturally had never had to deal with a lion before. In a few minutes he picked up the "spoor," as it would be called in Africa. The marks of the "pads" showed in a muddy hollow.

"Here's where he's been," said Wildrake.

"We saw them blessed marks yesterday," said Mr. Sankey.

"But they ain't any use."

"I guess I can follow them."

"More than I can, then."

Wildrake smiled, and gave his attention to the trail. It led him from the little hollow over a stony ridge. The marks that he found were slight enough, but to his experienced eye every atom of "sign" told its own story. Mr. Sankey & Co. followed him, with dubious looks.

"Where are you goin'?" called out Hercules, the tamer, at last.

"After the lion, I guess."

"You think he went that way?"

"No; I know he did."

"How do you know?" asked Joey Jorrocks.

"Because he's left sign."

"Well, let's see it through," said Mr. Sankey resignedly.

"If there's any sign there, as you call it, I can't see it, but I'll take your word for it, Master Wildrake. Lead on!"

Wildrake was already loading on. The faint "sign" led him across the ridge, and then across a level and into a deep hollow where rain had gathered into a pool. This was nearly a mile from the starting-point. But at the pool the hunters had ample proof that the Canadian junior was on the right



Half a dozen juniors grasped the rope, and the hapless lion was dragged heels-over-head into Study No. 10. By this time Grundy was roaring, not as a lion, but plainly as George Alfred Grundy. But his roars were not heeded. He had started on a career as a lion, and Tom Merry & Co. chose to take him at his own valuation, as it were, and treat him as one.

track. For in the soft mud by the water were a dozen or more tracks of the lion's pads. The brute had stopped there to drink.

Wildrake looked at his companions with a smile.

"What price that?" he asked.

"Right as rain!" exclaimed Mr. Sankey. "If it ain't luck, you're a clever young scallywag, you are. Get on with it."

"Follow on, then!" said Wildrake.

The whole party looked more hopeful and confident now. They realised that the Canadian junior knew what he was about.

For some distance the Canadian led on directly towards the distant wood, but abruptly he swerved off to the right.

"Sure of that?" asked Hercules.

"Sure!"

"Then he didn't make for the wood?"

"He turned off here, at any rate. I dare say we'll soon see the reason. I guess he was heading for the wood, and something called him aside."

They soon discovered what it was that had called the lion aside from the direction he was following. The half-devoured carcass of a sheep was found in the thick grass. Evidently the hapless animal had sighted the lion, and fled, and had been run down and killed by the savage brute. There were many traces of the lion's meal, and the track then led on through the grass in the direction of Wayland Wood.

"I guess he was going to look for cover after his feed," said Wildrake. "We ought to find him in the wood."

"Good!" said Mr. Sankey.

They pushed on steadily.

Twice or thrice the trail was lost in stony patches on the moor, and Kit Wildrake "tried" to and for patiently, till he found it again. It led them right into a glade of Wayland Wood at last. There it was lost again, and found once more, and Kit Wildrake led the way onward into the deepest depths of the old forest.

"Keep your eyes peeled now," he said, looking back over his shoulder. "I guess we may start the game any minute now."

"We're ready for him!" growled the tamer.

From somewhere in a distant part of the wood the report of a gun was heard. Doubtless some other party was "gunning" after the lion, and probably shooting at a shadow.

Mr. Sankey gave a snort as he heard the shot. He was no doubt thinking of the value of the escaped lion, which would disappear if the brute were knocked on the head. Mr. Sankey had a very natural desire to recapture the fugitive alive.

Wildrake stopped at last.

There was a rugged slope before him, thick with bushes and creepers, and a tree here and there. Higher up the slope the trees grew thickly. At the bottom of the slope the ground was broken, and there were many dark openings screened with bushes. The Canadian junior held up his hand.

"I guess we're home!" he said.

"But—"

"There's the track!" muttered Wildrake. "It goes through that clump of bushes, and there's no track out again. And the hill is beyond; he can't have gone farther. He's there; he's made a den there in a hollow, and he's at home, I reckon."

Mr. Sankey drew a deep breath. Hercules nodded; now that the Canadian junior pointed out the indications, the lion-tamer could make them out.

"He's there," said Hercules.

"I'd rather send in my card before I call," murmured Joey Jorrocks. Mr. Sankey frowned at him; it was no time for Joey's jokes of the ring.

"This is your business, Hercules," said the circus-master.

"Are you goin' in for him?"

Hercules grunted, but did not reply. He was accustomed to doing "stunts" with the lion inside the cage; but rooting into a shadowy hollow of the earth after a beast that had lately tasted blood, was quite a different matter. The tamer had no desire to be torn in pieces.

"I guess he's got to come out," said Wildrake. "If we can get him out, I can drop the rope on him as he shows up."

"You'd have the nerve to stand by and do it?" breathed Mr. Sankey.

Wildrake laughed softly.

"Sure! Leave that to me."

"Beat the bushes, then, and pop off the guns," said Mr. Sankey. "That'll scare him out, I reckon."

"I guess so."

