

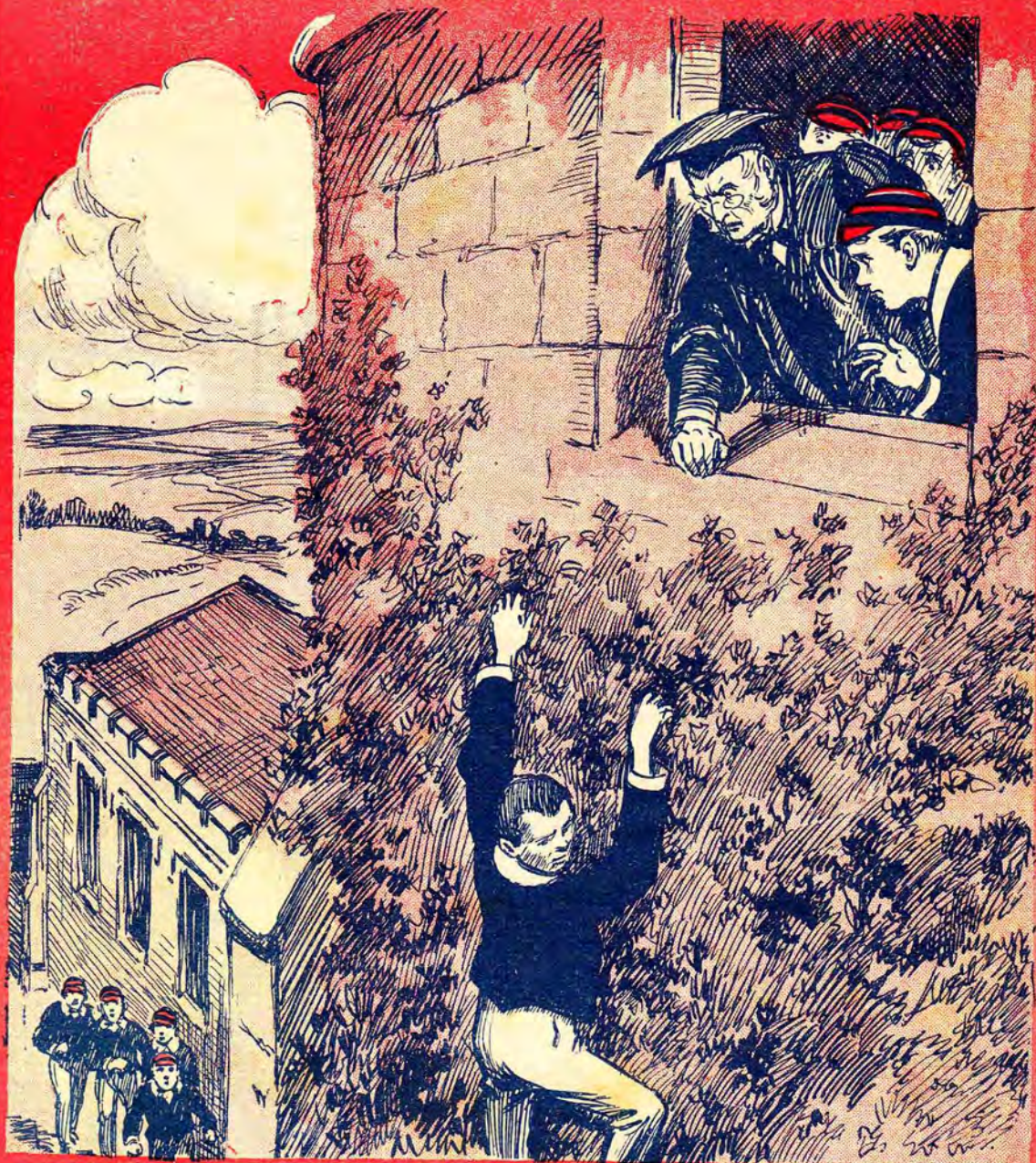
Splendid Double-Length School Story & Firework Supplement Inside !

The GEM 2^d

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 874.
Vol. XXVI.
November 8th,
1924.

LIBRARY OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



CHIN LING FINDS A WAY OF ESCAPE!

The Chinese junior faces fearful peril in order to escape the wrath of the Head of St. Jim's! (A thrilling incident from the grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. in this issue.)



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

MY DEAR CHUMS.—This is great news I have to tell you this week. The GEM will very shortly indeed start a new Portrait Gallery. For months past I have had requests from supporters that such a feature might be incorporated in the cheery weekly. We have had Portrait Galleries before now, and well were they liked. But another series of brand new portraits was wanted. Therefore we will have it. Readers of the magnificent yarns of St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, like to see the pictures of their favourites. Not that everybody who figures at the school is a prime favourite. There are black sheep amongst the number. But they are required for our Gallery as well. Keep your eye on the GEM. This new Portrait Gallery will be very fine indeed, and thoroughly representative. Don't miss it!

"THE ST. JIM'S FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT!"

By Martin Clifford.

St. Jim's is in grand fighting form. As you will see when you get next week's yarn, the football doings are tremendous. Lord Eastwood has given a cup, and the contest for it put up by the stalwart junior eleven is immense. Kildare has a team, ditto Grundy. Things positively hum in the old school. This is a tip-top sporting yarn, and the game struggles for the coveted prize will be watched with keen interest.

"THE ST. JIM'S NEWS."

Here you are! This is just what you have been looking for! Next week's supplement will be a special New House number. All the chums who have made New House famous will appear. Fair play is a glittering jewel, and there were some who averred that not enough space was allowed to the Paladines of New House. Such remarks will droop off into respectful silence after next Wednesday. New House comes into its own with a flourish of trumpets.

"CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!"

By Roland Spencer and Francis Warwick.

More thrilling happenings next week! Our serial has gone ahead with a record rush. Each instalment goes one better on its forerunner. The coming chapters are as intensely interesting as anything ever written about the big events in the railway world.

"THE TUCK HAMPER!"

All my chums must take special note of the surprises in store for them in connection with this fascinating competition. Send in the snappiest, chirpiest yarnlets you can find. There are Special Tuck Hamper Weeks looming in the near future, with more prizes than ever!

"THAT 'MAGNET' PLATE!"

Have you seen this week's "Magnet" plate of one of the foremost fighting ships of the Royal Navy? Our Companion Paper, the "Magnet," has romped into a gratifying success with its wonderful series of photogravure plates of warships in the great Service. They are unrivalled, and there you have it!

"OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER!"

Preparations for our Special Christmas Issue are in full swing. It is early days yet, but the festive season comes next month, and the great thing in life is to be ready. You will be pleased with our Christmas Number, I know. It will be a shining example of what a Christmas extra ought to be—full of bright, seasonable yarns, and supplementary features of the cheeriest kind.

"THE 'HOLIDAY ANNUAL'."

Of course readers of the GEM who have not yet obtained a copy of the "Holiday Annual" have taken the precaution to earmark it as a first-class Christmas present. There's nothing better. Some people are always in doubt as to what to give as a Christmas present. Let them try the "H.A." It is the book of the season, and has the knack of pleasing everybody who picks it up.

Your Editor.

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GET BUSY NOW!

Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.

(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—You May Next!)

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

GOOD OLD LEYTONSTONE!

FACULTIES OF OBSERVATION!

"No," complained the Scottish professor to his students; "ye dinna use your faculties of observation—ye dinna use them. For instance—" Picking up a jar of chemical of vile odour, he stuck one finger into it and then into his mouth. "Taste it, gentlemen," he commanded, as he passed the vessel from student to student. After each one had licked his finger and had felt rebellion through his whole soul, the old professor exclaimed triumphantly: "I to' ye so! Ye dinna use your faculties, for if ye had observed ye would ha' seen that the finger I stuck into the jar was nae the finger I stuck into my mouth!" A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to B. Taylor, 4, Hartley Road, Leytonstone, E. 11.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS!

After an International match between the Scots and the Irish teams, two old Scotsmen, who knew nothing about football, and whose sons had been playing, were boasting about what their sons had just done. "Ay," said one, "did ye no' hear the fowk shoutin' when our Jock nearly scored a goal?" "Mon, that's nathin'," said the other. "It wis a faur looder shout they gied when our Wull missed the ba'!" Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. M. Easten, 4, Gordon Avenue, Gosforth, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

COULDN'T BE DONE!

"Aren't these gooseberries rather dirty?" asked the prospective purchaser of the street hawker. "Dirty!" cried the outraged tradesman. "Think a bloke can wash them and part their hair in the middle these hard times for sixpence a pound!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. G. J. Rayner, Prospect Place, St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Birchington, Kent.

HIS EXCUSE!

Mother's face wore an exasperated look as she rapped her little son smartly on the knuckles. Johnny would persist in putting the food into his mouth with his knife instead of his fork, and time and again mother had told him about it. "Sonny," she said angrily, "how many times have I told you that you must not eat with your knife? Use your fork!" "Yes, but mamma," objected the little boy, "I must use my knife 'cos my fork leaks!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Doris Brushett, 39, Cecil Avenue, Shirley, Southampton.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

The GEM LIBRARY.

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

It is a mysterious affair all through—the coming of Chin Ling to St. Jim's. Gerald Knox, the unscrupulous prefect, has particular reason to remember the Chinese junior!



THE CHINEE OF ST JIM'S!

A Powerful New Double-
Length Story of Tom
Merry & Co., and Chin
Ling, the Mysterious
New Chinese Junior.

BY FAMOUS
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. A Matter of the Moment!

IT'S impossible!"
"Absolutely unheard of!"
"But it's true!"
"Oh, rats!"

And that was the general opinion of the gathering of juniors in the Common-room in the School House at St. Jim's. The view taken by the boys of the Shell and Fourth was summed up in that ancient and classic monosyllable, "Rats!"

George Gore of the Shell was looking quite put out about it. "It's too thick!" he said decidedly. "The Head ought not to allow it. He must be off his rocker. We won't stand it!"

"No fear!"

"Bai Jove! What's the wow, deah boys?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form came in with his chums, Blake, Herries, and Digby. Tom Merry, Manner, and Monty Lowther of the Shell followed them in. All were looking fresh and ruddy from the footer-field. They looked in astonishment at the excited crowd in the Common-room.

"Anything wrong?" asked Tom Merry.

Aubrey Racke snorted.

"I should jolly well think there is!" he exclaimed.

"We're not going to stand it!" roared Percy Mellish.

"Not much!"

"But what are you not going to stand?" inquired Monty Lowther. "Has somebody been treading on your pet corn?"

"Bosh!"

"Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"About the Chink!"

"The whatter?"

"The Chink!"

"The beastly heathen!"

"The rotten Chinese!"

The excited juniors roared the words out in a sort of chorus. Tom Merry & Co. were quite taken aback.

"You silly chumps are talking in riddles," said Tom Merry. "What's all this about a giddy heathen Chinese?"

"Hasn't Kildare told you?" demanded Mellish. "He's coming into the Fourth!"

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther. "Kildare coming into the Fourth?"

"Gammon!" said Blake incredulously.

"You ass!" howled Racke. "Mellish doesn't mean Kildare. It's the new chap—the Chink! He's coming here, to St. Jim's! The Head's put him in the Fourth!"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. began to understand the cause of the untoward excitement in the Common-room.

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed Blake. "A giddy Chinese coming into the Fourth—eh?"

"Yes; a blessed heathen!" roared Baggy Trimble, who seemed to be bubbling over with indignation. "I think it's a bit too thick! Fancy having a heathen Chinese mixing with us! What is St. Jim's coming to? I, for one, won't stay here!"

"Hurrah!" roared Monty Lowther.

"That will go a long way towards ridding St. Jim's of the undesirables, anyway!" said Blake.

"Yah!" snorted Baggy.

"I don't think it's right!" said Racke. "This school isn't exactly a home for foreigners, I hope. We're already got Contarini, a greasy Italian, and Koumi Rao, a blessed nigger. But a Chinese—"

"It's disgraceful!" said Scrope.

"Impossible!"

"Well, I don't see anything impossible about it," said Tom Merry. "Why shouldn't a Chinese come to St. Jim's to be educated, if he wants to?"

"But we don't want him to!" said Racke. "St. Jim's is supposed to be a public school for young gentlemen—"

"Yes, Racke, it's often puzzled me how on earth you got in," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

Racke, the son of a war-time profiteer, searled.

"None of your rotten cheek, Lowther! This isn't a time for joking, either. St. Jim's is no place for yellow Chinks!"

"What is there against the new kid, anyway?" said Tom Merry urbanely. "He'll be all right if he's decent."

"Chinks aren't decent!" said Mellish. "They're different altogether from us! Blood and water won't mix, and a heathen Chinese ought not to be allowed to come here."

"Well, if the matter's already settled, and the Head's arranged for him to come into the Fourth, there's nothing for you to argue about," said Blake. "I've got nothing against a Chinese, personally. Chinamen are a queer lot of individuals, admitted, and they have certain racial characteristics that don't mix with ours, but there's no reason why the new chap shouldn't be all right."

Aubrey Racke sneered.

"So you're taking the part of the Chink!" he said. "You'd be willing to associate with a heathen!"

"Yaas, warrah! I regard you as a most unweasonable set of boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking round severely through his monocle. "P'viding the new chap is all right, I am fully prepared to associate with him."

"I shan't dare to let my people know at Trimble Hall!" said Baggy Trimble darkly. "If I did they'd remove me from St. Jim's at once."

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"Well, if you don't let 'em know, I'll drop a line to the Trimble Arms myself!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, your chaps are talking out of the backs of your necks!" said Tom Merry quietly and seriously. "If a Chinese chap is coming here, that's no bizney of ours. The school's open to all, and you can rely on the Head not to admit anyone whom he thinks is unsuitable. The kid will probably feel like a fish out of water in a strange land, and that will be rotten enough for him without you chaps making a set against him. He can't help being a Chinese; and, anyway, I believe in giving a chap a chance."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"It will be rotten enough for him if he comes here!" said Gore in his burly way. "We'll make things so hot that he'll be glad to clear out. We don't want to have any truck with Chinks. We'll have some fun out of him, anyway!"

"Good wheeze!" said Racke.

Tom Merry frowned.

"You'll leave the kid alone," he said. "I shall have something to say in the matter, Gore, if you start any of your rotten bullying tricks."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Gore.

"We don't want any Chinks here!" said Lennox. "As Kipling says, 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.' It's not right that we should have a yellow heathen dumped on us."

"They've got Chinese chap at Greyfriars. Lemme see, his name's Wun Lung, I think," remarked Herries. "If it's good enough for Greyfriars to tolerate a Chinese, I reckon it's good enough for St. Jim's."

"Rats!" said Aubrey Racke. "That doesn't go down with us. We'll give that Chink chap a high old time when he does get here! We'll cut his blessed pigtail off, for a start."

Tom Merry looked angry.

"It's my business to see that a new chap gets fair play!" rapped the young junior skipper sharply. "It's caddish to rag a chap who's done nothing. Give the new kid a chance."

"You may get ragged yourself, Merry, if you set yourself up against the others," said Racke, with an unpleasant grin.

"The others can go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry shortly.

And he walked out of the Common-room, followed by his chums and Blake & Co.

He left the Common-room in a buzz. The news that a Chinese boy was coming to St. Jim's was, of course, calculated to cause a great sensation in the school. St. Jim's could talk of nothing else for the remainder of that evening.

The decent fellows took the news as Tom Merry & Co. had done, in the spirit that as there was nothing yet known against the new boy he should be given a fair chance.

But there were a large number of fellows, prominent among them being Racke, Gore, and Mellish, who maintained that the thing was a "come down" for St. Jim's, that a Chinese wasn't wanted, and that when he did come they would give him such a hot time that he would be glad to leave.

Which was a decidedly unpleasant prospect for the Chinese boy when he arrived at St. Jim's to take his place in the Fourth Form in the School House.

CHAPTER 2.

Racke's Ruse!

"**W**HEREFORE that worried look, Gussy?"

Tom Merry greeted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with that question in the Form-room passage the next day, which was Wednesday and a half-holiday at St. Jim's.

Lowther and Manners were with their leader. D'Arcy was standing by a window, looking out somewhat vacantly. His classic brow was wrinkled, and it was evident that the swell of the Fourth had something on his mind.

"He looked round with a start on hearing Tom Merry's voice."

"Oh, it's you, deah boys!"

"Yes, only little us!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What are you mooning about, old son?"

"Weally, Lowthab, I wasn't aware that I was moonin'!" said D'Arcy, with some asperity.

"Well, you know now!" grinned the humorist of the Shell.

"What's the trouble this time, Gussy? Has the girl in the Rylecombe linen draper's turned you down?"

"You uttah ass—"

"Or is it the young lady at the stationer's you are mashing now, old top?"

Arthur Augustus fastened his monocle tighter into his eye, and gave Monty a frigid glare.

"Bai Jove! Lowthab, you feahful boundah, I uttably wepudiate your suggestions that I am mashin' any young lady!" he exclaimed indignantly. "And I wasn't moonin', eithah! I was thinkin'—"

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"I shouldn't do a lot of that, Gussy, if I were you!" said the irrepressible Monty. "It must be an awful strain—"

"Weally, Lowthab, unless you wefwain fwom makin' those dispaavagin' wemarks, I shall considah it my painful duty to give you a feahful thwashin'!" said Gussy.

"Grooooooh!"

"Cheese it, Monty!" laughed Tom Merry. "What's the trouble, Gussy? You're looking awfully serious. Hasn't your new set of Sunday toppers arrived?"

"I wasn't thinkin' about my toppahs, Tom Mewwy. It was about Chin Ling—"

"Who?"

"The new Chinese boy, you know, deah boy."

"Oh—oh! So his name's Chin Ling?"

"Yaas. I have been thinkin' things out, deah boys, and I have decided to place Chin Ling undah my pwotection!"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Good old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "I wonder what Chin Ling will have to say about it?"

"I have spoken to Mr. Lathom, deah boys, and he agrees that somebody ought to give an eye to the new boy when he comes," said D'Arcy. "He's bound to feel stwange, and those wottahs, Wacke & Co., are plannin' to wag him."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that's so, Gussy. The kid's in for a high old time, I'm afraid, unless he's looked after. So you're taking Chin Ling under your fatherly wing, so to speak?"

"Yaas, wathah! Mr. Lathom tells me that he awwives by the three-fifteen twain at Wylcombe this aftahnoon," said Arthur Augustus. "I was wondewin' whether your chaps would care to come with me to the station to meet him."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry readily. "There's no footer on this afternoon and we're doing nothing in particular, so we'll come with pleasure, Gussy. I'd like to see that the new kid doesn't get any hankey-pankey as soon as he arrives. You can count on us, old top."

"Thanks vewy much, deah boys! I'll wun along and see Blake, now. I shall expect him and Hewwies and Dig to come, of course."

"Of course, Gussy! The more the merrier!"

Arthur Augustus walked on in search of his studymates.

He passed Racke, Gore, and Mellish at the bottom of the stairs. The young rascals were chuckling together, and were evidently discussing some amusing plot. D'Arcy caught the word "Chink" as he went by, and his look became grim.

A quarter past three that afternoon saw Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. waiting on the platform at Rylecombe Station. On the way from St. Jim's they had kept a sharp look-out for Aubrey Racke & Co., but had seen no signs of these youths.

That Racke & Co. had mischief in mind they were well aware.

Shortly after they had passed into the station, Racke, Gore, and Mellish appeared in the old High Street of Rylecombe, carrying between them an ancient sedan-chair.

Had Tom Merry & Co. seen this chair, they would immediately have recognised it as the one belonging to the School House Amateur Theatrical Society. It had been used for "processional" purposes in a recent historic production, and had been kept in a far-away box-room since.

It was not a particularly strong sedan-chair, and it had undoubtedly seen its better days; but it was still useful for its purpose.

Racke & Co. halted in the station-yard, and set down the sedan-chair. A group of villagers, and old George, the caddy, gazed at them wonderingly.

"Now for the Chink!" grinned Racke. "The train's not in yet, and it's bound to be late—the trains at this dead-and-alive hole always are—so we've plenty of time to work the trick. You mind the sedan-chair while we cut into the station, Mellish."

Racke and Gore took platform tickets, and strolled nonchalantly through the barrier.

Tom Merry & Co. were standing in a group farther up the platform.

"There are those interfering rotters!" muttered Gore. "We shall have a bit of a job to manage them, Racke. If we don't—"

"Oh, we'll manage it all right!" said Racke carelessly. "We're out for some fun this afternoon. We'll bag the Chink, get him into the sedan-chair—he's probably used to them over in China—and then we'll carry him to St. Jim's, have a procession, and wind up by chucking the giddy sedan-chair into the river, complete with the Chink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke led the way down the platform.

"All we have to do is to decoy those rotters into the waiting-room," he said. "I've got the key. This morning I came down here, you know, and pinched it from the porter. The loss won't be discovered till to-night, when it's time to lock up. Good! They've spotted us!"

