

THE MYSTERY OF THE RUINED TOWER!

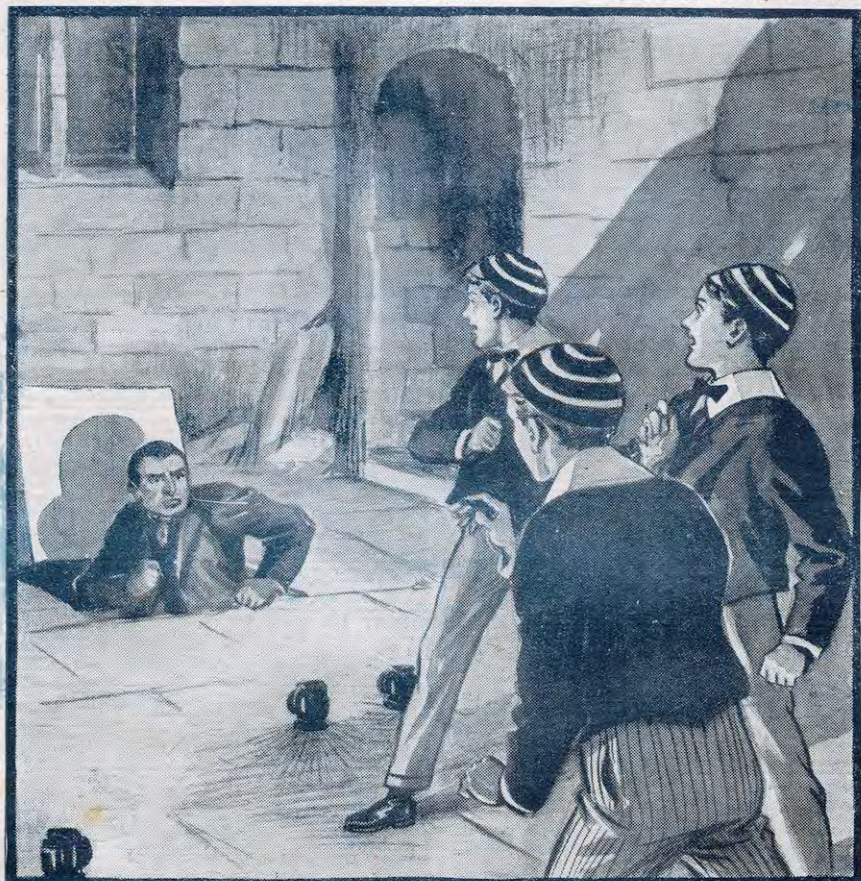
The GEM 1¹/₂ LIBRARY

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Every Wednesday.

September 24th, 1921.



A SURPRISE FOR TOM MERRY & CO.!

(A Startling incident from the Grand Long Complete Story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)

EDITORIAL

My Dear Chums,—

News reaches me of an ardent reader of the "Gem" who had never seen the paper till one day he was waiting for a train. He chanced on a copy, and then—well, I fancy he lost the train when it did slither in, but as he found the "Gem" there's no need to waste sympathy over him. But—here comes the compliment—he wishes he had been earlier. He is bitterly disappointed because he did not meet D'Arcy sooner, likewise Cardew, also Fatty, and Figgins, ditto, in one big sweep of comprehensiveness, the whole crowd, New House, School House, and the other residents, beneath the lordly shadows of St. Jim's. Sorry I cannot help him to swing back the mighty procession of weeks, months, and years. But this keen supporter, the same as others like him, can get instant welcome to the precincts of the school,

and they will find all that matters in the back news way recorded in an interesting manner in the pages of the "St. Jim's News."

Please don't go and get it into your heads that I am booming our new supplement out of proportion to its importance. The "St. Jim's News" has raised enough enthusiasm in a few short weeks to astonish even Taggites; and, remember this, though some back numbers cannot be had at any price, the whipped cream of the old yarns, and all the history, may be found in our supplement week by week.

"I don't think," writes another correspondent, "that anybody in the 'Gem' comes up to Cardew. You never know what he will do next, and he never does things in the same dreary way as some of the others."

That's one for Cardew. Ralph jumped into popularity. He came, saw, conquered, and Cutts soon felt sorry for himself. "Cardew of the Fourth" was the title of the yarn in which the very original fellow made his bow, and it is one of the tales that are remembered.

But I fail to see that Cardew, with all his smartness, has the monopoly of the non-dreary. Take Baggy in the recent mumps story, with Miss Marjoram putting Ratcliff in his place, and Trimble setting out as a champion of the truth, and nothing but the truth. Nothing dreary there!

In case you think I am dealing too much in what has been, might be, was, and so forth, I must say a word about forthcoming events. School serials are popular, but a considerable army of readers like romantic adventure thrown in, and I have been preparing for their tastes. Besides, unknown lands and experiences off the beaten track are appreciated by everybody some time or another. Uncharted seas have their appeal. That is why Sir Ernest Shackleton has gone off on his great new adventure. It is always a bit, but the adventure yarn of today has to be written with extra snap and much sparkle. You will be sure of finding both these qualities in the great new feature in the "Gem."

YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWER TO READER.

"BLUEBELL"—Wildrake's Christian

name is Kit. D'Arcy's hair is black, and his eyes blue; though at times his eyes have matched his hair. You want to know some more about Wildrake? All right, you shall. I am glad to hear you were delighted with the story of how he arrived. Gussy's home is at Eastwood

House, and he is certainly an intimate friend of Tom Merry's. Arthur Augustus has been in love countless times, but on every occasion he managed to fall out again. Grundy and Trimble could also relate an experience of this kind.



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A Grand Long Story
of the
Chums of St. Jim's.

LEIVISON TO THE RESCUE

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Manners Means Business I.

"SEEN my minor?"

Leivison of the Fourth grinned. He couldn't help it.

Manners of the Shell had a frown on his brow, and a cricket-stump in his hand, as he inquired after his minor.

To judge by the frown and the stump, Manners minor was booked for a rather exciting time when his major found him.

"Nothing to grin at!" snapped Manners. "I'm asking you whether you've seen my minor. Nothing funny in that, is there?"

"Nunno! But—" "Well, have you seen him?" grunted Manners. "I'm in rather a hurry."

Tom Merry and Lowther were with their chum Manners. They were not looking so serious as Manners. Evidently they were helping him in his search for Manners minor, but they were not taking the matter so much to heart as their chum. Monty Lowther, in fact, was smiling. Tom Merry was trying not to smile.

"Think it out, Leivison," said Monty Lowther. "It's a rather grave affair. We are looking for Reggie in order to slough him—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" interjected Manners crossly. "Reggie is always near the limit," continued Monty Lowther imperturbably. "Now he has gone over it! There is a rumour that he was seen with a packet of smokes—"

"I saw him!" snapped Manners.

"The inference, my dear Watson," continued Lowther, apparently parodying the style of the celebrated Sherlock Holmes—"the inference is that Manners minor was intending to smoke those smokes. If he does so he will suffer from serious trouble with the central powers. Also it will be bad for his morals. As Reggie's natural guardians and keepers, we are hunting him up hill and down dale. We are going to confiscate the smokes, and we are going to boil Reggie Manners in oil—"

"Would you mind shutting up for one minute, Lowther?" inquired Manners, in a tone of ferocious politeness.

"Couldn't be done!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "When did Monty ever shut up for a whole minute!"

"Look here, you ass—" began Lowther warmly.

"Leivison—" "I've seen your minor," said Leivison. "But it was half an hour ago."

"Where?" "He was going towards the old tower. But—" "Thanks!"

Manners of the Shell started off across the quadrangle at once. Tom Merry and Lowther and Leivison exchanged a glance and a smile. Then the two Shell fellows followed their chum. Leivison strolled away to meet Cardew and Clive, who had just come in at the gates. Apparently he wasn't very deeply interested in Manners minor, or the search for that sportive youth.

Manners' frown was very dark as he led the way through the old elms. He had cause for annoyance. His minor was rather a trouble at the best of times. But on the present occasion he had been really too exasperating.

Manners had been talking—or, rather, listening—to his Form-master, Mr. Linton, in Big Corridor. Manners was a seditious youth, very much in his Form-master's good graces, and Mr. Linton often honoured him with a chat. While the talk was going on, Manners minor had appeared in the corridor—behind Mr. Linton. He had held up a cigarette-packet for his major to see—knowing that Manners couldn't

possibly come after him while Mr. Linton was in the full flow of eloquence.

Then he had strolled away, grinning, and disappeared, leaving Manners most exasperated.

Mr. Linton, quite unconscious of the incident, went on talking—and Manners had to listen politely till the finish.

As it happened, Mr. Linton was unusually long-winded on this occasion—it was ten minutes before Manners escaped.

When the Master of the Shell trotted away at last, Manners only waited to dive up to his study for a cricket-stump, and then he started looking for the festive Reggie.

He was still looking for him. Tom Merry and Lowther kindly joined him in the quest. Manners wasn't grateful—he could not help seeing that his chums saw a humorous side to this affair.

Certainly, Reggie was a young rascal. Manners had been "ragged" at home because Reggie had been found smoking there in the holidays. Manners was supposed to keep an eye on the cheery fag at school, and bring him up in the way he should go, as it were. Reggie oughtn't to have had the smokes—above all, he oughtn't to have displayed them defiantly to his major when that much-troubled youth was engaged with his Form-master and couldn't possibly deal with him. It was really insult, added to injury.

So it was not surprising that Manners major was hunting for Reggie, with a cricket-stump to help him in arguing with the erring youth.

The Terrible Three passed under the elms and round the corner of the school tuckshop, and headed for the ruins, which were at some little distance from the school buildings, though within the walls of St. Jim's.

More than once the old dismantled tower had been the haunt of some secret smoking-party. Racke and Crooke of the Shell had often been there, till they had been caught there by a prefect. Since Kildare's ashlant had driven them out on that occasion, Racke and Crooke were giving the old tower a wide berth. But Manners had little doubt that he would find his minor there, enjoying the cigarettes—or more probably suffering from the after effects of them.

The doorway of the old tower was boarded up, the place being out of bounds, on account of its danger to explorers. Great masses of ivy grew over the outside, almost to the top of what remained of the building. It was easy enough to get in at the deep old windows by climbing the ivy. Manners stopped under the nearest window, and called out angrily:

"Reggie!"

There was no answer, save an echo from the old tower.

"He's not there!" said Tom Merry.

"He wouldn't answer, anyhow!" snapped Manners. "I'm going in."

"Out of bounds, you know," said Lowther.

"Oh rot!"

Manners caught hold of a strong tendril of ivy and swung himself to the lowest window.

In a few moments he disappeared into the building.

"Now listen for the fireworks!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ain't you jolly glad that you haven't a minor, Tommy? I am!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"If I had a minor like Reggie, or like D'Arcy minor, I think I should keep a cricket-stump handy," he remarked. "Leivison minor is the best-behaved of those three young rogues, and he's not a prize-packet. Reggie can't be there, though—I can't hear Manners stumping."

"I can't hear Reggie howling, either!" grinned Lowther.

"Hallo, in there! Have you found the young villain, Manners?"

Manners' face appeared at the deep loop-hole window. There was a serious expression on it, and he was no longer frowning.

"Get in here, you fellows," he said.

"What for?"

"There's something rather queer."

"Your minor?" asked Lowther innocently.

"Fathead! Come in! Somebody's been here."

"Not Reggie?"

"No. Get in."

Somewhat surprised, and rather curious, Tom Merry and Lowther caught hold of the ivy and clambered in at the window, and dropped inside the dusky lower apartment of the ancient tower.

CHAPTER 2.

Caught out of Bounds.

TOM MERRY looked round him. It was a long time since he had been in the ruined tower, but its aspect was quite familiar to him. The lowest apartment was dusky in the broadest sunlight, lighted only by the narrow windows in the thick stone walls. A stone stair, dangerous enough to ascend, led upward, ending in sheer space, where the upper part of the tower had fallen away long years since.

The floor was of great flagstones, mossy with age. Tom Merry and Lowther, glancing round them, saw nothing unusual in the aspect of the place. They looked inquiringly at Manners.

"Well, what's the merry mystery?" asked Monty Lowther. "I don't see anything—not even Reggie's cigarette-ends."

"Reggie's not here," said Manners. "He's not been here, I think. There'd be some trace of his smoking—he had a whole packet of cigarettes. But—somebody else has been here!"

"I don't see—"

"You wouldn't!" said Manners. "But look!"

He pointed to the old flagstones of the floor. Tom and Lowther looked surprised and curious. There were muddy marks on the floor—marks of dried mud—but they had not paid them any particular heed.

Now they heeded, however. On one of the flagstones there was the distinct print of a large boot, and the other traces, when examined, were evidently prints from the same-sized boot.

"Number ten at least," said Manners sagely. "Whoever

loft those tracks had a jolly big hoof."

"Taggles, perhaps," said Lowther.

"Taggles never comes here."

"But who, then—"

"Look!" said Manners, pointing. "The marks lead direct from the window where we got in—it's the easiest one to get into. They lead right across to the centre flagstone, and stop there."

"I see they do," said Tom Merry. "Somebody has been in here with jolly muddy boots."

"You're a scout," said Manners reprovingly. "Don't you see any more in it than that?"

Tom started.

"By Jove! The tracks all lead to the centre of the floor, and there's none going back!" he said.

"Exactly!"

"That's jolly queer," said Lowther, staring at the trail on the old stone floor. "Whoever he was, he must have come in here last night. It was raining last night, and he got his boots wet and muddy. It's been fine all day—and this mud was fresh when it was marked here, of course. Some blessed tramp was in here last night, I suppose, taking shelter from the rain."

"More than that," said Tom Merry, interested now, and his instinct as a Boy Scout aroused. "He came by way of the Wayland Lane. That yellow mud is found there, and nowhere else hereabouts. The chap, whoever he was, footed it from Wayland in the rain."

"Good egg!" said Lowther. "Baden-Powell would be pleased if he could hear you, Tommy. Can you tell us the colour of his whiskers from those giddy tracks?"

