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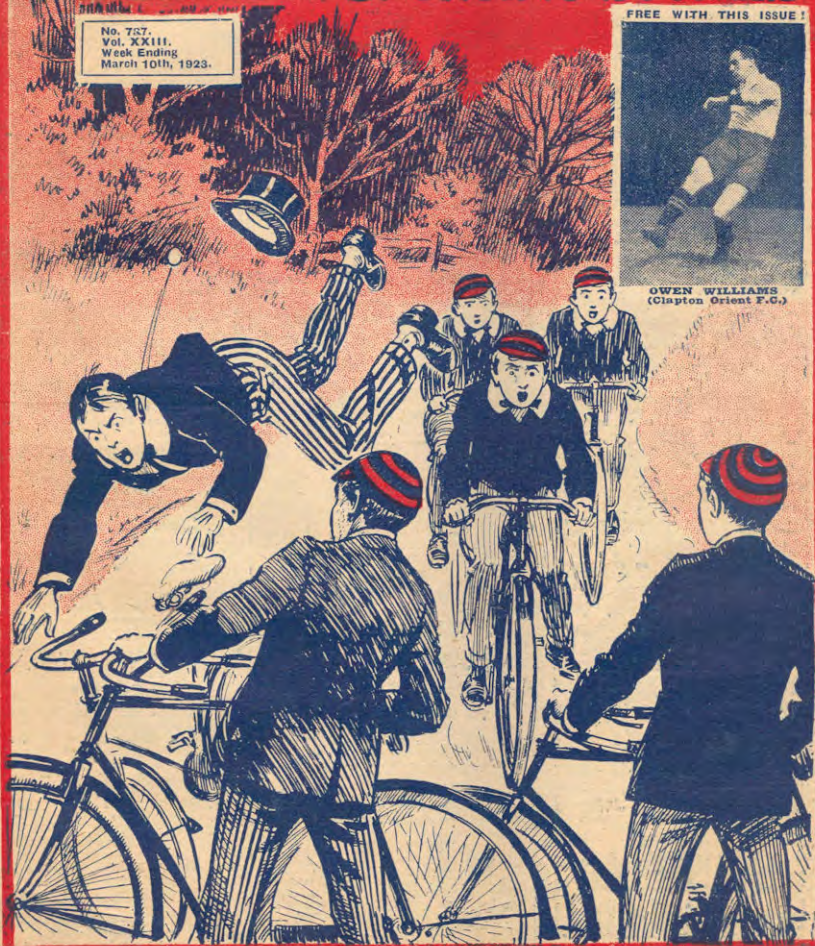
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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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Week Ending
March 10th, 1923.

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OWEN WILLIAMS
(Clapton Orient F.C.)



HELD UP ON THE OPEN ROAD !

(The juniors find their way barred by Cutts & Co. An incident from the Grand, Long Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's in this issue.)



Address all letters: The Editor, "The Gem Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

My Dear Chums: A record opportunity is a thing which is well worth talking about. There is a chance of this kind provided in next week's issue of the GEM. Look out for Wednesday! You will be satisfied, I am dead sure, for the new portrait to add to your splendid gallery of famous footballers shows a man who has done simply wonders.

W. H. Walker.

It is in my mind to say a good bit concerning the magnificently produced, glossy, real action photo of the celebrated player for Aston Villa. You will fairly jump at it. Each week, thanks to the thoroughgoing enterprise of the GEM, your collection of portraits gets more valuable. We shall carry on with a vengeance until the gallery is the most representative in the world. I might add that there is such a rush for the photographs these days that it is sheer wisdom to order your copies far in advance. Nobody wants to get left in the lurch.

"The Schoolboy Pug!"

For baffling ingenuity Clifford me to this fine story, Mr. Martin Clifford's latest and grandest, a yarn with a rare appeal, and a sparkling atmosphere which lends it extra attractiveness. Sport—good sport—is in our blood, and a jolly good thing it is so, for the true sportsman is able, thanks to the support he gets from this admirable interest, to face the real mill of life, and win through, be the odds terrific. As you know, I am short for space, but I will say this for next week's inspiring story of St. Jim's—it is a real gem, and it contains a brilliant bit of a mystery to boot. It all hangs round the unknown protégé of Colonel St. Leger, and this new fellow, who "dips" in Study No. 6, has been responsible for more curiosity—and not mere idle curiosity, either—also tantalising speculation, than has been the case with any other who took it upon himself to blow into the old school. We have been fairly wallowing in sensations at St. Jim's of late, but Mr. Martin Clifford always manages to go one better, and he supplies the excitement in generous measure this time. Blake & Co. are the old, recognised inhabitants of the Sixth Study and the long-established tenants of the cosy rendezvous do not look on the newcomer

with any too favourable eyes. Come to think of it, this sort of thing is happening under our very noses every day of the week. I hope you will let me know what you think of next Wednesday's yarn. I shall be much surprised if "The Schoolboy Pug!" does not top the list for commendation.

A New House Number!

The "St. Jim's News" will be found radiant next week, not with poetry, nor any of those special spring novelties, appreciated by some people at this season of the year, but with something so infinitely superior that all other things seem trivial. You see it's this way. The doughty Figgins, supported by a brilliant contingent of New House fellows, each one a shining genius, has taken a hand. To Figgins the New House is well, just the New House, in fact, something so superlatively grand that all other Houses sink into insignificance. And Figgins thought it was time something was done to emphasise the lustre and the glory of the New House in relation to the genial little Supplement, which is an ornament to the GEM. Result, next week's issue, which scintillates with wit and humour, and also makes a dash into drama and subjects of much general interest.

"The Trotter and the Trickster!"

This is another thrilling adventure of the Sportsmen of Thunder Creek. Gordon Wallace has hit not merely one nail on the head, but a whole horseshoe company of them in this new romance of the Western Wild. There is a come-uppance, never-say-die element about the adventures narrated of the Six Stalwart Chums away there in the back of beyond, where civilisation never had much say. But a handful of the fellows, well mounted, able to shoot, and who understand what playing the game means, carry all that is worth a bean of the real civilisation wherever they go. They are the moving citadel of progress, and it is mere justice to admit that Gordon Wallace proves the truth of this idea up to the hilt. You will be carried away as you read of what they do, of the difficulties they ride over, figuratively and literally, and you get a glimpse of the magnificent country in which the action passes. And then you have the Kid—the youngster who, so luckily for him, is found by the Six Chums. You will see, as you follow the thrilling pages of this entrancing narrative, the underlying reason for a series of positively stupendous happenings.

But there never was any doubt as to the mental make-up of Gordon Wallace's game little band of heroes. They are heroes! Look out for them next Wednesday, and say I am right.

"The Wolves of St. Beowulf's."

Wobley & Co. are going strong. Duncan Storm raced away with the seal from the very start, and plunged into popularity. It is good stuff, high-spirited, with plenty to show that the author has kept his eyes wide open during his many pilgrimages up and down the globe. For Duncan Storm, of Bombay Castle fame, has roved the world for years, and taken notes of what was happening wherever he chanced to find himself.

The Tuck Hammer.

As soon as may be the results of the Big Boom Offer of Tuck-hammers will be announced. The judges are hard at work, sitting up all night to deal with the entries. Mentioning this capital feature of the issue, its triumphant way, and, if possible, the tuck-hammer gets better liked than ever. I realise this is making an enormous claim, but it is justified!

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

A Splendid Tuck Hammer 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.

FISHY!

The newly-wed husband walked home one evening with a parcel in his hand and the light of rebellion in his eyes. "Look here, Lizzie," he cried, "I'm about fed up with fish every day. We have fish for breakfast, fish for tea, and fish for supper." "Well, I told you I couldn't cook anything else when we were married," sobbed the bride. "I've brought a pound of sausages," continued the hubby. "Now, you cook them the same as you cook the fish. Just see to them while I go up and get a shave." Half an hour later, the voice of Lizzie was heard calling up the stairs, "Joe, I don't think there'll be enough sausage out of this pound for you and me." "How's that?" asked Joe. "Well, now I've taken the roe out, there's none left!" answered the wife.—A Tuck Hammer filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Mr. L. H. Hays, 10, Harrington Road, Lezels, Birmingham.

IF—

The crowd was struggling and fighting to leave the hall after the political meeting, when a dear old lady who was sitting calmly in a seat in the corner turned to the attendant. "Faith," she said, "if everybody would do as I do and stay quietly in their seats until everyone had gone out, there wouldn't be any crush at the door at all!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Cruise, 139, Verney Road, South Bermondsey, S.E. 16.

NATURALLY!

Some boys thought it would be great sport if they could take a famous naturalist. They killed a centipede, and then glued on to it a beetle's head, the wings of a butterfly, and the legs of a grasshopper. They packed it in a box and took it to the great man. "We found it in the fields," the leader of the group explained. "Can you tell us what it is?" "Ah!" exclaimed the naturalist. "Did it hum when you caught it?" "Oh, yes," came the answer. "It hummed like anything!" "Then," said the naturalist, "it is undoubtedly a humbug!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Thomas A. Nelson, 48, Derry Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire.

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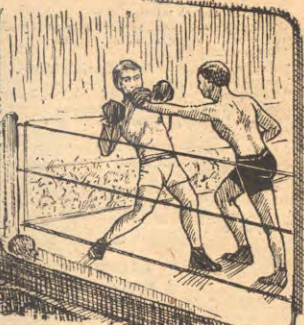
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Your Editor.

The Fifth Former's Secret!



A Ripping, New, Extra-Long Complete School Story Introducing a Quaint New Boy—One of the Fighting Fraternity.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

(Author of the Grand Stories Now Appearing in the "POPULAR.")

CHAPTER 1. Caught!

"TOMMY!"

D'Arcy minor of the Third addressed the captain of the Shell in that familiar and disrespectful manner, as he put his cheeky face into Study No. 10.

Tom Merry frowned, and Manners and Lowther grinned.

"Tommy, old chum—"

Tom Merry picked up a cushion.

"Where will you have it?" he inquired.

"Don't play the goat, old man," said Wally of the Third cheerfully. "I've a message for you. You're wanted."

"Head?" asked Tom.

"Not so bad as that. St. Leger of the Fifth."

"St. Leger of the Fifth?" repeated Tom Merry. "If St. Leger of the Fifth wants me St. Leger of the Fifth can come along to this study, I suppose? They haven't made St. Leger of the Fifth a prefect by any chance?"

"Cheek!" said Monty Lowther.

"Neck!" agreed Manners.

"Well, that's the message," said D'Arcy minor. "I wouldn't have brought it for Cutts or Gilmore; but St. Leger asked me civilly, so I said I would. He's in his study."

"You can tell St. Leger of the Fifth that I'm in this study," said Tom Merry. "Tell him he can send for me when he's St. Leger of the Sixth and a prefect. But so long as he's St. Leger of the Fifth and a nobody, he can meander along to the Shell passage if he wants me. Catch on?"

Wally of the Third grinned.

"I don't think it's a licking," he said. "St. Leger was looking a bit worried, and Cutts wasn't there."

"Tell St. Leger—"

"My dear man, I'm not going back to the Fifth Form passage. I'm busy," said D'Arcy minor loftily. "I've wasted enough time bringing a message to a blessed fog."

And with that Wally of the Third retired—but he did not retire quite quickly enough. The cushion flew, and it bowled over D'Arcy minor, and there was a yell as he was strewn in the Shell passage.

"Well bowled!" ejaculated Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whoop!" came in a roar from D'Arcy minor.

"Next time," said Tom Merry severely, "you will remember to be respectful to your elders and betters— Oh! Ah! Ow! Yoooooo!"

Whiz!

The cushion came back into the study like a cannon-ball. It caught the captain of the Shell on the chin, and he sat down on the carpet with a thud.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally.

"Why, I—T—T!"

Tom Merry leaped to his feet, and made a dash for the door. But D'Arcy minor was sprinting down the passage at great speed, and he had vanished from sight by the time Tom Merry was through the doorway.

Tom turned back into his study, rubbing his chin.

"Cheeky young sweep!" he growled.

Manners and Lowther chuckled.

"You're not going to St. Leger's study?" asked Manners.

"No fear! It's a rag, most likely," said Tom Merry.

"We're not exactly on visiting terms with Cutts of the Fifth and his friends. We helped to bump Cutts the other day, when he had a row with Study No. 6. It's a case of the spider and the fly over again, I think; but—"

"But this study is too fly to walk into the spider's parlour!" suggested Monty Lowther, seeing an opening for a pun.

"Just so," assented Tom Merry, unfortunately not seeing the pun. "Much too fly! If the Fifth want a ragging, they can come here."

"And we'll be ready for them!" said Monty Lowther, jumping up.

Lowther placed the door ajar; and, mounting on a chair, began to arrange various articles on the top of the door.

A cushion, a basket, a pile of school books, a rather substantial Latin dictionary, were stacked with great care, balanced against the lintel, all ready to crash down on the next visitor as soon as the door was pushed open from outside.

Tom Merry and Manners grinned as they watched the activities of their chum, and handed him fresh articles for the pile.

As St. Leger's message had failed to draw Tom Merry to the Fifth Form quarters, it was very probable that the enemy would change their tactics, and visit Study No. 10 in the Shell. The Terrible Three were on the worst of terms with Cutts & Co. of the Fifth. They had little trouble with St. Leger personally; but he was a member of Cutts's set, and was Cutts's study-mate. So they quite expected a hostile visitation, and were prepared for it.

"I think that will do!" remarked Monty Lowther, stepping back from the chair and surveying his handiwork with satisfaction. "I dare say Cutts & Co. will all come together. I hope Cutts will be foremost. First man in gets the prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell waited.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and a fine spring afternoon. The Terrible Three had been discussing what was to be done with the afternoon when Wally of the Third butted in with his message. They had plenty of time on their hands, and they were ready to devote some of it to the Fifth. Indeed, a rag with the Fifth seemed quite a good and useful way of spending part of a half-holiday. The more the Fifth were ragged, the better it was for them and St. Jim's generally—in the opinion of the Shell, at least.

Lowther held up his hand.

"They're coming!" he breathed.

Footsteps sounded in the Shell passage.

They came from the direction of the stairs, and approached the door of Study No. 10.

Tom Merry & Co. waited, and listened, with grinning faces. They had not the slightest doubt that the enemy were coming. The fly having failed to walk into the spider's parlour, as it were, the spider was coming out to look for the fly! The footsteps came nearer and nearer, and stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study.

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There was a light tap on the door, and it was pushed open. The three juniors watched breathlessly. The door swung open, and the pile on top of it toppled over. Crash, crash! Bump! Thud! Whiz! "Yoooooooooooo!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "Caught! Ha, ha, ha!" "Yawwooh! Oh cumbus! It's a howwid earthquake! Oh cumbus!" yelled a familiar voice. "Gussy!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth sat in the doorway, surrounded by the varied property that had rained down upon his aristocratic head. He blinked at the Shell fellows in utter bewilderment. Tom Merry & Co. stared at him blankly. "Gussy!" gasped Tom. "Oh, you ass—" "Yawwoop!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2. A Misunderstanding!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sat and blinked at the Terrible Three, in a state of the greatest mental confusion. For a moment or two it seemed to the hapless Gussy that an earthquake had happened, and that the ruins of the School House at St. Jim's were crashing down upon his devoted head.

The Terrible Three roared. They had laid the booby-trap for the Fifth-Formers, but the unexpected capture of Arthur Augustus was not without its comic side. "Oh cumbus!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What—what—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Weally, you fellows—" Tom Merry helped the dizzy swell of St. Jim's to his feet. Arthur Augustus gasped for breath, and blinked round him. He jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, to take a further view. Then he seemed to understand. "Bai Jove! It was a booby-trap!"

"Just that!" chuckled Lowther. "You uttah asses! I wogard this as a wotten twick!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I have a gwest mind to give you fellows a feaful thrashin' all wound!"

"Mercy!" gasped Lowther. "Spare us!" pleaded Manners. "Only a mistake, Gussy," explained Tom Merry. "The booby-trap was put up for another silly ass!"

"What?" "I mean, for a silly ass," amended Tom Merry. "We were expecting a visit from the Fifth." "Expecting quite a different booby," explained Lowther. "Weally, Lowthah—"

"Just like Gussy to butt in and spoil a jape," remarked Manners.

"Bai Jove! I am vewy sowwy I butted in," said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his head. "I have wocieved a feaful shock, and it has thowwn me into quite a fluttah. I have a good mind not to take you fellows with me to Abbotsford now."

"What's on at Abbotsford?" asked Tom Merry. "Football-match?"

"No; a boxin' stunt," answered Arthur Augustus, still rubbing his noble head. "Blake and Hewieswant to go vewy much; also Dig and I have agweed to go. I thought I would ask you fellows. It's a boxin'-match of ten wounds, I think, at the Abbotsford Stadium, and Blake is vewy interested in it. He says there is a chap called the Duck—"

"The Duck?"

"Yaas; or the Chicken, or somethin'. Now I come to think of it, I think it is the Chicken. Some kind of poultry, anyhow. And this chap is boxin' in public for the last time. Blake says, and there will be a crowd to see him. I do not think vewy much of pofessional boxin'," added Arthur Augustus. "But Blake says the Duck—I mean, the Chicken—has a wonderful punch with the left, and he wants to see it. So we're goin'."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass inquiringly upon the chums of the Shell.

"If you fellows care to see the Chicken—if he is a Chicken—you can come along," he said.

"We were thinking of seeing the pictures at Wayland," remarked Monty Lowther, whose personal tastes ran in the direction of the cinema.

"I was thinking of taking out my camera," observed Manners casually.

"Oh, blow your camera, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "There's a football-match at Wayland—the Ramblers against The GEN LEAGUE.—No. 767."

the Grammar School first eleven—and as we haven't a match here to-day, we couldn't do better—"

"But the pictures—"

"My camera—"

"Look here—"

"Bai Jove! The boxin' at Abbotsford will be ovah by the time you chaps have done talkin'," said Arthur Augustus, with a grin. "We're not startin' for an hour; so if you think you'll come, come along and tell us. I must go and change my collar now. It is quite wumpled, owvin' to your silly fag twick."

And Arthur Augustus walked out of Study No. 10, leaving the chums of the Shell to settle the important question of proceedings on that fine afternoon.

"Looks as if the Fifth aren't coming, after all," remarked Manners. "Now, what about a walk across the moor, and you fellows can watch me taking some photographs—"

"Not in your lifetime!" said Monty Lowther, with emphasis. "Chap told me they've got a good picture at Wayland Picture Palace—"

"Cut it out!" urged Tom Merry. "It's bound to be a good match between the Ramblers and the Grammarians—"

"Bother the Ramblers!" said Manners.

"And blow the Grammarians!" added Lowther.

"Look here, you duffers—"

"Hallo! Look out!"

Monty Lowther jumped up and seized a cushion, as there were footsteps in the passage, and an elegant senior stepped into the doorway. It was St. Leger of the Fifth!

Whiz!

The discussion of the afternoon's proceedings ceased instantaneously at the sight of the enemy.

The cushion flew and landed on St. Leger's chest, and he staggered.

"Gad! Oh! What—" stuttered St. Leger.

"Collar him!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Down with the Fifth!"

The Terrible Three rushed to the attack. Rather to their surprise, they found that St. Leger of the Fifth was alone. There was no sign of Cutts, or Prye, or Gilmore. That made the affair quite easy to the trio. They collared St. Leger and dragged him bodily into the study. The Fifth-Former bumped on the carpet.

"Ink!" shouted Lowther.

"Here you are!"

