

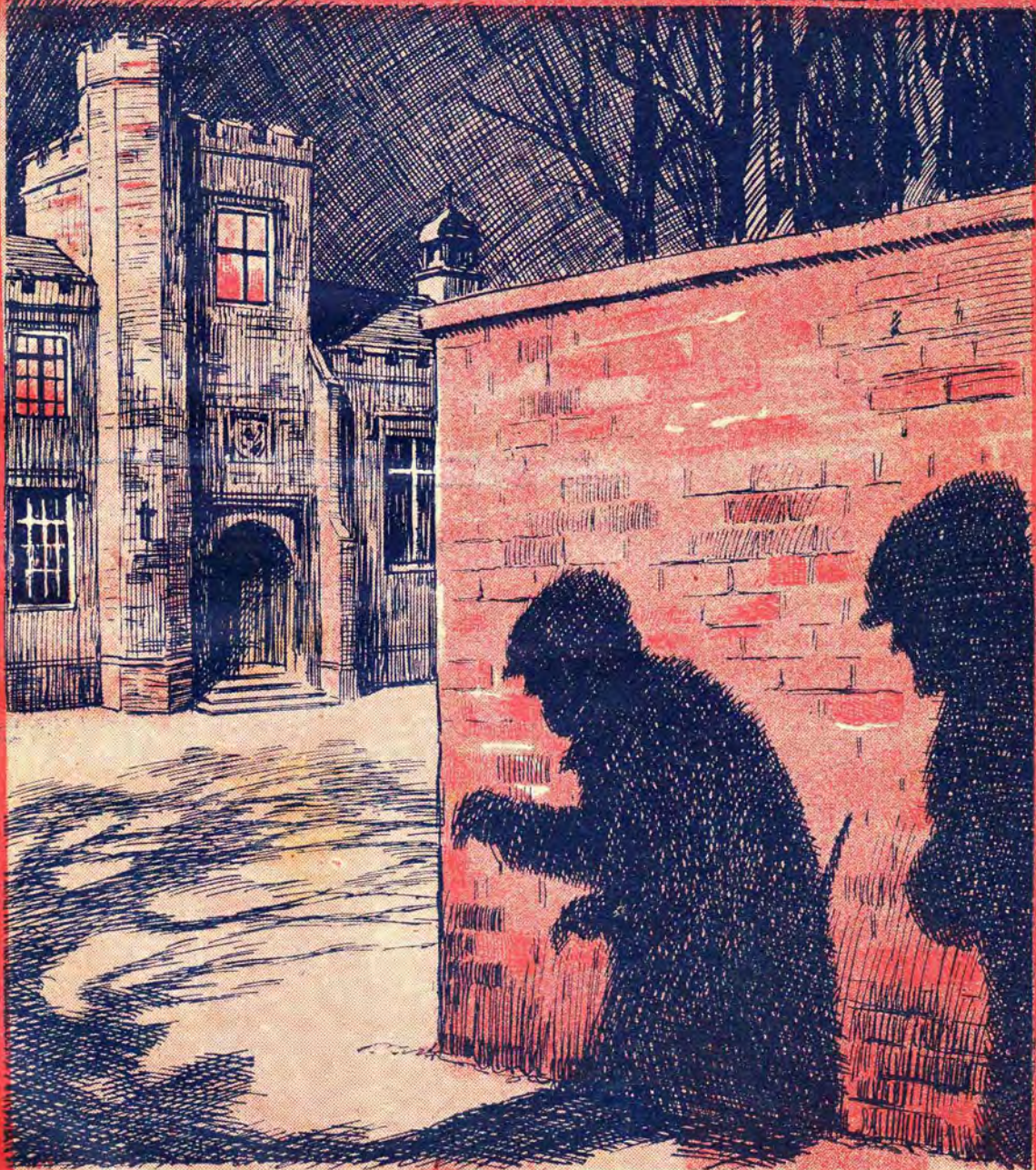
"LOST IN THE JUNGLE" A Magnificent Adventure Story By **SIDNEY DREW**

EVERY WEDNESDAY

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The GEM 2!

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"THE NIGHT RAIDERS!"

(This Week's Powerful Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, inside.)

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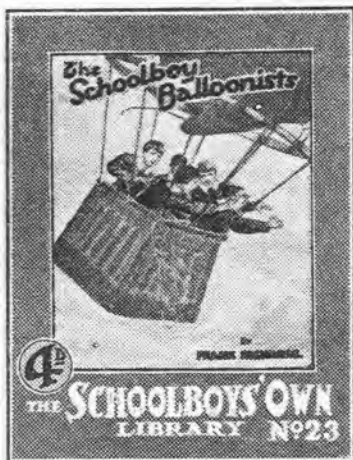
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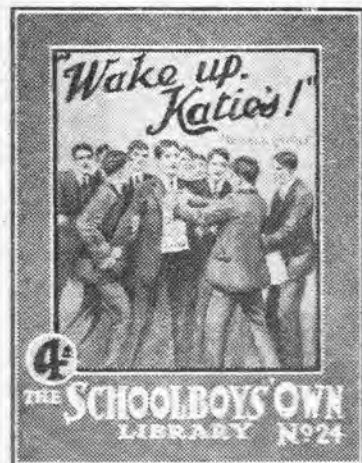
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SOMETHING OUT OF THE WAY!

I THINK that describes pretty accurately the wonderful new serial I have "up my sleeve" which is billed to follow the present series of Gan Waga & Co. stories. Doubtless you will remember the stir in newspaperdom when the Death Ray came into prominence a short time back. Well, then, this treat in store deals fairly extensively with this terrible weapon of ultra-modern warfare, and simply abounds in thrills and dramatic situations. I'm not saying any more about this fine new serial this week, but it will be certainly worth your while to keep an eye open for next week's Chat.

FIGURES!

A keen reader of the GEM writes for information on the subject of bookkeeping. My chum apparently has passed the intermediate stages of two public examinations, and is now desirous of studying the early stages of Accountancy. He says that with the knowledge he has now of bookkeeping he could not hope for promotion in his present job, and he is keen to get on. What book ought he to study, and what exams ought he to prepare for? I would venture to suggest that my correspondent takes up a course at the continuation schools. Both subjects are handled at these classes, and students are put in the way of the requisite exams.

SHOULD A PAL TELL?

I have received a lengthy letter from a pal in the Isle of Wight who says that his chum is becoming a different fellow, moody and snappy, because his girl friend has "turned him down," to use my correspondent's own phrase. There's nothing much in that alone, for this "turning down" process is pretty common. But my correspondent is exercised in his mind whether or not to tell his boy pal what he knows of this little tangle. In his letter he informs me that the girl friend in question has been heard to say that X has not enough money to take her about, that she doesn't care two straws for the friendship of X, and never did care. My correspondent would do well to leave this little affair alone. No need for him to tell what he knows—that would be almost akin to rubbing it in. As far as I can gather from his letter this "friendship" between X and the girl will die a natural death. So much the better, in view of the circumstances. But if my correspondent wants to be helpful let him put up with this moodiness and snappiness on the part of X like a real chum for the time being, and try and take him out of himself. Long walks, footer—oh, there are heaps of ways of taking a fellow's mind off a thing that he is inclined to brood over. Later he'll see things again in their right perspective, and he'll be mighty glad that he had such a good pal in you. We'll leave it at that.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"GRUNDY THE ARTIST!"
By Martin Clifford.

A rattling fine story of Tom Merry & Co., featuring George Alfred Grundy in a new role. Don't miss it!

"THE CAVERN OF GHOSTS!"
By Sidney Drew.

Another rollicking yarn of Gan Waga & Co. Something extra good to look forward to.

"SPRING-TIME" SUPPLEMENT.

Two pages of fun and laughter specially contributed by Tom Merry & Co., dealing with the above subject. It'll be your loss if you don't read it! Look out, too, for another Jingle by the St. Jim's Rhymester. Cheerio, chums, mind you order your GEM in good time.

Your Editor.

THE WITCHING HOUR! The pale light of the moon throws up the stately pile of St. Jim's against the velvety blackness of the night; it reveals, too, the creeping shadows of a gang of desperate cracksmen!



THE NIGHT RAIDERS!

A Powerful and Dramatic Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's,
re-introducing the "Dawlish gang."

By

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Wanted—A Peacemaker!

"I DON'T like it, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head in marked and emphatic disapproval.

The elegant swell of the St. Jim's Fourth was at tea with Tom Merry & Co. Those cheery youths were in funds, and Study No. 10 in the Shell passage resembled a land flowing with milk and honey. On the snowy-white tablecloth stood an alluring array of delicacies which would have tempted even the most jaded appetite. There were jam-tarts and cream-buns and meringues, and fat, sugary doughnuts jostled each other on the dish. But the tit-bit of the festive board—and a very substantial tit-bit at that—was a large plum-cake, specially made by Dame Taggles at the school tuckshop.

Monty Lowther had carved the cake, and helped the elegant guest to a generous slice.

Arthur Augustus had nibbled nonchalantly at the cake for a moment; then he had given vent to that expression of disapproval.

"I don't like it, deah boys! I don't like it at all!"

Tom Merry stared. Harry Manners glared. Monty Lowther looked indignant.

The Terrible Three naturally supposed that Arthur Augustus was alluding to the cake; and they considered it very tactless, to say the least, on the part of a study guest to decry what was put before him. If Gussy didn't really like the cake, he might in common politeness have refrained from saying so.

As a rule, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy showed the politeness of princes, and was a model of good manners. When taking tea as a guest in a junior study he had seldom been known to wound the feelings of his hosts. But he had wounded them now.

"Why, you ass," said Tom Merry, "I don't understand your not liking it. I think it's perfectly ripping!"

"Same here," said Manners.

"It's top-hole," agreed Lowther.

Arthur Augustus looked surprised. He turned his famous eyeglass upon the Terrible Three.

"Weally, deah boys, I cannot subswibe to those remarks," he said. "I considah it is wotten!"

"What!"

"It is perfectly awful, in fact," went on the swell of St. Jim's. "Somethin' will have to be done about it, bai Jove!"

The Terrible Three breathed hard. Really, it was too bad of their elegant guest to pick Dame Taggles' plum-cake to pieces—both literally and metaphorically.

"If you don't like it, Gussy, you can leave it!" said Tom Merry in curt tone.

"Eh?"

"Personally, I think it's the best cake Dame Taggles has baked for many a long day," said Manners. "You've turned faddy all of a sudden, Gussy."

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus in amazement. "Did you imagine I was wewefwin' to this cake, deah boys?"

"Of course!"

"Weally, I should not be so wude as to cwiticise my hosts' cake. Besides, this particulah cake is beyond all cwiticism."

"Then what on earth were you babbling about when you said you didn't like it?" demanded Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus became grave.

"I was thinkin' about old Talbot," he said. "There is somethin' wadically w'ong with him, an' I don't like it a bit. For sevealal days he has been moonin' an' mopin' about, as if life wasn't worth livin'. He isn't his old bwight self at all—fah wrom it, in fact. I have twied to cheer the poor beggah up—I have exerted all my tact an' judgment to make him mewwy an' bwight—but I haven't succeeded. Poor old Talbot! He is absolutely down, an' it distwesses me."

The faces of the Terrible Three clouded over. They, too, were distressed at the recent conduct of Reginald Talbot. For some days past—ever since the day of the Abbotsford match—Talbot had been moody and morose. He had shunned the society of his schoolfellows; he had been unable to apply his mind to lessons; and he had been woefully off-colour on the football-field.

Tom Merry & Co. had asked Talbot what was wrong, but he had not enlightened them. They had tried manfully to rally him from his deep depression, but in vain. Only yesterday, in fact, they had marched him along to their study for tea, and had tried all they knew to cheer him up, and to banish the "blue devils" which seemed to have possessed him.

But nothing, it seemed, could cure Talbot's dejection, and the Terrible Three had at last to give it up as a bad job.

"If only we knew what was wrong with the fellow we might be able to help him," said Tom Merry slowly. "But he refuses to trot out his troubles, so there's nothing we can do."

Manners nodded.

"Talbot's brooding about the past, most likely," he said.

"He can never quite forget the old days, or shake off their effects. It wasn't his fault that he was brought up among a gang of cracksmen in the slums of London; he was what they call a victim of environment. If the fellow was wise, he'd put the past right out of his mind; but every now and then it seems to rise up and haunt him, and he mopes about as if nothing was worth while. He's in one of his black moods, and he's inclined to snap a fellow's head off when he's spoken to. But if we let him alone, I think he'll come round all serene."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"It isn't the past that's wowwyin' old Talbot," he said; "it's the pwesent. I saw somethin' this mornin' which gave me a clue as to what was w'ong."

The Terrible Three glanced inquiringly at their guest.

"What did you see, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"I saw Talbot cut dead, in the quad, by Miss Mawie!"

"My hat!"

The juniors were astounded, as well they might be. For Miss Marie Rivers, the young school nurse, was Talbot's best and closest chum. Their friendship dated from the dark old days when they had been in the toils of the notorious gang of cracksmen, and with the passing of the years their friend-

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ship had grown stronger, until it seemed that nothing could shake it, much less sever it.

The news that Marie Rivers had "cut" Talbot in open quad was more than surprising. It was staggering—well-nigh incredible.

"You—you are quite sure of what you saw, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, at length.

"Yaas, deah boy. I assuah you I was not mistaken. Talbot was walkin' undah the elms, with his hands in his pockets, lookin' uttally misewable. I watched him fwom my study window. Aftah a time, Miss Mawie came along. Talbot saw her, an' went up to her, as if he wanted to speak to her. But Miss Mawie tossed her head quite angwily, an' walked on."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"I could hardly believe my eyes, but there it was," went on the swell of St. Jim's gravely. "I wasn't the only fellow who witnessed the incident. There were several fellows puntin' a footah about at the time, an' they saw Talbot given the cut diwect."

"Phew!" ejaculated Lowther, with a low whistle. "That explains why Talbot's been down in the dumps these last few days. He must have quarrelled with Miss Marie."

"And it explains why Miss Marie has been so jolly strange lately," said Manners. "She is usually as nice as pie to the fellows who have to go to the sanny for medicine; but she's been awfully curt and snappy the last day or two. We might have guessed that there was trouble between her and Talbot."

Tom Merry nodded.

"They've quarrelled, there's not much doubt about that," he said. "It's rotten. Still, it's no business of ours."

"On the contwaw, Tom Mewwy," interposed Arthur Augustus, "I considah it is our duty to try an' put things wight—to pour oil on the twoubled waters!"

"Ass! We should only make matters a thousand times worse if we chipped in!"

Arthur Augustus frowned at Tom Merry through his monocle.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! A case of this kind, in my opinion, calls for the services of a peacemakah. If nobody tries to heal the bweach between Miss Mawie an' Talbot, they will only dwift farthah apart. You wemembah what Shakespah says? 'It is the little wift within the lute that by-and-by will make the music mute, and, evah widenin', slowly silence all.'"

"If Shakespeare said that," said Monty Lowther, "then Tennyson deserved to be called over the coals for cribbing another man's work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus eyed his hosts reprovingly.

"This is not a mattah for visibility," he said. "If you fellows are disposed to sit tight with folded arms while Talbot an' Miss Mawie dwift apart, I am surprised at you! Personally, I shall do my best to bring them togethah again. It is useless to appwoach Talbot. I have already twiced to tackle him on the subject, but he told me to go an' eat coke!"

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Howevah," went on Arthur Augustus, "I twust that Miss Mawie will be more amenable to weason. I pwopose to go an' see her after tea, an' ask her what the twouble is about, an' urge her to make it up with Talbot."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

Arthur Augustus looked considerably pained. He had confidently anticipated the co-operation of Tom Merry & Co. in this matter. He had hoped that they would be ready and willing to accompany him to the sanny and urge Miss Marie to forget her differences with Talbot and renew her friendship with him. But instead of according Arthur Augustus their hearty and unanimous support, the Terrible Three had hurled uncomplimentary epithets at his noble head.

As a matter of fact, the chums of the Shell had sufficient worldly wisdom not to interfere in the quarrel between Marie and Talbot. Neither Marie nor Talbot would thank them for their interference. Butting into other people's quarrels even with the very best of motives was simply asking for trouble.

Tom Merry & Co. were sorry—extremely sorry—that matters had come to this pass, and the sooner Marie and Talbot were reconciled, the better they would be pleased. But they knew that they would not speed up the reconciliation by interfering.

Arthur Augustus, however, had other views. He considered that the intervention of a peacemaker was necessary; he considered, moreover, that he was an ideal peacemaker.

Tact and judgment were the two qualities most essential to successful peacemaking, and Arthur Augustus prided

himself on the fact that he possessed those two qualities in a marked degree.

"Look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry seriously, "if you take my advice, you'll keep off the grass! Miss Marie won't bless you for butting in, and neither will Talbot!"

"Gussy should bear in mind that the path of the peacemaker is a thorny one!" said Monty Lowther. And he proceeded to quote the ancient couplet:

"Those who in quarrels interpose
Must often wipe a crimson nose!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. His mind was made up, and wild horses would not have turned him from his purpose.

The swell of St. Jim's deemed it his duty to bring Marie and Talbot together again, if possible. He was not curious to know why they had quarrelled, or who was to blame for the split. His one aim and object was to heal the breach and effect a happy reconciliation.

"I wathah hoped, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, "that you would back me up in this mattah. But perhaps it is just as well. You fellows are somewhat lackin' in tact, an' if you came with me to see Miss Mawie, you might say a word in the w'ong place an' make things worse instead of bettah!"

"Well, I like that!" said Manners warmly.

Monty Lowther laughed.

"Oh, give Gussy his head!" he said. "Let the giddy pacifist sally forth with his oil-can to pour oil on the troubled waters. I wish you luck, Gussy; but I'm afraid you'll strike a snag."

"Anyway, let us know how you get on," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus moved to the door.

"I hope to be able to weport that my peacemakin' efforts have pwoved a success!" he remarked. "So-long, deah boys! An' many thanks for invitin' me to tea!"

The swell of St. Jim's departed on his school mission. The door of Study No. 10 closed behind him, and the Terrible Three exchanged smiling glances. They were not very sanguine that Arthur Augustus, with all his vaunted tact and judgment, would be successful in his efforts to reunite two sundered hearts.

CHAPTER 2.

The Impostor!

JOAN DAWLISH, the cracksman's daughter, stood at one of the lighted windows of the "sanny." Holding the curtains apart, she gazed out across the dusky quadrangle.

There was a frown on Joan's attractive face. Her thoughts, if the frown was any criterion, were the reverse of pleasant.

Two days had elapsed since Joan Dawlish, by means of a clever subterfuge, had taken the place of Marie Rivers at St. Jim's. They had been days of tense anxiety for the fair impostor; indeed, it was little short of miraculous that she had contrived to keep up her amazing deception without being unmasked and exposed.

Joan had relied upon her remarkable resemblance to Marie Rivers to carry her through. Certainly she owed the success of her scheme, so far, to the fact that she was Marie's double.

In the capacity of school nurse, however, Joan had made several blunders, owing to her unfamiliarity with the duties. Any one of those blunders might have brought about her undoing; but her luck had held good, so far.

Nevertheless, Joan Dawlish was far from easy in her mind.

As she stood at the lighted window gazing out into the darkness, the girl reviewed the amazing events of the last two days.

First, there had been her meeting with Marie Rivers in Abbotsford. Joan and Marie had been close friends in the old days, when they had been associated with the gang of cracksmen in Angel Alley. Later on, when Marie and Marie's father and Talbot had reformed, Joan Dawlish had been sent by her father to Paris to complete her education.

On her return to England, Joan had been pressed into the service of the gang. Not that she had needed much pressing. For, despite the enlightenment of a first-class education, Joan retained all her old criminal tendencies. She was not done with the old life, like Marie and Talbot were. On the contrary, she was only too anxious to return to it. Jim Dawlish, the cracksman, was a criminal not by force of circumstances, but by his own deliberate choice. And Joan was her father's daughter. She would have been a tough proposition for any reformer.



"I suggest, D'Arcy, that you mind your own affairs," said the school nurse firmly, "and leave other people to mind theirs!" "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning crimson. He had not expected this sharp rebuke from a girl who was usually kindness itself. (See Chapter 3.)

Jim Dawlish, the leader of the gang, was now languishing in prison, as the result of his latest attempt to plunder St. Jim's.

But Dawlish had by no means abandoned his nefarious designs. His capture and imprisonment had only made him all the more determined to bring off his dearly-cherished coup. He was well aware of the fact that the famous public school contained numerous valuables, which would provide a rich haul for any cracksmen.

On several occasions, with a long interval between each, the school had been raided by Jim Dawlish and his confederates; but always they had been baulked of success. Once they had actually got away with the plunder, only to be chased and captured by John Rivers, Marie's father, who was now a detective attached to Scotland Yard.