The hunters began to crash on the thickets with their bludgeons, and half a dozen shots were fired into the hillside. The disturbance soon brought out proof that the lion was there. A deep growl came from the depths of the

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thickets. The lion, crouched in the hollow under the screen of bush and bramble, had been roused. A movement was heard, a rustle, and another deep and terrifying growl.

"I guess I've spotted him now," said Wildrake. "Light a flare and chuck it in—the bushes won't catch; they're not dry enough. It will scare him out. I've seen a painter scared out like that at home."

He gathered a bundle of the driest leaves and twigs he could find, tied them together with a box of matches in the middle, lighted them, and tossed them among the straggling bushes that covered the lion's lair. A loud roar sounded as the flare dropped, and the matches, catching from the flame, buzzed explosively.

"Stand clear!" yelled Wildrake.

There was a rush back as the thickets moved and shook. From the bushes a long, sinuous body launched itself, landing in the glade. The lion, a full-grown animal, with bristling mane, was a terrifying object, as he stood out clear to view, clawing the grass, and roaring fiercely. Mr. Sankey dodged instinctively behind a tree. Mr. Jorrocks swung himself into a branch, the rest of the party scattered back. Kit Wildrake did not move, save to swing up the hand that held the coiled rope.

Whiz!

The lasso flew.

The lion was starting to lope away into the wood as the loop of the lasso dropped over his grim head.

A drag on the rope, and the noose tightened round the neck of the huge brute.

A frightful roar awoke every echo in the wood.

Wildrake, the rope's-length distant from the lion, took a rapid turn of the end round a tree, and knotted it swiftly.

Then he dashed away among the trees for safety as the half-throttled animal came tearing towards him.

Right to the end of the rope the lion pursued him, and had not the strong lasso held, the Canadian junior might not have escaped.

But as the lion's rush carried it to the length of the rope it tightened, and the noose round the huge throat was drawn tighter.

There was a choked howl from the brute.

For the next few minutes the scene was terrible. The lion struggled and howled and rolled over and over, tearing up the grass and earth in his fury. The hunters, at a safe distance, watched him, with pale faces, the guns ready if he should break loose. But Wildrake had done his work well. The throttling cord grew tighter and tighter round the animal's throat, choking him.

The hapless brute did not comprehend how it was held, and its struggles were blind and impotent. When at last it succeeded in getting its teeth on the rope, realising, perhaps, how matters stood, it was almost exhausted.

And Hercules, seizing a favourable moment to rush in, dealt it a heavy blow on the head with an iron bar.

"I guess it's a cinch!" said Wildrake.

Mr. Sankey clapped the Canadian junior on the shoulder.

"Thanks to you!" he exclaimed. "By gad! I'd like to have you in my circus, my boy. If ever you want to change your school for the ring, remember that I'll make it worth your while!"

And Wildrake grinned. He did not "calculato" that that time was ever likely to come.

A couple of hours later, a cart was driven up to Sankey's Circus, and in the cart was a dazed and very humbled and subdued lion, chained securely.

And Kit Wildrake, after seeing the captured animal turned into its cage, set out for St. Jim's, wondering what was going to happen to him by missing a morning's school without leave.

CHAPTER 10.

The Hero of the Hour.

"B Al Jove! It's Wildrake!"

"Hallo, here he is!" shouted Tom Merry.

Kit Wildrake, with his lasso on his arm, was knocking coolly at the door of the School House.

Dinner was over at St. Jim's, and the "Saints," still confined to House bounds, were grumbling and growling in the studies and along the passages. Wildrake was sighted from half a dozen windows as he came across the quad, and Mr. Railton went to the big door to open it.

The Housemaster frowned grimly at the returned junior.

"Come in, Wildrake!"

"Yes, sir," said Wildrake meekly.

"Kindly hurry yourself," said Mr. Railton sharply. "The door must be closed."

"Oh, certainly, sir! But there's no need to close the door, sir—the lion's caught!"

"What?"

"I guess he's safe back in his cage now, sir."

"Are you sure of that, Wildrake?"

"Quite sure, sir. I saw him shut in!"
 "I am very glad to hear it," said Mr. Railton. "But that does not excuse you for leaving the school without permission, Wildrake, and missing your lessons. You have disregarded the Head's order in going out of the school, and you will be dealt with very severely. I shall not come you, Wildrake, as I understand that it is Dr. Holmes' intention to administer a flogging!"

"Oh, holy smoke!" murmured Wildrake.
 There was the buzz of a bell in the distance. It was the telephone in the Head's study. But nobody heeded it just then—excepting the Head himself. Tom Merry & Co. gave Wildrake looks of sympathy, but they did not venture to speak, in the presence of the wrathful Housemaster. They were burning to know what had happened since the Canadian junior had taken French leave, however.

"Where have you been, Wildrake?" inquired Mr. Railton, fixing his stern eyes on the junior.

"I'm sorry I cut lessons, sir," said Wildrake frankly. "I guessed I could be of some use in looking for the lion—"

"What?"
 "They'd lost his track, sir, and I figured it out that I could pick it up again," explained Wildrake, "so I went down to Sankey's Circus to offer my services, sir."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, aghast. "How dared you do anything of the kind without the Head's permission!"