"Hold on!" roared St. Leger. "Stoppit! Oh gad! Stoppit! What are you at! I came here to speak to Tom Merry—pax!"

Manners had passed the ink-bottle to Lowther. Monty paused just in time.

"You didn't come here for a rag?" demanded Lowther suspiciously.

"Ow! You young ruffian! No!" gasped St. Leger. "Do you think I should come into a hornet's-nest alone, you young idiot? Ow! Keep that ink away, you rascal!"

"Honest Injun?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ow! Yes."

Monty Lowther reluctantly put down the ink-bottle.

St. Leger of the Fifth was allowed to rise to his feet. It occurred to the Terrible Three that perhaps they had been a little too hasty. St. Leger frowned as he dusted his elegantly creased trousers, and put his collar and tie straight.

The Terrible Three watched him curiously and a little suspiciously. They could not guess what business St. Leger of the Fifth could possibly have with Tom Merry, if he was not on the warpath. And apparently he was not.

"Well, cough it up, old bean," said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "We're going out this afternoon, and haven't much time to waste on seniors."

"Don't be a cheeky young ass!" growled St. Leger.

"Well, don't be a cheeky old ass!" suggested Lowther amicably.

St. Leger of the Fifth gave Lowther an expressive look. Seemingly he had come to Study No. 10 with friendly intentions, but his reception there had not pleased him. But he repressed his wrath.

Tom Merry looked at the study clock. That clock did not go, but Tom Merry wished to convey politely to St. Leger that time was valuable. Possibly it was an honour for a junior study to receive a friendly visit from a member of the Fifth Form. Nevertheless, a half-holiday was a half-holiday, and time was going.

"The fact is—" said St. Leger, when he had finished arranging his tie to his satisfaction.

"Go ahead!" said Tom.

"The—the fact is—"

"Well?"

"The—the—the fact is, Merry—" St. Leger hesitated.

"The—the fact is, I—I want to ask a little favour of you."

"My hat!"

"My hat!"



There was a light tap on the door of Study No. 10, and Tom Merry & Co. watched breathlessly. Suddenly the door swung open, and the pile on the top of it toppled over. Crash! "Yawwooh! Oh cwumba!" howled a familiar voice, as the varied property rained down upon his aristocratic head. "Oh deah! It's a howwid earthquake!" "It's Gussy!" shrieked Tom Merry. (See page 4.)

CHAPTER 3.

A Task for Tom Merry!

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther eyed the Fifth-Former in surprise and with some suspicion. St. Leger was a wealthy fellow, and a great nut in the Fifth Form, and no end of a lofty personage in his own estimation. He was generally considered a good-natured fellow; but under the influence of Cuts of the Fifth he sometimes came into hostile contact with Tom Merry & Co. For St. Leger of the Fifth to ask a favour at the hands of a junior was amazing. Generally, he regarded such trivial creatures as fags as a god on the summit of Olympus might have regarded common mortals on the common earth. It was a surprise to see the great man of the Fifth condescending from his Olympian loftiness in this way.

"A—a—favour?" repeated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yes."

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

"Alas!" sighed Monty Lowther. "I think I can guess the awful trouble. Have Cuts' dead cots turned out wrong 'uns, St. Leger? Have the gee-gees run away with all your spare cash? Have you come to raise the wind in the Shell?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Tom Merry, greatly tickled by the expression on St. Leger's face, as Lowther asked that question.

It was true that St. Leger followed the ways of Gerald Cuts, the sportsman of the Fifth, and no doubt he often made the painful discovery that the profits of racing went to the bookmakers. But it really was not probable that a Fifth Form sportsman would come to a junior study in search of a loan.

"You—you—you cheeky young scoundrel!" roared St. Leger, his face crimsoning with wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Am I off-side?" asked Lowther gently. "Then what's

the game? No good your coming here to give Tommy a tip for the Swindlem Handicap. His kind uncles don't allow him to gamble."

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry.

"I want to speak to you, Tom Merry," said St. Leger, calming himself, after a rather savage glance at Monty Lowther. "If your friends can shut up for a minute or two, or, better still, clear out of the study—"

"See you blowed first!" said Monty cheerfully. "We're not clearing out and leaving innocent Tommy in bad company."

"No fear!" said Manners, shaking his head.

Tom Merry shook his head also.

"Look here, St. Leger. I don't know what you want with me," he said, "but whatever it is, my friends can hear it. Get it off your chest. Sit down and spout. You shut up for a tick or two, Monty."

"Right, O king!"

St. Leger sat on the corner of the table, and crossed his rather long and elegant legs. He still seemed to hesitate, but he plunged at last into the subject.

"There's a now, kid comin' into the School House, Merry, in a few days—"

"Minor of yours?" asked Tom.

"No! Oh no!" exclaimed the Fifth-Former hastily.

"Then what—"

"The kid is a sort of connection," said St. Leger. "My father's sendin' him here—he's his guardian, you know. Now, you're head of the Shell, and junior captain, an' I believe you have a lot of influence among the fags."

"Lots!" said Tom with a smile.

"I know you're a decent kid," went on St. Leger amicably. "I thought of speakin' to you for that reason. This kid who's comin' here may go into the Shell or the Fourth. I

don't know. He will be rather up against it—as a new kid here."

"I dare say he'll shake down all right," said Tom, regarding the Fifth-Former with wonder. In an easy-going way, St. Leger was good-natured. But there was plenty of selfishness along with his good nature, and Tom was surprised to see him concerned in the least about the fate of a "new kid" in the Lower School. It made Tom feel more amicable towards the senior.

"Well, the fact is, he's a bit out of the common," said St. Leger with a faint flush.

"Oh!" said Tom.

"A good little chap, I believe," said the Fifth-Former. "Good heart, I'm sure, an' all that. But a bit queer. He paused. "Blessed if I know how to put it. My father's taken him in hand out of kindness, and got the Head to let him into this school, an' asked me to look after him as much as possible. Of course, it's scarcely possible for a Fifth-Former to have much to do with a Lower School lad, though the pater doesn't seem to see it."

"So you're asking Tom to take the job off your hands!" interjected Manners with a touch of sarcasm.

St. Leger did not reply to that. "I want to see the kid through, if I can," he said. "He's bound to be a bit rough-and-ready, from what I hear. Some of the fellows may be down on him for that reason. But he's really as good as gold—the pater says so. I—I'd like you to give him a helping hand, Tom Merry. I know you're a good-natured kid, and I've heard the juniors say you'd walk a mile out of your way to help a lame dog over a stile."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Much obliged to them for saying so," he answered. "I'd like to live up to a reputation like that. What's this kid's name?"

"Lynn—Oliver Lynn," said St. Leger. "The pater's havin' him put in the School House, because it's my House. Of course, I shall do anythin' I can for him."

"Of course!" said Tom with a slight smile.

"But a fellow like you could help him a lot—much more than a senior possibly could. It's against a fog to be coddled by a relation—or a connection—in an upper Form."

"I know that!" assented Tom.

"Well, will you give Lynn a bit of a helpin' hand?" said St. Leger. "You could do more than anybody else to help him shake down."

"Certainly, I'll look out for him when he comes, and do anything I can," said Tom, at once. "I'll see that he's not bullied, or anything like that. No good my fighting his battles for him, of course. That would do him more harm than good."

"Oh, that's not wanted. He can fight his own battles all right, if it comes to punchin'," said St. Leger with a slight laugh. "No danger of that at all. But—well, you'll see the kid for yourself in a few days. His manners may be against him. Fact is, goodness knows how he was brought up. I don't! But the pater says he's a good kid, and thinks it's his duty to give him a good start in life, though really he's got no claim on us at all. I want to back the pater up all I can."

"That's jolly decent of Colonel St. Leger," said Tom, "and decent of you, too. I'll be jolly glad to help."

"Count us in," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "The moment I see young Lynn I intend to take him to my manly chest and weep over him. He shall be the apple of our eye."

"I'd take it as a great favour," said St. Leger, "and if there's anything I can do for this study in return, just ask."

"That's all right," said Tom. "We'll do our best."

"Reward," said Lowther, still solemn, "does not tempt us. What we do, we do from sheer unadulterated goodness, like the esteemed and never-to-be-sufficiently-admired Eric."

St. Leger slid off the table.

"Well, then—"

The Fifth-Former was interrupted. The half-open door of the study was kicked wide open, and Jack Blake of the Fourth Form looked in.

"You Shell bounders coming?" he demanded. "Gussy says you haven't said yes or no. We're going over to Abbotsford on our bikes."

"Oh, blow your old boxing-match!" said Manners. "I suppose there wouldn't be a chance of taking a snap, would there?"

"Blow your old camera!" answered Blake in disgust. "Look here, the thing is worth seeing; it's the last appearance of the Chicken in the boxing-ring—he's retiring, or something."

"Let him retire without our assistance," said Lowther, "We're going to the giddy pictures."

"Well, you're asses," said Blake. "It's a lovely afternoon for a spin on the jiggers, and I can tell you they have good boxing at the Stadium. But suit yourselves."

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"Hold on!" exclaimed St. Leger, as Blake was turning away. "Are you going to Abbotsford Stadium, Blake?"

"That's it," answered Blake.

A curious change had come over St. Leger's face. Why the dandy of the Fifth should be interested in a Fourth-Former's pursuit on a half-holiday was a mystery. But St. Leger's look showed that he was deeply interested and startled. All three of the chums of the Shell noticed it. Indeed, it was scarcely possible to avoid noticing it.

"Look here, Blake," said St. Leger. "You'd better not go."

"Eh?"

"The thing's practically a prize-fight," said St. Leger. "Your Housekeeper wouldn't approve of this."

Blake looked at him.

"You cheeky ass!" he said. "Do you think you're a prefect? Go and eat cake. As for its being a prize-fight, it's nothing of the sort—a decent boxing match with the gloves on, in public, with the whole giddy police-force there if they care to pay for admission. You're talking rot, St. Leger."

The Terrible Three smiled. Blake of the Fourth was a plain speaker occasionally—and this was one of the occasions.

"Look here!" said St. Leger.

"Bow-wow!"

Jack Blake turned away without ceremony, and walked down the Shell passage.

St. Leger of the Fifth compressed his lips.

"Anything more, St. Leger?" asked Tom.

"Eh! No! Thanks for what you've promised to do," said the Fifth-Former. "Much obliged, really."

And with a nod, St. Leger quitted Study No. 10 in the Shell; and the Terrible Three resumed once more that important discussion of what was to be done with the afternoon, opinions being still divided among the three principal resources—the camera, the cinema, and the Ramblers' football match.

CHAPTER 4.

A Dirty Action.

"I WON'T keep you ten minutes, dear boys."

"You won't!" agreed Herries. "Not two!"

"Not one!" remarked Digby.

"Not a sec!" said Jack Blake. "Are you coming, you fathead, or shall we take you by the ears?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned an indignant eyeglass upon his chums. He was standing before the glass in Study No. 6 in the Fourth, giving the final artistic touches to a necktie that was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Blake & Co. had changed into Norfolk for the ride to Abbotsford; a change that had occupied Blake and Herries and Digby about five minutes, and Arthur Augustus half an hour. But Arthur Augustus always gave his best attention to matters of this kind. When a thing was worth doing, it was worth doing well, in Gussy's noble opinion—at least, if it was a matter of a fellow's dobber.

"I should utterly refuse to be taken by the yaks, Blake," said the swell of St. Jim's with dignity. "Look at this necktie! Does it look all wight?"

"How can it look all white, fathead, when it is nearly all black?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I believe you are well awah that when I say wight, I mean wight."

"Come on."

"You see, my Norfolk jacket bein' a fawn colour, I could not possibly weah my usual tie with it," said Arthur Augustus. "Do you fellows think the woad spots on this tie go all wight with the colour of the jacket?"

That question was evidently occupying the powerful intellect of Arthur Augustus seriously. It did not, however, seem a serious or solemn problem to Blake or Herries or Digby. They made a concerted movement towards their noble chum.

"Are you coming?"

"Yas, but—"

"Take hold of his silly ears."

"Bai Jove! I'm comin', dear boys," said Arthur Augustus hastily. And he came.

The four chums of Study No. 6 walked down the passage to the stairs. They were in cheery spirits that fine half-holiday. Blake was very keen on seeing the boxing at Abbotsford, being something of a boxer himself. His comrades were less interested, but quite prepared for a spin on their bikes on the long country road to Abbotsford, and not unwilling to put in half an hour or so at the Stadium.

According to Blake, who had been reading it up in some newspaper, the occasion was unique. The Chicken, a very youthful boxer of wonderful prowess for his years, was retiring from the ring for some reason best known to himself; but he had been booked long ago for this engagement at Abbotsford, which he was fulfilling this afternoon. It was anybody's last chance, Blake impressively declared, of seeing the Chicken with the gloves on. As Herries and Digby and Gussy had never even heard of the Chicken before, they



Blake & Co. struggled furiously in the grasp of the muscular Fifth-Formers, but it was useless. Cutts & Co. hauled the hapless juniors into the field and across it to a shed that stood in the farther corner. They were bundled into the shed. "You can stay in here, now!" cried Cutts. "Let's wush them, deah boys!" cried D'Arcy. (See Page 10.)

were not very much impressed, perhaps. Still, they were willing to give Blake his head.

Blake related that the Chicken had a remarkable punch with the left—worth seeing. Blake talked on the subject like a fellow who had followed the "fancy" for years and years; and if his chums suspected that he had bagged all this information quite recently, from the Abbotsford paper, they did not say so.

The four heroes of the Fourth walked out of the School House, into the spring sunshine of the quad, and headed for the bicycle shed, only pausing on the way to knock Trimble's cap off, in sheer exuberance of spirits.

St. Leger of the Fifth was strolling from the direction of the bike shed. Blake gave him a rather hostile glance, but the dandy of the Fifth paid no heed to the juniors.

He strolled on unseeing, as if sublimely unconscious of the existence of such small things as fags of the Fourth Form. The juniors went into the shed.

A good many of the bicycles were out that fine afternoon: quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows having gone over to Wayland to see the Ramblers' match. But the four handsome jiggers belonging to Stady No. 6 were still on their stands.

Blake took hold of his machine to swing it off; and suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise and rage.

"Great pip! What—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look at my machine!" roared Herries.

"My tyres!" yelled Digby.

The chums of Stady No. 6 stared at their machines, almost speechless, though not quite! Some felon hand had been at work on those machines!

The tyres had been cut—not merely punctured, but actually cut—almost to ribbons.

It was such an outrage as had never been known in the history of St. Jim's; apparently the act of some utterly reckless hooligan.

It was hard to believe that any St. Jim's fellow could have been guilty of such an act. Yet obviously it had been done by some person within the school.

"Who—who—who's done this?" gasped Blake.

"What awful rotter—"

"Bai Jove! I'm goin' to find out that wascal and give him a fearful thwashin'!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "Powwaps some of the New House boundahs—"

Blake shook his head.

"Figgins & Co. wouldn't play a dirty trick like this."

"More likely some end like Trimble or Melish," said Herries. "Let's go and punch them."

"Weally, Hewwies, it would be wathah advisable to find out who did it, befoah we start punchin'."

"They're rotters anyhow," said Herries.

"Yaas, but—"

"St. Leger!" muttered Blake. "He was coming away from the bike shed just now—but—but it couldn't be! A Fifth-Former."

"Imposs, deah boy."

"Rot," said Dig. "St. Leger wouldn't! Why should he?"

"I had a jaw with him in Tom Merry's study," said Blake. "He was down on us going to the Stadium, for some reason. But—but it's impossible he could do this dirty trick."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Rot, who did?" exclaimed Blake. "By Jove! I'll simply smash the rotter. But—but we're dished now! We can't mend those tyres under hours, if we can mend them at all."

"Hallo, what's the trouble, little boys?" asked Monty Lowther cheerily, as the Terrible Three came in for their machines.

"Look!" snorted Blake.

Tom Merry & Co. stared.

"Great Scott! What rotten hooligan—"

"I'd report that to the Housemaster," said Manners.

"That isn't a joke—that's a beastly outrage on property."

"Yaas, wathah."

"But how are we going to get to Abbotsford?" said Blake dismally. "The beast, whoever he is, has dished us."

"Take our jiggers," said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "We can walk to Wayland, you fellows, it's not a third of the distance to Abbotsford."

Manners and Lowther grinned. That was just like Tom Merry. But they nodded assent at once.

"Do!" said Manners. "If we're going to walk, I'll take my camera after all."

The Terrible Three had decided on the pictures at Wayland—Monty Lowther having over-persuaded his chums.

"That's all right," said Lowther. "Take the bikes. You'll be one jigger short, but one of you can have a lift."

"You are awfully good, dear boys."

"Not at all," said Lowther gracefully.

"We'll do it," said Blake. "We'll do as much for you chaps another time. I'll give you a lift behind my machine, Gussy."

"Pewwans I had better wide, and give you a lift, Blake," suggested Arthur Augustus, "bein' a bettah widah, you know."

"Fathead!"

"We'll help you put the saddles down ready," said Monty Lowther generously.

This generous offer was not received with gratitude. Jack Blake gave Lowther a glare.

"We don't want the saddles lowered, you ass!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Fifth-Form Rag!

CUTTS of the Fifth was in his study—occupied as Cutts of the Fifth often was occupied in his leisure hours.

He was seated, or rather sprawled, in the armchair, with a cigarette between his teeth, and a pink sporting paper in his hands. If Mr. Ralston, the Housemaster, had looked into that Fifth Form study just then, there would have been serious trouble for the sportsman of the Fifth. Quite a painful scene would have interrupted Gerald Cutts' study of that deep and baffling problem, how to get something for nothing by means of spotting winners.

Cutts started a little as the door was flung open, but recovered his composure at once as he saw St. Leger. He nodded to his chum, and made a gesture towards the cigarettes on the table.

"Looks like a good thing here," he remarked. "I'm dashed if I don't chance a fiver on Nobby Nick. He—"

"Oh, chuck that!" said St. Leger, with a yawn. "I want to speak about somethin' else."

"Go it," said Cutts, laying down the paper. "Take a fag."

St. Leger did not help himself to a cigarette, however. He was in a very preoccupied mood.

"The other day you had some trouble with those kids in Study No. 6, in the Fourth," he said.

READ WHAT OUR EXPERT HAS TO SAY ABOUT OWEN WILLIAMS. (Clapton Orient F.C.)

AS a football team, Clapton Orient have never been particularly well blessed, either with a big bank balance or a galaxy of talent. But the faithful supporters of the side which plays at Lea Bridge had just cause for rejoicing a few weeks ago when their outside-left, Owen Williams, turned out for England against Ireland, and played a very good game indeed, being one of the outstanding successes of the side. The rejoicing among the Orient supporters was all the more whole-hearted because at that time Williams represented the only Orient player who had ever played for England.

Since then Williams has been joined by another man of international repute in Bert Bliss; and, as a matter of fact, it was largely in the hope of getting the very best out of the outside-left that Bliss was obtained as a partner for Williams. The absence of a suitable partner had previously tempted the Orient to make experiments with their International winger, and he has actually played this season at centre-forward. There cannot be any doubt, however, that it is on the extreme wing that the pace of Williams can best be utilised, though the fact that he has often shown himself a most deadly shot induced the management to give him a trial as leader of the attack.