"Ass!" said Tom, laughing. "It's queer, a tramp getting in here. I don't see how he'd know anything about the place, or find his way to it in the dark. And he doesn't seem to have left any signs behind him of camping here."

"It's more than queer," said Manners quietly. "A man came in here last night, climbed in at the window, and crossed over to the centre of the floor. If he left again, where are his return tracks?"

"Well, as he isn't here now, I suppose he must have left," grinned Lowther. "Probably his boots had dried by the time he mizzled."

"It's odd," said Tom Merry slowly. "There ought to be a trace. And—and it's more than odd. The man seems to have walked direct from the window to the centre of the

floor, and—and that's all. Not a single sign of where he's moved about the room."

"Not a sign!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther became grave. It was certainly a very curious happening, and Lowther glanced round him in the shadowy, silent ruin rather uneasily.

"I—I suppose he can't be here now," he exclaimed. "There's two or three rooms up the stairs."

"I've looked in them—for Reggie," said Manners. "There's nobody in the tower excepting ourselves."

"Well, it's odd. I suppose the giddy merchant didn't stand in the centre of the floor and vanish into thin air."

"Looks as if he did," said Tom Merry, much puzzled.

Manners dropped on his knees and examined the centre flagstone very keenly. He felt it, but it was as firm as a rock to the touch.

"My hat!" breathed Lowther. "You—you think—"

"St. Jim's is full of queer old secret places, and they're not all known," said Manners. "You remember the secret passages that used to run from Nobody's Study."

"Yes. But—"

"A tramp couldn't know anything about a secret passage here," said Tom Merry. "Why, if there is one, we don't know of it ourselves. Still, I must say it looks—"

Tom Merry broke off abruptly.

The head and shoulders of Knox of the Sixth Form were framed in the narrow window.

"Caught you, have I?" grinned Knox.

"Oh, my hat!"

The bully of the Sixth grinned gleefully. He had certainly caught the Terrible Three "out" this time. The old tower was strictly out of bounds for juniors, and the Terrible Three were there—all of them—fairly caught out of bounds.

Tom Merry & Co. looked grimly at the prefect.

"Smoking here, I dare say!" grinned Knox.

"You know we're not!" said Tom Merry curtly.

"I know that you're out of bounds," said Knox. "And I know that I'm going to take you straight to Mr. Railton and report you."

"We came—" began Manners, and paused.

"Well," said Knox.

But Manners was silent. He did not intend to tell the bully of the Sixth that he had come there expecting to find Reggie smoking. Reggie deserved a licking; but it was not his major's business to get him a prefect's licking.

"Nothing to say?" sneered Knox. "Well, just crawl out the way you went in, and follow me, you young rascals!"

There was nothing for it but to obey. One after another, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther crawled through the window, and dropped outside. They were feeling considerably disgusted with themselves and things generally. They could guess easily enough that Knox had been watching them, and had seen them making for the old tower, and followed them—doubtless in the charitable hope of discovering them smoking there. In that he had been disappointed; but undoubtedly he had caught them breaking a strict rule of the school. And the Terrible Three rubbed their hands in anticipation as they followed him to the School House and to Mr. Railton's study.

"I have to report these three juniors for breaking bounds, sir!" said Knox.

Mr. Railton glanced at the Terrible Three.

The chums of the Shell were silent. For once they had nothing to say for themselves.

"Indeed!" said the Housemaster. "Where have you been, Merry?"

"In the old tower, sir," faltered Tom.

The Housemaster frowned.

"You are well aware, Merry, that access to the tower is forbidden to juniors on account of the dangerous character of the ruins," he exclaimed. "You might have sustained some injury in exploring the place. I am surprised at this, Merry, as you are the head boy of your Form."

Tom crimsoned uncomfortably, but he had nothing to say in reply.

"You may leave them to me, Knox," said Mr. Railton, picking up his cane. And Knox left the study very respectfully, and did not chuckle till he was in the passage.

Swish, swish, swish!

Mr. Railton laid down his cane.

"If this should occur again, your punishment will be more severe," he said. "You may go!"

And the Terrible Three went—squeezing their hands in anguish as they went down the passage. Mr. Railton had given them only one cut each—but the School House master was rather an athlete. For some time afterwards the Terrible Three had no attention to bestow upon the mystery of the footprints in the old tower; and Manners even forgot Reggie. The three Shell fellows sat in their study and squeezed their aching palms, and for quite a long time their only remarks were:

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

CHAPTER 3.

Manners is not Pleased.

LEIVISON minor came into Study No. 9 in the Fourth, with "Julius Caesar" under his arm—the book, of course, not the old gentleman himself.

The three Fourth-Formers of No. 9 greeted him, each in his own way. Sidney Clive gave him a kind nod, Leivison major a nod and a smile, and Ralph Reckness Cardew, who was reclining at ease in the armchair, expressed his feelings in a deep yawn.

"Merry old Julius again?" asked Cardew.

"I want Ernest to help me a bit," said Frank. "I've got tied up with the blessed thing, and old Selby ragged me in prep. Got a few minutes, Ernie?"

"More than a few, kid," answered Leivison.

"Finished prep?"

"Yes."

"The industrious Ernest has finished, and the plodding Clive is still goin' strong," said Cardew. "I haven't started. I'll have some Caesar instead with you, young 'un. Is all Gaul still divided into three parts?"

"Aa!" remarked Leivison.

"Is cheery old Orgetorix still goin' strong?" asked Cardew. "I seem to remember, from the distant days of my youth, that he was the richest and most influential thingummy amongst the What's-his-names. I'm rather uncertain. But I'm sure that all Gaul was divided into three parts when I was in the Third Form at my old school."

"You'd better do some prep, Cardew," said Leivison. "How can I do prep when you are coachin' your merry minor in Caesar?"

"I—I'll come in later—" began Frank.

Cardew held up his hand.

"Stick where you are! You're as welcome as the flowers in May. You're an excuse for cuttin' prep. Never been so glad to see anybody. Get on with the Gallic war." Ralph Reckness Cardew listened, with an ironical appearance of interest, as Leivison major proceeded to expound Caesar to his young brother. Clive went on with his own work, undisturbed. When Caesar had been dealt with, Frank remained to share a packet of toffee, which he seemed to enjoy considerably more than he had enjoyed Caesar.

"How did Reggie get on with his major?" asked Leivison of the Fourth.

Frank grinned.

"The young ass!" he said. "I told him it was rather rotten to pull Manners' leg like that!"

"Did Manners find him?"

"No fear! Reggie lay low till prep in the Third Form-room," said Leivison minor. "Poor old Manners was hunting for him high and low, with a cricket-stump. We watched him from a window."

Cardew chuckled.

"But I hope, Franky," said Cardew, suddenly becoming preternaturally grave. "I hope, my young friend, that you did not share these immortal smokes with that reckless and dissipated fag, Manners minor. You must remember, my good youth, that you set a ghin'in' example to this study. If you should fall from grace, the effect might be serious."

"Fathead!" said Frank cheerily.

"There weren't any smokes. It was only a lark. We spotted Manners being chinned by old Linton, and Reggie had a cigarette-packet he'd picked up. It was only an old packet, and he stuffed it with blotting-paper to make it look as if it was full of cigarettes. Then he held it up for old Manners to see, while Linton was keeping him jawing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Leivison.

"He was only pulling his major's leg," continued Frank. "We simply howled, watching from the window, while Manners was going round hunting for him. D'Arcy minor says it was as good as a play."

"You never pull your major's leg, do you, my dear youth?" asked Cardew.

Frank shook his head.

"I wouldn't," he said. "You see, Manners major is a bit of an ass. My major isn't."

"Thanks!" said Leivison, laughing.

"Poor old Manners!" chuckled Cardew. "And he got licked for going

into the old tower looking for that rascal, Reggie. What a life!"

Leivison minor started.

"I didn't know that," he said. "That's rather a shame. Reggie will be sorry when he hears that."

"Reggie's sorrow will be brief," said Cardew. "It will not cast a shadow on the whole of his young life. He could stand a lot of lickin's given to his major. You'd better give him a tip to keep out of the way, young 'un. Manners will want to pass that lickin' on."

"Poor old Manners!" said Frank. And, having finished his toffee, the fag picked up Julius Caesar and quitted Study No. 9, returning to the Third Form quarters.

Leivison major also quitted the study, going in the opposite direction—towards the Shell passage.

He found the Terrible Three in No. 10 in the Shell. Tom Merry & Co. had finished prep, and they had quite recovered by this time from the caning in Mr. Ralston's study. Tom Merry and Lowther were inclined to discuss the strange affair of the old tower, while Manners was thinking of his minor.

The cricket-stump, still unused, lay on the table, and Manners was thinking that it was about time it was used—on his minor.

"They've finished prep in the Third," remarked Manners.

"I think I ought to trot along and see my young brother,"

Then Leivison of the Fourth looked in.

"Hallo! Trot in, dear boy!" said Monty Lowther.

"Wherefore that expansive grin? Have you been looking at the comic column in the last number of the 'Weekly'?"

"That wouldn't make him grin, would it?" asked Manners.

"More likely to make him sad, old chap!"

"Depends on whether he's got a sense of humour," grunted Lowther.

"Some fellows have, and some other fellows think only of taking rotten photographs, and mugging up rotten mathematics, and playing silly chess, and whacking their minors with a cricket-stump."

"That's what I've dropped in to talk about," said Leivison.

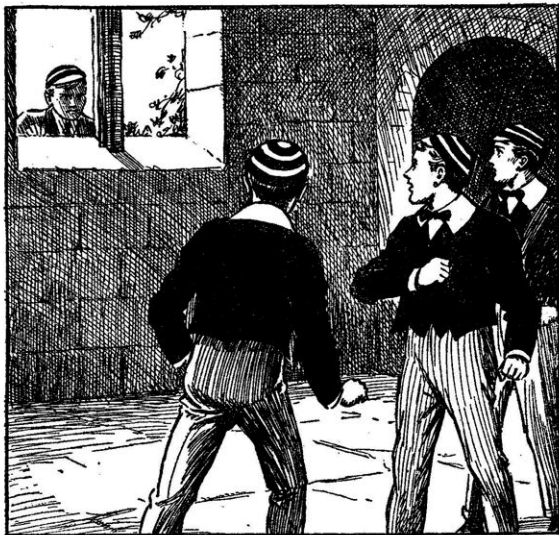
"You haven't stumped your minor yet, Manners?"

"I'm going to."

"There's a little mistake," said Leivison, and he proceeded to explain what he had learned from Frank.

Manners' face was a study as he listened. Tom and Lowther burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Tom Merry's conversation broke off abruptly, for the head and shoulders of Knox of the Sixth Form were framed in the narrow window. "Caught you, have I?" said Knox. "Oh my hat!" gasped the Terrible Three. The old tower was strictly out of bounds for juniors, and they were fairly caught.

"There weren't any smokes, you see," said Levison, with a smile. "Only a fag lark."

Manners knitted his brows. The merriment in the study did not please him. His concern for his minor was the result of brotherly affection, and of what was expected of him at home, and he did not like it to be regarded in a humorous light. In fact, the humorous side of the affair was quite lost on Manners himself.

"Cheeky young sweep, if that's true!" he growled. "Oh, it's true! Frank told me," said Levison. "I thought I'd enlighten you, you know. You don't want to stump Reggie for nothing."

Manners grunted. "Perhaps Frank spun you that yarn for you to spin it to me, to get Reggie off!" he snapped. Levison's face set a little.

"My minor doesn't tell lies!" he said curtly. "Of course he doesn't!" broke in Tom Merry pacifically. "It's all right, Manners, old chap. Nothing to be waxy about."

"Who's waxy?" inquired Manners. "Oh, nobody—nobody at all!" said the captain of the Shell. "I think very likely Levison minor was spinning a yarn to—"

"Oh, bother!" said Tom, before Levison could speak. "Give your minor a rest, Manners! It's barely possible for fellows to have too much even of such a delightful youth as Reggie."

"Just possible!" assented Levison. "Hold on, Levison," said Tom, as the Fourth-Former was turning to the door, with a rather set expression on his face. Levison had not come there to "row," but he resented anything in the shape of an aspersion on his minor. "Hold on, kid! We've got something to tell you!"

"We agreed not to jaw about that all over the school," said Manners. "Might as well tell Levison, and see what he thinks," said Tom. "Levison won't jaw about it."

Manners grunted again. He was feeling sore, and his usual good nature had failed him for the moment. "Well, what is it?" asked Levison rather abruptly.

"Sit on the table, kid, and I'll tell you." And Tom Merry and Lowther proceeded to explain together the strange discovery they had made in the old tower.

Manners did not speak. "It's rather queer," said Levison, when the explanation had been given. "Looks as if somebody had been in the place."

"The fact is, we're going to look into it," said Tom. "We can't go there in the daytime—we've been caught there once, and licked by old Railton. We're going to look into it, though."

"Not at night?" asked Levison, with a start. Tom Merry nodded. "That's the idea! We're going to take our bike lanterns and explore the place, and see if anything is up. We're going to-night."

"There'd be an awful row if it came out," said Levison, "especially after Railton has just caned you for going there."

"We're not going to let it come out," said Lowther. "It's on the strict T.T. of course."

"Things have a way of coming out," said Levison. "Well, we're chancing it," said Tom, with a smile. "Would you like to join up and come along with us?"

"That means all the Fourth knowing about it," said Manners, putting in a remark for the first time. "If it gets out, Tom, we shall be stopped and licked again, very likely!" Levison knitted his brows.

"I shall keep it dark," he said. "You can depend on me not to say a word about it. But I won't come, thanks! The less I see of Manners for a bit, the better I shall be pleased."

"And with that, Levison walked out of Study No. 10. "Dash it all, you might be civil to the chap, Manners," said Tom Merry, rather testily.

"Oh, rot! We don't want him!" "He came here to do you a good turn!" "I never asked him to interfere."

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Tom. "Let's get down to the Common-room!"