The cracksmen seemed fated never to succeed in this particular enterprise. But Jim Dawlish was not the man to be disheartened by repeated failures. Although he personally was powerless, being safe under lock and key, his two right-hand men—Pat Donovan and Peters—were at large, having received shorter terms of imprisonment than their chief. And Donovan and Peters now had the assistance of Joan Dawlish, who had pledged herself to carry out her father's wishes, and to bring his schemes to fruition.

Joan had not allowed the grass to grow under her feet. She was an energetic young lady, and she did not intend to postpone the raid on St. Jim's till that vague period known as "one of these days." She had got busy at once, and her first step was to contrive a meeting with Marie Rivers, in Abbotsford. The meeting had been a chance one, so far as Marie knew; but in reality it had been carefully prearranged by Joan Dawlish.

The two girls had adjourned to a quiet tea-room, where

Joan had informed Marie of her father's implacable determination to plunder St. Jim's. She had used all her powers of persuasion to induce Marie to take part in the raid, to share the spoils, and afterwards to give up her post at St. Jim's for a more lucrative engagement with the gang of cracksmen.

On a given night, the school was to be raided by Donovan and Peters; and Joan desired Marie to admit them, and deliver up to them the keys of the strong-room and other places, Marie being in a favourable position to secure the keys.

Marie, of course, had been horrified by the proposals of her former friend. She flatly and finally refused to be a party to the conspiracy. She pointed out that she could not possibly betray the trust and confidence reposed in her by Doctor Holmes, and the matron, and her many other friends at St. Jim's.

Not only did Marie refuse to fall in with Joan's wishes, but she pleaded with Joan Dawlish, eloquently and appealingly, to sever with the gang of cracksmen at all costs, and to have nothing to do with their shady schemes.

Joan had pretended to be impressed by Marie's appeal; but she pointed out that she was, at the moment, penniless; and how could she sever her connection with the gang of cracksmen, when she was dependent upon them for her very existence? Moreover, how could she possibly desert her father, Jim Dawlish, who had been a good father to her, cracksmen and criminal though he was?

Marie had replied that Joan must get honest employment, somehow; and that when her father came out of prison, Joan must make clear to him the insane folly of persisting in a life of crime, which could only result in further

imprisonment and disgrace. In short, Joan must take upon herself the task of reforming her father.

Pretending to be swayed by Marie's arguments, Joan Dawlish had promised to think the matter over. She had given Marie the impression that she was prepared to reform, and to go straight in future.

Marie, delighted to think that she had won Joan Dawlish over, had agreed to meet her on the following night, and hand her the sum of twenty pounds, which would be sufficient to give Joan an honest start in life.

Little did Marie Rivers dream that a trap was being prepared for her—that Joan Dawlish, her one-time friend, was about to betray her, and decoy her into the clutches of the gang.

On the fatal night—a wild and stormy one—Marie had set forth to keep her secret appointment with Joan.

Talbot of the Shell had seen Marie leave the school. He had followed her, and urged her not to venture out alone on such a night.

Marie had rebuked her boy chum; had said that she was quite capable of taking care of herself. She refused to tell Talbot where she was going, and whom she was meeting. There had been high words, and Talbot had been peremptorily ordered back to the school. With a heavy heart, the junior had obeyed.

Arriving at Abbotsford in the blinding storm, Marie Rivers had walked unsuspectingly into the trap so cunningly prepared for her.

A closed-in saloon car had driven up, and Joan Dawlish had jumped out, and beckoned to Marie. On stepping into the car, the St. Jim's nurse had been overpowered by the man Peters, whose accomplice, Pat Donovan, was at the steering-wheel.

The car had then been driven rapidly away in the darkness, with Marie Rivers a helpless prisoner. Marie had been conveyed to the gang's headquarters—a house called Lonedeepe, which amply justified its name, for it stood in solitary isolation in a hollow of the Sussex Downs.

Marie was still there, a prisoner in that lonely house, with none of her friends at St. Jim's any the wiser.

Marie's place at St. Jim's had been usurped by Joan Dawlish, who had planned to personate her.

It was a daring and audacious scheme; and Joan had known, at the very outset, that she would have a difficult part to play. Her imposture would entail numerous risks. She would be skating on very thin ice, as it were, with danger-posts all around her.

But Joan Dawlish did not propose to stay at St. Jim's a moment longer than was necessary. Her idea was to spy out the land; to ascertain where all the valuables were kept, and who had the custody of the keys; to find out which studies would pay for plundering; to admit the cracksmen, when they came, and furnish them with all the information she had managed to acquire.

Up till now, Joan had not acquired very much. She was obliged to feel her way with great caution. She had managed to secure a plan of the school, and late at night she had made a tour of the School House, and gathered some useful information. But her task was far from finished; and perhaps this accounted for her frown, as she stood gazing out across the dusky quadrangle.

"I shall be glad when I'm through with this business," she murmured. "It's getting a bit nerve-racking. I've made some awful blunders in dispensing medicine; and now I've had a lecture from the matron, warning me to be more careful. She will begin to suspect soon. Marie never used to give her any cause for complaint. This is a more difficult part to play than I imagined—though I knew it wouldn't be easy. Still, nobody has any suspicion, as yet, that I'm not Marie Rivers; and I've managed to shake Talbot off, thank goodness!"

Shaking off Talbot had been a very necessary, but not a simple matter.

Joan Dawlish had met the junior after midnight, on her arrival at St. Jim's. Imitating Marie Rivers' voice to the best of her ability, she had told Talbot that their friendship was at an end—that she never wished to speak to him again. She wanted to avoid Talbot as much as possible; for she feared that, were they to meet in the daytime, the keen-eyed junior would penetrate the masquerade.

Talbot had been dismayed and dumbfounded on being told that the friendship was at an end. He had refused to accept that harsh decree as final. He could not understand what had come over his girl chum. He had tried to force an interview with her, to talk things over; and Joan Dawlish had contrived to keep him at arm's length, until that morning, when she had passed close to him in the quad.

It had been an anxious moment for the pseudo-nurse. Talbot had actually stepped up to her, as if about to speak; and Joan had been on tenterhooks lest he should penetrate

her disguise. But she had shown no outward sign of agitation. With a disdainful toss of her head, she had walked on, cutting Talbot dead. A number of fellows had witnessed the incident, and they had marvelled greatly.

Joan Dawlish had successfully dodged that danger; but there were other and more insistent dangers pressing about her path.

The strange conduct of the school nurse was being freely commented upon by all the fellows. Everybody was saying that Marie Rivers was not a bit like her usual self. This was hardly a compliment to the impostor; but then, how could Joan be expected to copy Marie's ways and mannerisms with accuracy, when she had not had an opportunity of studying them?

Joan realised that the sooner she completed her investigations at St. Jim's, the better it would be for her safety, and for the success of the proposed raid. Already the school was wondering what had come over the young nurse. Wonder might easily ripen into suspicion, and suspicion would lead to investigation. And then the game would be up!

Joan Dawlish was not a "nervy" type of girl. On the contrary, she was remarkably cool and self-possessed. But the growing strain of her position was beginning to affect her nerves, now. She found herself starting at every footstep; she feared that Talbot might make yet another attempt to see her, in spite of the fact that she had threatened to report him to the matron for annoying her.

Her hands trembled a little as she drew the curtains together. Then she stepped from the window, and moved restlessly about the room.

Suddenly there was a sound of footsteps in the corridor. They halted outside the door of the nurse's room. Then there was a sharp rap on the panels.

Joan Dawlish pulled herself together.

"Who is there?" she called steadily.

She feared that it was Talbot; in which case she was determined to refuse him entry.

But it was not Talbot who responded to her question.

"It's I—D'Arcy," came the cheerful voice of Arthur Augustus. "May I come in, Miss Mawie?"

Joan hesitated for a brief second.

"Yes!" she said.

And she seated herself on a chair in a corner of the room, where the electric-light did not fall directly on her face.

CHAPTER 3.

Not a Success!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stepped into the room. He smiled genially across at the school nurse; but his smile was not reciprocated. Gussy reflected that Miss Marie was looking unusually grim.

"I—I twast I am not intwudin', deah gal?" murmured the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am not busy, at the moment," said Joan, laying stress on the last three words, as if to imply that she soon would be busy. "You wish to speak to me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas."

"Will you sit down?"

There was no cordiality in the girl's tone. It was polite, but it was not effusive. And the voice struck Arthur Augustus as being not quite so pleasant and musical as Miss Marie's voice usually was. But there was a ready explanation of that. Having recently quarrelled with her best chum, Miss Marie would naturally not be in a very cordial humour.

Arthur Augustus was about to cross the room and take a chair beside her; but Joan indicated a chair near the door, and the would-be peacemaker, lifting his immaculate trowsers at the knees, in order to preserve the creases, sat down.

A silence ensued—a silence that grew almost painful.

Arthur Augustus was undecided how best to broach his subject. If Miss Marie had been at all encouraging, it would have simplified matters. But the school nurse sat perfectly still, neither smiling nor frowning, but merely waiting to hear what her visitor had to say.

"Ahem!" began Arthur Augustus, at length.

Still no smile; still no look of encouragement.

"Ahem!" repeated the swell of St. Jim's. And he felt the colour mounting to his cheeks. He was embarrassed by his companion's silence; and the little speech he had prepared in advance, on the subject of friendship, had slipped clean out of his mind.

"Ahem!" observed Arthur Augustus, for the third time. The nurse spoke at last.

"If you are troubled with a cough, D'Arcy, I have an excellent cough-mixture—"

"Nunno—not at all, Miss Mawie!" stammered Arthur

Augustus. "I am not twoubled with a cough, but with somethin' wathah more sewious. An' that's what I've come to speak to you about."

"If you are in trouble, I should imagine your house-master was the most suitable person to see. I have no doubt that, if you confide the facts to Mr. Railton—"

"Oh, ewumbs! You—you quite misundahstand me, Miss Mawie!" stammered Arthur Augustus. "I am not twoubled about any twoubles of my own; it is anothah twouble that twoubles me. I find it wathah a twouble to make my twouble cleah—"

Arthur Augustus was floundering helplessly—in a sea of troubles, as it were. And "Miss Marie," instead of coming to his rescue, let him flounder.

The more Arthur Augustus tried to extricate himself from the verbal morass into which he had fallen, the more mixed and muddled he became. But he managed, at last, to make it clear that he had no troubles of his own. It was somebody else's trouble with which he was concerned, at the moment.

"Why worry about other people's troubles?" said the nurse.

"Oh, weally, Miss Mawie— It's not like you, to say a callous thing like that. If nobody evah bothaled about othah people's twoubles, it would be a vewy selfish world."

"So you regard me as callous and selfish?"

"Nunno!" said Arthur Augustus hastily, realising that he had put his foot in it again. "You are one of the best gals bweathin', Miss Mawie. I have a gweat admivation an' respect for you."

"You are very flattering!"

"Not at all! I mean evewy word I say. An' it is because I have such a high weward for you, Miss Mawie, that I felt bound to intewest myself in this unfortunate affair—"

"What unfortunate affair?"

"Your quawwel with Talbot."

It was out at last. Arthur Augustus had been a long time getting to the point, but he had reached it at length by a circuitous route. And now that he had stated the subject of his visit, he looked at "Miss Marie" rather anxiously.

The school nurse compressed her lips.

"I do not wish to hear anything about that," she said coldly.

"Then—then you weally have quawwelled with Talbot, Miss Mawie?"

"I have."

"I was afwaid that was the case," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head sadly. "I saw you cut Talbot this mornin', in the quad. The incident wovwied me a gweat deal; it has been on my mind all day."

"Indeed! I suggest, D'Arcy, that you mind your own affairs, and leave other people to mind theirs."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was crimson. He had not expected this sharp rebuke from a girl who was usually kindness itself.

"Pway do not imagine, Miss Mawie, that any motives of ewisosity have bwought me heah," said the swell of St. Jim's, with some dignity. "I am not like that boundah Twimble—always buttin' into affaihs that don't concern me. I have come heah this evenin' in the wole of peace-makah. I don't wish to know why you have quawwelled with Talbot, or who is to blame. My one desiah is to heal the bweach, an' to bwing about a weconciliation."

"Then you are wasting your time; for it is my firm intention never to speak to Talbot again!"

Arthur Augustus looked deeply distressed.

"Don't say that, Miss Mawie! Whatevah Talbot may or may not have done, I implore you to think it ovah vewy carefully before you decide to sevah a lifelong fwriendship!"

"I have already thought it over," was the reply. "Talbot has made it impossible for me to have anything more to do with him. I am finished with him. There is nothing more to be said."

"But, look heah, Miss Mawie—"

"Nothing you will say, D'Arcy, will be of the slightest avail. My mind is made up; my decision is irrevocable."

The nurse rose to her feet, as if to signify that the interview was at an end.

Arthur Augustus rose, too, looking decidedly crestfallen. He felt painfully conscious of the fact that his peacemaking efforts had proved an inglorious failure. "Miss Marie" seemed quite intractable. She was not to be reasoned with. Arthur Augustus, in trying to pour oil on the troubled waters, had merely ruffled them the more.

"I sincerely twust, Miss Mawie, that you will weconsidah your decision," he said. "I do not like to see a long an' swong fwriendship terminated in so dwastie a mannah. Old Talbot is most fond of you, Miss Mawie. I am suah that if he has said or done anythin' to upset you, he will be willin' to apologise, as one gentleman to anothah—I mean,

as a gentleman to a lady. He is dweadfully cut up about this unfortunate affair. He mooches about all day, bwoodin' about it, an' fwom what Tom Mewwy tells me he hasn't been sleepin' at night. I do wish you would forgive him—if there is anythin' to forgive—an' make it up with him, an' take him back on the old footin'."

Arthur Augustus was speaking earnestly now—entirely forgetful of self, in his keen desire to effect a reconciliation.

But the earnest eloquence of Arthur Augustus was wasted upon the desert air, so to speak.

"It is quite useless for you to say anything further," said the girl whom Arthur Augustus believed to be Miss Marie. "Kindly leave me now, D'Arcy. I have some urgent work to attend to."

Arthur Augustus sighed, and went slowly out of the nurse's room, and down the stairs. He had done his best; he had made a big effort to repair a shattered friendship; but the breach between Marie and Talbot was as wide as ever.

The swell of St. Jim's was looking far from happy as he made his way to Tom Merry's study. He was puzzled and perplexed by the conduct of the school nurse. Her callousness and coldness had shocked him. Instead of her being her usual kind and amiable self, she had seemed harsh and unkind and perverse. She had seemed, in fact, to be a different girl from the Miss Marie who had endeared herself to St. Jim's—as, indeed, she was, had Arthur Augustus but known it!

"What luck, Gussy?"

Monty Lowther grinned as he asked the question. The downcast face of Arthur Augustus told its own tale only too plainly.

"I have failed," was the reply. "I have weasoned with Miss Mawie, but she wemains firm, or, wathah, obstinate. She wefuses to have anythin' furthah to do with old Talbot."

Tom Merry was about to say, "I told you so!" But he refrained from uttering that parrot-cry. The look on Arthur Augustus' face checked its utterance.

Undoubtedly the swell of St. Jim's had taken the quarrel between Marie Rivers and Talbot very much to heart. And Tom Merry, as the friend of Talbot and Marie, too, was himself far from happy about it. He hoped that the clouds would soon roll by, and that time would heal the breach. But there seemed little prospect of a reconciliation between Marie and Talbot in the immediate future.

CHAPTER 4.

A Bombshell!

"TELEGRAM for Miss Rivers!"

It was the next morning. Joan Dawlish was in the dispensing-room, doling out copious draughts of white-mixture to a number of fags, when Toby the page announced the telegram. He handed the buff-coloured envelope to the school nurse.

"The boy's waitin' in the quad, Miss Marie," said Toby.

"E wants to know if there's any answer."

Joan Dawlish felt very uneasy as she ripped open the envelope. She had not foreseen the possibility of a telegram arriving whilst she was taking the place of Marie Rivers at St. Jim's. Already there had been several letters for Marie; and Joan had ignored these, placing them, unopened, in a drawer.

But she could not ignore a telegram. What did it mean? Who could be writing to Marie Rivers, and with what object?



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Joan's countenance was quite serene and her hand quite steady as she unfolded the flimsy sheet. Inwardly, however, she was very apprehensive.

On reading the brief message, Joan's apprehension grew into alarm.

"Marie Rivers, St. Jim's, Rylcombe, Sussex.—Calling to see you this afternoon.—FATHER."

The face of the nurse paled slightly as she perused that message. But there was no trace of agitation in her tone as she said to Toby:

"There is no answer, thank you."

When Toby had gone Joan soon got rid of her few casual patients. And the patients were not sorry to go. They had come to the sanny with slight coughs and colds—genuine in some cases, and simulated in others—in the hope of being given delectable draughts of nice-tasting medicine. But "Miss Marie" was still adhering to her new whim of doling out white-mixture to all and sundry; and the fags gulped down the nauseous stuff and went clattering down the stairs, making fearful grimaces, and resolved to give the sanny a wide berth, so long as Miss Marie's new craze lasted.

When the fags had gone Joan Dawlish stood alone in the dispensing-room. She frowned, and bit her lip with vexation.

Crumpling up the telegram which had arrived for Marie Rivers, Joan tossed it on to the fire.

Here was a new and utterly unexpected development which threatened to frustrate all her carefully-laid schemes.

John Rivers, the detective, was coming to St. Jim's to see his daughter. It was calamitous—a bombshell for the girl who was impersonating Marie Rivers.

"What beastly luck!" murmured Joan Dawlish. "This has knocked all my plans on the head."

To stay at the school and face a meeting with John Rivers was out of the question.

Joan had deceived the matron; she had deceived Talbot of the Shell; she had, in fact, deceived everybody at St. Jim's. But she realised the impossibility of deceiving Marie's own father. Her disguise, ingenious though it was, would soon be penetrated by the lynx-eyed detective.

It occurred to Joan to wire John Rivers to postpone his visit on some pretext. But she dismissed the idea almost as soon as it came. If she wired that she were ill, it would only bring the detective to St. Jim's the quicker. If she wired that it was not convenient for him to call that day, he would probably telephone to the Head, to inquire what was wrong; and awkward inquiries would assuredly follow.

Any attempt to prevent John Rivers from calling at St. Jim's would be certain to arouse suspicion.

Joan Dawlish was baffled and nonplussed. It was beastly luck, she reflected, that just as her task at St. Jim's was nearing completion this hitch should have arisen.

The proposed raid on the school would have to stand over—for a time, at all events.

There was nothing for it but for Joan Dawlish to make a hurried exit from St. Jim's before John Rivers came on the scene.

Joan cast about in her mind for a plausible excuse for leaving; and she had just hit upon one when the door of the dispensing-room opened, and Miss Pinch, the matron, rustled in.

"Ah! Good-morning, Marie! Looking from my window just now, I saw the page-boy coming this way with a telegram. Was it for me, my dear?"

"No, matron; it was for me," replied Joan.

She spoke wearily; and there was a look of great distress on her attractive face.

"I trust you have not received bad news, Marie?" said the matron anxiously.

Joan's voice faltered a little.

"A—a favourite aunt of mine is very seriously ill, in Yorkshire," she said. "She wishes me to go up and see her. Would it be possible for you to release me from my duties for a few days?"

"Certainly, certainly," murmured the matron. "I am indeed sorry, my dear; this is most distressing. You have my ready permission to proceed to Yorkshire as soon as you wish. Things are very quiet here, and I can spare you."

"Thank you, matron."

The kindly Miss Pinch was all sympathy; and Joan's heart smote her at this new deception she was practising. The matron was trying to cheer her and comfort her; and every word was like a knife-thrust.

But the deception was necessary, from Joan's point of view. She had to devise some excuse for leaving St. Jim's. She could not suddenly walk out of the place without a word of explanation.

Callous girl though she was—hard and inhuman by com-

parison with the rest of her sex—Joan Dawlish was not utterly devoid of feeling. She had taken Marie Rivers' place at St. Jim's, and had paved the way for the proposed burglary, without a twinge of conscience. But in this matter of deceiving the kindly and guileless matron, Joan experienced a feeling of self-contempt. For a brief moment, the baseness of her conduct rose up before her as upon a screen.

On the spur of the moment, she had thought of the fiction about the sick aunt in Yorkshire. She had had to find some pretext for getting leave of absence; and that seemed as feasible as anything.

Joan was relieved when the matron withdrew. She then made hurried arrangements for her own departure.

Whilst morning lessons were in progress, Joan Dawlish quitted St. Jim's as unobtrusively as she had arrived.

Garbed in a raincoat and hat which belonged to Marie Rivers, and carrying a small travelling-bag which was also the property of Marie, Joan Dawlish stepped briskly down to the school gates.