Born at Ryhope, which is near to Sunderland, Williams began to show an aptitude for football almost as soon as he started going to school, and while he was still poring over books and wrestling with sums he was honoured with a place in an English International school-boys eleven. In his youth he went down the mine to

earn his living; but, of course, he could not resist the call of the big ball on the Saturday afternoons, and he played first with Ryhope Church Institute, and later with Easington Royal Rovers. It was while there that he attracted the attention of managers of big clubs, and for the 1914-15 season he became a professional player of Manchester United. This fact may come as a surprise to those people who are apt to consider him an Orient player simply and solely, but he actually played for the first team of Manchester United on several occasions that season. Also, he assisted them at times in their Lancashire Combination matches during the war. But, just further to illustrate that the diamonds in the rough are not always recognised, even by football experts, we may add that the Manchester United officials were not particularly anxious to keep Williams after the war, so they allowed him to go to Clapton Orient practically for nothing. Incidentally, the Orient has always had a fondness for players from the Sunderland district, and Owen Williams soon began to show himself as the most brilliant of all.

In the season before last he played in every League match for the Orient save two, and scored nine goals; while last season he found the next six times in thirty-three matches. These, of course, are not at all bad figures for an outside wing-man.

In handicap sprints of eighty or one hundred yards Williams has won many prizes in his native North. One of the burning questions of the moment is whether he will stay at Clapton. No definite answer can be given, but we do happen to know that Sunderland are particularly anxious to obtain his services, and there are other clubs who would also give a high price.

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Cutts scowled.

"What about it?"

"They ragged you, or somethin', for cuffin' one of them, I believe you told me," said St. Leger.

"I'd have scragged the lot of them, only some Shells fags came up in time, and helped them out," said Cutts. "I'll make them suffer for their cheek one of these days."

"Why not to-day?"

"Eh?"

"It's a half-holiday," said St. Leger. "Nothing on. Why not go on the war-path? I'll back you up."

Gerald Cutts stared at his elegant study-mate in blank astonishment. Cutts, owing to his bullying proclivities, was not uncommonly on fighting terms with some of the juniors. But St. Leger always loftily kept himself out of such rags and rows if he could. He was far too lazy to take any interest in anything that required exertion, as a rule. He had simply yawned, a few days before, over Cutts' furious description of the "row" with Study No. 6.

It was amazing to hear the lazy, nutty St. Leger suggest going on the war-path against a parcel of fags. Cutts could scarcely believe his ears.

"Pullin' my leg?" asked Cutts at last.

"Not at all. I happen to know that those young cads are goin' to Abbotsford this afternoon."

"Let 'em go, and be hanged to them."

"Certainly not, Lowthah! If you are undah the impression that we are any smallah than you Shell duffahs—"

"The fact is, I think I shall want Lowther's saddle put up a bit," said Herries.

The Terrible Three grinned, and strolled out of the bicycle shed. They walked down to the gates, leaving Blake & Co. busy with the saddles—whether putting them up or down we will not undertake to say. St. Leger of the Fifth was lounging at the gates, and he gave the chums of the Shell an unaccommodated affable nod.

"Not going on your bikes?" he asked pleasantly.

"No—we've lent them," said Tom. "Some frightful cad has mucked up some of the machines in the shed—"

St. Leger started.

"Lent your machines?" he said.

"Yes—Blake and his friends."

The Terrible Three walked out of gates. St. Leger looked after them with a curious expression on his face, and then walked back into the quad. There he caught sight of Blake & Co. wheeling out three handsome bicycles on the gravel path.

St. Leger looked hard and long at the Fourth-Formers, who did not even notice him. Then he went hastily into the School House, with a thoughtful and troubled expression on his usually lazy face.

"They're goin' to see a prize-fight or somethin'—"
 "Are they? That's serious, if it's reported to the House-master—a jolly lickin' all round. Know the particulars?"
 "It's a boxing affair at the Stadium in Abbotsford—"
 Cutts grunted with disappointment.

"Oh, rot! That's all right. Railton wouldn't object to that, I dare say he'd go himself if he had time."
 "They'll be cyclin' along the Abbotsford road," said St. Leger. "A few fellows could overtake them on bikes easily enough, and rag them, and take their machines away, an' all that—"

Cutts laughed.
 "I don't mind—nothin' special to do. But this is rather surprising." You seem to have woke up all of a sudden, St. Leger.

"Well, they ragged you," said St. Leger. "It's up against this study, isn't it?"
 "You didn't seem to see that before," said Cutts dryly.
 "Better late than never. Are you on?"

"Like a bird," said Cutts. He rose from the armchair and stacked the pink paper and cigarettes in the table drawer, which he locked. "I'll call one or two of the chaps—our set. A raggin' will do those cheeky little rotters good. We'll wheel their machines home, and leave them to walk to Abbotsford an' take the train back, what?"

"Better than that," said St. Leger. "We won't let them go to Abbotsford at all. If they complain to the giddy authorities, we can say we stopped them from goin' to a prize-fight—on moral principles, what?"

"Oh, they won't sneak," said Cutts. "They're scrubby little cads, but not that sort. Still, we'll stop them from goin' to Abbotsford all right. How many of them?"

"Four."
 "They've got a good start, if they're gone already."
 "One's ridin' double—they've got only three machines, it seems," said St. Leger.

"Good! We'll run them down."
 Gerald Cutts entered into the scheme with zest—having many old injuries to avenge upon Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He called on Prye and Gilmore, his special followers in the Fifth. The four Fifth-Formers hurried for their machines, and in a few minutes they were riding down the road to Rylcombe at a good speed.

Cutts, Prye, and Gilmore were quite keen on the rag. But all three were surprised at St. Leger's keenness. That usually lazy and inert slacker was exerting himself wonderfully, and riding hard, keeping ahead of his comrades most of the time, evidently very keen to run down Study No. 6 before those unsuspicious youths reached Abbotsford.

That St. Leger could have any secret and mysterious reason of his own for wishing to prevent Blake & Co.'s visit to the Stadium naturally did not occur to Cutts. And if St. Leger had such a reason he did not confide it to his chums.

His earnestness was a surprise to them, and made them wonder. He looked like anything but his usual slacking self as he made his pedals fairly fly.

The four Fifth-Formers swept through the village of Rylcombe, and came out on the broad country that led to Abbotsford.

Three miles had been covered on that road before they caught sight of the junior cyclists ahead. Blake's machine was double-loaded with D'Arcy standing on the footrests, but the juniors had not wasted time. Study No. 6 was a strenuous study.

"There they are!" panted St. Leger, with a quick backward glance at Cutts & Co. "Put it on!"

"What-ho?" answered Cutts cheerily.
 The seniors rode harder. They drew closer and closer to the four juniors. The Fifth, of course, were very much bigger fellows, and in a bike race the juniors could hardly have hoped to compete with them. They were within twenty yards of the Fourth-Formers when the latter observed that they were pursued.

"Hallo! There's some of the Fifth!" remarked Digby. Blake glanced round. But Arthur Augustus behind him obstructed his view.

"It's Cutts & Co.," said Herries.
 "Bai Jove! Those Fifth Form boundahs are goin' to see the Duck—I mean the Chicken—too," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Put it on," said Blake. "Don't let the Fifth beat us on the road, if we can help it."

"Yass, wathah!"

The Fourth-Formers were already going at a good pace, but the three riders bent over their handlebars and fairly scoured now. It did not occur to them for the moment they were being pursued with hostile intent. They accelerated simply from the natural youthful keenness not to be passed on the road by rival cyclists. But a shout from behind them apprised them of the real state of affairs.

"Stop, you young rotters!"
 "Bai Jove!"

"Stop! Do you hear?"
 "My hat! They're after us!" exclaimed Blake. "It's a rag!"

"Put it on!" panted Herries.
 The junior machines fairly flew. Study No. 6 realised the truth now—Cutts & Co. were taking advantage of that lonely country road to renew the old quarrel. And as four juniors, of course, had no chance at all against four seniors, it behoved Study No. 6 to keep out of the clutches of Cutts & Co. if they could. Otherwise, the bumping lately bestowed upon Gerald Cutts was likely to be repaid with interest.

"Stop!" roared Cutts again savagely.
 The juniors did not waste their breath in replying. They drove hard at their pedals, and whizzed along in a cloud of dust. But the four muscular seniors were riding hard, and they gained at almost every turn of the wheels.

Cutts shot past the four-ahead now. St. Leger shot past them a second later. The two seniors rode on until they were a dozen yards ahead of the juniors, and then jumped down and drew their machines across the road.

It was unfortunate for D'Arcy that he was leading. The others had time to jam on their brakes hard. But not so D'Arcy. His front wheel crashed into Cutts' machine, and D'Arcy went flying over the handlebars.

He landed, yelling on top of his own machine.
 "Ow! Yow!"

"You silly fools!" roared Blake, as he jumped down, in great wrath and indignation. "Are you hurt much, Gussy?"

"Ow! No! Cutts, you wotah, I wegard you— Oh deah!" Words failed the noble Gussy.

"Collar the young cads!" rapped out Cutts to the Fifth.

Cutts and St. Leger left their machines go and ran at the juniors. Prye and Gilmore came on from behind and rushed into the fray. It was a hopeless struggle of four juniors against four hefty Fifth-Formers; but Blake & Co. put up a fight.

Cutts caught Jack Blake's knuckles with his nose, and sat down in the road with a nasty jar and a loud roar. But he was up again in a second, and a couple of minutes was enough for the Fifth. Study No. 6 were striven on the dusty roadside, and four boots were jammed on them, pinning them down.

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"Got the young cads!" growled Cutts.
 "Bai Jove! You uttah wotahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.
 "I shall give you a feathery thwackin' for this, Cutts!"
 "Let us go, you rotters!" roared Herries, struggling fiercely.

"Oh, you cads!" gasped Blake.
 Cutts & Co. were grinning now, excepting St. Leger. St. Leger seemed as serious about this "rag" as if it were an affair of earnest importance. Perhaps it was to him, for mysterious reasons of his own, as yet unsuspected.
 "Bring 'em into this field," said Cutts. "There's the dashed carrier's cart coming up the road."

It was doubtful whether Cripps the old carrier, would have intervened in the affair; but the bully of the Fifth did not want witnesses. The four Fifth-Formers grasped the juniors and fairly hauled them through a gap in the hedge into the field. Blake & Co. struggled furiously, but they had no chance against their muscular adversaries. Struggling and passing, the hapless juniors were hauled into the field, and across it to a shed that stood in the farther corner. They were bundled into the shed, sprawling on a hard earthen floor.

"Keep them there!" said Cutts.
 Cutts of the Fifth hurried back to the road. St. Leger, Prye, and Gilmore stood in the doorway of the shed, while Blake & Co. scrambled breathlessly to their feet. The four juniors drew together, with gleaming eyes.

"Wush the wotahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.
 "Better take it quietly!" grinned Prye. "You may get hurt."
 "You rotters!" roared Herries.

"Wush them!"
 Blake & Co. made a desperate rush together, hoping to get through while Cutts was not there to back up his comrades. But three stalwart seniors easily held the narrow doorway against four of the Fourth. Study No. 6 were hurled back, gasping.

A minute later Gerald Cutts rejoined his comrades with a grin on his face.
 "I've handed your bikes to the carrier, you fags," he said. "Old Cripps has undertaken to drop them at St. Jim's for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Prye and Gilmore; and St. Leger grinned.

Blake gave a howl of wrath.
 "Our bikes, you cheeky rotter! What are we to get home on?"

"I suggest Shanks' pony," said Cutts genially. "Still, you can crawl on your hands and knees, if you like that better."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! You wotten wuffian—"

"Besides, you're not going yet!" smiled Cutts. "This shed seems to have been built specially for you. We'll leave you in it!"

"Look here," howled Blake, "we're going to Abbotsford to—"

"Yaas, watah!"
 "Are you?" chuckled Cutts. "I think not. My belief is that you're stayin' here in this jolly old shed."

"We're going to see the match at the Stadium!" yelled Herries.

"Hardly," said Cutts. "My dear infants, your bikes have started back to St. Jim's in the carrier's cart."

"We'll walk, then," said Digby. "We can walk it. We're not slackers, like the Fifth!"

"If you want a walk, you can walk round and round this shed!" grinned Cutts. "That's all the walkin' you'll get till you find a way out! Good-bye!"

The Fifth-Formers, grinning, backed out of the shed, and Cutts shut the door. It opened outwards, and there was a latch on it, but no other fastening. Cutts soon found a piece of wood to use as a wedge, and drove it under the door, jamming it tight there with his boot. Then Cutts & Co. walked away, laughing, leaving the four Fourth-Formers imprisoned in the shed, almost dancing with rage.

CHAPTER 6.

The Face on the Film!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther walked cheerily through the wood by the footpath to Wayland. They had to walk, having lent their machines to Blake & Co.—and they little dreamed what was happening to the hapless cyclists in those very moments. As we have related, the discussion with regard to the afternoon's proceedings had ended in favour of Monty Lowther and the cinema. But Manners had slung on his camera. Had the Terrible Three ridden over, they would have put up their machines and gone direct into the picture-palace. But as they went afoot Manners could not resist taking the camera. It was a

fine, clear afternoon—cold, but with a brilliant sunshine—and Manners' eyes roved round him as the juniors walked through the wood; and at last he stopped.

"Come on!" said Lowther.
 "You fellows keep on!" said Manners. "It's a sin and a shame to waste a clear light like this. I've got a new roll of a dozen films in my camera, too."

"Oh, we'll wait for you!" said Tom.
 "Rats!" said Lowther warmly. "We don't want to pay for admission and then lose half the show. Chuck that silly camera into the thicket, Manners, and come on!"

"Fathead!"
 "Well, how long are you going to hang about?" demanded Lowther.

"Say half an hour."

"Ass! Come on, Tom, and let the silly duffer mooch around with his silly camera as long as he likes."

"Good!" said Manners. "You're aske to go to the pictures when you've got a chance to see a really good photographer at work. But run on and don't worry."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, laughing.
 Tom and Monty walked on, leaving Manners to enjoy himself in his own way. The enthusiastic Shell photographer was soon lost to sight.

"Hallo, there's Study No. 9!" said Tom.
 Ahead of the two Shell fellows, on the path, could be seen Clive, Cardew, and Levison of the Fourth Form. Tom and Monty broke into a run and overtook them.

"Coming to the pictures?" asked Lowther.
 "No fear!" answered Levison. "We're going to the Ramblers' match at Wayland."

"Catch us sticking indoors on a day like this," said Clive.
 "Chuck the pictures and come along to the football-ground."

"Bow-wow!" said Lowther.
 Tom Merry glanced at his chum, and seemed about to speak, but did not. Tom was not keen on pictures, and he was very keen on football. He would rather have played than watched, certainly; but the Ramblers' match was certain to be a good one, and worth watching. Monty Lowther gave a grunt. He could read his chum's thoughts.

"You'd rather go to the dashed Ramblers' ground, you ass!" he said.

"Hem!" said Tom. "It's all right, old fellow—I'm coming to the jolly old pictures."

"Why not come with me instead?" said Cardew. "I'm going to play billiards at the Black Bird, with some blackguards I know there."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.
 "You're not, old infant," said Levison pleasantly.

"You're coming to the football match. You can walk or be carried."

Apparently there had been an argument in Study No. 9, and compulsion was being executed upon Ralph Reckness Cardew.

The two juniors came out together into the Wayland road, and walked into the town. The football ground was on the farther side, and they walked down the old High Street of the market town together. Monty Lowther halted as they passed the picture palace.

"Tom Merry halted also, with a suppressed sigh. Lowther grinned.

"You silly ass!" he said. "Go on with Levison to the football. I don't mind!"

Tom Merry brightened.
 "Right-ho, old chap! See you at tea in the study."

"Good!"
 Tom Merry walked on cheerily with Study No. 9. At the corner of River Street, which led to that extremely disreputable resort the Black Bird, Ralph Reckness Cardew made a move, and Clive and Levison promptly secured his arms.

"This way!" grinned Clive.
 "Look here—"

"Come on!" said Levison. "Would you mind helping Cardew with your book, Tom Merry?"

"Not at all," said Tom, laughing.
 "Chuck it!" roared Cardew. "I'll come!"

And the slacker of the Fourth went on with his chums and Tom Merry; and a few minutes later they were packed in the crowd on the Ramblers' football ground.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther expended the sum of one-and-threepence in the Wayland Grand Picture Palace, and entered the dim hall where the pictures were flickering on the screen.

He settled down comfortably.
 It was one of the gifts of the Terrible Three that though they were as a rule inseparable they could separate with perfect amity when a difference of tastes led them in different directions. Each of the three chums was enjoying his half-holiday in his own way now—Manners with his beloved camera, Tom Merry on a football ground, and Monty Lowther in a dim hall watching the movies. It was Lowther's ambition, some day, to write a scenario—likewise he hoped that in the distant future he would astonish a



"We're sending our bikes to Wayland for the tyres to be repaired, St. Leger," said Blake. "I want to know whether you are going to foot the bill without making a fuss." "What!" yelled Cutts. "You accuse a Fifth-Former of a low-down trick like that?" "Yes, I do!" said Blake steadily. "I accuse St. Leger! Whether you had a hand in it I don't know; but St. Leger did!" "You lying young rascal!" exclaimed Cutts furiously. (See page 16.)

dazzled universe as a famous film star—a star of the first magnitude. His interest in the films was deep and intense.

There were some good pictures at the Wayland show—some Eskimo scenes that had a good educational value started the show, and a comic film of Cholly Chumpling followed. Then there was a pause, and the lights went up for a few minutes, and Lowther had an opportunity of looking at his programme.

Lowther gave a whistle.

The next film featured a boxing show—a late scrapping match between the Tooting Pet and the Chicken.

"The giddy Chicken!" murmured Lowther. "That's whom Blake & Co. have gone to Abbotsford to see."

There was no doubt about it; for a note on the programme informed the public that the Chicken, a boy boxer of wonderful skill, was retiring from the ring for private reasons, and that this present film was the only one in existence giving him in the boxing ring, and that there never would be another, owing to the youth's forthcoming retirement. Evidently this was the same Chicken that Blake was so keen to see.

So Lowther watched the next film with keen interest.

It was quite a good film, picturing the boxing-ring and a watching crowd, and a boy boxer standing up to a young man considerably his superior in size. The Chicken did not look more than about fifteen years old, Monty Lowther thought; but he was well developed for his age, and obviously a very powerful youth physically.

He could not be called handsome—that was certain. He was rugged and thickset, and his head was like a bullet, his nose of the pug variety. But there was a rather agreeable expression on his plain face, Lowther thought. Certainly, so far as boxing went, he was worth watching, if not on his looks. He was wonderfully quick on his feet, and he had a lightning-like punch with his left, which was the final cause why the Tooting Pet came to grief in that particular match that had been filmed.

There was a round of clapping when the film finished, and Lowther heard several voices remarking on the fact that the

Chicken was boxing at Abbotsford that afternoon, in the flesh.

It was the last picture, and Monty Lowther left when it was over, and walked down to the football ground to meet Tom Merry and Study No. 9. He met them coming away.

"Ramblers won," said Tom Merry. "They beat the Grammar School seniors two to one."

"Did they?" yawned Lowther. "I say, I've seen that giddy Chicken that Blake was talking about. He's on the films."

"Good man?" asked Tom.

"Topping! Looks a mere kid, too," said Lowther. "Jolly young to take up that line of business. Not older than some fellows in the Shell, I think. I wonder what he's retiring from the ring for, when he can only have just started?"

"I wonder!" said Tom. "The Ramblers played a good game. Delamere put in a good one for the Grammar School, though."

