

RESULT OF FIRST "SCARLET STREAK" £10 COMPETITION—INSIDE!

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.



No. 653.
Vol. XXIX.
May 16th,
1926.

FIGGINS HITS OUT—FOR HIS HONOUR'S SAKE!

(A tense moment in the long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—inside.)

YOU MUST NOT MISS THIS, BOYS!

(Result of No. 1 on Page 20!)

Try your hand at solving the paragraph—you can see that the opening words are "Mary Crawford is the . . ."—and then write your solution IN INK on a sheet of paper. Cut out the puzzle and the

Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).
so as to reach there not later than FRIDAY, MAY 21st. Any efforts
arriving after that date will be disqualified.

RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

No one connected with the staff or proprietors of this journal may compete.

Our Grand Story. "The Scarlet Streak," has been filmed by the Universal Co. Read the story *and* see the film.

"SCARLET STREAK" No.6.

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I enter "Scarlet Streak" Contest No. 6, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....

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GEM. Closing Date, Friday, May 21st.

6

CHIVALRY! Rather than that the fair name of Cousin Ethel should be dragged into an inquiry concerning the theft of a banknote, George Figgins, who would gladly lay down his life for his girl chum, makes a noble sacrifice!

FIGGINS'S SACRIFICE!



CHAPTER 1.

Cash Wanted!

"BIKE FOR SALE.—G. Figgins, Study No. 4, Fourth." Among many other papers, that notice appeared on the board in the New House, at St. Jim's, on Monday morning.

It attracted quite a lot of attention among the juniors of the New House.

George Figgins, of the Fourth Form, was quite a prominent member of that community. He was junior captain of his House; he was the best batsman in the eleven, he was popular in both Houses, having almost as many friends in the School House as in his own House. Anything that was said or done by Figgins of the Fourth was sure to excite interest. So quite a number of fellows stopped to look at the notice, and to remark to one another that old Figgy was selling his jigger.

Two of the fellows seemed surprised, and not at all pleased. They were Kerr and Fatty Wynn, Figgy's bosom pals.

They stared at the paper, and then stared at one another. "Figgy selling his bike!" said Kerr.

"What the thump does he mean?" demanded Fatty Wynn indignantly. "He hasn't told us. If Figgy's hard up, why can't he tell his pals, before he sticks up his bike for sale?"

"We'll jolly well talk to him!"

"Yes, rather!"

And Kerr and Wynn of the Fourth proceeded to look for George Figgins, with the intention of talking to him.

It was morning break, and the St. Jim's fellows had a quarter of an hour to themselves. Figgins was generally easy enough to find in morning break; but the present occasion was an exception to the rule. Kerr and Wynn looked round the quad for him, but in the vicinity of the New House George Figgins was not to be seen.

"Gone over to the School House, perhaps," suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Let's see."

The two juniors crossed the quad, and by the steps of the School House they came upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, sunning himself there with his usual graceful elegance.

The swell of the School House bestowed a friendly nod on the two.

"Seen Figgins?" asked Kerr.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's friendly face became a little severe.

"Yaas," he answered.

"Oh, good! Where is he?"

"I am afraid, dear boys, that Figgins is buttin' in," said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows are awah that my Cousin Ethel is stayin' in the Head's house on a visit to Mrs. Holmes."

Kerr grinned.

"Yes," he assented.

"Weally, Kerr, it is not a gwinnin' mattah," said Arthur

A moving story of the Chums of St. Jim's, showing George Figgins of the New House in the light of a hero—and an outcast!

By Martin Clifford.

Augustus. "Lots of times, when my Cousin Ethel has been visitin' St. Jim's, it has stuwck me that Figgins seemed to think that she was his cousin and not mine." I have been thinkin' of speakin' sewiously to Figgins on the subject."

"Go hon!" murmured Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis.

"I weally do not approve of Figgins always hangin' about the gate of the Head's garden, you know, while my Cousin Ethel is there. Figgins nevah hangs about the gate of the Head's garden when my cousin is not stayin' with Mrs. Holmes."

"You don't say so!"

"But I do, Kerr! A fellow does not like to be suspicious, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "But it has stuwck me several times that Figgins hangs about that gate, simply because Ethel genewally walks in the garden duwin' mornin' break."

"You really think so?" asked Kerr, closing one eye at David Llewellyn Wynn.

"I do!" said D'Arcy firmly.

"You suppose that Figgy hangs about the gate because Miss Cleveland walks in the garden?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You don't suppose that Miss Cleveland walks in the garden because Figgy hangs about the gate?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Come on, Kerr, old man," chuckled Fatty Wynn. "We know where to look for him now."

"Kerr, you uttah ass—" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

But the New House juniors did not stay to listen to Arthur Augustus. They walked away towards the Head's house, leaving the swell of St. Jim's staring after them in great indignation.

Kerr and Wynn passed under the shady elms, to the place where a little gate gave access from the quad to the Head's private garden. That garden was barred to the Lower School, though prefects of the Sixth Form sometimes walked there in great state. The gate was generally kept locked, and there were few juniors venturesome enough to climb over it and trespass in the forbidden precincts.

On the gate a rather long-legged junior was leaning, staring into the garden.

It was Figgins of the Fourth, and the expression on his rugged face was not happy.

Indeed, to judge by Figgy's look at that moment, all the troubles in the universe might have descended in a bunch upon his youthful shoulders.

Hitherto, while Ethel Cleveland was staying with the Head's wife, she had made it an unbroken habit to walk in the garden during morning break at the school. Whether she walked in the garden because Figgins hung about the gate might be a question; but undoubtedly Figgins hung about the gate because she walked in the garden.

But on this Monday morning, Cousin Ethel was not to be seen. No doubt that was the cause, or partly the cause, of the lugubrious expression on the face of George Figgins.

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Figgy looked round at the sound of footsteps with a rather annoyed look. Already he had kicked Baggy Trimble for presuming to lean on that gate by his side. Trimble's opinion was that he had as much right to lean on the gate as Figgins had. No doubt he was right; and Figgy, as a rule, was a reasonable and good-tempered fellow. Yet he had kicked Trimble, and Baggy had relinquished his undoubted rights and fled, lest worse should befall him.

Even his own special pals were not very welcome to Figgins at that moment. But as he recognised the new arrivals, he looked as agreeable as he could.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he grunted.

"Looking for you," said Kerr.

"Well, you've found me."

"What do you mean by it?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

"By what, fathead?" asked Figgins. Figgins, the best-tempered fellow in his House, seemed much less genial than usual.

"We've just seen your paper on the board."

"Oh, that!" said Figgins carelessly.

"Yes, ass," said Fatty Wynn warmly. "What are you selling your bike for?"

"Seven pounds, if I can get it."

"I mean, why are you selling it, with the summer coming on? You'll want your bike."

"I can do without it."

"If you're hard up—"

"I'm not hard up."

"Well, I thought you couldn't be," said Kerr. "I know you had a good tip last week from your father. You ought to have some pounds left, if you take any care of your money at all."

Figgins grinned faintly. Kerr, a canny Scottish youth, was always careful of his money, and was seldom or never in the unhappy state known as "stony."

"That's all right, old man," said Figgy. "I've got three pounds left."

"Then why the thump are you selling your bike?"

"I—I want the money."

"You've got three, and you want seven for your bike," said Kerr. "That means that you want a tenner."

Figgins coloured a little.

"Well, yes," he said.

"And what the thump do you want a tenner for?"

No answer.

"And if you want a tenner," said Kerr quietly, "why can't you speak to an old pal, instead of selling your bike, which you jolly well know you'd miss frightfully this summer?"

Figgins shifted uneasily.

"I'm not going to sponge on my pals," he said. "I—I couldn't pay the money back if I borrowed it. Not this term, anyhow. And I—I don't want the jigger."

"You do want it, ass!"

"Well, it's a case of Hobson's choice, then," said Figgins. "I've got nothing else that will bring in the oof, so the jigger will have to go, see?"

"But it's fatheaded!" exclaimed Kerr angrily. "Can't you tell us what you want the money for? You're not beginning to keep secrets in your old age, are you?"

"No. But—"

"You don't want to tell us?"

"Well, no."

"I say, I don't like this, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn, looking quite alarmed. "What have you got mixed up in, to want such a lot of money all of a sudden?"

"Nothing, ass!"

"Well, it's jolly queer. I say, you haven't started backing horses, I suppose, like that ass Cardew of the School House, and Racke of the Shell?"

"Fathead!" was Figgy's reply to that.

Kerr laughed.

"Figgy's an ass, but he's not that kind of ass," he said. "Look here, Figgy, you're not selling your bike. You're an absolute ass in such things, and you'll let it go for next to nothing. It's worth twelve pounds second-hand at the least—and you'll get about half that."

"Well, selling things in a hurry, you know—"

"What's the hurry?"

"I—I want the money to-day."

"You're not selling your bike, I tell you. I've got some money in the bank," said Kerr.

"I know you have, old man," said Figgins, with a smile. "But I'm jolly well not going to touch it. Besides, you couldn't handle it in time. I want it to-day."

"But why?"

No reply from Figgins, but the troubled look seemed to settle deeper on his rugged features. Kerr and Wynn regarded him with growing uneasiness. This was quite unlike the Figgy they knew—always open and frank, never dreaming of keeping a secret from his chums. Some sort

of a change had come over George Figgins, and they could not understand it.

Clang!

"There's the bell for third lesson!" said Figgins, evidently relieved by the interruption.

"Bother third lesson!" granted Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, come on!"

George Figgins cast a last lingering glance over the gate; but the garden was still untenanted. He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped away towards the school—Kerr and Wynn following him with uneasy faces, and in an uneasy mood.

CHAPTER 2.

Baggy After a Bargain!

"TOM, old chap!"

Tom Merry did not answer.

Manners and Lowther, who were with Tom Merry, fixed their eyes on Baggy Trimble with a gaze that ought to have withered him on the spot.

Baggy's cheek in addressing the captain of the Shell as "Tom, old chap" deserved rebuke. But Baggy was impervious to rebuke.

He did not even notice the withering looks of Manners and Lowther. He blinked at Tom Merry with his friendliest blink.

"I say, Tommy—"

"Cheese it!" suggested Tom.

"You see, old fellow, I want you—"

Tom Merry bestowed his attention on Baggy Trimble at last.

"Look here, you fat boulder!" he said. "If you want anything you can say so. But if you call me old chap and old fellow, I shall kick you! Catch on?"

"Kick him, anyway!" said Lowther. "The more Baggy is kicked, the better for Baggy! Turn round, Baggy!"

"Slew him round," said Manners. "We'll all kick together. It does Trimble a lot of good to kick him."

Baggy Trimble grinned feebly.

He decided to take these remarks of the Shell fellows as little jokes.

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy, as an acknowledgment of the little jokes. "I say, Tom Merry, you know all about bikes, don't you?"

"Bikes?" repeated Tom.

"Yes, bikes."

"Well, I suppose I know something about bikes, as I've biked ever since I was big enough to climb on a jigger," said Tom. "I don't know whether I am an expert. What the thump are you driving at?"

"He wants a puncture mended, probably," said Manners. "Better kick him."

"I'm buying a bike!" explained Trimble.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Have you received one of your enormous remittances from Trimble Hall?" asked Monty Lowther. "Bikes cost money, you know."

"Well, I've got some money, you ass!"

"Whose?"

"Look here—" roared Trimble, as the Terrible Three of the Shell chuckled.

"This ought to be inquired into!" said Monty Lowther gravely. "For the first time on record Trimble has some money. Is there really such a place, after all, as Trimble Hall?"

"I don't think!" grinned Manners.

"Look here, don't play the goat, you know," said Trimble. "I'm going to buy a bike, and I'd like you to help me, Tom Merry. You know all about bikes, and I want you to look at it, see, and tell me whether it's worth the money. I don't want to be done."

"Oh, all right," said Tom good-naturedly. "I don't mind! If I have a good look at the machine, I can tell you whether it's worth your money, of course. Are you getting it in Wayland?"

"No; in the school."

"Oh! A fellow selling his bike?" asked Tom. "There's time before dinner to take a squint at it, then. Whose is it?"

"Figgins of the New House."

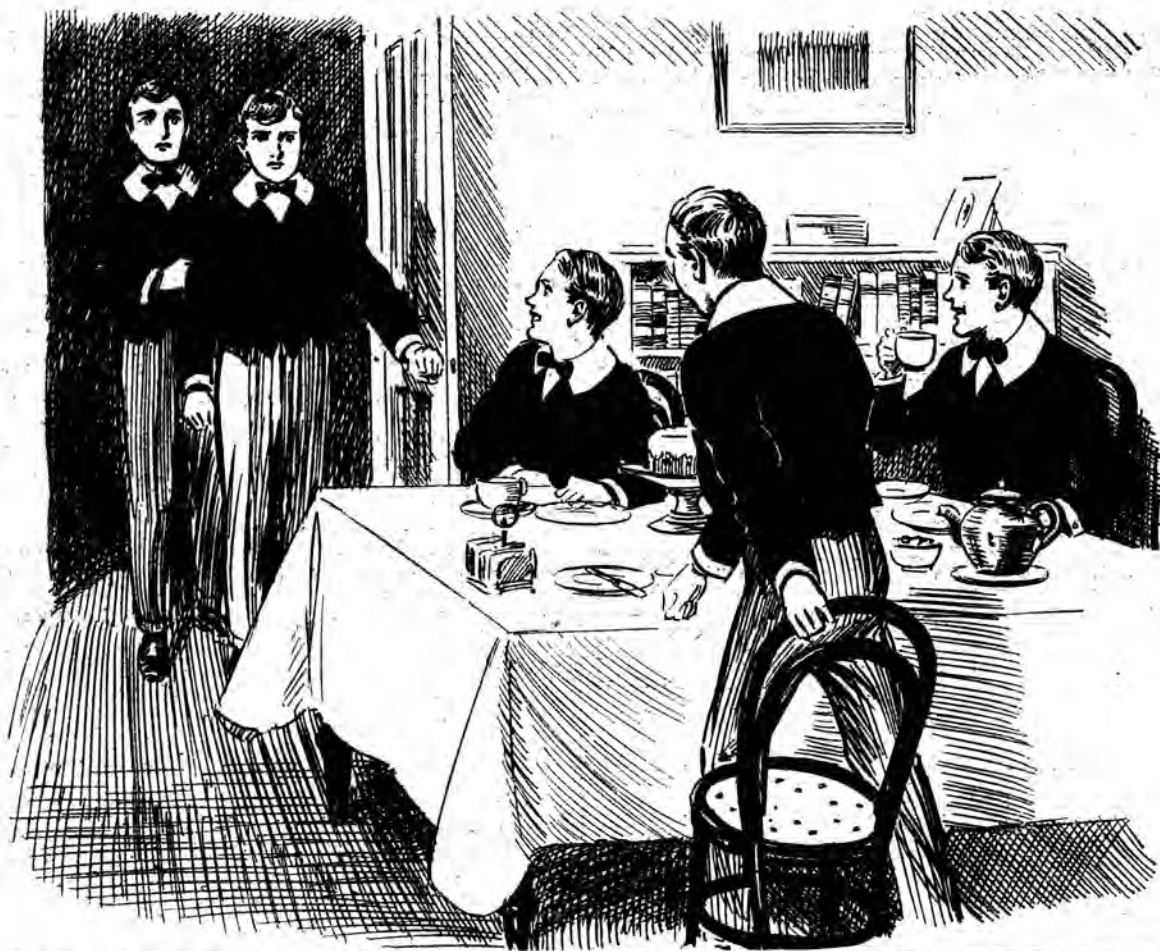
"Figgy selling his bike?" said Manners. "You needn't be afraid of being done, then. Figgy wouldn't do anybody."

"He's got a notice up in his House about it," said Trimble. "I heard some New House men saying so, and I went to look. Now, I want a bike this summer, and I thought of buying it, if it's going cheap."

"I know Figgy's jigger," said Tom. "It's all right. It never cost less than sixteen pounds, and he keeps it in splendid condition. If you get it for twelve, you'll be all right."

Trimble made a grimace.

"I've got seven pounds," he said.



"Trot in, old bean!" Tom Merry gave a cheery smile and a nod as Levison of the Fourth appeared in the doorway of Study No. 10. Olive followed Levison in, but Cardew, the third of the Study No. 9 trio, was not to be seen, having been "barred" by the Shell fellows. (See Chapter 5.)

Tom laughed.

"Then you'd better give it a miss. Figgins wouldn't be ass enough to let his jigger go for seven pounds. It would be throwing it away."

"Well, you see, he must be hard up, or he wouldn't be selling his bike early in the summer," argued Trimble. "If he's hard up, he must want the money—and he may let it go cheap, if he doesn't get any better offers quick. See?"

"I see!" said Tom, rather dryly.

"A fellow's entitled to drive a bargain, what?" asked Trimble.

"That's a matter of opinion," answered the captain of the Shell, still more dryly.

"Well, I can settle that for myself," said Baggy. "What I wanted you to tell me is, whether the bike's worth the money. I don't know much about bikes, and I don't want an old patched-up crock palmed off on me. See?"