It was Joan's intention to return to Lonedee, the headquarters of the gang, and to acquaint the cracksmen with the fact that her plans had been nipped in the bud by that unexpected telegram from John Rivers. It would not be agreeable news to Pat Donovan and Peters, who were eager and impatient to carry out the raid on St. Jim's. But it would be good news to Marie Rivers, the cracksmen's prisoner. Marie would undoubtedly be glad to hear that Joan's schemes had been frustrated.

Joan Dawlish did not proceed to Rylcombe station, and entrain for the nearest station to Lonedee. She did not think it wise, for John Rivers might endeavour to trace her movements.

Instead, the girl set out across country, and made her way by a circuitous route to Abbotsford. Arrived at the little market-town, she rested, and obtained a meal at the same tea-rooms where she and Marie Rivers had talked things over a few days previously.

Refreshed by food and rest, Joan continued her journey on foot, arriving at Lonedee early in the afternoon.

A drizzle was falling, and a thick haze hung over the Sussex downs, which rolled away on either side.

The lonely house, with its shuttered windows and its air of desolation, had the appearance of being untenanted. But Joan knew that she would find Donovan and Peters within, and that the girl she had wronged and betrayed was imprisoned in the gloomy basement.

Joan tugged at the rusty bell-pull, and a loud peal reverberated through the house. It was answered by the violent barking of Marcus, the bull-terrier which belonged to the cracksmen.

Pat Donovan, having peered through a chink in the shutters to ascertain who the visitor was, came to the door and shot back the bolts and opened it. Peters joined him in the hall, and both precious rascals looked considerably startled at Joan Dawlish's unexpected return.

"What has happened?" asked Donovan quickly. "Have you failed, Joan? Is the game up?"

"No. But it would have been if I had stayed at the school many more hours. Marie's father wired to say he was calling on her this afternoon. So there was nothing for it but for me to quit."

Pat Donovan muttered a savage imprecation.

"Confound John Rivers! He is for ever crossing our path and puttin' a spoke in our wheel!"

"I wonder if he suspects anything?" said Peters uneasily.

Joan Dawlish shook her head.

"How can he suspect anything? He's merely paying one of his periodical visits to St. Jim's, to see his daughter."

"An' when he finds his daughter isn't there, he'll become suspicious at once," growled Donovan. "How did you get away, Joan? What excuse did you give?"

"I told the matron I had been wired for by a sick aunt, in Yorkshire."

"Phew! John Rivers will see at once that that was a trumped-up yarn."

"It can't be helped," said Joan. "I had to give some explanation for leaving the place. But let me come in, Pat. I'm cold and wet."

Donovan stood aside to let the girl pass. He and Peters were not only disappointed at this unexpected hitch in their plans; they were fearful of what might happen when John Rivers arrived at St. Jim's, to find Marie missing. He would know that the story of the sick aunt was a fiction; he would wonder why his daughter had left the school so suddenly; he would set inquiries on foot, and would leave no stone unturned to try and discover Marie's whereabouts.

"How did you come here, Joan?" asked Donovan, a new fear striking him. "If you came by train, John Rivers will make inquiries at Rylcombe station, and trace your movements."

Joan smiled.

"I wasn't so stupid as to come by train," she said. "I walked by a roundabout way to Abbotsford, and then came on here."

"Oh, good!"

"I don't think we have much to fear from John Rivers," said Joan. "Of course, he'll organise a search for Marie; but with no clues to help him, he'll not get very far. Nobody saw Marie kidnapped the other night. The street was deserted, if you remember, and there was a terrific storm raging. And nobody saw which way I went when I left St. Jim's this morning. So what is there to worry about? All we've got to do is to lie low until the search for Marie Rivers has been abandoned as a bad job. Then we can return to our plans for raiding St. Jim's. I have not been idle during my short stay at the school. Although I haven't found out as much as I could have wished, I know where the keys are kept, and which studies will pay for plundering. I have also ascertained that there are valuable negotiable bonds stored in the Head's safe—bonds which he is holding in trust for somebody."

Donovan's eyes gleamed. He clenched his hand, as if, in imagination, it was already closing over those valuable bonds.

"She can hardly expect to live like a lady," he said. "We've given her good, plain food, and books to read; which is more than most prisoners get."

"Rather!" assented Peters. "But whenever we take her meals down to her, she won't speak a word—won't look at us, even!"

"Well, neither of you are beauties exactly," said Joan, with a laugh. "You've both got faces like gargoyles, and it's rather a strain having to look at them."

The cracksmen grinned at Joan's banter—not very good-humouredly, however. And they remained in the hall, muttering to each other, while Joan Dawlish descended the stone steps leading to the basement, where Marie Rivers was a prisoner.

CHAPTER 5.

Hope for Marie!

"HOW much longer?" Marie Rivers had asked herself that question a score of times during her imprisonment, and she asked it again now.

The extreme loneliness, the drabness of her surroundings,



St Jim's Jingles!



No. 27. TOBY MARSH, THE ST. JIM'S PAGE BOY.

THE boy in buttons, Toby Marsh,
Now comes into our
Gallery;

He thinks that Fate is somewhat harsh—

He wants a bigger salary.

"My daily duties are immense,
And not a bit congenial,
And yet I get more kicks than
pence!"

Says this disgruntled menial.

He rises sooner than the lark,
Before King Sol starts beaming;
When everything is drear and dark,
And schoolboys lie a-dreaming.
He cleans a hundred pairs of shoes
Before the call-bell's summons;
No wonder Toby gets 'the blues,'
And joins the band of glum 'uns!

The busy House-dame, Mrs. Mimms,
Is Toby's supervisor;
She makes him stir his lazy limbs;
'Tis seldom he defies her.
He's running errands all the day—
Or, rather, slowly crawling;
For when allowed to have his way,
His slowness is appalling!



The School Page.

The tortoise and the nimble hare

Would both leave Toby standing;
He takes an age to climb each stair.

And reach the upper landing.

He needs a charge of dynamite

To rouse his constitution,

And keep him frisky day and night,

Like good old Grandpa Kruschen!

When work is finished for the day
(Work which is really leisure),

Then Toby whiles the hours away

In fast and furious pleasure.

To Wayland Cinema he'll go,

Or else to village dances;

This is the only time I know

That Toby jumps and prances!

And yet, with all his dawdling ways,

And his absurd frivolities,

Toby deserves a word of praise—

He has some sterling qualities.

He is well-mannered, as a rule,

And never fails to show it;

For when he meets me out of school

He always "caps" a poet!

NEXT WEEK:—GERALD CUTTS, OF THE FIFTH FORM.

"It's a thousand pities that John Rivers has got mixed up in this business," he said. "He'll be scouring the countryside for his daughter, and he won't give up the search in a hurry. We shall have to wait days—perhaps weeks—before we can go ahead with our plans. Still, you've done your best, Joan. It's no fault of yours that this has come about. But the sooner we get some money into our coffers, the better. We are down to our last few pounds."

"We needn't be idle," said Joan. "There are some big country houses a few miles away, which ought to yield something in the way of plunder. It will be practice for us before the big coup comes off."

Joan laughed lightly. Now that the strain of her position at St. Jim's was over, and she no longer had a part to play, she was in one of her old care-free moods.

"I think I'll go down and have a chat with the prisoner," she said. "I hope you've been looking after her all right in my absence?"

Pat Donovan shrugged his shoulders.

the dreary monotony of her captivity had grown well-nigh intolerable.

Shut off from the sunshine, severed from her friends at St. Jim's, and almost in despair, it seemed to Marie that months of time had elapsed since that fateful night when Joan Dawlish had betrayed her into the hands of the cracksmen. In reality, it was but the third day of her imprisonment.

Marie had been allowed one concession, which had relieved the stark monotony of her position. For the brief space of half an hour each morning she had been permitted to exercise in the walled-in garden at the back of the house. Escape, however, had been out of the question, even had Marie been able to scale the high wall, for she had taken her exercise under the surveillance of one or other of the two cracksmen.

But for this daily break in the monotony, Marie felt that the ordeal of imprisonment would have driven her insane. That one half-hour of comparative freedom was all that she

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 944.

had to look forward to. It came and went like a lightning-flash; but it was good, while the opportunity lasted, to breathe the fresh morning air, to hear the twittering of the birds, and to gaze upon "that little tent of blue, which prisoners call the sky."

Then would come a return to the gloomy basement, and the day would drag out its slow length, with indescribable weariness.

Day was succeeded by night—a long, long night of broken sleep, of sudden, wakeful starts, as strange sounds broke the silence. Sometimes a rat would scuttle across the stone floor, and Marie, who had a natural dread of the rodents, would sit bolt upright in her little camp-bed, her limbs trembling. She had heard that rats sometimes, in the desperation of hunger, attacked humans; but she need not have entertained any fears on this score. At the far end of the basement there was a big pile of litter and rubbish, and it was in this that the rats foraged for their food.

Marie's meals had been brought to her at more or less regular intervals. At first she had eaten nothing, but she had soon realised that there was no point or purpose in hunger-striking. If she chose deliberately to starve herself, her callous captors would not have interfered. Certainly they would not have released her.

Books had been brought down to her also, but it was too dark in the basement, even in the daytime, to do much reading. In any case, Marie didn't feel like reading. She was too busy with her thoughts.

How had Joan Dawlish fared at St. Jim's? Had she been successful in her impersonation of Marie? Apparently she had, or she would have been back at Lonedeep by now. Marie was not aware that Joan had returned that afternoon.

The scheme of the cracksmen, to raid and plunder St. Jim's, must now be nearing fruition. Joan Dawlish would have paved the way, and all that remained was for Joan to admit Donovan and Peters to the school at dead of night that they might carry out their nefarious designs.

It was this thought that troubled Marie most. The school was in danger, and she, who alone knew of the cracksmen's plans, was powerless to give any warning—powerless to do anything to save the school from a carefully conceived robbery.

If only she could have conveyed some sort of message to the Head, or to Talbot! If only she could make good her escape! But with Donovan and Peters in the house, to say nothing of the big bull-terrier, nothing could be done.

Meanwhile, Marie's imprisonment was growing more and more irksome. She felt that there were limits to human endurance, and that those limits had almost been reached by her. Freedom—glorious freedom—which she had accepted so carelessly when she had it, seemed very remote now.

Marie was seated on her camp-bed, a prey to gloomy thoughts, when she heard the sound of bolts being shot back—the bolts of the basement door!

The girl gave a start.

Who was about to enter at this hour? Her midday meal had been brought to her a couple of hours previously by Pat Donovan, and she knew that she would not get another meal until nightfall.

During the long intervals between meals her captors always left her undisturbed. What did this unexpected visit portend?

"Don't be alarmed," said a familiar voice. And the next moment Joan Dawlish stepped into the basement.

Marie Rivers stared in surprise at her visitor.

"You!" she exclaimed.

"Little me," answered Joan cheerily. She advanced towards the bed, smiling at her one-time friend. "You will be delighted to hear, Marie, that we have received a severe set-back to our plans."

"I am indeed delighted to hear it—if it is true," said Marie quietly.

"Oh, it's true enough!"

"Your plans to plunder St. Jim's have failed?"

"Well, they haven't exactly failed, but they have had to be postponed. The fact is, my dear, your father has seen fit to butt in, at a very inconvenient moment."

"My father!"

Marie's eyes brightened suddenly. The mention of her father caused a ray of hope to penetrate her gloom. She glanced inquiringly at Joan.

"I was getting on very nicely at St. Jim's," said Joan. "I made a few blunders in the sanny, of course, and everybody was wondering what was wrong with Miss Marie—as they believed me to be. But nobody suspected for a single moment that I was an impostor. I managed to collect a lot of useful information for the gang, and in another twenty-four hours my task would have been finished. But this morning I had a telegram from your father to the effect that he was visiting St. Jim's this afternoon."

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"Oh!" gasped Marie.

"That, of course, put the kybosh on everything, as the St. Jim's fellows say. I wasn't stupid enough to believe that I could deceive John Rivers into thinking I was his daughter. I should have given myself away in no time. So I had to concoct a yarn in order to get away from St. Jim's, and here I am. Trust your father to butt in and upset our plans—although he did it quite unwittingly this time."

Marie was silent. But the colour had returned to her cheeks now, and her heart beat high with hope. She was glad that the plotters had been frustrated for the time being, and that Joan Dawlish had been compelled to leave St. Jim's. And she was hopeful that her father, on finding that his daughter was missing from the school, would at once institute a search, which would result in the tracking down of the gang, and the finding of Marie.

"My news seems to have had a tonic effect on you, Marie," said Joan, half-sneeringly. "It has quite cheered you up!"

"It has," replied Marie. "But I can't understand why you are so cheerful about it all."

Joan shrugged her shoulders.

"What's the use of whining?" she said. "It was just beastly bad luck, your father interfering in this unexpected way. But it hasn't scotched our scheme; it has merely postponed it. And, in a way, this will be unlucky for you. It will prolong your imprisonment."

"I don't think so," said Marie. "You appear to forget, Joan, that my father is a detective. When he finds that I am not at St. Jim's he will make search for me. He will scour the country."

Joan laughed sardonically.

"He will never find you," she said. "He hasn't a single clue to work upon. He can only make a blind search, at best, and trust to finding you by sheer luck. That won't help him much. He is hardly likely to penetrate to this lonely spot. Why, he does not even know that you have been kidnapped!"

"He will find out," said Marie confidently. "My father is no fool. He will know that I would not have left St. Jim's of my own free will. He will suspect foul play; he will guess that the gang is in some way concerned with my sudden disappearance. By this evening my father will be hot on the trail."

"I wish him luck!" said Joan sarcastically.

At that moment the voice of Pat Donovan hailed her from above stairs.

"I must be off now," she said.

Joan held out her hand to Marie, and as quickly withdrew it.

"I forgot; you won't shake hands with your old friend."

"How can you expect me to, Joan, after your base treachery?" said Marie. "We can never be friends again; that is quite impossible."

"As you wish," said Joan, with cheerful indifference.

And she walked out of the basement.

The bolts were shot back into place, the key grated in the lock, and Marie Rivers was alone again. But she felt that she could endure the loneliness now—felt that it would not be for long. Her father, John Rivers, would soon be making search for her; and Marie, knowing her father's capabilities, felt confident that he would find her, and that her hour of deliverance was at hand.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Trail!

TOM MERRY & CO. were punting a footer about in the St. Jim's quadrangle after dinner, when a smart two-seater car swung into the school gateway.

The juniors glanced at the car and its occupants—casually at first, and then with glad looks of recognition.

"Mr. John Rivers, by Jove!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Oh, good!" said Manners and Lowther simultaneously.

Marie's father was not a very frequent visitor to St. Jim's. It was seldom that he could escape from his duties. But his visits were always welcomed, and the ex-cracksmen, whose reformation had caused a big sensation at the time, was immensely popular with the St. Jim's juniors. With Tom Merry & Co., in particular, he was a great favourite; and as the detective jumped down from his car the juniors sprinted up to greet him.

"Hallo, Mr. Rivers!"

"Jolly glad to see you again!"

John Rivers smiled, and he shook hands very cordially with the Terrible Three.

"This is one of my periodical visits," he explained. "I managed to snatch a day off duty, and thought I'd run down and see Marie—and all my friends here."

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Would you care to come and have tea with us, Mr. Rivers, about five o'clock—with Miss Marie, of course?"



"No luck, Mr. Rivers?" said Tom Merry as he caught the expression on the detective's face. John Rivers shook his head. "Marie is not here," he said. "I understand from the matron that she left the school at an early hour to-day." "My hat!" ejaculated Manners. "We knew nothing of that!" (See Chapter 6.)

"Delighted!" said the detective.
 "And would you tell us some of your latest adventures, Mr. Rivers?" asked Monty Lowther eagerly.
 "Certainly—though I'm afraid I've nothing of a hair-raising or bloodcurdling nature to relate," answered the detective, smiling. "However, I have been concerned in some rather interesting cases. But where is Talbot? He is generally with you."

The Terrible Three looked uncomfortable.
 Talbot was in his study, either buried in a book or brooding. The quarrel with Marie Rivers had hit him very hard; and her refusal to make it up, or even to discuss the matter with him, had wounded the junior deeply. He still shunned the society of his schoolfellows; he had given up attending footer practice; he was keeping himself apart from his Form-fellows, like a recluse.

John Rivers was quick to notice the juniors' embarrassment.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked quickly.

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I—I'm afraid there's been a bit of a tiff between Talbot and Miss Marie," he said. "I can't give you any details, Mr. Rivers, because I don't know them. But they've not been on speaking terms for some days."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the detective, frowning. "If that is the case, then something more than a mere tiff must have occurred. My daughter would not fall out with Talbot over a trifle."

"Now that you're here, Mr. Rivers," said Manners, "perhaps you will be able to put things right. We haven't cared about interfering ourselves; but a few words from you will be a different matter. We should like to see Talbot and Miss Marie friends again."

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther.

The detective nodded.

"I will see what I can do in the peacemaking line," he said. "I confess I am surprised as well as sorry to hear your news. If I succeed in bringing about a reconciliation

I will bring Talbot along to tea as well as Marie—provided you have no objection."

"Of course not!" said Tom Merry. "I hope you'll manage to work the oracle, Mr. Rivers."

"Same here!" echoed Manners and Lowther.

John Rivers nodded to the juniors and strode away in the direction of the sanny. He was puzzled and perplexed by the news of the quarrel. Talbot and Marie not on speaking terms! Why, it was ridiculous! This matter must be inquired into and set right without delay.

Tom Merry & Co. waited in the quadrangle, hoping that John Rivers would succeed in healing the breach and bringing about a reconciliation between his daughter and Talbot.

But when the detective rejoined them, a quarter of an hour later, they could tell by his face that their hopes had not materialised.

"No luck, Mr. Rivers?" said Tom Merry.

The detective shook his head gravely.

"Marie is not here," he said. "I understand from the matron that she left the school at an early hour to-day."

"My hat!" ejaculated Manners. "We knew nothing of this, Mr. Rivers."

The sudden departure of the school nurse was news to the juniors.

"It is most strange and inexplicable," said John Rivers. "I have spoken to the matron, and she tells me that Marie received a telegram this morning, summoning her to the bedside of a sick aunt in Yorkshire. We have no relatives in that county, so far as I am aware."

"Then what do you make of it, Mr. Rivers?" asked Tom Merry.

"I hardly know what to make of it, my boy. Marie asked Miss Pinch for leave of absence for a few days, in order that she might visit the sick aunt. And the sick aunt does not exist; she is a myth. Marie must have made a deliberate misstatement to the matron, though it is quite unlike her to concoct stories which have no foundation in fact. I repeat,

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it is inexplicable that my daughter should leave St. Jim's in this way, especially as she had been apprised of my intended visit."

"It's queer!" said Monty Lowther.

"Dashed queer!" agreed Manners.

John Rivers looked considerably worried.

"There was no reason why Marie should suddenly leave the school," he said. "She was in no trouble—unless we except her quarrel with Talbot. Her affairs were quite in order; though I gather from the matron that she had been somewhat strange in her conduct of late. Up till recently, Marie gave entire satisfaction with her duties; but just lately she seems to have become lax and careless, and to have made several blunders. Indeed, the matron had occasion to admonish her. But that would not account for her leaving the school like this."

The Terrible Three exchanged helpless glances. They were very perturbed by the detective's news.

Why Marie Rivers should have quitted the school, on the very day that her father was due to arrive, was a mystery to which the juniors could find no solution.

"I will go and see Talbot," said John Rivers. "It is possible he may be able to throw some light on the matter."

The Terrible Three escorted the detective to Talbot's study in the Sholl passage. Then they withdrew.

Talbot had been sitting in the armchair brooding—a prey to gloomy thoughts. When John Rivers entered, however, he jumped to his feet at once. He could see that something was amiss.

John Rivers shook hands with the junior; then he told him, briefly and quietly, of Marie's disappearance.

Talbot was even more astonished than Tom Merry & Co. had been. He was thunderstruck.

"I thought, Toff," said John Rivers, using the name by which Talbot had been known in the old days, "that you might be able to throw some light on the matter. But I can quite see that you knew nothing of Marie's departure."

"Nothing!" said Talbot. "This has come as a big shock to me, Mr. Rivers!"

"And to me, also," was the reply. "Can you suggest, Toff, why Marie should suddenly abscond from St. Jim's in this way?"

Talbot shook his head.

The detective stood in silence for a moment, staring into the fire. Then he turned to Talbot.

"I understand that an estrangement has arisen between you and Marie," he said.

"That's only too true," said the junior miserably.

"What was the trouble?" asked John Rivers kindly. "You need not tell me, Toff, if you do not wish to."

"There's little enough to tell, Mr. Rivers. A few nights ago—Thursday night, it was—Marie had a secret appointment. I don't know where, or with whom. Marie was very reticent about it, and refused to explain, and that started the quarrel. It was a fearful night—blowing great guns, and pelting with rain into the bargain—and I urged Marie not to go. She refused to listen to me; but I felt so anxious for her safety that I decided to follow her, so that if anything happened to her I should be close handy. I followed her as far as Rylcombe station, and then she happened to turn her head and see me. She was awfully angry at being followed. There were high words, and Marie ordered me back to the school."

