

A Splendid Action Photograph of SAM HARDY, FREE in This Issue.

The GEM 1^D 1/2

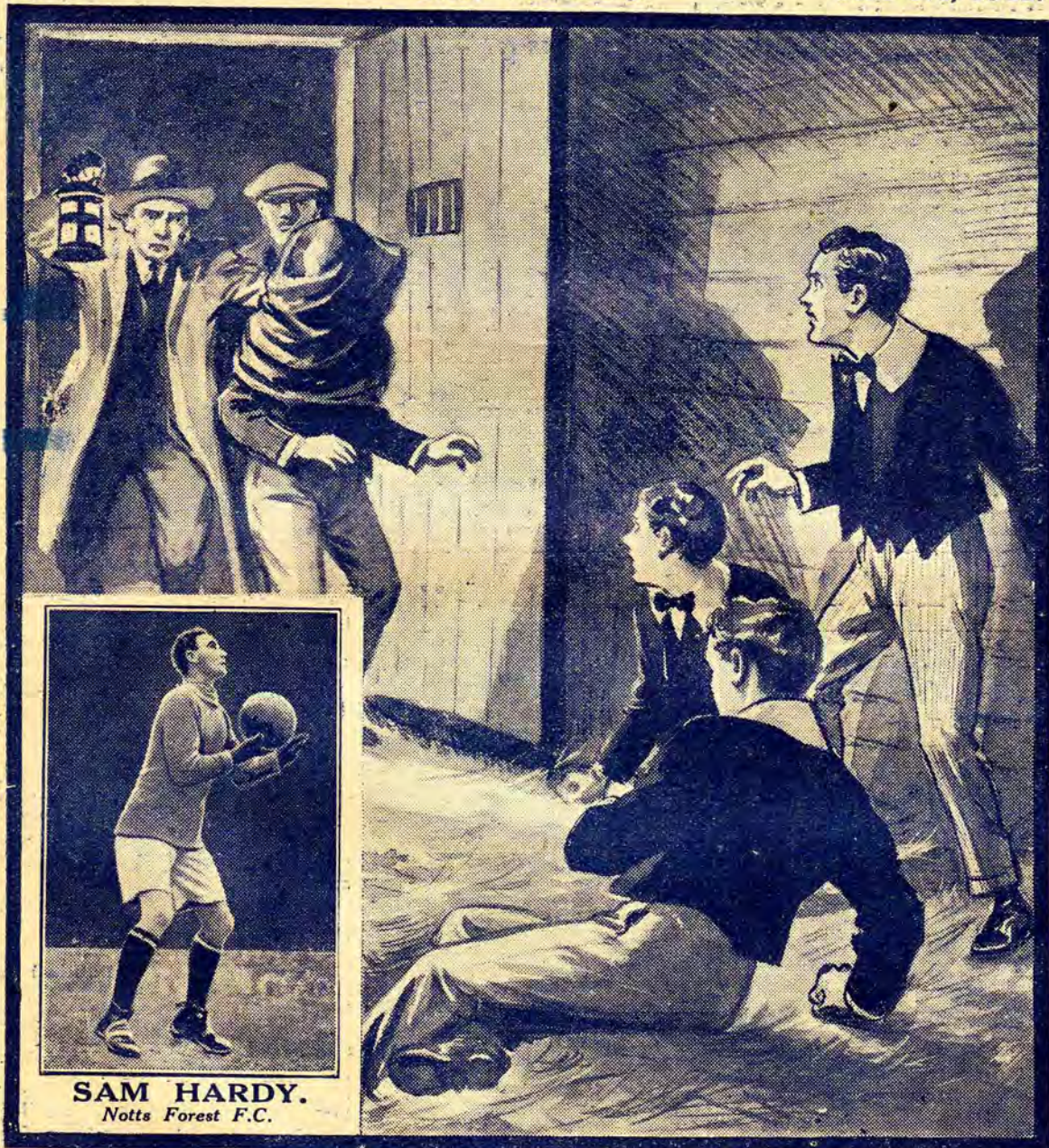
No. 757
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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

June 3rd, 1922.



SAM HARDY.
Notts Forest F.C.

THE KIDNAPPERS SECURE ANOTHER VICTIM!
(An Exciting Incident in the Thrilling Long Complete School Story inside.)

SAM HARDY.

The Famous Notts Forest Goalkeeper.

YOUNG fellows anxious to make good in the world of football cannot possibly do better than watch some of the experts at play, for if the fellows to watch are carefully chosen, then most excellent tips of how things should be done can be picked up. And for the lad who has ideas of being a real goalkeeper when he grows up, one cannot do better than recommend a "course" of Sam Hardy.

The man who last season guarded the fort for Notts Forest is really a model custodian, and for the last fifteen years or so has been recognised as being pretty nearly always the world's best. There may be men who occasionally do more brilliant things than "Silent Sam," as he has been called, but there can seldom have been a goalkeeper who throughout a long career has made fewer mistakes.

He treats every ball as a possible goal-scorer, which means that he declines to take liberties with even the softest-looking shots. This, however, is not the same as saying that he is never ready to go all out to make a sensational save when the situation is desperate; but he has the art of anticipation developed to a high degree, and his long, raking stride enables him to get across the goal to tip over a high shot which other goalkeepers would scarcely get near.

Not so long ago the writer of these notes had a taxicab trip across London in company with Hardy, and was trying to draw him on the secrets of his success in the goalkeeping line. Samuel is not a talkative man, though, and is difficult to draw. But just as the question of how he accounted for his success as a goalkeeper was put the taxi passed a bus, and on the back of it was a "safety

first" poster. Hardy immediately pointed to the poster, and said: "Safety first! That is the secret of all goalkeeping success." And on the field of play Hardy carries out that motto all the time, never running any unnecessary risks, and always having a good understanding with his full-backs to be on the spot to help him out of a difficulty should he get into one when forwards are trying to rush him and the ball into the net.

The Notts Forest goalkeeper is now nearly forty years of age, having been born at Chesterfield in 1883. He has, therefore, had a long as well as a distinguished career; but it is interesting to note that in his early days he had no notion of being a goalkeeper. While at school he was quite a capable centre-forward, but later, instead of making a name as a scorer of goals, he decided to go in for stopping goals from being scored. He put in four seasons of most useful service with the Liverpool Club, and then for the 1912-13 season he was transferred to Aston Villa, with which side he played in two Cup Finals, which his team won.

On eighteen occasions he has kept goal for England, apart from the Victory International matches, and has put up some wonderful displays. Last summer he is said to have made up his mind to retire from the game, having gone into business at Chesterfield; but the Notts Forest officials persuaded Sam to stay on, and they were very glad at the end of the season that they had been able to do so, for Hardy played a great part in making Notts Forest one of the leading teams in the Second Division last season.

(Look out for next week's TWO REAL Photographs.)

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

A Splendid Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck is awarded to the sender of what the Editor considers the most interesting paragraph. Half-a-crown is awarded for each other contribution accepted.

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

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER.

The Signpost.

An Englishman and a Scotsman were travelling through the Highlands together, and they came upon a deep dip in the road near a broad river. On the other side of the dip stood a farmhouse, while in the centre of the depression in the road itself was a signpost, bearing the words: "When the post is covered by the overflow of the river, please inquire at the farmhouse." The Englishman thought over this, and saw that when the post was covered, the notice could not be read. He burst out laughing. "What's the joke?" asked his companion. "Just read that sign, and you will see it," was the reply. The Scotsman read the notice, and shook his head. "I don't see anything funny in it," he said. He was deep in thought for the rest of the day, and did not get a wink of sleep that night; but early in the morning he jumped up and went to his friend's room. "I see the joke," he cried delightedly, "and it certainly is very funny. You see, the farmer might be out!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Hugh Anderson, 1, Hicks Street, Deptford, S.E. 8.

:: EDITORIAL CHAT ::

My Dear Chums,—

There is an increasing rush for the magnificent photographs of footballers. Next week's GEM will contain two first-rate portraits of J. McIntyre (Blackburn Rovers F.C.), and D. Howie (Bradford F.C.). The "Magnet" next week offers a capital action photograph of Tom Clay of Tottenham, while in the "Boys' Friend" you will find the likeness of Jim Higgins, the holder of a Lonsdale belt.

I must draw attention once again to the splendid opportunity offered in connection with these admirable photos. You want an album for the whole collection, and you can get one you will be proud of if you send a sixpenny postal-order to the GEM Album Office, 7-9, Pilgrim Street, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C. 4. Please write name and address distinctly. My staff is working overtime, and it can be relied upon to do its best. By making your writing very plain the work will be much facilitated.

Meantime, the "Popular" is winning crowds more friends with its splendid coloured plates of railway engines. Our Companion Paper is being deluged with requests for special types of engines, and I shall do my best to meet all demands.

Of course, with regard to the football photos, as we all know, interest in the

great sport never ceases. There is a breathing space in the summer, so far as play is concerned, but anticipation as to what next season will bring forth is keen.

Next week the new serial starts in the GEM. I have not the least doubt that you will all declare "All On His Own" is a masterpiece. It is the work of that prince of storytellers, our old favourite, Duncan Storm, and you will find the opening instalment crammed full of dramatic interest and telling characterisation. I can vouch for the follow on. I am proud of this new yarn. Mr. Duncan Storm will have a big welcome from GEM readers. Just let me know what you think of this record of a boy's uphill fight against destiny.

"Trimble's Treasure" is the title of next week's ripping story of St. Jim's. This really is a fine yarn, and you will find in it the wit and humour which only the famous Mr. Martin Clifford can supply. You will like the new yarn about Trimble, and the large sum of money which comes his way, also the surprising discovery which is made later on. Baggy can be relied upon to supply food for mirth. He succeeds admirably on this occasion.

Don't forget! To make sure of your GEM next week, place a standing order with your newsagent RIGHT NOW!

YOUR EDITOR.

"QUID PRO QUO."

The secretary of a village cricket club wrote asking for a game with the Second XI. of the county club. The secretary of the club replied, naming a date on which an XI. would be sent, on condition, however, that "later in the season you will give us a quid pro quo." To his surprise, he received a letter, thanking him for his courtesy, and adding: "My committee has asked me to send the pound for the professional whom you mentioned, although they are rather surprised at a request like that from a club of your standing."—A half-crown has been awarded to Ivor Leaman, 19, Torley Road, Greenbank, Bristol.

THE DIFFICULTY.

It's hard to be without a friend
When your heart is full of hope;
But harder still to find a towel
When your eyes are full of soap.—
A half-crown has been awarded to John B. Dacre, 1, The Square, Nether Wallop, Stockbridge, Hants.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON

The GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

Out of the Depths!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A Grand Long Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling how the iron-nerved Canadian junior brings about the arrest of the kidnappers.

CHAPTER 1.

In the Head's Study!

"HEAH comes the Head, deah boy!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Four juniors were waiting in the corridor near the door of the headmaster's study at St. Jim's. Jack Blake of the Fourth had a sealed letter in his hand upon which "Dr. Holmes" was inscribed, in the clear, firm "fist" of Kit Wildrake. Blake had the letter to deliver; and D'Arcy and Herries and Digby had come along with him, like good chums, to support him in the awe-inspiring interview.

The Fourth-Formers were waiting to catch the Head as he went to his study after lunch. Blake drew a deep breath as he heard the stately footsteps approaching the corner. He knew that he was going to surprise the Head; and he was not at all certain what view the old gentleman would take of the matter. But he had promised Wildrake of the Fourth to deliver the letter, and he was going to keep his word.

"Here he is!" murmured Dig.

Dr. Holmes came into view, and Blake made a step forward. Then he paused again. The Head was not alone; he was accompanied by a tall, slim gentleman, a stranger to the juniors. He was a rather grim-looking gentleman, with rugged features, and a square jaw that looked as if it were cast in iron.

Blake hesitated now; and the Head came on with the grim-visaged stranger, giving the juniors a glance of disapproval. He made a gesture to dismiss them from the vicinity of his study doorway.

"Go it, Blake, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in an encouraging whisper.

"If you please, sir—" began Blake diffidently.

"Kindly go away at once!" said the Head severely.

"But, sir—"

"You should know, Blake, that I cannot attend to you now," said Dr. Holmes. "Pray step into my study, Mr. Troope."

"Certainly, sir!"

The headmaster and his companion passed the juniors, and Blake blinked at his chums.

"Better back out, and leave it for a bit," whispered Herries. "The Head's busy now—"

"Later on will do!" murmured Digby.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "You undahtook to delivah that lettah aftah dinnah, Blake, and it is aftah dinnah now. Cawwy on."

The Head was closing his study door, under the impression that he had finished with the juniors.

But he had not finished yet.

After a moment's hesitation Blake approached him again.

"Dr. Holmes—"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Head sharply. "What do you mean by this, Blake?"

"I have a letter for you, sir!" exclaimed Blake hastily.

"It's from Wildrake, of my Form, sir—"

"What?"

The Head's manner changed at once. The tall gentleman looked round, with a curious expression on his hard face.

"A letter from Wildrake—the boy who disappeared from the school this morning?" said Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir."

"How did it come into your possession, Blake?"

"Wildrake gave it to me before school, sir," answered Blake. "He asked me to—"

"You may come into my study," said the Head. He held the door open for Jack Blake, and then closed it, rather to the disappointment of Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"This is very extraordinary," said the Head, eyeing Blake. "Mr. Troope, perhaps I had better leave this matter in your hands. Blake, this gentleman is Detective-Inspector Troope, of the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard. You will explain to him how this letter came into your hands, and hand it to him."

"Very well, sir," said Blake.

Inspector Troope fixed his keen, steely eyes on the junior, and Blake coloured a little uncomfortably. As he told his chums afterwards, he had a feeling that Mr. Troope's steely eyes were looking right through him.

"I understand," said the detective, "that Wildrake, of the Fourth Form, is the latest of the boys of this school to disappear."

"That is so," said the Head.

"It is presumed that he has fallen into the hands of the gang of kidnappers, who already hold prisoner five other boys—"

"Four boys of the Shell, named Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Talbot," said the Head; "and Kildare, a Sixth Form boy."

"And a Housemaster?"

"Yes: Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House."

Mr. Troope nodded.

"It appears assured that the latest victim, Wildrake, left the shelter of the school of his own accord," he remarked.

"Obviously, he must have gone out of school bounds," said the Head. "His motive I cannot guess, but this boy may be able to throw some light upon it, according to his statement."

