

A COWARDLY HERO! A Thrilling Tale of Tom Merry & Co., By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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The GEM 2^d

LIBRARY OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



THE THEFT OF THE NECKLACE!

"Help!" shouted Edith Glyn. "Help me, Crooke, quickly! He's got my necklace!". (A thrilling incident from the Grand, Long, Complete School Story contained in this issue.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

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.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
"THE MAGNET" Every Monday
"THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
"JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—Next week's issue of the GEM is a bumper one. First on the bill comes an extra long complete yarn of St. Jim's, a real winner again. Mr. Martin Clifford has secured a thrilling plot, and gives us one of those full-power, fascinating stories which are well calculated to add to the fame of St. Jim's.

"THE HEROIC COWARD!" By Martin Clifford.

There you have the title of the next magnificent tale of the old school. It sounds like a contradiction, a regular brain teaser. That can't be helped. The yarn is a grand sequel of the story which is delighting you this week. It shows Crooke in a new light. In real life there is a prevalent notion that people remain the same. But that is not the case. And St. Jim's is so near to being real life that Tom Merry and his chums get taken to be real living characters. But now take the case of Crooke. Mr. Clifford has summed the fellow up time and again. Crooke has played many parts, mostly of the miserable, abject order. He is mean-spirited, and possesses a shabby mind. That is as we have known him. But fellows do change. In the brilliant yarn which will appear in next week's GEM you get the other side. A coward is not always a coward; not externally, anyway, whatever may be his innermost feelings. Read this tale of the missing necklace, and you will set Crooke down as being thoroughly human, if appallingly weak. A somewhat paltry fellow, with great moments in which the spirit of pluck within him insists on coming to the front. The yarn is a triumph, and with the splendid ring of reality in it which has made the St. Jim's series celebrated from London to Sydney and round home again the other way.

THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS."

Our bright little supplement is not in next week's bill, but please do not imagine that this popular feature is forgotten. I have some capital numbers in preparation. These go one better than any we have published. In the big and varied programme of the GEM there come times when something has to give place, but the well-liked supplement will be in the limelight again in the very near future.

"THE RED ANT!"

By Martin Walker.

Another magnificent story about Dr. Ziglio! I get plenty of evidence every week in the shape of highly appreciative letters that this series has caught hold of the fancy of GEM supporters. Mystery gets piled on mystery in the new episode from the life of the sinister master crook. Ziglio, like all great criminals, is an artist in the clever way he goes about his business. Never yet was any sleuth led such a dance as the sinister doctor leads that all-round, astute detective, Jennifer Pettigrew Wren. Elusive as an eel, Ziglio seems to defy all known

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methods of tracking down crime. His chief weapon is the unexpected. He turns up when least anticipated, and in his guise as the Red Ant he strikes terror into all-excluding, of course, the detective, Wren, who, like the shadow of Nemesis, persists in his quest, implacable as Fate. Next week's exploits of the mysterious doctor are thrilling in the extreme.

HONOUR FOR BAGGY TRIMBLE!

A Manchester chum asks me whether I cannot give away a picture card of Baggy Trimble! Wonders will never cease! There are people who aver that one glance at the fat face of Baggy Trimble is sufficient. But such individuals evidently do not understand things. Baggy has his fervent admirers. I will make a note of the suggestion from Cottonopolis.

RUGBY IN SOUTH AFRICA!

Aubrey Bennette, P.O. Box 236, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, sends me a long and entertaining letter about the great game in his part of the world, where they are just tuning up, as it were, for the season. He is naturally keen to hear from readers, and he tells me, moreover, that he has increased the number of supporters in South Africa by handing round hundreds of copies of the GEM and the other Companion Papers to friends. I add my thanks to those of the recipients. I can't do more, and I would not do less.

"RIVALS OF THE RACECOURSE!"

By Andrew Gray.

No story could be more seasonable than the splendid serial now running. We are in the very thick of the great racing season, and next week everybody will be making plans to visit the Derby. The GEM, always up to date, shows in the stirring adventures of Mat Martingale just what one wants to know about racing. The coming instalment is full of thrills.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

Life, as you will have noticed, is full of handicaps. At best it is an obstacle race, and one is always being hampered by difficulties. But there is no difficulty about the Tuck Hamper. It is welcome at all times, and the way to secure one of these prizes is to send in the brightest yarnlet you can find. Write the storyette on a postcard and send it to the Editor of the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

"OLD RATTY!"

Among the most cherished characters at St. Jim's Mr. Ratcliff takes his proud place. This is not because of his angelic character. Some people criticise his manners, though it's a puzzler how they manage it, since it is difficult to criticise things that don't exist. But let it go. I was prompted to make these remarks because of a chatty letter which has blown in from Caerphilly. There was a snap of Caerphilly Castle enclosed. My chum is keen on pets and photography, and thinks the GEM and Ratty are hard to beat.

THE ST. JIM'S INVENTOR.

Since his last merry notion of gold-making Bernard Glyn has been quiet, but in response to numerous inquiries I may say that the ingenious scientist will soon be stepping forward again with something brainy and strikingly new, with a pun in it.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPER ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

MORE TUCK WON!

MONKEY TRICKS!

A visitor to a country village thought he would enjoy himself at a yokel's expense. Going up to him, he asked him if he'd seen a cartload of monkeys down the road. The yokel looked surprised, and answered: "No, not as I knows." "Are you sure?" asked the visitor. After a pause the youth replied "What beest so pertikler for to know, eh? Hast fallen off?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Francis Connor, 29A, Westgate, Ripon, Yorks.

ENOUGH!

On a certain chemist's shop a large advertisement was displayed for a "Hair Restorer," made by the chemist himself, and guaranteed to produce hair, in dependency of the age of the user. A bald old man happened to see it, and was greatly impressed thereby. He walked into the shop, full of hope, and was about to ask for a large bottle, when the chemist, who was entirely bald himself, came in. "A bottle of—" said the man, but as he noticed the bald chemist in front of him, went on again with—"I mean threepence'orth o' Beecham's pills!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Davies, Glen Cairn, Dorset Road, Darlaston, Staffs.

"NEUTER!"

The class lesson was geography. Just before the close a bright young miss of seven summers got up and asked the teacher: "Please, miss, what relation is Italy?" "Relation! Why, what do you mean?" asked the teacher. "Well," explained the child, "you call Germany the Fatherland, England the Motherland, and America Uncle Sam. What do you call Italy?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. L. Webb, 20, Temple End, High Wycombe, Bucks.

All efforts in this Competition should be addressed to: The GEM LIBRARY, "My Readers' Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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

Your Editor.

To gain his own ends Gerald Crooke of the Shell poses as a hero—and none but himself knows what a cowardly one!



A COWARDLY HERO!

A Thrilling Long Complete School Story of the World-Renowned School-boy Characters—Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Bernard Glyn is Busy!

TOM MERRY, Monty Lowther, and Manners—known to fame as the Terrible Three—and Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth were adorning the School House steps with their presence, discussing the all-important question as to what they should do the following afternoon, which was Wednesday and a half holiday at St. Jim's, when a tall figure in Army officer's uniform appeared in the school gateway.

Tom Merry & Co. did not notice him at first, so absorbed were they in their conversation.

"We've no cricket fixture on to-morrow afternoon, and we're all practically broke!" said Tom Merry dolefully. "The question is—what can we do?"

"Wish we could do Gussy for something," said Jack Blake. "The silly ass ought to have had a fiver to-day—"

"Weally, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his monocle severely on the leader of the Fourth. "I wefuse to be called a sillay ass. The remark is uttably uncalled for, bai Jove. It is not my fault that my patah has ignored my latest request for a fivah!"

"That last batch of fancy neckties did it!" growled Herries. "Your pater's getting fed-up with your extravagance, Gussy, and—"

"Excuse me, my lads!"

A quiet, refined voice broke in, and the juniors looked round.

A tall, handsome officer stood at the bottom of the steps, smiling up at the juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. had never seen him before. They raised their caps respectfully.

"Good-afternoon!" said the newcomer in a deep, pleasant voice. "Could you tell me whether Bernard Glyn of the Shell is about?"

"Glyn? Oh, yes, sir!" replied Tom Merry. "Glyn is probably in his study."

"Oh, good! I wonder if one of you lads would be good enough to show me the way?"

Tom Merry coughed.

Any of them would be only too willing to oblige, but Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor and mechanical genius of the Shell, always kept his study in a hopelessly untidy state—quite unfit, in fact, for the reception of visitors.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, who had the doubtful pleasure of sharing Study No. 11 with Glyn, were never finished complaining about the litter of electrical apparatus, weird chemicals, and other gear connected with his inventions that Glyn always had in the study.

Matters were much worse when Glyn was busy on an invention. On those occasions Kangaroo and Dane usually gave their study a wide berth, and left Glyn alone in his glory and muddle.

Tom Merry & Co. knew that Glyn was at present engaged on some new invention of his, although they were quite

ignorant of what it was. Glyn always preserved his secrets, and did not often confide in his schoolfellows.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "Perhaps we had better go along first and see if the coast is clear—I mean, see if Glyn is actually in, sir. Would you mind waiting in the Hall?"

"Not at all! I am much obliged, my lads!"

Tom Merry & Co. showed the visitor into the Hall, and went upstairs, making their way along to the Shell passage.

"Glyn's at home, I know, but we can't very well show a visitor into his merry glory-hole," said the Shell captain. "We'd better give him the tip to clear up a bit before we show the visitor up."

"Yaas, wathah! Must cweate as good an impresson as poss, bai Jove!"

The door of Study No. 11 was locked—as usual—when Tom Merry & Co. arrived. Sounds of hammering came from within, indicating that the schoolboy inventor was busy.

Tom Merry tapped at the door.

"Glyn! I say, Glyn!"

No reply.

"Glyn, you ass! You're wanted!"

"Run away!" said Glyn's voice from the other side. "I'm working!"

"Rats! Open the door! There's a visitor to see you—"

"Tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Bai Jove! Glyn, you disrespectful boundah—"

"Go and eat coke yourselves!" said Glyn brusquely. "Buzz off, there's good asses!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other in deep astonishment.

Blake gave the door a hefty kick.

"Glyn, you chortling fathead, there's somebody come to see you—"

"Rats!"

"Open the door!"

"More rats!"

Bang, bang!

"Are you coming out?" roared Tom Merry sulphurously through the keyhole. "You're wanted, and—"

"Can't be interrupted now! I'm in the middle of an experiment. Tell the visitor, whoever he is, to call another day!"

"You—you—you—"

"I wish you blighters would buzz off!" said Glyn in exasperated tones from within. "You're upsetting my train of thought!"

"We'll upset you when we do get hold of you!" hooted Blake. "Look here, Glyn, you've got to come down and see the visitor!"

"Bow-wow!"

"It may be important—"

"Go away!"

"Glyn, I weally must wemonstwate with you ovah your disgwaceful conduct!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus heatedly, and he rattled the doorhandle. "A gentleman is waitin' in

the Hall to see you, and undah the cires it will be necessawy for me to say— Yawooooooooogh!"

Gussy gave vent to that wild roar as a click sounded above, followed next minute by showers of blue-black ink that shot out, it seemed, from the top bar of the door-frame, in a manner of a water-cart sprayer.

Arthur Augustus, who was standing directly underneath, received the full benefit of that inky shower. Tom Merry & Co. tried to dodge away, but did not manage to leap far enough to escape the range of those devastating jets of ink.

Sizzzz-zzzzz-zzzzz!

"Yarooooogh!"

"Gerroooocch!"

"Yah! Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bernard Glyn from inside. "What do you think of my patent contrivance for driving away unwanted interruptors? Do you want some more?"

"Groooooogh! You howwid wuffian!"

"If you don't clear off, I'll let loose another dose!" threatened the youthful inventor.

"You awful boulder—"

"Look out! I'm just going to press the button again!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. hurriedly scrambled away.

They had had enough of Glyn's inky contrivance!

Gussy's face was a picture. His hair and visage were smothered in ink, and streams of it ran down his fancy waistcoat, adding most effectively to the weirdness of the pattern.

The other juniors, too, were liberally bespattered with ink, and while they dabbed at their faces they breathed all manner of blood-curdling imprecations upon the devoted head of Bernard Glyn.

While they were so doing a step sounded on the Shell passage, and Glyn's visitor came into view.

He stopped short when he saw the juniors.

"Oh dear!" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

The handsome, bronzed face of the visitor broke into a smile.

"Dear me! What ever have you lads been doing? Has somebody been throwing ink at you?"

"Groooooogh! Ye-es, sir! We—"

"A chap took us by surprise, sir—"

"We're awfully sorry we haven't found Glyn—"

"Never mind!" laughed the other. "A prefect whom I met in the Hall told me the way to my nephew's study, so I came up on my own."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ah, there is Study No. 11 a little way along this corridor. How curious that there should be ink upset outside!"

"Ahem!"

Glyn's visitor walked along to Study No. 11 and rapped on the door.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged scared looks.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Blake. "If that idiot lets loose the ink—"

Rap, rap!

"Hallo!" roared Glyn from inside his den. "Have you come back for some more ink, you blighters? Why can't you let a chap alone? Blow the visitor! I can't be bothered with visitors this afternoon. Tell him he's a nuisance—tell him to chop chips. Tell him anything, only for goodness' sake buzz off and don't worry!"

"Bernard!"

A gasp sounded from inside Study No. 11.

"Bernard!" exclaimed the visitor at the door. "Are you aware of the identity of your visitor?"

"I—I—I— Oh crumbs! Who are you?"

"Your Uncle Malcolm, from South Africa."

"Mum-my hat!"

A minute later the key grated in the lock of Study No. 11, and the door opened, giving view to Bernard Glyn's surprised and dirty face.

"Uncle Malcolm! My word! Fancy seeing you! This is a great pleasure—"

"Is it?" demanded his uncle severely. "Your remarks from inside here just now seemed to convey the opposite impression, Bernard!"

"Ahem! I'm awfully sorry, uncle! I thought it was one of the men from the village ironmonger's trying to collect a bill, and—"

"Ha, ha! You young rascal! I presume it was you who threw the ink at your schoolfellows?"

"Ye-es, uncle—at least, this little contrivance over the door did the trick. You see, somebody is always bothering me when I am busy, and—"

"Yes, I see, Bernard!" laughed his uncle, and he glanced round the study. "Great Scott! How ever do you manage to move with all this litter about?"

"Sorry the room's in such a state, uncle!"

The door closed behind Glyn and his uncle, and Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

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CHAPTER 2.

Crooke Doesn't Like It!

HALF an hour later Glyn's visitor left St. Jim's.

He passed Tom Merry & Co. in the quad, and gave them a cheery smile.

The juniors looked clean now, after having spent some time with hot water, soap, and scrubbing-brushes in the bath-room, but they were still feeling enraged with Bernard Glyn.

They were standing in a group near the steps when Glyn himself came out of the Hall door.

Tom Merry & Co.'s looks immediately became grim.

"There's the blighter!" roared Blake. "Grab him! We'll slaughter him for that ink business!"

"Yaas, wathah! Glyn, I considah it my painful dutay to give you a feahful thwashin', bai Jove!"

Glyn crossed his fingers and laughed as the chums of the School House walked threateningly towards him.

"Pax, my infants!" he said. "I've got news!"

"Look here—"

"Now, listen! My visitor was no other than Captain Malcolm Glyn, M.C., of South Africa—a long-lost uncle of mine!"

"Great pip!"

"Uncle is digging with the pater at Glyn House for the duration of his stay in England," went on Glyn. "There's a house-party on, and they want me to go over there to-morrow afternoon—and take a few pals along."

"Bai Jove!"

"So, if you chaps will chuck playing the giddy goat, we might talk business!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked interested at once.

They had often been to Glyn House, the residence of Glyn's pater, which was quite close to St. Jim's.

Bernard Glyn smiled cheerfully.

"The house-party is a pretty jolly affair, from what uncle says," he remarked. "As a matter of fact, the pater and Uncle Malcolm have a number of their own pals over there, and they want to play us a cricket match to-morrow afternoon."

"Good egg!"

"That's a topping-whoeeze!"

"So uncle suggested that I made up a party sufficient to form a team to play the Old Boys," said Glyn. "I propose to take you, Tom Merry, and Lowther and Manners—"

"What-ho!"

"And Blake and Herries and D'Arcy and Digby—"

"The pick of the bunch!" said Blake enthusiastically.

"And Kangaroo and Dane and Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern."

"Quite a family gathering!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I—Hallo, here's old Baggy!"

Baggy Trimble, the fat youth of the Fourth, rolled down the steps, his plump face wearing an eager look.

"You'll be taking me along, of course, Glyn?" he piped. "Can't very well leave me out, you know, old chap!"

"Why, you cheeky little toad!" exclaimed Glyn indignantly. "You've been listening—"

"Ahem! I happened to hear you from the Hall door, and—"

"Well, you can run away and play, Trimble! There's nothing doing for you—unless you want a thick ear!"

"Oh, really, Glyn, I don't want to brag, but I will suggest that I would be an acquisition to any house-party! And you chaps know how I can play cricket—"

"We do—we does!" grinned Tom Merry. "You're a Hayward, a Grace, a Stoddart, a Fender, and an Armstrong all rolled into one, Baggy!"

"Quite so!" said Baggy, with a smirk. "You know that on the cricket-field I'm a good all-round player—"

"We know you're an all-round player, Baggy, but you're not a good one!" said Tom blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, Trimble!" growled Bernard Glyn.

"Look here—"

"When I say three," said Tom Merry, with grim solemnity, "all of us will jump on Baggy and squash him. Now, are you ready? One—two—"

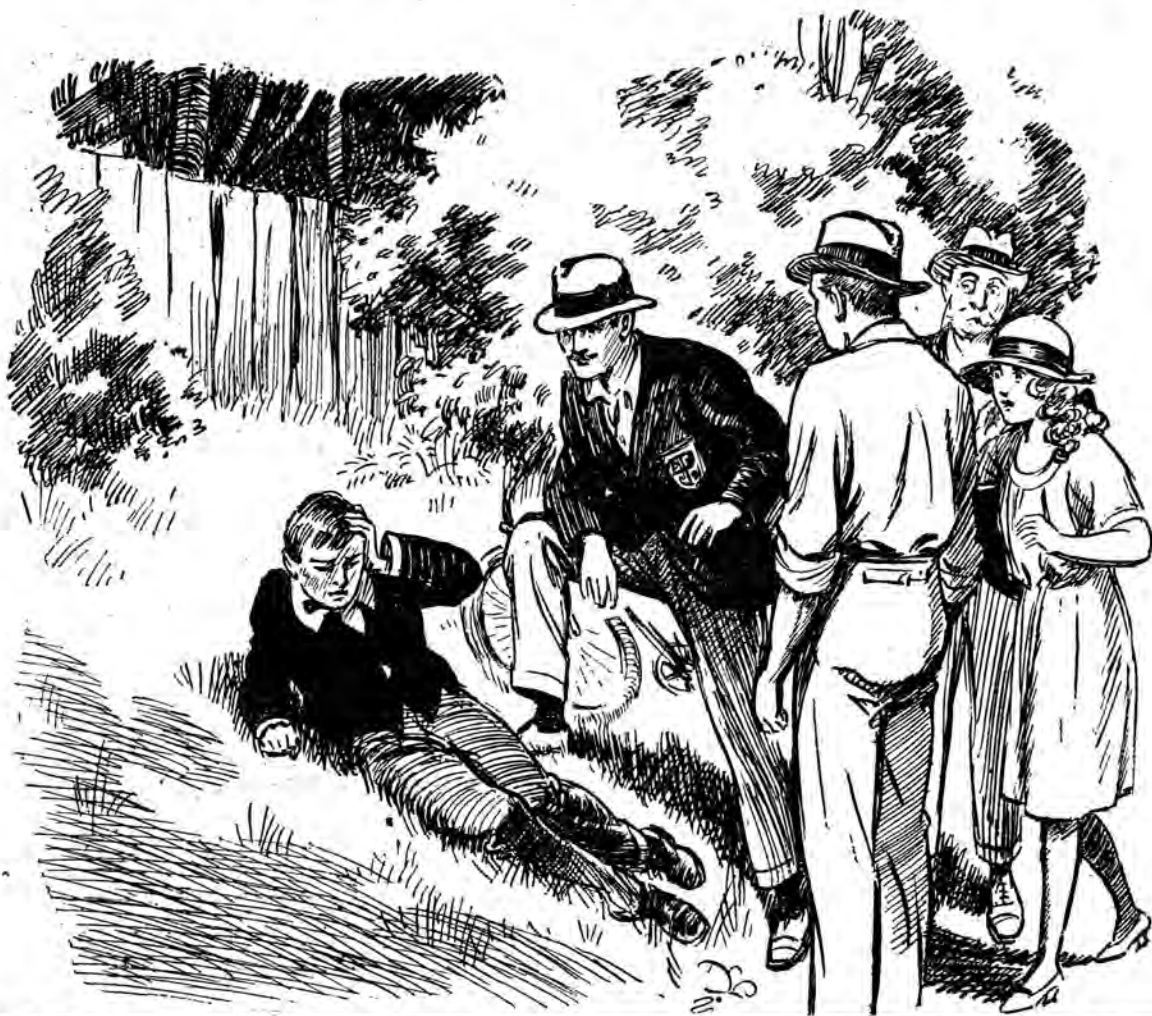
The word "three" was drowned by a piercing yell from Baggy Trimble.