Tom Merry & Co. had at that moment caught sight of



As Racke made a dive at Chin Ling, the Chinese junior turned to meet him, his arms outstretched. The Shell junior made an attempt to dodge those arms, but they seemed to fall about him, and the next moment he found himself whirling through the air right over Chin Ling's head. Thud! "Wow-wow-wow!" he yelled, collapsing on the cobblestones next to Gore. (See page 6.)

Racke and Gore, and were staring at them hard and suspiciously.

"Take this key, Gore, and wait outside the waiting-room, ready to lock the door when I yell out!" muttered Racke. "I'm going in! They're bound to come down to see what I'm up to."

Racke was correct in his surmise, for no sooner had he entered the waiting-room than Tom Merry & Co. walked down the platform.

They gathered round the waiting-room door and looked in.

Racke was bending down by the fireplace.

The other juniors looked at him with suspicion.

"You here, Racke!" exclaimed Blake. "What's the game?"

"None of your business!" returned Racke.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"The rotter's up to something," said Digby. "I reckon it's up to us to find out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry led the way into the waiting-room. Racke jumped up and put his hands behind him, standing with his back to the fireplace.

"What are you hiding, Racke?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business!"

"Bai Jove! Whatevah Racke has in his hand, dear boys, it's somethin' jolly mysterious, and I vote we appropwiate it!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors closed in on Racke, their suspicions well aroused. Blake and Lowther grasped Racke, and attempted to drag his hands from behind him. The others came forward, and Racke, despite his struggles, had to let go of the article he was holding.

"My hat! It's something wrapped up in brown paper!" said Manners. "I— Oh! Hold him!"

Racke, with a bound, had torn his way through the party of unsuspecting juniors and was making for the door.

Tom Merry and Herries made a grab at him, but missed.

Racke shot through the waiting-room door and slammed it shut behind him.

"Quick, Gore—the key!" he gasped.

Click!

Gore was there with the key, and a sharp, deft movement sufficed to make the door fast and immovable.

Herries kicked at it from inside with his proverbially big feet.

Bang! Bang! Thump!

"Open this door!" howled Blake.

"Rats!" was Racke's inelegant but emphatic retort.

Phceecceep!

The train was coming into the station!

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at each other helplessly.

"We—we're locked in!" gurgled Manners.

"Caught in a blessed trap—by those rotters!" said Tom Merry, in a faint voice. "Oh, my only summer bonnet! What frabjous idiots we were!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Herries, Digby, and Manners beat a loud tattoo on the door, but the train was clattering and hissing at the platform now, and the noise it made quite drowned the juniors' banging.

"Dished, diddled, and done brown!" moaned Blake. "What's in that parcel, anyway?"

"A matchbox!" said Manners. "There's nothing in it—"

"Yes, there is!" said Blake. "It's a card!"

Manners withdrew a card from the matchbox, and on it was written this cryptic, mocking message:

"Ever been had?"

The juniors gazed at this with feelings that were inexpressible.

Then they looked out of the waiting-room window.

The train was now at a standstill, and carriage doors were opening.

CHAPTER 3. A Little Tartar!

RACKE and Gore looked expectantly up and down the platform.

The door of a first-class compartment opened and a sleek figure descended. It was that of a Chinese boy, dressed in immaculate Etons, with a glistening topknot on his head—and no pigtail.

"My word!" said Racke. "It's the Chink!"

He and Gore blinked at the newcomer.

They were disappointed in him.

They had expected to see a Chinese boy in his native costume, such as Wun Lung at Greyfriars wore, and with a pigtail. But Chin Ling of St. Jim's looked quite a different personage, as regards his dress. There was no mistaking his nationality, for his face was oval and of an almond hue, his features had the Oriental caste, and his eyes were narrow—slits, almost. His black hair was short-cropped, however, and he wore a topknot that vied with his black patent leather shoes in brilliance. His Eton suit fitted his slim, graceful figure in such a perfect manner that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing at him through the waiting-room window, opened his eyes wide in approbation.

Chin Ling stood on the platform and looked about him with an air of interest.

Racke nudged Gore, and the pair of young plotters walked up to the little Chinese.

They both raised their hats and bowed low to the platform boards.

"Good-afternoon!" said Racke.

"Welcome, your Highness!" said Gore solemnly.

"Hail, O Royal Chop-chop!" said Racke, bowing again.

"We, thy miserable mongrel servants, salute thee!" said Gore, following suit.

The Chinese boy gazed at this operation on the part of Racke and Gore with great surprise.

"Good-afternoon!" he said at last, in a mild, crooning voice.

"You come from St. Jim's, allee same?"

"Yes, we are from St. Jim's," said Racke. "Are you the Chin Chin Chow from China?"

Chin Ling nodded and smiled all over his almond features.

"Yes, me new boy, me come to big school," he said.

"Chin Ling vellee pleased to meet handsome schoolboys. Shakee!"

He extended a yellow hand, and Racke grinned when he saw it.

He grasped the hand and gave it a wrench, expecting Chin Ling to yelp and jump.

But to the surprise of Racke and Gore, nothing of the sort took place. A queer gleam entered the Celestial's eyes and his grip tightened on Racke's hand. Next minute the Shell fellow gave a wild leap into the air and let out a howl of pain.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Wow! Ow-wow-wow!"

Chin Ling's grip was like that of a vice, and Racke danced. It was some seconds before the Chinese let go, and Racke felt as though his hand had been put through a mangle.

"Nicee handee shake!" purred Chin Ling. "Othel hand—some boy shakee, too?"

Gore grabbed the yellow hand, feeling quite confident

that his brute strength would make the Chinese hop. It was Gore who did the hopping, however. The yellow fingers seemed to be made of steel, and the power in them was unbelievable.

"Yooop!" roared Gore. "Ow! Stop-pit!"

Chin Ling released his hand and stepped back, an innocent, guileless smile on his yellow face.

"Me vellee sollee I hurtee handsome boys," he murmured. "You St. Jim's boys vellee weak, allee same. No stand good handee shake!"

"You — you — you —" gurgled

Racke, looking daggers at Chin Ling. He restrained himself, however.

Gore was gasping.

"Let's go outside, Chin Ling," said Racke hurriedly. "We've got a conveyance to take you to the school."

"Vellee kind of you," said Chin Ling. "Me vellee grateful, indeed!"

"This way, then!"

Racke and Gore walked either side of Chin Ling as they led him away.

Bang! Bang! Bang! came from the imprisoned juniors in the waiting-room.

"Let us out, you rotters!" hooted Blake over the top of the window.

"Rats!" said Racke cheerfully. "Come on, Chin Ling!"

"Don't you have anything to do with them, kid!" shouted Tom Merry. "We'll spifficate you, Racke, unless you leave Chin Ling alone!"

"More rats!" retorted the cad of the Shell. "Never mind those chaps, Chin Ling—they're potty! We had to lock them up because they're dangerous, see?"

"Me savvy," murmured the Celestial, looking slyly from Racke & Co. to the prisoners in the waiting-room.

He made no further comment, but went meekly with Racke and Gore from the station.

Mellish was mounting guard on the sedan-chair in the station yard.

He stared hard at Chin Ling when he came out with the other two.

"My word!" he gasped.

Racke indicated the sedan-chair with a wave of the hand.

"This is the conveyance, Chin Ling," he said. "Will you do us the honour to allow us to carry you to St. Jim's? I'm sorry we couldn't get a rickshaw, but this will do just as well. Get in!"

Chin Ling's almond eyes looked the sedan-chair up and down. Then he shook his head.

"No savvy," he said.

"We're going to take you to St. Jim's in style, you know," said Gore.

"No takee Chin Ling in that!" said the little Oriental decidedly. "Me no likee. Me muchee plefer cabee."

"You're going in the sedan-chair, kid!" said Racke, his pleasant manner suddenly departing from him. "Hold him, you chaps!"

Chin Ling tried to dodge as the three young rascals closed in on him, but Gore's burly hand fell on his shoulder and the Chinese youngster was swung back bodily.

"Not so fast, you little heathen!" grinned Gore. "You're to be taken to St. Jim's in the sedan-chair, and—why, what the dickens—Ow! Yaroooooh!"

Chin Ling's arms went round the Shell bully, and, before he quite realised what was happening, Gore felt himself being whirled round and flung to the ground.

"Yaroooooh!" he howled, as he sprawled face downwards on the hard cobblestones.

"Mum-my bat!" gurgled Mellish. "Ju-jitsu, by Jove!"

"Don't let him go!" screeched Racke, making a dive at Chin Ling.

The Chinese turned to meet him, his arms outstretched.

Racke made an attempt to dodge those arms, but they seemed to fall about him; and a minute later he went into the air, right over Chin Ling's head.

Thud!

"Wow-wow-wow!" yelled Racke, collapsing on the cobblestones next to Gore.

Mellish and the villagers in the station-yard were thunder-struck.

"My heye!" gasped old George the cabby, who had been an amazed spectator of these events. "Well, I never! My heye!"

Chin Ling stood by the sedan-chair, a cool grin on his almond visage.

A row of amazed faces showed at a window looking out into the station-yard. That window belonged to the waiting-room—the opposite window to the one looking out on to the platform—and the faces were those of Tom Merry & Co.

The expressions on those faces were of blank amazement. Gore and Racke struggled to their feet.

Their looks were homicidal.

Racke turned to Mellish.

"Grab him, can't you?" he hooted. "Come on, Gore! He shan't do us this time!"

All three made a simultaneous rush at Chin Ling.

Nobody essayed to interfere. The Chinese darted away, and would have escaped, but Racke thrust his foot out and brought Chin Ling stumbling to the ground with a vicious kick.

"Now—the rope!" he gasped.

Mellish took out some rope from the sedan-chair and handed it to Racke. Gore took out another length of rope. They sat



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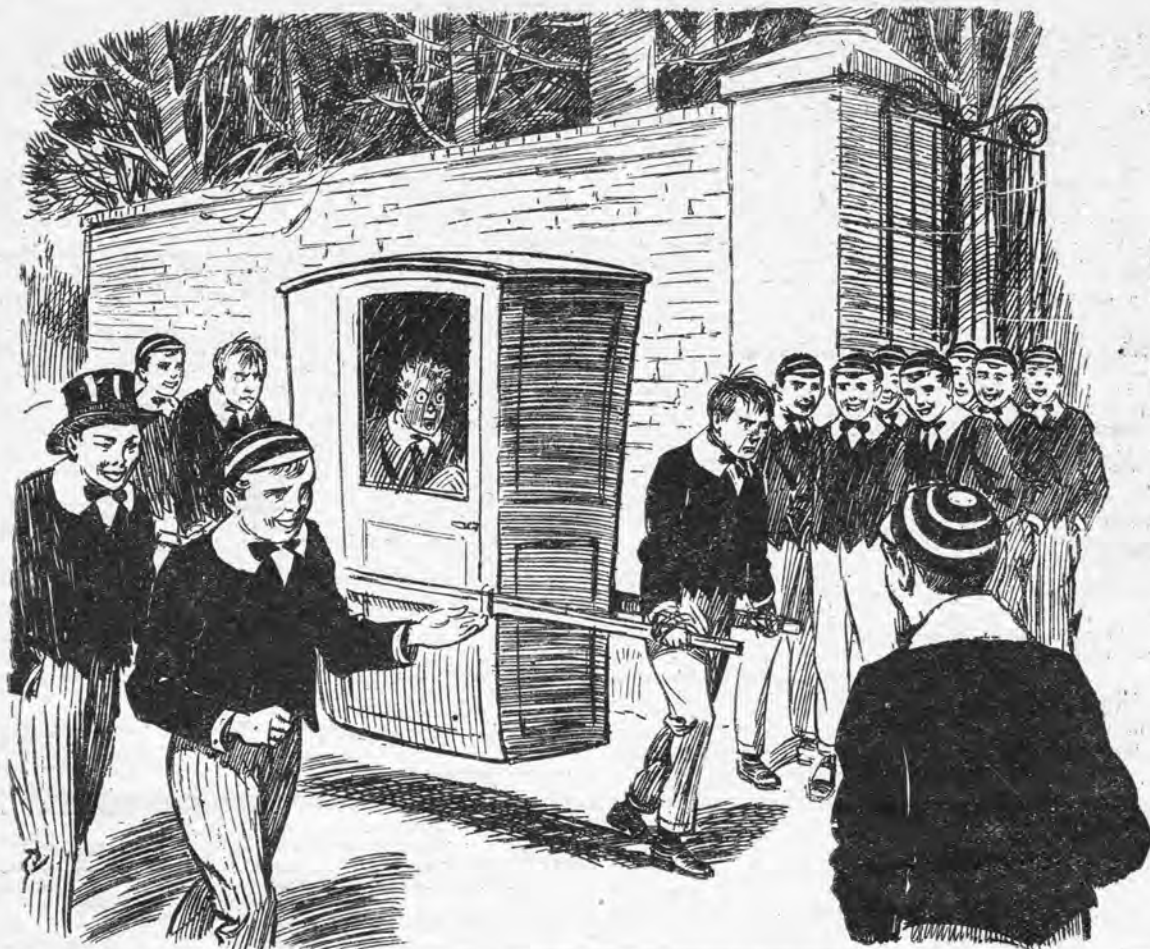
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Quite a crowd of fellows had gathered at the school gates, expecting to see Racke & Co. arrive with the Chinese junior in the sedan chair. But a surprise awaited them, for the occupant of the chair was none other than Racke himself, securely bound, and seated very uncomfortably on a heap of rough bricks. Chin Ling had turned the tables on Racke & Co. in no uncertain manner! (See page 8.)

on Chin Ling as he lay on the ground, and twined the rope several times round his small body. The Celestial wriggled like an eel, but his aggressors succeeded in making him fast in the ropes.

"Now, into the chair with the young rotter!" moaned Racke, whose back was beginning to ache as a result of the "throw" that Chin Ling had given him. "We'll give him ju-jitsu now. We'll give him jip!"

"Not half we won't!" said Gore savagely.

Chin Ling was lifted, a prisoner in the ropes, and dumped heavily into the sedan-chair.

"Right away for St. Jim's!" said Racke, taking up the front two handles of the chair.

Gore took the back handles, and in this manner the chair was carried out of the station-yard, Mellish walking alongside, grinning.

Chin Ling was a prisoner, after all, in the hands of Racke & Co. Racke, in passing out into the High Street, flung a glance back at the waiting-room window.

Tom Merry & Co., furious and helpless, were still incarcerated in the room!

CHAPTER 4.

Turning the Tables!

"VELLEE bad boys!" wailed the Chinese in the sedan-chair, as Racke and Gore carried him up the High Street. "Lettee me out!"

Racke & Co. chuckled.

"You jolly well stay where you are!" said Gore. "This is where we show you what we think of you heathen Chinks. We'll give you beans!"

"No likee beans! No hurtie poor Chinese!"

But Racke & Co. only laughed at the plaintive wailing of their prisoner, and walked on with the sedan-chair. The people of Rylcombe were highly amused at the sight.

Three seniors of St. Jim's turned a corner, and catching sight of Racke & Co. with the sedan-chair, they stopped.

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth laughed when they saw Chin Ling.

"My word! It's the new Chinese kid for the Fourth!" said Cutts. "It looks as though he's got into a rag already! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts & Co. had no sympathy for the Chinese—in fact, they rather enjoyed the joke. They passed on, chuckling.

Had anyone been watching Chin Ling closely they would have noticed him making strange, snake-like movements with his hands, arms, and body, whilst he was sitting in the sedan-chair, crying out in such piteous tones.

Racke & Co. were half-way through the High Street when all of a sudden Chin Ling shed his bonds.

Even then neither Gore nor Mellish saw what had happened. The first indication that Gore had of the Chinese's release was when Chin Ling stood up in the chair and smiled blandly at him.

The little Celestial held a long rope in his hands—one of the ropes that had been used to bind him.

"Why, how on earth—" began Gore.

Whiz!

The rope, leaving Chin Ling's hands with a deft movement, came twirling above him like a snake. A noose dropped neatly over his shoulders and then drew tight.

George Gore roared.

His arms were bound securely to his sides!

He dropped his end of the sedan-chair, which bumped down on the road.

It was Racke's turn to yell.

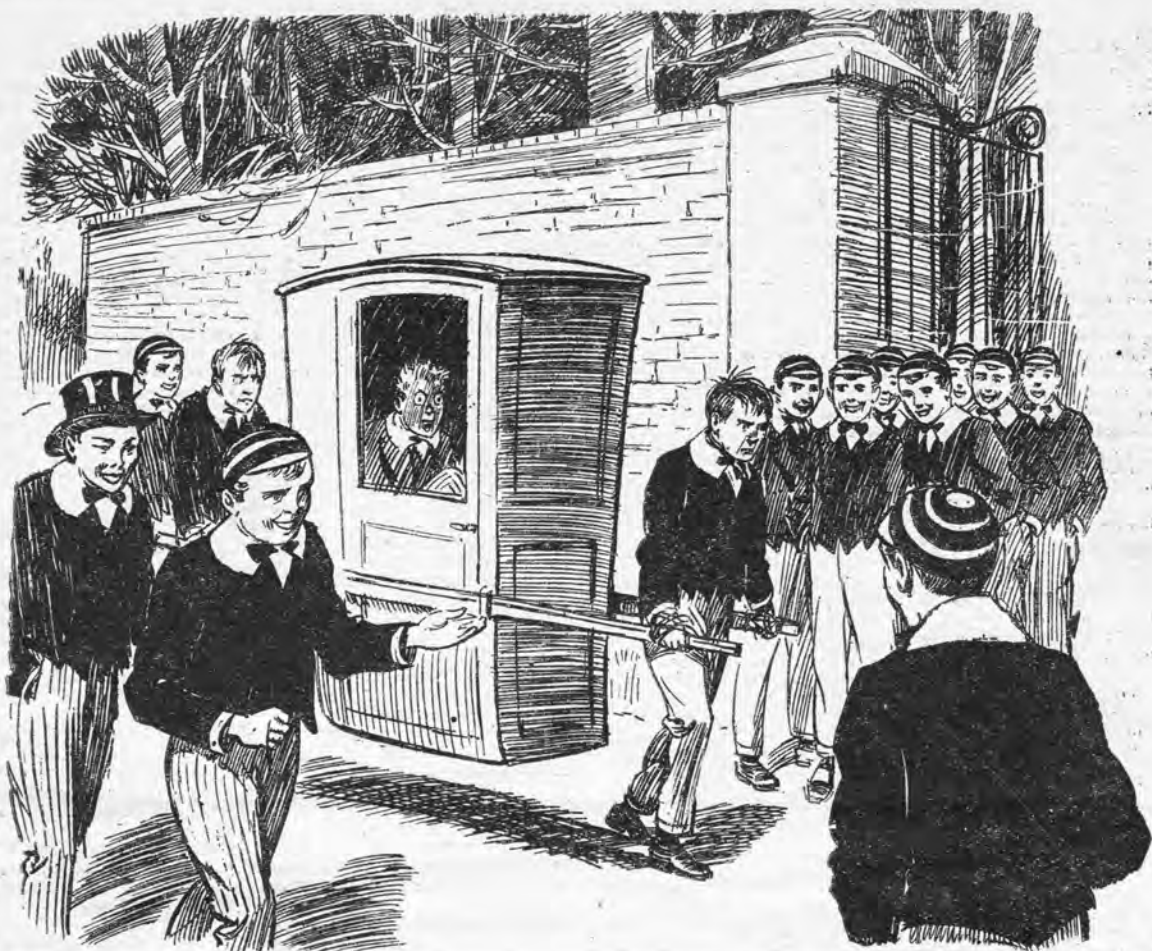
"Yow! You silly ass, Gore! Mum-tay hat!"

"Look out, Racke!" shrieked Mellish. "The Chink's going to lasso you!"

Mellish's warning came too late!

The other end of the rope, formed into another noose, shot out over Racke, and in a twinkling Chin Ling had his arms pinioned to his sides.

Bump!



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studee to myself, so me fulnish. Me likee take things easy, what you tinkee?"

"My word!"

The men were still bringing in rolls of carpet and curtains and a brass fender and fireirons and valuable looking pictures and well-packed crates.

Boxes and furniture were piled on all sides in the entrance of the School House.

"That's the lot, sir," said the foreman at last. "Sign, sir."

Chin Ling signed the paper, and then he withdrew a leather wallet from his breast-pocket. The juniors gasped with awe when they saw, on the case being opened, that it contained a wad of banknotes and Treasury notes.

Chin Ling presented each of the four delivery men with a pound note each, and the boys of St. Jim's gasped still more.

"My word!" breathed Baggy Trimble. "The heathen chap's rolling in tin!"

"Fairly wallowing in filthy lucre!" agreed Monty Lowther.

The bumping of boxes brought Mr. Railton downstairs. The Housemaster stared at the piles of luggage and furniture, rubbed his eyes, and stared again.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "What are all these things doing here?"

"My fulnitule, sil," said Chin Ling, with a smiling bow. "Nicee—nicee lot, sil. Me soon getee them to studee allee light."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "All this yours, Chin Ling? I should think you have sufficient here to furnish a whole row of studies. Call—call Taggles, some of you, and tell him to remove the things at once. The hall cannot be lumbered up in this way. It is most—most extraordinary!"

