

"THE LIGHTNING SHAFT!"

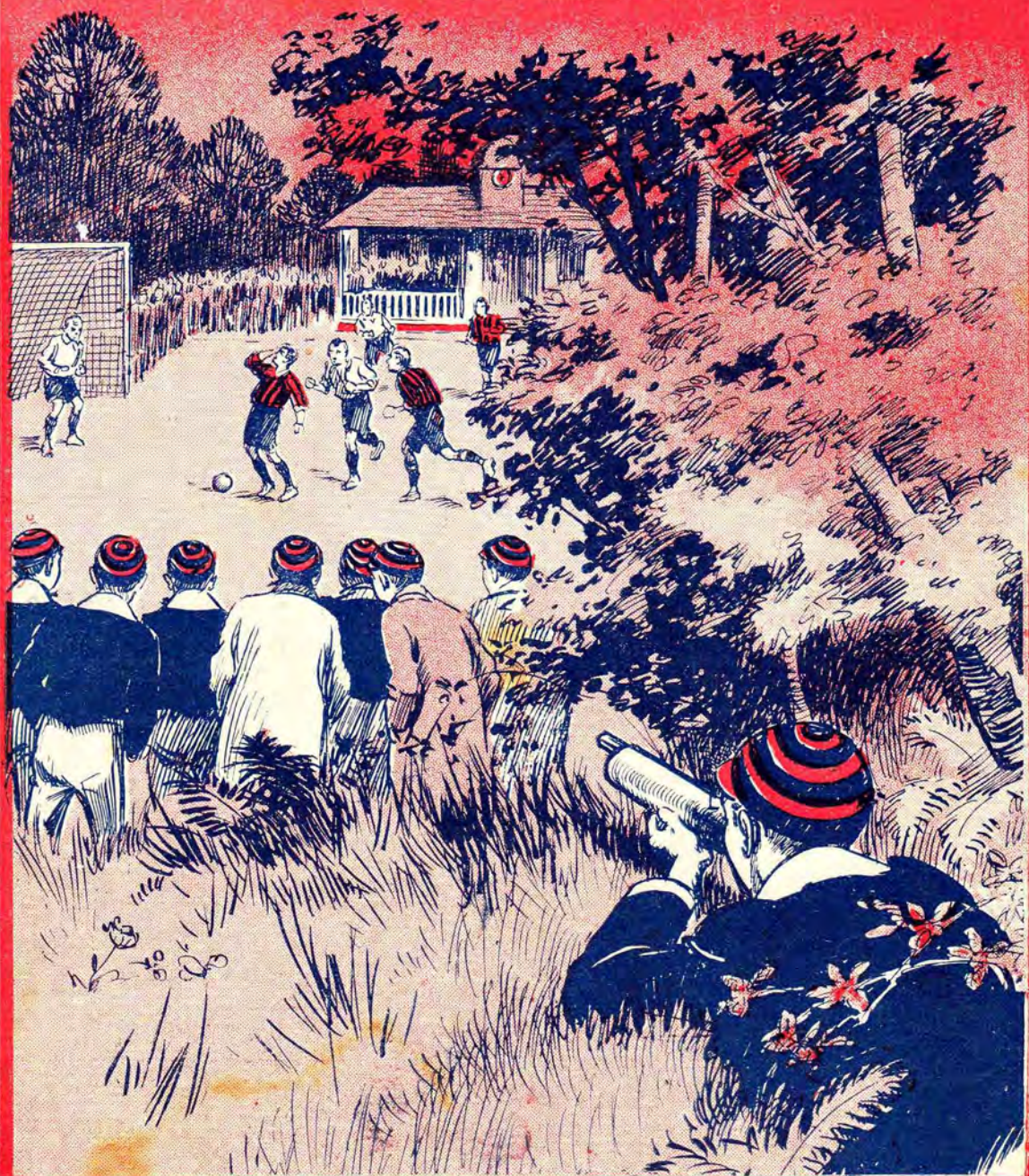
Special 25,000 Word Story of
Tom Merry & Co.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

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THE MYSTERIOUS RAY PROJECTOR IN ACTION!

(Read "THE LIGHTNING SHAFT!" This week's amazing story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's inside.)



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

MY DEAR CHUMS.—Is there anything much more repellent than a traitor? It is not always the actual act of treachery which is the worst part. The mere fact that there is a traitor in the camp does the big mischief. Suspicion spreads. Former good comrades start looking at each other with the shadow of doubt in their eyes. It is an end of peace. At the present time St. Jim's is having its full share of this unpleasantry.

"A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!"

By Martin Clifford.

This magnificent, extra-long, complete story will appear in next Wednesday's GEM. It carries on with the thrilling excitement created by the yarn which you have now in your hands. In a sense there has been nothing to equal the disaster caused by the scheming of certain individuals whose methods are dark indeed. But it is, of course, one thing to know that a sinister enemy is skulking close at hand in the shadow, and quite another to track the foe down. The trouble in this instance is pretty deep seated. What is more, the individual most concerned in the plotting has extra powerful reasons for covering up his tracks.

THE PRICE OF INFAMY!

We find the unscrupulous Cutts well to the fore in the new yarn. Cutts is in low water. He has had sundry dealings with the blatant and bounceable Banks, which are to the credit of neither side. Cutts is in a funk, and he thinks he has found a way of meeting the difficulties which are hemming him in. To save the situation, and, incidentally, his own skin, he will stop at nothing. Thieves are after the great invention which has made such a sensation at the school. Cutts thinks to himself that he can derive immense advantage by coming to terms with the would-be purloiners. What happens? That you will hear next week when you get the GEM. The story is full of surprises not merely for the reader, but also for Cutts, Racke, and company.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

Telling stories is about the oldest thing which has lasted. It is every whit as popular in these stirring days as in the gay old times when the Stone Age Men gathered round of an evening after their hammering was done for the day and listened to the best yarnlets of the gifted members of the assembly. Of course, in those picturesque ancient days they had the pull because no story had had time to become a chestnut. But there are legions of first-rate stories now, and the success of our Tuck Hamper competitions proves this up to the hilt. All Gemites are cordially invited to take part in this feature. Send in the brightest storyette which comes your way. Snap is most welcome. Address your entries to the

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Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.

THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS."

I have some specially fine numbers of the always welcome supplement in preparation. As we all know, there is any amount more to be said of the doings at the school. So far we have really hardly begun. You should see some of the letters that reach me asking for detailed information about sports at St. Jim's, and the relationships of the characters. Readers are so keen on the yarns by Martin Clifford that they yearn to know all about what goes on at the homes and in the holidays of the popular favourites. Of course, even the well primed "St. Jim's News" cannot tackle the whole job, but it is going to do its best.

"CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!"

By Roland Spencer and Francis Warwick.

Next week our great railway serial starts. Tell your chums about this new yarn. It is magnificent. "Chums of the Iron Way!" There have been plenty of requests for such a story. For this and many another reason I know that the coming treat will be welcomed most heartily. There is a rare magnetism about the iron road.

RIGHT AWAY!

The yarn goes with a bang from the drop of the signal. There has been nothing so good. You will be fascinated from the opening line. The story introduces you to a splendid youngster, by name Jimmy Speed. Jimmy "thinks" railways and lives for them. How he gets his chance of a job on a big line—thanks to a display of grand pluck—you will read with eagerness—eagerness for more. The story is packed with thrills and exciting situations. It has more to commend it as well. It just shows one some part of the real meaning of the iron road, and the kind of men who have made British railways a model for the rest of the world to copy. Small wonder that the rest of the world has taken the tip and copied. It has that! But that's beside the point! Keep your eye on Jimmy, and you will be all right.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

What do you think of that stunning complete yarn of St. Jim's, in the new volume of the "Holiday Annual"? I hope no Gemite will miss the pleasure of reading it. Martin Clifford has another winner in this story. Regular Gemites, I know, will have made sure of the "Holiday Annual." It is to the new readers who are always trooping in I would say "Get the 'Annual,'" for you will find it the best and biggest budget of first-class fiction to be obtained anywhere.

Your Editor.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyettes 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.

Lancashire Wins Tuck.

OPTIMISTIC!

Two archins were watching interestedly some men who, with the aid of a crane, were hoisting up a very large box weighing about two tons. "Crumbs, Bert!" exclaimed one, breaking the silence. "If that there box was to fall on yer 'ead, yer couldn't 'arf sue 'em for damages, eh?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Eric Price, 26, Railway Walk, Birkdale, Southport, Lancashire.

A COOL RETORT!

A man in Piccadilly Circus had the great misfortune of having his watch stolen. The thief disappeared round the corner, and the man stood staring after him. Soon a policeman arrived. "Why didn't you chase him?" asked the man in blue. "I couldn't, sir," explained the man; "I hadn't got the time!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Haden-Morris, 92, Lumley Road, Horley, Surrey.

A KNOWING SUBJECT!

Two motorists were coming down the road at a most terrific speed. A hairpin bend pulled them both up with a jerk. Consequently a few seconds later found them both sitting in the road staring at each other. The village policeman came and asked them the usual questions and eventually departed. The first motorist, with a look almost enough to freeze the thermometer, said to the second: "What you don't know about motors would fill a book." "Yes," replied the other smilingly. "And what you do know about motors would fill a hospital!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Clifford, 5, Brunswick Street, Poplar, E. 14.

SUITING THE PURPOSE!

"Here is that suit I bought of you last week!" said the angry customer to the tailor. "You said you would return my money if it was not satisfactory." "That's what I said," replied the tailor, rubbing his hands. "But I am happy to tell you that I found the money to be entirely satisfactory!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Joseph Brown, 44, Arlington Street, Glasgow.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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

Bernard Glyn is always well to the fore where inventions are concerned. Thus the coming to St. Jim's of Mr. Vining, who has perfected a particularly clever gun that projects an electrical ray, finds the St. Jim's inventor dabbling in something after his own heart. Other folk, with ulterior motives governing their interests, are also "dabbling." Between them a rare and intricate plot is woven!



THE LIGHTNING SHAFT!

A Magnificent Long School
Story of Tom Merry &
Co., at St. Jim's.

□□□□

By Famous
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. The Hold-Up!

"LOOK out!"
"Great Scott! Back pedal—"
"Oh, bai Jove!"
Crash!

Clatter, clatter, clatter! Crash!
It all happened in a flash.

One moment the seven St. Jim's juniors had been cycling leisurely along the quiet country lane, and the next they and their machines were mixed up in a confused medley of wheels and handlebars and wildly waving limbs.

The quiet autumn afternoon rang with startled yells and the clatter of steel on steel.

It was a car that caused the trouble—a small two-seater, standing just round the sharp bend in the narrow country lane.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., the chums of the School House at St. Jim's, came upon it suddenly—too suddenly.

Cheerily chatting footer matters, they swept round the sharp corner in a group, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther riding first, with Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby close behind, riding abreast.

The car stood in the middle of the narrow lane; there was no room to pass on either side of it. But there was just time to pull up; and the Terrible Three clapped on their brakes like lightning and pulled up.

Unluckily, though Blake & Co. behind also pulled up quickly, they were not quick enough, and they crashed into the vanguard of the party. It was extremely lucky for the juniors that they had been riding leisurely.

As it was they were hurt—and wrathful. They scrambled to their feet, fully intending to tell the motorist what they thought of his criminal carelessness in stopping in such a dangerous spot.

But they did nothing of the sort.

They merely stood and stared dumbfounded at the scene which met their angry gaze.

It was certainly not carelessness on the motorist's part—quite the reverse, apparently. For he was standing up in his car, fighting for his life with two men. Even as the startled juniors looked the motorist glimpsed them, and his voice came in a panting gasp:

"Help! Help! Run for help, lads!"

There was a furious oath from one of his assailants, and the sound of it was quite enough for the St. Jim's juniors.

But they had no intention of running for help, for all that.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What the thump—Come on, chaps!"

And with that Tom Merry led his chums to the rescue with a rush.

Heedless of their various aches and pains, they swarmed round the car like a pack of terriers.

What the trouble was they could only guess. The men were fairly well dressed—obviously not footpads. And yet it was without doubt a "hold-up." The men's faces were evil and desperate as they glared at the juniors.

"Keep off!" snarled one of them, as the juniors rushed up. "Young hounds—"

His voice ended in a strangled yelp as Tom Merry's hard fist smacked home on his jaw. But what happened next Tom least of all had any clear idea.

The motorist was already hors de combat, and both men had turned to face the rush of the juniors now. Tom's success was short-lived.

He had scarcely struck the blow when an iron-like fist sent him hurtling backwards off the footboard, his head ringing.

He sprawled among Manners and Lowther behind him, throwing them back into the roadway.

In the open the seven determined juniors would very quickly have made their numbers felt, but in the confined limits of the little car the men had the advantage, and they made the most of it.

Blake & Co. had fared no better than the Terrible Three. Like Tom, Jack Blake had scarcely set foot on the footboard when he was sent reeling backwards, throwing his own chums into momentary confusion. And before they had recovered themselves the clutch had been let in with a jerk, and the car sped away, with one of the rascals at the wheel.

"Done, bai Jove!" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The juniors scrambled to their feet and stared disgustedly after the vanishing car. As they stood thus a distant whistle reached Tom Merry's ears, and his eyes gleamed.

"We're not done yet!" he shouted, making a rush for his bike. "Hear that whistle? They'll be held up at the level-crossing!"

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

Tom's meaning was clear enough to his chums. That distant engine-whistle meant only one thing—that the gates of the level-crossing were closed to allow a train to pass, and that the escaping car would be held up for a few precious moments.

An immediate rush was made for the bikes. Luckily, save for sundry scratches and dents, the machines were undamaged, and in a moment all seven juniors were in the saddle and racing away after the fast-disappearing car.

The juniors grasped their leader's plan in a flash. The crossing was nearly a mile away, and he realised that their chance of catching the car up in time was a slender one.

"We'll never do it, Tommy," panted Herries. "They'll be through and away long before we get there."

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"Don't give up hope yet!" snapped Tom Merry. "I've got a better wheeze than following the rotters. Off at the stile yonder, you fellows!"

"But—but—"

"We'll race along the towing-path and cut 'em off at the bridge," said Tom. "It'll save half a mile, and we should do it, with luck."

"Oh, good egg!"

The juniors grasped their leader's plan in a flash. The winding country lane took a wide detour before reaching the stone bridge over the Rhyl lower down, and by taking to the towing-path the juniors would save several precious minutes.

A moment later they reached a stile in the thick hedge, and they tumbled pell-mell from their bikes, and lifted them over one by one. Then they mounted again, and raced along a narrow footpath in single file until reaching another stile, where they found the river gleaming before them.

In a matter of seconds all were on the towing path, and Tom led the way at a reckless pace, heedless of coming to grief on the narrow pathway.

The juniors' machines fairly flew by the side of the gleaming river. But the juniors were expert riders, and their keen eyes did not fail them. The old stone bridge loomed up ahead in next to no time, and as they reached it the juniors leaped from their saddles.

Running their machines up the steep path to the roadway, they glanced eagerly along the dusty road. There was no sign of a car on the short stretch visible, but as they looked the distant hum of a motor reached their ears.

"Just in time!" panted Tom Merry, looking swiftly about him. "We've got to stop the rotters somehow. What about that cart?"

"The very thing!" agreed Blake.

On a short stretch of turf by the roadside stood a light, farmer's haycart; and without asking questions, the juniors darted across to it. With Tom Merry and Blake at the shafts, and the others pushing behind, they ran the cart swiftly across the road. With shafts outspread, it completely closed the roadway.

"Now take cover!" ordered Tom Merry briefly. "We'll do the job properly this time. Wait until I give the word, and then go for 'em!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors hid themselves in the dry hedge-bottom, Blake & Co. on one side, and Tom Merry & Co. on the other. They were only just in time.

Hardly had they crouched down when a car appeared in sight, travelling at great speed. It was a two-seater, and a glance was enough for the juniors to recognise it.

"That's it!" hissed Tom Merry. "Ready, you chaps!"

Tingling with excitement, the juniors waited as the car raced up—to stop amid a harsh grinding of brakes before the obstruction.

Apparently the men had no suspicion that the cart was thus placed to bar their passage. They leaped from their car, with savage imprecations, and hurried forward, with the obvious intention of removing the obstruction.

But before their hands touched the shafts of the cart Tom Merry's voice rang out:

"Now, you chaps! Go for 'em!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Black Leather Case!

THE seven St. Jim's juniors went "for 'em" with a rush, and the surprise was complete.

The chums had not the faintest idea what the trouble was—the whole affair was a mystery to them. But they had no doubt that the two men were dangerous "customers," and they made no bones about attacking them now.

The struggle which followed was desperate, but brief.

With Tom Merry & Co. swarming over them, the men went thudding to earth. But they had recognised the juniors now, and, after the first shock of surprise, they fought furiously.

The Terrible Three had selected the bigger of the two men, and, though the force of their combined attack brought him to earth, he easily threw off the clinging juniors and lurched to his feet.

As he did so his hand flew to his pocket, and when it emerged it held something that glinted wickedly in the sunlight.

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

Like lightning Tom lunged viciously with his foot. His toe struck the man's wrist, and the shining weapon flew from his hand, to explode harmlessly in the nearest hedge.

The next moment Tom reeled away from a savage blow between the eyes, and in a flash the man was away, racing for the car.

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But he never reached it.

He was still a few yards away when a figure appeared in the doorway of the car—the figure of the motorist. He lay along the floor of the car, supporting himself on one elbow. His face was white, save for a crimson trickle of red that streaked from a wound in his forehead. And in his hands was a queer-looking instrument.

It was obviously a gun—but a strange gun! From end of barrel to tip of butt it was a dull, shining blue, and in shape it closely resembled a miniature Lewis machine-gun.

As the motorist pointed the weapon at the advancing man there sounded the unmistakable sharp crackle of an electric spark, and a queer blue flash spurted from the end of the barrel.

The running man suddenly jerked, and lurched headlong. Behind him the Terrible Three stopped dead, staring in horror.

But it was no tragedy that had taken place before their eyes, as they realised the next moment.

While they stared, transfixed, the man scrambled to his feet, apparently unharmed. He gave one scared glance at the deadly-looking weapon still pointing at him, and then he wheeled and raced for the nearest hedge, shouting to his accomplice to follow as he did so.

He crashed through the hedge, and vanished into the thick woods beyond.

At the moment the other fellow only had D'Arcy and Digby to deal with—Blake and Herries were on the ground hors de combat for the moment. And at the shout to retreat, he easily sent the two juniors spinning to right and left, and darted away.

"After the beggars!" yelled Tom Merry, awakening abruptly as from a trance. "After them!"

He was about to start in pursuit when the voice of the motorist brought him up short.

"Let them go! Let the scoundrels go, lads!"

The voice was weak, but there was a note of urgency in it, and the juniors obeyed wonderingly. In a disreputable-looking crowd, mopping eyes and streaming noses, they surrounded the car. All of them showed traces of that terrific but brief scrap, and the air resounded with gasps and groans.

Blake & Co. had been too busily engaged to see exactly what had happened near the car, and they fairly blinked as they saw the motorist leaning in the doorway of the car with the strange weapon still in his hands.

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, starting back at sight of the glinting instrument. "What—what the—"

He broke off in alarm as the motorist suddenly crumpled up in a limp heap on the floor of the car, the strange weapon dropping from his hands with a light thud.

Tom Merry jumped into the car, followed by Lowther, and together they grasped the injured man and raised him.

"Fainted, I think!" muttered Tom. "Oh, my hat! What a pretty pickle! Help me on to the seat with him, you fellows!"

There was little room to move in the confined space, but at length they managed to lift the unconscious form on to the cushions.

At that moment Manners, who had raced away to the river below for water, came back with a little in his cap. They gave the stranger the benefit of this, and very soon he opened his eyes and gazed dazedly about him.

"Dash it all!" he muttered faintly. "I—I must have fainted, I suppose! I— But the Lightning Shaft! Where is it? Is it—"

"The—the whatter—" stammered Tom Merry. The queer name startled him almost as much as the man's urgent tone. "You mean—"

"I mean the gun!" snapped the stranger. "Oh, there it is! Thank goodness!"

The young man's eyes lit up with relief as he saw the weapon lying unharmed on the floor. He motioned to a black leather case lying near it, and, grasping his meaning, Tom Merry gingerly picked up the gun and placed it inside the case.

"It's quite harmless!" said the man, smiling weakly. "But I think you'd better hand it to me, for all that. It's caused you lads trouble enough. I've got you to thank for the fact that it's still in my possession. The scoundrels would—"

"So—so that's what they were after?" gasped Jack Blake.