The fat junior of the School House did not wait to be jumped on and squashed. He streaked across the quadrangle as fast as his fat legs would carry him, and disappeared into the cloisters.

Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn chuckled, and they strolled over to the New House to tell Figgins & Co. the great news.

Within quite a short space of time all St. Jim's knew of the house-party at Glyn House, and of Glyn's invitation to take over a party of juniors to play his uncle's team on the following afternoon.

Baggy Trimble spread the message far and wide, and Glyn was inundated with offers from fellows who suddenly began to show quite a brotherly affection for him.



Captain Glyn, followed by two other gentlemen and the anxious-looking Miss Glyn, dashed over to where Crooke lay beside his damaged bicycle. "Have you hurt yourself much, my lad?" asked the captain. "No, sir—it's only my head, I believe. Oh!" Crooke gave a moan and raised himself on his elbow. "The poor boy must be hurt, uncle!" said Edith Glyn, stepping forward. (See page 6.)

Glyn was kept very busy, in consequence, pointing out to these fellows that he had already made up his party. Very often he had to use emphatic phrases in order to impress this fact on his visitors, and some of those who had come with the milk of human love fairly bubbling in their souls, retired from Study No. 11 in quite the opposite spirit, and slammed the door behind them.

After a time Bernard Glyn became exasperated with the number of visits he received, so he locked the door and brought his ink-spraying contrivance into operation. That, he found, was far more effective than words.

Glyn was walking downstairs just after prep that evening when Gerald Crooke of the Shell followed him down and tapped him on the arm.

"Just a minute, Glyn!" said Crooke.

Glyn turned, and gave his Form-fellow a look of disfavour.

He did not like Crooke—and there were not many fellows at St. Jim's who did. Crooke was one of the black sheep of the school, and his rascally ways—such as smoking and gambling and breaking bounds at night—were viewed with great disfavour by the majority of the fellows at St. Jim's.

"What do you want, Crooke?" asked Glyn coldly.

"I—I want to ask whether you have made up your party for to-morrow afternoon," said Crooke. "If not, I should be glad of a chance to go along, Glyn. I'm not a bad hand at cricket, and you could rely on me to do my best."

"Thanks all the same, Crooke, but the list is full up," replied Glyn shortly. "I shouldn't want you, anyhow."

With that, Glyn continued on his way downstairs.

Crooke halted, biting his lips, his eyes glittering fiercely. Glyn's curtness had sent a flood of bitter resentment through him.

"So I'm not wanted! I'm not good enough for him!" he muttered. "He prefers to take Tom Merry and the rest of

the goody-goody, milk-sop crowd. My hat, wouldn't I like to do them in the eye, and get into Glyn House to-morrow, somehow!"

He turned and walked upstairs, and made his way to the upper box-room, a dark scowl on his coarse face.

The box-room was Crooke's favourite resort when he wished to indulge in the forbidden luxury of a smoke. Walking into the room, he closed the door behind him carefully, and lit a cigarette.

He stood by the window, smoking steadily and thinking.

He wanted to be included in the Glyn House party, just to satisfy his personal vanity, and his newly born desire to gain a more prominent position in the Lower School at St. Jim's.

Crooke was the oldest fellow in the Shell, and lately he had begun to feel his position bitterly. Tom Merry & Co. left him out of everything, and made him take a back seat in the affairs of the Form. Crooke resented this, and looked upon it as unreasonable treatment, although, had he been frank with himself, he would have seen the reason.

Tom Merry had no time to waste on fellows whose habits were repugnant to all the decent boys of the school. Crooke was a cad, and on many occasions in the past he had shown himself to be a blackguard. Had it not been for the yellow streak in his nature, Crooke might have been quite a prominent member of his Form. He was a big fellow, and was wiry and strong, and could play a respectable game of cricket when he wished. But Tom Merry knew that he could not be relied upon, so that Crooke did not get much of the lime-light—except when he was in trouble.

"I won't stand it!" muttered the burly Shell fellow savagely. "I won't be kept down by kids who are younger than myself. I— Oh!"

He broke off, for the door had opened and Tom Merry & Co. themselves were entering the room.

"Crooke!" exclaimed Tom Merry, blinking through the haze of tobacco smoke. "So you're here, you smoky rotter!"

Crooke puffed calmly at his cigarette, and then turned defiantly to the others.

"Well, what if I am here?" he demanded. "I suppose you have been spying on me?"

"No, we haven't!" retorted Tom Merry sharply. "We came up to look for Baggy Trimble—the young cormorant has raided our cupboard. But now we are here, Crooke, I think we'll give you a little reminder that smoking isn't allowed."

Crooke sneered.

"Who are you to tell me what to do, and what not to do?" he demanded. "I think I am capable of looking after myself."

"Rats! You need little us to look after you!" said Blake grimly. "You need to be shown the error of your giddy ways, Crooke."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Grab him!" said Tom Merry. "We'll stuff his fags down his neck—externally, of course—and then bump him!"

"What-bo!"

Crooke staggered back as the others closed in menacingly.

"Hands off! Yah! Oooooooch!"

A fiendish splutter came from Crooke, and he almost doubled up. The cigarette he had been smoking had gone into his mouth, and he nearly swallowed it!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"Out with the rest of his fags!"

Monty Lowther deftly jerked a large packet of Golden Glitter cigarettes from Crooke's jacket pocket. The Shell fellow was held down while Tom Merry rammed the cigarettes down the back of his neck.

Crooke roared and struggled desperately.

"Yaroooooh! Grooooh! You cads—"

"Now bump him, kids!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Wooooooop! Yah! Ow-ow-ow!"

Crooke, having been severely bumped, was hurled into a corner.

There he lay, moaning, while Tom Merry & Co. chuckled and departed.

Crooke staggered to his feet some minutes later. His face was contorted with rage and malice.

"Grooooh! The interfering cads! Yow! I'll get even with them!" he moaned. "I'll make them sit up for this! Yow-wow!"

And, performing a series of weird evolutions, Gerald Crooke made frantic attempts to extract the cigarettes that had so forcibly been thrust down his back.

CHAPTER 3.

Crooke's Ruse!

BERNARD GLYN & CO. looked forward eagerly to their projected visit to the house-party at Glyn House, and when next morning came they viewed the bright sunshine with great satisfaction.

"It's going to be a glorious day, my sons," quoth Monty Lowther. "Roll on, dinner-time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Lessons were a bore to the fourteen lucky juniors, and they heaved deep sighs of relief when the final bell rang that morning.

Dinner over, they changed into their cricket clothes, and went into the quadrangle.

Gerald Crooke met them near the old elms.

He gave them a smile—quite an unusual proceeding for Crooke.

"Hallo! You chaps just off?" he said. "I wonder if you'd care to let me stand treat for a brake for you to drive over in? I heard that you were hard up, and thought perhaps you'd like to arrive at Glyn House in style, so if you will let me—"

"We're walking, thanks!" said Glyn, and he turned away.

The others followed, feeling astounded at Crooke's sudden change in demeanour towards them.

"Bai Jove! That has sent me into wathah a fluttah, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "Crooke was quite polite, and it was jolly thoughtful of him to offer to stand the exes for a brake—"

"Don't you see the method in his madness, you ass?" growled Blake. "Crooke was after an invite to the party. He thought he'd wheedle himself in—see?"

"Gweat Scott! The cunnin' wottah!"

The juniors left St. Jim's and set out for their walk to Glyn House.

Gerald Crooke stood in the quadrangle, clenching his fists and staring at the gates with a bitter scowl.

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"I'll go to Glyn House!" he muttered. "I'll get in there somehow, whatever happens! I'll do it just to make them mad!"

He stood thinking for some minutes, and then a gleam lit up his eyes. He hurried over to the cycle-shed and took out his machine.

There was a grin on his face as he mounted and rode off from St. Jim's, taking the same direction as Tom Merry and the others.

It did not take him long to catch up with his school-fellows.

As he rode up he rang his bell loudly.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, jumping out of the roadway where he was walking. "The dangewous ass!"

Crooke was past in a twinkling, leaving a cloud of dust behind him.

He chuckled softly to himself and rode on swiftly towards Glyn House.

Ten minutes later he reached a fine country mansion standing in wide, extensive grounds. It was Bernard Glyn's home.

"Here we are!" muttered Crooke to himself. "Now for a look round, to see what's doing!"

He rode past the house and turned up a narrow lane that ran alongside the house grounds.

Looking through the railings as he pedalled slowly along, he saw a game of tennis in progress on the tennis court.

A little farther along a number of gentlemen clad in white flannels were at cricket practice. The field in which they were playing was separated from the lane by iron railings.

A grin overspread Crooke's face.

Looking ahead, he saw a steep hill rising, with trees on one side, but having an unobstructed view of the Glyn House grounds all the way.

"Those are some of the house-party players, I suppose, who are playing Merry and the others later on," he mused, glancing into the field on his right. "Now's my chance!"

He turned round and rode back into the main road.

He cycled along until he came to another lane, and pedalled swiftly up the hill that confronted him. Then, turning to his right, he eventually reached the top of the hill in the lane that led past the grounds of Glyn House.

A desperate ruse had entered Crooke's mind.

He started down the hill, driving hard at his pedals. The machine went down the hill at breakneck pace.

Then Crooke commenced to shout loudly, putting mock terror into his voice.

"Help! Help!"

His shout was heard by the gentlemen in the field near by, who ceased their practice and looked in horror at the bicycle that was now hurtling down the hill at terrific speed.

"Help!" shrieked Crooke. "My brakes won't act! I can't stop!"

Cries of horror arose from some of the ladies on the tennis-court as he sped by. In a flash he was lost to their view past the trees, but he continued to shout frantically.

There was nobody to see him now.

Crooke eased the pace of his machine by gently applying the brakes, which were working perfectly.

Then he deliberately drove the machine up the grassy bank at the side of the lane, and leaped from the saddle.

There was a crash, and the front wheel of the bicycle buckled inwards. Crooke lay on the grass, and looked covertly round.

So far, nobody was coming.

He hastily rubbed his face in the loose soil at the top of the bank, deliberately tore his trousers on a jagged stone, and then lay motionless.

A gate opened, and Captain Glyn came running out, followed by a number of gentlemen and anxious-looking ladies.

The captain dashed over to where Crooke lay beside his damaged bicycle, and knelt down.

Crooke gave a moan and raised himself on his elbow.

He clutched the back of his head with one hand.

"Have you hurt yourself much, my lad?" asked Captain Glyn.

"No, sir; it's only my head, I believe. Oh! I thought I should have been killed!"

"So did I, seeing the rate you came down that hill!" said one gentleman behind the captain. "It's a marvel to me you aren't badly injured, my lad! You're very lucky!"

Crooke groaned and continued to clasp his head.

"The poor boy is hurt, uncle!" said a pretty girl, stepping forward. Crooke, glancing at her, recognised her as Edith Glyn, his Form-fellow's sister.

"Why, he's a boy from St. Jim's, too!" exclaimed another of the party. "He must be one of Bernard's friends!"

Captain Glyn assisted Crooke to rise.

"So you're a St. Jim's boy, by Jove! You are a friend of Bernard's?"

"Yes," said Crooke, still as though he were in pain. "Glyn and I are in the same class, sir!"



As Tom Merry & Co. dashed into the room in answer to Edith Glyn's cries for help the dark, evil-visaged dwarf gave a savage snarl and bounded for the open window. Tom Merry leaped after him, but he was a fraction of a second too late. "The rascal's gone!" he cried. "Get downstairs, some of you, and try to catch him in the grounds. I'll follow this way." (See page 9.)

"Come in! You need a wash and a little attention, my lad. Dickers, bring along the bicycle!"

Crooke accompanied Captain Glyn and his friends into the house, a member of the party wheeling the damaged bicycle into the grounds.

"It's awfully good of you, sir," said Crooke, as he was given a seat in the large morning-room, and a maid fetched a basin of hot water and a towel. "I'm afraid I am putting you to a lot of bother—"

"Nonsense, my lad!" said Captain Glyn warmly. "I'll leave you to bathe your head—you know best where it hurts. I'll look out a pair of Bernard's trousers, and you can go up into his room and change afterwards."

"Thanks awfully, sir!" Crooke chuckled to himself as the captain left the room. His ruse had worked! He had got into Glyn House, and so far there had been no hitch in his plans.

He washed himself, and made a pretence of bathing his head, and soon afterwards Edith Glyn looked in.

"How are you now?" she asked anxiously. "Do you require anything else?"

"No, thank you!" said Crooke politely. "I feel quite all right, except for a headache. I expect that will soon pass off!"

"Oh! Here is Uncle Malcolm. I'll leave you in his hands!"

Captain Glyn gave the Shell fellow a cheery smile. "Better?" he inquired.

"Yes, rather, sir! My head aches, but that's nothing!"

"Well, Bernard's room is ready, so I'll take you up."

Crooke was taken up to Glyn's bed-room, and there a fresh pair of trousers were laid out on the bed for him. When he came downstairs again Mr. Glyn himself was standing in the hall with the captain, and he shook hands warmly with the Shell fellow.

"Sorry to hear you've had a spill on your bicycle, my lad," he said. "I'm glad nothing serious came of it. You must be singularly fortunate, Master—er—"

"My name is Crooke," answered the junior. "I am awfully obliged for the kindness I have received here, sir. I think I will be going now, and—"

"No, Crooke, you will stay here!" said Mr. Glyn warmly. "My son Bernard and other friends of yours from St. Jim's will be here very soon now, and I insist upon your staying

with us. We have a house-party on, and I'm sure you will find plenty of fun here!"

"Thank you very much, sir. I shall be delighted to stay!"

And a smile flickered across Gerald Crooke's face as he said this. His cunning scheme had worked out splendidly!

CHAPTER 4. A Great Match!

"HERE we are at last!" said Bernard Glyn cheerfully. "Come right in, you fellows!"

Tom Merry & Co. walked into Glyn House behind the youthful son and heir of the place, looking a trifle dusty, but supremely bright after their walk from St. Jim's.

Glyn led the way into the drawing-room, and the first person to greet them was his sister Edith.

"Hullo, Bernard!"

"Hallo, sis! I'm afraid there's rather a crowd of us, and—"

—Oh, mum-mum-my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

A chorus of amazed, incredulous cries arose from the St. Jim's party. All had at that moment caught sight of a figure who was seated in a comfortable armchair at the other end of the room chatting with Captain Glyn.

It was Gerald Crooke—or his ghost! Crooke leaned back in the chair and gave his schoolfellows a cool smile.

Bernard Glyn and Tom Merry & Co. could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes.

"Bai—bai Jove!" gurgled D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle again and again. "Is that weally Cwooke, deah boys, or—"

"Hallo! Here we are again, then, my lads!" exclaimed Captain Glyn, hurrying up. "Why, what's the matter?"

He looked in surprise at the juniors' utterly flabbergasted demeanour.

"My only hat!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "Crooke—in here! How on earth, uncle, did he—"

The captain burst into a hearty roar of laughter.

"Oh, yes! You are surprised to see him here—what? Crooke had an accident on his bicycle outside, and we brought him in here. He's staying the afternoon with us—the more the merrier, you know!"

"Ahem!"

"Hum!"

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

Crooke was looking him full in the eyes, with a leer of triumph on his face. He felt perfectly safe, knowing that the juniors would not give him away. He did not care about what would happen when they returned to St. Jim's. He had succeeded in getting into Glyn House, and that was all that mattered to Gerald Crooke.

Tom Merry & Co. avoided him as much as possible. They went out into the grounds to be introduced to the other guests, and to meet the team of "Old Contemptibles," as Captain Glyn humorously called the gentleman cricketers.

"Well, we have fifteen boys here now," said the captain, with a smile. "What about playing a single-innings match with fifteen aside? We shall all have a chance of a game, then!"

"Right-ho, sir!"

"That's a wippin' idea, bai Jove!"

It rankled with Tom Merry & Co. to have to include Gerald Crooke in their team, but it could not be helped.

Crooke swaggered out of the house and joined them on the field where the match was to be played.

Captain Glyn had suggested that Crooke borrowed some of Bernard Glyn's cricket togs, and Glyn had had to assent, although inwardly he was boiling with rage.

So Gerald Crooke, his "headache" now gone, and feeling—and looking—quite fit, took his place in Tom Merry's team.

The Old Contemptibles, under Captain Glyn, looked a very capable and formidable team. Tom Merry & Co. knew that, in the gallant captain, at least, they had a foeman worthy of their steel. Captain Glyn was an old Oxford Blue, and, out in South Africa, he had made a name for himself as captain of a big amateur cricket team.

So the guests at Glyn House looked forward to a good match, with the additional novelty of there being fifteen players on each side.

Captain Glyn won the toss, and elected to bat first.

"Now, then, Fatty!" said Tom Merry to the St. Jim's champion bowler. "You've got to show 'em what you can do. The quicker we get the match over, remember, the sooner tea-time will come round!"

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, his eyes glistening.

Captain Glyn and Glyn's father opened the innings for the Old Contemptibles.

Fatty gave the captain a selection of his best, but found them met by an unerring bat.

Mr. Glyn was not such an expert cricketer, however.

The first ball that Fatty sent down went clean through the centre of his wicket.

"How's that, umpire?" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"Out!" said Edith Glyn, who was acting as umpire. "Oh, dad! I thought you hated ducks eggs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A tall gentleman succeeded Mr. Glyn, and he treated Fatty's bowling very warily at first.

Captain Glyn piled up the runs in a steady and thorough manner, eliciting cheers of admiration from all.

The tall gentleman made ten, and was then clean bowled by Fatty Wynn.

The next gentleman in was a hardened stone-waller, and he had a comparatively long innings. The Old Contemptibles' score stood at 56 when he retired.

Redfern accounted for the two following wickets. He tried the captain with every ball he knew, but each one was slogged away into the country.

Tom Merry & Co.'s fielding was brilliant, and Gerald Crooke, in the long field, did some very useful work. His alertness and speed made the juniors open their eyes. Crooke was out to make a show, and he played his very best, giving his schoolfellows a display that they had never before thought him capable of.

