

SPLENDID COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

The

GEM

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No. 727.
Vol. XXI.

LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

January 14th, 1922.



THE GREAT CARDEW MYSTERY!

(A Dramatic Incident from the Grand Long Complete School Story Inside.)

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.



"My Readers' Own Corner."

Half-a-crown is paid for each contribution printed on this page.

If your name is not here this week it may be next.

SURPRISING.

A teacher was instructing a class on the habits and species of fish, etc. "Now, children," she said, "who can tell me of six fish which live in the North Sea?" "I can, miss!" cried Tommy. "Two crabs and four plaice."—G. Winnill, The Cot, Yebbridge Farm, South Hornchurch, Essex.

ENGLISH AS SPOKEN.

A tired and hungry American arrived in a French village, and met a French girl in the street. "Say," said the American, "parlez vous Anglais?" "Yes, a leetle," was the reply. "Gee, ain't that great?" cried the visitor. "Say, now where can a guy line up against some good eats in this burg?"—S. Mahony, 19, Flora View, Boreenmanna Road, Cork, Ireland.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.

It was the year 1924. The mighty express was on its way from London to Pekin, sailing through the air at 200 miles an hour. Suddenly the speed slackened perceptibly. The captain, with an ashen face, dashed into the engine-room to inquire of the cause. He emerged with a broad grin on his face. "It's all right," he said to those around. "We are passing through the Milky Way, and the propellers have churned it into butter. Nothing more serious."—F. Greenwood, 3, Square, Mytholmroyd, Yorks.

TO BUSINESS MEN.

Oh, tradesman, in thy hours of e e e,
If on this paper you should c c c,
Take my advice and now be y y y,
Go straight ahead and advert i i i.
You'll find the project of some u u u,
Neglect can offer no ex q q q.
Be y y y at once; prolong your d a n a,
A silent business man de k k k k.
C. P. Cheong, The Chinese Protectorate, Kuala Lumpur, Federated Malay States, British Columbia.

THE NAME.

Policeman to foreigner who is involved in a dispute with a taxi driver: "Name, please!" Foreigner: "Signor Fortunio Francesco di Pablo—" Policeman: "Ere, 'old on! I'd better put you down as Jim till I get a fresh notebook."—M. Goldberg, P.O. Box 84, High Street, Oudtshoorn, South Africa.

HER MISTAKE.

A pretty girl entered a music shop, tripped up to the young man who was serving, and said: "Have you 'Kissed Me in the Moonlight'?" "No, miss," answered the youth. "It must have been the man at the other counter. I've only been here a week."—B. Lockyer, 3, Glen View Street, Ton-y-Pandy, South Wales.

A CHANGE OF MIND.

Doris: "Mother's changed her mind. She doesn't want kidneys; she wants liver." Butcher: "What she do want, my dear, is brains!"—E. G. Short, Crawley Court, Winchester, Hants.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

JUST SO.

A traveller walked into the railway-station, and his gaze rested on the notice-board. He was surprised to see on it, "Next train next week." A small boy was standing near, so he put a question: "Is there any place of amusement here, my lad?" "Yes; there's the theatre, sir." "What's on?" "The roof," said the boy.—Windsor Davies, Maes Mawr Cottage, nr. Pontypridd, Glam.

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

"It was a dreadful moment," said the dentist. "I was bathing quietly when the great, cavernous jaws of a shark opened before me." "What did you do?" asked a lady. "Took the forceps out of my bathing-suit and drew his teeth before he had time to seize me. It was the neatest, quickest piece of work I ever did!"—J. Chetham, 30, Chadderton Park Road, Chadderton, nr. Oldham, Lancs.

A POSER FOR JOHNNY.

Johnny, home for the holidays, wished to impress his little sister with his weight of learning. "Do you see that tiny star up there?" he said. "Well, it is bigger than the world." "No, 'tain't," cried the other. "But I tell you it is," said the scholar. "Then why don't it keep off the rain?"—Joseph Henry Pickles, 16, Union Street, Rochdale, Lancs.

A WILLING WORKER.

A tramp stopped a gentleman and asked for a few coppers to buy bread. "Can't you find a trade which is more profitable than begging?" asked the gentleman. "Well," said the tramp, "I'd like to open a bank, if I could only get the tools."—George Manuel, 107, Constitution Street, Cape Town, South Africa.

THE PASSWORD.

On one occasion it was brought to the notice of General Washington that the coloured sentries were unreliable. He determined to test the truth of this report, and one night when the password was "Cambridge," the Commander-in-Chief of the American Army went the rounds. "Who goes there?" cried a sentry. "Friend," said Washington. "Advance, friend, and give the counter-sign." "Roxburgh," said Washington. "No, sah!" said the soldier. "Medford," said Washington. "No, sah!" was the response. "Charleston," said Washington. "I tell you, Massa Washington," said the sentry, "no man go by here without he say 'Cambridge.'"—Miss Eunice Spencer, 78, Pendle Street, Nelson, Lancs.

A BRITISH IDEA.

The clergyman of a very poor parish was showing a rich lady round, hoping to touch her heart and receive a big cheque for his people. "We are now passing through the poorest slums," said the reverend gentleman. "These people have little enough to brighten their lives." "I must do something for them," sighed the lady, adding to her chauffeur: "James, drive the car slowly, and turn the big lamps on."—Robert D. Stephen, 8, Church Street, Cairnbulg.

THE WHITE ELEPHANT.

The white elephant is an object of veneration and worship in parts of the East. The King of Siam owns six of these animals, and, according to popular belief, each is supposed to be the temporary abiding-place of the soul of a great personage. The finder of one of the rare creatures is rewarded with a crown of gold, and a grant of land equal in extent to the space of country in which an elephant's trumpeting note can be heard. There are also many other privileges for the lucky individual who tracks down a white elephant. He becomes free in every sense, and he and his successors for three generations do not have to pay land tax. Even the King of Siam never rides on a white elephant, for he regards the animal as mighty as himself.—Ernest J. Reid, 11A, Rainville Road, Crabtree Lane, Fulham, S.W. 6.

THE LAWYER LAUGHED.

A mean man required some legal advice, and thought out a plan whereby he could get said advice for nothing. He asked a solicitor acquaintance of his to dinner, and, during the chat afterwards, asked the legal question. All went well, and the giver of the dinner felt mighty pleased with himself. But a few days later in came a bill from the solicitor for five guineas to pay for legal services rendered. The mean man was enraged, but he fancied he could get even, so he sent in a bill for the dinner, including wine and cigars. The next day a policeman called with a summons issued against him for selling wine and tobacco without a license.—A. H. Burchett, 42, Seaton Street, West Brompton, London, S.W. 10.

A CHANCE TO RISE.

Butcher: "I am in need of a boy about your size. I would pay you twelve shillings a week." Applicant: "Will I have a chance to rise?" Butcher: "Oh, yes. I want you to be here at four every morning."—E. Morgan, 50, Inkerman Street, St. Thomas, Swansea.

THE DESERVING POOR.

Closetist: "No, sir; I respond only to the appeals of the deserving poor." Openhand: "Who are the deserving poor?" Closetist: "Those who never ask for assistance."—A. H. Wilks, 103, Liverpool Road, Watford, Herts.

INELIGIBLE.

During the war a Canadian cow-puncher came from the Far West to enlist. "I'm sorry," said the examining physician; "I'll have to turn you down. You have flat feet, and you wouldn't be able to march five miles." The youth thought hard. "I'll tell you why this hits me so hard," he said, at last. "I walked nigh on to a hundred and fifteen miles over the mountains to get here, and, gee, how I hate to think that I'll have to walk all the way back!"—Charles Smith, jun., 150, Rock Avenue, Gillingham, Kent.

The GREAT CARDEW MYSTERY

A Grand Long, Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Call for Help.

"ERNEST! Ernie!"
Frank Levison of the Third Form came racing down to the school gates.

A crowd of St. Jim's juniors, in Scout rig, were going out—among them Levison major, of the Fourth Form. Levison of the Fourth stopped, as he heard his minor's voice, and looked round.

The fag came scudding across the quad, his face full of excitement.

"Ernie!"

"You fellows go on!" said Levison. "My minor wants me! I'll follow you!"

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Time pusses, you know, Levison! If we are goin' to find Cardew—"

"Oh! These minors!" said Manners of the Shell. Manners had a minor in the Third, so Manners knew what it was like.

"Levison's minor isn't an ordinary minor!" said Monty Lowther gravely. "He is a very special minor, quite out of the common. Let's all wait and see what Levison's minor has to say."

But Levison of the Fourth did not smile. He was in no mood for smiling that morning.

"Get on," he said. "No need to wait."

"I'll wait," said Clive.

"And I'll get on," said Blake of the Fourth. "I'm not interested in fags of the Third. Get a move on, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The St. Jim's scouts moved on, leaving Levison and Clive in the gateway, as Frank came panting up. Tom Merry moved on with the rest; but he turned back and joined Levison. The crowd of scouts marched down the lane towards Rylcombe. There were no lessons at St. Jim's that morning; the school scouts had been called out to hunt for Cardew of the Fourth, who was missing from school. They were quite concerned about Cardew, but they looked very cheerful for the most part; they were glad to get a 'run' in the clear winter air, as a pleasant change from the Form-rooms.

"Well, what is it, Frank?" asked Ernest Levison, as his minor came panting into the big gateway.

"You're wanted!" gasped Frank.

"The Head?"

"Yes; it's a telephone-call—from home!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Levison.

"Doris has rung you up on the Head's telephone!" said Frank breathlessly. "Cut in at once, Ernie!"

"I will!"

Levison of the Fourth started for the School House at a run. Frank followed more slowly, and Tom Merry and Sidney Clive went with him. They were all interested in Doris Levison's telephone-call to her brother at St. Jim's.

"It's news of some kind," said Frank. "I—I hope it may mean that father's better! Or—or it might mean—"

His face fell.

"Don't meet trouble half-way, young 'un," said Tom Merry kindly.

The three went into the School House together, to wait for Levison. Ernest Levison had headed for Dr. Holmes' study at once. He arrived there rather breathless.

Dr. Holmes greeted him with a nod.

The receiver was off the telephone, and the Head signed to Levison to take it up.

"Your sister has rung me up, Levison," said the Head kindly. "She has asked to speak to you. Although it is somewhat—ahem!—unusual, in the present state of affairs, you may—"

"Thank you, sir!"

Levison of the Fourth picked up the receiver. The Head glanced at him rather curiously for a moment, and then rustled out of the study. Levison paid him no further heed. His heart was throbbing. There had been bad news of late from Levison's home, and he feared to hear worse.

"Doris—"

"Is that you, Ernest?" Doris Levison's sweet, soft voice came along the wires.

"Yes, yes; the Head's let me take the call. Where are you speaking from—home?"

"Yes; Cliff Cottage. Ernest, I asked you in my letter to come home—"

"I couldn't! I wanted to," said Levison. "The Head would not give me leave. He 'phoned to father and asked him, and the pater said he did not want me at home. I couldn't come after that!"

"I know—I know! But you must come, Ernie!" Doris' voice had a tremble in it. "You must! I am helpless here! Father has had another of his attacks!"

"Oh!" gasped Levison.

"I am sure that all is not right. I can see only too plainly that Dr. Smith is puzzled, and does not know what to make of it. That man I told you of—Carson—is here now!"

"Has he been away?"

"He was away all Wednesday and Thursday. He came back on Thursday night," said Doris. "Father was ever so much better while he was away—almost like his old self."

Levison gritted his teeth for a moment.

"Doris, answer me this—that man, Carson, is he a man with a sandy beard and whiskers, and a disfigured nose?"

"He is clean-shaven—"

"Oh!"

"But he has a disfigured nose, as you say. It is flattened, as if by a terrible blow at some time. Have you seen him, Ernie? He has been away from here for two days. Has he been at the school? Has he harmed you?"

"He has been here," said Levison. "He had a false beard, of course; but there's no mistaking his smashed nose. He has been here, but I have not seen him. Others have. He came after me, but got Cardew, my chum, by mistake—as I figure it out. Cardew disappeared yesterday, and it turns out that a man with a smashed nose was here, inquiring after me, and Cardew was pointed out to him by mistake."

"Oh, Ernie! You must come home, not only for my sake, but you will be safer here! I cannot bear it any longer alone! Mother cannot come home from Bournemouth—she is too ill! Father will not let me send for anyone—even a relation—not even his solicitor! I know that it is Carson who will not allow him to do so. And I am certain, Ernie—as certain as I am of anything—that he is drugging poor father! His heart attacks are not natural—"

Her voice broke off.

"Where is he now?"

"He has gone for a walk along the cliffs. If he were in the house I should not have dared to get a trunk call to the school. I am sure that he would have prevented me. If he comes in while I am at the telephone, he will stop me!"

"He will dare?" hissed Levison.

"Oh, I am afraid of him, Ernie! I am afraid! I— Ernie, Ernie, he is coming in now—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

"Doris!"
 "I—I—"

The voice on the telephone broke off in a sharp cry.

Levison trembled from head to foot.

His sister was a hundred miles away from him—and what was happening at the other end of the wire? He spoke hoarsely into the transmitter:

"Doris—Doris!"

There was no answer.

"Doris!" groaned Levison.

Silence.

The unhappy junior shouted into the telephone again and again, almost beside himself with anxiety. But no answer came—till a voice came through from the exchange:

"You are cut off!"

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned Levison.

He put up the receiver with a trembling hand, and almost tottered from the Head's study.

CHAPTER 2.

Levison Makes up His Mind.

TOM MERRY uttered a startled exclamation as Levison of the Fourth came out into the corridor. Levison's face was white as chalk, his eyes almost wild. Frank caught his arm.

"Ernie!"

"Good heavens, Levison, what's the matter?" exclaimed Clive.

Levison tried to pull himself together.

"Father's ill again—seriously—it's that man's doing! Doris was forced away from the telephone—I heard her cry out—!" He clenched his hands with rage. "That man, Carson, is there—he has dared to lay hands on her! I'm going home!"

"The Head—" muttered Tom.

"I'm going home!"

Levison hurried away. Frank followed him, and Tom Merry and Sidney Clive looked at one another.

"He—he ought to go!" muttered Clive. "But the Head has refused him leave—"

"I can't say I should blame him for taking French leave," said Tom. "He's got a good chance of getting clear. As the whole school's turned out to hunt for Cardew, he won't be missed until this evening. Let's go and see if we can help him."

"Yes, rather!"

They found Levison in the Fourth Form dormitory. He was changing rapidly out of his scout rig into his ordinary clothes. There was no doubt that he had made up his mind; and his friends could not help thinking that he was right.

Levison's face was white and set; but he was quite calm now. The nerve for which Levison of the Fourth had always been well known, did not fail him in this emergency.

Frank was helping him, his eyes blind with tears.

"Can't I come, too, Ernie?" he muttered, as Tom and Sidney Clive came into the dormitory.

Levison shook his head hastily.

"No; it would be a row with the Head for you, and no good done. I can see what's wrong—if I'm not really wanted at home, I shall catch the next train back, and the Head need not know that I've been away. It's no good asking him for leave again. You hang on, Frank, and help in hunting for poor old Cardew. He's been got at instead of me."

"You're sure of that?" asked Clive.