"Just that," said the stranger, nodding. "But it's quite valuable to them, I assure you! They've been trying to get their hands on it for days. But how on earth did you fellows manage to get here in time to do this?" He nodded to the farm-cart across the road.

"We took a short cut along the towing-path, sir," explained Tom Merry. "We wondered what had happened to you. Did they—"

"They bowled me out with a crack on the head—the butt-



As the man raced towards the car Tom Merry saw the figure of the motorist appear in the doorway, and in his hands was a queer-looking instrument. As the motorist pointed the weapon at the advancing man there sounded the unmistakable sharp crackle of an electric spark, and a queer blue flash spurted from the end of the barrel. (See page 4.)

end of an automatic, I think," was the rueful reply. "But that was not all, unluckily. When I went down I gave my foot a nasty twist, too. I only came round in time to stop that big fellow's rush for the car. I—I—"

He broke off weakly, and sank back with his eyes closed. "I'll be quite all right presently," he murmured through his teeth. "I'm just feeling a bit queer."

"Bai Jove, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a glance of distress at Tom Merry. "You look frightfully wocky! Pway allow us to take you to St. Jim's with us! The Head is a vewy good sort, and he will make you welcome, and be only too glad to place the wesources of the sanney at your disposal."

"That's so, sir!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "The Head's a brick, and you certainly need medical attention. We'll soon run you there."

"Yes, rather!" chorused the other juniors.

The motorist's eyes opened quickly, and as he noted the juniors' caps, he smiled.

"So you are St. Jim's fellows?" he said, with satisfaction. "I really might have guessed that. Well, I think I will take advantage of your kind invitation. As a matter of fact, I was just debating in my mind whether to call at St. Jim's as I passed, when those fellows held me up."

"Oh!"

"You see," he went on, smiling again at the juniors' astonishment, "one of your masters—Mr. Victor Railton—is a very old friend of mine; we were at college together years ago. Yes; I think I will call there for an hour. I shall be as right as rain by then, perhaps, and can get on to London."

Tom Merry felt more than doubtful about that, but he did not voice his opinion.

"Oh, good!" he said. "I can drive; and I'll soon run you there, sir. Let's have that cart out of the way, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors jumped to Tom's bidding, and in a few moments had wheeled the cart out of the road. Then, after bandaging the injured man's head with a handkerchief, for it was still bleeding slightly, they made a start, with Tom at the steering-wheel, his bike having been slung over the back of the car.

Escorted by the six cyclists, the car started for St. Jim's. There was no sign of their recent antagonists, nor did the juniors trouble their heads about them. Tom, having recovered the rascal's automatic from the hedge, had handed it over to the stranger, and they felt they had nothing further to fear from that quarter.

CHAPTER 3.

The Mystery Gun!

"HERE we are, sir!"

Tom Merry made the announcement as the old buildings of St. Jim's came into sight along the Rylecombe Lane. To allow his chums to keep up with him, Tom had been obliged to drive slowly, and he was thankful to reach the school at last. He could see that the injured gentleman was weak and exhausted, and he was anxious to get him into the doctor's hands.

For the most part, the distance to St. Jim's had been covered in silence. Though all the juniors were mystified and burning with curiosity, they could see that the stranger was in no mood for conversation; and they forebore to ask questions.

He had been lying back with closed eyes all the way; but now, as Tom Merry spoke, he opened his eyes, and nodded without speaking.

At the gates the car and its escort parted—Blake and

the others making for the cycle-shed, leaving Tom to take the car up the drive to the School House doorway.

As it happened Mr. Railton was standing at the top of the School House steps, chatting with Kildare of the Sixth; and both master and senior stared in astonishment at the car and its occupants as it drew up below them.

"Merry!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. "What—what—"

A look of amazed pleasure came over the Housemaster's face as he suddenly recognised the figure sitting next to the junior. He ran down the steps to the car, his hand outstretched.

"Why, Vining!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed an unexpected pleasure! But—but, my dear fellow, you are injured. Has there been an accident?"

Mr. Railton glanced wonderingly from Mr. Vining to Tom Merry.

"It is nothing very serious, Railton," said Mr. Vining, with rather a shaky laugh. "Just a twisted ankle and a knock on the head! A couple of hefty rascals attacked me on the highway and our gallant young friend here, and his chums, came to my rescue. I am afraid you will scarcely thank me for paying you a visit in this state."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Railton warmly, "I am only too delighted to see you; and you were very wise to come here, Vining. You must have medical attention without delay. Do you think you can manage to walk?"

"I—I think so—with a little help," said Mr. Vining, smiling wryly. "It is too bad to trouble you like this!"

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" retorted Mr. Railton, eyeing his old friend's strained face in some concern. "I am deeply thankful that you were so near to St. Jim's, and that those boys of mine were of help to you. Kildare!"

The Housemaster of the School House called Kildare, and a moment later the master and senior were helping the injured motorist from the car and up the steps into the House. Mr. Railton could see that his old friend was on the point of collapse, and he was anxious to get him to his own room without delay.

Since Tom Merry had handed over the mysterious black leather case and its contents to Mr. Vining, he had not allowed it to leave his grasp; and it was taken indoors with him now.

There was a suitcase in the car, and Tom Merry took upon himself the responsibility of sending it up to Mr. Railton's room by Toby, the school page. Then, ignoring the excited questions of the curious crowd of juniors, who had collected together, he jumped in the car again, and drove it round to the Head's garage.

Mr. Vining had stated that he would stay at St. Jim's for an hour; but Tom Merry knew he would never be fit to go on to London that night—even supposing the Head would ever allow him to do so.

On returning to the quadrangle Tom found Blake and the others surrounded by a crowd, to whom they were telling the story of their adventure. Naturally, such a story had created a sensation among the juniors.

Tom Merry frowned slightly. He was not at all sure that Mr. Vining would approve of the affair being made public. It was too late to stop his chums now, however.

"Well?" demanded Lowther, as Tom joined the group. "What happened? Have you discovered who the chap is, Tommy?"

"His name seems to be Vining," said Tom briefly. "That's all I know. Railton's taken him up to his room."

"It's a jolly curious affair!" said Blake. "But I expect we'll know more about it before long. He ought to explain to us chaps, anyway!"

"You fellows have all the luck!" growled Grundy of the Shell. "Jove! Don't I wish I'd been there!"

"Not much luck about it," grinned Tom Merry, rubbing a swollen nose ruefully. "Those brutes were hefty chaps, and they gave us a warm few minutes. It wasn't exactly a picnic!"

Grundy gave a snort.

"You fellows mucked the whole thing up, of course!" he sniffed. "My hat! Seven to two, and yet you let the rotters get away. If I'd been there—"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "We let 'em go because that chap told us to. I expect he had a good reason for not wanting them to be collared."

"Bosh! If I'd been there—"

"Thank goodness you weren't!" said Lowther. "If you had, Grundy, you'd have gone for the wrong party; you'd have helped those merchants to rob and finish off Railton's pal!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Look how you are on the footer field," argued Lowther. "You always manage somehow to cripple your own men, and shove the ball through your own goal. You can't help it; it's your nature. You're a born idiot, Grundy, and there it is!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Lowther—" snorted Grundy.

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The ringing of the bell for call-over interrupted the discussion just then—and possibly saved Grundy the trouble of distributing thick ears—and the chums of the School House trooped indoors.

Tom Merry rather fancied that Mr. Vining would want to see them before the evening was out; and he proved to be right.

The juniors had scarcely settled down to prep when a message came from Mr. Railton ordering the Terrible Three, and Blake & Co., to go to his study.

A demand to proceed to the Housemaster's study usually portended trouble; but the juniors guessed that this was not the case. Lowther was grinning broadly as the Terrible Three met Blake & Co. in the passage outside Mr. Railton's study door.

"We're giddy heroes!" he chuckled. "And don't you forget it! Shove your manly chest out, Gussy! We're about to receive our laurels for the thick ears and black eyes we collected this evening."

"Dry up, Lowther, you ass!" grinned Tom Merry.

He tapped on the door, and a moment later the juniors had filed into the study. Mr. Railton was there; he was curiously examining the queer gun as the juniors entered. On a couch close by reclined Mr. Vining, his head and foot bandaged. He still looked pale; but he gave the juniors a smiling nod.

Mr. Railton also smiled at the juniors as he replaced the gun in the black leather case.

"Ah, here you are, boys!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Vining is much better now, and he has expressed a wish to see you, and to thank you for so courageously going to his help this evening. He also feels that some explanation is due to you under the circumstances."

Rather nervously the chums shook hands in turn with Mr. Vining. This done, he picked up the curious weapon from its case.

"But for you boys," he said grimly, "this instrument would now be in the hands of those scoundrels, while I—well, I can only guess what would have happened to me. I suppose you are wondering what the mystery of it all means?"

"We are rather curious, sir!" stammered Tom Merry.

"Well, you shall hear—though, really, there isn't much mystery about it," said Mr. Vining smiling. "First of all, I must explain that I am a bit of an inventor—I specialise in electrical inventions, many of which I have disposed of to the Government. And this," explained the inventor, handling the queerly-shaped gun fondly, "is my latest. I've called it the Lightning Shaft."

Mr. Vining paused and laughed.

"As a matter of fact," he went on, "in its present stage the invention is practically harmless, despite its rather terrifying name. This," he explained, pointing to a curious projection fitted on the barrel of the weapon, "is a direct vision view-finder. And this—but I hardly need go into details; in any case, you would scarcely understand them. The point is that by pressing the trigger a shaft of electricity—somewhat like a wireless wave, but direct, not circular—is projected towards the person aimed at. You saw what happened to the man I fired at this evening?"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry. "We—we were scared!"

"I don't wonder," was the laughing retort. "Well, I merely did it to frighten him—and it succeeded. Had he not been running at the time, he would not even have fallen most probably. All this gun can do, at present, is to give a slight shock, lasting only a second or two. It merely causes the person aimed at to lose control. If one of you boys will go to the far end of the room I will give a demonstration."

Mr. Railton laughed heartily. There was no sudden jumping to accept Mr. Vining's offer. Despite the inventor's assurance that the Lightning Shaft was harmless, they did not like the look of the glinting weapon at all.

But after a moment's hesitation, Tom Merry blushed, and, walking to the end of the room, he turned and faced the inventor, grinning rather uneasily.

"There is not the slightest need for alarm, Merry," laughed the good-natured Housemaster. "I have already tried it."

"I am ready, sir!" said Tom.

Mr. Vining smilingly raised the Lightning Shaft and pointed it in the direction of the junior. Tom Merry winced a trifle; it was none too pleasant a feeling looking down that ominous barrel.

The inventor did not keep him long in suspense.

He pressed the trigger abruptly, and once again there sounded that crackling noise, while the tiny bluish flash showed more clearly indoors than it had done outside.

Tom Merry jerked, swayed, and almost toppled over. The next instant he had recovered himself, and was laughing as he rubbed his hands together.

"It was queer!" he said shakily. "I scarcely felt anything—just a slight start, and a tingling sensation, sir!"

The other juniors were eager enough to try it now Tom



The inventor directed the Lightning Shaft towards Tom Merry. He pressed the trigger abruptly, and once more the tiny bluish flash showed. Tom Merry jerked, swayed, and almost toppled over. (See page 6.)

Merry had proved it harmless. At the inventor's invitation they each took a turn at facing the weapon.

"Bai Jove, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with rather a perplexed look at the Lightning Shaft. "It certainly is wathah wonderful. But, weally—"

"You are wondering of what practical use my invention is," laughed Mr. Vining. "Well, I will explain. In its present state my invention is only in its early stages—it is not completed by any means. With the necessary capital to exploit the gun, however," said the inventor, becoming serious, "I can make it a powerful and deadly weapon—a weapon which will, I believe, revolutionise modern warfare."

"So—so that is why those men were so desperately keen to get it?" asked Tom Merry, taking a deep breath.

"Exactly! And but for you fellows they would undoubtedly have succeeded, my boy. They have already tried to purchase it—have made several tempting offers on behalf of a certain European Power, whose agents, I suppose, they are; but I have refused to consider their offers, and will certainly destroy the secret rather than allow it to fall into the clutches of the government they represent. They are now trying more forcible methods to get it, and must have known I was proceeding to London with it to-day for Government tests."

"So you see," went on Mr. Vining grimly, "you have not only saved my life, possibly, but you have done your country, in my view, a great service this evening. At all events, I, personally, cannot feel sufficiently grateful to you for your plucky aid, my boys."

The juniors were astounded, and they eyed the glinting gun with keener interest now, as the inventor placed it back in its case. And they felt a certain amount of pardonable

pride, too, at the thought that they had prevented a national loss that might have had a far-reaching effect.

When they found themselves outside the study at last Jack Blake gave a long whistle.

"Phew!" he breathed. "Who'd have thought of such an adventure happening to us? My hat! It was jolly good of that chap to explain everything to little us, though."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And jolly decent of Railton to let him!" grinned Tom Merry. "That gun's a jolly ingenious invention, anyway. It rather puts old Glyn's giddy inventions in the shade—eh?"

"Wait until old Glyn hears about it," said Lowther, with a chuckle. "I bet he'll fairly haunt Mr. Vining. I shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't try to get hold of it see how it works."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther only spoke jokingly, but as it turned out his humorous prophecy was destined to be surprisingly near what actually did happen.

CHAPTER 4. Turned Down!

THE Terrible Three parted from Blake & Co. in the Shell passage, and entered their study. They had not been at work long when Bernard Glyn himself charged in, looking greatly excited.

At the moment Tom Merry happened to be writing exercises, and as the door crashed back he jumped, sending a spatter of ink across his neatly written copy.

He jumped to his feet wrathfully.

"You silly chump, Glyn!" he howled. "What the thump did you want to come barging in here like that for? Look what you've done?"

But Bernard Glyn was, apparently, much too excited to look at a mere spoilt exercise.

"I say, never mind that, old chap," he said eagerly. "Look here—"

"Never mind it, eh?" hooted Tom. "You careless dummy! My exercise—"

"Blow your exercise!" exclaimed Glyn impatiently. "Look here, you fellows, what's this about an electric gun? I've been home, and only just heard about it all. Trimble says that—"

"Blow Trimble! You silly, blundering ass—"

"Now look here, Merry," pleaded Glyn, almost pathetically, "do tell a fellow about it. Trimble says you fellows have seen it—tested it. Tell me all about it, there's a good chap."

Tom Merry's wrath suddenly vanished, and he laughed good-humouredly. It was impossible to be wrathful for long with the schoolboy inventor; and he could understand Glyn's excitement. Any new electrical device or gadget always did arouse the electrical genius of the Shell to a pitch of excitement and enthusiasm.

"Yes, we've seen it, old top—and tested it, too!" he grinned. "I fancied it wouldn't be long before you were on the trail, Glyn. Well, there doesn't seem to be any need for secrecy about it, so I'll tell you what I do know."

"Oh, good!"

And Bernard Glyn listened almost breathlessly as Tom described the invention and its effects.

"Well, by Jove!" breathed Glyn, when he had finished. "That's a jolly rummy thing, you fellows. As a matter of fact, I was thinking of working a theory of my own out on practically the same lines."

"Bow-wow!"

"It's a fact!" said Glyn warmly. "I'd have started it long ago, only—"

"You didn't—"

"You couldn't—"

"You couldn't—"

"Rats!" snorted Glyn. He frowned thoughtfully. "What range had this blessed gun—do you know?" he asked.

"About two hundred yards, I think Mr. Vining said," grinned Tom Merry. "He said the effect was strictly the same, only the shock was more diffused."

"Pooh!" sniffed Glyn. "Mine would have had a range of two miles, and would have killed at that. That's not all. It would have put out of action any mechanical apparatus or engine it was projected at."

"In theory or in practice?" inquired Lowther blandly.

"Eh? In both, of course." • I Glyn calmly. "I'd worked it all out exactly. But"—Glyn's eyes suddenly gleamed—

"I say, you fellows, I've got to get hold of that gun. You say Mr. Vining's with Railton?"

"Yes; but—"

"Good! I've heard a lot about him, and I'll be glad of the chance to meet him. I think I'll run along now and see him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll get him to explain the secret," said the schoolboy inventor enthusiastically. "My hat! This is a bit of luck for me! I'll get him to lend me it to experiment with."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I can see him doing that," chuckled Lowther. "You prize ass—"

"Well, why shouldn't he?" inquired Glyn warmly. "It's not like handing it over to one of you ignorant kids to pull to pieces and play with. I've got to dissemble it to find out just how it's done. You fellows coming along—"

"Ha, ha! Not much!"

"You potty chump!" snorted Tom Merry. "It's awful cheek! It was different with us. If you go barging in with your blessed cheek Railton will scrag you."

"Blow Railton! What's it got to do with him—eh? I'm going, anyway."

And with that Bernard Glyn hurried from the study, his face eager and excited.

Tom Merry jumped up in alarm.

"Oh, let the ass go!" chuckled Lowther. "Let him go and ask for a licking if he wants one."

Tom Merry hesitated, and then he sat down again, with a grin.

"The prize chump needs saving from himself," he remarked. "But p'raps it will be best to let him rip. It'll cool his ardour a little, anyway, to get a licking from Railton."

"Let's listen for him coming back," suggested Lowther.

The juniors settled down to work again, but they kept one ear open for the return of Bernard Glyn. And presently they heard dragging footsteps in the passage without.

"Here he comes!" said Lowther quickly. "Come on!"

The Terrible Three rushed for the door; they were all eager to see Glyn's return from his uninvited visit to Mr. Railton's study. They rather fancied he would not be looking very happy.

Nor was he! On the schoolboy inventor's face was a look of wrathful indignation, and he tottered down the passage, his hands clasped under his armpits.

"Well?" inquired Lowther blandly. "How did you get on, old chap? Did you get Vining to explain the secret?"

"Where's the gun?" said Manners. "I thought you were going to borrow it, Glyn?"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Glyn crossly.

"His hands are tingling," said Monty. "Was it the shock from the gun or the shock from Railton's cane that made 'em tingle, I wonder?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling dummies!" snapped Bernard Glyn. "Just you wait! I'm not done yet! Railton's potty! It would have been all serene but for him. Railton was waxy—actually said I was being impudent and ordered me out. Then just because I started to explain he licked me. Ow! He fairly laid it on, the silly owl!"

"We told you so—"

"You'll say that, of course," said Glyn bitterly. "I tell you that chap Vining would have climbed down but for Railton. He seems a decent sort, and grinned at me quite decently. Anyway, I'm not done yet. I'm going to get hold of that gun somehow. I'm going to try again to-morrow. You'll see, you grinning apes!"

And with that Bernard Glyn went into his study, slamming the door with unnecessary vigour as he did so. Apparently, the St. Jim's inventor felt deeply on the subject.

CHAPTER 5.

A Shock for Toby!

AS Tom Merry had opined, Mr. Vining's injuries, though not serious, were sufficiently troublesome to prevent him travelling, and he had accordingly accepted the kindly invitation of Dr Holmes to stay at St. Jim's for a day or two.

He had been given the use of a spare bed-room, and Mr. Railton had been only too glad to place his study at his disposal for the day-time.

Naturally the presence of such a distinguished visitor at St. Jim's had aroused a great deal of interest in the school, and Tom Merry & Co. were bombarded with questions concerning the inventor and his invention.

But not a person in the school was as deeply interested as Bernard Glyn of the Shell.

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Tom Merry kept a close eye on the schoolboy inventor all the next morning. He had not forgotten Glyn's remarks the previous evening, and he was rather uneasy as to that enthusiastic youth's intentions.

He knew how utterly reckless and regardless Glyn was accustomed to be when engaged in scientific investigations. He was sometimes blind to all reason, and deaf to the voice of authority. He was also not a little careless in regard to the rights of property.

So that when Tom Merry, in company with Manners and Lowther, came upon Glyn hanging about the passage just outside Mr. Railton's door just after dinner he stopped and eyed that youth suspiciously.

"What's the giddy game, Glyn, you ass?" he exclaimed.

"You're not thinking—"

Glyn held up a warning hand.

"Shush!" he breathed. "He's just gone out—"

"What!"

"He's just gone out with Railton," said Glyn, his eyes dancing with excitement. "Railton's showing him round the school, I think. Mr. Vining went toddling out on two sticks, and I bet he won't be back for some time. Now's my chance!"

"You mad ass!"

"I know where the gun is!" said Glyn eagerly. "I spotted it this morning. You fellows keep cave, will you? I'm going in!"

"We jolly well won't!" snapped Tom, in alarm. "You reckless idiot, Glyn! If you want to see the blessed thing, why don't you get Vining alone, and ask him to show it you?"