The wickets went down one by one, Fatty Wynn performing mighty deeds with his famous "yorkers," but the captain remained set till the bitter end.

Last man went in, and Fatty sent his bails sky-rocketing immediately.

"All out!" laughed Edith.

The score stood at 197, out of which Captain Glyn had knocked up 119 off his own bat.

"My word!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically. "Your uncle is some batsman, Glyn!"

"Wait till he starts bowling!" grinned Glyn. "You'll see the fur fly!"

The Old Contemptibles ranged themselves on the field, and Tom Merry and Figgins took in their bats.

Bernard Glyn had not spoken idly, as Tom Merry and the lanky New House junior soon discovered. They played the first few overs very cautiously, and scoring was slow.

Tom soon got into his stride, however, and his first boundary was greeted with loud cheers from the spectators.

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Figgys soon afterwards scored a 3, and after that the Old Contemptibles in the field were kept quite busy leather-hunting.

Figgins succumbed at last to one of the captain's deadly scorchers, and Glyn went in to face the music.

He added 10 to the score before his middle stump was uprooted, a very respectable number, considering the nature of the bowling.

Jack Blake adopted stonewalling tactics, and had only knocked up 3 when he was caught out in the slips by an energetic old gentleman with a bald head.

Redfern added a useful 13 to the score, and Kangaroo's wicket went down for 15.

Monty Lowther's wicket was wrecked by the second ball he received, and he made a grimace when he surrendered his pads to Gussy.

Arthur Augustus cut an elegant figure at the wicket, and he soon proved that he was an able batsman, too. He received a good deal of the captain's bowling, but did not make many runs from it. Captain Glyn's bowling partner, a dapper little bank manager with a red-hot delivery, was no mean bowler, and he took Gussy's wicket after that youth had made 16 runs.

The next wicket to fall was Tom Merry's, and Tom carried off his bat with 51 runs to his credit. Kerr, Herries, Digby, and Manners knocked up 19, 4, 1, and 5 runs respectively, bringing the total to 165. There were only three men left now—Clifton Dane, Fatty Wynn, and Crooke. Thirty-three runs were wanted to register a win for Tom Merry & Co., and Captain Glyn was still as fresh as a daisy. Could those three fellows do it?

Tom Merry & Co. groaned when Fatty's bails went sky-rocketing after he had made only 2. Thirty to tie, 31 to win! Clifton Dane and Gerald Crooke were at the wickets now, and all depended on them.

Crooke, who was the last man in, walked to the wicket with a smile on his face.

He faced Captain Malcolm, centred, and then prepared for the first delivery.

Down it came, like a shot from a seven-pounder, and there was a click.

"Hurrah!"

Two runs were made, and then Crooke knocked up a single.

Dane blocked the next ball, and sent the next one away for 3.

Crooke soon showed that he was capable of dealing with Captain Glyn's bowling, and Tom Merry & Co. found themselves watching him eagerly.

The burly Shell fellow's eyes glittered as, with shoulders squared, he met each ball with his willow, scoring singles, doubles, and sometimes trebles.

Clifton Dane played up to his best junior eleven style, and after a nerve-racking but exciting quarter of an hour, 27 out of the coveted 31 had been made.

Crooke faced the bowling again, and Tom Merry & Co. noted the look of grim determination on the captain's face as he sent down the next ball.

Crooke stepped out to meet it, and tipped it off the edge of his bat. He took 1 run, and left the batting to Clifton Dane.

"Now, Dane!"

Clifton Dane stopped the next ball, and knocked the following one away for a single.

Only 2 wanted now.

All eyes were focused on Gerald Crooke as he stood in readiness to meet that fateful sphere of leather.

Click!

Came the merry sound of the willow striking, and the batsman ran. Once—twice—

"Huwah!" cried D'Arcy joyously. "We've won, deah boys!"

The grounds of Glyn House resounded with the cheering. Gerald Crooke stood at the wicket, leaning on his bat, and a triumphant smile lit up his face.

He had shown Tom Merry & Co. what he could do if he liked. His revenge and triumph for that afternoon, at any rate, were complete.

CHAPTER 5.

The Mysterious Dwarf!

"JOILLY good game!" said Captain Glyn enthusiastically. "Crooke, you played those last balls magnificently, although I say it myself."

Crooke, flushed with triumph, looked across at Tom Merry.

The Shell captain coloured and turned away.

"Come along, boys! Tea's ready!" cried Edith.

"Oh, good!" breathed Fatty Wynn. "I always feel extra hungry after a cricket match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All trooped indoors, where a magnificent spread awaited them—a spread that brought warm glows to the hearts of the St. Jim's juniors and caused Fatty Wynn to rub his hands together in ecstasy.

The tea was a great success, and Tom Merry & Co. forgot the unwelcome presence of Gerald Crooke in their midst.

Captain Glyn delighted the company with some interesting accounts of his experiences among the Kafirs of South Africa.

"I say, Edith," exclaimed Bernard Glyn suddenly, "that's a funny necklace you're wearing. I've never seen it before."

"No," laughed his pretty sister. "Uncle Malcolm only gave it to me two days ago. He brought it over from South America."

Everybody looked at the necklace which Edith Glyn wore round her neck.

It was composed of quaintly-carved blue beads, set with tiny diamonds. The centre bead was made of a marble-like substance, and contained a large, magnificent white diamond.

The necklace was unusually quaint and beautiful, and was passed round for inspection. Everyone admired it.

"That necklace came into my possession through an old Kafir witch-doctor, whom I saved near the Death Valley of the Elephants," said Captain Glyn. "It is reputed to have magic qualities, bringing good fortune to the one who wears it. Of course, I cannot vouch for that."

"It must be pretty valuable, uncle!" said Bernard Glyn.

"That, also, I cannot vouch for, except as regards the value of the diamonds it contains," replied the captain. "They are worth a good deal, of course, but whether the necklace has any additional value by virtue of being a curio I do not know."

Edith replaced the necklace, of which she was very proud, and the conversation turned into other channels.

Tea over, the company settled down to a musical evening.

Edith Glyn played the piano and sang, whilst the gentleman with the bald head, who had caught Blake out in the cricket match, roused all by his rollicking songs of the sea.

Arthur Augustus came to the fore with selections from his repertoire of tenor solos, which were warmly applauded, and Monty Lowther sang some comic songs with great effect. Captain Glyn mystified the company with his conjuring tricks, picked up from the Kafir "magicians" of the Rand.

Then Glyn switched on the wonderful multi-valve wireless set, which he had installed some time ago in the house, and all danced to the merry strains of the wireless dance orchestra. Edith had gone up to her room to change into her new evening frock.

The St. Jim's juniors joined whole-heartedly in the revels.

The dancing was at its height when screams sounded from upstairs.

"Oh! Hark!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn. "That sounds like Edith."

"Help! Help!"

The girl's shrieks of terror rang through the house.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy were the first to dash through the door.

They dashed up the stairs three at a time, with the other juniors close behind them.

Tom Merry tore into the room from which Edith's cries could be heard.

He saw a dwarf of dark, evil visage struggling with the girl on the floor. A pair of large, brown, hairy hands encircled Edith's throat in a vain endeavour at strangling her cries.

The hideous creature jumped up when he saw the juniors, and, with a savage snarl, he leaped to the open window.

Tom Merry made a dash for the window, but did not reach it in time. Edith's assailant had disappeared.

"The rascal's gone!" he cried. "Get downstairs, some of you, and try to catch him in the grounds. I'll follow this way."

The plucky junior clambered out of the window.

He caught a glimpse of the dwarf slithering down the drainpipe that ran down to the ground from the balcony nearby.

Tom clenched his teeth and took the leap.

He landed on the balcony, and a moment later was making his way down the pipe.

The dwarf had disappeared into the night darkness.

Tom, just before he reached the ground, saw a shadow moving among a clump of rhododendrons. He heard the others coming out of the open french windows just across the lawn, and he gave a ringing shout:

"This way!"

"Wun like anythin', deal boys!" he heard D'Arcy cry.

The hue-and-cry was taken up all over the house grounds, but no trace of the mysterious dwarf could be found.

He had made good his escape.

The pursuers had to give up at last, and they returned to the house feeling exasperated.

Mr. Glyn had meanwhile rung up the local police. Edith was now little the worse for her exciting experience.

"I was just coming downstairs when I heard somebody

moving in that room," she said. "I looked in, and those two horrible hands dragged me in. I screamed, and then the dwarf flung me to the floor and tried to strangle me. Oh, it was horrible!"

"The dwarf was a burglar, no doubt—probably after the valuables I keep in the safe up there," said Mr. Glyn. "You lads did splendidly by your timely intervention. Edith might have received some serious injury."

"Oh, that's all wight, sir!" said D'Arcy, polishing his monocle. "It was weally Tom Mewwy who did the twick, bai Jove!"

It soon became time for the juniors to return to St. Jim's. They left Glyn House still in a state of excitement over the visit of the mysterious dwarf.

Gerald Crooke accompanied them back to St. Jim's, but hardly a word was spoken to him all the way.

Tom Merry & Co. knew that it was mainly through Crooke's masterly playing that they had won the cricket match that afternoon, but they realised that he had only played like that just to "swank" and to humiliate them.

That was just like Gerald Crooke.

Tom Merry turned to him just before they entered the gates of St. Jim's.

"We should have ragged you baldheaded, Crooke, for that rotten trick you played this afternoon," he said quietly; "but we will let that pass. Don't ever try to thrust your presence on us again, that's all!"

"What rotten trick do you refer to?" asked Crooke, a touch of insolence in his tone of voice. "I don't know that I played anybody a rotten trick."

"You played us—and Glyn in particular—a rotten trick by foisting yourself on the party at Glyn House this afternoon!" was Tom Merry's hot retort.

"Really! I was asked to stay by Mr. Glyn and the captain!"

"You rotter! You spoofed them into believing that you had had an accident on your bike!" exclaimed the Shell captain sharply. "I know you lied about that, Crooke—that it was only a cunning wheeze of yours to get into Glyn House and do us in the eye. I looked at your bicycle, and saw that the rear brake, at least, was working perfectly. You had the machine under control all the time!"

"I—I—"

"You were jolly clever, Crooke, and you succeeded in going one over us. But let me warn you—don't attempt any more of your rotten cleverness, or you'll get it in the neck!"

"And you will kindly keep away from my home in future, Crooke!" said Bernard Glyn fiercely. "You aren't wanted there. I told Edith all about it this evening, so you needn't expect any more favours."

"Wathah not!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a feahful, oppwobwious boundah, Cwooke; and if I were Glyn I should feel like givin' you a feahful twashin'. bai Jove!"

With that Tom Merry & Co. turned away abruptly and hurried on, leaving Crooke by himself near the gates.

He looked after them with a sneer.

He hated them with all the bitter malice of his soul. He snapped his fingers and gave vent to a low, unpleasant laugh.

"That's all I care for your rotten warnings, Master High and Mighty Merry!" he muttered. "I haven't finished with you yet—not by a long chalk! I'll make you smart still more for treating me like a dishrag!"

And, his eyes glinting vengefully, Gerald Crooke followed the others indoors.

CHAPTER 6.

Miss Edith's Visit.

"MORE news!" Bernard Glyn made that announcement, looking into Study No. 10 two days later.

The Terrible Three were at home, busy on a forthcoming number of the "St. Jim's News." The scraping of pens ceased, and the youthful scribes looked up curiously at Glyn.

"What is it, old chap?"

"I've just had a run over to home and back," said Glyn. "Uncle was there, and he tells me that he's getting up a county cricket championship for junior amateur teams. The winning team gets a bronze medal with a real South African diamond set in it. I told him that our junior eleven would go out for that medal!"

"What-ho!"

"You bet!"

"What a ripping wheeze of your uncle's, Glyn!"

The schoolboy inventor grinned.

"Uncle Malcolm's a jolly keen cricketer, you know," he said. "He told me that he thinks our team is hot stuff, and stands every chance of pulling off the championship. The house, by the way, will be pretty empty after to-day. All the guests have gone, and to-morrow the pater and uncle will be going up to London on business for about a week. So poor old Edie will be alone in the house, except for the servants."

"Perhaps she will come over to tea with us once or twice," said Tom Merry hopefully. "We'd make her jolly welcome!"

"Rather!"

"Right-ho!" said Glyn. "I'll put it to her next time I go over."

That evening Tom Merry received a letter from Captain Glyn, telling him all about the cricket championship he was organising, and asking whether he could enter the St. Jim's junior eleven.

The juniors were, to use Monty Lowther's own expression, "on like a shot," and Tom Merry promptly wrote to the captain and told him so.

Thereafter the sole topic of conversation among the juniors of St. Jim's was the forthcoming cricket championship.

The next day saw Tom Merry & Co. hard at practice on the cricket-field, watched by an approving cluster of followers.

Crooke strolled on the field and crossed to the nets.

There was an ingratiating smile on his callow face.

"Any chance of a look-in for me?" he asked Tom Merry.

"I'd be glad of a place in the team, and—"

"And we'd prefer your room to your company, Crooke!" retorted the Shell captain coldly. "Buzz off!"

Crooke's eyes glittered.

"I suppose the team is so full of tip-top players that there's no room for me?" he said sarcastically.

"Look here, Crooke, if you want a thick ear, you've come to the right place!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"In fact, Crooke," said Monty Lowther sweetly, "you can have two, or even three thick ears, if you like!"

Crooke scowled.

"I think I've a right to a place in the team, Merry. I'm as good a cricketer as any of you. You know what I'm capable of."

"I know you're capable of letting the team down if you wanted to!" said Tom Merry angrily. "That's just the sort of thing you would do—out of spite. I'm not taking any chances, thanks! Sheer off!"

Crooke walked away, biting his lip with chagrin.

As a matter of fact, Tom Merry had hit on Crooke's very motive in desiring a place in the junior eleven.

He wanted to get into the team, to bring Tom Merry & Co. to rely on him, to raise their hopes—and then to leave them in the lurch.

That was Crooke's idea of revenge, of venting his spite on his Form-fellows.

It maddened him to think that Tom Merry & Co. saw through his rascality. His sudden interest in the welfare of the junior eleven had failed to make an impression. He would have to think out a fresh means of making Tom Merry & Co. sit up.

Cricket practice over, the juniors were strolling from the field, when suddenly D'Arcy gave a start and halted.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, screwing his monocle tighter into his eye. "Miss Edith, bai Jove!"

A girlish figure had entered the school gates, and was walking across the Close. Arthur Augustus had been the first to see her. The visitor was Glyn's sister.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Miss Edith here! How ripping!"

The heroes of the Lower School ran up eagerly to greet Miss Glyn.

"This is a most unexpected pleasuah, bai Jove!" said Gussy enthusiastically. "We're jollay glad to see you, deah gal—I mean Miss Edith! Gweat Scott! What evah is the mattah?"

Miss Edith seemed to be greatly distressed. Her pretty face was white and pallid, and her fingers were nervously twitching as they held her necklace.

"Is Bernard in?" she asked in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, Miss Edith, he's in his study, working on one of his inventions, I believe," said Tom Merry. "I—I hope nothing is the matter?"

"Something has happened to-day that has frightened me very much," replied Edith. "You remember that horrible dwarf who came to rob the house last Wednesday night?"

"Yes, rather! Has the rascal turned up again?"

The girl nodded and gave a slight shudder.

"Yes. The servants reported to me that they had seen him prowling about the house, and they were nervous. I naturally felt frightened, too, as I am the only one in charge now. Dad and uncle went to London by the first train this morning, you see. About an hour ago, while I was sitting in the library reading, the dwarf appeared in the doorway.

"Gweat Scott!"

"The horrible creature ran straight at me, as though he intended to murder me," said Miss Edith. "Oh, I was terrified! I picked up a large spear off the wall, and was able to defend myself until help arrived. The dwarf then disappeared, and he has not been traced, although the gardeners and the police have hunted high and low for him."

Tom Merry & Co. looked horrified and concerned.

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"I felt that I could not remain in that house any more," faltered Miss Edith, "so I came straight here to see Bernard."

"Come indoors, Miss Edith!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "We're just going to have tea, and you and Glyn must join us."

"Thank you! I should just love a cup of tea."

The juniors took Miss Edith up to Study No. 6, where tea on a large scale was already laid.

Arthur Augustus had received his belated "fiver," and he and his chums were celebrating accordingly.

Bernard Glyn was hard at work behind the locked door of his study when Tom Merry and Blake went along there. He demanded to be let alone, as usual, but when Tom Merry informed him through the keyhole that his sister had come there was an instant scramble inside, and Glyn came out.

He hurried along to Study No. 6, and he gave a low whistle of dismay when Edith told him of the startling happening at Glyn House.

"Oh, my hat! That was jolly rotten for you, Edith!"

Miss Edith soon forgot her fear, however, in the jolly tea-party that followed, and afterwards a party of juniors accompanied her back to Glyn House.

The butler opened the door and gave Miss Edith the news that two of the servants had given notice on account of the mysterious dwarf. No trace of the dwarf had been found, and the police were keeping close watch on the house.

This latter fact reassured the girl, and she took smiling leave of her brother and Tom Merry & Co.

The juniors hurried back to St. Jim's to do their prep. They could not help worrying on Miss Edith's account, and they hoped, for her sake, that the last had been seen of the dwarf.

CHAPTER 7.

A Reckless Ruse!

BERNARD GLYN came into the Shell Form-room for lessons two mornings later, looking haggard and worried.

Tom Merry & Co. guessed the reason, and when lessons were over they gathered round him in the passage outside.

"More trouble at the house, old chap?" asked Tom Merry.

Glyn nodded.

"Yes. I had a letter from Edith this morning," he said.

"The dwarf has appeared three times since she came over here—and yet the police are supposed to be keeping watch on the house! The poor kid's scared out of her life!"

"And no wonder!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "I wonder what the dwarf is after, anyhow?"

"I'm blessed if I can make it out at all!" said Glyn.

"The valuables have been taken out of the safe and put in the local bank till the pater comes back. He and uncle are in London doing some important business, and positively can't get back till next week. Edith can't stay in the house alone any more. I'm going to put the matter before the Head, and ask his permission to live at home till the pater returns."

"That's not a bad wheeze, old chap."

Glyn went away and tapped at the Head's study door.

Tom Merry & Co. saw him go in, and they waited for him at the end of the passage.

Ten minutes later Glyn came out, looking quite cheerful.

"Well," asked Tom, "what's the verdict?"

"The Head's a brick!" said Glyn enthusiastically. "I told him all about the dwarf, and of Edith being alone in the house, and pointed out to him that it isn't safe for her to be left alone. Her nerves are in a jolly bad state already. The Head agreed, but he didn't fall in with my idea of living at home and just coming here for lessons."

"Oh!"

"He had a better wheeze!" said Glyn. "Instead of me going home to live, Edith's coming here!"

"Great pip!"

"Isn't the Head an old top?" said the schoolboy inventor, with a chuckle. "He rang up Edith and invited her to come here to stay with his wife and Miss Marjorie for a few days. And Edith accepted."

"Oh, good!"

This news was received with great satisfaction by Tom Merry & Co.

Miss Marjorie was Dr. Locke's daughter, and she and Edith Glyn were already on very friendly terms.

"Edith will be paying a visit to a friend at Latcham to-day, and she will come on here by train—the five-ten at Rylcombe. I'll get Taggles to lend me his trap, and we'll meet Edith at the station and bring her on here with her luggage."

"Hear, hear!"



Gerald Croke continued to lash the galloping horse mercilessly, and Edith Glyn clutched at his arm in horror. "Put that whip down, Croke," she cried. "You are driving the horse mad!" The girl screamed in terror as the trap dashed along the narrow road. (See page 12.)

And so it was arranged.