"You were aware that your schoolfellow, Wildrake, intended to break bounds this morning, my boy?" asked the inspector.

"Oh, no, sir," answered Blake. "I guessed he'd done so when he didn't turn up for morning lessons, that's all."

"When did he hand you this letter, then?"

"Before classes," said Blake. "He asked me to take charge of it, and I did. He said that if he did not ask me for it again by dinner, I was to take it to Dr. Holmes."

"For what reason?"

"I don't know, sir," said Blake frankly. "but I think there's something in it about the kidnappers."

"Did Wildrake know anything about them?"

"Well I don't see how he could have," confessed Blake. "Nobody knows anything about them. But Wildrake thinks he knows something. I'm sure, from what he said when he gave me the letter. Anyhow, as he didn't come back I thought I'd better bring it to the Head."

"That is quite right," said Dr. Holmes, with a nod. "Is it not possible, Mr. Troope, that the letter may throw some light upon Wildrake's intentions when leaving the school, and indicate in what direction he may be looked for?"

"It is possible," said the detective. "What kind of boy is this Wildrake?"

"He is a Canadian, and, I think, a very keen and able lad," said the Head. "His Form-master has a high opinion of him. Will you open the letter, Mr. Troope?"

The detective nodded. The Head made Blake a sign of dismissal, as Detective-Inspector Troope slit the envelope with a paper-knife. Rather reluctantly, Jack Blake quitted the study. He would have been very glad to see the contents of Wildrake's mysterious missive. But evidently the man from Scotland Yard and the headmaster had no intention of taking the Fourth Form into their confidence.

Blake rejoined his comrades in the passage.

"Well?" said Herries and Digby together.

"Well, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

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"That long merchant is a new detective from London," said Blake. "He's got Wildrake's letter now. I suppose he's come along because the kidnappers have got hold of Inspector Fix. Let's hope that the blighters won't get hold of him, too."

"Bai Jove! I shouldn't wondah if they twy!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps we had better keep an eye on him while he is heah, and see that nothin' happens to him. I wondah if the Head would give us a half-holiday this aftahnoon, deah boys, so that we can keep an eye on the inspectah."

"I wonder!" said Herries sarcastically.

"Weally, Hewwies!"

"Come on!" said Blake. And he grasped Arthur Augustus' arm, and dragged his noble chum away.

Trimble of the Fourth met them at the corner of the corridor. Baggy Trimble's fat face was eager and curious.

"See that merchant, you chaps?" he asked eagerly.

"What merchant?" grunted Blake.

"Long-legged chap, with a face like a gargoyle," said Trimble. "He had lunch with the Head. Is he a new detective? I heard them talking as they came along, and he said—"

Arthur Augustus interrupted.

"Wats! Pwaw do not wepeat your suwweptitious discoveries to us, Twimble."

"Do you fellows know who he is?" urged Trimble. "I say, what's he here for? You might tell a chap."

Blake sank his voice.

"I'll whisper it," he answered cautiously. "It's not for everybody to hear."

"Go it!" said Trimble breathlessly.

Blake whispered.

"It's the Kaiser in disguise! Keep it dark!"

And Study No. 6 walked on, grinning, leaving Baggy Trimble to digest that extremely startling information.

CHAPTER 2.

The Prisoners.

"**A** WAKE, Tom?"

Talbot of the Shell spoke in a low voice.

Tom Merry sat up and rubbed his eyes.

For a moment Tom wondered where he was. Awakening, he expected to find himself in the Shell dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's.

But instead of the high walls and windows, the lofty ceiling of the dormitory, he saw narrow walls and roof of wood, bare, unpainted; and the only light in the room came from a small oil-lamp, fastened to a bracket high on the wall. The light glimmered on three faces—the faces of the kidnapped juniors of St. Jim's.

Manners sat up on his bed of rough sacking and yawned. Talbot of the Shell had long been awake, but he would not disturb his companions in misfortune. He did not speak till Tom Merry stirred and opened his eyes.

"Is it morning?" asked Tom, blinking at him.

"I don't know. They've taken our watches. I feel as if we've been here a week, but it may only be a few hours," said Talbot.

"I'm hungry!" said Tom.

Talbot smiled faintly. He was hungry, too, but he was hardly conscious of it; he was thinking of other things. He was thinking of the liberty he and his chums had lost—of the light of day they had seen, perhaps, for the last time.

Hours at least had passed—perhaps many hours—since the three Shell fellows had fallen into the clutches of Rogue Rackstraw. Thrown into the wooden hut, left to themselves, they had not heard a sound since. There was no window to the hut—only one door, and that was bolted on the outside. The air was fresh enough. The room was ventilated by an opening in the ceiling, high up. But not a glimmer of light came through the opening. If it was daylight without, no glimpse of the sun came to the prison of the kidnapped schoolboys.

Tom Merry rose to his feet and moved restlessly about the room, which was not more than ten feet by eight in extent.

"This is rotten, Talbot!" he said at last. "We've got to get out of this, somehow."

"Somehow!" said Manners.

"How did you fare when you were in the hands of the rotters before, Tom?" said Talbot quietly. "Did you get a chance?"

"No."

"You never saw the daylight again until the Head handed over five hundred pounds in currency notes for your release," said Talbot. "I'm afraid we're up against it, old chap!"

"At the worst we shall only have to stay here till that villain can stick our people for money," said Manners hopelessly.

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Talbot was silent. His handsome face was very grim. Tom looked at him quickly.

"What are you thinking of, Talbot? I suppose that rascal whom you call Rogue Rackstraw is only holding us for ransom, as he held me before?"

"I—I hope so."

"You don't think so?"

"Well, no," said Talbot slowly; "no, Tom. When you were kidnapped before it was a different matter. You never knew who collared you—never knew where you were imprisoned. Now it's different. We came to the mill on the moor, and found it was the den of the kidnappers; and now we know—"

"We know, certainly."

"Do you think they will let us go again?" said Talbot. "We could bring the police on them at once—and we should. They know it. They can't afford to let us go, Tom."

Tom Merry was silent and thoughtful. Manners broke out:

"They can't keep us here for ever."

"They mean to keep us here until their game is up in this quarter, at least," said Talbot. "After that—I don't know. Monty Lowther they are holding for ransom, and Mr. Railton; perhaps the detective, Mr. Fix of Scotland Yard, too. But us—they are holding us for their own safety. We were fools to run into such a trap!"

"Lot of good thinking of that now!" grunted Manners.

"But," said Tom, "after all, we can't blame ourselves, Talbot. You recognised Smiley Joe, the crackman, in a photograph that Manners took of the mill. It was natural enough to come here and see the miller about it. We couldn't guess that he was in the game—that the mill and the miller and the miller's men were a big-camouflage for a kidnapping gang."

Talbot moved restlessly.

"I ought to have guessed," he said. "I remember from old times that Smiley Joe was seldom at work on his own. He played jackal to Rogue Rackstraw's lion. I ought to have guessed, but I did not."

"It's easy to be wise after the event," said Tom. "You couldn't have guessed, old man. But there's one thing, we're all together; that's something. When they had me a prisoner before, I was alone, and I hadn't a chance. The three of us—"

Talbot's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"It's possible," he said. "If we get half a chance we'll try it on. They must come to bring us food sooner or later."

"Unless they mean to leave us to starve," muttered Manners.

"That's not likely," said Talbot. "That means the rope if they're caught; and though Rogue Rackstraw feels safe enough, he's not the man to take unnecessary chances. At least he would wait till he had made absolutely certain of security before he let us die here. He's no fool!"

"I wonder where Lowther is?" muttered Tom restlessly. "He must be pretty near at hand, I suppose. This hut looks just like the one I was imprisoned in before, but it's not the same; the door's in a different place. There's more than one of them, and they're well out of sight. Did you fellows see anything while you were being dragged here after our fight in the mill?"

"Couldn't," said Manners. "They put a sack over my head."

"And over mine," said Talbot.

"Mine, too," said Tom. "They're taking no chances, although we know so much. I remember there were a lot of steps, though."

"I remember that. We're pretty deep down, or there would be a glimmer of daylight."

"But where?" said Manners, in amazement.

"Somewhere below the old mill; in a disused quarry, perhaps," said Talbot. "They've spied out the place and taken every kind of precaution before they started this game. Somewhere close at hand Lowther is a prisoner, and Mr. Railton and Detective Fix. And I don't see light ahead. Rackstraw has covered up his tracks too well. Even I, who had seen him in the old days, did not recognise him in his get-up as a country miller! He's safe, and we—"

Talbot broke off.

"While there's life there's hope," said Tom Merry. But he did not speak very hopefully.

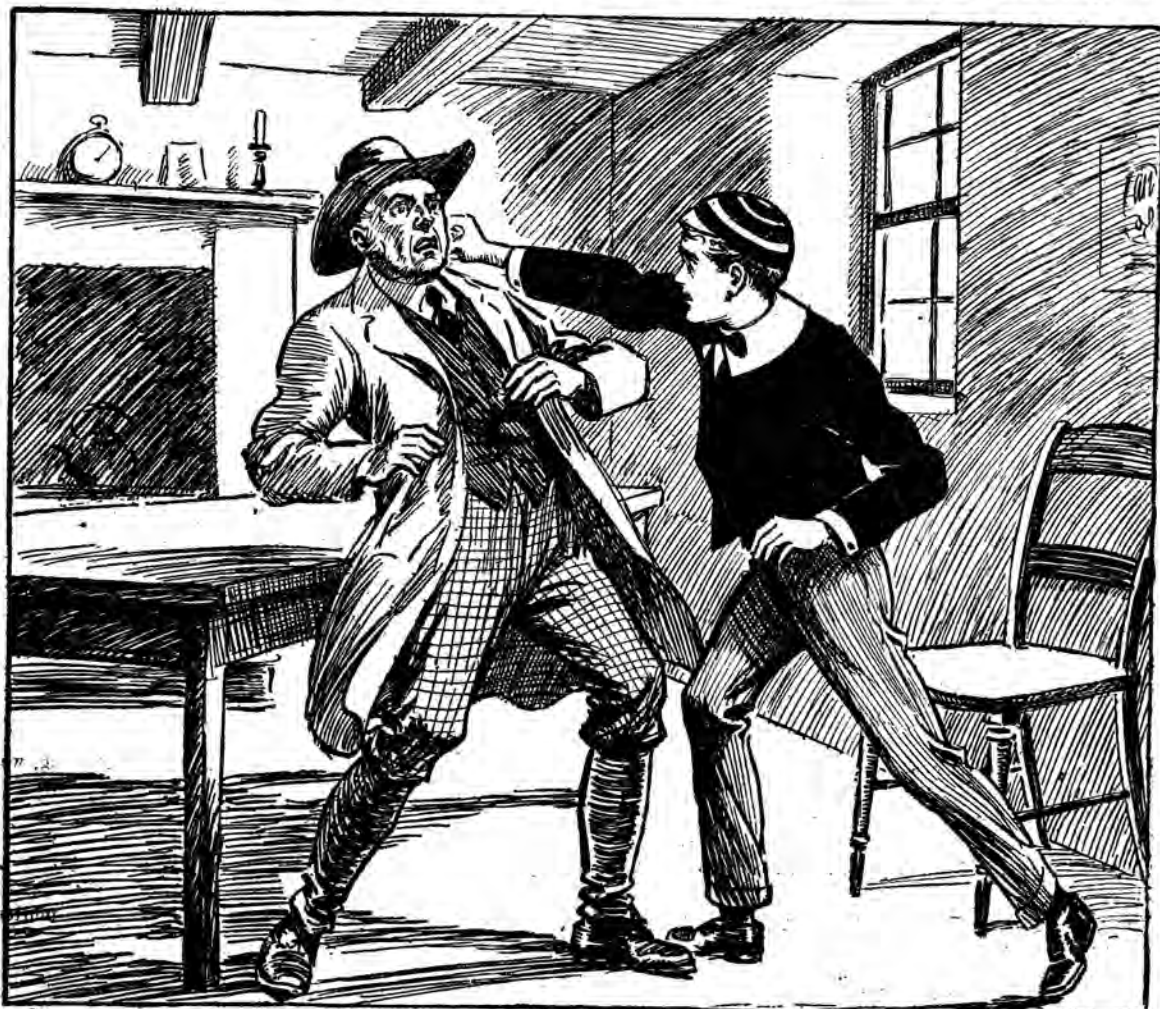
The talk died away. The silence oppressed the imprisoned juniors. From the kidnappers, wherever they were, there came no sound.

It seemed ages to the juniors before there was a noise of footsteps, and a bolt jarred back outside the door.

The three schoolboys drew together, the desperate thought in their minds of attempting a rush.

The door was pulled open.

The man who was known as Mr. Brown, the miller of the moor, stepped into the doorway, ruddy-cheeked, white-haired, in his white coat, looking the rural miller to the life. Only



Wildrake made a sudden step forward, and before the miller could raise a hand to guard, he had grasped his side whiskers, and dragged them off. The miller uttered a sharp cry. A hard, savage face was revealed. Rogue Rackstraw, in his proper person, stood staring dumbfounded at the Canadian junior. (See page 4.)

the keen, glittering glance of his sharp, cunning eyes belied the character.

Behind him, Smiley Joe stood, with a revolver in his hand, and a grin on his face.

The chums of the Shell abandoned their design—it was madness to think of rushing upon a revolver—and they knew, too, that Rogue Rackstraw, alias Brown the miller, had overwhelming force within call. The miller stood in the doorway, and regarded the juniors with an evil smile.

"Good-morning, Toff!" he said, in a mocking tone, addressing Talbot.

"Is it morning?" said Talbot.

"Naturally you would not know. Day and night are the same to you here," grinned Rackstraw. "It was an unlucky hour for you, Toff, when you spotted Smiley Joe's face in the photograph that young gentleman took of the mill."

"You need not tell me that."

"I am sorry we had to use you roughly," continued the miller, in the same mocking tone. "Your bruises will heal—you will be here long enough for that."

There was a chuckle from Smiley Joe.

"It was thoughtful of you, and really kind," went on Rogue Rackstraw, "to bring with you the photograph—and the negative. I shall see that Joe changes his looks sufficiently to prevent another accident of the same kind. The next night not and so luckily."

"Are you going to give us food?" asked Tom Merry, breaking in upon the rascal's genial mockery.

Rackstraw nodded.

"Prison fare—the same as when you honoured me with your company on a previous occasion, Master Merry," he said.

"But I regret that I cannot hold out to you any prospect of liberty. You know too much, my young friend, and you may thank the Toff for it."