The Terrible Three left the study—and the cricket-stump was left where it was, on the table. Annoyed as he was with Levison, Manners had evidently changed his intentions, owing to what the Fourth-Former had told him. There was no "stumping" for Manners' minor that evening—which was, as a matter of fact, rather a disappointment for the sporting Reggie. For Reggie Manners was fully expecting a visit from his major in the Third Form-room, and he had rallied a dozen fags to back him up. If Manners of the Shell had dropped in with the stump, he would have awakened a very serious hornets' nest. But as he did not drop in, he did not know it, and was quite unaware how much reason he had to be obliged to Levison of the Fourth.

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CHAPTER 4.

At the Hour of Midnight!

KILDARE of the Sixth saw lights out in the Shell dormitory that night; and there was nothing to make Kildare suspicious. The Terrible Three had talked the matter over in their study, but they had not said a word outside their own select circle in the Shell. That there was some mystery in the discovery they had made in the old tower, they felt assured—and they intended to search the place and ascertain exactly what it was. But they realised that it was very necessary to keep their intentions secret from masters and prefects. So not a word was said, and even Talbot and Kangaroo were not confided in. The least said was the soonest mended, as Monty Lowther sapiently remarked.

It was not till the rest of the Shell were fast asleep, and eleven o'clock had sounded, that the Terrible Three stirred. Then they quietly rose and dressed.

They quitted the dormitory silently in rubber shoes, which they had placed in readiness under their beds. There were still lights downstairs; but the upper part of the School House was quite dark. The chums of the Shell groped their way along to the box-room, where the bike-lanterns had been bestowed during the evening. A few minutes later, they had dropped from the leads outside, and were scuttling round the dark building.

There was a glimmer of starlight in the sky. The old elms stood out in black shadow against the stars. A light glimmered from the window of Mr. Railton's study. There were lights in the Head's house. But the greater part of the mass of buildings was in darkness.

"All serene," said Tom Merry.

"Right as rain," said Monty Lowther. "Lucky it isn't raining to-night!"

"Yes, rather!"

The three juniors crept on quietly, and reached the secluded old ruins.

They stopped before the old tower, which rose black and silent before them, and hesitated a little.

The place was lonely, dark, and eerie at that hour of the night. The juniors felt a little thrill as they peered about them in the shadows.

They were not thinking of danger. So far as they could see, there was no danger in the expedition—except the danger from falling stones in the ruins, which they gave little thought to.

But the eeriness of the place impressed them, in spite of themselves. It was one thing to plan the excursion in the cheery, well-lighted study—it seemed quite another now that they were on the spot, in the solitude and darkness.

To tell the exact truth, the Terrible Three would greatly have preferred their warm beds in the Shell dormitory at that moment. But nothing would have induced them to admit that, even to themselves.

"Well, here we are!" said Tom Merry. "Better not light the lanterns till we get inside. Might be seen!"

"Might take a tumble in the dark," murmured Manners.

"I'll get in first and put on a light."

"You're just as likely to take a tumble as I am."

"Don't argue, old chap!"

Tom Merry clambered in at the narrow window, and scrambled down inside the tower. Two or three loose stones fell and rolled, and the ivy rustled; but the captain of the Shell landed safely.

He struck a match and lighted the bike lantern.

"Come on!"

Manners and Lowther followed him in. Two more lanterns were lighted, and the dusky old room was more illuminated now than in the daytime.

It looked exactly the same as when the Terrible Three had left it in the afternoon, called out by Knox of the Sixth.

The muddy tracks remained unchanged on the old stone flags, dried hard there.

"Nobody's been here since," said Manners.

"That's pretty clear. Now, about that merry old stone," said Tom. "If it moves, we're jolly soon going to move it!"

"Hold on!" said Manners. "Look here, from what we've seen, it looks as if somebody came in here last night, and if the stone lifts, it looks as if he— whoever he was—went down into a cellar for something—"

"That's what it looks like!"

"And stayed there," said Manners.

"Yes."

"If he's still there, and we come on him suddenly—"

Manners paused. "—I say, we don't know what kind of a job we may be!"

"Some tramp," said Lowther.

"Might be a riddy burglar hanging about for a chance to rob the school," said Tom Merry.

"I'm not funky!" said Manners. "But if we come suddenly on some brute of a ruffian—"

"Well, we're three to one!" said Tom. "Dash it all, one

man couldn't hurt us, even if he was a rough. We could bash him with the bike lamp, if it came to that."

"We're not turning back now," said Lowther.

"Oh, all right!" said Manners.

Manners was afflicted with doubts as to the wisdom of the enterprise—rather late in the day, it is true. But he dropped the subject; he did not want to appear to be suffering from "cold feet."

The three juniors proceeded to make a very careful examination of the central flagstone.

They discerned that it was quite detached from the surrounding stones; the moss on the edges was cleared away, while all the other flags had moss thick between them.

This was a rather startling indication; for certainly there was no reason why the edges of the stone should be clear of moss, in contrast to all the rest; unless it had been moved.

But their search for an opening was vain; the stone refused to move, though they pressed it in every spot, in search of some secret spring, and tried to raise it by prising the edges with a pocket-knife. The great stone was certainly too heavy to be lifted by such means, even if it was not fastened.

For a good half-hour the chums of the Shell continued their efforts, but they gave up at last, tired and a little irritated.

"Looks as if there's nothing in it, after all!" grumbled Monty Lowther. "We've come here on a giddy wild-geese chase!"

"Looks like it!" agreed Manners.

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Blessed if I think so," he said. "That stone has been moved—and recently, too, I'm sure of that. It's fastened underneath somehow. Look here, we've simply got to find out the secret of it."

"Let's take a bit of a rest, then," yawned Lowther. "I've got some milk chocolate here."

"Good!"

The bike lanterns were set on the floor, and the Terrible Three leaned on the wall to rest and refresh themselves with milk chocolate. Twelve strokes boomed out from the clock-tower in the distance.

"Midnight!" said Tom.

"'Tis now the very witching hour of night!" began Monty Lowther.

He was suddenly interrupted.

Without a warning, without a sound, the great central stone suddenly rose on end from the floor and stood upright.

A black orifice was revealed.

The juniors stood and stared at it, dumbfounded for the moment. The sudden happening had taken them utterly by surprise.

Before they could recover from their amazement, before they could move, a man's figure leaped from the opening.

The lantern light fell full upon him.

It showed a short, stumpy man, with a hooked nose and narrow, cunning eyes. He seemed, for the instant, as astonished as the juniors.

He stood on the edge of the opening, staring at them blankly, but with an expression of savage ferocity growing in his hard, sallow face.

Tom Merry found his voice.

"Who—what—"

The man made a spring towards them. His hand was in his pocket. It came flashing out with a revolver in it.

"Silence! Silence, on your lives! One word—one cry—and I shoot you dead where you stand!"

CHAPTER 5.

What Levison Saw.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, of the Fourth Form, stirred in his slumber and awoke, and blinked drowsily into the darkness of the Fourth Form dormitory. He raised his head from the pillow and blinked around.

"Bai Jove! Who's that wakin' me up!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Is that some silly ass gettin' out of bed?"

"Hush!"

"Is that you, Levison?"

"Yes. Don't make a row."

Arthur Augustus sat up.

There was a glimmer of starlight, and D'Arcy could dimly make out the figure of Ernest Levison.

"What are you gettin' up for, Levison?"

"I can't sleep."

"Oh, wubbish, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Go to bed and twy to sleep. No good twototin' wound the dormitoway and wakin' othah fellows up. It is inconsiderate, Levison. I was just dreamin' that my new coat had come home from the tailah's, and that it fitted me perfectly."

Levison laughed softly.

"I may not have so vewy pleasant a dream when I go to sleep again," said Arthur Augustus, reprovingly. "Pway be quiet. Go to bed; and if you can't go to sleep, twy countin'. Count imaginawy sheep goin' ovah a stile, you know. By the time you get to a thousand or so you will be fast asleep."

"Who's that jawin'?" came a sleepy voice from Jack Blake's bed. "Is that Gussy chattering in his sleep?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's the row?" asked Digby's voice. And Herries grunted and nearly awoke.

"It's all right," said Levison. "I can't sleep, so I've turned out of bed. No need for you fellows to wake up."

"Gag Gussy, then!" yawned Blake. And he turned his head on the pillow and closed his eyes again.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up, Gussy," implored Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Yes, do dry up, old top," said Levison. "You'll wake all the fellows."

"Weally, Levison—"

Levison moved away from the beds. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a sleepy sniff and laid his head upon the pillow again.

Levison listened uneasily. He was afraid that the murmuring voices might have awakened his chums, Cardew and Clive. But they were further away, and he was relieved to hear no sound from them.

Ernest Levison was in a troubled mood.

But for Manners' rather "ratty" behaviour, Levison would probably have joined the Terrible Three in their escapade that night. Now he could not help thinking about it.

He had fallen asleep at first, but he had awakened again,



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stirred in his slumber and awoke. He raised his head from the pillow and blinked around. "Bai Jove!" he murmured. "Who's that wakin' me up?" "Hush!" "Is that you, Levison?" "Yes. Don't make a row." D'Arcy sat up, and in the glimmer of starlight, could dimly make out the figure of Ernest Levison.

and he found himself thinking again of the Shell fellows and their rather reckless enterprise.

If they had given him a correct description of their discovery in the old tower, it seemed to Levison that there must be something wrong there—at least something very unusual.

It was possible, at least, that there was danger in the enterprise, and the possibility seemed greater than ever now, in the silence and darkness of the night.

Levison thought of the three reckless juniors "rooting" about in the old ruins, and he was distinctly uneasy.

After Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had composed himself to sleep again, Levison climbed to the dormitory window and looked out. He peered from the window in the direction of the ruined tower. But the dark old elms shut off any possible view.

Levison made up his mind at last.

He was anxious, and the easiest way of allaying his anxiety was to follow the Shell fellows and learn what had happened.

Taking care not to awaken his form-fellows, Ernest Levison dressed himself and slipped out of the dormitory.

In a few minutes more he was in the box-room. There he expected to ascertain beyond doubt whether the Terrible Three had carried out their intention of quitting the School-house. He knew that three bike lanterns had been placed there in readiness.

It did not take him long to ascertain that the three lanterns were gone, and that the window was raised an inch at the bottom—left thus to be pushed up from outside when the juniors returned.

"That settles it," muttered Levison.

He pushed up the window, climbed out on the sill, and pulled the sash down. Then he dropped quietly to the leads, and thence to the ground.

Midnight tolled out over St. Jim's as Ernest Levison started for the ruins.

Through slits and gaps in the old walls of the tower, and through the window apertures, there came a glimmering of light—the light of the Shell fellows' bike lanterns.

"They're there!" muttered Levison.

He crept closer to the old tower.

As he came under the window by which the juniors had entered, there came the sound of a voice from within—not the voice of a schoolboy. It was a strange voice to Levison—a deep, rather husky voice, with a savage snarl in it.

"Keep quiet! I've warned you. One howl, and you get a dose of lead. I mean business, hang you, you meddling, spying fools."

Levison's heart throbbed.

He had a vague apprehension of danger for the three explorers, and it was pretty evident now that his apprehensions were well-founded.

For a moment he stood still, his heart thumping. Then, quickly and cautiously, he raised himself on the old masonry and got a knee into the window-opening. Kneeling there, he could see into the lowest room of the tower; a wide strip of the floor was disclosed to his view.

He started, as he saw the central flagstone standing on end; and from his raised position he could see the beginning of a flight of stone steps leading downward beyond the aperture.

But at that he gave hardly a glance. What fixed his look was the figure of a stumpy, narrow-eyed man with a hooked nose, standing revolver in hand by the opening—the revolver levelled. Levison could guess at whom it was levelled, though the Terrible Three were out of his range of vision.

Tom Merry's voice came to his ears.

"Who—who are you?"

"Never mind who I am, you young spy," came the savage answer. "Put your hands over your head, sharp."

"Look here—"

The man made a gesture with the revolver.

"If you don't want your brains blown over that wall!" he said threateningly.

Levison heard a movement; he knew that the Terrible Three had obeyed the savage order.

Crouching in the aperture in the wall, the Fourth-Former made no sound. Keeping back out of sight, he watched and waited, and tried to still the hurried throbbing of his heart. His hand closed on a loose stone, and he gripped it tight. What was about to happen he could not guess, but as things he knew, and that was, that if there was a struggle between the Shell fellows and the ruffian with the revolver, he would spring into the tower at once and join in. And he waited and watched, with throbbing heart, the stone gripped in his hand—ready.

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CHAPTER 6. A Desperate Deed!

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther had put their hands over their heads. They were startled and dismayed; and they realised that it was useless to argue with a levelled revolver. The hook-nosed ruffian looked as if he was quite prepared to shoot—as very probably he was. It dawned upon the minds of the juniors that the secret they had stumbled upon in the old tower, was a much darker and more serious matter than they had dreamed. But dismayed, as they were, they kept cool. They even noted that the hook-nosed man had large, muddy boots—still muddy with the yellow mud of Wayland Lane dried upon them—and they guessed that this was the man whose tracks they had found on the flags. Apparently he had come there the previous night, and had remained a whole day in the mysterious recesses hidden under the ruins; and by ill-fortune for the Terrible Three, he had been quitting his hiding-place at midnight, doubtless intending to depart under the cover of darkness. What his object might be, in skulking for twenty-four hours in the cellars under the ruins, was a deep mystery to the juniors. But that he had an object was obvious, and it was equally obvious that he was a desperate man.

His narrow eyes twinkled and glittered with anger and malice as he looked at the juniors over the revolver. He seemed more inclined than not to use the deadly weapon; and Tom Merry wondered whether he was only restrained by the knowledge that a pistol-shot would awaken the school.

"What are you 'doin' here?" he rapped out suddenly.

"Exploring the place," answered Tom.

"You come 'ere at midnight rooting round jest to explore these 'ere ruins?" asked the ruffian suspiciously.

"Yes."

"You didn't expect to see me, what?"