"I—I guess I'd have been glad to have the Head's permission, sir," murmured Wildrake. "But—but—"

"But you knew he would not grant you permission to go into such terrible danger, if you asked it."

"I—I was afraid he wouldn't, sir," confessed Wildrake.
 "And Mr. Sankey sent you back, I suppose? In that case, why did you not return to the school sooner?"
 "I—I—"

The door of the Head's study opened, and Dr. Holmes came down the corridor. Mr. Railton turned from Wildrake to the headmaster.

"Wildrake has returned, sir," he said. "He tells me that the escaped lion has been recaptured and taken back to the circus."

"Quite so," said the Head. "I have just received the news by telephone. Mr. Sankey was kind enough to ring me up and tell me that there was no further cause for alarm. You will let the boys know that the restriction of bounds is now removed."

"Bwavo!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Mr. Sankey has also told me," resumed the Head, "that the capture of the lion was due to a boy belonging to this school, who found the animal's track, and followed him, and rendered it possible to capture him by catching him with a lasso!"

"Bless my soul!"

"My only hat!" murmured Tom Merry; and Manners and

Lowther grinned. The Terrible Three knew now that Wildrake's expedition had been a success.

"A boy belonging to this school, sir!" exclaimed Kildare of the Sixth in wonder. "There was only one boy out of gates to-day—Wildrake of the Fourth—"

"Precisely!" said the Head. "And that is the name that Mr. Sankey gave me a few minutes ago on the telephone!"

"Bwavo, Wildrake!" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, quite forgetful for the moment of the august presence in which he stood. And the swell of St. Jim's waved his eyeglass in the air with great enthusiasm.

But Dr. Holmes did not rebuke the exuberant Gussy. He smiled.

"Wildrake!" he said.

"Yes, sir," murmured Wildrake meekly.
 "You have been guilty of a very serious dereliction of duty in leaving the school without permission, and in failing to appear for lessons in your Form-room!" said the Head magisterially.

"I—I guess I'm sorry, sir—"

"Had you asked my permission, I should have refused it," said the Head. "That would have been my duty to your parents. As matters have turned out, however, I have to admit that your confidence in yourself was well-founded, and you have certainly displayed great courage and resource. It was my intention to administer a flogging, Wildrake, for the anxiety you have caused. But I cannot overlook the fact that you have probably saved lives by what you have done this morning!"

"Silence, please! I cannot pass over your offence, Wildrake. You will take five hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir."

"And I will add," said the Head, "that I am very proud that a St. Jim's boy should have acted as you have done, in helping so materially to effect the capture of a dangerous beast!"

And, somewhat to Wildrake's surprise, the Head shook hands with him. And then there was a roar of cheering. As the Head returned to his study Tom Merry & Co. made a rush, and Wildrake was collared, and mounted shoulder-high, and carried in triumph out of the School House and round the old quadrangle.

That day Kit Wildrake, of the Boot Leg Ranch, was the hero of the hour. And that evening half a dozen fellows were lending a hand in doing the five hundred lines. And when those lines were taken in to the Head it is extremely probable that the old gentleman noted the remarkable variety of hands; but if he did, he did not say so. All he said was a kind word or two and a kind good-night to the schoolboy lion-hunter.

THE END.

(Another magnificent, long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's "GEM." This yarn entitled "Levison to the Rescue" must not be missed.)

Extract from "St. Jim's News."

THE MYSTERIES OF SCREEN PHOTOGRAPHY.

By HARRY MANNERS.

HAD an offer the other day to go over a cinema studio when a number of difficult double exposure scenes were to be made, and as I am frightfully keen on camera work, as most of you know, I simply jumped at the idea.

I hope some of the readers of the "St. Jim's News" will be as interested as I was to know how these things are done.

Well, to begin with, "double exposures," as they are termed, are used when the producer wants to show dream figures, ghosts, and so on, on the screen. You know the idea. The hero is sitting alone in his study, with the lights low, and the glow of the fire shining upon him, when suddenly he sees before him something which has happened some time before in his life. The incident he is dreaming about appears upon the cinema screen for a minute or two and then just as suddenly disappears.

There are three ways of doing this business. One is technically known as the "split screen," another the "transparent exposure," and the third the "oblique dissolve." The first method is by far the simplest.

Half of the film in the camera is "masked" namely, covered over with a brass disc. The other half is exposed with the character to be double-exposed in position.

When the necessary number of feet of film is taken, the character changes his position and the film is unwound, and the mask is changed to cover the half of the film which has been exposed. Then the little scene is taken all over again.

This is how the scenes where a man is seen to be talking to himself are made. It is really quite simple when you think it out, and I think I shall have a shot at Cardew one of these days; he ought to be pleased with the result.

Now we come to the second method. This is the one in which ghosts or transparent figures are produced. The scene is first of all photographed by the film camera in the ordinary way. It may be a woodland scene, for instance, where fairies are required to appear.