"I've done that—just before dinner," said Glyn. "He was jolly decent, I'll admit. But he doesn't understand. I asked him to let me take it away to pull it to pieces. He refused. Wouldn't hear of it! Rather mean, I thought! Well, I've got to get hold of it somehow. If anyone comes along, just whistle, will you?"

And without waiting for a reply, Bernard Glyn slipped into Mr. Railton's study.

The Terrible Three eyed each other in alarm.

"Well, if that chap doesn't take the bun!" breathed Manners. "Better stop the ass, hadn't we, Tommy?"

Tom nodded grimly.

"If he gets it—yes!" he snapped. "We can't risk a rumpus with the mad ass here, though. If he does bring it out we'll let the fool take it to his study, and then—Here he is!"

Mr. Railton's door opened suddenly, and Glyn blinked stealthily out.

"All serene!" he whispered. "Oh, good! I've got it, you chaps!"

He emerged into the passage, holding something under his jacket carefully. It was the gun—the dull-blue barrel projected beneath the jacket; and the startled juniors recognised it instantly.

"You—you mad idiot!" began Tom Merry.

"I've got it!" repeated Glyn gleefully. "Come along to my study, you fellows! I'm longing to try it. Come on!"

And Glyn started off along the passage. The juniors followed grimly. Half-way along the passage Glyn stopped suddenly, and dodged into a near-by doorway. Someone was coming up the stairs from the lower landing.

It was only Toby, the pageboy, however. He appeared at the head of the staircase, carrying a tray loaded with crockery. Bernard Glyn gave a wicked grin as he observed him.

Besides being an enthusiastic scientist, Bernard Glyn was also a great practical joker, and at sight of the labouring Toby, an imp of mischief took sudden possession of him. He was longing to test the mysterious invention. Here was a chance!

Acting on the swift impulse, he whipped the instrument from beneath his jacket, and aimed it at the boy in buttons.

"Glyn, you ass—"

But Tom Merry's warning sounded too late!

Crackle! Flash!

Simultaneous with the crackle and flash of the electric spark, Toby gave a convulsive start, swayed for a brief instant on the top step of the stairs, and then he gasped and overbalanced—backwards.

"Oh, my hat!"

Crash! Clatter, clatter! Crash!

"Yaroooooh! Oh crumbs! Yooooop!"

Crash, crash!

From the bottom of the stairs sounded a final unearthly crash, and it was instantly followed by a series of dismal howls from the luckless Toby, and a series of angry yells from someone else.

"You—you mad ass, Glyn!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors rushed to the head of the staircase, and looked down.

On the landing below them lay the hapless Toby, on his

back, and he was yelling wildly. Above him crouched Aubrey Racke of the Shell and he was punching the luckless Toby as if for a wager.

Racke's face was red with rage and pain, and his hair and shoulders were covered with tealeaves, while his clothes still steamed—apparently from the contents of the teapot, which lay in fragments on the linoleum, amid an assortment of broken crockery.

It was evident that Toby had broken his fall by alighting on top of Racke, who had been coming upstairs. It was also evident that Racke strongly resented this, and was now engaged in taking it out of Toby.

Thump, thump, thump!

Each savage thump from Racke's fist elicited a corresponding howl from the unfortunate pageboy.

Tom Merry's face changed as he took in the scene.

"Stop that, Racke!" he called sharply. "It wasn't Toby's fault, you silly idiot!"

The Terrible Three rushed downstairs and dragged the incensed Racke from off his victim. Tom Merry whirled the furious Shell fellow against the passage wall.

"You howling cad, Racke!" he cried indignantly. "It wasn't Toby's fault, and, in any case, you've no right to go for a chap who cannot hit back!"

Racke was almost beside himself with passion.

"You—you—interfering cad!" he raved, glaring at Tom Merry. "I—I'll smash him! I'll teach the low cad to knock—"

At that moment Toby staggered to his feet, and, unable to restrain himself, Racke hit out at him again, catching the pageboy full in the face with his fist.

This was too much for Tom Merry.

"You've asked for it, Racke!" he snapped. And he hit Aubrey Racke under the chin, lifting him clean off his feet. Racke dropped to the linoleum with a thud and a yell.

"You always were a cad, Racke!" said the junior captain, looking down contemptuously at the grovelling Shell fellow. "Now you can get up and hit someone who dare hit you back. Try it on me!"

But Aubrey Racke wasn't likely to do that. He lay where he had fallen; but his eyes glittered with malice as he glared up at the junior skipper of St. Jim's.

"You—you rotter, Merry!" he hissed. "I—I'll pay you out for this, see if I don't!"

Tom Merry laughed scornfully. He stooped and helped Toby Marsh to his feet. Toby's nose was red and swollen.

"It weren't my fault, Master Merry!" the page almost wailed. "Something came over me, an' I couldn't 'elp myself. Oh, crumbs! I thought I was kilt when Master Glyn aimed that there awful gun at me! Ow!"

At that moment Bernard Glyn came down the stairs, wearing a broad grin, and Tom Merry's eyes blazed at sight of the gun showing beneath his jacket.

"You—you fool, Glyn!" he gasped. "Take that thing back before a master comes along, you ass! Haven't you done enough mischief with it? Take it—Oh crumbs!"

"Look out! Cave!"

It was Mr. Railton. He came hurrying along the passage, and the crowd which had gathered opened out to let him through. At sight of him Bernard Glyn gasped and bolted up the stairs, two steps at a time.

But instead of taking Tom Merry's wise advice, and taking the gun back to the study, he stopped at the head of the staircase. In the alcove stood a tall cupboard, and, snatching the door open, Glyn shoved the queer gun inside and closed the door.

Then he ran down the stairs again—to face the music!

Glyn's practical jokes usually did end in trouble for someone; but he never failed to play the game. He had no intention of allowing Toby or anyone else to suffer through his humorous acts.

At the same time, he had no intention either of taking back the Lightning Shaft—until he had finished with it. It would be safe enough in the cupboard for the time being, until he could recover it in safety.

So Bernard Glyn imagined.

Meanwhile, Mr. Railton was eyeing the scene at the bottom of the stairs in amazement and growing wrath. His brow darkened as his glance strayed from Toby's dismal face to Racke's passion-distorted features.

"Merry," he exclaimed quietly, "perhaps you will be good enough to explain this—this extraordinary scene? What has happened?"

"There—there's been an accident, sir!" gasped Tom, rather fatuously.

"There appears to have been more than one accident

Merry!" said Mr. Railton dryly, looking hard at Toby's damaged features. "Is it possible, Racke, that you have been fighting with Marsh, the pageboy?"

"I—I—" Racke stammered and stopped, his eyes glittering. He badly wanted to tell the master just what had happened. He had heard Toby's words, and he had seen the gun under Glyn's coat. He knew now that Glyn was responsible.

But he dare not snook; he knew what the rest of the juniors would say—and do—if he did.

Glyn came down just at that moment, and saved him the trouble of explaining.

"It was all my fault, sir!" he exclaimed quite cheerily.

"I played a little joke on Marsh—"

"What?"

"I caused Toby to fall downstairs, sir!" explained Glyn. "He fell on top of Racke. It wasn't Racke's fault, and it wasn't Marsh's. I played a trick on Marsh just as he was at the top of the stairs with the tray. It was only a joke, sir."

"Only a joke!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "You utterly reckless boy! You might—"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir!" said Glyn. "I didn't expect him to fall downstairs, of course. And I didn't know Racke was coming up behind him. It—it just happened like that, sir!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Railton grimly. "Very well, Glyn! If you will kindly proceed to my study, and await me there, I will endeavour presently to instil in your thoughtless mind a sense of the fitness of things."

"Y-yes, sir."

Bernard Glyn mounted the stairs slowly, en route for Mr. Railton's study. Grinning glances followed him. There was a plentiful lack of sympathy for the practical joker on this occasion.

Mr. Railton turned to the shivering Toby and ordered him to clear away the wreckage, assuring him at the same time that no blame would be attached to him for the occurrence.

"Now, Racke," he said in steely tones, as Toby departed, "I think there is still some explanation required from you. I presume you attacked Marsh, though you must have been aware that the poor fellow was not responsible for the occurrence."

"I—I lost my temper!" stammered Racke through his teeth. "I—I thought it was his carelessness. I was hurt—scalded with the tea; and—and look at my hair and clothes, sir!"

"That is no excuse, Racke! Whatever the provocation, you had no right to attack the boy. You had your remedy in that you could have reported the matter. Apart from other considerations, you have acted in a cowardly and ungentlemanly manner in attacking a person whose position in the school makes it impossible for him to defend himself. You had better proceed to the bath-room and clean yourself. Afterwards I should like to see you in my study."

With that the Housemaster ordered the crowd to disperse, which they did quickly enough. It was a half-day, and, the excitement being now over, they had no desire to linger indoors.

The Terrible Three walked away with Blake & Co., chuckling. But they very quickly forgot the incident. There was rather an important match with the Grammar School that afternoon, and very soon they were en route for the football field, their minds busy only with thoughts of the tussle before them.

But Aubrey Racke did not forget so easily—he was scarcely likely to do that with thoughts of the coming interview with Mr. Railton in his mind.

As Mr. Railton hurried up the staircase, Racke found himself alone in the passage, and for some seconds he stood motionless, a black and savage expression on his face. Then, with a sudden movement, he turned and raced up the stairs.

At the top he paused and looked quickly about him.

He had not seen Bernard Glyn hide the gun, but he knew it could not be far away. Glyn had had no time to take it to Mr. Railton's room.

He wrenched open the cupboard door, and as he glanced inside his eyes glittered at sight of the precious weapon, lying where Glyn had placed it.

Racke's lips set hard, and he snatched a sheet of brown paper from the rubbish in the cupboard and swiftly wrapped it round the short, stocky gun. Then, after a stealthy glance about him, he hurried away to his own study, the package barely showing under his coat.

There were few people about the passages, and he reached his study without adventure. And to his joy he found the room empty.

He was only inside the study a couple of moments before he emerged again empty-handed. He strode away towards the bath-room then.

And he was grinning evilly. Even the prospect of his interview with Mr. Railton did not seem to disturb the cad of the Shell just then.

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The gun would be missing, and there would be a terrific row. The only fellow known to have had it was Bernard Glyn; and Racke knew that when inquiries were set on foot—as they were certain to be—Glyn would be forced to own up.

The thought was pleasant to Aubrey Racke. That unscrupulous junior had his own ways of "sneaking."

After a visit to the bath-room Racke changed his clothes in the dormitory and hurried to the Housemaster's study. He expected a severe licking, and he was feeling far from happy now.

But it wasn't a licking—to Racke's great relief. Mr. Railton merely contented himself with a lecture—a sharp lecture on Racke's treatment of Toby Marsh. But the master's scathing remarks penetrated even Racke's thick hide.

It did the junior little good, for all that. And on reaching his study he flung himself into the easy-chair, his face livid with rage, and his mean mind seething with thoughts of revenge.

Curiously enough he was not thinking of Bernard Glyn now; he had already "settled" him. He was thinking of Tom Merry, and the rest of the fellows who had humiliated him.

For some moments he sat stroking his still aching chin, where Tom Merry's hard knuckles had struck, and then, quite abruptly, he sprang up, his eyes gleaming.

"By gad," he breathed, "the very thing! I wonder if it would work?"

He stepped to the door and locked it quietly. Then he felt a moment behind the bookcase and drew out a brown-paper package. Unwrapping this he revealed the Lightning Shaft.

He eyed it for a moment, his mind working rapidly. Then, stepping to the window, he threw up the sash softly. At the far end of the quad were two figures racing for the gates. One was young Wally D'Arcy of the Third, and the other was his chum, Curly Gibson.

Racke's eyes gleamed, and he stepped swiftly back, raising the gun as he did so. He took swift aim at the running forms, and his aim was good.

As he pressed the trigger Wally D'Arcy seemed to stumble and stagger, and then he went down headlong on his face.

Racke laughed callously. The result had succeeded his expectations. He had, of course, heard all about the marvellous invention, but he had scarcely expected it to be so easy to handle. He was more than satisfied with the test.

He closed the window and hurriedly wrapped up the gun again. Then he got string, and tied it securely round his waist. This done, he shoved on his raincoat, and, hurrying out of the house, made at top speed for the playing-fields by a roundabout way.

CHAPTER 6.

What Cutts Saw!

GERALD CUTTS of the Fifth lounged in the easy-chair in his study with a cigarette between his thin lips, and a black and moody frown on his features.

Smoking was just one of the shady games practised—in secret—by the black sheep of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's.

He took the cigarette from his mouth, and his lips curled in a bitter sneer.

"You won't help me, then, St. Leger?" he said shakily. "I've helped you out of a hole before to-day, remember. I expected you would do the same for me, in all decency."

St. Leger, the elegant dandy of the Fifth, and Cutts' chum, eyes him rather uneasily.

"I simply can't, old man," he protested. "Dash it all, you know I would if I could! I've told you I've scarcely a quid to my name—and I'm dashed well telling the truth!"

"Your pater—"

"Nothing doing there—absolutely, old man! It's no good! He's turned rusty—just like your pater. He's refused to send me another stiver until the end of the month. Have you tried Gilmore, or Prior—"

Cutts nodded and scowled.

"Both broke—or say they are, at least!" he sneered.

"Fine pals, aren't they? Hang them! I did think I could rely on you, though, St. Leger."

The elegant St. Leger flushed crimson at the look in his chum's eyes.

"Here, dash it all, Cutts!" he said. "You expect too much, you know! I owe five quid to that rotter Banks myself; and I know both Gilmore and Prior owe him a little. How much is it you owe?"

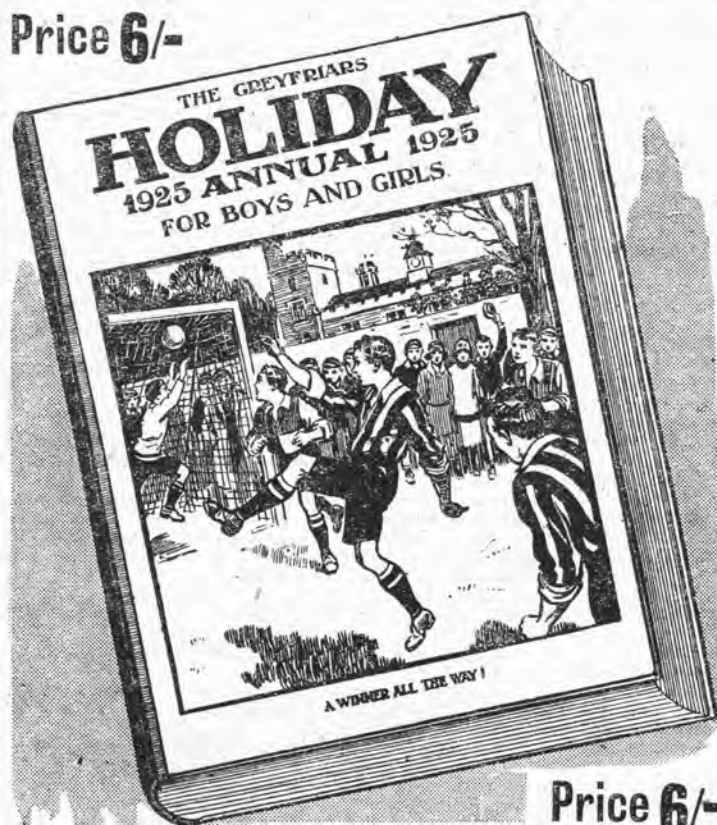
"Fifteen quid!" said Cutts through his teeth. "And the brute swizzed me out of most of it!"

St. Leger whistled.

"Dashed if I know why we keep on goin' to the swindler!" he remarked. "It's a mug's game, anyhow! But—but you overdo it y'know, Cutts!"

"Tell me something I don't know!" snarled Cutts. "Oh, hang the brute! I tell you it's thundering serious, St. Leger."

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I've got to find fifteen quid, or it's the long jump for me—swift and sure!"

"That's rot, old man!" said St. Leger. "What's the desperate hurry, anyway? Banks won't turn rusty—he daren't! He's trying to frighten you, old top."

"I tell you he means it this time!" hissed Cutts fiercely. "It was my own fault, though. I was along there the other night. Some other chaps were there—Hake, and his pals from the Grammar School. We were playing nap. As usual, Banks was winning. I spotted him changing the cards. I was savage, and I showed him up before all the crowd. Now do you see? He was blazing mad. It's not that he wants his money—he's doing it to get his own back!"

"Phew!" St. Leger understood now, and he looked rather scared at his chum.

"Jove, you were an ass, old man!" he breathed. "He's a spiteful brute! You'd better try to get round him. He's dashed crafty, too. If he daren't peach to the beaks openly he'll find a way of doin' it somehow."

"Don't I know it!" groaned Cutts. "Look here, St. Leger, you've got to help me! My only chance of getting round the brute is to take him that fifteen quid—or most of it. It's no good saying you can't help me. You can!"

"My dear man, I simply cannot! I'm almost broke, I tell you. How on earth can I?"

"What about your motor-bike?" said Cutts coolly.

"Eh, what?" gasped St. Leger.

"Your thundering motor-bike!" repeated Cutts, eyeing his chum narrowly. "You can sell it, can't you? You'd be able to pay off that fiver and help me as well, then."

St. Leger was dumbfounded. His chum's cool suggestion fairly took his breath away.

"Saus-sell my motor-bike?" he stuttered.

"Yes. You'll easily get thirty quid or more for it," said Cutts eagerly. "I'll pay you every penny back as soon as I can—honest Injun! You can have an IOU for the cash. Help me out of this hole, and I'll never forget it, old chap!"

St. Leger looked at Cutts, and his looks spoke volumes. St. Leger, though a bit of a gay "dog," and an easy-going slacker, was a good-natured enough fellow. He would have helped his chum willingly enough had he seen his way clear to do so.

But he didn't see his way clear now. His good nature fell short of selling his precious motor-bike to pay Cutts' gambling debts.

It was really too much to expect, even of the easy-going and good-natured St. Leger.

"Dash it all, Cutts, old man!" he gasped. "You can't expect a fellow to do that, y'know!"

"You—you won't?"

"Not likely! In any case, I daren't. The jigger was a birthday present from the pater. He'd never forgive me if I sold the dashed thing. He'd want to know why, too. Hang it, Cutts, be reasonable."

But Cutts was not in a reasonable mood. His face darkened. St. Leger's bike had been his last hope, and he saw that hope slipping away now.

"I'm being reasonable," he said bitterly. "It's only reasonable to expect a fellow to sacrifice something to save a pal from the sack. I'd do it for you, St. Leger."

"You wouldn't!" said St. Leger flatly. "You dashed well wouldn't, an' you know it. Anyway, I'm not doing it."

"Is that final?"

"I'm sorry, old man—yes!" Then, anxious to change the subject, St. Leger went on: "No good stuffin' indoors a day like this, Cutts. Comin' out? I'm goin' on Big Side."

"No, I'm not, hang you!" snarled Cutts.

"Please yourself, old bean!"

And, shrugging his shoulders, St. Leger lounged out of the study. He often got a little fed-up with his surly "pal," and he was certainly fed-up with him now.

Cutts flung his cigarette-end in the grate, and for some moments he remained seated, biting his finger-nails savagely. Then he jumped up and got his cap. Despite his chum's "unreasonableness," he still had hopes of making him see "reason." He certainly did not want to quarrel with him now. He decided it was just as well to follow St. Leger and attempt to put matters right. St. Leger was easy-going and good-natured, but he had his limits.

In a minute Cutts was out of doors and hurrying for Big Side. Reaching the senior footer-ground, he looked about him in vain for St. Leger.

If St. Leger had intended going there, then he had since. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 868.

changed his mind, obviously. And after looking about for some minutes Cutts walked off the ground.

A quite unimportant match between the Fifth and the Sixth was in progress, but had it been an important match it would not have interested Cutts. Horse-racing was more in Cutts' line than footer.

Gerald Cutts strolled away and made tracks for Little Side. He fancied he knew where St. Leger might be found.

The match between Rylcombe Grammar School and St. Jim's had already commenced, but Cutts had not come to see this—far from it.

At the far end of the junior ground, and at some little distance from it, was a bunch of trees and thickets. Skirting the ground itself, Cutts dived through the hedge, and made his way along it until he reached these.

It was a quiet and secluded spot, and was a favourite rendezvous of Cutts & Co. Here, within easy reach of the school, one could enjoy a quiet smoke in comparative safety, and even a quiet game of cards, if one took ordinary precautions. And Cutts expected—or half-expected—to find St. Leger here now, with, perhaps, Gilmore and Prye.