Tom was obviously more interested in the match he had seen than in the film Lowther had seen. Neither of the Shell fellows dreamed of suspecting how much they were to see of the Chicken in the near future—or that they were to see him at all, for that matter. Tom and Monty walked back to St. Jim's with Levison & Co., and they found Manners waiting for them at the school gates.

"The giddy bikes have come home!" was the surprising announcement that Manners greeted his chums with.

"The bikes!" repeated Tom.

Manners nodded.

"Yes," Cripps the carrier brought them in, and left them with Taggles. He's told me. I wonder what's become of those Fourth Form kids?"

"What on earth did they send the bikes back by carrier for?" exclaimed Monty Lowther, in amazement.

"They didn't! Cripps told Taggles that Master Cutts had asked him to bring the jiggers back."

"Cutts!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes. The Fifth have been ragging those kids," said

Manners. "Pity we didn't go with them, after all. Up to us to protect the Fourth from ragging seniors—what?"

"Can it!" said Levison.

"Rats!" remarked Clive.

"Let's go and rag the Fifth!" suggested Cardew. "After watchin' a football-match, I'd like somethin' excitin'."

"Better find out first what's happened," said Tom Merry, laughing.

The juniors went on to the School House; but there they could learn nothing of Blake & Co., excepting that those hapless youths had not yet returned to St. Jim's. It was evident that something had happened to Study No. 6 that afternoon; and Tom Merry & Co. wondered what it was.

CHAPTER 7.

Not a Happy Afternoon!

"THE wotahs!"

"The cads!"

"The beasts!"

"The awful outsiders!"

Blake & Co., in the interior of the lonely shed, grew quite eloquent.

Cutts and his comrades had long since gone; they had ridden back to St. Jim's on their bicycles, leaving the hapless heroes of the Fourth prisoners in the shed. And Study No. 6 fairly raged in their confined quarters. They had started out to see the Chicken's last boxing-match at Abbotsford Stadium—and their journey had finished in this shed—and that change in the programme was simply exasperating.

The door was wedged tight; the juniors exerted their strength on it in vain. They had forced it open an inch or two; but that only jammed the wedge under the door a trifle tighter. There was no escape by way of the door; and there was no window.

Had the Fifth Form ragers merely deprived them of their bicycles, Study No. 6 would have walked on to Abbotsford, great as the distance was, and returned home by train after the show at the Stadium. But that was not to be thought of now. Two hours had passed since Cutts & Co. had fastened the shed door on them; and it was too late now to reach Abbotsford in time, even if they had been released. And there seemed no hope of release. So far as they could make out, the shed was in the midst of a totally uninhabited country, like unto the Sahara. At all events, there was no sound of footsteps or voices during those dreary hours.

The juniors began to think, not so much of what they had misread at Abbotsford as of lock-up at St. Jim's. After getting out, they had four miles to walk to the school—and they were not out yet.

"We shall have to smash a way out, if nobody comes!"

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exclaimed Blake savagely. "I suppose we could biff a hole in one of these wooden walls."

"Bai Jove! It would be wathah wuff on the farmah to damage his wopwahy like that, deah boy."

"We can't stay here for ever!" growled Blake.

"No; that is deahly imposse," agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But probably someone will come heah soonah or latah. This beastly shed must be used for somethin' or othah."

"Blessed agricultural implements, most likely—a plough or harrow, or something," said Blake. "Must be used, or it wouldn't be here. But the farmer mayn't come here to-day."

"We can bweak through a wall as a last wesource, deah boy. But I weally think we ought to wait a little longah first," said the swell of St. Jim's sagely.

"We're too late for Abbotsford, anyhow," said Dig.

Blake nodded assent.

There was an old bench in the shed, with which the juniors, doubtless, could have driven a way through one of the weather-board walls. But naturally they hesitated to inflict such extensive damage on the property of a stranger.

"By gum, we'll make those Fifth Form cubs sit up for this!" said Herries. "Taking our bikes off was had enough, but they could call that a jape, and we've japed them sometimes. But shutting fellows up like this isn't a jape!"

"Wathah not! It's a wufianly outwage, like cuttin' up the tyres of our bikes," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally begin to suspect that some of the Fifth Form wotahs must have done that, now. I weally think Cutts is capable of it."

Jack Blake knitted his brows.

"It's jolly queer," he said. "It really looks as if those cads had some reason for keeping us away from Abbotsford this afternoon. You remember we saw St. Leger coming away from the bike-shed, just before we found our jiggers mucked up."

"But why—" said Herries.

"Blest if I know; but it looks like it. St. Leger was quite ratty when he heard we were going to the Stadium, and he told me not to go—"

"Cheeky cad!"

"I told him to go and eat coke, of course," said Blake.

"Then we saw him near the bike-shed, and found the tyres cut up. Then he comes after us with that gang, and shuts us up here. It's St. Leger from beginning to end. Cuts and the rest couldn't even have known we were on the Abbotsford road—St. Leger must have told them and brought them along."

"Why the thump should St. Leger care whether we went to the Stadium or not?" asked Dig blankly.

"I give that up; but it's all St. Leger, from start to finish. It's jolly unusual for that lazy slacker to join in a rag at all; but he joined in this, and you could see that he was more in earnest than the other totters. I suppose it would have interfered with him somehow if we'd gone to the Stadium. Perhaps he's gone there," growled Blake.

"May have some of his filthy betting on the boxing-match, and doesn't want St. Jim's fellows hanging round to see him."

"If it was St. Leger cut up our tyres, we'll jolly well make him pay for them!" said Herries hotly.

"Yass, wathah!"

"We'll tackle him about it when we get back, anyhow," said Blake savagely. "He looks like it to me. But we've not got back yet, so I'll wait."

And Blake proceeded to undertake a particularly savage lion stalking round its cage.

He looked at his watch at last.

"Nearly five! Look here, if somebody doesn't come by five o'clock, we're going to bang through the wall. I'm fed-up with this!"

"We're going to get out somehow," said Dig. "I dare say that cad Cutts will be all the more pleased if we land in a row with a farmer."

"Patience, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus soothingly. "Somebody is bound to come soonah or latah."

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!" growled Blake. Blake's patience seemed at the lowest possible ebb.

"Would you chaps like me to sing one of my tenah solos, to pass the time?" asked Arthur Augustus modestly.

"We'll jolly well stuff some of that straw in your mouth, if you begin!" grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

Jack Blake was not in a mood for melody, it was clear; on this occasion music would have failed to soothe the savage breast. Arthur Augustus did not render the solo. The four juniors roamed about the shed, and relieved their feelings by uttering dire threats of what should happen to St. Leger & Co. at a later date.

There was a sound of footsteps at last, and no sound could have been more joyful to the ears of the imprisoned juniors.



Lowther stopped, and looked over the banisters. Mr. Railton was in the hall speaking to Colonel St. Leger. But Monty Lowther's eyes were fixed—or, rather, glued—upon the rugged face of Oliver Lynn. "No mistake!" he murmured. "It's the giddy merchant right enough! Oh, my only aunt Sempron! His chums looked at him in surprise. "What's the matter, you chump?" asked Tom Merry. (See page 15.)

"My eye!" growled a rough voice outside. Somebody, apparently, had been surprised to find the door wedged open the outside.

The wedge was kicked away, and the door pulled open. A farmer's man stared blankly at the four schoolboys in the shed.

"My eye!" he repeated. "What's this here game—trespassing 'ere? Blocking up this here door, too!"

"Weally, my good man, you must realise that we could not block up the door outside while we were inside," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"We've been shut up here by a gang of cads!" said Blake. The man looked at them suspiciously.

"Well, you clear off!" he said. "If you ain't gone in two ticks, I'll set the dorg on you!"

"Weally, my good man—"

"Houtside!" said the good man.

"Yaas; but—"

"Oh, come on!" growled Blake.

The four juniors trumped out, the countryman watching them suspiciously till they tramped through the gap in the hedge, and disappeared into the road.

"Now for a four or five mile trudge!" said Blake, as he set his face towards St. Jim's. "Oh, my hat! I'll fairly scalp those Fifth Form cads for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Study No. 6, greatly relieved at being set free, but in a state of the most intense exasperation, started for St. Jim's, with long miles to tramp before they reached the school. It had not been a happy half-holiday for Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 8. The Culprit!

THERE was a meeting in Tom Merry's study in the Shell that evening. After prep, Study No. 10 was crowded. The Terrible Three were there, and Study No. 6 were there, and Levison & Co. and Kangaroo and Talbot and Julian. And the meeting discussed what had happened

to Blake & Co. that afternoon as a serious matter requiring their best attention.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed unanimously that it was up to the School House juniors to jape Cutts & Co. in the severest possible manner, in return for their jape on Study No. 6. In that important object all School House juniors were to play up as one man. Cutts & Co. had to be put through it at the earliest favourable opportunity.

That point being settled, there arose the question of the cut tyres. The damage done amounted to pounds, in Blake's opinion, and pounds were not as common as blackberries in the Fourth Form. Study No. 6 did not intend to pay for new tyres, if they had to search St. Jim's inch by inch, and stone by stone, in finding the culprit. And Jack Blake's positive opinion was that the culprit was St. Leger of the Fifth—an opinion that caused a sensation in the meeting.

The bare idea of the aristocratic St. Leger playing such a trick almost took the juniors' breath away.

"More like a fag of the Third!" said Talbot.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But—"

"A senior wouldn't do such a thing," said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "You are off-side this time, Blake!"

Blake looked obstinate. He had thought the matter out, and he had come to this decided opinion. Blake was a Yorkshire youth; he considered carefully before he adopted a fixed opinion, but having adopted it, he stuck to it like glue.

"It's really too thick," said Talbot of the Shell. "Might believe it of Cutts; but St. Leger's—"

"Too thick!" said Julian. "St. Leger isn't really a bad chap, in the main. And a dirty trick like that—"

"He had some motive," said Blake. "For some reason that I can't cotton to, St. Leger was determined to keep us away from the Abbotsford Stadium this afternoon. I've thought it out, and that's clear to me. Cutts and Prye and Gilmore were japing us—St. Leger was in deadly earnest. He never joins in a jape, as a rule. You know that—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE STRANGE AFFAIR AT HERON'S COURT!

BY EDMUND BURTON.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of

ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1.

The Man Who Was Frightened!

"WITH a little practice, Tim, you will find that you can get the 'atmosphere' of a man's story, even before he begins to tell it to you. Every turn of the head, every movement of the hands, every flicker of the eyelids—all play their individual parts, betraying fear, cunning, lying, or half a dozen other things. I have studied this for years, and have often found it very useful when sizing up my clients."

Anthony Sharpe was giving his young assistant, Tim O'Carroll, one of his frequent lessons in the side-tracks of crime investigation, and, as usual, Tim was thirstily drinking in every word.

"There was that case of Webber, the race-horse trainer, for instance," Sharpe continued. "You will remember he came here and spun a yarn about some crooked work at his stables. He seemed nervous and ill at ease—sensations anyone might feel I grant you—but there was something else behind his attitude which aroused my suspicions before I had been talking to him ten minutes, and, as you know, I eventually proved that Webber himself was the author of the shady affair he seemed vainly to clear up. He had come to me as a blind, in order to make himself out as a party much to be pitied, whereas he only succeeded in cutting the ground from under his own feet. Now—"

It was the electric-bell at the outer door of Sharpe's flat, and Tim O'Carroll hastened to open it. A young fellow of some twenty-eight years stood on the landing outside, and Tim, the interrupted lecturer still running in his head, mentally took stock of the caller.

"Is Mr. Anthony Sharpe in?" the man asked hastily, his voice trembling slightly, while his blue eyes, which held a kind of fixed stare, gazed toward O'Carroll towards the partly-open door of the sitting-room.

"Fear!" Tim commented to himself. "This suggests real genuine fear, or I'll never listen to the guy nor again!" Then, aloud: "Yes, sir! Mr. Sharpe's at home. Have you a card, please?"

The other produced a slip of pasteboard and passed it over with shaking fingers. Tim showed him into the consulting room.

"Just wait here a moment, sir," he said. "It's a bit late, but I'll ask Mr. Sharpe if he'll see you."

Young chap, on the right side of thirty, with black, curly hair and a slight limp, wants you, sir," O'Carroll said, as he handed the card to the master. And from what you've just been telling me to watch, sir, I'd say he was in a sweet state of fright!"

"You're an apt pupil, Tim," Sharpe smiled, glancing at the name and address: "Mr. Vincent Heron, Heron's Court, Donmore, Surrey. Right, Tim! I'll see him. Bring him in here; it's more comfy."

Vincent Heron presently entered, his left leg dragging slightly—a souvenir of Zeelbrugge—and took the deep armchair the investigator indicated. O'Carroll switched on another couple of bulbs in the big electric over-head, knowing that his master always liked plenty of light when interviewing callers.

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"Well, sir," Sharpe asked. "What's the matter? Something unpleasant, I can see, for you haven't been sleeping well. Also, you hurried here; you didn't stop to tie your bootlace, though it loosened some little time ago, since it's covered with mud, partially dried."

The visitor gave a rather strained smile. "You're right, Mr. Sharpe," he admitted. "I've been off my sleep for several nights—and small wonder. Also, I came along here as fast as I could—thought I'd never arrive, in fact—because I want you to act as quickly as you can, if you are disengaged at the moment?"

Sharpe leaned back in his chair, slowly filling a big calabash with black tobacco.

"Proceed," he commanded. "Tell me all the facts, omitting nothing; then I'll see what can be done."

"Well," began the young fellow, in a low voice. "Six days ago my father, Colonel Robert Heron, was buried. He died suddenly in his sleep, and there was the unavoidable inquest, the dad not having been under medical attention. The verdict was the most natural one under the circumstances—heart failure."

"After the funeral, I changed my bed-room and took the pater's—"

Sharpe leaned forward suddenly.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because it's a sort of unwritten law in our family that the head of the house always occupies the 'bise bed-chamber,' as it's called," Heron replied. "I don't know who originated it, but I believe it's been so for several generations, and I'm now the sole survivor of the direct line."

The investigator nodded briefly.

"Go on, please."

"That was five nights ago," the young

fellow continued. "The first night passed without incident, but on the second, about two a.m., I woke up, choking, and every time I tried to doze off again, the same thing happened. I'm rather a light sleeper at the best of times—have been so since the war. I was in the Navy then, and the constant watchfulness seems to have upset me in this way, though I do not mean that I suffer from insomnia. It's not as bad as that."

"And the following nights?"

"Were an exact repetition," Heron passed his trembling hand over his lips, and his eyes again took on that frightened look which Tim O'Carroll had noticed when he opened the door for him. "I could get no sleep at all after two o'clock. Something seemed to grip my lungs, suffocating me, whilst a red mist formed before my eyes and I seemed to get weak. I noticed the approximate time on each occasion, when I had managed to struggle out of bed."

"Did these sensations continue once you had left the bed?" Sharpe asked.

The other nodded.

"Yes, for a little while; then they gradually passed off—only to come on afresh as soon as I lay down again and had begun to doze. Vincent Heron paused a moment before continuing: "It's uncanny, sir—more than uncanny. I believe I'm as mentally sound as any man, but this kind of thing plays Old Harry with the nerves. I've just about had as much as I can stand, though if I knew the cause it would be different."

"You didn't smell anything unusual?"

"No—nothing. I only felt the choking,



As Anthony Sharpe peered over the top step-edge into the dust-covered apartment beyond, he saw a tall, powerfully-built man standing near the panelling. He was doing something to a strange-looking apparatus which seemed to be all tubes and valves!

and then came the red mist and the strange weakness."

"Silence reigned for a little while, as Sharpe thoughtfully reviewed what he had just heard. Finally he put a swift question:

"Is Heron's Court a valuable property?"

"Very. It's a fine old mansion in its own grounds, and, besides this, I am now the owner of several other houses in the neighbourhood."

"Which bring in a tidy rent-roll, I should say. And to whom does all this pass in the event of your death, since you are the last direct heir?"

"To a relative whom I have not seen since I was eighteen years old—a man named Wilfred Love. He took a post somewhere in the East, I believe."

"And he's still out there?" Sharpe asked.

"So far as I am aware, yes," was the reply. "He used to be a frequent visitor at the Court before the matter died, but I've neither seen nor heard of him since he went away."

"That would be about ten years ago?" Sharpe suggested. "You look about twenty-eight or so?"

"Twelve years," Heron corrected. "I shall be thirty next week."

"Whilst telling his story, and especially towards the finish, the young man's nervousness had gradually grown less marked, probably owing to his having a couple of sympathetic listeners—for Tim was still present and feeling that in the person of Anthony Sharpe he had found someone whom he could rely upon. But as he ceased speaking, Vincent Heron's face once more assumed that strained, drawn look, and he gazed at the detective appealingly.

"That's the whole yarn, sir—every bit of it—so I hope you'll take the case up," he implored. "But I'm not going back to Heron's Court tonight—I've seen it. If I've only experienced what I did, you'll understand."

Sharpe turned quickly to O'Carroll.

"Tim, get the spare bed-room ready," he commanded, with a cheerful smile. "We have an unexpected visitor. No, Mr. Heron, you needn't return home until we accompany you by the first available train to-morrow. Yes, I'll take your case in hand, as it promises to be uncommonly interesting."

CHAPTER 2.

The Blue Bedchamber—Sharpe Samples the "Terror."

HERON'S COURT was certainly a fine old place, and one of those few really ancient English mansions which have escaped the vandalism of the modern "improver." Almost immediately on arrival Sharpe began a careful examination of the blue bedchamber—so called on account of its carpet, curtains, bedspread, furniture upholstery, and so forth, all being of that colour—but for some time he could discover nothing which might lead to a solution of the mysterious affair young Heron described.

The walls of this room, like most of the other apartments, were paneled almost from floor to ceiling—real, unstained oak, showing many wormholes as proof of its age. The head of the occupier's bed was placed against one of these walls, facing the window, and it was just about here that Sharpe spent most of his time. He examined every square inch of the panelling through a powerful pocket-lens, then he got down on his knees and examined the floor immediately beneath. A curious light—a light which Tim O'Carroll knew well—was gleaming in the investigator's eyes as he presently stood erect again, though he made no remark just then as to what he had discovered. "All right," he said:

"I shall sleep here to-night, Mr. Heron, if you have no objection."

"Objection!" echoed the young fellow, with a rather shaky laugh. "Not likely! I'm only too glad to see you taking such an interest in the matter, Mr. Sharpe. But, mind," he added, "I'd advise you to sleep with one eye open!"

"With both eyes open, perhaps?" Anthony Sharpe smiled, then held up his hand warningly. "Let's not speak so loudly, however, since walls are supposed to possess ears."

Heron looked curiously at him.

"What 'd you mean?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Nothing—nothing just now," was the



By a deft manoeuvre Anthony Sharpe tripped his adversary and sent him crashing headlong down the stairs. The heavy body struck Tim O'Carroll, who was just mounting the steps at the moment, and sent him reeling against the wall.

enigmatical reply. "I may, however, have a definite statement to make in the morning."

That night, merely removing his coat and boots, the detective climbed into the big double bed, and lay there through the long hours, with his senses very much on the alert. Midnight struck from Donmore Church close by, then one o'clock, then two; and as the last musical note died away Sharpe raised himself silently on his elbow, waiting with every nerve strained to the utmost.

Perhaps another quarter of an hour went by without incident; then the investigator suddenly became aware of a strange sensation in his chest. It seemed as if a soft band had suddenly encircled it, gradually growing tighter, and making breathing a matter of difficulty. Nevertheless, he determinedly stayed where he was, listening to a very slight hissing sound that proceeded from somewhere behind his head—a sound like the far-distant hiss of escaping steam, faint, but just audible to a highly-trained ear.