St. Jim's soon got to know that Miss Edith was coming to stay for a few days, and all looked forward to her arrival. The news set Gerald Croke thinking hard.

He was still as bitterly opposed to Tom Merry & Co. as ever, seeking for any opportunity to satisfy his spite against them.

In the arrangements the juniors had made for meeting Miss Edith at the station the young rascal of the Shell foresaw an excellent opportunity.

Tom Merry & Co. had ordered Taggles' trap to be ready for them at a quarter to five.

Croke strolled down to the stables five minutes before that time, and found Taggles putting the mats down inside the trap. The mare was already harnessed between the shafts.

Croke waited until Taggles had finished and led the horse out of the stable. Then, while Taggles was all unsuspectingly locking the stable door, Croke jumped up into the trap and gathered up reins and whip.

"My heye!" gasped Taggles, wheeling round as he heard the horse starting. "Wot the— Oh crumbs! You young rip, come back with that trap! Hi! Stop! Which I'll report yer, and—"

Taggles broke off and started to run.

Croke had whipped up the horse, and was driving the trap at a furious pace towards the gates.

Taggles dashed off in pursuit, waving and shouting.

"Come back! Do you 'ear? Wot I says is this 'ere— Oh, Master Merry, which that young rip 'as run off with the trap! Groooogh!"

Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Blake, D'Arcy, and Glyn came running up.

They looked in speechless astonishment at the fast-receding trap.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Who—what awful rotter has had the nerve to collar the trap?"

"Bai Jove! It's Cwooke, deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy, who was arrayed in his most beautiful clothes and topper. "That

feahful outsiders! Oh deah! I'm in a most frightful fluttah!"

Croke looked back as the trap reached the school gates. He took off his cap and waved it derisively at his astounded schoolfellows.

"You rotters needn't bother to come down to the station!" he shouted. "I'm meeting Miss Edith! I'll tell her you were detained! So-long!"

"Come back with that trap, you howling rotter!"

"Rats!"

Croke gave the whip a smart crack, and the trap disappeared through the gates of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other in speechless wrath for some moments.

"The awful cad!" said Monty Lowther faintly. "Croke ought to be scragged!"

Tom Merry set his teeth grimly.

"Wait till I do lay my hands on him!" he exclaimed. "I'll give Croke the hiding of his life! But we've still time to stop him before he meets the train at Rylcombe. We'll follow him on our bikes!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors dashed over to the cycle-shed.

Tom Merry gave a cry of dismay when he tried to insert his key in the padlock.

"Oh, jemimy! The padlock's bunged up with sealing-wax! I can't get the key in—"

"Croke must have done it to keep us back!" said Blake between his teeth. "Oh, the rotten outsider!"

The whole interior of the padlock had been filled with sealing-wax, and it was hopeless to attempt to open it.

"The only thing we can do is to get a screwdriver and take off the padlock altogether!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"That's a ten minutes' job at least, as the screws are rusted in! That cad Croke will meet your sister meanwhile, Glyn."

"Never mind!" came the grim reply. "It can't be helped. Who would have thought of Croke playing that trick on us? We'll get our bikes out and meet him on the way back. We'll

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hold up the trap, get Edith out, and then give Crooke the ragging of his life!"

"What-ho!"

Jack Blake ran off and fetched a screwdriver. Then began the task of getting off the iron staple from the cycle-shed door.

This was accomplished after an exasperating delay. The door was dragged open, and the juniors rushed in and seized their bicycles.

They mounted in an instant, and pedalled away at top speed from St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, Gerald Crooke had arrived with the trap at Rylcombe Station.

The clock showed exactly ten minutes past five when he drew rein in the station yard.

He looked anxiously along the railway-line in the distance, but the train was not yet in sight.

Would it get there before Tom Merry & Co. arrived?

Trains at Rylcombe were notoriously late, and things would go hard with Crooke if Tom Merry & Co. got there first. Crooke knew that he would have to pay the piper in any case, but he was prepared to stand a ragging if he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had stolen a march over his enemies.

A shrill whistle sounded. It was the train at last!

Crooke waited impatiently while the train drew in, and the passengers alighted.

Miss Edith was one of the first to come out of the station. She carried a large case in each hand. She stopped and gave a start on seeing Crooke.

The Shell fellow raised his cap and climbed down from the trap.

"Half a mo', Miss Edith!" he exclaimed, as the girl was about to pass on with a curt nod. "I have been waiting for you, to drive you to St. Jim's."

Miss Edith looked coldly at him.

"I understood that my brother and his friends would be meeting me," she said.

"Yes, but they have been detained," said Crooke blandly. "So I brought the trap instead, you see. May I take those bags, Miss Edith?"

The girl winced at the familiar tone adopted by Crooke. She had heard quite a lot about the rascally Shell fellow since his cleverly manoeuvred entry into Glyn House, and she could not conceal her repugnance of him.

She looked round towards the cab rank, intending to hire a cab, and thus be independent of Crooke. She bit her lip with slight annoyance when she saw that the sole, solitary cab that Rylcombe boasted had just been engaged by an old lady who had come out of the same train.

Crooke grinned behind his hand.

"Well, Miss Edith, shall we start?" he said.

Miss Edith hesitated. She frankly had no wish to be driven to St. Jim's by Crooke, but there was no other conveyance, and she felt tired and spent after a busy day.

So at length, with a cold nod of her pretty head, she assented.

Crooke opened the door of the trap and assisted her in. He felt the girl shrink from his touch, and he gritted his teeth. He made no comment, however, but lifted up the two cases into the trap, and then got in himself.

He cast an anxious glance at the clock outside the Railway Hotel as he drove the trap into the High Street.

Tom Merry & Co. would have succeeded in getting their bicycles out before now, and must nearly have reached Rylcombe. Perhaps, at this very minute, they were coming down the High Street.

Crooke jerked at the horse's mouth, and drove in the opposite direction from the way he had come.

"Where are you going?" asked Miss Edith sharply. "This isn't the way to St. Jim's."

"Yes, it is, Miss Edith," replied Crooke calmly. "The road is under repair down there, so we must take a little more roundabout route."

This explanation satisfied the girl, and they drove on quickly. They passed out of Rylcombe and went into the country lanes on the outskirts.

Crooke tried to engage Miss Edith in conversation, but she kept her head averted from him, and answered him in brief, curt monosyllables.

This made Crooke more than ever savage. Anyone whom he knew disliked him was to him an enemy, and a subject for his bitter, unreasoning spite.

Crooke's eyes glittered as they came to a long, straight country road. He determined to get his revenge on the girl, and incidentally provide himself with some amusement, by giving her a fright.

There was an unpleasant expression on his face as he commenced to whip the horse for apparently no reason at all.

"You cruel boy!" exclaimed Miss Edith. "You must not whip the poor creature like that!"

"Oh, I'm just making it move a bit, that's all!" replied

Crooke carelessly. "We've a fine road before us, and we shall see what the old horse can do."

"Lash! Lash! Lash!"

The whip came spinning round again and again, and the horse bounded forward at a terrified gallop.

The frail trap rocked and lurched from side to side, and Miss Edith had to grasp the rail to save herself from being thrown off her seat.

Crooke continued to beat the horse mercilessly, and the girl clutched his arm in horror.

"Put that whip down, Crooke! You are driving the horse mad! Oh! You are doing this for the purpose, you coward!"

"Hold on!" muttered Crooke. "We're getting along fine now!"

The girl screamed in terror as the trap dashed along the narrow road. The horse had the bit between its teeth now, and nothing would stop it.

Crooke hung on recklessly, his eyes narrowed in evil enjoyment as he watched the suffering girl.

Suddenly, from a side turning, came a shout, and five schoolboy cyclists came into view.

Tom Merry, Blake, Glyn, Lowther, and D'Arcy, finding their quarry gone when they reached the station, had set out in the direction the trap had been seen to go, and gained on Crooke by taking short cuts.

A concerted cry of horror burst from Tom Merry & Co. as the trap hurtled by.

They saw Crooke lashing the horse, and saw Miss Edith holding on to the rail with one hand, while with the other she was making brave attempts to stop the rascally junior from using the whip.

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Tom Merry. "There is a sharp corner at the end of this road, and if the trap tries to turn at that speed—"

He shuddered to think of the rest.

He must try to stop the maddened horse.

The Shell captain bent low over his handlebars and scorched after the runaway trap. Would he be able to gain on the horse in its mad career?

Fortunately, the gear of his machine was very high, and Tom fairly flew over the ground. His breath came in short, quick gasps as he strained every muscle to his task.

Miss Edith was beckoning him on. Crooke looked back with a baleful expression on his face.

At last Tom Merry drew level with the trap.

The corner was very close now. Crooke, in his mad recklessness, did not think of the danger, or perhaps he did not care. Tom Merry was thinking only of Miss Edith, and he acted with swift instinct.

He rode neck and neck with the horse for a short distance, and then, releasing his hold of both handlebars, he reached out sideways at the horse's reins.

His hands closed over them, and all his weight came to bear on them as he fell.

The bicycle shot from under him, and there was a grinding crash as one of the trap wheels went over it.

CHAPTER 8.

Paid in His Own Coin!

TOM MERRY hung on grimly to the reins, and succeeded in dragging the horse sideways. It plunged wildly into the bank at the side of the road, and at last, quivering and trembling in every limb, it stopped.

Crooke in the same instant leaped out of the trap, but Tom Merry flung himself on the young rascal, and together they rolled in the grass, locked in each other's embrace.

"You cad!" panted Tom Merry. "You shall smart for this!"

"Let me go, hang you!"

Miss Edith jumped down from the trap, and, going over to the horse, patted its steaming, vein-swollen neck.

The two juniors were still fighting in the grass when the others pedalled up.

They leaped from their machines and went to Tom Merry's aid.

Crooke was quickly made a prisoner.

"Tie him up with that cord you have in the carrier of your machine, Monty!" exclaimed the Shell captain. "We'll settle with the rotter when we get him to St. Jim's."

"Yaas, wathah! A fellow who plays a trick like that on a defenceless gal ought to be horse-whipped, bai Jove!"

Crooke was made a prisoner and dumped into the trap, with Tom Merry's damaged bicycle.

D'Arcy led the horse, and each junior wheeled a bicycle, and in that manner they walked with Miss Edith to St. Jim's.

On the way she told them of Crooke's reckless act, and the juniors' blood boiled.

"He shall pay for it, Miss Edith, have no fear of that!" said Tom Merry grimly. "He won't try to frighten you again in a hurry, I'll warrant."



Vaulting over the fence, Tom Merry & Co. reached the Head's garden. The dwarf was crouching on a window-ledge now and, reckless of whether the ruffian carried firearms, Tom Merry gave a shout. "Come down from there!" he cried. "Do you hear!" The dwarf gave a low, hissing snarl of rage. (See page 16.)

Arriving at St. Jim's, Gerald Crooke was lifted out of the trap and taken upstairs to the Shell Form-room.

Tom Merry took the whip up with him.

Juniors gathered from far and near, and the room was soon crowded to overflowing.

Crooke, his sallow face pallid with fear, was dumped on a chair, and Tom Merry stood on another chair beside him and raised a hand for silence.

"Gentlemen of the School House, I want you to look upon this miserable worm I have at my feet!" he cried in ringing tones. "Its name is Crooke, and it belongs, I am ashamed to say, to the Shell. When I tell you of his rotten actions you will all feel ashamed that he belongs to St. Jim's."

"We're already ashamed of that, Merry," said George Alfred Grundy. "But what is his latest caddishness?"

"Gentlemen, you have all heard of that affair at Glyn House, when this rotter wormed himself into the party by means of a low trick?"

"Rather!"

"That showed to what lengths Crooke was prepared to go in order to make us feel small," went on Tom Merry grimly. "He tried to toady up to us afterwards, but I knew he had an axe to grind, so he got the bird. That must have riled him still more. He knew that we had ordered Taggles' trap to fetch Miss Edith from Rylcombe Station. The rotter forestalled us—ran off with the trap while Taggles wasn't looking, and filled the bike-shed padlock with sealing wax, so as to delay us giving chase."

"Great pip!"

"Crooke met Miss Edith at the station, and although she didn't want to let Crooke drive her, she felt too tired to walk—especially as she had luggage—so she got into the trap. Crooke went the other way round, so as to dodge us. He then played the most low-down trick I have ever heard of. Just to vent his spite on Miss Edith for cutting him, he whipped up the horse till it got mad and bolted. That was his idea—to give her a scare!"

A low rumble of angry voices broke out.

"To some girls the consequences might have been very serious," went on the Shell captain. "A girl with less nerve would probably have fainted, or perhaps jumped out and got seriously hurt. As it was, an awful accident nearly happened. Crooke didn't care. I wonder if he cares now that we are going to make him suffer for his caddish trick!"

"The howling rotter!"

"The unspeakable cad!"

Tom Merry's eyes blazed down at the cowering junior at his feet.

"Have you anything to say, Crooke?" he demanded.

Crooke bit his lip and was silent.

A score of angry voices, all talking at once, demanded that Miss Edith should be avenged.

"Chaps of the School House, I have here the same whip that Crooke used to beat the horse with!" cried Tom Merry, raising the formidable-looking instrument aloft. "I propose that he shall be given a taste of his own medicine! Hands up all those in favour of a horse-whipping for Crooke!"

Every hand in the room was raised.

"Then it's passed unanimously!" said Tom, swishing the whip. "Rope him to the blackboard easel!"

Blake, D'Arcy, Lowther, and Bernard Glyn stepped forward with alacrity to perform that office.

Lowther had brought in plenty of rope, and Crooke, howling and snivelling now, was tethered at full length to the easel, his back towards the assembled juniors.

Tom Merry took up the whip and proceeded to castigate Crooke.

Lash, lash, lash!

"Yarooooogh! Oh! Ow, ow, ow!"

Crooke's yells rang shrilly through the Form-room.

Lash, lash, lash!

The juniors stood in grim silence while Tom Merry horse-whipped the fellow on the blackboard easel.

Tom did not spare his victim, but gave him twenty stinging cuts with the whip.

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THE idea of having a Special Dog Issue of the "St. Jim's News" really originated with Monty Lowther, who some time ago wrote an alleged humorous article upon the canine tribe, and wanted an excuse for bringing it forward.

But it was Towser who provided the *raison d'être*, so to speak, by winning the second prize in the bulldog class at the Wayland Dog Show last week. Herries, needless to say, is nearly off his head with delight and pride, in consequence.

Jealous-minded people have remarked, with unpleasant emphasis, upon the fact that there were only two entries for this particular class, and that the judge, furthermore, was the tradesman from whom Herries purchases large quantities of biscuits for his pet; but, of course, Herries himself cannot be brought to understand that these circumstances can possibly have any bearing upon Towser's success.

Indeed, if he has any fault at all to find with the judge's decision, it is that Towser was not awarded the premier prize, and he is convinced that the stewards were guilty of gross carelessness in getting the award cards mixed up.

The dog show was not a very big affair, and none of us attended it, our tastes not happening to run in the direction of submitting our ears to a symphony of barks, growls, and yaps in a rather close and uncomfortable "doggy" atmosphere.

Wally D'Arcy had some idea of entering Pongo; but an examination of the preliminary competitors' lists, for the purpose of deciding in which class he was to be entered, led to the discovery that owing to his mixed ancestry it would be necessary to divide him among nine or ten classes. So the project was regretfully abandoned.

Curly Gibson had a notion of gumming false hair on to his white rabbits, and putting them forward as Pekingese; but upon being assured that they would most certainly be required to walk round the floor, he came to the conclusion that unless the judges were more than commonly unobservant, or very short-sighted, the characteristic method of progression of the bunnies might give them grounds for some suspicions regarding the parentage of the "Pekingese" they were called upon to admire.

So the fags were unrepresented. I have, however, endeavoured to compensate in some measure for their disappointment by giving them a show in this special number of the "News."

Tom Merry

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"RATS!"

By Wally D'Arcy.

A DOG is absolutely the finest pet that a fellow can keep, no doubt about that. But a chap who wants to keep a dog ought to make sure that it is a dog he's got hold of, and not a museum exhibit.

Now, I'm not saying a word about Towser. I've no doubt that he's quite a decent specimen of what he's supposed to be. The only puzzle about him is—what is he really supposed to be?

He's not a dog, that's jolly certain!

I mean to say, if a fellow wants to pal up with a snub-nosed, boss-eyed, bow-legged, lop-eared, web-footed, two-a-penny freak of Nature—well, it's his own business, of course. It's when he's under the impression that he's keeping a dog of sorts that you can't help wishing that somebody would take him gently by the ears and lug him off to an optician's to be measured for a pair of gig-lamps; or else hike him off to a home for incurables, which, in Herries' case, would be about the best thing to do, since he's booked for the journey, sooner or later.

One thing's certain. If Towser was as much of a dog as Herries is an ass he'd be absolutely it!

But as this article is about dogs, the less said about Towser the better. It's Pongo you want to put your money on, every time, believe me!

There's a dog for you! Some dog, I give you my word! Why, if he'd been entered for that dog show last week, he'd have swept the board, instead of crawling back with a twopenny tin mug. Second prize! Rats! The booby prize, more likely!

I saw the photographs of the prize-winners in the "Wayland Gazette." All I can say is, if Pongo couldn't have eaten the lot before breakfast any old morning—well, I'd have taken on the job myself.

You never saw such a mangy-looking crowd. Why, I'll bet the whole collection couldn't have caught a three-legged, blind rat that was tied to a nail in a wall—not even if the rat was trying to commit suicide.

But when Pongo goes rattling, there really is something doing. I've known him to catch as many as five in an afternoon. Of course, he doesn't always do as well as that. You can't expect him to be on top form every time; but even when the luck goes against him, and he doesn't get hold of any, he gives the little blighters a jolly good scare.

Of course, these dog shows are run on the wrong lines. Fancy giving prizes for prettiness! That's what they do, you know. All the little mammy's darlings have their hair curled, and their noses powdered, and pink ribbon tied round their necks. It ought to be tied so tight that they wouldn't want any dinner. ("Din-dins," they call it, the putty-faced little freaks. "Diddum's darlings wantum's mussums giveums din-dins!")

DOGS!

By Monty Lowther.

DOGS are animals that are compelled by law to wear collars so that they may be distinguished from cats and billy-goats, which they do not in the least resemble.

They have ten legs—two fore-legs (total ling eight) and two hind legs—but they find four sufficient for the purpose of locomotion, and rarely use more, for fear of being mistaken for centipedes and shot by game-keepers.

Dogs, like trees, are protected by a bark; but while the bark is outside the tree, it is inside the dog. You will often hear people say that a barking dog never bites. This is quite true; but, unfortunately, you can never be sure that the dog is not going to stop barking, and start biting. So my advice is: Never take the risk of letting a strange dog get near to the seat of your best Sunday bags, bark or no bark.

There are many kinds of dogs—little dogs, big dogs, small dogs, large dogs, fire-dogs, gay dogs, dirty dogs, and tykes. There is also a small class known as tripehounds.

Sometimes a dog is a fish—the dog-fish. Pongo, owing to a partiality for kippers, will probably sprout fins and a tail, and become one of these in the logical course of evolution.

Sometimes a dog is a flower—the dog-rose. These flowers grow on prickly hedges, and the legend goes that a dog one day went to sit down under one of these hedges, and the thorns pricked him. So, of course, the dog rose!

(Here, that's enough, Monty! If we permitted that sort of thing, the "News" would soon be going to the dogs!—T. M.)

A dog, however, is never an insect. Nor is it a bird, though most of them are wag-tails. (I shan't warn you again.—T. M.)

There are many different breeds of dogs, and each breed differs from the others in those points in which it is not similar.

I will now refer to a few of the best-known breeds.

WATCH-DOG.—Usually kept on a chain. Requires to be wound up at night.