The picture is taken with all the characters, and then the height of the camera from the ground is measured, and the distance from the spot where the fairies are supposed to appear is also noted.

The film is rewound in the camera, and the sprightly little fairies are put in front of a black velvet curtain in the studio. They are then photographed, and, of course, appear on the top of the scene which has just been acted. It is naturally

much more difficult to get a correct and artistic result than it sounds.

The third way is called the "oblique dissolve," and this is by far the most difficult of them all. Camera-men hate it, for it means double walking along a river bank. He remembers that it was here many years ago he had lived in to rescue a child who had fallen in.

His thoughts are shown in the corner of the film, and this gradually fades into the picture until the whole film is taken up by pictures showing the man jumping in as he did years ago.

Then the light-picture fades away again, and the man is seen continuing his walk along the river-bank. It is a very clever but difficult business to get a satisfactory result.

In a new film entitled "Peter Ibbotson," a record for double-exposure photography is set up, and there are altogether three hundred and ninety-eight of these scenes.

Now, I'm going along to see if I can fix up a picture of D'Arcy eyeing himself through his monocle, or Baggy Trimble fighting himself.

I'm very keen on this double-exposure business!

HARRY MANNERS.

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The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

THE SECRET OF PEPPER'S BARN.

STRANGE HISTORY RECALLED.

By ERNEST LEVISON.

"PEPPER'S BARN" is a structure which has far more history behind it than one would suppose when viewing it in the ordinary way. It stands in the centre of a field, a quarter of a mile from Rylcombe village, and about a hundred yards to the right of Rylcombe Wood.

It is fairly obvious that, to begin with, the place was constructed with a special purpose in view. A secret tunnel from the Monk's Cell in Rylcombe Wood leads out into the field, and some few centuries ago a brainy person decided to build a cottage over the exit, so that, in the case of emergency, he would stand a good chance of escaping via the tunnel to the Monk's Cell and away through the wood.

He only completed the first four walls of the cellar, which hid the opening into the field, and then for some unknown reason forsook his task.

Descending to more modern times, about ten years ago an old squire living near by was shown these ruins by the Archaeological Society, and thought it would be a good idea to finish building the place. On the top of these four flint walls he had built a solid oak bungalow. But, like the former attempt, it was never finished, and the result this time was a three-story, barn-like arrangement, with windows in the front.

The ground slopes away beneath the barn, and at the back the wooden floor is five feet above ground level. A semi-subterranean cellar is formed underneath by the four flint walls, and it has a door at one side which leads out into a gully. When the left side of the gully has been climbed you would find yourself on a level with the front entrance to the barn again.

The space underneath was at one time used as a storehouse. Above the barn is a loft to which access is obtainable by a ladder, which is nailed perpendicular with the wall, inside the barn floor.

The loft is kept aired and dry by a skylight in the roof.

The barn has been standing for many years now, but it wasn't introduced into the stories until Tom Merry decided upon it as a suitable place to hold the debates of the St. Jim's Parliament.

At the time when Tom Merry made that decision Erasmus Zachariah Pepper was the person in sole possession of the place. No person in the world can remember the year in which he "let" his "first-class" barn to Tom Merry, Grundy, Racke, and also to Cardew. And then how he collected from the juniors four individual rents, and left the tenants to fight it out among themselves who had most right to take possession of the barn.

Cardew asked me to write this article because I am the only fellow who has ever been held prisoner in the dismal storehouse under the barn. My younger brother Frank was the means of securing my rescue. When he arrived, Outram, the fellow who had been holding me captive, yielded to reason, and was convinced that I had really come to him as a friend, and not as an enemy.

The greatest occasion when the barn figured prominently in the stories was when Tom Merry held his first parliamentary debate. Cardew, Clive, and myself thought the idea was altogether too serious to be indulged in by boys of Tom Merry's age, and we got into the cellar with some noisy instruments. When Mr. Speaker had fairly got the chinlaw under way, Cardew, Clive, and your humble struck up a bright little "tune." Before they could pull up a plank and descend into the cellar, we mizzled by the back entrance, climbed up the incline from the gully, and escaped over the fields. The next interruption the Parliament received was from Racke & Co., who had rented the cellar for the purpose of enjoying a quiet smoke and a game of cards, with no fears of an inquisitive prefect dropping in. They called the cellar the "Sporting Club House," and fairly fumed the Parliament out of it, when the smoke trickled through the cellar ceiling and into the barn floor. Racke & Co. were caught, and as the instruments—hammer, saucepan-lid, water-can, etc.—were in full evidence, they were blamed for having created the first disturbance.

And though they were wallowed, the wallowing was not unfair.

The next and last story we have had of Pepper's Barn came six months after this incident. Old Pepper was on the make, and George Alfred Grundy was the victim.

At the time when this happened the war was on, you remember, and everybody was "down" on food hogs. Pepper knew this, and accordingly led Grundy on to a false scent, of thinking that he—Pepper—was a food-hoarder. The whole thing was perfectly clear when Pepper was the better off by twenty pounds, or damages to his barn, and Grundy, who thought himself a heaven-born detective, paid dearly for his interference.