Mr. Railton walked away, giving Chin Ling a very peculiar look. Taggles was fetched, and he appeared, grumbling.

A very grim expression crossed his face when he saw that formidable cargo in the hall.

"My heye! Which H've got to carry all that lot upstairs!" he gasped. "Wot I says is this 'ere. My middle name's Simpson, not Samson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Samson!"

Chin Ling again produced his wallet, and he took out a rustling five-pound note.

"Velly hard-worked poltel takee this, then he cally these things up to my studee, what you tinkee?" he said.

He thrust the five-pound note into Taggles' horny palm. Taggles blinked at it, and blinked again, hardly able to credit his eyes. The juniors were utterly flabbergasted, too.

"My—my—my heye!" he gasped.

Chin Ling turned away. Evidently he saw nothing unusual in his action. Taggles gazed at the banknote like a man in a dream, but he did not let it go. After carefully examining it, to make sure that it was a good one, he stowed it away in the dim recesses of his trousers-pocket. Then he commenced work, still in a more or less trance-like condition.

"Well, carry me home to die, somebody!" exclaimed Blake. "What sort of a fish have we got this time? I've never seen a kid handing out fivers like that before!"

"Wathah not, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I am in quite a fluttah, bai Jove!"

Baggy Trimble sidled up to Chin Ling.

"I say, old chap, I'll carry some of those things up for you!" he said. "Anything to oblige, you know!"

"Tankee you!" said the Celestial. "You callee this."

He indicated a heavy armchair. Baggy coughed.

"Ahem! I—I tell you what. I'll see to the fitting-up of your study, Chin Ling," he said. "It would be worth a fiver to have all that trouble taken off your hands, wouldn't it?"

"No savvy," said Chin Ling, shaking his head.

"I'm offering to do all your dirty work for you for a fiver!" said Baggy eagerly. "Is that a go, Chin Ling?"

"No go," replied the little Chinese. "No savvy, no go."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make it four quid, then!" urged Baggy.

"No savvy."

"Three quid! I'll do it for three quid!"

"No savvy."

"Well, I'll take two pound ten!" said Baggy magnanimously.

Still Chin Ling maintained an implacable look on his almond countenance and shook his head.

"Two quid—thirty bob—you—you mean beast! A quid, then!" gasped Baggy. "Surely you can sport a quid, Chin Ling?"

"No savvy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Baggy glowered, and brought his price down to ten shillings, and finally to five, but still Chin Ling did not "savvy." At length Baggy Trimble gave it up in disgust and rolled away.

Tom Merry & Co. good-naturedly lent a hand in transporting Chin Ling's extensive collection of property up to the end study in the Fourth Form passage, which was the room allocated to the new boy.

The affair created a tremendous impression at St. Jim's. Chin Ling was no ordinary heathen Chinese, so it seemed. He was fabulously wealthy, and evidently spent money like water.

The tuft-hunters of the school soon got busy. Scrope attempted to sell Chin Ling a leaky fountain-pen for a pound, but the Chinese did not "savvy" this transaction. Baggy Trimble tried to "work off" a blunt penknife and several borrowed articles, yet still Chin Ling did not "savvy."

As Blake remarked to Tom Merry a short while later, Chin Ling was "all there" in spite of his quiet, shy ways.

They assisted Chin Ling in the task of setting his study straight. Blake fetched a hammer and nails, Monty Lowther got to work with another hammer, and they set to work to nail the carpet down between them.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The sounds of heavy hammering re-echoed along the Fourth Form passage.

The others busied themselves in opening the various crates. Costly ornaments and vases and brass and lacquer ware came to view.

"Lend us your hammer, Blake," said Tom Merry, coming to a small crate that was more securely nailed down than the rest. "This is a jolly stiff one to open!"

"Coming over, Tommy!"

"Ow!"

Tom Merry caught the hammer on his chest, and he nearly lost his balance. He glared at Blake, and made a threatening movement with the crowbar he had in his hand. He desisted from what homicidal impulses he felt, however, and attacked the small crate with vim and vigour.

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Bang!

Tom did not believe in wasting time. He saw that the inside of the crate was packed with straw, so he hacked away industriously at the woodwork. All of a sudden the crate collapsed, and a number of small brass ornaments and a quaintly-carved red box fell out on to the floor.

Tom picked up this box and looked at it curiously.

It was a beautiful piece of work, and the design was weird in the extreme. He was still admiring it when he heard a shrill cry from Chin Ling, and next minute the box was snatched out of his hands.

The Chinese stood behind Tom Merry, the box held tight in both hands, which were trembling with agitation. The yellow face, usually so urbane and smiling, was contorted into a look which Tom could not interpret. He was so taken aback at Chin Ling's whole demeanour.

"Why, what on earth—" he began.

"No touchee this; it plivate!" exclaimed Chin Ling, in a tremulous voice. "Me no wishee you to see this box. But now you know, you no tellee?"

"My hat! What on earth are you gassing about, Chin Ling?" demanded Tom.

Chin Ling turned, and unrolled the top of a small wooden desk. He put his hand into one of the large pigeon-holes, and Tom Merry & Co. heard a click. Next minute the little Oriental brought to light a small steel safe, which fitted flush into the pigeon-hole. He withdrew a key from his pocket and inserted it in the small lock of the miniature safe. The door came open, and with swift, precise movement, Chin Ling thrust the mysterious red box into the safe, relocked it, and thrust it back out of sight in the pigeon-hole.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "So that desk is fitted with a secret safe, Chin Ling. Was the safe specially designed to fit that red box?"

Chin Ling nodded, watching each of the juniors narrowly in turn.

"Yes, me take gleeatee care of box," he said. "Me only tellee you because I tustee you allee same. You no speakee about the box to anyone, and me payee you. What you tinkee?"

He took out his wallet and began to count out from the wad of notes. Tom Merry laid a kindly hand on the Chinese junior's arm.

"We don't want you to pay us to keep your secret, Chin Ling," he said. "We're not like Trimble and the others. If you don't want the others to know that you have that red box, and if you want to preserve the secret of that hidden safe in the desk, you can rely on us to keep mum."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "It's quite contrary to our principles, deah boy, to betway any confidences."

Chin Ling nodded, and smiled.

"Me knowee," he said. "You vellee nicee schoolfellows; me tustee you. Me believe you no speakee about box."

Tom Merry & Co. went on with the setting-up of Chin Ling's study. They could not dismiss the matter of the red box from their minds, however, and, although far from

being curious or prying by nature, they could not help wondering what was in the box, and what secret the new Chinese boy had to maintain.

Under the juniors' energetic hands the study soon assumed a very sumptuous appearance indeed. It looked a trifle overcrowded, owing to the numerosity of the articles it contained; but Tom Merry & Co. were all agreed that the room was more like a miniature palace than a schoolboy's study.

CHAPTER 6. More Surprises!

"ME vellee much oblige," said Chin Ling. "Now me standee big feed, what you think?"

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Chin Ling, we were going to ask you to come to tea with us in our study," said Blake. "We haven't got much of a brew to-day, but you're welcome."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Me come to tea, but me standee my whackee!" murmured the little Chinese. "Me standee big feed—"

Tap!

Alan Lorne of the Fourth looked in.

"My word!" he said. "You do yourself well, Chin Ling—what? I came along to invite you to tea. You must be jolly hungry after your railway journey. Yow! Who are you shoving, Tompkins?"

Tompkins grinned into the room.

"Posh shanty, this!" he remarked. "I say, Chin Ling, what about coming to tea with me? I reckon you could do with a feed, and—"

"Chin Ling here?"

Gerald Croke of the Shell came up. He, like the others, looked in wonder at the Chinese boy's expensively-furnished study.

"By jeminy, this is something like!" he exclaimed. "I—er—I was wondering whether you would care to come to tea with me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Everybody seems struck with the same idea—to invite Chin Ling to tea. Here comes some more of the dear, considerate chaps!"

Reilly, Lennox, Serope, and Baggy Trimble came into the room almost together. They were taken aback at first by the vision of splendour that met their eyes.

"I say, Chin Ling, what about tea, you know?" said Lennox. "There's a decent spread in my den, and I should like you—"

"Faith, an' it's me that's wantin' you to come to tea with me, Chin Ling, me darlin'!" said Reilly. "I—"

"Might as well pop along with me and have some tea, Chin Ling," remarked Serope.

"Rats! Chin Ling's in the Fourth!" snorted Baggy Trimble. "You're coming to tea with me, aren't you, Chin Ling?"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

Matters had altered since it became known that the "heathen Chinese" was immensely rich. Instead of being "downed," he had become the most-sought-after fellow at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry turned to the little Celestial.

"Well, Chin Ling, you must think yourself highly honoured to be in such demand!" he said, with a laugh. "Please don't think we wanted you to come to tea with us to sponge on you—"

"Allee light. Me knowee," said Chin Ling softly. "Me no accept any invitations. Me standee big feed."

Baggy Trimble brightened considerably.

"I say, that's a good wheeze!" he exclaimed. "Of course, it's only right that new boys should stand the rest a feed on their first day, you know."

"Hear, hear!" said Lorne and Tompkins.

"Vellee well," said Chin Ling. "Me have heap lot cash. Me standee deat."

"Good egg! This way to the tuckshop, Chin Ling!"

Tom Merry frowned.

"I say, Chin Ling, you needn't stand that feed unless you like!" he said. "Don't let these bounders persuade you that it's compulsory—"

"No compulsolly," said Chin Ling. "Me likee standee feed to nice schoolfellows."

"That's the way to talk!" said Tompkins enthusiastically.

They all went downstairs together, and they gathered others on their way. Quite a crowd followed Chin Ling to the tuckshop when it became known that he was standing a general feed.

And the little Chinese was as good as his word.

He walked into Mrs. Taggles' tuckshop at the head of that huge contingent, and placed three five-pound notes on the counter. Mrs. Taggles looked at them breathlessly.

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"Please we've come to buy up the whole giddy establishment, ma'am!" said Monty Lowther.

"My goodness gracious!"

Mrs. Taggles was amazed. The juniors were not slow in taking Chin Ling at his word, however. Mrs. Taggles' stock was fairly raided, and her shelves were bared and her jars and dishes emptied with remarkable rapidity. The news of the stupendous feed soon spread, and fellows arrived from all quarters to lend a hand.

Figgins & Co. came up from the New House. They gasped when they saw what was taking place. Fatty Wynn, indeed, almost fainted.

"What's on—a general feed?" said Figgins.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "There's plenty for all, so pile in!"

"What ho!"

Figgins & Co. needed no second bidding! Tuck was passed out to them—the tuckshop was full, and there was a happy crowd outside—and they fell to promptly.

Chin Ling stood looking on with a bland smile of pleasure on his almond visage. He ate very little himself, although Baggy Trimble generously urged him not to spare the grub. Baggy himself was performing mighty deeds of valour, and Fatty Wynn, as soon as he got going, proceeded to vie with him.

Knox of the Sixth strode up to the tuckshop with the usual frown on his usually unpleasant face.

"What's going on here?" he rapped bad-temperedly.

"Feeding!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"You little sweeps! You are raiding the tuckshop!" exclaimed Knox, with an angry movement forward.

"Ha, ha, ha! You're offside this time, Knox! It's Chin Ling's treat!"

"My hat!" gasped Knox.

He looked round at the crowd of laughing, munching juniors, and the frown on his brow darkened.

The milk of human kindness did not flow in any great quantity in Knox's heart. He was a bully and a tyrant to the juniors, and he never missed an opportunity to vent his spleen on them.

Knox of late had been more "down" than ever on Tom Merry & Co. A hard glitter came into his eyes.

"This is disgusting! You little rascals are making perfect pigs of yourselves!" he rapped. "I'll make it my business to see that this disgraceful orgy is put a stop to!"

"Oh jeminy!"

"Bai Jove! The feahful wottah is goin' to intahfere, dear boys!"

Knox pushed through the crowd and elbowed his way into the tuckshop.

"Where is this Chinese rotter?" he exclaimed. "I'll settle with him, first!"

Chin Ling stole softly and unobtrusively to Knox's side.

"Big handsome boy wantee Chinese?" he said.

Knox glared down at the smallish figure in Etons. The bully of the Sixth seemed to tower right over Chin Ling.

"Yes, I want you!" he said, in his most burly tones. "What do you mean by inciting these young sweeps to take part in such a disgusting affair? This sort of thing isn't allowed at St. Jim's! I'm a prefect, and it's my duty to see that the juniors behave, and—"

"Half a mo!" said Chin Ling suddenly. "Lookee!"

His hand went up to Knox's coat collar, and when he opened his palm he displayed a small, wriggling object.

Knox gave a gasp of horror, and turned pale.

"A—a beetle!"

"Nasty beetle claw! ovel handsome boy!" murmured Chin Ling. "Lookee! Anothel on hair!"

He stood on tiptoe, and his little yellow hand went under Knox's cap. This time Chin Ling brought forth two beetles.

The juniors fell back, amazed. Knox's face was a study.

"Plentee mol beetles on handsome boy!" said Chin Ling, and he proceeded to remove numbers of the wriggling objects from Knox's ears, and waistcoat, and, finally, from down his back.

By this time the prefect was positively squirming.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Knox must be absolutely running alive with 'em!"

"Oh cwumbs! Don't go neah him, deah boys!"

"No fear!"

"More beetles down back!" crooned Chin Ling softly. "Me see thlee claw down!"

"Groooooogh!" gasped Knox, reaching down the back of his neck. "Get 'em up, somebody! Oh dear! Yerooooooh! Yah! Ooogh!"

Chin Ling bent down and produced three more beetles, apparently from Knox's trousers legs.

The prefect fairly danced in the open space which the juniors had cleared.

"You'd better go outside and shake yourself, Knox!"



Gerald Knox let out a shrill cry as Chin Ling drew back and poised the whip to strike. "Don't—don't! I swear I didn't steal your box!" Lash! Lash! Lash! The biting thongs of the whip fell with cruel force across Knox's back. Tied as he was to the ceiling, the prefect was helpless to escape. He was completely at Chin Ling's mercy. (See page 18.)

advised Blake. "It's too bad, bringing your beetles into Mrs. Taggles' shop. Make way for him, kids!"

"Another beetle down neck!" said Chin Ling.

"Yerrrrrooogh!" howled Knox.

He made a blind dash from the tuckshop and streaked across the quadrangle to the School House. Gerald Knox forgot all his intentions of stopping the juniors' feed. His one aim was to get to the bath-room, to rid himself of the plague of beetles that seemed to have so suddenly befallen him.

When Knox had gone, Chin Ling stood by the counter chuckling.

"I say," exclaimed Cardew suddenly, "where have all those giddy beetles gone to? You must have taken quite fifteen off Knox, Chin Ling!"

"Why, yes! Where are the horrible things?" cried Blake. "They're nowhere to be seen! They must be crawling about here!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Mind your legs!"

Chin Ling burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he cried, holding his sides. "Vellee good jokee! No lookee for beetles! Ho, ho, ho!"

The juniors stared at him.

"What on earth are you laughing at?" demanded Blake in wonder.

"Me gettee plentee beetles anywhere!" said Chin Ling. "Lookee!"

He reached over to where Baggy Trimble was sitting on an upturned ginger-beer crate, with a pie-dish, containing a half-demolished rabbit-pie, held between his knees.

Chin Ling, to the amazement of all, extracted two wriggling beetles from the pie!

Baggy Trimble's face went green.

"Oh lor!" he gurgled.

"My hat!" said Levison. "You've been eating beetles, Baggy, evidently!"

"Groooooogh! Yah! I feel ill!" wailed Baggy.

He thrust the rabbit-pie on to the counter, and, with one hand holding his ample waistcoat, the fat youth of the Fourth crawled away.

Tom Merry & Co., and the other juniors were mystified.

Mrs. Taggles looked terribly distressed.

"Young gentlemen, I really don't know how the beetles could have got into the pie," she said. "All my pies are made of the best rabbit—"

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Chin Ling.

"The Chink's cackling again!" exclaimed Cardew. "I wonder if he knows anything about it?"

Chin Ling was almost doubled up.

"Ho, ho, ho! Me know!" he gasped. "Plentee moi beetle—lookee!"

He withdrew a handful of the wriggling creatures from his jacket pocket.

The juniors recoiled in horror.

"So you—you've been planting these horrible things all the time!" ejaculated Blake.

Chin Ling nodded his close-cropped head.

"Me plantee—vellee good jokee, what you think?" he said. "Ho, ho, ho!"

"You—you horrid little—"

"My only summer chapeau!" Tom Merry gave a sudden shout. "Look at 'em, you chaps! They're not real!"

"Bai Jove! You're wight, deah boy!"

"Great pip!"

Kerr of the New House gave a chuckle.

"I see it all now!" he said. "This little beggar is a conjurer. He's just been demonstrating his conjuring tricks!"

"By jingo!"

"Is that so, Chin Ling?"

The Celestial nodded vigorously.

"Collect!" he murmured with a chuckle. "Me vellee good conjuler. Watchee this tart!"

Chin Ling took up a large raspberry-tart which Grundy had only had one bite out of. From the hole in that tart Chin Ling proceeded to withdraw yards and yards of coloured ribbon!

Mrs. Taggles had to hold on to her counter for support, so amazed was she. The juniors in the tuckshop could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyes. They blinked, and blinked again.

The ribbons came out of the tart it seemed in miles. A huge pile of multi-coloured ribbons soon collected on the tuckshop floor. Then, when the ribbon was exhausted, Chin Ling withdrew from the tart a handsome gold watch.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a start.

"Bai-bai Jove! That's my tickah!" he exclaimed. "How-how did it get into that tart?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the others.

"Watchee still tickee, so not so vellee had aftel cookee!" grinned Chin Ling, handing Gussy back his watch.

"Gweat Scott! I wegard that as fwightfully elevah, Chin Ling, but I must wequest you not to perform that twick again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if the Chink doesn't beat the band!" breathed Blake. "He's a real cough-drop, isn't he? The way he got rid of Knox was ripping!"

"Rather!"

"Good old Chink! If it hadn't been for the beetle trick Knox would have put the lid on our feed!" said Sidney Clive. "I wonder how he's getting on now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors at the recollection of Knox's unpleasant experience.

They did not receive any further visit from Gerald Knox, and the feast went on its glorious way unhindered.

When, at last, it came to an end, Chin Ling was escorted back to the School House by an enthusiastic party of admirers.

There was no mistaking the popularity of the Chinese junior now!

They met Baggy Trimble in the hall. He was still looking pale and haggard-looking. The juniors grinned when they saw him.

"Hallo, Baggy! How are you feeling now?" inquired Monty Lowther sweetly.

"Groooogh! I think I'm poisoned!" moaned Baggy. "If I'm ill I shall complain to the Head and have Mrs. Taggles' shop closed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Baggy glared.

"I'm blessed if I can see anything to laugh at, you unfeeling rotters!" he said peevishly.

"But we can, old son!" roared Blake. "We can see you! Poor old Baggy! You were properly done that time! Those poor old beetles at all—they were imitations. You were spoofed, Baggy—gloriously spoofed! Chin Ling's a giddy conjurer, you see!"

"Mum-miy—my word!"

Baggy's paleness vanished, and his face became crimson with wrath. Tom Merry & Co. shrieked with laughter.

"You rotters!" howled Baggy. "There's nothing to laugh at! I've been done—done out of my feed! I had hardly eaten anything when—"

"Baggy, you awful crammer! You had already eaten enough for three!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I hadn't!" roared the luckless fat youth of the Fourth. "I've been swindled! I'm hungry, and I've had no tea! Look here, Chin Ling, I expect you to make this up to me!"

Chin Ling gave him a bland look.

"No savvy," he said.

"Gimme ten bob, and we'll call it quits!" said Baggy.

The Chinese shook his head.

"No savvy, big bladdel of lard!" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You savvy well enough, you yellow heathen!" howled the indignant Baggy. "Yah! You squint-eyed Chink! Make it five bob! Eh? You do jolly well savvy, you rotter! Half-a-crown, then! Yah! Mean heathen beast!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Chin Ling passed on, leaving Baggy roaring after them in the hall. He was wildly excited and wrathful. And, it is undoubtedly safe to say, Baggy Trimble felt much worse now he knew the truth of the rabbit-pie mystery than he had felt before.

CHAPTER 7.

Rough on Knox & Co.

GERALD KNOX looked out of his study doorway. There was a frown on his face as he glanced up and down the passage.

As a matter of fact, Knox had been in a perpetual state of ill temper for days. He had been trying to make Tom Merry & Co. "sit up" of late, those youths being the

ones he most particularly disliked, but to his chagrin he had found that Tom Merry & Co. had been too wary for him, and that the "sitting up" process had been more or less transferred to himself.

The coming of Chin Ling had made matters worse. The story of the beetles in the tuckshop had gone round the school, and Knox had come in for a good deal of banter from all quarters. He was not allowed to forget that episode, and even his fellow seniors had chuckled over the affair, and chipped him unmercifully. Chin Ling had been at St. Jim's two days now, and was quite popular everywhere, and Knox knew that the joke against himself had helped towards making Chin Ling a species of hero.