But St. Leger wasn't there, nor were the other two members of Cutts & Co. The place appeared to be deserted.

Cutts glanced carelessly around, and then with a grunt he dropped down on the soft grass and took out his cigarette-case. He lit up, and lying on his back he smoked moodily, his mind full of bitter thoughts.

The cheery shouts and yells from the footer-field, and the dull thud of the falling ball reached his ears from beyond the hedge, but the sounds brought no feeling of pleasure to Cutts. But presently another sound aroused him—a curious sound he had heard once or twice since entering the lonely copse.

It was a faint crackling sound—short and sharp, like the sudden tearing of crisp paper. And it came from somewhere quite close to him—near the hedge.

Somebody was hiding in the copse beside himself.

Curious, Gerald Cutts raised himself on one elbow and listened intently. Presently the sound came again, and this time he located it.

Rising softly, Cutts stepped equally as softly over the grass towards the spot. He hardly felt it could be his own chums, and the curious sound mystified him.

He stopped suddenly, for below him, motionless in the undergrowth, and reclining on his elbows, was a junior, from whose shoulder was levelled a peculiarly-shaped gun—a bluish metal weapon that glinted dully in the wan sunlight.

The junior was Aubrey Racke, and the gun in his hands was the Lightning Shaft.

Cutts had never seen the mysterious weapon, but he had heard a great deal about it, and he knew in a flash that this was it—it must be.

Cutts watched, motionless, spellbound.

What Racke was "up to" he could not imagine. He appeared to be aiming the queer weapon through the interstices of the hedge at the distant footer-field.

Cutts knew the next moment.

From where he stood he had a good view of every detail of the field. The hedge was low, and he could see over it, though, from his position, screened by foliage, he knew that he himself must be invisible to anyone on the footer-field.

He saw Racke's finger curl round the queer-shaped trigger, he glimpsed the triumphant glitter in the Shell junior's eyes. In a flash he understood, and his eyes went towards the distant field.

Tom Merry had just trapped the spinning leather, and slung it over to Talbot at outside-right. Like greased lightning Talbot was off along the touchline, and he only parted with the ball within a yard of the corner-flag.

With a beautiful dropping centre he sent the leather over to Tom Merry, who had followed up. Tom, finding himself heavily marked, had sent it out to D'Arcy at outside-left.

Arthur Augustus trapped the spinning ball neatly, and, after cleverly tricking Frank Monk of the Grammar School, he punted the ball back to Tom Merry.

And Tom was ready for it! He took the whizzing ball in his stride, and steadied himself for a shot at goal.

He was beautifully placed for the shot—he had an open goal before him, and a breathless hush settled upon the crowd. He raised his foot, and—

Crackle! Flash!

Only Cutts and Racke, in the copse, knew exactly what actually happened. Only Racke and Cutts heard that faint crackle, and saw the tiny blue flash from the gun in the rascally Shell junior's hand.

All the breathless crowd saw was that, even as he raised his foot, Tom Merry seemed to flinch and sway, and in that instant of hesitation Gordon Gay, the Grammarian leader, whipped in and smacked the ball almost from his toes.

Gordon Gay then sent the leather whizzing down-field, and a roar of mingled disappointment and execration went up from the crowd.

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"By gad!" breathed Cutts.

A soft chuckle came from the thin lips of the rascally Racke. But still Cutts remained silent, watching. He understood now, and his eyes were gleaming curiously. He was anxious to see more—though what he had already seen was a revelation.

He very soon saw more, too.

The Grammarian team seemed to be in amazingly fine form, while the Saints seemed to be working dazedly—like fellows in a dream.

Scarcely a minute later Gordon Gay got the ball again, and in a flash the whole Grammarian front line were sweeping, like a well-oiled machine, towards the St. Jim's goal, passing the leather from foot to foot with bewildering rapidity.

Fascinated, Gerald Cutts watched the short barrel of the weapon in Racke's hand moving slowly as Racke's eyes followed the hurricane attack of the visiting forwards.

Gay was satisfied at last. He was well placed when the ball dropped at his feet again, and, neatly avoiding the rush of Herries and Levison, he sent the ball in a pretty daisy-cutting trip goalwards.

Again came that sudden, breathless silence, and again—in the copse on the bit of rising ground—sounded that faint crackle of an electric spark.

And at the critical moment Fatty Wynn, the St. Jim's goalie, stumbled, and sprawled headlong in the mud, while the ball whizzed like a cannon-ball past him into the net.

Goal!

From the crowd came a terrific yell of execration, mingled with laughter—from the Grammarian supporters, that is. The St. Jim's fellows were stunned. Good shot as it undoubtedly was, Fatty Wynn's attempt to save it had been hopelessly feeble and behindhand.

It was amazing.

But it was not amazing to Gerald Cutts, and this time he chuckled aloud.

"Jolly good shot, Racke, old man," he said pleasantly.

Racke almost jumped out of his skin.

The glinting weapon dropped from his suddenly shaking hand, and he turned an ashen face to the grinning Fifth-Former behind him.

"You—you—" he whispered trembling.

"Little me," said Cutts, nodding genially. "I say, that's a jolly good wheeze, Racke, old man!"

Racke said nothing; but as he stared into Cutts' grinning face he drew a deep breath of relief. Cutts was a bigger rascal than he himself, and Racke was well aware of that. And Cutts' manner was reassuring. He shuddered to think what it would have meant had anyone else but Cutts discovered his rascally game.

"You—you saw?" he breathed. "You saw, Cutts—"

"I saw, and I understand—quite!" grinned Cutts.

"You—you won't split—"

"Dear old Racke!" murmured Cutts, dropping down by Racke's side. "What a really brainy merchant you are. What's the giddy old game? Just getting a bit of your own back, or—by Jove, that's an idea!—have you got a few dubs on the match? By gad!"

CHAPTER 7.

Racke Gives Way!

CUTTS paused, his eyes gleaming strangely. A sudden rascally scheme had entered his mind—a scheme that almost made him gasp.

Racke eyed him tensely, quite mistaking his silence.

"Look—look here, Cutts," he breathed. "You—you won't give me away—you hate those cads as much as I do?"

"Well, that's so!" mused Cutts, though he seemed to be thinking of something other than the junior's question.

"No, I won't give you away, Racke. But—but why are you doing this—tell me all about it?"

Racke told him, gaining confidence from the grin on his hearer's face.

"Gad!" breathed Cutts. "And it worked, Racke—like I saw just now?"

"Like a charm!" grinned Racke. "I've mucked up Merry's play—stopped him scoring half a dozen times. And I've made that fat cad Wynn let the dashed ball through four times. It's close on time, and the Grammar School are four up."

"Phew!"

"Merry punched me," gritted Racke, stroking his chin.

"But I think I've had my own back—what?"

"How does it work?" asked Cutts, picking up the gun curiously.

"Easy as winking! All you've got to watch is to see you get an uninterrupted view of the chap you aim at. Luckily, there aren't many chaps on the touchline this side."

"I see," said Cutts slowly. "By gad! What a game! Jove, the cash a chap could make with this gadget!"

He fell silent, eyeing Racke reflectively. He spoke at last in a low tone.



Acting on the swift impulse Glyn whipped the instrument from beneath his jacket and aimed it at the boy in buttons. "Glyn, you ass!" shouted Tom Merry. There was a crackle and a flash, and Toby gave a convulsive start and over-balanced. Crash! Clatter, clatter! (See page 9.)

"Nobody knows you've got this, of course, Racke?" he asked.

"Not a soul!" grinned Racke. "Glyn's the only chap known to have handled the thing. If it's missing he'll get the blame."

"Good! Then I think I'll borrow this useful gadget for a bit, Racke."

"But—but—"

"Look here, Racke," said Cutts, his eyes glittering.

"How'd you like to win a few easy quids? I can show you how."

"What's the dodge?"

"I'll tell you," said Cutts, lowering his voice still more. "What about the big match on Saturday with Rylcombe? I know where I can get odds of two to one on the Grammar School; in fact, I believe I can get better terms than

(Continued on page 16.)



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THIS Bernard Glyn Edition of the "News" is being published by special request of a large section of my readers, who appear to be tremendously interested in everything concerning the Shell inventor.

There is not the slightest doubt that Glyn is remarkably clever in his own special line, though it is none the less true that his notions are not always successes. Accidents are pretty frequent in Study No. 11, and the sort of accident that involves chemicals is generally a very unpleasant affair for everybody in the vicinity. There have been occasions when the Shell corridor has been absolutely untenable for an hour or so after Glyn has liberated some more than unusually abominable odour. And it is perhaps unnecessary to add that retribution has been prompt and dire. But ragglings, however severe, do not in the least deter Glyn. As soon as things settle down again, he's at it again just as enthusiastically.

His activities are unlimited, and his inventive notions range from a patent collar-stud to a flying-machine that will do anything and everything—except fly.

One day he invented a new sort of indelible marking-ink, and fellows borrowed small quantities of it with which to paint the keyholes of their study doors.

The result was that, during the next few days, Baggy Trimble was constantly being pulled up in class for having neglected to wash his ears, and the hours he spent in the bath-room during that period must almost have made up for his previous careful neglect of that apartment. Glyn guaranteed the ink to stop on for a week, and it did even better than he claimed.

I should imagine that it must have been very gratifying to him to observe that traces of it still lingered in the more ornamental and inaccessible portions of Baggy's ear-flaps ten or eleven days after.

The rest of us were no end grateful to Glyn, but I will not undertake to express Baggy's opinion of the affair.

But there are few of Glyn's ideas which gain such universal approval as this did. As a general rule, when he's perpetrated any fresh notion, he has to keep out of everybody's way for a day or so. It was quite a new experience for him to have bouquets thrown at him instead of boots and books and things of that kind.

Noble and Dane have come up to the scratch with contributions, and thanks are due to them for their articles, which, I venture to think, will prove of interest to all my readers.

Tom Merry

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A HARD LIFE!

By Bernard Glyn.

I MIGHT as well be frank, and say straight out that I don't want to write this blessed article at all. I've got more important things to do.

But Noble and Dane are standing on each side of me, and they swear they won't go away till I finish the job. So I suppose the best thing to do is to get on with it.

Life at St. Jim's for a fellow with original ideas isn't a bed of roses. I have a jolly thin time, I can tell you. The slightest smell, the tiniest noise, and the Shell corridor's up in arms, banging on the door and thirsting for blood. My blood, mark you! The hooligans!

What do the claims of science count with them? Less than nothing! It's enough to give a chap the doodle-pip, isn't it? Here am I taxing my brains to devise inventions that will make life easier and more comfortable for everybody, and all they can do is to raise Cain every time one of my experiments causes them the least bit of inconvenience.

Bah! It's absolutely disgusting! Noble and Dane are every bit as bad as the rest of them. If I want a few minutes' peace and quietness in which to work out an idea I have to lock the blighters out of the study. Then they stand outside in the corridor and bang on the door, which is about as disturbing as having them rampaging about in the study. And Dane is such a clumsy ass! If there is anything in the way of apparatus that he can possibly knock over, smash it goes!

But what I grumble about most is people's ingratitude. Do them a good turn, and they only turn round and bite you in the neck for it.

The other day Kildare had got the hump because he was swotting for an exam, and chaps were continually going to his study and interrupting him about nothing in particular every time he settled down for a half-hour's mugging.

So I decided to put things right for him, Kildare being a jolly decent sort of fellow—or so, at least, I thought up to then.

I fixed up a Leyden jar attachment to his door-handle and a plate under his doormat, so that anybody who came along on a fool's errand would be sorry he hadn't gone down to the kitchens and taken a spoonful of mustard instead. Of course, Kildare didn't know anything about it, I didn't intend that he should until afterwards, when I would explain how it was that he'd had an uninterrupted sleep—I mean, swot, and permit him to thank me.

How was I to know that his uncle would come to the school for a few minutes, while passing through Rylcombe, and go straight up to his study?

I tell you, it's a hard life for a fellow with original ideas.

POOR OLD BLAKE!

By Clifton Dane.

GLYN once invented an automatic thief-catcher.

It was a most ingenious affair. You fixed it up inside a cupboard, for instance, and if any unauthorised person opened that cupboard in your absence, strong steel bands fastened round his wrists and held him until you came along and opened the court of inquiry.

A most useful notion to have handy when you've got a cupboardful of grub and a fellow like Baggy Trimble drifting around.

And, mind you, it worked all right! No doubt about that! You ask—well, let me tell the story properly.

When I was chosen to play in the Junior Eleven against Rookwood you can bet I was on Little Side to time—before time, in fact. I was taking no chances, because Tom Merry's an impatient skipper who won't stand for unpunctuality, and I was too mighty keen on playing to run any risks.

But there was one fellow who wasn't on time. Five minutes before the match was due to commence Blake hadn't put in an appearance.

The teams were trotting on to the field when Skimpole came up, and informed us that there were strange sounds audible in our study.

Skimmy occupies the study next but one to ours, and he explained that he'd been writing when he heard the noises—some potty rot about some silly "ism" or other, which is Skimmy's usual method of spending his spare time. Anybody but Skimmy would have gone into Study No. 11 and found out what was wrong instead of running out to the footer-ground, but Skimmy always does things cock-eyed.

Anyway, Glyn and Noble went off to investigate, and returned, about four minutes later—with Blake!

Poor old Blake!

It appeared that he'd gone into our study to ask for his footer stockings, which I'd borrowed the day before because my new ones hadn't arrived from the outfitters. They were a spare pair of Blake's, and he'd torn his others at practice, and wanted them to wear for the match.

Not finding any of us in, he commenced to rummage round in order to save time, guessing that he'd find them somewhere about.

It occurred to him that the cupboard would be a likely place, and he'd gone there. Well, as it happened, the stockings were there, but so was Glyn's thief-catcher. Blake didn't get the stockings, but the thief-catcher got Blake. And, what is more, it wouldn't let him go again.

No wonder he was late arriving at the match. If Skimmy hadn't heard him yelling he'd have been there for the afternoon.

I'll bet the next time Blake wants anything out of our study he'll come and ask one of us to get it for him.



GLYN'S MOTOR MOWER!

By HARRY
NOBLE.

IF anybody asked me whether I consider Glyn to be a mechanical genius or a prize ass, I'm hanged if I should quite know what to reply.

I suppose the truth is that he's a bit of each, and rather more of the latter than of the former, perhaps.

Of course, he's got brains. I'll admit that right off. But, in my opinion, it's not so much a question of whether a fellow's got grey matter in his upper story or not that counts most in the world; it's the use he puts it to.

Now, Glyn sometimes uses his brains to good purpose, but more often he sets himself to working out some idiotic stunt or other that leads to no end of trouble.

Take the case of the motor lawn-mower. Now, that particular notion wasn't a bad one, so far as it went. The trouble was that the confounded thing went considerably too far on one occasion.

Of course, motor lawn-mowers aren't exactly a new idea. Most people have seen one, I suppose, at some time or another. But this particular contrivance of Glyn's was supposed to be something especially classy. He claimed that it had all the advantages of the existing types of power-mowers, without any of the drawbacks.

It was a mower and roller combined, and Glyn constructed it out of a collection of odds and ends that he bought cheaply from a scrap-merchant's place in Wayland—with the exception of the motor, that is. This was a petrol engine of about twelve horsepower that Glyn happened to have by him, though goodness only knows where he got it from.

He admitted that it was a trifle more powerful than he wanted for the purpose, but he couldn't afford to buy another, so he installed it and trusted to being able to throttle it down.

The very afternoon he put the finishing touches to it things so turned out that he had an opportunity for trying it out.

The Head and most of the masters were away at some special civic do in Wayland, and most of the prefects were over at Greyfriars, where a First Eleven match was being played. So that Glyn was pretty safe from interference, which in the ordinary way wouldn't have been the case, that's jolly certain.

He trundled the mower out of the shed by the gardener's cottage, in which he'd been building it, and took it on to the fags' sports ground to test it.

Fortunately, there weren't many fags about, and after we'd pacified the few who were hanging about, and who conceived the idea that we were intent upon perpetrating some dastardly scheme for the ruination of their playing-pitches, we got the mower to work.

It was certainly a success. When Glyn had been joy-riding for about half an hour the pitches looked like one huge billiard-table. The contraption rolled the ground as well as mowing the grass.

Glyn's biggest job wasn't managing the mower, but discouraging the horde of would-be chauffeurs, who were more than anxious to try their hands at the job of driving the bus. A crowd of fags turned up when they heard of the excitement that was going forward, and the manner in which they clustered round every time Glyn slowed down to turn round, imploring him to permit them to be head cooks and bottle-washers for a few yards at least, was as exasperating to

him as it was amusing to us—and futile to them.

Glyn wasn't taking any chances. There was a tremendous amount of blif about that machine that needed keeping under careful control, and the job of guiding it round the sports ground, simple as it looked, wasn't one to be undertaken by a novice.

But though they didn't get any satisfaction in that respect, the fags were highly delighted with the state of their sports ground, and for once in a way there was a general enthusiasm regarding one of Glyn's stunts.

Tom Merry came along just as Glyn was rolling out the last bump, and he at once asked Glyn to perform a like service for Little Side.

Bernard promised readily enough; but, as it was near tea-time, we decided to leave that job over for a while, and the mower was taken back to the shed and locked away—a very necessary precaution, by the way, in view of the interest it had aroused among the fags, who were a trifle too curious about the engine, and desirous of inspecting it at close quarters.

As soon as tea was over we fully expected that Glyn would spring up and commence the task of shingling the grass on the Little Side pitches, but, instead of that, he sat at the table in a thoughtful mood.

Pretty soon he came out with it. He was anxious about the fate of the mower when the beaks learnt of its existence.

There was every possibility that they would order it to be taken away, and it had occurred to Glyn that it wouldn't be a bad idea to make an attempt to placate them by some means. The method that had suggested itself to Glyn was a feasible one, if only it worked out as well as the experiment on the fags' pitches had done.

There is a large lawn in the Head's garden, and Glyn proposed to mow and roll that, as a proof of the abilities of his invention and provide at the same time a pleasant surprise for Dr. Holmes.

We—Dane and I, that is—both agreed that it wasn't at all a bad idea, and Glyn wasted no time in putting it into operation.

He was out of the study and down the corridor before we could get to the door, and when we reached the gardener's cottage he was already dragging the mower out of the shed.

"Come on, you two, and give me a hand!" he shouted, as he looked up and saw us approaching. "I don't want to be longer than I need be. The beaks may arrive any time now, and I want to be finished before they appear on the scene."

With our help he pushed the contrivance into the Head's garden and started up the engine.

It made the dickens of a row, which brought out most of the servants, who certainly stared when they saw three juniors doing stunts on the lawn with a mysterious contraption that banged and clattered and rattled, emitting clouds of evil-smelling vapour the while. But they said nothing, probably supposing that the Head knew all about it. It wasn't likely to occur to them that we should have the nerve to invade the sacred precincts in that fashion without permission.

I'm free to admit that I felt more than a trifle windy, and Dane confessed to me that he felt much the same—a queer sort of sensation in the region of the tummy—but Glyn had enough confidence for the lot of us.

He climbed into the little leather saddle that he'd rigged up for a driving-seat, and pressed in the clutch. Off started the mower, its blades whirling round over the short grass of the lawn.

When I had a look round it occurred to me that the lawn didn't really need much mowing, if any. I pointed that out to Dane, who agreed with me.

But Glyn's mower went trundling along, and, by its appearances, it was finding something to cut, short as the grass was.

Now, when that mower had gone over the fags' ground, it had behaved exactly as a mower should behave. It cut the grass beautifully short, and then rolled it out crisp and firm on a perfectly level lawn.

But now it was behaving more like a plough than a lawn-mower. It was tearing huge lumps of turf out of the lawn, and flinging them to the four winds of heaven.

Whether the blades had required readjustment, which Glyn had omitted, or whether they had been damaged in the removal from the shed to the Head's garden, I cannot say. Anyway, it was obvious that something was decidedly wrong.

Dane and I stared, horror-stricken, into each other's faces.

"Great Scott!" I gasped. "Look at the mess it's making! Hi, Glyn! Stop the thing! You'll be coming out in Australia in a minute at this rate!"

I had to yell twice before he heard me above the racket of the engine, and then he turned and looked back in amazement.

When he saw the state of the lawn he had another bad attack of amazement. The shock was so great that he forgot he was driving the mower, with the result that he allowed it to go over the edge of the lawn and into the plantation beyond.

When he got a cough on the back of the neck from a tree-branch, it recalled him to a realisation of where he was and what he was supposed to be doing, but by that time he'd made a sad mess of the spinney.