"We should hardly have come, if we had!" said Tom.

The ruffian nodded; this answer seemed to convince him. But he still glared savagely and suspiciously at the Shell fellows.

"Anybody else with you?" he snapped.

"No."

"You came 'ere alone, jest to explore the place?"

"Yes."

"Anybody knowed you came?"

"Yes, one fellow," said Tom.

The ruffian muttered a curse. There was a sound below the opening in the floor, and a tousled head rose into view on the stone steps. A husky voice called up:

"What the thunder's the row, Hooky? What—"

"Stow the gab, you fool!" muttered Hooky. "We're found out; there's three bally schoolboys 'ere, and there's another knows they came."

"Thunder!"

The second man emerged from the opening. He was a fat, greasy-looking man of middle age, his fat fingers stained with chemicals. He was dirty and untidy, and wore a tattered suit of overalls; but he gave the impression of having been a manservant, or something of the kind, in his better days. He stared hard at the juniors.

"Know them, Nobby?" snapped Hooky.

"No; they're since my time," answered the fat man. "They wasn't here when I was in my old job. Don't let 'em get away."

"You bet!" snarled the hook-nosed man. He muttered a brutal oath. "They say another bloke knows they're 'ere."

"Lyin'!" said Nobby. "That's a trick to make you let 'em go."

"If I thought so—" The ruffian gave the three juniors a savage look. "Anyhow, they ain't going. We've got 'em safe, and we'll put 'em safe where they can't talk!"

"Look here—" began Manners.

"Hold your tongue!" snarled the hook-nosed man.

"It's past midnight!" muttered the fat man. "The car was to be ready at midnight, Hooky."

"Don't I know it?" Hooky made a motion with the revolver. "Get down them steps, you spying young hounds!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another.

What dark secret was hidden in the recesses under the old tower, they could not guess; but they understood that they were to be made prisoners, to keep that secret safe.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"We're not going!" he said firmly. "And I warn you, my man, that if you use that revolver, you'll wake up the school, and you'll never get away from here."

Hooky rapped out a savage oath.

"Get down them steps! Shove them down, Nobby, while I keep them covered!"

"Get a move on!" snapped the fat man, and he shoved the three juniors roughly towards the aperture in the floor.

Crash!

Tom Merry hit out at once, and Nobby staggered back. The next moment he leaped at the juniors like a fury, and they struggled. The hook-nosed man rushed on the struggling crowd, clubbing the revolver, evidently not venturing to fire if he could help it.

A blow from the clubbed revolver caught Tom Merry on the shoulder, and sent him reeling over the edge of the opening. He fell on the steps with a cry of pain.

That was more than enough for Levison. Gripping the heavy stone in his hand, Ernest Levison came scrambling through the window-opening, and leaped into the room.

Before the ruffians knew he was there, he hurled the stone, and it struck Hooky on the side of the head, sending him staggering.

The ruffian yelled. He clasped one hand to his head, and spun round, the revolver glittering in the other. There was murder in the man's brutal face now.

Crack! He fired, and the bullet missed Levison by an inch or less.

"Help!" Manners and Lowther were struggling in the grasp of Nobby. The three of them went reeling over the verge of the opening in the floor, and crashed on the steps below, sending Tom Merry rolling down the steps.

Nobby tore himself loose, and came springing up. He leaped into the upper room, and grasped at the upright stone. There was a crash as it descended into its place.

Levison of the Fourth had leaped for the stairs as the hook-nosed man rushed on him.

The revolver rang out again, and a bullet chipped the masonry a foot from Levison as he bounded up the stairs of the tower.

The struggle had gone against the Terrible Three, in spite of Ernest Levison's help; and the Fourth-Former was now thinking only of getting away, and getting aid. He raced up the rickety, shaky stairs of the old tower, with the enraged ruffian behind him.

Levison's idea was to slip through one of the upper window apertures, and escape down the ivy. But the ruffian guessed his thought.

"Look out for him below, Nobby!" he panted.

"You bet!" Nobby scrambled out of the lower window, and jumped outside, with a revolver in his hand.

He stood watching the ivy-clad wall of the tower from outside, looking for a sign of the fugitive schoolboy.

Levison, almost at the same moment, scrambled through a high window-opening, and swung out on the ivy.

There was a shout from within the tower.

"Look out for him, Nobby!"

"I'm looking out!"

Levison hung on the ivy. He was scrambling downward; but the voice below stopped him. A descent meant falling fairly into the hands of the ruffian waiting underneath.

"Come down, will you?" hissed Nobby, waving the revolver below.

Levison clung to the ivy, and shouted:

"Help! Help!"

Crack!

The ruffian below pulled the trigger. A wild cry rang out from Ernest Levison, and he fell.

CHAPTER 7.

In Merelless Hands.

"YOUVE killed him!"

The hook-nosed man panted out the words as he came breathlessly from the tower, scrambling out hurriedly.

Levison lay inert on the ground.

His face, upturned, was white and still, and across one pallid cheek was a red streak of blood.

Hooky's rage seemed to fade as he looked at the fallen junior. It was apprehension that was in his brutal face now.

Nobby shoved the revolver into his pocket sullenly.

"You fired at him, too!" he snarled.

"I ain't blaming you!" muttered the hook-nosed man.

"Tain't that; but—but if he's dead—"

He stared away in the direction of the school. The trees and buildings hid the School House from sight, but there were lights flashing in two or three directions, and the sound of voices falling.

The pistol-shots had alarmed St. Jim's. A lantern gleamed in the starlight near the elms. Taggles, the porter, was carrying it, and shouting. In a few moments more the whole place was to be as excited as a disturbed hive, and Hooky realised it. The two ruffians had awakened a hornet's nest round their own ears.

"We've got to cut," said the ruffian, in a shaky whisper.

"No time to waste now, Nobby. They'll never find the tools down there. They'll never find them three young

'ounds. That cellar's safe. The car's waiting at the corner of the lane, and I've got the stuff about me—you understand! We've got to clear, and give this quarter a wide berth for a bit."

"I know," muttered Nobby.

Hooky bent over Levison.

The terrible penalty of murder was in his thoughts. Savagely enraged as he was with the schoolboy, he would have given much to see him stir—to see his eyes open.

He gave a sudden exclamation as he examined the boy hurriedly.

"He's not dead, Nobby!"

"He looks—"

"Stunned," said Hooky. "Look 'ere, this 'ere scratch. You missed him; only took a clip o' skin from his forehead 'ere. He jist dropped, that was all, and he's stunned."

Nobby gave a gasping breath of relief. Already he had felt the hangman's rope on his bull neck, in imagination.

"Let's cut, then," he muttered.

"Old on," said the more cautious Hooky. "He'll come to soon, and then he'll talk. They'll find the cellar—he's seen the stone open—they'll get 'old of the tools, and the rest. We can't leave him here."

Nobby gave a terrified look round.

Lights were flashing in a dozen different directions, and they were advancing towards the ruins. A shouting voice was heard in the distance.

"It was from the old tower; that's where the shots were. I'm certain of that, Mr. Railton."

"They'll be 'ere in two ticks," whispered Nobby. "No time to chuck him down into the cellar, Hooky. By the time we'd got him inside, through that window, they'll be here, and we'd never get out again. We'd be caught like rats in a trap!"

"Lay hold of him," answered the hook-nosed man.

"I tell you there's no time!" almost seethed Nobby. "If we get inside there again we'll be caught there, with the stone open, p'raps. 'Ow do we know they mightn't find the cellar, too, even if we get the stone shut in time. I tell you—"

"I know that as well as you do!" hissed Hooky. "Lay hold of him, and carry him away."

"Oh!" Nobby understood suddenly. "To the car?"

"Yes."

"That's all right."

Levison of the Fourth was lifted from the ground between the two ruffians. His weight was little enough to the two powerful men.

They rushed away with him into the gloom.

Evidently they knew their way about the place—at least, the fat man did, and he led the way. By the time the lights were gleaming round the old tower, the two ruffians had reached a distant point of the school walls, and Nobby had climbed up, and Hooky had handed the insensible junior up to him. A minute more and they were in the road.

Carrying Levison between them, the two ruffians hurried away at a run, and disappeared into the darkness of the night.

A quarter of a mile from the school a hooded car was waiting, with lights out, in a muddy side-lane. The chauffeur was leaning against a tree, smoking, and he started out of the shadows as the two men came up.

"What the thunder!" he ejaculated.

"No time for talk now, Stoker. Get the car going."

"But—but what—"

"Shut up, I tell you!" hissed Hooky. "They may be arter us. Get the engine going, you fool!"

Levison was placed in the car.

Nobby and the hook-nosed man followed him in, and the chauffeur started the engine.

Very quickly the car glided away up the lane.

It turned out of the lane into the Wayland road, and put on speed, and the two ruffians breathed more freely as the miles lengthened between them and St. Jim's.

There was a groan from the dark floor of the car, and Hooky muttered a curse.

"He's coming to!"

Levison's eyes opened, and he stared about him dazedly.

The hook-nosed man bent over him.

"Quiet, you whelp!"

"Where am I?" gasped Levison.

"You're in our 'ands, you young 'ound," said Hooky. "I'd knock your brains out now, in the car, and have done with you, only—"

He broke off. "I'll smash your head in with the butt of my shooter, if you make a sound! I mean that. Lie quiet!"

Levison lay back, his head throbbing with anguish, his senses in a whirl. But he spoke again in a few minutes.

"Where are you taking me?"

"You'll find out soon enough."

"Where are the others—Tom Merry, Manners, and—"

Lowther? Have you left them shut up in the cellar?" panted Levison.

Hooky laughed savagely.

Just that," he answered.
"They won't be found."

"I reckon not."

"You're not going to leave them there to starve?" panted Levison. "If they're not found, they may die there!"
"Let them!" said Hooky callously. "If they're not found afore they peg out, they won't be found arter, and it will be all safe."

"You—you villain!" panted Levison. "You scoundrel! Help!"

"You won't keep quiet, won't you!" hissed Hooky. He raised the butt-end of his revolver, but his companion caught his arm.

"Enough of that," said Nobby. "Stick something in his jaw to keep him quiet. We don't want the cub to die on our hands!"

Levison struggled to his feet. He was grasped at once by the two ruffians, and flung into the bottom of the car; and in a minute more a gag was thrust into his mouth and his wrists were bound.

The car rushed on through the night, with Levison of the Fourth a helpless prisoner.

CHAPTER 8. Buried Alive!

"GOT a match?"

"Here you are, Tom." Monty Lowther struck a match, and the light glimmered on the stone stair below the old tower.

The three Shell fellows looked at one another grimly. Over their heads the heavy flagstone shut them off from escape; below them the stair continued downwards. No sound came to their ears. The thick stone deadened every sound from above.

"We're in a precious fix!" said Manners, rubbing his head. All three of the juniors were severely shaken and bruised by their fall upon the stone stair.

"We are!" said Tom. "We've got to get out of it somehow. That was some other chap chipping in, wasn't it, I heard I fell!"

"It was Levison of the Fourth," said Lowther.
"I saw him," said Manners, in a very subdued voice. "He—he must have followed us. Poor old Levison! It was plucky of him to chip in like that."

"We've got to get out of this," said Tom desperately. "Come on, and let's try the stone."

"I've shoved at it already," said Lowther. "It's like a rock."

"Let's try again." Lowther struck another match, and the Terrible Three ascended to the top step. There they had to crouch to get under the stone trap. All three of them planted their shoulders against it, and shoved.

"All together!" breathed Tom Merry. The strain was terrible. But it did not move the stone. The Terrible Three desisted at last, breathless and exhausted, their nerves throbbing. Tom sank down on the step to rest.

"It's fixed, somehow," he said. "There's some trick of fastening it. We should have raised it otherwise, heavy as it is."

"What on earth's happened to Levison?" muttered Manners. "One of those villains was firing——"

Tom shuddered.
"If he got away he'll soon bring help to us," said Lowther. "Then we shall know," said Tom, in a low voice. "Poor old Levison! I—suppose he followed to see that we came to no harm, and—dropped into trouble himself along with us."

The Shell fellows rested a while, and then descended the steps, striking matches as they went. They had a faint hope that there might be some other outlet to the secret recess under the tower.

At the bottom of the stone stair they found themselves in a damp, stone-walled passage. A light glimmered ahead at the end of the passage.

They followed it, and stepped into a vaulted room. An electric-lamp was burning there, on a trestle table. In one corner of the room were blankets and rugs, showing that someone had slept there. A small cooking-stove, some cooking utensils, and a pile of empty tins also caught their eyes. And on a bench there were a number of tools and instruments that they did not even know the use of.

The juniors stared round the vault.
"They've been camping here," said Tom Merry. "The place looks as if it's been lived in for weeks."

"But what—why?" muttered Manners. "Why should they camp here? What was their object, Tom?"

"Some dirty work has been going on," answered the captain of the Shell quietly. "Look at these things! Look at this die! That's for printing, and you can see what is engraved on it. It's a die for printing a pound note!"

"The Gem Library—No. 711."

"Counterfeiters!" exclaimed Lowther, with a deep breath. "That's it!"

"Good heavens!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another. They knew the secret of the vault now. That hidden recess, unknown to all, was used as a retreat and workshop by a gang of counterfeiters, engaged in the manufacture of spurious currency notes!

They understood now the savage rage of the ruffians when they found themselves discovered. There was penal servitude hanging over the heads of the rascals if the police came upon them!

"The cheek of it!" said Lowther. "A forger's den—inside the walls of St. Jim's! Who'd have thought it?"

"Nobody," said Tom. "And that's why they fixed their quarters here, I suppose. It was about the safest place they could find. But how they knew of this secret vault I can't imagine. I'm certain that nobody in the school knows of it."

"It's a giddy mystery."

"I think I can guess," said Manners quietly. "Did you hear what those rascals said? One asked the other if he knew us, and the other—the fat man—said that we were since his time. He's been a servant in the school at some time, long ago, and then he must have hit on this place by accident. And when he wanted a secret hiding-place for this swindling game he thought of it, and they came here."