"Figgins wouldn't do such a thing, you fat ass!"

Trimble looked dubious.

"Well, you know, any fellow would, if he could," he said.

"What a flattering opinion for a chap to hold about his giddy fellow-creatures," remarked Lowther.

"Well, business is business, you know," said Trimble. "Figgins may have had an accident with his bike, and patched it up—"

"Fathead!" said Tom.

"I'm not taking chances, with a lot of money," said Trimble. "You come along to the bike-shed and look at it for me."

Tom Merry hesitated.

Had he been making a purchase of anything from George Figgins, of the Fourth, he would have been willing to make it with his eyes shut. Tom judged other fellows by himself—and so did Trimble. For which reason, Trimble was always very sharply on his guard against trickery.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom shortly. "May as well walk that way as another, you chaps."

And the Terrible Three walked away to the bike-shed, where George Figgins' bike was to be seen on its stand. It was quite a handsome bike, and nicely kept—Figgy was particular in such matters. Tom Merry glanced over it, Baggy eyeing him anxiously. Baggy was already of opinion that if he could secure that handsome jigger for seven pounds, he would do very well indeed out of the bargain. But he wanted to be sure—in fact, to make assurance doubly sure.

It was not often that such a sum as seven pounds was in Baggy's possession—indeed, this was the first time that any St. Jim's junior had heard of his possessing such a sum. According to Baggy, Trimble Hall was a magnificent dwelling where millionaires most did congregate. But the wealth of Trimble Hall—if any—remained at Trimble Hall, and never travelled as far as St. Jim's.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Baggy, as Tom made his examination of the bicycle.

"It's not new, but it's jolly nearly as good as new," said Tom. "It's really worth as much now as what Figgy's pater paid for it. Figgy ought not to take less than twelve pounds."

"Sure of that?"

"Yes."

"That's good enough," said Baggy. "I can trust you."

"Thanks!" said Tom curtly.

"You wouldn't spoof me, and let me down, just because you're friendly with Figgins, would you?" asked Baggy. Apparently Baggy's distrust of human nature was somewhat deeply planted.

"You fat boulder," said Tom Merry, in disgust. "If you think so, you can think so, and be blown to you. Go and eat coke. Come on, you chaps—Trimble makes me feel ill."

"I say, you know—"

Tom Merry and his chums walked out of the bike-shed, leaving Baggy Trimble still speaking. They felt that they—
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had wasted more than enough of their time and patience on the fat junior.

"Rotter!" murmured Baggy; which was no doubt his way of expressing his gratitude for the trouble Tom Merry had taken.

He blinked over Figgins' bike, scanning it all over. Tom Merry's opinion really was conclusive; but Baggy had a lingering suspicion that something might have happened to the bike, as a reason for Figgys offering it for sale.

But he was satisfied at last.

"It's a jolly good bargain," he murmured, as he rolled out of the bike-shed at last. In the doorway he came on Herries of the Fourth, and blinked at him suspiciously. It occurred to him that Herries might have come there to look at Figgins' bike, and having decided on the purchase himself, Baggy did not want any rivals in the field.

"I say, Herries, heard that Figgys is selling his bike?" asked Baggy, with a fat grin.

Herries nodded.

"Yes; I've come to take a look at it," he said.

"I've just been looking at it," said Baggy. "I asked Tom Merry to look at it to make sure. He thinks it's a bit of a crock."

"Oh, does he?" said Herries.

"Yes; it's patched up jolly well, but he doesn't like the look of it," said Trimble calmly. "He's advised me not to buy it. I say, Herries, do you think Tom Merry knows much about it?"

"Of course he does," said Herries. "More than you ever will. If he thinks it's a rotter, it's a rotter!"

"Then I shall jolly well let it alone," said Trimble, and he rolled on his way—and was considerably bucked, as he blinked over his shoulder a minute or two later, to see Herries of the Fourth walking away also—without having taken the trouble to inspect Figgins' bike.

Dinner came next on Baggy's programme—Baggy would not have been late for a meal, to secure the greatest bargain ever offered. But immediately after dinner he rolled away to the New House to seek George Figgins—and a bargain in bikes.

CHAPTER 3.

Cardew Does Not Care!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW smiled.

His chums, Levison and Clive, frowned.

Cardew seemed amused; but his friends certainly did not share his amusement.

The three chums of Study No. 9 had come out of the School House, and in the quad they passed Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell.

The Terrible Three, without appearing to look at them, slightly changed their direction, so as not to come into contact with Study No. 9.

"Still goin' it!" murmured Cardew.

Levison knitted his brows.

"I'm getting fed-up with it!" he growled.

"What's the odds?" smiled Cardew. "You can't keep fellows from playin' the giddy ox, if they've made up their minds to do it. Those chaps bar me. Well, I bar them; so we're pleased all round."

"I'm not pleased."

Cardew glanced at Levison of the Fourth.

"No; you're not lookin' pleased," he agreed. "But it's an imperfect universe, and everybody can't be pleased all at once. Still, what's bitin' you, Ernest, old bean?"

"We're your friends," said Levison. "We're generally together—and in barring you, the fellows are practically barring us."

"What a loss! Do you really want to hear their conversation?" said Cardew. "You want to hear Manners tellin' you the latest thing he's done with his camera—"

"Oh, rats!"

"And Monty Lowther recitin' his latest and greatest joke—carefully gathered up under the spreadin' chestnut-tree."

"Rot!"

"And Tom Merry talkin' battin' and bowlin' and fieldin' and rowin' and runnin' and things. Dear man, those chaps have palled on me long ago. I got to the end of their conversation before I'd known them a week. Then they began again."

Levison laughed, but he frowned immediately afterwards. "Don't be an ass, Cardew. You've never told us what the fellows have barred you for."

"I've told you to ask them if you want to know."

"They won't tell us, either," said Clive.

"Let it rest at that, then," said Cardew lazily. "But if you don't like takin' your whack in the marble eye, all you've got to do is to bar me in your turn. Bar away."

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"Fathead!"

Study No. 9 walked on, one smiling and two frowning. The fact that he was "barred" by Tom Merry & Co. did not seem to trouble Cardew of the Fourth in the very least. But it troubled his chums very seriously. Without knowing the cause of the trouble, they could not judge who was to blame—but they could not help suspecting that Cardew was somehow at fault. The situation was extremely awkward for them. They were on friendly terms with Tom Merry & Co.; but they could not turn down their own comrade because Tom Merry & Co. had turned him down, especially not without knowing the facts of the case. But whenever they were with Cardew, there was the "marble eye" for them as well as for him; and generally they were with him. Under the elms, as they sauntered on, they came on Blake & Co., of Study No. 6. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, all turned away their heads, affecting not to see the trio.

Clive's eyes sparkled with anger—Levison frowned more deeply, and Cardew laughed.

"It's rotten!" growled Levison, as Study No. 6 walked away in another direction, Herries giving expression to a very audible sniff as they went. "All those chaps wouldn't be set against you for nothing, Cardew."

"Believe me, in me you see a hapless youth more sinned against than sinnin'," said Cardew gravely.

"Oh, rot!"

Cardew sighed.

"And I can't tell you the trouble, and they won't," he said. "Really awkward, isn't it—what D'Arcy would call a dooid awkward posh. I advise you again to turn me down, before the marble eye and the frozen mitt are handed out to you in earnest."

"It's not only those chaps of our own House," said Levison. "There's Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, of the New House—they're with Tom Merry and his friends in this. What has happened?" He bit his lip angrily. "They're the most decent set of fellows in the school, and they wouldn't bar a man for nothing."

"Unless they made a little mistake," suggested Cardew.

"What mistake, then?"

"Ask them."

"Oh, rats!" said Levison crossly. "I've asked them, again and again, and they're as close as oysters about it."

"But you're a little off-side, Ernest, old bean," said Cardew. "Those fellows are keepin' it up—Kerr and Wynn—but Figgins has relented. I never wanted him to—and I hope to goodness he won't inflict his conversation on me now he no longer bars me—but there it is—he's come round."

"That's news," said Clive, rather suspiciously.

"Put it to the proof, if you like," said Cardew lazily. "Let's walk over to the New House and see them."

Levison and Clive assented, much perplexed. Figgins & Co. were to be seen near their House, and they seemed to be engaged in an argument. The School House fellows caught the word "bike" as they came up. But Figgins & Co. broke off as the trio arrived.

"Sorry to interrupt you, dear men," said Cardew politely. "One little word with you, Figgins, if you don't mind."

"A dozen, if you like," said Figgins.

"A lot of fellows are barrin' me, for a reason you wot of," said Cardew coolly. "My friends would like to know whether you are still in the game, or whether you have called it off?"

Figgins smiled.

"I've called it off," he said. "It was a mistake—a good deal your own fault, but a mistake—and I've said that I'm sorry I ever thought—" He hesitated.

"Never mind what," smiled Cardew. "No need for particulars. So far as you are concerned, I'm not barred."

"No," said Figgins.

"Does that satisfy you, Ernest, old bean?" asked Cardew.

"Mind, I haven't the faintest idea why Figgins has changed his mind. It was quite a surprise to me. But there it is."

"We haven't changed ours," said Fatty Wynn grimly.

Kerr shook his head.

"You haven't much to change, have you?" asked Cardew agreeably.

"Why, you cheeky School House rotter—"

"Cheese it, Fatty!" said Figgins hastily. "I think you two fellows might follow my lead in this. I tell you there was a mistake—a horrible mistake."

"Tell us how you know," said Fatty Wynn, while Kerr looked very keenly at his chum.

Figgins coloured.

"I can't!" he said. "But—I do know! Cardew never touched the banknote. I—I—I mean—"

Figgins checked himself, but it was too late. The word had been uttered, and Clive and Levison exchanged startled glances.

"The banknote!" repeated Clive blankly.

"The banknote!" said Levison. "Is there any trouble about a banknote?" His brow grew black. "Is it possible—can it be possible that you suspect Cardew—my friend—you suspect him of—of—"

"Softly, old bean, softly," murmured Cardew. "No need to get your rag out! I haven't got my rag out."

"I don't suspect him, because I know now that he is innocent," said Figgins quietly. "I suspected him at first, because he drew suspicion on himself by playing the ox. He asked for it."

"Is there a banknote missing?" asked Levison steadily.

Figgins nodded reluctantly.

"And you dare to think that Cardew—" Levison broke off. "That's why you barred him, is it? Why, you cheeky rotters—"

"Look here—" began Kerr hotly.

"Oh, rats! Come on, Cardew—leave the rotters alone," said Levison savagely. "So that's it, is it? Let's get away from the cads!"

Levison stalked away, Clive following him, and Cardew followed more slowly. Figgins & Co. looked after them, and Kerr and Wynn seemed disposed to take more severe measures than looking. But George Figgins interposed.

"No House rags on this subject," he said.

"But—" began Fatty Wynn angrily.

"I tell you, Cardew's innocent," muttered Figgins. "I tell you that I know he is. I tell you I've got proof. Isn't that good enough for you?"

"What's the proof?"

"I can't tell you that. But it's so."

"You've been spoofed, Figgy," said Kerr soothingly. "Anybody could spoof you, old chap. Cardew's too deep for you."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins crossly.

"Anyhow, I'm not speaking to a fellow who bagged D'Arcy's banknote in Study No. 6," said Fatty Wynn. "If Cardew hasn't got it, who has? There's a thief somewhere—and the thief's got the banknote. Why, what the thump's the matter with you, Figgy? Are you ill?"

George Figgins really looked ill, for a moment, his face became so ghastly pale as Fatty was speaking. He stood quite unsteadily, as if his sturdy limbs were refusing to support him. His startled comrades made a step towards him.

"You're ill, Figgy!" exclaimed Kerr.

Figgins recovered himself.

"Rot! But—but—" He stammered. "I—it's nothing!"

Kerr fixed his eyes on Figgins.

"Figgy, there's only one way that you can know that Cardew is innocent. If you know, you ought to say. Do you know who's got D'Arcy's tenner?"

Figgins breathed with difficulty.

"Oh, don't ask silly questions!" he muttered.

"Silly or not, you can answer, yes or no, I suppose," said the Scottish junior tartly.

Figgins did not speak.

"If you know the thief, you ought to say. You've no right to leave Cardew under suspicion, though the matter's been kept dark so far, and only a few fellows know."

"Haven't I told you he's innocent?" snapped Figgins.

"Yes—but you haven't told us who's guilty," said Kerr quietly, "and if you know, you're bound to tell us."

"Oh, rot!"

"You can't shield a thief, Figgy. If you're not talking sheer rot, that's what you're doing. For goodness' sake, what's the matter with you? You're as white as a sheet."

"Nothing!" muttered Figgins. "The—the sun's rather strong. I—I think I'll go in for a bit."

Figgins went into the New House.

"Is he off his rocker?" said Fatty Wynn, in sheer wonder. "Why, from his looks, and from what he says, anybody might think that Figgy had the rotten banknote himself."

"Hush!" breathed Kerr.

Fatty Wynn jumped.

"Kerr! You don't think—you can't think—"

"No!" said Kerr. "Figgy's practically asking us to think it, but we don't, and we can't! But—Figgy knows the thief, Fatty, and for some queer reason he wants to screen him. That's what it means."

"But why?"

"Oh, goodness knows! It will have to come out, though," said Kerr determinedly. "D'Arcy's got to have his banknote back—he's not going to lose ten pounds because Figgins is an ass."

"Ten pounds!" repeated Fatty, with a start. "Kerr—ten pounds is the sum Figgy says he must have to-day—that's why he's selling his bike!"

"I—I know."

Fatty Wynn breathed hard.

"Any fellow who didn't know Figgins as well as we do, Kerr, would think that he'd had the tenner, and got fright-

ened, and was trying to raise the money to pay it back," he said.

"I know."

"But—"

"He hasn't," said Kerr. "It's not that—because it can't be that. Figgins could no more steal than he could fly. But—we're going to know who he's shielding—and we'd better speak to the School House chaps about it. It's pretty clear to my mind now that Cardew never did it—and Figgins knows who did."

"I think so, too, now. But—"

"We're bound to set Cardew right with the other fellows, now we know. And Figgins will have to explain," said Kerr. "Come on!"

And Kerr and Wynn crossed the quadrangle to look for Tom Merry & Co., to consult them on this new development; while Figgins, in a troubled and gloomy mood, went up to his study in the New House—where he found Baggy Trimble waiting for him.

CHAPTER 4. A Bargain In Bikes!

BAGGY TRIMBLE was sprawling comfortably, if not gracefully, in the study armchair when Figgins came in.

He grinned and nodded at the New House junior; and received a black look in response. Figgins had never liked the fat School House fellow, and he liked him less than ever now. He had come to his study to be alone to wrestle with the terrible trouble that was on his mind—he did not want company, and Baggy Trimble's least of all.

Deep enough was the trouble that had fallen on George Figgins, of the New House. Only a few days ago he had been the brightest and happiest fellow at St. Jim's—fellows who had seen him walking out of the school gates with Cousin Ethel on Saturday afternoon, had smiled to see him looking so happy and bucked. But a good many fellows had noticed that Figgins had returned gloomy and distraught; and his friends knew that something had caused a projected "Sunday walk" with Ethel Cleveland to fall through. It was scarcely possible that Figgins and Cousin Ethel had quarrelled—but it looked like it. But even that would not have accounted for the mood of black despondency that had fallen on Figgins since that walk to Wayland with Miss Cleveland.

To Figgins himself, indeed, it seemed that the sky had grown black, and that the sun would never shine again. Since he had seen the number "0002468" on a ten-pound note in Ethel Cleveland's possession, Figgins' brain had been almost in a whirl. What was he to think—what was he to believe? That Cardew was innocent of the theft in Study No. 6 he knew, now—for the stolen note was in Ethel's hands. But that Ethel was guilty was wildly and horribly impossible. What to think, what to do, was a hideous problem to George Figgins.

One thing had been sun-clear—he could not allow Cardew to rest under a false imputation. So far as that, he had spoken out; but without mentioning Ethel's name, he could not be explicit; and naturally Tom Merry & Co. had declined to change their fixed belief, merely on Figgins' word without any atom of evidence or proof. If Figgins knew what he said, he could say how he knew—and he could not and would not say.

What could Figgins say?

That Ethel was incapable of a dishonourable action, was as fixed in Figgins' mind as the stars in the heaven. But if others knew what he knew, what would they think? What could they think?

Ethel had told him that it was a "secret" how she had obtained the ten-pound note. That was good enough for Figgins; for anything that Ethel said was good enough for Figgins. But he knew very well that it would not be good enough for an impartial mind. A person in possession of a stolen banknote had to tell some better story than that. And Ethel had been annoyed by what she seemed to consider his pertinacity on the subject—they had parted coldly, almost angrily. She could not know that the banknote was a stolen note. But how had it come into her hands—and if innocently, why was it a "secret"?

Had Kerr and Wynn known what was on poor Figgy's mind, they would not have wondered that he looked "down." But they did not know, and Figgins assuredly did not mean to tell them. They were his dearest chums—but he would have struck them, and cast them off without compunction, if they had harboured a moment's suspicion of Ethel Cleveland. And what could they think if they knew what he knew?