"The law will get hold of you some day!" said Manners savagely.

Rackstraw laughed.

"I rely upon the law's delays," he said. "One worthy upholder of the law; Inspector Fix of Scotland Yard, is a prisoner in my hands. I have no doubt that I shall be able to deal with his successor. I think I have laid my plans a little too carefully for the police to disturb me. I do not fear a search of the mill—it would reveal nothing. Two of you will not see the light of day again—at least, for a very long time to come. But I may be able to offer you better conditions, Toff."

"I want no better conditions than my friends," Talbot answered.

"Perhaps your friends do not know you as we know you!" grinned Rackstraw. "Perhaps they do not know that their schoolfellow, Talbot, is—or was—the Toff, the son of a crackman, and the prince of crackmen himself at one time!"

Talbot coloured deeply with pain and shame.

"You are mistaken, Rogue Rackstraw," he answered, in a steady voice. "My friends know what I was—and what I am—and they are my friends nevertheless."

"Maybe." Rackstraw shrugged his shoulders. "What game you have been playing at the school, I do not know. But I am prepared to give you a chance to make a good thing of it. We never had much to do with one another in the old days, Toff; but I knew you pretty well. You are the kind of assistant I want—and having a place in the school, you could be very useful to me. There's a place in the gang for you, if you choose to join up."

"You scoundrel!" said Talbot, between his teeth. "Rather than take your offer, I would pass the remainder of my life in this underground den."

"You may alter your tune in a week or two!" smiled Rackstraw. "I am in no hurry, Toff. You shall have days—weeks if you like—to think it over. Give them their food, Smiley, and let us go."

Smiley Joe brought into the hut a jug of water, and a loaf and a hunk of cheese. Evidently that was the prisoners' rations for the day. He left the hut again, but remained outside, the revolver in his hand, watching against any desperate attempt on the part of the prisoners.

"One word before you go, Rackstraw!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Two if you like, my boy."

"My pal Lowther—Monty Lowther—is in your hands."

"Correct."

"Is he safe? Is he well?"

"He is safe, and well—only a little sick of his quarters," smiled Rackstraw. "I should be kind enough to let you see him, but if he shared your knowledge, I should be compelled to keep him a permanent prisoner; and this afternoon I am to receive the ransom for his release."

"Then he is to go free to-day?" exclaimed Tom.

"When the ransom is paid—certainly. I kept my word in your case—I shall keep it in his. My thriving business would be a failure if I broke it!" smiled Rackstraw. "Are you interested also in your Housemaster? He is well, save for a bump on the head. He would not give in without being stunned. If his relatives choose to pay the price, he will go free, believing that he has been kept a prisoner in the Midlands." Rackstraw laughed. "Is there anything else you would like to know, my young friend?"

"Mr. Fix, the detective?"

A black look came over Rackstraw's face. "I do not think it likely that Mr. Fix's friends will ever see him again," he answered. "He is a dangerous man."

"Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's?"

"Alive and well and awaiting his ransom. He—" Rackstraw broke off suddenly, as a man came hurrying along the dark passage behind him. "What is it, Dusty?"

"You're wanted, guv'nor!" The prisoners of the hut heard the ruffian's words clearly enough. "A boy from the school has come into the mill and is asking to see Mr. Brown."

"Another?" said the miller, with a frown. "Did he give his name?"

"Wildrake."

"What does he want?"

"Danger!" muttered Dusty. "I've left Hookey watching the window, and Tadge at the door. He knows something."

"Fool! What could he know?"

"He knows something," repeated Dusty. "He said that he must see you, and that if you do not see him, he will go to the police."

"What?"

"Then was his words," growled Dusty. "I reckon I made safe that he couldn't get out before I came to tell you."

Rackstraw muttered an oath.

"Bolt the door, Smiley—sharp."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!"

The door closed, and the bolts rattled into place. In the dim light of the oil-lamp, Tom Merry and Manners and Talbot looked at one another.

"Wildrake!" muttered Tom. "And—and he suspects something. And he's walked fairly into the trap—"

"As we did!" groaned Manners. "Poor old Wildrake! He's got in, but he'll never get out again."

Talbot did not speak, but there was gloom, and something like despair, in his handsome face. Another prisoner was about to fall into the hands of the kidnapper—and, shut up like rats in a trap, they could not help—they could not even warn Wildrake of his danger.

CHAPTER 3.

In the Lion's Den!

KIT WILDRAKE, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, sat in the little parlour of the mill-house, waiting.

His sunburnt face was cool and calm as ever, though he could see the shadow of a man who lounged outside the window, and could hear the heavy breathing of another who was at the door.

The Canadian junior of St. Jim's had walked into the trap with his eyes open—not blindly and unknowingly, as Tom Merry and his comrades had done—but with his eyes wide open. He had walked in, knowing that if his suspicions were correct, as he believed they were, he would never be allowed to leave again. And when Dusty went to report his arrival to the miller, Wildrake was not surprised that the window and the door of the room were immediately guarded. He had expected it, and he was glad of it, for it told him that his surmise with regard to the miller of the moor was well-founded.

As a shadow darkened the window, he smiled. A man in labourer's garb lounged outside on the flower-bed—but Wildrake was pretty certain that the man was no labourer. There was an air of workaday industry about all the men at the mill; but the Canadian junior did not doubt that it was an elaborate camouflage, and that the miller and his

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men belonged to the class that "toiled not, neither did they spin." What he wanted was proof—and he was already receiving it.

There was a muttered word without, and the door opened, and Mr. Brown, the Wayland miller, entered the room.

There was nothing of Rogue Rackstraw in his look or manner as he gave the junior a nod and a smile.

Indeed, so well did he look and act the part of a genial country miller, that Kit Wildrake was smitten with a doubt. But he was fortified in his secret belief, by the remembrance of the shadow at the window, and the heavy breathing outside the door. If all was at the mill as it appeared on the surface, those precautions would certainly never have been taken on account of a schoolboy visitor in Ettons.

Wildrake rose as the miller came in.

"Good-morning, my lad," said Mr. Brown. "I think I have seen you before somewhere."

"You have, sir," assented Wildrake. "I guess I came along this way last week, when Tom Merry was missing from our school—the first time he was missing, I mean."

"Surely he is not missing again?" exclaimed the miller.

"I guess so, sir."

"That is very extraordinary," said Mr. Brown, eyeing the junior covertly. "Are you searching for him again, Master Wildrake?"

"Sure."

"I hope you will be successful. Can I help you in any way? I suppose so, from your calling upon me this morning."

"I guess you can, sir, if you choose," said Wildrake. "I'll explain how the matter stands."

"I am a rather busy man," said the miller. "I grind to-day, Master Wildrake."

"Do you, sir?" said Wildrake cheerily, "I guess I'd like to see the mill grinding. It seldom does, does it? I figured it out the other day that there can't be much trade in this quarter. When they built this mill a hundred years ago, there was wheat land around here, so I've heard; but it's nearly all pasture now, and the corn has to come a pesky long way to the mill, hasn't it?"

The miller eyed him without answering.

"I guess I wondered why a business-man like you, Mr. Brown, should invest his money in this out-of-date and out-of-the-way old mill," said Wildrake. "Not my bizney, of course—but I kind of wondered. And while Manners and Lowther and I were rooting around the mill hunting for Tom Merry on the moor, Lowther did the vanishing trick. Since then I've been sort of thinking—"

"Indeed," said Mr. Brown smoothly. "You rather interest me, Master Wildrake—you seem a keen lad."

"Keen as they make them, sir," answered the Canadian junior, coolly and cheerfully. "I guess I got my eye-teeth cut on the Boot Leg Ranch, where I was raised. You see, the kidnapping stunt is a bit rare in the Old Country here, but it's quite a common game over in the States, and I've heard all about it before. Kinder took an interest in it, you know. Thinking it out, I couldn't help remembering that while Manners and I were looking for poor old Lowther, we saw a cart of straw driven into the mill-yard."

The miller started violently.

"What does that imply?" he asked.

"I calculate that a fellow might be hidden out of sight with his hands tied and a gag in his mouth, or under chloroform, at the bottom of a load of straw," explained Wildrake.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the miller.

"You see the idea?" said Wildrake, smiling cheerfully at the staring man. "Nothing in it, perhaps—but perhaps a lot. Of course, a galoot wouldn't want to get laughed at by spouting such an idea in public till he had got hold of something a little more solid."

"I suppose not," said the miller, still staring. "Am I to understand that you have come here, to my mill, in search of something more solid, as you term it?"

"Sure."

"And how do you propose—"

"This way, I guess."

Wildrake made a sudden step forward, and before the miller could raise a hand to guard, he had grasped his side-whiskers, and dragged them off.

The miller uttered a sharp cry.

A hard, savage face was revealed. Rogue Rackstraw, in his proper person, stood staring dumbfounded at the Canadian junior.

CHAPTER 4.

Held by the Enemy!

KIT WILDRAKE laughed.

He stood with the side-whiskers in his hand, looking into the hard, savage face that was suddenly revealed—and he laughed, as if entertained by the amazement and rage in the face before him.



Wildrake made a swift and active spring through the open window, to land on his hands and knees in the geranium-bed without. Before he could make another movement he was seized by the man on the watch outside! (See this page.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rackstraw staggered back a pace. He had been taken utterly by surprise.

"You—you—are you mad?" he panted at last.

"I guess not, Mr. Brown," smiled Wildrake. "I figured it out in my mind that if you were playing a rum game here you wouldn't be got up so that the police would know you. It's all been too deep-laid for a beginner at the game—I reckoned you were an old hand, with your merry portrait in the rogues' gallery at Scotland Yard—and so I guessed that your cheery old side-whiskers were false. You looked sixty-five—but I reckoned you were a bit younger than that—you wouldn't be playing this stunt at a grandpapa's age. If your whiskers had stuck, sir, I'd have apologised and cleared. But—ha, ha—they didn't."

"And now," said Rogue Rackstraw, recovering his calmness, and looking at the junior with a deadly glitter in his eye—"now you have satisfied yourself?"

"I guess so."

"And your next step—if I may presume to ask so very acute a young gentleman?"

"I guess I'm walking to the police-station at Wayland now," answered Wildrake. "I haven't said a word to Inspector Skeat yet—but I guess I've got something to say now that will make him sit up and take notice—what?"

"No doubt," said Rogue Rackstraw. "You will be able to tell him that Mr. Brown, the miller of the moor, who looks sixty-five with side-whiskers, looks no more than thirty without them."

"Sure."

"Even a rural inspector will want to know something more, after he has been told that."

"I guess so."

"Probably, in the first place, he would have laughed at your story of a prisoner hidden under a load of straw—but with the rest that you can now tell him, he will take very special note of it," suggested Rackstraw.

"That's how I figure it out," said Wildrake, with a nod. "I'm only sorry the peelers are not at hand now, and that you'll have time to pull up stakes and clear before they

can arrive. But I guess you can't take your prisoners with you—that's one comfort."

Rogue Rackstraw smiled—a deadly smile.

"So you think that I am going to pull up stakes and clear?" he asked.

Wildrake laughed again.

"I guess you'll be for the stone jug if you wait for the police to arrive," he said. "I shall be back from Wayland as fast as they can come."

"You are sure of getting to Wayland?"

"I guess so."

"You are a very bright lad," said Rackstraw, with an evil grin. "But it did not occur to you that by confirming your suspicions in this way, you placed yourself in my hands."

"I guess you won't dare to play monkey tricks in broad daylight," said the junior.

"You have forgotten, my young friend, that the mill is the loneliest place in the county—that there is no other building within miles," smiled Rackstraw. "You have been very clever—perhaps a little too clever. You would have been dangerous, my lad, if you had been just a little less clever—and enterprising. I do not think you will be dangerous now. Dusty! Smiley!"

The door opened, and the two ruffians rushed in.

"Seize him!" said the miller.

Wildrake for the first time showed signs of alarm. He backed quickly towards the window.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed. "I—"

"Stun him if he resists!"

Wildrake gave a wild and desperate glance round. The window was open, and he made a swift and active spring through it, and landed on his hands and knees in the geranium-bed without.

Before he could make another movement he was seized by the man on the watch outside.

He struggled, but without much vigour. He was swung up in a pair of brawny arms, and tossed bodily in at the window again. The window was jammed shut at once.

As Wildrake sprawled on the floor, Dusty and Smiley Joe grasped him by the arms.

He was dragged to his feet, and held securely between the two ruffians.

The coolness of the Canadian junior seemed utterly to desert him now. He wrestled and shouted:

"Help! Let me go! Help!"

"Silence him!" snapped Rackstraw.

Smiley Joe placed a grip on the schoolboy's throat, and Wildrake gasped for breath.

"Another yelp, and it will be your last, young bantam!" growled Smiley.

"I—I—let go! I—I won't call out again!" gasped Wildrake.

"You'd better not."

The miller of the moor picked up his side-whiskers, where the junior had dropped them, and arranged them carefully before a glass. When he turned to Wildrake again, Rogue Rackstraw, the thin-lipped criminal, was once more the bluff and genial miller of the moor. But his eyes were glittering with a deadly light.

"Get him below," said Rackstraw. "The sooner the better. Put the sack on him, Tadger!"

Tadger came into the room with a flour-sack in his hands. It was drawn over the head and shoulders of the St. Jim's junior.

"What—what are you going to do?" panted Wildrake. His voice sounded strangely muffled from the interior of the sack.

"You will know soon enough, you young hound!" said Rackstraw, between his teeth. "In the meantime, you may bear it in mind that you have seen the sun for the last time!"

"Let me go—I—"

"Bring him along!"

Wildrake, with his head hidden in the sack, could see nothing as he went. The grip on his arms forced him along. He felt steps under his feet—many steps—down—down—down he went. The steps seemed almost endless as he stumbled down them, one after another.

There was a sound of bolts withdrawn, and a door opened. Wildrake was shoved roughly from behind, and he went stumbling into a room.

The door closed behind him. The bolts were replaced—footsteps died away.

Wildrake tore the sack from his head. He glanced round him in the light of a dim oil-lamp.

Three other juniors were in the hut.

"Wildrake!" said Tom Merry, with almost a groan. "So they've got you, too!"

Wildrake smiled. The consternation, the terror he had

displayed when Rogue Rackstraw's men had seized him, had quite vanished now. He was as cool as a cucumber.

"Little me!" he said. "Fancy meeting you here, old beans!"