"Did she return safely from this mysterious mission?"

"Yes. I waited up for her, and it was past midnight when she came in. I wanted to apologise for having upset her earlier in the evening; but she wouldn't give me a hearing. To my amazement, she said she was finished with me, and would never speak to me again. After that I made several attempts to see Marie, and reason with her, but it was useless."

John Rivers stroked his chin in perplexity.

"Strange—very strange!" he muttered. "The Marie you have been describing seems quite foreign to the Marie we both know so well. Never have I known her to behave in so unjust and unreasonable a manner. Her refusal to give you a hearing—her apparent determination to force a quarrel—strikes me as being most inconsistent with Marie's character. Yet I do not doubt what you say, Toff. It is only too plain to me that you have been very hard hit by what has happened."

"I've never felt so utterly wretched and fed-up in my life as during the last few days," said Talbot. "It's been one long nightmare. And now, to cap everything, comes the news that Marie has gone. It—it's knocked me all of a heap."

The detective pulled out his pipe and slowly proceeded to fill it.

"It is, of course, a matter for prompt inquiry and investigation," he said. "I will have a chat with Dr. Holmes, and will then endeavour to trace Marie's movements. Little did I dream, Toff, when I left London this morning, that I should be called upon to elucidate a mystery which concerned my own daughter. With whom did Marie have that secret appointment, I wonder?"

Talbot shook his head.

"If that scoundrel Dawlish was at large, I should suspect that he was somehow concerned in it," he said. "But Jim Dawlish is in prison."

"His confederates are not," said John Rivers. "Donovan and Peters were recently given their discharge. They are dangerous rogues, and they have disturbed our peace of mind on more than one occasion. They would not be averse to getting Marie into their clutches. They might somehow have lured her away from the school by a trick. But that is sheer surmise—a guess in the dark. There is not a tittle of evidence to show that Donovan and Peters have had a hand in this business. It is all very mysterious and alarming, and the sooner I acquire some clues, and get on the trail of Marie, the better. I must be off now, Toff. I will not fail to keep you posted of any developments."

They shook hands, and the detective took his departure. On his way to the Head's study, he met Tom Merry & Co., and regretted his inability to stay to tea. He explained that he was about to set out in quest of his daughter, and the juniors wished him luck.

It was a busy afternoon for John Rivers.

After a brief interview with the Head, he proceeded to Rylcombe Station, and made inquiries of the porter on duty.

The man could not help him much. He knew Marie Rivers well, he said, and he was quite certain that she had not taken train at Rylcombe that morning. The last time the porter remembered to have seen her was on the previous Thursday evening, when Marie had taken a ticket to Abbotsford.

John Rivers pursued his inquiries; but he could learn nothing of Marie's movements that morning. She had vanished from St. Jim's with all the suddenness of a ghost at cock-crow. Taggles, the porter, had not seen her depart; she had not been seen on the road, nor at the railway-station. The detective tapped every possible source of information, but without success.

All that John Rivers was able to discover was that Marie had travelled to Abbotsford a few nights previously. It was at Abbotsford, presumably, that she had kept her secret appointment. And it was to Abbotsford that the detective now proceeded, in the hope of picking up fresh information.

Dusk had fallen when John Rivers reached the market town. He was able to do very little that evening in the way of collecting clues. But he took a room for the night at a local hotel, determined to prosecute his inquiries on the morrow. He had an idea that his visit to Abbotsford would prove not unprofitable—that he would be able to secure some important clues upon which to work. But he was still very perturbed in his mind at his daughter's unaccountable disappearance. And there was little sleep for John Rivers that night.

CHAPTER 7.

The Night of the Raid!

"CARRIED, by a majority of one!"

It was Pat Donovan who spoke.

At the lonely house, nestling in a hollow of the Sussex downs—the house which the gang of cracksmen had chosen as their headquarters—there had been a sort of round-table conference.

Pat Donovan and Peters and Joan Dawlish had been discussing their plans for raiding St. Jim's.

Joan Dawlish was strongly opposed to the raid taking place yet awhile. She did not consider it an opportune time, with the school in a ferment over Marie Rivers' disappearance, and with Marie's father on the scene, endeavouring to unravel the mystery. Joan was all in favour of waiting until the sensation had died down, and affairs at St. Jim's were more or less normal again. She pointed out that the risks of raiding the school at this juncture were too formidable to be undertaken lightly. Wait—that was Joan's advice, in a word.

But Joan's arguments had been brushed aside and her judgment overruled.

Pat Donovan and Peters had grown heartily sick of inactivity. They were all eagerness for the projected raid. The burgling of country houses, as Joan had suggested, did not

ANSWERS

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appeal to them overmuch. They were after bigger fish, so to speak. Joan had furnished them with plenty of information concerning St. Jim's; and this, added to the knowledge which the cracksmen already possessed, made them feel that they were on a safe and sure job. They would not have to blindly grope their way. They knew the lie of the land, and they would be able to carry their enterprise through without a hitch.

Funds were low, and the greed of plunder was very strong upon the cracksmen just then. Their eagerness to be up and doing, to get the job over and done with, was overmastering.

Joan Dawlish had made out a strong case in favour of postponement; but Donovan and Peters had been in no mood to listen to her clear-headed reasoning. They rather resented her opposition to their proposal. It seemed to them that Joan was trying to be "bossy" and argumentative, and inclined to be dictatorial. True, Joan had taken her father's place as leader of the gang; but Donovan and Peters were not disposed to knuckle under submissively to her leadership. They had a great respect for her father, Jim Dawlish, and had always been willing to follow where he led; but they had no intention of being dominated by a mere slip of a girl—as Peters described Joan to his partner, in an undertone.

And so Joan Dawlish had been overruled in the matter, and by a majority of two to one it was decided to carry out the raid on St. Jim's that night.

"If you think the risk is too great, Joan, you can stand out," said Donovan.

The girl's eyes flashed angrily.

"I am not afraid of risks, and you know it," she said. "If I were a chicken-hearted sort, I should never have agreed to take Marie's place at St. Jim's. I am as anxious as you are that the raid should be a success, especially after all the trouble we have taken in paving the way. But I feel very strongly that the time is not yet ripe to carry out the raid—that we ought to wait."

"And Peters and I feel just the opposite about it," said Donovan coolly. "There's no sense in prolongin' this discussion. Our minds are made up—"

"Absolutely!" said Peters.

"An' the raid takes place to-night at midnight."

"Very well," said Joan. "Have your own way. I'm not backing out, and you can count on me to play my part in the business. But if we fail—and I've got an uneasy feeling that we shall—you will wish that you had listened to my arguments."

"We sha'n't fail," said Donovan confidently. "Everything'll be carried through without a hitch, and we shall be a dashed sight richer in a few hours' time than we are now."

"In fact, we shall almost be able to retire from the business, after a haul of this size," said Peters, with a grin.

The cracksmen had been drinking—not heavily, but they had taken sufficient to inspire a mood of recklessness and optimism as to the result of their enterprise. Their faces were flushed and their eyes gleamed. They could not foresee any pitfalls in their path; but Joan Dawlish was less easy in her mind.

"What about our prisoner?" inquired Peters, after a pause. "It will be the first time she has been left in the house alone."

Pat Donovan stooped and patted the head of Marcus, the bull-terrier, who was stretched at his feet.

"We'll leave Marcus on guard," he said. "Even if our prisoner was able to get out of the basement—which is not possible—she would never escape from the house. Marcus would see to that. He's a treasure!"

Marcus blinked at his master with bloodshot eyes, and growled a gruff appreciation of Donovan's flattery, as if he understood perfectly.

The two men and their girl accomplice continued to discuss their plans; and after a time Joan Dawlish became infected by the optimism of her companions. They refused to contemplate even the possibility of failure. Their plans were cut and dried, and they were eagerly looking forward to the adventure. Joan found herself looking forward to it with the same eagerness. After all, she reflected, perhaps there was nothing to be gained by waiting. The risks might be a little greater now than they would be later on; but then all burglaries were attended with risks, and a cracksmen who waited until he could eliminate all risks before undertaking a coup would have to wait a very long time.

It was an ideal night for the raid—dark and wild and stormy—just such a night, in fact, as the night on which Marie Rivers had been kidnapped. The wind whistled and shrieked around the lonely house, and the driving rain lashed against the shuttered windows.

The hour was late when Joan Dawlish, suddenly remembering that the prisoner had not had her evening meal, took it down to Marie on a tray.

It had been a long and dreary evening for Marie. For hour after hour she had lain, fully dressed, on her bed.

In a recess of the wall stood a smoky oil-lamp, and its subdued light cast strange shadows around the gloomy basement.

As the long hours passed, Marie's hope of rescue and release had grown fainter, until she was plunged once more into the depths of despondency. She had made an effort to read a book, but she had been unable to concentrate, and had eventually thrown it aside, and given herself up to her dismal reflections.

She had hoped that by this time her father would have discovered some clue as to her whereabouts, and followed it up to a successful consummation. But it seemed that Joan Dawlish's prediction had been fulfilled—that John Rivers had not found a single clue to work upon, and was therefore helpless. Doubtless he would have sought the co-operation of the police in scouring the county; but that would be of little avail. As Joan had said, nobody was likely to penetrate to that isolated spot where Lonedeep stood—an untenanted house, judging by its shuttered windows and its air of desolation.

The monotony of her imprisonment had told heavily upon the St. Jim's nurse by this time. Her cheeks had lost the flush of health; her eyes were heavy; her face haggard. She scarcely dared to conjecture how much longer she might have to remain in that cheerless dungeon of a basement.

Marie had heard the low hum of voices from above stairs, but she had not been able to distinguish what was said. She had guessed, however, that a conference was in progress, and she presumed that it had to do with the forthcoming raid on St. Jim's.

She thought that the raid might shortly take place, and that she was powerless to warn the school authorities, was maddening to Marie.

Everything seemed to foreshadow the success of the cracksmen. Fate seemed to be working hand in glove with them. They had been temporarily baulked by Joan having to leave St. Jim's; but the cracksmen's daughter must have acquired much valuable information during her brief stay at the school—sufficient, in fact, to enable the coup to be carried off without a hitch.

Marie was thinking of Joan Dawlish and of her treachery, and of the old days when they had been inseparable friends, when the basement door was unbolted and opened, and Joan herself came in with the prisoner's supper.

Joan's face was unnaturally flushed, and her eyes were very bright. She laughed as she set down the tray.

"I very nearly forgot you to-night, Marie," she said.

"It wouldn't have mattered," answered Marie wearily. "I don't feel like eating anything."

"Never mind," said Joan. "Doubtless your companions will enjoy it."

The utter callousness of the girl stung Marie Rivers into vehement speech, for her companions were scampering rats. She rose to her feet and faced her former friend.

"Look here, Joan Dawlish, how long is this going to last? How long am I to be penned up in this awful place?"

"Until your father finds you!" said Joan, with a sneer. "Your faith in his deductive powers was quite touching. You were confident that he would have found you by this time and laid the gang by the heels. Well, your father has failed. I've no doubt he has done his best, and raised a hue-and-cry through the county; but the fact remains that he has failed. I daresay he has given up the search by now. John Rivers thinks himself a mighty clever man, but—"

"Stop!" Marie's eyes were blazing. "You may taunt me as much as you like, but I will not hear a word against my father!"

Joan Dawlish retreated a step before that vehement outburst.

"Don't get so excited," she said, "or I shall have to call Pat Donovan. If he thinks you are likely to give any trouble, it will be the worse for you."

"You are cowards, all of you!" panted Marie. "I have been treated worse than a dog! I tell you, Joan Dawlish, that if I have to remain in this place much longer I shall lose my reason! The monotony of it will drive me mad! You are utterly cruel and heartless—you, who were once my friend!"

And then, for the first time since her imprisonment began, Marie broke down. She sank upon the bed and buried her face in her hands, sobbing convulsively.

Marie had been so self-composed, hitherto, that Joan Dawlish was amazed at this unexpected collapse. She stood looking at Marie, and there was no sneer on her face now. She felt strangely moved, and for once in a way her heart smote her as she looked at the girl she had so cruelly wronged.

Joan laid her hand on Marie's shoulder.

"Come, Marie! You mustn't give way like this!" she said in a low tone. "I was a beast to mock you. I was trying to break your spirit, and it seems that I've succeeded only too well."

Marie did not answer.

(Continued on page 16.)

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THE St. Jim's News



ST. JIM'S can boast quite a big menagerie. You will find a "black sheep" in the Sixth Form—Gerald Knox, to wit; while the Fifth can also boast a black sheep in Gerald Cutts. Over in the New House there are several "donkeys," and George Figgins is probably the pick of these "silly asses."

"YOUNG MONKEYS" abound in the ranks of the Third, Walter Adolphus D'Arcy being the most mischievous of the tribe. There is also a prize porpoise in the Fourth, who rolls about on dry land, but avoids the water like the plague. I refer, of course, to Baggy Trimble!

I'VE been getting fellows to tell me which are their favourite pets. The results are rather amusing. Kildare of the Sixth has a warm place in his heart for Irish terriers; which is only what you might expect, for Kildare hails from the Emerald Isle. Pat Reilly of the Fourth also declares that an Irish terrier wants whacking. (I'm surprised at this; I should never whack mine, unless he did something outrageous!)

PERCY MELLISH is partial to snakes, and as he is a very shaky individual, this is not surprising. The burly George Gore prefers a bulldog to any other pet. Failing a bulldog, he says he wouldn't mind a whippet. But I'm afraid that, being rather a bully, he'd "whippet" too often! The gentle Skimpole would dearly love to keep a little lamb. Baa! Skimpy makes me tired!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW'S favourite pet is the dormouse. I suspect that Cardew—who is inclined to be rather a slacker—has an affinity with the dormouse, because it goes to sleep all the winter! Kerr, the Scottish junior, plumps for a Skye terrier, and Fatty Wynn, with a twinkle in his eye, told me that his favourite pet was a Welsh rabbit! Isn't that the delicacy that Dame Taggles sometimes serves at the school shop—melted cheese on toast? I guess David Llewellyn Wynn was trying to have me on toast!

TAGGLES, the porter, is not partial to pets. He has had a good many in his time, and they have all proved snares and delusions. There was a watch-dog who wouldn't watch; a singing-bird that wouldn't sing, and a cat named Mouser, who flatly refused to catch mice. "Wot I says is this 'ere," remarked Taggles, "pets is a dratted noosance, as ever was! You spends all your time a-feedin' an' a-fussin' of 'em, an' you gets nothin' in return!" Taggy, however, is getting sour and grumpy in his old age. Pets are awfully jolly, to my way of thinking, and if I had my own way, I'd turn my study into a miniature Zoo tomorrow. But if I were to get in a few pets, I'm afraid Tom Merry and Manners would get in a "pet"—of a different kind!



BIG cats, small cats,
Cats with clutching claws;
Short cats, tall cats,
Cats with velvet paws.
Shiny cats and sleek cats,
Mewing cats and meek cats,
Common and unique cats—
My admiration cause.
Savage cats, scowling cats,
Cats with coats of silk;
Purring cats, growling cats,
Cats that steal the milk,
Stay-at-homes and hunter cats,
Cats that climb—the "stunter" cats,
And fat old Billy Bunter cats—
Cats of every ilk.
Shy cats, sly cats,
Cats that crawl and creep;
Cunning cats, "fly" cats,
Cats that always sleep.
Docile cats and furious cats,
Handsome cats and curious cats,
Gentle and injurious cats,
Cats that race and leap.
Stupid cats, wise cats,
Cats that love to feed;
Ugly cats, prize cats,
Sturdy or weak-kneed.
Friendly cats and fighting cats,
Bickering cats and biting cats,
Scuffling cats and smiting cats—
Cats of every breed.
Cheerful cats, happy cats,
Cats that grin with glee;
Sullen cats, snappy cats,
Cats that climb a tree.
Staid old cats and sporty cats,
Humble cats and haughty cats,
Virtuous cats and naughty cats—
They all appeal to me!

EDITORIAL!

By TOM MERRY.

WHEN we published our Special PETS Number, some time back, I was fairly bombarded with contributions, from the pet-lovers at St. Jim's. The result was, that a number of features were crowded out, including an article dealing with Pongo, the mischievous terrier belonging to Wally D'Arcy of the Third.

Young Wally has been badgering me ever since to publish another number dealing with pets, so that his Pongo article can see the light of day. And this week I am giving Wally his head.

There is no love lost between Pongo and Herries' bulldog, Towser. They are eternally scrapping; and opinions differ as to who emerges the victor. Herries declares that Towser could eat Pongo, if he ever fought in earnest; and Wally D'Arcy retorts that Pongo could wipe up the quad with Towser!

On the last occasion when these canine rivals met, I watched the scrap from my study window. Pongo was the aggressor; he usually is! He saw Towser coming along with a juicy bone in his jaws, and he promptly challenged him. Towser dropped the bone, and there was a fierce fight for possession. Over and over the two dogs rolled, pommelling each other without mercy. There was quite a duet of yapping and snapping. Along came Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and I suppose he thought he ought to interfere on Pongo's behalf, as Pongo belonged to his minor. Gussy had no idea how to separate two scrapping dogs. At first, he just yelled to them. "Pongo! Come heah, sir! Towser! Leave my minah's dog alone, you wuff bwute!" The only response to Gussy's commands was a cheaky. "Bow-wow!" from Pongo. Gussy thereupon proceeded from words to deeds, with the result that both dogs forgot their private differences, and turned on Arthur Augustus! He dropped them as if they had suddenly become red-hot, and then bolted across the quad, with Towser and Pongo at his heels.

I asked Arthur Augustus to weigh in with a contribution to this issue; but he says he cannot trust himself to write about Pongo or Towser. "I vegard them as ill-bwed, vicious bwutes, who have no respect what-evah for a fellow's twousahs!" said Gussy heatedly. "And the soonah Pongo is sent home again for misbehaviah, the bettah it will be for my peace of mind—an' my wardwobe!"

Tom Merry



ANIMALS— PAST and PRESENT!

By
Baggy Trimble.

THERE is a line in Gray's "Elegy," dear readers, which appeals to me very much. It is:

"The short and simple animals of the poor."

My study-mate, Wildrake, says I've got it all wrong, and that what the poet really said was "short and simple annals." But I'm perfectly certain that what Gray had in mind were those short-legged, stumpy-tailed poodles that poor people trot around on a string.

Animal life has always interested me. When I was a tiny tottler my uncle took me to the Zoo, and I was gratefully fascinated by all the lions, tigers, hippos, rhinos, and other insects that I saw.

The creatures that interested me most, however, were the porpuss and the boaconstrictor. I am said to be descended from a porpuss. That isn't Darwin's theory of evolution; it's Monty Lowther's! Monty Lowther's

got no cause to make such sneering remarks, because they only go to show that he's a bit of a beast himself!

I seldom visit the Zoo nowadays. I'm waiting for a remittance to turn up before making a trip to London for the purpuss of seeing the porpuss. They won't admit you to the Zoo on tick—more's the pity. Even if you claim to have relations in the monkey-houses, and are longing to see them, the heartless attendants won't admit you. And even if you offer to write them out a check for a bob, as I did once, they won't let you in. It's a shame and a scandal, in my opinion. A fellow ought to be admitted for nix to see his ancestors.

Most of our English animals at the present day are tame and domesticated. But I often wonder what it was like in the days of the Ancient Brittons, when huge monsters stalked up and down the land.

Have you ever heard of the brontosaurus and the stegosaurus? They were whacking great creatures, with enormous appytites. It was nothing for them to polish off a couple of duzzen Ancient Brittons for brekker.

Then there was the ichthyosaurus, which used to rear its hideous head out of the sea and gobble up anybody who had the misfortune to be bathing or paddling at the time. Also there were fiery dragons, and bunyips,

and all sorts of weird monsters. Life couldn't have been worth living in those days, and if a fellow reached the ripe old age of fifteen or sixteen he could consider himself jolly lucky!

A few nights ago, after a supper of cold rabbit-pie, cheese, and pickles, I drempt that I was paddling a canoe on the Rhyll, when suddenly a huge ichthyosaurus, with a long, scaly neck and a great, grinning mouth, popped its head up above the surf. Taking my curridge in both hands—and my paddle as well—I dealt the great monster a terrific crack on the head, which ought to have stunned it and sent it gurgling to the bottom. But my blow caused the huge monster no inconvenience whatever. The paddle broke in half, and I was left defenceless at the mercy of the terrible broot. Suddenly the great grinning mouth opened, revealing two rows of fearsome fangs. It was clearly the monster's intension to gobble me up. I bellowed "Help! Reskew, St. Jim's!" at the top of my lungs; and then, just as the great jaws snapped at me, I woke up, to find Blake and Herries tipping me out of bed, and telling me that rising-bell had gone! Thank goodness, it was only a dream, after all!