With that black problem tormenting him, Figgins came tramping gloomily into his study; and it was no wonder that he scowled in reply to Baggy Trimble's fat grin.

He threw the door wide open.

"Get out!" he snapped.
 "Look here, Figgins, you know—" began Trimble.
 "Get out!" shouted Figgins savagely.
 Baggy looked quite alarmed.
 "I—I say—if you want to sell your bike, you know—" Figgins, in a very unusual bad temper, was striding towards the fat junior. Baggy's words, fortunately, arrested him.

"Oh, that!" he muttered. He realised that Trimble was there on business, and that it was not a case of Baggy's cheeky and impertinent "butting-in."

"I hear you want to sell it," said Baggy. "If you like to take five pounds for it, I'm your man."

Baggy was beginning low; he was prepared to advance his price as he bargained. Figgins grunted.

"I can't take five pounds. Chuck it!"

"It's a bit of an old crock, you know," argued Baggy.

"It's nothing of the kind, and I don't want to haggle. Leave it alone if you don't want it."

"Well, suppose we say six pounds," said Trimble. "Mind, I don't specially want the bike—"

"If you don't want it, get out and leave me alone!" Baggy grunted discontentedly. How the thump was a fellow to bargain with a chap who did business on these lines? Evidently Figgins himself was not a business man.

"Look here, it's no good asking a lot of money for a second-hand bike," said Trimble. "How much do you want?"

"Seven pounds."

Trimble started.

According to what Tom Merry had told him, the bike would be an immense bargain at that figure. And Baggy had seven pounds!

But it was not like Baggy to close with even a generous offer. He wrinkled his fat brow thoughtfully.

"Say six ten," he said, "and I'm your man."

Figgins glared at him.

"The bike's worth ten at least, and I could get ten by waiting," he snapped. "I want seven pounds to-day, and I'll sell the bike for it—I'd sell my head for it if necessary. If you'll take the jigger for seven pounds, shell out; if not, bunk!"

"If that's the way you talk to a chap—"

"Oh, get out; I'm fed up with you, Trimble!"

"Say six-fifteen—"

"Do you see the door?" asked Figgins. "Get on the other side of it before I put you there, Trimble!"

Baggy eyed him warily.

"I'll make it seven," he said.

Figgins eyed him.

"If you've got the money, shell out and get out! Not that I believe you've got anything of the kind, you fat idiot!"

"Money talks!" sneered Trimble.

Figgins stared, as Baggy counted out six pound notes and two ten-shilling notes on the table. Nobody at St. Jim's had ever seen Trimble of the Fourth in possession of so much money before.

"That's right—what?" asked Baggy.

Figgins nodded.

"You see, my pater sent me the money for a new bike," said Baggy casually. "I've blued some of it, that's why I'm buying a second-hand jigger. See?"

"Nothing to do with me!" growled Figgins. "I don't like having any dealings with you at all; but if you want the bike, you can have it for seven pounds."

"Give me a receipt!" said Baggy loftily.

Figgins wrote out a receipt for the seven pounds, received in exchange for the bike now in the shed. Then he gathered up the currency-notes.

Baggy Trimble rolled away with the receipt in his pocket. It gave him a pain to part with his currency-notes; but he felt that that sum was rather in the nature of a sprat to catch a whale.

Figgins was in a tearing hurry to sell his bike, and had to take what he could get; Baggy was not in a hurry, and he had no doubt whatever that by waiting a few days he would be able to dispose of the machine again at a profit of at least a couple of pounds.

Trimble rolled away at once to the bike-shed, to take official possession of his new property. He found two or three juniors looking at Figgy's bike.

"Not a bad jigger," Thompson of the Shell was saying.

"If Figgy would take ten quid for it—"

"It's worth more," said Redfern. "Jolly nearly as good as new. I could go to eight, but I shouldn't have the cheek to offer Figgins that."

Baggy chuckled.

"Not a bad machine—what?" he asked. "Mine, you know."

The juniors stared at him.

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"Yours?" repeated Redfern.
 "I've bought it from Figgins."
 "Gammon!"
 "Figgy won't sell it for eighteenpence, and that's about your limit!" grinned Gore of the Shell.

Trimble sniffed.

"Look!" he said. And he showed the receipt.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Mellish, who was one of the fellows round the bike. "Seven pounds! Have you been holding up a bank?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I get jolly good remittances from Trimble Hall, you know!" said Baggy airily.

"I don't think!" grinned Mellish.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Trimble. "It's my bike, anyhow. I might sell it again for twelve pounds, if you fellows are keen—"

"Rats!"

The fellows did not seem keen to give Baggy twelve pounds for a bike that he had purchased for seven. They drifted away, and Baggy was left in possession of his prize in a state of fat contentment.

Meanwhile, Figgins, in his study in the New House, had taken out a little leather purse, and added Baggy's seven pounds to three pound notes that were already there. A weight seemed to be lifted from Figgy's troubled mind as he counted over the ten pounds and slipped the purse back into his pocket.

"That does it!" he muttered. "Now I've got to see Ethel, and—"

Figgins left his study, and his footsteps drew him in the direction of the Head's garden once more. But in that garden the graceful figure of Cousin Ethel was not to be seen; and Figgins was called away at last by the clang of the bell for afternoon classes.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Wants to Know!

"TROT in, old bean!"
 Tom Merry gave a cheery smile and a nod as Levison of the Fourth appeared in the doorway of Study No. 10.

The Terrible Three had settled down to tea in the study when Ernest Levison appeared. Clive was behind him. Cardew, the third of the Study No. 9 trio, was not to be seen, however. Cardew was not on visiting terms with the Shell fellows, who "barred" him.

Tom's manner was quite cordial to Levison, and as he perceived Clive gave him a cheery nod also. Manners and Lowther put on their most cordial grins. The fact was the Terrible Three were glad of the opportunity to speak to Levison and Clive without the presence of Cardew. Cardew's presence made it impossible to speak in the friendly strain to which they were used.

"Glad to see you!" said Manners. "Come in to tea—we're just beginning."

"And there's lots!" said Monty Lowther hospitably.

"Welcome as the flowers in May!"

Levison hesitated.

"I haven't come to tea," he said. "But I don't want to interrupt you. It's rather important; but I'll look in later, if you like."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Look in now," he said. "We can tea while we talk. Is it about the cricket?"

Cricket was a great topic at St. Jim's now; House and Form matches, as well as school matches, occupied a great deal of attention; and Tom Merry, as junior captain, had his hands full. Levison was a reliable man in the eleven, and Clive was a promising recruit, and cricket was generally a welcome subject to their ears.

But it was not cricket this time. On a second glance Tom noticed that both his visitors looked decidedly gloomy and restive.

It came into his mind that the call was the subject of Cardew, and his face hardened a little.

He was fed-up with Cardew and with the whole affair of the missing banknote. He did not want to talk about it.

But Levison's next words showed that that was the topic. He came into the study, and Sidney Clive followed him in, but neither sat down.

It dawned on the Terrible Three that the visit was scarcely a friendly one, and their hospitable smile faded away. They went on with their tea, quietly, undisturbed by the frowns of Study No. 9.

"It's about Cardew," said Levison, after a pause.

"Oh, bother Cardew!" said Tom, rather sharply. "Can't we drop that subject? You've asked me six or seven times already why this study bars him. I've told you nothing can be said. That ends it!"

"It doesn't end it."

"Well, it does!" said Manners. "Chuck it! What's the good of singing it all over again?"

"Figgins let out something to-day," said Levison very quietly. "He let it slip. It seems that there's a banknote missing, that you fellows suspect Cardew of bagging it, and that that's why he's barred."

Tom Merry made an impatient gesture.

"That New House ass oughtn't to have let it out!" he said.

"But it's so?"

"Yes, it's so," said Tom. "For goodness' sake don't sing it all over the House and the school!"

"And why not?" demanded Levison fiercely. "You accuse a friend of ours of one of the dirtiest things a fellow could do—a thing that Cardew's incapable of, with all his faults—and you ask us not to sing it out. I shall want to hear a jolly good reason for not shouting it all over St. Jim's, I can tell you!"

"If you want Cardew bunked from the school—" said Lowther.

"If Cardew's guilty of theft he ought to be bunked from

"What?" roared Tom Merry, jumping to his feet.

Levison pushed back the angry Clive. Clive's hands were clenched, and his eyes blazing at Tom Merry.

"Easy does it, old man!" said Levison quietly. "And you keep your temper, Tom Merry."

"Keep my temper!" exclaimed Tom fiercely. "Am I to keep my temper while I'm called a liar in my own study?"

"You seem to expect us to keep our tempers while you call our pal a thief," said Levison.

Tom Merry paused.

"There's something in that, I suppose," he said, driven to that admission by his own sense of justice. "But you'll remember that I haven't said it to you of my own accord; you've dragged it out of me."

"You must tell us the rest," said Levison. "Leave this to me, Clivey old chap; it's not a matter for ragging and raging. These fellows are straightforward; they believe what they say, or they wouldn't say it."

"Thank you!" said Lowther sarcastically.

"But you've got to explain," said Levison. "That's not a threat; but we shall go to the Housemaster, or the Head,



St Jims Jingles!



No. 36—REGGIE MANNERS, of the Third.

YOUNG brothers often prove a
snare,
And likewise a delusion;
They cause commotion every-
where,
And chaos and confusion.
Poor Harry Manners of the Shell
Is one (and there are others)
Who find it difficult to quell
These wayward younger brothers!

In Reggie Manners, of the Third,
We find a scamp appalling;
His high-pitched voice is often heard
When fags are busy bawling.
Self-willed, self-centred, self-esteemed,
He drives his major frantic;
And Harry's eyes have often
gleamed
At each unruly antic!

Young Wally D'Arcy rules the fags
At this illustrious college;
He's cute at organising "rags,"
A fact we all acknowledge.
But Manners minor won't support
The leadership of Wally;
He seldom joins in healthy sport,
But seeks the paths of folly.



A wayward youngster.

Troubles have often come his way,
Troubles both grave and serious;
Advice is wasted, sad to say,
For Reggie is imperious.
He simply won't do what he's told
By older chaps and wiser;
He won't be guided or controlled
By mentor or adviser.

Sulky, and selfish to the core,
Stubborn, perverse, pig-headed.
He riles his major more and more,
His future's to be dreaded.
Unless he takes himself in hand,
And yields to wise compulsion,
Some day he'll have to bear the
brand
And stigma of expulsion!

But there is hope for Reggie still,
He's quite a babe at present;
Let's hope he plays up with a will,
And makes himself more pleasant.
Let's hope his follies are a phase,
And they will vanish later;
That he may serve, in useful ways,
His famous Alma Mater!

NEXT WEEK:—KOU MI RAO, OF THE NEW HOUSE FOURTH

the school," said Sidney Clive steadily. "He's a friend of ours; but friendship doesn't stand for stealing. No decent fellow would call a thief a friend. But Cardew is not guilty, and you know it, or ought to know it!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"If you knew the circumstances—" he said.

"We intend to know them."

"You intend?" exclaimed Monty Lowther angrily. "Are you taking on yourself to give orders in the junior captain's study, you Fourth Form ass?"

"Yes, if necessary," said Clive, between his teeth. "You call a pal of mine a thief! You'll tell me what reason you've got, or I'll make you!"

"Make us!"

"Yes," said Clive fiercely. "Make you! If I can't handle you, I'll jolly well try—and then I'll go to the Head and demand an inquiry. I'll make Dr. Holmes take the matter up and find out the truth, for all St. Jim's to hear."

"And the next thing they will hear will be that Cardew of the Fourth is sacked and kicked out," said Tom.

"That's a lie!"

if you don't explain; and you know that if the matter is reported, either Dr. Holmes or Mr. Ralston will order an inquiry. Then you will have to speak."

"I suppose so," said Tom.

"Well, then, if there's any reason for keeping the matter dark, as you say, better tell us in private first."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. Levison, cool and sagacious, was right as usual, and they had to admit it.

"It's to be kept dark," said Tom at last. "Shut the door, Monty. You two fellows will understand that it's to be kept dark when I tell you that a girl's name may be dragged into it if we're not careful."

"A girl's name!" exclaimed Levison, while Clive stared in utter astonishment.

"Yes, Ethel Cleveland—D'Arcy's cousin, and a friend of your sister Doris," said Tom. "You don't want her name talked up and down St. Jim's, I suppose, in connection with an affair of theft?"

"You beat me," said Levison. "I suppose that's why."

Cardew won't say a word. But I don't understand. Tell us what happened."

"There isn't much of it. Last Wednesday, while the House match was on, a ten-pound note was taken from D'Arcy's study."

"That ought to have been reported to the Housemaster, then," said Clive.

"Well, Blake and his friends consulted with us, and we didn't think so," said Tom tartly. "We went after the banknote, instead. Cardew owned up that he butted into Blake's study—he was there, in fact, when Cousin Ethel came. That was the day she arrived at St. Jim's, and she went to Study No. 6, expecting to find D'Arcy there. He was at the cricket, and she found Cardew instead."

"I think I remember," Cardew went to the study to smoke," said Levison. "One of his thoughtless tricks."

"There's rather too many thoughtless tricks about Cardew," said the captain of the Shell. "He went on playing thoughtless tricks, as you call them—dodging us when we wanted to see him about it, pulling our legs, and generally playing the goat. Perhaps he was only playing the goat; but he gave us all the impression that he had the banknote, and was trying to throw dust in our eyes."

"And the banknote's still missing?"

"Yes."

"And if you believe that Cardew had it, why the thump did you let the matter drop? Barring a fellow isn't enough if he's stolen a banknote for ten pounds. You're bound to make him hand it back at least."

"It was D'Arcy's money, and he agreed—in fact, insisted—upon letting it go," said Tom. "Can't you see that if there was a public inquiry Ethel's name would come into it? Cardew had the nerve to say to us that there was no more evidence against him than against Ethel. That put the lid on, and made us sure he had it."

"Cardew was right."

"What?"

"There was no more evidence against him than against Miss Cleveland—and no evidence against either," said Levison.

"He was in the study; the banknote was left on the table, and it's gone, and hasn't been seen again," said Tom.

"We've put in a lot of inquiry," said Manners. "We've got proof that nobody went to the study before three. Cardew admits going there soon after three, and staying till Miss Cleveland came there—and she stayed till D'Arcy came in, waiting for him."

"That leaves a short interval, in which somebody might have dodged into the study and bagged the banknote," said Tom. "But we can't trace anybody. Are we going to imagine that some unknown person popped into the study and popped out in those few minutes, when we know jolly well that Cardew was there—where he had no right to be? A fellow who dodges into other fellows' rooms without permission when the owners are out, and dodges them when they want an explanation, can thank himself if he's suspected when money is missing."

"I know Cardew was playing the goat at that time; but he thought a lot of fuss was being made about his smoking a cigarette in Blake's study," said Levison.

"Possibly! I'm willing to believe it when the banknote turns up. Somebody's got it."

"Is the number known?"

"Yes! 0002468."

"That number ought to be posted on the notice-board, with a notice that the banknote is lost," said Clive.

Tom looked impatient.

"I tell you we're keeping the thing dark. We believe Cardew had it; but Cardew or another, it's got to be kept dark, or Ethel's name will be dragged into it. The Head will want to know the name of every person who entered the study while the banknote was there. The whole school will know. Do you think we're going to let Cousin Ethel in for a thing like that while she's staying at the school?"

"Nobody would suspect Miss Cleveland," said Clive. "That would be simply idiotic."

"I know that—no decent fellow," said Tom. "But we've got rotters at St. Jim's, too, and lots of things might be said and whispered."

"Figgins seems to have changed his mind about it," said Levison. "He says he's got it proved that there's been a mistake, and that he knows Cardew is innocent."

"That's rot!" said Tom. "Kerr and Wynn came over and told us so to-day; Figgins seems to have brought them round to his opinion. But it's all rot—utter rot! Figgins can't know anything of the kind, unless he's found out the thief. And if he had he would say so."

Levison and Clive stood silent.

They had come to Study No. 10 in the Shell determined to learn upon what grounds their chum was accused of a crime. Now they had learned; but the information was so

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unexpected and surprising that they hardly knew what to think. Their faith in Cardew remained unshaken, but they had to admit that Cardew had fairly asked to be suspected. Cardew had his own wilful and whimsical ways, perplexing enough to fellows who did not understand his peculiar nature, or did not take the trouble to attempt to understand it. Undoubtedly it was Cardew's own fault that he had placed himself under suspicion, and their recognition of that fact disarmed his chums.

"Well, are you satisfied?" demanded Tom Merry restively.

"We can't be satisfied till Cardew is cleared," said Levison. "But I agree with you that the matter had better not be reported—not yet, at all events. Nobody wants Miss Cleveland's name to be mixed up in a rotten affair of this kind, of course."

"I'm glad you can see that!" grunted Tom.

"But Cardew is innocent."