"You're taking it pretty coolly," muttered Manners.

"Sure!"

"It's not a case of ransom, or they wouldn't have put you in with us," said Manners. "According to what they say, we're booked; and if they give us a chance of telling you what we know, you're booked, too!"

"I guess you couldn't tell me much I don't know," said Wildrake cheerily. "Perhaps I could tell you something; but I won't, because walls have ears. Keep your peckers up, and smile. This cheery business is really no end of a lark!"

"I'm glad you think so," said Talbot dryly. "Do you know who that pretended miller is?"

"I know he's a young man, not an old one, and that his whiskers grew on another galoot's chin!"

"Quite so. He is Rogue Rackstraw, one of the most desperate rascals out of the hands of the police," said Talbot quietly. "You could not have known that; you could not have known about Smiley Joe—"

"Never heard of him. Who is the gentleman?"

"Another of the gang. Then how did you come here? Why did you come here?" exclaimed Talbot.

"Little way I have, butting in," said Wildrake. "I've butted into trouble before, and butted out again."

"You think there's hope?" asked Talbot.

Wildrake smiled.

"Tons of it!" he answered.

"But how?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Wildrake, without replying, made a round of the hut, examining the walls. The juniors watched him in silence.

"Inch matching, I guess, and two-by-two beams," said Wildrake. "I reckoned so." He came back to the juniors, and sank his voice to a whisper that even they could scarcely hear. "Those walls can be listened through. Can't jaw. But put this in your pipe and smoke it. I've pulled the leg of that scoundrel you call Rackstraw! He reckons he's at the top of the wheel and we're at the bottom. But the wheel's just going round. 'Nuff said!"

And in spite of the eager curiosity of his companions in the prison hut, the Canadian junior refused to say another word, even in a whisper.

CHAPTER 5.

Trimble Asks For It.

"B AI Jove! I am weally cawious to know what the Head and that detective johnny are sayin' to one another, you know!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that confession to a group of juniors in the quadrangle at St. Jim's. The Honourable Arthur Augustus uttered the thought that was in every mind.

All the school knew that a detective from Scotland Yard was shut up with Dr. Holmes, in consultation, in his study. Only the four chums of Study No. 6 knew that a letter, left behind by Kit Wildrake of the Fourth, was in their hands, and that Detective-Inspector Troope and Dr. Holmes were deep in council over it. Jack Blake had sagely decided that it was wiser to say nothing of Wildrake's mysterious missive until he knew for certain that there would be no harm in doing so. The more he thought over the strange affair, the more Blake was inclined to believe that the mysterious letter contained something of importance with regard to the kidnappings; and if that was the case, it was obvious that the less said the better.

"The detective johnny looks wathah a gwim old boundah," went on Arthur Augustus. "But he looks vewy capable. Pwobably the wascals will not be able to twap him as they did poor old Fix. But I should feel much easiah in my mind if I could keep an eye on him, you know. I suppose it is no good offahin'," added the swell of St. Jim's, very thoughtfully.

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass reprovingly upon the fat junior.

"Weally, Twimble—" he began.

"I'd jolly well like to know what they're chewing over," said Figgins, of the New House, with a glance towards the distant windows of the Head's study. "It's really our bizney, you know; we're not inquisitive rosters like Trimble—"

"Look here—" roared Trimble.

"But we want to know," confessed Figgins. "It's getting jolly serious. Tom Merry gone again, and Manners and Lowther, and old Talbot, and now Wildrake—"

"As well as poor old Kildare, and our Housemaster," said Blake. "Pity it wasn't your Housemaster, Figgy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins grinned.

"We could have spared Ratcliff!" he agreed. "And there's Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School, too—they've

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got him. He's only a dashed Grammarian, but he's a good sort!"

"They're making a regular bag of it," yawned Cardew of the Fourth. "What's the bettin' on Trimble bein' the next to disappear? If they've heard of the glories of Trimble Hall—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" from Baggy.

"I wish there was something doing," said Levison restlessly. "It's rotten, marking time like this."

"Howwid, deah boy."

"And most likely this new man, Troope, won't do anything more than poor old Fix did!" grunted Herries. "He's got no more to go upon."

"Exceptin' that lettah, Hewwies—"

"Shurrup!" murmured Blake hurriedly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"What letter?" asked Kangaroo of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Pewwaps I had better not tell you, Kangy. Blake thinks it would be wisah not to mention that Wildwake—"

"Cheese it!" roared Blake.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Blake thinks what—about which?" demanded Kangaroo, in astonishment.

"I feah that I cannot tell you, deah boy. Of course, Blake is not vewy bwainy, and as a wule I should not mind what he thinks—but in the pvesent case, you see, I agwee with him that it is bettah not to talk about Wildwake's lettah—Yawwoooooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy broke off with a yell, as Blake seized him by the collar and started running him across the quad.

"Wlease me, you feahful ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Kim on!"

"Bai Jove! You are wumplin' my collah—yawwooh! If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Blake—"

"Bow-wow! Come on!"

Arthur Augustus had to come on. He disappeared in the distance, with Blake's grip still on his crumpled collar—going strong. The juniors stared after them blankly.

"Those fellows can't know anything," said Fatty Wynn. "What was Gussy going to say, Herries?"

Herries strolled away without seeming to hear the question.

"Dig—I say, Dig—" called out Kerr.

But Robert Arthur Digby was following Herries.

"Spoof!" said Figgins. "They don't know anything. Only School House swank! But I'd jolly well like to know what the Head and the giddy detective are chow-chowing over, all the same."

"I say, you leave it to me," said Baggy Trimble. "I'm jolly well going to find out."

"Eh?"

"You help me, of course, and I'll jolly soon tell you all about it," said Baggy.

"And how?" demanded Figgins, in astonishment.

Trimble gave a fat wink.

"There's a keyhole to the door of the Head's study," he answered.

"A-a-a keyhole?" stuttered Figgins.

"Yes. You come and keep watch in the passage," explained Trimble. "You at one end, Figgins, and you at the other, Wynn. Kerr can keep watch round the corner. See?"

"Why, you—you—"

"Then I'll nip along to the Head's door," said the cheerful Baggy. "You whistle if you see a prefect or a master coming, see? I'll tell you all about it afterwards."

George Figgins' rugged face was a study, as he blinked at Trimble. He seemed at a loss for words.

"Come on," said Trimble eagerly, "strike while the iron's hot, you know. You come and keep watch—"

"You eavesdropping worm!" roared Figgins, finding his voice at last. "You want us to help you in listening at a keyhole?"

"Yes, you see—Yooop! Leggo!" roared Baggy Trimble in great alarm and indignation. "Hands off, you New House rotters! Oh, crumbs!"

Bump!

Baggy Trimble sat down in the quad, with a roar.

"That's one for proposing to me to back you up in eavesdropping, you fat worm," said Figgins. "Now one for Kerr—"

Bump!

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"Now one for Wynn—"

Bump!

"Yarooooooooh! Help! Fire!" roared Trimble.

"And now one for luck!" said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Figgins and Co. walked away, leaving Baggy Trimble sitting breathless in the quad. That was all the gratitude that Baggy received for his generous offer. After that, Baggy was too busily engaged in trying to get his second wind, to think of carrying out his masterly scheme—and the Head's consultation with Mr. Troope, of Scotland Yard, remained unheard and unknown.

CHAPTER 6.

The Clue!

DR. Holmes took off his glasses, wiped them slowly and carefully, and replaced them on his nose. He did not speak; he was in too great astonishment to speak. Even Mr. Troope, of Scotland Yard, was surprised, and showed it. He sat and stared at the letter on the table before him, while the Head fairly blinked at it. The grim, hard-featured detective was not in the habit of displaying emotion of any sort, but undoubtedly he was looking startled now.

The letter, written upon a sheet of impot. paper in Kit Wildrake's steady hand, was, perhaps, startling enough. The Head and the detective had read it through—twice. And Mr. Troope was staring at it, and the Head wiped his spectacles, and blinked. The letter ran:

"Dr. Holmes.

Sir,—If this letter is placed in your hands, it will mean that I am a prisoner of the kidnappers. I am sorry, sir, to cause you further anxiety, and I hope you will forgive me, when you learn my reasons.

"Before Detective Fix fell into their hands, I spoke to him, and he was kind enough to listen to my surmises on the subject. I think—I believe—that I have found at least a clue to the den of the kidnapping gang.

"I will be as brief as possible, sir. These are my reasons:

"1.—Mr. Brown, the miller of Wayland Moor, is a stranger in this district, having been at the mill only a few weeks. The mill, from its situation, can do little trade. Hardly a fellow has ever seen it grinding. There are some vegetable grounds round it; but it seems odd for half a dozen men to be employed on so little. The mill is very lonely on the moor, and not far distant from the old quarries, now disused. Kildare of the Sixth, while searching for Tom Merry, disappeared on the moor within a short distance of the mill. The same with Lowther.

"2.—After Lowther disappeared, a farm-cart laden with straw went into the mill-yard, under my eyes. Afterwards, I asked Tom Merry whether, when he was kidnapped and chloroformed, he found any trace of straw on his clothes after awakening. He told me that he found several wisps of straw about him. This does not hold with the theory that he was carried to a distance in a fast car, but it would look as if he was taken to a den nearer at hand, hidden under a load of straw in a farm-cart. The police have been searching for suspicious motors; but farm-carts are too common about here to attract attention.

"3.—Tom Merry described his place of imprisonment as a wooden hut. I asked him particulars, and learned that the hut was of match-boards, with two-by-two beams. I visited the timber-yard at Wayland—the only one in this locality—to inquire. As it happened, I went with Mr. Fix, who made the inquiry. He learned that a quantity of match-boards and two-by-two beams had been supplied to Mr. Brown at the mill on the moor; but from my own observations, I know that there are no new buildings in sight there to account for the use of the timber.

"4.—Mr. Brown, the miller, came into the timber-yard while Mr. Fix was there, and observed him. Later the same afternoon he called at St. Jim's, and inquired of the porter whether there was news. He got into conversation with a junior, who told him which was the window of Mr. Fix's room. That night, Mr. Fix's room was broken into by the window, and Mr. Fix taken off by violence.

"5.—My impression was that the miller was watching Mr. Fix, but I have no proof of this. Inquiry at the timber-yard

(Continued on page 12.)

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Scout Notes.

WILDRAKE'S PROMOTION.

His Ambition to have the Smartest Patrol in the Troop.

WILDRAKE has been appointed to the leadership of the "Elk" Patrol in the school Scout troop, and is putting in some useful work training them at tracking.

The members of this patrol are Levison, Cardew, Durrance, Clive, and Lumley-Lumley.

Wildrake announces his intention, when he has trained his patrol sufficiently, of challenging the other patrols in the troop to a contest at tracking; but in view of the almost uncanny powers of the Canadian in this direction, and the invaluable instruction that he will be able to impart to his command, it is exceedingly doubtful whether there is another leader intrepid enough to accept the challenge. If so, the result is likely to be something of a foregone conclusion.

Wildrake takes out the "Elks" for an hour's practice every evening, directly after tea, and they go off down the road together.

Wildrake points out some track on the road—a motor track, a map's footprint, a horse's hoofprint, or something like that—and sets them, one by one, to make what they can of it—what kind of motor or man or horse it was that made the track, the pace it or he was travelling at, how long since it passed, and so on. After they have done their best to find out all they can, Wildrake gives his reading, and corrects their errors or confirms their accurate deductions, as the case may be. They then have to follow the track, one by one, picking it up again if they lost it on hard ground. Wildrake following on to help them when they're at fault.

Then he chooses a soft patch of ground, and makes them walk and run across it, so that they can pick up each other's tracks if necessary, and they draw diagrams of the footprints, with measurements. Then he walks and runs backwards to show them how to detect, by the way that the soil is kicked up, when a man is doing this in order to throw his pursuers off the trail, by pretending to be going in the opposite direction.

Some of the fellows are progressing amazingly at the work, and Wildrake declares that Levison, in particular, will soon be as good at it as he is himself.

All the members of the patrol are deeply interested in the training, and Wildrake is receiving requests from other patrol leaders to train their patrols; but he declares that he wants to bring his own crowd up to the scratch first, and then he may hold a special class for leaders, so that they can learn, and teach their patrols themselves.

On the days when there are no cricket matches Wildrake takes the leaders and seconds of the troop into Rylcombe Woods and teaches them all kinds of woodcraft—how to move swiftly but silently, avoid rotten twigs, make rope out of twisted creepers, stalk animals, how to "freeze" by standing still in any position, so as not to alarm an animal or an enemy by disclosing your presence, and many more things.

There is no doubt that before long the "Elks," if they only live up to their training, will be in the enviable position of the smartest patrol in the troop, and they are certainly to be congratulated upon their luck in having Wildrake for a leader.

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Gussy's New Waistcoat.

SAD FATE OF A WORK OF ART.

By His Young Minor, Wally.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the Beau Brummel of the School House, has lately been visited by inspiration in the shape of an idea for a new design of fancy waistcoat. We believe that the scheme was suggested to him through the medium of a coloured plate of the Aurora Borealis. It has also been suggested that the design was revealed to him in a dream—or a nightmare.

He at once visited the tailoring establishment in Rylcombe and consulted Mr. Wiggs upon the matter. The tailor was somewhat doubtful as to whether he could work up the design—indeed, he seemed none too certain that some of the colours that Gussy required actually existed.

However, Mr. Wiggs promised to do his best, and started to work on the masterpiece. Gussy spent the whole of one afternoon in the work-room at the back of the shop superintending the labours of the tailor and his assistants.

Such a creation naturally demanded special consideration in the matter of neckwear, and Gussy passed an hour in the choice of a gorgeous silk necktie to wear with it.

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We understand that the waistcoat is rapidly nearing completion, and that it will shortly be delivered. Gussy is awaiting its advent in a fever of expectancy.

As we go to press more news of the waistcoat comes to hand. It appears that it was duly finished and sent up to the school. Gussy was on Little Side at the time, and the parcel was therefore left on the table in Study No. 6 to await his return.

It was unfortunate—from Gussy's point of view, at any rate—that Towser should have slipped his chain at that particular time, and wandered into the School House in search of Herries. Still more unfortunate that the parcel was sufficiently near to the edge of the table to be within his reach.

Towser had to wait some time for his master's arrival. In the meantime he needed a bed. The bulldog has been too much petted and spoilt to have any liking for a Spartan existence, and he doesn't choose to curl up on the hard floor when there is anything more comfortable within reach. He also has a habit of pawing and tearing anything that offers itself to make a comfortable bed.