Tom Merry nodded.
"That's it, I suppose," he said. "Yes, that must be it. One of them worked at the printing of false notes here, and the other came at midnight and put it in circulation. He came at midnight and left at midnight. I suppose it was safe enough. And but for our finding the muddy footprints in the tower, the game might have gone on unsuspected for as long as they liked."

"Rather an unlucky discovery for us, as it turns out," said Lowther ruefully.

The Terrible Three searched through the vault. They soon found that there was no exit, excepting by the stone stair to the tower. As the air was fresh enough, it was evident that there was some hidden pipe for ventilation, but they failed to discover it. They found a quantity of tinned food, and bottles of mineral waters, and several bottles of spirits. Evidently the rascals had prepared for a long stay in the vault. They found, too, several bundles of finished counterfeit notes, as well as a number in an unfinished state. Nobby, evidently, had not intended to leave the secret den with his comrade. It was the alarm in the tower that had called him up. The lamp had been left burning, and there was a half-smoked cigar on the table.

Tom Merry looked at his watch. It was past two o'clock. There was no sign of the ruffians returning to the vault, and it was clear that they had fled. It was easy for the juniors to guess that the school had been awakened and alarmed by the firing, and that Hooky and Nobby had fled to save their skins, leaving the three juniors shut down in the vault. But what had become of Levison?

The juniors ascended the stairs again, and once more strove to lift the flagstone. But they strove in vain. It was immovable, and they desisted at last from the hopeless attempt. Then they shouted for help, and kept up a steady shouting for five minutes or more. Only the rumbling echoes of their shouts answered them from the vault below.

"It's no good," said Tom Merry at last. "That stone shuts off all sound. If Levison's got away he'll bring help."

"He would have brought help long before this if he had got away," said Manners, in a low voice.

"I suppose so." The juniors descended to the vault again. There was nothing to be done but wait for rescue! And if Levison had not escaped, what hope was there of rescue? But if he had not escaped, what had happened to him? That was a dark and terrible thought in the minds of the Shell fellows.

They threw themselves on the blankets at last in the corner of the vault to sleep.

When they awakened all was darkness. The electric-lamp had burned out.

Tom Merry struck a match and looked at his watch. It indicated three o'clock. But whether it was three in the morning or three in the afternoon he could not tell. He did not know how long he had slept. Whether it was day above the ground or night there was no means of guessing. No gleam of the sun ever penetrated into the vault below the old tower.

And help had not come!

In the flickering light of the match the Terrible Three looked at one another, and read in each other's faces the despair that was in all their hearts! Help had not come. Levison, dead or alive, had been unable to speak, and the secret of the moving flagstone was known to no other. The chums of the Shell were buried alive!

CHAPTER 9.
Missing!

"IT'S simply extraordinary!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, delivered that opinion, and for once all Study No. 6 agreed with him.

St. Jim's was fairly seething with excitement.

All the school knew what had happened, so far as the facts could be known. The School House hummed with discussion, the New House was almost equally excited. Quite early in the morning Figgins & Co. had come over from the New House athirst for information. But the School House fellows could tell them little.

There had been an alarm in the night. Firing had been heard, and it was supposed to have taken place in or near the old tower. Mr. Railton, Kildare, and four or five of the Sixth had hurried out to search. They had found absolutely nothing. No trace of any intruder was discovered. But Mr. Railton had called the roll, all the fellows being out of bed with the alarm. And when the roll was called, four fellows were found to be missing—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Levison of the Fourth.

By morning nothing had been seen or heard of them, and with the morning came the police. But Inspector Skeat, from Wayland, was blankly puzzled. He had searched the old tower, and found traces of broken ivy, where someone had apparently climbed. But the old tower was empty and silent. Nothing was discovered there but three bike lanterns, which Mr. Railton had found there the previous night, and left for the police to see. The bike lanterns were known to belong to the Terrible Three. That was the only clue, and it was a baffling one.

So far as the story could be figured out, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had gone to the old tower in the night with the bike lanterns, apparently to explore the place. It was remembered that Knox of the Sixth had discovered them there the previous afternoon, and reported them to the House-master. But why had they left the lanterns there, still burning, and where had they gone?

The St. Jim's fellows asked themselves those questions without being able to find any answer.

The case of Levison of the Fourth was still more mysterious. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave information of how he had found Levison awake and out of bed in the middle of the night. Blake and Herries and Dig corroborated. But they had gone to sleep again, and did not know that Levison had left the dormitory. Obviously, he had done so; but whether he had gone to the old tower with the Shell fellows was not known. And what had become of him since?

A crowd of fellows searched the tower from end to end—"out of bounds" was utterly disregarded, in the circumstances. If anything could have been learned from "sign" there, the number of searchers made it hopeless—the muddy track that had first attracted the notice of the Terrible Three was completely obliterated. Even Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior, failed to discover anything of use. That there existed a secret recess below the old tower was not likely to occur to anyone, as such a thing had never been heard of in the school; and the presence of strangers within the school precincts was not even suspected. All that was known was, that four juniors had gone out, and had not returned, and that three of them had visited the old tower before completely vanishing.

As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declared, it was simply extraordinary!

That day there was little attention given to lessons in the Form-rooms at St. Jim's.

Two fags of the Third, especially, were in a state of distress; and even Mr. Selby, the snappish master of the Third, was lenient and almost kind to Levison minor and Manners minor.

For it was clear that something serious had happened to the missing juniors, though of what nature no one could even surmise.

Levison minor was very white in class;

and Reggie Manners, though perhaps not so deeply moved as Frank Levison, was utterly miserable. The trick he had played on his major the previous day weighed on his conscience. But it was rather too late for repentance now—as it generally was when Reggie repented.

Wally D'Arcy, the third member of the celebrated company of fags, tried to comfort Frank and Reggie. But his consolations were of little avail.

"They're all right somewhere," said D'Arcy minor. "Your major knows his way about, Frank. 'Tain't as if he was an ass like my major, or a duffer like——" Wally was about to say "like Reggie's major," but he checked himself in time. "Depend on it, Levison major will pull through. He's gone off on a jaunt, and he'll 'turn up all right."

"He's not gone off of his own accord," Frank said.

"Must have!" said Wally. "Besides, my major saw him in the dorm. He turned out of his own accord."

"They all went out of their own accord!" said Reggie Manners. "The box-room window was found unfastened."

"Well, then, they're all right!" said Wally. "It's one of their larks, and they'll come home all right."

"I wish I could think so," said Frank, with a sigh.

"Something's happened," said Reggie.

"But what?" demanded Wally.

"Blessed if I know."

There was no news during the day. The Head was seen to be looking very grave. Mr. Railton was as grave as the Head.

The telephone was busily at work. The school knew that the missing juniors were being searched for far and wide. Yet there was no news.

A sombre shadow seemed to settle on St. Jim's when night came on again, and no news had been received of the missing juniors.

At bed-time, the fellows went very quietly to their dormitories. Even Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth was very subdued, and seemed to have lost his usual mocking cynicism. Clive was frankly distressed by the unaccountable disappearance of his chum; and Cardew probably felt it as keenly, though he was not likely to show it, if he could help it.

After all St. Jim's was in bed the Head sat up in his study. Mr. Railton joined him there at nearly midnight.



Lights danced before Levison's dazzled eyes, there was a strange taste in his mouth. He was in the Head's study—Mr. Railton by his side, the Head bending over him. "Let me speak, sir!" The mouthful of brandy revived him. "I've got away from them, but Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther are under the old tower, sir, shut up in a collar. The central stone tower—it can be raised—save them!" His voice trailed away. The lights danced, and darkness descended upon Levison of the Fourth.

Outside, in the quad, a light rain was falling, and the leaves of the trees stirred faintly in the rain and the wind. "You are not going to bed, sir?" asked the House-master. Dr. Holmes shook his head. "I am too anxious for those unhappy boys," he said. "I have asked Inspector Skeat to telephone immediately there is any news."

"You fear—"
"I can hardly say what I fear," said the Head. "But I know that something terrible must have happened. The boys have not run away from school—that is impossible. Besides, news would have been received from them, ere this, if that had been the case; the police would have traced them. Something has happened. I cannot even imagine what. Heaven grant that they may come safely back."

The two masters sat in silence for a long time, only the faint tick of the clock breaking the silence of the study. The hour of one boomed out from the clock-tower. Two! Three! The night was growing old; but the hoped-for ring on the telephone-bell did not come.

The Head rose to his feet at last, with a sigh. "Hark!" exclaimed Mr. Railton suddenly.

He listened intently. Through the silence of the night there came the faint sound of the ringing of a distant bell.

"That is the porter's bell!" said Mr. Railton. "It must be ringing very loudly for us to hear it here."

The Head breathed quickly. "It may be news—"

"I will go at once."

Heedless of the rain, Mr. Railton quitted the School House, and hurried down to the gates.

CHAPTER 10.

The Luck of Ernest Levison!

LEVISON of the Fourth lay on a pile of sacks, and watched the light fade and disappear from the small square window.

Where he was, he did not know. The car had driven for miles—how many miles he could not guess. It had stopped at last, and the kidnapped junior has been lifted out, and carried into a building. Dark as it was, Levison had noted that the building was a small one, that it stood in a field well back from the road, with trees near at hand. He had been thrown on the pile of old sacks in a sort of garret, and left there—still bound securely.

He lay for hours, after he had heard the key turn in the lock, alone. He had slept at last, in spite of the ache in his bruised head, and the numbing pain in his bound wrists. It was broad daylight when he awakened; sunlight glimmered in at the tiny window of the garret. Levison dragged himself from the sacks, and strove to look from the window. But he could not raise himself high enough, even on his toes, and with his hands bound he could not pull himself up. He felt ill and exhausted, and he returned to the sacks to lie down; and an hour or so later the door was unlocked, and Hooky came in.

The ruffian scowled at the prisoner, and set a loaf of bread and a jar of water on the table.

"That's for you!" he grunted. "And you're lucky to get it."

"Untie my hands, so that I can eat," said Levison. "If you can't eat with your hands tied, go without!" grunted the hoarse ruffian; and he strode out of the room and locked the door.

Levison sat on the sacks, and set to work on the cord that secured his wrists. But for long hours he was unsuccessful. The sun passed the meridian. He was hungry now, and he contrived to gnaw at the bread, and lap water from the jar. No one came to the garret. For some time, he heard the sounds of movements about the little house, and after that there was silence. He wondered whether the ruffians had gone, leaving him alone in the building.

The weary afternoon wore away. Exhausted with his efforts to unfasten his wrists, in vain, Levison sank down on the sacks again, and rested. The light of day died away.

Gradually the small square of the garret window darkened. There was despair in the heart of the imprisoned junior. He was a helpless prisoner, in merciless hands; and he knew that Tom Merry & Co. were shut up in the hidden vault. What would happen to them if rescue did not come? What would happen to himself?

"I've got to get away!" he muttered, gritting his teeth. He thought of shouting for help, many times, but he did not. The fact that the ruffians had taken off the gag showed that he had nothing to hope from shouting. The house was too isolated for his cries to be heard. And it was probable that the first shout would bring up Nobby or Hooky to the garret to silence him.

"I've got to get away—somehow."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 711.

His wrists ached terribly. He sat on the sacks, watching the vanishing light of day at the window, and thought hard.

The face lighted up as a sudden thought flashed into his mind. He rose from the sacks, and approached the little rickety table, on which stood the remains of the loaf and the jar of water.

He seized the edge of the jar in his teeth, and lifted it from the table. Then he unloosed his grip on it, and it fell to the floor and broke.

Levison listened intently, his heart throbbing. Had the sound of the breaking jar been heard below? But there was no sound of footsteps on the creaking stairs.

He was reassured at last, and he set to work. He lay on the floor, and seized the largest piece of the broken jar in his teeth.

Holding it firmly, he sawed his bonds to and fro on the rough edge.

His wrists were tied close together, and all his previous efforts had failed to loosen the knotted cord.

But, to his joy, he saw a strand part at last under the friction of the ragged edge of the broken jar.

It was slow, wearying work, but it was succeeding. Strand after strand parted—slowly but surely. His arms ached, his wrists were chafed. Several times he had to stop and rest, with his head swimming. Hours had passed. It was a late hour of the night now. But he persevered—and at last the cord parted under a hard pull.

He gasped with relief.

His hands were free now. He disentangled them in a few minutes. He rose to his feet, with a new light in his eyes.

There was no sound from below. Silently, cautiously, he lifted the little table to the window, and raised himself upon it.

Darkness without, and a glimmer of starlight on a sloping, tiled roof. The garret window jutted up from the roof, which sloped away to a gutter below. It was easy enough to open the window. Every creak of it it opened made him tremble; but there was no alarm. Evidently the ruffians, if they were still in the building, believed him secure in the garret.

What awaited him outside the window he did not know—and cared little. It was his only chance, and he meant to take it. The thought of escape gave him new nerve and strength.

He climbed through the window, and raised himself above it, and looked round him. His eyes were used to the gloom, and outside, on the roof, the stars glimmered. A light rain was falling, and the tiles were smooth as glass. But he noted, behind the window, the ridge of the roof, and at the end of it, a big tree with branches that overhung the cottage. Slowly, steadily, he worked his way to the ridge, and held on to it, and crawled along to the end—and the foliage of the tree brushed his face.

He stopped there a few minutes to rest. But the pause was short—there was the fear of discovery and pursuit strong upon him. A few minutes, and then he was clinging and crawling along a branch of the tree. He reached the main trunk, and with the activity of a monkey, he worked his way down, and his feet touched the ground.

He leaned for a moment on the tree, almost giddy.

But there was no time to waste.

Dimly, in the distance, he made out a garden fence, and he stole silently towards it, and climbed it, and dropped into the field on the other side. He was on a footpath now. And he hurried along the footpath, caring little whither it led him, so long as it led him away from his place of imprisonment. The rain was falling softly and steadily, a sharp wind blew in his face. The cool night air refreshed him.