I am very fond of animals—the modern domesticated sort, I mean—and I wish they would let me keep a little menagerie of my own at St. Jim's. But they won't, so I shall have to keep an imaginary menagerie. It will consist of a plump pug-dog, a fat, comfortable cat, a gimpy-pig, and plenty of rabbits, to be put into pies as soon as they've been fattened up sufficiently!

These are the pets I should keep if I could, but the powers that be won't let me turn my study into a Zoo. If I had my own way, I should be surrounded by an army of devoted pets; but a fellow can't have his own way in this world, which I consider a jolly shame.

Anyway, I know that I can count on my readers always to be kind to dumb animals—especially the short and simple animals of the poor!



The PRANKS of PONGO!

By
Wally D'Arcy.

PONGO, as everybody knows, is my wire-haired terrier. He is very much attached to me—usually by a chain lead! He's a fine little fellow, is Pongo, but he's so full of mischief that he gets into disgrace with everybody. He has been sacked from St. Jim's at least a dozen times, and then brought back again; which must be a record!

On the whole, poor old Pongo has a rotten time of it—quite a dog's life, in fact. He is banded about from pillar to post. He stays with me at St. Jim's until he commits some crowning outrage—such as removing the seat from Mr. Selby's trousers—and then he is "sacked." There is no dramatic scene in Big Hall, and no public flogging; but I've no doubt Pongo feels the pangs of expulsion just as keenly as an expelled junior. He is put in a special dog-basket, and sent by rail to Easthorpe, which is the station for Eastwood House. After a time, I worry my major to worry Mr. Railton to worry the Head to let me have

Pongo back at St. Jim's again. And you ought to see the fuss he makes of me, when he sees me again! He snuggles up to me, and wags his old stump nineteen to the dozen. Then I give him a friendly lecture. "Now, look here, Pongo, old man, you've got to behave yourself this time. Don't go raiding the school kitchen, or snapping at old Selby, or scrapping with Herries' bulldog. Turn over a new leaf, and start afresh. If you go getting sacked again, they might not let me have you back any more."

I gave Pongo this warning when I brought him back to St. Jim's with me, after the Christmas Vac. He made a really big effort to reform, and for a whole week he was as good as gold, and gave no trouble to anybody. Then he suddenly broke out again!

There was a footer match between the St. Jim's Third and the Greyfriars Third. Knox of the Sixth was referee. Just before half-time, I scored a perfectly good goal, but Knox made out I was offside, and disallowed it.

Old Pongo had been watching the game—he's a bit of a footer enthusiast, you know—and I suppose he thought that my goal ought to count, and that Knox was being unfair. He came tearing on to the field, making straight for Knox, and barking like

the very dickens! Knox tried to dodge away, and he yelled to me to "keep that beastly mongrel off." But Pongo was fairly on the warpath. He made a spring at Knox, and came away with a square piece of trousering in his jaws. Knox was obliged to referee the rest of the game with his overcoat on! He was in an awful rage; and he gave me the choice of taking a licking, or having the matter reported to Railton, and Pongo sent home. I cheerfully took the licking, for Pongo's sake. And before I put Pongo to bed that night, I pointed out to him the error of his ways, and told him it was a criminal offence to take a bite out of a pair of prefectorial "bags." Pongo hung his head; he knew he was in disgrace; and when he gave me his paw to say good-night, there was an "I'll never do it again" expression on his doggy face.

Next morning, the loss of a brace of pheasants was reported from the school kitchen. The pheasants had been a present to the Head, from some sporting governor; and the Head had sent them to the kitchen to be plucked and prepared. In the night, they had mysteriously disappeared; and when I saw that Pongo's chain had also been broken during the night, I put two and two together!

Amateur detectives took up the case, and a trail of feathers was discovered, leading from the kitchen to Pongo's kennel. And in the kennel itself there was evidence enough to hang Pongo a dozen times over.

The Head, who had been looking forward to pheasant-pie for dinner that evening, was fearfully annoyed when he heard the news; and once again poor old Pongo received marching orders from St. Jim's.



THE NIGHT RAIDERS!

(Continued
from
page 13.)

"It will not be long now," Joan went on. "To-night we carry out our plans. To-morrow we shall be clear away with the plunder, and you will get your release."

Marie started up, red-eyed and panting.

"You—you are raiding the school to-night?"

Joan nodded.

"At midnight," she replied. "If we are successful, then it will mean your prompt release to-morrow. If we find too many obstacles in our path, and have to postpone the raid, you will have to remain here. There will be no help for it. I hope, for your sake, that we shall succeed. And now I must be going. I can hear Donovan getting the car out."

"You are all three going to the school?" asked Marie, as Joan moved to the door.

"Yes. I know why you asked that question, Marie. You are thinking there may be a chance of escape. I am sorry, in a way, but there is none. It is not possible to get out of this basement. You have no means of breaking down the door. And even if you had, and forced your way out, there would still be Marcus to contend with, and he is a fierce brute. I'm not telling you this merely to taunt you, but simply to save you wasting time and trouble in a vain attempt to get away. Good-bye, Marie! In a matter of a few hours you will know how we have fared."

Joan Dawlish was gone. The door closed behind her, the bolts were pushed carefully into place, the key was turned, and Marie Rivers was alone again. A few moments later and she was the only human occupant of the lonely house.

Listening, Marie could hear, amid the tumult of the storm, the sound of the cracksmen's car as it was driven away through the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER 8.

A Bid for Freedom!

THE cracksmen were gone, and Joan Dawlish with them. And Marie Rivers experienced a sickening sense of loneliness.

The realisation that she was alone in that bleak house, save for the dog Marcus, struck a chill into the girl's heart.

Marie had nothing to fear, actually; indeed, had anyone visited the lonely house on that wild night, either in quest of shelter, or with less innocent motives, it would probably have meant release for the prisoner in the basement.

It was not fear; it was the feeling of utter abandonment which chilled Marie. Never had she felt so terribly alone. Even the faint sound of the cracksmen's voices, which she had heard at intervals during the day, had afforded the girl a sense of companionship. Now there was no sound save the wailing of the wind on the storm-swept downs and the creaking of shutters from the windows above.

Marie felt as if she had been suddenly cut off from the world.

Her frame of mind was desperate.

Often, during the weary hours of her incarceration in the dingy basement, Marie had thought of escape—not as a practical possibility, but merely as a wild fancy. She had toyed with the idea in her mind, but she had not seriously considered making an attempt; for it seemed, on the face of it, quite hopeless.

Now, however, the idea returned to her with greater insistence.

It seemed absurd to contemplate it seriously, especially after the parting remarks of Joan Dawlish concerning the utter impossibility of securing freedom.

To begin with, there was no means of egress from the basement, the door being of great thickness and solidity, and elaborately fastened on the outside.

As for the iron grating high up in the wall, it was not large enough to admit of the possibility of escape, even had Marie possessed some means of removing the bars.

And yet, in order to distract her mind from the painful knowledge that St. Jim's would shortly be raided and ransacked by the cracksmen, Marie concentrated her thoughts

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upon escape. And presently she proceeded from thought to action.

Rising from the bed, she moved slowly around her prison, sounding the walls on every side.

It was an old house, and there was just the barest possibility that a secret passage of some sort existed unknown to the cracksmen.

The chances of Marie discovering a hidden outlet from the basement, in the nature of a secret panel or a sliding slab of stone, were remote indeed. The girl sounded the walls with great thoroughness, but at every part they were solid, thick, impenetrable.

Marie gave it up at last. She was not disappointed. She had scarcely dared to hope that there was a secret passage leading from the basement.

For a moment Marie stood irresolute, peering around her prison in the subdued light of the smoky oil-lamp.

"The door is the only possible way," she murmured at length. "But there is no way of breaking it down."

She glanced towards the great heap of debris at the far end of the basement. Paper, and cardboard boxes, and empty bottles, and rubbish of every description, had been dumped there by some previous tenant of the house.

A wild notion occurred to Marie to heap some of the litter against the door and endeavour to burn it down and fight her way through the flames. But, even in her desperate frame of mind, such a scheme was not to be seriously contemplated for a moment. The door was not of the type that would easily take fire; and even if it did catch, the smoke and heat would fill the basement and overpower the prisoner. Marie almost laughed at herself for having thought of such an untenable plan.

But she was not beaten yet. It had never occurred to her until now to investigate that heap of debris. By some lucky chance she might discover an implement of some kind powerful enough to batter down the door, or, at all events, to hack an opening sufficiently large for her to squeeze her arm through and get at the fastenings. She reproached herself for not having thought of this before.

Taking the oil-lamp from the recess and setting it upon the floor, Marie went down on her hands and knees and rummaged about amongst the rubbish. It was an obnoxious task, for the litter had been there a long time and it was caked with dust and grime and odious to the touch.

In the course of her operations a great spider emerged from one of the cardboard boxes and crawled over her hand. Marie shook it away with a shudder of loathing. She hated spiders as heartily as she hated rats and mice.

But she went steadily on with her task, wrenching the various articles aside and burrowing deeper and deeper into the pile of garbage.

Presently she came upon a stout piece of wood with an oblong slit at one end. She was about to throw it aside, when she suddenly realised that it was an axe-handle.

This discovery gave Marie definite hope.

Was it possible that the blade of the axe was there also, concealed somewhere amongst the litter?

If only the blade could be found and affixed to the handle Marie would have in her hands a most useful and powerful weapon—the very thing, in fact, with which to attack the door of her prison.

She searched feverishly now, her eyes aglow with this new hope.

It seemed that her search was destined to prove abortive. Deeper and yet deeper she penetrated the pile until she came to rock-bottom—to the cold stone floor of the basement. And here, just as the girl was about to abandon hope, she came upon the thing she sought—the blade of the axe.

With a low cry of exultation, Marie rose to her feet.

At last she had in her possession the means of escape. It was a pity that the blade of the axe was severed from the handle, for it was no easy task to weld them together again. But Marie set to work with the energy of her new-born hope, until blade and handle were successfully reunited.

The blade was extremely blunt. Doubtless the axe had been discarded long ago as unfit for further service.

The cracksmen could not have been aware that such a thing as an axe was concealed among the rubbish in the basement or they would certainly have removed it.

The time was now ripe for Marie Rivers to put her plans for escape into execution. Gripping the handle of the axe in her strong, supple fingers, she advanced towards the door. The axe swung back over her shoulder and was then brought down with all her strength upon the panels.

Crash!

The sound awakened a thousand echoes in the lonely house.

Crash! Crash!

Marie wielded the axe with all the vigour and energy of a sturdy boy. Blunted though the blade was, indentations

began to appear in the woodwork, and they deepened at every stroke.

Suddenly the fierce barking of a dog became commingled with the sound of the axe-blows.

Marcus, the bull-terrier, had been asleep in one of the upper rooms, and now he came plunging down the stone steps leading to the basement. He seemed to divine what was happening, and his barking was loud and furious and terrifying.

Marie Rivers paused for a moment, panting from her exertions.

In her delight at the discovery of the axe, Marie had temporarily forgotten her canine warder. She was given a grim reminder now of his presence.

The bull-terrier, still barking furiously, was pounding and scratching with his great paws on the far side of the door.

Marie tried the effect of a few soothing words.

"It's all right, Marcus! Lie down, there's a good dog!"

The sound of the girl's voice seemed merely to infuriate the beast the more. Obviously, he was not to be soothed or subdued.

Marie hesitated for a moment. With Marcus on the war-path, her hopes of escape seemed slender indeed; for even if she successfully negotiated the door, there would still be Marcus to contend with. And even the plucky-spirited Marie shrank from the prospect of a conflict with the fierce beast.

But now that she was definitely launched on her plan of escape, Marie was reluctant to abandon it. There was just a chance that she might be able to outwit the dog in some way, and she decided to persevere with her attempt.

Raising the axe once more, Marie resumed her attack upon the door.

Crash! Crash!

The splinters flew in all directions as Marie belaboured the door with powerful blows.

Outside, the dog Marcus continued to bark and snarl, as if filled with insensate rage.

Marie succeeded at length in hewing a hole in the panel. The aperture widened gradually beneath her blows, until there was sufficient space for Marie to slip her arm through and draw back the bolts and turn the key which had been left in the lock.

She did not do this yet, however. She stepped back from the door and stood waiting in silence until the fury of the dog's barking should have spent itself and the beast should desist from pounding at the door with his paws.

Now that the axe-blows had ceased, Marcus quieted down. Marie hoped that he would return upstairs; but, apparently, he had lain down outside the door.

The brute seemed to realise that the prisoner was engaged upon a desperate effort at escape, and that he, as Marie's sole warder, was expected to thwart the attempt.

Marie waited patiently in the hope that Marcus would retire, but she could not hear him stir.

She dared not delay too long, for already a couple of hours had passed since the cracksmen had left the house. Very soon, if all went well with their plans, they would be returning.

With a set, resolute face, Marie stepped swiftly towards the door and thrust her arm through the aperture she had made and wrenched at the bolts.

Marcus bounded up on the instant with a fierce snarl. He snapped at the girl's hand, but missed his objective. Then he sprang again, and Marie, clenching her hand, dashed her fist into the brute's face.

Marcus recoiled with a yelp of anguish, and before he could recover, Marie had withdrawn the last of the bolts and also turned the key.

Without a second's hesitation, she threw open the door of her prison and stepped quickly behind it.

Marcus came charging into the basement full-pelt, and Marie was on the other side of the door in a twinkling. Then she slammed the door upon the bull-terrier, who had made a frantic, but futile bound towards the doorway.

"Got you!" panted Marie.

Her face was as white as a sheet, for it had been a tense and nerve-racking moment.

Marcus was now a prisoner in the basement, and the noise he made was almost deafening. He sprang again and again at the aperture in the door, but it was not spacious enough for him to get through. The dog had been outwitted. Marie had escaped from the basement, and all that remained was for her to escape from the house.

She groped her way up the stone staircase hurriedly, eagerly, her heart pulsating quickly. Surely there were no more obstacles to be overcome? Another moment, and she would be free!

Liberty at last!—after the long, dreary days and the unspeakable nights! By her own hand—by her own initiative and courage—she had fought her way to freedom.

But it seemed that a malign Fate was to frustrate her efforts, after all. For just as Marie reached the darkened hall there came a loud and startling peal at the front-door bell—a peal which echoed and reverberated through the lonely house!

CHAPTER 9.

Found!

MARIE RIVERS stopped short, in alarm and dismay. The last echoes of the clanging bell died slowly away.

From below came the muffled barking of Marcus, from without the roar of the wind. There was another sound, too—the sound of a motor-engine which had been left running.

Marie surmised that the gang of cracksmen had returned from their expedition; and that one of them, in order to apprise the prisoner of their return, had given that peal at the front-door bell.

The girl expected the door to open, and the cracksmen to enter, with Joan Dawlish. She tried to move, tried to dart into the sitting-room close at hand; but her limbs, paralysed by fear, refused to function. She stood there in the darkness, her eyes fixed apprehensively upon the door, waiting for it to open.

But it did not open. Instead, there came another peal at the bell—louder and more clamant this time.

With a great effort Marie pulled herself together.

Her surmise that the cracksmen had returned must be wrong. It was conceivable that they would give a single peal at the bell, to let her know they were back; but they would not remain outside, ringing, when they had the key of the door in their possession. And if they had mislaid their key, they would have known that it would be futile to ring the bell, since there was nobody within the house who could give them admittance. Being cracksmen, they would have forced one of the windows, in order to get in.

Besides, there was no sound of voices outside; and this seemed to signify that there was only one caller, and not a number.

Who was he? And what did he want at the lonely house at that late hour?

Possibly it was a friend of the cracksmen who had called; a member of the gang, perhaps; for membership of that shady organisation was not confined to Donovan, Peters, and Joan Dawlish. There were members who lived in the underworld of London, and elsewhere; and this late caller might be one of them.

It was an alarming thought; but Marie was mistress of herself again now. She did not intend to abandon her fight for freedom without a struggle.

Recovering the power of action, Marie stepped swiftly but cautiously into the sitting-room, with the intention of escaping by the window.

It was just possible that the man in the porch, whoever he was, would not see her, or that he would see her too late to frustrate her escape.

The sitting-room was intensely dark; but Marie's eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness by this time. She groped her way towards the window, and unclasped the heavy shutters. It was not a noiseless operation, but Marie fervently hoped that the man outside had not heard it.

Now came the task of raising the lower part of the window. It was quite impossible to accomplish this without noise. The window seemed firmly wedged, and Marie struggled with it for a full half-minute without being able to raise it so much as the fraction of an inch. But she pressed her palms to the framework, and pushed upwards with all her force; and presently the window shot up, with a noisy creaking which seemed almost thunderous to the ears of the dismayed Marie.

The man in the porch must have heard the sound of the window being opened, for before Marie could scramble through the aperture, there was a quick footstep on the gravelled path without. A tall form loomed up in the darkness, advancing towards the window.

With a gasp of dismay, Marie withdrew swiftly into the dark room, and groped her way towards the door, and ensconced herself behind the heavy door-curtains, hoping against hope that she would not be discovered. She flattened herself against the door, and stood rigid.

There came a sound of someone clambering through the window into the room. Marie then heard footsteps, and the sound of a man's quick breathing. There was a click, and an electric-torch was flashed on.

The intruder glanced swiftly round the room. His eye fell upon the door-curtains, and he could not fail to notice the pronounced bulge in the middle of them. He took a

quick stride towards the curtains, and drew them suddenly and ruthlessly aside, exposing to the glare of his electric torch the cowering figure of Marie Rivers.

The girl gave a gasp of alarm, which changed on the instant to one of surprise and joy. As for the man—the intruder whom she had feared—he clasped her in his arms.

"Marie!"

"Father!"

It was a joyous moment for the detective and his daughter. With her father's strong arms about her, Marie Rivers had nothing further to fear. Her grim adventure was over at last; and its unexpected termination brought a great flood of relief to her. It was like the awakening from a hideous nightmare.

"Father! Thank Heaven it was you!" panted Marie. "I—I was afraid it was one of the gang. I was terrified when I saw you coming towards the window. I dodged back into the room, and hid behind the curtain. You see, I had been in the act of making my escape from the house. Had you come a moment later, I should have been out and away."

"You are alone, here, Marie?"

"Yes, father."

"But the others—your captors—where are they?"

Marie disengaged herself from her father's embrace.

"They have gone to St. Jim's," she explained breathlessly. "They are going to raid and plunder the school. You have your car, father? If we hurry, we may yet be in time to interrupt their plans."

John Rivers seemed in no hurry.

"How long have they been gone, Marie?" he asked.

"I have no means of telling; but I should say between two and three hours."

"In that case, we should be too late to frustrate the raid. They should soon be returning here, with the plunder. Our best plan, therefore, will be to inform the police, and have them intercepted and arrested at this end. Is there a telephone in the house, Marie?"

"Not to my knowledge, father."

"We will soon see."

John Rivers explored the various rooms, with the aid of his electric torch; but there was no telephone.

"We must proceed to the nearest village, and knock up the postmaster, and telephone from there," said the detective, rejoining Marie in the sitting-room. "It will not take us many moments. Come, Marie!"

Father and daughter quitted the house by the front door. Marie leaned heavily on her father's arm. In the excitement of her plucky dash for freedom, she had not realised how weak she had become by reason of her long imprisonment in the fetid atmosphere of the basement. The reaction had set in now, and the girl felt quite limp. Her troubles were over now; her father had found her; and before the night was much older, the cracksmen would be safe in the hands of the police.

The only thought which was distasteful to Marie was that Joan Dawlish would share the fate of the cracksmen. For Pat Donovan and Peters, Marie had no sympathy. They were scoundrels both—hardened and unrepentant violators of law, for whom there was only one place—prison.

But the thought of Joan Dawlish being cast into prison, for her complicity in the plot, was far from pleasant to Marie. True, Joan had behaved abominably. She was no weak-willed dupe of the cracksmen; she had deliberately chosen to throw in her lot with them, and to embark on a career of crime. To Marie, her one-time friend, she had behaved outrageously, with a callousness almost incredible in so young a girl.

And yet, in spite of all this, Marie found herself wishing fervently that Joan might be spared the shame and disgrace of imprisonment.

John Rivers assisted his daughter into the two-seater, which was soon speeding away in the direction of the nearest village.

Marie nestled close to her father, smiling up into his face. "Tell me, father," she said, "how did you manage to find me—to trace me to Lonedee?"

"That must wait, my dear," replied the detective. "You shall hear all about it later. It is too long a story to relate at this juncture. Meanwhile, there are one or two matters concerning which I need enlightenment. Let me hear your story, Marie."