The week before last, when Tom Merry reopened the St. Jim's Parliament, of course Pepper's Barn came into use again. I can safely say that in the near future the barn will again figure in some interesting stories.

ERNEST LEVISON.

St. Jim's For Ever.

MISS PRISCILLA'S BRILLIANT SCOOP.

There can be nothing but really useful rivalry to St. Jim's in the idea of a new school for girls which, it is said, Miss Priscilla Yawcutt hopes to establish in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's. Miss Priscilla's kind-hearted activities are well known, and she is possessed of considerable means. On the occasion of the recent arrival of Timothy at St. Jim's she handed a Treasury note for a pound to Tom Merry. But the whole financial weight of the new college will not fall on the shoulders of the amiable and far-sighted lady in question. It seems she is being supported by people whose names are household words through the Old Country. The projected institution will be named after Saint Jane, a noble personage who lived in the year 300. Obviously the popular term will be St. Jill's, and we hasten to offer a few words of welcome to the new foundation.

The Advance of Science.

CHEQUES WRITTEN A THOUSAND MILES OFF.

BAGGY'S BIG BOON.

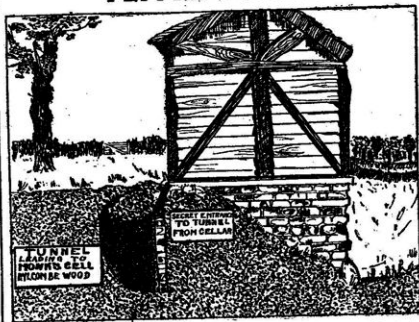
Few would credit Baggy Trimble with deep interest in the wonderful progress made by scientific investigators during recent years. It appears that Baggy has an uncle in Brazil—Uncle Josiah Trimble, a gentleman busily engaged in the rubber trade.

Uncle Josiah has not so far shown himself to be distinguished by benevolence, so far as his nephew is concerned, at least; but Baggy explained the other night that this was due entirely to his uncle not realising how badly money was required.

No. 2, especially by Baggy, since Kit Wildrake is not short of funds.

Baggy asked a number of fellows to witness an exhibition of the new system of distance writing the other night. The results were really wonderful. Baggy placed a blank sheet of paper on the table, turned out the lights, and then "spoke" to Brazil, as he called it. There was a scratching noise in the dark, and when Baggy turned up the lights there was the sheet of paper—only it was not blank. It bore the words: "Pay Baggy Trimble One Hundred Pounds." Underneath was a signature, rather scribbly—"Josiah Trimble." Baggy says the cheque is all right, but he has not been able to cash it yet.

PEPPER'S BARN.



A diagram, explaining the extraordinary riddle of Pepper's Barn.



A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Tom Mace, the son of a crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. The poor circumstances in which he has lived earn for him the scorn of Simon Lundy & Co., the school snobs. Spikey Meadows, a friend of Tom's father, Mr. Bill Mace, calls upon Tom, and tries to persuade the lad to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night. Returning late that evening, Tom is questioned by his Form-master, Mr. Mullins, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious Mr. Mullins, who knows something about Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. The following day Tom sees Mr. Gale, whom he had seen in conversation with Spikey Meadows when journeying to the school. Mr. Gale warns the lad against this man. Later Tom's mother comes to the school, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom would have fought the snob but for the promise to his mother not to fight. Tom is again visited by Spikey Meadows, the incident being witnessed by Lundy and Mr. Gale. Lundy is rather interested, and meets Spikey Meadows himself. He is encouraged by him to place a bet. Mainly through Tom's efforts, his Form wins an important cricket match, and his companions suggest that an election should be held for a new Form captain. It goes strongly in favour of the scholarship lad, for most of the fellows are heartily sick of Lundy & Co. But Lundy is not satisfied, and the point is to be determined by a fight. Tom knocks Lundy down, but Bradshaw, who is keeping time, tries to cheat him of victory. After lights out one evening Meadows waits outside the school, intent on seeing Lundy. When he arrives Meadows informs him that he has brought him bad news.

"Bad news!" gasped Lundy. "Do you mean our horse lost?"

(Now read on.)

The Plot Against Tom.

MEADOWS nodded.

"I do!" he said.

"That means I lose a fiver," said Lundy.

"Hang!"

"Tanner!" said the ruffian laconically. "You put a fiver each way, you remember. I've had it booked."

"Each way!" gasped Lundy. "But, hang it, I can't afford to lose ten quid!"

Mr. Meadows shrugged his shoulders. "Well, you'll have to afford to pay it!" he said. "That bookie friend of mine'll come along asking for it soon."

Lundy scowled.

"Oh, leave that over for a bit!" he growled. "Braddy, can you lend me anything? Thought you said that horse was a cert, Meadows!"

"I've lost two quid over it!" lied the man, with a well-feigned look of grievance.

He had hoped that he would have a useful hold over Lundy. He knew that the horse would lose, and the horse had lost. So had Lundy.