"Quite! I've got a description of Carson from Doris—a man with a smashed nose. The man who was inquiring after me yesterday on the football-ground, and who was speaking to Cardew in the lane afterwards."

"That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"I've got to go!" said Levison, hurried, but cool. "I'm going to deal with that villain who's frightening my sister. But you fellows—do your best for Cardew. It's plain that he's been kidnapped in mistake for me—Carson wanted to keep me away from home. Get Wildrake to help you—you know how clever he is at that kind of game. Cardew's a prisoner somewhere, and Wildrake may be able to get on the track."

"Right! You'll want some money, Levison—"

"I've got some, thanks! That's all right! Now I'm off! You fellows will do your best for Cardew?"

"Of course!"

The juniors left the dormitory together. They came on Kit Wildrake, the Canadian junior, on the lower staircase. He called to Levison.

"Levison, hold on a minute—"

"Sorry—can't stop!"

"But I want—"

Levison of the Fourth ran on, leaving Wildrake staring after him in astonishment.

"What the thunder—" he ejaculated.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

"It's all right, Wildrake," said Tom Merry. "Levison's in a hurry. Aren't you joining in the search this morning?"

"I guess so! You'll do, Clive—hold on!"

Frank was hurrying away with his brother, to see him off at the station. Clive stopped as the Canadian called to him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Cardew was your pal, and Levison's," said Wildrake. "I guess you can give me what I want."

"What's that?"

"A pair of his boots," answered Wildrake. "I want them to help me in picking up his trail."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Sidney Clive nodded.

"Good idea!" he said. "Come along to the study; I'll get them in a jiffy. Cardew always has five or six pairs knocking about."

The three juniors went to No. 9 in the Fourth. In a minute Clive produced a handsome pair of very natty boots. Cardew, the dandy of the Fourth, was very particular about his boots. He had a small foot, which his excellent boots always showed off to advantage. Wildrake took the boots, glanced at them, and shoved them into a small leather case.

"I guess that will help me some," he said. "Now, who was it that saw Cardew yesterday talking to a man in the lane?"

"Trimble!" said Tom.

"Then I guess we want Trimble."

"We'll find him hanging about the tuckshop, I expect," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "I don't suppose he's gone scouting!"

"Not likely, I guess."

The three scouts hurried out into the quadrangle, and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was quickly found. He was regarding the good things in the little window of Dame Taggles' shop behind the elms with a hungry and thirsty gaze. Baggy was glad that that day was an unexpected whole holiday; but he was not keen on scouting in muddy lanes and frosty woods. He could have spent a very happy day in the tuckshop, if funds had been available. But they weren't—which was quite a common state with Baggy Trimble. So he gazed mournfully at the good things he could not hope to devour.

Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder, and Baggy spun round with a startled yelp.

"Ow! Oh, it's you, dear boy! Can you lend me—"

"We want you, Trimble—"

"A half-crown—"

"Come on—"

"Till I get a cheque cashed—"

"This way, fatty!"

Wildrake took one of Trimble's fat arms, and Tom Merry the other. Sidney Clive gave him a gentle tap with his boot.

"Yow!" roared Trimble. "What's up? Is it a feed? If it is, I'll come—you needn't yank a fellow along!"

"We're going scouting—"

"I'm not going scouting!" roared Trimble.

"Come on!"

"Yah! I won't! Leggo!"

"You fat slacker!" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "We want you to point out just where you saw Cardew speaking to the man in the lane yesterday—"

"If you'll lend me a bob, I'll come—"

"I'll lend you a thick ear if you don't!"

"Look here—"

"Give him your boot, Clive!"

"Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beast! I'm coming as fast as I can, ain't I?" howled Trimble.

And he came.

Tom Merry and his companions hurried down the lane, with the fat and reluctant Trimble on the trot. They found Manners and Lowther in the lane.

"Waiting for you, Tommy!" said Manners.

"What's up with Levison?" asked Monty Lowther. "He passed us as if he was on the cinder-path, and never answered when we called to him."

"Catching a train," said Tom briefly.

Lowther looked serious.

"French leave?" he asked.

"Yes. Keep it dark!"

"Of course! What have you brought that fat lump of tallow along for?" asked Lowther.

"Yah!" snorted Trimble. "I didn't want to come! Yah!"

"He's going to show us where Cardew was last seen, and Wildrake may be able to pick up the trail!"

"Oh, good!"

The scouts went on their way. Meanwhile, Frank Levison was waving good-bye to his brother on the platform at Rylcombe Station.

The train whirled away with Levison of the Fourth. He

had taken the plunge now. At Wayland Junction he changed

into the express, and tore along at great speed; but the speed of the express train seemed slow to the junior racked with anxiety and dread.

CHAPTER 3.

"Sign."

"HERE you are!" said Trimble sulkily.

The scouts stopped.

The rest of the St. Jim's crowd had long scattered in various directions. Tom Merry & Co. had the spot to themselves.

That Cardew had been kidnapped was the most probable theory, and all the St. Jim's juniors—with a few exceptions like Trimble and Racke and Cooke—were anxious to get on the track and distinguish themselves by discovering the missing junior.

Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, had headed for the old castle on the hill near Wayland as a likely spot. Figgins & Co., of the New House, had gone off to Wayland Moor to search the old quarries. Wally and his fag comrades, of the Third Form, were beating the woods, as were some scores of other fellows, of all Forms. Kildare of the Sixth, with a party of seniors, had also headed for the quarries on the moor.

But the Terrible Three of the Shell felt that they had the surest chance, with Wildrake's help: the junior from the Boot Leg Ranch, British Columbia, was exactly the ally they needed. His skill on the trail was famous at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. were good and efficient scouts, but they confessed that they had a master in the Canadian junior. Wildrake had tracked elk on the Cascade Mountains, he had trailed lost horses and steers on the Boot Leg Ranch, and he could read the faintest "sign" like an open book. If there was a chance of picking up the lost junior's trail, Kit Wildrake was the fellow for the task.

Wildrake's keen dark eyes glanced about as the juniors stopped at the spot indicated by Baggy Trimble.

"Sure it was here you saw them?" asked Wildrake.

"Yes."

"Where were you?"

"Cutting across the fields yonder," said Baggy. "I was in a hurry to get back for dinner, you know. I can't get along so fast as some skinny chaps, and I was rather afraid of being late."

"Did they see you?"

"No, I don't suppose so. I just caught sight of them through that hedge."

"Which way was Cardew going when the man spoke to him?"

"Strolling towards the village."

"He met the man—"

"No; the man overtook him."

"A man with sandy beard and whiskers and a smashed nose?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes; I've told you so half a dozen times."

"You didn't hear what they said?"

"Of course I didn't!" grunted Trimble. "It looked to me as if it was a man asking Cardew the way. They walked on together."

"Towards the village?"

"Yes."

"Notice the kind of boots the man was wearing?" asked Wildrake.

Trimble snorted.

"Of course not."

"Well, we're about done with Trimble, I guess," said the Canadian junior. "You can roll away, fatty."

"Look here, after I've taken all this trouble, I think one of you chaps might lend me a bob—"

"Oh, scat!"

"Only until I get a cheque cashed," explained Trimble. "I've had a rather decent cheque from my pater at Trimble Hall—"

"Got it about you?" grinned Wildrake.

"I—I left it in my study—"

"Trot it out when we come in, and we'll cash it for you," said Wildrake. "Now vamoose; you're a worry!"

Baggy Trimble, with an indignant and scornful snort, rolled away. The Terrible Three looked at Wildrake.

"Your move!" remarked Manners.

"I guess there's no sign here. But if they went on towards Rylecombe, I reckon we'll pick up something along the lane. Follow on."

"Right-ho!"

Wildrake led the way, and the Terrible Three of the Shell followed on his track. They were more than willing to follow the lead of the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch.

Kit Wildrake's keen eyes were never at rest. By the side of the lane was a belt of grass, and he scanned every inch of it as he proceeded. There had been a good deal of pedestrian traffic in the lane since the previous day, especially since the numerous search-party from St. Jim's had set

out. Tom Merry could not help realising that Wildrake had been set a task that might well baffle even his skill. But the Canadian junior seemed hopeful.

Wildrake stopped suddenly.

He had Cardew's boots in his hands now, and he knelt and fitted them to a track that showed faintly in soft earth among the grass.

"The same!" he said.

"We know he passed along this way," remarked Manners.

"We want to know how far he went," said Wildrake quietly. "We don't want to overshoot the mark. The theory is that the man he spoke to collared him, and has put him away somewhere. He couldn't do that in the open in broad daylight, or in the village. I figure it out that he got Cardew into the wood somehow. We want to know just where they entered the wood. Once we get that, I guess I can answer for picking up the trail—nobody will have tramped over it."

"Good!"

Wildrake moved on, still scanning the ground keenly. A fence and a thick hawthorn hedge bordered the wood here, practically impenetrable. The Canadian junior did not pause again until he reached the stile, which gave access to the footpath through the wood in the direction of Wayland.

"Figuring it out that the man got Cardew into the wood, I reckon it was about here," said Wildrake. "He couldn't have shoved through that fence and hedge without leaving a sign."

"Might have had a car waiting," suggested Manners.

Wildrake nodded.

"I guess I haven't overlooked that possibility," he answered. "But I put that as unlikely."

"Why?" asked Tom Merry.

"It was broad daylight, for one thing. It was just before dinner at St. Jim's, and half a dozen fellows, at least, would have passed the car, coming along to the school. The police have been inquiring, and nobody's mentioned seeing the car. It would have to be a closed car, to carry off Cardew unseen. Could a closed car have been hanging about in this lane without anybody noticing it, and mentioning it as soon as the police began to inquire?"

"Not likely!" assented Tom.

"A car may have been used," said Wildrake, "but not in this lane. I guess it would be more likely to wait on the other side of the wood on the main road, where it wouldn't be seen by St. Jim's fellows, and wouldn't be noticed much, anyway."

"True," said Clive, with a nod.

"Anyhow, the wood's our first objective," said Wildrake. "That's so."

The juniors crossed the stile into the footpath.

On the well-tramped footpath there was little hope of finding "sign." Wildrake glanced at it, and wasted no time.



Wildrake took one of Trimble's fat arms, and Tom Merry the other. Sidney Clive gave him a gentle tap with his boot. "Yow!" roared Trimble. "What's up? If it's a feed, I'll come—you needn't yank a fellow along."

He began to make a circuit in the wood on either side of it.

"But what—" began Manners.

"If they followed the footpath—" said Lowther.

"I guess a kidnapper and his prisoner don't walk openly along a footpath that's used by scores of people during the day."

"Well, that's so. But he may have spun Cardew some yarn to make the chap walk with him willingly."

Wildrake shook his head.

"Cardew's no fool," he said. "He might walk with a stranger a few yards to point out the way; anything like that. But he was nearly due at St. Jim's for dinner; and he wouldn't start walking through the wood. It's not likely, at least. Anyhow, I'm trying for sign."

The chums waited on the footpath, while the Canadian junior "tried" for sign in the neighbouring trees. A sharp call from Wildrake, after the lapse of half an hour, brought them to him. At a short distance from the footpath Wildrake had stopped.

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

"You've found—"

"Look at the tracks."

With all their scouting skill, Tom Merry & Co. did not find it easy to pick out the tracks Wildrake alluded to so carelessly. But the Canadian pointed them out.

"They stopped here," he said. "A man in number eight boots, and Cardew— Here's Cardew's prints, fitting his boots exactly. He didn't go with the man willingly; here and there his boots dragged, and he kicked up the earth. There's a hawthorn bough torn away; I reckon he caught at it—it's a fresh break. And here he stood against this tree for some time. I guess they must have been talking. He leaned against this tree; see where his heels sunk."

"Good!"

"Cardew was wearing a grey overcoat yesterday, Clive?"

"You saw him?"

"Nope!"

"Well, he was wearing a grey overcoat when he went out," said Clive. "How the thump do you know if you didn't see him?"

Kit Wildrake smiled.

"I guess he leaned on this tree," he answered. "If you examine the bark with your eyes open you'll see that some little grey threads have been caught in it—at the height of Cardew's shoulders."

"Good man!" said Monty Lowther.

"I reckon they hung on in this spot for some minutes at least—goodness knows why. Cardew was leaning on this tree—breathless perhaps, after putting up a struggle. The man faced him there. Then Cardew was led away through the wood. And I guess a one-eyed coyote could follow on now," said Wildrake confidently. "You can pick up the natty little Cardew tracks and the number eights side by side."

"Follow on," said Tom Merry.

"I guess the man knew his way about here," said Wildrake, as he led on the trail. "He's getting right away from the footpaths, and fairly butting through thickets. See where the twigs are broken. Look at that trampled bramble. Look at that rain pool—they went right through it, and they've left as beautiful a set of prints on the edge as a fellow could wish to see. I guess Mr. Number Eights didn't know that a galoot from the Boot Leg Ranch was coming nosing after him!" And Wildrake chuckled.

The juniors pressed on eagerly, with glistening eyes. They stopped suddenly in the heart of the wood as a rustle came to their ears.

"Somebody ahead of us!" muttered Lowther.

Wildrake gripped his staff.

"It's barely possible they're here—may reckon it's a safe corner in the middle of the wood. Look out!"

The juniors, breathing hard, stood ready. Footsteps and rustling came through the underwoods towards them. They gripped their staves hard as a figure showed through leafless boughs and twigs. And then suddenly they burst into a laugh. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form who came on them suddenly—evidently greatly surprised to see them there.

CHAPTER 4.

The Story of the "Sign."

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his eyeglass into his eye and blinked at Tom Merry & Co.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "You fellahs heah?"

"Gussy, you ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gussy, you frabjous cuckoo—"

"Weally, Lowtkah—"

"What the thump are you doing here, D'Arcy?" exclaimed Wildrake impatiently.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

"Weally, Wildwake, deah boy—"

"Treading out the trail, of course," said Manners. "That's just what Gussy would be doing on an occasion like this!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Have you found anything?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas—I've found you fellahs."

"Ass!"

"I'm wathah glad to have wun into you, although your mannahs leave much to be desiahed," said the swell of St. Jim's. "The fact is, I have lost my beastly way. Blake and Hewies and Dig are gone to the old castle, you know, and they insisted on goin' by the footpath. I took a short cut through the wood, and somehow or othah I haven't got to the castle. It is wathah wemakable, for I am a pwetty good scout, you know. Have you fellahs any ideah where you are?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess we could figure it out," said Wildrake, laughing. "Run away and play, Gussy, while we follow the trail."

"Bai Jove! Is there a twail heah?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"I have not noticed it, Wildwake."

"You wouldn't."

"Weally, deah boy, if there is a twail, I wathah think I should have noticed it. I am a pwetty good scout, you know. Howevah, lead on, and I will follow; I will stick to you fellahs if you think you have found somethin'. If you come up against some feahful difficulty I shall be able to help you out with my knowledge of scoutwaff, you know."

"I don't think!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowtkah—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

Wildrake was already going on, and the Terrible Three followed him with Arthur Augustus. The latter gazed round him with inquiring eyes as he followed the Canadian, but it was evident that the "sign" which told the Canadian so much was invisible to the noble eyes of the Honourable Arthur Augustus.

Deeper and deeper into the wood the juniors penetrated. At first they had been able to hear, in the distance, the calls and signals of other fellows who were searching, but now silence surrounded them. They were in a lonely and untrodden part of the old wood—a part of the ancient forest that had once covered that part of Sussex, and where some of the trees were gnarled with centuries of age.