"Believe so if you choose. I'd be glad enough to believe so, too," said Tom. "If he's suspected unjustly, it's his own fault for playing the giddy ox. He's got himself to thank for it."

"Exactly," said a voice at the door.

The door had opened quietly, and Ralph Reckness Cardew looked in. He smiled genially at the frowning faces in the study.

"Excuse my buttin'-in without knockin'," he said. "I found that my pals had come here, and I hopped along thinkin' that perhaps a row was goin' on. If so, I'm in it."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Is it a rag?" asked Cardew, glancing at his friends.

"Are we here to mop up the study? I rather think we could knock these Shell-fish into a cocked hat, if we put our beef into it! What price walkin' into them and wreckin' the study?"

"You're welcome to try it on!" growled Lowther.

"That's a challenge," said Cardew, pushing back his cuffs.

"Back up, my merry men—back up!"

Levison shoved him back.

"Chuck it!" he said brusquely. "That's no good. Let's get out."

"Without a scrap?" sighed Cardew.

"Yes, ass."

"I've been puttin' in a lot of exercise at the punch-ball lately," urged Cardew. "I feel sure that I could give Thomas his quietus. It would be rather a distinction to mop up the junior captain of the House. Why waste the opportunity?"

"Oh, cheeze it!"

Levison grasped Cardew's arm, and led him from the study. Clive, with a rather hostile look at the Terrible Three, followed. The study door shut after them.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to their interrupted tea. But they were not looking so cheery as before Levison's visit.

"This is getting rotten," growled Tom Merry. "There's two more fellows in the secret—we shall have it all over St. Jim's soon, at this rate! I suppose we can't blame those fellows for standing by a pal—but—"

"But Cardew does put a fellow's back up," said Lowther.

"He does, confound him!"

"All the same—" said Manners slowly—and paused.

"Well, what?"

"Well, I'm beginning to think that Figgins is right—and that there was a mistake," said Manners. "Somehow or other, it seems to me less and less likely that Cardew did it. He's not the sort really—only, where the thump is the banknote?"

"If Figgins is right, Figgins knows where the banknote is," said Tom. "Kerr seems to think that Figgy is screenin' somebody. But it's all rot!"

"I suppose it is."

"Of course it is," said Tom. "For goodness' sake, let's chuck the subject—we're all fed-up with it!"

And the chums of the Shell "chucked" the subject; but they were left with a feeling of dissatisfied uneasiness that was not at all pleasant.

CHAPTER 6. Figgins Does His Best!

"ETHEL!"

George Figgins' voice was low, humble, almost pleading.

Cousin Ethel started.

In the golden sunset, she was seated on an old oaken bench, in a summer-house in the Head's garden. It was nowhere near the gate on the quad—Ethel had not been near that gate since her walk with Figgins on Saturday afternoon.

In the summer-house, certainly she had not expected to see Figgins. The Head's garden was "taboo" to the juniors. But here was Figgins—in the forbidden precincts. Evidently he had taken the risk of the Head's wrath, in his determination to see Cousin Ethel and speak to her again.

Ethel glanced at him.

Her glance was cold; her face did not light up and soften, as of old it was wont to do at the sight of Figgy's honest, rugged features.

Figgins stepped timidly into the summer-house.

His face was red. "You're surprised to see me here, Ethel," he muttered.

"Yes," "You—you don't want to see me?"

"No."

Figgins winced.

"I—I suppose you're waxy with me, Ethel," he muttered.

Cousin Ethel looked at him, and in spite of herself, her face relaxed, her face relaxed, her face relaxed, and so thoroughly miserable that a harder heart than Ethel's might have softened towards him.

"I am not angry," she said, after a pause.

"But you ought not to be here, unless you have Dr. Holmes' leave to come into the garden." She looked at him inquiringly, and Figgins shook his head. "Then you had better go away at once."

"Won't you speak to me, Ethel?"

"What is there to say?" said the girl. "You do not want to be friends, or you would not have acted as you did on Saturday. I could not understand you. I do not understand you now."

"I—I suppose not," said Figgins. "I—I—you see—I—"

His voice trailed off dejectedly.

Ethel looked away across the gardens, and Figgins stood silent for some minutes.

He had a good deal to say; but he did not know how to say it; he did not know how to begin.

But it had to be said.

The stolen banknote—D'Arcy's banknote—was in Ethel's possession. It could not be left in her possession. Figgins had seen it—suppose somebody else saw it and recognised the number? Suppose the number was advertised as that of a lost banknote, and the note was traced after Ethel had changed it? Figgy's brain almost reeled at the thought.

Somehow—he could not imagine how—Ethel had come into possession of that banknote—innocently, of course. Somehow, it had to be taken out of her possession, and returned to the owner. But to tell the girl that the banknote was a stolen one—Figgy shrank from that. How could he tell her? She had said that it was a "secret" how she had come to be possessed of it—and he knew that it had been stolen—that D'Arcy had left it in his study, that Cousin Ethel had waited in the study for him—

Only Figgy's faith in Ethel made him refuse to see how the matter looked—but in spite of his faith, he knew how it must look to others, unless Ethel gave a full and frank explanation of how she had come by the note.

And that she refused to do—she said it was a "secret." Ethel looked at him again. She was puzzled, hurt, and very much offended. Being offended with Figgins hurt her.

"You came here to speak to me?" she asked, at last.

"Yes, Ethel."

"You must not stay here."

"I know."

"Well, then—what is it?"

Figgins cleared his throat.

"About that ten-pound note, Ethel." He made the plunge.

The girl's face hardened at once.

"What do you mean?" she said. "What can you possibly mean? I gave you the note to change for me at Blankley's



"You have alarmed me, Figgins," said Ethel. "I don't like mysteries, and I don't see any need for making a mystery about this. But I do trust you—I do. Here is the banknote, and I will try and forget how you have distressed me!" Figgins' clutch closed almost like that of a miser on the ten-pound note as Miss Cleveland handed it to him. (See Chapter 6.)

Stores at Wayland on Saturday, and you did not change it. You asked me how I have come by it. If you meant anything by what you said and did, you must have meant that you supposed that the note did not belong to me. If you meant anything else, what did you mean?"

"I—I meant—"

"Well, what?"

"You can't think that I meant anything against you, Ethel," said Figgins miserably. "You can't think that I fancied for a second that you could possibly do a wrong action. You couldn't think that."

"What did you mean, then?"

"If you'd only tell me where you got the note," said Figgins. "It may seem curious and inquisitive to you, Ethel—"

"It does."

"But even then you might tell me," said Figgins. "We're friends, aren't we, Ethel?"

"Friends are not inquisitive and curious," said Ethel.

"But I would have told you at once, if it had not been a secret."

Figgins' heart was like lead.

How could it be a "secret," the manner in which Ethel had come into possession of a stolen banknote?

"Will you give me the note, Ethel?" he burst out at last.

"I—I want it! I mean, I want a—a ten-pound note. I've got ten pounds here in currency-notes. You won't mind giving me the tenner in exchange, will you, Ethel?"

The girl looked at him in blank astonishment.

"Why do you want it?" she asked.

"I—I do want it."

"I don't understand!"

"But you trust me, don't you?" asked Figgins. "You can trust me, Ethel. Besides, what does it matter? You were going to change the banknote on Saturday at Wayland. Well, let me change it for you."

"I should not mind at all, of course," said Ethel. "I must change the note—it is all the money I have. But I don't understand. Unless you are wandering in your mind you must think that there is something very peculiar about my having that banknote. What is it?"

Figgins did not answer.

"What is it?" repeated Ethel. "Tell me why you want the banknote, and I will give it to you at once."

"I—I want it," Figgins rummaged in his pocket, and produced a little wad of currency-notes. "Look here, here's ten. Let me change the banknote for you, Ethel."

The girl's eyes were fixed on him.

She was perplexed and distressed. Figgins's conduct was utterly inexplicable to her.

"Ethel!" muttered Figgins.

"I do not wish to change the note now," she said at last. "I must understand what you mean before I part with it. You have made me feel very uneasy, I hardly know why. You seem to be trying to frighten me somehow—"

"I!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, Ethel!"

"Then why do you not explain?" exclaimed the girl indignantly. "Tell me plainly what you mean, instead of speaking in riddles!"

Figgins breathed hard.

Could he say, "That banknote was stolen, and you may be suspected of theft unless I protect you?"

He could not.

"You won't tell me?" asked Ethel.

"I—I've nothing to tell you!" muttered Figgins. "I—I just want that tenner, Ethel—I just want to change it for you. No harm in that, is there?"

"Not if that were all, of course. But is that all?"

No answer.

Even for Ethel's own sake, Figgins could not tell her untruths. He had to get the banknote away—he had to hide the fact that it ever had been in Ethel's hands. But he could not tell her falsehoods.

The girl sat in thought for some moments. Figgins watched her miserably.

"I will give you the banknote," said Ethel at last. "I do not understand you, and you have made me very uneasy and unhappy. But I will do as you wish."

Figgins' face lighted up.

"Oh, Ethel! Thank you!" he breathed. "I—I'd like to—to— I mean, it—it's rather important! I really want that tenner! Just trust me, and—and it's all right. Let's forget all about it."

"But you have alarmed me, and I cannot forget all about it," said Ethel. "I don't like mysteries, and I don't see any need for making a mystery about this. But I do trust you, I do! Here is the banknote, and I will try to forget how you have distressed me."

Figgins' clutch closed almost like that of a miser on the ten-pound note, as the girl handed it to him. Ethel placed the currency-notes in her purse.

Figgins' face was very bright.

"Thank you, Ethel!" he said. "And—and you don't feel very waxy with me, do you? You ain't down on me for bothering you like this, are you, Ethel?"

"You had better go now," said Ethel. "Mrs. Holmes would be very displeased if she knew that you had come here without permission."

"I—I'm going."

Figgins paused a few moments, and then slowly he took his departure. Ethel was troubled and annoyed; but that would pass. His heart was light as he made his way out of the Head's garden, with the banknote safe in his pocket. It would be returned somehow to the owner. Figgins would lose ten pounds, a sum he could ill afford to lose; but that was nothing. Nothing mattered except keeping Cousin Ethel's name from the barest possibility of a breath of suspicion.

He would make his peace with Ethel. All would be well as soon as this wretched affair was buried in oblivion. Once the banknote had been returned to D'Arcy all would

be plain sailing—the whole miserable incident would be forgotten.

"Here he is!"

Figgins started.

He had dropped from the old stone wall in a quiet spot where the trees screened him, and started for the school. It was Cardew's voice that startled him.

Figgins looked round quickly.

Quite a little army of fellows surrounded him in a moment. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, Levison, Clive, and Cardew of the Fourth—ten fellows in all—were waiting for Figgins, and evidently had been watching for him.

Figgins stared at them.

"What's the game?" he asked.

"You are, dear man," said Cardew.

"Oh, don't play the goat now!" said Figgins crossly.

"We want to speak to you, Figgins," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Go it."

"We can't talk here. Will you come to my study in the School House?"

"Is it a rag?"

"No, ass!"

"I don't mind," said Figgins. "But you seem to be jolly mysterious about something. What's on?"

"Come to my study," said Tom.

"Oh, all right!"

And George Figgins, in a state of considerable surprise, walked away to the School House with Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 7.

Not Nice for Trimble!

BAGGY TRIMBLE blinked into the cracked looking-glass in his study, and smirked at his reflection therein.

Trimble seemed very pleased with himself.

Perhaps he was pleased at what he saw in the glass. If so, it showed that Baggy was a fellow who was easily pleased. For really, in the way of good looks, Baggy had little to boast of.

There was a step in the doorway, and Wildrake of the Fourth came in. He grinned at the smirking reflection in the glass.

Baggy looked round.

"Admiring yourself, old scout?" asked Wildrake.

"Well, some fellows are good-looking," said Baggy complacently. "I don't brag of it."

"My hat! I should say not!"

"And some chaps are jealous of good-looking chaps," said Baggy disdainfully.

Wildrake chuckled.

"You don't ever get a message from a girl to meet her at a garden gate, I dare say," said Trimble.

"Never!" assented Wildrake.

"Well, I do."

"Gammon!"

Trimble sniffed.

"Seeing is believing," he answered. "If you like to follow on, you'll see me meet Ethel at the gate of the Head's garden."

"Ethel?" repeated Wildrake, his face becoming serious.

"Do you mean D'Arcy's cousin Ethel?"

"Of course I do. She's rather gone on me, you know," said Baggy.

Wildrake looked at him.

"D'Arcy isn't exactly a pal of mine," he remarked. "But I know him, and like him. I know exactly how he would feel if he heard you speaking of his cousin like that. I feel just the same—and am going to do just what D'Arcy would do."

"Look here, you know— Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble. Wildrake grabbed him by the collar, and jammed his bullet head against the door of the study.

Bang!

"Whooooop!"

"I'm not sure whether D'Arcy would bang your head on the door, or kick you," said Wildrake thoughtfully. "To make sure, I'll do both."

"Look here— Help! Yooop!"

Wildrake's boot landed on Trimble's light trousers, and Baggy shot out of the study.

"I guess that will teach you manners, old scout," said the Canadian junior. "But if that's not enough—"

Trimble sat up in the passage and spluttered.

"You cheeky rotter! I'll jolly well come into the study and mop you up!"

"Come on, old pippin!"

"Yah!"



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BOY'S FRIEND

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Baggy Trimble picked himself up, and Wildrake smiled at him cheerily from the doorway. But on second thoughts—proverbially the best—Baggy decided not to mop up the Canadian junior. He shook a fat fist at him instead, and rolled away to the stairs.

He rubbed his head and wriggled, as he went. But when he rolled out into the quadrangle, he was looking complacent and pleased with himself again. Baggy, in fact, was in high feather.

Baggy really had received a message from Ethel Cleveland, to the effect that she wished to speak to him. That message had only one meaning to Baggy's fat and fatuous mind.

Cousin Ethel was "gone" on him, in his own elegant language. Had he not met her at the station the day she arrived at St. Jim's and displayed his good looks, his charming manners, and his delightful conversation? No wonder she was dazzled.

Baggy was not surprised at receiving such a message. He was only surprised at not having received it earlier.

He was so full of fatuous self-satisfaction that he simply could not keep it to himself. He came on Talbot of the Shell in the quad, and stopped him.

"Hold on a minute, Talbot!"

Talbot of the Shell good-naturedly paused.

"Is my tie straight?" asked Baggy.

"Eh! Oh, yes! As straight as it ever is."

"Well, a fellow has to be a bit particular on some occasions, you know," said Baggy.

Talbot smiled.

"What is it—tea with the Head?" he asked.

"Something a bit better than that," said Baggy. "The fact is—I don't mind telling you, Talbot—I've an appointment this afternoon with a lady."

"Eh?"

"Cousin Ethel, you know," purred Baggy.

Talbot of the Shell looked at him, just as Wildrake had done.

"Do you mean Miss Cleveland?" he asked.

"Yes—Ethel, you know. She's— Yooop!" Baggy broke off with a howl, as Talbot crushed his hat on his head and then walked on.

Baggy Trimble had brushed his hat with unusual care, for that important appointment. His care was quite wasted; the hat was fairly squashed on his head. He struggled to get it off, and when it came off it looked as much like a concertina as a hat.

"Why, the cheeky rotter!" gasped Trimble. "What did he do that for? Blessed if every fellow in the school doesn't seem to be jealous of a chap! I've a jolly good mind to go after him and wipe up the quad with him!"

Again second thoughts proved best, and Trimble did not go after Talbot and wipe up the quad with him. Instead of that, he squeezed out his squashed topper into something like the shape of a hat again, and brushed it with his sleeve, and finally replaced it on his bullet head, and rolled on his way. He did not stop any more fellows to tell them of his appointment with Cousin Ethel. There was so much jealousy about, that really it did not seem quite safe to do so.

Baggy arrived at the secluded gate, under the shady branches of an ancient oak. A graceful, girlish figure was waiting there on the other side of the gate.

Trimble raised his rather battered hat, and bowed with the grace of a rhinoceros, at the same time bestowing upon Miss Cleveland one of his most killing smirks.

It seemed to produce no effect, however. Miss Cleveland's face was very grave, and she did not smile.

"Here I am, Ethel," said Baggy. "I hope I haven't kept you waiting."

"I have waited a few minutes," said Ethel. "But it does not matter. Thank you for coming—I shall not keep you a minute."

"As long as you like, of course," said Baggy. "I say, I'll get over the gate."

"Please do nothing of the kind," said Ethel. "I have only a few words to say."

"But—"

"The day I came here," said Ethel, "you met me at the station—very unexpectedly."

"It was a real pleasure, you know," smirked Trimble.

"The fact is—"

"You asked me to change a ten-pound note for you," said Ethel.

Trimble's expression changed.

It dawned upon his fat brain that this appointment was not the outcome of the "glad eye" he had bestowed on Miss Cleveland. It was not for the sake of his good looks—if any—that he had received the message.

"Oh, bother that!" said Baggy crossly. "That's ancient history!"

"My father had given me my allowance just before I came on my visit here, so I was able to change the bank-

note," said Ethel. "You asked me not to mention the matter, as boys here are not allowed to have so much pocket-money."