"Well, what about this jaunt? Thought you were going to take us to some place to play cards!" said Lundy.

"That's off till you can pay that debt," said the man. "If you can't pay that, you can't play cards for quids. I don't play for nuts, you know."

Lundy looked perfectly ferocious. And Bradshaw and Garnet, it must be confessed, looked relieved. From the first they had not been so keen as Lundy on this midnight expedition. But he had led, and they had followed.

"Wait a bit, though," said Meadows. "If you promise to do me a favour, and keep your mouths shut, I'll reward you well. I'll cancel that debt—pay the man myself."

As there was no man to pay he was not being over-generous. But Lundy, naturally enough, was not aware of that.

"What is it you want?" he asked eagerly.

Meadows lowered his voice.

"There's a kid at this school—Mace. Now, I've got a down on that kid—"

"So have I!" said Lundy, with vicious emphasis.

"Well, then, it'll be more pleasure than labour," said the crackman. "All you've got to do is to down that kid at

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every turn. Now, the man I've got a grudge against is his father. Mark my words, that kid'll be in a burglary soon. If this school ain't robbed before long, I shall be surprised! That kid's father is a burglar by profession!"

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

Lundy & Co. shouted their amazement.

"You—you don't mean that!" gasped Lundy.

Meadows nodded.

"It's the truth," he said. "Like father, like son. If you find anything stolen, you can bet your lives it's Tom Mace at the back of it!"

Lundy whistled. He believed the man at once. It did not occur to any of the three that Meadows himself might be mixed up in the affair.

"Son of a crackman! I say, that's great!" exclaimed Lundy. "For Jove, I knew he was low-down. But I never hoped for that!"

And Lundy did a war-dance of joy.

"I'll settle him yet!" he cried joyously.

"You settle him, and I'll let you off the debt!" said Meadows artfully.

It was cunningly planned. Meadows knew, well enough, that the police would discover that someone had left a window open. And he knew, too, that they would look for some inside accomplice.

They would not suspect a master. And, as through Lundy it would be known that Tom, the scholarship lad, was the son of a burglar, the police would be satisfied that Tom was guilty.

Lundy Again!

GO on Lundy, put it on the board!"

Garnet grinned and nudged his leader's arm. Thus encouraged, Simon Lundy affixed to the green baize notice-board in the school Hall, the piece of paper he had in his hand.

The three knuts were standing in the Hall, eyed curiously by several fellows who were standing around.

"Hallo! What's that, Lundy?" exclaimed Gordon.

Lundy, with a sneer on his lips, pointed to the paper he had affixed to the board.

"That," he said, "is a little illustration indicating what Millford is coming to. The tall figure with the muffer and the jemmy and life-preserver sticking from his pocket is father of the small urchin. The small urchin is our Tom—Tom Mace—"

"Tom Mace!" shouted Gordon.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Hill.

Lundy laughed.

"Perhaps you don't see the point of the caricature?" he sneered. "Well, I can tell you for a fact that Mace's father is a crook—he's just a burglar. You know he was an errand-boy before he came here. Well, his father is Bill Mace, the crackman!"

"Rot!" snapped Gordon.

But all the same, he and one or two others pressed forward to inspect the crude drawing.

And while they were gathered in a group round the board, a cheery voice made itself audible in the passage.

"What cheer?" came Bob Peel's strident tones.

Lundy turned and drew back. He had no desire to face Peel just then. But there was to be no escape for him. Gordon, Hill, and Smythe took hold of him, and would not let him move.

Bradshaw backed hastily down the passage.

"Let me go!" shouted Lundy to his captors. "Hang you! Take your hands off me!"

But Gordon merely laughed. Time had been when Gordon was awed by the imperious Lundy. But now—Lundy's day was over.

Rider and Peel, with Tom Mace, frowning and worried behind, stepped up to the crowd.

"Now what's wrong?" asked Peel.
Gordon indicated the notice-board, and the crude drawing that was attracting so much attention.

Then Peel, realising that his suspicions were right, that this was some new plot against his chum, pushed aside several fellows and glared at the notice upon the board.

"Who did that?" he roared, turning round.
Lundy drew back slightly, then shrugged his shoulders.

"I did!" he retorted. "And it's true to life. That's Mace and his burglar father."

"His cracksmen father?" repeated Peel. "What do you mean?"

"Mean?" echoed Lundy. "Why, that Mace's father is a burglar! Ask him to deny it!"

"Deny it?" laughed Peel bitterly. "I don't see why he should trouble to deny anything so wild and unfounded as that!"

Lundy sneered, and wrested himself free from his captors.

"Mace can't deny it!" he said. And then he turned to the new boy. "How's Bill Mace, the cracksmen?" he jeered.

Tom Mace's face went quite white.

"I—I— What do you mean?" he stammered.
Bob Peel turned to his chum in surprise. He could tell from the tone of Tom's voice that all was not well. And so could the other fellows.

"Look!" shouted Lundy triumphantly. "He can't deny it! Look at his face! Of course it's true! That's your Form capt'n! That's your hero! Son of a burglar!"