Knox knew by now, of course, that he had been the victim of a clever conjuring trick. He had been trying to persecute the Chinese for it ever since, but so far had not succeeded.

Chin Ling, although he appeared to be a quiet, unassuming fellow and incapable of hurting a fly, was really too much for those who attempted to get the better of him. He had given Knox a wide berth, cunningly guessing that things would go hard with him if he fell into the prefect's clutches.

Knox wanted a fag, and his frown deepened as he continued to look up and down the passage and saw no one; but he did not want to bawl "Fag!" at the top of his voice, as was customary with the great men of the Sixth.

Knox, prefect as he was, was the black sheep of St. Jim's, and his study was the headquarters of the "fast set" of the Sixth and Fifth, their "fastness" consisting chiefly of smoking cigarettes and playing nap.

Knox frequently required services of his fags that would have got him into serious trouble had they got known. Mellish of the Fourth was usually Knox's emissary, but Mellish was in bad odour with Knox lately.

Knox frequently visited the Green Man public-house at Rylcombe for a surreptitious "flutter" with the dubious sportsmen who gathered there, and a few days ago he had caught Mellish spying on him. He had thrashed the cad of the Fourth, and since then Mellish had kept out of his way.

Knox was having three friends into his study that evening. Those friends were Cutts, St. Leger, and Gilmore, of the Fifth. Knox happened to be desperately hard-up and in debt, and he knew that the Fifth Form blades were flush, so he intended to risk what remaining cash he had in "doing them down" in first-rate style in his study that evening, and, incidentally, rooking them of as much of their spare cash as he could. Knox had picked up a trick or two at cards at the Green Man, and he intended to use them to the best advantage.

For the purpose of entertaining Cutts & Co. he wanted some cigarettes, and the question was—who should he send to Rylcombe to get them?

Whilst Knox was still wondering, a soft step sounded on the passage. A slim figure came into view. It was Chin Ling.

Knox's eyes glinted maliciously.

"Chin Ling, come here!" he rapped.

The Celestial shook his head.

"Me no comee," he said. "Me in tellific hully."

"Do as I tell you, do you hear?" roared Knox, in his most terrifying tones. "I'm a prefect, and my orders are to be obeyed. Do you want me to larrup you with the cane, you yellow image?"

"Me no likee canee," said Chin Ling. "Mistel Lathom likeee poor Chinese this molning for doing conjuring ticks in classee. What you wantee?"

"I want you to fag for me," said Knox. "Come into my study, Chin Ling, or I'll come after you with the cane!"

"Allee light!" said Chin Ling submissively. "Me comee."

He followed Knox into the study, and there the prefect turned on him with a savage snarl.

"I'll teach you to play tricks on me, you rotten little heathen!" he exclaimed. "You've got to be my fag, now, and I'll make you work for me. I want you to go down to Rylcombe and get me some cigarettes, then you'll return and get tea ready in here by six o'clock. Be careful you're not seen buying the smokes, and mind, if you mention a word to anyone I'll flay you within an inch of your miserable little life! Do you understand?"

Chin Ling nodded.

"Me savvy!" he said.

"Mark you do, that's all!" growled Knox. "Cut off and get the fags now, and hurry!"

"Me gettee cigalettes plente quick!" murmured the little Celestial, and he disappeared from the room.

Knox chuckled as Chin Ling went.

"I'll cow the little brute!" he muttered. "He's frightened to death of authority and the cane. He'll get plenty from me, I'll warrant!"

Chin Ling went down to Rylcombe, purchased some cigarettes at the tobacconist's, and returned quickly to St. Jim's.

He did not go straight up to Knox's room, however.

Instead, Chin Ling went to his own study and locked the door.

Percy Mellish, who happened to be just coming out of his study, saw the Celestial disappear, and heard the key turn in the lock.

"What's that yellow heathen up to now, I wonder?" murmured Mellish.

He crept to the door of the end study, and looked through the keyhole.

Mellish gave a gasp.

Chin Ling had an open box of cigarettes before him on the table, and beside the box was a paper packet. The Chinese junior was busily engaged poking some powder from the paper into each of the cigarettes.

"My hat!" muttered Mellish. "He—he's doping those smokes with something! I wonder—"

The door of Study No. 6 opened, and Mellish had to scuttle away.

When Chin Ling emerged from his room, however, and glided noiselessly along to Knox's study, Mellish followed him. Knox was awaiting Chin Ling. He scowled at the little Celestial when he entered, grasped him roughly, and hurled him against the table.

"Where've you been all this time, you little sweep?" he demanded. "I'll wallop you with the cane—"

"No wallop!" wailed Chin Ling. "Me gottee cigarettes!"

He handed Knox the box of cigarettes, and the prefect took it with a grunt. He opened the box and looked at the cigarettes. They were large, gold-tipped ones, and Knox raised his eyebrows.

"H'm! They look all right. You can wait for the money, young Chink. Now set about laying the tea!"

"Allee light. Me makee vellee nicee tea!"

Knox left the study with the cigarettes in his pocket, and Chin Ling set about making tea. He was busily engaged on this operation when a tap came at the door, and Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy came in, with impots which they had to deliver to Knox by tea-time. They were surprised to see Chin Ling there.

"My hat! You don't mean to say you're fagging for Knox, Chin Ling?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The Chinese nodded.

"Yes, me fagge," he murmured. "Me no wantee stickie!"

"But Knox has no right to fag the Fourth!" exclaimed Jack Blake angrily. "You're a silly young ass, Chink, to allow yourself to be frightened by Knox!"

"No frightened!" grinned Chin Ling. "Me gettee ownnee back on velly bad plect. Knoxee sendee me to village fol cigarettes—"

"The rotter!"

"Me gettee cigarettes and dopee them!" chuckled Chin Ling.

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry. "You've doped the cigarettes!"

Chin Ling nodded.

"What on earth have you put in 'em?" demanded Blake.

"Opium!" said Chin Ling.

The three juniors gave concerted jumps.

"Whaa-a-at!" stuttered Blake. "Opium!"

"Yes, me had some powdel, and me puttee some in cigarettes," said Chin Ling softly. "Opium no killee; it velly queer stuff allee same. It makee Knoxee drunk. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Bai Jove! The dangerous young ass!"

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Chin Ling, you mustn't let Knox smoke those doped cigarettes!" he exclaimed.

"Why not? Cigarettes no hurtie!"

"Perhaps not, but—"

"Too latee now. Knoxee got cigarettes. Me hully up and makee tea. Watchee me!"

Chin Ling took up six plates, and commenced to juggle with them. He threw them high into the air, one after the other, keeping them in motion, and catching each deftly as it fell, tossing it to the other hand, and then throwing it up again. He kept this up in a rapid, bewildering manner, moving round the room as he did so.

Tom Merry & Co. forgot their concern about the cigarettes as they watched Chin Ling's marvellous dexterity with the plates.

The Chinese had reached the door, and was still juggling away merrily when the door came open, and Knox strode in.

He cannoned into Chin Ling, sending him staggering forward, and then there was a crack and a fiendish howl from Knox.

Two of the plates, descending from their flight in the air, had crashed on Knox's head.

"Yarooogh!" roared Knox.

Crash, crash, crash!

Plate after plate was smashed to smithereens on the floor, excepting, of course, those two which had been broken on Knox's head.

Knox staggered against the table, holding his injured

cranium, and blinking about him dazedly. He had just seen more stars than he could possibly count.

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy roared. They could not help themselves.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger appeared in the doorway, and demanded to know what had happened.

"Groooogh! Yow! My head! That little yellow rascal

chucked plates at me!" moaned Knox. "Hold him!"

"Lais!" said Chin Ling, as, with a snake-like movement, he

dived between Cutts' leg and disappeared.

His feet went pitter-patter along the passage, until they

died away. Chin Ling was not likely to return in a hurry!

The juniors stifled their mirth as much as they could.

"Chin Ling didn't throw those plates at you, Knox; he

was just doing a bit of juggling with them when you barged

in!" explained Tom Merry. "We're only here to deliver

these impots, but I'd like to remind you, Knox, that it's

against the rules to fag Fourth-Formers!"

With that, Tom and the other two left Knox's study,

laughing.

Knox was almost beside himself—especially when he saw

Cutts, St. Leger, and Gilmore grinning.

"Groooogh! What are you laughing at?" he moaned. "For

two pins I'd go after that yellow heathen rotter and skin him

alive."

"Never mind about that now, old man," said Cutts

pacifically. "Let's get on with tea. You'd never catch

Chin Ling. We'll lend you some more plates."

Knox, growling, agreed to this.

Tea was prepared without any further assistance from Chin

Ling or any other fag.

When the meal was over Knox suggested a game of nap.

"Right-ho!" said Cutts. "We'll take you on, old man."

The "sporty" seniors of St. Jim's sat round the table

after it had been cleared, and Knox produced playing-cards

and the box of cigarettes which Chin Ling had bought.

"Try one of these," said Knox hospitably. "They're first

quality and gold-tipped."

"They look all right," said Cutts. "Thanks!"

All four helped themselves from the box and lit up.

The game of nap commenced.

Cutts puffed at his cigarette with apparent enjoyment.

"What a peculiar rich flavour these fags have got," re-

marked Gilmore. "I've never smoked fags like them

before."

"Neither have I," said Knox. "Queer aroma, isn't it, but

quite pleasing."

"Rather!" said Cutts. "I'm really enjoying this smoke!"

The seniors went on smoking and playing, and when one

cigarette was finished they lit fresh ones.

St. Leger was half-way through his second cigarette when

he gave a queer gurgle.

"Groooogh! I—I feel funny!" he muttered. "This smoke

seems to have got up into my head, somehow!"

"I was thinking the same," said Cutts. "I— Ooooh

Mum-my head went dizzy just then."

Knox laughed, but a moment later his smile vanished and

a white, pallid expression took its place. The prefect rose

from his chair and tried to walk. He reeled forward against

the table, sending cards and money flying in all directions.

"Yooogh-hooogh! Mum-my legs are giving way! Ow—

ow!" he moaned.

Knox's legs seemed to collapse from under him, and he

went with a thud to the carpet.

Cutts was leaning back in his chair with quite a dizzy look

on his face and a wild expression in his eyes. St. Leger

moaned and held his head in his hands, whilst Gilmore lay

across the table in quite a helpless condition.

"Yooogh! I did-do feel funny! Ow!" moaned Cutts.

"So do I! Wow—woup!"

"Yerrooooh! My head and my stomach are rolling!"

gurgled Knox. "Whooogh!"

"I—I feel as though I'm floating in the air!" muttered St.

Leger in a far-away voice.

The four seniors moaned and writhed. Cutts attempted to

reach the door, but after staggering a few steps he gave way

at the knees and joined Knox on the floor.

Five minutes elapsed, during which time the hapless

seniors' conditions became worse. Their heads were spin-

ning, and violent pains were stabbing at their interiors.

Their moans and groans were truly heart-rending.

The study door opened, and a cluster of startled juniors'

faces looked in.

The Terrible Three and Blake, Herries, Digby, and

D'Arcy gasped when they saw the four seniors.

Knox was nearly under the table, whilst Cutts lay beside

him with his head on the fender. Gilmore was leaning over

the back of the armchair, whilst St. Leger was sprawled

half-way across the table.

All were moaning in unison.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 874.



EDITORIAL.

By Tom Merry.

BANG! Whizz! Fizzle-tee-zzz! Sssss—ssss! Bang!

Don't be alarmed, chums. This is merely my method of introducing you to the Special "November the Fifth" issue of the "St. Jim's News."

I am hoping this edition will go with its much of a "bang" as the biggest cracker you ever put a match to.

Anyway, I've done my best with it, and in the following columns you will find articles by some of the brightest "sparks" among our staff of contributors. I might also say that I shall look forward to hearing some good "reports" from you concerning this issue.

By this time I suppose quite a number of you have begun to suspect that this Editorial is being written by our pet funny merchant and champion word-twister, Monty Lowther, but I can assure you that you're wrong. It is all my own unaided work, as the street artists say.

It just happens that I've blossomed out in that direction for once, but I mustn't keep it up.

November the Fifth is always a great occasion at St. Jim's. We never fail to celebrate it in fitting fashion—at least, so far as the Lower and Middle Schools are concerned. There isn't much enthusiasm among the Fifth and Sixth, and positively none among the masters. Some of the latter, indeed, regard the date with feelings of considerable distaste. Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Selby in particular.

I believe they'd like to have it taken out of the calendar altogether. They don't at all agree with the old rhyme that says there's no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot. They don't see the slightest reason for its being remembered.

You see, they both have a pretty thin time during the first few days of November, especially Mr. Selby.

The fags spend all their available pocket-money on little coloured cardboard tubes that go bang! or fizzzz! or both, and they are delightfully generous in the manner in which they share the excitement with their Form master by letting off these little things somewhere in his neighbourhood whenever they possibly can.

The more daring spirits among them even venture to snuggle fireworks into the Form-room; and you can take it from me—if you've never tried it for yourselves—that a roman candle or a "lightning-flash," tossed skilfully into a stove, is capable of providing quite a lively time.

Mr. Ratcliff on one occasion had a repeating cracker tied to the back of his gown, and about this time of the year he never turns his back on a member of the Lower School. "Once bit, twice shy!" is his motto, and he takes no chances. I suppose you can't blame him, either.

Think of me, boys, when you set a match to the "honny," and take care not to singe your eyebrows, as Monty once did.

Tom Merry

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 874.



THERE'S one thing about the Fifth of November—it often gives a fellow a chance to pay off old scores.

Anyway, I know I paid one off on Knox's account, and with a bit of interest, too.

Wally and I called in the oil-shop in Rylcombe where they sell fireworks, and the chap showed us some new crackers he'd just had in. Real bobby-dazzlers they were, too—went off with a bang like a boiler explosion, only a bit more so.

We bought a dozen, and while we were walking back to St. Jim's I had an idea about them. It seemed to me that if I couldn't make Knox sit up with those blessed cracks of doom, I jolly well deserved kicking for an addle-pated idiot.

Of course, my idea was to wangle them into his fire some evening, but the trouble was that it wouldn't do to simply shove them there in such a fashion that he'd be able to spot who to thank for it. Because if he did—well, I should be sorry for it, you can bet.

It so happened that just about this time there had been a lot of timber cut down in Rylcombe Woods, and tons of it had been sold for firewood. Some of the logs were so big that people bought them to burn in place of coal, and Mr. Railton had got in a stock for the School House. The prefects were using them in their studies, and it occurred to me that, with the aid of one of these logs, I could get Knox to put that cracker into his fire with his own hands.

So I borrowed a brace and bit from Blake, and bored a couple of holes in a big log. I made a couple, because I thought I might just as well do the job thoroughly, and put two crackers into the fire instead of one. I shoved them well into the log, so that only the touch-paper was showing, and then covered that with a thin wooden plug.

Then I put the log among others in Knox's scuttle.

It worked all right. He shoved the log on to the fire one evening, and a few minutes afterwards a terrific report was heard from the direction of his room. The rest of the Sixth rushed out into the corridor, and when they saw Knox dash out from a room full of smoke they all went towards his door just as the other cracker went off, even louder than the first.

Splinters of burning wood flew in all directions about the place, and Baker, thinking that a fire had broken out, yanked a chemical extinguisher from the wall and flooded the study.

It was days before Knox got the place straight again, and no end of his gear was ruined. Serve the rotter right! He couldn't blame it on to me, because I was in the Third Form room at prep when it happened, and it never occurred to him that I'd doctored the log.

WHEN CHOOSING YOUR CHRISTMAS
PRESENT THINK OF
THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

"GUY!"

By George Francis Kerr.

I SUPPOSE that if Figgy hadn't received a remittance from his uncle that morning we should never have known anything about the Grammarians' guy.

But Fifth of November doesn't occur every day, so we—Figgy and I, that is—unanimously agreed that we ought to honour the occasion, and accordingly went down into Rylcombe to pay tribute to the local agent of Messrs. Brocks'.

Fatty Wynn, of course, suggested that we should put half of the cash aside for the purchase of tuck, but the scheme met with no approval. Guy Fawkes day only comes once a year.

We held a long discussion on the way regarding the manner in which we could lay out the money to the best advantage; but before we had arrived at the fireworks-dealers' establishment our attention was attracted by sounds of revelry proceeding from the direction of the village green.

We strolled that way in a spirit of curiosity, but when we came in sight of a crowd of Grammarians, making merry round an unlit bonfire, we began to take more than a passing interest in the proceedings.

The unlit bonfire was evidently not the cause of their excitement, for within a few seconds of our arrival upon the scene we discovered what the rumpus was about.

They were parading a guy.

It was a most elaborate guy, too. We gazed at it for a while, keeping carefully out of sight ourselves, before we began to realise that there was something rather familiar about it.

The rather elegant Eton-jacket, the striped trousers, the fancy vest of many colours, the stylish, if somewhat battered, topper, the gleaming eyeglass fastened to the cardboard mask—why, great Scott, the cheeky lighters had actually made a guy of the one and only.

Now, Gussy is admittedly an ass, and a School House ass at that; but, all the same, he's not a bad little ass, and we weren't going to stand by and see Grammar cad's guy a St. Jim's fellow, whoever he was.

But it was a pretty forlorn hope, just three of us against about twenty Grammarians, though we did the best we could in the cires. The cry of "St. Jim's to the rescue!" met with no response, so it was evident that there were no more of our fellows in the village just then, and we were being swamped by the odds of six or seven to one when help came from a most unexpected quarter.

A crowd of villagers, led by the redoubtable Grimes, sailed into the scrap, and things began to even up a trifle. Anyway, with their assistance we were able to get to the guy, and, though we had to retire eventually, we did so with the honours of war—that is to say, we had the guy in our possession.

The reason for the villagers taking part in the affair is easily explained. Grimes thinks no end of a lot of Gussy—in fact, the grocer's lad almost worships the scion of the noble house of Eastwood—and as soon as he saw his hero being held up to ridicule in that fashion he gathered his forces and loosed his wrath upon the perpetrators of the deed of shame—which was lucky for us as well as for Gussy's "dig."



The SET-PIECE.

By CLIFTON DANE.

something really classy. So I'm going to change my set-piece into a portrait of the Head, and put 'Congratulations to Dr. Holmes!' underneath. It's sure to buck him up like jerry-ho when he sees it blazing away in about four colours. What do you chaps think?"

Well, we told him what we thought, which was pretty well what he did—that it was a jolly good notion and a great improvement on the crest.

So he got out a sheet of drawing-paper and commenced to work out the design. Glyn isn't half a bad draughtsman when he puts his mind to it, and the sketch of the Head was quite decent. Anyway, you could see what it was intended for, which is a sight more than you can say of some pictures I've seen in my time.

He got into difficulties when he set to work on the motto, though.

"Hang it!" he said. "I haven't got room on that framework to put what I want!"

"Why not alter the framework?" I suggested.

"I can't do that. No time, for one thing. I shall have my work cut out to finish it as things are. Now, if I could alter the wording a bit—shorten it, and still keep the same sentiment—Gee, I've got it! I can contract 'congratulations,' can't I?"

"Gratters," I suggested.

"No. Sounds too slangy. 'Congrats' is heaps better. It cuts off half a dozen letters or so, and I shall just be able to get it in."

And "CONGRATS TO THE HEAD!" was therefore adopted.

So we all went down to the woodshed, where the framework was, our arms full of powder-filled paper-tubing, ready for Glyn to fix on the woodwork. While Glyn was putting the key into the lock we heard a noise inside the shed, and when the door was opened we saw young Piggott of the Third standing there, with a scared expression on his face. It was evident that he knew he was in for trouble, and he wasn't disappointed. Glyn was in a furious temper, because he knew perfectly well that the young rotter was there for no good purpose.

We saw at once how he'd got in—through the window—and the piles of fireworks had been disturbed in a manner that showed he'd been rummaging about among them.

If it had been Wally D'Arcy or young Gibson, or Mauners minor, we shouldn't have been so wild, because it was only natural that the fags should be curious about the fireworks they well knew we were making; but young Piggott is an absolute young sweep, and ready for any kind of mischief. He'd have been quite capable of throwing a match among the stuff.

So Glyn gave him a jolly good cuffing, and booted him out of the place. It was no more than he deserved, and it wouldn't have hurt him to have had a worse licking. Unfortunately, when we examined the window, we discovered it was impossible to close it so as to prevent some youngster repeating Piggott's dodge for getting in.

We had a jolly good look round, but there appeared to have been no damage committed, so we started our work on the set-piece. We didn't finish it that evening, but the next night we put the finishing touches to it.

Glyn covered it with pieces of sacking, and we kept as close a watch on the place as possible. Of course, even if the stuff had caught fire by any means, or somebody had set it alight out of spite, the woodshed was too far away from the school buildings for any damage to be done; but we should have lost the results of more than a week's work, and that would have been quite bad enough for us. And we didn't trust young Piggott after Glyn had given him a hiding.

There was a good deal of excitement among the fellows, who were eagerly looking forward to Glyn's promised display.