Anyhow, he turned the mower and came back. Dane and I shouted to him to stop the blessed thing, because he'd done enough damage in crossing the lawn once, without multiplying it by two in another journey. But the mower came trundling on.

"Stop, you ass!" roared Dane. "Look what you're doing!"

Glyn was frantically tugging at the controls, and we began to get an idea that there must be something wrong with the juggernaut. We weren't far out in our guess, either. A tree-bough had got wedged just where it could do most damage, and the mower was out of control. No use shouting to Glyn to stop it. That was just what he jolly well couldn't do.

The worst of it was the thing was getting up speed. Faster and faster it went, till it must have been travelling at twelve or fourteen miles an hour, and every moment I expected to see Glyn jerked out of his seat. He spent about five minutes on the lawn, steering round and round in circles while he wrestled with the levers, and at the end of that time there was precious little of the lawn left; for, whatever else had gone wrong, the cutting-blades certainly hadn't. They stuck grimly to their work, and put in a bit of overtime—mostly spade-work, as it were.

Then the steering-gear went west. The mower turned off the lawn, and made straight for a row of forcing-frames. It didn't take long to reach them, but it took even less time to demolish them.

Crash! Tinkle, tinkle! Crash! The maids screamed blue murder; we yelled frantically; the engine roared; the mower banged and rattled and clashed.

The total din was appalling, but the blessed mower seemed to thrive on it.

I think that engine must have been designed for use as the power-unit of a tank.

It propelled the mower through every obstacle the garden could offer.

It wiped out a shrubbery, cut up and flattened out a dozen beds of prize flowers, knocked down a potting-shed, carried away an avenue of rustic arches, wrecked an arbour, converted a garden seat into firewood, and gave up the ghost reluctantly in the fish-pond, out of which it was unable to climb.

And at that moment in walked the Head!

The sequel is too sore a subject even yet to recount in detail. Possibly, however, you can guess what it was!

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that. Hake and his pals offered me that only yesterday. They think it's a cert for their chaps."

"It is," muttered Racke, giving him a keen look. "The Grammarians have a hot team, and two of our chaps are crooked—Rushden and Baker. It is a cert for them—everybody knows it."

"Not if a chap happened to be at hand with this," said Cutts, pointing to the gun on the grass, "and also happened to want 'em to lose—see?"

"Oh!"

Racke understood then. He gave Cutts a scared look.

"You—don't mean—"

"Yes, I do," grinned Cutts. "It would be as easy as what you've just been doing—easier, in fact. The Grammar School ground is surrounded with trees; there's heaps of cover. And Hake and his lot will jump at the bait; in fact, we might even get some of our chaps to take us on. It's money for nothing. What about it?"

Racke shook his head promptly.

"No thundering fear, Cutts—not for me," he said. "It's too risky."

"No more risky than this, you fool!"

"This is different, Cutts. In any case, I'm not keen on betting on school matches."

Cutts gave a low, derisive laugh.

"Harken to good little Georgie," he sneered. "Well, I'm not so keen myself, but it happens that I'm hard up. Anyway, are you coming in?"

"I'm having nothing to do with it, Cutts," said Racke steadily. "It's risky, and it's just a bit too thick for me. Look—look here, you can't do it. You can't keep that gun until Saturday; there'd be a frightful rumpus. I'm taking it back."

"Are you? Not if I know it!" snapped Cutts, picking up the gun again. "That's your little mistake. Well, as you chose to keep out of it, I'm going to ask you to lend me a few quids. I happen to be stony, and Hake will want me to put the money down. Five quid might do, and I can raise the rest, p'raps."

Racke looked at him. He understood now why Cutts wanted him to come in.

"There's nothing doing, Cutts," he said sullenly. "I'd rather have nothing to do with it—and I'm not."

Cutts rose to his feet carelessly.

"Oh, all right," he said calmly. "Well, perhaps you're right, Racke; it is a bit thick. In fact, now I think it over I think it's too thick letting poor old Glyn suffer. I'll take this gun back at once and explain. I suppose Merry and his pals would be no end interested to hear just how they lost the match. I'm afraid they'll just flay you alive, Racke."

Aubrey Racke bit his lip hard. He could hardly fail to grasp the drift of Cutts' remarks.

He stared for some seconds into Cutts' cool, hard face, and then he drew out his pocket-wallet. The purse-proud son of Sir Jonas Racke was well supplied with pocket-money—far too well supplied for his own good. But he hated to part with any of it, for all that.

His face was pale with suppressed rage as he handed three Treasury notes over to the unscrupulous senior.

"All I've got now," he said through his teeth. "I—I'll hand over the rest to-morrow, Cutts."

"That'll do," said Cutts, grinning. "You needn't be afraid of not getting it back, kid. With this nobby gadget it's an absolute cert."

"What about an I.O.U., Cutts?"

"Oh, I'll give you that to-morrow, Racke," rejoined Cutts airily. "Now you'd better shove off, kid. I'm expecting St. Leger and Gilmore here any moment now."

"What about the—gun?"

"I'm hiding it here for a bit, old top. Leave that to me," grinned Cutts.

Racke gave the senior one helpless glance, and then he tramped away, his brow dark, his mind full of uneasy fears. He bitterly regretted having touched the gun now. Cutts' scheme filled him with alarm. He knew that if it failed—if it all came out, Cutts would never hesitate to drag him into it.

At the same time, Racke felt thankful that it had been Cutts who had caught him. He shuddered to think what the result would have been had it been any fellow less shady

than Cutts. It was bad enough, but it certainly might be worse.

But Cutts of the Fifth had no fears or doubts. For some minutes after the junior had gone he lay on the grass smoking and thinking, and then he sprang to his feet with sudden decision. He hid the Lightning Shaft in a thick bush hard by, and then he flung his cigarette away and left the corpse.

Five minutes later Cutts had got his bicycle from the cycle-shed, and was riding hard towards Rylcombe Grammar School to see Messrs. Hake & Co., the shady gang with whom he hoped to do "business." For Rylcombe Grammar School had its "black sheep" just the same as St. Jim's. And when Cutts started back an hour later for St. Jim's he was smiling.

Apparently Hake & Co. had "jumped at the bait!"

CHAPTER 8.

Was it Glyn?

"LICKED!"

"Licked to the wide!"

"Licked isn't the word, deah boys. It was a slaughtah, bai Jove!"

"We'll never hear the last of this, you fellows! Oh, my hat! It was awful!"

Tom Merry said nothing.

The junior match with the Grammar School was over, and the St. Jim's juniors were deeply thankful that it was over. It had been an amazing match, and a disastrous match for Tom Merry & Co. It had ended in a score of five goals to nil for the Grammar School.

To the St. Jim's players the match had been as amazing as it was bewildering. It seemed as if they could do nothing right. And their skipper—Tom Merry—had made a more dismal show than anyone else. Chance after chance of scoring he had either failed to take advantage of, or else he had muffed his shot in the most incomprehensible manner.

True, towards the close of play the St. Jim's juniors had "bucked up" a little. But it had availed them nothing. They had failed to score when the whistle put an end to the fiasco. And now they were trooping off the field amid a roar of cheering from the gloating Grammarians, and a great deal of ironical laughter and chipping.

In a dismal, dispirited group the St. Jim's footballers trooped off the field. They were a stronger team than the Grammarians, and they had fully expected to "walk over" Gordon Gay & Co.

But they hadn't. On the contrary, they had had the licking of their lives. It was utterly beyond them. And they discussed the strange circumstances volubly, albeit dejectedly, as they made tracks for the School House.

Only Tom Merry was silent. He was as perplexed as were the others, and he was feeling humiliated at his own wretched exhibition. But, instead of talking like the others, he was thinking—hard.

"It was our off day fairly!" groaned Blake. "I'm blest if I know what was the matter with me! I seemed to be on form all right, and yet when a blessed chance did come I seemed to lose my nerve. It beats me!"

"Just how I was, Blake. It's rummy we should all be off colour!"

"Somethin' we had for dinnah, deah boys," suggested D'Arcy reflectively. "Pewwaps indigestion, bai Jove!"

"Looks like it, anyway!" grunted Herries. "Even Fatty Wynn made a muck of things. It must have been something we all had for dinner, as Gussy says."

And that was the general view. It seemed to be the only way to account for the wretched exhibition. But Tom Merry did not share that view. A strange and growing suspicion was taking form in his mind.

It was such a startling theory that Tom hesitated even to mention it to the others. By the time they had reached the School House, however, he had decided to do so.

"I want you fellows to come along to my study," he said quietly. "I've got a theory that may explain this business. I don't believe it was indigestion. Anyway, it won't do any harm to talk things over."

"Wathah not, bai Jove!"

The rest of the footballers followed Tom Merry wonderingly. He led the way along to Study No. 10, and when all were inside he closed the door and faced them.

"Now, you chaps," he began grimly, "we've been licked—licked to the wide. But we've been licked, not because we all played a bad game throughout, but because most of us, just at certain critical times, muffed our shots or failed to shoot at all."

"That's so, Tommy."

"Well, in that case, I can't see how it could be indigestion. Besides, I've had the same sensation before this afternoon, though I scarcely noticed anything in the rush of play. I only know that at the critical moment, just when I was about to kick the ball, something came over me. I seemed to lose control for a second. I thought it was just nerves at the time."

"Same here," said Blake, eyeing Tom Merry queerly. "That was just as I felt, Tommy. It was, now I come to think over it, just like a queer sort of shock—yes, and my hands seemed to tingle. Mum-my hat!"

Blake's face assumed a startled look, and Tom Merry saw that he had grasped what he was aiming at.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "You—you think—"

"Just that," assented Tom grimly. "And I suppose all you fellows had the same sensation?"

Tom Merry's own particular chums were beginning to grasp his meaning, but the others were looking perplexed.

"Well, that's so, Tommy," agreed Talbot. "I remember the feeling distinctly now."

"Same here," said Levison, frowning. "But—but I can't quite see what you're driving at, old chap."

Tom compressed his lips.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said. "You fellows have heard all about the Lightning Shaft, of course? But most of you haven't seen it or felt its effects. I have. So has Blake, and one or two more. Mr. Vining showed it to us, and tested it on us. You've all heard how the gun projects a wave—something like a wireless wave—at the person aimed at? It gives him a shock, slight and momentary, that causes him to lose control for a second. Well, this is what I'm aiming at. The sensation one gets from that gun is exactly the same sensation as we all experienced at certain times during the game this afternoon."

"Bai Jove!"

"Phew!"

The juniors stared aghast at Tom Merry.

"But—but how on earth—" began Manners.

"Easily enough!" said Tom, anticipating the question.

"What about that cove on the far side of Little Side—eh? Supposing a chap had that gun and was concealed there? The more I think about it the more certain I am that that is just what has been happening."

There was a moment's silence.

"But—but weally, Mewwy," exclaimed Arthur Augustus at length, "you cannot possibly suspect Mr. Vinin' of such a wassally twick? I uttally wefuse to cwedit such a wotten theowy, bai Jove!"

"I certainly don't, Gussy," said Tom. "My theory is that some chap had the gun, and did it for a practical joke."

"A thundering rotten practical joke, then!" snapped Blake.

"Yes, it was," agreed Tom grimly. "The fellow who did it—if anyone did—was a fellow with a mistaken sense of humour. I fancy I can guess who the chap is. He was a chap who we happen to know had the gun this afternoon."

"You—you know him?" ejaculated Levison, staring.

"I think so."

Arthur Augustus was looking distressed.

"Weally, Mewwy, that is wedic!" he gasped. "You cannot mean old Glyn, deah boy?"

"That's the chap I do mean," said Tom, his eyes gleaming.

"We know what he is—"

"Did Glyn have the gun?" asked Talbot quietly.

"Yes, he did."

Many of the juniors present had not heard of Toby's "accident" on the stairs, and Tom Merry told them now. Few of the juniors grinned, however.

"It was rather a senseless jape to play on Toby," was Talbot's quiet comment.

"That's just my point," said Tom. "We all know what an ass Glyn is sometimes. When he's experimenting he cares nothing for anything or anybody. He's a good sort, but he doesn't think when he's up to his games. His practical jokes are all right in a way, but he often goes just a bit too far. That's just what I believe he's done now."

"Wot—uttah wot, deah boy!" said D'Arcy warmly. "I admit that Glyn is careless, and apt to act without due wefection. But he wouldn't play a wotten twick like this, bai Jove!"

"I'm not so sure about that," said Levison slowly. "I'm inclined to think Tommy may be right. Glyn's a mad ass in some ways. If he had the gun—"

"He had it," said Tom. "Mind you, I'm only suggesting this. And if he did do it, I know perfectly well that he didn't realise that it was such a rotten trick. I know he wouldn't look at it quite in the same way as we do. All the same, I think we ought to tackle him about it. And if he did it, then—well, I think we ought to teach him a lesson. A fellow with a sense of humour like that wants jumping on—hard!"

"Yes, rather!"

All agreed upon that. The juniors were all angry—bitterly angry and mortified at the fiasco on the footer-field, and it was plain that Glyn was "for it" if he was proved to be guilty.

"So I vote we get him here and question him," went on Tom Merry. "I expect he's taken the gun back by this. But—"

Tom Merry got no further. At that moment the door

opened and a junior entered. It was Bernard Glyn. Every eye turned upon him.

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We are just wanting to see you, Glyn."

"And I want to see you, Merry!" said Glyn, through his teeth.

Tom Merry looked quickly at him. Glyn's face was white, and his eyes glittered with anger.

"You—you cad, Merry!" hissed Glyn. "You sneaking cad!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You rotten sneak!" said Glyn. "You gave me away to Railton!"

Tom Merry was utterly taken aback. He had been about to "start on" Glyn. Instead of which Glyn was doing that to him.

"What on earth do you mean, Glyn?" he asked.

"You know what I mean jolly well, Merry. You've told Railton I had that gun—that wave projector."

"I did nothing of the sort, Glyn."

"You must have done, or if you didn't, then one of your blessed pals did, then," said Glyn, his lip curling. "Railton yanked me away and licked me. He thought I'd just played a joke on Toby, pushed him so that he fell down the stairs. I let him think that. Somebody's told him since, though. Only you and Lowther and Manners saw me with the gun. One of you must have told him."

"What rot!"

"You did. And now the thing's missing I'm blamed for it," said Glyn bitterly.

"Missing?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "How can it be missing when you've got it?"

"You know jolly well it's missing!" snapped Glyn. "I hid it in the cupboard at the top of the stairs when Railton yanked me away. I meant to get it later. It was gone when I went for it. Then Vining missed it from Railton's room, and they've been turning the house upside down searching for it. Railton's had me before him. He's going to take me before the Head if it doesn't turn up before morning."

Tom Merry eyed him steadily. His face was flushed, though, and inwardly he was seething with anger at Glyn's charge, and when he spoke he did not mince his words.

"That's a thin yarn, Glyn," he said. "And we know what to think of it. I suppose you'll say next that you don't know what happened at the match this afternoon?"

"I don't know, and I don't thundering well care!"

"We know you don't," said Tom angrily. "But we're going to make you care, Glyn. Mucking up matches like that is not the sort of joke we appreciate."

It was Glyn's turn to be astonished.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" he snapped.

"Then I'll tell you. Somebody was hiding in the cove just off Little Side this afternoon. He had the Lightning Shaft with him, and was taking pot-shots at us. He mucked up our game completely. We were licked five to none. That chap was you, Glyn, unless I'm very much mistaken."

"Is—is that true?" gasped Glyn.

"You ought to know!" cut in Blake curtly.

"And you—you think I played a dirty trick like that?"

"It looks like one of your silly jokes!" assented Tom Merry bluntly.

"Then here's my answer!" shouted Bernard Glyn.

And, stepping forward swiftly, he slapped Tom Merry clean across the face with his flat hand.

CHAPTER 9.

Standing by Glyn!

THERE was a dead silence in the room.

As he struck the blow, Bernard Glyn sprang back, on his guard, ready for the inevitable retaliation.

His face was scarlet and his chest heaved with the violence of the passion that consumed him. Normally he was a good-tempered junior—cheery, and far from being prone to outbursts of passion.

But that afternoon had been a trying one for Bernard Glyn. The "licking" from Mr. Railton, the discovery that the precious invention was missing from the cupboard, the subsequent discovery that the Housemaster knew he had had the instrument, and the searching cross-examination before Mr. Railton and Mr. Vining, had all contrived to upset the balance and good temper of the schoolboy inventor considerably. Moreover, there was the prospect of an interview with the Head, and serious trouble to follow, should the wave projector fail to turn up that evening, to add to Glyn's distress of mind.

And now this last charge of Tom Merry's had proved to be the last straw for Bernard Glyn.

The inevitable retaliation came swiftly enough.

Up to now Tom Merry had held his rising temper in check with an effort. But that sudden, unexpected blow was too much. For an instant he stared blankly at Glyn's furious

face, and then his own flushed face went suddenly white, and he gave a growl.

"You—you rotter, Glyn! You'll pay for that! Put your fists up, you cad!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you fellows—"

But the alarmed protests of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were unheeded, and the next moment the two were fighting furiously.

It could scarcely have been called a fight, though. With such a crowd in the study, there was scarcely room to move, much less fight; and what followed was little more than a confused scramble.

Backwards and forwards, now crashing into the table, now struggling among the fire-irons in the fireplace, the struggle went on, while the rest of the juniors skipped and dodged to avoid the combatants.

"Stop! For goodness' sake stop, you asses!" gasped Blake, as the table went over with a crash. "Oh, my hat! They'll have the beaks here in a sec. Help me stop the idiots, you chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The alarmed footballers made a combined rush, and after a brief struggle, they dragged the angry combatants apart. The "scrap," though brief, had been fierce, and both juniors looked the worse for wear. Tom Merry's nose was streaming red, while Glyn's left eye was closing rapidly.

In the grasp of their fellow juniors they struggled, gasping and panting, and glaring at each other.

"Let me go!" hissed Glyn. "I'll teach that rotter—"

"Not much!" said Blake grimly. "You can finish your little scrap out in the gym, old top! This is no— Oh crumbs!"

Blake finished with a gasp as the door opened wide to admit Kildare of the Sixth. The skipper of St. Jim's eyed the scene grimly for a moment, and then he came in and closed the door behind him.

"H'm! Only a little difference—eh?" he exclaimed, with sarcasm. "I thought from the row that it was a riot, at least. Well, what's it all mean?"

"Only a little argument, Kildare," said Lowther. "It's ended now, though!"

"I want to know what it means!" snapped Kildare, looking hard from Glyn to Tom Merry. "What's the trouble, Merry? I don't like to see chaps like you and Glyn quarrelling!"

Tom Merry was silent.

"I'll jolly soon tell you, if he won't!" said Glyn savagely. "I went for Merry—I started it, Kildare! I went for him because he gave me away to Railton—the rotten sneak!"

"That's something new," remarked Kildare. "I wasn't aware before that Merry was in the habit of sneaking, Glyn."

"It's true, anyway!" said Glyn defiantly. "He told Railton I had that gun—he must have done. He told him before I had the chance of owning up that I'd had the thing. It was—"

"Rubbish!" snapped Kildare. "Merry did nothing of the sort, Glyn! It was Mrs. Mimms who reported the matter to Mr. Railton. Marsh must have told her. Anyway, she got the wind up—rushed to Railton complaining that you had pointed a gun at Toby, causing him to fall downstairs. She thought it was an ordinary gun, and felt it her duty to report the matter."

"Oh!"

Glyn gasped blankly. He saw that he had been just a little premature in charging Tom Merry.

"I—I didn't know that, Kildare," he muttered.

"Well, you know now," said Kildare briefly. "Now, let's have no more of this. You'd better run along to the bathroom and clean up a bit. Afterwards, Mr. Vining would like to speak to you in Mr. Railton's room."

"Right, Kildare!"

With white, set face, and without a glance at any of the juniors, Bernard Glyn walked from the room. And a moment later Kildare had followed him out.

"Well, my only topper!" exclaimed Herries. "Who would have expected a thing like this to happen?"

"Wotten, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head sadly. "Poor old Glyn made a bloomah, deah boy. But I wegard you fellows as bein' quite in the w'ong with wegard to Glyn havin' mucked up the match this aftahnoon. We weally must give the poor fellow fair play, y'know!"

"Fair play?" ejaculated Blake. "You burbling dummy! Isn't it plain enough that Glyn did it? Who else did it if he didn't, Gussy, you ass?"

"I weally do not know, Blake," said D'Arcy coldly. "But I pwopose to make it my business to find out. I wegard the charge against Glyn as uttah wubbish! Glyn is a w'eckless pwactical joker—he has no wegard for a fellow's feelin's, or even his clobber! But he is a vewy decent fellow, for all that. He has said that he did not do it, and I am pwepared to accept his word upon that."