"Son of a burglar!"
The cry was taken up by the whole group of juniors in the Hall, and there were muttered remarks and exclamations.

Tom's face went scarlet, then white again as he felt all those accusing eyes were upon him.

He tried to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"Deny it, Tom," said Bob Peel, "and I'll smash Lundy!"

Deny it! How Tom wished he could—how he wished that his father were an honest man like the fathers of all these lads!

But he could not deny Lundy's imputation. It was true!

"I—I can't deny it!" said Tom miserably. "But, oh, what does it matter? Why must you bring that up against me?"

"It's true!" cried Garnet joyfully.

"Then your father is a thief!"

"And you captain of the Form, too!"

These amazed cries rang through the Hall, and Tom started back. The fellows were in a semi-circle round him now, and he felt like a caged-in animal.

"Leave him alone!" shouted Peel, when he recovered from the shock of Tom's surprising admission. "What does it matter—"

"Matter!" exclaimed Gordon. "It matters a lot! It's a fine thing to have a burglar's son as Form-capt'n! Jove! He might pinch the cups and medals—and goodness knows what else!"

"Boosh!" snapped Peel. And Rider, after some slight hesitation, added: "Rot!"

"It's not rot!" retorted Garnet. "I've a jolly good mind to go to the Head—"

"Hear, hear!" said Lundy.

At that Bob Peel stiffened, and he clenched his fists.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" he said, through his teeth. "I don't want any funny tricks from you, Lundy."

The Head probably knows it already. Anyway, it's not Tom's fault. But if it's spread round the school, I shall know whom to blame—you, Lundy!"

The former leader of the Form scowled, and bit his lip. Then, with a careless shrug of the shoulders, he turned on his heel.

"Come along, chaps," he said. "Leave that young burglar to his kind little friends!"

After he had gone, Peel turned to his chum.

"Tom!" he exclaimed. "That wasn't true? Your father isn't—isn't—"

Tom Mace nodded his head dully.

"Yes, Bob," he said. "My father is a cracksmen! But I thought that that was in the past—a secret. How have they found out, Bob?"

Bob Peel shook his head.

"Poor old Tom!" he said softly. "Poor old chap!"

"The Form won't like it," said Rider, rather uneasily, giving Tom a keen look.

"I know—I know!" muttered Tom. "Oh, that it should come now, when I thought I had lived down their snobbery! It is cruel!"

"Perhaps they'll forget," said Peel. "But—but they're funny chaps. Lundy will have a lot to say now that you've admitted it." And Peel looked quite worried.

Meanwhile, Lundy, with Garnet and Bradshaw behind him, had gone to see Mr. Mullins, the master of the Fourth.

Lundy tapped on the door, and at a muttered "come in," entered, leaving his companions outside.

The master was pacing up and down the room, his hands behind his back, his face worried and anxious.

"Well," he snapped, "what is it?"

Lundy's jaw dropped in sheer surprise. It was not usual for the Form-master to speak to him in that manner. As a rule, Mr. Mullins was servile where Lundy, Bradshaw, and Garnet were concerned.

Now he wheeled upon them in a perfectly fierce manner.

"What is it? What is it?" he snapped.

Lundy looked surprised; but he had come here to speak to the master, so he hesitated no longer.

"Mr. Mullins," he said, "I've found out something about Tom Mace. I thought you'd like to know." He paused, but Mr. Mullins, who had flung himself into a chair, did not even look up. "His—his father's a burglar, sir!" finished Lundy dramatically.

Mr. Mullins almost leaped from his chair.

"A—A burglar! Where did you hear that, Lundy?"

"Where?" ejaculated Lundy, startled by the master's manner. "I heard it from—from someone."

The master quivered slightly.

"A burglar," he repeated more calmly. "A Millford lad's father a burglar! Surely, Lundy, you have been mistaken; someone has purposely misled you!"

Lundy shook his head.

"You can ask Mace himself, sir," he said. "He admits it."

Mr. Mullins was silent.

"Very strange," he mumbled. "Why, anything might happen! There might be a burglary! Good heavens!"

And he feigned alarm so well that not for an instant did Lundy suspect that this was no news to the master.

"He ought to be sent to Coventry," said Lundy. "I shall spread it around about his father. One ought not to keep silent about such a thing. Surely the Head must know?"

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Mullins. "But I—I shouldn't make too much of the matter, Lundy."

"No, sir," said the Fifth-Former. "But I thought you would like to know."

"Thank you," muttered Mr. Mullins; and Lundy could not help noticing, then how the master's hand trembled.

This evening, somehow, the master did not seem himself. Something was worrying him, though what Lundy could not tell.

With one last curious look at the master, Lundy left the study. No sooner had he gone than Mr. Mullins rose to his feet and paced the study in agitation.

"I don't know whether it's good or bad, this discovery!" he muttered. "It will be all over the school in a moment now. Everyone will know! But Meadows is coming to-night! When the picture has gone, when it is known that there must have been an inside hand, Tom Mace will be suspected."