They bought plenty of fireworks of their own, of course, but it was to us that they were looking for the greater part of the excitement.

We had plenty of willing helpers to assist us in the task of carrying the piles of fireworks over to Big Side, where the display was to take place; but we permitted nobody but ourselves to touch the set-piece, which we conveyed across carefully, wrapped up in the sacking, so that nobody should see more of it than a small part of the framework. It was a difficult job to get it across and fixed up, because it was a big affair, but we had taken the precaution of sinking poles into the ground beforehand, to which it was nailed as soon as we got it across.

By the time we'd fixed it securely most of the school, seniors and juniors as well, had gathered on Big Side, and were impatiently waiting for us to commence operations.

We started our little display with half a dozen huge crackers that exploded with reports like big naval guns, and followed them up with a score of the new super-rockets.

By this time the Head, accompanied by Mrs. Holmes and Mr. Railton, had arrived upon the ground to watch the proceedings.

Our home-made fireworks were a great success, and the only unrehearsed incident that occurred throughout the display was due to somebody dropping a slow match among a pile of rockets that were lying on the ground, with the result that they went hissing off in all directions.

The Head was a bit blue about it, I think. Anyway, he sent Kildare to ask us to be careful that it didn't happen again.

At last the moment for lighting the set-piece arrived, and, while Noble let off the last of the crackers, Glyn and I touched off the fuse of our masterpiece.

The blue paper spluttered and went out. We relit it, with a similar result. Glyn slit the end of the tubing and tried to light it that way, but without much success, for it went out almost immediately. There was no time to waste, for Noble had used the last of the crackers, and everybody's attention was directed towards us, so Glyn made a hasty decision.

"I'm going to light it from the other end," he whispered. "It'll come to the same thing."

There was no difficulty in touching it off at that side, and it burnt along rapidly, though there was some clucking among the fellows when they saw the writing appearing in that fashion. The portrait of the Head flashed up before the writing was complete, and there was a burst of applause as soon as the fellows recognised it.

A few seconds after that the whole design had blazed out in its entirety, but, to our amazement, the cheering and hand-clapping died away suddenly. In place of it there was a sort of combined gasp of horror from the assembled crowd. Glyn, Noble, and I stared at each other for a moment, and then we stepped back so that the set-piece, which had been lit then a mere blaze of light to us, was readable.

As soon as we caught sight of it we collapsed.

There was the portrait of the Head all right, but underneath it, in huge letters of red flame, was the legend

"RATS TO THE HEAD!"

The trail of burning powder had stopped short at the "R" instead of continuing to the beginning of our wording.

Of course, we were able to explain the matter—that is, we were able to inform Railton what we'd intended to say, and show him the unburnt letters to prove our statement.

Investigation revealed that the missing letters were slightly damp, and Railton came to the conclusion that we had been careless in handling the set-piece.

But we knew better than that. It wasn't our carelessness, but young Piggott's spite. The young sweep had managed to get into the woodshed in spite of our watchfulness, and had doctored part of the wording. We screwed a confession out of him, and left it to Wally D'Arcy and the Third to give him the ragging that we, for fear of doing something perilously near to bullying, couldn't very well undertake.

GLYN usually takes a pretty big share in the Fifth of November celebrations at St. Jim's—which is only natural, really, because, although he's undeniably a first-class ass, he's also a first-class chemist as well, and he's rather smart at making all kinds of fireworks.

On one or two occasions this year he's given firework displays at garden-parties, and he met with so much success that he made up his mind to provide a display on the Fifth that should outshine all his previous performances.

He'd got ideas for several new kinds of crackers and squibs, including a specially effective form of "golden rain," and a rocket that burst and liberated huge coloured sparks the size of footballs which lasted for more than half a minute before they disappeared; also he had a sufficiency of cash provided by his pater for the purpose of buying the materials for the manufacture of these marvels.

Naturally, the work was more than he could do single-handed, so Noble and I agreed to help him, on condition that there were no stinks attached to the business.

For days our study was almost knee-deep in cardboard and cartridge-paper, out of which we made cases and tubes to hold the powder, together with paste, blue touch-paper, and wooden laths for rocket-sticks. But the pile of finished fireworks, which Mr. Railton insisted should be stored in the old woodshed out of harm's way, grew bigger and bigger each day; and when we contemplated what we'd done we were more than satisfied, and we certainly didn't grudge the time and trouble we were giving to the work.

But Glyn's ambitions soared beyond squibs, crackers, rockets, and roman candles, even of original types. He had decided to make a huge set-piece, and the planning of this occupied his thoughts for the whole of his spare time for the day or two previous to the great occasion.

The trouble was that he couldn't decide upon the design for the set-piece. He thought at first of building a huge St. Jim's crest, which should burst out into coloured fire, and there is no doubt that would have provided a most effective spectacle.

But Glyn wanted something even better than that, and cudgelled his brains to think of something. The worst of it was he wanted the affair to be a complete surprise to everybody—which, indeed, it proved to be, though not in the manner he hoped for—and so he couldn't very well go about asking for suggestions. Finally, however, he decided upon the crest, having thought of nothing better.

Then one evening, after he'd built the framework and shown us how to roll the tubes of which the design was to be fashioned, he came into the study in a state of great excitement, and announced that he'd just heard an item of news which had given him the idea for which he'd been looking.

"The Head's been elected president of some society of big bugs!" he said delightedly. "I've just heard Railton telling Latham in the corridor. I believe it's no end of a distinction, anyway. Railton talked about it as though the old boy had been offered the crown of China, so it must be

STARTING SOON! A SPLENDID PORTRAIT GALLERY! DON'T GET LEFT!



"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in real alarm. "They—they've smoked those cigarettes, then!"

"Young Chin Ling—the dangerous young heathen—may have poisoned them!" gasped Blake. "What can we do? If we call for help it will give the game away and get them into trouble for smoking. We—"

"The best thing for them is water—applied externally!" said Digby. "If we could slop some water over them—"

"Bai Jove! That's a good ideah! There's some watah in the kettle, deah boys—"

"But it's hot!" said Tom Merry hurriedly. "I think cold water is the best. Run along and fetch those four fire-buckets hanging on the wall at the end of this corridor."

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

Blake, Lowther, Herries, and Manners fetched the buckets.

Knox, rolling over, turned a pair of glassy eyes upwards.

"Ooogh! Help!" he gurgled. "Fetch a doctor!"

"All right—we'll pull you round!" said Tom Merry. "Let 'em have the water, chaps—it will do them good. Never mind the mess. Whatever mess we make, it will serve Knox right for being such a rotter. Look at the fags and playing-cards."

"Yaas, wathah! It's disgwaceful!"

"Here goes!"

"Swooooooosh!"

Four buckets of water were hurled over those four hapless seniors. Knox, Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger each received a thorough douching. The effect of the cold water was most surprising. All four staggered to their feet, and managed to stand up. They gurgled and spluttered as they stood there, dripping with water.

"Yerrrugh!"

"Ooogh! Gug! Gug!"

"Good egg!" chuckled Blake. "That's brought 'em round!"

Knox & Co.'s sudden shock had restored their heads to normal working order. They were still writhing in agony, however.

"Oh dear! This is awful!" moaned Knox, blinking round.

"Look at the mess in this study—"

"We had to make a mess to bring you to your senses!" rapped Tom Merry sharply. "If Kildare or any of the masters had come in you would have been called over the coals properly! You can't be very bad now; and the pains are bound to wear off in time. You rotters shouldn't go in for smoking!"

"You—you—you—" stuttered Knox. "Ow! I—I do feel awful! That young Chinese imp is at the bottom of this! Yooogh! He planted those cigarettes on us! Ow! When these pains have gone I'll find him and flay him alive!"

"Groo-hooogh!"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled and departed with the empty fire-buckets.

They could see that Knox & Co. were in no serious condition. Chin Ling could not have put sufficient opium into the cigarettes to do the seniors any real harm. It was because they had never had it before that the opium had affected them so strangely.

It was half an hour before Cutts & Co. were able to crawl out of Knox's room. And five minutes after that, Gerald Knox himself strode out, cane in hand and a most dangerous expression on his face. He was on the trail of Chin Ling.

But the wily Chinese, like the Arabs in the poem, had silently drifted away!

CHAPTER 8. A Mystery!

TOM MERRY, Blake, D'Arcy, and Talbot, all dressed to go out, came down the stairs in the School House later on that evening, just as Gerald Knox was going up.

Knox still had the cane gripped tight in his hand, and his looks were grimmer than ever. It was apparent that he had not yet found Chin Ling.

"Hallo, Knox!" said Blake sweetly. "Are you still looking for our merry heathen?"

Knox scowled.

"Yes, and I'll give him something when I do find him!"

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he exclaimed. "I believe you rotters are hiding him from me!"

Blake turned his pockets out.

"Not guilty, my lord!" he said. "You might try Gussy; he may have Chin Ling stowed away underneath his topper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Mind, I shall get him sooner or later!" snarled Knox. "I've half a mind to give you a thrashing for slopping that water over me!"

"A pretty fine stew you would have been in if we hadn't!" said Tom Merry contemptuously. "Come on, chaps; we've got to get to the printer's with our news copy, so we can't waste time arguing with Knox."

Knox stamped on furiously up the stairs, whilst the editorial staff of the "St. Jim's News" went out of the School House, took their bicycles from the shed, and rode away in the gathering dusk.

By the time they reached the cross-roads in the Rylcombe Lane darkness had fallen, and they stopped to light their lamps.

All of a sudden Blake gave a start.

"I say, did you hear that?" he exclaimed.

"No. What was it?" asked Tom Merry.

"It sounded like a cry for help, coming from the wood,"

said Blake. "There! Did you hear it that time?"

"Yes, I heard it," said Tom, his face going serious. "There's somebody screaming for help in the wood—probably attacked by footpads or tramps. We'll leave our bikes here, take our lamps, and have a look."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The plucky juniors left their machines and hurried along the narrow, winding path that led into the depths of the wood. They plunged through the thick black shadows cast by the trees and the bushes, the beams from their cycle lamps darting higher and thither.

Suddenly that shrill cry rang out again, sounding quite close to them.

"This way!" exclaimed Talbot. "I can hear sounds of scuffling!"

The juniors dashed through the thickets after Talbot.

Suddenly they came to a small clearing in the wood, and the lights of their lanterns revealed the figure of Chin Ling lying in the grass, with a burly Chinaman in European dress on top of him. One knee was pressed on Chin Ling's chest, whilst a pair of yellow, sinewy hands, with nails so long that they seemed like talons, were clutching at the Chinese school-boy's throat.

The big Chinaman turned, with a hissing snarl, when the newcomers burst upon the scene, and, releasing his hold of Chin Ling's throat, he jumped up. Next minute he had disappeared into the blackness of the trees beyond.

"After the rascal!" shouted Tom. "I'll attend to Chin Ling!"

The others dashed off in pursuit of the Chinaman, whilst Tom Merry ran to Chin Ling's side and bent over him.

The Chinese Fourth-Former sat up with a queer whimper.

"Are you all right, kid?" asked Tom Merry.

Chin Ling made a great effort to compose himself. It was apparent, however, that he was labouring under the stress of severe nervous tension.

"Yes, thankie. Me allee light now," he murmured. "Go find vellee had Chinaman—no lettee escapee."

"The others are after that rotter," said Tom, assisting the little Chinese to rise. "Are you hurt, Chin Ling?"

The Chinese junior shook his head.

"No, Tom Melly. You velly kind to poor Chinese."

Blake, D'Arcy, and Talbot returned soon afterwards to announce that all trace of Chin Ling's assailant had been lost.

"The artful rotter got away somehow," said Blake. "Who is he, Chin Ling? Do you know him?"

Chin Ling shook his head.

"Me no knowee bad man," he said.

"Well, kid, tell us how it happened," said Tom Merry.

"Me leavee St. Jim's to dodge Knoxee," murmured the little Celestial. "Knoxee velly waxy—hunt for me with cane. So me come out fol a little while and walkee into wood. Bad Chinaman jumpee out at me allee of a sudden. He wantee kill me, allee same like Knoxee."

"But what the dickens for?" demanded Talbot.

Chin Ling shook his head.

"No savvy," he said.

Tom Merry & Co. looked hard at the inscrutable face.

"H'm! I reckon you could tell us if you liked," said Blake. "But still, it's no bizney of ours. Gussy, you'd better see Chin Ling back to the school, he's not safe alone. We'll carry on to the printer's."

"Yes, that's a good idea," said Tom Merry.

"Wight-ho, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Come along, Chin Ling. I haven't had much of an opportunity yet to protect you, have I? We'll walk back to school."

"You vellee kind," murmured Chin Ling. "You hideos me from Knoxee, too."

"Yaas, wathah! That howwid bwute sha'n't catch you, deah boy."

Chin Ling heaved a sigh of relief, and he followed D'Arcy out of the wood with the others, and back into the Rylecombe Lane.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Talbot rode on to the village, whilst D'Arcy escorted Chin Ling back to St. Jim's.

The staff of the "News" left their "copy," and the instructions connected with it, at the printer's in the High Street, and then they turned back towards the school.

The moon had by now come out, and the juniors enjoyed a glorious scorch down the moonlit lane.

As they pedalled swiftly round the bend in the lane just before reaching St. Jim's, Tom Merry caught sight of two figures who were standing in the shadows on the opposite side of the road to the school. These two were evidently engaged in deep conversation, and at the same time were anxious not to be seen, for they kept well within the shadow, and they cast frequent covert glances up and down the lane.

No sooner did Tom Merry & Co. round the bend than the pair took alarm and disappeared through the hedge of a field beyond.

"I say, did you spot who those two were?" said Blake in a thrilled voice.

"Yes," replied Tom Merry quietly. "One was Knox, and the other the Chinaman who half-strangled Chin Ling in the wood a little while ago."

"Great pip!" exclaimed Talbot. "So those two were talking together?"

"Yes; they looked as thick as thieves," said Blake. "I'd like to know what the little game is. There's a mystery about this somewhere."

The juniors rode into St. Jim's, put their machines in the shed, and went upstairs, making their way to Chin Ling's study in the Fourth Form passage.

D'Arcy's voice bade them enter.

They received a surprise when they walked in.

The Chinese's sumptuous study was in an untidy and disturbed state. Papers and books littered the carpet, and the contents of several drawers were scattered upon it. Most of the furniture was either out of place or upside down altogether. Chin Ling himself was seated in an armchair by the window, looking utterly dejected and miserable.

"Hallo! What on earth has happened here?" demanded Blake.

"I'm afraid somebody has been wansackin' the woom, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "Chin Ling has, so he says, suffered an iwweapawable loss. You wemembah that queer wed box which he hid in his desk? Well, that's gone."

"Whew!"

"Who could have taken it, I wonder?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It wasn't one of our pals, I'm sure."

"Knox has been huntin' about in here," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps he took the box for some weason."

"Was there anything of particular value in it, Chin Ling?" asked Tom Merry.

The little Chinese nodded dully.

"Yes; this is most selious mattel," he said. "You no savvy. Me ofel ten pounds leward for boxee."

"Ten pounds reward! Oh, my only hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors could see that the loss of the mysterious red box which he had guarded so closely was a severe blow to Chin Ling.

They instituted inquiries throughout St. Jim's, and when it became known that Chin Ling was offering a reward for the recovery of the box, quite a host of amateur sleuths joined in the hunt. But it was all of no avail, and Chin Ling hardly spoke to anybody that evening, his demeanour being miserable and downcast in the extreme.

CHAPTER 9. And Still Another!

"HAVE you heard the news?"

Baggy Trimble rushed up to Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., who were chatting on the School House steps early next morning, before breakfast, and asked that question in an excited, spluttering voice.

"Hallo! Baggy's nosed out something already—so early in the day," said Monty Lowther. "What is it, my fat tulip?"

"Knox has disappeared!" gasped Baggy.

"What?"

"Knox has disappeared!" reiterated Baggy. "His bedroom window was seen to be open this morning, and a rope was hanging from it. Kildare looked into the room, and found that the bed had not been slept in, and Knox was nowhere to be seen. They looked for him high and low, but Knox has disappeared. His cap and overcoat are gone,

too. Knox must have run away from school in the middle of the night!"

"Gweat Scott! That has thwown me into a fishful flattah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I don't believe it!" said Blake. "Knox wouldn't run away from school unless—" He broke off, and the chums of the Lower School exchanged glances.

"Unless he's in trouble with that rotten crowd at the Green Man, and he's cleared off from St. Jim's to save further trouble," said Tom Merry.

St. Jim's did not know what to think. Baggy Trimble spread the news of Knox's disappearance far and wide, and there was no doubt that the report was true.

Many greeted it with joy, particularly Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third. The long-suffering fags did not in the least regret the absence from St. Jim's of their old enemy, Knox, and they sincerely hoped that he would not come back.

That was not the view adopted by Dr. Holmes, however. The Head was worried and concerned over the affair, and searches and inquiries were made everywhere for the missing prefect.

Knox did not appear at breakfast, nor in chapel, neither had any news been heard of him by the time lessons were over.

The affair was a mystery—an utter, complete mystery.

Where was Gerald Knox, and what was the cause of his dramatic disappearance from St. Jim's? What motive was behind it all?

For a Sixth-Former, and a prefect at that, to disappear in the night with no trace, leaving his bed-room window open, and a rope dangling from it—it was amazing!

The boys of St. Jim's could talk of nothing else.

"It absolutely beats me!" said Blake, in the Common-room, after lessons that day. "I wonder if Knox actually has cleared off of his own accord, or whether he has met with any foul play?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Just what I was wondering," he said. "The Head appears to think that Knox, for some unknown reason, suddenly took it into his head to run away from school, but he doesn't know what we know about Knox. We've got no sympathies for the rotter, of course, but if he has met with foul play, it's up to us to take a hand."

"Rather!"

Tom Merry & Co. made an expedition to the Green Man, and interviewed Mr. Banks. Tom Merry knew that the rascally landlord could not be trusted, but he and his chums left the inn, feeling convinced that nothing of Knox's whereabouts was known there.

"Then where is he?" said Manners. "Knox can't have been spirited away. Perhaps he went for a walk on the moor, and fell into one of the old quarries."

"Oh crumbs!"

On arriving at St. Jim's they found that Kildare had already thought of that, and that a futile search had been made of Wayland Moor and the quarries.

Night came on again, and the mystery of Knox's disappearance was as deep as ever.

There was a long discussion on the matter in the Fourth Form dormitory that night, until one by one the juniors dropped off to sleep.

Jack Blake did not actually go to sleep. He fell into a doze, and after some time was roused suddenly by a faint click at the dormitory door.

He sat up in bed, instantly on the alert, and peered through the darkness of the dormitory.

"Who's that?" he demanded, in a tense voice.

There was no reply.

Blake got up and struck a match. He glanced round sharply at the row of beds, and gave a sudden loud exclamation when he saw that one bed was empty—Chin Ling's. The Chinese junior had left the dormitory.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered Blake, under his breath. "What the dickens is the young beggar up to, I wonder? Some blessed mischief, I bet. I reckon I'd better follow him."

Blake hurriedly put on jacket and slippers, and he left the dormitory. He crept along the dark, deserted corridors with infinite stealth. Which direction had Chin Ling taken? What was the Chinese doing out of bed at dead of night?

Blake first visited the Shell dormitory, but everyone there was asleep, and there was no sign of Chin Ling. Puzzled, he crept downstairs to the Fourth Form passage, and looked in at Chin Ling's study. The room was empty, but two articles which the moonlight revealed on the table caught Blake's attention.

One was a long, chipped ashplant, which Blake and all the juniors of St. Jim's knew only too well. It was Knox's favourite cane—his "stinger." The other article was a large horsewhip.

"My hat!" murmured the Fourth Form captain to himself. "What on earth are those things doing here, and how did they get here? Has Knox been here, I wonder?"

Thrilled at the thought, Blake left the study and made his way along to Knox's room. He saw a flickering light under the doorway as he crept along the Sixth Form passage, and Blake's heart thumped. There was someone in Knox's room!

He crept noiselessly to the door, and opened it.

He looked in, and gave a gasp.

The room was completely empty.

There was no sign of anyone. That there had been someone in there recently was apparent from the disturbed state of the room, but although Blake lit the gas and peered everywhere—even out of the window—he could see no one.

"H'm! That's jolly funny!" he muttered. "I could have sworn I saw a light!"

He turned off the gas and left the study.

As he did so, a slim form uncurling itself from inside the cupboard, Chin Ling had compressed himself into so small a space in the cupboard that one would have thought it impossible.

Chin Ling slipped noiselessly from the study, and glided away into the darkness.

CHAPTER 10. The Chinese's Secret.

WHEN Blake returned to the Fourth Form dormitory he found the Chinese curled up in bed, apparently fast asleep.

Blake grunted and went to bed.

In the morning everyone asked the same question. Had anything been heard of Knox? Knox's whereabouts, however, was still a complete mystery, and nothing had been seen or heard of him.