There was no alarm behind. His escape had not been discovered. With a new elation in his heart, he hardly seemed to feel fatigue. He broke into a run, and in a quarter of an hour emerged from the footpath upon a country road.

There was a signpost at the cross-roads, and Levison climbed it, to peer at the sign in the gloom, and read it.

"WAYLAND—7 MILES."

He was seven miles from Wayland—eight or nine from St. Jim's. But the knowledge of the way to be followed cheered him.

He started at a steady trot.

Once or twice he looked back—but he soon felt secure. Through the night, through the drizzle of rain, he kept steadily on. His trot dropped to a walk, but he never stopped. And when four miles had been covered he was in familiar country, and he turned into a short cut through woods and fields for St. Jim's.

He had not seen a soul, so far, on his way. He knew that it was past midnight. Through shadowy woodland paths, by lonely muddy lanes, he tramped on, cheered by the knowledge that every step brought him nearer to the school.

Several times, now, he had to sit down and rest. His limbs were aching, and his head ached and swam. He was very

(Continued on page 18.)

The VALLEY OF SURPRISE



COMING SHORTLY IN THE "GEM"

Amazing Adventure Serial!

JOKES TO CHEER!

Cholly: "This newspaper tells of a monkey who shaves himself."

Algy: "Well, what of it? You shave yourself, don't you?"

Rudd: "They say that radium is constantly giving off particles of itself, yet it never gets any less."

Budd: "That's the kind of stuff they ought to make money of."

Sadler: "Let's be up and doing!"

Thomson: "Yes, we can't make footprints in the sand of time by sitting down."

Customer: "Waiter, bring me some hash!"

Ex-Army Waiter (shouting to cook): "Clean up the kitchen!"

Binks: "Why do you call your house a bungalow?"

Jenkins: "Well, if it isn't a bungalow what is it? The job was a fungle, and I still owe for it."

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Edited By TOM MERRY.

THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT.

More Trouble for Members.

(By Redfern.)

ABOUT thirty or forty fellows from all the junior Forms gathered to start away for Pepper's Barn. This time Tom Merry made quite sure that this meeting shouldn't be a repetition of the last disastrous affair. He accordingly suspended several members. Grundy was respectfully requested not to attend.

Mr. Speaker, Harry Noble—informed the War Minister that he had better write out his speech, if he wished to make one, so that it could be read aloud at the next sitting.

The War Minister accordingly scrawled off thousands of words of tosh, written in the specially invented and patented language of G.A.G. It took the Clerk of the Journals several hours to make head or tail of it, and extracts that are read might appear later. (The chances are that they might not!—Tom Merry.)

Ralph Rockness Cardew has also been suspended. The Prime Minister voiced his opinion that this Honourable Member was not dignified enough, and, on account of his disrespectful attitude and the way in which he treated the occasion, it was generally agreed that the House would be better off with his place than his company.

My New House pals, Figgins & Co., have been suspended for the whole session. While for myself, I have to remain neutral, and I can't even interfere either way when a shower of peas enter the loft and pepper my boko.

Most of the fellows discussed together in

groups as they walked along to the field in which is situated old Pepper's "residence." While a crowd of School House asses went up to the barn door, I stood talking with Reg Talbot on the subject of whether Taggles was worth the money he was paid to act as Sergeant-at-Arms. After talking for five minutes, I became aware that something was amiss. Tom Merry could not unfasten the padlock with which the barn door was secured.

After many vain attempts, the Prime Minister decided to get in by the cellar. About half a minute later he came clambering up the grassy slope again, and said that he couldn't make his key open that door, either.

Then Ernest Levison discovered that the padlocks were new ones, and, of course, of a different make.

As a last resource, to try and hold a sitting, Talbot asked Manners to cut across to old Pepper's cottage and beg, borrow, or steal something which would open the troublesome padlocks.

In a few minutes Manners returned, and these were his glorious tidings:

"That old fool, Pepper, has gone away to Wormwood Scrubs for a holiday while his cottage is disinfected!"

Perhaps next week we may be able to hold a sitting, and I can make a lengthy report; but, from what I can see, D'Arcy, with all his first-class knowledge of Parliamentary ways, intends to try and cut me out.

I'd even play the part of that fat chap who marched through Coventry, if anybody wants it.

We are getting on. We haven't got the dresses or scenery yet, and Percy Mellichamp's tin. He refused to fork out half-a-crown only yesterday, though I told him it would be safe with me. It would!

Well, as I was saying, my theatrical company which had the luck to get me would have a treat. I am one of the all-round sort, and I can sing, at a pinch. My voice has been called a rich baritone. If only those dingy rotters in No. 6 will show a bit of sport, also the chumps in No. 9—for we want Cardew, though he is a sarcastic beast—our company will do all right.

We are open to any talent. I am a smart fellow myself, but I never was a chap to get a good thing. Let them all come—that is, those chaps who are really clever, like me! That's what I say. As for plays, we shan't stick to ordinary stuff. I mean to act some French, you know. "Avez vous du fromage?" "La fille du boulanger a besoin de l'encree"—all that sort of thing comes as easy to me as kissing your hand!

I shouldn't half wonder if some of the manager chaps want me to leave St. Jim's and join the stage for good. I see myself making pretty money as a handsome hero! But just look out for our first performance. It will make some of the duds open their blinkers.

BAGLEY TRIMBLE.

Great Football Struggle

SCHOOL HOUSE PLAY FINE GAME.

By COUSIN ETHEL.

ARE-ELECTION for the post of treasurer to the school clubs was drawing near at St. Jim's. The previous election had proved a tie, and consequently, a trifle disappointing. Since then, however, a new boy had put in an appearance and from the first moment when he stepped out of the train, great excitement had prevailed.

After many strenuous adventures, Jack Blake & Co. succeeded in landing him in an armchair in Study No. 6. The new boy, George Edward Barby, and originally been intended to go into the New House. Figgins knew this, and made no small effort to get their weedy recruit across to his real quarters.

To make quite sure that Figgins should have no chance to do any such thing, Jack Blake bundled Barby into their study cupboard, and locked the door. It was more than likely that Figgins would not have succeeded in getting hold of the new boy before the election had not Monteith known that a new boy for the New House had arrived at St. Jim's, and been promptly carried off by the School House juniors. Monteith was not slow to realise what this would mean, and he made his way to Eric Kildare.

Together they visited Study No. 6. Barby was quickly brought to light, and carried off to the rival house by Figgys & Co. Later, when the poll was taken in Big Hall, Barby was seen wedged firmly in a solid body of House meant to run no chances with him.

When the call "Hands up for Sleath!" was made, George Edward Barby's hand went up with the rest. The result was that Lucas Sleath was elected treasurer of the school clubs.

While the New House cheered lustily at the result, the School House groaned in chorus.

"Hurrah!" yelled Figgins. "We've won the giddy election, and now we'll win the giddy House match, or die in the attempt!" The New House were not particularly proud of Sleath—he was far too much after the pattern of Monteith to be a favourite, but he was of their house—he was one of theirs. So they rejoiced. They celebrated the event and "kept it up" for the whole of the evening after the election.

In Study No. 6 in the School House sat Jack Blake, looking rather dismal. Inwardly wishing for one that he wasn't a leader of boys. A leader often doesn't get the credit for his successes, but he always gets the blame for his failures.

THE HOUSE MATCH.

On the Saturday after, both teams turned out eager for the fray. The game was an evenly-contested one—both sides being in excellent form.

The game started rather tamely. For about ten minutes there was a knock-about in midfield, and then George Figgins seized an opportunity and broke away. His long legs took him right through the School House forward-line defence, past the half-backs, until he was brought up with a jerk by Jack Blake. The rest back Jack with a fine burst of energy robbed Figgins of the

The Ambitions of Baggy

WANTS TO START THEATRICAL SOCIETY.

By BAGGY TRIMBLE.

AS I have said all along, there is an awful lack of the right feeling at St. Jim's. I come from Trimble Hall, and understand what tone is, of course. It surprised me to see that most of the chaps were not a bit taken with my stunt for a theatrical society. It's just the sort of thing for the coming dark evenings. Oh, I mean it, and I mean to have the society, but I am not going to have any common chaps in it! If you want to do things well, keep out the crowd.

Percy Mellichamp and Kit Wildrake are in it, of course. We three formed the first committee. Wildrake seemed to fancy Wild West shows, with cowboys coming in, would be the thing. I told him that was all rot. I said what the public wanted was romance. I am prepared to play anything. For two weeks I'd perform Hamlet's ghost, or Charlie Chaplin, or any others of the giddy crowd you like to mention! It's all the same to me.

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ball, and despatched it to Herries, who was playing centre-forward. Herries swung it over to Digger, the right forward, and Digger promptly drove it into the goal.

Barely two minutes after that Blake dribbled it through the backs and scored a second goal. Everybody had been expecting a wonder from George Figgins, and during the next five minutes he did some. It was Figgins' long legs which stood him in good stead. When he got hold of the ball he made up at a pace which was even faster than Jack Blake's. A School House half-back attempted desperately to charge at him, but was only sent flat to the ground by the impact. Then he dodged one back, shouldered off the other, and finally slammed the ball into the net just where the goalie did not expect it.

THE SECOND HALF.

Excitement was at its height when the two teams lined up again. Figgins' fierce run in the first half did not leave him as cool as it should have done. And when Blake, running with the ball just a little ahead of Figgins, persisted in looking over his shoulder and grinning at him, "George" forgot for the moment that he was on the football field, and lost his wits. When Blake grinned for the fourth time, Figgins stretched his long arm forward, and gave Jack's ear a twist. Thus a "snally-kick" to the School House almost one goal ahead, was awarded. Blake quickly altered that figure into two, for he beat Fatty Wynna hands down. The New House almost gave up the ghost after that, and Lorne added to their agony by putting the score three goals ahead. From then to the end of the game it was evident that the score could not be altered.

When the whistle blew Blake was borne away shoulder-high by his chums. On gaining terra firma again he made his way to Figgins, and said:

"Gather your Co. and come to tea in my study. We'll make it a truce to-night, and perhaps to-morrow we'll be fiercer foes than ever. What?"

That evening saw six juniors in Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. And they might have been six brothers for the royal way in which they entertained each other. As Jack Blake sagely remarked: "They were all very firm friends—until the next time!"

COUSIN ETHEL.

(Another article dealing with Jack Blake and Figgins & Co. will appear soon in the "St. Jim's News.")

Cutts on the Carpet.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. SELBY.

Part 1.—By TOM MERRY.

Most of you will remember that article which appeared last week by Gerald Cutts, telling how a crowd of them were caught red-handed by the Third Form master. Well, it was hardly a week ago that I was sitting in the "St. Jim's News," as a rule, does not come under the critical eyes of our masters, chiefly because there is nothing in it which would interest them. But, as you very quickly discovered, one master got hold of last week's copy all right. It was Mr. Selby!

Philip Lefevre of the Fifth says last Wednesday afternoon, when classes were finished, Selby was heard to come roaring and bellowing down the Fifth Form passage, until he reached the study of Gerald Cutts. When he emerged, his hand was on Cutts' collar, and he marched him along to Mr. Ralston's study.

A few minutes later Toby, the page, summoned seven fellows to go along to the Housemaster. They were Cardew, Rakce, St. Leger, Crooke, Adriance, Cutts, and Stagland.

TOM MERRY.

Part 2.—By CARDEW.

We get some fearfully interesting, entertaining, and exciting little scenes at St. Jim's now and again. But I think the one which beats the band when eight of us were brought up to the head-bench study and charged with holding a smoking orgy (nice word!).

Most of the fellows went along to the study like sheep which were to be behatted. But I was not.

"Cutts!" thundered Mr. Ralston. "Will you please explain the meaning of this atrocious article?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Cutts, with an attempt at a grin. "I dreamt a wonderful dream the other afternoon at Greek, and wrote an article about it."

"Mr. Selby declares the whole affair to have actually taken place!" exclaimed Mr. Ralston. "Why do you attempt to bandy words?"

"Awfully sorry, sir!" said Cutts calmly. "I merely replied to your question. Perhaps this silly old gaffer—I mean, perhaps Mr. Selby could tell you all about it, sir!"

"Cutts!" squeaked Mr. Selby shrilly, "your insolence is without parallel. I caught the lot of you red-handed, and punished you very leniently. Now you have the audacity to publish an account of it in print! You are a crowd of young—"

"Perhaps, sir," I interrupted, "you would like to produce our—ahem!—belongings which you took a fancy to?"

"Oh!" I murmured, slightly abashed. "But I did not think Jim's had started fires yet. It would require a jolly good fire to burn half a dozen pipes, sir!"

Henry Selby gave quite a jump, and Rakce gave him a queer look.

"I refuse to discuss the subject with you, boy! I insist that all these boys are flogged, and expelled, Ralston!" he cried.

"You will have to insist till you're blue in the face, then!" I murmured slyly.

At this remark, Cutts gave a loud "Ahem!" and the other six fellows began to grin.

Neither master said anything for five minutes. They both had plenty of food for thought. Ralston looked up at me and Selby gritted his teeth. Then they went over to the window, and had a good old growl and snarl.

Anyhow, we got off with five hundred lines each.

The following Saturday we went up to our old box-room again, this time to play a "face-the-fact" map, as it was provided with a key, and a periscope to fix in the lantern.

RALPH BECKNESS CARDEW.

The Great Pocket Question.

(Why do boys require from nine to fourteen pocket-money?—clothes? A few more replies to Doris Levison's question.)

SIDNEY HANKEY (Third Form, New House).—My mother would never put more than two pockets in the clothes she made for me. I put makes in one pocket, and my hand in the other. (I think your mother made your clothes with two pockets too many.—D. L.)