SPORTING DOG.—Very useful, if properly trained. A first-class sporting dog should be capable of bringing in a bird for every shot you fire, whether you hit anything or no. Some of these dogs are of great assistance to anglers, jumping into the water, catching fish, and attaching them to the hook.

HOUSE-DOG.—Dogs of several breeds are adaptable to this duty. The most useful are those intelligent enough to bite the post-man when he brings your school report, and lick his hand when he ambles along with the Tuck Hammer you have won in the "Storyette" competition.



TOWSER!

By George Herries.

I DON'T pretend to be one of the bratny sort, but when it comes to dogs I do reckon I know what I'm talking about. Considering that I'm the owner of the finest dog of the finest breed in England, I ought to, anyway.

Now, you may have heard of my dog Towser. Lots of people have done, and, mark my words, lots more are going to before very long. Perhaps by the time these lines are printed he may be the best-known dog in the world. Of course, everybody knows that he's just won the first prize at a big dog show. As a matter of fact, he only got the second, owing to a silly mistake, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he won the first, even if he didn't get it.

And he is only at the beginning of his career. Who knows what he will do when he gets a real opportunity? I'm going to enter him for all the biggest dog shows in the country. And, my word, won't he cause some sensation!

The only thing I'm afraid about is that he will be marked now, and somebody will probably try to do him some harm, like they do with racehorses. Some rotters might even try to steal him. I've been thinking of hiring a man to guard him, because there's a silly, idiotic rule at St. Jim's that dogs can't be kept in the studies, and so poor old Towser has to stay down at the kennels among a lot of common mongrels of all kinds, including that towied-headed, nasty-tempered misfit of a mongrel that belongs to Wally D'Arcy.

Why, it's demoralising to a thoroughbred like Towser to have to breathe the same air as such a monstrosity! And you can bet he feels it, too, even if he is so jolly good-tempered that he doesn't complain. He has his likes and dislikes, the same as everybody else.

Talking about that, there are about a half-dozen people Towser can't stick at any price.

One of them is Ratty. Now, Towser hates him like poison, and I know that Ratty hates Towser about as much, though they never have much to do with each other.

But Ratty kicked him once, and Towser has never had a chance of showing the old freak what an unhealthy game that kind of thing is, for the mean old blighter hopped on top of a wall and yelled blue murder till Figgins came along and rescued him.

A dog is allowed one free bite by law, and Towser's great ambition is to have his free mouthful out of Ratty, though I don't want him to do it, because Ratty is such a tough, stingy old bird that it's quite possible Towser might break his teeth, and, naturally, I wouldn't have that happen for anything.

The other people who get Towser's rag out are Racke, Crooke, Mellish, Knox, and Cutts. He always looks sideways on Trimble, too. But perhaps that's because he thinks Baggy could spare a good mouthful without missing it.

Next to Ratty, I should say that Mellish is Towser's pet aversion.

A few days ago Mellish got himself mixed up with some trouble among the fags. I don't quite know what it was, but I think it was something to do with a bit of quiet bullying that didn't come off owing to six or seven Third-Formers coming unexpectedly

on the scene and teaching Mellish that arm-twisting and chin-pie are games that can be played by half a dozen even better than by one. They made pretty good use of a fives bat too, I heard.

Anyway, when they'd finished with Mellish he was pretty near blubbering, by all accounts. Serve the little rat right!

But the fags ought to have known what to expect. Getting even with people is one of Mellish's specialities, and he doesn't care two shakes of a terrier's tail how he does it.

In this particular case he decided to get back at Curly Gibson, who appears to have been the Lord High Executioner of the rescue party, and Mellish was jolly sore, in more senses than one, at the way in which Curly had wielded the fives bat.

Now, Curly Gibson keeps white rabbits. How anybody can waste his time and affection footling about with such lop-eared lettuce-nibblers as rabbits is more than I can understand. But, anyway, that's neither here nor there.

He's got four of them, and he makes no end of fuss of the little horrors, and Mellish knew that he couldn't find a better way of hitting Curly under the belt than by getting at his rabbits.

I don't know how he got hold of the poison, but I've got more than an idea that it came from the New House stinks lab, and that Chowie could explain something about it.

But it'll give you an idea of what Mellish is capable of, if you don't know already—poisoning a fellow's rabbits out of revenge for being caught out in rotten bullying.

He must have sneaked out of the House just after tea one evening, with the poison in his pocket. But things didn't work out as he'd planned they should—thanks to Towser.

FOUND STRAYING!

The following amusing incident is worth relating in this canine supplement.

It was about nine-thirty one evening, just as the St. Jim's juniors were retiring to their dormitories, when the bell in Taggles' lodge rang furiously.

"Drat it!" fumed the old porter, shuffling out of his lodge. "Who's there?"

A fat face loomed up behind the iron bars of the gate. It was that of P.-c. Crump, the Rylcombe policeman.

"I've just come to inform you as 'ow a dog found wandering around 'as been taken in charge, and is now in Rylcombe Police Station awaiting a claimant. Presumably it belongs to one of your boys 'ere, 'cause on its collar is the name, 'G. Herries, St. James' School.' Send someone along to the station with a shillin', and they can get the animal."

"All right!" said Taggles, with a sniff. He delivered the message to the Head, who sent Kildare up to inform Herries.

As Herries had only fed Towser about seven o'clock that evening, he was greatly surprised to hear the news.

"The Head has granted you permission to fetch the dog," finished Kildare.

Herries hurried off, and within half an hour was handing over the required shilling for the dog.

"Come to the stables and fetch him!" said the inspector.

"Hallo, Towser!" cried Herries, arriving in the pitch-dark stable.

He picked the animal up, tucked it under his coat; then, with a "Good-night, sir!" he hurried out of the station and back to St. Jim's.

Imagine the junior's surprise when he arrived at the school, to find that he had got a "thoroughbred mongrel," wearing a collar which Herries had thrown away in the school refuse-bin only a day or two before!

Herries, afterwards, saw the funny side of the adventure; but, as for poor old Taggles, he had to stand at his lodge and wait for the reappearance of P.-c. Crump, so as to deliver the dog back in his charge!

I was the first to find out anything about it. I went down to the kennels to feed Towser and bed him down for the night, in the usual way; but before I got there I could hear him growling.

You can bet it didn't take me long to get there after that. I'd got an idea that somebody was fooling around Towser, taking advantage of the fact that he was chained up and couldn't defend himself.

Sure enough there was somebody there.

But I needn't have worried about old Towser. He was quite all right. It was the other fellow who needed the reinforcements.

Towser was standing on guard, at the full extent of his chain, growling and showing his teeth.

Backed against the wall, afraid to move an inch for fear of getting within Towser's reach, was Mellish. And scared! Well, my hat, scared isn't the word; he was absolutely blue with funk. Towser had got him properly penned up, because the angle of the wall prevented Mellish from slipping away, and it was too high and smooth for him to climb.

As soon as he heard my step, Towser stopped growling. But he didn't take his eyes off Mellish, and there was no mistaking what he was prepared to do if the cad moved.

"What's all this business?" I said. "Mellish, you rotter, what rotten game are you up to?"

Of course, Mellish spluttered and snarled, and then swore that he'd only been walking along, and that Towser had attacked him savagely and forced him to take refuge where he was. Which was all rot, because Towser couldn't have got anywhere near to him unless he'd gone there of his own accord.

Then I saw something lying at my feet, and bent down to pick it up. It was a lettuce, and at first I thought one of the fags must have dropped it, because several of them keep rabbits, and go down to feed them in the evenings. But I happened to catch sight of Mellish's face, and he was watching me with such a queer expression that I began to think something fishy was going on. When my foot kicked against something else, and I found it to be a little blue bottle, I got a glimmering of what the game might be, especially when I remembered that to reach Curly Gibson's rabbit-hutches you have to pass Towser's kennel, just where Mellish was. Of course, Towser takes no notice of young Gibson and his pals when they go by, but the knowing old fellow had more sense than to think Mellish had any right there, so he hung the cad up.

I streaked off to the Third Form Common-room and fetched Gibson. I knew that Mellish was in safe keeping with Towser on guard.

Curly didn't come alone. Four more of the Third were with him, and when they saw the lettuce and the poison it didn't take them long to understand what Mellish's little game had been.

After seeing what happened then, I can only say: "Heaven preserve me from a ragging by the Third!" But Mellish deserved all he got, and I had no pity for him.



There was no mistaking what Towser was prepared to do if Mellish moved.

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By the time the last stroke had fallen Crooke was whimpering and howling with pain.

"Now he can go!"

The ropes were untied and Crooke was free.

His face, now turned to the silent onlookers, was white, strained, and haggard. He could not have suffered more if he had received a flogging from the Head.

Not one look of sympathy or of pity was cast at him. Every look was of contempt and condemnation.

Having heard the facts, the juniors did not consider that his punishment had been one whit too severe.

Gerald Crooke did not utter a word.

He crawled, rather than walked, from the Form-room.

"The comedy is ended!" grinned Blake. "That will teach Crooke a lesson; if it doesn't, he's incorrigible. Now let's go and find Miss Edith."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And, having witnessed the well-deserved horsewhipping of Gerald Crooke, the juniors filed from the class-room.

CHAPTER 9. An Alarm in the Night!

CROOKE was very, very subdued in the two days that followed.

He hardly spoke a word to a soul, but remained sullen and morose.

On the third afternoon Miss Edith was walking in the cloisters, reading a book, when Crooke walked up to her.

She regarded him coldly, and would have walked on, but the Shell fellow planted himself right in her way.

"Excuse me, Miss Glyn," he said, in a strangely subdued voice. "I—I want to apologise for my caddish trick the other afternoon. Tom Merry and the others gave me a hiding, and it has made me realise what a cad I have been. I wish I could make amends, but I'm afraid that all I can do is to say that I am sorry."

Miss Edith caught her breath and looked hard at the burly Shell fellow.

Crooke's face was downcast, and his tone of voice had been sincere. Miss Edith had heard of Crooke's horsewhipping, and the junior's broken, contrite demeanour awoke compassion in her large, warm heart.

"If you really mean that you are sorry, Crooke—" she began.

"I do mean it, Miss Edith, and if I can do anything to prove it—"

"That doesn't matter, so long as you are really sorry," said the girl gently. "I do not wish to be on unfriendly terms with anyone, and I hope you will try to be a little more like Tom Merry and his friends."

"Yes, Miss Edith, I will try," said Crooke.

The girl gave him a kind smile and passed on.

When she had gone, Gerald Crooke's penitent look vanished, and the old, hard, callous expression took its place. His thin lips widened into a sneer.

"So far, so good!" he muttered. "Being friendly with Glyn's sister will go a long way towards my getting on good terms with Tom Merry and the rest of the goody-goody crowd. I've got to keep up to the reformation stunt until it has thoroughly soaked in. They might take me to their bosoms, then, and cherish me. That will be the time to get my own back on them. I shall never forget that horsewhipping—never!"

Crooke walked away, and went to the cricket field, where Tom Merry & Co. were practising at the nets. He put on the penitent expression, and he chuckled with soft satisfaction when Miss Edith came up and spoke to him about the cricket.

He noted Tom Merry & Co.'s amazed expressions at seeing him in conversation with the girl. When practice was over and the juniors came trooping off the field, Miss Edith left Crooke, and he walked away, grinning to himself.

Tom Merry coloured when he mentioned the subject that was in all their minds to Miss Edith.

"I noticed you speaking to Crooke just now, Miss Edith," he said. "I—I don't wish to appear inquisitive, but was he bothering you in any way? If so—"

"No, Tom," replied the girl with a laugh. "Crooke was certainly not bothering me. As a matter of fact, he has

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apologised, and I believe he is genuinely sorry. He tells me he has had his lesson, and is now anxious to get another chance to redeem his name."

"H'm!" growled Blake. "I shouldn't take in all that Crooke says if I were you, Miss Edith."

The girl looked troubled.

"Crooke certainly seems very anxious to make amends," she said. "I think he should be given a chance. You won't be too hard on him in future?"

This was a direct appeal to all the juniors. There was not one there who would have shirked doing anything for Glyn's sister.

"Very well, Miss Edith," said Tom Merry. "We'll watch Crooke, and if we find him trying to be decent in future we'll do our best to help him."

"He'll need plenty of help, I'm thinking!" said Jack Blake in a soft voice.

Tom Merry did not see much of Crooke until bed-time.

He watched him curiously in the dormitory, and wondered whether his subdued, almost meek manner was a real attempt to mending his ways, or whether he was only pretending.

Tom slept lightly that night, and a creaking noise in the dormitory woke him suddenly.

It sounded as though somebody had trodden on the loose board just inside the dormitory door. Tom sat up in bed and looked round the moonlit room.

Only steady breathing could be heard, and, above all, Grundy's mellifluous snore.

Yet Tom was certain he had not been mistaken. He gave a start when, looking round more closely, he saw that one bed was empty.

Gerald Crooke's!

A grim smile played about the corners of the Shell captain's mouth. Then Crooke was up to his usual habits that night; he was out, breaking bounds, probably at the Green Man public-house near Rylecombe, a favourite resort of the black sheep of the Shell.

So much for Crooke's supposed reformation!

Tom lay in bed, thinking over matters, for some time. He determined to lay awake for Crooke's return, and then confront him with his duplicity.

It was a fine, warm night, so Tom at length got up and went to the window to watch for Crooke.

A bright moon was shining, bathing the old school in its mellow, mystic radiance.

Suddenly, as he looked downward from the window, Tom Merry stiffened.

What was that figure that moved in the shadows near the Head's garden just then? It wasn't Crooke, he could swear to that.

There it was again! This time a low gasp escaped Tom Merry's lips.

It was the dwarf of Glyn House!

There could be no mistaking that low, crouching figure with the large head. It was the dwarf right enough! Prowling in the dead of night at St. Jim's!

Swiftly the junior went over to Lowther and Manners and shook them in turn.

"Groooooogh! Whassermarrer?"

"Yaw-aw-aw! Tain't rising-bell!"

"Get up, you chaps!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've got to go down to the Head's garden as soon as we can—the dwarf's skulking down there!"

"By Jove!"

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, this very minute! It's the dwarf that attacked Miss Edith at Glyn House."

Manners and Lowther were wide awake in an instant.

The Terrible Three flung on some clothes and slippers, and hurried from the dormitory.

They gained the quadrangle by climbing out of the lower box-room window.

"There he goes!" muttered Lowther tensely, pointing towards the Head's private house next to the main school building. "He's climbing up the drainpipe!"

"This way!" exclaimed Tom Merry, darting off at a run.

They reached the Head's garden and one by one vaulted the fence.

The dwarf was crouching on a window-ledge now, and, reckless of whether the ruffian carried firearms, Tom Merry gave a shout and exposed himself.

"Come down from there!" he cried. "Do you hear?"

He heard the dwarf give a low, hissing snarl of rage.

Next minute his small figure swung off the window-sill, and commenced to clamber, with the swift adroitness of a cat, about the ivy that clung to the wall.

"Don't let him get out of our sight!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I mean to find out who that dwarf is, and what his business is. Let's cut through the shrubbery."

They were scrambling their way through the shrubbery in the Head's garden, when all of a sudden Tom Merry saw the dwarf give a leap off the wall and dart in among the bushes.

"He's gone!"

"He's in this garden somewhere!"

Desperately the juniors went in different directions in search of the elusive dwarf. They each heard noises in the garden, but they might have been made by one of themselves.

"There he goes!" cried Manners suddenly. "He's running to the school wall!"

The dwarf had had a good start, and his speed was incredible. Long before Tom Merry & Co. reached the wall he had got over and disappeared.

The juniors looked at each other in disappointment and chagrin.

"Oh, well, it couldn't be helped!" said Tom Merry ruefully. "We drove him off, anyway, whatever mischief he was up to!"

"I say, Tommy, I believe that that window-sill the dwarf was crouching on belongs to the room where Miss Edith is sleeping," said Monty Lowther. "I wonder if the dwarf is after her?"

"My Hat! Perhaps that's so, Monty!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He might have discovered that Miss Edith was living here now, and so broke in—for whatever purpose he has for breaking in. We'd better tell the Head."

"Rather! There he is, looking out of the window now, Tommy. I expect we woke him up!"

The Terrible Three went back to the garden, and soon afterwards the Head, clad in dressing-gown and carrying a lamp, appeared at the door.

Swiftly Tom Merry told Dr. Holmes of what had happened.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head in horror. "It certainly appears that the loathsome creature has some designs on Miss Glyn. Boys, you may return to your beds. I will get into communication over the telephone with the police at once."

The Terrible Three returned to the Shell dormitory, thrilling with the night excitement.

Gerald Crooke was just getting back into bed when they arrived. They darted grim looks at him.

"So you've been out breaking bounds again, Crooke!" said Tom Merry contemptuously. "I thought your reformation sounded too good to be true."

"I admit I've been out—but only to break things off," replied Crooke quietly. "I had to pay the old friends a last visit and settle up with them, otherwise I should have been bothered with them here."

Tom Merry darted him a quick look.

Crooke's explanation was plausible, but was it true?

Tom did not devote much thought to it that night, however.

His mind was too greatly occupied with the strange affair of the prowling dwarf at St. Jim's.

Who was the dwarf, and what was his business?

The Terrible Three lay awake far into the night wrestling with these questions, and the moonlight was giving place to dawn before they fell asleep again.

CHAPTER 10. Crooke's Cunning!

WHEN the story of Tom Merry & Co.'s midnight chase of the dwarf got round next morning, the whole school was thrilled and mystified.

Glyn heard the news in great dismay.

"So the rascal, whoever he is, has started operations here!" exclaimed the schoolboy inventor to Tom Merry in the Common-room. "I—I wish it could be kept from Edith. It will worry her."

The affair could not be kept from Miss Edith, however, for later on that morning the Rylcombe police-inspector came to St. Jim's and questioned her closely about the dwarf.

The girl was plainly distressed, and Marjorie Holmes did her best to comfort her.

It was Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. had intended putting in an afternoon at cricket, but when Miss Edith informed them, soon after dinner, that she was going to Wayland to transact some business for Mr. Glyn at the estate agent's there, the chums of the School House immediately decided to run over on their bikes to meet her when her business was over, and then they would make up a party to visit the Wayland Cinema, where a big super-film was being shown.

Gerald Crooke did his utmost to worm himself into the party, but Tom Merry & Co soon made it plain to him that he was not wanted.

Crooke accepted this in an apparently humble spirit, but the refusal embittered him still further against the chums.

Miss Edith borrowed Marjorie Holmes' bicycle in order to travel to Wayland, and started out from St. Jim's while Tom Merry & Co. were putting in a little time at the nets.

Gerald Crooke left St. Jim's soon after Miss Edith, and he walked steadily until he reached Wayland-Moor.

The route he took was the one that Tom Merry & Co. would follow when they cycled over to Wayland to meet Miss Edith later on. Crooke had a purpose in going that way. His cunning brain had devised another plan—a more sinister one—of getting his revenge on Tom Merry & Co.

Just by the quarries on Wayland Heath was a tumbling stream that ran through a narrow, deep ravine in the grey rocks. Tom Merry & Co.'s route would cross this ravine, the point of crossing being the old wooden bridge that spanned it close to the large, disused quarry workings.

The bridge was supposed to be for pedestrians only, but through the laxity of the local authorities cyclists used it as well, in preference to taking the main road higher up on the moor, which made a difference of two miles in the distance between Rylcombe and Wayland.

Crooke reached the bridge, and, swinging himself over the edge of the ravine, he clambered over the rocks until he was underneath the wooden structure.

Twenty feet below roared and gushed the swift-flowing stream—the accumulation of numerous underground springs down in the quarries.

A fall down there from the bridge would have nasty consequences, if not actual serious injury. A ducking in the murky water and a severe shaking would inevitably result.