Blake told his chums and the Terrible Three of what had taken place during the night. They immediately sought out Chin Ling in his study. The Chinese was seated in an armchair when they came in, and his almond visage betrayed no sign of feeling or surprise at the visit.

"Now, Chin Ling, what were you doing out of bed last night?" demanded Blake, coming directly to the point.

Chin Ling regarded him with a look of calm innocence, and shook his head.

"No savvy!" he said.

"Look here, you left the dorm last night, and were skulking in the school somewhere!" exclaimed Blake. "What were you up to?"

"No savvy!" was the Celestial's purring reply.

Tom Merry looked round the room.

"Where's Knox's cane which was in here last night, Chink?" he asked.

But still Chin Ling solemnly shook his head, and repeated that he did not "savvy." The juniors saw that there was no hope of getting anything out of Chin Ling, so they gave it up in despair.

Chin Ling gave a soft chuckle as they left.

After lessons that morning the Chinese of the Fourth slipped away from the Form-room unnoticed. He glided noiselessly along the back corridors, and thence gained the quadrangle through the matron's door. He then ran, swiftly as a hare, across the deserted quadrangle and into the cloisters; then he made his way to the ruined tower.

He swung back the creaking oak door and mounted the crumbling steps. It was a long climb to the top of the ruined tower. At length Chin Ling came to another oak door. This gave access to the room at the top of the tower, but it was kept locked.

Chin Ling withdrew a key from his pocket, inserted it in the lock, and a minute later he had the door open. He slipped inside, closing the door behind him.

A groan sounded in the stone-walled chamber.

With his arms held on high by means of a rope tied to one of the cross-beams near the ceiling, and his legs roped together, Gerald Knox was standing. He had no jacket or waistcoat on, and was shivering with cold. The prefect's face was white, haggard, and deeply furrowed with lines of suffering.

Chin Ling's whole demeanour was now altered. Instead of the bland, smiling junior he appeared to be in the school, he changed to a sinister, repellent creature. His yellow face was contorted with spite, his almond eyes glittered wickedly.

Knox looked at him in fear.

"Will you let me go, Chin Ling?" he moaned. "I cannot stand this any longer! It is torture—cruel torture! I tell you I don't know where your box is!"

Chin Ling shook his head, and took up the horsewhip that was lying in the corner. It was the whip which Blake had seen in Chin Ling's study during the night. The little Chinese had paid a visit to the ruined tower early that morning, and taken the whip with him.

"Velly bad lottel tellie lies!" he exclaimed. "You steal my box, and me make you tell. Me horsewhip you till you do!"

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Knox let out a shrill cry as Chin Ling drew back and poised the whip to strike.

"Don't—don't whip me! I swear I don't know anything about the box!"

Lash! Lash! Lash!

The biting thongs of the whip fell with cruel force across Knox's back. Tied as he was to the ceiling, the prefect was helpless to escape. He was completely at Chin Ling's mercy.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Now tellie!" said Chin Ling, pausing.

"I—I can't!" Knox was whimpering with the pain of his torture. "You little fiend!"

Lash! Lash!

Chin Ling did not spare the whip. He beat Knox mercilessly, and the prefect's cries reverberated through the stone chamber.

All of a sudden there was a rush of feet on the stairs, the door flew open, and Tom Merry, at the head of a large party of juniors, dashed into the room.

Tom drew to a sudden standstill, amazed at the scene before him.

The other juniors gave cries of horror.

Chin Ling stood back, the whip still held in his hand. His brows were knitted together in a scowl. He was a different person altogether to the Chin Ling the boys of St. Jim's were accustomed to.

The juniors looked from the Chinese to Knox.

The prefect was now hanging by his tethered arms, moaning with pain.

"Hold—hold that little devil!" he managed to gasp.

Tom Merry turned to the Chinese boy.

"Chin Ling, what does this mean?" he exclaimed. "We thought you were up to something. I saw you from our Form-room window running into the cloisters, and we followed. It was only just by chance that we happened to think of coming up here. So you've been holding Knox a prisoner!"

Chin Ling nodded.

"Yes; me keepee lottel here to make him confess," he said sullenly. "He steal my box from my loom!"

"It's a lie!" panted Knox. "I haven't touched or seen the box. He—he's been torturing me!"

"Half a minute, Knox. We'll set you free."

Blake cut the ropes that secured the prefect. Knox worked his stiff arms up and down, his face contorted with agony and malice. He leaned against the stone wall.

"How on earth did Chin Ling manage to kidnap you, Knox?" demanded Blake.

"That little fiend caught me out at night!" muttered Knox. "I was in the Close when he came behind me and jumped on my back. He held an evil-smelling handkerchief to my nose, and I lost my senses. When I woke I found myself a prisoner up in this room. Chin Ling has kept me up here ever since. He has been torturing me—beating me with that cane, and now horsewhipping me, trying to make me tell where his box is. But I cannot tell him. I don't know. I haven't seen the box at all. The little beast would have killed me in the finish, I think."

Knox's whole frame shuddered, and the juniors gave low exclamations of horror. It was apparent that Knox had undergone terrible suffering during his incarceration at the top of the ruined tower.

"Well, if this doesn't beat everything!" exclaimed Blake, drawing a deep breath. "I was out looking for Chin Ling last night, Knox. He went to your room, I think, to hunt for the box which he imagined was there. But it looks now how he managed to get you up here all on his own."

"I tell you he chloroformed me, or used some horrible stuff that was similar!" exclaimed Knox.

"I suppose you were out on a bounds-breaking expedition, Knox," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "That would account for the bed not having been slept in, and the open window and the rope."

Knox was silent, but the juniors knew that Tom had hit the right nail on the head.

"Well, you appear to have had a high old time up here, Knox," said Monty Lowther. "It's a jolly serious matter, though. For a chap to kidnap a prefect and flog him with a cane and horsewhip him!"

"Knoxee velly bad lottel!" said Chin Ling stubbornly. "Me killee him if he still keepee my box!"

Knox shuddered.

"The murderous little fiend isn't safe here. He'll have to be sent away!" he said. "Levison, will you go down and ask the Head to come up here?"

Levison hesitated and looked at Tom Merry & Co.

"Do you hear what I say?" snarled Knox. "I command you to fetch Dr. Holmes here, Levison. Tell him where I am, and that I want to see him."

Levison shrugged his shoulders and left the chamber. There was no help for it but to obey the prefect.

Tom Merry turned to Chin Ling with a serious look.

"You've landed yourself in for something now, you mad



Knox watched the line of light in fascinated horror as it moved about the window, lengthening as it did so. It was writing in long straggling characters. With awful, unnerving slowness this message, in eerie, glowing light, appeared on the window: "BEWARE." As the last stroke of the E finished, Knox let out a piercing yell! (See page 21.)

young idiot!" he exclaimed. "The Head will flog you for this, and you'll be turned neck-and-crop out of St. Jim's!"

"No floggee! Handsome boys lettee me go!" wailed Chin Ling, his sinister demeanour now giving way to terror.

"Keep the little rat here!" ordered Knox. "I'll see that he gets his just deserts for this."

Tom Merry & Co. hemmed in the Chinese, who would have made a break for liberty. Chin Ling took out his pocket-book and displayed a wad of notes.

"Me givee you ploocee money to let me go," he said. "You takee allee this, Tom Melly, and share it with othels, what you tinkee?"

"I don't tinkee anything of the sort!" replied Tom, in a grim voice. "I'm sorry, Chin Ling, but you've got to face the music."

"No facee music! No floggee! Lettee go!"

Chin Ling's wails were wild and plaintive, but there was no way of escape for him.

Looking down out of the jagged gap in the stone wall that had once been a window, Blake saw, far below, an excited crowd coming to the tower. Dr. Holmes, in cap and gown, was in front, and Levison and Baggy Trimble were close behind him. The news that Knox had been found in the ruined tower had soon spread, and quite a host of excited juniors followed the Head through the cloisters.

It was not long before Dr. Holmes arrived in the chamber at the top of the tower. He looked round him in horror and amazement.

"Bless my soul! Knox, you here!" he exclaimed. "Have you been here all these past two days? You look ill, Knox. Kindly give me an explanation of what this means!"

Knox told the Head of how Chin Ling had kidnapped him and had been torturing him. He took care not to give the Head any suspicion of his real motive in leaving his room on the night of his capture. Knox, lying desperately in front of the juniors, said that he had been unable to sleep and had gone out to walk round in the quadrangle in the night air, to rid himself of a headache.

Dr. Holmes' usually kind old face hardened as Knox unfolded his tale. He turned to Chin Ling, who was crouching against the wall near the window.

"Chin Ling, I cannot say how horrified I am at Knox's disclosures!" exclaimed the Head. "Your racial instincts are admittedly different to ours, but that you should resort to such revolting, uncivilised behaviour fills me with loathing and alarm. You shall be punished for your behaviour, and then I shall not hesitate to have you sent away from

St. Jim's. I — Oh, good heavens, the boy has flung himself through the window!"

Chin Ling, when all least expected it, made a sudden sideways spring, and disappeared through the window.

The juniors in the chamber were too horrified to move for several seconds. There was a sheer drop from the window to the cloisters far below.

But when they rushed to the window and looked out they saw the slight form of Chin Ling clinging to the ivy on the tower.

The Chinese junior was attempting the seemingly impossible. He was climbing down from the top of the ruined tower.

Tom Merry shuddered as he looked. He expected any moment to see Chin Ling lose his hold and crash to his doom on the paving-stones below.

But the Chinese's nerve and resource were amazing. He climbed unerringly downwards, watched in breathless awe by the boys at the window above and the terrified crowd below.

Would Chin Ling fall?

Dr. Holmes sent down word to the boys in the cloisters that Chin Ling was to be taken prisoner if he did accomplish his daring climb.

The Celestial was like a human fly. He climbed, not only down the tower, but round it, and Tom Merry saw his objective.

"He's making for the old chapel roof!" he exclaimed. "If he reaches that he may escape!"

"He's there, bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy tensely.

Chin Ling had accomplished his climb from the tower. Instead of dropping into the cloisters, his detour had brought him over the roof of the ruined chapel. With one wide leap he left the tower, and landed on hands and feet on the bold masonry of the chapel.

The juniors in the cloisters dashed to the spot.

Chin Ling stood up, apparently unharmed, a grim look on his yellow face and his eyes glittering fiercely.

He darted away like a cat, and was lost to view next minute.

"Come down, boys!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, who had been a thrilled spectator from the window at the top of the tower. "Chin Ling must not be allowed to escape. A thorough hunt shall be made."

"Yes, rather!"

Chin Ling was hunted high and low in the chapel and in

the cloisters. But the Chinese seemed to have utterly disappeared. Practically all the school joined in the search, but all had to confess themselves baffled at length.

Chin Ling had made good his escape.

CHAPTER 11. A Reign of Terror!

NEVER before had there been such a sensation at St. Jim's.

The mystery of Knox's disappearance had been solved with the remarkable disclosure that Chin Ling of the Fourth had kidnapped him and subjected him to his weird Chinese tortures.

And now the mystery was transferred to Chin Ling himself. No sign of the missing junior was seen all day, and night came without Chin Ling having been found.

Speculation was rife in the school as to the Chinese's whereabouts and intentions. The mystery of the red box, too, exercised the minds and imaginations of the juniors. What was in the box, and where was it? Somebody had taken it from Chin Ling's room, and Knox, apparently, knew nothing concerning it, although Chin Ling himself was convinced that Knox was the culprit. Who, then, was the thief?

Tom Merry & Co., discussing the matter in Study No. 10 next morning, could not make head or tail of the affair.

"It absolutely gets me guessing!" said Blake. "Chin Ling certainly lives up to that reputation. I say, though, what about that Chink whom Knox was talking to the other night, the one who attacked young Chin Ling in the wood?"

"My hat! Of course!" said Tom Merry, giving a start. "That's another part of the giddy mystery. It strikes me that Knox knows more of the matter than he cares to tell. Let's find Knox and tackle him about it. Two will be enough—will you come, Blake?"

"Yes, I'll come," said the leader of the Fourth.

The two juniors left the study and went along to Knox's room. The prefect was not there, so they went out in search of him.

Assuring themselves that Knox was not in the School House, they went into the quadrangle. They were determined to have a talk with Knox, and, if possible, get to the bottom of the mystery.

"There he goes—under the elms!" exclaimed Blake, catching sight of Knox's burly form in the shadow of the old elm-trees in the Close.

He and Tom Merry hurried to the spot.

Knox, they could see, was looking haggard and worried.

He was pacing the grass in a manner that suggested that he was wrestling with a matter that consumed his whole thoughts. Knox had a hunted expression, Tom Merry thought.

Suddenly the young Shell captain stiffened with horror.

From behind one of the elm-trees a glistening, sinister object came flying through the air. It was a small dagger, and it was making straight for Knox.

"Oh, good heavens!" muttered Tom, and then the full terror of the situation welled upon him, and he dashed forward, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Knox! Knox! Look out!"

The prefect, startled out of his reverie, pulled up with a jerk. Only just in time! The cruel, glinting steel blade sped by him, a matter of only a few inches from his head, and there was a thud as it struck the tree-trunk on Knox's left, and remained with its point embedded there, quivering like a live thing.

Knox's face turned a ghastly white. Tom Merry and Blake, dashing to his side, thought for the moment that the prefect was going to drop.

"Oh, my heaven!" muttered Knox. "That—that was meant for me!"

The two juniors ran behind the tree from which they had seen the knife come, but no one was there. They hunted among the elm-trees, but could not find the person who had thrown the dagger.

When they returned to Knox he was holding the knife in a trembling hand. It was a quaintly fashioned dagger, with a cruel-looking blade, and a handle that was carved in a strange design and which bore two cryptic Chinese characters.

"A jolly close shave that, Knox!" said Tom Merry. "If that knife had struck you—"

"Don't—don't remind me of that!" muttered the prefect thickly. "I—I hardly know what I'm doing. A poisoned dart was thrown at me in the Sixth Form passage a little while ago. Here it is—it just missed me."

"Good heavens!"

Knox took from his pocket a sinister-looking dart, and the two juniors regarded it in horror.

"My only hat!" breathed Tom Merry. "Then this knife affair wasn't the only attempt made on your life, Knox! There's only one person responsible for this, of course—Chin Ling!"

Knox nodded.

His usual surly, abrupt manner with the juniors was gone; he was frightened and unstrung and seemed to look to Tom Merry and Blake for help.

"Yes, that little heathen fiend is prowling about the school somewhere, and he means to do me some terrible injury—to take my life if he can!" muttered the prefect miserably. "He—he still thinks that I am responsible for the loss of his rotten mystery box!"

Tom Merry gave Knox a quick look.

"Are you sure you know nothing about that, Knox?" he exclaimed.

"No, I tell you!" replied the prefect savagely. "If I had the box, I'd willingly give it up, or if I knew where it was I'd tell. Chin Ling isn't human at all—he's a little fiend! I—I don't feel safe."

"Out in China they usually settle quarrels and arguments by torture, or with knives," said Tom Merry quietly. "Human life is not so sacred to these Orientals as it is to us. Chin Ling hasn't got into English civilised ways yet. Now, look here, Knox, there's another Chinaman in this affair. We saw you talking to one outside the school the other night."

Gerald Knox started and gave a short cry.

"You—you saw me?" he muttered.

"Yes," said Tom Merry sharply. "Now, Knox, you might as well out with it and help us clear up this affair—it's getting on our nerves, too. We don't want any murders or knifing affairs at St. Jim's. Who was that Chink?"

"I don't know who he is," said Knox. "That night, you remember, I was looking for Chin Ling to pay him for that cigarette affair. I heard that Chin Ling had been seen to leave the school, so I went out of gates. I met Sefton outside; he had just returned from the village, and I asked him whether he had seen Chin Ling. I told him I was going to give the young rotter the licking of his life. When Sefton left me I started to walk down towards Rylecombe when that Chinese fellow called me over. He had heard what I had told Sefton, and knew that I was up against Chin Ling. He told me that he was an enemy of his, too, and was after a red carved box which Chin Ling had in his possession. He offered me money to get the box for him, and as I was hard up, I consented."

"Oh!"

"I went up to Chin Ling's study afterwards and ransacked it. I told the kids in the passage that I was looking for the opium. I suspected that the heathen rotter had in his room. I found the opium and destroyed it, but I did not see the box. I saw the Chinaman later at the same place

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and told him so. I have never seen it, or laid hands on it, and I don't know where it is."

"Well, after that, one can't blame Chin Ling for charging you with the box's disappearance," said Tom Merry. "It's evident, Knox, that Chin Ling, so long as he remains at liberty, will not let you alone until he has either got his box back—or done you in. That's the fact of the matter."

Knox shuddered. "Why can't the little brute be found?" he muttered hoarsely. "He's in the school somewhere—"

"But where?" said Blake. "Chin Ling isn't an ordinary kid, you know. He's as artful as a wagon load of monkeys. Now he's on the run, he'll take some finding!"

Knox walked away to the School House, whilst Tom Merry and Blake, seeing Figgins & Co. coming out of the tuckshop, asked them to join in a search for Chin Ling. The hunt proved fruitless, however.

Gerald Knox went about all that day in fear and trembling. He was afraid to be alone, and sought company where he could. As soon as it became known that mysterious attempts at injury were being made on Knox, however, the fellows shunned the prefect's society. As Cutis remarked, he did not wish to be in the vicinity where knives and poisoned darts were being thrown about.

Knox dreaded going to bed that night, and when he did get there he could not sleep.

He heard midnight chime from the clock tower, and then, all of a sudden, he started.

What was that at the window?
A glowing spot of light had appeared on the glass of the window, showing vividly against the blackness of the night beyond.

Knox lay stiff in bed, dumbfounded with terror, whilst

with Kildare at their head. Some were carrying lighted candles, which shed a flickering radiance in the room.

Knox, limp as a wet rag and with his hands clasped round his head, sank exhausted on the bed.

"Take them away—those hands—those awful hands!" he moaned. "They are going to kill me—"

"Come, pull yourself together, man!" exclaimed Kildare, shaking him. "What's the matter?"

A babel of voices sounded in the passage. Juniors, as well as seniors, had been roused from their beds by the midnight disturbance.

"Knox is mad!"

"He's gone off his rocker!"

"Mind yourselves, kids; he may be dangerous!"

The juniors were startled, and the general impression was that Gerald Knox had suddenly gone insane.

"Here, drink this!" said Darrell, handing Knox a glass of water.

The prefect gulped the liquid down gladly.

"You must have had a nightmare, Knox!" said Kildare, looking hard at his trembling Form-fellow. "You're all right now!"

Knox looked with terrified eyes at the window.

There was nothing to be seen; all was black there again.

"An awful face and a pair of hands appeared at the window, all glowing with light!" he muttered hoarsely.

"And there was writing, too. It seemed to come from nowhere—"

"Oh, piffle!" said Kildare incredulously.

"I tell you it's true!" cried Knox shrilly.

The St. Jim's captain stepped to the window and examined the inside. Finding nothing there, he opened the window and looked at the outer side of the pane. That, too, was clear.

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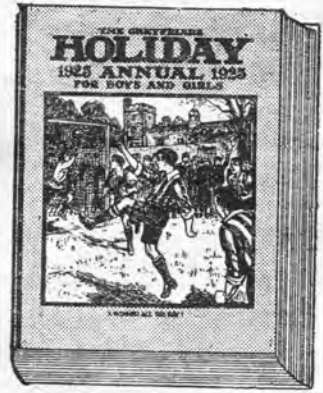
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the spot of light gradually expanded, and then drew into a line.

He watched the line of light in fascinated horror as it moved about the window, lengthening as it did so. It was writing, in long, straggling characters. With awful, unnerving slowness this message, in eerie, glowing light, appeared on the window.

"BEWARE!"

As the last stroke of the E finished, Knox found his voice.

With one long, loud yell of terror he sprang out of bed and dashed to the door.

"Yarooooogh! Help! Ooooooogh!"

Knox wrenched at the door, but it would not come open.

He flung a look back at the window, and saw a face—an evil, devilish face, glowing with ghost-like light—grinning in at him at the window.

Palsied with fear, Knox bellowed and thumped at the door, raising the midnight echoes throughout the School House.

A pair of glowing hands then appeared at the window, the fingers long and tapered. They were clutching at him—they seemed to be coming through the window at him!

Knox, his nerves shattered and all restraint broken down, beat at the door and shrieked.

Doors banged open, and startled voices sounded. There were hurried footsteps on the passage, and the doorhandle rattled.

"What's the matter, for heaven's sake?" demanded Kildare's voice.

"Open the door! Let me out! Oh, let me out!" shouted Knox. "The hands—they're coming at me—"

Crash!

The door burst open and a crowd of prefects rushed in,

A slight glow on the window-sill, however, attracted his attention. He touched it with his finger, and saw that the glow became transferred to the finger-tip.

Kildare gave a short gasp.

"Why, it's phosphorus paint!" he exclaimed. "The stuff they put on watches to show the time in the dark, you know!"

"Whew!"

Knox jumped up from his bed.

"Phosphorus paint!" he cried. "Oh, it was a joke, then! The writing has been rubbed off since I last saw it!"