But presently the feeling of suffocation becoming too much for him, and a red mist beginning to form before his eyes, the detective left his position and staggered weakly towards the open window, where he gulped in great mouthfuls of the pure night air. Then, somewhat revived, he returned to the bedside and cautiously struck a match. Holding this at arm's-length, he moved it gradually closer to the pillows, the flickering flame soon turning a deep violet colour and finally going out altogether, as though snuffed by invisible fingers.

Sharpe passed the remainder of that night curled up in a big chair near the open window, taking care that he was well hidden by the deep shadows cast by the heavy blue curtains; and when the first streaks of dawn showed above the neighbouring tre-trees he knocked up Tim O'Carroll, who was sleeping in the next room.

"Rouse Mr. Heron, Tim," the investigator commanded. "Tell him we need his assistance now, and it's urgent!"

When the owner of the Court entered, looking only half awake, Sharpe's first question surprised him not a little.

"Have you a plan of this house, Mr. Heron?"

"Yes—a rather elaborate one," was the answer. "It's in the library below. Why?"

"I'll tell you directly. Meanwhile, listen carefully, and don't speak above a murmur, in case of accident. Have you ever explored the grounds thoroughly?"

The other rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I know pretty well every inch of 'em, if that's what you mean," he replied. "I was born and bred here."

"Ever found anything in the nature of a tunnel or passage? These old places generally have at least one secret entrance somewhere about."

"Well, if Heron's Court possesses one, I never found it," said the young fellow confidently. "The only thing in the grounds that might fit your bill is a dried-up well, half full of earth and rubble."

"Aha! A dried-up well, eh?" Sharpe murmured, pursing his lips. "Thank you! And now for the plan!"

Downstairs in the library the detective was soon deep in an examination of a large square parchment, making sundry careful measurements and calculations, and paying particular attention to that section of the plan which showed the upper floor and the blue bed-chamber. Finally, he folded up the sheet and straightened his back.

"That's all right, Mr. Heron," he said. "Now we'll have a look at your choked-up well!"

Somewhat mystified, the young man led the way to a remote weed-grown part of the grounds, eventually pausing beside what looked like a time-eaten heap of moss-covered stones set in a rough rim. Sharpe peered over the edge; then, bidding the others stay where they were, he carefully lowered himself inside the rim and dropped upon the heap of soft rubble at the bottom.

Here he at once commenced examining the ground, his heart presently giving a throb of expectation; for, apart from his own, other footprints were easily visible, and he followed their main direction with his eye. They led to the farther side of the well, where a narrow opening, almost concealed by a curtain of weeds, showed in the ancient brickwork.

Then, with his automatic ready for use in one hand and his electric-torch in the other, Anthony Sharpe crept through the gap.

(Continued on page 26.)

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"THE FIFTH FORMER'S SECRET!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"This time he was in it, up to the neck, and more determined than the others," said Blake. "What his reason was, I don't know, but he was set on keeping us away from the Stadium. Possibly some of his dirty betting, or something, on the boxing match. I don't know. But there's the fact. And I'm going to put it to him straight!"

"You're going to accuse St. Leger of cutting up the tyres?" asked Tom Merry very doubtfully.

"Yes!" said Blake grimly.

"H'm!"

"They'll rag you in the Fifth Form passage," said Julian.

"I want all you fellows to come with me to see St. Leger," answered Blake. "They won't rag this little lot all at once."

"Wathah not!"

"That's so!" assented Julian. "But—"

"We'll come!" said Tom Merry. "But, go easy, Blake. Don't make a serious accusation without any real proof. I admit that it looks like what you say; but—"

"Well, if you can suggest any clear motive St. Leger might have had for keeping you away from the Stadium, that would make it pretty certain. But—"

"Let's go and see St. Leger, anyhow!" said Blake obstinately.

"Right-ho to that!" assented the captain of the Shell.

The whole party of juniors proceeded to the Fifth Form passage to call on St. Leger. There was little fear of a rag with so many in the party—thirteen sturdy fellows in all. Quite a number of the Fifth would have been required to deal with that resolute contingent of the Lower School.

St. Leger and Cutts were in their study. No. 3 in the Fifth. Cutts started up at the sight of a crowd of juniors in his doorway, and grabbed up a ruler. His natural suspicion was that a rag was intended, in return for the Fifth Form exploit that afternoon. St. Leger did not move, however. He only gave the visitors a lazy, nonchalant glance.

"Keep that ruler to yourself, Cutts," said Tom Merry quietly. "This isn't a rag unless you ask for it!"

"Get out of this study then!" snapped Cutts.

"We've come to speak to St. Leger."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Awfully obliged," yawned St. Leger. "Pleasure, I'm sure. Don't all speak at once."

"Go it, Blake!" said Tom.

Tom Merry, as a matter of fact, was not feeling hostile towards St. Leger. He had not forgotten the talk with that senior in Study No. 10. St. Leger's intended kindness towards the new boy, Oliver Lynn, had favourably impressed Tom. At the same time, Tom remembered the curious interest St. Leger had displayed when he heard that Blake & Co. were going to the Abbotsford Stadium that afternoon. All the Terrible Three had noticed that. Tom was prepared to stand by Blake to any extent, if it proved that Blake's surmise was correct.

Blake "went it" at once.

"We're sending our bikes to Wayland for the tyres to be repaired, St. Leger," he said. "I want to know whether you are going to foot the bill without making any fuss!"

St. Leger stared, and Cutts broke in angrily:

"What do you mean? The jiggers were not damaged. The carrier brought them back to the school safe enough!"

"I don't mean those jiggers," said Blake quietly. "They belonged to Merry and Manners and Lowther, lent to us. I mean our own machines—four of them—that were mucked up in the bike-shed—the tyres cut to ribbons."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"First I've heard of it," said Cutts, looking suspiciously at the juniors. "If it's true, it's some gag-trick. Do you dare to accuse a Fifth Form chap of a thing like that?"

"Yes, I do!" said Blake steadily. "I accuse St. Leger! Whether you had a hand in it. I don't know. But St. Leger did!"

"You lying young rascal—" exclaimed Cutts.

"That's enough! Shut up, Cutts!"

"You're dead in this act, Cutts," explained Cardew politely.

"St. Leger is our bird. Let him speak."

St. Leger did not seem in a hurry to speak. All eyes in the study were fixed on him, and it was very noticeable that his handsome face was troubled.

Cutts looked at him. Cutts was angry and suspicious, and from that circumstance alone it was pretty clear that Gerald

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Cutts had had no hand in the outrage in the bike-shed, which was all the more amazing, for Cutts was much more capable of such an act than the lazy, slacking, good-natured St. Leger.

"Well," said Blake, after a long pause, "what have you got to say, St. Leger? If you deny it, we're going to the Housemaster ask him to make an inquiry. Mind, we're not complaining of the jape this afternoon—we can settle that account ourselves. But the jiggers want new tyres, and we're not going to hand over half a term's pocket-money to pay the damage. It's got to be paid by the fellow who did the trick. If you prefer the Housemaster to inquire into it, leave it at that."

"That's fair!" said Lowther.

St. Leger breathed hard.

"If your bikes were damaged—" he began.

"No!" "about it," interrupted Herries. "The tyres have been cut to rags!"

"And you dare to accuse St. Leger of a dirty trick like that!" exclaimed Cutts angrily.

"Let St. Leger answer!" said Kangaroo.

St. Leger spoke, with a terrible effort. His face was red now.

"I'm willin' to pay the damage."

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Cutts in utter astonishment.

The juniors looked at one another.

It was a confession of culpability; St. Leger was owning up to having sliced the tyres of the four bicycles. It was amazing—even Blake was surprised, sure as he had felt.

"You own up to that dirty trick!" exclaimed Clive.

St. Leger did not answer that.

"I'm willin' to pay the damage," he said. "Get the tyres mended, or renewed, anything you like, and let the man send the bill to me. I'll square it. I suppose you can take my word for that."

"Of course," said Tom Merry.

"Then that's settled," said St. Leger. "Now travel."

"Well, that's all right," said Blake. "If you pay for new tyres, we shan't be the losers. But you were a rotten cad all the same, to muck up other fellows' property like that."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Rotten dirty trick!" said Kangaroo with a grunt.

St. Leger's face was crimson.

"Get out!" he said.

"Oh, we'll go fast enough," said Monty Lowther.

"We're not anxious for the company of a dashed hooligan."

And Tom Merry & Co. marched out of the study, leaving St. Leger crimson, and evidently in a state of the greatest discomfort. When the door closed after the juniors Gerald Cutts stared at his study-mate in angry amazement.

"St. Leger! You—"

"Oh, don't jaw, Cutts," said St. Leger with very unusual irritability. "No good jawin'."

"A silly gag-trick—"

"Cheese it."

"Well, you might have some sense of the dignity of the Fifth Form," snapped Cutts. "A rotten hooligan trick like that—"

"Shut up, I tell you!" exclaimed St. Leger. "I'm fed up!"

His eyes gleamed, and he rose to his feet. Cutts, with amazement, realised that he was on the verge of a quarrel with his usually quiet and easy-going study-mate, and, angry as he was, he decided to shut up.

Cutts' astonishment at St. Leger's confession was shared by all the juniors. Study No. 6 were satisfied, but amazed. The Terrible Three returned to their study simply not knowing what to think of the matter.

"It beats me!" said Tom Merry. "St. Leger—playing a rotten hooligan trick that Trimble or Mellish would be ashamed of—"

"Seats me hollow!" said Manners.

"Same here," remarked Monty Lowther. "Blake's right—St. Leger must have some awfully strong motive for wanting to keep those fags away from the Abbotsford Stadium. This will cost him some pounds, I fancy. It beats me hollow."

"But why the merry thump should St. Leger care whether they went to the Stadium or not?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That's a giddy mystery!"

"I don't suppose we shall ever know that," said Manners.

"There's something behind the scenes that St. Leger doesn't choose to explain. But if he pays for the damage it's all right."

The Terrible Three, like the other juniors, were perplexed; and they had to give up the problem. But the solution of the mystery was nearer at hand than they supposed; and it was through Monty Lowther's visit to the cinema that afternoon that the solution was to be found—if the Terrible Three had only known it.

CHAPTER 2.
An Amazing Discovery!

"TOM MERRY!"

"Hallo!" said Tom.

It was some days later, and in the interval Tom Merry had very nearly forgotten the circumstances of that eventful half-holiday. Plenty of other matters had intervened to drive from his mind St. Leger's peculiar conduct on that afternoon; as well as the favour the dandy of the Fifth had asked at his hands. For one thing, there had been a glorious rag on the Fifth-Cutts' study having been almost grided by a raid of the juniors, to level up the account with the Fifth-Formers. As St. Leger stopped him in the passage Tom Merry thought of that episode, and he looked very wary. But St. Leger's manner was very friendly.

"You haven't forgotten what I asked you the other day?" said the Fifth-Former.

"Oh! About the new kid?" said Tom.

"Yes."

"Well, I'd almost forgotten," said Tom with a smile; "but I'm ready to play up when Lynn comes, of course, 'Our little rows and rags don't make any difference to that.'"

"Good!" said St. Leger. "I thought I'd mention it, as young Lynn is comin' to-day."

"Oh!" said Tom. "I see! I'll meet the kid at the station if you like—nothing special on."

"That's not necessary; my father's bringin' him," said St. Leger. "The pater will be here with him this afternoon in the car. If you're not busy you might keep an eye open for him. They'll get to St. Jim's about three."

"Right-ho!" said Tom.

"If there's anything I can do for you in return—"

"That's all right! I'll give the new kid a helping hand with pleasure," said Tom. "I was a new kid myself once, you know."

"Thanks," said St. Leger. He hesitated, and went on, "I've told you the kid is a bit out of the common—"

"Yes, I remember."

"He's been at my home for the last six months," said St. Leger. "I saw him last vac—soon after the pater had taken him in hand. He's had a tutor to cram him for

St. Jim's, and I believe he's picked up more than enough to see him through the Fourth here. But—but—well, you'll see him when he comes. If you think he's rather a corker, you'll stand by him all the same as much as you can."

"Yes, certainly," said Tom, in wonder.

"Thanks."

St. Leger strolled away, with a pucker in his usually smooth brow. It was indubitable that the coming of Oliver Lynn had disturbed the nonchalant self-satisfaction of the dandy of the Fifth.

Tom Merry joined Manners and Lowther with a very thoughtful expression on his face. He could not help wondering. What sort of a queer merchant was the new junior? Obviously there was something extremely uncommon about him.

The new kid's coming this afternoon," Tom Merry told his chums. "I'm rather keen to see him. Might be a giddy Siamese twin by the way St. Leger speaks."

"I suppose he must be a relation of St. Leger's for the chap to worry about him," Manners remarked.

"I should think so," said Tom. "His father would hardly pick up a complete stranger to send here, I suppose. But it's jolly odd. St. Leger thinks, plainly enough, that the kid is some sort of frightful outsider, who will get the school down on him. But I suppose St. Leger's relations must be, at least, respectable."

"It's dashed queer," said Monty Lowther. "Fact is, St. Leger seems to be turning queer himself. His butting in the other day to keep Blake's crowd away from the Stadium, for instance."

"Blake told me that was squared," said Manners with a grin.

"Good!" said Tom. "But why he did it is a corker. You fellows will be decent to this new kid Lynn, of course."

"We'll watch for his coming, and fold him to our bosoms and cry over him, old chap!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Fathead!"

The day being Wednesday, it was a half-holiday, and there was a football match on with the Third. Such a match did not require the attention of the great men of the junior eleven. It was only by way of practice that

(Continued on the next page.)

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they played Wally of the Third and his merry men. The captaincy was handed over to Figgins of the Fourth, and Figgie made up his team mostly of reserves, to give the Third a sporting chance. The Terrible Three of the Shell walked down to Little Side to see the game begin, and honoured the match with their presence for twenty minutes or so, and then repaired to the School House to devote an hour or two to the forthcoming number of "St. Jim's News."

They were busy in Study No. 10 when the sound of a car in the quadrangle came to their ears.

Tom Merry laid down his pen.

"That's St. Leger's pater, most likely," he remarked.

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten that new kid again!"

He rose to his feet.

"Coming down?" he asked.

"May as well," yawned Lowther. "I'm rather keen to see the weird specimen that St. Leger is so anxious about."

The Terrible Three went down the stairs. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was in the big doorway of the School House when they arrived there. A handsome car was coming slowly up the drive to the House.

"Old St. Leger," said Trimble. "That's St. Leger of the Fifth's pater. He's got a kid with him—new chap, perhaps! Looks a bit of a giddy bulldog, doesn't he?"

The Terrible Three looked at the car and its occupants. They had seen Colonel St. Leger before, and knew that rather stiff old military gentleman by sight. The colonel sat bolt upright in the car, with his eyeglass screwed into his eye, and his mouth shut hard under his grey moustache. By his side sat a lad who might have been anything between fourteen and sixteen. This, apparently, was Oliver Lynn, the new junior for St. Jim's.

Tom Merry looked at him.

The boy was of sturdy build—very sturdy; indeed, he was thickset, and seemed remarkably well-developed and muscular. His face was not handsome. His head was round like a bullet, his nose was somewhat of a pug, his jaw square, and his eyes small but very keen and bright. If he was a relation of the handsome, graceful St. Leger of the Fifth, he certainly formed a striking contrast with his relative. Yet in the rugged features of the new junior Tom thought he could trace a fleeting resemblance to St. Leger.

"So that's the kid!" said Manners.

"That's it, it seems!" assented Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Looks a bit tough," commented Manners. "But I don't see anything about him to make a fuss of."

"Come here! What do you think, Monty?"

Monty Lowther had not spoken.

His eyes were fixed on the boy in the car, and the expression of his face was extraordinary. Amazement and incredulity seemed to be struggling in Lowther's expression. He did not answer Tom Merry, but continued to stare at the new junior in the same blank, amazed, incredulous way, as if Oliver Lynn had been some sort of a spectre.

"My hat!" he ejaculated at length.

Tom shook him by the arm.

"What's the matter, Monty?"

"Dash it all, don't stare the fellow out of countenance, Monty!" remonstrated Manners. "What's got hold of you?"

"My only hat!" breathed Lowther. "It's impossible!"

"What's impossible, you ass?" asked Tom.

"But there it is, all the same! So that's why! That's why St. Leger wanted to keep St. Jim's fellows away from the Stadium the other day!"

"What's at it?"

"Great Scott, this beats it!" gasped Lowther.

"Are you wandering in your mind, you ass?" asked Manners, staring at Monty Lowther in astonishment.

The car stopped at the School House steps. St. Leger of the Fifth came to greet his father. The old military gentleman alighted with Oliver Lynn. Tom Merry dragged Lowther away, and Manners followed. Lowther evidently had seen something to astonish him in the new junior, but his amazed stare at Oliver Lynn was passing the verge of good manners.

"My hat!" repeated Lowther blankly, as he went up the staircase with his chum. "My only summer bonnet! It beats the whole giddy game! Here, let's have another squint."

Lowther stopped and looked over the banisters. Mr. Ralston was in the hall, speaking to Colonel St. Leger. But Monty Lowther's eyes were fixed—or, rather, glued—upon the rugged face of Oliver Lynn.

"No mistake!" he said. "It's the giddy merchant right enough! Oh, my only aunt Sempronius!"

"What the thump——"

"Oh, come on!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther seemed reluctant to leave the spot, as if the rugged face of Oliver Lynn had some strange fascination for him. But his chums dragged him on up the stairs, and the Terrible Three returned to Study No. 10 in the Shell.

"Now, fathead," said Tom Merry, "what do you mean? What have you been burbling about?"

"Have you seen that kid Lynn before?" demanded Manners.

Lowther chuckled.

"No wonder St. Leger said he would be a bit out of the common! My hat! A lot out of the common, I should say!"

"What are you driving at?" howled Tom Merry. "Have you seen him before?"

"Not in the flesh!" grinned Lowther.

"Eh! You haven't seen his ghost, I suppose?"

"Nunno! On the screen."

"On the screen!" exclaimed Tom Merry and Manners together, in astonishment.

"That's it! Blake & Co. came near seeing him in the flesh, though. They'd have seen him right enough if they'd gone to the Abbotsford Stadium last Wednesday. That's why St. Leger played japes on them to keep them away from the Stadium!" chuckled Lowther. "Plain enough!"

"Why?" yelled Tom, getting exasperated.

"Why, because he's keeping it dark, of course. If they'd seen the Chicken boxing at the Stadium, they'd have known him again."

"The Chicken?"

"Yes."

"What about the Chicken? What the thump——"

"You remember I told you I'd seen the Chicken on the pictures at Wayland?" said Lowther. "St. Leger never thought of that—ha, ha, ha! Never knew the giddy Chicken had been filmed at all, I dare say!" And Monty Lowther roared.

Tom Merry and Manners rushed at their chum, caught him by the shoulders, and jammed him against the wall of the study. They were mystified and exasperated, and they wanted to know.

"Now, look here, you ass——"

"What do you mean, you chump?"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Tell us what you mean, before we bang your silly napper on the wall!" exclaimed Manners.

"I'm going to. That kid Lynn— Ha, ha——"

Crack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Lowther.

"Now then——"

"Ain't I telling you as fast as I can!" howled Lowther.

"He's the Chicken!"

"Who is?" roared Manners.

"That kid Lynn!"

"What's at it?"