"That's so," assented Trimble. "I say, you haven't told anybody, have you?"

Baggy was not smirking now; he looked alarmed.

Ethel's lip curled slightly.

"I told you I would not mention it," she answered. "It was not exactly a promise; but as I said I would not do so, naturally I have not done so."

"That's all right, then," said Trimble, looking greatly relieved. "Of—of course, I—I don't want it mentioned. You see, I get no end of whacking tips from Trimble Hall—"

"Yes, yes. But—"

"If my Housemaster knew he would stop it, you know," said Baggy, "and a fellow wants some money in his pockets. Why not, when his people are rolling in wealth, you know?"

"That is no concern of mine," said Ethel quietly. "I wish to speak to you, to ask your permission to mention the banknote. Not to your Housemaster, of course; but it cannot matter if the other boys know about it, I suppose?"

Trimble looked alarmed again.

"Don't you jolly well tell anybody!" he exclaimed. "A fellow might sneak about me, you know. They—they're jolly strict here about a chap not having too much pocket-money."

"The person I am thinking of is not one who would, as you call it, sneak," said Ethel.

"Oh, fellows are much of a muchness," said Trimble.

"Fellows let things out, you know."

Ethel compressed her lips.

"I didn't know you were staying on here when I gave you the banknote, you know," went on Trimble, in an aggrieved tone. "I thought you'd just come down to see D'Arcy for the afternoon. I thought you'd take the banknote away with you. You said you'd never mention it, you know, and I took it as a promise. You're bound to keep your word, Miss Cleveland."

"I am bound to keep my word, if you hold me to it," said Ethel. "I wished to ask you whether I might explain the matter to one person, as I do not see that it is important."

"It's jolly important!"

"Another boy in your own Form," said Ethel.

"If one fellow knew, all the other fellows would jolly soon know!" said Baggy. "They—they'd be jealous. Lots of the fellows are jealous of me. I should get into trouble!"

"If you really think so—"

"I do, I can tell you. You've no right to say a word about it, after telling me that you wouldn't!" said Trimble indignantly.

"Very well," said Ethel quietly. "I will say nothing. That is all I had to speak to you about. Good-afternoon!"

She turned away.

"Hold on, you know!" exclaimed Trimble eagerly.

"Let's have a chat, you know. I say, I'll come over into the garden, if you like. I— Oh, my hat!"

Cousin Ethel was gone.

Baggy Trimble grunted discontentedly. This interview was not of much use to Baggy. Only too clearly his glad-some eye had had no effect whatever upon Miss Cleveland. He had been kicked; he had had his hat squashed for nothing—nothing at all. Baggy Trimble rolled away with dark discontent on his fat face.

CHAPTER 8.

Up to Figgins!

"SIT down, old chap!"

Tom Merry's manner was friendly and hospitable. Evidently, so far as Tom was concerned, Figgins' visit to his study was on friendly terms.

All the School House fellows looked serious; but their looks were not inimical. Figgins was puzzled and perplexed as he stood in the study in the midst of the crowd. All the fellows had crowded in, and Levison closed the door.

"I'll stand," said the New House junior shortly. "I've come here because you asked me. You've got something to say. Get it off your chests, and let me get back; Kerr and Wynn will be waiting for me."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"It's rather a serious matter," said Tom Merry. "I'll leave it to Levison to speak, as he's taking the lead in this matter."

"Pewwaps I had bettah—"

"Perhaps you had better dry up, Gussy," said Blake.

"You give your chin too much exercise, old bean!"

(Continued on page 15.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 953.



EDITORIAL!

By TOM MERRY.

WE often talk wistfully about "the good old days," and many of us seem to wish that the pendulum of Time would swing back a few centuries, and deposit us in the Stone Age.

If we had our wish, however, I'm jolly certain that we should be sadly disillusioned, and should find ourselves longing for 1926 again!

For the Stone Age, whatever romantic writers may say to the contrary, was an age of darkness and fear. Human progress was in its cradle; the lamp of knowledge, which has lighted mankind through the centuries, beaming more brightly as the years rolled on, was merely a faint flicker in those "unhappy far-off days." Man was little higher than the beasts; and he seems to have spent his time in killing off his neighbours as fast as they would let him.

Those who imagine that life in the Stone Age was a dream, or a delight, or a grand sweet song, or anything else that it was not, will do well to swot up the grim history of this period. And when they have done so, they will exclaim: "Thank goodness I'm living in the Progressive Age, and not in those dark old days!"

Monty Lowther calls the present era the "Stoney" Age, because there is a general shortage of pocket-money! Call it by any name you like, Monty, but you must agree that it is miles ahead of the Stone Age, in every way. Look around at all the benefits which we enjoy—benefits which were denied our early ancestors. We have wireless; electric lighting; decent accommodation to live in; proper clothes instead of sheepskins; cinema shows; and fine stories to read every week. There was no GEM LIBRARY in the Stone Age, to cheer the hearts of the boys of that period. There were no newsagents, no editors, no printers. There was money, of course, but money was a handicap rather than a boon. When heavy slabs of stone constituted legal tender, it must have been a weighty matter to walk about with twopence in your pocket!

Baggy Trimble is one of the fellows who would welcome a return to the Stone Age, because at that time they made a great business of eating and drinking. Tremendous orgies were held by the people of the period; and Baggy Trimble considers he would have been in his element. But let me remind our complacent friend that human beings were gobbled up in those days, by fierce and fiery monsters. For those were the days of the Dinosaur, a gigantic reptile which was sometimes

eighty feet long; the terrible Ichthyosaurus, which would rear its hideous head out of the sea, and make short work of anybody who happened to be bathing; and fearsome dragons, which struck terror into the hearts of the Ancient Britons.

TOM MERRY.



WHEN mighty monsters stalked the earth,

Their nostrils snorting fire.
For bite and sup, they gobbled
up whole families entire.
You dared not venture for a stroll,
Or ride in Stone Age wagons,
Or you, alack, would make a snack
For fierce and fiery dragons!

When England was a jungle vast,
And roads had not been fashioned,
When caves were rude, and meals were
crude
(Though not a soul was rationed!);
When goatskins dangled from men's
waists,
And woad adorned their faces,
How quaint and queer they did appear,
The various tribes and races!

They had their Gogs and Magogs then,
Their giants big and burly,
Who used to fight from morn till night,
Pugnacious men and surly.
Man was the enemy of man,
And woman warred with woman;
The "good old days," which poets
praise,
Were terribly inhuman!

They had no wireless aerials,
Or similar constructions;
No gramophones, no telephones,
No cinema productions.
No snug and cosy feather beds
Where they might lay a-dreaming;
No friendly light to shine at night,
Save for the pale moon gleaming.

So let us thank our lucky stars
We weren't alive and kicking;
Back in B.C., for you'll agree,
That period wanted sticking!
Let poets prattle how they will
About the bygone ages;
I'm glad those times of feuds and
crimes
Are past in History's pages!

ST. JIM'S IN THE STONE AGE!

A Flight of Fancy by Jack Blake.

MORNING lessons in the Fourth Form Cave were rudely disturbed yesterday by the sudden entry of a fiery dragon, which Taggles, who guards the entrance to the caves, permitted to pass him. Panic broke out among a section of the pupils, including Trimble and Melish; and the Form-master leapt for safety on to the top of his stone desk. Luckily, the majority of the pupils had their stone bludgeons handy, and they pitched into the dragon with great gusto. The monster was slain after a fierce struggle, and Mr. Lathom was so delighted at the pluck of his pupils that he requested the Head to give the Fourth a half-holiday.

I WENT to tea yesterday with Tom Merry, in his den. The poor beggar seemed awfully fed-up. I found him busily engaged with stone chisel and a mallet, hacking out a hundred lines on the wall of his den. Knox of the Sixth had given him the impot, for buzzing a big boulder at him in the quadrangle. Knox is at present in the Sanny Cave. Though not feeling humiliated, he feels decidedly crushed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY is easily the best-dressed fellow in the St. Jim's Cave School. His goat-skins fit him to perfection, and they are of the finest quality procurable. Gussy pays no less than fifty flint-stones for his "suits," and he has a great number, and variety of them. Indeed, his wardrobe is easily the most extensive—and expensive—in the school. Gussy's stone-capped top, which he wears on Sundays only, is the envy of the Lower School. Gussy believes in looking smart and spruce on all occasions. Yaas, wathah!

A VERY painful function was witnessed this morning, in Big Cave. Racke, of the Shell, received a public flogging, for paying a midnight visit to the "Cave-dwellers' Arms," for the purpose of gambling and revelling. The Head wielded the stone punishment-rod with great vigour, and the victim's yells of anguish fairly awakened the echoes. After the flogging, Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth carried the hapless victim away to the Sanny Cave. It will be at least a week before he is fit to rejoin his school-fellows!

GRUNDY of the Shell had a remittance of a quadruple flint-stones this morning, from his Uncle Grundy. The remittance was conveyed to St. Jim's by special chariot, and it took Taggles quite a long time to carry the weighty coins to Grundy's den.

STONE AGE SPORTS!

Ancient Briton v. Gaul.

By
Monty Lowther.



THE Annual Sports Meeting between the Ancient Britons and the Gauls commenced on Woden's Day, and was concluded on Thor's Day. There was a goodly attendance, thousands of people paying the price of six flintstones for admission. The spectators wore goat-skins; and they were also "skinned" at the turnstiles!

THE MARATHON RACE.

This was a very strenuous event, over a long and very bumpy course. The "favourite" was Peter the Plodder, of Ancient Briton, who had previously lowered the world's record for speed when being chased by a man-eating monster of the period. Odds of ten to one—in flintstones—were freely laid on Peter the Plodder, who justified the confidence of his fellow-countrymen, and romped home an easy winner. Froggy Fleetfoot, of Gaul, had been expected to fight out the finish with Peter; but, unfortunately, he encountered a fiery dragon when halfway round the track; and the dragon had not yet dined! Froggy Fleetfoot,

therefore, took no further interest in the sports.

THROWING THE "CRICKET-BALL."

The "cricket-ball" consisted of a large round boulder, weighing half a hundredweight. The two finalists were Beowulf the Burly, of Ancient Brit, and Henri the Hurler, of Gaul. When Beowulf gathered up the mighty boulder in his brawny arms, there were yells of encouragement from his fellow-countrymen. "Go it, Beowulf!" "Throw thy 'weight' about!" "Verily, thou art entitled to 'have a fling,' in thy youth!" Lifting the boulder behind his shoulder (Shakespeare!) Beowulf gave a mighty heave, and the "cricket-ball" hurtled through the air with the velocity of a cannon-ball. Unfortunately, it flew in the wrong direction, and hit the official starter on the nose, flattening that organ into his face! Beowulf was promptly disqualified, and the event was a walk-over for Henri the Hurler.

CLUB-FIGHTING.

This event consisted of a pitched battle with stone clubs, the side which brained the greatest number of opponents being adjudged the winners. The men of Gaul put up a great fight, for a time, but eventually their leader "lost his head," and panic broke out in their ranks. The Ancient Britons followed up their advantage, wielding

their clubs with tremendous vim; and the measured and regular sounds of cracking skulls made merry music. Eventually, the club-fight was abandoned in Britain's favour, in order that enough men might be left to carry on with the sports programme on the morrow!

BOAT RACE.

This thrilling event took place on Thor's Day, in the sea, the course being between Folkestone and Dover. Wicker boats were used, and both crews were at full strength. Cuthbert the Crab Catcher was the "stroke" for Ancient Britain, and he set a terrific pace from the outset, ably supported by those muscular giants, Strongpull and Longpull. The men of Gaul rowed a plucky race, but disaster befell them when they had covered half the course. A huge Ichthyosaurus suddenly rose up from the sea, its wide grinning mouth revealing its sinister intentions. Doubtless it was a long time since the great monster had enjoyed a boat's crew for its afternoon tea; and it made short work of the hapless men of Gaul. It then floundered off in the wake of the Ancient Britons' boat; but Cuthbert the Crab Catcher managed to bring his crew to land in the nick of time!

DRAGON-SLAYING CONTEST.

This was the last event of all. A captive dragon, the biggest of its tribe, was let loose; and six picked men of Ancient Britain, and six selected stalwarts of Gaul, were sent into battle against the hideous monster. The side which had the most survivors, after the fight, bagged the honours. Unfortunately, however, there were no survivors! The dragon won all along the line, and then ran amok amongst the spectators, bringing the Annual Sports Meeting to a precipitate and untimely conclusion.

STONE AGE OR PRESENT AGE?

By Our Contributors.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

There's no time like the pwsent, deah boys! I am extremely glad that I did not live in the Stone Age, when dwess-suits, an' fancy waistcoats, an' bwiliant neckties, were unknown. I should wogard it as vewy infwa dig, to have to dwess in a goatskin, an' paint my body with woad. An' a stone monocle wouldn't be of much use to a fellow, would it? The poor, un-enlightened people of the Stone Age were nevah taught how to dwess in style. No doubt they had their dandies an' their knuts; but it must have been wathah difficult to look dandified in a goat-skin! I am jollay glad I am livin' in an age when dwess is of supweme importance. Yaas, wathah!

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

Give me the good old days of the Stone Age, when the motto of the nation was not "Eat More Froot!" but "Eat More of Everything!" What champion food-hogs they used to be in those days! Our fore-fathers would think nothing of polishing off a whole fattened calf at one sitting. And there would be grate joints, of vennisson, and big Sir Loins of Beef, and all sorts of body-building and fattening foods. As the years rolled on, mankind cared less and less for the good things of the

table, with the rezult that we now have snacks instead of banquets, and mouthfuls instead of meals. And it's getting worse and worse, so that in a few years' time we shall be taking our meals in tabloid form. Groo! No wonder old Taggles the porter says that he duzzent know what things is a-coming to!

REGINALD TALBOT:

All things considered, I prefer the Present to the Past. Living in a draughty cave, and always at war with your next-door neighbour, and never knowing when a fiery dragon might come in and gobble you up, must have been exciting, but decidedly unpleasant! And the Stone Age sports, too, were not so healthy and enjoyable as our modern games. A footer match, in those days, was a massacre. And Stone Age cricket, played with stone clubs and a stone ball, must have caused many casualties. Of course, there were no lessons in the Stone Age, and no schools, and therefore no Form-masters; but that's about the only advantage the fellows of that period enjoyed.

JOE FRAYNE (OF THE THIRD):

I should like to have lived in the stone age bekwase there was plenty of

bludshed and fting, and you never new which minnit was going to be your last. life went along at a rollicking pace, and there was heaps of eggstement, whereas life is tame and slow nowadays. you can't challenge your form-master to a duel with clubs, and you can't go around slaying fiery dragons, bekwase there aren't any to slay. they have all become distinct. but perhaps the stone age will come round again. a few more world wars will bring us back to our former state of barbarism. so we will live in hopes!

MONTY LOWTHER:

I don't know about the Stone Age, but the Brass Age must have been awfully jolly, bekwase everybody had plenty of "brass." Similarly, in the Tin Age, everybody had plenty of "tin." But we now live in the "Stoney" Age, when money is tight, and wealthy uncles harden their hearts. Alack-a-day!

EPHRAIM TAGGLES:

Wot I says is this 'ere, that it don't make the slightest difference to me, this airy talk of the Stone Age or present age. Boys are boys all the world over—Stone Age, present age, or any other age. If I had my way I'd—(Yes, we know all about it, Taggy, old chap, but we take comfort in the knowledge that you won't have your way—not even in your dotage!—Ed.)

Supplement II.

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FIGGINS'S SACRIFICE!

(Continued
from
page 13.)

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get on with it, Levison," said Tom. "But if you've got any suspicions about Figgins, I'm bound to say, first of all, that I don't share them."

"Wathah not. Figgins is wathah a cheekay ass, and nevah seems to know that a fellow's cousin is a fellow's cousin, and not anothah fellow's cousin. But—"

"Suspicious!" broke in Figgins. "What the thump do you mean? Have you been losing some more banknotes in this House?"

"No. It's the same jolly old banknote," said Cardew. "But some of us think that there's a clue to it now."

"That's how it stands," said Clive. "We want to know what you can tell us about it, Figgins."

Figgins started.

Certainly he had no intention of telling anyone at St. Jim's what he knew about it. Wild horses would not have dragged Cousin Ethel's name from his lips.

"Let me explain," said Ernest Levison, in his quiet, steady way. "We've got to know to-day that a number of fellows barred Cardew on the suspicion that he had bagged D'Arcy's banknote from Study No. 6 on the day of the House match. I'm not at all sure that it was taken from the study myself. If a silly ass leaves a banknote lying on a study table, with the door and window open, it might blow away and a dishonest fellow might pick it up and keep it. But that works out to the same thing. The banknote is in somebody's hands!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You were one of the fellows who barred Cardew on suspicion," said Levison, his eyes fixed on Figgins' troubled face.

George Figgins nodded.

"Weally, Levison—" interrupted Arthur Augustus.

"Order!" grunted Blake.