Briefly, as the car sped along, Marie told of her experiences—of her first meeting with Joan Dawlish; of her betrayal and kidnapping; of Joan's impersonation of her at St. Jim's; and finally, of her own desperate effort to escape, in the hope of nipping the cracksmen's schemes in the bud.

"Ah! Now everything is clear to me," said John Rivers. "This has been an evil time for you, my poor girl. And

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those who are responsible for all that you have suffered shall pay dearly for their villainy!"

The detective's voice was hard and stern. Marie's thoughts again turned to Joan Dawlish, and she sighed.

They came presently to the village; and the postmaster, sleeping peacefully above the little shop which was post-office, grocery stores, and general emporium rolled into one, was suddenly awakened from his slumbers by a thunderous knocking at the door downstairs.

The postmaster reluctantly left his warm bed, and his head appeared at an upper window.

"I am sorry to trouble you at this hour," came a voice from below, "but I wish to use the telephone. It is extremely urgent. I am a detective officer."

The postmaster checked the expression of annoyance which he had been on the point of uttering.

"Very good, sir," he said. "I'll be down in a moment."

Five minutes later the police at Abbotsford had been duly apprised of the raid on St. Jim's.

It was arranged that a squad of constables should proceed forthwith to Lonedee, so that when the cracksmen returned with their plunder they would walk into a hornets' nest. It was assumed that the burglary had been carried out by this time, and the cracksmen would be returning with the spoils; but, in order to make assurance doubly sure, John Rivers arranged with the police to communicate by telephone with St. Jim's, so that the cracksmen might be intercepted and detained, if they had not already left the school premises.

Having set the stage, as it were, for the arrest of Pat Donovan, Peters, and Joan Dawlish, the detective and Marie returned to Lonedee to await the arrival of the police.

CHAPTER 10.

A Night Adventure!

"ANYBODY awake?"

Talbot asked the question softly, in the Shell dormitory at St. Jim's. He sat up in bed, peering around him in the gloom.

There was no response to Talbot's inquiry. All his school-fellows, apparently, were in the arms of Morpheus.

The solemn strokes of midnight had just boomed from the old clock-tower.

Outside, the storm raged with great violence. It buffeted the windows of the dormitory, making them rattle and shake. But Tom Merry & Co., sleeping the sleep of healthy youth, were undisturbed by the noisy conflict of the elements.

Talbot, however, had not yet slept; nor did there seem any prospect of sleep for him. His brain was far too active to permit of slumber.

Night after night, following the strange disappearance of Marie Rivers from the school, Talbot had tossed restlessly upon his bed, sleeping but fitfully.

The junior was dreadfully worried at Marie's inexplicable absence. He suspected foul play. He was convinced—though he had no definite ground for the conviction—that the gang of cracksmen was in some way responsible for Marie's disappearance. He believed that they had lured her from the school by a trick, and that the girl was now their prisoner.

It was a disquieting thought; and it had preyed upon Talbot's mind by night and by day. He had himself suffered, in the past, at the hands of the Dawlish gang; he well knew that it was no picnic, being a prisoner in their hands. And the thought of Marie Rivers undergoing hardship and privation in some lonely place, and powerless to communicate her plight to her friends, was almost maddening to Talbot.

There had been no word from John Rivers. The detective, when setting out on his quest, had promised to keep Talbot posted of any developments. But no news had yet come to hand. And, in this case, no news was bad news.

For hour after hour Talbot had lain awake, listening to the roar of the elements. But the storm had raged itself out, and now a watery moon shed a soft light over the sleeping countryside.

He had been trying to overcome his fear for Marie; trying to convince himself that her disappearance had some quite innocent explanation, wholly unconnected with the gang of cracksmen.

If only Talbot could have composed his mind and allayed his fears, he might have slept; but he found it impossible to set his mind at rest.

He had slept so little of late, that he foresaw a serious breakdown in health if the insomnia persisted.

Already Talbot had lost his customary fitness. His face was pale and haggard; his eyes lacked their old lustre.

"I simply must get some sleep somehow," he reflected. "I shall be a physical wreck if I go on like this. Think I'll

get up and walk myself round for a bit. That's supposed to induce sleep."

It was then that Talbot, sitting up in bed, had asked if anybody was awake.

Receiving no response, the junior rose quietly and slipped on his clothes and a pair of rubber-soled gym shoes. Then he quitted the dormitory, and made his way down the dark staircase.

It was Talbot's intention to fetch a cap and raincoat from his study and to venture out into the quadrangle. He did not mind a possible drenching; he felt that a brisk walk in the night air might promote slumber.

But Talbot's intentions were never carried out.

He gained the Shell passage, and was mentally reproaching himself for not having brought his electric torch, when suddenly he heard the sound of a door being opened and closed, along the passage, followed by soft footfalls.

Talbot stopped short. It was very dark, and he could discern nobody, as yet; but he had a good sense of location, and it seemed to him that the door which had been opened and closed was the door of Aubrey Racke's study. He knew that the millionaire's son was abed, for Racke's bed was next to his own, and it had been occupied when Talbot left the dormitory. Who, then, had been paying a midnight visit to Racke's study?

The footsteps were coming in Talbot's direction; and the junior promptly stepped aside and took refuge in an adjacent doorway.

It was possible that a master or prefect was on the prowl; and if Talbot were discovered absent from his dormitory, awkward inquiries would follow. His explanation that he was unable to sleep, and was therefore about to take a walk in the quad, would sound rather thin. In any case, no junior, whether an insomnia victim or not, had a right to leave his dormitory during the night.

The footsteps were very near now. And Talbot, standing perfectly motionless in the dark doorway, strained his eyes ahead of him, to see if he could identify the unknown person or persons as they passed.

There were two of them. They moved furtively and slowly, and one of them carried what appeared to be a cricket-bag.

It was too dark for Talbot to recognise them, though they passed within a couple of feet of him; but he saw sufficient to satisfy him that the two men did not belong to St. Jim's.

Burglars!

The thought leapt instinctively to Talbot's mind.

His suspicions were confirmed on the instant, for, just as they had passed the doorway in which the junior stood, the two men started to converse in low tones.

The voices seemed strangely familiar to Talbot—seemed to awaken in his mind unpleasant memories of the past. He could not "place" the owners of the voices at the moment; but he knew that the men were marauders, who had broken into the school to commit a burglary.

Talbot waited until the men were a dozen yards or so beyond the spot where he stood. Then, with a fast-beating heart, he groped his way stealthily in their wake. His rubber-soled shoes made no sound.

He could not see the two figures in front, but he was guided by the sound of their voices.

Little did they dream that they were being silently stalked in the darkness. They led Talbot through a labyrinth of passages, until they came to the corridor at end of which was the Head's study.

Talbot did not follow them down this corridor. He halted at the entrance to it, and watched and waited and listened.

There was a creak as the door of the Head's study was opened, and the men entered.

When the door had closed behind them, Talbot tiptoed



With set, resolute face, Marie stepped towards the door and thrust her arm through the aperture. On the instant the bull terrier on guard leaped up and snapped at the girl's hand, but he missed his objective. Then he sprang again, but this time Marie's clenched fist struck him on the side of the jaw. (See Chapter 8.)

quietly along the corridor, and stood listening for a moment outside the door. He could hear movements within the study, and a low murmur of voices.

Talbot could no longer doubt that a burglary was in progress. Judging by the sounds in the study, the marauders were in the act of forcing the safe.

Talbot's next actions were carried out as swiftly as the darkness would permit. He hurried back to the Shell dormitory, dashed breathlessly into the room, and awakened Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther in turn.

One word was sufficient to explain to the startled juniors why they had been forcibly dragged from the thralldom of deep sleep.

"Burglars!"

The Terrible Three turned out, and scrambled into their clothes. They did not ply Talbot with senseless questions. They knew that he would not awake them for a hoax, or on a false supposition. If Talbot said there were burglars, burglars there assuredly were.

"Buck up, you fellows!" said Talbot. "The rotters are in the Head's study at the moment, trying to force the safe. There are two of them; but there may be more, for all I know. Perhaps we'd better take a couple more fellows—"

Tom Merry nodded.

"You wake Kangaroo, and I'll give Glyn a shake," he said.

Harry Noble and Bernard Glyn were swiftly roused, and informed what was afoot, and in a few moments the party of six, headed by Tom Merry with his electric torch, hurried downstairs, and made their way to the Head's study.

Softly they filed along the corridor and halted outside the door, and listened intently.

No light gleamed in the chink under the door, but the study was undoubtedly occupied, for the listening juniors could hear the sound of movements within.

Tom Merry caught his breath, and turned to his companions.

"Ready, you fellows?" he whispered.

There was a grim nodding of heads.

"Come on, then!"

Without further hesitation the captain of the Shell threw open the door of the Head's study. He stepped quickly

inside, and the juniors swarmed in after him. Tom switched on the light.

They turned their eyes instinctively towards the great iron safe in which the Head kept everything of value.

The door of the safe had been forced, and stood wide open, and before it knelt two men, working swiftly by the light of an electric torch. One was engaged in ransacking the safe, the other was cramming the plunder into an open cricket-bag which stood on the floor.

But it was not the sight of the two cracksmen at work which startled the juniors most, though it was startling enough.

Standing behind the two men, and apparently directing the operations, was a slim, girlish figure. She spun round swiftly as the juniors entered, and Tom Merry uttered a cry of blank amazement.

"Miss Marie!"

Talbot went deathly pale.

"Good heavens!" he gasped, in horror.

It was a terrible moment for the junior. He had longed to see Marie Rivers again; but he would have preferred never to have set eyes on his old chum again, rather than find her in such circumstances as these!

Talbot's head swam. He stared at the girl as if petrified; but she, instead of lowering her eyes and appearing ashamed stared back at him defiantly. She knew that the game was up—that six sturdy juniors would be more than a match for her confederates; but, even in the bitter moment of defeat, she retained her composure.

"You are wrong, Toff," she said coolly, "in supposing I am Marie Rivers. I am Joan Dawlish, and my resemblance to Marie has deceived you all. I took her place at St. Jim's for several days, and you did not know—did not even suspect."

Talbot was thunderstruck. So, too, were Tom Merry & Co. But they had no further opportunity for conversation with the girl who had just admitted her amazing imposture.

Pat Donovan and Peters had jumped to their feet, and they stood at bay like hunted animals. Suddenly they made a dart for the window, and this roused the St. Jim's juniors to swift action.

"Collar them!" roared Tom Merry.

A desperate struggle ensued, and Talbot felt thankful that he had suggested bringing a party of six, instead of a party of four. For Donovan and Peters fought with savage ferocity. They stood shoulder to shoulder, hitting out vigorously.

Tom Merry was temporarily knocked out by a blow in the chest, and Manners and Lowther were bowled over like skittles. Talbot and Noble and Bernard Glyn sprang over their recumbent forms, and closed with the cracksmen. They clung to the scoundrels like tiger-cats, and refused to be shaken off.

The Head's study was the scene of the wildest upheaval. The sounds of commotion penetrated the slumbering House, and Mr. Railton and the others, awakened from sleep, came hurrying to the spot.

By the time the Housemaster came on the scene the cracksmen had been conquered. They sprawled on the floor, each of them pinned down by three juniors.

But when the flushed and triumphant Shell-fellows looked round for the girl accomplice of the cracksmen she was nowhere to be seen.

Joan Dawlish was gone.

Realising, doubtless, that she could have been of no material assistance to Donovan and Peters had she remained, Joan had slipped out of the study whilst the struggle was in progress, and she had escaped into the night.

CHAPTER 11.

Light after Darkness!

THE School House was ablaze with lights. The corridors hummed with voices.

A throng of excited seniors and juniors and fags followed Mr. Railton into the Head's study.

The news that there had been a burglarious attack upon the school, and that the cracksmen had been captured by a party of Shell fellows, in the Head's study, spread through St. Jim's with the rapidity of a fire through gorse.

But the most astonishing piece of news, which set everybody gasping, was that a girl had been concerned in the raid—a girl named Joan Dawlish, who had audaciously impersonated Marie Rivers at St. Jim's for a number of days, and had deceived the whole school, from the Head downwards.

A surging throng clamoured for admission to the Head's study; but Mr. Railton waved them back.

The corridor was teeming with fellows, in their night attire, and there was a confused hubbub of voices.

Naturally, the Housemaster was very astonished, when he came upon that extraordinary scene in the Head's study; and he had just finished questioning Tom Merry & Co. when the telephone bell rang loudly.

are all them little basins mine, also?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Silverbeck, 23, Sefton Park Road, Liverpool.

A SEVERE SHOCK!

A young man was arrested for assault and battery and brought before the judge. "What is your name and occupation?" asked the judge. "And what are you charged with?" "My name is Sparks," answered the prisoner. "I am an electrician, and I am charged with battery." The judge looked sternly at the man in the box, and in a shrill voice cried: "Officer, put him in a dry cell!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Jack Skues, Derby Cottage, Derby Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport.

VERY FEELING INDEED!

A series of heartrending screams were emerging from the door of a house in a quiet back street, when a stranger happened to be passing. Seeing a small boy at the door of the house, he went up to him and asked what was the matter. "Oh," said the youngster, "it's my brother. He's crying because father's so short-sighted." "What a kind-hearted boy he must be!" said the stranger, deeply moved. "And how feeling!" "Yes. You see, father said he was going to tun me, but he's mistaken Billy for me, and it's Billy that's getting the strap!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Philip Greenhalgh, 72, Newearth Road, Walkden, Manchester.

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MIDDLESBROUGH MAKES MERRY!

ENCOURAGING!

Town Girl (at big stores): "Are you sure these seeds will grow into big, strong trees?" Storekeeper: "I will guarantee them, miss." Town Girl: "Well, in that case I'll take a hamper as well!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to M. Smallwood, Endcliffe, Hawnby Road, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough.

A TIMELY DISCOVERY!

Sambo (investigating the internal arrangements of a large watch, is horrified on finding the hair-spring): "Oh, goody! No wonder she won't go! Ef yeah ain't a great hair done got twist' all roun' de in'ards!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Pole, 47, Park Street, Heaton Park, Manchester.

THAT DID IT!

Lady: "Don't call them jugs, Mary; they're ewers." Maid (with a beaming smile): "Oh, thank ye, mum! And THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 944.

It was a call from the Abbotsford police, to warn the St. Jim's authorities that an organised attempt to plunder the school was being made that night.

"Thank you," said Mr. Railton, with a grim smile. "The men are here now. They have been surprised and overpowered."

"Smart work, sir!" came the voice of the Abbotsford inspector over the wires. "I will send a sergeant and a couple of constables to take the men into custody."

"Very good," said the House-master. And he rang off.

Mr. Railton remained with the captured cracksmen, pending the arrival of the police-officers. Some rope was procured, and Pat Donovan and Peters were trussed to a couple of chairs by the juniors, under Mr. Railton's direction.

Tom Merry & Co. were permitted to remain in the Head's study until the police came; but the excited throng in the corridor was ordered back to bed.

The arrival of the police synchronised with the arrival of John Rivers and his daughter Marie. They had waited at Longdeep for the cracksmen to return with the plunder; and as they had not done so John Rivers concluded that the raiders must have been frustrated at St. Jim's and captured. His conclusion proved correct.

The juniors were delighted beyond measure to see Miss Marie again—their own Miss Marie who had been found by her father and brought back. And Marie, for her part, was so moved by the reception they accorded her that she could scarcely speak. Her eyes brimmed with tears, as Talbot clasped her hand and clung to it as if he would never let go. "The Toff" and his girl chum were reunited at last!

"Oh, Marie!" Talbot's voice was husky. "I—I was beginning to think I should never see you again! What happened to you? Were you kidnapped?"

Marie nodded without speaking.

"She is overwrought," said John Rivers. "She has passed through a terrible ordeal, my boys. Everything will be explained to-morrow. But where is the girl—where is Joan Dawlish?"

"Gone," said Tom Merry simply.

"She must have got away while we were scrapping with these precious scoundrels," said Manners.

The detective's face was expressionless, when he heard that Joan Dawlish had made good her escape. But on Marie's face was a look of intense relief. She was glad that she had not been called upon to witness the arrest and disfigurement of the girl who had wronged her.

As for Pat Donovan and Peters, that rascally pair were marched off in the custody of the police, faced with the prospect of a fresh term of imprisonment.

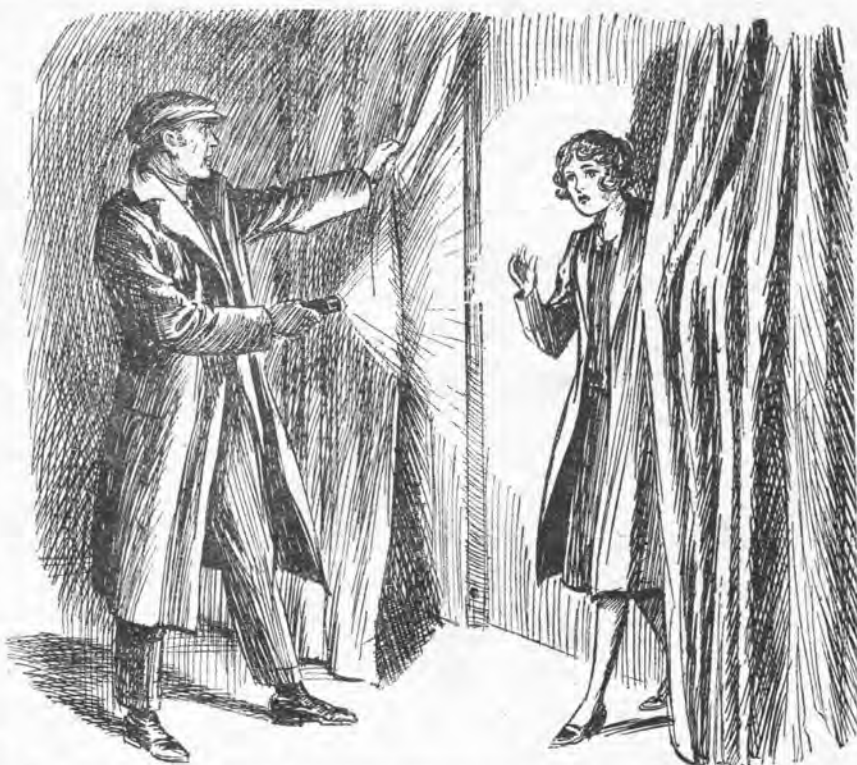
The party in the Head's study dispersed to their various quarters, John Rivers being provided by Mr. Railton with accommodation for the night—or, rather, what remained of it.

And thus the curtain was rung down upon one of the most eventful and exciting nights in the school's history.

Next day there was a very cheery tea-party in Tom Merry's study.

The Terrible Three acted as hosts, and their guests included John Rivers and Miss Marie, and, of course, Talbot.

Talbot was very happy now. The dark clouds had rolled by, proving once again the truth of the saying of the scribe of old—that "heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And now, in the more up-to-date language of Monty Lowther, everything in the garden was lovely!



The intruder took a quick stride towards the curtains and drew them on one side, exposing to the glare of his torch the figure of Marie Rivers. "Marie!" "Father!" It was a joyous moment for the detective and his daughter! (See Chapter 9.)

"How did you manage to find Marie, Mr. Rivers?" asked Tom Merry. "That's what we're dying to know."

"And I am the most curious of all," said Marie, smiling. "Father hasn't even told me yet."

John Rivers smiled across the table at his daughter.

"In the first place, my dear," he began, "I ascertained from Talbot that on a certain night you had a secret appointment, to keep which you entrained at Rylcombe Station. Inquiring of the porter there, I found that you had booked to Abbotsford; and it was to Abbotsford that I proceeded in the hope of picking up further information."

"Various inquiries brought me at length to the tea-rooms which you and Joan Dawlish had visited on the afternoon of the football match between St. Jim's and Abbotsford. Dropping in for a cup of tea, I inquired of the waitress if she remembered, among her recent customers, a tall, dark, and very attractive young lady—"

"Flatterer!" said Marie, blushing down at her tea-cup.

"I gave her a full description of you," went on John Rivers, "and she remembered you quite well. You visited the tea-rooms, she said, in company with another girl who bore a quite remarkable resemblance to you. Indeed, the waitress took you for twin sisters. She heard you, during tea, address each other as Marie and Joan. I realised at once that the Joan must be Joan Dawlish, the cracksmen's daughter, back in England after completing her education abroad. I suspected that the girl would be working in collusion with the gang, and that she had by some means lured you into their clutches."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That opened up the trail!"

John Rivers nodded.

"There was no trace of Marie having gone on from Abbotsford by train," he continued. "It, therefore, followed that if she had been kidnapped, and conveyed to the gang's headquarters, they must have taken Marie by road."

"Inquiries at the various motor garages elicited the fact that on a certain night a closed-in car of the saloon type had stopped at the garage opposite the tea-rooms for a supply of petrol. Later, a mechanic attached to the garage had seen this particular car outside the tea-rooms, and had seen two girls, answering to the descriptions of you and Joan Dawlish, get into it. There had been no kidnapping, so far as he was aware, and no violence of any sort."