Kildare snapped his teeth down hard.

"Yes, Knox, it appears that you've been the victim of a jape," he said. "The joker, whoever he was, must have come to the door first and locked it from the inside. Can't you pull yourself together now? You're all right."

"Ye-es," muttered Knox. "I—I'm all right."

The Head and Mr. Railton appeared, and Kildare explained matters to them.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Holmes. "Who could be responsible for this audacious trick?"

Kildare and Tom Merry exchanged grim glances.

"I shouldn't be surprised if it was Chin Ling, sir," said Tom Merry. "He's set himself up against Knox, and we know he's still hiding about the school somewhere."

"Good heavens! This is a most extraordinary and distressing affair!" said the Head. "Knox, your nerves are unstrung, and you should endeavour to control yourself. I do not anticipate that you will be any further troubled by the practical joker to-night. Boys, kindly return to your beds!"

Juniors and seniors dispersed, and Knox was left alone. He lit the gas and looked about him fearfully. Gerald Knox was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He was, as Blake described it on the way upstairs, in a state of "blue funk."

"I—I can't stay here to-night!" muttered the terrified prefect hoarsely. "The young fiend may return to kill me! Oh, I can't stay here!"

He turned out the gas and went to Kildare's room. "Hallo! Come in, Knox!" said the captain, who was just getting back into bed. "What's the trouble now?"

"I—I'm nervous, Kildare," said Knox thickly. "Chin Ling is out to kill me, and I—I feel afraid to sleep in my own room to-night. I was wondering whether I might turn in with you. That's if you don't mind, Kildare."

Kildare's lip curled as he looked the other up and down. "All right, Knox. You may share my bed if you like." The two prefects turned in together, and Kildare blew out the candle.

Knox did not go to sleep until the first grey hours of the morning. It was not a comfortable night for either of the prefects, for Kildare confided to Darrell the next morning that Knox pitched and turned about and kept him awake by muttering all manner of things in his sleep.

persisted in taking revenge on Knox, then he was bound to get into trouble sooner or later. They knew that the little Celestial at heart was as good as gold. He saw nothing wrong in his behaviour, which, to others, was horrifying and repulsive.

"Look here, kids, something's got to be done!" said Tom Merry. "Chin Ling is after that weird red box, and he thinks that Knox has got it. There are only two things that will stop him at his tricks. To capture him is the first, and to find the box is the second."

"H'm! Quite so," said Blake. "But Chin Ling will take some capturing, the crafty young beggar! He's as full of tricks as a monkey! And as regards finding the box, the Head and Kildare have hunted pretty well through the whole school, and there doesn't seem to be much hope of getting it back."

"But still, one of those two things have got to be done, and I think we should concentrate on the first," said Tom Merry. "Chin Ling is hanging round the school. He may be actually on the premises now for all we know. On the other hand, he may have some hiding-place outside, with a secret way of getting in when he wants to. In any case, the young blighter isn't far away, and, properly worked, the job of catching him shouldn't be so jolly difficult. Hang

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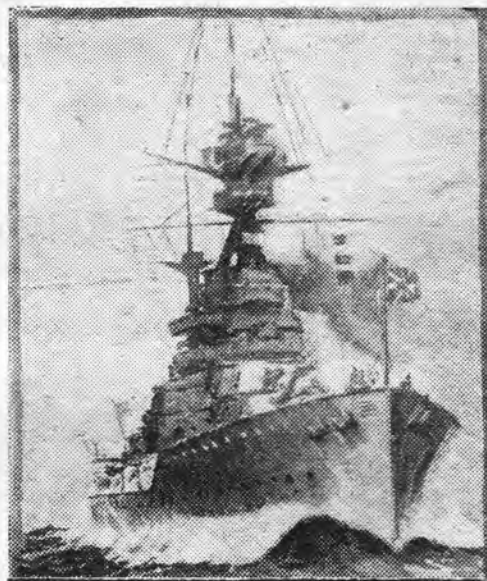
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CHAPTER 12. Light at Last!

"POOR old Knox!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "It's wotten!"

And Monty Lowther, Manners, Blake, Herries, and Digby agreed that it was rotten—jolly rotten!

It was most unusual for the heroes of the School House to express sympathy for Gerald Knox; their feelings towards the bully of the Sixth were always quite the reverse to sympathetic. But no one, to look at Knox the following day, could help but feel at least a spark of pity for him. His appearance was cowed and miserable in the extreme; his demeanour like that of a hunted fox.

That Knox went in hourly dread of the hidden menace that lurked over him was apparent to all. The campaign of terror now being waged against him by Chin Ling was a very Sword of Damocles to the unhappy prefect.

What was the next move that the wily, cunning little Chinese would make?

Tom Merry & Co. took a personal interest in the affair, not primarily on Knox's account, but out of their regard for Chin Ling. Although the Chinese junior was still practically a newcomer at St. Jim's, they had taken a great liking to him, and certainly did not wish to see any harm befall him. If Chin Ling, in his imaginary grievance,

it all! We can't possibly admit defeat from one insignificant Chinese!"

Tom Merry's words impressed the others.

"That's so, Tommy," said Blake. "If we make up our minds to catch Chin Ling, we ought to jolly well lay hands on him or eat our hats!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So we'll keep a constant watch for him," said Tom decisively. "We'll get the other chaps to join in with us, and all places in and around the school where Chin Ling is likely to appear shall be guarded."

"Jolly good wheeze, Tommy!"

The chums of the School House went along to the Common-room, where Talbot, Levison, Sidney Clive, Cardew, Kangaroo, and most of the other juniors were found. Tom Merry, when he propounded his scheme for the capture of Chin Ling, received a large number of volunteers.

A survey was made of the school precincts and surroundings, and Tom Merry and Blake worked out a plan of tactic points. "Look-outs" were hidden at each of these points with instructions that should Chin Ling appear, or should they see anything suspicious, they should give an agreed signal, which would bring all the watchers to one spot.

This plan was brought into operation immediately after lessons that day, and in this way the interior and outside of St. Jim's was kept under constant surveillance.

Tom Merry and Kangaroo were stationed after tea in the bushes on the bend of the Rycombe Lane, at a spot which commanded a full view of the back entrances of St. Jim's.

A rustling in the grass behind them caused the two watchers to stiffen tensely. They peered through the branches, and in the field beyond they saw a Chinaman.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry, under his breath. "That's the man who attacked Chin Ling the other night—the chap who asked Knox to get the box from him."

The Chinaman's movements roused suspicion at once.

He walked to the edge of the field and looked through the bushes towards St. Jim's. He remained there for a little while, and then struck off across the field towards some spinneys.

Tom Merry snapped his teeth down with a click.

"I'm going to follow that man!" he said to Kangaroo. "Blake and Levison are a little way down the road—I'll get Blake to come with me. We may find out something."

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

The Shell captain moved out of his hiding-place and ran down the lane to a point opposite the gates where, in the bushes, Blake and Levison were concealed.

"Come with me, Blake!" muttered Tom. "I've seen—"

"The Chinaman?" said Blake, taking the words from his chum's mouth. "We spotted him, too, old chap. There he goes—towards Jenner's spinney."

"We can run up the bridge-path," said Tom, as they hurried away. "That will fetch us out close to the spinney, and with practically no risk of being seen."

The two juniors took the narrow bridge-path, and came at last to the low gate by the spinney.

The Chinaman could be seen now among the trees.

"He's waiting for someone, evidently," muttered Tom Merry. "I— Oh! Hide behind these bushes quick, Blake! Here comes Mellish! I believe he's looking for the Chinaman—it looks suspiciously like it, and he'd better not see us."

Percy Mellish was walking along the bridge-path, his eyes turned anxiously in the direction of the spinney, as if expecting to see someone there. The two juniors did not know Mellish's object in coming along the path, but in any case they would not wish the sneak of the Fourth to see them. They drew back into hiding, feeling confident that they had not been seen.

Mellish climbed over the gate and walked direct to the spinney. A few minutes later Tom Merry and Blake saw him in conversation with the Chinaman.

The two juniors exchanged wondering glances.

"Then Mellish came here to meet the Chink!" muttered Blake. "There's something mysterious on between them!"

"And this is where we find out what it is!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We can get into that spinney without being seen. Hurry, Blake—and for goodness' sake be careful!"

"You bet!"

They clambered over the gate and slithered through the grass, thence into the spinney. Well trained as Boy Scouts, Tom Merry and Blake found little difficulty in getting close to their quarries without attracting attention.

"Then you heard what I said to the big boy the other night?" The Chinaman was speaking in soft, velvety tones which only just carried to the hidden juniors' ears.

"Yes," replied Mellish. "I heard you offer Knox ten pounds to steal the red, carved box from Chin Ling. I knew where Chin Ling kept the box, and I decided to get it instead of Knox."

The Chinaman regarded Mellish with narrowed, glittering eyes.

"How did you know where Chin Ling kept it?"

Mellish chuckled.

"I had been looking through his keyhole, and saw him put some stuff into some cigarettes as a joke on Knox," he said.

"I wanted to find out what that stuff was, and when Chin Ling had gone I entered his study and had a good look round. While hunting in his desk I discovered a secret safe in one of the pigeon-holes. I couldn't get it open, and I wondered what was in it. Later on I went out into the fields with one of our chaps to smoke a few fags we had bought. I saw you hanging about, and followed. I heard you tell Knox about the box, and I immediately guessed that Chin Ling kept it in that secret safe. I cut indoors and went up to the dormitory. I raked through all Chin Ling's clothes, and found some keys. One of those keys fitted the safe—and I got the box before Knox came in to hunt for it."

The Chinaman drew a deep breath.

"Then you are speaking the truth—you have the box?"

Mellish nodded.

"Yes; here, in my pocket. I suppose you will give me the ten pounds now?"

"Yes—yes!" exclaimed the Chinaman eagerly. "I did not believe you when you met me by the river the other day, where I had arranged to meet the other boy. You told me you had the box, but I did not believe you; and that is why I asked you to bring it here. Show me the box."

Mellish withdrew from his pocket the quaintly carved red casket which Tom Merry and Blake had first seen whilst helping Chin Ling to unpack.

The Chinaman's cadaverous features relaxed into a ghoully smile.

"Ah! Then it is true! I will gladly pay the money—"

"No, you won't!"

Tom Merry's voice rapped in, and next instant he and Blake bounded out of their hiding-place. Blake landed out at the Chinaman, whilst Tom Merry made for Mellish, and with a deft movement snatched the box from his grasp.

"Now, get that Chink!" said Tom between his teeth.

Blake and the Chinaman were fighting grimly. The look on the man's face was one of horrible, baffled hatred. As Tom turned from Mellish he caught the gleam of steel, and saw a knife descending on Blake.

"You yellow hound!"

Tom, with those words, crashed his right fist full between the Chinaman's eyes. He put all his weight into that blow, and the Chinaman, with a moan, fell back, dropping the knife.

Tom picked up the hideous weapon, and tossed it in the shrubs.

"Now, you rotter!" he muttered.

"Thanks, Tommy!" said Blake, turning to his chum. "I couldn't have stopped him!"

Mellish had run away in terror, and it was a fight now between the two schoolboys and the big Chinaman.

The man's breath hissed on their faces as they fought—his yellow features were contorted into a hideous leer.

Suddenly Blake gave a cry.

"Hold him, Tommy!"

Too late!

The Chinaman, with a herculean wrench, tore himself away from the juniors' grasp. Next minute he was gone.

"After him!" cried Tom Merry desperately.

The two juniors sprang away in chase of the Chinaman.

They saw him dash across the fields, and they kept steadily on his trail, through spinneys, and over fences, until at last they lost sight of him through some bushes.

"He's in the Rylcombe Lane, Tommy!"

They had reached the road again. Tom and Blake tore their way through the bushes, but even as they gained the pathway they heard the hum of a motor-engine, and, looking round, they saw a large car drive off rapidly.

As it turned the bend near the cross-roads they caught a glimpse of an evil yellow face looking balefully at them through the rear window of the car.

"He's gone!" muttered Tom. "We've no chance of catching him now."

"Never mind, Tommy," said Blake. "We've got the box—and now, perhaps, we shall be able to clear up the rotten affair."

"Yes, rather!"

Tom still had the casket safe in his pocket—he had taken care that the Chinaman should not rob him of it.

They returned to St. Jim's, and near the gates, they called in all the juniors who were looking for Chin Ling. Tom Merry showed them the red box, and cries of amazement arose.

They thrilled when Tom Merry told them what had transpired.

"Yes, we saw Mellish run in a little while ago, looking scared and pretty sick," said Digby. "So you've got Chin Ling's blessed red box! Good egg! If only we can let the Chink know!"

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Yes, that's just the point. How can we let him know?" he said. "The little beggar is still about, and—"

"Me here! Me know now, what you think?"

The juniors almost fell down when they heard that voice. Wheeling round, they saw Chin Ling standing close by, near Taggles' lodge.

The Chinese's almond visage was wreathed in a bland, expansive smile. He walked forward, his hands outstretched to the box.

"Givee me that! Me gleatly obliged, Tom Melly!"

"Chin Ling!" gasped Tom Merry in tones of wonder.

"The Chink!" gurgled Blake faintly.

The boys gazed at Chin Ling as though he were a ghost.

"Where—where did you spring from?" demanded Monty Lowther.

Chin Ling chuckled.

"Ho, ho, ho! Me watchee you all the time! You no catchee me in a month of Sundays! Me hidee in loft in pottee's lodge!"

"The loft in Taggles' lodge!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Oh, my only hat! Who'd have thought of looking there!"

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"Velly small and velly dirty, but velly safe," smiled Chin Ling softly. "Me watchee everything from there. No hidee any mol, now I have boxee."

"You yellow rat! Now I've got you!"

Knox's voice broke in.

The prefect had just come in through the gates of St. Jim's, and had stood transfixed for some minutes on seeing Chin Ling standing just ahead of him, with Tom Merry & Co.

Recovering himself, he had made a blind dash up the drive. Chin Ling was taken unawares.

The prefect's heavy hands descended on him, and he was swung round. He let out a yell.

"Helpee! Helpee, Tom Melly! No lickee poor Chineee!"

"I'll lick you!" snarled Knox, all his fear gone now that he had Chin Ling actually in his hands. "I'll give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life. I'll break every bone in your body, you heathen rotter!"

He rushed Chin Ling away, leaving Tom Merry & Co. standing there, too amazed to do anything except gasp.

Fellows ran up from far and near when they saw Knox rushing towards the School House with Chin Ling. The body prefect almost carried the Chinese.

Straight into the School House he went, and up to his own study.

"Now we'll settle matters without any delay, you little fiend!" grated Knox, turning the key in the lock.

Chin Ling yelled and wriggled like an eel. He tried to wrestle with Knox, but the prefect held him at arm's length.

He grasped a cane with the other hand and flung Chin Ling face downwards across the table. Then Knox commenced to flog the Chinese unmercifully. The cane rose and fell with all the strength that Knox could put into his blows.

Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Ooooooogh! Helpee! No killee Chineee! Ooooooogh!"

Lash! Lash! Lash! Lash!

Knox's face was drawn into a scowl of bitter rage and hate.

He meant to pay Chin Ling for all he had suffered.

Bangs sounded on the door, but Knox paid no heed, not even to Kildare's voice. He had Chin Ling at his mercy now, and the rascally prefect's soul craved for revenge.

Suddenly, through the babel of voices outside, came one which made Knox pause. It was the voice of Dr. Holmes.

"Knox! Open this door immediately!"

Knox flung down his cane with a snarl, and hurled Chin Ling to the floor.

Dr. Holmes walked in.

"Knox! What have you been doing to this lad?"

"I've been giving him some of what he deserves, sir," said the prefect between his teeth. "I meant to cane him till he couldn't stand—"

"Knox! You exceed your duty! You have treated this lad with brutality—"

"How has he treated me, sir?" snarled Knox. "He tried to take my life—"

"Ooogh! No mean to killee velly bad pfect!" moaned Chin Ling, on the floor. "Me frighten him—that's all. Me killee him at first wish dare if me likee. Me only just frighten him."

Tom Merry, who was just behind the Head, drew a deep breath.

"Oh, thank goodness!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad the beggar didn't really mean to murder Knox!"

"Come with me, Chin Ling," said the Head, abruptly turning away.

St. Jim's buzzed with excitement at the turn events had taken. Tom Merry was sent for by Dr. Holmes later on. He took the red casket with him.

"Ah! I am glad you brought that, Merry," said the Head when Tom placed it on his desk. "I have just had a complete explanation of the affair from Chin Ling. It appears that I have been deceived—Chin Ling was not sent to St. Jim's for his education at all, but merely as a means of finding a hiding-place for this red casket. It contains, so he tells me, the sacred eye of the Mogul god, Yin Tong. A powerful religious sect worshipping this god still exists in China, and Chin Ling's father is an important functionary. Not only is the sect religious, but it is now mainly political, and its adherents are a powerful element in the Chinese Government. It seems that enemies of the Yin Tong sect have been striving to overthrow them, and to achieve this purpose have been striving to obtain the sacred eye. The motive, I should imagine, is purely one of superstition. However, the people of the Yin Tong sect found that it was dangerous to keep the sacred eye in China, so they placed it in this casket and sent this boy to an English school, which happened to be St. Jim's, with the casket for safe keeping, thinking that their enemies would not suspect, and thus be defeated in their aims."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry, thrilled at the Head's story.

"Apparently the Yin Tong enemies got to know of the scheme, and sent an emissary here to obtain the casket," went on the Head. "That is the story as told me by Chin Ling. I should like you to tell me exactly what happened this evening, Merry."

Tom did so, in a cool, even voice. He could not help mentioning Mellish when Dr. Holmes pressed for the name of the St. Jim's junior who had taken the casket from Chin Ling's room.

"Mellish shall be punished for his rascality. And as for Chin Ling, I think he has already suffered sufficiently for whatever he has done," said the Head. "This casket shall be put in a safe deposit in London, and left there for Chin Ling's father to deal with. As for Chin Ling himself, I am afraid he will have to leave St. Jim's to-morrow. Under the circumstances, and in view of the deception that has been practised on me by his Chinese guardians in London, I can hardly allow him to remain here. I will notify them this evening that he will be returning to them to-morrow morning. I am greatly obliged to you, Merry, for the part you have played in bringing this affair to a close. You have done splendidly, and Blake, too. You may now take Chin Ling away."

The rest of St. Jim's heard the news in thrilled wonder, and with not a little regret that Chin Ling was going.

Most of the boys had taken a liking to the Chinese, and none could deny that he was a lively, amusing character.

Tom Merry & Co. saw him off at Rycombe next morning, and that was the last that was heard of the Chinese of St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Martin Clifford writes a splendid football yarn for next week: "THE ST. JIM'S FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT!" Be sure you read it, chums.)

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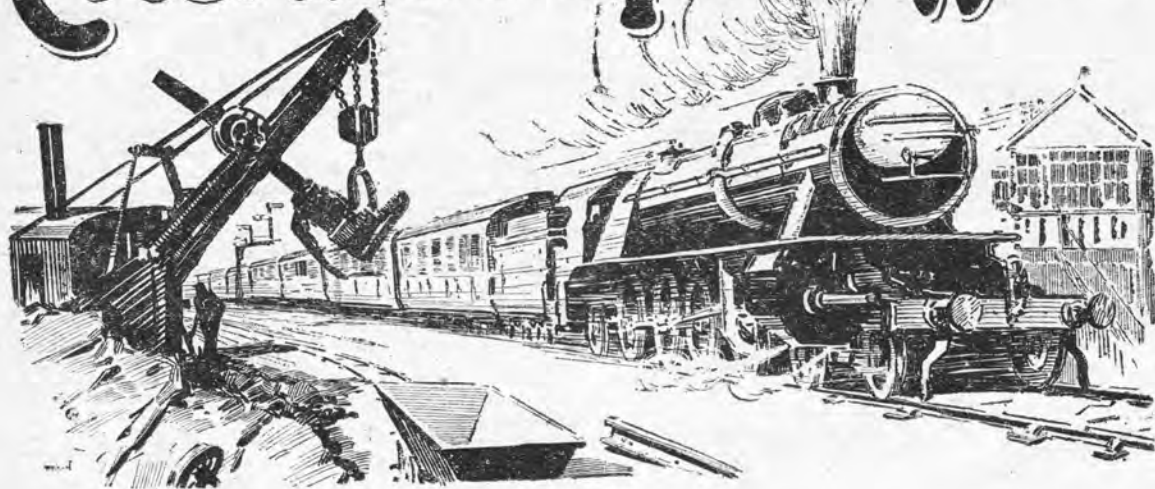
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CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!



A Thrilling Yarn of Exciting Adventure on the Railroad. By ROLAND SPENCER and FRANCIS WARWICK.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

JIMMY SPEED, a plucky and cheery young newsboy of Blackhampton.

SIR RICHARD GRANT, chief director of the Great Scottish and Central Railway, who has in his employ nearly all the male population of Blackhampton.