"But, you ass—"

"I have nevah known Glyn to tell a lie, and I see no

weason to believe he is tellin' a lie now, Blake. I believe Glyn is innocent, and I am goin' to tell him so, bai Jove!"

And with that, Arthur Augustus left the room rather loftily. Evidently the unfortunate affair had quite upset the kind-hearted Swell of the Fourth!

"The burbling chump!" sported Blake. "As if it wasn't plain enough that Glyn did it!"

"I only wish I could think otherwise," said Tom Merry uneasily. "But—but look here, you fellows, we'll keep our suspicions to ourselves about this. We shall be clipped no end about the match; but that can't be helped. Nobody else is likely to suspect the truth, and for Glyn's sake we must say nothing now."

"But—but—"

"He did it, I'm afraid," explained Tom, "and he deserves showing up. But—but he looks like being in trouble enough soon. And this trick on the footer field will about finish him if it gets out. Let's keep mum about it."

"Well, my hat!"

The juniors rather grinned at that. It was just like the good-natured and forgiving junior skipper to suggest screening the fellow he had just been fighting furiously with.

But they agreed willingly enough. Glyn undoubtedly had trouble enough to face just then, and angry with him as they were, they did not wish to add further to his troubles.

After agreeing upon that course, the footballers went their ways, leaving the Terrible Three alone.

But Tom Merry's face was sombre; and his mind full of uneasy doubts as he sat down to tea that afternoon. The confident words of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had struck home—had made him think. Everything seemed to point to the theory that Glyn was guilty; but D'Arcy's words had disturbed him, and he wondered rather uneasily if they were wrong and he was right.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy on the Trail!

D'ARCY had stated that he intended to tell Glyn that he believed in his innocence; and he fully intended to do so. Arthur Augustus usually did do what he intended doing—wisely or unwisely.

During tea in Study No. 6 Arthur Augustus repeated his statement of his intentions to his own chums. He gave his reasons for believing Glyn innocent, and he also announced his intention to solve the mystery—to discover who actually was responsible for the loss of the gun, and for the happenings on the footer field. All of which was received by Blake and the other members of the Co. with hilarity. They did not seem to think much of Gussy's chances as a detective.

But Arthur Augustus was not to be put off by the laughter of his chums, and after tea he went along to Glyn's study. He found Glyn alone; he was seated at the table with his head in his hands.

"Glyn, deah boy," exclaimed D'Arcy kindly, "pway do not wowwy too much ovah this affair. I have come to assuah you—"

"Get out!" snapped Bernard Glyn, without looking up.

"Weally, Glyn—"

Arthur Augustus was about to protest mildly, but a moment's reflection told him that the schoolboy inventor had good reason to be irritable and somewhat rude.

"I was about to assuah you, Glyn," he went on, with gentle dignity, "that I do not share the genevahl belief in your guilt in wegard to that w'ave pwjectah, deah boy. I am awah that you are a weckless pwactical jokah, and that you bowwowed the thing fwom Mr. Vinin's woom. But I have nevah known you to do anythin' undahhanded and mean, bai Jove!"

"Oh!" Glyn looked up then. "Oh, I see! Thanks, Gussy!"

"Not at all!" said Gussy kindly. "It is meahly fair play, deah boy. I pwesume the gun has not been found yet?"

"No; I only wish it had, Gussy," said Glyn dismally. "I wish I'd never touched the confounded thing. I was a fool!"

"I must weally agree with you theah, deah boy. Did you see Mr. Vinin' just befoah tea?"

"Yes, I did! He—he's frightfully upset; it's a staggering blow to him, and I don't wonder. That's just what worries me, Gussy—the thought that he and Railton believe I'm responsible for its loss. I—I suppose I am, in a way!"

"Wotten!" said D'Arcy. "Howevah, it will all come wight, deah boy. Do not wowwy! As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I have gweat hopes of puttin' the mattah wight. I am goin' to take the mattah up, and solve the mystewy."

"You—you are?" gasped Glyn.

"Exactly!" said Arthur Augustus cheerily. "So do not wowwy any more, Glyn, deah boy. What is wequired for a job of this description is a fellow of tact and judgment, and one possessin' an unusual amount of common sense. I wathah pwide myself that I possess those qualifications," ended Gussy modestly.

"Oh!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "Tha-thanks, Gussy; it's no end good of you. I'm glad to know, anyway, that one chap, at least, thinks I know how to play the game. Now close the



D'Arcy saw the form stoop suddenly and take something from the bushes, with a deep murmur of relief. The unknown junior turned the light of the torch upon it, and Gussy's eyes gleamed as he recognised the Lightning Shaft. (See page 20.)

door after you, there's a good chap. I want to be left alone!"

"Vewy well, deah boy! Pway don't wowwy."

And with that Arthur Augustus gracefully retired from the study. And once outside, he started his investigations without delay by making a bee-line for the study occupied by Aubrey Racke of the Shell!

As a matter of fact, Arthur Augustus had his own theory of what had happened. Before tea, and during tea, he had reflected long and deep on the problem, and he had come to the conclusion that only one fellow could possibly have done what Glyn had been charged with doing. And that fellow was Aubrey Racke! Of the fellows present at the bottom of the staircase, his own chums were above suspicion, as was Toby Marsh. There only remained Racke—of those who had seen Glyn with the gun, at least. And Aubrey Racke was the only fellow likely to have done it.

And, like all first-class detectives, Arthur Augustus looked first for a motive, which he very quickly found.

Racke obviously had a motive; he was a revengeful, spiteful fellow, and the motive in his case would be revenge both upon Glyn and Tom Merry.

It seemed all so beautifully simple to Arthur Augustus, and he wondered how such an explanation—or rather theory—had not occurred to Tom Merry and the others. But then they were not Arthur Augustus—they did not possess his tact and judgment, and unusual degree of common sense.

So now the amateur detective was going to interview Aubrey Racke. It was certainly an original proceeding for a detective to charge a suspect with a crime before he had an atom of proof. But then Arthur Augustus was an original detective.

He knocked sharply on the door of Racke's study, and Racke's snarly voice bade him enter. D'Arcy marched in, and closed the door carefully after him.

Crooke and Mellish were in the room with Racke, and all three glared none too pleasantly at the swell of the Fourth.

"What's the trouble, D'Arcy?" snapped Racke. "What the thump do you want with us?"

"I would like a word with you, Wacke—in pwivate, if pos, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Then you won't get it, old top! If you've any old thing to say, you can say it before these chaps."

"Vewy well, Wacke! I will come to the point without delay. I desiah you, Wacke, to answer a few questions in wegard to your movements this aftahnoon, deah boy."

Racke gave a violent start, and just for a brief instant a look of fear came into his eyes. But he recovered himself quickly, and glared at the cheerful detective in sudden fury.

D'Arcy eyed him calmly. He seemed oblivious to the fact that his words were a trifle in the nature of a command.

"You—you cheeky cad!" hissed Racke. "What—what do you mean?"

"I wathah fancay you know what I mean," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing Racke steadily through his monocle. "But theah is weally no occasion for wudeness, Wacke. I must wemark—"

"Get out!" hissed Racke furiously.

"I will wetiah when you have answahed my questions, Wacke. They are in wegard to what took place at the footer this aftahnoon."

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Racke, going white. "I know nothing about—"

"Then I will tell you, deah boy," said D'Arcy, looking Racke full in the eyes. "You are awah, of course, that Mr. Vinin's invention is missin'—you must be. Vewy well! I have good weason to believe that a certain fellow had it in his possession this aftahnoon. He was hidden in the copse just off the footer-gwound, and it was he who mucked up the match. I—"

"You—you fool!" gasped Racke, his eyes glittering. "You can't think that—"

"I think nothin' yet, Wacke. I only suspect, and have not an atom of weal pwoof. But—"

"Oh!"

Racke drew a deep breath—it seemed of relief.

"D'Arcy," he muttered, "do—do Tom Merry and the othier chaps think—think that's what happened?"

"Certainly not! They believe Glyn is wesponsible—"

D'Arcy jumped back suddenly as Racke stepped towards him, his eyes blazing with fury.

"Get out!" he hissed. "Get out of this study, you meddling, interfering fool! Help me chuck this fool out, you chaps!"

He rushed at D'Arcy in a fury, and after a moment's hesitation Crooke and Mellish joined him. They did not like the job, but they dare not disobey their leader.

In the ordinary way Arthur Augustus would have been almost a match for all three of the slackers, but the sudden attack took him completely by surprise.

Before he scarcely knew what had happened he found himself sprawling in the passage without, and the door closed and locked behind him.

"Ow! Bai Jove! The feahful wuffians!" gasped D'Arcy dazedly. "Oh deah!"

He picked himself up breathlessly, and jammed his monocle in his eye. Then, after staring a moment at the closed door, he turned and marched away.

He was hurt, and he was wrathful. But he was satisfied with the result of his visit, despite his summary and rather painful eviction. Racke's face—his whole attitude, in fact—had convinced him that his theory was the correct one.

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus, as he walked away thoughtfully. "I weally believe I am on the wight track! Vewy well, if Wacke won't inform me as to his movements this' afternoon, then I must obtain the information from othah sources, bai Jove!"

For the rest of that evening the amateur detective was busy, but not with prep. He was making discreet inquiries regarding Racke's movements that afternoon. And it was close on bed-time when the swell of the Fourth got his first clue.

While larking on Little Side during the match Jameson of the Third had "pinched" young Manners' cap, and Reggie Manners had chased him through the hedge quite close to the copse.

He had caught him there, and while the two were wrestling together, Jameson had seen Aubrey Racke sneaking—that was the word Jameson used—out of the copse.

Jameson had thought nothing of the incident until Arthur Augustus had started his inquiries.

But he remembered it now, and Arthur Augustus left the fags' Common-room with his noble eye gleaming behind his eyeglass.

One point he was rather perplexed about was that Jameson had stated that Racke was empty-handed.

In bed that night D'Arcy pondered long and deep over this problem, and it was not until long after the rest of the Fourth had gone to sleep that the enthusiastic detective thought of a possible solution.

If Racke had done it, it was scarcely likely he would bring the missing gun back to school—in daylight, at all events.

Was the missing wave projector still hidden in the copse?

The thought brought D'Arcy back to instant wakefulness, and he sat up in bed with a gasp.

The next moment he was out of bed and dressing at lightning speed. When Arthur Augustus got an idea into his head to do anything, he just did it without considering time or place.

Armed with a pocket-torch, Arthur Augustus left the sleeping dormitory quietly, and made for the box-room. He found to his astonishment that the window was slightly open. Evidently he was not the only "night-bird" abroad!

Possibly it was Aubrey Racke—gone for the missing gun!

"Bai Jove!" "As that possibility occurred to the amateur detective he gasped, and lost no further time in pondering on the problem. In a flash he was through the window and dropping to the ground below.

It was a mild, starlit autumn night, with a dimly-seen moon that shed a faint glimmer of light over the sleeping school. In a minute or so the adventurous junior was hurrying at top speed for the playing-fields.

Arthur Augustus was seething with excitement. He already felt he had victory within his grasp, and the thought of his scoffing chums' faces when he told them of his discoveries was a pleasant one to the amateur detective.

He crossed the silent playing-fields, and squeezed softly through the hedge dividing Little Side from the dark copse beyond.

Then he stopped, his heart beating fast. Somebody was already there. He could hear the snapping of twigs, and see the white ghostly light moving about amid the undergrowth.

It was somebody searching for something, and Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath, and began to move towards the light with the stealth and skill of a Red Indian.

He could see the dark form now—the form of a junior—and D'Arcy stood still, watching. He saw the form stoop suddenly and take something from the bushes with a deep murmur of relief.

He turned the light of his torch upon it, and Arthur Augustus

Augustus D'Arcy's eyes gleamed as he recognised the Lightning Shaft. The weapon glinted dully in the white shaft of light.

It was enough for Arthur Augustus.

With a sudden movement he brought his own electric torch forward, and turned a beam of light full upon the face of the unknown junior.

There was a sharp, startled cry, and D'Arcy found himself—as he had expected—staring into the fear-distorted features of Aubrey Racke.

"Got you, you wottah!" snapped Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with triumph. "Bowled out, bai Jove!"

"D'Arcy! You?"

Racke breathed the words in a choking whisper. His face was white, but the next moment it flushed red—red with fury.

He was bowled out, and he knew it. D'Arcy's words that evening had terrified him. He knew what the swell of the Fourth suspected, and he knew that the Lightning Shaft was no longer safe in the copse—if it was still there.

And he had determined to recover it—to find it and return it to Mr. Vining's room without delay. If D'Arcy was on the trail, then Tom Merry soon would be. Better far to risk trouble with Cutts, than risk the gun being found there now he was suspected.

But he had left it until too late. D'Arcy had beaten him! The meddlesome, interfering swell of the Fourth had brought his guilt home to him!

For a single instant the guilty junior stared into D'Arcy's triumphant eyes, and then his evil temper overcame him—a sudden, overwhelming gust of passion took possession of him, and, with a hoarse cry he flung himself at the swell of the Fourth.

The gun fell to the grass, as did the torches, and in the darkness of the quiet spinney the two grappled and fought like wildcats.

CHAPTER 11.

A Shock for Cutts!

"I'M through—I've finished, Banks!"

As Gerald Cutts muttered the words, he flung down a handful of cards, and, pushing back his chair, staggered rather unsteadily to his feet.

It was close on twelve, and at that time of night Gerald Cutts should have been in bed in the Fifth Form dormitory at St. Jim's.

But Cutts was not at St. Jim's; he was in the smoky, dingy atmosphere of Mr. Joseph Banks' private room at the Green Man Inn in Rylcombe.

So certain did Cutts feel in regard to the success of the scheme he proposed to put into action at the big match on the forthcoming Saturday that he had deemed it just as well to let Banks know that he intended "paying up" at the week-end.

He had started out after lights out for the dingy inn in fear and trembling. He believed the rascally bookmaker was in deadly earnest this time, and he wondered what reception he would get from Mr. Banks, from whom he had parted in such a rage two nights ago.

He need not have worried! The moment he heard that Cutts intended "paying up," Mr. Joseph Banks was affability itself. Mr. Banks, as a matter of fact, had never intended to "show up" Cutts—far from it! Mr. Banks was not in the habit of killing the geese which laid his golden eggs!

He made Cutts welcome, and, after a friendly game in the billiards-room, Cutts had accompanied the kind and forgiving bookie to his private room for a little game of cards. And there the two had been joined by two friends of Mr. Banks.

Their names, Cutts understood, were Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine, and they had been introduced to Cutts by Mr. Banks as two gentlemen who were in Rylcombe on business for a few days, and who were staying meanwhile at the Green Man.

Cutts was none too pleased at the introduction. He very soon discovered that Mr. Twine, at least, spoke with a slight foreign accent; and Cutts heartily disliked foreigners. But these two gentlemen seemed to take a keen interest in Cutts, and were geniality itself. And Cutts very soon forgot his first distaste and distrust.

Mr. Bulmer especially was kindness itself. When Cutts' cash ran out he insisted upon lending the senior a little money to carry on with, and when Cutts rose from the table at last, he was owing Mr. Banks still another two pounds, and, in addition, was three pounds or more in the debt of Mr. Bulmer.

So that Cutts was in none too happy a frame of mind as he pushed back his chair and announced to Mr. Banks that he was through—finished!

His head was whirling with the hot, stuffy atmosphere of the dingy, smoky room, and he bitterly regretted his folly in acceding to Banks' invitation to have a "little game"

Only that night he had vowed to finish with Mr. Banks when once he was out of his clutches; but, like many, many more foolish fellows, he was discovering that it was much easier to start such dingy pursuits than to give them up.

"What! Not goin' yet, Master Cutts?" ejaculated Mr. Banks.

"I'm through for to-night, Banks!" said Cutts hoarsely. "I—I'll settle with you Saturday, for a cert! And—and—"

He turned, stammering, to Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine. Mr. Bulmer held up his hand with a laugh.

"Not a word, my young friend!" he exclaimed bluffly. "Don't let that little matter of the cash worry you! You'll get it back another night, I'll warrant! Just give me your I O U as a matter of form, and don't worry about it again!"

In silence Cutts tore a couple of pages from his notebook, and handed his I O U's to Mr. Banks and Mr. Bulmer. And two minutes later Gerald Cutts was out in the fresh night air, walking fast. Another two minutes later, and Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine were also out in the fresh night air, walking fast—on the trail of Gerald Cutts.

But Cutts was far from dreaming that.

Once away from the feverish excitement of the cards and the close, stifling room Cutts' brain began to clear, and as he walked he remembered several things which began to cause him no little disquiet.

He remembered how curiously interested Mr. Bulmer and his friend had been in St. Jim's—and especially he remembered how strangely interested they had been in the fact that Mr. Vining, the celebrated inventor, was a visitor there. Cutts remembered thinking at the time how singular it was that they should be aware of his visit.

He remembered also how he had bragged as to the simple ease with which he could get in and out of the school at night. It dawned in upon Cutts' mind now that it was anything but a wise proceeding to discuss such matters with two practically strangers like Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine.

Altogether, Gerald Cutts was in a very disturbed frame of mind by the time he reached St. Jim's. He would have been far more disturbed had he only known that when he dropped over the wall into the quad those two curious gentlemen were scarcely half a dozen yards behind him. It might even have occurred to him that perhaps Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine were desirous of discovering for themselves how simple it was to get in and out of St. Jim's at night.

But Cutts little dreamed this as he hurried towards the School House. But half-way across the quad he stopped on remembering the Lightning Shaft.

He had intended to recover the gun at nightfall, and to hide it in a safer place than the copse, where skylarking fags might easily stumble across it. And until now he had clean forgotten to do so.

With a grunt—for he was tired—Cutts turned his footsteps towards the playing-fields. And after him went the two shadowy figures of Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine. They were astonished at Cutts' sudden change of direction, but they were determined not to lose sight of Gerald Cutts yet.

Cutts hurried across the dark playing-fields, and very soon reached the copse. It was there he got his first shock that night.

As he pushed his way carefully towards the spot where he had hidden the wave projector he stopped suddenly, his heart in his mouth, and his legs trembling beneath him.

Before him, almost in deadly silence, two figures were fighting furiously. A stray shaft of moonlight lit up the scene, and he recognised the figures with a gasp of amazement.

They were Aubrey Racke and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Cutts stared at them, transfixed. And even as he stared Aubrey Racke crashed to the ground under a heavy blow, and he heard Gussy's triumphant, panting voice.

"Theah, you uttah wottah! You asked for it, and you've got it, bai Jove! Now where's that gun, Wacke?"

As he spoke Arthur Augustus stooped down and began to search among the grass. He found his torch, and, as a flood of light shone on the grass, Gussy stooped again and picked up the glimmering gun which its inventor had called the Lightning Shaft.

As he did so Gerald Cutts got another shock—the shock of his life this time!

As the light showed up the curious instrument in the junior's hand, there sounded a sharp, guttural exclamation from the deep shadows behind Cutts, and the next moment the startled senior went crashing down from a brutal blow on his temple. And as he went down he glimpsed the two dark forms that pounded past him towards the suddenly alarmed D'Arcy.

"Oh, bai Jove! Wun for it, Wacke—wun like anythin'! Wun!"

D'Arcy's startled voice rose to a shrill scream as he glimpsed the dark forms charging towards him, and even as he shouted Arthur Augustus turned and ran for it.

But Racke stood as if turned to stone—too petrified at that terrifying rush of feet to move even.

He saw the dim forms of the two rascals rush past him after D'Arcy, and the three of them vanished amid the trees. And then to his ears came a sudden yell, followed by a crashing fall.

Then Racke awoke abruptly from the trance which held him, and he hesitated to act no longer.

In a flash it dawned upon him who the men must be—he had heard the story of the hold-up, as had all at St. Jim's. And though a young rascal, and though too cowardly himself to go to D'Arcy's help, he had no intention of allowing the plucky junior to fight alone against such desperate men if he could help it.

He must do something—he must bring help! The game was up now, and Racke realised, in any case, that nothing could save him from exposure. If he played up now—if he helped to save D'Arcy—he knew that Tom Merry & Co. would be merciful.

And with this selfish thought at the back of his mind, Aubrey Racke turned abruptly and ran for his life, stumbling and lurching as he raced for the distant school buildings, silent under the stars.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy's Triumph!

THOUGH Arthur Augustus had not seen the faces of the two men who came charging in upon him, he had guessed instantly who they were, and what they were after.