HANK LEVISON (Third Form, School House).—Well, you see, it's like this, old girl. I have only got three pockets in my suits. One contains a water-pistol filled with ink. This is absolutely necessary, because the new fellows must carry on the surprise attacks during the week, and experience has taught us to be ready for them. The other pockets hold money-nuts and fag-cards. We have some fine games with fag-cards. Old Selby caught me last week with an awful lecture—said it was the first step to gambling, if you please! The money-nuts we eat, and then throw the shells at old Selby's feet. I don't look. But the awful old beast hung a looking-glass on the black-board, and caught poor old Joe Frayne red-handed the other day. This is all I can tell you about pockets at the moment. But I bet this reply whacks all the rest, don't you think so? (I should say it did. You seem to be a very mischievous boy, Frank. I only just wish I could take the Third Form at lessons on them.)

BEHAVIOUR.—D. L.

GERALD CUTTS (Fifth Form). By gad! Are you the interviewing office-girl for a ladies' fashion rag, or do you happen to be the special representative of that junior weekly wash-out, edited in young Merry's study? In any case, I don't see what you want to ask me such a pertinent question for. I think it is downright impudence! If you really want to know, try a gas, a tailor next time you are taken to London; they can tell you all about men's suits. I have had an invitation to a smoking-concert in the school's stables, and I shall be there. (I think I shall speak severely to Ralph Cardew for giving me the name of such a person as this to write to!—D. L.)

Kidnapping Kit Wildrake.

SET UPON BY ROUGHS.

Further light has been thrown on the sensational attempt to run off with Wildrake. The very events of a violent struggle were heard coming from Study No. 4, and, on the door being forced, Wildrake was found, bound hand and foot and securely gagged, while the open window afforded evidence enough of the escape of the miscreants who had made the attack on the popular young hero. Mr. Ratcliff immediately commanded Tom Merry, Noble, Grundy, and Jack Blake, who had smashed their way into the study, to organise a search-party. The Housemaster did not go himself, but remained to make inquiries of Wildrake as to what had happened. The desperadoes were not caught. They evidently made their way across country to the junction. Wildrake declares they were hirelings, employed by a circus management. He states that he had frequently turned down offers to leave St. Jim's and take a position in a circus at a handsome salary as a lasso-thrower and bareback rider. He assumes the gang determined to take him willy-nilly.

Needless to say, Wildrake has no intention whatever of interfering with his scholastic career, and leaving his chums at St. Jim's.

Baggy Trimble.

MYSTERY CLEARED UP.

Just as we go to press alarming news reaches us regarding the disappearance of Baggy Trimble. He was seen leaving the Common-room shortly after tea, but there was nothing remarkable in this circumstance. At call—about 11.30—Baggy was still missing, and rumour began to take shape after Wally D'Arcy had found in the quad a scrap of paper bearing some weird hieroglyphics. The paper was heavily stained, and disfigured by thumb-marks. They proved to be Baggy's, and constitute important evidence. The message on the paper ran: "Orright young 'un. At the vorits. A bob's my nigger."

LATER.

The mystery of Baggy has now been cleared up. He was found in an exhausted condition in the vaults under St. Jim's. These vaults date from the old establishment of the monastery of St. James, many hundred years since. Baggy explained that he had been in the habit of employing a disreputable personage called Topey Mike to bring him food from the village, and the night in question he lost his way, and could not find the right passage in the labyrinth of passages which intersect the vaults. His cries for help were fortunately heard by Taggles, who was making his rounds.

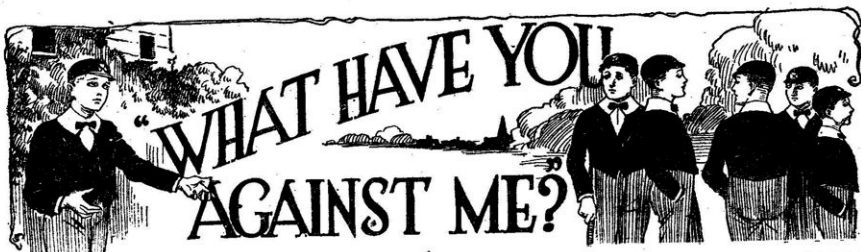
AMERICAN MILLIONAIRE OFFERS TO BUY ST. JIM'S.

It has been the wish of the Head to keep off the swarm of curious visitors who have tried to explore the secret passages at St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes is always prepared to grant facilities to students who desire to see the vaults and study the inscriptions on the walls of the strange subterranean world which is known to exist beneath the historic school, but these privileges are, of course, jealously guarded.

Hundreds of years ago, in an age when learning was the lost job, the learned monk, St. Honoratus, made his headquarters in the district. He studied the wild life of the neighbourhood, and would journey miles in order to study the habits of birds. Most of his work perished in one of the invasions from the north, but there are still to be seen on the crumbling walls of the old vaults, lifelike sketches of bird and beast.

The rather ill-considered offer of the gentleman from Chicago to purchase the whole place so that he might transport the old walls to his home in Forkopolis, is, we are glad to note, not at all likely to be accepted.

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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. Spiky Meadows, a friend of Tom's father, Mr. Bill Mace, calls 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 Spiky Meadows when journeying to the school. Mr. Gale warns the lad 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 Spiky Meadows, the incident being witnessed by Lundy and Mr. Gale. Lundy is rather interested, and meets Spiky Meadows himself. He is encouraged by him to place a bet. Mainly through Tom's efforts, his Form win 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 the school. Tom 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. Later Lundy hears of the failure of his horse, but, to square the debt with Meadows, he agrees to assist Meadows to bring about the downfall of Mace. That same night Meadows burgles the Head's study. Tom, hearing the sounds, rushes below. Just after he reaches the study Mr. Gale quietly enters, and switches on the light. The master is fully dressed, and when the Head arrives, Tom denounces Mr. Gale as an accomplice of the burglar.

(Now read on.)

Wrongly Accused.

TOM's clear voice rang out accusingly, and he turned to the master's coat-pocket bulged suspiciously.

"What is that?" he said quickly. "A firearm?"

"Yes," said the master. "It is a revolver. You are right, Mace. And I did speak to Meadows in the train—"

"I know," answered Tom. "And you warned me not to speak to him, because you were afraid that I should find out your plans!"

Dr. Mason frowned at Tom.

"Mace," he said sternly. "You are altogether on a false scent. Mr. Gale is not a criminal—"

"Not a criminal!" cried Tom, fearing that even now the master might escape. "But why is he here now—why did he speak to Meadows—and why, if he is merely an innocent man, does he walk about in rubber-soled shoes with a revolver in his pocket?"

The headmaster thumped the table.

"Listen!" he said angrily. "Do not interrupt me. I was about to say that Mr. Gale had a perfect right to do all these things. Mr. Gordon Gale is a private detective."

Tom Mace staggered back.

"A detective!" he cried. "Mr. Gale a detective?"

The new master smiled, and bowed.

"That surprises you?" he laughed. "Yes, I am a detective, Mace. That is why I am here. Spiky Meadows is a very clumsy criminal. But what do you know of him? I fear it is you, Mace, who are the scapegoat! And I suggest that you let Meadows into the school. I have found a window wide open—not forced, but opened from the inside. Meadows intimidated you in some way, and made you do that. You have spoken to him since you have been at the school. Once he came to the school for you—I saw him leave."

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Tom's face was ashen white. He had not expected this. Meadows came to the school. Yes. He asked me to leave a window open," he said wildly. "But I did not do it."

"Oh!" said the headmaster, in some surprise. "You admit, Mace, that he asked you? This is, indeed, a surprise to me. I have always had a high opinion of you before. But what connection have you with such a man as Meadows? You, a schoolboy—what have you to do with such a man as he?"

"I—I knew him before I—"

Mr. Gale nodded. "I have made a few inquiries, Mace," he said. "And I have discovered that you are the son of a man I know well by repute—Bill Mace, the loofer and crackman!"

Tom went pale, and he looked afraid.

The headmaster was more staggered than Tom.

"Your father a crackman, Mace?" he said. "And—and this Meadows, then, is an accomplice of your father's. Good Heavens!"

Tom Mace nodded his head dully.

"My—my father is a crackman, sir," he said. "But he is unfortunate. It is not entirely his fault. Bad companions—"

"Perhaps so, perhaps so, my lad," said the headmaster. "But I do not wish to go into the causes of your father's life of crime. How can you stand there and deny that you opened the window? Confess, my lad, and I shall be lenient with you. Tell me all—if they forced you to do this, tell me!"

Tom shook his head.

"I did not do it, I did not!" he protested. "Oh, sir, cannot you believe me?"

Dr. Mason looked from the pleading boy to the master.

Mr. Gale shook his shoulders.

"That Mace was forced to do it, sir," he said, "I have not the slightest doubt. But I am quite sure that he did it. This school cannot be entered without an inside accomplice!"

"I know," said the headmaster. "Since a window is open there must have been an inside hand of some sort, and I suspect Mace."

Tom stepped forward and outstretched his hands pleadingly; his voice was quite husky.

"Don't say you believe me guilty of that, sir," he pleaded.

"I would not do such a thing! I would have denounced Meadows to the police—but—for my mother's sake—how could I? If my father were imprisoned it would break my mother's heart."

Mr. Gale took the lad's shoulder.

"Come, Mace," he said sternly. "This denial is useless. Come with me."

"Look him in the punishment room for to-night, Mr. Gale," said the headmaster. "That is the safest place for him."

How thankful Tom was then that the passages were deserted; that the juniors had all gone back to their dormitories. At that moment he could not have stood their taunts or their jeers.

And, in the dark punishment-room, as he lay upon the uncomfortable bed, he pondered on the burglary, wondering if his father were concerned in it.

His mother—what would she think if his father was arrested and he himself expelled?

Tom had no doubt that he would be expelled. The evidence was completely against him.

But who, he wondered, had opened that window. Who was the real inside accomplice? He knew that there must have been one.

Expelled.

"I T can't be true!" Lundy sneered, as those cries greeted his account of what had happened the night before. "It's perfectly true," he said. "Tom Mace is to be expelled. And a jolly good job, too, I say. Why do we want fellows of his sort at Millford? His father's a burglar!"

"Well, what's that to do with it?" asked Peel gruffly. "That doesn't prove anything against Tom, does it?" "Doesn't it?" jeered Lundy. "Who else would have left that window open? I tell you Mace did it!"

The Fourth-Formers in the dormitory, who were just dressing, looked from the loyal Peel to Lundy.

"The Head's most valuable picture has gone," went on Lundy. "It was a put-up job. I daresay Mace only came here in the first place to steal."

"That's rot, and you know it!" cried Peel. "You're a rotten cad, Lundy. Say another word and I'll smash you!" Lundy shrugged his shoulders, but for the moment he kept silent.

"What does the Head think?" asked Gordon. "The Head's put Mace into the punishment-room," said Garnet, feeling safe, since he had three fellows between himself and the war-like Peel.

"But it's madness!" cried Bob. "How can anyone think Tom that sort of chap? Why should he do it? He would be the first one to be suspected when everyone knows about his father!"

"That's no argument, Peel," said Smythe. "Mace's father's a cracksmen, the window was opened from the inside, and he was found down there—what more than that in the way of evidence can be wanted?"

And there was a murmuring from the Form. It was obvious that most of the fellows agreed with Smythe.

Bob Peel clenched his fists and glared round him helplessly.

"I don't care what you think," he answered angrily. "I say Tom isn't a thief. Why, it's far more likely that Lundy opened the window. That sort of thing is more in his line."

"That won't do, Peel," retorted Hill. "It's no good at all bandying accusations. Lundy wasn't down there at the time, and besides, his father isn't a professional cracksmen."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a general chorus, and Lundy looked triumphant. "You all were down on me when I spoke against the rotter," he sneered. "But wasn't I right? He is a thief—or, at any rate, an accomplice. Peel may like cracksmen's sons, but I don't!"

"Nor I, bai Jove!" muttered Bradshaw. "Absolutely not!"

"You shut up!" snapped Peel. "I'd rather have a cracksmen's son than a fatheaded popinjay like you, Bradshaw!"

And Bradshaw, though he opened his mouth, said nothing. "I'll fight every chap that says a word against Mace," said Bob Peel fiercely. "You're all a rotten set of cads. There's not one of you fit to clean his boots—"

"Here, steady," said Smythe, rather angrily. "What the dickens are you making all this fuss for? It doesn't effect you!"

Peel seemed to swallow something in his throat.

"Fuss!" he exclaimed. "I'm not making any fuss. But I'm standing by Tom Mace. He's my pal. And I'll give a prize thick ear to the first silly ass who calls him a thief!"

"Thank you," said Lundy boldly. "Tom Mace is a low down burglar!"

Out shot Bob Peel's fist, and the cad of the Fourth spun round and fell heavily to the floor. Bob Peel stood over him.

"The next chap who says that will get the same," he cried.

For a moment no one said anything; but their looks expressed quite as much as Lundy's words had done.

"Oh, chuck that fighting!" exclaimed Smythe at last. "It's no argument. Because you can knock Lundy down it doesn't prove that Mace is innocent. I for one think he's guilty."

"Hear, hear!"

Lundy rose to his feet.

The Fourth-Formers resumed their dressing, and, despite Bob Peel's presence, discussed the burglary of the previous night.

That youth, though still as loyal as ever, and as sure of his chum's innocence, did not make any fustian demonstration of his loyalty. He saw that it was useless. As Smythe had said, it was no argument.

At breakfast Peel noted, with a sinking feeling, that his chum's place was vacant, and rumours were spread abroad, too, disquieting rumours, about Tom Mace and the burglary.

"They've put the police on the track of the chap they suspect," whispered Rider to Peel. Rider had so far taken no side in the arguments; for though he tried hard to be

loyal to Tom, he could not help realising the weight of evidence that told against the scholarship lad.

"Have they?" asked Peel. "How did they know him?" "Apparently Tom told them," said Rider uneasily. "He must have known. And what do you think! Mr. Gale is a detective! He has had the burglar chap shadowed all the time. Chap named Meadows, the burglar is—but he's got away. They can't find him."

And that was all anyone knew. But it worried Bob Peel. For if it were true, that rumour only blackened Tom's case the more.

Greatly troubled on his chum's behalf, Bob Peel wandered miserably along the corridor. What to do he did not quite know. Yet he wanted to help his chum, wanted to save him if possible from expulsion.