That thought seemed to comfort the master, and his worried frown relaxed.

The Burglary.

WHAT was that?"

Tom Mace sat upright in bed, and blinked sleepily about him. The dormitory was in darkness, and he could hear no sound. Yet Tom was quite sure that he had been aroused by some noise. Wide awake, he listened intently.

"Bob!" he whispered to his chum; but there was no answer.

So Tom, deciding not to wake Peel, crept out of bed, slipped on his trousers, and searched around for his slippers.

Then he stood upright and listened again.

From below came a slight creaking, and Tom's heart beat faster. He looked along the row of beds which in the gloom he could see but faintly.

"Anyone awake?" he asked, as he moved to the door.

From somewhere down the dormitory a sleepy voice replied:

"Who's that?"

The voice was indistinct, and for a moment Tom hoped it belonged to his chum.

"It's Tom!" he answered. "That you, Bob?"

A grunt was the reply.

"No; it's Lundy. What are you doing, mooching about at this time of night, Mace?"

Tom did not reply. He wanted no argument then with Lundy. So, very softly, he stepped across the dormitory, and opened the door.

Out on the landing he stood listening, but no sound came

to his ears. The noise he had heard from below was not repeated. And Tom thought that perhaps his imagination was playing with him.

But no! That same mysterious creaking came from below, and now Tom crept down the stairs very softly.

A whispered word he heard, then footsteps very soft, faintly dying away. Tom hurried forward to where he thought the noise had come from.

He stopped before the Head's study, and caught his breath. The door was open! It meant a burglary, Tom was certain of that.

Yet the school was well guarded against such midnight entries. The windows were fastened securely with patent catches, and everywhere were burglar alarms.

How, then, has this burglar entered? Tom's first thought was of Spike Meadows. Spike could have entered easily enough if Tom had left a window open for him. But Tom had not done that.

Urged by a sudden impulse, he entered the room and peered round. But all was in darkness. He felt along the wall for the switch, but could not find it.

He was not used to the room, and he nearly knocked an ornament from a shelf as he groped round. Then, quite suddenly, there was a creak. He stopped still, and pressed his back to the wall.

The midnight intruder—could he be returning?

It was a footfall, soft and stealthy. Someone entered the room. A hand brushed beside Tom's face, and—flick!—the light was turned on.

The switch for which Tom had groped had been just above his head. But now Tom forgot about the switch—forgot everything in amazement.

"You!" he gasped.

For the midnight intruder was no other than Mr. Gale, the new master! For a moment silence reigned.

Mr. Gale stared at Tom, equally surprised as the lad himself.

"What does this mean, Mace?" he asked sternly.

Tom did not reply. He looked at the master, then round the study, and as he caught sight of an empty picture-frame he started.

He looked from the empty frame with its thin strip of canvas still round the sides, to the master in the doorway.

"That picture," he cried—"you have stolen it! That is why you are here! You have come to steal the pictures! That is why you were speaking to Meadows in the train. You and he are hand-in-glove together! You thief!"

The master started and blinked with surprise.

"I!" he answered with a short laugh. "It is you who will suffer for this, Tom Mace! That it is Spike

Meadows' doings I do not doubt. But you—you are the inside accomplice!"

Their voices were not softened, and presently there came footsteps from above, as others in the school were awakened.

"What is it—what is it?"

The headmaster's voice came down to the two in the study.

"That is Dr. Mason!" exclaimed Mr. Gale. "Keep where you are, Mace. It is useless to attempt to escape."

Tom laughed.

"I escape!" he cried. "You would like me to, so that you could make your story good!"

Now the headmaster was upon the scene with quite half the school in a clamouring crowd behind him.

"What is it—what is it?" cried Dr. Mason.

He looked wild and agitated, his dressing-gown girdle trailed the floor, and he gazed from master to boy in bewilderment.

Then his eyes, searching the room, sighted the empty picture-frame.

"My picture gone—the best one—the most valuable one—gone! Who has done this?"

He looked at the master, then at Tom Mace, inquiry and amazement on his kindly face.

The group of juniors, seniors, and masters clustered round the door, and the Head became aware of their presence. He turned to them.

"Go!" he cried. "Mr. Johnson, Mr. Hicks, see that the boys go back to bed. There has been a burglary; the lads must not be here."

The masters, rather reluctantly, he it said, hustled the unwilling juniors off to bed, and when they had gone the headmaster turned round upon the two in the study, his lips tightened, and he shut the door.

"Now," he said sternly, "Mr. Gale, tell me precisely what has occurred."

Tom Mace stepped forward.

"It is my duty, sir," he said, "to denounce this master as an accomplice of the burglar!"

"An accomplice!" cried the head-master. "What do you mean, Mace! Are you mad?"

"I mean," said Tom steadily, "that on my journey to the school I heard this man in conversation with a rogue—a man of disrepute named Spike Meadows. What connection should a master here have with Meadows? I suggest that he is responsible for this. Ask him why he is wandering about the school fully dressed at this time of night."

(Another Fine Instalment Next Week.)

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