Crooke examined the rotting wooden struts that held up the flimsy bridge. A low chuckle escaped him.

"A few minutes' work with my jack-knife will soon loosen these!" he muttered. "My word, if I can only make this bridge so weak that it will fall in when those rotters cycle on it, it will be the lark of a lifetime. It won't be dangerous—there's no chance of 'em killing themselves. They'd get a jolly good fall, though, and their machines would get smashed up. I'll do it!"

There was nobody about, so Crooke took out his jack-knife and got to work.

Tom Merry & Co. would be coming along soon. He would be able to see them coming over the wide heath.

"Good!" he muttered. "That's one loose!"

He left the four struts in position after he had loosened them. Until they were knocked away, there was no danger of the bridge collapsing.

One or two people passed over the bridge, but the rascally Shell fellow, crouching underneath, kept well out of sight.

He had thought out everything in connection with his plan.

When he saw Tom Merry & Co. coming he would knock away the four struts, and then climb down to one of the deep gullies among the rocks and hide. With ordinary caution he would be able to make good his escape, and nobody would be any the wiser. Tom Merry & Co. would get a ducking and a shaking up, and their machines would probably be smashed. And, to complete the devastating cycle of events, their little trip with Miss Edith to the Wayland Cinema would not take place. The prospect of thus making Tom Merry & Co. "sit up," made Crooke chuckle as he lay waiting and watching under the little wooden bridge.

He had not long to wait.

The party of St. Jim's cyclists soon came into view. There were eight altogether—the Terrible Three, Jack Blake & Co., and Bernard Glyn. Six at least of them ought to be on the bridge when it collapsed.

Crooke glanced about on all sides. There was nobody else in view, only the oncoming juniors.

He pushed away the four struts, and watched them fall into the rushing water below.

Then he tried to swing himself down the ravine.

A frightened cry escaped his lips.

He was caught!

A large protruding nail had caught in his jacket. He wrenched, and in doing so, some of the loosened woodwork sagged down. He gave a baffled groan. Tom Merry & Co. were pedalling swiftly to the spot, they would see the sagging woodwork before they reached the bridge, and would not venture upon it. And, unless he could get away quickly, he would be discovered, and the whole plot exposed.

He was in an awkward position to reach round with his hands, but he did manage it, and at last he was free.

"Look out!" he heard Tom Merry exclaim. "Slow up, kids! There's something wrong with the bridge!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. were there.

Crooke panted like a trapped fox.

How could he escape now?

He must get away somehow; he dared not allow himself to be caught. The horsewhipping he had received would be nothing to what he would get if the tampering with the bridge was traced to him.

Desperately he commenced to slither down the rocks, anyhow, towards the rushing water. In so doing he accidentally loosened a boulder, and heard Blake give a shout.

"There's somebody down there! This bridge has been deliberately interfered with, so that it should give way when we rode on it! If the rotter who did it is down there—"

Crooke did not wait to hear any more.

With a sob of relief he found himself at the opening of a narrow fissure in the rock. There was room enough for him to squeeze through, and he went in.

He was out of sight of his schoolfellows now, and unless they climbed down and discovered that opening themselves, he would be safe.

He crawled as far into the narrow cleft as he could, and found, to his surprise, that it was gradually widening. He kept on and, when he had pushed away a number of loose boulders of rock that obstructed his path, he saw that the break in the ravine led into an old, tumbledown quarry working.

"My word!" he muttered, scrambling to his feet and looking round. "I got out of that a treat! I'll shift some of those heavy rocks over the opening, so that if those rotters come through they'll think it's the end, and go back.

A better idea struck him as he was doing this.

He pulled down the wooden framework of the quarry working just in front of the opening, and ran.

There was a crash and a roar of falling rock.

Looking back, he saw that the cleft in the ravine was effectively sealed up for all time.

He continued his way through the old working.

At length he came to an opening that led into the main quarry. Looking upward, he saw that he was more than half-way down, and a low mutter of dismay escaped his lips.

He was down, but how would he be able to get up?

He shuddered as he contemplated the climb he would have to make. Daring climbers like Tom Merry, or Blake, or Figgins might, at great peril to their lives, attempt the task, but Crooke was too much of a coward to tackle it himself.

He had pluck enough for some things, but he shrank from this.

A fall would mean certain death.

His only means of getting back he had deliberately destroyed.

He might stay down there for days, or weeks—months, perhaps—before a soul passed who might look down and see him.

What was he to do?

As he stood there, miserably contemplating the situation, he heard something that made him start violently.

A girl's cry of terror!

It came from farther down the main quarry—past those jagged rocks that overhung the pools of stagnant water below.

Again that cry came to his ears.

"Help! Help!"

The voice was Edith Glyn's!

CHAPTER 11.

False Laurels!

GERALD CROOKE stood irresolute for some minutes. Then he was not alone in the quarry. Two others were down there—Edith Glyn and somebody who was apparently attacking her.

What should he do?

How had they got down there—that was the first question that came to his mind. Not from the top, he would wager; and certainly not from the ravine, the way he had come.

There must be another way in—and, incidentally, a way out.

Suppose he did get out eventually? When he returned to St. Jim's all manner of awkward questions would be asked concerning where he had been, and how he had got his clothes into their present state?

Anyone who knew the district would be able to tell, at one glance at his clothes, that he had been in the quarries. And Tom Merry & Co. would easily be put on the track of the truth concerning the bridge.

Crooke's sallow face paled at that prospect, and swift decision came to him.

He would go down and tackle Miss Glyn's assailant, whoever he was. He was an able fighter when it came to a scrap—and a desperate one. By so doing he would be able to account for his presence in the quarry. He would win recognition for a plucky deed, and turn suspicion away from himself in connection with the bridge.

Fired with these thoughts, Crooke started to climb down towards the bottom of the quarry.

Miss Edith was still crying out, and as Crooke clambered over a large jutting-out ledge of rock he saw, on the tumbled masses of rock below, the girl struggling with—the dwarf!

"Help!" cried Miss Edith, giving a glad cry when she saw the junior appear. "Crooke, come quickly! I cannot hold out any longer—"

"I'm coming, Miss Edith!"

Crooke climbed swiftly down, and took a wild leap that landed him full on the dwarf's back as he sprang away from the girl.

"Hold him!" cried Miss Edith. "He has stolen the necklace—"

Crooke and the dwarf were rolling over and over in the water, fighting grimly. The junior found his adversary strong and as fierce as a tiger. Crooke was desperate now, however. He got his knee on the dwarf's chest and held him down.

"Miss Edith!" he cried. "Bring me your girdle—quick!"

The girl ran over, and, while Crooke held down the still struggling dwarf, she tied his feet together.

"Good!" muttered Crooke, standing

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up and wiping his forehead, which was smothered with blood from an ugly gash he had sustained in the fight. "Now I can tie him up and make him a prisoner."

Crooke pulled off his necktie, and after a great deal of struggling, he managed to tether the dwarf's hands behind him.

"See if he still has the necklace!" exclaimed the girl eagerly. "That is what he has been after all the time."

Crooke felt in the dwarf's pockets and the strange Kafir necklace came to light.

"Oh, Crooke! How can I thank you for what you have done?" Miss Edith's voice trembled, her wide blue eyes shone radiantly at the junior. "After all your past acts you are a hero. I did not think it possible for anyone to climb down this terrible quarry."

"Tell me exactly what happened, Miss Edith," said Gerald Crooke, in a low voice.

"I was riding on the moor just by here, making towards Wayland, when the dwarf appeared from one of the quarries. He threw a stone at my front wheel, and I fell off. He then dashed at me, and dragged me down into a small quarry next to this, kicking the bicycle down before he went. I fought with him, and escaped. I lost my way among the workings, and found myself down here. Then, just before you came down, the dwarf came out of that opening over there and attacked me again. He would have succeeded in taking the necklace had you not come down to my rescue."

"Oh, don't mention that!" said Crooke, a crafty smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "I said that if I could atone for my caddishness the other day—"

"You have more than atoned, Crooke. You risked your life in climbing down from the top of this quarry. If you had fallen you would have been killed!"

Crooke gave a soft laugh.

He did not see fit to enlighten her that he had only climbed down the easy part, from just above the overhanging rocks, and that he had only come to her rescue because he was too much of a coward to wait for a chance of escape and face Tom Merry & Co.'s questions afterwards.

He told Miss Edith that he had seen her attacked, and had gone in search of her, and at last, looking down that large quarry, he had seen her struggling with the dwarf, and had climbed all the way down to her rescue.

Crooke lifted the dwarf in his arms, and he and Miss Edith entered the opening out of which she had seen the dwarf emerge.

She took a box of matches from Crooke, and in the fitful light afforded by these they traced his footsteps through a tortuous, tumbledown working, into the small quarry.

They then found it a comparatively easy matter to scramble to the top, dragging the dwarf with them.

Crooke left Miss Edith to look after their prisoner at the top while he climbed down again and retrieved Marjorie Holmes' bicycle.

They were making their way towards Rylcombe when they came upon Tom Merry & Co.

The juniors were amazed to see them.

When they saw Crooke marching the dwarf in front of him their astonishment knew no bounds.

"Wh-what the merry dickens!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Cwooke! I am all in a fluttah. I—"

"You've got the dwarf!" roared Blake.

"Yes; Crooke rescued me from the horrid rascal and captured him," said Miss Edith, with a smile.

Tom Merry & Co. listened in amazement to the girl's story of her rescue by the Shell fellow. She repeated the fabricated story that Crooke had told her, fully believing it to be true. Tom Merry & Co. gasped.

"Well, my only hat!" said Bernard Glyn. "Crooke, you've been a real brick. If you had not rescued my sister she might have been badly injured, or might have stayed down in the quarry to die before anyone found her."

He held out his hand to Gerald Crooke, who, chuckling inwardly, took it.

"Well, Crooke, you've certainly made amends," said Tom Merry, with a cordiality he had never before shown the cad of the Shell. "We agree with Glyn. You've acted like a brick."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors returned to St. Jim's, marching the dwarf in their midst, and there received a further surprise.

Captain Glyn and another gentleman—a tall, learned-looking gentleman—were waiting for them.

They heard Miss Edith's story of her amazing adventure in breathless wonder.

"How thankful I am that you have not lost the necklace!" exclaimed the captain. "I guessed, from what you had written and from your description of the dwarf, that it was the necklace that he was after. The fellow is a Kafir, one of the tribes from whom I obtained the necklace. Professor Laring here, who is an expert on curios, is anxious to examine the necklace."

Miss Edith willingly handed it over.

The professor's report on it fairly took their breath away. "It is one of the most rare and priceless bits of antiquity in existence to-day. There is only one other such necklace in existence, and it was sold only last year for fifty thousand pounds. This one, I should say, is even more valuable, as it is a better specimen. It is the work of an ancient sacred tribe of Kafirs. The present descendants of that tribe look upon these necklaces as sacred, and the removal of one from their native country is regarded as a calamity. I can understand this Kafir being sent to England to recover it at all cost. I should advise you to keep it, however. Such a prize is rarely found."

There was a sudden shout from Bernard Glyn.

In their wrapt attention to the professor's words they had forgotten to keep close watch on the dwarf. They were just in time to see him slip his bonds and disappear out of the study window.

The hue-and-cry was immediately raised, but the elusive dwarf managed to escape.

"Never mind!" laughed Captain Glyn. "Let the little wretch go. I'll see that he doesn't get a chance to steal the necklace again. Crooke, my lad, I cannot say how indebted I am to you for your bravery and resource."

Crooke, flushed with pleasure in his hour of triumph, was spoken of as a hero throughout St. Jim's.

Nobody questioned the veracity of the story he had told Miss Edith. The tampering with the bridge was put down to the dwarf, and the matter was not coupled with Crooke's name.

The rascally Shell fellow now found his ambition realised. He was on friendly terms with Tom Merry & Co., who, in his heart, he still hated with all the malice of his shallow soul.

And he made up his mind to make good use of that friendship in order to wreak the vengeance that he still craved. In the meantime, he was a hero, and no one but himself knew what a cowardly one.

THE END.

(If you have enjoyed this magnificent school yarn, be sure you read the grand sequel entitled: "THE HEROIC COWARD!" by Martin Clifford, in next week's bumper number of the GEM.)

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CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Dr. Ziglio!

AS Dr. Ziglio, the master criminal, read the telegram that his man had brought him his evil face went livid with rage. The muscles of his jaw-bones twitched uncontrollably. The telegram itself looked harmless enough. It ran as follows:

"Mr. Pryce Smith,
"Merton Hall, Merton.

"The chicken-house is on its way.—
PENWILL."

But, decoded, it had a very different meaning, as it then read:

"Wren is on your trail."

In the light of the fact that Mr. Pryce Smith, alias Dr. Ziglio, had been labouring under the complete delusion that he had safely blotted out Jennifer Pettigrew Wren, detective and crime investigator, for ever, this was a somewhat stunning piece of news.

At first Ziglio, as he paced the room in savage contemplation, was inclined to doubt the truth of the information he had received. It was altogether too incredible. The last he had seen of Wren had been in that small room at the haunted house, and then the detective had been securely bound down into a chair that threatened to electrocute him at any moment. Ziglio, therefore, was hardly to be blamed for allowing himself the satisfaction of regarding Wren as a closed chapter.

No wonder the telegram worried him. Penwill, who had sent it, was one of his most trusted men. He would never have wired him thus unless what he said was true.

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After ten minutes' fuming thought Ziglio admitted the need for rapid and drastic action. He must waste no further time dilly-dallying around the Prince Maharat. Penwill's telegram explained why the Zedian Government had been so backward in coming to the release of Prince Maharat. Obviously, Wren must have counselled them to hold their hands. Then, again, Ziglio realised to the full that Wren, working in conjunction with the Zedian Government, would have an almost unparalleled opportunity of netting him beyond all hope of escape. Indeed, Ziglio came to the conclusion that immediate flight by air was the only possible way out. He was taking no risks with Jennifer Pettigrew Wren.

Ziglio touched a bell on his desk. Within half a minute Redstark, his right-hand man, appeared.

"Redstark," said Ziglio, "I have just heard from Penwill. He says that Wren is alive and on our trail again. We shall have to quit, and at once. You understand?"

Redstark nodded. He was a short, enormously broad man, with a great scar running down the whole length of his left cheek.

"You will play these funny tricks of yours," he sneered. "Why don't you shoot 'em while you've got 'em? Your tricks will be the death of you and the rest of us before you've finished!"

Ziglio strode across the room to him, his whole face suffused with diabolical anger.

"See here, you scum!" he rasped between his teeth. "When I want your ideas I'll ask for 'em, but until then keep your foolish mouth shut, or I'll kill you as I would a dog!"

Their eyes met for a fraction of a moment. Redstark was the first to lower his. He was cowed absolutely by Ziglio's personality. Ziglio, knowing that he had won, turned away.

"Get out!" he commanded. "See that the airship is ready to start in an hour's time. Have plenty of food on board. We're going a long way."

Redstark left the room without a word. When he had gone, Ziglio filled and lighted his huge meerscham pipe. He then went over to his desk, and pressed what appeared to be a second bell. This time, however, the electric current was diverted into another direction, and what was apparently a large oil painting on the opposite wall slowly slid back, revealing a dark cavity beyond. Ziglio crossed the room and entered the cavity. He paused for a moment to switch on a light, then pressed another button, and the oil painting slid back into its original position.

Down a short, narrow passage, which caused him to bend slightly to avoid hitting the ceiling with his head, Ziglio went, until, in about a minute's time, he reached the end of it. Here he waited whilst he produced an ugly-looking revolver and saw that it was properly loaded. Then, operating a third button inset in the wall, and similar to the previous two, he admitted himself into another apartment.

This apartment, having no windows whatsoever, was lighted with an electric chandelier. For ventilation it relied upon two shafts, the entrance of which into the room was signified by the presence of two gratings low down on the wall facing the door. The room was sumptuously furnished; indeed,

Prince Maharat's private opinion was that only the Eastern splendour of his sanctum at the palace at Varhut rivalled it.

Ziglio found the prince in an armchair reading. The prince, a tall, lithe young man, with finely chiselled features, was clad in ordinary Western clothes of perfect cut. He glanced up from his book on hearing Ziglio, but made no attempt to rise.

"You may lower that revolver," he said, in cool, deliberate tones. "I have given you my word that I will not attempt to injure you by soiling my hands upon you. And you know that I have no weapon."

Ziglio smiled grimly. The carefully-worded insult had struck home.

"Your Highness would do well to be civil," he said. "I am in no mood to bandy words. I have come for a final, direct talk."

The prince stirred his limbs restlessly.

"You bore me," he said. "But I suppose you must have your little joke. Proceed."

Ziglio crossed the room and seated himself opposite the prince.

"Your father is dead," he lied.

The prince started, and then controlled himself. For a fleeting moment a look of agony at the cruelly blunt words flashed across his face, but the next instant the impenetrable mask of nonchalance once more settled down.

"Indeed," he said.

"The time has come," continued Ziglio, "for you, in your new capacity as Emperor, to command your Government to pay me the ransom that I demand—a sum equivalent to a hundred thousand pounds."

Prince Maharat laughed.

"I have already told you," he said, "that I do not regard myself as of that value to my country, and, under no circumstances will I command any such thing. If they choose to pay it on their own responsibility, that, of course, is another affair. Besides, I'm very comfortable here, Ziglio. As a matter of fact, I have no wish to leave or to part with your very charming and interesting company."

Ziglio was tolerant. He had no other course just then.

"What do you suggest, then, is your value?" he inquired.

"I should say not more than ten pounds," returned Prince Maharat. "But that is not of much use to you after all the trouble you have taken to secure me, and the expense I have been to you since you succeeded, is it? Frankly, Ziglio, I believe you've struck a loser."

Ziglio rose to his feet. His anger had gained the better of him. The prince's calm acceptance of the inevitable had won the day.

"You believe," he said thickly, "that your Government will save you! You think that they are more powerful than I! Well, young man, let me tell you that they are not. An hour ago I informed them that unless the money was forthcoming you would die—die here, in this room, in sixty minutes. That hour is up by all but five minutes, and if by that time something does not occur to cause me to change my mind, I shall put my threat into action. You will be left in this room, Prince Maharat, and your ventilation shafts will be stopped up and closed. And then a strong jet of mustard gas will be ejected into the room from a secret source."

Ziglio smiled evilly as he spoke.

"I have done this before, you see. I should advise you to be careful before you come to a decision. You have four

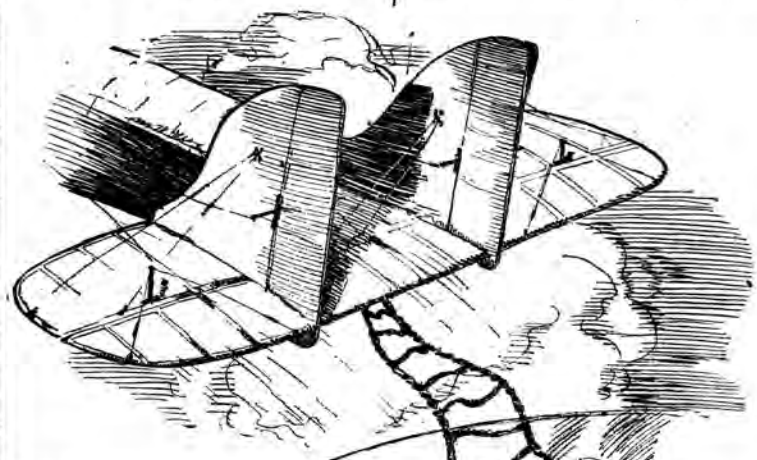
minutes in which to make up your mind!"