(Continued on page 28.)

NOT A VERY PLEASANT THING TO BE ALOFT IN AN AEROPLANE WITH A "FORCED DESCENT" INTO THE JUNGLE STARING YOU IN THE FACE, IS IT? BUT GAN WAGA & CO. MAKE LIGHT OF THIS LITTLE ADVENTURE. HAVE A TRIP WITH THEM, BOYS!



Lost in the Jungle!

A Splendid Story of Jungle Adventure, told by the Inimitable

SIDNEY DREW.

CHAPTER 1. A Quick Descent!

THE dark-skinned gentleman with the long spear and no clothes worth mentioning was sheltering behind a rock and staring at the sky, more in curiosity than alarm. He had seen an aeroplane before. It glided out between the two great peaks and began to drop at a steady slant, heading for the sea and doubtless for the big, white-painted ship anchored in the roadstead below Sendoki. And then all at once, instead of the steady droning sound of the engine, the native heard a succession of coughs and barks and rattles and, lastly, a loud report.

The machine was spinning over and pouring out black fumes that resembled a thick, dark cloud against the clear blue of the sky. Through the smoke something long and grey tumbled at terrific speed. The aeroplane emerged from the cloud, rocking dangerously. The next instant the long and narrow things had swelled into great mushrooms, and the magic of this was too much for the native, who picked up his spear and bolted into the bush.

"Wow! What a jerk! I've jarred every tooth in my head loose!" said Master David Ap Rees. "Where's the old bus?"

Master David Ap Rees was some two thousand five hundred feet above sea-level when he made the remark about his teeth and asked for information about the aeroplane. He was hanging from the parachute in company with his friend Midshipman Valentine Hilton of the steam-yacht *Lord of the Deep*.

"Gone clean out of sight!" growled Val. "I yelled to you to look after your teeth, for the rotten old 'chutes generally open with a tearing bang like that, and I've had some! What's underneath us? Not trees, I hope. And where's that blubber-biter?"

As the parachute swung round they caught sight of the second parachute, about a third of a mile away from them and considerably lower down. It was descending slowly and steadily like their own, in spite of the fact that it had to support Gan Waga, the Eskimo. Below, the ground, though strewn with boulders, was fairly open, but between that and the cliffs over which the aeroplane had disappeared lay a thick expanse of bush and forest.

"You're a nice sort of aeroplane-buster, you are!" said David Ap Rees. "You're a pretty pet to fly a bus!"

"How could I help the thing smashing?" growled the midshipman. "If I wasn't so busy holding on I'd buff you!"

"If you land us in a bunch of cacti or a lot of spiky thorns I'll buff you, my lad!" said the boy from Wales. "This sort of stuff is bad for the nerves. You may be used to it, but I'm not. Can't you back-pedal or put the brakes on or something? We look like bumping down on top of a palm-tree or a monkey puzzle with spikes like bayonets!"

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"Swing her," said Val. "Try and get into a swing with me. I'm not keen on dropping on the top of a sixty-foot tree. Swing like old billy, look you; but do it steadily, and perhaps we'll pull her out."

There was not a breath of wind. After a period of body-swinging, their feet touched ground between two boulders and they freed the safety-catches and scrambled clear as the parachute collapsed into a heap of silk and cordage.

"And that's that whatever, look you, my twopenn'orth of Welsh cheese!" said Midshipman Hilton.

Val looked keenly at David Ap Rees, and David grinned.

"Don't stare," he said; "for it's rude. Besides, if I'm a bit windy I'm not going to let you notice it, my lad! A tidy drop that. My son, I hope you'll get it in the neck for losing that plane. If they make you pay for it, you won't have any pocket-money for the next umpteen years to come. I call it jolly well disgraceful! That bus was as good as new till you started monkeying with it!"

Then they remembered Gan Waga, and shouted lustily. To their great relief, a voice answered them. The Eskimo had come to earth in a rocky hollow and was quite undamaged. He was so undamaged that he was smoking a cigar.

"What went bust, Gan?" asked Val.

"Yo' no use ask me, old bean!" said the Eskimo. "I fly any bus and stunt on any bus, but I not understands the machinery muchness. She seemed to pick ups a bit when we flop outs of her. Dears, dears! I not ableness to tell where she gonied and she gone and lefted us. And what the merry old games now, hunk? This is a rotten sort of silly places to get dumped on!"

"M'yes," said David Ap Rees. "Only a complete ass would chuck too sensible people out of a plane in a hole like the back-blocks of New Guinea. He might have dumped us near a tuckshop, Gan. Absolutely no intelligence at all!"

"I nots like the places a bits!" said the Eskimo. "The last time I came ashores some cannibal chaps wanted to eat me!"

"And a mighty pity they didn't, except for their digestions!" said Val. "There are a few cannibals left, I believe, but they've been hustled back into the mountains. I'm as wild as either of you about the plane, but it wasn't my fault. She was buzzing along splendidly till she got that fit of the jumps and staggers. If we'd only been closer to the sea I think I could have got her out of the spin and safely down. Instead of grousing, I think you ought to be jolly thankful you're alive to talk about it!"

"A fact," agreed Dave. "To be honest, I'm a bit shakier than I thought I was. Is there anything like a drink of cold water about as a nerve-steadier? You've played these stunts before; but don't forget it's the first time I've tumbled out of the sky hanging on to a bit of rag! Pulse a bit jerky, and all that. Still, I suppose I musn't grumble. I

might have been a lot windier than I am. It wasn't the drop so much as the thought that Val would keep on being a full-sized idiot and bang me slap on one of the largest and tallest monkey-puzzle trees in the whole silly island!"

There was little prospect of finding fresh water where they were. It was a sun-baked spot, and the dry, barren rocks were hot to their touch. It had been cold enough high up, as they had come winging between the lofty peaks whose summits carried caps of snow; but down below their leather coats and air-helmets were almost unbearably warm.

"Guess the distance to the yacht, Gan," said Val. "Forty-five or fifty-five miles abouts lesseness or morer," said the Eskimo. "Rottens forests all the ways!"

"And I forgot to grab the chart; we had to leave in such a hurry," said Val. "Perhaps the thing wouldn't have been much good if I had grabbed it. Sorry and all that, old things! We can't go pushing through fifty or sixty miles of unknown jungle, so the best idea seems to try and wriggle through this strip of it and get to the cliffs and the sea. If we don't turn up in a couple of hours, the yacht will get a move on. Plenty of smoke on the cliff may fetch them along."

"That's about it," said Dave. "If we stay here we shall grill. Gan, I'm afraid you're in for a hot time; but stick to your leathers as long as you can, for if the giddy thorns are as sharp as they are down Sendoki way you'll need a suit of armour."

"Dears, dears! I hotness now—awful hotness!" sighed the Eskimo. "We better look fo' the old bus, anyhow. It the only bus we gotted, and Ben Maddocks told me she wanted specialfuls to-morrows."

The jungle was like a wall. Gan Waga pulled out his big, keen-edged knife he always carried. With a piece of cord from one of the parachutes he lashed the haft of the knife to a stout stick.

"It not be so thickness insides," he said, "fo' the stuffs not grow thickfuls where the sun not able to shines."

The Eskimo proved to be right. In turns Val and Dave used the knife and slashed a narrow path into the bush. Thirty feet in the scrub was less dense. Knowing how much great heat affected the Eskimo they refused to let him take his turn at scrub-cutting. And then all at once, as the last thin barrier fell before the blade, they found themselves in a green gloom.

"A jolly sight more open than I expected," said Dave. "I don't know much about this particular zoo. Anything nasty about, Val?"

"Perhaps a snake or two, but beyond that, leaving a chance cannibal out, I don't think there's anything more ferocious than a wild pig or two, unless we get scrub-itch," said Val. "You'll know all about that if you get it, look you, yes, indeed, whatever."

"Rather a pretty name that," said Dave. "But what the thump is scrub-itch if you get it or don't get it!"

"Oh, only a jolly lot of little microbe chaps that burrow under your skin and tickle till you scratch holes in yourself," explained Val cheerfully. "Turpentine or eucalyptus keeps them off, but I forgot to bring a bottle, Gan, old warrior; there's no compass, so we shall have to trust to you to smell our way out. We could easily get waltzing round in a ring here."

Gan Waga wiped his perspiring forehead and panted.

"Yo' not—phe-w!—yo' not got to worry about that, old pineapples," he said. "My nose smell the sea in a straightness line, and I only wishes I was swimming in her. Dears, dears! I wishes, too, I was hugging a polar bear on a butterfuls coldness iceberg."

"I'd be jolly grateful myself to the chap who happened to come along with a quart of ice-cream," said Dave. "A nice son of a gun you are, Val. Why couldn't you smash the bus over the sea, where Gan would have been comfy? You do the silliest things."

Off came Gan Waga's helmet, jerkin and leather breeches. Underneath he wore his usual suit of striped pyjamas. As they might find many things unpleasant to tread on in the forest, things capable of stinging, biting and pricking, the boys persuaded him to retain his boots and puttees. The rest of his garments left behind him. Gan Waga waddled on ahead with the knife on his shoulder.

"I'm not going to sob about it, old scout," said Dave to Val Hilton. "But it strikes me that we may be in any sort of an old mess."

"It struck me that way some time ago," said Val, "but don't start again blaming me for it."

"Don't be a lunatic. Of course you couldn't help the bus busting. Gan says we're about fifty miles from the yacht, but I'm acquainted with that fat gentleman and his ideas about figures. It's just as likely to be twice that."

"Yes, the merry old boy gets a bit hazy when you mention figures," said Val. "I'm not so much rattled about ourselves as about the bus. She must have gone for keens."

A little bird told me that the chief, Hal Honour and Maddock have found something good up there in the mountains. Platinum, I believe it is; stuff ten or twenty times more valuable than gold. Keep mum, of course. I fancy we came along to fetch more samples. And now I've bust the bus and lost her. There'll be nothing said, but I wish to Mike I'd never asked the prince to let me take her out for a spin. That's what I've got on my chest."

"Then you don't care a rap if I finish up as a cannibal stew or gulled on in a pie, I reckon," grinned Dave. "You're some pal. Poof! I shall have to get out of this coat and hat and carry 'em. And don't mention scrub-itch any more, for I tickle all over only to think of it."

Val followed Dave's lead and took off his coat and helmet. The hot, moist air was filled with pleasant scents, but another smell mingled with them that was filled with peril for white people, though the two boys did not realise it, the smell of rotting leaves and fever. They did not possess a single scrap of food or a drain of fresh water. Dave had a wrist-watch which had escaped undamaged, and Val carried an automatic pistol and half a dozen clips of cartridges.

In spite of the melting heat, Gan Waga plodded on gamely enough. No bird, beast, insect or reptile showed itself. It was the burning hot time of the day, and the forest creatures were wisely taking their rest. And then the scrub grew dense once more, telling them that they were coming to the edge of the forest, and they hurried forward as they heard the slashing of the Eskimo's knife.

"Give me hold of that, Gan," said Val. "We don't want you to crumple up. If you'd eat less and take more exercise, you wouldn't be so fat."

"It not that," sighed Gan Waga. "If the wrongness places fo' me. Any old places where my pals are is the rightness place, of course; only when it so hotness I go wobble-wobble about the backbones. Dears, dears! If I found an iceberga now I'd chew my way through it."

They emerged from the scrub streaming with perspiration. Like the other side, the place was sun-baked and strewn with boulders; but they could see the shimmer of the sea beyond. It lay half a mile away, calm and blue. Below was a crescent-shaped beach of brilliant white sand, and a mile to the left of that a wooded promontory pitted out into the azure water. What was to the right they could not see owing to a bulge in the cliff.

"It looks good and cool down there," said Val. "How about getting down, Gan? I think Dave and I can do it. What about you?"

"Not like him, old ducks," said Gan Waga. "I afraid I not much usefuls climbing down rocks."

"We'll shift along," said Dave. "I guess I could manage, but if there's an easier way, why try to break our necks. Not a speck on the mighty ocean. That bus has committed suicide and found a watery grave, Val."

"I can't see how she could founder, unless she hit the cliff, smashed her floats and bounced off," said Val. "And she couldn't have bounced far enough to clear that sand. What's the tide doing, Gan, going out or coming in?"

"Coming in," said the Eskimo. "If the old bus afloats, p'haps yo' see her if yo' goes so yo' look round the bends."

Dave went. He lay down on the edge of the cliff and peeped over. The sea came up to the base of the cliff. It looked like very deep water, and if the plane had bumped there and broken her floats she was no doubt at the bottom under several fathoms of water.

"Awful luck," said Val. "If we only knew where she was, they might dredge her out and patch her up again."

"All that sort of thing is jolly nice of you, but I think the three of us are of more importance than that bus, sonny," said Dave. "The bus is your funeral, but I don't want it to be ours. I love adventures, but not in cannibal islands. I know they'd cook Gan Waga first if they were really hungry, but they might not be really hungry, and decide to keep Gan for a feast day and make a light meal off me."

They had been nearly an hour and a half coming through the strip of forest. On the yacht there would be no real anxiety for some time yet.

"That promontory is the proper place for putting up a smoke," said Val, as they moved along the cliff. "It runs out about three miles, I should think, and I know Sendoki also has a decent bulge seawards. Not that they'll see our smoke sixty miles away, but they know we meant to go up towards the peaks and come back the same way, so they're sure to come along."

Dave put out his tongue.

"Don't make me talk," he said. "I've got a mouth like a sheet of hot sand-paper. Blow your adventures! I wish I was in a deck-chair on the yacht with a quart or so of lemonade, reading a book of them."

The Eskimo, who was still leading the way, turned and shouted and broke into a waddling run. Then, through

the hot air as the Eskimo suddenly disappeared from sight, the boys heard strains of beautiful music, for there can be no more beautiful music to the ears of parched and thirsty mortals than the sound of falling water.

"A giddy tap at last!" cried Val, as he dashed after his chum.

The water, pure and cool, came gushing down the face of the cliff. Val and Dave put their cupped hands under it and drank greedily. Gan Waga had found a pool below, and was sitting in it chin deep and splashing the water over his face and hair. His face glistened and his white teeth flashed as he looked up at them with a happy grin.

"I think I better stop in here till the merry old ship comes along, people," he said. "If they only give me sausages for breakfast, I could stop a year and umpteen seconds. Oh, comfy coolness! Ho, ho, ho! Ours is a nice bath, ours is!"

The waterfall had bitten its way into the cliff, forming a zigzag course, fern-grown, well-bushed, and filled with shallow pools and rocky ladders. There was foothold and handhold in plenty. With ordinary care a fatter person than Gan Waga could have gone down it in the dark for a certain distance—about three-fourths of the way.

"It looks jolly fine, old scout," said Dave, "but I'd like to know what's round the corner. There ought to be a drop of thirty or forty feet there, and it may fall sheer over the cliff. We can't see for the twist, and in this world there are lots of twists in most things."

"I'll soon tell you," said Val.

It was quite easy to descend. Val had almost got to the turn when suddenly a naked figure confronted him. The man had a spear in his hand. He stopped to look back. The man swung round and dashed against Val, who was too startled to attempt to retreat. Val's boots slipped on the wet moss-grown rocks and he went sprawling downwards, knocking the legs of two other natives who were running up from under them.

The downward journey was short and swift. Val soused into a pool. He heard splashes and yells, and then a hand gripped his collar and dragged him out, and as he blinked the water out of his eyes he saw the two natives he had brought down with him scuttling up the rocks again.

"Four papilio gigantica spinnerii," said an angry voice, "and they ate 'em! Blueimps and murder!"

Val beheld a very short man in white ducks and a Panama hat dancing about on the sand, firing a revolver at the sky.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Spinner is Unpopular!

BY the time Val had got the water fully out of his eyes and hair the short man had emptied the revolver, and David Ap Rees and Gan Waga had come down more cautiously than Val to see what the shooting was all about. The stranger's face was the colour of brick-dust, and

he had a bushy white moustache. A tent was pitched on the sand beside the pool into which the waterfall tumbled.

"Sorry, sorry!" said the short man jerkily. "Off the yacht, eh? Niggers told me there was a yacht off Sendoki. I'm riled—savage—murderous! Four papilio gigantica spinnerii. Unknown species which I christened after myself. My name's Spinner—Seagrave Spinner. Blueimps and murder! I left 'em in the tent in a box till I had time to make a killing-bottle large enough to take 'em. And one of the black gormandising monsters plucked the wings off 'em and swallowed 'em like oysters!"

Both Val and Dave remembered enough Latin to know that papilio in that language denotes a butterfly, and gigantica something of large size, so it was easy to gather that the short stranger was an entomologist.

"Caught 'em all in a bunch," he said. "The only four I ever set eyes on, and a new species. And they ate 'em!"

Val's fall had not hurt him, and his wetting had done him no harm. Like Dave, he was very pleased to meet Mr. Seagrave Spinner so unexpectedly, and in such a remote place. He introduced himself, and Dave explained their mishap.

"I heard the plane go over," said the entomologist, "but I didn't hear her again. If she did skim back, I must have been asleep in the tent. I've been around five days. I came up on the Government launch from Hokuli, and they'll fetch me off in another four or five days. I employed five of those black rogues to help me, and that's what they did. Four papilio gigantica spinnerii eaten! Blueimps and murder! I wish they'd sampled a few of the commoner lot out of the killing-bottles. Cyanide of potassium I use, and a little of that stuff would have taught 'em. Now I suppose they've bolted for good. When I got my gun they didn't like it."

"I don't think they did," said Dave. "You could scarcely see the three we got a glimpse of for dust."

"Isn't it a bit risky to be here alone?" asked Val. "I've heard it isn't always safe for a white man to go very far from Hokuli."

"Oh, I don't think so," replied the entomologist. "The Teleli are the only trouble, and they've got back into the hills. The coast blacks are a lot of arrant thieves, but they haven't got the pluck to stick a spear into a white man. Blueimps and murder! I almost wish they'd stuck to cannibalism, and then perhaps they'd have spared my butterflies. Eaten! I could shoot the whole parcel of 'em! Those four would have made my name famous. Plucked the wings off 'em and swallowed 'em. And I might bake and sweat here a lifetime and never get another."

While Gan Waga went to sleep in the shallow pool, well shaded from the burning sun, the boys went into the tent and saw the captures of beetles, moths, and butterflies Mr. Spinner had made. To Val and Dave he seemed to have been very busy and very successful as he opened his zinc-lined cases and showed his victims pinned out on sheets of cork.

"A lot of 'em are rare," he said, "but there's not a new one in the lot. I was going to divide those four, one to London, one to Liverpool, one to Paris, and the fourth to New York. And now they've found an ignoble grave in the interior of a greasy New Guinea black. Heart-breaking!"

"If there were four, there ought to be more where they came from, Mr. Spinner," said Val. "Was it very far away?"

"It wasn't," said the entomologist; "but I couldn't find it alone. And I don't think those fellows will come back. They're scared stiff at the very sight of a gun or a revolver. Perhaps I was foolish to lose my temper, but can you blame me? Now I suppose I shall be stuck here on the beach till the launch comes. If they do come back, it will be to rob me, for they didn't stop for their wages."

"Let's hope they won't show temper about it," said Dave. "Of course, I know nothing about these niggers except what I've been told, and they say that though they're great cowards, they can be jolly cunning and spiteful, so look out, Mr. Spinner."

"I'll watch it!" growled the entomologist. "But what do you three air-wrecks mean to do about it?"

No doubt Mr. Seagrave Spinner was a learned person in his own way and a very good fellow also, but he did not speak like an educated man. This did not make them any less glad to have met him on that remote and lonely beach.

"They'll be getting the wind up about us on the yacht," said Val. "We ought to have been home by now. We thought of pushing down to the end of the promontory and making a big fire there. There ought to be a lot of dead stuff and driftwood."

"Bags of it," said Mr. Spinner. "I'd come with you, but I'm a bit nervous now about leaving my stuff. They might sneak in and eat the rest of my collection. It isn't that I mind poisoning a few of 'em with cyanide of potassium as

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an example to the rest, but I expect the Government would kick up a racket if they found the beach littered with poisoned tiggers. We'll have tea, and you'd better wait till it's a bit cooler. It's cooler outside the tent than inside, so we'll shift the stove and other clutter outside."

Then Gan Waga awoke. As he arose from the pool Mr. Spinner gazed at him curiously, as most people did. Gan glanced at the primus stove and tea-kettle, and then at the big butterfly-net that was leaning against the side of the tent, and Gan Waga decided that he would like some prawns or shrimps for tea. Picking up the net, he walked down the beach and waded into the sea.

"Jiminy!" shouted Dave Ap Rees. "There's a beauty!"

A gorgeous butterfly had come fluttering down from the cliff and was winging lazily across the beach close to the sand, a monster like a rainbow. Mr. Spinner stared at it for an instant like a man entranced.