Wildrake stopped again.

"Enter the third party!" he said.

"Bai Jove! I would weally like to know what the chap is divin' at!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Wildrake did not heed him.

He was examining the ground, and he looked up at last with a startled expression.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he ejaculated. "This grows more interesting! I guess I never expected to see a track like this here!"

The Terrible Three scanned the print he was looking at. It was that of a man's boot, of medium size. They could see that it was not Cardew's track—or that of the man with the flattened nose. Cardew and the kidnapper had left traces quite near it; but this was new. But the juniors noticed nothing in particular striking about it.

"You see that?" asked Wildrake.

"Yes. There was a man here, waiting for Cardew to arrive with the fellow who made him a prisoner, I should say," said Tom Merry.

"Sure!" said Wildrake. "But this beats me to a frazzle! On the Boot Leg Ranch, if you like—but here, in the middle of a Sussex wood! I must have another look at it." He knelt down, examining the footprint long and carefully. He rose to his feet at last. "It's no mistake. It beats me! This man with the smashed nose, Tom—do you know anything of him?"

"Only what Levison told me," said Tom. "He's named Carson, and has turned up at Levison's home some weeks ago, and installed himself there. Levison is sure he's the same man, at all events."

"He came from America?"

"Yes. How the thump do you know?"

"That may account for this track, that's all. It's the track of an American Indian."

"What?" yelled the Terrible Three. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed blankly at the Canadian. Sidney Clive stared.

"Look at it!" said Wildrake. "Don't you see that the toes turn inwards?"

"Yes, now you mention it."

"Well, mightn't they—" began Manners.

Wildrake interrupted him.

"You might find a man in a thousand whose toes turned inwards," he said. "Not more than that in this country—if so many. But the Red Indian always turns his toes in. In my country nobody ever makes a mistake between an Indian's trail and a white man's. It was a Red Indian that met Cardew and the kidnapper in this glade."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"If the man came from America, that would account for it," said Wildrake. "The Indian is his confederate, and he brought him along with him. Plainly the Redskin was waiting for him here. The kidnapper turned Cardew over to him, and went off by himself. That's where he started off through the wood—making for Wayland, I guess."

"Bai Jove!"

"The other man—the Indian—went with Cardew," continued Wildrake. "See, the track leads into the wood here—in the dead leaves. Cardew's boots show up quite plainly beside it. I guess this is the trail we want."

Tom Merry nodded.

"A man with a smashed nose was seen to leave Wayland Junction by train last night," he said. "It's the man whose trail we've been following, of course. He was alone—and he had left Cardew here in charge of his confederate. Is that how you work it out, Wildrake?"

"Sure! Follow on!"

Wildrake stopped in a few minutes in a dusky recess under the thick boughs of an ancient, low-growing oak. He crept into the dusky recess, which was almost shut in and darkened by tangled underwoods. The chums of the Shell watched him breathlessly, while D'Arcy polished his eyeglass. The Canadian emerged with his eyes glinting.

"They stayed here a long time," he said. "There's plenty of sign where a rug was laid on the ground, and a man rested on it. That would be the Indian. Cardew stood most of the time leaning on the oak; his heels are dug in in half a dozen places. The Indian smoked; there are a score or more of cigarette-ends lying about."

"Cardew smokes sometimes," remarked Arthur Augustus sagely. "I am sowwy to say so, as he is a welation of mine. But it is a fact, deah boy."

Wildrake smiled.

"He does not smoke this kind of cigarette, at all events," he said. "It's a black, strong tobacco, rolled in husk. I figure it out that the Indian hid here with the prisoner till nightfall, when he reckoned it would be safe to get him away. I can't imagine any other reason why they should have lain doggo in that dark hole."

"Vewy likely, deah boy!"

"Pretty certain, I think," said Tom Merry. "And now, Wildrake—"

"Put it that they stayed on here, and left after dark last night," said Wildrake. "They left a trail of some kind—the Indian wouldn't leave much trail, but Cardew would. Poor chap! He got jolly cold while he was waiting here for hours!"

"I suppose he would, in this weather!" said Arthur Augustus. "But othahwise, I weally don't see how you know, Wildrake."

"Look where his footprints are stamped into the ground," said the Canadian.

"Bai Jove! They are marked vewy deep! Do you think Cardew thought we might be twailin' him, and was twyin' to leave us signs?"

The Canadian junior laughed.

"I guess that thought never crossed his mind for a moment," he answered. "I reckon he stamped his feet to keep them warm!"

"Bai Jove! Vewy pwobable," assented Arthur Augustus. "I wondah I did not think of that myself!"

"There's quite a lot of things you don't think of, old top," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You can pick up the trail from here, Wildrake?" asked Tom Merry—or, rather, it was more an assertion than a question. Tom Merry's faith in the Canadian junior had been more than confirmed by what had happened so far. While the police of Wayland and Rylcombe, and a crowd of St. Jim's fellows, were busily searching for the missing junior, Wildrake had led the way on Cardew's trail with almost the unerring certainty of a bloodhound. Owing to Wildrake, the juniors now knew that it was a case of kidnapping beyond a doubt, and that the kidnapper had a confederate—a man of Red Indian blood. Such a man was not likely to escape notice in England, which made the discovery a valuable clue. Wildrake's comrades expected everything of him now. But the Canadian's manner was as quiet and modest as ever; there was no trace of anything like "swank."

"I'm going to try," he answered. "The Indian would be cautious, from habit—not that he expected to be trailed here. But I think it will be pretty easy to pick up Cardew. Let's get on!"

In a few minutes Wildrake picked up the spot at which the Indian and his prisoner had quitted the hidden den under the branching oak. The juniors pressed on through the frosty underwoods. Their hearts were beating with excitement now. Arthur Augustus congratulated himself on having joined Tom Merry's party. While Blake & Co. were wasting time at the old castle, Gussy was on the track—and, indeed,

he was already beginning to consider that this was due to his own superior sagacity. He was in a very contented frame of mind; only grumbling occasionally when he was scratched by bramble or briar. But brambles and briars were no respecters of persons—not even of the noble person of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! It must have been wathah wotten plungin' through this howwid wood aftah dark!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah glad that we are doin' it in the daylight. Sure you're still on the twack, Wildwake?"

"Sure."

"If you are in doubt at any time, deah boy, don't hesitate to call on me to help."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I weally see nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, my deah fellahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "We are heah to help Wildwake, aren't we?"

"Cheese it, old top!" said Monty Lowther. "This isn't a time for your irresistible humour, you know!"

"But I was not bein' humowous!" said the puzzled Arthur Augustus. "I fail to follow your wemark, Lowthah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

Here and there, Wildrake paused, but he was never long at a loss. There was but a scanty "sign" at any time of Cardew's companion; but Cardew's own natty boots seldom failed to leave a trail. Most of the way, Wildrake told his companions, Cardew had been walking in front of the Indian, with his hands tied. In thick and difficult places the Indian had pushed ahead to clear a path through the bushes. The Terrible Three asked no questions; they took the Canadian's word for it. But Arthur Augustus was not so easily satisfied.

"Pway how do you know Cardew was in advance, Wildwake?" he inquired.

"The Indian's track treads over his in places," snapped Wildrake. "That wouldn't happen if the man was in front, or if they walked side by side."

"Bai Jove, that is so! And how do you know his hands were tied?"

"That's not so certain, but I think so. Here and there where it's thick, you can see where the Indian pushed ahead—Cardew's footprints overlap his in such places. Cardew couldn't part the bushes with his hands tied, so the Indian had to do it, I reckon."

Arthur Augustus considered.

"Quite pwob!" he said, at last.

Wildrake grinned, and went on. The juniors emerged at last into the footpath, near its end where it joined the Wayland road. Wildrake followed the footpath as far as the stile on the road. It was well past noon now, and perhaps the juniors were thinking of dinner. But they did not mention it; they waited for Wildrake to speak.



Wildrake stopped suddenly, and with Cardew's boot in his hand, he knelt and fitted it to the track that showed faintly in the soft earth among the grass. "The same," he said. "He must have passed along this way."

For the first time, the Canadian junior seemed to be beaten. It was evident that the trail had led him to the main highway—and there, on the hard high-road, there were no further footprints to guide him. Kit Wildrake leaned on the stile, staring out into the road; and Tom Merry & Co. waited in silence. Was even Wildrake beaten at last?

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Reaches Home!

LEVISON of the Fourth sat in the corner seat in the carriage in the express train, his hands clenched in his overcoat pockets. His eyes were fixed straight before him—seeing nothing.

Other passengers glanced sometimes at the white-faced schoolboy sitting so still and silent. Levison did not notice it. He was unconscious of his surroundings—conscious only of a fierce hurry to be home.

Rapid as was the express, it seemed to his impatience to be crawling. Trees and telegraph-poles flashed by, but not quickly enough for his burning impatience.

Would the train never arrive?

His thoughts were busy—black and bitter. He was not thinking of the school, or of the Head! If there were any serious consequences upon his taking French leave, he did not care—he did not give them a thought. Sometimes he thought of his chum, Cardew, his chum who had been kidnapped in his place—who, he more than suspected, had deliberately allowed the kidnapper to fall into his error, from a reckless generosity that was a part of Ralph Reckness Cardew's strange mixed nature. He thought of Cardew with a pang of anxiety.

But his chief thought was of his home—of his sister. What had happened since Doris had been wrenched away from the telephone—wrenched away by force, as he knew. Hours had passed!

Levison set his teeth hard as he thought of it. His father was somehow in the power of Carson—somehow. That seemed certain. The scoundrel seemed to be master in Mr. Levison's house. He had forbidden Mr. Levison to have his son home from St. Jim's, and the hapless man had obeyed. But Levison intended to deal with him, whatever strange power the man possessed, he should find that he was a dangerous opponent to reckon with.

Hours had passed! It seemed ages to Levison since he left St. Jim's when he jumped out of the train at last at Ashford, in Kent. There he had to take a local train on to Clyffe, the nearest place to his father's house. Cliff Cottage, where the Levisons now lived, was on the south-eastern coast. The house in London was shut up at present. The local train was slow; to Levison it seemed to crawl like a snail. But he stepped out at last in the little station of Clyffe, and started to run, rather than to walk, towards his home.

It was a good mile to Cliff Cottage, and the path grew steep, winding among farmhouses and grassland at first, later among woodlands of fir and pine. Chalk cropped up in ridges through the earth in the lane Levison was tramping. The sea burst on his right suddenly as he came round a bend of the lane, in sight of the house.

Cliff Cottage faced the sea—a red-brick building of ancient date. It stood on the cliffs, with wide gardens round it planted with firs and chestnuts. Deep in those huge chalk cliffs were cavernous recesses—old haunts of smugglers, according to local legend. Levison hardly glanced at the sea, rolling bright in the winter sunshine. He hurried on to the garden gate, but there he paused.

Doris had called to him to come. But his father? Even if it was Dandy Carson who constrained Mr. Levison to refuse to allow his son to come home, it was quite probable that he would be angry to see the schoolboy. Levison stopped, and considered. It would be best to see Doris first—before he saw either his father or the blackguard who was ruling the house.

He skirted the fence, and let himself into the back garden by a little gate. There was no one to be seen; and he approached the house cautiously. He left his bag in a shed, and crept quietly to the French windows of the dining-room, which looked on the garden.

A bright fire blazed within, and Levison saw the back of a head over the back of an armchair, near the fire. He knew that his father was sitting there. He had been hardly conscious how time had passed; but he knew that it was now afternoon. Lunch was over at Cliff Cottage. His father was not alone in the room. On the corner of the dining-table a man was seated, swinging his legs and smoking a cigar. In the firelight Levison saw his profile clearly—the profile of the man with the smashed nose. There were no beard or sandy whiskers now; but the flattened nose was enough. This was the man who had witnessed the House match at St. Jim's on Wednesday—this was the man who had kidnapped Cardew on Thursday in mistake for Levison himself.

The man was speaking—addressing Mr. Levison, his eyes

fixed mockingly on the almost crouching figure in the armchair.

Levison could not hear what he said; but a faint murmur of the mocking voice came to his ears through the closed window.

He backed away.

He knew where his father was now—and the Dandy. He stepped quietly away to the kitchen door, and let himself in.

There was a startled exclamation within.

"Ernie!"

It was Doris!

An old woman was at work at the kitchen table, and Doris was evidently assisting her. The woman glanced at Levison, he had never seen her before. Doris ran towards her brother, her eyes shining.

"Oh, Ernie! I'm so glad you've come!"

"Doris!" muttered Levison. "What does this mean? Who is this? Where are the servants?"

"Old Jane is the only servant now, Ernie. You can speak before her—she is quite deaf. Since Mr. Carson has been here the others have been sent away. There are only four in the house now—father and myself, Jane and that—that man."

"But why—why?"

"It was his doing."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Does father obey that man's orders, in his own house?"

Doris nodded.

"He is afraid of him?"

"It seems so."

"But why—why?"

Doris' eyes filled with tears. Levison could see many traces on the girl's worn face to show that tears had often been there of late. He was filled with rage and bitterness.

"I don't know what power he has," muttered the girl. "But father is like his slave. Thank Heaven you have come, Ernie! We can face it all together, somehow. But father—he may be angry—he may send you back to school—"

"I shall not go!" said Levison steadily. "I will not leave the house while that man remains. I shall tell father so. What happened when you were telephoning to me, Doris? I—I heard you cry out—"

The girl shivered.

"He came in—that man." Her voice trembled. "I—I suppose he guessed I was telephoning to the school—or perhaps to a relative. He grasped me by the shoulder and tore me away from the telephone—"

"He dared?" muttered Levison huskily. "And—and father?"

"He was not there. But—but I do not think he would have interfered. He is afraid of the man, and—oh, Ernie, he is not himself now! He looks old—old and so worn and feeble—" A sob broke the girl's voice. "I am certain that that man has given him drugs—he is not at all himself. He is dazed and enfeebled. I hardly dare speak to him now. I—I have ceased to speak to him about Mr. Carson. Oh, Ernie, what can it all mean?" She broke off. "But you have come all the way from the school to-day, and it is getting dark now. You must be tired and hungry."

"I am going to face him, and father," said Levison.

"Not yet—not yet," whispered Doris. "They have not seen you yet."

"No."

"Sit down. I will give you your tea here—in the kitchen. They need not see you yet. Wait till you have rested."

Levison nodded, and sank into a chair at the table. He was conscious now of fatigue and hunger. He needed to be at his best when he faced the man who held his father in his power—and when he faced his father! What would his father say? What would he do? Levison wondered. But upon one point he was resolved—that he would not quit the house while Carson remained under his father's roof.

CHAPTER 6.

What Wildrake Knew.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY coughed.

For a long time Kit Wildrake had remained silent, leaning on the stile, watching the Wayland road with brows wrinkled in thought.

The Terrible Three waited. If Wildrake was beaten, they knew that they were beaten. If the trail ended there without a further clue, their work had been in vain. But they hoped.

D'Arcy coughed again.

"Pewwaps I could make a suggestion," he said.

Wildrake looked at him.

"Go it!" he said briefly.

"It is dinnaht-time—"

"What?"