"I am bound to speak," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "We did not bar Cardew merely on suspicion. We had excellent reasons to believe that he had taken the banknote."

"That's so," said Herries.

"Let it go at that," said Levison, in the same quiet way. "Anyhow, you all barred Cardew, and Figgins was one of you. But on Saturday Figgins changed his mind all of a sudden, and declared that a mistake had been made, and that he knew that Cardew was innocent."

"That's the truth," said Figgins.

"Much obliged!" said Ralph Reckness Cardew. "But you'd really add to the obligation, old bean, if you'd mention how you knew."

"I can't do that!"

"Why not?" asked Levison.

"Well, I can't!"

"That's not quite good enough!" said Sidney Clive.

"It will have to be good enough," said Figgins curtly. "I'm one New House man here in a School House crowd. But if you think you can bully me, you're making a mistake!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Keep your temper, old chap!" said Tom Merry gently. "There's no question of bullying, and you're among friends."

"We've a right to know the facts when our pal is accused of a rotten and rascally action!" said Clive doggedly.

"Figgins will admit that," said Tom.

Figgins looked deeply troubled.

"Of course, that's all right," he said. "Only, there happen to be some reasons—" He broke off.

"Let's get at the business quietly, keeping our tempers," said Levison. "We find—Clive and I—that our best pal is barred on a suspicion of theft. We're bound to take up the thing and see it through. That banknote has got to be found. Figgins says he knows that Cardew is innocent, and that's good enough, so far. But it doesn't go far enough. There are fellows here who want more than a man's bare word to make them change their opinions."

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"Yaas, wathah!"

"So we ask you, Figgins, to tell us all that you know," said Levison. "Cardew stands under a rotten suspicion, which may spread through the school and put a slur on him so long as he stays at St. Jim's. You can't expect him or his friends to let it go at that!"

Figgins did not reply. He felt fully the justice of Levison's calm and temperate statement. But his tongue was tied.

"From what you said, you must have made some discovery on Saturday," went on Levison. "When you went over to Wayland with Miss Cleveland, you believed Cardew guilty?"

"Ye-es."

"Immediately after coming back, you stated that you knew him to be innocent."

"I—I was bound to say so when I knew."

"That's so, of course. But you're bound to say more than that. There's only one way, so far as any of us can see, that you can have found out Cardew's innocence. That is, you must have found out who had the banknote."

Figgins' face was white now.

"Or else," went on Levison, his voice calm and hard as Fate—"or else, Figgins, it was you yourself who had the banknote, and you were not quite rotter enough to let suspicion rest on an innocent fellow."

George Figgins started as if he had been stung.

"I!" he panted.

"I don't say so—I don't think so," said Levison steadily. "I'm only pointing out that you must tell us what you know. If you know that Cardew is innocent, you must know who has the banknote."

No answer.

"If you cannot point out who has the banknote, only one conclusion is left for us—that you have it yourself."

Figgins clenched his hands convulsively. His face blazed with anger, and he made a step towards Levison of the Fourth.

Ernest Levison did not flinch or recede an inch. Cool and steady, he remained immovable as a statue, his calm eyes fixed on the New House junior's furious face.

Tom Merry hastily interposed.

"Chuck that, Figg!"

"Is he going to call me a thief?" panted Figgins.

"Unless you point out the guilty party, I call you a thief, and will call you a thief before all the school!" said Levison, his voice like iron.

"You rotter—you cad—you—"

"Call me any names you like—but you know what I shall call you, if you leave Cardew under suspicion when you admit it to be in your power to clear him."

Figgins dropped his hands.

His anger had been fierce, but it faded away. He had a fair mind; he could place himself in another fellow's position, and he knew that Levison was right. He knew that he would have taken just such a line himself had Kerr or Wynn lain under such an accusation. Cardew and his friends had a right to know the facts; and it was only cricket to tell the facts. But Figgins could not tell them—not to save his life, not to save his name, would he have breathed the name of Cousin Ethel in such a connection.

There was a long and painful silence.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances. Most of the juniors had backed up Levison, feeling the justice of his demand that Figgins should state what he knew. But they had done so in the full belief that Figgins would be able to explain at once.

His silence at first perplexed them, and then it caused suspicion to grow in their faces. Why did he not speak?

Ernest Levison broke the long silence at last.

"Will you tell us what you know about it, Figgins?"

"I can't!"

"Will you tell us why you can't?"

"There are reasons."

"What reasons?"

"I can't tell you."

"Your friends, Kerr and Wynn, have an idea that you know the thief, and are screening him. Is that the case?"

"I don't know any thief!"

"Do you know who took D'Arcy's banknote?"

"I don't know who took it."

"Do you know in whose hands it has been since it was taken?"

No answer.

"Silence gives consent," said Cardew lightly. "We may take it that Figgins does know that much. Whose hands, Figgins?"

Figgins did not speak.

"Have you seen the banknote at all, Figgins?" asked Tom Merry, deeply distressed and perplexed. "Dash it all, old man, you must be able to see what you are forcing us

to think. Answer that one question—have you seen D'Arcy's banknote?"

Figgins breathed hard.

"I can tell you nothing. I'm sorry—if you knew how I was fixed, you'd understand at once. You'd do the same in my place."

"I take the liberty of doubting that," said Levison, his lip curling. "If I saw a fellow accused of theft, and knew the name of the real thief, I should give the name."

"I've said that I don't know the thief, if there was any thief."

Levison eyed him. His suspicion was growing stronger, but he wanted to give the hapless New House fellow every chance.

"Are we to take it that you have seen the banknote, but in the hands of someone you do not believe to be a thief?" he asked. "That's the only meaning I can put to your words."

"Well, yes."

"Very well—that person has nothing to fear, if he is not a thief. Who was it?"

Silence.

"That person, whoever he is, can tell us where he got the banknote, and all will be clear," said Levison.

Figgins shivered a little. Why had not Cousin Ethel told him? He knew there must be a reason for her silence—otherwise his faith in her must have failed; and his faith in Ethel was founded on a rock. But she had not told him.

"Figgins," urged Manners, "we all believe in you—we all want to believe in you, at least. Do you want us to think that you have the banknote in your own pocket?"

Figgins started.

The banknote was, as a matter of actual fact, in his pocket at that moment. He had had no chance, so far, of restoring it to the owner, as he had intended—this interview had followed at once on his meeting with Cousin Ethel.

His start did not escape the eyes of the School House juniors. There was a fresh exchange of glances.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, deeply shocked. "Is it possible that Figgins—"

"You—you idiots!" breathed Figgins. "You don't understand—you can't understand."

"We want to understand!" said Levison. "For the last time, Figgins—I'm not threatening you; I'm only asking you to save yourself—for the last time, will you tell us in whose hands you saw the banknote?"

"No!"

Levison drew a deep breath.

"Very well! Cardew has been accused of stealing D'Arcy's banknote. I don't blame anybody for that—he played the fool and brought suspicion on himself. But now we know more! I accuse Figgins of stealing the banknote."

"You—you accuse me—" panted Figgins.

"I do—and I will repeat my accusation before the Head if you like!" said Levison grimly.

"You rotter—you—you—"

Figgins made a spring at Levison of the Fourth. The next moment they were rolling on the floor of Tom Merry's study, fighting savagely.

CHAPTER 9.

Guilty!

"COLLAR him!"

"Stop them!"

Figgins' outbreak of fierce wrath had taken the whole crowd of School House fellows by surprise, and for a moment they stood staring at the two juniors as they fought.

But it was only for a moment.

The next, Tom Merry & Co. fairly hurled themselves on Figgins, and dragged him away from Ernest Levison.

"Let me go!" roared Figgins, struggling savagely in the grasp of half a dozen pairs of hands.

"Cheese it—"

"You cheeky rotter—"

"Let me go! Do you think that rotter is going to call me a thief?" yelled Figgins furiously.

"Shove him back!" said Tom, unheeding.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"A good many fellows will be callin' you a thief, dear man, if you don't stop them," drawled Cardew, "and you can't stop them by punchin' noses!"



TUCK HAMPERS AND MONEY PRIZES AWARDED FOR WIT.

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

TUCK FOR OLD IRELAND! CAUGHT IN COURT!

An Irishman, on being examined in a case where the defendant was charged with breaking a plate glass window with a large stone, was pressed to explain the size of the stone. "Was it as large as my fist?" asked the judge. "Sure, it was larger!" replied Pat. "Was it as large as my two fists?" asked the judge. "Sure, it was much bigger." "Was it as big as my head?" "Sure, it was about as long, but not so thick!" said Pat, amid the loud laughter of the court.—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to William Scully, Castlemartyr, co. Cork, Ireland.

VERY LONG MEASURE!

Teacher: "Now I hope you understand long measure. Will any pupil please ask me a question on the subject?" Smart Sam: "Yes, teacher. How many policemen's feet make a Scotland Yard?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. T. Griffiths, 3, Eastfield Terrace, Plymouth Road, Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER!

Visitor (to parent): "Why did you send your son into the Air Force?" Father: "Because he was no 'earthly' good!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Herbert Ewing-ton, 156, Park Hill Road, Harborne, Birmingham.

WHAT A CALAMITY!

McDougall boarded a tram and asked for a penny ticket. When that expired, he bought another. He repeated this operation until the fifth stage was reached, when he asked for another penny ticket. The conductor, losing his temper, asked the Scot somewhat brusquely why he hadn't taken a sixpenny ticket in the first instance. Sandy gazed at the official with an expression of pained amazement, and finally remarked: "An' suppose the car had broke doon!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Dorothy Bloemink, 702, Pretorius Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa.

SHOCKING!

"Waiter!" shouted a young fellow who, for the last half-hour, had been wrestling with a steak, and had failed to get his knife through it. "Yessir!" said the waiter, hurrying up to him. "How do you cook your food in this place?" asked the diner. "Well, sir, all our food is cooked by electricity," replied the waiter. "Then," said the young man, with a grunt, "take this steak back and give it another shock!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Frank H. Barker, 24, Sloane Street, Brooks' Bar, Manchester.

REAL SCOTS!

Two old Scotsmen sat by the roadside talking and puffing away merrily at their pipes. "There's nae pleasure in smoking, Sandy," said Donald. "Hoo dae ye mak' that oot?" asked Sandy. "Weel," remarked Donald, "ye see, if ye're smoking yer ain baccy, ye're thinkin' o' the awful expense, and if ye're smoking some ither body's, yer pipe's rammed sae tight that it winna draw!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to James Orr, 159, Ashgrove Avenue, Cleaden Estate, South Shields, Durham.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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Figgins still struggled, but he was safely held. Five or six fellows grasped him and kept him back, while Levison of the Fourth picked himself up. Still cool and calm, Levison wiped a smear of red from his nose with his handkerchief.

"Will you let me get at him?" panted Figgins.

"No, you cheeky ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Not that Levison couldn't handle you."

"Let him try, then, the cad!"

"You dare to call Levison names!" exclaimed Clive indignantly. "Every fellow here believes you to have the banknote."

"It's a lie!"

"This won't do you any good, Figgins," said Monty Lowther. "You've only got to speak out, if you want us to believe otherwise."

"Believe what you like!" exclaimed Figgins savagely. "I don't care a button! School House cads, the lot of you!"

"I don't think they'll like a thief any better in the New House than in our House," said Clive.

"You rotter—you—"

"Oh, stop that!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "This isn't a case for slanging. I believed in you, Figgins—"

"And you don't now?" shouted Figgins.

"How can I?" exclaimed the captain of the Shell tartly. "You own up to having seen the stolen banknote. You're bound to tell us in whose hands you saw it!"

"I won't!"

"Well, if you won't, that settles it!" said Tom. "It's in your own hands!"

"That's false!"

"If it's false, it's your own fault that we believe it. Tell us where to find the banknote."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins wriggled in the grasp of the School House fellows. "Let me go—let me go, you dummies! I'll keep my temper! I—I'm sorry I touched you, Levison; but a fellow feels wild when he's called a thief. I won't raise a hand again!"

The juniors released Figgins at once.

Ernest Levison gave his nose another dab, and put his handkerchief away. His face was hard.

"If this were a matter of fisticuffs, Figgins, you shouldn't have to ask me twice," he said. "But it isn't. You know where the stolen banknote is, and if you refuse to say, we judge you to have it in your possession. I'm not speaking only for myself—we all think the same."

"We must!" said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake, Figgins, if you can say anything, say it! Every fellow here has always thought well of you."

Figgins breathed hard and deep.

"I can't explain," he said. "I'll tell you all I can, but it's not the whole story. I said that Cardew was innocent on Saturday, because I had found out that it was so. I could have kept silent if I had chosen, and this wouldn't have happened."

"A hit, a very palpable hit!" drawled Cardew. "Let's remember that, you fellows. That isn't the way a thief acts."

Levison gave him a sharp look.

"Cardew, you believe in him?"

"Well," said Cardew, with his whimsical smile, "It seems rather rotten, Ernest, old bean, when you've taken all this trouble for my unworthy self. But I don't agree with you. Figgins is several sorts of an ass, but he's as straight as a string. He's screening somebody."

"Whom, then?"

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, ask me another! I don't begin to guess that!"

"It's rot," said Tom Merry. "But Figgins can tell us. I've always known him to be a fellow of his word. If you say so, Figgins, I shall believe you. Do you say so?"

"I don't say anything."

"That's that, then," said Tom.

"I'm telling you all I can," said Figgins huskily. "I—I found out where the banknote was. Whether it ever was stolen—what happened to it—I don't know, and can't guess. But I found out where it was, and I got possession of it."

"What?"

There was a general exclamation of astonishment.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Blake. "You got D'Arcy's banknote?"

"Yes."

"When?" asked Levison.

"To-day—this afternoon. I can't tell you how I got it; but I did get it, and I intended to hand it back to D'Arcy. I hadn't decided yet how I was going to do it. I should have let him have it in some way without his asking questions—perhaps by post—I don't know. Anyhow, I got it to hand it back to him."

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There was silence in the study. In every face there was strong disbelief.

"You've got the banknote on you now?" asked Manners very quietly.

"Yes," said Figgins, flushing crimson, as he read the expressions of the faces round him.

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry looked fixedly at the New House junior.

"If you've got it, give it to the owner," he said.

Figgins fumbled in his pocket, and a crumpled banknote came into view as he drew out his hand.

He held it out to the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy took it, in the midst of a deep and chilling silence.

"That's the note?" asked Tom.

Arthur Augustus glanced at the number on the ten-pound note.

"0002468," he said. "Yaas, that's the numbah, Tom Mewwy. This is my banknote!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Tom.

There was silence again. The crimson died out of Figgins' face, leaving him very pale. He read his condemnation in every look.

Levison smiled rather bitterly.

"Are you fellows satisfied now that Cardew is innocent?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Of course," said Tom Merry. "That's clear enough now. Not that Cardew can blame us. He fairly asked for it."

"Admitted!" yawned Cardew. "If you beg my pardon, dear man, I grant it without reserve."

"Nobody begs your pardon!" snapped Blake. "You played the fool, and brought it on yourself. Serve you jolly well right!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew laughed, and shrugged his shoulders.

"We want this quite clear," said Levison steadily.

"Figgins, do you mean to explain how you came by this stolen banknote?"

"No!" said Figgins resolutely.

"Do you admit, at least, that it has never been in Cardew's hands?" asked Levison categorically.

"It has never been in his hands that I know of," said Figgins. "So far as I know Cardew never had anything to do with it."

"That lets me out!" smiled Cardew.

"But it isn't enough," said Tom Merry. "You must explain where you got the note from, Figgins."

"I can't and won't!"

"I suppose you know that leaves us only one thing to believe?" said the captain of the Shell.

"Believe what you like!" said Figgins savagely. "Let me get out of this! You're done with me!"

"We're done with you, right to the finish, if you are a thief," said Tom, "and if you don't explain how you got hold of D'Arcy's banknote, we can only believe that you took it!"

"And told the lamest possible story for having it in your pocket!" said Levison bitterly. "I suppose you guessed that you wouldn't get out of this study without being searched."

Figgins' lips quivered.

"I've nothing more to say. Believe what you like." He paused. "No, I won't say that. I'm sorry you should think this of me—horribly sorry. But I can't help it. I can't explain."

"I think that's about enough," said Blake. "The only question now is—what are we going to do? Are we reporting this to the Housemaster?"

"Report it if you like!" said Figgins. "I sha'n't tell the Head any more than I've told you!"

The juniors exchanged doubtful glances.

"It means the sack for him," said Manners.

"A thief ought to be sacked," grunted Herries. "We don't want a thief at St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"Wathah not! But—"

"So far as we're concerned, the matter drops," said Levison, after a glance at his chums. "We came into it to clear Cardew, and we've done that. Study No. 9 has nothing further to do with it, and I'm willing to leave the matter in your hands, Tom Merry, as junior captain of the House."

"I concur," murmured Cardew. "Only temper the wind to the shorn lamb, Thomas, and temper justice with jolly old mercy."

"Come on!" said Clive.

Study No. 9 walked out. The other fellows looked at Tom Merry inquiringly.

Tom hesitated long.