"Papilio gigantica Spinnerii!" he yelled. "Where's my net? Blue imps and murder! Where's my net? Where's my net, I say?"

The magnificent butterfly danced away as if intending to take a trip across the sea, and at that moment Gan Waga lifted the net out of the water to see if he had caught anything. Then Mr. Spinner discovered what had become of his net. His legs were short and thick, but he could use them. Howling, he trekked over the beach in the wake of the butterfly, plunged into the water and wrestled the net from Gan Waga's grasp. Not understanding what it was all about, and thinking he was being violently robbed of a few prawns that were in the net, the Eskimo clutched the entomologist by the neck, and Mr. Spinner vanished.

In a twinkling, leaving his hat adrift, Mr. Spinner was up again and splashing for the shore. The butterfly was not far away. It skimmed over the shallow water. Cheered on by Dave and Val, Mr. Spinner plunged and pranced after it, making frantic sweeps at the butterfly that were always too short or too wide. Often he fell, only to rise again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Val. "I hope he'll get it, for he's a real stickler. I wonder if we could head the thing off for him."

"Never having hunted any such game, I don't know the rules, old son," said Dave. "Hallo! It's coming inland again! Now if he makes a spurt, he ought to get it. Gee! Can't he make those little legs of his twinkle? Well run, sir! Swat him now! That was close."

It was close, but not close enough. Mr. Spinner was panting and purple, but he would not give in. The butterfly flickered on in front of him, but always a couple of feet or more out of the sweep of the net. Mr. Spinner stopped, and the boys thought he had abandoned the chase, but the entomologist knew more about the habits of the creature than they did.

The butterfly had settled on the side of the cliff, and was displaying its amazing colours. Trailing the net, the entomologist crawled forward on hands and knees. Then he rose inch by inch to his feet, and cautiously slid the net upwards and drove it against the face of the rock.

"Got him!" he shouted triumphantly. "Got him!"

Out of a crevice shot a black, naked arm, and a black hand closed on the handle of the net. As the net was torn away from the entomologist, a second black hand was thrust into it to seize the butterfly.

"You shoota poor black fella, you no pay poor black fella," said a voice. "You no good white fella. You catch 'um poor black fella, eat 'um all along. Too nice sticka on plus. Alla nice good chop. Nice taste good chop."

And, as Mr. Spinner stood momentarily stunned and stupefied, the empty net descended on his head. For the next three or four minutes he danced and raved. After his exertions it was astonishing that he had so much breath and energy left. Val ran back, climbed the waterfall, and shinned along the cliff. The point of a spear was poked at him out of a hole in the cliff.

"I've got a gun, so drop that spear," he said. "You're a nice sort of thief fella. What have you done with that butterfly?"

"Eat 'um," said the voice. "No wanta get shot, wanta get paid. Bad white fella wanta rob poor black fella, not wanta pay. All alongside big cheat."



Down on the tea-party swept an avalanche of mud and water that, for the time being, almost obliterated it. (See this Page.)

"Come out, and I'll see you get paid," said Val. "Can you get more of those butterfly fellas?"

Feeling that Val intended to be friendly, an extremely lean and ugly black ventured out of his dark retreat. He wore a necklace of dog's teeth round his neck, and rings of mother-of-pearl in his ears and nose.

"Plenta samee fellas up topside swamp, boss," he said. "Getta twenty for a dollar. Not for bad white fella. Getta you quick."

"Right you are, Jacky," said Val, shaking some loose silver in the palm of his hand; "bring along and I'll pay. You mistake white fella. He only angry because you eat 'um. Here's a shilling. Four more alla same when you bring butterfly fellas."

Val climbed down and explained to Mr. Spinner that he thought he had settled a misunderstanding with the blacks, and that more butterflies could be procured.

"They seem to think you pumped off your revolver to dodge paying them and to frighten them off," he added. "I only saw one of them. I gave him an English shilling, and told him I'd give him another four when he brought back the butterflies."

"Then I think yo' made a messes of it, Val, old beans," said Gan Waga. "Yo' should have gotted the whole lots together and tolds them. He nots share with the rests, and they all want their pay. And I want my teas. Where the openers for this merry old tin of condensed milk?"

Mr. Spinner was too angry to talk much, but his hospitality was generous. In addition to tea and condensed milk, he provided biscuits, bully beef, and jam. Gan Waga was so busy with the bully beef, biscuits, and jam, which he ate together, that he failed to notice what a person with such keen eyes and ears ought to have noticed. The waterfall had become a mere trickle.

Then down on the tea-party swept an avalanche of water and mud that for the time being almost obliterated it. From the cliffs above came shrill, triumphant cheers. If they could not get their pay, the entomologist's black fellows were trying to deserve it. They had dammed up the pool at the head of the fall until the weight of the water had burst it. Luckily the deluge was clear of the tent.

"This is just jolly; awfully jolly," said Dave, pulling a frond of wet moss out of the nape of his neck. "I wish I could get at them with a good thick stick. It's not so bad if they get no nastier. They may barge rocks next, so we'd better pull the tent clear."

Val stood well back, automatic pistol in hand, while the others dismantled the tent and set it up again well away from the cliff.

"I think I'd pay the beggars if I were you, Mr. Spinner," said Dave. "I don't suppose it will cost you much, and it may save trouble."

"Never a cent," growled the entomologist. "Not a farthing. Not after that trick, not a farthing. Blue imps and murder! Not a rap!"

"Well, watch out then," said Dave. "We're off now to build that fire, but we'll try to get back to you before dark. Will you stay with Mr. Spinner, Gan? There's no need to fag you all that way, Fatness."

"Ho, ho, ho! Yo' not fags me, old bean," chuckled the Eskimo. "I swims, and I get soonerfuls than yo'. I not got so farness to go."

Val borrowed a sheet of white paper from the entomologist, and left that gentleman pacing up and down before the tent, gripping his revolver and muttering his opinion about the blacks, and especially blacks who devoured butterflies, in bitter tones.

"I hope he'll be safe, Val," said Dave, glancing back. "I saw the gleam of a spearhead up there just now, so the niggers are still on the prowl. It would be a beastly thing if we came back and found they'd done something really ghastly to the chap."

"Oh, don't give me the creeps, old man!" said Val. "I don't think he's in much danger of being clubbed or speared. They wouldn't have left him here if there had been such a risk. I don't fancy Spinner is any great shakes, not a scientific chap, but only a collector who collects to sell, but he's a white man, and our people wouldn't risk getting him murdered. He's an ass not to pay up, for those niggers will never be made to understand how he could get into a wax over a few butterflies that are worthless to them unless they're eatable, like those big chaps. They've made up their silly little minds that he's got all he wants, and that his game is to get rid of them without paying."

Gan Waga had taken to the water, and was swimming strongly for the point. The sun was still very hot, and they had no hats, but they cut some broad, thick leaves which sheltered their heads. The promontory was a long coral reef, but soil had accumulated on it and there were plenty of trees. As he had told them, Gan Waga was there first. The sandy beach at the end was littered with driftwood. They built a huge pile of it and set it alight. Then near the fire Val Hilton pinned the sheet of white paper to a tree, and wrote a message on it.

"We want more wood yet, old beans, if we want the fire to burn till sunrises," said Gan Waga.

"Better try the other side then, for we've about skinned this beach," said Dave. "I don't think we've left a twig or a splinter."

As they walked through a little grove of palm-trees, a whoop of delight broke from Val, for afloat on the sea scarcely fifty yards from the beach was the hydroplane. One wing was sagging down, but she was there and afloat, and the tide was slowly drifting her shorewards.

"Good egg! Our luck is still in!" he cried. "She looks bent a bit, but I don't think she can be past mending. I'd give a leg to be able to get her in and beach her. Now, Gan, you old weatherwise ruffian, how's the tide, and is it going to blow?"

"The merry old tide run another hour or more, yo' old know-nothingness," said Gan Waga; "and it not blow hardness to put a match out. It no uses me swim out and try to pushes her ins, she too heaviness, but I go and look at the old bus."

"If the engine will work we'll soon get her in," said Val. "Wait till I yank my boots off and I'll come with you."

"Yo' stops ashores," said the Eskimo. "Children aren't allowed to bathe in these waters, only grown-ups, sensible peoples. Too many hungry old sharks, Val, all abouts. They most respectfulness to me, but they swallow yo' like a pills, old dears, so yo' stay ashores and be good."

"One of the rotten things they made me promise, Dave," said Val, with a sigh. "I'm not allowed to swim in these waters, so that's that."

"And pretty sensible, too," said Dave. "It's a silly sort of thing to be swallowed by a shark. And Gan doesn't mind them a bit, they tell me."

"Not a scrap. I say, I hope the old engine will buzz enough to pull her in. The propeller looks O.K. from here."

They watched the Eskimo climb aboard. He was not long out of sight. He lowered himself into the water and sank until only his hands were visible, and then he rose and swam back.

"The petrol-tank busted and let all the juice run outs," he said; "but it nice and shallowness. I cut a bamboo poles, and I think able to shoves her in with the tides to help. Yo' get some of those snaky creeper things and twists a rope."

In another half-hour the aeroplane was tethered to a palm-tree where there was no surf, with a sandy bottom to rest on when the tide turned, and from the head of the promontory

the crackling fire sent a column of smoke into the still, hot air.

"Gee! I feel better for that, look you," said Val. "She's not much hurt, and though Mr. Prout and Mr. Maddock aren't likely to give us the glad eye, I can put up with their grouching. And now we'll go and ask Mr. Spinner what he's got for supper, for I didn't get much tea."

CHAPTER 3.

Dave Brings Back the Loot!

GAN WAGA swam, for that was easier and more pleasant than walking. Val and Dave made a good pace of it, for they were both rather anxious about the little entomologist. They discovered, when they rounded the shore end of the promontory and reached the beach, that Mr. Spinner was coming to meet them. He was coming at his best run, faster, perhaps, than he had ever chased the most coveted butterfly.

He seemed to have excellent reasons for being in a hurry, eight reasons in all. Six of the reasons carried spears, and two of them were brandishing clubs. Mr. Spinner was waving a revolver and threatening his pursuers with it, but the threat had no effect, for the blacks knew that there were no cartridges in the weapon.

"It looks ugly, Val," said Dave quietly. "Give 'em one over their heads. If they hear the ping of the bullet, that may stop them."

In his hurry, Val must have aimed too low. To his horror he saw one of the natives hurl away his club and drop, writhing in the sand, howling and clutching at his right wrist. The others stopped dead, and Mr. Spinner, more brick-red than ever, his eyes bulging, and his white moustache bristling, raced up to the boys.

"Blue imps and murder!" he said, in a hoarse, ghost of a voice. "Not a thing in the gun. I left all the cartridges in the tent."

Val was not listening, but wondering what he had done to the black, who was still howling. His comrades gathered round him, and then one of them picked up the fallen club and pointed to it. Then the black stopped his yells.

"I only hit his club, and the jar of it knocked him over," Val thought, with an enormous relief.

Val had heard that if a nigger got hurt by a white they made an enormous fuss about it at Hokuli where the Government House was, and Members of Parliament asked questions in the House of Commons. Of course, there was every excuse on the present occasion, even if he had brought down one of the blacks, but he was heartily glad his hasty shot had gone wide, as he intended.

The blacks stood in a group, shaking their spears, and then the particularly ugly one to whom Val had given the shilling thrust his spear into the sand and came slowly forward holding his bony arms above his head.

"Palaver, young fella tuan!" he cried. "Me honest, straight, good fella. Palaver honest just same good white fella."

"Get hold of the automatic, Dave," said Val. "I wish we were jolly well clear of this. I don't want any scrap if I can dodge it!"

"There won't be any scrap," said Dave. "They won't face our gun unless they've more pep and ginger in them than they look to have."

Mr. Spinner was sitting down blowing like a grampus, for it was a long run from the tent.

"What you wanta then, you black rogue?" asked Val. "I'll have the whole bunch of you down along Hokuli, and have you hanged for trying to murder a white man. You'll all hang in one big black bunch along Hokuli gaol."

"No, savee, young tuan fella belonga white yacht," said the black with the necklace. "Me belonga good fella. No savee what you mean wanta murder white fella. No hang along Hokuli. Wanta money from lil' white cheat fella. No want poor black fella cheat, tuan?"

"Pay the dogs!" said Mr. Spinner. "Not a cent! Blue imps and murder! Not a rap! My butterflies! They ate 'em! Imps and murder! Ate 'em!"

"The tuan says you don't deserve to be paid," said Val. "He employed you to help him to catch butterflies, not to eat them. I think you not belonga good fella. You promised to bring me some butterflies. Where are they?"

"Oh, let's finish this rot!" said Dave. "How much is it? If you won't pay these chaps, I will, just to get rid of them!"

"Pay 'em!" shouted the entomologist, jumping to his feet. "They've looted the tent! Pay 'em! I'd sooner shoot 'em all down, and I'd do it, too, if my gun wasn't empty! Blue imps and murder! Shoot 'em like dogs!"

"They haven't wrecked the tent, anyhow," said Dave, in his quiet way. "We've got to stop on the beach to-night, and there won't be any peace till these chaps are satisfied. Trot out your best pidgin English, Val, and ask that handsome-looking brigand how much."

The total sum was eighteen shillings, and, in spite of Mr. Spinner's protests, Dave paid it. Without anything in the shape of thanks, except a few shrill whoops, the natives raced along the beach in a body. A roar of rage burst from the lips of Mr. Spinner as he saw his tent fading away. Three of the blacks had picked it up bodily, and, after securing the rest of the loot, the others followed. Tent, blacks, and loot went up the waterfall and disappeared.

Val looked at Dave and grinned, for Dave's face was as long as a yard of pump water. Then the Welsh boy set his teeth and fled down the beach. Dave still had the automatic. Val sprinted after him, shouting to him to come back, but Master David Ap Rees took no heed. When he began to climb he was a good thirty yards ahead of Val.

"Come here, you ass!" cried Val, for he knew what the Welsh boy was like when his temper was roused. "Let them alone."

It was not the mere fact that he had parted with eighteen shillings that had ruffled Dave, but the bare-faced act of robbery after he had satisfied the niggers' claims. It seemed an absurdly small sum, but blacks do not receive high wages in that wild corner of the earth, and he had given them the amount they had demanded.

"You silly ape, come back!" roared Val. "You'll only get it in the neck, so come back!"

Val followed as quickly as he could, but when he gained the top of the cliff, Master Ap Rees, like the blacks and the tent, had vanished.

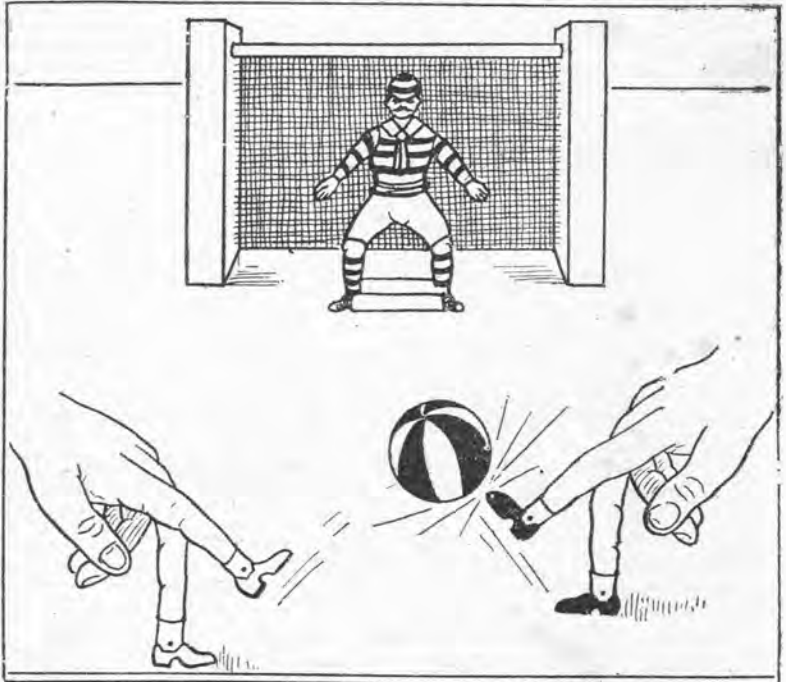
"The blithering ass!" muttered Val.

For a short distance there was a trail left by wet naked feet, but on the hot ground it was simply dying out. Val hurried on. The blacks had not entered the scrub by the path they had cut, and were probably unaware that it had been cut. They seemed to have gone farther on and used a familiar path of their own. Val had no weapon of any kind, and stood irresolute. He could quite understand Dave's rage at being served such a sorry trick, but he was angry with his chum for being such a reckless idiot.

Then from the depths of the scrub he heard the quick bark of the automatic pistol. Only a single shot had been fired. Val, his heart thumping, dashed down the path they had hacked out and burst into the clearing. Dave was standing there, the automatic pistol levelled, and a bunch of spears behind. The tent lay on the ground, and on the ground, too, lay all the loot. Some of the blacks were squatting, and others were on their feet, but they were all holding up their hands.

"Got 'em napping, quarrelling over the division of the boodle!" grinned Dave. "Greedy asses! They could hardly get out of sight before they started scrapping about the stuff, so I just hopped in, collected their spears, and let off one shot to let 'em know it was a business cartridge and not a blank. My hat! You should have seen the thieves jump, old son. They seem to understand your lingo better than mine. Tell 'em this automatic will put a bullet through six men and then some. The chaps with the tent will go first, and others will follow in single file with the stuff they stole. You can bring their bundle of pig-stickers. Go ahead with it."

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Val did his best. He told them that they belonga bad fella gang of blacks, and that his friend the young tuan, would like to shoot them all. Then he ordered them to pick up the tent and carry it down to the beach.

"I reckon if I go behind with the spears, I can manage three of them, Dave," he added. "You've got the gun, so you push the rest along."

Gan Waga, who had been taking a short nap, had just come ashore when the first of the procession drifted down to the beach. The second instalment promptly followed in the care of Dave and the automatic pistol.

At pistol's point the robbers were made to put up the tent, and then Mr. Spinner checked his property.

"I'm not sure if it's all there, but there's not enough missing to hurt much," he said.

"Now, you black trash, I'm going to be kind to you," said Dave. "Kinder than you deserve. You can keep the money, but pack out of this beach quick, and don't come back while we are about."

The old rascal with the necklace began to whine. "The spear, tuan. You not wanta rob poor black fella of his spears, tuan. Good spear take longa time makee, tuan, and worth lotta money."

"I don't think the whole lot is worth eighteen bob," said Dave. "Anyhow, you don't get them, so clear out!"

"Hold on, black fella," said Val. "You come alonga morning time and bring some of those big butterflies, and you getta your spears back sure's a gun."

"Oh, any old thing!" said Dave.

The sun went down, and the sky turned from grey to darkest purple, tinged with red from the glare of the fire on the promontory. When the men came up they had supper. A gunshot roused them just before dawn, for the launch from the Lord of the Deep had arrived. And a couple of hours after dawn, in exchange for the spears, the blacks brought in the butterflies.

THE END.

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"THE NIGHT RAIDERS!"

Continued from page 21.

"Inquiring as to the ownership of the car, I was told that it was the property of a Mr. Mulready, a rather mysterious individual who had recently taken up his residence at an isolated house called Lonedeepe, some miles from Abbotsford, and right off the beaten track. Pat Donovan should have been more careful with his aliases, for he adopted the cognomen of Mulready on previous occasions."

The detective paused, and his audience gazed at him in silent admiration.

"It was at a very late hour that I made this discovery," he continued, "and I could no longer doubt, Marie, that you had been decoyed in Donovan's car to Lonedeepe. The mechanic was able to direct me there, for the car had on one occasion been left at his garage for repair, and he had personally driven it back to its owner. The car was a stolen one, as a matter of fact, and Donovan had had it carefully camouflaged. But that is by the way."

"And so, having acquired this very useful information, I proceeded to Lonedeepe in my own little runabout, deter-

mined to give the cracksmen no quarter if I came to grips with them, and found that my daughter was imprisoned on the premises. You knew the rest, Marie; but the boys will be interested to hear of your plucky attempt to escape, and how you outwitted the bull-terrier—"

"No, no!" interrupted Marie. "They won't want to be bored with that, father."

But John Rivers insisted upon telling the juniors of Marie's bravery; and when he had finished a murmur of admiration and applause ran round the table.

It was, in truth, a very cheery tea-party. Marie Rivers was happy to be back at St. Jim's, after her nerve-racking experiences. And Talbot was more than glad that she was back; and Tom Merry & Co. were glad; and John Rivers was glad that he had found her. Gladness, in fact, was the predominating note at that happy function, which celebrated the return of popular Marie Rivers to St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Screamingly funny from beginning to end: "GRUNDY, THE ARTIST!" next week's magnificent story of St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford. Don't miss it!)



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