Tom Merry and Manners released Monty in amazement. They stared at him blankly. Lowther rubbed his head, and grinned as he rubbed it.

"That's the giddy history of the mystery! St. Leger knew the Chicken was giving his last show at Abbotsford, and he meant to keep St. Jim's fellows from seeing him. And, all the time, I saw him on the screen—ha, ha, ha! The new kid at St. Jim's is a giddy prize-fighter, and St. Leger's keeping it dark."

"You're potty!" gasped Tom Merry. "You mean to say that Oliver Lynn, St. Leger's relation, is the Chicken—the boy boxer——"

"His very giddy self!"

"But—but——" stammered Tom.

"Don't ask me how or why!" said Monty Lowther. "I don't know. It beats me hollow. But that new kid is the giddy Chicken. He's retired from the jolly old ring to come to St. Jim's. St. Leger knows it, and doesn't want anybody else to know it! We've got a giddy prize-fighter at St. Jim's now! My hat! I wonder if the Head knows?"

"You—you're sure!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Sure?" stammered Manners.

"Quite!"

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

And that was all Tom Merry could say. That astounding information fairly took his breath away.

THE END.

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CHAPTER 1. Bill Steps In!

"H I, there! Look out, Jim!"
Thud!
The silence of the starry night was broken by a sudden shout, a clatter of brakes, and the crunching thud of a mudguard as the four-wheeler Ford swung out of the road and made a gallant attempt to bite a large section of mud out of the bank on the left.

Jem Stokes, the driver, received a violent jab from the steering-wheel as he fell forward, and his sallow-faced passenger, Boss Tepper, who had started to his feet as he raised the shout, went backward over the hood into the rear seat, fetching up with a resounding whack on the floor-board.

It was Boss Tepper who had caught sight of that huge, lumbering vehicle in the centre of the road and had raised a shout in the nick of time, but it was really Jem Stokes' fault. He had no right to cut off power and allow the Ford to run down that long, dark hill with the clutch out and the air inlet full open to cool the heated cylinders.

Even a Ford is noiseless under those circumstances, and Tu Sin, dropping from his perch in front of the caravan, came running round to the back, throwing up his long, lean hands as he saw the one solitary headlamp of the Ford glaring indignantly at him. The other lamp was well on to the bank, looking into the thickest portion of the hedge.

"Are you 'urt, boss? Are you 'urt?"
Jem had recovered his wind now, and he slipped out of the steering-wheel to look over into the back seat just as the thick-set figure of Boss Tepper arose

Tepper caught sight of him. He thrust Jem aside, and the driver of the car dropped into the road, followed a moment later by Tepper.

"The honourable gentlemen seem to have been visited by the demons of misfortune! I hope they have not hurt the entirely estimable car," said Tu Sin.

"A Chink—a blinking, yellow-skinned Chink!" Jem gasped.

He made a leap at Tu Sin, grabbing the loose-fitting sleeve.

"What do you mean, eh? What do you mean by it? Where's your rear light, that's what I want to know—where's your rear light?"

Jem's fingers were powerful, and he tightened them on the thin, pipe-stem-like arm.

Boss Tepper, ranging up on the other side of Tu Sin, shook his fist in the long, lean, Mongolian face.

"I'll have you locked up for this, you confounded heathen! Crawling along the 'ighroad on a whacking great house on wheels like that, and not even a light showing!"

"The honourable gentlemen are mistaken," said Tu Sin. "This humble habitation does have a light. Look, there it is! I will show it you."

Then, turning, he raised his voice.

"Here, honourable Bill!"

Something scrambled on a shelf, then a huge, shaggy shape leaped down from its perch, and immediately there appeared against the back of the caravan the regulation red lamp.

"But—'ut, hang you, 'ow could we see it, when that blinking dog was lying down on the shelf in front of it!" Boss Tepper snapped out.

Tu Sin shrugged his shoulders.

into view.

What was once a perfectly good bowler hat was now a shapeless mass on his bald head, and he was tugging violently at the brim to remove it.

"Am I all right? Would you be all right after taking a blinking chucker over that seat? Quick, Jem, collar that beggar! We'll make him pay for this!"

Tu Sin's lanky figure had come into the halo of light made by the solitary headlamp, and Boss

"This entirely unworthy person cannot control the desires of the honourable hound," he pointed out, then slipped into his broken English. "I got 'nough to do to drive that blinkin' old gee-gee. He want to stop and eat grass all the time!"

"Well, that cuts no ice with me," Tepper went on. "You made me damage my car, and you'll blinking well pay for it! I'm going to have you locked up!"

Tu Sin's slant eyes narrowed. "You will put me in dishonourable prison?"

"You've said it, you skunk, unless you can scrape up enough money to pay for the damage you've done, and I don't suppose you are worth twopennoth of tin-tacks!"

"I do not know much about the laws of this honourable country," said Tu Sin in his softest voice. "But I understood that every gentleman driving swift, horseless carriage sounded notes of warning on horns so that humble personages might remove themselves from their path. Why didn't you sound your blinking horn, eh? And why do you come down-hill with your motor shut off? How you think I hear you, anyhow?"

The last questions were fired off in a quick way, and Boss Tepper came to the conclusion that this Mongolian stranger was not nearly such a fool as he looked.

An unbiased judge might quite conceivably declare that the accident was the result of mutual carelessness.

"Aw! Shut your face!" said Jem Stokes, tugging at Tu Sin's arm. "If you don't I'll shut it for you!"

Jem Stokes was Boss Tepper's right-hand man and horseman, a rough-houser of worth. Boss Tepper never travelled far without Jem. His business needed a strong arm and a reliable subordinate. He had both these combined ideally in the cauliflower-cared Jem Stokes, ex-light-weight boxer and thug.

"Let me give him a bat over the 'ead, boss!" Jem muttered, turning to his leader. "Then we can take him along to 'Alborough without any more jawing."

Holding Tu Sin at arm's length, Jem clenched his powerful left fist, and selected the exact spot on that lanky face where his fist would do greatest damage—under the chin and a little to the right.

Boss Tepper glanced at his ditched car and nodded his head.

"All right, Jem," he urged. "Give 'im one!"

Tu Sin felt the muscular frame of his captor tense, and he knew what was coming.

As Jem steadied himself to deliver the blow, his fingers, half-unconsciously, slackened their grip on the thin arm. It seemed a very poor sort of arm, a mere lean length of thin flesh that would break at a snap.

"Take that!" said Jem, as he swung his fist forward.

But his vicious blow hit nothing at all, for, even as he delivered it, Tu Sin suddenly dropped on one knee, jerked his arm free, then, as Jem followed his punch, the lean Chink, dropping his head, leaped forward, and his hard, bullet pate landed full on the pit of Jem's stomach, a round, substantial affair that indicated that Jem had long since ceased to go in for arduous training.

It was a hefty charge, and every ounce of Tu Sin's amazing, supple strength was behind it, and its effect on Jem was catastrophic. He gave vent to a long-drawn howl, dropped both hands on the pit of his stomach, and, leaning back a couple of paces, rolled over on to the roadway, gasping with pain.

Boss Tepper had turned to walk back to his stranded car, when Jem began his attack. Tepper had seen so many of Jem's attacks that he had never expected anything but a complete victory.

Now, at the agitated wail from his henchman, the boxing promoter whipped round and took in the scene at a glance.

Jem was rolling over in the road, and Tu Sin, in a grotesque attitude, was waving his long, lanky arms, and making vicious jabs and upper-cuts at the empty air.

"Get up! You get up! I give you another blump on broad-chest!" Tu Sin challenged. "I show you box-fight!"

Reaching his car, Boss Tepper dived for the tool-box, and straightened up with an ugly snarler in his fist. Raising this murderous weapon aloft, he made a rush for the yellow-skinned youngster.

"I'll brain you—I'll brain you, you almond-eyed Chink!" he blared.

He probably would have, too, for he was beside himself with rage, and when men of the Boss Tepper kidney lose their temper they do not care who gets hurt so long as it is not themselves.

But he was yet a yard away from Tu Sin, when something shaggy and awe-inspiring arose like a streak from the dark patch of roadway. It leaped up from the ground, and hurled itself headlong at the stocky boxing promoter.

White teeth snapped within an inch of Boss Tepper's throat, and next moment old Bill, the sheep-dog, rolled his man over, and the spanner went flying into the hedge on the other side of the road.

Boss Tepper fell flat on his back, and he lay there dazed for a moment; then he became aware of a heavy weight on his chest, and, opening his eyes, he saw that shaggy head with the great golden eyes looking down at his own.

Bill's lips were back, and every tooth in Bill's jaws shone in the light of the head-lamp.

"The honourable gentleman will be wise if he does not move," came the drawing voice of Tu Sin. "So long as old Bill think you dead, him no touch you. Savee?"

And Mr. Boss Tepper did savee. He held his breath until it almost choked him, and he heard the slow, grinding wheels of the caravan as it started to move on again.

It seemed an eternity before a high, clear whistle sounded, and that great, shaggy shape, with its paws resting on Mr. Tepper's chest, leaped to its feet, and with a whirl of its tail galloped off up the dark highway.

"Are you all right, Boss? Are you all right?"

Boss Tepper felt a shaky arm glide under his shoulders, and he was lifted into a sitting position.

Jem Stokes' face was yellow and sickly as he peered into the red countenance of his employer.

"Don't ask fool questions," Boss Tepper snapped, rising unsteadily to his feet. "Why didn't you brain that blinking 'ound, anyway? Nice mess you made of it."

Jem was still suffering from that battering-ram-like punch, and he stifled a groan as he stooped to pick up his coat.

"I draw the line at managing dogs, boss," he muttered. "Why, he was as big as a blinking 'ouse; and for tooth crumps! You say 'em as well as I did!"

Mr. Tepper was dusting himself and swearing aloud during the process.

Far ahead shone the little red light on the slow-moving caravan. It would have been quite easy for these two men to have hurried and overtaken it, yet neither of them made the slightest attempt to do so.

"Just you wait until I set eyes on that Chink again!" Boss Tepper muttered. "I'll make him sorry he was ever born!" Sometimes vain threats are remarkably convincing, but they are not always easy to carry out.

CHAPTER 2.

A Novel Feature!

GINGER DAN, with a basket of provisions hanging on his arm, halted outside the town hall of Halborough and glanced eagerly at a huge, twelve-foot poster which was fastened up above the doorway.

The poster bore the title that a great boxing carnival, organised by Mr. Joseph G. Tepper, would take place that night in the big building. Mr. Tepper was going to give a very long programme, for there was a double row of names under the announcement. Not that they were very famous names. Indeed, Ginger Dan, who studied the boxing columns of the dailies as other enthusiasts study the exchange list, could not recognise a single one of them.

And finally he came to a small announcement near the foot of the poster. It ran:

"SPECIAL ATTRACTION.

"Tiger' Gull, the well-known bantam-weight, will appear in a novel and interesting contest. He is prepared to box any three local lads, who will take the ring successively, and if 'Tiger' Gull fails to beat his opponents inside three rounds, Mr. Tepper will hand the victors £10 each!"

"Now then, local talent, roll up!"

It certainly was a novel feature. Putting it bluntly, it meant that Tiger Gull would have to knock out his challengers, one after another, inside three rounds.

A top-class professional boxer was quite capable of accomplishing that feat, but, although Ginger Dan cudgelled his brains he could not remember the name of Tiger Gull as being anywhere in the first rank.

At the shabby youngster was still studying the poster, one half of the front door of the town hall opened, and a cauliflower-eared gentleman emerged on to the sunlit porch. It was Jem Stokes, dressed in a new tweed suit of a particularly loud check pattern.

Boss Tepper's henchman had a fat cigar

between his lips, and his face had returned to its normal reddish hue.

It was just about ten o'clock in the morning, and there were not many people in the sleepy old market square. Jem cast a discontented glance around the shops and houses, then his eyes glared gradually travelled to Ginger Dan, and halted.

"Cheapest seats one-and-seven, kid," Jem Stokes said. "Mind you get here early to-night, if you want to see the show. And tell all your chums to come."

Jem never lost an opportunity of pushing his boss' interests.

Dan rattled a few coppers which he had left in his pocket, and shook his head.

"Can't afford to pay that, guv'nor," he returned. "But I'd like to see the show all the same."

"Nothin' doin', son," Jem returned gruffly. "We ain't 'ere for the benefit of our health, you know. A whacking big programme costs—costs—er—thousands of quids to produce. You ain't seen anything like it in this old burgh not for centuries."

Dan raised his hand and pointed towards the special attraction.

"Got that fight with Tiger Gull fixed up, mister?" he asked.

Jem removed the cigar.

It was rather strange that Ginger Dan should have mentioned that very item, for a few minutes before Boss Tepper had been displaying some of his bad temper over that same event.

It had been Jem's idea as a novel feature, and, much against his will, Boss Tepper had agreed to it. The announcement had been up for two days, and so far local talent had been showing a remarkable display of diffidence. Only one solitary candidate for the £10 had appeared, in the person of a lanky butcher's lad who had delivered meat at the hotel where Tepper and his boys were staying.

Jem had almost to bribe the butcher's boy before he would put his name down. "I'll see 'e don't hurt you, lad," he had said. "Just lie down when you feel tired, but don't put it off too long."

With that solitary exception, the attraction had drawn nil, and now Jem eyed the ragged, broad-shouldered, ginger-haired youngster with renewed interest.

"Well, I don't think we've fixed up exactly," he said cautiously. "Though, of course, we've got 'eaps of lads wanting to have a chance. Can you box?"

"Yes, mister."

Dan was ragged and unkempt. There were patches and gaps in his coat and trousers, and his shoes were very down at the heel, but beneath those rags one could almost count a sturdy young body, there was a pulse of health and virility in the young vagabond that made Jem Stokes suddenly rub his hands.

"Come along," he said, beckoning to Ginger Dan. "I'll take you to the boss, right now."

And so Ginger Dan, his basket hanging on his arm, was led through the town hall into the little office set apart for Boss Tepper. Boss Tepper was in his shirt-sleeves, surrounded by handbills and posters. There were four or five men with him in the office, all of them bearing the unmistakable stamp of the professional pug.

"Ere's some more local talent, boss," Jem Stokes said, with a note of triumph in his voice. "Good lad, too, by the looks of him. What do you think, Tiger?"

Dan looked across at the group, and saw one of the men grin. Tiger Gull came across the office and halted in front of Dan. He was dressed in blue serge, and there was something about his lean,

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mahogany face that whispered of half-caste blood. He was old for a boxer, well over thirty, and had the hard, battered appearance that long experience in the ring brings.

"You know he to box, eh?" he asked in a shrill, sing-song voice. "You like the idea of fighting me, eh?"

The circle behind him sniggered, and Jim Stokes thrust an arm forward.

"Course he likes the idea of boxing you, Tiger," he said, winking swiftly at the brown-faced boxer. "Why shouldn't he?"

Tiger Gull smiled, revealing a set of gold-filled teeth.

"That's all right, Mr. Jim. I verra glad that this youngster wantsa fight me. We have good time in the ring together, eh?"

Boss Tepper jumped out of his place and halted in front of Dan.

"Let's take a look at you," he remarked. "Take off your jacket."

Dan slipped out of his tattered coat and squared his young shoulders.

Boss Tepper ran his hand over the youngster's iron-built body with the skilled touch of a groom. To give Boss Tepper his due, there was no man in England better able to judge a boxer and his condition, and a grunt came from his lips as he straightened up again.

"By jinks, you're fit enough, lad, anyhow," he said. "What do you do for a living?"

"Don't do anything much, mister," Ginger Dan returned, with a grin that stretched across his freckled face. "Just take odd jobs when they come along."

Tepper nodded his head.

"Fire away with him a bit, Jim."

The henchman fell into guard, and Dan did likewise, dropping into that easy, graceful pose of his. They sparred for a few moments, then Jim feinted and aimed one or two straight blows at the youngster. Dan met the swift passes easily enough, and Tepper called a halt.

"Right; you'll do," he said. "You know something about the business, anyhow. Come along. What's your name?"

There was a satisfied smile on the boxing promoter's face as he reached the desk and took up his pen.

"Ginger Dan, sir," said the vagabond.

"Ginger Dan what?"

"Ain't got any other name, mister."

Tepper scrawled the name on the sheet.

"Right-ho, young fellah! You get here at eight o'clock sharp. Your little affair doesn't commence until nine but I must have you all ready when the time comes."

Dan lifted his basket, touched his cap, and backed towards the door, then, tempted by some spirit of ill-fortune, Tiger Gull called out a quick question.

"Perhaps you've got a chum who'd like to come in and make third man, eh, you Ginger Dan?"

To box three men one after another, even although they were country louts, is a distinct undertaking, and Tiger Gull felt justified in having something to say in the matter.

If that down-at-heel, grubby-looking vaif did happen to have a companion of his own type, it would be much better to have him as an opponent than some unknown third person, who might prove to be real hot stuff.

"Yes, I have got a chum."

"Can he box?"

Ginger Dan remembered that solitary and only appearance of Tu Sin in a boxing-fight, and nodded.

"He knows how to use the gloves, sir," he said, looking across to Tepper.

"Good enough. What's his name? Come on, let's finish it."

"His name is Tu Sin, sir," said Ginger Dan.

"Ain't he got a Christian name?" Tepper asked.

"No, sir."

"We'll call him George, or something," Jim Stokes drawled.

And Boss Tepper fell into the trap.

The name "George Tusin," was written on the sheet, and Ginger Dan, after promising to bring his chum along with him at the appointed hour, hurried off to break the amazing news to his yellow-skinned pal.

An hour later the local printers had the two names set up in the programme, and the deed was done.

At three o'clock that afternoon Ginger Dan and Tu Sin, seated under the hedge beside the common, saw a Ford with a battered left wing swirl past. It was covered with posters announcing the fight, and Ginger Dan, reaching out, touched Tu Sin on the arm.

"There you are, old chap," he said. "The Town Hall, Halborough, to-night. That's where we're going."

He had already made his startling announcement, and Tu Sin had accepted it with his usual grave composure. But now the yellow face changed slightly, and Tu Sin peered after the car and its occupant with dropped jaw.

"What's that you say, Dan?" he queried feebly.

Dan pointed after the column of dust.

"That chap driving the car is the fellow who's fixed up for us," he said, "and the man by his side is Mr. Tepper."

Tu Sin smothered a groan.

That little accident on the road was a secret between Tu Sin and Bill. Ginger Dan had gone ahead that day to pick out a suitable camping place, and Tu Sin had been warned concerning the regulations which governed slow-moving traffic.

The threat of prison had frightened Tu Sin, and he had kept the encounter to himself.

"You—you mean that the fat honorable gentleman beside the driver is—Mr. Tepper?" he questioned.

"Yes, Tu Sin, and I hope that one of us will pocket £10 of his money before the night is over."

Tu Sin raised his eyes skyward.

"If this humble personage gets £10 from that honorable boxing promoter, this humble personage will find himself lost in a maze of bewilderment and joy," he thought.

Not for the life of him would he tell Ginger Dan what had happened. His long, yellow fingers searched in the loose folds of his jacket, and closed on a small, flat, ivory idol, a little squat Buddha that he had picked up second-hand from a stall on the side of the road.

Not that Tu Sin believed in such things, but in moments of stress it would be foolish to leave anything undone.

"May the Cloak of Dusk descend on the vision of the honourable Tepper and his eminent companion when they look upon this miserable, unworthy personage," he breathed. "Perhaps they may not recognise me. One Chink looks mighty like other Chink, anyhow."