The gun must be saved at all costs!

With this thought in his mind Gussy dashed away, heedless of direction, the thudding footsteps of his pursuers hard on his heels.

But he did not get far. A sudden stumble brought him sprawling amid the undergrowth, and next instant there sounded a startled yell, followed instantly by a crashing fall as the two men stumbled over him in the darkness and went down headlong.

The nimble junior was on his feet again in a flash, however, and, dodging a sudden grasping lunge from one of the sprawling rascals, he darted away through the dim trees.

But again he did not get far. In a flash it came to the fleeing junior that out in the open he could never hope to outpace the men.

Acting upon a sudden inspiration, the plucky junior shoved the light weapon he carried between his teeth, and, gripping it by the queerly-shaped trigger, he sprang upwards and grasped a hanging bough of a tree.

With the light gun still between his strong young teeth he hauled himself up, and next instant was seated astride the bough with the gun in his hands.

It was done with lightning swiftness, and D'Arcy's heart leaped with joy the next moment, as the two men dashed beneath him and went charging through the copse.

Their thudding footsteps died away, and as silence settled upon the quiet spinney D'Arcy could have chuckled at his success.

But he did not move even then. He knew that if he ventured abroad his figure would be clearly seen on the moonlit playing-fields.

He waited motionless, in silence, hoping against hope that Racke would have the courage to fetch help.

Fully five minutes passed, and then he heard sounds in the undergrowth below him, and presently the men came into his view. They were searching the bushes as they came, and they stopped directly underneath Arthur Augustus.

For three or four minutes the search went on, and then what Gussy had dreaded happened.

A sudden thought seemed to strike the man with the torch, and the next instant its rays were flooding the trees. The white shaft moved slowly in a circle, and suddenly it swept full into the junior's startled face, and a yell went up from the man.

"He's here! The young whelp's here!"

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "Oh, would you, you wottah!"

Even as the man shouted he made a flying leap upwards; but, acting on a sudden inspiration, Arthur Augustus pointed his gun at him and pulled the trigger.

(Continued on page 27.)

Although disappointed over the loss of the galleons the crew of the *Result* smile loud and long over their rivals, who have been beaten at every turn!



THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!

By ROLAND SPENCER.

(Author of our Recent Success: "Tom of the Ajax.")

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DON ALONZO GUADIANA DE LA MANCHA, a Spaniard and financier of the expedition aboard the salvage boat *Result*.

SARKY MARLINE, a trustworthy, bow-legged old seaman in command of the *Result*.

DAN DERRICK, a cheery youth, and son of Captain Derrick—known as "Dare-Devil" Derrick—a rugged sea captain of some sixty-five years.

BRIAN CARR, a chum of Dan's, and son of "Amphibious" Carr, inventor of a patent diving-dress which Brian in his research work had perfected.

Their unscrupulous rival, known as the "Rat," a round-shouldered, beady-eyed Mexican half-breed, aboard the *Golden Gain*.

Steered by the trusty hands of Sarky Marline, the salvage boat *Result* sets out on its great voyage in quest of sunken Spanish treasure. Reaching Thirlbeach, Brian Carr and Dan Derrick, garbed in their patent diving-dresses, take the first plunge into the depths of the mighty ocean, where they locate the *Maria de Castellon*, an old Spanish galleon, in whose lazaret hold lies hidden fabulous wealth. The chums find themselves up against great odds, for there are rivals in the quest, a rascally set of rogues under the leadership of Moreno, commonly known as the Rat. Brian gets captured, but, thanks to the hard hitting of Sarky Marline, he is able to gain his freedom. Further gruelling fights on the sea bottom follow, but the cool courage displayed by the chums is rewarded with the first fruits of victory. Moreno is determined to lay hands on the second of the galleons, and by a cunning ruse the



Golden Gain is able to make a rapid get-away for Islay. The weather prevents all operations being carried out, however. The *Result* is soon hot on their track. Dan and Brian go ashore, where they fall into the hands of Moreno. They effect an escape, after which they go down and locate the second galleon. The explosion of a depth-charge wedges them together in the crevice of a rock, but after a gruelling experience they are able to get free, after which they turn the tables on their rivals.

During the fight with Moreno the *Result* is badly damaged. Marline orders full steam ahead, in spite of their condition, and steers his ship for the land, showing a few miles in front of them.

With the hand of an expert he pilots the tug through a chain of reefs and beaches her on the shore beyond. There she is laid up for repairs.

Whilst on shore the two boys meet a couple of detectives who are trailing Moreno. These two men join the Don's party, who set out in a new motor-launch in the direction Moreno has taken.

Moreno has some hazy idea of the locality of the third sunken galleon, and he has set his ship towards the place. The Don, with his now increased party, follows hard upon his rivals' heels.

They reach the spot where the last of the galleons is resting on the ocean bed, to find Moreno already at work. Under cover of a fog, the yacht draws near to the *Golden Gain*, and Dan, with Brian, sets out to investigate the progress of their rivals on the wreck. Beneath the ocean they come face to face with Rayne, the Gain's diver, and their old enemy. A short fight ensues, in which Rayne is eventually overpowered by the two chums.

(Now read on.)

Captured!

TELEPHONE connection with Rayne was quickly made. "Rayne, we've got you, and we're going to keep you now!" said Brian. "It's the diving-dress we want, not your worthless self. You're coming up with us."

Rayne laughed harshly. "It is a surprise meeting you down here," he said. "I didn't dream you'd come down. However, you'll hand me over to the police now, I suppose, for stealing your diving-dress and for other things—"

"On the contrary, Mr. Rayne, we're not handing anyone over to the police—yet!"

"Why not?" replied Rayne. "The treasure hunt is over, for you. There's the last galleon, which went down with the richest haul of the lot. The Rat'll get what's in that treasure-hold. You are powerless, so why not start making your charges against us?"

"I've a message for you, Mr. Rayne," said Dan. "You know that Tony is with us on the yacht—"

"Is he?" cried Rayne eagerly. "Is he well? Better health now? I've been a sweep, Derrick. It was my going crooked which made Tony break down in health. But—but what did he say?"

"He told me to tell you that, as he remembers he has a father, you are to remember you have a son who is the sworn friend of Carr and me."

Rayne swayed slightly where he stood. "Poor youngster," he said. "Yes, I'll remember that always. But I'd better not see him again, and yet I'd like to. Still, this business means prison for me."

"It doesn't mean prison for you," said Brian. "You've

been a sport in many ways, as our rival in this treasure-hunting business. You've kept the Rat from torturing me, you've saved my life, you've tried to play the game as cleanly as you can. I want my diving-dress, that's all. Then we'll let you go free—"

Rayne laughed bitterly.

"Don't think I'll be peaceable on those terms, Carr," he said. "The tar-brush that tarred me won't put on white-wash. I know my own short-comings, and I'm not a good man. You—you're not going off yet, are you, before you've surveyed this galleon properly? The sand's down to within four feet of the floor of the lazaret hold now—"

Brian broke telephone contact with Rayne, and spoke to Dan.

"Quick, Dan; don't you see his game? Collar him by one arm, and I'll take the other. Back we go as quickly as we can on our course. Leave his light. He's trying to gain time—probably shouted a warning to Moreno above the moment he saw us. See—see, divers descending from the Gain now. Hurry him along, boy, sharp!"

Rayne tugged and struggled, but the chums soon had him out of the misty light from the lamp on the old ship. Then they pushed on rapidly, retracing their steps, Brian communicating with Guadiana the while that they had Rayne and were walking clear of the *Golden Gain* before shooting to the surface.

When they were hauled on to the deck of the *Glimmer*, Tony tremblingly undid the thumb-screws of his father's helmet, while Sarky and Guadiana saw to Dan and Brian. Soon the three divers were breathing the fresh, pure air. Tony and his father were left alone for a little while, as Dan and Brian made their report. The chums had barely finished giving details of their reconnaissance when the fog began to roll away.

"Get below, Rayne!" bawled Sarky. "Bear a hand, there,

you yacht sodgers, you! Let draw the stays'l, there, and I'll hev the engines full ahead. Must hold off from the Gain, for they'll soon 'ave discovered as Rayne's in our 'aunds."

The yacht began to draw away from the Seven Hunters, but apparently no alarm had yet been given aboard the salvage ship, for work seemed to be proceeding normally. In fact, raising tackle was being lowered to the old galleon below the salvage ship's keel.

The people on the Gance expected a burst of fury from the Golden Gain. Instead, a line of signal flags fluttered out from her stump mast-truck. Sarky read out the message, with one side of his face screwed up and one eye shut.

"Haitch-hay-vee-ee—have; wye-oh-yew—you; gee-oh-tee—got; arr-hay-wye-en-ee—Rayne. 'Ave you got Rayne?' Wot-ho, we 'ave! Shall we say 'Yes,' Don?"

"Can we dodge them if they chase?"

"Oh, ay, I reckon so, easy! And if they do chase it'll make 'em waste more time. The Result should be in the Little Minch by now, too."

"Then reply 'Yes!'" ordered the Castilian.

The signal was sent over by semaphore, and, instead of wild running about in excitement, shaking of fists towards the yacht, and so on, the semaphore message came back:

"Then keep him. All the more shares for us."

Rayne, when this was communicated to him, was furious. He had served them as far as he was able, so, from their point of view, he was now a good riddance to them.

"Well, what can ye expect from a half-breed Rat like Morveno!" growled Sarky. "It's only what ye might think to get from a cur like 'im!"

The day drew to a close. Evening saw the Result, blustering along madly, bilge-water streaming from her sides, heave into view. And as darkness fell, the heavy raising gear of the Golden Gain was heard clanking and grinding. It ceased before the Result and the Gance spoke each other. Then the winding in of the salvage ship's anchor-cable was heard. The Golden Gain was weighing anchor.

"Well, Jenks," said Guadiana bitterly, "you've come here in record time. But it's all in vain. The Gain's finished. She's now clearing off with her haul—the richest prize of the lot, according to the records."

Guadiana turned away and stared across the water in the darkness, and Sarky Marline, in a fit of rage, snatched his pilot cap off his head, dashed it to the deck, and fumed.

The Lost Diver!

SARKY MARLINE, with his cap at his feet, glowered over the sea in the direction of the Golden Gain. The groaning of the Gain's cable as it was taken in could still be heard. The sea was calm, but fog had blown over again, making the night thicker than ever.

All on the decks of the Result and the Gance, these two vessels held together by a couple of warps, now maintained an impressive silence. The occasional splash of a wavelet against the sides, and the creaking of the hulls and grinding of the

fenders were the only sounds that broke in on the monotonous griping and groaning of the Golden Gain's great cable.

So their rivals had won something worth all their trouble, after all—the richest haul of all the four galleons, for Guadiana's records had said that the last galleon, which went down off the Seven Hunters, was the richest of the lot. And the Rat had got his evil clutches on this vast wealth from between the rotting ribs of the Almanza Aguilhas. A treasure worth three times that of the others. It was a bitter pill that little band of gallant salvage people had to swallow.

The only person who was not showing bitter disappointment was the Scotland Yard detective standing by, Guadiana. He seemed to be thinking deeply. All he was concerned in was the making of convictions. No doubt he was considering how things would go now, for he and his colleague had had high hopes of being able to arrest the Rat on a charge due to the happenings at this last galleon.

Rayne was sitting on a heap of coal in the waist of the Result, since Guadiana had signed for him and Tony to tranship to the tug. Tony was beside his father, and the working of the boy's face was a study. Disappointment, delight, perplexity, contemplation—an expression of each came and went in his pale young face. His father, pale from his trying experience below the sea, looked a trifle frightened. But there was no sign of delight in his face, although his own party had just made such a fine haul. Had not the Rat intimated that, now he had fulfilled his obligation as the Gain's diver, he was to be thrown over?

At last the engine-room telegraph of the Golden Gain was heard. Dong-dong, sounded the notes, faint and muffled by the fog. The stamp of engines followed, grew fainter and fainter, and finally died away.

Brian Carr was the first to rouse up from the apparent wave of stupefaction which had swept over the Result's company. The young diver was standing near Bill Jenks, and he turned to that seasoned salt, and said, in a forced way:

"You must have had a bad journey up, Bill. How did the standard patch go? I saw you pumping like fury when you drew alongside—"

Brian's words galvanised Bill Jenks to action.

"By gum, yes!" he roared. "Bad passage, leakin' like a sieve. And the pumps is now stopped. Hi, Result, there!" Jenks had boarded the Gance the moment the two vessels had grappled. "Result! Get them pumps suckin' again, or we'll flood out them sweatin' firemen!"

The order was given, and the Result began to sluice water from her scuppers again, deluging the decks of the yacht, since the freeboard of the Gance was less than that of the Result. The wash of the water made men yelp and leap about the yacht. A laugh rang out, a coarse jest, and then the chatter which usually follows a tense situation.

Rayne, helped by Tony, had risen and approached the bulwarks of the Result, the water from the powerful pumps sluicing about his feet and the feet of Tony.

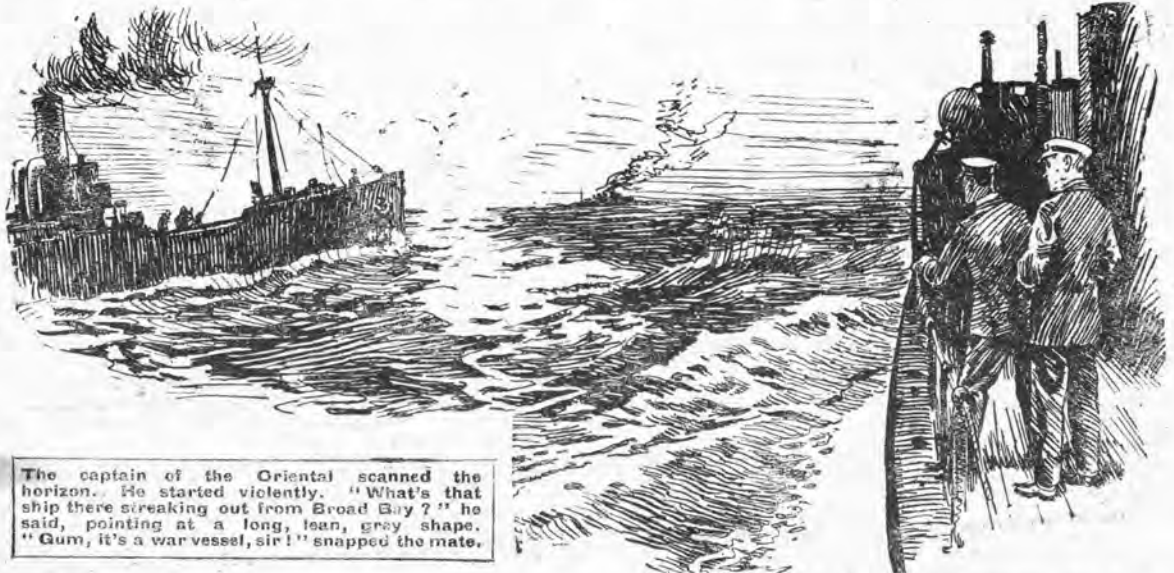
"Carr!" called Rayne.

Brian went over.

"What is it?" he said.

"Tell Don Alonzo I'd like to speak to him for a minute, will you? You and Dan Derrick and any others who share the secrets of the business—"

Brian called out the few names, and Guadiana, Sarky, Dan,



The captain of the Oriental scanned the horizon. He started violently. "What's that ship streaking out from Broad Bay?" he said, pointing at a long, lean, grey shape. "Gum, it's a war vessel, sir!" snapped the mate.

Jenks, and MacFadyen, the last on the Result, grouped round Rayne and his son.

Rayne spoke. "I didn't actually see treasure down below," he said. "The lazaret hold was only half-silted up with sand? Half, I say, and that not on a level with the sand outside. There was a big hole in the deck where the lazaret hold hatch used to be. I've been thinking over this. Wouldn't the sand have been level in the hold with the sand outside if—"

"Not necessarily so," cut in Brian. "The levels might be very different."

"But there was a hole in the side of the galleon. One could crawl through it. And I found this and put it in my ballast bag. Forgot all about it till just now. You've had some experience in diving, under your father, Carr. What do you make of that?"

Brian Carr took a small, rusted tin box, cylindrical in shape. He turned it over once or twice, then looked at Rayne.

"If it's not one of the tins containing the cartons of blasting gelatine, used to get through ships' sides, I don't know what it can be."

"I've used hundreds of those tins, Carr. It is one of the tins in which the cartons of blasting gelatine are supplied. How did it get below? Human hand dropped it—and inside the lazaret hold of the galleon. How's that? Seems to me—"

Dan tugged at Brian's arm. "Remember that dead diver we found—and buried?" he said.

"By Jupiter, yes! Senor, from what Rayne has found and what we saw down below, we have reason to suspect that someone has been nosing about that galleon a few years ago. Let Dan and me go down again. We'll explore and find out—"

Rayne asked if he might go down, too, but Guadiana shook his head decidedly. Brian looked sharply up just as his helmet was heaved up above his close-cropped head.

"Why not, senor?" he said. "You'll promise to be a sportsman, Rayne, and not indulge in any foul play?" The blood mounted to Rayne's fine face. The man tugged at his fair moustache.

"I promise to do nothing but help you and Dan from now on, Carr, whatever you intend to do with me!"

Tony's eyes were shining as he looked first at the Castilian, then at Brian and Dan, then at his father. But Guadiana could not understand Englishmen yet. He was a bundle of suspicion always, and would trust no one but those who had proved themselves worthy of trust throughout the venture.

Rayne threw his axe and knife clattering down to the rusty iron deck of the Result.

"There, senor," he said. "What could I do against Carr and Derrick without those? I give my word I mean no foul play. Three down below will make shorter work of exploring than will two. And I'm curious to probe this."

"Let him come, senor," said Brian. "A promise from Rayne, whether it is an amiable one or a threatening one, is his bond, we know."

Guadiana muttered something. "Well, it's your affair. Not treasure now," he ended. So Rayne, Brian, and Dan all went overside and sank, swinging and twisting, into the depths.

Once on the bottom they connected up by telephone. In an hour they had found the galleon. They entered the lazaret hold, and discovered that the Golden Gain had sucked nearly all the sand out of it. Broken chests lay here and there.

"Whew! If all those chests contained treasure there was a haul here, whoever got it," said Dan. "But it was taken out years ago. See, the chests that are not collapsed are half-filled with sand. And the marks on the surface show that the sand has been disturbed not more than an hour or two ago."

"That'll be one of the Gain's divers groping in the sand to feel if the treasure was there," replied Rayne. "By thunder, what a disappointment they must have had! Boys, my thanks to you for capturing me. It has saved me discovering this."

"Enough to drive a man mad—to find that it has all been raked out before," muttered Dan. "But I s'pose that is what has happened?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Rayne. "See, there's not a scrap of anything left, except the chests filled with sand, which has been disturbed and raked over a couple of hours ago. I'm indeed thankful I'm not on the Golden Gain now. She'll be a hell-ship, if ever there was one. I can imagine the Rat gnashing his teeth and rating and swearing here and there, eyes shot with blood, and smashing up everything in his way. Pretty picture to think about, isn't it, youngsters?"

"It's a pleasant picture for us to imagine, Mr. Rayne," said Dan. "I wonder—"

"What was that you said about a dead diver, Derrick?"

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"We'll go out and find him in a minute. It was a diving dress we found—of the pattern in use some years ago, Brian says. The air-tube had been severed somehow."

"There might be a more definite clue there."

"No use raking about here any longer," said Brian suddenly. "Let's get out and find that cross of stones we made, Dan."

The three ponderously swung themselves out of the old galleon, and made out across the sandy floor of the ocean. The water got deeper, but it was a shallow part at the deepest. They found the old lost anchor they had before seen. Then, in the rays of the lights they carried, they spotted the masthead of the small sailing craft.

"We're getting warmer," said Brian. "It was near that old anchor where we found the lost diver."

"There's the cross!" cried Dan, and the three went swaying over in the direction indicated by the youngster.

Gently the three scraped away at the sand, and soon had the old diving dress from its resting-place. The rubber material of which it was made was rotten and perished, and broke as it was handled.

"Don't let's pull the dress about," said Brian, shuddering slightly, for it seemed like disturbing the dead. "Just rake about near by. There may be some sort of a clue buried in the sand, though I doubt it."

Using their axes as rakes, Dan and Brian began to tear at the sand round about. Dan hauled forth what they at first thought was rope. But closer investigation showed it to be a rubber tube.

"Rotted at the end," said Brian. "Then its presence must mean that the tube was severed some distance from the diver. How much is there, Dan?"