He tried to speak to Tom, but Morley of the Sixth was patrolling the passage, and he saw to it that no one went near the punishment-room.

"You can't see him!" snapped Morley. "Mr. Gale's in there now."

"Then I'll wait till he comes out, and speak to him, then," answered Peel miserably.

It was not many moments before the door of the punishment-room opened, and Mr. Gale emerged.

Peel went up to the master, who stopped, and gave the junior a surprised frown.

"What is it, my lad?" he asked rather sharply. "It's about Tom—Tom Mace," said Peel quickly. "Oh, sir, will he be expelled?"

Mr. Gale shrugged his shoulders. "I can't say," he answered. "But I think it quite probable that he will, unless, of course, he can produce evidence to prove that it was not he who opened the window. The window was opened from the inside, and the case looks very black indeed against Mace."

"But is there nothing—nothing that can be done? Is there no piece of evidence that is missing? Wouldn't it help if the real burglar were rounded up, sir?"

The master smiled. "It would help, of course, Peel," he replied. "But, my dear lad; that would not clear Mace I'm afraid, unless the burglar can explain how he got in. But he'll probably admit that Mace was an accomplice!"

"Oh," said Bob. "Then—then there's really no chance, unless the real culprit, the one who really opened the window, owns up?"

Mr. Gale shook his head. "I'm very much afraid that that is so, Peel," he replied. "I admire your loyalty, my lad, but it seems misplaced. Tom Mace is not the lad I thought he was. Still, his home influence was bad, and that will be taken into consideration."

Bob Peel's face drooped.

"Can't I speak to Tom, sir?" he asked.

The master shook his head, then patted the boy kindly on the shoulder.

"Come, come, Peel," he said. "Don't take it like that. I hope that Mace is not guilty, though it seems a forlorn hope."

"And if—if he's guilty, what will they do with him?" gulped Peel.

"Send him to a reformatory, I expect," said the master. "And if he is guilty that would be the best place for him."

And the master walked off.

Reformatory! Tom sent to such an institution! It could not be true. Bob Peel almost groaned aloud. This charge against his chum was ridiculous.

Bob Peel could not forget Tom's predicament. All through lessons that morning he was inattentive. But for once Mr. Mullins did not complain—for he was equally worried, and no wonder.

(Another splendid instalment of this fine serial next week.)

Coming soon in the "GEM."

A Magnificent Series of Complete Yarns dealing with a great new battle between The School House and New House.

FIGGINS & CO. v. TOM MERRY & CO.

EXTRA SPECIAL.

LEIVISON TO THE RESCUE.

(Continued from page 12.)

near exhaustion. But always he plodded on again determinedly. He was in Friardale Lane at last, and never had he been so glad to see the old familiar lane. And tears started to his eyes when the shadowy old buildings of St. Jim's loomed against the sky. Exhausted, scarcely able to drag one foot after the other, Leivison of the Fourth staggered up to the gates of St. Jim's.

He leaned on the gates, clutching at the bars for support, his brain reeling.

For some moments he was not himself. But his mind cleared again, and he found himself clinging to the gates, the rain beating on his face. He clutched at the bell, and rang it, loud and long.

The clang of it was like music to his ears. Holding to the gate for support with one hand, he rang and rang at the bell with the other.

A loaden weight seemed to be dragging him to the earth. Again his mind seemed to float in space. He knew that he was near fainting. Would the porter never come?

A footstep—a gleam of light from the porter's lodge. A face he knew looked through the bars of the gate.

"Mr. Railton—help!"

"Leivison!"

Taggles, the porter, came grumbling out of his lodge, with a lantern. The gate was opened. But Leivison was unconscious when Mr. Railton's strong arms carried him across the quadrangle and into the School House.

Lights danced before Leivison's dazzled eyes. There was a strange taste in his mouth. He tried to rise.

"Lie still, my boy!"

It was the Head's kind voice.

"Bai Jore! Who'd have thought it?"

That was D'Arcy's remark the next morning. Leivison of the Fourth lay in bed in the school sanatorium, a doctor in attendance. It was likely to be many days before Leivison reappeared in the Form-room. But he was safe, and had told about the others. Long before dawn busy hands had been at work in the old tower. The secret of the moving stone was undiscovered, but

iron crowbars were at work, and the flagstone was raised. Mr. Railton descended with a lamp, and when he emerged three white and shaken juniors came with him.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were still in bed when St. Jim's came down that morning. But later in the day the three Shell fellows rejoined their comrades, little the worse for their perilous adventure. And by that time Inspector Skeat and the police had taken possession of the counterfeiters' den, and searched it—and St. Jim's was buzzing from end to end with the startling discovery. And in the afternoon Leivison was able to speak, and the information he gave led to Mr. Skeat and his men starting in the Head's car to seek for the lonely cottage where the junior had been held a prisoner. They found it, but the counterfeiters had fled—having discovered Leivison's escape, and guessing that the police would not be long in coming. But their flight did not save them—their descriptions were known—and on the following day they were in the hands of the police.

It was more than a nine days' wonder at St. Jim's. After Mr. Skeat had cleared out the counterfeiters' den, and the police had gone, nearly all St. Jim's explored the hidden vault in great curiosity. How the rascals had known of its existence was at first a mystery, till Nobby was identified as a former servant at the school, who had been dismissed for dishonesty; and he confessed that he had discovered the secret vault by accident, when looking for a hiding-place for stolen goods. It was not till after the St. Jim's fellows had explored the vault thoroughly that it was closed up, and the old tower placed out of bounds again.

Leivison of the Fourth, as he recovered, had a good many visitors in the sanatorium—Cardew and Clive, of course, and Frank Leivison; but Manners of the Shell was one of the most assiduous. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dropped in to see him, too, and to chide him gently for not having taken him—the noble Gussy—into his confidence. Arthur Augustus was convinced that if Leivison had confided the whole affair to him in time, nothing untoward would have happened—all would have been plain sailing from start to finish. Whereat Leivison smiled.

But Leivison of the Fourth came out of "sanny" at last, and rejoined his chums; and he was given a great reception. There was a great spread in Tom Merry's study in honour of the occasion, at which Leivison was the guest of honour—and that, according to Baggy Trimble, was the very best part of Leivison's Luck.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of the chums of St. Jim's in next week's Gem. Be sure you order your copy Early.)

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"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

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THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

"What is the secret of success?" asked the Sphinx. "Don't be shocked," said the Batter. "Talk some more," said the Telephone. "Never lose your head," said the Barrel. "Make light of everything," said the Lamp. "Don't monkey around," said the Monkey. "Be up to date," said the Calendar. "Don't be a knocker," said the Hammer. "Take pains," said the Window. "Look out for the time," said the Clock. "Always keep cool," said the Ice. "Find a good thing and stick to it," said the Glue.—F. L. Ferguson, 37, Albert Street, Belfast, Ireland.

THE QUICKEST WAY.

She was such a dear, kindly-faced old lady, and she did so want to see everything in London worth seeing. She stood serenely in the middle of the street at the junction of the tram-lines, and was deaf to all warning shouts. "Will you please tell me," she asked an official in uniform who was vainly trying to inform her of her danger, "what is the quickest way to get to the — Hospital?" The exasperated official simply glared at her. "Certainly!" he snapped out. "Just stand where you are for another minute and a half, and you'll get to the hospital without a bit of trouble."—Harccliffe Eva, Place Barton, St. Anthony, Portscatho, Cornwall.

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

A young girl used to ride through the public park on horseback, and one day she had a very severe fall. A sailor rushed to her aid, and lifted the victim from the ground. "Some of you get a doctor, quick!" he shouted to the crowd, as he felt the girl's corset. "This youngster's got her ribs going north and south, instead of east and west!"—R. Perry, 10, Jamieson Street, Cape Town, South Africa.

ONE TO JAMIE.

A half-witted youth, named Jamie, in a Highland village, seldom went to the barber. On one of his rare visits he met the village doctor. It was a windy day, and the lad's hair was blowing about his head in a tangled mass. "Man, Jamie," said the doctor, "I wadna gang wi' hair like that for all the world!" "Ye'll ne'er get the chance, doctor," said Jamie, "for yer heid canna grow as muckle as wad mak' a keepsake for yer nither!" "Well, well," rejoined the doctor, "it's an auld saying, ye ken, that them who maun be wael clad canna be weel fed." "Ah, but ye mind anither saying," replied Jamie, "that it's nae use putting thatch on an empty barn."—Miss R. Wilson, Chevin View, Pool, near Leeds.

HIS APPETITE.

"Who are you?" asked the circus manager. "I am the Food Demolisher, the Appetite King," was the reply. "What's your star turn?" "Oh, I eat half a dozen mutton-chops, three plates of ham, six pork-pies, three rabbit-pies, two plates of potatoes and sausages, and

a big plate of pudding, to say nothing of the cigars and coffee, at a single sitting." "I suppose you know we give four shows daily?" "Grand!" "On Saturdays we give seven shows, and at holiday-time a performance every hour. Can you manage it?" "I can do it easy, but I want you to understand that on holidays I must have time to eat my regular meals at my lodgings."—Jack Thompson, care of Mrs. Wilson, Chevin View, Pool, near Leeds.

HIS MISTAKE.

Some men were standing around the front of a boat, when a policeman came along and told them to move on. After he had gone past, one of the men came back and began looking at the anchor. On his return, the policeman told him to move on. The man replied: "I'm not going to move on till I see who uses that pick."—J. Roxburgh, 2,669, Des Ecores Street, Rosemount, Montreal, Canada.

CUTTING.

Police-constable, who has just stopped a motor-car: "What's your number?" Motorist: "B.C. 748." Police-constable: "I did not ask you when your car was made. I asked for your number."—T. B. Clifford, 126, Ladybarn Lane, Fallowfield, Manchester.

ONE AT A TIME.

A messenger from a local provision dealer's hailed a vessel in dock. "What do you want?" growled the mate. "Got some vegetables for the ship," was the reply. "All right. You needn't come aboard. Throw them up one at a time." "Aho, then, look out!" shouted the lad, as he threw a small, dried pea on deck. "I've got a hundredweight of these!"—F. Attwood, 47, Second Avenue, Bitton, Teignmouth.

A BAD TWIST.

A man, who had an orchard, got up early one morning to pick his plums, and, in his hurry, he never noticed that he had slipped his trousers on the wrong way. He fetched the ladder, and went up into a tall tree, but his foot slipped and he had a nasty fall to the ground. Then he noticed his trousers, and gave a groan. "That was a nasty twist!" he said.—Arthur Horton, 32, Ethelbert Road, Folkestone, Kent.

THE NEWSPAPER.

The first modern newspaper was started in 1615. The oldest English newspaper is the "London Gazette," which dates from 1665, while the "Morning Post" is the oldest daily. It was established in 1772. The first newspaper in Scotland was the "Mercurius Politicus," in 1654. The "Dublin Newsletter" had first honours in Ireland. In America, the "Boston Newsletter" opened the ball. There are about 2,560 newspapers issued in the United Kingdom at the present time.—P. A. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, N. 15.

EXASPERATING!

A bookseller was annoyed at last by the time-wasting attentions of a so-called customer. The visitor inspected everything, and asked questions, but he did not buy. "What do these run about?" inquired the caller, taking up a box of paper and envelopes. "They do not run about. They are stationery!" snorted the aggravated shopman.—Frederick Openshaw, 174, Waste Lane, Wexham, Manchester.

THE BLACKBOARD.

The blackboard had not yet been placed on its easel for the morning class, but the teacher did not observe the fact. He was too busy explaining the sum. "Now, boys," he said, "we are to find the simple interest; but before we do that, who can tell me what else we must find?" A smart youngster held up his hand. "Yes, Jimmy," said the master; "what is it we have to find?" "Please, sir, the blackboard!"—E. Charles Longworth, care of P.O. Box, 966, Cape Town, South Africa.

TO THE GOOD.

Nervous Customer at the Barber's: "Steady with that razor! You may cut me, waving it about like that!" Barber's Assistant: "That's quite all right, sir. Every time we cut anyone we allow a halpenny. Why, only this morning a man left here half-a-crown to the good!"—D. K. Gray, 2, Crescent Road, New Barnet, Herts.

ROOM ORDERLY.

A soldier, writing home to his mother, thought he would let her know how things stood, so he said: "Dear mother, I have been promoted to Room Orderly." His mother wrote back, and offered congratulations, adding: "Be lenient with the men, my son. Remember you were a private yourself once."—Private R. Owen, 6336165, 1st Royal West Kent Regiment, Fort William, Calcutta, India.

A FULL BACK.

A fat old man was breathlessly running after his hat, which the wind had swept off his head. A policeman, seeing this, was kindly getting ready to stop the tile, when a young football enthusiast, passing by, shouted: "Pass out to the wing, sonny! You'll never get it by him!"—E. Wenman, 17, Tadema Road, Chelsea, S.W. 10.

STILL FUNNIER.

Gwendoline, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the house, had received a splendid present from her "young man"—an engagement ring set with rubies and diamonds. That evening at tea, when the happy pair were present, the conversation naturally enough turned to jewellery, and someone remarked that it was funny to think we get pearls from oysters, whereupon Gwendoline's young brother remarked loudly: "Oh, that's not half as funny as getting rings from mugs!"—Miss Betty Button, 32, Wolsley Road, Southtown, Great Yarmouth.

SNAPSHOTS OF THE ST. JIM'S JUNIOR FOOTBALL TEAM. GETTING READY FOR A BUSY SEASON!



Top row, reading from left to right—Jack Blake (Right-back), Fatty Wynn (Goal), George Kerr (Left-back), Ernest Levison (Right-half), Arthur Augustus D'Arcy (Inside-right), Harry Noble (Left-half), Monty Lowther (Centre-half), George Figgins (Outside-right), Richard Redfern (Inside-left), Reginald Talbot (Outside-left), Harry Manners (Reserve), Tom Merry (Centre-forward), Robert Digby and George Herries (Reserves).

(Another splendid portrait here next week.)