"If you fellows leave it to me—" he said at last.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You are satisfied, D'Arcy, now that your banknote has been returned?"

"Certainly. I shall be able to pay my tailah, aftah all, and—"

"Can it!" growled Blake.



"Hallo!" said Talbot, eyeing Trimble up and down. "Tea-ing with the Head?" "No," answered Baggy, "something better than that. I've an appointment with Cousin Ethel, you know!" Talbot looked at him. "Do you mean Miss Cleveland?" he asked. "Yes—Ethel, you know. She's—yooop!" Trimble broke off with a howl as Talbot crushed his hat on his head, and then walked on. (See Chapter 7.)

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's the verdict, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

"Well, we don't want a scandal in the school," said Tom slowly. "We don't want a lot of trouble between the Houses. Figgins was always a decent sort—till now. I really think he must have been potty to do this; it's not like him. It's utterly unlike him. I can't think he's a thief, even after what he's done. He's done this, but I don't believe he will do anything of the kind again. I vote for giving him another chance."

Figgins' face was very pale.

He was condemned, and he knew that he must be condemned. He was fair-minded enough not to blame the juniors for condemning him. But it was a terrible blow to him.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, in obvious relief. "Least said soonest mended, deah boys!"

"Well, I agree," said Blake. "The chap must have gone off his rocker when he took the banknote, I think; that's the only way I can account for it. I'd have trusted Figgins with the Bank of England if it belonged to me."

Figgins winced.

"Give him another chance," said Manners. "Only let him keep his distance."

"That's understood," said Tom. "I suppose nobody here will ever speak to Figgins again. But let it stop at that."

"Agreed!" said Blake.

Tom Merry threw open the door, which Levison had closed behind him.

"You can cut, Figgins," he said.

Figgins hesitated a moment. He cast a haggard look at the serious, troubled faces of the juniors. All of them were troubled to be forced to believe that Figgins was a thief; it was a blow to them as well as to the hapless junior himself.

"I suppose it's no good telling you fellows that I'd sooner have cut off my hand than touched D'Arcy's banknote?" muttered Figgins. "I got possession of it; I did so to return it to him. That's all I can say."

"You can't expect anyone to believe that, unless you give the name of the fellow you got it from."

"Well, no," said Figgins honestly, "I can't." He turned to the door.

Tom Merry made a stride forward. Somehow his faith in Figgins lingered, struggling with his belief in Figgy's guilt.

"Figgy, old man," exclaimed Tom, "if you can explain, give yourself a chance before it's too late. We all want to believe in you."

"Yaas, wathah! If you can say anythin', deah boy—"

"If you're screening somebody, the fellow's not worth it," said Tom. "You're not bound to screen him. Give yourself a chance."

Figgins smiled faintly. It was not a "fellow" that he was screening; but that, naturally, did not occur to any of the juniors.

"I've nothing more to say," he muttered huskily.

Tom stepped back.

"Then the sooner you go the better!" he said curtly. And Figgins went.

CHAPTER 10.

The Last Sacrifice!

FATTY WYNN smiled the smile of contentment.

A feast was toward, in Figgins' study in the New House.

On such an occasion Fatty Wynn was naturally the most prominent member of the New House Co.

Figgy was absent, but Kerr had loyally lent a hand. But Fatty was master of the ceremonies. David Llewellyn Wynn had received a remittance from an affectionate uncle in Wales. When Fatty had a remittance his thoughts naturally ran to a feed. But he had special reasons now for standing a very special feed in the study. His pal Figgins was down on his luck; for days he had looked worried, and trouble had evidently settled thickly upon him. He seemed to be up against it in several ways; and he had sold his bike, which was a sort of final blow. In the circumstances Fatty considered that a really first-class spread in the study was

what old Figgy needed to buck him up. And the whole of Fatty's remittance had gone upon supplies from the school shop, and Fatty had turned out a spread that was, as he proudly told Kerr, really a corker.

Now it only remained for Figgins to come in and partake of it, and to be consequently bucked up.

Figgins was late.

Until the feed was quite ready Fatty was not anxious for his chum to come in; but as soon as all was prepared—the crisp toast ready in a tempting stack, the sosses and chips done to a turn, the other good things set out in tempting array on the table—then Fatty felt that it was time for Figgy to turn up. A waiting feed was a spoiled feed.

So Fatty gave anxious glances at the study clock, and anxious glances at the good things keeping warm in the fender, and more anxious glances into the falling dusk from the study window.

The smile of contentment on his plump, cheery visage died away into an anxious frown.

"Where on earth's Figgy?" he said.

"Oh, he'll come in!" said Kerr.

"But the grub!" said Fatty.

"Splendid, old man! But it will keep a few minutes."

"Grub spoils by keeping; everything's done to a turn. We don't want to begin without Figgy, when we've got this feed up specially for him. But I'm frightfully hungry!" said Fatty pathetically.

"Take a snack!" suggested Kerr.

"He seemed in a hurry for the money," said Wynn. "I don't quite understand Figgy lately. He's awfully down about something. Is he worrying about that rotten affair of D'Arcy's banknote?"

"I think so," said Kerr, with a wrinkle in his brow. "He's screening somebody—goodness knows whom! I believe the School House chaps have some scheme of making him speak out. He ought to speak out, and I hope they'll have luck."

"But he ought to come in to tea—he's frightfully late. I say, you'd better begin, Kerr; no good going hungry. It's bad for a fellow's inside."

There was a step in the passage outside the study door.

"Here he comes!" said the Scottish junior.

"Oh, good!"

The door opened, and George Figgins came in. Fatty Wynn beamed on him and waved a plump hand to indicate the feed. For the moment he did not notice the black, depressed look on Figgy's rugged face. But Kerr's keen eyes searched Figgy's face at once, and the look on it made the Scottish junior's heart sink.

"You're late, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn.

"Eh! Am I?"

"We've got a spread."

"Oh, have you?"

"Yes. Look at it!" said Fatty, in rather an injured tone.

"I hope you're hungry, Figgy."

WINNERS OF OUR £10 COMPETITION!

RESULT OF "SCARLET STREAK" CONTEST No. 1.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been divided between the following two competitors, whose efforts, each containing two errors, came nearest to correct:

Mrs. Collins, 54, Springcroft Road, Hall Green, Birmingham.
C. Hewitt, 94, Windsor Road, Neath, Glam.

The Five Prizes of £1 each have been added together and divided among the following twelve competitors, whose solutions each contained three errors:

T. Andrews, North Park, Ugborough, near Ivybridge, South Devon.
Miss P. M. Browne, 52, Mount Pleasant, Waterloo, near Liverpool.
Thomas Brooks, 306, Livesey Branch Road, Blackburn, Lancs.
Joseph M. Byrne, 27, Home Villas, Donnybrook, Dublin.

John Christopherson, 76, Cowley Street, St. Helens, Lancs.

A. E. Cookson, 18, Irvine Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool.

Gilbert Hobbs, 8, Howard Street, Reading.

Walter A. Hunt, 49, Woodgrange Drive, Southend-on-Sea.

William R. Powley, 133, West End Road, High Wycombe, Bucks.

Dudley Pugh, Kymric House, Canal Road, Newtown, Mont.

Arthur J. Truscott, 291, Romford Road, Forest Gate, London, E.

Kenneth V. Wood, 190, Ainslie Street, Barrow-in-Furness.

The correct solution was as follows:

The "Scarlet Streak" is a wonderful invention which projects a death-ray capable of blasting holes in mountains and demolishing great cities. The inventor hopes that, by its awful power, he will be able to force peace on the earth. But a gang of crooks are after the invention, and there are various fights between the rival parties.

ANOTHER £10 MUST BE WON THIS WEEK, CHUMS! (See page 2.)

"Well, perhaps I might take a snack," said Fatty Wynn, proceeding to help himself to a snack that would have made a pretty good meal for some fellows. "I get jolly hungry in this weather, you know."

"Any weather you don't get hungry in?" grinned Kerr.

"Well, I've a healthy appetite," said Fatty, with his mouth full. "Nothing greedy or gorging about me, I hope, like that fat boulder Trimble of the School House. What?"

"Nothing!" assented Kerr.

"I never could stand a greedy fellow," said the Falstaff of the New House. "A healthy fellow likes a square meal; but enough is enough. You and Figgins don't eat enough. You don't eat as much as I do. But the way Trimble scoffs grub is sickening, you know. Greedy!"

"Horrid!" agreed Kerr, with a genial grin. Fatty Wynn ran Trimble very close as a trencherman, if he did not equal him; but Fatty enjoyed seeing others at a feast as much as feasting himself, and he would have shared his last aniseed-ball with a chum—and in that respect he was exceedingly unlike Trimble.

"But where can Figgy be all this time?" asked Fatty Wynn, proceeding with his Gargantuan snack. "My belief is that he sneaked into the Head's garden to see Cousin Ethel, Kerr."

"Mine, too?" assented Kerr.

"But he can't be there all this time."

"He can't."

"Well, then, why doesn't he come in?"

"Seeing somebody about selling his jigger, perhaps."

"He's sold it," said Fatty. "Didn't you hear? That fat cad Trimble got it off him for seven pounds."

Kerr gave a grunt.

"The silly owl!"

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"Hungry! Oh, no!"

"What? You're more than an hour late for tea!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in great astonishment. "Not hungry?"

"No."

"I say, are you ill, Figgy?"

"No; I'm all right."

"Where have you been all this time?"

Figgins did not answer.

"You've seen Tom Merry and his gang?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"They didn't keep you all this time?"

"No; I—I've been walking a bit. Having a tramp under the trees," said Figgins dully. "I—I wanted some fresh air."

He avoided Kerr's penetrating eyes, and crossed to the armchair and dropped into it, rather than sat down. He looked tired and worn, and it seemed as if all the strength had gone out of his sturdy frame.

Fatty Wynn, quite forgetting the snack he had been busy upon, gazed at Figgins in anxiety, almost in consternation. If a fellow was not hungry an hour after teatime the matter was serious, in Fatty's opinion. If a fellow was indifferent to such a feed as Wynn had prepared, the matter was more than serious—it was really tragic.

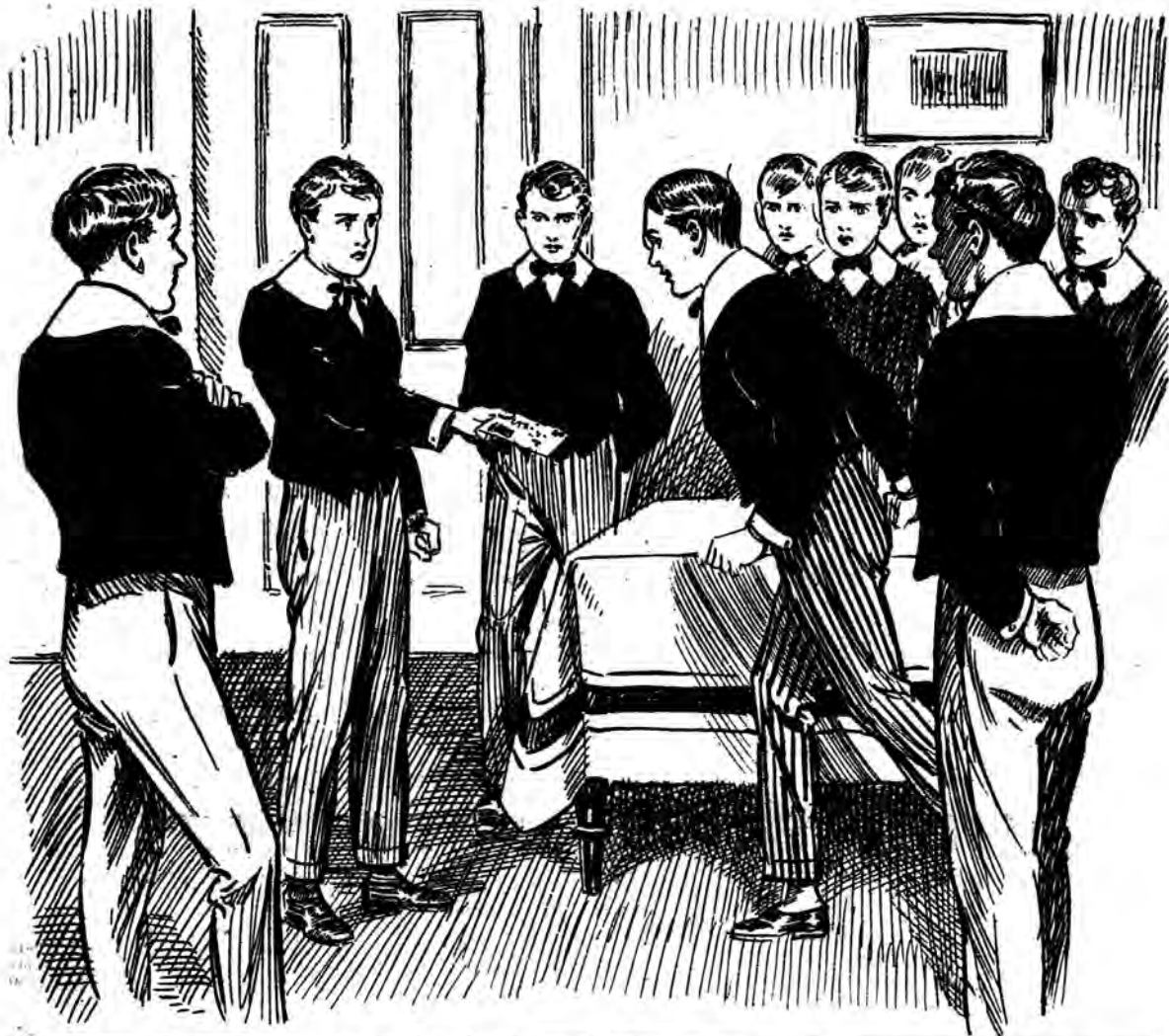
How could a fellow be indifferent to such a feed unless he was quite off his balance?

"Will you begin with the sosses and chips, Figgy?" asked the fat Fourth-Former at last.

"No! Yes! Thanks!"

"What is it, Figgy?" asked Kerr, very quietly.

Figgins did not answer, but the distress in his honest rugged face intensified. He did not seem to dare to meet Kerr's eyes.



"If you've got the missing tenner, Figgins," said Tom Merry, "give it to the owner." The New House Junior fumbled in his pocket, and a crumpled banknote came into view as he drew out his hand. He held it out to the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy took it, in the midst of a deep and chilling silence, and glanced at the number. "Yass, that's the numbah, Tom Mewwy," he said. "This is my banknote!" (See Chapter 9.)

Fatty Wynn filled a plate for Figgins. The only possible explanation was that Figgins had left it too long, and was feeling faint. Something solid in his inside was what Figgy wanted, in Wynn's opinion.

As Figgy did not come to the table, Fatty carried him the well-filled plate, on an atlas by way of a tray, and set it on Figgins's knees as he sat in the armchair.

"Tuck in, old man!" said Fatty. "Not a word till you've got outside that. Here's a knife and fork. Salt and pepper. Go it!"

"I'm not hungry!"

"Rot!"

"But, really——"

"Get outside that, you ass! You'll feel better! Now then, go it. I suppose you don't want me to feed you like a baby, do you? I jolly well will, if you don't tuck in!"

Figgins grinned faintly, and began to eat. He was feeling sick and miserable, utterly disinclined for food or anything else. But, as a matter of fact, he needed food, and he was surprised to feel himself better as the succulent provender went down to its place. Fatty Wynn had judged well after all.

"That's better!" said Fatty. "Pile in, and let me help you again! I'll take a snack myself, too. Now then, Kerr!"

Kerr sat down to tea, but his eyes were anxiously on Figgins. Figgy ate, but he ate slowly, and he ate little. Fatty Wynn, contented to see him eating at all, proceeded to do full justice to the spread himself, and his plump face was soon beaming again.

A considerable clearance had been made by the time Fatty Wynn turned his attention to Figgy's plate again, and found that it was still half-filled.

"You're getting on jolly slowly!" he said. "Go it!" "I've had enough, really," said Figgins, putting the plate on the table. "I'm not hungry."

"You're worrying about something," said Fatty Wynn sagely. "If it's the bike, that's all right; we're going to get that back from Trimble, ain't we, Kerr? We'll make him sell it again as soon as we've got the tin."

"That's nothing."

"Well, you'll want a bike this summer, you know."

"I don't know. I—I mayn't be at St. Jim's long, perhaps," said Figgins slowly.

David Llewellyn Wynn jumped.

"What! Leaving?"

"I—I think it's possible."

The fat Fourth-Former turned his back on the feed. His face was full of dismay as he looked at Figgins.

"What on earth's the matter?" he asked. "Trouble at home?"

"Oh, no!"

"You'd better get it off your chest, Figgy," said Kerr quietly. "I can see that something's happened. What is it? If there's trouble, there's two fellows in this study who will stand by you."

"Yes, rather."

Figgins's eyes drooped.

"I know I've got two jolly good pals here," he said. "But—but when you know——" He broke off, and the blood mounted to his face, redder and redder, till his pale cheeks had become crimson. "I—I'm in disgrace, and it can't be set right!"