Which suggested that Tu Sin was prepared to bluff good and hard if matters came to a test.

"Come on," said Dan, jumping to his feet. "I'm going to give you another half-hour's practice. And for goodness' sake don't kick this time. It's not allowed, I tell you."

CHAPTER 3.

The Bribe!

HALBOROUGH surprised Tepper. He had been inclined to think that his show was going to be a frost, but at seven o'clock, when the doors opened, he found the Market

Square filled by a well-dressed young. There were lines of vehicles from the outlying farms, and every farmer seemed to have brought his wife and children and dependents.

Within half an hour the cheaper seats were crammed, and there was also a large muster among the more expensive ones. Shortly before eight o'clock the carriage folks commenced to arrive, and there was a fine sprinkling of white shirts and immaculate collars around the edge of the ring.

Boss Tepper and Jim, who was acting as master of ceremonies, never left the main hall; indeed, Tepper hardly moved away from the door, where the money was being taken. He trusted his book-keeping, of course—so long as he could keep his eyes on him.

That pile of Treasury notes which was rapidly accumulating was much more interesting to him than any boxing bouts that he had ever seen.

And so, when two youngsters entered by way of the back door of the town hall and were led by a burly second into the dressing-room, they met with no opposition or need for a lie.

Tu Sin's almond eyes were on the alert, and every time the door opened he turned his head towards it. Principals and seconds passed in and out, but there was no sign of Tepper or Jim.

Presently the local butcher lad, Jerry Field, presented himself to his fellow-boxers. A burly second appeared with kit, and Dan and Tu Sin changed, slipping into the grimy dressing-gowns.

Shortly before nine o'clock the door of the big dressing-room was flung open, and Tiger Gull, in a handsome silk dressing-gown, stalked into the room. He glanced around, then located Dan and his chum in the corner, and came across, halting a few yards away from them, and folding his strong, sinewy arms across his chest.

"So there you are, my three friends," he said, revealing his gold-filled teeth again. "How you feel—eh? Going to knock me out, poor old Tiger—eh?"

His manner despite the friendly words, had a menace in it. Indeed, there was a distinctly malevolent look in those small, piercing, black eyes, and it seemed to Dan as though he deliberately fixed his gaze on him.

"You'll know that presently, Tiger," Dan said, steadily enough.

The half-caste came a step nearer.

"Now, look here, you kids, I don't want to be rough with you, but I got to win—save—"

His shoulders were hunched for a moment.

"We make a show, if you like. I let you boys go one round each; then, when you start again, I make a quick finish with two of you, but third man he go into final round!"

This meant that Tiger Gull was prepared to box seven rounds, two with a couple of his rivals, and three with the remaining one.

"We make the show, and that's the main thing," he went on. "Besides, you boys get something; I see to that. I give myself a gold each. That's better than nothing—eh?"

He had been speaking for the trio, but his eyes had never wavered from Dan's face, and the ginger-headed lad stood up.

"I can't speak for him," said Dan, indicating the lanky butcher's boy, "but I know that my friend, Tu Sin, and myself are out to—to collar that ten pounds if we can, Tiger. So we can't accept your offer, you see."

A swift change came over the brown, lean features. The mask of friendliness vanished, and a look of savage menace

took its place. Tiger Gull stepped forward until he was standing in front of Dan.

"What's that you say?" he demanded. "You think you—you beat me—oh?"

But no scowl in the world could ever make those steel-blue eyes of the ginger-headed man flash so fierce. Dan got that glare with a steady, quick glance.

"I dare say it's a big job for you, Tiger," he said, "but we're going to have a mighty hard try."

An oath broke from the half-caste's lips, and he made a threatening lunge forward; but a couple of burly seconds had sauntered nearer to the corner, and one of them reached out, thrusting Tiger back.

"Give the lads a chance, can't you, Tiger?" the man said. "You've got plenty of time to do all you want when you get them in the ring."

Tiger drew back, breathing heavily; then he raised one lean, clenched fist and shook it at Dan.

"The others I may give a chance to, but you—I will kill!" he broke out, through his clenched teeth, as he turned on his heel and hurried away out of the dressing-room.

Tu Sin had stood silent during the whole of the interview, but now he leaned forward, touching Ginger Dan on the arm.

"Did the honourable boxing gentleman offer us money for take away the sting of a defeat?" he asked.

"Course he did! What are you driving at?"

Tu Sin shrugged his shoulders. "A couple of quid are worth having, Dan," he returned hesitatingly.

Dan stared at his yellow-skinned pal. It was the first time during their long acquaintanceship that Tu Sin had ever shown any sign of fear.

"Great Scott! Tu Sin, what the dickens has come to you?" Dan demanded. "Do you mean to say that you are afraid to stand up to a hammering?"

The shocked expression on the freckled face made Tu Sin turn away his head, and he shrugged his lean shoulders.

"I'm not afraid of the hammering, Dan," the lean, yellow youngster remarked, in a troubled voice. "But—I think I may not get my ten pounds after I'm hammered, if you say that it is Mr. Tepper who give me that ten pounds for—"

"Now then, you lads, come along!"

A hoarse voice sounded from the doorway, and the seconds, who had been detailed to look after the trio, lifted their towels and sponges and buckets.

The local butcher-boy, having been the first to put his name down, had the prior place; then came Ginger Dan, and finally Tu Sin brought up the rear. They entered the lighted hall, filing down through the row of seats, and a cheer greeted them as they climbed on to the platform erected in the centre of the hall.

Jem had been chatting to one of the seconds on the other side of the ring, but he turned now to look at the newcomers. For a moment Jem Stokes stared; then a gasp broke from his lips, and he came rushing across the ring.

"Ere! What's this! What the blazes are you doing here, you yellow limb!"

Tu Sin dodged swiftly behind Ginger Dan, and not knowing the truth, the freckled lad began to explain.

"This is my friend, Tu Sin, mister," he said. "You told me to bring him along. He's the chap that you said we were to call George."

Jem Stokes' fists were clenched, and his soul was itching to be at that lean, lanky figure with the long, yellow face; but

there, under the white light of the hall, in front of that packed assembly, Jem Stokes realised that any move he might make to satisfy his rage would tell against him; and, with an effort, he balled his wrath.

"So it's you, is it?" he said, in a low, savage tone, glaring at the almost-eyed Chin. "All right, you yellow skunk! Wait till Tiger gets at you; and if he doesn't knock your blinkin' block off, I'll knock his!"

A cheer brought him to a halt, and next moment Tiger Gull came striding down between the seats, slipping into his place on the other side of the ring.

Naturally, the spectators were interested in the trio of youngsters who had to face this seasoned boxer; yet Tiger received his full quota of applause as the introductions were made.

Jem Stokes hurriedly announced the conditions of the fight. The rounds were to be of three minutes' duration, and each of the three contestants were to take their turn and turn about. If any of them went the full distance, each would receive the promised reward.

As there was the best part of £700 in solid cash in that packed house, Boss Tepper could afford to be generous.

Dan and Tu Sin slipped out of the ropes, leaving the local lad in the chair.

"Seconds out! Time!" Tiger Gull was obviously following a plan for he played tight with the young butcher lad, and the local residents watched the latter's blundering and inept rushes, fondly believing that he was doing remarkably well.

Tiger made one or two spectacular attacks now and again; but Ginger Dan, who was watching closely, saw that he put no power into his punches. The round came to an end with the local lad still on his feet and comparatively fresh.

"Now, Tu Sin, your turn, and for goodness' sake don't kick him!" Dan whispered.

Tu Sin's ungainly body, revealed when he dropped the dressing-gown, sent a titter round those in the nearer seats; then the little figure fell into its guard, and Tiger opened up in a style that was the exact opposite to what he had displayed in the first round.

He waded into Tu Sin with both fists, showering a hurricane of blows on the lean, tough ribs and chest. He slammed and hammered and swung, driving the yellow youngster all round the ring, yet that dead ivory skin revealed no traces of the buffeting when the round drew to a close. There were more beads of sweat on Tiger Gull's face than there were on the yellow countenance of his opponent.

The half-caste had worked Tu Sin against the ropes, and had closed in on him with half-arm jabs. It was at that moment that Mr. Boss Tepper decided that he might have a look at the proceedings.

He had collected all the money, and it had been locked away securely in the town hall safe, where it would remain until Mr. Tepper collected it again.

With a lighted cigar between his lips, and a couple of diamonds sparkling on his shirt-front, the contented boxing-promoter came strolling down the main passage.

As he neared the ring he raised his eyes to it, and they fell on the locked shapes beside the ropes. For a long moment Boss Tepper stared at the lanky, yellow figure, then a shift on Tiger's part brought Tu Sin round so that his lean face was staring straight over his rival's shoulder down on Mr. Boss Tepper.

"You blinking yellow skunk, what are you doing here, boxing in my ring, dang you!"

Howling at the top of his voice, Mr. Tepper leaped forward towards the raised platform.

Tiger Gull heard that well-known voice, read the meaning of it, although he could not catch the words. Just for a moment his attention was drawn from the man he was boxing with.

Tu Sin leaped back to distance, and Tiger made a badly-aimed swing at him; but Tiger's eyes were on the red-wrathful shape of Tepper, glaring up through the ropes.

Whack! Tu Sin's long, flail-like arm came out with the swiftness of a piston-rod, and caught Tiger full between the eyes. It was a pile-driving punch, and next moment Tiger Gull had fallen headlong over the ropes into the arms of the gesticulating boxing promoter.

The seconds rushed round, heaved him up, and he was into the ring again in quick time, but the jarring effect of that blow was revealed in his unsteady gait as he crossed to face Tu Sin again.

Jem Stokes, with a couple of seconds, had managed to collar Mr. Tepper, and had dragged that purple-visaged gentleman away from the platform. Tepper collapsed into a vacant seat, and, leaning back, stared with bulging eyes until the gong sounded marking the end of the round.

Tu Sin went back to his seat, and the seconds got busy with the young butcher.

Ginger Dan had witnessed that curious scene, and now he slipped into the corner, pretending to help the seconds at work on Tu Sin.

"Look here, you skunk—you old rascal, what is it?" he asked. "What's the matter with Mr. Tepper and that fellow, Jem? Quick, tell me! They both seem to know you!"

Tu Sin heaved a deep sigh. Despite that battering he had received, there was no sign of fatigue in those amazing deep lungs of his, then in a quick rush of words he told Dan the truth.

"They go get their own back on me, Dan," he said. "I don't think we get that tender. That why I get wind up."

The padded gloves were slipped on Dan's fists, and now, as the seconds whispered their warning, he threw his dressing-gown aside. A moment later Tu Sin heaved a "Seconds out!" then "Time," and the red-headed youngster paced quietly out into the centre of the ring to take up his guard.

Deft work in the corner had removed all traces of that accidental punch that Tiger had received, and the half-caste was his own dangerous, supple self when he came out to meet Dan.

Dan held out his gloved hand, but Tiger waved it aside with a ferocious scowl.

"I've been waiting for you!" he said under his breath. "You think you got tender, eh? You look out for yourself!"

The audience had rocked to that fierce, terrible battling that Tiger had given to Tu Sin, but this new grim round was fought in a hardly scientific way that held their spellbound.

Ginger Dan was a good boxer, and as plucky a lad as ever breathed, but under the fury of that implacable attack, he had to cover and give ground again and again, while the swift-moving fists of his scowling enemy rained blow after blow at him.

Clean living, young body, and unstrained heart brought him through the gruelling unharmed; but, as Tiger backed away to distance, Dan saw that the man's mouth had fallen open, and there was a grey pallor commencing to appear below the mahogany-tinted face.



Ginger Dan's right flat crashed full into Tiger's jaw, and the half-caste went to the boards with a thud, to roll half under the ropes, one leg dangling over the side of the platform. Quietly the timekeeper counted him out.

Under other circumstances, Ginger Dan might have given the fellow a chance; for, after all it had been a big task that Tiger Gull had set himself. But his threats, his mean attempts at bribery, and the sullen ferocity of his attack made Ginger Dan realise that no mercy could be given or received.

So, half-way through the round the red-headed youngster began to fight back, and under his white skin the sleek muscles rippled and coiled.

Twice he brought Tiger to a halt in one of his murderous rushes with a straight left that was a masterpiece of timing and cool delivery; then as Tiger staggered back to the ropes, Dan followed him.

As he did so, the ginger-haired youngster caught sight of Jem, slipping along the row of seats towards the timekeeper. Jem was trying to catch the timekeeper's eye, signalling frantically, but the man did not see him.

Instantly Ginger Dan realised what was on foot. Jem Stokes, knowing that Tiger was very nearly out, was about to anticipate the flying moments. The gong would sound before the three minutes was passed.

A surge of honest anger leaped into Ginger Dan's heart, and, rushing to the rope, he evaded a vicious upper-cut from the swaying half-caste, then brought his right fist round with all his power.

It cracked on to Tiger's jaw, and the swarthy boxer went down with a thud

on the floor, to roll over half under the ropes, one leg dangling over the side of the platform.

Jem Stokes saw that limp foot in front of his eyes, and he came to a halt with a shrug of his broad shoulders. It was too late to intervene now—

Quietly the seconds were counted and came to "Time!"

Every member of the audience leaped to their feet, yelling at the top of their voices. Again and again the roof of the old town hall rocked to their clamorous shouts of delight.

The seconds ran forward, picked up the dazed Tiger, and carried him limply back to his corner, while the referee, crossing to Dan, lifted the lad's right hand above his head, and made the announcement:

"Ginger Dan is the winner! And the three local lads claim the prize!"

Again a cheer went up, then Ginger Dan, crossing to the ropes, signalled to his two chums. Tu Sin and the butcher's lad slid up beside him and stood in line, grinning sheepishly as the crowded house cheered them.

As the cries died down, Ginger Dan held up his hand, then, taking a pace forward, he bowed across the ropes to where Boss Tepper sat silent and fuming in the chair below.

"Business is business, Mr. Tepper," Ginger Dan's clear, youthful voice said. "And perhaps you'd like to pay us the money here and now—eh?"

A roar of laughter went up, and one

magisterial-looking old gentleman wagged a forefinger at the youngster.

"Bravo, boy, business is business!" the old fellow called. "I can see you'll be a millionaire some day! Collect your money when you want it!"

The speaker turned round and nodded affably to the half-petrified Mr. Tepper.

"Now, then, sir," he said, "let's have the little ceremony now!"

To obey the popular will is ever the harsh lot of those who try to cater for them! Mr. Tepper found himself reluctantly compelled to scramble ungraciously on to that platform and extract three hard-earned ten-pound notes from his pocket and hand them one by one to the three dishevelled lads lined up before him.

But only the butcher-boy and Ginger Dan heard what Boss Tepper said as he handed the folded note to the long, saw-toothed Chink.

"I—I 'opes it chokes you, you skunk!" was Mr. Tepper's fervent whisper.

But Tu Sin only laughed. Linking arms, the three young lads left the ring, and then hurried out of the town hall, the richer by £10 apiece.

THE END.

(Be sure you read next week's grand complete tale "THE TROTTER AND THE TINKER!" by Gordon Wallace. You will enjoy this splendid Wild West Story.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 707.

THE SERIAL SUCCESS OF THE MOMENT!



The Wolves of St. Beowulf's!

A Stirring Story of Thrilling Adventures on Land and Sea.

BY

DUNCAN STORM.

Wobby & Co. are the pluckiest and liveliest schoolboys you ever met.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Jack Wobbygong, James Ready Sweet, and a Chinese named Lung, clung together in the great school of St. Beowulf's, together with Viscount Waffington, a relation of the Countess of Castlewood, are instrumental in bringing about the capture of a gang of international burglars.

John Lincoln, one of the governors, takes an interest in the lads, and arranges to take them on a world tour.

The great day comes, and aboard the Pole Star the happy party set off on their great adventure. After an exciting sea trip, the Pole Star drops anchor at San Carlo where the boys make things so lively they have to dash back to the ship to avoid arrest. Immediately they get back they are told they are to rout out a number of pirates—a prospect they hail with joy. The journey is continued until the coast of Morocco is reached. Here the party land, and, armed to the teeth, they advance upon the stronghold of Suini Baba, the pirate chief.

They are captured, however, by a party of mounted Moors, and, marched to the residence of El Took, the nigger governor and viceroy of Suini Baba.

(Now read on.)

Before El Took!

LEANING against the walls were several well-dressed young Moors, graceful and athletic, who eyed the prisoners with queer lack-lustre and incurious eyes. They were smoking small pipes of kiff or hemp, that fatal smoke which ruins body and soul.

Perhaps it was well for the peace of mind of the boys that they did not know that these were attendant assassins of El Took and of his master Kaid Suini Baba, deft stranglers, whose only weapon was a silken cord, and who were as pitiless as tigers. These youths were obedient to the death to the orders of their masters.

Another low flight of marble steps brought the party to a great door of camphor wood inlaid with mother of pearl in barbaric magnificence. Upon this the leader of the party knocked.

The door was softly opened.

There was a murmur of people retiring from the hall within. The boys heard the sound of a gramophone and the buzzing of an American voice which sang, "You can't sting a nigger in the same place twice."

The boys were then dragged across a

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floor of tiles of mother of pearl and marble, coming face to face with a huge nigger, who was as fat as a toad, and who sat cross-legged on a huge pile of yellow leather cushions.

This was El Took, master and tyrant of the town of El Nif.

Their conductors fell upon their faces and kicked off their shoes at the edge of the handsome carpet.

"Ere!" muttered Mr. Hobbs. "What's the matter with all these chaps? Look at 'em, kissin' the carpet. My word! I never see nothing like this afore. They don't kiss any carpets down our street. This black bloke must be a football champion at least!"

El Took's red eyes looked round from one to the other of the prisoners. They were terrible eyes, sombre, suspicious, and intensely evil and malignant.

The leader of the band which had captured the boys replied in voluble Arabic, in which the word Nazarene turned uppermost.

El Took glanced more suspiciously than ever at the captives as he played with the great amber mouthpiece of his jewelled narghili. Then he lifted his hand, for there was a sudden hubbub in the doorway, hoarse, guttural nigger talk that declared matter of jinns and efreets to be revealed to his greatness, El Took.

"What is this talk of jinns?" croaked El Took. "Let these men enter."

The guards at the door stood back, and four niggers came crawling in on their hands and knees.

These brought evil news, and knew it. Heavy news, indeed.

"All the horses and camels of the illustrious El Took and of his more illustrious master stampeded by jinns and the Flying Jinns, who leaped through the air in mighty strides."

It was Kandor and his three friends, who had rushed into town after their interview with the veiled bear, Dempsey.

A nigger can't keep quiet when he has a story to tell, and the four were spilling the story before they reached the edge of the carpet.

"Slaves!" muttered El Took. "What tale of jinns and efreets is this?"

"Oh, master," blubbered Kandor, "Oh, woe is me! We are poor men. As we guarded the camels and the horses of your Mightiness against the lions, there came a hundred efreets, accompanied by one of the Flying Jinns. The camels

were stampeded and the horses followed them. They broke out of the zebra and are gone. Then came unto us a woman in the garb of old Fatima, the slave woman. She spoke to us comfortably, and we entreated her to sit by us and to do magic to frighten away the efreets and the jinns that persecuted us. And lo! master, she sat between us, and when she took the pot of honey to which we invited her, her hands were turned to great claws, and we saw her feet, which were the feet of a ghoul, and she spoke to us in a great growl. Then we saw that it was some fearful efreet which had taken the place of old Fatima, and we ran away."