Half an hour later what was left of the waistcoat was rescued from beneath Towser, and we understand that the only purpose for which it can possibly serve Gussy is as a polishing-pad for his patent-leather shoes.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

Secret Sherbet Traffic at St. Jim's.

STARTLING DISCLOSURES BY "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR.

DESPITE all efforts of the Head and masters to stop the use of sherbet during lessons by the juniors, it is a matter of common knowledge that the prohibited white powder still finds its way into the Form-rooms in large quantities, and that a number of juniors, slaves to the insidious influence of sherbet, are in the habit of taking it regularly as a stimulus during the monotony of Latin and Euclid. The Special Investigator of "Tom Merry's Weekly" was put on the scent, and he is now able to furnish exclusive and amazing information concerning the surreptitious traffic in sherbet which now goes on behind the backs (and, indeed, under the very noses) of the masters at St. Jim's.

Only a few days ago, Mr. Selby, in the Third Form room, discovered a quantity of the white powder inside some blotting-paper on Curly Gibson's desk. Gibson, although subjected to the severest questioning, refused to give any information as to his source of supply. This fact is ominous, inasmuch as it goes to prove that recipients of the banned sherbet, such as Gibson, live in fear of the chief sherbet trafficker, and keep the secret of his identity under pain of thick ears and black eyes to come.

Another important discovery was made by the chemistry master during a demonstration lesson in the "chemmy" lab last week. He took out of the cupboard where Baggy Trimble was standing a small bottle containing a white powder, and labelled "Carbonate of Soda." Upon emptying some of this white powder into a beaker of water, however, a sizzling noise arose, and all were amazed to see a fierce effervescence taking place in the beaker, and white foam burst over the brim and simply drench the master's hand and his gown. At first this phenomenon was attributed to the presence of some volatile acid in the beaker, but subsequent tests revealed its contents to be sherbet. There was a fearful shindy, but the person who put the sherbet into the bottle was never discovered.

That there is a hidden hand at work is obvious, therefore. The subtle tricks of the sherbet traffickers are as cunning as they are daring. Recently George Alfred Grundy in the Shell Form-room, was discovered with something up his sleeve—and that something proved to be sherbet. The main source of supply is from a certain tuckshop at Rylcombe, where the white powder is sold openly at fourpence a quarter, or secretly in small paper-bags, into which a tube of liquorice is inserted, and called a "sucker." These "sherbet suckers" are particularly popular among the lag tribe at St. Jim's, and Mr. Selby's desk contains a vast quantity of these contraptions which he has confiscated from time to time.

One particularly daring youth, and one whom the Special Investigator has had his eye on for a long time, is Wally D'Arcy of the Third. He was discovered by Herr Schneider during lessons one afternoon upon him which consisted of a bag of sherbet in his trousers-pocket, fitted with a long tube consisting of various lengths of liquorice joined together. This tube, emerging from the sherbet-bag, went underneath D'Arcy

minor's jacket and down his right sleeve into his hand, so that he could lean his elbow on the desk with his hand to his mouth, in a thoughtful attitude, and all the time be sucking up sherbet through the concealed pipe of liquorice. That is only one of the many daring tricks which these youthful traffickers get up to in order to indulge their craving for the tabooed white powder. Expense to them is no object so long as they can procure the pure sherbet, and one member of the Third was known to squander ninepence in a lump sum last week on a supply of sherbet which lasted the dormitory an hour after lights-out that night.

When sherbet is unprocurable, the young rascals fall back on bullseyes and tiger-nuts, commodities which Mr. Selby has forbidden his Form to bring into class-room. But the fact remains that, despite the strictest surveillance, this traffic in sherbet, etc., goes on, and it will need a special Act of Parliament, at least, before it is successfully stamped out.

Cardew Keen on Tennis

FIGGINS WOULD ALSO LIKE TO PLAY.

Staff Contribution.

WE understand that Ralph Reckness Cardew contemplates playing tennis again this season, and has applied for membership of the Rylcombe Tennis Club.

There is a young rotter named Trimble, Whose brains would go into a thimble;
He spends his time spying,
And sneaking and prying,
And for rotten behaviour's the symbol.

A fearful outsider called Racke,
In all things is disgustingly slack;
He smokes cheap cigarettes,
Plays cards and makes bets,
Some day you'll see Racke get the "sack."

We've a recent arrival named Coufts,
Who's a cad from his hat to his boots;
He soon joined the ranks
Of the bounders and swanks,
So we'll leave him to those whom he suits.

A caddish Sixth-Former (that's Knox),
Has a pair of remarkable socks;
They're yellow-and-green,
With light blue in between,
And crimson embroidery clocks.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. A. D'A. (Fourth).—We agree that it is decidedly "wotten" to have one's bags torn in an affray with a bulldog—especially when the said specimen of caninity belongs to a study-mate. We do not, however, advise you to take action against the dog itself (unless you happen to be insured against attacks by wild beasts); go for the owner. With regard to your query concerning the likelihood of your getting hydrophobia, we promise to have you carefully watched for any sign of this complaint, and will save up all our old bones in case you should need 'em!

Form Room Mystery.—When Mr. Lathom entered the Fourth Form-room the other morning, he discovered that both his canes had been broken and put off the active service list. So far no arrest has been made, and it is generally believed that when Mr. Lathom finds a clue, the culprit will flee the country.

A state of warfare exists between Herries' dog Towser, the champion kipper-fancier, and Pongo, D'Arcy minor's pet mongrel.

It is computed by our special statistician that if all the food that Baggy Trimble eats in a week was collected, it would prove sufficient to keep a boa-constrictor for a month, and would fill three lorries or a couple of ordinary barges.

Answers to Readers.

By the Editor.

PERCY GOLDING (Bristol).—Talbot is sixteen years old and five feet and a half in height. Grundy is a month or two younger. Herbert Skimpole periodically bombards Tom Merry with manuscripts many thousands of words in length, but I don't think they serve him any better purpose other than to help light the study fire.

"CHICK" (Melbourne, Australia).—Wally D'Arcy is thirteen, Bernard Glyn is just fifteen and a half, and Kildare of the Sixth is about eighteen. There are not many cats at St. Jim's. Yes, Kangaroo is an Australian, I believe. I am sorry, but I cannot obtain Kit Wildrake's signature for you. Gore and

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This latest and greatest masterpiece, written by a favourite author, starts next week's issue of The "GEM" Library. The first instalment of this Record-Breaking story is crammed full of incident and is bound to please you. Make sure of your copy NOW.

Last season Cardew played many games on the courts of this club. He was not an actual member, but he was frequently invited by others who did belong to the club to come down and make up sets when there was a shortage of players.

Cardew shines better at singles, as, when playing doubles, he is apt to leave rather too much work to his partner, unless he happens to be playing with a lady. But at singles, knowing that he has no one but himself to rely upon, he livens up to an almost incredible degree, and the player who can count upon beating him without going "all out" may congratulate himself on his prowess at the game.

Several times last season cousin Ethel played with the club, and the courts have also been visited by Phyllis Macdonald, Joyce Digby, Doris Levison, and Constance Owen, among other sisters and relations of the St. Jim's boys.

It is perhaps for this reason that Figgins is declaring his intention of taking up the game, but as a prominent and important member of the junior cricket team, it is doubtful whether the leader of the New House will get much opportunity for tennis.

D'Arcy is rather a good player, and on one occasion last season he played singles against Cardew, winning 6-4, 5-7, 6-3 in three sets.

Gussy, however, much prefers cricket to tennis, and to him the team comes first. The rest of Study No. 6 would see that it did so, too!

Potted "Preserves."

By Monty Lowther.

There is a young fellow named Gore, Whom you'll find in the study next door;
But if Skimpole sees you,
With rapture he'll seize you,
And send you to sleep with his "jaw."

Baggy Trimble (Fourth).—"I have invented a wonderful waistcoat, which is really 2 waistcoats—one at the front and another at the back. Where would you advise me to place this invention?" In, the nearest dustbin, Baggy!

Aubrey Racke (Shell).—"You chaps know everything, so please tell me what the Dead Sea died off!" Sorry, Racke, but we've lost trace of the poor sea's relatives, so it's impossible to say. But we wish you'd be like the Dead Sea, and dry up!

Leslie Clampe (Shell).—"My ambition is to go on the 'boards.' Do you think I am suited to the work?" Not exactly. Personally, we think you more suited to go "on the tiles."

E. Kerruish (Fourth).—"I have just taken a photograph of St. Jim's by moonlight, but during exposure, the matron's cat dashed up and knocked over the camera. Do you think the photo will be a success?" The answer is bound to be in the negative.

BULLETINS IN BRIEF.

According to Monty Lowther, this business about the Channel Tunnel will be a big bore.

A sparrow has made its nest under the roof of the school gymnasium. Herbert Skimpole of the Shell is also believed to have bats in his belly.

The School House Junior Cricket Eleven expects to give the New House team the kybosh all along the line this season, as per usual.

A German howitzer, captured from the Battle of the Marne, has been presented to St. Jim's by Major Kildare, an old boy and cousin of our present skipper, as a war souvenir.

Manners minor have "Daisy" hair-rifles. Crooke, Clampe, and Grady have other makes.

MASTERS SPENCER AND SALMON (Gainsborough).—I expect you were highly satisfied with the results of your pursuit for back numbers of the GEM, my chums. As you will have found, we are devoting more and more space to the antics of the Third, and are finding they become increasingly popular. Kit Wildrake arrived at St. Jim's on the back of a fiery teal. His appearance created quite a sensation. Yes, the river is all the rage during the summer, and the college watermen are kept busy housing and launching the boats. The boat-races come later on, when the St. Jim's regatta and water-carnival take place. More of Wally & Co. in the future.

IAN F. BOOTH (Aberdeen).—Writes a very interesting letter, portions of which are well worth publishing: "Why should all the best characters be in the School House? . . . Give Figg & Co. a better following. . . . Why should Tom Merry always be elected captain? . . . Give Talbot a chance. . . . If Levison turned over into the New House, would he be different?" The best characters are in the School House simply because the School House is the largest House. Reginald Talbot is of a very reserved disposition, and if Tom were to resign and a fresh election take place, it would be a hundred to one that Talbot would never dream of standing as a candidate. It is not his inclination or nature to lead to such an advanced extent, and, besides, Talbot has a wisdom beyond his years. He knows a Form captain's job isn't anything like so rosy as it looks. And, then, for Levison. Well, in my opinion, Levison would still be as he is now in whichever house he lodged.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 747.

Out of the Depths.

(Continued from page 9.)

will show whether he inquired what questions Mr. Fix had been asking there. At least, his curiosity with regard to Mr. Fix's quarters in the school needs explaining.

"6.—The general belief seems to be that the kidnappers have taken their prisoners to a distance in a fast car. You, sir, have been telephoned to from the Midlands by one of the gang—and there was mention of a car, as I understand, Tom Merry, before he was released, was told that he was to take a long journey. I cannot help thinking that all this is camouflage to give an impression that the rascals' headquarters are not close at hand.

"Now, sir, Merry and Manners and Talbot have disappeared—as well as Mr. Railton, and Gordon Gay of the Grammar School. I am writing this on Wednesday evening in my study. If there is no news in the morning, I have resolved to carry out a plan I have formed, and I hope you will pardon me for doing so.

"I shall go to the mill and see Mr. Brown. If he is, as I suspect, the kidnapper, there is not much doubt that he is disguised, as he looks sixty-five, and has white whiskers. I shall ascertain whether these whiskers are false. If I am making a mistake, I shall return at once to the school and the my punishment for breaking bounds, and this letter, which I shall leave with Blake, will never reach your eyes.

"But if I am correct in my surmise the miller will certainly not let me escape after I have discovered him. I shall give him the impression that I have entered the place recklessly without thinking of the consequences. He will not know that I have left this letter behind as a guide. If he is the kidnapper, he certainly will seize on me and keep me a prisoner. Unless this happens, I shall not be missing. But if I am missing from school, sir, and this letter reaches you in consequence, it will be because the miller has made me a prisoner.

"In that case, sir, the course will be clear. My disappearance will be a proof that the miller of the moor is the kidnapper, and it will only be necessary for the police to surround the mill and search it thoroughly. It must be remembered that Tom Merry was confined in a hut far from the daylight; and for that reason, an underground retreat must be looked for.

"I hope, sir, that you will forgive me for acting as I am doing. It is for the sake of the St. Jim's fellows who are now prisoners.

"KIT WILDRAKE."

That was the letter written by the Canadian junior the evening before he had made his desperate venture, and it was no wonder that it astonished the Head and startled the man from Scotland Yard.

Wildrake had expressed himself clearly enough, and the fact of his disappearance was a proof of what he had written.

The Head knew now what had happened to him—that he had gone to the mill on the moor, and that he had never left it.

He could scarcely be angry with the daring junior; any anger he might have felt was swallowed up in anxiety for him.

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There was a long silence in the Head's study. Mr. Troope pursed his lips, and read the letter through for a third time, Dr. Holmes watching him in silence. The detective spoke at last.

"This is a most amazing letter, Dr. Holmes!"

"Amazing, indeed!" said the Head.

"The boy Wildrake did not return——"

"He did not."

"As I have never seen the boy, sir, I must take my impression of his character from you. Is he the kind of boy to write a letter like this for a foolish practical joke, and to absent himself from the school in order to give it colour?"

The Head started.

"Most certainly not!" he exclaimed. "He is a very steady and sensible lad—perhaps a little reckless in some respects, but a very steady and sterling character. Moreover, the trick you mention would certainly be punished by expulsion from the school, and no boy would face that punishment for the sake of a foolish prank."

The detective nodded.

"Some of the points he refers to can be clearly ascertained," he remarked. "An inquiry at the timber-yard will be useful. It is unfortunate that the boy Merry has now disappeared again. He might have given me useful information. I shall most certainly act upon this letter, Dr. Holmes!"

"Certainly I think it worth acting upon," said the Head. "The boy has been reckless, and he has disregarded authority; but if he has indeed furnished the means of clearing up this terrible mystery, I cannot but be grateful to him!"

Mr. Troope rose.

"I shall proceed to Wayland now," he said.

"My car is at your service, sir," said the Head courteously. "But one word more! I received yesterday a telephone message from the villain calling himself Nemo. He threatens to do wicked injury to the boy Lowther if the ransom is not paid. Lowther's uncle refuses to pay one shilling!"