"We have bwrought some gwub in our wallets," said Arthur Augustus. "Suppose we lunch while Wildwake is doin' his thinkin', deah boys."

The Canadian junior laughed.

"Jolly good idea," he said. "I've finished thinking, and I'm pesky sharp set. Trot out the grub."

The juniors sat on the stile and ate a substantial lunch from their haversacks. Trailing in the wood in the keen wintry air had given them a good appetite.

Wildrake was still looking very thoughtful.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

"Bai Jove! It's Blake!"

Blake and Herries and Digby came along the Wayland road from the direction of the old castle. They looked rather tired and cross.

"Found anything?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Only spiders and cobwebs. Nothing doing there!" grunted Blake.

"If we'd brought Towser—" began Herries.

"Oh, bother Towser!" said Blake crossly. "Let's have our grub here along with these chaps. Where did you pick up Gussy? He got wandering. I left him off the chain, you know."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You never turned up at the castle, fathead!" said Digby. Arthur Augustus smiled.

"I had no time for wambin' ovah sillay old castles," he explained. "I have been on the twack."

"On the track of a new necktie?" asked Blake sarcastically.

"Certainly not."

"A new topper?" asked Dig.

"Wats! We have been twackin' Cardew and the kidnappah and the Wed Indian—"

"The red what?" yelled Study No. 6, with one voice.

"The Wed Indian, deah boys."

"Has he been reading Fenimore Cooper, and got it on the brain?" asked Jack Blake, in wonder.

"Weally, you ass—"

"It's so," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've been making discoveries—at least, Wildrake has."

"Moonshine, I expect," said Blake, shaking his head. "But tell us what you've discovered, and we'll tell you if there's anything in it."

The Terrible Three recited the morning's adventures in the wood. Wildrake did not speak; he was busy with bread-and-butter and ham and tongue. Arthur Augustus put in a few words in a rather lofty way.

"You see, we've been makin' wippin' discoverwies, while you chaps have been wastin' your time," he remarked.

"I don't see that you've made any!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"All you've done was to lose yourself in the wood," said Digby. "You might have died of old age there, if these fellows hadn't found you!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Well, I'd like to see this giddy Red Indian!" said Blake, apparently in a rather sceptical mood. "Got him up your sleeve, Wildrake?"

"Weally, Blake, you know—"

Kit Wildrake slipped from the stile.

"Enough chewing the rag!" he said. "I'm ready to get on, if you fellows are!"

"Quite weady, deah boy!"

"Lead on!" said Tom Merry. "We're ready to follow, if you know where to lead, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I guess I'd better tell you what happened hereabouts last night," said Wildrake thoughtfully.

"Do!" said Blake politely. "You were in the dormitory at St. Jim's at the time it happened—what?"

"Yep."

"So you must know all about it. Pile in!"

"I've been reading the sign, and thinking it out," said Wildrake quietly. "If I'm wrong, I'm wrong; but I could read sign on a trail before I was six years old. The Indian—he might be a half-breed, but I reckon he's more red than white—"

"How's that?" asked Blake, with a wink at his comrades.

"Because he turns in his toes in the Indian way."

"Then, why figure it out that he may be a half-breed, or a quarter-breed, at all?"

"I reckon the kidnapping galoot was more likely to be chummy with a half-breed than a pure Redskin, and, especially more likely to bring him with him to England if he was part white."

"Well, that's so," admitted Blake.

"Well, they reached this spot, I reckon, somewhere about midnight. Cardew was bound to a tree, and gagged, while the Indian went away to fetch a horse and cart. Cardew was carried to the cart, and driven away by the Indian. They didn't go very far; and, unless he's been moved since during to-day, Cardew isn't many miles from us at the present moment. I can't trace the cart on the main road—it's too hard—but I calculate I can pick up the spot where it's turned off the high-road, and, if you fellows are ready, we'll call on the johnny who's got him a prisoner."

The juniors fairly blinked at Wildrake.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Blake burst into a chuckle.

"Can you tell us the colour of the Indian chap's eyelashes?" he asked.

"Nope! I can't tell you that," answered Wildrake quietly.

"Or the way he does his back hair?" asked Digby humorously.

"Nope."

"Chuck chipping!" said Tom Merry. "Wildrake knows what he is talking about!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sounds to me like a giddy fairy-tale, or something out of a story of Ferrers Locke, the detective, in the 'Boys' Herald'!" yawned Blake. "Still, seeing is believing! If we find Cardew—"

"If!" grinned Herries.

"Never mind these duffers, Wildrake!" said Tom Merry.

"I don't mind them," said the Canadian junior tranquilly.

"The fact is, old chap, I believe what you say, of course; but you might make it a bit clearer," said the captain of the Shell—"put it into words of one syllable for us, you know!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kit Wildrake laughed. The chipping from Study No. 6 had not disturbed his equanimity in the least.

"What I've figured out is plain enough for anybody to see," he answered. "I'm not making a mystery of it."

"Well, let's take the giddy points of the indictment in order," said Blake. "First, they arrived on this merry spot about midnight. How the thump do you know that, to begin with?"

"They lay doggo in the wood till after dark," said Wildrake. "I guess that was so that the kidnapped chap shouldn't be seen with the kidnapper's confederate, when he got a move on. They had to come out here on a main road, which is pretty well frequented, Wayland being a market-town. Cars especially whiz along here up to a very late hour. Common-sense would make the kidnapper leave it till midnight."

"Likely enough," admitted Blake. "Only he would want to get in before dawn, and, leaving it so late, might—"

"The other sign tells that he hadn't very far to go."

"Oh, all right! If that's so, it's so! But how the merry thunder do you know they hadn't far to go?"

"Because the Indian left Cardew here while he fetched a



"Football Ferdie's" Latest Idea.

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horse and cart to carry him away in. And because a horse and cart can't take long journeys. If they'd thought of carrying Cardew off into the next county,* for instance, I reckon they'd have fixed up a motor-car for the job. Being only a short journey, a horse and cart did the trick well enough. Safer, too. Nobody was likely to notice specially an ordinary farm-cart jogging along. The Indian went and fetched it, and came back for Cardew. That proved pretty clearly that the distance wasn't great."

"Might have had the horse and cart tied up ready near at hand!" suggested Herries.

Wildrake smiled.

"If a horse and cart had been tied up all afternoon and evening yesterday on this main road, it would have attracted attention, I guess!"

"Then, you think it was fetched from the place to which Cardew had been taken—the kidnapper's hiding-place?" asked Tom Merry.

"Looks like it to me."

"But, dash it all, you haven't proved the existence of the horse and cart yet!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "How the merry thump do you know that Cardew was left here at all by the blessed Indian, tied to a tree—when you were asleep in the dorm at the time?"

Wildrake jerked his thumb towards the wood.

"A dozen yards out of the path there's the tree he was tied to!"

"How do you know?"

"He was wearing a grey overcoat, of a rather rough-surfaced material. The bark shows in a dozen places where he was jammed tight on it, and bound there. He scratched the coat on the bark pretty hard, in trying to wriggle himself free, I guess!"

"Oh!" said Blake, rather blankly.

"There's sign, too, where the rope ran round the tree," continued Wildrake quietly. "I guess Cardew did some struggling, though he couldn't get loose."

"You said he was gagged, too—"

"Pretty clear, or he'd have yelled for help. The tree wasn't more than a dozen yards from the fence on the road. Anybody passing could have heard him if he'd yelled. Somebody might have passed. I guess the kidnapper wasn't chancing that!"

"Heah, heah!" said Arthur Augustus admiringly.

Blake was silent for a moment.

"You say Cardew was carried to the cart?"

"Yep."

"How do you know?"

"Because from that tree there's only the Indian's tracks—rather deeper than before. He walked alone, and was carrying something heavy to make his footprints deeper."

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"Cardew may have refused to walk, or, more likely, he was frozen pretty stiff from being tied to the tree on a winter night," said the Canadian junior. "Anyhow, the Indian carried him from there to here."

"And put him in the cart?"

"Sure!"

"We've heard a lot about the cart," said Blake. "Did you dream it in the dorm at St. Jim's?"

"I've read the sign. You can see where a horse was tied to this stile last night, and wheel-ruts in the mud. How often do you reckon a horse is tied up to this stile? Not once in a blue moon; it's not near any house or farmyard. Besides, if the tracks were old, they'd have been walked out of sight. Lots of pedestrians pass this way. But if you look on that muddy patch between the stile and the main road, you'll see where a horse has stood, close to the stile—tethered to it, I guess—with a farm-cart. No mistaking those wheels—thick and heavy."

Blake glanced through the stile.

"I'd noticed those wheel-marks," he admitted. "But I hadn't thought—well, it may be as you say, Wildrake. You figure it out that the Indian fetched the horse and cart, tethered the geegee here, and went into the wood for Cardew, whom he'd left bound to a tree."

"Correct."

"Why couldn't he walk him on, after walking him so far?" asked Herries dubiously.

"That's pretty clear," said Tom Merry. "He could walk him through the wood; he couldn't walk him on a road. Anybody passing—"

"Yaas, wathah! You are an ass, Hewwies!"

"Well, even if all this is according to Cocker, I don't see that it gets any farther," said Blake. "You're undertaking to track a farm-cart along a high-road, I suppose?"

"I'm undertaking to examine every gate and opening by which a farm cart can have left the main road," answered Wildrake quietly. "I've got the measurement of the wheels, their width, and distance apart. It was a two-wheeled cart. Both the wheels are well worn. I've got the size of the

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horse's shoes, and noticed that a nail is missing from one. I reckon I shall know where that cart turned off the road. We've got to set our backs to Wayland, and start."

"Why not towards Wayland?" asked Blake obstinately.

"It's not likely that the kidnapper would fix up nearer the town than he could help. And the way the horse and cart were standing looks as if they came from the opposite direction. The Indian certainly never dreamed of being trailed in England, as he might have expected in his own country, and he took no trouble to hide the cart-tracks. But the proof of the pudding's in the eating, and we're wasting time. Get a move on."

Wildrake vaulted over the stile into the road, and started.

Tom Merry & Co. followed him.

Blake & Co. were still evidently sceptical. Arthur Augustus looked rather dubious. But the Terrible Three, at least, had full faith in their Canadian comrade, and they followed him full of hope, almost certainty, that the rescue of the kidnapped junior was near at hand. And Sidney Clive, at least, fully shared their faith.

CHAPTER 7.

Face to Face.

"WE'VE got to face it!" muttered Ernest Levison.

"Yes," whispered Doris.

The winter evening had closed in on Cliff Cottage; through the darkness came the boom of the sea at the foot of the chalk cliffs. The dining-room opened on one side of the hall, which was still unlighted; but from the room came the glimmer of light, under the door. Mr. Levison and his strange guest were there. Several times there had been the sound of a clinking glass on a decanter. Carson was apparently washing down the flavour of his incessant cigars, with liberal potations of his unwilling host's wine. His voice came to the brother and sister as they stood hesitating outside the door.

The situation had to be faced, and Levison had nerved himself for it. Doris was pale and troubled, but she was resolute to stand by her brother. But they hesitated as they drew near the room where they had to face their father, who seemed under so strange a spell, and so changed from what they had always known. Clearly, in low, ironical tones, the voice of the man with the flattened nose came to their ears, as they hesitated.

"No news, you say?"

They could not hear Mr. Levison's low response, but the adventurer's strident tones went on.

"You've not heard from the school at all?"

A murmured response, evidently in the negative.

"That's queer."

Then Mr. Levison's voice became audible.

"What do you mean, Carson? Why should I hear from the school? Nothing has happened to my sons."

Carson laughed.

"As for the little kid, nothing has happened to him, that I know of," he said. "He's not dangerous."

There was a sound of Mr. Levison moving in his chair. As if they had seen him, Ernest and Doris knew that he had sat upright, and turned on the adventurer from Colorado.

"What do you mean, Carson?" His voice was sharp and piercing now. "You have been away two days. I thanked Heaven for the relief of your absence. Have you been plotting against my son?"

"I guess you're bound to know, sooner or later," said Carson, laughing. His voice sounded as if he had been drinking very freely, and doubtless the wine had loosened his tongue. "It beats me that you haven't heard from the school. The Head must have missed him."

"Missed him—my son?"

"I guess so, old pard. I looked in at St. Jim's for your son yesterday, and persuaded him to take a little journey with me." Carson laughed at the cry of dismay that broke from the unhappy man by the fire. "Don't be alarmed; he is not harmed. I've left him with my man Chiquito. You remember Chiquito, the half-breed—three-parts Indian and one-part whisky." Carson chuckled. "Chiquito is looking after him—taking care of him, I calculate. He won't come to any harm."

"You scoundrel!"

"Kidnapping, I guess you'd call it," continued Carson. "It was as easy as rolling off a log. He had no suspicion. You can thank your daughter for it, pard."

"Doris?"

"Correct! I knew she had written to her brother, telling him too much. And I know something about your elder son, pard—from you, and from the girl. He is dangerous! He might reckon it was up to him to chip in here."

"You fear a schoolboy?"

"I fear nobody," said the adventurer. "But I guess I'm taking no chances. I will not have the boy here."

"I had forbidden him to come."

"I know it. But I reckon he would have come, all the

same, sooner or later. Only this morning I caught Doris telephoning to the school—asking after him, I guess. She didn't know that he was away from school—in a safe place." Carson chuckled. "But it beats me that you haven't heard from his headmaster. He's been missing from school since yesterday midday—and you haven't heard?"

"I have heard nothing."
"Well, you'll hear. You'd better answer the Head that you've sent for him, and he's safe home. Too much inquiry won't do you any good, Poker Jack."

"You villain—you villain!"

"Hard words break no bones, I guess. Besides, the boy will not be hurt. Chiquito will take care of him. He's safe; that's all. And he will stay safe—till you've come to my terms, old pard."

"Where is he?"
"I guess that's my secret."

"You think I will allow you to kidnap my son, and keep him a prisoner?" Mr. Levison exclaimed, in a trembling voice.

"I think you've got no choice," answered Carson coolly. "I won't have the boy chipping into my game. If your daughter had told him nothing, he would be safe at his school still. You may thank that obstinate little minx!"

"Oh, you scoundrel!"

The brother and sister heard Mr. Levison sink back into his chair. They looked at one another with pale faces.

"What can it mean?" whispered Doris. "Why does father fear that horrible man, Ernie?"

Levison shook his head.

There was much in his father's past life that he knew nothing of; but he knew that Mr. Levison had had a strange career in the Far West in his earlier days. Had it been a lawless one? Was it the knowledge of some crime that gave Dandy Carson his power over the unhappy man?

Yet it was clear that Carson feared interference—feared the coming of Mr. Levison's son to that shadowed house.

"Let us go in," said Levison, as the voices died away in the room. "We've got to face the music."

"Yes, Ernie."

Levison turned the handle of the door and threw it open. He strode into the room boldly, his sister by his side.

Carson turned and looked at them. Mr. Levison sat bolt upright in his chair, staring.

The sight of his son bereft him of the power of speech. But Carson did not share his astonishment. He did not know Ernest Levison by sight.

"Hallo! Visitors—what?" yawned the adventurer. "I think, my girl, that your father does not want visitors at the present time."

"You scoundrel!" said Levison, between his teeth.

Carson started.

"Ernest!" gasped Mr. Levison.