A minute later Ziglio was on his way back to his own apartment, his brain working at a furious pace. He knew that he was running a desperate race with time. If Prince Maharat and his Government consented to pay the ransom he demanded, that ransom would have to be delivered and a getaway made a very short period. Never before had he had his back to the wall so completely; but then, never before had he played for such big stakes.

CHAPTER 2.

The Deadly Sleep Bomb!

HE pressed the button operating the sliding oil painting that admitted him to his own room. Then he stepped into the room. As he did so a voice from behind him—a voice that he knew well—caused him to swing round abruptly.



As the ladder swung across the top of the airship, Detective Wren allowed his grip to relax. The next minute he was gripping the meshing of the gasbag with feverish hands, only just managing to maintain a hold.

"Put your hands up, Ziglio," came the words, "or you're a dead man!"

Jennifer Pettigrew Wren smiled at him from behind the barrel of the revolver that he held levelled, steady as a rock, at Ziglio's heart.

"And I'll take a small shade of odds," he continued urbane, "that I was the last person in the world you either expected or wanted to see just now—eh, Ziglio?"

Ziglio recovered himself with a mighty effort.

"I must admit," he said, "that your visit is a little unexpected, Mr. Wren, but by no means unwelcome. Can I offer you anything?"

"Not a thing just now," returned Wren, "except, perhaps, an explanation or two. For instance, where does that very interesting-looking passage lead to?"

"Ah, Mr. Wren," said Ziglio, "you would be a lucky man if I told you that! Many, many people have asked me that question, but I never tell them. And, curiously enough, they never find out."

"You'll tell me, though," said Wren coolly. "Somehow, I feel sure you'll tell me. You see, Ziglio, beating about the bush is so futile. Your house is entirely in our hands. Robertson is downstairs in command of a force of hardened warriors

some thirty strong. He will be up here any minute now. Wouldn't it be wiser to lead me to Prince Maharat without further trouble, and save all unpleasantness, and possibly bloodshed?"

Ziglio was playing for time. He felt certain that Redstark had not fallen into the hands of the invaders. Redstark would have seen them approaching from the airship shed, and would even now be formulating some plan for their defeat.

In any case, time was a great factor just now.

"I'll take you there," he said. "But I should like to know just how you found your way here, Wren?"

"My dear fellow, it was all very simple. Penwill fell into my hands."

"Penwill!" exclaimed Ziglio. "But he—"

"I know. He had my permission to wire you exactly two hours after he had seen me, and had given me all the information I required. He was not released from captivity until two hours

after I had left. I flatter myself I've done rather well."

"Do you mind if I go to my desk?" Ziglio asked.

"Not in the least. But give me the revolver you've got in your pocket first."

The sudden swift glare in Ziglio's eyes reminded Wren that his enemy's brain was working rapidly.

"Don't try any treachery, Ziglio. I'm in rather good form with a gun just now. The other night I brought down a firefly on the wing."

Ziglio's revolver landed on the carpet with a dull thud.

"Thanks!" said Wren.

Ziglio moved across the room towards his desk. Wren followed him with a levelled weapon.

"It's no good looking for an implement of violence," said the detective. "I very carefully saw that nothing like that was left about. I should advise you—"

Wren suddenly stopped speaking and sniffed the air.

"A peculiar smell," he said. "Reminds me of— Ah—ah!"

The detective's revolver dropped from his hand, and he clutched his throat, swaying forward drunkenly, gasping and fighting for breath. Ziglio's actions were strange. He clapped his handkerchief over his mouth and nostrils, and feverishly pulled open a drawer at the bottom of his desk. From this drawer he abstracted a curious-looking mask, which he pulled over his head, and proceeded to fasten down securely. When he had finished his headgear looked very much like that worn by deep-sea divers.

Quickly he walked across to where Wren had fallen. The detective lay sprawled on the carpet, his face a deathly white. He was breathing steadily, however.

Suddenly Redstark, clad similarly to his master, appeared in the doorway at that moment, and beckoned to him furiously. Ziglio followed him out of the room, down the wide oak stairs, and through the hall. Here a scene of almost indescribable chaos met his eye. The forms of big men lay about the floor in all directions, and in all positions. He saw the mighty Robertson reduced to a helpless mass, sprawled over the table in the centre. Chairs were overturned, and there were all the signs that a furious struggle had taken place.

Ziglio and Redstark passed out of the hall rapidly, and, once in the open air, and about a hundred yards from the house, they whipped off their masks.

"Closest shave ever," said Redstark tensely. "I saw them coming from the shed. They took the place by storm. 'Chick' and the 'Beetle' have gone west, I believe."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Ziglio irritably. "What you did is what I want to know. Forget Chick and the Beetle."

"I doubled back into the shed and collared hold of a couple of your deadly sleep bombs. Then I waited my time, slipped in, and burst 'em both among the crowd."

Redstark allowed himself a satisfied chuckle, and went on:

"You should have seen them topple over. None of 'em lasted more'n a minute. The big chap, he was the worst. He started smashing things up."

"Is the dirigible ready?"

"Propellers running now. Luckily they didn't see her. They didn't come round that side. She's crewed up, too. Collins, Kohnheim, Vladimir, Cieffun, De Votchikiss, Greville, and me and you. Plenty of food aboard. Petrol enough

for two thousand miles at least, so Kohnheim says. I—"

"They'll recover inside half an hour," interrupted Ziglio. "Get the prince. Give him my mask. We'll have that hundred thousand yet. Don't be more than five minutes or I'll brain you! I'll go on to the dirigible. Join me there."

"Right!" said Redstark; and, jamming on his mask once more, sped away in the direction of the house.

Ziglio himself doubled across the grounds, and, inside three minutes, had arrived at the hangar of his private airship, the Hawk. He found, even as Redstark had told him, the engines running well, and the airship herself straining at her leashes.

De Votchikiss, Ziglio's pilot, was leaning over the side of the after-boat.

"Any idea where you want to make for?" he demanded.

Ziglio nodded.

"Pull out for the island," he said. "We're safe there for a bit, anyhow. We can pick up supplies of everything, too. Give me a hand in."

Aided by De Votchikiss, the master criminal clambered into the airship, and swung himself into the travelling-clothes that were waiting for him. Watching for the figures of Redstark and Prince Maharat to appear, he looked at his watch impatiently.

"He's got one more minute," he muttered. "If he isn't here by then we quit. Ah, here he comes!"

Two running figures had come into view. They were dashing towards the airship as though for dear life. They reached the Hawk.

"You're only just in time, Redstark," said Ziglio. "And you, too, Prince Maharat. Let me help you in."

In a very short space of time both Redstark and the prince were safely in the airship, the prince ensconced in Ziglio's private cabin.

"Had to bring him at the point of my revolver," explained Redstark. "And then I don't think he'd have come if I hadn't told him I was helping him to escape."

"Are Wren's crowd still affected by those fumes?"

"They certainly are," responded Redstark, looking very sad. "I badly wanted to shoot two or three, but I didn't waste time. I had a pot at Wren going out, though. Couldn't resist it. I don't know whether or not I got him."

Ziglio telephoned forward to release the automatic halters and grappling-ropes that were his own invention. Simultaneously the after ropes were slipped, and the Hawk rose gracefully into the air. Tilting her nose well up, De Votchikiss shot her forward at an ever increasing speed, and in five minutes she had disappeared from view.

Down on Mother Earth there stood the only living person who had seen her go; the only living person who had the slightest knowledge, now, as to whither she was bound. This was Augustus, Jennifer Pettigrew Wren's factotum.

"Thank 'eaven we come down by plane!" he murmured to the skies. "We can follow you, Biglio, or Wriglio, or whatever yer rummy name is. 'Ere, I'd better 'op off and see 'ow the boss is. Somethink must 'ave 'appened."

CHAPTER 3.

A Darling Way Out!

ON the way to the house it occurred to Augustus that there must be some very good explanation as to why Redstark and the prince had worn these strange-looking masks. He connected it with the complete dis-

appearance of his master and party. He felt that it had been a not unlucky thing that he had been sent out on a scouting expedition, whilst the rest had taken the house itself by storm.

So, in light of all these curious things, he went up the stone steps leading to the big front door, and placed his handkerchief over his face, having previously taken a long, deep breath.

Augustus entered the hall cautiously. It was lucky that he did so. If he became overcome by poison-gas, he reasoned, all would be lost.

To his great relief, Augustus saw Robertson sitting up on the floor, running his fingers through his hair in a dazed fashion.

Augustus decided that if Robertson could breathe certainly he could. He relieved his face of the handkerchief, and, crossing over to Robertson, spoke: "What on earth's 'appened, sir?" he inquired.

Robertson looked up at him blankly.

"Don't know!" he grunted. "Got a fearful headache, I know!"

Sounds of movement, grunts, and one or two groans from the other members of the ill-fated relief-party came upon their ears. Augustus helped Robertson to his feet, and from the height of his 6 ft. 3 ins. the latter regarded the prone forms around him.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, in abject astonishment.

"Look un'appy, don't they, sir?" murmured Augustus.

Returning memory brought light to Robertson. The effects of the gas were fast wearing off.

"I remember!" he roared. "Ziglio! Where's Ziglio? Where's Wren? Where's the chief? We were all here! I was just coming upstairs when something caught me by the throat! I went mad! Jumping Jehosaphat! Has Ziglio escaped, boy?"

Augustus nodded.

"E 'as, Mr. Robertson! But I know where 'e's gone to! We can follow 'im easy!"

By this time other men had risen to their feet. An excited babble of talk rang through the building. And then suddenly, above it all, came a voice, clear, crisp, and commanding:

"Boys, Ziglio has escaped, and he has taken the prince with him!"

All in the hall turned and looked up. They saw the figure of Jennifer Wren coming down the stairs rapidly. Wren made for Robertson and Augustus.

"The scoundrels tricked us at the last minute!" he said. "What news have you?"

Robertson grunted.

"I?" he returned. "None! I went under with the rest. But the boy here I had sent out on a scouting expedition, and he was therefore not in the house at the time that they let those infernal bombs off. He says that Ziglio and his party went off in an airship, en route for their private island. It seems almost incredible to me."

Wren turned to Augustus.

"Is what Mr. Robertson tells me the truth?" he asked rapidly.

"Not 'arf, chief!" responded Augustus, with confidence. "They didn't know I was close by, an' I 'eard Ziglio tellin' 'is pilot to make for the island."

Wren breathed a sigh of relief.

"All hope is not lost, then!" he said. "Some of us must follow! Thank goodness we came down by plane, since I happen to know just where Ziglio's island lies, Rob!"

The detective's brain was working at express speed.



As Detective Wren swayed forward from the effects of the poisonous gas, Dr. Ziglio abstracted a curious-looking mask from his drawer and proceeded to fasten it securely over his head.

"I've a plan!" he said. "It's a daring one, but it's the only one. If once Ziglio lands on that island all hope is gone. He has a stronghold there that is impregnable without the use of dynamite. So my idea is for you, myself, and another to take the big Army plane with the gun on it and chase them for dear life. I'll tell you the rest as we go along."

He turned to the rest of the party.

"I want one volunteer to accompany Mr. Robertson and myself. I then want the party who brought down the seaplane here to follow us wherever we go, and to be prepared to pick up myself and Prince Maharat from the water at any period after we have once sighted Ziglio's airship. There is not a second to be lost."

And not a second was lost. Within fifteen minutes, with a roar like a thunderclap, the great engines of the Army plane, with Wren, Robertson at the joystick, and a third man mounted over the gun, burst into action.

With a rousing cheer from the rest of the party, the plane soared up and was soon away, closely followed by the speedy seaplane that was shortly to perform such valuable work.

Soon they were well on their way, the leading plane doing a comfortable eighty miles an hour, with Wren keeping a lynxlike eye on the horizon for any signs of the fugitive airship. After an hour's travelling thus Wren suddenly gripped Robertson's arm.

"I've spotted 'em!" he roared. "Slightly to the right of us! We shall overtake them in half an hour, or less at this going! I'll get ready for action!"

The detective's movements after that time were strange in the extreme. From the back of the plane he produced a rope ladder, which he proceeded to lower from the machine and fasten securely into its sockets. He then saw that his revolver was loaded, and once more looked at the ever-nearing airship.

Only five miles now separated them. Robertson opened out a little more. In fifteen minutes they were not more than four hundred yards from the Hawk and flying on a level with it.

Wren, who had taken up a position beside the man on the gun, shouted his instructions.

"Fire when you think you can take away both his propellers!" he roared. "But be careful not to hit the gas-bag, though!"

The man nodded his assent.

In another couple of minutes his gun barked out.

When the smoke cleared away, Wren, through his glasses, discerned that consternation reigned supreme on the Hawk, and that one of its propellers had been carried away.

The gun barked out again. This time, apparently, the shot missed.

Robertson manœuvred for a better position and circled round the airship.

Once more came the boom of the gun. This time there was no mistake. The other propeller was whirled off like a leaf, and hurtled down into the sea below. The Hawk lay in mid-air, becalmed, incapable of movement and at the mercy of the winds, a derelict.

And then Jennifer Pettigrew Wren left his aeroplane by the back door, as it were. In other words, he went down the rope ladder, with a nerve as steady as a rock, swaying in space two thousand feet above the ocean.

Robertson brought the machine directly over the airship, and as the ladder swung across the top of the gas-bag Wren allowed his grip to relax. The next minute he was gripping the meshing of the gas-bag with feverish hands, only just managing to maintain a hold.

In ten minutes he had reached the rigging itself, and, looking down, saw Ziglio gazing up at him, his face distorted with a paroxysm of anger.

"Don't fire, Ziglio!" shouted Wren. "If I go, you go, too! Remember that! There's lots more ammunition on board!"

Wren swarmed down the rigging rapidly, and in another couple of minutes set foot in the after-boat of the Hawk.

"Now," he said briskly, "I've no time to waste! You will do exactly as I say, Dr. Ziglio, or we shall all die a watery death! I want Prince Maharat and two parachutes!"

Ziglio looked at Wren for a moment, wondering if the detective meant what he said.

At that moment Robertson brought the aeroplane past the Hawk, and the man on the gun loosed off another odd shell high above their heads just to show that he was still about.

Ziglio decided that business was meant. There was no way out, if he valued his life, but to give in.

Without a word to Wren he issued the necessary instructions, and Prince Maharat appeared on the scene. Wren made himself known to him, and quickly explained the plan that he had on hand for his rescue.

The Prince was more than game for the adventure, and in ten minutes they were both ready to start.

"Dr. Ziglio," said Wren, "I should advise you to wireless for help at once. There's a nasty wind coming up. Au revoir!"

The Prince jumped clear first, and his parachute opened beautifully. He sailed down like a bird. Wren followed suit.

In a couple of minutes both the Prince and Wren were in the water, quite close to each other. The seaplane then swooped down, and they both clambered on to the floats, where willing hands hauled them in.

Water pouring from them, the Prince and Wren shook hands.

"I owe you a debt of gratitude, Mr. Wren," said the Prince—"a debt that I can never repay! I don't think a braver act has ever been done!"

Wren laughed.

"Well, Prince Maharat," he said, "I must admit that, whilst it was the only way out, it was not without its risks. The great thing is, however, that we're both safe now. Full speed ahead," he added, "for home and glory! I see Robertson's heading that way already!"

A glimpse of the big Army machine in the distance proved beyond all doubt that Robertson was.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next thrilling yarn in this splendid series: "THE RED ANT!" It's absolutely tip-top!)

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BY
**ANDREW
GRAY.**

A Sensational
Story of the
Turf.

The "Chalk" Jockey!

"**W**HY, what's up, sonny?" asked Dick, who imagined it was all a joke, though a cruel one.

"Why, Scarfe! Haven't you heard?" cried Mat. "That brute felled him with a great lump of wood. We're not sure if he isn't done for absolutely."

"What!" gasped Dick, staring blankly ahead.

"Yes; and he won't be able to ride the Stunt. So what ever shall we do?"

"Great hooky gee!" ejaculated the American. "He laid out young Scarfe, did he? Well, I ain't surprised. But, say, this is a fix! We've only got ten minutes to the saddling-bell. You'll have to ride the Stunt yourself."

"Me!" blurted Mat in blank dismay. Yet he knew that it was the only thing, of course. "But it means losing the race."

"Why?"

"Because it will," was Mat's distracted answer. "The wretched beast is one of the most difficult horses we ever had in the stables. Scarfe was the only one able to do anything with him, in fact. That's why he rode him all through."

"Is he vicious, then?" asked Dick. "He can't be. I've never seen any traces of it."

"No, it isn't viciousness exactly. But he balks, and won't try. And here we are, with everything depending on our winning the race for Furzedown. Isn't it too cruel for words!"

"You're right, sonny, it is," said Dick comfortingly. "But, at the same time, it's the only thing to be done. You couldn't scratch him now, after all the bad name you've got with him. Buck up, and try. I'll fix up with the clerk about the change of jockeys. You go and dress."

It meant getting into Scarfe's riding kit, and the doctors might not let him be touched. However, luck was with Mat so far. He found the insensible lad's clothes stripped off him already.

So he fled to the dressing-room just as the order came to "weigh out." It was a fearful scramble. Scarfe's breeches were too small for him, and his boots too large. So Mat looked but a second-hand object as he came flying out.

The stirrup leathers were too long, too, and being made specially for Scarfe's leg, could not be shortened. Mat could have cried with vexation.

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"Never mind, younker, do your best; you can't do more," was all the comfort that Dick could administer, and it did not carry either of them far.

A "chalk" jockey was Mat. That is to say, when the numbers of the starters went up on the great telegraph-board, there was no painted name for him. His was written in chalk.

Nor did the crowd who had been putting their money on the Stunt appreciate this change at the very last minute. There were angry shouts for Scarfe.

"Where is he? He was round about only a few minutes ago. What's become of him? It's another trick, that's what it is."

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

LORD RIPLADE, late owner of the estates of Furzedown and the famous racehorse, Whiplash, the most-talked-of two-year-old of his day.

TOM MARTINGALE, his lordship's "trusted trainer and esteemed friend," and "guc'nor" of the renowned Furzedown training stables, in whose charge are sixty thoroughbreds, famous among them being the Stunt and Whiplash.

MAT MARTINGALE, his sixteen-year-old son, a true and trustworthy apprentice.

SCARFE, another apprentice, but an unscrupulous rascal.

SIR ROGER RACKSTONE, a mean and despicable scoundrel, and owner of the Stunt, a most unreliable racer.

The late Lord Ripplade had so willed that, should his property be unclaimed by his missing heir within one year of his death, the Whiplash colt was to become the property of Tom Martingale, providing the trainer was still at Furzedown. Failing this, it would go to Sir Roger Rackstone.

Realising the situation, Sir Roger Rackstone sets a plot in motion, and gets Tom Martingale hounded out of Furzedown.

Mat Martingale, the old trainer's son, who is left in charge of the stables, finds a friend in Dick Derringer, an American.

Fearing further treachery at Furzedown, the American sets a trap, and Scarfe is found in the act of doping the famous Whiplash.

A dramatic scene follows, which nearly results in the arrest of Mat and Dick.

Later, after buying the Stunt for a ridiculous figure for Lord Dungarrin, one of the Jockey Club Committee, Tom is granted a trainer's certificate.

He returns to Furzedown stables, where, to his astonishment, he finds the apprentices, led by Scarfe, no longer bitter against him, but ready to welcome him as Trainer Mat.

After this, Scarfe falls foul of Sir Roger Rackstone, who brutally knocks him down.

Mat's cheery smile at once changes into a worried frown.

(Now read on.)

All the old libels about the stable and the Stunt leapt to life again.

"It's the young 'un up to the old 'un's tricks. What did they give him a licence for? He's as bad as his father. Don't let 'im ride!" yelled the angry punters, surging round as near the paddock as they could squeeze to get a view of poor Mat.