"Very proper on his part!" said Mr. Troope.

"No doubt," said the Head, colouring a little. "But I have a duty to my boys, Mr. Troope. I have agreed to draw the required sum from the Wayland bank this afternoon and to hand it to the kidnapper's agent, who is to accost me while I walk home alone from the town. I have agreed to this, with the proviso that the money will not be handed over, if by good fortune justice should seize upon the rascals in the meantime."

"I recommend you, sir, to defer your visit to the bank until you hear from me," said Mr. Troope. "I shall be able to give you some definite news before the bank closes."

The Head breathed a sigh of relief.

"Then I will wait for word from you, Mr. Troope," he said.

And after a little further discussion the gentleman from Scotland Yard took his leave.

Many eyes were turned upon Mr. Troope as he stepped into the Head's car on the drive outside the School House.

But if the St. Jim's fellows hoped to read anything in his face, they were disappointed. Mr. Troope's iron features expressed nothing whatever.

The car turned out at the gates and vanished on the Wayland road. Taggles carefully locked the gates after it.

"Well, Twoope's gone, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to his chums. "I weally wish he 'ad

given us a lift in the cah, you know; it would have been safah for him. I was pwepared to back him up, you know, and keep an eye on him. There is nothin' to gwin at in that remark that I can see, Blake."

"Lots of things you can't see, old top!" remarked Blake.

"I wondah whethah his goin' out has anythin' to do with Wildrake's lettah?" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Wildrake's lettah?" chimed in Clive of the Fourth. "What was that, Gussy?"

"The lettah—pway, do not dwag at my arm like that, Blake! I am not goin' to tell Clive about—leggo, you silly ass!"

"There goes the ball!" said Herries. "Come on! Even Gussy will have to shut up in class!"

"Weally, Hewvies——"

"If the Head would let us out of school bounds, we'd go and buy him a muzzie!" remarked Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Come on, fathead!" said Blake.



From a little window, unseen himself by any possible observer, Rogue Rackstraw swept the moor with his powerful field-glass. His teeth came together with a sharp click—as in the distance, half-hidden by high grass and thickets, he spotted horseman after horseman. Six or seven mounted constables were surrounding the mill. (See page 14.)

And he propelled his noble chum to the Fourth Form room, where Arthur Augustus' aristocratic chin was perforce inactive, except in the way of lessons. But that afternoon the St. Jim's fellows were thinking a good deal more about their missing schoolfellows than about their lessons, and wondering what Detective-Inspector Troope, of the C.I.D., was "up to."

CHAPTER 7.

An Advance in Force !

ROGUE RACKSTRAW threw himself into a chair by the window that gave a wide view over Wayland Moor and lighted a cigar. He smoked with a moody brow, staring away across the moorland. His brow was wrinkled with thought. In his cunning disguise the kidnapper looked thoroughly the part of a bluff country miller; the most unexpected visitor dropping into the mill would never have taken Rackstraw by surprise in that respect. But the troubled light in his eyes, the deep wrinkle in his brow, the restless movements of his hands, were not in keeping with that bluff and genial character at the moment. Mr. Brown, the miller—alias Rogue Rackstraw—was not easy in his mind.

His inward misgivings dated from Wildrake's visit that morning to the mill.

The coming of Talbot had not alarmed him. The recognition of Smiley Joe in a photograph taken of the mill by the one-time Toff had been a chance happening, which might have proved unlucky. But it had not proved so. Talbot and the juniors in his confidence were in the rogue's hands, as well as the photograph and the negative from which it had been printed. In that direction fortune had favoured Rackstraw. He was safe there.

It was a different matter with Wildrake; for, as appeared from what the junior had said, his suspicions had been turned on the mill and the miller from no cause but keenness of observation. It was true that Wildrake was a prisoner, that he had been silenced before he could say what he knew—at least, so the rogue believed. But what one had

suspected might not another suspect? Fix, the detective, who had inquired so keenly at the Wayland timber-yard, was a prisoner—silenced. But what had occurred to Wildrake's keen mind might occur to another equally keen. For the first time since he had established himself on the moor, the plotting rascal felt misgivings.

He had played his game so cunningly, he had covered his tracks so well, that his confidence had been supreme until Wildrake came. The Canadian junior had given him a shock he had not yet recovered from.

What the boy had told him seemed a slight ground to build deep suspicion upon. Did the boy know or guess more than he had told? Was it likely that the same surmise would dawn in another mind? This boy was unusually keen and observant. Rackstraw realised that, though, in reckless schoolboy fashion, he had walked right into the spider's web, and had been caught there like a fly. But the suspicions that had passed through Wildrake's mind, and which he had verified so recklessly, with such disastrous results to himself—were these suspicions working in the minds of others?

It was a discomforting thought to the schemer, who had felt himself so secure hitherto.

He realised that he needed to be doubly on his guard; that it would be wise to allow the kidnapping game to rest for a time, and lie low while he watched how the wind blew. There was, as it were, a scent of danger in the air—faint, afar off, but real. As he smoked his cigar and stared across the moor, the rogue cursed Wildrake from the bottom of his heart. Yet if there really was danger, he felt that he owed the warning to the Canadian. But for Wildrake's coming, certainly he would never have feared it.

His eyes, as he stared over the moor, fell idly upon the figure of a mounted man. There was nothing uncommon in a horseman riding across the moor, and Rackstraw paid the man little heed at first. But he started, and his look concentrated, as he noted that the rider was a mounted constable.

Even in that there was nothing alarming. Mounted constables had ridden the moor many times of late days. But the sight struck upon Rackstraw's mind in unison with the gloomy and apprehensive trend of his thoughts.

The horseman passed out of sight in a clump of thickets. Rackstraw rose to his feet and stood at the window. The thickets hid the horseman. Had he ridden on across the moor? Surely! Yet the thought lurked in the rogue's mind that the mounted man had only withdrawn into cover, and had halted there, and was watching the mill from a distance. He muttered a curse at his own nervous fears. He threw away the stump of his cigar and left the room, and a minute later was mounting the steps of the windmill. From a little window, unseen himself by any possible observer, he swept the moor with a powerful glass.

His teeth came together with a sharp click.

In the distance, half hidden by high grass and thickets and the undulations of the moor, he spotted horseman after horseman.

Six or seven mounted constables at least were drawn in a wide circle, of which the lonely mill was the centre.

Rogue Rackstraw breathed hard and quick.

The mill was surrounded by mounted men, still at a distance. If the den of the kidnappers was suspected, escape was cut off.

The man he had first seen was still at hand. From the high window, with the field-glass, he could see him now, his horse at a standstill in the thickets, the nose turned towards the mill. The horseman was in cover, waiting and watching.

Rogue Rackstraw descended, his heart beating quickly. He told himself that this did not mean danger, that it was only some vague search for the missing schoolboys, such as had taken place several times already on the moor. He told himself so. But deep down in his heart was a sense of coming peril and disaster. Smiley Joe came up to him as he descended from the mill.

"There's a car coming this way, guv'nor," said the ruffian. "It's turned off the moor road--this way."

Rogue Rackstraw nodded.

"Give the boys a tip to keep busy about the place," he muttered. "And keep your face out of sight, Joe. It might be known to other as well as the Toff."

"You bet, guv'nor!"

The white-haired, white-whiskered miller lounged down to the gate. His manner was calm, his face genial, now, in spite of the black doubts and fears that tugged at his heart. Rogue Rackstraw had never wanted for nerve.

A big car had turned off the moorland road upon the rutty, rugged track that led to the mill, worn by the heavy wheels

of farm carts. It bumped and swayed over the hardened, muddy ridges as it came on to the mill gate. Rogue Rackstraw watched it advance, his face good-humoured and genial under his white hat, his heart heavy with care. The car was closed, but he knew that it was filled, and there was a man in uniform seated by the chauffeur--Inspector Skeat, of Wayland. The worthy Mr. Skeat was not an alarming personality. Rackstraw had talked to him several times, and taken his measure. But the inspector's arrival was alarming, taken in conjunction with the circle of mounted constables that surrounded the mill.

The car grunted to a halt at the gate, and Mr. Brown gave the portly inspector a genial salute. The door of the car opened, and a hard-featured man stepped out--a man with a grim, sagacious face and icily sharp eyes. The rogue's heart sank within him as he recognised Detective-Inspector Troope, of the C.I.D. What did Mr. Troope want there? Five constables followed the Scotland Yard man from the car. It was a visit in strong force.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Skeat!" said the miller blandly. He betrayed no sign of recognising Troope.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Brown!" said the Wayland inspector, who looked rather red and uncomfortable. "I'm afraid we've had to call upon a rather unpleasant business!"

The miller raised his eyebrows.

"An unpleasant business?" he repeated. "I don't quite follow, Mr. Skeat. What is wrong?"

The Wayland man coughed.

"The fact is, Mr. Brown, we hold a search-warrant to search the mill. I hope you've no objection?"

Not a sign in Rackstraw's face betrayed the icy apprehension at his heart. He nodded and smiled.

"My dear fellow, it would not be much use objecting when you are armed with the powers of the law," he replied. "And, as a matter of fact, I haven't the faintest objection in the world. You are welcome to search the mill from top to bottom. But surely I may ask why?"

Mr. Skeat coughed again. His own opinion of Mr. Brown was that that gentleman was a very genial and good-natured man, who had treated him with the respect that was his due. Mr. Skeat certainly would never have made this visit on his own account. He was acting under the influence of a much stronger power. Mr. Troope, of the C.I.D., was the directing spirit, and the Wayland man was far from agreeing--as yet--in Mr. Troope's conclusions. Detective-Inspector Troope broke in before Mr. Skeat could answer the miller.

"We are sorry to give you annoyance, Mr. Brown. You have, of course, heard of the kidnapping that has taken place in this neighbourhood?"

"It is the talk of the place, sir," answered the miller civilly.

"There is reason to suppose--at least, to suspect--that persons in this establishment have been concerned in the affair," said Mr. Troope. "We apologise for the trouble we are giving, but it is our duty to make a thorough search."

The miller smiled.

"I cannot imagine how such a suspicion has arisen," he said. "But you are welcome, sir."

And he threw wide the gate.

CHAPTER 8.

The Grip of the Law.

DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR TROOPE entered the mill-yard, followed by Mr. Skeat and the constables. Rogue Rackstraw cast a covert but very keen glance around, and noted that the circle of horsemen had drawn in a little. They were all in sight now, sitting their horses and watching the mill from every direction.

Resistance, if the rogue had thought of it, was out of the question. There was overwhelming force on the side of the man from Scotland Yard. Whether he was on the right track or the wrong, Mr. Troope had left nothing to chance.

"Will you be good enough to call your hands together, Mr. Brown?" he asked civilly. "I should like to look them over."

"Certainly. Johnson, bring all the hands into the yard."

"Yes, sir."

Five men gathered from various quarters. The London man eyed them all keenly. They looked their part, of rural labourers--there was nothing in clothing or manner to betray the city crook. Rogue Rackstraw had picked his confederates well.

"These are all?" asked Mr. Troope.

"Excepting one man, Peters, now absent in Wayland," answered the miller. "At least, I think he has not yet returned. Where is Peters, Johnson?"

"I think he's not come in with the oats yet, sir."

"No doubt he will be here before you have finished, sir," the miller said courteously.

"I trust so," said Mr. Troope.

It was Smiley Joe who was absent, and he was in as safe a quarter as the prisoners themselves.

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"Remain here, my men!" said Mr. Troope. "At the present moment there is no charge against you. But you will kindly keep together in the yard. Three of your men will watch them, Mr. Skeat."

"Oh, certainly!" said Mr. Skeat, a little gruffly. "I am quite at your orders, Mr. Troope."

"Thank you," said the detective, unmoved. "Mr. Brown, perhaps you will have the kindness to show me over the mill?"

"I am quite at your service, sir."

The miller led the way, accompanied by Mr. Troope, and Inspector Skeat and two constables followed. Three remained to guard the group of the miller's men.

The search began.

The mill was searched first, and Mr. Troope did his work thoroughly. It was unlikely that a hidden mouse in the old windmill would have escaped his penetrating eye. The house followed, and every room was scanned, even cupboards being opened and peered into. The manner of the miller was politely patient. His look implied that he was aware that the whole proceeding was absurd, but that he was prepared to spend his time in assisting to do what they regarded as their duty.

Two hours passed in the search, and then the searchers gathered in the little parlour. There was a slightly ironical expression on Mr. Brown's face now, and Inspector Skeat even exchanged a wink with him, in secret derision of the gentleman from Scotland Yard. The local constables took their cue from their inspector, and looked tired and bored. Only Mr. Troope's hard-featured face was unmoved.

"I trust you are satisfied now, sir?" said the miller.

"Not quite!" said Inspector Troope, in his almost expressionless voice. "I understand that the mill is built near some old disused quarries."

"I believe there are old quarries at a quarter-mile distance."

"Not nearer?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"There is no means of communication between the mill and the quarries?"

"Only by walking across the moor."

"Really, Mr. Troope—" murmured Inspector Skeat.

"I believe I am conducting this search, Mr. Skeat," remarked the man from the C.I.D. "We will now examine the sheds."

"Oh, very good, sir—very good!" said Mr. Skeat.

The search-party left the house. There was a range of sheds at the back of the mill-house, with a stable and cart-house. Mr. Troope made a cursory examination.

"These sheds are fairly old," he remarked.

"They have been repaired a little," said the miller.

"With the new timber you purchased at Mason's yard in Wayland?"

"Exactly."

"Perhaps my eye is inexperienced in such matters," remarked Mr. Troope. "But I do not quite see where that quantity of timber has been used." He paused suddenly, and then spoke to the constables. "Get this straw removed."

Rogue Rackstraw needed all his nerve, as the detective gave that order. The two constables, exchanging a resigned sort of look, took a pitchfork and stable broom, and began to shift a heap of straw from a corner of a large shed. Inspector Skeat grunted aloud, hardly caring to conceal his contempt of the whole tiresome proceedings. The miller stood quite still. The straw was thick and plentiful, but it was shifted at last. Mr. Troope bent and examined the thick plank floor of the shed where the straw had lain. Rogue Rackstraw watched him, a mechanical smile upon his lips, but his breath coming hard.

"No sign of a trapdoor there," said the detective, looking up at last.

"You were looking for a trapdoor?" exclaimed Mr. Skeat.

"Why not?"

"There is solid earth under this shed, I suppose?"

"Perhaps!" said the detective.