JOHN LANGRISH—whose heavy and determined features, square-set jaw, and steely eyes earn for him the title of "Granite" Langrish—chief director of the Great Electric Northern, and a rival of Sir Richard Grant.

HAROLD SOPER, a foreman shunter on the G.S.C., and an unscrupulous rascal, working in the pay of John Langrish, and

SAM BLUNDELL, a fireman on the G.S.C., and as true as steel.

It was a lucky day for the cheery young newsboy, Jimmy Speed, when, at great risk to himself, he rescued Sir Richard Grant from

being crushed beneath the wheels of a monster goods-train engine, for it meant the realisation of his long-cherished ambition—to get a job in the great workshop of the G.S.C. To hear the clanging and the shouting, and to see the great steel locomotives towering around him, sent a thrill through Jimmy Speed.

But he is soon up against it when he meets Soper, who, in the pay of Granite Langrish, is endeavouring to poison his fellow-workers against the G.S.C.

He finds a friend, however, in Sam Blundell, a fireman. Then, anxious to learn more, he shadows Soper, who, together with Cridland, another confederate of Langrish's, have met in the lonely ruins of Black Hill to discuss further villainous plans. A thrilling fight follows, Speed miraculously escaping from the hands of the villainous Cridland. He returns to work, however, only to be brought up before the foreman, who accuses him of a false entry on his time-sheet.

(Now read on.)

Forgery!

As Jimmy followed the foreman to his office, he felt that this business of the time-checks was the finish of all things for him in his railway life. But suddenly he cheered up considerably. Someone had been monkeying about with his time-check, altering it so that he would get into trouble. But he had his carbon copy in the book of checks which had been supplied to him on starting his work in the shops.

The apprentices of the G.S.C. were required to fill in their time-sheets as carefully as did the fitters, chiefly to get them used to it and to impress upon them the necessity for strict accuracy in booking time. For each department of the great railway was self-supporting, charging other departments for the work done. That is, work on a locomotive in the repair shops was charged to the locomotive department, and so on.

Jimmy blessed the G.S.C. methods when he thought of his book of carbon copies. He groped in his trousers-pocket, under his overalls, and hauled the small buff book to light just as he entered the foreman's office. The foreman turned sternly towards him as he was turning the pages of his greasy little book to refer to the copy.

"Well?"

The word rasped on the boy's ears like the edge of a file on cast steel. He started slightly, and looked up into the rugged face of the foreman.

"Turning up my carbon copy, sir," he said.

The foreman grunted and waited. At last Jimmy had the place. He scanned the words swiftly:

6 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.—Cleaning smoke-box engine 584.
8 a.m. to 10 a.m.—Con. rods both sides 584.

Jim gasped. 8 to 10 a.m.! These were the two hours he had had off. And here was the carbon copy of time booked on the con. rods of engine 584! It seemed to have been crushed in between two entries, it was true; but there it was, and in his own list! Yet he knew he had not written it!

"Well?"

Again the foreman's voice rasped the query, and Jimmy turned a rather pathetic face towards the man.

"It's—it's down here, sir—my carbon copy—and it shows the time booked. But I didn't write it, sir. It—it's been put in by someone else."

The foreman laughed.

"Ay!" he said. "Always some excuse like that!"

"But it's true, sir. I didn't write it. See, it has been crushed in between the before breakfast entry and the ten to twelve-thirty entry—"

"Lemme see!"

Jimmy handed over his book. The foreman "humped" as he examined the buff slip. Then, suddenly he turned to Jim.

"Got your carbon?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Jim, groping for his small pocket-book. "I keep it in my pocket-book, 'cos the edges get tattooed in the time-check-book. Here it is, sir."

Jim handed over the small piece of carbon paper, and the foreman examined it carefully. Then he took a stump of pencil from his desk, put the carbon between two pieces of paper, wrote a word, and examined the carbon copy, holding the time-check in Jim's book and the carbon copy

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he himself had made together towards the light. At last he put them down.

"Speed," he said, "I believed you before I made the test. You don't look like a youngster who'd tell lies. But I might mention that this entry 'crushed in,' as you say, was not made with your own carbon. It's obvious, on a close examination. Anyone got his knife into you, boy?"

"That'd be accusing someone, sir. I—I'd rather not say anything more if you're satisfied I'm telling the truth—"

"So someone has got his knife into you. This forging the entry—it is forgery, you know—is a serious crime in my eyes. A fellow who'd do a thing like this might do something worse. It would be quite possible. Your carbon copybook was taken from your pocket in the wash-house, probably, and no carbon being found in it the dirty work was done with another bit of carbon. That clue might lead to the wrongdoer, if you'd only talk. It's simple for an apprentice to dodge into my office and take the day's checks from the nail to do the job, then replace them. How's it you've an enemy already, Speed?"

"Well, sir, I don't suppose anyone has his knife into me more than you'd expect with an apprentice just started—"

"Payin' your footin', eh?" queried the foreman, smiling.

"No, sir; I took that all right," replied Jim, feeling that he was floundering in deep water. "It was an outside row I had—a chap cracking up the Great Electric Northern and running down the G.S.C."

The foreman suddenly slapped Jim on the back.

"Good boy!" he said. "That's the spirit! You won't tell me the name of this chap? I might be able to guess, you know."

"I—I don't think it would be fair, sir. It's rather a serious business, this time-check thing, and I don't know whether this chap did it, of course."

"Well, if you won't speak, get along to your work. This matter's ended, as far as I'm concerned. But sedition preached amongst the apprentices is more serious than monkeying with time checks, to my mind. Get along now, my boy!"

Jim went, and gladly. He joined his fellow-workers, already down to business with work on the tank-engine, which had a cracked smoke-box door. Bob Williams and a couple of other cleaners, with two of the apprentices, had the door open, and were hard at work, black and happy, clearing the smoke-box of soot. Webber was on a cleaner job, raking out the ashes from the fire-box. Snaith worked with Webber.

Jim joined the other two apprentices at the front of the locomotive. Apprentices and cleaners worked together in this particular shed, since it was an engine-shed attached to the repair department. And the apprentices' first work was with the cleaners, to give them an introduction to locomotives and make them familiar with the various parts before being detailed to work with the fitters in the repair shops.

"Well?" said Bob Williams seriously as Jim arrived. "What's it mean, Jim? Did you get it in the neck, or is the matter being reported, or what?"

"I didn't book time as the time-check shows," said Jim loudly, so that his voice would travel through the boiler tubes and out of the firehole to the ears of Webber and Snaith. "What's more, the foreman knows I didn't make the entry myself—proved it by comparing my carbon with the carbon marks of the false entry. He's got a good clue, and means to get on the track with it, if he can. Says it's someone trying to land me into trouble."

Williams made a face, and jerked a grimy thumb in the direction of the cab of the engine, where Webber was working. But Jim only grinned, then got busy with his brush.

At breakfast-time the boys all collected at the canteen near their shed, and joked and laughed throughout the half-hour's spell. Webber and Snaith, however, kept away from the main group. They were strangely quiet, till Bob Williams dragged them into the talk by making a joke at Webber's expense.

Strangely enough, Webber took it well. He did not seem to be in a mood for quarrelling, for once in his life. He laughed uneasily, and chaffed Bob Williams in turn.

One of the apprentices joined in, and Webber began to get nasty, for, foolishly enough, the apprentice had made a joke about Webber's hobnailed boots.

"Apprentices," sneered Webber, "think they're up in the world compared to us cleaners! Too bad on cleaners, to 'ave apprentice rats put on to us, to show 'em what's what! Ay, an' we'll show 'em an' all! What say, Snaith?"

"Rather, Bill!" tittered Snaith. "Apprentices are far too cocky. What wi' their ten bob a week—when they're lucky—they ain't men o' independence like cleaners! Settin' at 'ome with their legs tucked under their father's tables—"

"Some of 'em live on their wage, though, as I know," replied Webber, looking in Jim's direction. "Ay, an' live well, an' all, but blow me if I know 'ow! Still, sellin' newspapers ain't very profitable, I reckon, so ten bob a week's good enough, if ye sleep under railway-arches an' so on!"

Jim flushed, but the soot on his face hid his feelings from his fellows. He did not reply to Webber, but he thought a good deal about the matter. Why had Webber aimed another shaft at him? Or were they words for his own ears rather than the ears of his companions? Was Webber trying to cover up his mistake in letting Jim know, or think, that he had been spying in his mistake of mentioning Blundell's name? It looked like it. It seemed as if the bully was now trying to impress on Jim that he had no real knowledge of the youngster's private affairs.

The boys were soon back on their cleaning work, and the shift passed quietly enough. Jim and Bob Williams passed homewards together, the latter shouting out greeting to one or two cleaners entering for the "back turn"—that is, the shift from 2 p.m. till 11 p.m., the most hated shift of the three.

"We shall be on the back turn, next, chum," said Bob, as Jim and he plodded home with the other tired workers just released from the railway premises. "But it won't be for a while yet. We'll probably go off the day turn together, since I'd just come on when you joined. Maybe we'll be able to keep with each other for a spell, though you'll be detailed for a fitter eventually, and when you're working with a fitter you'll not see much of the cleaners, in working hours, anyway."

Jim was glad to hear that he would be on the day turn for some little time, for if he was to assist in the work of upsetting the plans of the gangs Langrish had at work during the nights, it would be necessary for him to get some hours sleep before dark. But he did not voice his thoughts to Bob, for there were many things he could not speak about, even to Williams.

Bob left Jim on the road that led past the goods department of the big railway centre. Jim, as he smartly stepped out on his way home, suddenly became aware that Bill Webber was slouching on ahead of him. He took no notice of the fact, but he kept Webber in view, all the same, not from any intention, but simply because he was walking at about the same rate as the bully.

Webber's clumsy, hobnailed boots slouched along with the hundreds of other feet of the railway workers. Jim lost sight of the bully now and again, but once he came full in view between the backs of other people. And Jim saw the bully roll something in his palms, and then flick it into the gutter.

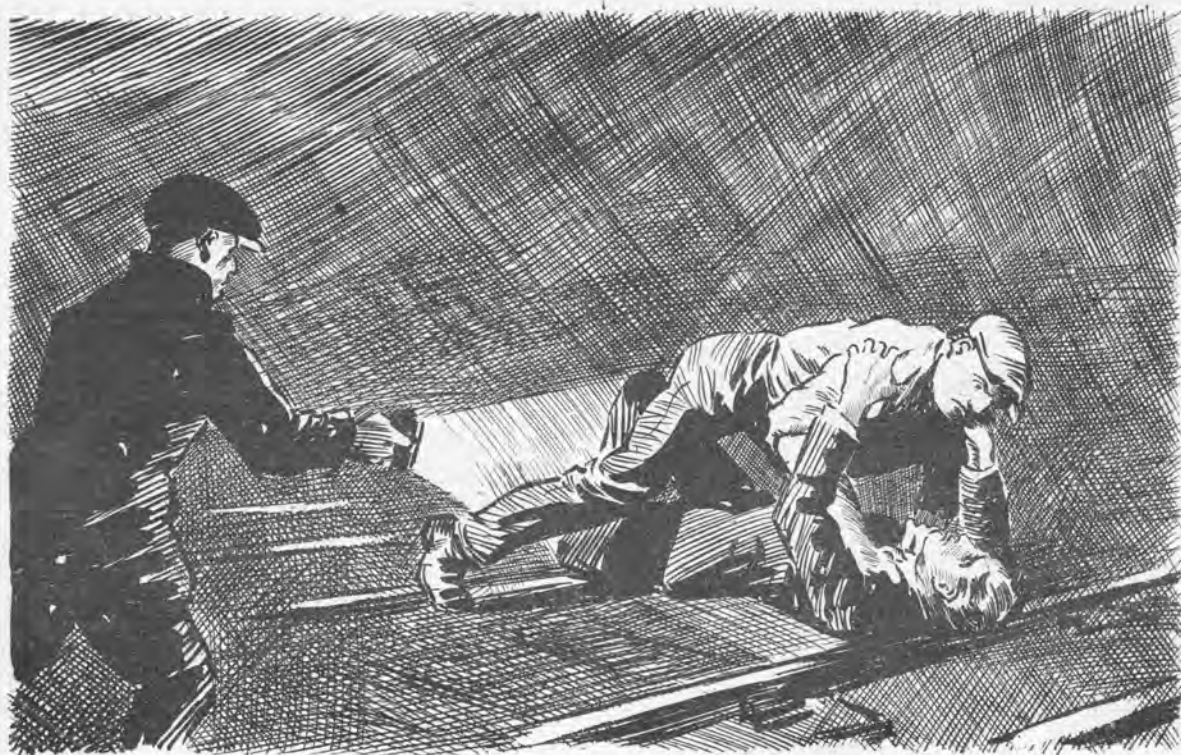
The boy took no notice of the incident; but his eyes lit on the little ball of paper Webber had thrown down. With a slight gasp, Jim recognised the tiny ball as a piece of the carbon paper they used for their time checks. This seemed to prove that Webber had been the one to alter his time check—that he had been afraid when he heard Jim's words to Bob Williams: "With the clue of the carbon the foreman means to get on the track, if he can."

Was Webber trying to get rid of evidence? It looked very much like it. Jim stooped swiftly and picked the tiny ball of paper up. He opened it out, and saw that it had not been worn much. Indeed, it was the fact that his own carbon made a slightly fainter copy than the one which was used for the false entry that had proved to the foreman that Jim had not written the words. And his own piece of carbon had only been in use a week!

Jim slipped the paper into his pocket and hurried home.

Sam Blundell was out. But before Jim commenced his stripping for a wash-down, he flattened out the carbon against the glass of the window, and examined it thoroughly.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY.....PRICE 2:
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Someone—whether friend or foe Jim knew not—flashed a torch, and the rays fell on the face of the person grappling with him. A swift exclamation of surprise escaped Jim's lips as he recognised Bill Webber, the bully of the cleaners.

At Grips on the Line!

AFTER a few minutes a quick exclamation escaped him. What was this he could make out in the jumble of words and figures? "8 a.m. to 10 . . . Cou rods . . . ides 584." Jim fumbled for his time-check book, and swiftly turned up to his Saturday's copy. The false entry had been made with this piece of carbon he held! It was Webber's doing, without a shadow of doubt, and Snaithe had probably done the sneaking into the office to get the day's time-sheets from their position on the nail. It was all a dirty, underhand trick, anyway, with Webber at the bottom of it.

Jim pocketed the carbon grimly, meaning to demand an explanation from Webber the next time they should meet. But Jim's next meeting was sooner than he expected—and at that dramatic meeting he was not able to tackle Webber about his underhanded work.

Sam Blundell came in while Jim was washing.

"Hallo, kid!" cried Sam heartily. "'Nother day's work done? Well, grub now, and then bed for a good sleep, to be ready for our night watch. We're to be at the Old Pithead Box by eleven p.m."

The chums fed, and then got into bed, Sam adjusting the alarm clock. Soon they were sound asleep, and at half-past ten the frantic call of the clock roused them up. They rose and dressed quickly, and then slipped out into the night.

Sam hauled out his old "speed iron," and, Jim riding pillion, the pair sped out to Old Pithead Signal Cabin. Here Sam left his bicycle in a thick hedge, and the chums pushed on foot towards where they had been told the party would meet to keep watch on the railway that night.

When they drew near the line they were challenged in a low voice.

"Who's that?"

Jim and Sam halted, and Sam replied:

"Blundell and Speed. Where are we to go?"

"Same place as last night. Some men have been hanging about here to-day, so we expect things to happen to-night. Sit tight down there, mind."

"Right-ho!" replied Sam, leading Jimmy away.

"Who was that?" said Jim.

"One of the railway detective staff. They all know me now," replied Sam. "Gosh, Jim, I hope it happens to-night! It was rotten before, crouching in a ditch, waiting, and nothing happening after all. It's drizzling

to-night just like it was last night. Ugh! It'll be beastly uncomfortable down in that ditch! Still, if we upset their plans, we can put up with a bit of discomfort."

"You bet!" grinned Jim. "Well, what's the scheme, anyway, and is our position a good one?"

"Couldn't be better, I think. Men are concealed here and there the whole length of the gradient. We're just above the catch-points, where the trucks will be uncoupled, I expect. The signalman has been instructed to make a signal-check if he sees waving lights. But the box is well guarded, too, in case the beggars try to rush it—"

"What's the idea, anyway, Sam? Just to stop their scheme or to make arrests?"

"Arrests, this time. Sir Richard says he's going to stop this villainy, publicity or no. And I don't blame him. Perhaps one of the brutes will talk—and then if the people know that the Great Electric Northern's playing dirty—"

"Here comes the train. Look out!"

"Quick! Scout across there and drop into the ditch. Keep as low as possible, and don't let yourself be seen. Run up the ditch till we get near the line, then wait till we either see something or hear three blasts from a detective's whistle."

Jim and Sam jumped into the ditch, and splashed along it towards the railway. They arrived at the line before the slow night goods train began to take the gradient. Two detectives were lying in the ditch, and Sam replied to the whispered challenge. Then all four peered through the signal wires which bounded the railroad.

It was an eerie watch. The rumbling of the train grew louder and louder. The night was pitch dark, and the windows of the signal-cabin farther up looked ghostly and misty in the fine rain. The shiny rails could be discerned, gleaming in their wetness. But there was no sound save the distant rumbling of the train, which strengthened every second that passed.

Suddenly the signal wires just in front of the watchers' faces moved and quivered.

"Look!" whispered a detective. "Signal's up at danger! It's going to happen!"

On came the train, and Jim felt his heart flutter with excitement. So it was to be a clash with Langrish's villain again! What a surprise was in store for the rogues!

The goods train was now labouring up the gradient. The flush from the engine-cab could now be seen, a misty red glare in the night, reddening the billows of smoke which belched out of the smokestack at every powerful blast from the blower.

Even at that grim moment, Jim could not help thrilling with enthusiasm as he watched the approaching train, the locomotive a thing of might and power as it ground on up the gradient with its mighty weight of rolling stock behind it. Jim knew what engine was approaching. It was a mighty 2-8-0, consolidation type locomotive, capable of great pulling power.

On it came, nearer and nearer, and soon was past the place where the chums and the detectives were crouching. Then it began to slow down, and the wheels of the wagons made less throb on the permanent way.

Suddenly, from the left of where Sam and Jim were concealed, a form ran towards the train. Low exclamations escaped the detectives, and Jim gasped, for he felt he had seen that form somewhere before. Who was it? Something seemed familiar in the movements of the person.

Whoever it was, he jumped the train, clawing on to a coal wagon at a corner. The watchers saw him squirm over the buffers, then he was lost to view in the blackness.

At that instant the train came to a standstill, and the rolling stock clashed up, buffers to buffers, with a series of shocks. Then three shrill whistles sounded, and every watcher on the line leapt forward to action. So did numbers of dark forms which did not belong to Sir Richard Grant's party!

Jim and Sam made a break for the truck to which the form they had seen had leapt. They arrived just as the wagons parted company, the last five and the guard's van to roll off down the permanent way, gathering speed as they went.

Jim saw the form of the person who had doubtless uncoupled the wagons spring down from a buffer. Then the lad charged straight in, and was soon struggling, locked in a desperate embrace with the villain.

To and fro over the metals swayed Jim and the form. Other figures came running towards them, a clash here and there and muttered oaths denoting that friend and foe were meeting in many places. Jim felt himself mastering the ruffian he was tackling. He was pressing him hard, but a

blow on the mouth made the lad stagger back. He tripped on one of the metals, and fell over heavily on to his back, the ruffian, with muttered growls, piling himself on top of the boy.

Though it was pitchy dark just behind the tail of the train, Jim felt all the more that this person was someone he knew—or, at least, had seen before. He felt, too, that he himself was the master, and he fought hard for supremacy.

Someone—whether friend or foe Jim knew not—flashed a torch, and the rays fell on the face of the person grappling with him. A swift exclamation of surprise escaped Jim's lips as he saw the face—coarse, brutal, loose-lipped, sneering mouth—the face of Bill Webber, the bully of the cleaners' "Webber!"

Jimmy gasped out the name under his breath in sheer amazement as he stared up into the face that peered down evilly into his own, no light of recognition in the bully's gleaming eyes.

For a moment Jim was utterly mystified. But he realised an instant later that the solution was simple enough. Soper, knowing Webber to be a fellow of his own kidney, had picked on the cleaning-shed bully for a useful tool—one who could be paid to do as he was told, and would keep his mouth shut afterwards.

Jimmy struggled desperately, but in vain. That knock on the head as he went backwards had set his brain swimming, and he felt horribly weak in Webber's grasp. A great fist rose before his eyes, and then came crashing down into his face. With a groan, Jimmy's struggles ceased, and he lay stretched across the gleaming rail with eyes closed.

Webber rose to his feet, breathing hard. "By hokey, Jim Speed!" he gasped, clenching his fists again. "Lucky I was able to knock him out before the young rat recognised me!"

(And there Jim lay, in the pitch darkness, to await his fate. Perhaps to be dashed to pieces by one of the great monsters he had hoped one day to drive! Next week's thrilling instalment is the most powerful yet, so don't miss it, chums!)

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