"Ernest?" repeated Carson blankly.

Mr. Levison turned to the man, his sunken eyes glittering.

"Then you were lying to me, you hound! You told me that you had kidnapped my son, and he is here!"

"Your son!" stammered Carson.

"I am Ernest Levison!" exclaimed the St. Jim's junior, his eyes flashing at the startled adventurer. "I have returned home to deal with you, you villain!"

"By thunder! Is this some game?" exclaimed Carson, in bewilderment. "Is this boy really your son, old pard?"

"He is my elder son."

"Then who—who—"

"Fool as well as rascal!" said Levison. "You kidnapped my chum in mistake for me, and I've heard you confess it. The police will deal with you, Mr. Carson. Father, will you order that man out of the house?"

Carson recovered his composure, with an effort. He burst into a rather forced laugh.

"So I made a mistake; I guess that young jackanapes was pulling my leg. He was pointed out to me as Levison, and he let me believe it! I'll make him suffer for it!"

"You will release him at once, wherever he is," said Levison steadily.

"At your order?" said Carson mockingly.

"At my order!"

Carson laughed.

"Doris," said Levison quietly, "go to the telephone! Ring up the police-station at Clyffe, and ask them to send a constable here to arrest a man on a charge of kidnapping."

"Yes, Ernie," breathed Doris.

"Stop!" thundered Carson, as the girl moved to the door. Doris did not heed.

Carson made a stride towards her. Ernest Levison stepped in the way, catching up a heavy decanter from the table.

"One more step towards my sister, Mr. Carson, and I will knock you flying!" he said, between his teeth.

The adventurer stopped. There was no doubting the boy's desperate determination.

"A game chicken!" said Carson, with a harsh laugh. "Thunder! Your son is a chip of the old block, old pard!"

Tell your girl not to go to the telephone. You hear me?"

Mr. Levison roused himself with an effort.

"Doris, stay where you are!"

"Father!"

"You hear me?"

"But, father—"

"And tell the boy to go!" said Carson grimly.

"Heaven help me! Ernest, you must return to school!" almost whispered Mr. Levison. "My boy—my boy, I cannot explain; but you can see that I am in that man's power! You must go!"

Ernest Levison did not stir.

"I can see that you are in that man's power, or believe that you are, father," he answered. "I am here to help you."

"You cannot help me!" groaned his father.

"We shall see."

"Leave the house, boy!" thundered Carson.

Levison looked at him unflinchingly.

"I am staying!" he answered. "If my father forbids me to call in the police to deal with you, I will obey him. But I will not leave the house."

"Levison, order him to go!"

"Ernest—"

"If you order me to go, father, I have no choice," said Levison. "But I tell you, and this man, that if I leave this house, I go direct to the police-station at Clyffe, and return with a constable. I am determined upon that; and you and Mr. Carson may make your choice."

Carson looked at the schoolboy with savage, searching eyes. There was no doubt that Ernest Levison meant what he said; even his father's command would not make him falter. There was a short, tense silence.

"Am I to go, father?" asked Levison at last.

It was Carson who answered:

"Hang you, stay!"

CHAPTER 8.

Trackel Down.

JACK BLAKE, of the Fourth Form, gave a deep yawn. There was no special reason for yawning; but Blake's yawn was long and audible.

Probably Blake of the Fourth wished to convey the fact that he was growing "fed-up" with the proceedings then on hand.

Tom Merry & Co. had proceeded more than a mile from the stile on the Wayland road. Progress was slow. Kit Wildrake was doing his work thoroughly. At every farm-gate or garden-gate on the road the Canadian junior stopped and made a careful examination.

At all the farm-gates there was plenty of mud, and tracks of vehicles could be picked up easily enough. Wildrake was hunting for the wheel-track of the cart that had been



The Juniors crowded into the little bare garret with the barred window. There was Cardew! His clothes were rumpled and his face was a little pale, "Jolly glad to see you, my merry old beans," he said.

tethered at the stile the previous night, and for the tracks of the horse from one of whose shoes a nail was missing.

Wildrake did not heed Blake's portentous yawn, or the amused glances that Herries and Dig were exchanging. Neither did he heed the growing dubiety in the noble countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Even the Terrible Three were beginning to waver in their faith. But the Canadian junior went on the even tenor of his way unheeding. He was quite prepared to continue on the trail alone if his companions became "fed-up" with the long and doubtful quest. Clive, at least, showed no signs of doubt.

"You see," said Jack Blake, addressing space, "it's getting on for tea-time."

"Yaas, wathah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, stick it out!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"You see, Cardew may have been found in the quarries, or somewhere, by this time," remarked Blake, with a ruthless disregard of Wildrake's long and laborious reading of "sign."

"Bai Jove! I wondah!"

"We're keeping on," said Monty Lowther.

"You Fourth-Form kids can run home to tea if you like," added Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Wildrake heeded nothing. He was on his knees before a rickety old gate that led into a neglected-looking farmstead. There were ridges of mud before and round the crazy gate, and wheel-tracks and horse-prints showed in the dried mud clearly, unmistakably.

The Canadian junior rose, and looked over the gate.

Fifty yards away was a small, patched-looking cottage, evidently an old labourer's cottage, in a state of disrepair. It was surrounded by a neglected field, shut in by hedges. There were several outhouses; in an open shed a cart could be seen up-ended. A horse wandered loose in the field, cropping the scanty grass. Smoke rose thinly from a single chimney of the cottage.

The Canadian turned to his followers.

"Ever seen this place before?" he asked. "You've been longer hereabouts than I have."

"Oh, I've seen it lots of times cycling round these parts," said Blake. "It belonged to a small-holder before the war."

"Does he live there now?"

"He was killed in Flanders."

"Do you know who's at the place now?"

"No; it was empty a long time. The place is almost too crazy to live in, I believe; nobody wanted it."

"Well, somebody's living in it now," said Wildrake grimly. "You see the horse and cart, and the smoke from the chimney. You may notice, too, that there are bars of iron clamped over the garret window. That isn't usual in tumble-down cottages in this country, is it?"

"Wathah not!"

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"May be to hold the window-frame together," said Blake. "Looks as if it would fall to pieces at a push."

"Maybe," said Wildrake. "But I calculate not. You see, Cardew of the Fourth is a prisoner in that cottage, and I'm going in to fetch him out. You fellows can come or not as you like."

"Great Scott!"

Wildrake threw open the creaking gate, and walked on into the holding. The juniors, after a glance at one another, followed him. Tom Merry tapped the Canadian on the arm.

"Those tracks at the gate—" he asked.

"They're the tracks I've been looking for."

Wildrake walked to the open shed where the cart stood. He examined the wheels, and nodded. Then he crossed over to the grazing horse. The animal shied at first; but the Canadian had his own way with horses. In a couple of minutes he had soothed the horse, and proceeded to examine its hoofs.

"There's the shoe with the missing nail," he said.

"Bai Jove! It weally looks—"

"Hallo! There's somebody coming out!" exclaimed Herries.

The occupant of the cottage had evidently observed the scouts rooting about his barton. The front-door was thrown open, and a man appeared. He had a thick stick in his hand.

The juniors looked at him, and Blake gave a sort of jump. For the man's face was dark and bronzed, his cheek-bones high. It was obvious that he was of a coloured race, and he bore no resemblance to a negro or a Hindoo.

"The Redskin!" muttered Dig.

Blake nodded. He was pretty well convinced now. From clue to clue, from certainty to certainty, the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch had followed the trail. Every point of his theory had been proved, so far. The horse and the cart had been tracked home, and down here was the Indian whose existence was suspected by no one else, but which Wildrake had deduced from the track in Rylcombe Wood, with the toes turned inwards.

"Hallo! What you do here?" shouted the man in the doorway, waving his stick. "You vamoose the ranch pretty quick, or I come out to you!"

"I guess we're not vamoosing!" grinned Wildrake. "Are you fellows backing me up? I'm going to tackle that red, anyhow!"

"Of course, ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Follow on, then."

The juniors moved towards the cottage doorway in a body. The Indian stared at them surlily and angrily. Evidently he had no suspicion, so far, of what they were there for, but he was surly and suspicious by nature.

"You vamoose! You hear me!" he snapped.

"I guess not, my coffee-coloured tulip!" said Kit Wildrake. "Put down that stick, or you'll get hurt! We're coming in."

"You no come in here!" snapped Chiquito savagely. He brandished the stick threateningly. Tom Merry lunged with his staff, and knocked it out of his hand. The juniors made a rush.

In a moment they closed on the man in the doorway, and there was a fierce struggle.

The struggle was long and savage.

But numbers told. The Indian went down under the juniors, and Wildrake's knee clamped on his chest. Clive's fingers were wound in the thick lank hair.

"Look out!" yelled Blake.

There was a glitter of steel. The savage half-breed, finding himself overcome, had whipped out a knife.

But Wildrake was ready for him. He had had to deal with breads before on the Boot Leg Ranch.

He gripped the dusky wrist, and held it tenaciously; and Tom Merry and Blake together unclosed the man's gripping fingers, and forced the knife from him. Clive dragged it away.

The Indian was well held now, and Wildrake jerked a whipcord from his pocket. He bound the dusky wrists together, while the others held them, and knotted the cord. Then Chiquito's neckcloth was jerked off, and twisted to bind his legs. The Indian lay on the floor, panting, his black eyes watching the juniors, glittering like a snake's.

There had been no sound from the cottage during the struggle. It was evident that the Indian was alone there, unless there was a prisoner in one of the rooms. On that point the juniors had no doubt. Wildrake rose rather breathless from the struggle.

"Now for Cardew!" he said.

And Sidney Clive shouted:

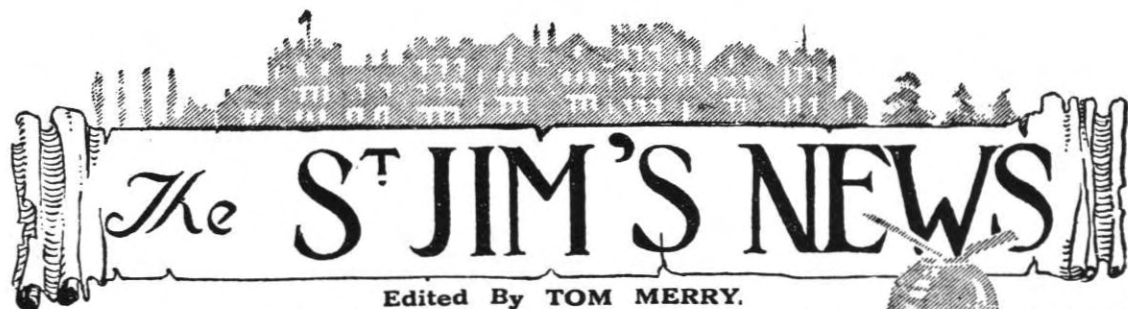
"Cardew! Are you here, Cardew?"

From somewhere above the rickety staircase came the answer:

"Hallo, old bean!"

It was the cheery voice of Ralph Reckness Cardew!

(Continued on page 18.)



The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

Wally's Secret Society.

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER.

By WALLY D'ARCY.

I REKKON that it's about time some-boddy with branes had a look-in here. This "St. Jim's News" is supposed to be written by St. Jim's fellows, not just one or too of them. It's edited by a Shell-fish, and filled up by Forth-Form chaps who don't even no how to spel. And while I'm diskusing that matter, I may as well say that if Tom Merry takes this artikle, I'll thank him to print it as I rite it, without trying to alter the speling akording to his own way. I don't want it spoilt.

This paper wants bucking-up; it wants pep putting into it. Fanny giving up space to a silly ass swanking how he spent a thousand quid (not that I believe he ever did. And he admits himself that he had to get a girl to help him. Any idiot could do it like that. Girls no all about spending monney, and their things cost more than a fellow's do. Why, my mater often pays too hundred pounds for one dress, and even my silly ass major, Gussy, could get harf-a-duzen suits for less than that.)

Then all that rot about sekret sossieties, and what the Sixth do. People will think we're a lot of silly jays at St. Jim's when they read that. Why couldn't Levison come and see me? I'd have shown him what a sekret sossiety reely is. Take ours, for instance. There's Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne and Manners miner and young Levison in it, with a lot more of the chaps of the Third. The four I have just named are the heads—after me, of course!

We don't waste time talking about what we mean to do. We do it. And we don't have a subskripshon of fifteen bob a week. Our sub is tuppence a week, paid on the nail. No messing; out with the monney or out with the member, one or the other. No dodging the collum in our crush, take it from me!

The boss (that's me) doesn't hit on the table with a hammer, like they do at sum places. I do my biffing with a cricket-stump, and it not only makes more row, but it gives you a longer reech when you have to leen over and call one of the chaps to order.

The rules are a bit stiff, and it's not easy to get eklected. You have to be proposed by a member, and get two others to prove that you are a self-respekting chap who never wears more than two clean collars in a week (one member got expelled from the sossiety only last week for changing his collar on a Thursday. He gave some potty excuse about having upset a bottle of ink over it, but anny ass woud have known it woud have dried all right. Annyway, he got the boot!).

Then you must have kicked the shins of somebody in the Fifth or the Sixth, only he mustn't be a decent chap you kick, like Kildare and Darrel, but Knox or Cutts or St. Leger, and their pals, the same being rotters and well worthy of being kicked—on the shins or out of the school.

And you must have had at least three scraps with one of the fags from the Grammar School, and have wiped the flore with him, in the opinion of two witnesses or a responsible official appointed by the committee. (I got that bit from a book of rules for a footer club, so I no the speling and all that are all right.)

Then come the tests, the first of which is to be able to cook a bloater with only half

a candle. This takes a bit of doing, I can tell you, and only an expert has anny candle left when he's finished. Joe Frayne and me can do it, and then roast a sossidge with the same peace of candle. The new member has to pass a test in thoroughing ink-balls, made of blotting-paper, soaked in ink, at a big drawing of Selby that we pin up on the wall. You have to get four hits out of six, and one on the beak counts as too.

The next test is for dropping big piles of ekserise-books, so they make a row, and look as if it was an axident, and then for putting pegs in an eazle so that a blak-bord will rest on it, but will fall as soon as anny-boddy starts riting on it.

If the chap passes all thease tests, he takes the oath, wich is sekrecy, and swares undieing hatred to the Shell-fish and the Forth Form. Those members who have got majers in these Forms have to humbly appologise to the sossiety for it, and ask to be forgiven. They also have to sware to check them on all okashions.

They are then given the sekret pass-words, wich I am not aloud to revele. Each member carries a dead rat in his pocket to show to the other members as a sekret sine. Their is no harm in my teling this, as noboddy could make anny use of it, becaws the rat has to have a spechial kind of knot tied in its tale to show that it is a jenuin sekret sine rat.

The other seremonys I cannot revele, as they are to much of a mistry, and cannot be spoken of without making people shuder and there blood run cold.

But I have said enough to show what Levison major mist when he went to Kildare insted of comming to me.

WALLY D'ARCY.

Tracking Down The Sixth:

HERO AND MARTYR.

By EDGAR ALFRED JONES
(JONES MINOR).

For New Readers.

I was picked upon by Tom Merry, the brilliant editor, as being the only suitable person for the task of bearding the lions in their dens. I started on my perilous adventure at tea-time, and succeeded in getting inside three studies. After managing to quit the third study in one whole piece, it was necessary to suspend investigations owing to circumstances which cannot be referred to.