"Dunno! I'm hauling it out of the sand by yards."

They got the end at last, and found the tube to measure, roughly, the depth of the water at that part, shown on their indicators.

"Cut from the boat, by Jupiter!" muttered Rayne. "Hallo, what's this?"

Rayne had been digging into the sand with his fingers. He had been turning up the lumps he tore out and breaking them in his fingers. What he held was a piece of sheet metal. "Copper," said Brian. "Bright where the sand has rubbed it. It's nothing, I expect, but hang on to it!"

Rayne rubbed at the surface of the metal, and peered at it, turning it towards Brian's light.

Suddenly a swift exclamation of amazement escaped Rayne. "Look—look!" he cried. "Boys, it's lettering—English—scratched on this copper. What does it read?"

Brian and Dan bent over and saw the faint lettering, scrawled with a sharp point, the point of the dead man's axe, probably. Would it solve the mystery for them?

Foretalled!

RAYNE spelt out the words. The date headed the message, if message it was. The day figure was undecipherable, but it might have been an eight or a three:

"July, 1912, diver Johansenn—foul play—won't pull up. Wife London advertise. Find McLaughlin fisherman Uig found lantern."

That was all, and it conveyed a lot to the three divers, staring at the pathetic message silently.

At last Rayne spoke.

"Uig is in the Island of Lewis, the Atlantic side of it. Maybe Fisherman McLaughlin is still there."

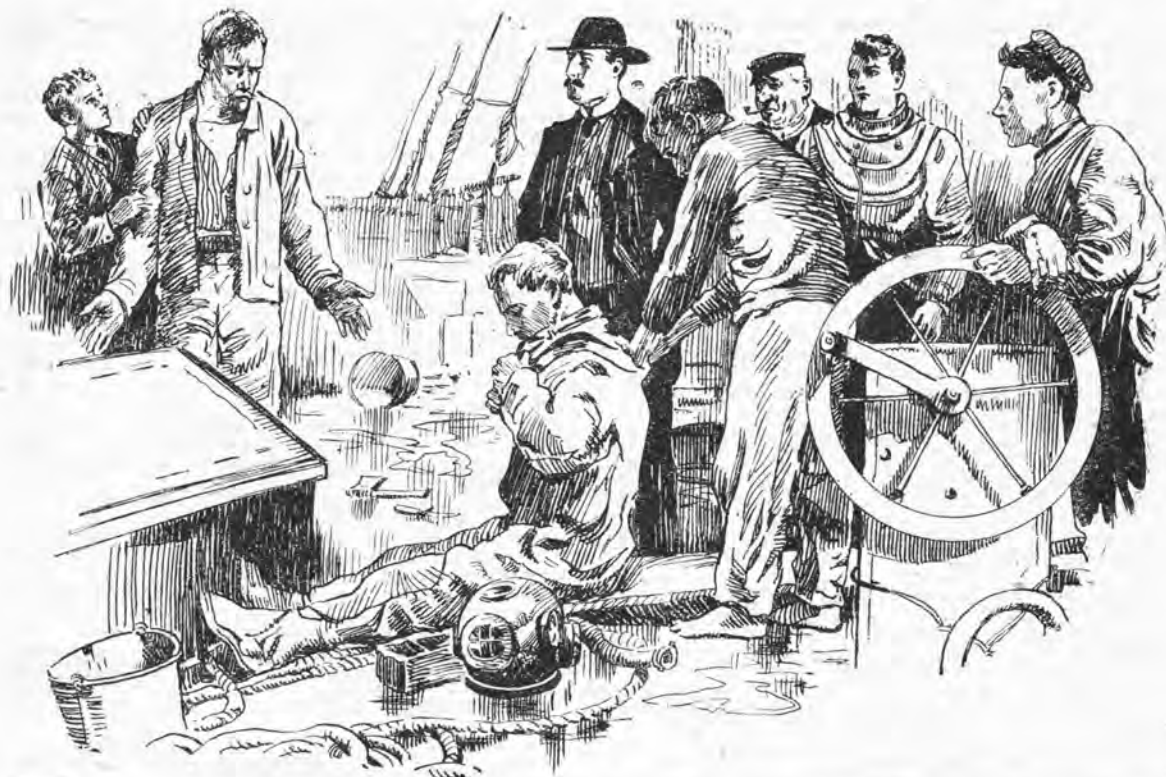
"Chuck away your ballast, all, and rise," said Brian, placing the diver into the hole in the sand once more, and replacing the stones in the shape of a cross after covering over the form.

On board the Result great excitement was caused by the news. Everyone felt delighted that the Rat had not got the treasure, after all, for his ways had been evil, and the wealth would have been put to no useful purpose by him. The detective began to theorise on the matter. He reconstructed the dead diver's adventures below. But he couldn't fit McLaughlin of Uig into the summing up at all.

"Only way is to steam into Uig and see if the man now exists," he said. "I'm out to solve another mystery, so if you gentlemen decide to follow this up, I'll get over to Stornoway by road from Uig. There's a good road across, I know."

Being more interested in the solving of the mystery of the looting of the Almanza Aguilhas than the further pursuit of the Rat, Guadiana ordered Marline to take the tug into the cove on which Uig was situated. It was not a great distance. The yacht, under the yacht hands, was to sail for Stornoway.

At Uig, where they arrived in the morning, they struck



Rayne threw his axe and knife clattering down on the rusty iron deck. "There, senior!" he cried. "What could I do against Carr and Derrick without those? Three down below will make shorter work than two."

oil at once. They might have expected to do so, for these Scottish islanders are not fond of wandering. McLaughlin was there, and had lived there for sixty-five years. His father had lived there, in the same hovel, for seventy-two years, and his grandfather for forty. That was as far back as McLaughlin had ever troubled to go, but it was a known fact that McLaughlins had lived at Uig for centuries.

Happily, McLaughlin spoke English. Most of the other inhabitants of Uig spoke the Celtic tongue, and wanted to speak no other.

"Whaat do Ah know apoot any Spanish calleon sunk hereabouts?" he said. "Whaat do Ah know? It iss little, yes. Put wait you till I think, yes. It wass twenty-four years ago Ah hooit from the bottom wi' ma guid gaun grapple hook, which wass my anchor, a pig brav lantern. It wass ferry pig—a han' sicht lantern it wass. Pig as me, as Ah stood in ma twentieth yeer, yes. Square, it wass, an' copper, from an auld, auld wreck. A bit mon cam to the Lews t'see ma find, an' he paid me well, verra well. He tookit the lantern an' cave me five poun'—five poun', yes. An' I tookit him in ma boat out to the spot an' showid him where it wass I had hooit up the gaun brav lantern."

McLaughlin was garrulous, but little more than the above could be discovered from his talk, except that the man had seemed rich an' verra eenferested, verra, an' took bearings from the brow lichthoose and the gaun rocks of the Flannan Isles. McLaughlin spent his five pounds in stocking his "croft" or tiny farm, for he was now a crofter, and had given up fishing when "the stem fell out from his boat, for she wass gaun rotten." He found crofting and poaching better than fishing, and not nearly so dangerous.

The name of the man, and whether he had been up that way since, Guadiana and his company could not discover. But that someone had got wind of the galleon there was certain. She had been found by divers, and looted, for loot it was, since, as the chums well knew, no treasure had been handed over to the Government from Flannan. The "bit mon" who had come to "the Lews," and had paid five pounds for the information and the lantern—evidently one of the great quarter lanterns of the galleon—must have raised the treasure in secret, and steamed off abroad with it, greedily denying to the Crown that part of the treasure that would be its right, according to the law.

So ended that. Suffice it to say that it was proved that the Rat had been foiled by an earlier adventurer right at the last, when victory had seemed to be his. Brian and Dan later advertised for "Mrs. Johansenn, wife of a diver,"

found her in poverty, a deserving woman, and set her up for life.

The Result, leaving a happy crofter in Uig with forty crisp Treasury notes gripped in his trembling fingers, steamed away for Stornoway, her pumps going merrily, but her standard patch holding on gallantly, though now loose and worked, owing to the great strain Jenks had put on it on receiving Marline's orders to steam up north for the last of the treasure.

At Stornoway, which port the Result entered in the evening, the adventurous party found the Golden Gain lying to in the offing.

The Result steamed right into the port and dropped anchor in the bay, a safe place, almost landlocked as it is. The Result was, before she had been damaged, a most uncomfortable ship. Now, with water streaming over her decks from the pumps, she was quite unbearable when better accommodation was at hand.

As the afterguard sat at their evening meal in Guadiana's cabin, Dan said, as he watched a steady drip, drip of water from one of the deck beams above:

"I'm sick of this constant dripping and roaring of the pump-engines. And you can't go out on deck without getting your feet sopping wet. Why shouldn't we go ashore and live in a hotel? Those detective chaps might keep us hanging about Stornoway for days. They say they'll have further excitement for us, but I'm blessed if they've produced any yet."

Guadiana smiled as he broke his bread abstractedly. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I have told the detective to find accommodation for us in the town. He was all impatience to get ashore to join his colleague. He says he'll hail us when he has fixed up rooms."

"Good!" said Brian with a grin. "I've had enough of that paint-locker for a spell. There's a bolt-head standing half an inch above the deck on the side where I sleep, and it has made a great impression on me. I shall never forget it! Nice soft bed for this child when one is available."

"And no drip, drip of water from the ceiling," cut in Dan.

"I have told him to arrange for you and Tony, Rayne," continued Guadiana. "But I must insist that you go ashore on parole. You'll promise not to make a break for it, will you?"

Jefferson Rayne nodded.

"Rather!" he said. "I'd be a fool if I tried to run for
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it. The only thing with which I can be charged is stealing Brian's diving-dress, and Brian says he doesn't intend to charge me with that. I won't thank him again, because I've already done it fifty times, if once."

So the whole party packed up and went ashore, Jenks staying in command of the Result, since he refused to leave the little ship while she was floating. He wanted to beach the tug, but Sarky Marline said that they must not do that yet—not until they were certain she would not be needed.

The moment the party streamed out of the whaler, in which they had been rowed ashore, the two detectives ran down the quay to meet them.

"Great news!" cried Haverford, waving his arms. "The Oriental will be here soon, with Gurdley aboard. Come up to the hotel. We'll want Rayne, too, for we have something important to discuss."

Some Talk About Arrests!

ONCE in the apartment the detectives had engaged for the Castilian, the Scotland Yard men began their story.

"The Gain is lying to in the offing waiting for the Oriental, the famous steam yacht owned by Gurdley, the mystery man behind all the plots of the Rat and his crew. It has been agreed between them that the Oriental shall go abroad with the treasure, to try to escape paying that which is due to the Crown."

"Well, the Rat arranged all that before he sailed for Flannan that last time from Stornoway. But he's in a bit of a quandary now. He has no treasure, and he has to meet his principal with that news. I don't envy him, if Gurdley is the man we think and hope he is."

"Our theory is that Gurdley is Rex Dalby, the notorious one-time crook, and now Continental fence—that is, receiver of stolen goods from crooks. The ill-gotten wealth of that man has been used in the present expedition, against you, of searching for this galleon treasure. Here is a photograph of Dalby. Here, Rayne, is this a photograph of Gurdley?"

The detective spoke roughly, and Rayne flushed indignantly.

"I never saw Gurdley," he said quietly, "so I can't tell you."

"Won't, you mean?"

"Can't, I said," flashed back Rayne.

"Well, that's that! Still, we'll soon find out. Now, you, Mr. Carr, will, of course, charge Rayne with the theft of your diving-dress. We can get Rayne with that."

"On the contrary," said Brian. "I have the suit in my possession, handed over by Rayne, thoroughly tested by him, and in excellent condition. So I shall make no charge."

"From what I can understand," said Dan, "Mr. Rayne was merely a diver in the pay of Gurdley, under the Rat."

So, though he has taken part in villainy practised by the Rat, he has done so as an employee of Gurdley's. All the Rat's salving, too, was quite within the law, for spying out our methods is not a punishable crime. And Brian and I can say that Rayne, far from being a villain, proved himself below water a very gallant gentleman. Brian would not be here to say so if Mr. Rayne hadn't been a real sportsman down below."

Rayne shot a look of gratitude towards Dan, and Tony crept up towards his new chum and squeezed his hand.

The detectives scowled slightly, and turned towards Guadiana, who, scenting the line on which the chums were working, said that he had no case against Rayne personally.

"What about that ramming?" snapped Blunt, who was beginning to see fresh difficulties in making a record number of convictions at one fell swoop.

"You can get the skipper of the Gain for that. I will charge him with it," said the Castilian quietly. "But I fancy he will clear himself, because he can prove that it was Morveno who jammed over the telegraph without orders from him."

"Well, we'll get the Rat for that, anyway," said Haverford. "But what about the stolen plans?"

"The attempts were in every case frustrated," replied Guadiana. "The last one, true, the Rat got the bearings of the Flannan galleon, Almanza Aguilhas, but considering how things have turned out, this last galleon looted, I shall make no charge on that head."

The detectives were discontented.

"We had hoped you gentlemen were going to help us all you can," Haverford said.

"My solicitor has told me to keep out of lawsuits if I can," replied Guadiana. "He has told me they will prove very expensive, considering the nature of the matter. That is your English law, and it you must blame. But, beyond being embroiled in long and droning trials, by which a great quantity of the treasure we have found will pass into the hands of legal advisers, we will help you as much as we can."

Blunt turned to Haverford.

"Why waste our time over these petty charges, anyway?" he said. "We've got Dalby, if our theories are correct, and the Rat, too!"

"Yes, you're right; but we have no warrant for the other things yet. However, we'll get it quick." Then, turning to Guadiana, he continued: "You see, sir, we were relying on your charges for arresting the Rat and 'Gurdley'; but we'll have to work on a different line now. Even our 'English law' will not allow us to arrest whom we will without a proper warrant. However, you will be astounded when you hear of Dalby's other crimes, those against you being mere petty offences in comparison."

"Crumbs! He's been a bad 'un, then!" said Dan; and everyone laughed, even Rayne.

During the rest of their stay at Stornoway, the chums made good use of their time, exploring "the Lews." They

found the island, for the most part, bog-land and moors. A barren place indeed, but with good trout streams and little brown lakes.

They had no great while to range about, however, for the Golden Gain, lying to in the lee of the Eye Peninsula off Cnoc, was joined by a large steam yacht in the evening of the second day.

The detectives, who had seemingly vanished from sight, miraculously reappeared, and asked Guadiana if he'd take them out in the Result. All piled aboard, and, steam being up on account of the pumping, the little craft got under way, and stormed out alongside the two vessels.

Haverford spoke to the Oriental.

"May I come aboard to see your owner?" he shouted through Sarky Marline's megaphone.

"No; we're in a hurry!" came back the reply from a brass-hatted, gilt-buttoned young man, who was the Oriental's skipper. And immediately the Oriental and the Golden Gain began to forge ahead, making for the sea.

The Result steamed along beside the two vessels, easily holding her own. The three ships sped on to the eastward, making out into the Minch, the channel

(Continued on page 28.)

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"THE LIGHTNING SHAFT!"

(Continued from page 21.)

The man's grasp had closed on the bough, but as the crackle sounded, and the blue flash came from the polished barrel of the queer instrument, he gasped, and shot to the ground like a shot rabbit.

He was up again the next instant, however, rubbing his hands together and shouting wildly. The next moment his hand had flown to his pocket, and he was pointing a glinting weapon at the crouching junior above him.

"Now, you little rat!" he hissed. "Hand down that—that gun, or you'll regret it!"

"Wathah not, bai Jove!" panted D'Arcy. "Go, and eat coke!"

Though D'Arcy's words were brave enough his voice trembled. He was not at all certain whether such desperate rascals would dare to shoot or not.

Nor did he ever find that out. For even as he waited for the rascals' next move the sound of running feet reached his ears. Then came a shout in a well-known voice—Tom Merry's voice.

"Gussy! Gussy, where are you?"

Arthur Augustus gave a delighted yell.

"Huwah. This way, deah boys! Wescue!"

There came the crashing of many racing feet, and after a brief moment of indecision the two men bolted. They melted among the thick trees, and next moment Tom Merry, followed instantly by Manners and Lowther and Blake, Herries, Digby, and Aubrey Racke, arrived on the spot with a rush.

Arthur Augustus dropped down from the tree, and the crowd surrounded him.

"Oh, thank goodness!" panted Tom Merry. "You're saved then, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah! The wascals bolted when they heard you comin', deah boys! But—but I've got the gun!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Merry as he stared at it. "Gussy, you—you're the limit! But how—"

"I'll tell you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus modestly. And he did.

"Well, I'm blessed!" breathed Blake, when he had

finished. "And you never mentioned a word to us, Gussy, you blessed oyster! So—so it was Racke, and not Glyn! You—you howling cad, Racke!"

"Well, what's to be done now?" asked Lowther. "Racke looks like getting the sack for this—if we split!"

"We—we don't want to do that," said Tom Merry quietly. "But we've got to clear Glyn. We owe the poor beggar an apology for this. And yet, after all, Racke played up at the finish—he came for us, and saved Gussy!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wacke has saved me, bai Jove!" said Gussy, shaking his head. "We weally cannot give the wascal away, Tom Mewwy."

"That's so!" said Tom. He paused reflectively, his brow wrinkled, and then he reached a decision. "Yes, we'll let Racke off. There's no reason why anyone excepting old Glyn should be told. Look here, I vote we simply take this thing back to Mr. Vining's room, and leave it to be found there. That will clear Glyn with the beaks, won't it? And in the morning we'll settle with Glyn. He's a good sort, and he'll come round when we've apologised—as we ought to!"

"Then that's agreed, and all is O. K.," said Tom, with a deep breath of relief. "And now let's get back."

Hardly had the triumphant juniors marched away across the playing-fields when from the hedge-bottom bordering the copse arose a dim form.

It was Gerald Cutts, and he was trembling.

He had not seen the faces of the two men. But he knew instinctively who they were, for all that. They were Mr. Bulmer and Mr. Twine—his friendly companions of the little card-party! And Cutts shuddered, as he remembered that Mr. Bulmer had his I O U, and that he was more or less in the power of such a dangerous customer.

For a full minute the wretched senior stood motionless, his mind working swiftly. And then he hurried across the dark fields, his jaw set hard. He had made up his mind. Tom Merry might replace the missing invention in its owner's room; but Cutts was desperately determined that, if he did, it should not be there when rising-bell went!

THE END.

(Gerald Cutts is in desperate straits, and desperate straits require desperate remedies, so be sure you read "A TRAITOR IN THE SCHOOL!" next week's powerful extra-long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. by Martin Clifford.)

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"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!"

(Continued from page 26.)

between Lewis and the mainland. The westering sun was throwing a ruddy glow over the waters, and here and there a broken wave-top glanced pink. Broad to port, the northern part of the Minch was hidden by the Eye Peninsula. But soon the headlands would be abeam, and then a full view of the northern waters would be obtained.

Suddenly the Oriental hailed the Result.

"Why you following us?" bawled the officer standing beside the captain on the bridge.

He shouted through a megaphone, and his voice came clearly to the ears of those on the Result.

Sarky Marline seized his own megaphone.

"We're lookin' for a tow!" he roared. "That's why we's hangin' on to ye. Ye'll be glad to gie me the job o' towin' ye into Stornoway agen ef ye keep on at that there rate!"

All on the Result laughed; but those on the Oriental and the Golden Gann were puzzled.

"What d'ye think he means by that?" asked the captain to his chief officer. The young yacht-master tugged at his

little moustache nervously as he spoke. He looked round at the horizon, and, when his eyes wandered to the northern rim of the sea, now broad in view since the Eye Peninsula was falling astern, he started violently.

"What's that out there, streaking out from Broad Bay?" he said, pointing at a long, lean grey shape.

"Gum, it's a war vessel, sir!" snapped the mate. "I always said that this yacht's business was always too reckless. Let's hope she's not after us, anyway!"

The lean, evil-looking little craft swept on, her foredeck a smother of foam. Little could be seen of her now she was travelling all out, but the squat funnels, the masting with its wireless apparatus, and the grey-painted canvas of the bridge. She was a torpedo-boat destroyer, with the white ensign flying at her stern.

Suddenly signal flags in international code fluttered to her peak. The skipper of the Oriental spoke down a speaking-tube. He said:

"Torpedo-boat destroyer speaking us to starboard, sir." Then he tugged at his moustache in a more disturbed manner than ever as his officer feverishly turned the pages of the signal-book.

(Be sure you read the concluding chapters of this serial which will appear in next week's GEM which will also contain the opening instalment of our grand new serial: "Chums of the Iron Way!" by two favourite authors.)



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