He moved to the wall and examined the joint of the floor planks. Then he glanced at the miller. That gentleman was backing unostentatiously towards the open doorway of the shed.

"Do not go away, Mr. Brown," said the detective urbanely. "I have not finished with you yet, sir. Will you give me a hand to lift this bench to the wall?"

The detective indicated a long wooden bench. Rogue Rackstraw drew a quick breath. If the detective wanted to stand on the bench to examine the wall higher up, the rogue had nothing to fear. His ebbing confidence returned.

"Certainly," he said, with a smile.

He bent and laid hold of the bench. Mr. Troope did the same, and appeared to stumble, and fell forward towards the miller. He caught hold of that gentleman as if to steady himself. Before the miller knew what was happening, his wrists were grasped, and there was a sudden metallic click. Rogue Rackstraw, with a fearful oath, staggered back, the handcuffs on his wrists.

"What—" gasped Mr. Skeat.

The detective straightened up with a smile.

"We will not trouble about the bench now," he said coolly.

"A little trick, Mr. Brown—safer so, for your own sake and mine."

Rogue Rackstraw made a herculean effort to calm himself.

"What does this outrage mean?" he panted. "How dare you! Stand back!" He broke off with a yell.

But Mr. Troope did not stand back. He plucked at the white whiskers of the handcuffed rascal, and they came off in his grasp. Another movement of his hand, and the white hat flew off, and the white hair with it. The constables gasped. Inspector Skeat's jaw fell. The miller of the moor had vanished, and in his place stood a dark, crop-haired, clean-shaven man of thirty, with a thin-lipped, cruel mouth. And a surprised exclamation came from Mr. Troope himself.

"Rogue Rackstraw!"

"A thousand curses!" hissed the exposed rascal. He wrenched madly at the handcuffs on his wrists.

"A clever game, Rackstraw!" said the detective. "I never recognised you—never suspected that it was you! If I had not discovered your hidden trapdoor here, I might have departed as wise as I came. But I was looking for a trapdoor after what your latest prisoner declared."

"But there's no trapdoor!" gasped Inspector Skeat, who was fairly spluttering with astonishment at the sudden denouncement.

"Not an ordinary trapdoor," said Mr. Troope tranquilly.

"A section of the floor moves, which answers the same purpose. My good Rackstraw, you may as well explain how the trap opens."

A curse was the only answer.

"Doubtless one of your men will be more obliging," said Mr. Troope. "Mr. Skeat, kindly keep that man in safe charge while I deal with the rest."

Rogue Rackstraw gave a sudden, piercing yell.

"Scatter, boys! The game's up! They've got me—scatter!"

There was instant commotion there following the rogue's warning yell. The five members of the gang broke and scattered—but three of them were promptly collared by their guards and handcuffed. Two leaped away for freedom, and escaped to the moor—only to be run down and captured by the ring of mounted constables, who acted immediately at the sight of the rogues in flight. The whole gang were soon secured in the mill-house with their leader—and then Dusty, doubtless in the hope of making matters easier for himself, accompanied the detective to the shed, and revealed the hidden fastening of the trap. A section of the floor rose bodily, as a hidden spring was pressed, revealing below a dark opening with a flight of steps. From below came a startled voice.

"Guv'nor! That you?"

"The game's up, Joe!" said Dusty. "Better give yourself up quietly! They've got the chief and all the gang."

And Smiley Joe, after he had digested that startling information, sullenly came out and surrendered. And then Detective-Inspector Troope, turning on the light of an electric torch, descended the stairs into the gloomy depths, followed by Mr. Skeat—the latter still in a state of great astonishment, and gasping like a fish out of water. Flights of wooden steps led downwards, apparently into the heart of the earth—but they ended at last in a passage, and the passage led into a wide, open excavation, undoubtedly a section of the ancient quarries. There was no gleam of daylight—it was an underground working of the quarry that ran so near to the old mill, and at the farther end of the working all way was stopped by a piled mass of chalk and stones and earth—some collapse that had taken place in old days. There was a draught of air in the old quarry, showing that all openings were not stopped—but no daylight penetrated.

Mr. Skeat blinked to and fro, amazed. The Scotland Yard man noted his surroundings with keen and quiet interest. He could guess that the kidnappers, in excavating a secret hiding-place for their destined prisoners, had struck by chance upon that ancient section of the quarry workings, and turned it to their purpose. Against the rugged wall of chalk, five small match-board huts had been roughly erected—unpainted, nailed with huge nails—roughly made, but strong enough. They were the prisons of the kidnapped juniors—secure enough, and preventing them from seeking to dig a way out of the quarry—and from learning that it was a quarry in which they were confined. From each of the huts, through slits in the rough wood, came a glimmer of light.

Mr. Troope looked at the Wayland inspector with a quiet smile.

"I think we have found what we were looking for!" he remarked. "This success will redound very much to your credit, Mr. Skeat, I think." And the Wayland inspector was comforted.

(Continued on page 18.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 747.

Keep your eyes open for our grand new serial starting next week.



Our Magnificent Story of Daring and Adventure.

Hector Gordon Takes Charge.

DONALD GORDON and his brother Val, together with Tommy Binks and Septimus Todd, left St. Christopher's School on an expedition to the Solomon Islands to join Hector Gordon, an uncle of the two brothers, who is on a big plantation there.

Captain Targe, captain of the Wittywake, and a scoundrel at heart, heard of the party's quest. He planned to abandon the boat, and leave the party to their fate—this, in order that he might carry out his plans and more easily overthrow the wealthy plantation owner and obtain hold of his land. His dastardly scheme proved futile, however, Taga, the black cabin-boy, warning the party and assisting them in making their escape. They were about to leave in one of the ship's small boats, when Anna, anxious to get away from the harsh treatment of her father, joined them.

Not long after they started on their perilous sea journey a severe storm arose, and the party got washed up on the Island of Pleasure.

They prepared their new home, living on the products the island offered. Shortly afterwards the happy party were startled by the reappearance of the Wittywake out at sea. Don kept watch, and, to his surprise, saw Targe, together with Ralph, land, carrying with them a metal box, which they deposited in the bed of a pool, to be guarded by a slimy, tentacled monster of the deep. Don wisely decided to keep the grim secret to himself.

It was some time afterwards, when the party were returning from a picnic, that a severe storm broke over the island. The chums were only just able to escape from their hut, which, with the combined forces of wind and waves, was brought crashing to the ground. The party underwent a terrible time that night, the angry waves carrying them hither and thither in their fury.

The storm subsided with the break of dawn, and of the separated party, Don, Anna, and Taga were reunited, but of the others there was no sign. Taga and Anna, tired after their night of terror, fell asleep, but the ever-watchful Don kept on the alert.

Meanwhile, of the others, what had happened? Tommy had luckily managed to get a footing on the roof of the hut, which, having fallen in, had acted as a raft. He found Val struggling with Scat, and the two had dragged the exhausted tutor on to the crazy raft. Washed on the sands, the three chums fell into a deep slumber. Val dreams of his old enemies, and, waking up suddenly, is horrified to find himself looking into the very faces of the men who had haunted his dreams—Captain Targe and Ralph Siddeley.

The chums are made prisoners, and taken on board the Wittywake. Targe, having to make a special journey to the island, leaves his prisoners in charge of a trusty lieutenant, and, with Ralph, puts off in a small boat to be rowed to the beach. Val makes a daring escape from the schooner, and follows the two rascals.

They had not gone far, however, when Val saw Targe turn suddenly upon Ralph, shaking his fist in his face.

Guessing the two rascals were quarrelling, Val kept a close watch on the moving figures. A few steps farther, and they reached the ravine. Suddenly, to Val's horror, Ralph picks up a huge stone, which he casts, with unerring aim, full into the back of the leader, sending him reeling over the edge of the cliff into the black depths below.

Val tries to render assistance to the dying captain, but his efforts prove futile. In Targe's last words, Val hears the secret of the pool, and how Ralph, through his treacherous action, can only meet death.

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Val then leaves the dying man behind, and continues his way in search of the missing chums. He eventually meets them, and tells of the terrible scene he has witnessed, taking care not to let Anna hear him. The party rush to the pool, but only arrive in time to see Targe's treacherous companion take a header into it.

The prisoners on the Wittywake, meanwhile, overcome their guard, and, in endeavouring to find a hiding-place, come across a number of dynamite cases. Mr. Gordon makes full use of the find. He threatens to blow up the natives, who, terror-stricken, flee overboard. They return, however, but only with Hector Gordon as their master. Launching a longboat, the plantation owner sets the natives to work, and the Wittywake is towed through the reef, Gordon's move being to baffle the two rascals who had made him prisoner.

They are within sight of the cliff which had been the site of the chums' camp, when Tommy recognises two figures on the shore.

"It's Don—Don and Val!" he cries. With a rush he was across the deck, and leapt into the rigging, then, waving one arm, he sent a shout echoing and re-echoing across the bay.

"Don, ahoy! Val, ahoy! Here we are again!"

Mr. Gordon gave an order, and a couple of native sailors came running forward, and their sail was lowered and the anchor dropped.

Then, leaving the native whom he could trust behind in charge, Hector Gordon and Scat and Tommy climbed into the longboat and rowed ashore.

Don and his brother waded out to meet them, checking the boat before it ran aground.

"We must get across to the reef at once," Don said, as he leapt into the longboat. "Ralph is over there, and he has walked into a trap. Quick—although I am afraid it is too late now."

The longboat was swung round and headed across for the coral reef.

"So you are Don, are you?" Mr. Gordon said, eyeing the broad-shouldered, handsome youngster with a quiet, approving nod. "I have heard a great deal about you, young

man, and I am thinking that I have got every reason to be proud of my nephews."

The longboat ran on to the reef within a yard or so of where the catamaran had landed, then Don, who was the first to leap on to the reef, was followed by Val and Scat, with Mr. Gordon and Tommy bringing up the rear.

"Be careful, old chap," Don said, turning to his brother. "Don't forget what it is you're carrying. You had better let me go ahead."

He sprinted off, leaping from point to point on the coral growth, and in a few minutes had put some thirty or forty yards between himself and his companions.

Tommy, with Mr. Gordon, panting along behind, picked out Don as he appeared for a moment on a slight ledge.

He watched the athletic figure leap across a gap and go on at a breakneck speed.

"Dunno what's making him barge off like that," Tommy panted. "Why the deuce can't he—can't he wait for us?"

The reef broadened out in front of Don at last, and he jumped down on the shallow basin and darted towards the edge of the pool.

He was some five or six yards away from it when there came a splashing and beating of water, then a thin, frightened cry went up, a cry which was choked almost as soon as it was uttered.

"What's that—what's that?" Scat gasped, as he came alongside of Val.

They had reached the ledge beyond the levelled space, and Val steadied Scat.

"Look—look, old chap," he said, "at the pool!"

From their elevated position they were able to see the surface of the little pool, and, as Val spoke, there came out of the pool a long, black tentacle, which waved to and fro for a moment, then sank again.

Another and yet another tentacle arose, then, in the midst of the mass of black, rubber-like arms was revealed a head and shoulders.

"Good heavens!" Scat said, drawing a horrified breath through his set teeth, "it's Ralph!"

He shrank away, covering his eyes for a moment, and when he looked again the surface of the pool was clear, and Don's figure, standing on the edge of it, was beckoning to him.

"Quick, Val, quick," the leader's voice called.

A scrambling rush saw Val and Scat over the ledge, and they ran across the reef towards the pool, forgetting for a moment the sharp edges which were lacerating their feet.

"It's all up with him," Don said. "That brute has got him. By Jove, see, it knows we are here!"

He pointed down into the crystal-like pool, and Val's horrified eyes saw the body of the great squid.

It was moving across the coral bottom, a mass of waving tentacles, and Val saw the limp, lifeless body of its victim huddled up in the coils.

From the squat shape a dense, black cloud was emerging and even as he looked, the black mass spread, tingling the clear water and drawing a curtain over the scene below.

"They always do that when they are attacked," Scat breathed. "I am afraid we can do nothing, old chap. That fellow has gone to his doom."

Val had dropped on his knees by the edge of the pool, and he was searching in the folds of his ragged shirt now.

Don saw him produce the long dynamite cylinder with the flexible wire.

"You are right, Scat," Don said, in a grim voice. "We can't save Ralph, but we can kill that awful brute which has got him."

He reached for the cylinder, taking it out of Val's shaking fingers, then, leaning out

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over the edge of the pool, the leader began to lower it into the water, paying out the flexible wire, until at last he felt the cylinder land on the coral bottom of the pool.

"Where's the dry battery—quick!"

Val handed him the square box, and, after seeing that the connections were correctly attached, Don turned to his companions.

"Better get back now," he said. "I don't know how powerful the explosion may be. Don't take any chances—get away."

He reached out with his hand and pushed Val aside.

Val and Scat dropped back three or four paces.

A shout from behind made them turn their heads; Tommy and Mr. Gordon were just in the act of lowering themselves over the edge.

Val made a warning gesture towards them. "Keep back!" he called. "Keep back!"

"Keep back, be hanged!" cried Tommy excitedly. "What do you think we've been hurrying after you for? What's on, anyhow? I want to—"

Tommy's indignant statement was never completed.

Don, with a steady hand, turned the little switch on the dry battery, connecting the terminals.

There was a dull, booming roar, and up from the pool a solid wall of black-tinged water leapt, to spray out over the group of youngsters, while the shock of the explosion seemed to make the surface of the reef tremble.

Tommy, who had been running forward, found himself thrown on his hands and knees,

the water made the tentacles sway and lift, so that Tommy, peering at it for a moment, turned to Val again.

"I don't believe the brute is dead," he said. "Wait a minute, and I'll make sure."

He turned, and, after searching along the levelled ground, detached a huge block of coral, and, staggering with it to the edge of the pool, he cast it down on the black shape below.

There was no movement from the huddled mass, and Don nodded across to his uncle.

"There's something down there, uncle," he said. "I think it belongs to you. Look, just on that ledge where the black gap shows in the wall of the pool. It was out of there that the octopus came, and I think it must be a hollow, probably its lair."

Hector Gordon peered down in the direction named, then he turned to his nephew.

"It's the iron box which Targe stole," he said. "How on earth did it come to be there?"

"Targe put it there," Don returned. "I saw him do so the first time he came to the island. I never told you fellows before because I didn't think it was worth while, but I always knew he would come back. That's why I kept guard at night-time for so long."

Val had been searching the pool steadily, and he looked across at his brother now.