(Now Read On.)

HAVING introduced myself to new readers in a really modest manner, I will tell what happened when I again commenced to invade the great men of the Sixth Form passage.

STUDY No. 4.—Occupant, Arthur Lyons—Lyons major—brother of a silly ass who, for some mysterious reason, hangs out in the New House Fourth.

"Good after-tee!" I remarked, by way of introduction. "How do you don't?"

Arthur Lyons arose from his soft armchair, and came towards me. I honoured him with a lofty smile, walked round behind him, and wallowed down into his warm, empty armchair. I am not quite sure whether Lyons is dumb or not; but, anyhow, he seemed dumb this afternoon. He took no

notice of yours truly as I sat in that comfortable armchair, gradually feeling anything but comfortable. At last he crossed to the window, behind the back of the armchair in which I was seated. Then suddenly a gripping hand descended from behind the chair, and clutched at my collar with a grip of iron. Slowly—slowly I was hauled from that chair, up—and over the back. When the seat of my trucks were on a level with the top of the back, Lyons twisted me round and bent me over in a most unbecoming fashion. His intentions dawned upon me in a flash! I was "in for it," with a vengeance. But, no! Luck walked in at the door in the shape of old Horace, my elder brother. Old Jonesey could nearly spifflicate Lyons—and tigers, too—if he wanted to, and before I knew what had happened I was standing behind the chair on my feet. I didn't wait to ask any questions, but removed my uninjured person from Study No. 4 in precisely two seconds. Talk about bearding a lion's den—why, the Lyons in Study No. 4 are worse than the rest of the crowd put together.

STUDY No. 5.—Occupant, Jack North—an honourable prefect of the school.

"Cheerio, old tulip!" I yelled, sticking my head round the door of Study No. 5. "How's the old north, south, east, and west blowing?"

Jack, the prefect, was putting things right on the bed in his alcove. He looked round suddenly, and before I knew what happened let fly a heavy pillow at me. The beastly thing landed full in my face, and I was precipitated three yards back along the corridor. I gathered myself up tenderly, and as I passed the keyhole of Study No. 5, yelled through an affectionate remark: "Yah! Windy!"

STUDY No. 6.—Occupant, Patrick Mulvaney—Mulvaney major, brother of Michael Mulvaney, in the School House Fourth.

For five minutes I thought of a good think before marching into the presence of the great Pat. At last I decided what to say, and cautiously opened the door.

"Hallo, Pat!" I said cheerily. "How's Mike? Heard the latest joke?"

Mulvaney major looked round grimly at me, and then gathered up an ash-plant, which belonged to Gerald Knox.

"Shure!" he agreed. "I have. Just come over here, and I'll tell it to ye!"

"No, thanks!" I grinned. "Not to-day. You see, we had one, and the wheel came off, so we transplanted all three of 'em. I'll call again, to-morrow—"

I departed very quickly. Mulvaney major looked warlike.

STUDY No. 7.—Occupant, Eric Kildare, head prefect and captain of St. Jim's.

I took two deep breaths, and buttoned up my coat and waistcoat correctly before entering the apartment of our Irish skipper. But just as I was going to open the door I glanced down at my boots. Kildare is rather a particular sort of chap, and it struck me forcibly that I should simply be asking for trouble by going into his presence wearing a pair of corn-cases which had seen neither blacking nor brushes for over a week. I therefore buzzed off to the boot-room and cleaned them. I also oiled, brushed, and parted my hair, and sewed four missing buttons on to my trousers. Then, quite satisfied with my appearance in general, I made my way back again to the sacred sanctum of the skipper of St. Jim's. I cleared my throat, tapped at the door, and boldly entered.

"Hallo, Eric, old joint—" I began, and

then paused and looked round in search of the occupant. He was conspicuous by his absence.

"Well," I said, at length, "if that don't take the whole giddy tin of biscuits!"

I then alighted upon an explanatory message attached to the inside of the door. It was as follows: "Back at nine o'clock." I quitted the study in disappointment. But perhaps it was for the best!

STUDY No. 8.—Occupant, Nigel Macgregor—from somewhere in Scotland.

I found him at home, and sat down at the table opposite him. Nigel McG. is a strong, silent fellow—in fact, so silent that after talking to him for ten minutes without pausing, I couldn't get a word from him. I went on for a little while longer, but at length got absolutely fed up with talking to a dummy, and cleared off, venting my feelings by shutting the door so quietly that you could have heard it at Rylcombe. And would you have believed it? Just as I walked away a roar of laughter rang from behind the walls!

STUDY No. 9.—Occupant, Edwin Dudley—prefect.

Dudley glanced round quickly as I entered. "Just the fellow I want," he said. "You've got to go to Wayland for me, young 'un. I want my footer boots fetched from Friminges."

"Your mistake!" I said blandly, closing the door again. "Fetch 'em your lazy self!"

By the time he opened the door I was in the next study.

STUDY No. 10.—Occupant, George Thurzman—major of another silly little magpie who belongs to the New House Fourth.

"For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!" I warbled, as I found the study empty. But I did not clear off at once. I stayed five minutes, and made myself quite at home. I warmed my hands in front of the fire, and then looked into his cupboard. No fellow who is a sport would accuse another of stealing for simply boning some of his prog. Tuck-raiding is quite a regular pastime, and the unfortunates have to stand it. The iced cake was grand, the nuts and fruit were even better, and fancy pastry surpassed the lot. When I was about four pounds heavier than I had been on entering, I cleared off.

STUDY No. 11.—Occupant, Stanley Baker—prefect.

Old Baker-boy used to be in the New House once upon a time. I s'pose wiser counsels prevailed, and he gave the old casual ward "the bird," and came over to St. Jim's proper. Another really splendid fellow—splendid because of the fact that he was absent. I wish every fellow would be so obliging to me.

STUDY No. 12.—Occupant, Philip Rushden—prefect.

I was never more thankful in my life that I opened the door of Study No. 12 quietly. If you remember, last week I paid a visit to Gerald Knox. As I peered cautiously into the room I espied dear old Knox there, actually in conversation with Philip Rushden. I drew the door shut, and vanished.

STUDY No. 13.—Occupant, George Richard Bruce Darrel—prefect.

Fancy having a name like that to go to bed with!

"Hallo! You look extraordinarily smart for a Fourth Form boy," said Darrel, in mild astonishment. "What's the game?"

"I'm the new representative of the 'St. Jim's News,'" I explained, with a cheeky grin. "I'm on a tour!"

"Well," said Darrel slowly, "I must admit that it does one's eyesight quite a lot of good to see a fag spruce and clean for once; but, on the other hand, I'm very sorry to say it was quite unnecessary to have come here in such a garb."

"Why?" I demanded, staring.

Darrel indicated the fireplace.

"I shall want you to blacklead the grate, and clean all the brass, and wash up my tea-things, dust my bookcase through—Ah! Where are you off to?"

Yours truly was endeavouring to get to the other side of the study door, but Darrel grasped my arm, and gently persuaded me to carry out his bidding. After sticking at it for an hour and a half I got through his awful cleaning, and made the study as bright and cheerful as a new pin. But as for myself, alas! My shiny boots, my smart togs, my well-groomed hair! The only thing I represented when I had finished was a toss-

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

up between a Christy minstrel, a dustman, and a chimney-sweep!

I betook my grimy self to the nearest bathroom to scrape it off. And if my name doesn't go down to posterity as a hero and martyr for evermore, I'll never write another article as long as I live!

EDGAR ALFRED JONES.

A Fair Treat For Taggles.

(How not to make a dinosaur.)

By BERNARD GLYN.

WHEN I started out to make a dinosaur I never thought of the difficulties to be faced. I may as well admit this stupendous fact right away. Several chaps to whom I mentioned the biznez thought it was something to do with dinner. I hastened to let them know that a dinosaur was first cousin to a creature called a stegosaurus. They both lived some time back, in the prehistoric age, I think, but I am not going into that.

It is a rare job to make one of these animals. It cost me a good bit in cardboard and green paint. I kept the matter dark as long as I could, for I wanted to give them a really merry surprise in Study No. 6. When I let Tom Merry into the secret he told me to get on with the washing, and make this article (I mean what I am writing for his blessed paper, not the dinosaur) short and crisp, and all that, but you can't hurry a dinosaur.

Tom Merry ought to make one. Then he would see. I can tell you I was in a sticky mess with glue before I had half done. A dinosaur has to be padded pretty thick. I found a pile of old papers. They did for stuffing. There were plenty of journeys to and from the shed.

The animal was a fair terror when I had painted its cardboard head, with its celluloid eyes and red paper behind them. I felt a bit proud of it. If a dinosaur was not like my invention—well, all I can say is, it was missing a chance of making an impression.

I put my gramophone in its middle, and after I had tested its clockwork legs, and found that everything was O. K., I thought it was time for a public exhibition. It was a lucky chance that the night I walked the dinosaur into the school nobody was about. I had fixed two small electric-lights behind the monster's celluloid eyes, and, my word, the dinosaur's optics did glare.

"It will give them a pleasant surprise," I said to myself, as I guided the brute into the passage leading to Study No. 6. Its tail flopped on the floor.

There could not have been a more suitable occasion, for Gussy was giving Taggles a treat—he had insisted on asking the porter to supper. There was no end of a row coming from the study. I heard Blake pretending to play a piece on the piano called "Shirts and Brilliantine" (he says it is Scherzo-Brilliantine, but it is all the same), and it sounded as if Gussy were keeping time by making a speech.

Then suddenly a shadow loomed up, just as the dinosaur and I reached the study door. Yes, it was Baggy. Trimble was waiting for somebody to open the door.

"Listening to the music—what!" I said to Baggy.

Baggy had his ear to the keyhole, so it seemed a reasonable supposition.

"Bother the music!" rumbled Baggy. "The beasts are scoffing Kate and Sidney pudding in there, and they won't let me have a snack."

As he said this Baggy took his fat ear away from the keyhole, and put his pudgy nose there instead.

"My, it do smell good!" he muttered. "Rotters, that's what they are, rotters, keeping me out, and letting Taggles make a pig of himself—and after all I've done for 'em, too!"

"Let me knock at the door, Baggy," I said. "I am going in."

"He, he, he!" cried Baggy. "You may think you are, but the hogs won't let you. Besides, I expect the steak and kidney is all gone now—Yaroor! Help! Take it away!"

Baggy had just removed his huge bulk from the doorway, and in so doing he had caught sight of my pet dinosaur. He gave one look, took a surprising leap in the air as the gentle animal fixed him with its rosy eye, and then Baggy ceased to be in the vicinity. He went racing down the corridor letting out quick, short yells.

I had never intended to ruffle the nerves of our one and only frimble, but, of course, these accidents will happen. Baggy should not linger round studies. It may be a lesson to him. Maybe in 1922, as the year gets older and mellow, Baggy will reform.

(Cease this dull lecturing business, for goodness' sake.—Tom Merry, Editor.)

Blake heard the shout Baggy gave, and he threw open the door. I saw the festive scene. Gussy was really making a speech. I heard him say that porters were the bulwark of England. He said he wished that dear old Taggles would live to be a thousand years of age. (Save us.—T. M.) Gussy had one patent-leather shoe on the table. Herries was there, and Towser was occupying the next chair. Digby sat by Gussy. Taggles was at the end of the table, looking fat and cosy. I could not take them all in, but got a glimpse of Giacomo nibbling a banana.

Taggles turned his eyes towards the dinosaur just as I touched the button which set the gramophone going in the animal's Little Mary.

To this day I don't know just what Taggles said. It seemed to me like all the letters of the alphabet marching round in a giddy procession with a flag and a band. But it was clear he did not like the dinosaur.

"Help! I'm dying! Take the beast away! Save us!" Taggles had started saying things one could understand.

He stood there staring, and the dinosaur played the "Last Rose of Summer," giving as an encore "I Heard You Calling Me."

If it had heard Taggles calling nobody could be surprised. The porter had leaped on to a chair. He was roaring like a bull. Then he dashed for the door, but, unluckily, barged right into my invention. Down they both went. It was a sort of mixed stew—Taggles and dinosaur. We picked the porter out of the wreckage, and Gussy gave him ginger wine to bring him round.

But Taggles is no scientist, or he would have been interested in my praiseworthy attempt to show him one of the gigantic beasts which used to roam where London now stands. And, would you believe it?—they ended up by pelting the poor creature with all sorts of nasty things, so that I could hardly recognise my nice dinosaur at the end.

ST. JIM'S DECLARES WAR ON THE GRAMMARIANS!

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(Continued from last week.)

THE Black Circle gang at once made off towards their headquarters in the town. Here they had secured a large house in a quiet corner, and it suited their purpose as a meeting-place.

Madeleine was by this time resigned to her fate.

Struggling to free herself was worse than useless, and the only thing the unfortunate prisoner could hope for was that some of her friends would be able to track her down before it was too late.

She realised, however, that the artful members of the gang would do their very best to cover up all their recent movements. The outlook, indeed, was very black for her, for Madeleine was convinced that these villains would show her no mercy.

Presently the car halted, and Madeleine was taken into the big house. The interior was very gloomy indeed, and with the exception of the man who opened the door in response to the leader's knock, the place was apparently deserted.

Madeleine gathered that the caretaker, or whatever he called himself, was both deaf and dumb, for none of the men spoke to him. Some of them made signs to him, and he responded in the same manner.

There was no doubt, though, that the Black Circle gang knew him well, and that he also was on the most familiar terms with them.

The gang were determined that Madeleine should not escape them again, for at the order of Hammer Mr. Stanton's daughter was conducted to a large gloomy cellar beneath the house by the deaf mute.

He at once set to work to make his prisoner even more secure, and the unhappy girl was forced roughly into a chair and her legs and arms were tied to it.

The rest of the gang were holding a conference amongst themselves upstairs, and Madeleine had not the slightest doubt that the subject of her fate was under discussion.

She was feeling very despondent at that moment, but it was not her own plight which worried her. She was wondering if her father, the millionaire ranch-owner who had been missing for so long now, was also brought here, and whether it was possible that he was still held in captivity.

The girl's thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of her deaf and dumb gaoler again. He was a most repulsive man to look at, and Madeleine fairly hated him to come anywhere near her. Never before had she seen such a villainous-looking man.

The gang had decided to try her for her life, and the charge was one of interfering with the plans of their organisation.

She knew that the trial would be a pure mockery, and the result was a foregone conclusion. They would be almost certain to find her guilty. The deaf mute tested the ropes which bound Madeleine to the chair, and then he pressed a small button on one of the walls.

Slowly the chair commenced to ascend, and the prisoner felt herself being raised towards the ceiling above. The next minute or so she found herself in the assembly-room surrounded by all the members of the Black Circle.

For a moment there was a tense silence. Then one of the men opened the proceedings by a speech in which he stated the charge against the prisoner.

The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written by Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.

In spite of the terrible position in which Madeleine found herself she could not help smiling at the farce which was going on. Her contempt for the villains in front of her seemed to enrage the men still further, and both Hammer and Pinchers, and the leaders the gang, displayed a great desire to proceed with the trial with all possible haste.

Madeleine took not the slightest interest in this mockery. She was wondering at the time whether her friend, Dr. Brutell, would succeed in finding his way to her prison before it was too late. She knew that he would not spare any effort to find her, but he had a tremendous task in front of him, and it was a race against the clock all the time.