"And Laila, the pearl of mares, the horse of our master?" snarled El Took, his fat jowl going almost an ash grey with fear and excitement.

"Gone, master; gone!" wailed Kandor, for there was death in the voice of El Took.

"Rise!" muttered El Took.

The four trembling niggers rose, hiding their hands in the sleeves of their ragged garments to show proper respect to their dread master.

"So ye have slept whilst enemies have wasted thy master's goods and have stolen his horses!" he snarled. "And, above all, ye have lost Laila, the mare, that precious jewel of the eye of our dread lord, Sidi Bu Saini Baba."

He clapped his hands four times, and into the hall slipped four of those sleek youths who had been lounging in the outer courts.

Waff took a side glance at these. They were regular Moorish nuts, nicely dressed, athletic, and oiled. They had the tired, bored look of young swells. Each of these elegant young men slipped behind one of the four doomed niggers.

El Took lifted his fat hand, which was smothered in cheap Brummagem jewellery.

"Let it be!" was all he said.

It was done in a second. Swifter than the eye could follow the movement a silken cord was whipped round the throat of each victim.

To the boys it seemed just as if these elegant young men had taken their niggers by the neck and laid them gently on the floor. There was no struggle or fuss. By the time each nigger reached the floor he was dead by that rare and fatal trick only known to the famous

thugs, who made the roads of India a terror in the early days of last century.

Then, having done their work, the four young men slipped silently from the hall like well-trained servants.

Waff felt a cold shiver run up his spine, just as though someone were playing exercises up his back with icy fingers.

Mr. Hobbs stared at the four dead niggers as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Ere to-day and gone to-morrow, as you might say," he muttered. "That's a fair knock-out."

El Took stared at the five prisoners with baleful considering eyes.

He saw before him four boys and a fat man disguised as Moors, but who stood on their feet like Englishmen, and who returned his glance boldly.

These were doubtless some of the jinns and efreeti who had stolen the horses and camels from the marshes. El Took had no great belief in jinns or efreeti himself, but he had a guilty conscience concerning certain Englishmen, and he was far more afraid of a Britisher than of the fruitless ghost that ever rifled the carcass of a True Believer out of his grave.

"You Engli?" he croaked at random.

"Yes," replied Mr. Hobbs wrathfully. "And you'll soon find out all about it if you don't take this whippin' off our arms."

El Took made a sign, and the leader of the guard rose.

He drew a long knife from his robe and approached Mr. Hobbs.

"Goo'-bye, boys!" said Mr. Hobbs, undaunted. "Die game! This tug is going to cut me."

The knife did not strike, however.

The guard ran his hands over Mr. Hobbs with the dexterity of a pickpocket, and from Mr. Hobbs' robes he produced things which are not generally found on Moors, efreeti, jinns, or ghouls.

There was a heavy service revolver, a pipe, half a cake of smoking tobacco, and three photographs of young ladies.

"My sisters," explained Mr. Hobbs to the boys with rather a sickly smile.

The boys were searched in the same fashion. The search revealed arms, bullets, and other odds and ends of a similar nature.

These were placed on the carpet before El Took.

The search, however, did not discover Wobby's boomerang. It was stowed close to his side under his arm.

The fat negro vicerey looked at these things with gloomy eyes that were full of suspicion.

His next question was straight and to the point.

"Do you know aught of one Kaid Sidi Bu Jan Linkoo?" he asked, which was the nearest he could get to pronouncing the name of John Lincoln.

"We are free men," replied Mr. Hobbs boldly. "We don't answer questions with our arms bound."

El Took stared with eyes insolent and flaming with the smoking of the deadly kiff. Mr. Hobbs could see, though, that he was trembling as men tremble with fear.

"Steady yourself, old stick o' lick-erish!" he urged. "If you don't put the penny on the horgin the monkey don't dance. English chaps don't talk when they are tied up like parcels!"

El Took seemed to understand. He signed to the man with the knife, and the keen blade sheared through the bonds of the prisoners one after the other.

They gave a sigh of relief, and stretched their arms to ease their cramped muscles.

Wobby, especially, breathed more

freely. If the worst came to the worst he had his boomerang, and, though nigger's heads are thick, he could fracture El Took's skull even though it were as thick and as hard as a bank safe.

A Fight for Liberty!

EL TOOK, though he freed his prisoners, was taking no chances. He clapped his hands five times in succession. Five sleek, well-oiled youths slid into the hall again, and took their stand one behind Stickfaw, one behind Waff, one behind Mr. Hobbs, one behind Wobby, and one behind Jim Ready.

"Crums!" breathed Wobby. "Here's these young Sweeney Todds again. Shall we turn and stoush 'em now?"

He partly turned to face the glazed eyes of the youth behind him. El Took saw that these attendants were not very acceptable to his prisoners. He made a sign to the young assassins to stand farther back.

"That's better!" muttered Wobby. "Now we can move. I don't like these lads breathing down my shirt collar."

"Speak!" granted El Took. "Who are ye who came in the guise of Moors and who are Nazarenes? Who are ye who have stolen the camels and horses of my dread lord, Kaid Sidi Bu Suini Baba, whose name be dreaded by his enemies?"

There was no answer.

"Speak!" cried El Took hoarsely.

The young stranglers closed up slightly on their intended victims, but El Took motioned them back. He did not mean to strangle his prisoners yet.

Mr. Hobbs looked up into the stained

glass dome above his head with the aspect of one who is endeavouring to think out a first-class lie.

"If you want to know who we are," he answered, "we are the Kipper Kings."

"What manner of kings are these?" granted El Took.

"Kings from a British ship that's in the offing," replied Mr. Hobbs.

"A ship of war?" asked El Took rather anxiously.

He had heard of ships of war, and the more he heard of them, the less he liked them. They carried unpleasant guns that would pitch a shell many miles, to send houses flying with terrible accuracy.

"Yes!" replied Mr. Hobbs boldly. "The Kipper King is a ship of war, and she carries the biggest gun you ever saw!"

"What is the name of this gun?" asked El Took.

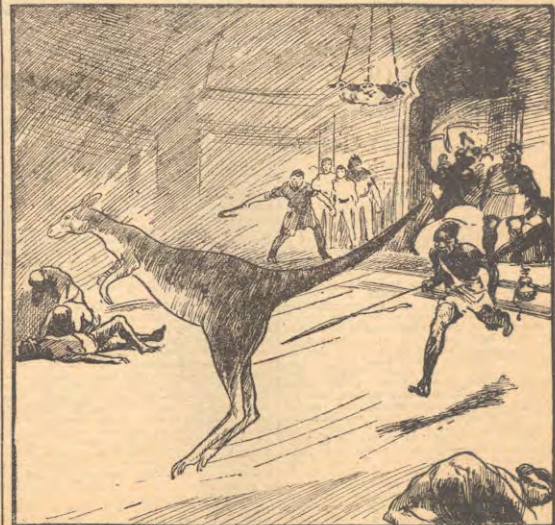
"Obbs!" replied Mr. Hobbs affably.

"And this Kaid Sidi Bu Jan Linkoo?" asked the bewildered El Took, searching after the name of John Lincoln. "Is he thy master?"

"Well, if you must know," replied Mr. Hobbs. "Mr. John Lincoln is our master, and if you are not very careful he'll be smashing up your skylights for you. I tell you straight, Mr. Took, that if as much as a hair of our heads is damaged, you are for it!"

El Took scowled.

"Jan Linkoo attacks my city," he said. "He steals my camels and horses, and frightens these fools with jinns and efreeti. I am not afraid of talk of jinns and efreeti. Ye shall be held as hostages till all the camels and the horses, and particularly the brood mare of my lord, Kaid Sidi Suini Baba, is returned in safety. If anything happens to her, your lives are forfeit!"



A big, bold nigger came charging into the hall armed with a long spear. He chased round the hall after the flying kangaroo, and it was only by Nobby's dodging that he missed a thrust from this long pig-sticker.

"My word!" muttered Mr. Hobbs under his breath. "From the way young Jai Singh was patin' her along las' time I clapped eyes on 'im someone will be collecting our 'ealth insurance pretty soon!"

A sudden gleam of cruelty shot into the red eyes of the fat nigger. It was plain that he could barely restrain himself from giving the order for execution.

"I cannot afford to kill ye," he said, "but ye shall taste a little of the vengeance of El Took. Then ye may know."

He made a sign to the young strangers behind.

But Wobby was quick to catch the sign.

"Right about, boys!" he cried. "Stout 'em!"

These mysterious young assassins had, by the order of their master, drawn back farther than they would have done had they intended to execute their office.

Across the door of the hall were a string of nigger guards with drawn scimitars.

There was no chance of escape, but the boys and Mr. Hobbs faced round and were upon the assassins before they could act.

These young experts of the cord, though they could kill a large and powerful man like a rabbit from behind, knew nothing of the gentle art of boxing.

Wobby saw red, as before him there showed the yellow, bored face, and the glazed eyes and the shining teeth of the young gentleman who was advancing to half-strangle him.

This young gentleman was accustomed to find his victims much in the same state as a bird man preyed by a serpent. In most cases the very glance of one of these assassins was enough to bring his victim down to his knees shrieking for mercy.

Judge then of this young gentleman's astonishment when Wobby's fist shot out at him, and with tremendous force hit him square on the point of the jaw.

All that the assassin saw was a red flash before his eyes—a peppering of dancing stars. Then his spirit departed from him, and down he went with a smack on the floor of marble and mother-of-pearl, his head hitting the pavement with a rattling crack.

"One!" called Wobby.

The young thug who was attacking Woff and trying to get round behind him so that he could use the fatal cord, got a lift in the neck that sent him flying half-way across the hall, fetching up against the wall with a bump that knocked him silly.

The nigger guards rushed forward, and El Took staggered up on his cushions.

"Slap 'em!" he cried.

"Push off, Siki!" called Wobby, bowling him over with a pillow.

Then a yell went up from the nigger guards:

"The Flying Jinn!" they howled.

"The Flying Jinn!"

There was a queer sound in the outer hall.

Flop! Flop Flop!

The yelling niggers saw a strange shape covering a courtyard and outer hall in great bounds.

The young assassin, breasting up to Stickjaw, gave a yell of fear, as this terrible shape leaped through the air towards him.

It had short arms and long legs. It leaped upon him, and its breath was hot.

One of its great legs was drawn back, and with a tremendous punch it landed

on the young assassin's stomach, doubling him up, and sending him sliding across the polished floor as though it were playing shove ha'penny with him.

He banged against the wall, and was deathly sick.

The Flying Jinn, for, without a doubt, it was one of the spirits conjured up by these British magicians, kicked right and left and leaped across the hall in great bounds.

Yelling at the top of his voice, El Took had risen from where he had fallen, and the Flying Jinn leaped upon him, kicking him head over heels and rolling him along the floor like a ball.

The assassins turned and fled to the outer court.

A nigger, holder than the rest, came charging in with a long spear on which was inscribed the names of the blessed saints, Abd el Kader and Abou Hussein, enough in themselves to put any of the Flying Jinn to flight!

He chased round the hall after the flying kangaroo, for it was none other than the faithful Nobby, who was creating such a diversion. He had followed his chase from afar-off into the town, entering by a breach in the old walls.

Wobby took a quick squirt at the door. There was no chance of escape that way, either for Nobby or for themselves.

Nobby in this confined space was not at his best for dodging the thrust of his pig-sticker. Once he barely escaped it.

Wobby slipped his hand into his robe, and drew forth the famed boomerang. He saw the nigger as near pin his pet as made no difference.

"Hop it!" he cried to Nobby.

The kangaroo heard the command, and with a mighty bound leaped into the leaden dome of jewelled glass that rose above the cushions of El Took.

(Excitement razes still higher in next Wednesday's instalment of this great story. Wobby & Co. get into a very tight place indeed.)

"THE STRANGE AFFAIR AT HERON'S COURT."

(Continued from page 15.)

CHAPTER .

The Secret Chamber, and its Occupant! Explanations!

TIM O'CARROLL, leaning with Heron over the well-rim, watched his master disappear, much to his disgust, for Tim had much of the adventurous spirit of the average lad of his age, and anything in the nature of a secret passage excited his curiosity almost beyond control.

In fact, on this occasion he decided to risk disobeying orders, and was presently following in Sharpe's wake through a narrow tunnel, guided only by the reflection of the detective's torch some yards ahead.

The floor of the boring steadily rose until a steep flight of stone steps loomed in front. Sharpe climbed swiftly but silently up these, and the passage continued at a less steep incline until a second, but shorter, flight again led to a still higher level. Here the detective paused, shining torch-beam round about, and noting that oaken wicket had now replaced the stone lining of the lower cutting.

"So far, so good!" he muttered, to himself, then began to mount the last flight with most particular care, halting every now and then to listen. A slight sound came from somewhere above, and finally his head drew level with the top. Here he crouched down almost flat, his eyes peering over the step-edge into a small, dust-covered apartment beyond.

There was no need for the torch now,

for the early daylight was streaming through a cunningly-fashioned slit in the left-hand wall, giving Sharpe quite sufficient illumination to see by.

A tall, powerfully-built man was standing near the panneling, doing something to a strange-looking apparatus which seemed to be all tubes and valves. A couple of rubber pipes led from this to a metal container on the floor, and whilst Sharpe watched, the other disconnected these.

He was proceeding with his work when, quite suddenly, he ceased, swinging round and staring into the comparative gloom of the staircase. Sharpe had accidentally made a slight sound, and apparently still unconvinced that he was alone, the tall man strode quickly forward until he had almost reached the top of the flight. Further attempt at concealment being useless, the investigator sprang erect, covering the stranger with his automatic, though not wishing to shoot. He wanted the fellow alive, if it could possibly be managed.

But the other, instead of being cowed, lurched forward, and next instant, when he had closed, To and fro they swayed in that little secret apartment behind the blue bed-room, the detective soon realising that, for sheer brute strength, he had met more than his match, for the man seemed to be as tough as a gorilla. Indeed, only for Sharpe being vastly more scientific, and succeeding in partly tripping his adversary by a deft manoeuvre, it is doubtful if he could have escaped without serious injury. As it was, his ribs were almost cracking when the fellow's hold broke, and the big man staggered backwards until he reached the brink of the steps, where he swayed for a moment ere crashing headlong down the entire flight.

O'Carroll was just then mounting swiftly, having thrown all his master's commands to the winds at the first sounds of the struggle proceeding above, and the

heavy body struck him a glancing blow as he shot by, sending the investigator well against the wall. Then came a final thud at the bottom; but, after that—silence.

When Sharpe and his assistant reached the man, very brief look sufficed to tell them that nothing could be done. His neck was broken.

"Who was he, sir?" asked Tim, shuddering.

"Best go back for Mr. Heron, and bring him here," replied his master; "I think I could answer your question, lad, but we must make absolutely sure."

Heron presently came limping along the passage, and stooped over the body. When he looked up again, his face was as white as paper.

"What a Low!" he gasped, almost inaudibly. "It's years since I saw him last, but he hasn't changed a great deal."

Anthony Sharpe nodded.

"I think you are right," he said. "He was the only man who could have had a 'motive' in this case, and by breaking his neck he has merely cheated the gallows!"

"That was my father, Colonel Heron, did not die of heart failure. He was murdered!" declared Sharpe solemnly. "Come up here, and I'll explain."

He led them to the strange-looking contrivance against the wall, and pointed to several small holes in the woodwork.

"Your father was suffocated by some kind of poisonous fumes which have no smell and leave no trace—possibly something that Low came across in his Eastern travels, or perhaps he invented the infernal stuff himself," the investigator continued. "It was pumped through the wall from here, in the early hours of each morning when the blue bed-room would most likely be occupied."

"You see those small holes, there? Well, they were what first gave me the idea. I noticed, Mr. Heron, that the wormholes

"THE STRANGE AFFAIR AT HERON'S COURT."

(Continued from previous page.)

which one expects to find in all old wood-work were extremely numerous behind the head of your bed, and especially at about the level of the pillows. This seemed curious, for all the panelling appears to be of the same age, so I examined the floor immediately beneath, where I discovered some grains of white wood-dust.

Further minute scrutiny proved to me that the majority of the "wormholes" were not natural at all, but had recently been bored from the other side of the wall; hence my request for a plan of the building, and my investigation of this wall outside.

"You had told me, you remember, that Love used to be a frequent visitor here before he went away, and he must have turned his knowledge of the passage and the secret room to account."

"My theory, therefore, is this. Love returned from the East, unknown to you, and took up his quarters somewhere close by. Each night he would make his way to the secret room, via the well-passage, and, having cleverly prepared everything bit by bit, at length tried the effect of his infernal apparatus on the colonel. In that proving successful, he skipped a night in order to give you time to take over your father's room, and tried the same methods on the only one who now stood in his way outside."

"It was a daring scheme, and would surely have succeeded only for your being such a light sleeper and waking up just before you were completely under the influence of the drug. In your father's case it was otherwise; he slept heavily, and had no chance."

(Another splendid Anthony Sharpe story shortly.)

WOOLWICH ARSENAL COMPETITION RESULT.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been divided between the two following competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

MISS M. O. AITKEN, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.
E. WHITEHEAD, 68, Nugget Street, Oldham.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The second prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have therefore been added together and divided among the following forty competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Charles H. Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Howarth Street, Sunderland; Ida Ogden, 41, Nugget Street, Oldham; Mrs. A. F. Clinie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; N. Whitehead, 68, Nugget Street, Oldham; Stanley Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Frances Morton, 8, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland; A. W. Carter, 208, Stos Hill, Newport, Mon; G. H. Saville, 3, Smith Street, Mansfield, Notts; R. S. Pitt-Kethley, Wayside, Amersham, Bucks; Miss F. J. Phillips, 28, Stapleton Hall Road, Strand Green, N.; C. E. Drew, 1, Park View, Albany Road, Cheltenham; Richard Wimberley, 15, Wheatfield Street, Edinburgh; Harry Collett, 34,

Tratfalgar Road, Gorleston-on-Sea; Great Yarmouth; C. Cook, 36, Seymour Place, S.W. 10; John Butcher, 69, High Road, Chadwell, Essex; Harold Jones, 9, Wansford Street, Moss Side, Manchester; Tommy Loynd, 17, Clementina Terrace, Carlisle; J. H. Marsden, 14, Belgrave Avenue, Victoria Park, Manchester; N. Nadin, Fernlea House, The Lawn, Davlish, South Devon; Robert S. Wylie, 27, Spring Place, Horton, Bradford, Yorks; Leonard Jupp, 46, Holly Park Road, Friern Barnet, N. 11; J. B. Inglis, Northfield, Woodland Road, Haslemere, Surrey; T. East, Glasgow, Scotland; Max A. Cutchinuk, 17, Low Albion Street, South Bank, Yorks; W. de Gruchy, Woodstock, Oxfordshire; Raymond W. Kernick, 62, Iver Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; George Cooper, Ivy Cottage, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, near Stourbridge; E. Nelson, 29, Ivy Street, Ilford, Essex; Miss D. Stephenson, 63, Keppel Road, East Ham; N. Willis, Whelford, Leekhampton, Cheltenham Spa; J. M. Godfrey, 2, Guy Street, Leamington Spa; J. A. Harrison, 29, Normanton Road, Derby; S. Moorhouse, 41, Nugget Street, Oldham; Alfred Carr, 70, Bargeat, Boston, Lincs; James Hocking, 141, Monkey Street, Oldham; Thomas Cooper, Ivy Cottage, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, Stourbridge; L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Arthur Butters, 23, Roberts Street, Grimsby.

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