The stewards, hearing the outcry, were just as unkind. Scarfe they knew had been hurt, but how? Mat had to explain, and a sorry business it sounded. Black looks met him on every side.

And the bitterest thing of all was the almost certain knowledge that he could never win.

"Oh, well, he'll have to ride," was the grumpy decision of the clerk of the course. "We can't stop him, that I can see."

"Yes, but we can't let the case rest here. Knowing what we do, it will have to be investigated," growled another.

Mat's cheek flushed scarlet. He had to bite his lip to keep him from letting fly at the unjust men. But Dick Derringer's grave face was peering through the doorway, and Mat climbed out of the scales with his gear and hurried to join him.

"If you'd only heard what the cads have been saying!" burst out the youngster, flinging the saddle across the Stunt's back.

The latter stood with ears pricked and whites of eyes showing, as much as to say: "Hallo! Who's this? I'm not going to have everyone riding me if I'm going to be asked to win. Where's Scarfe?"

"Don't worry, younker—don't worry!" counselled Dick, helping Mat to saddle up, for there was need for haste. The other horses were cantering to the post already, and Mat hated to be late.

"My stars, just look at the stirrups!" he groaned as he flung himself into the saddle, to find, as he feared, that he could scarcely reach the irons with his toes.

Even Dick looked as if he knew it was all up then. But instead of it knocking all the stuffing out of Mat to see his chum hopeless at last, it had the contrary effect.

"What a rotten little coward I am," he said, biting his lip. "Here I am whining, when I ought to be doing my best for dad's sake and the stable's. Good-bye, Dick, and wish me good luck!"

He swung the Stunt round with a jerk and a cut which made the old rogue open its eyes. A moment later it was out of

the gate and pelting up the course to catch the rest.

A storm of hoots and jeers saluted Mat as he cantered by. But he was past caring about anything of that sort long ago.

They could not slander him worse than when he turned out on Whiplash, at Sandown Park, and beat Bonnybrake by a neck. And that with an injured foot that made his brain reel with the agony of it.

"But there's nothing of that to-day, you old blackguard," he whispered to the Stunt, with another grim tug on the bridle, "so no larks! Do you hear? You'll gallop for me as well as ever you gallop for Searfe, or I'll know the reason why!"

The Stunt had his own opinion about that, and Mat could feel it. However, they were soon up with the field, and Mat slackened the pace to take stock of his rivals.

Clawhammer was the pick of the bunch. He would prove a tough nut with the famous Filbush steering him.

The crack jockey treated Mat to a sullen glare. He had heard about Searfe's mysterious smash-up, and had been hoping that the Stunt would have to be scratched in consequence. He knew that the beast was difficult as well as Mat did.

"And, by Jimmy, he'll find him a bit more difficult if he comes within reach of me!" he vowed under his breath. "We'll give him 'Boy Trainer' before we've finished with him!"

Filbush was right. Old Tom Martingale had many enemies. Jockeys who liked to swank, and "put on frills," hated him, particularly. And it just happened that the three who most had their knife into the old man were arrayed against young Mat now.

Fishart was a good second to Filbush. He was on Pickerel, a raw-boned, raking roan, that could go like the wind for the mile, but generally cracked soon after. Nevertheless, he was well favoured, as was Clawhammer, the white-stockinged bay.

Foumart completed the trio of equine rivals that the Stunt would have to go "all out" to beat.

On his back was perched Wisby, a dissipated little rat of a jockey, who had been apprenticed to old Tom Martingale once, but who had been kicked out for his drinking habits. And that when he was only a lad in his teens!

Wisby had never forgiven the old man for this, and he never met young Mat without telling him so. So, on the whole, it looked as if Mat was going to have all his work cut out even to get in the first three.

"A bit of all right, I call it," sneered Wisby, "when trainers take to riding their clients' horses just to swindle us poor jockeys out of a job. I bet Lord Dungarrin gets charged up all the same, though. Serves him right for not being here to see."

Fishart and Filbush laughed over the silly gibe as if it were the funniest thing in the world.

"Is your owner here to see you ride to-day, Wisby?" asked Mat quietly.

"Why, you bet he is!" was the prompt reply.

"Then that's how it comes that you're sober for once in a way, I suppose?" asked Mat.

It also was a clumsy thrust and an unkind one, as the youngster realised the moment he had let it slip. Wisby's shrewish face turned green with venomous hate.

"You rotten little prig!" he spluttered. "I'll have you for that—see if

I don't! You dare to sauce me—you—the pup of a swindling hound—"

Mat was not going to stand this. Spurring the Stunt abreast of his rival he would have yanked him out of the saddle in another second. But before he knew where he was they were up to the starting-gate, and very nearly through it in the heat of Mat's rush.

"Here, dash you! That fellow there! Who is he?" bawled the irate voice of the starter from his platform above. He was a deputy, as it happened, and no particular friend of Furzedown's either.

"Oh, so it's you, young Martingale? Showing off, I suppose, because you've gone a step up in the world!" he sneered. "Well, see you don't come any of your blank monkey-tricks under me, or you'll know it! Get back from those tapes! Do you hear? Do you want to smash the whole gate down?" he roared as the Stunt grew fractious. "Can't you manage a horse yet, though you have set yourself up as a trainer?"

Mat bit his lip to keep him from letting out with his fist in reply. But he knew he was largely to blame; and as for Wisby, he was boiling yet.

He deliberately butted his mount into Mat's luckless beast, cannoning it broadside on to the Pickerel. The latter thereupon rapped out a double "postman's knock" on the Stunt's rib with its heels, and so there was the dickens of a fray.

"Confound you!" protested Mat, who, with his useless stirrups, had been all but bucked out of the saddle. "You did that on purpose!"

"Liar!" screamed Wisby.

"Dry up and stand to your places, you clumsy lot of tailors!" bellowed the starter, losing his temper. "Bring your horse up, Filbush, or stay where you blessed well are! Martingale, if you go butting about into anyone else like that there'll be trouble, so I warn you!"

"I never butted into Wisby!" 'Twas he that butted into me!" lashed out Mat, and, in penalty, the lever was pulled, and up flew the tapes.

It was merely temper on the deputy's part, and nothing else. A shout of derisive laughter from Filbush saluted Mat as he dashed away like a shell from a gun.

Nor were the Pickerel nor Foumart caught as the Stunt had been. Mat had not his right toe in the stirrup even.

Still, there was no time for that. Clawhammer was already foaming along up the hill, with the crackbrained Pickerel in wildest chase.

Mat must have lost a good ten lengths before he could get the Stunt going at all, and the jeers and catcalls of his exultant rivals came down the rushing wind.

His heart was bursting with rage. And here, as if he had not troubles enough, the Stunt was up to his old games again.

"Bust you! If you play me up, too, I'll flay every inch of hide off your ugly rump!" Mat fairly yelled at him, giving him a brace of stingers that sent the brute bucking and propping, till Mat was half over the withers before he knew where he was.

It was those long stirrup leathers. To race at all under such a handicap was farcical. Still, the youngster's blood was fairly up.

"You one-eyed lump of catmeat! Why can't you at least help me?" he appealed savagely, giving the Stunt a further dressing down of the best quality whalebone.

It certainly had good effect. The brute picked up his heels and flew. Mat was among the tail of the field already.

The ground shook to the drumming of hoofs, and clouds went whizzing by his ears like shells.

Swish! Swish!

He was giving the Stunt no time to brood over his wrongs. The whole future of Furzedown depended on the race.

The pace was a cracker—trust the mad-headed Pickerel for that. He had got the lead, as usual, but he could never last. Clawhammer was the brute Mat must get on terms with. Filbush, and Wisby were the men he had to watch. Mat could see the latter's ferret face ducked round, watching him.

"I'll have you for that—I'll have you for that!" Wisby's spluttered threat rang still in Mat's ears, beating time to the galloping hoofs.

Already they were up the hill and bearing down to Tattenham Corner. Mat



Mat realised Wisby's treacherous act just in time. Instinctively he jerked up his own foot and sent Wisby toppling backwards over his horse's rump.

could see how Filbush and Wisby were manœuvring abreast of each other. They meant to play some trick with him if they could. The Pickerel they did not bother about. He would have galloped himself to a standstill long before home.

Setting his teeth, Mat worked the Stunt into the best line that he could for making the famous corner. But he had horses to right and left of him, and badly-riden ones at that, unless their jockeys were in league with the two beauties ahead to shut him in. This was quite likely. Mat would have to look out for himself. His toes had lost the stirrup-irons altogether now, and he was bumping about like a fool.

Strangely enough, this seemed to suit the Stunt. All his tricks had vanished, and he was lying down to it now like a good 'un.

"Good lad! Easy a bit! Watch it!" muttered Mat in his ear as he lay out along his neck. He could see exactly what was happening. These cads were going to run him wide at the turn.

These two non-triers on either side of him were to keep him boxed in, with the favourites in front to hold him in check.

Then, when Pickerel had shot his bolt, and began to fall away, Mat would have him on top of him, too. Meantime, Wisby and Filbush would have cut in sharply to the rails.

It was five against one, really, and Mat looked helpless. But was he? His keen eyes were darting here and there like a hawk's. His enemies were no less on the alert. Every twitch of his bridle and lift of his hand was instantly responded to. They had him set, and they were keeping him so.

Thunder went the hoofs. The swish of wind in their silken shirts was like trees in a gale. Faint cheers sounded from far ahead.

It was downhill now, and faster and faster they flew. The Pickerel's own pace had killed him at last, and he was out of it. Back he came, as if they hauling him in with a piece of string.

"Now's my chance!" decided Mat, gathering every nerve and muscle for one supreme effort. Wisby and Filbush ahead had to pull clear of the beaten horse, and the eyes of the other jockeys were watching them. Inch by inch Mat was letting them draw ahead.

Whisk!

It was done, though how the Stunt had managed it Mat scarcely knew, for with a sudden swerve he had lugged the gallant old warrior round under the near horse's tail, and cut in like a flash back on to the rails.

In their stupefaction at the speed of the manœuvre the rest only sheered wider still. Before they knew where they were, Mat was almost level with the leaders.

"By Christopher! Watch him! He's done us!" yelled Wisby, lying out on Fomart's neck and lashing that gallant brute till it almost screamed in pain.

All was panic in the camp of the conspirators. Even Filbush, winner of a hundred races, lost his head. He cursed Mat, too, spluttering in his rage.

There they were, still wide, and Mat cutting down the straight with none to stop him. With whip and spur they edged back for another attempt.

"Go, boy! Into it—into it—into it!" cried Mat, fairly lifting his mount at each terrific stride.

The pace was furious. If the Stunt ever landed past the post Mat was quite prepared to see him drop dead. Yet the gallant brute seemed to be enjoying it.

Gallop, gallop, gallop! Ears roaring and eyes streaming with the wind. Mat laughed in his glee. For all their furious efforts to head him the Stunt was holding his own.

Quarter of a mile now only, and they were home! Perhaps it was the flapping stirrup-irons thumping the brute's ribs that was making the Stunt run the race of his life.

Now they were shooting along past the far fringes of the crowd. Wild yells were flung at them as they flew by. From ahead came a roar like the breaking sea.

Mat, however, was not going to ride "all out" quite just yet. He wanted to keep a bit for the last fifty yards. The others must be about done, as he was. So he eased imperceptibly.

Fomart promptly began to draw level. Wisby cursing and crowding on like a fury. Mat just let him range up alongside, meaning to spurt again then for the last big burst.

But Wisby had vowed to spoil Mat's race for him. He had long ago spotted the flapping stirrups, and seen how Mat was riding entirely by "balance."

Forcing his mount within reach of his quarry, he slipped his toe neatly under Mat's boot and gave an upward lift. He put all his strength into the kick.

Another fraction of a second, and Mat would have been clean over the Stunt's ears.

He just gauged the other's treachery in time, however. Instinctively he jerked up his own foot. The result was that all the force of Wisby's kick was expended on the unresisting air.

To the bewilderment of the thousands watching, who had not seen the slightest thing to account for it, over went Wisby backwards over his horse's rump.

Just for a second he hung clinging to the reins, his legs cocked in mid-air. But it was no good. He had to go. Wallop he fell on the flat of his back, almost under the next horse's hoofs.

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He was on his feet, too, the very next second, so that it could not have been a fit or sudden seizure.

"Ah, Wisby," said the wisacres, suddenly remembering, "the old game again!"

Still, that was not the only miracle. Simultaneously as Fomart's jockey performed his astonishing back somersault, so Mat Martingale was within an ace of diving clean over his mount's ears!

In fact, at the most critical moment of the whole race there he was right on the Stunt's neck, clinging by tooth and nail!

Wide out in the middle of the course, too, Filbury on Clawhammer was challenging with an invincible rush. The Stunt was beaten. Nothing could save him.

"Clawhammer! Clawhammer wins!" rose the yells of the crowd.

The bookies howled any odds against the Stunt being first past the post. The scene was a pandemonium.

Only the Stunt's supporters looked glum, and glummiest of these, needless to say, were the Furzedown contingent. They were agast. Dick Derringer could have torn his hair with fury and dismay.

"Clawhammer!" roared the crowd. "Filbush wins! Bravo, Filbush!"

From being two lengths behind Filbush was now a neck ahead, and only fifty yards from the post.

But Mat was not done with yet. He was back in the saddle again, calling on his mount by everything that he loved to make the effort of his life.

"Now, boy—now—now—now! Once more! Go for it!"

He never used his whip. It would have been sheerest cruelty. The Stunt was going "all out," and his great heart must have been like to burst.

A final storm of cheers, and the race was over, whatever the result. The post had whizzed by, and to Mat it looked a dead-heat at the very best.

He eased up, sick with disappointment and suspense. Wisby he could have shot dead for the dastardly trick he had tried to serve him.

And then he saw Dick Derringer come tearing along after him with radiant face.

"You did it by a nose!" he cried ecstatically. "Hurrah!"

"No! Do you mean it?" cried Mat, almost tumbling out of his saddle in his delight.

But it was true. The numbers were being fitted into the telegraph-board ready for hoisting when the weights had been declared correct. And then, just as promptly rose a yell of "Objection!" and the wild cry through the rings of "Don't pay!" Somebody was lodging a protest.

"Great Scott! Against me?" gasped Mat. "Why, what the dickens can they mean?"

And then up came Wisby, pale-green as new cheese, with a great slash cut in his riding-boot.

"He kicked me! He kicked me with

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his spur!" he spluttered, pointing to Mat. "That's why I came off! He lashed out just as I drew level with him!"

"What utter bosh!" cried Mat, flaring out instantly. "Why, it was the other way about! He tried to throw me—"

"Steady! Steady now!" rapped the clerk of the course. "We don't want you two yapping at each other out here for everybody to hear. Come into the weighing-room, and do your protesting there."

Excitement was intense. Those who had been so ready to believe Wisby to be intoxicated were equally confident now that it was just another of the old Furzedown tricks. Mat, they vowed, was as big a rogue as his dad.

The stewards, hastily summoned, looked down their noses when Mat made his defence.

"I tell you, gentlemen, I was riding another lad's saddle, with leathers so long that I scarcely had a toe in the stirrups all the way!" he protested, with flashing eyes. "Do you think it likely, then," he cried, "that I would risk trying to kick a fellow when I was in front and winning anyway?"

"You weren't winning; I was overhauling you!" retorted Wisby. "And I call in Filbash. He saw everything. Where is he?"

The room was cleared while Filbash gave his evidence. But it was all in his pal's favour, needless to say. Poor Mat was too stunned by the infamous accusation to do himself justice.

The stewards retired to consider their decision. All was excitement outside, for

on the verdict depended whether the bookies "paid out" on the Stunt or not.

Mat was distracted. Everybody was glowering at him as if he were a pick-pocket. To make matters a thousand times worse, there was no sign of his chum, Dick Derringer, to be seen.

The Furzedown apprentices, too, were holding aloof in a sulky mob. None came nigh him to give him a word of comfort.

"There is no hope; it's all up!" Mat thought bitterly. "I can see by the way they are all glaring at me that the stewards believe Wisby's lies."

"My spur must have ripped the black-guard's boot, but that was only because he tried to kick me out of the saddle. Yet with all the thousands watching nobody seems to have spotted that."

"Wisby and Martingale!" called out a sharp, authoritative voice, showing that the meeting had come to their decision at last.

Mat set his teeth and marched in. Wisby followed, a cunning grin upon his foxy face.

"I swore I'd down the young pup," he laughed to himself, "and, by Jimmy, I believe I've done it! I'll teach him to go sneering at me!"

"Silence, and listen to the decision of the committee!" commanded the clerk. "The stewards, after hearing Wisby's protest, have decided to uphold it. The Stunt, therefore, is disqualified, and Clawhammer wins the race."

"As to Martingale," continued the official, "he is suspended for the rest of the meeting, both as rider and trainer and his case will be sent before the Jockey Club. That is all."

"All!" cried Mat sharply. "My stars, and you call this justice! I swear that I am innocent! I rode as clean a race as any man could. Wisby has done this only to spite me! He swore before the race that he would do me down—"

"Silence!" thundered the chief steward, cutting him short. "How dare you create a scene here when you have heard our ruling! Wild accusations only make the matter ten times worse. The stewards are unanimous that you were caught in a dirty trick. Get out!"

A great roar of voices from the betting rings announced that the numbers had gone up.

"What! Clawhammer the winner? Hang the luck! Well, I suppose we've got to pay out!" growled the bookies gloomily.

For this horse had been backed heavily the moment it was known that Scarfe was not riding. The bookies were badly hit in consequence.

"Yes; and hang young Martingale, too!" shouted one fat fellow savagely. "It's all through him that we have to suffer! We've had enough of him, I reckon—"

"Hold on! Don't pay! Steady a minute!" cried a breathless voice as someone came tearing along through the crowd.

Everyone turned in astonishment. The bookies snapped the locks of their moneybags, while the disappointed punters stared.

But who was this man? He was not an official, nor was he one of the tie-tac brigade.

It was Dick Derringer, as a matter of fact, hatless, and pale with suppressed

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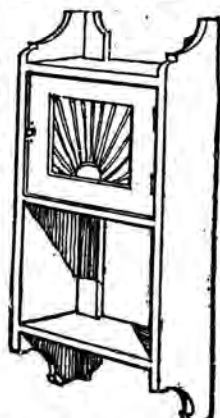
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excitement. Behind him followed a strange young man, also hatless and scared.

"Don't pay! Wait! This case has got to be reopened! We've got fresh evidence to go before the stewards!" shouted the American as he ran.

"Garn!" snarled the fat bookie disgustedly. "What evidence, I'd like to know?"

"Wait and see! But you can take my word on it," jerked Dick, "if you pay out, you'll repent it!"

He was gone then, shouldering his way in the direction of the stewards' room. He met Mat just coming out. He was so blown, and Mat so heartsick, that neither could speak for the moment. Reproach shone in the youngster's eyes.

"I know! I've heard all about it!" panted Dick. "Don't think I've de-

serted you! I've been tearing all over the shop to get a certain party, and here he is!"

He waved to the pale young man, who had been pushing his way along behind him.

"But come on!" he cried. "These blessed stewards—where are they? They haven't left the building yet?"

"No," said Mat. "But what is this

fresh evidence?" he appealed anxiously, following his chum as he went bursting into the room where the committee were still seated.

"Living pictures!" Dick fairly roared, addressing himself to the stewards, collar the strange young man and dragging him forward. "A photographic panorama of the whole kick-up! And here's the gent that's snapped them! He's Raddles—Mister Raddles, of the Scopos Lightning Film Supply Company. And he was right on the spot with his picture-gun when the thing occurred. I was watching him, and I've fetched him along!"

(Will Dick Derringer be able to clear Mat from his awkward predicament? Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial.)

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