To-morrow would be too late, for the gang might decide to put her to death almost at once. She was aware that they regarded her as being very much in the way, and that she was not likely to rest until she secured the release of her father. And this the gang wanted least of all!

They did not intend to let the wealthy ranch-owner get out of their sight until they had obtained a very large ransom indeed. If Mr. Stanton paid up he could have his liberty, but if he did not choose to do this, well, they would keep him a prisoner until he felt in a mood to change his mind.

But Mr. Stanton was not the sort of man to give way to the desires of villains of this kind. Already they had brought considerable pressure to bear upon him.

They had tortured him in many ways, but still the millionaire remained firm. He had faith that sooner or later his beloved daughter, Madeleine, would secure his release with the aid of the sheriff and his men.

Little did he know that she also was in their clutches, and that a solemn farce called a trial was going on, which would soon seal her fate.

It was a good thing, perhaps, for his peace of mind, that he was not aware of this distressing fact.

Soon all the evidence against Madeleine was heard, and then a vote was about to be taken, and all those present would decide whether the prisoner was guilty or not guilty according to their point of view.

A dramatic thing occurred at that moment, however, and the verdict was delayed. There was a roar and a flash of light, and a well-known figure stood in the midst of the members of the Black Circle gang.

It was Dr. Brutell, their chief. All the men bowed low before him as he walked towards the dais at the end of the room and took his place of honour.

Madeleine looked up in a startled manner. Who could this strange newcomer be, she wondered, and why did these villains in front of her treat him with such great respect? Then the visitor spoke, and the girl was puzzled more than ever. Surely she knew that voice! Where had she heard it before?

Madeleine tried to think, but she was so worried by the events of the last few hours that she could not. Again the newcomer spoke, and Madeleine was strangely impressed. She felt convinced that she knew that voice.

The members of the gang had been telling him of what had taken place in the room. How the prisoner had endeavoured to spoil their plans, and of the evidence which had been heard against the girl.

The newcomer listened eagerly, and it was obvious to Madeleine that he was in entire agreement with the rest of them.

Hammer, the second in command, explained how they were just about to find their verdict; then again bowing in an almost exaggerated manner, he concluded by saying, "the chief will now pronounce the punishment!"

There was a terrible silence! Madeleine felt that she was about to hear some awful news, but she did not lose courage. Indeed, she was still very much concerned about the identity of this man who had made such a dramatic entry, and whom they treated with unusual respect.

"Prisoner, you have only until midnight to live!"

Madeleine could scarcely believe that these terrible words referred to her. What! had she done to be sentenced to death. She wondered if she was dreaming. It all seemed like a terrible nightmare to her. What thoroughly heartless and inhuman men they must be. No wonder people went in dread of the hated Black Circle, and took pains not to incur their wrath!

The strange man spoke again and awoke Madeleine from her thoughtful mood. She felt that she would give almost anything to have her curiosity satisfied concerning the identity of her judge.

His voice seemed more familiar to her every time she heard it. And yet—surely she was mad to think that it could be Dr. Brutell who was sentencing her to death.

Dr. Brutell, the great scientist and doctor, was her father's best friend, and he had promised to protect Madeleine and shield her from harm.

He was now looking directly at her through the narrow slits in the head-covering which he wore. Madeleine flashed back defiance.

"I am not afraid to die!" she said with calmness. "But I am sure I know your voice. You are a coward if you do not show me your face!"

There was a movement amongst the men in the room. How dare the prisoner speak to the chief in this manner? Two of them gripped her by the shoulder, and it seemed that they expected her to make an attempt to injure him. But Madeleine had no thought of this.

She had a great deal more pluck than any of these cowards, who fairly trembled in the presence of their leader.

A hoarse laugh came from the man seated on the chair at the end of the room. It sounded to Madeleine like the laugh of a madman.

"Leave the woman alone!" he commanded. "She is about to die. If she desires, she shall see my face. I will let her have her wish!"

Again this strange man gave vent to a loud, maniacal roar of laughter. His face was not a pleasant sight for anyone to see. He was fully conscious of that, and he was aware what effect it would have upon anyone who was not accustomed to it.

Slowly and deliberately he lifted his head-covering, and he watched the features of the pretty, delicate girl in front of him as he did so. Madeleine was not prepared for such a ghastly sight, and presently the room resounded with her shrieks.

The face that she looked upon seemed scarcely human! Every sort of villainy was impressed upon those dreadful features. Never before had she gazed upon such a terribly wicked face. It completely unnerved her, as her tormentor knew that it would, and she could not refrain from screaming with horror. It was enough!

The chief of the Black Circle gang replaced his hood, and only by a great effort the poor girl saved herself from collapsing. How foolish she felt she had been to think for one single moment that this awful man could be her dear friend, Dr. Brutell. And yet, even now, she could not help marveling at the strange similarity in the two voices.

Needless to say, she did not recognise the evil face that leered into hers. It belonged to Dr. Brutell, but not the clever and respected scientist she knew so well. It belonged to Brutell, the bad, who was again stricken down by the terrible malady of which he was a victim.

As usual, when he was in these evil moods, he at once made for the headquarters of the Black Circle gang. At the end of this amazing incident Madeleine was once more taken to the cellar below, and she was there to await her execution.

(To be continued next week.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 727.

THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

Read this magnificent story dealing with the adventures of three chums in a strange country.

By REID WHITLEY.

FOR NEW READERS.

Hobby Tarrant and Tony Matthers, with Billy Kettle, a trusted negro servant, are on an expedition in the Andes. A volcanic eruption, causing a tremendous tidal wave, carries their canoe into the Valley of Surprise. The party explore the valley, and experience many adventurous times. Reaching a village, they are confronted by a race of strange, primitive men, who show great hospitality, and make friends. But Maxia, the medicine-man, hates the newcomers, and through a dastardly scheme which he hatches, they very nearly lose their lives. For this action the Ariki lose faith in him. He succeeds in making friends with the Mangas, but with the assistance of these semi-human brutes his cunning schemes prove futile.

Hobby invents a kite with a basket attached, to carry the trio out of the valley. On a trial trip he is attacked by an eagle, and is forced to land in the middle of the lake. His chums build a raft and set out to rescue him. They are attacked by an alligator which Lalo slays.

Now read on

It reared itself on its hind legs, its mouth opened to its fullest extent, displaying all its evil array of horrible teeth. One last ear-tearing bellow rang over lake and forest, and it fell, writhed, and then lay still.

Only waiting to make sure that the life was really gone out of the brute, the Ariki swarmed down and over the carcass. It was seldom that they succeeded in slaying one of the great saurians, who were as wary and cunning as they were strong. The carcass was uneatable, but they had many uses for the hide, while the teeth and claws made desirable ornaments.

Under many hatchets and flint-knives the brute quickly went to pieces, which were

hauled aloft by the women as they were cut off. Then minutes after its death nothing of the alligator remained but a sheer hulk, which the numerous scavengers would speedily remove in the night.

But the danger of interruption was not diminished by this, and Tony and Billy hastened the work of completing the raft. Four long oars were sent down and put in place; several long spears were shipped, and all was ready.

Lalo and two other men, who were to accompany Tony and Billy on their perilous voyage, entered the cage. Tony followed, and at his word the raft was shoved and carried down the sloping beach and pushed off.

The Ariki got aloft and hung, staring, not venturing even to whisper. This was a great and wonderful day to them—more wonderful than any of the days that had passed since the white strangers and their black brother had come down from the clouds to dwell with them.

The land was bad enough. It was very unsafe to walk the earth, even at midday. But so long as a man was in the forest and not too near any covert, he could usually escape danger by climbing aloft. The water was altogether different. To fall into it meant death. Only once or twice in the memory of generations had anyone dropped into the lake and escaped alive.

Therefore, they watched, awe-stricken, as the raft crept slowly away from the shore. It could not go fast. Though Billy, at one of the oars, kept up a constant stream of instructions, the Ariki at the other did not get on very well. Tony, who steered with a third oar, had some trouble in keeping the raft on a straight course. Finally, he changed places with the Indian, and they began to make better progress.

But since the raft was heavy, and had been built more with an eye to strength than speed, they did not hope to make Hobby's Island under at least two hours. They could see the smoke of that unsuccessful aeronaut's fire, so knew that he was all right. Tony wondered whether he had succeeded in finding food. At all events, Hobby would probably be hungry, so he had brought a basketful of cold pigeon and a chunk of fried fish.

He need not have worried himself. At that moment Hobby, comfortably seated in a crotch of his tree, was devouring hot, broiled fish while he watched the progress of the raft.

Other eyes watched it, too—from below. Perhaps the lurking denizens of the lake were scared by the strange invader of their domain. Perhaps they fancied the raft was yet another monster even more powerful than the Brontosaurus that often waded about the shallows. Anyhow, the raft had traversed more than half the distance to the island before any incident occurred.

The first sign was an odd swirling of the water ahead. Next the raft rocked as though something had passed just under its flat bottom. Then there came a bump that hoisted its fore part nearly out of the water and made all its timbers creak.

After that nothing happened for several minutes, during which Billy and Tony pulled their hardest. They began to hope that, after all, they might pass unmolested.

"Whatever that thing was, it seems to have gone off," said Tony cheerily.

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth than up from the depths in their wake shot the black, evil-looking head of the brute which had so nearly managed to secure Hobby on their first coming to the forest. Or, if it were not the same, it was its first cousin. At least, it behaved in the same abominable way.

Wasting not a moment, it threw itself upon the cage, striking with its head at the net of cane and bamboo which fenced the openings between the bars, while a pair of great flappers or fins beat at the raft itself. The weight of the creature's huge, barrel-shaped body bore the raft down till water poured over the feet of the crew; and for a moment it seemed as though it would be upset.

But not in vain had Tony planned the structure to resist just such an assault.

Nothing gave way. As the beast appeared, Lalo and his men seized their long spears. With fierce thrusts they drove them at the thing's tough and slippery hide. Tony waited his opportunity, and let drive a couple of bullets. Billy brought his pistol to bear, and at point-blank range sent a cripple-stopper clean through the beast's long, serpent-like head.

Uttering a long, hissing scream, it slid back into the water, its flappers slashing up spouts of foam, while its tail belaboured the raft. Once again it strove to turn to renew the attack, while the long spears pierced its flanks, but only to roll back, wallowing amidst the bloodstained surf.

"We've done him, Marse Tony!" shouted Billy. "Let's get on! Pull, Marse Tony—pull! Oh, golly! Dere's another!"

It was too true. A second abomination had appeared astern. It came towards them swiftly, its head held aloft, its neck cutting through the water like the prow of a boat. Despite their best efforts, it overhauled the raft as though it were standing still. But it did not at once attack. Twice it circled, and each time the wave it threw up set the clumsy raft rocking.

At last it made up its mind and closed, but this time the crew were prepared. Before it could hurl itself upon the cage the spears licked out to meet it, and Tony's rifle cracked. Wounded, and thoroughly scared, it drew back, circled again, then, spying its comrade or mate, which was still struggling on the surface, made for it.

Not to succour it, however. The stern laws of existence in the valley forbade any sort of sentiment. To be wounded badly meant death. Only the strong and fit could survive in the constant battle for life.

"Him going to eat him! Oh, glory!" exclaimed Billy. "Pull, Marse Tony! Golly, what a scrap!"

For the wounded creature still had some fighting left in it. As it felt the teeth of its loving kinsman sink in its flesh, it rallied enough to return the compliment. They whirled over and over each other in a mad confusion of spray and floating weeds, while over them hovered the birds of prey which hoped to share in the fragments of the feast.

But the raft's crew did not linger to watch the spectacle. Though Lalo and his fellows could not row, they could at least reinforce the rowers. They tugged and pushed at the long oars that Tony and Billy wielded, and with their aid the speed increased. Soon they had left the combat far behind, and were close to the island.

A loud hail greeted them. Hobby, swinging from a natural ladder, slowly descended as the raft forged beneath him, dropped upon the uncovered patch of deck, and scrambled through the door which Tony opened. Then he solemnly shook hands all round.

The Ariki stared at him round-eyed, and would have prostrated themselves if Hobby had not restrained them with a lordly wave of the hand. They revered him more than ever, for had he not ridden on the tail of an air canoe, vanquished one of the detestable eagles which they hated, and made himself comfortable on an island which no one had ever visited before.

Hobby understood something of this, and was the more pleased with himself.

"I find that kite notion was a mistake, old man," he said airily. "We'll never get out of here in that way. But it has been a most interesting experience." His eye fell on the food-basket, and he grinned. "Is that some grub you've got there? Awfully good of you to remember! I've had a few fish, but this air is most bracing—I feel most uncommonly peckish, you know! If you don't mind—"

And, without more ado, he opened the basket and began to eat. Billy laughed, but Tony eyed him grimly.

"You may as well feed while you can," he answered. "It's doubtful if you'll get another meal for some while. Look there!" He pointed to the sky. Clouds were rolling rapidly up from the further horizon. The wind was getting up again. "I doubt if we can pull this thing back against the gale that's coming," he added.

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"Then the sooner we get going the better," said Hobby, dropping a half-eaten pigeon. "I'll take an oar."

They swung the raft about and began the return voyage. But the wind steadily increased in violence. The waves grew higher. Soon they were sweeping over the raft, which tossed incessantly. The high cage was almost like a sail, so that, row as they would, they could make no headway. Soon they were losing ground.

The Ariki did their best, though they began to look very green about the gills. Presently one of them groaned and fell moaning.

"He says he's poisoned," translated Billy. "I tell him he seask, but he not understand. Dere goes another!"

A second Indian collapsed, rolling helplessly from side to side as the raft pitched. Lalo held out a little longer, then he, too, succumbed and lay moaning. In vain Billy tried to explain. It was useless. They lay, rolling up eyes of reproach, while the three toiled at the oars.

And now they heard the waves breaking upon a rocky shore, and, peering astern through a driving mist of rain and spray, saw that they were close to the land at the upper end of the lake. Shipwreck was to be added to their other experiences.

Tony drew in his oar and opened the door of the cage.

"Stand by to help the Indians!" he said. "What a horrible jumble of rock—and we're driving straight into it! We'll be lucky if we get ashore at all, and luckier still if we get back to the forest. Hold on!"

And with that the craft crashed on the outer edge of a reef half-hidden by spouting waves.

The Clutching Death.

THE raft groundwed with a crash, hung balanced for an instant, then, lifted by another wave, tore itself clear, and swept further on to the reef, to fall again between two jagged teeth of rock which held it firmly. Yet so strongly was it built that it still hung together.

Another wave came rolling in, and burst in spray over the cage, drenching everyone. Also, it revived the helpless Indians. They got to their knees.

"Tell them to follow us. They are to bring their weapons. Be quick! The waves seem to be getting bigger!" said Tony, and crawled through the door of the cage.

Another roller nearly tore him away, but he held on while the others emerged, and, seizing a chance between waves, ran along the reef to a rock which stood clear of the churning water. There he waited till the others joined him.

The roar of the surf was so loud that he could scarcely make his voice heard as he shouted to them. He pointed to another rock. Its further side stood on the dry land, but the nearer part sloped down to the end of the reef. It seemed to offer the best temporary refuge in sight, its land side being perpendicular.