"I can't see any sign of Ralph," he whispered. "What's happened to him?"

The water of the pool was quite clear, and there was a long moment's silence, while the eyes of the group searched the rocky hollow.

"No, he's not there!"

shoulder, and in another moment the leader of the castaways, gasping for breath, was drawn on to the coral platform.

"What is it, Don? What is the matter, old chap?"

Don's face was very white and drawn, then he drew a deep breath and arose to his feet. "I got the box all right," he said, "but I—I saw Ralph. He was in there, wedged in that brute's lair."

A shudder ran through him, and he turned away.

"Come on," he said. "I—I have had enough of this place; let's get away as soon as we can."

The Wittywake, lying over to the gentle urge of a soft so-westerly breeze, was slipping through the blue seas into the dusk.

The creak of block and tackle, and the voice of Mr. Gordon, were the only sounds which broke the silence.

The native crew, hard at work making everything ship-shape, were moving at a brisk pace to the command of their new skipper.

It had taken Mr. Gordon two days to collect the remainder of the crew from the island, and they had been glad enough to take service under him.

Leaning over the taffrail, Anna and Scat and Don were staring back at the island.

They could see the line of foam which marked the guardian reef and the stretch of white sand which ran up to the jungle, a broad patch of white below the dark green of the trees.

To the right arose the scarred cliff, and



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while the water from the pool cascaded down on him for a moment.

Gasping for breath, the stout youngster managed to drag himself to his feet, dashing the water from his eyes.

"What the deuce are you fellows up to?" he broke out, staggering forward. "Have you all gone mad, or— Gracious, what's that?"

He had reached the edge of the pool and was standing close beside Scat.

He gripped the lean figure of the tutor and stared open-mouthed at the round hollow in front of him.

The water of the pool was still agitated from the explosion, but now there came up on to the surface a hideous, squat shape, and with it there arose a tangle of broken tentacles, to beat madly on the surface.

Two awful eyes, round and terrible, appeared in the midst of the mass, and the great octopus, lashing the water in its death throes, threw itself from side to side until the surface of the pool boiled.

It was a scene which none of the witnesses were ever likely to forget. It seemed to them that an age had passed before the last tremendous quiver ran through the long, limp tentacles, and the great squid, rolling itself up into a round ball, sagged down through the water to the bottom.

"What a terrible brute," Mr. Gordon said. "I don't think I ever saw one that size before."

The hollow was still streaked with bluey-black fluid, but it was clearing rapidly, and they waited until all traces of the inky stuff had vanished.

They saw the black mass of the squid lying on the coral bottom, and the movement of

Don took a pace forward, poising himself on the edge of the same ledge from whence Ralph had made his death dive.

"I am going down for it, uncle," the young leader called. "I don't think there is any danger. The guardian of the pool is dead!"

"Wait—wait, you don't know. There might be another."

Don's supple shape was swaying over the pool. With his hands locked over his head, he went down in a beautiful dive, straight through the clear, crystal-like water.

They saw his figure slip down, and narrow as he went deeper and deeper, then the outstretched hands closed on the box, and they saw the swimmer lift the heavy object.

To reach the box, Don had to dive almost in front of the black gap, out of which the giant squid had emerged.

The white figure swung round, and, with the box clasped in his arms, Don came surfaceward, breaking water within a few yards from where his uncle and the others were watching.

Scat fell flat on his stomach, and, reaching out a long arm, slipped it under Don's

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beyond it, black and forbidding, were the lava slopes.

"Are you glad to leave it, Anna?" Don asked.

The girl turned her head.

"I—I don't know," she confessed. "I am not quite sure. They were very happy days we spent there together, and, perhaps, we may one day regret that we ever left it."

Her smooth brows drew together.

"Of course, it is different for you," she went on. "You have friends to go to, but there's no one in the world who I know."

"Nonsense!" Scat broke out, with a mild look of reproach. "Why, we are all your friends, Anna. Surely you understand that?"

He held out his hand, and Anna placed her brown, slender fingers in his.

"Yet, when you think it was my father who did all these unkind things to you," she said, "it wouldn't be surprising if you—you hated me!"

Her eyes travelled to Don.

"You were not able to find him?" she went on. "He must be dead, of course, but it seems strange that you weren't able to trace him or Ralph."

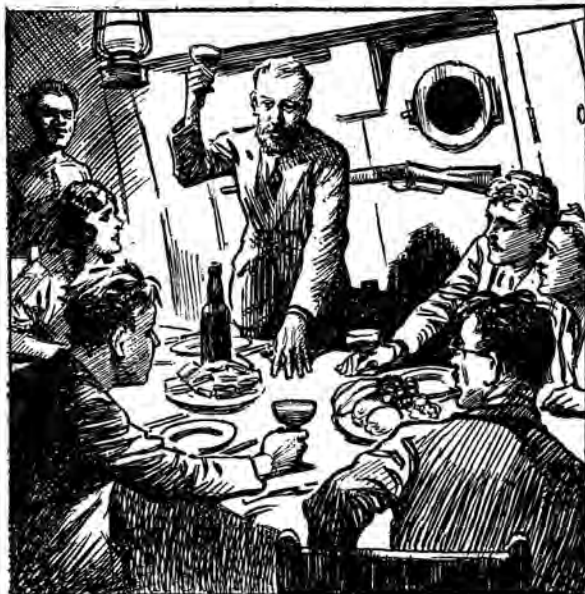
Behind her back Scat and Don had exchanged looks.

They had all agreed together that Anna should never know the truth about the terrible and which had overtaken her father.

That lonely crevasse, away in the rough slopes of the hill, would hold its secret for ever, and it would only have meant mental torture to the girl had she been told the truth.

So far as Captain Targe and Ralph were concerned their real fate was to remain a

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When the glasses were filled with the light red wine Mr. Gordon raised his and spoke. "This is just a little toast," he said. "Good luck to all of us, and kindly memories for The Island of Pleasure."

secret, locked away in the hearts of the youngsters and Mr. Gordon.

Taga, the only individual who had seen Ralph, could be relied upon to keep silent, and the story they had told was that Ralph and Targe had disappeared in the heart of the island and could not be found.

The days which they had spent in exploring the island for the remnants of the crew had been accepted by Anna as being their efforts to discover Targe and his companion. So to

you, so come along at once!"

They followed the plantation owner aft, and when Don entered his cabin he found Val waiting with a broad grin on his face.

Laid out on the berth were Don's clothes, the clothes which he had left behind on that fateful evening when he and his chums had slipped away from the Wittywake.

"Taga found them all," Val declared, "stowed away in Targe's private locker. By Jove, it feels good to get into a clean

the girl, the island, dropping away now until it merged at last into the skyline astern, would always remain as a place of mystery.

It was better she should regard it thus, than that the real truth should be revealed to her.

As the dusk began to deepen, Mr. Gordon came stumping along the deck to halt in the stern.

He nodded to Anna in his kindly way.

"I am only taking charge of the Wittywake until we get back to my place," he said, "for, of course you are the real skipper and owner now, Captain Anna, and she belongs to you. Dinner is ready, and I think we had better go along and have our first meal on board. It is rather a special occasion, and we must mark it in a special way. Taga has been at work in the cabins, and I think he's got a surprise for most of

shirt again and put on a collar, but I—I'm hanged if I can find one of my collars to fit me. Look at me! I seem to have grown out of everything!"

There was a good half-inch of solid brown throat that could not be spanned by Val's collar, and Don found a similar handicap when the time came for him to slip into his clothes.

Half an hour later, when the party gathered in the saloon, the only one of the youngsters who had cause to congratulate himself was Tommy, for the hard life on the island had removed some of the superfluous fat from that stout individual, and his clothes were, if anything, too easy in their fit.

Anna was the last to appear, smiling faintly as she came into the saloon in her simple white frock.

Hector Gordon took her by the hand and led her to the seat at the head of the table, making her sit there.

"You are skipper, Captain Anna," he said, "and this is your place."

There were glasses on the table, and, with much solemnity, Mr. Gordon produced a bottle of light, red wine, which he passed round for the youngsters.

When the glasses were filled he raised his and spoke.

"This is just a little toast," he said. "Good luck to all of us, wherever we may go, and kindly memories for the Island of Pleasure."

The toast was drunk in silence. Looking round the young faces along the table, Hector Gordon could not quite be sure whether the toast was drunk regretfully or otherwise.

"I wonder if we'll ever go back there?" Seat whispered to Tommy as they sat together at the table.

"I wonder," Tommy returned.

THE END.

(Be sure you read "ALL ON HIS OWN!" By Duncan Storm. Our splendid new serial, the opening chapters of which will appear in next week's GEM.)

Out of the Depths.

(Continued from page 15.)

CHAPTER 9.

At Last.

"I GUESS somebody's coming."

Kit Wildrake made that remark.

Tom Merry and Manners and Talbot listened eagerly. There was a murmur of voices outside the hut. The juniors hardly dared to hope.

"It's those rotters coming back to see if we're safe," said Manners dejectedly.

The bolts of the hut were withdrawn; the door was thrown open, and an electric torch flashed in. Mr. Troope glanced in, with the Wayland inspector looking over his shoulder. Tom Merry gave a shout.

"Hurrah!"

"So you are here," said Mr. Troope, with a smile. "Is the boy Wildrake in this hut?"

"I guess I'm that very galoot, sir," said the Canadian junior.

Mr. Troope eyed him with much interest.

"Safe and sound?" he asked.

"Sure."

"It was the letter you left for your headmaster, my lad, as much as anything else, that brought us here," said Mr. Troope. "I shall be glad to have a talk with you—later. Come, my boys, you are free."

"The miller?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"In handcuffs."

"And his men?" exclaimed Manners.

"They are also secured."

"We've made a full bag of it, my lads!" said Mr. Skeat, with a genial grin. "They're in the hands of the law now—and they won't wriggle out very easily. Let's see—Master

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Merry, Manners, Talbot, Wildrake—the others must be in the other huts."

Tom Merry & Co. crowded out. The door of the next hut was unbarred and opened. A pale, worn-faced man gave the newcomers a startled look.

"Inspector Fix!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Troope!" exclaimed Mr. Fix. "What—how—It's good to see you here, old man." He shook hands warmly with the man from the C.I.D.

In the adjoining hut Mr. Railton, the St. Jim's House-master, was found. He was pale, and his head was bandaged. His face lighted up at the sight of the eager juniors.

"My boys! What—"

"Saved, sir!" shouted Tom Merry. "They've found us, sir—and they've got those rascals."

"Thank Heaven."

Meanwhile, Wildrake was dragging open the other doors. From one hut came Kildare of the Sixth—pale and worn, almost haggard—from the other, Monty Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's, and Gordon Gay, of Rylcombe Grammar School. They were white and sickly from their imprisonment, but their faces were wonderfully bright as they found themselves among their friends. Tom Merry and Manners fairly hugged Lowther. Poor Monty was quite dazed.

"Is it real, or a thumping dream?" he asked. "Blessed be I can quite believe it! I feel as if I'd been years here—where are we?"

"Goodness knows!" said Tom. "Somewhere under the mill on Wayland Moor, that's all I know."

Lowther blinked round in the light.

"Looks like a bit of one of the old quarries," he said.

"I guess it's just that!" said Wildrake. "All serene now—you'll see St. Jim's again in an hour, old pippin."

Lowther almost choked.

"I'd given up hope!" he said.

"Poor old chap," Manners pressed his arm. "Let's get out to the daylight. Mr. Troope—"

"This way!" said the C.I.D. man tranquilly. "Are we all here? Then follow me."

A glimpse of Monty Lowther's old humorous spirit returned, as he climbed the long stairs with his chums.

"Like going up the giddy monument," he remarked. "But there's no charge, I suppose."

"There's a view at the top," grinned Wildrake. "A view of the merry old miller with the handcuffs on."

And that pleasant view the kidnapped juniors obtained, before they piled into Mr. Troope's car to be taken to St. Jim's.

Dr. Holmes was waiting anxiously, looking from his study window. No word had come from the detective, so far; and the Head was growing very anxious. That afternoon Monty Lowther's ransom was to be paid to the kidnapper—unless the hand of justice intervened. Classes were over at St. Jim's, and the quadrangle swarmed with fellows. And when Taggles opened the gates to admit a large car, there was a yell in the old quad that rang into the Head's study—and rang pleasantly in the ears of the anxious old gentleman waiting there.

"They've come back!"

"Hurrah!"

The old school rang with that joyous shout.

"Here's Kildare—good old Kildare—"

"Bravo!"

"Tom Metry! Tom Metry!"

Dr. Holmes bowed his head in thankfulness. From the car the rescued St. Jim's fellows swarmed, to be surrounded by an eager, roaring crowd. Dr. Holmes turned away from the window, his heart too full for words.

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Troope entered, hard-featured and emotionless as ever.

"You have succeeded?" gasped the Head.

"Quite so. All the boys have been found—"

"Thank Heaven."

"The police are now in possession of the mill—"

"Then Wildrake—"

"Was right, all along the line," said Mr. Troope. "A remarkable lad—a very remarkable lad. Every member of the gang is a prisoner, and now in the cells at Wayland—two of them have already been identified as well-known criminals. I may add that a considerable sum of money has been found in the mill-house, and probably you will recover the sum that was extorted from you for Merry's ransom. The affair has ended very fortunately, Dr. Holmes."

"Thank Heaven!" repeated the Head fervently.

There was something like a "jamboree" at St. Jim's that evening.

Mr. Railton dined with the Head in state—and Kildare was made much of by the Sixth. In the Lower School, the rejoicings were great and exuberant. The Terrible Three, were home again—Talbot of the Shell was with his friends once more—but it was Kit Wildrake, of the Boot Leg Ranch, B.C., who was the hero of the hour. Wildrake's desperate venture was common knowledge now—and the rescued juniors and their friends could not make enough of the cool, iron-nerved Canadian. Nobody gave a thought to prep. that evening—there was a terrific celebration, at which Wildrake was the guest of honour. Once more the chums of St. Jim's were reunited, and in the old school all was merry and bright, while in the cells at Wayland, Rogue Rackstraw and his gang had ample time to meditate upon their rascality, and what it had led to. But no thought was wasted on the rascals by the happy juniors whom Wildrake's courage and devotion had brought out of the depths.

THE END.

(There will be another grand, long story of the chums of St. Jim's next week, entitled "Trimble's Treasure," by Martin Clifford. Make sure of reading this splendid story by ordering your GEM early.)

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