"We'll go there first," shouted Tony, "then we'll be able to see our next move!"

They splashed along the reef, the water up to knees or waist, and climbed the steep face of the rock, the top of which was crowned by a little thicket of bushes. Reaching this, they flung themselves down, exhausted and panting, but safe for the moment.

The rain fell in torrents, veiling anything more than a few yards distant. The wind howled; the clouds veiled the sinking sun so that it was already growing dark. They huddled together amongst the bushes, waiting for the rain to lift, that they might see where they were. Billy was on the outer side nearest the water, which lashed up the face of the rock as the waves broke.

"Reckon we'll have to get out of this mighty quick, Marse Tony," he said. "If one of dem big beasties spies us, we ain't got nowhere to run to. What you pulling for, Injun?"

Something had tugged at his leg as he spoke. He half turned, thinking one of the Ariki wanted to speak to him. Then a loud yell cut across the wailing of the tempest.

"Ow—ow! Marse Tony! Marse Hobby! Something got me! Loramussy! It's a tugging at me!"

A long, snakey-looking cable, the end of which disappeared over the edge of the rock, was fast about the darkey's leg. It hauled and tugged. Slowly, but inexorably, it was drawing him to the verge.

Tony whipped out his knife, and slashed at the thing. It was tough, leathery, but the knife shore through it, and the coil that gripped Billy fell away. But as this happened, and before they had time to examine it, or, indeed, get any plain idea of what was happening, another snakey cable came twisting up out of the foam below, followed by a third.

They twisted about, seeking a victim, dropped on Hobby, who had turned to Billy's outcry, and instantly closed about his legs and body. Then only did Tony realise what the creature below must be.

"It's an octopus—a fresh-water octopus! Your chopper, Billy! Cut the things away! Look out!"

Billy's ready hatchet swung and descended. Tony's knife sliced through the other tentacle, and half a dozen more came whipping up the face of the rock. Several clutched at the shrubs, while the others swung and darted to and fro, as if they knew instinctively that living creatures were within their reach.

"Him coming up!" yelled Billy. "Him got saucer eyes and a whole lot o' tails!"

Tony ventured a glance below. Out of the foaming water that surged and lapped at the rock's foot, something was rising. A great leathery body, that looked somewhat like an immense football, bobbed on the surface. From its fore end bristled a multitude of long arms, all in violent agitation.

Some of these clung to the surface of the rock, others grasped at projections, while a few scouted over the group on the rock. Below the part from which they sprung Tony could see a horrid beak opening and shutting. Above, on either side, were the eyes—great globular discs glaring fixedly with terrible purpose.

The brute was hungry. Above it on the rock was meat. It meant to dine. With a speed amazing in a thing of its bulk it began the ascent.

The Ariki had not left their long spears behind. Grabbing them, they thrust furiously at the octopus. Billy hacked at another tentacle. Tony and Hobby cut at the horrible arms which darted between their legs, trying to secure a hold. There was no retreat. The rock behind was too steep to descend, too high to leap from. Perforce they had to fight.

The horrible thing climbed steadily. Again and again the spears sank into it. It appeared to heed them not at all. The baleful eyes glared terrible, protected by the flail-like movements of the many arms. In vain the Ariki tried to strike them. The spear points were turned aside ere they could strike home. One spear was dragged from the man who held it by a resistless tug.

All this had occurred in a very short time, much shorter than it takes to tell of it. Billy's first yell had been the word "Go!" and the octopus hadn't wasted a second.

Two tentacles fell upon Lalo together, as he side-stepped to avoid another. They drew tight. His foot slipped. He fell, hung for a moment on the edge of the declivity. In the next he would have been hauled down to death had not Tony leapt to him, grabbed his arms, and clung.

Billy clung with one hand, tugged with the other. It was useless. Another and another arm flashed up and took hold. Tony, his heels digging into the scanty soil on the top of the rock, felt himself sliding forward. Billy was holding to him. He, too, began to slip and slither. It looked as though all three would topple over into that snatching tangle of death.

Hobby had fallen back among the shrubs as he had been cut free. Now he rose and came forward. He took in the situation, dragged Billy's pistol from its holster, leaned over the edge of the rock, and fired down, straight into one of the glaring, pitiless eyes.

Phwit! A black fountain seemed to arise from the midst of the thing's body. A jet of inky fluid squirted aloft, and fell in a shower that sprayed the whole party. The arms relaxed and fell. There was a great splash as the big body toppled headlong, and the octopus was gone!

The strain relaxed, Lalo, Tony, and Billy

fell over backwards in a heap. They picked themselves up, and ruefully glanced at themselves. Each dripped with strong smelling, jetty-black ink. Like all of its kind, the octopus had let this loose to cover its retreat.

But the rain still fell in torrents, so they were speedily washed, though the smell remained with them for long. Meanwhile, it grew darker. The prospect of remaining there throughout a long night, open to another attack from the water, was too dismal to think of.

"Let's risk going inshore!" cried Tony, getting to his feet. "We can't be worse off, and perhaps we'll find a tree."

Without waiting for an answer he slid down towards the surf, turned aside at the water's edge, and, running along the higher part of the reef, reached the beach in the lee of the big rock. There he paused, while the others joined him, and, as if to reward them, the rain ceased, the clouds on the western side of the valley broke, and through the gap poured the last rays of the setting sun. They could see.

Before them lay a stretch of sand dotted with rocks. It ran up to the foot of the cliffs—those eternal cliffs which shut in every prospect in the valley. But on one of the lower ledges of the cliff, a ledge which seemed almost wide enough to be called a plateau, was something that riveted the attention, and made the Indians cry out. Lalo spoke a few words rapidly, and fell on his face, an example which his followers imitated, while Tony, Hobby, and Billy remained motionless, staring at the largest statue they had ever seen.

Apparently it had been carved from a jutting rock, for it overhung the precipice. A fearsome thing it was, with a ferocious face and outstretched hands that seemed to threaten.

"Ancient Peruvian," said Hobby. "It's the image of some sort of god. Lalo seems to know about it. Ask him, Billy!"

Lalo rose and answered briefly. It was here that his ancestors had lived when they first came to the valley. Behind the image was a house, cut in the cliff. They would do well to go there quickly.

At a run they crossed the open, reached the slope that led to the cliff, and were presently climbing a perpendicular ladder of stone steps, which led them to a little platform or landing, at the feet of the great statue. Behind it stretched a wide ledge, with a well-built wall on the outer side. The face of the cliff for some distance had been smoothed and pierced with a number of long window slits and one large door, above which was carved an odd-looking bird.

In silence the party approached the entrance. On the threshold Lalo halted. Throwing up his hands he began to speak, and Billy, his usual cheery smile quenched for the time by something in the chief's manner, translated.

"This is the house of my forefathers, who were once great chiefs," he said. "I have seen it once from far off, but never set foot in it. Neither have any of my people. But my great-grandfather lived in it. He told me of it when I was a child. He and the people with him left it, and went to the trees, because here it was hard to get food easily. He told me that our fathers had once been very great chiefs, ruling over a very large tribe. They were conquered by white men. Some of them fled here, where the white men could not follow. But because of all the good things you have done for me and my people I make you welcome to the house of my fathers. All in it is yours. Enter!"

He waved his hand. They marched into a lofty hall, the walls of which were gaily painted. But this was not what the practical Tony first looked to. His eyes leapt to a great pile of wood laid near a broad hearthstone. Much of it was decayed, but it looked as though it would still burn.

"We'll have fever if we hang about in our wet togs any longer, and I'm chilled to the bones," he said. "Let's light a fire, dry ourselves, and have some rest. We can examine this place to-morrow."

"Yes," agreed Hobby. "Only we'll starve meantime. I'm frightfully peckish!"

"So are we all, but we can stick it, old chap," replied Tony. "Let's make a blaze and dry off. Get a move on you!"

(To be continued in next week's

"Gem.")

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ANSWERS
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THE GREAT CARDEW MYSTERY.

(Continued from page 12.)

CHAPTER 9.

Rescued at Last!

TOM MERRY & CO. made a rush up the rickety stair. The staircase creaked and groaned under their weight.

"Look out, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "The blessed thing will come down wallop—"

Sidney Clive was the first to reach the little landing above. Two rooms had doors on it. One door was open, showing a rough blanket bed on the floor—doubtless Chiquito's sleeping-quarters. The other door was locked, and the key was in the outside of the lock.

From that door came a sound of thumping. Cardew was letting his rescuers know where he was.

"Cardew!" gasped Clive.

"Come in, old bean—don't stop to knock."

Clive turned the key back, and the door flew open. The juniors crowded into the little bare garret with the barred window.

There was Ralph Reckness Cardew!

His elegant clothes were sadly rumpled and dirty and dishevelled, and his face was a little pale. Otherwise, the dandy of the Fourth seemed quite his usual self.

He nodded cheerily to the juniors.

"Jolly glad to see you, my merry old beans!" he said.

"I'd ask you to stop to tea, but the fare is a bit frugal. Gad! I shall beat Baggy Trimble at his own game when I get back to St. Jim's."

"Well, you're pretty cool about it," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Cool enough," said Cardew. "Winter weather and no fire! What have you done with that merry character out of a Fenimore Cooper novel?"

"Tied him up below."

"I heard you handling him," said Cardew. "I'd have liked to help, but the door was locked. But how in the name of all that's queer did you come along here and find me?"

"Oh, we twacked you out, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus airily. "Wildwake helped—didn't you, Wildwake, deah boy?"

"I guess so!" chuckled Wildrake.

"Wildrake did the whole bizney," said Jack Blake.

"Wildrake, old man, I take back some things I said, and a lot more that I thought. You're simply great!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cardew stared at the Canadian junior.

"You don't mean to say that Wildrake has trailed me out, with his giddy trackin' stunt?" he exclaimed.

"Just that!" said Clive, smiling.

"My only hat!"

"Let's have it clear," said Blake. "Cardew, old man, did the red covey keep you doggo under a big oak in the wood till after dark?"

"Yes."

"Then late at night took you along through the wood to near the Wayland road?"

"That's it."

"Tied you to a tree and left you while he fetched a horse and cart?"

"Exactly."

"Carried you from the tree to the cart and shoved you in—"

"You've got it! How the merry thunder do you know? Were you walking in your sleep in the woods last night?"

"Ha, ha! No! Wildrake figured it all out."

"Blessed if I know how he did it."

"You weren't brought up on the Boot Leg Ranch," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Now some more questions, Cardew. Was it the johnny with sandy whiskers and a busted boko who lagged you?"

"That was the johnny. The whiskers weren't genuine, but the nose was."

"He took you for Levison?" asked Clive.

"Yes; and I let him rip."

"I guess we may as well get back to St. Jim's," said Kit Wildrake. "The Head will be glad to know that Cardew's found."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll be jolly glad to stretch my legs a bit!" yawned Cardew. "And the sooner we get out of this palatial boardin'-establishment, the better I shall be pleased. I should like to kick that grinnin' coffee-bean, but if you've got him tied up, I suppose it wouldn't be sporty."

"We're going to hand him over to the police, of course," said Jack Blake. "They'll get the other man, too."

Cardew started a little.

"The other man—the flat-nosed johnny!" he muttered. "Yes, they'll get him—and they'll get him at Levison's house! By gad! I wonder what that will lead to?"

"What the dickens—" began Blake in astonishment.

But Tom Merry and Clive exchanged startled glances. The three juniors who knew Levison's secret stood silent. Chiquito had to be handed over to the police—his confederate was known, and the police would have to know. What might that mean—to Levison, and to his father? Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the three grave faces one after another.

"What's the twouble?" he inquired.

"Nothin', old top," said Cardew blankly. "Nothin' that you would understand with your diminutive brain, old fellow."

"Weally, Cardew—"

"Let's get out of this," said Cardew abruptly. "Give me some grub, if you've got any left in your haversacks—and let me think a bit."

Wildrake quietly left the cottage and put the horse to the cart. The Indian, still bound, was lifted into the cart. Chiquito did not speak—only his black eyes glittered savagely. Kit Wildrake drove the horse up the road towards Wayland, Tom Merry & Co. following on foot. Ralph Reckness Cardew's brow was deeply wrinkled in thought. But it cleared at last. Cardew had thought it out, and made up his mind.

"You fellows will hand that coffee-coloured rotter over to the police," he said. "Then you'll get back to St. Jim's and tell the Head that I'm all serene. You may mention that I'm comin' back later."

"Bai Jove!"

"But—" began Tom Merry.

"I'm leavin' you at the railway-station," Cardew consulted his watch. "I'm in time. I think, to catch the five express, thanks to you fellows. I'm goin' to see Levison."

"But the Head—"

"Sorry if his noble nibs is disturbed by my unaccountable actions," said Cardew carelessly. "But tell him I'm anxious about Levison—you know I was kidnapped in mistake for him. I've got to give Levison the tip before the police drop into his house for Carson. Goodness knows what it may lead to. Levison's got to be warned. I'm goin' to him."

"But—" said Tom.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders. He had made up his mind, and argument was not likely to move him. And as the juniors passed the railway-station in Wayland, Cardew left them; and by the time Chiquito was handed over to the police, Ralph Reckness Cardew was in the express, speeding away to join his chum, but little dreaming of the strange circumstances in which he would find Levison of the Fourth.

THE END.

(What is Cardew's next move? Next week's grand long story of the chums of St. Jim's, entitled "CARDEW STANDS BY LEVISON" will tell. Order your copy of the GEM early.)

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EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

A letter reached me the other day quite out of the past. It came from Derbyshire, by the way, and was certainly one of the most glowing tributes to the "Gem" stories I ever read—and I have seen a few in my time. The writer simply revels in his memories of Tom Merry in the bygone, but he sticks to it that the new yarns are as good as those which appeared in the brave days of old.

There was always a rare magic about

Tom Merry and his schooldays, and my correspondent in the peak district tells me he still thinks with pleasure of "Tom Merry's Christmas," and "The Ghost of St. Jim's." The fact is he has all the old stories pretty well by heart. Now, it stands to reason that I enjoy a letter like this one. Not that I want the old days back; I doubt if anybody really does. The value of the past lies in the encouragement and good cheer it brings.

Some of my friends are keen to know how Mr. Martin Clifford manages to come up smiling each week with a new story of the best. Well, the famous author just does it, and that's all.

Putting these glimpses into the back ages aside, the "Gem" is going to do great things this New Year. Don't miss a single copy!

Everybody says the portrait gallery is the finest thing yet. The artist has been at pains to give something of the

character of each subject of his clever pen. I know from what has been told me that in the case of the new gallery there is splendid individuality. You see each fellow as he is with much of what he really is showing in his eyes, and every line of his face.

I hope all my chums will make sure to read the ripping new school serial, "The College of Sportsmen," in the "Boys' Herald." It is the latest in school yarns. Of course, Nibby Clink figures prominently. As one realises what the chirpy, good-tempered, thoroughly amusing little lad has to face at the hands of the arch-bully, one Poulter, there is the wish that young Nibby's friend, the mighty Stringer, could blow in and see fair play. But that would not be in the story, not at present. Another splendid number of the "Gem" next week—don't miss it!

YOUR EDITOR.



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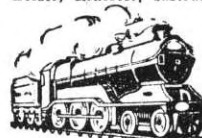
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