"Disgrace!"

"Yes."

"What's happened?"
 "You—you remember Cardew was barred because—because they—we—suspected him."
 "I know that! What does that matter?"
 "Cardew is cleared now," said Figgins. "And I—I'm barred instead. Tom Merry and his friends—all the fellows who were mixed up in the business—they bar me now."
 "School House cads!" said Fatty Wynn, with a warlike look. "Who cares for that rotten House?"
 "But why, Figgy?" asked Kerr very quietly.
 "For the same reason that Cardew was barred."
 "Impossible!"
 Fatty Wynn clenched his plump fists.
 "You mean that they suspect you?"
 "Yes."
 "Let's go over to the School House," said the Welsh junior, his eyes blazing. "There's us three, and we'll take Redfern and Owen and some more fellows, and mop up that crowd of cads. Why, every fellow in this House will back up. We'll make a raid of it, and mop up the School House, and jolly well lick every rotter there. We'll—"
 "Chuck it, old man," said Figgins, with an affectionate grin at his fat chum. "That's no good!"
 "I tell you we're going to mop them up!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I dare say they've got thieves in the School House—mobs of 'em! But they're not going to say we've got one in this House!"
 "Quiet!" said Kerr. "Cheese it, Fatty, old chap. This isn't a matter for House rags. Let's have it clear, Figgins."

There was a dead silence in the study.
 Fatty Wynn's hands were no longer clenched. He was no longer thinking of a raid on the School House and vengeance on the fellows who had dared to accuse his chum. He stood as if rooted to the floor, his fat face quite white.
 "You had it!" he said. "You had the stolen banknote! They thought you had it all along! Didn't you tell them where you got it?"
 "No."
 "Why not?"
 "I couldn't!"
 "You'll tell us?"
 "I can't!"
 "You can tell us that you had stolen money in your hands, but you can't tell us how you got it?"
 Figgins gave a sort of groan.
 "That's how it stands, old man. You can turn me down, if you like, and believe me a thief, as they do. I can't explain. I sha'n't blame you."
 Fatty Wynn only stared at him.
 "This won't do, Figgy," said Kerr steadily. "There's no question of turning you down, or believing you a thief. That's rot! You're standing between somebody else and justice."
 "Yes, that's it!" breathed Wynn.
 "We want to know who it is, Figgy. Who is it?"
 No answer.
 "You know the thief, Figgy?"
 "I don't know the thief."

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Being the sequel to the remarkable story you have just read.

"THE SCARLET STREAK!"

Another thrilling instalment of this amazing yarn of Romance and Adventure.

SPECIAL CRICKET SUPPLEMENT contributed by *Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.* and a simple competition offering **£10 A WEEK** in prize money. Order your **GEM** in good time, chums.—Editor.

Tom Merry is a level-headed chap, and he's always been a friend of ours, barring House rows. If he thinks such a thing of you, you've given him reason."

"I know."
 "You know who bagged D'Arcy's banknote, and you've refused to say," said the Scottish junior. "Is it that?"

"Not exactly. I—I admitted that—that I'd seen the banknote, and I couldn't tell them any more, only—only," Figgins faltered, "I—I was able to give it back to D'Arcy, as it happened."

"What?"
 "Figgins!"
 The hot colour faded out of Figgins' face again. His comrades were staring at him with unbelieving eyes.

"You had it, do you mean?" ejaculated Fatty Wynn.

"Yes."

"You had the stolen banknote?"

"Yes."

"Are you mad?"

"I'd got hold of it," said Figgins. "I can't tell you how. But—but it happened that I'd got it back from—from a person—a person who had innocently got possession of it. Somehow—I can't imagine how—it had got into that—that person's hands. I got it back, and intended to let D'Arcy have it in some quiet way. But they got me into Tom Merry's study, and—I handed it over there. And—and they thought I'd had it all along."

Fatty Wynn stared at him in horror.

"They thought I'd had it all along!" repeated Figgins dully.

"What else could they think?" said Kerr.

"Nothing else. I know that. I don't blame them." Figgins licked his dry lips. "I sha'n't blame you fellows if you think the same."

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"You know who had the banknote?"
 Figgins nodded.
 "That's good enough," said Kerr. "Give us the fellow's name!"

His eyes were fixed on Figgins' wretched face, and the look there made him start. Like a flash it came into Kerr's mind. He started from his chair.

"Figgins, when did you get the banknote?"

"This afternoon."

"You hadn't it in class? It was after class?"

"Yes."

"After class you went to see—" Kerr paused, and then went on firmly: "You went to see Cousin Ethel! Then the School House fellows got hold of you, and you had the banknote on you. Figgins!"

Figgins' face was ghastly.

"No!" he gasped. "No! Never! I mean—" He tried to collect his mind, as he read the Scottish junior's thoughts in his face. "I—I mean—I—I own up!"

"What?"

"I—I had it!" panted Figgins. "I—I never got it from anybody! I had it all along, just as those fellows think. It was—I—I own up, and—and you fellows had better bar me with the rest! I'm the thief!"

And with that George Figgins crossed to the door with an unsteady step, and left the study.

"Figgins!" gasped Kerr.

But Figgins was gone, and his two chums, pale and horror-stricken, gazed at one another in stony silence.

THE END.

(Although this drastic confession means the end of his friendship with Tom Merry & Co., Figgins is happy in the thought that, come what may, Cousin Ethel is safe. Read next week's fine, dramatic story, entitled "The Shadow of Shame!" and see how Figgins bears himself through this great trial.

THERE'S MANY A SLIP— The old saying is well applied to the Monk and his ambitious attempts to possess the Ray of Death, for even with the precious apparatus in his hands, Fate deals him a knock-down blow!



An Amazing Story of Romance and Adventure based upon the Death Ray, the most sensational invention of modern times!

Fired!

BOB could feel the fierce heat of the vat of molten lead; he could hear the seethe and bubble of liquid metal, and he felt himself dropping down into it, his head singing from that terrific punch on the jaw.

Desperately, he twisted away. He felt the burning rim of the vat scorch against his legs; then he was upright again, and as he straightened he jerked the heavy forme down into the vat. The forme held the fateful story of the Scarlet Streak, all set up in type and ready for the final edition of the "Daily Times."

Mary had convinced him that duty to humanity was greater than loyalty to his paper, and it was with a sense of relief that he saw a vivid, bluish flame lick up from the heaving surface of the molten lead as the forme splashed heavily into the vat.

As he heaved the forme down, Bob saw that Mary was struggling with Mr. Harley and another man. The girl was clinging to the proof-sheets of the story. Now that the forme was destroyed, only the proof-sheets remained.

With a shout, Bob leaped to her aid. Two of the nearest of the men jumped to stop him. One went headlong under a full-blooded punch to the side of the head, and the second one slid a yard on his back as Bob's charging shoulder caught him squarely on the chest.

An instant later, and Bob was at the men who were struggling with Mary. He hauled Mr. Harley away, then jammed his right fist on the side of the other man's jaw and knocked him flying. He ripped the papers from the girl's hand and tried to tear them. But the paper was tough and would not give.

He remembered the vat, and shot towards it. Half a dozen men saw his intention and strove desperately to hold him back. But he beat them to the vat. He knocked two men out—then a jerk of his hand sent the proof-sheets into the molten metal.

The compositors pulled up as they saw flames shooting high. In the fraction of a second nothing was left of the papers that carried the fateful story of the Scarlet Streak, and Bob smiled a little as he saw the charred sheets crackling in the fierce heat.

He heard Mr. Harley, the chief editor, shouting at him; then his arm was grabbed, and he swung round to face the enraged man. His features were distorted with passion, and he shook his fist in Bob's face ere he swung round to the angry men grouped behind.

"He's sold us out—the crook!" he exclaimed to them; and for a moment it looked as though the printers were going to rush and start the fight anew.

Bob had destroyed the biggest scoop that the "Daily Times" had ever had; but Mr. Harley could not appreciate the reason for the young reporter's actions. If the report of the Scarlet Streak had been published, it would have unleashed unimaginable complications. Once the death-ray machine got into the wrong hands there was no telling what would happen. Possession of it would give a crook the power to terrorise the world.

Bob jerked Mr. Harley's hand from his coat just as Mary stepped towards them and halted at Bob's side.

"You're fired!" the chief editor raved at Bob. "You're fired! And I'll have you black-listed with every newspaper and syndicate in the country!"

Bob laughed a little.

"You can laugh, hang you!" Harley exclaimed. "But you'll regret this morning's work. I never—" He broke off as he heard Mary speaking to the young reporter.

"Bob, I'm sorry!" she said quickly. "Maybe he'll forgive you if I explain everything!"

"It's no good. He wouldn't understand." Bob said quietly. "It took me long enough to realise what it all meant! We'd better go!"

"Yes, you'd better go!" Harley half snarled. "And don't set foot across the threshold of this office again! I've finished with you. And I'll see that no other paper takes you on!"

"Mr. Harley, you don't know what you're saying!" Mary protested. "Bob has done the—"

"Don't know what I'm saying, don't I?" Harley raved. "I know what I'm saying, all right! He's done me the worst turn he could do, and he's wrecked his own career! And now get out of here, both of you! Get out of it, Evans, or I'll chuck you out!"

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

BOB EVANS, a young reporter on the "Daily Times," has been ordered to find the inventor of a death-ray machine known as the Scarlet Streak. The creator of this wonderful machine is **RICHARD CRAWFORD**, and he has been working on it for years with the sole assistance of his daughter **MARY**. Crawford is being hounded by a crook who is known as

THE MONK. With his aides, **LEONTINE** and **COUNT K.**, the Monk is trying to get possession of the Scarlet Streak in order that he may terrorise the world. After an accident with the death-ray machine, Mr. Crawford is captured by the Monk, and is taken to the crooks' headquarters, a lonely mansion known as the House with the Closed Shutters, where they try to wrest from him details of the hiding-place of the death-ray machine.

Bob Evans helps the Crawfords against the Monk, and, discovering all about the Scarlet Streak, decides to make his report to his newspaper. Mary begs him not to do so because, if news of the Scarlet Streak gets about, it will bring the crooks of the whole world on to their trail. Bob, however, is a newspaper man first, last, and all the time, and he determines to do his duty by the "Daily Times." After a night of tortured indecision, he goes to the office just in time to catch the last edition of the paper. The chief editor, **MR. HARLEY**, tells him to put the story straight on to a linotype machine, which Bob does. It is just as the type is set up in its forme that Mary appears, and renews her plea to Bob to stop the story. At last he sees the real danger of letting the news go through. He snatches up the forme, and makes for a huge vat of molten lead at one end of the composing-room. A fight ensues between Bob, Mr. Harley, and the men around, and the young reporter is all but knocked headlong into the vat.

(Now read on.)

He was quivering with rage, and suddenly he lost what little there remained of his temper. He made a grab at Bob's throat as though he meant to throw him out of the composing-room. Bob caught his wrists, and his grey eyes glinted as he jerked the tense fingers from his throat. With a twist, he forced the boss to his knees, and for a moment Bob held him there, looking straight down into Mr. Harley's face.

"You kick me out now, but the day's coming when you'll be glad to shake my hand," Bob said quietly. Then, with a jerk, he sent the editor staggering back against the men grouped behind.

A moment longer Bob stood staring at them ere he slipped his hand under Mary's arm, and they left the composing-room. It was as they went that a man, half concealed by the machines around, grinned to himself. He was the fellow who had been watching the Crawford house. He had followed Mary to the "Times" building.

He had managed to slip into the composing-room. Now he watched the two as they left the building and entered the car which was waiting at the kerb. He saw Bob and Mary talking, but he could not hear what they said. They were discussing what had just happened, and Bob would not listen when Mary tried to express regret for the trouble which had followed the destruction of the story.

"I brought it on myself," Bob told her. "If I had listened to you yesterday, this would not have happened. Don't let's talk about it. Don't you think it is time we started to look for your father?"

He saw Mary's eyes widen. In her worry about Bob's intended disclosure of the secret of the Scarlet Streak she had almost forgotten that her father was still in the hands of the Monk and his gang.

"They took him after the raid on your house," said Bob. "And the chances are that they—" He broke off, and then added: "If your father is at the House of the Closed Shutters, we'll get him out."

"They are certain to have taken him there," Mary said. "And he—"

Bob leaned forward and spoke to the chauffeur.

"Can you use your fists?" he asked.

"A bit, sir," the man told him; and he grinned a little.

"All right, then," Bob answered. "I may want you to use 'em! Now, follow the directions I give you—we're going to a house just outside the town—and there'll be a bunch of trouble waiting for us at the end of it!"

The chauffeur sent the big limousine rolling forward. From time to time Bob called directions to him, and the machine headed swiftly for the headquarters of the Monk's gang.

The Tramp!

AT the headquarters of the crooks who sought to learn the secret of the Scarlet Streak Mr. Crawford was still defying the Monk.

Henry, the strong man of the gang, had handled him roughly; but the inventor was ready to die rather than reveal where he had hidden the blueprints of his marvellous death-ray machine.

Mr. Crawford sat there, holding his throat.

"Do what you like!" he gasped. "I shall tell you nothing!"

The Monk's dark brows scowled, and his sunken eyes glinted. His straggly beard jutted as he spoke through clenched teeth.

"You fool! What we've put you through now is nothing to what you'll get if you don't speak!"

Leontine bent towards him, her sleet-black eyes flashing and her cruel voice the merest hiss.

"Henry has only been playing with you, so far. If he—"

The big man strode forward, and his fingers wrapped about the inventor's grey hair, jerking back his head.

"If they gi' me the word I'll make yer wish ye'd never been born!" he growled. "I c'ud—"

Abruptly he broke off. From near at hand came the sound of a telephone-bell. Leontine and the Monk glanced at one another. Both knew that the call could only be from the man who was watching the inventor's house.

In the next room Count K. moved to the instrument. He was in league with Leontine and the Monk, but he pretended to be a friend of the Crawfords. He did not want the inventor to see him there, and that was why he kept out of the room in which Mr. Crawford was being "persuaded" to talk.

He lifted the receiver, and heard the quick, excited voice of the man who had watched Mary and Bob leave the "Times" building. For a few seconds the count listened; then he answered the man quickly and set the instrument

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down. He crossed to the door, opened it cautiously, and beckoned to the Monk.

"Our man has just phoned that the coast is clear at Crawford's. We can get the machine while everyone is away."

"Where's the girl gone, then?" asked the Monk.

"Don't know. She's with Evans; but they haven't gone back to Euclid Terrace," the count told him.

"All right!" the Monk snapped. "We'll start now! Have both cars brought round, and get four of the men ready!"

He turned away as the Count backed from the half-opened door. The Monk checked in front of Mr. Crawford.

"We'll leave you to think this over!" he said, quickly.

"Henry shall have another go at you later. Take him away!"

The big man heaved the inventor out of the chair, and carried him to the room in which he had first been kept a prisoner.

Henry pitched him on to the floor.

"Darn you for an obstinate old fool!" he snarled, as he turned and locked the door.

Mr. Crawford picked himself up and staggered to the chair behind the table.

Henry turned from the door, and he stepped grimly towards him. He snatched up a newspaper that lay on the table, then yanked the inventor out of the chair and heaved him on to the bed near by.

"Stop there, an' keep quiet!" Henry growled, as he himself dropped into the chair and lifted his feet to a comfortable position on the table. "If yer don't, I might take it into me 'ead to start on yer on me own. A little private session, like, jest to see if yer don't change yer mind about them there blueprints!"

Mr. Crawford made no answer, but as he sprawled on the bed he could hear hurried movements in the room which he had just left. The Monk and his gang were making preparations for another raid on the Crawford house, and this time they meant to bring away the Scarlet Streak itself!

In a little while all their arrangements were completed, and they left the house for the cars which stood outside. Count K. accompanied the Monk and Leontine.

"We'll let the machine out of the hole in the wall, using ropes," the Monk told him; "and we'll get into the place by telling that fool butler that we've come to repair the—"

"I'll get you in!" the count interrupted him. "If I'm there the butler will think that it's all O.K., and if either the girl or Evans turn up, I can stall them off."

"You won't have to do it for long, either!" the Monk growled. "It'll take us about five minutes to get that machine away once my hands are on it! Now, are we all ready?"

He glanced round; his men were piling into the leading car. He gave the word, and the two machines shot off towards the home of the inventor, leaving Mr. Crawford himself a close prisoner in the House with the Closed Shutters.

It was while the Monk and his gang were on their way that somebody else decided to take a hand in the game. A tramp, breaking through the hedge that surrounded the Crawford grounds, espied the great hole in the wall of the laboratory.

He surveyed it gleefully, then took a look round the house. Nowhere could he see any sign of life. The butler was down in the kitchen with the cook and the maid, all of them arguing about whether to take the rest of the day off, or not. Master and mistress were both away, and there was nothing to keep them in the place.

The tramp found a ladder near the hole in the wall. He reared it upwards, and in a matter of seconds he was clambering over the shattered brickwork into the laboratory.

He stood looking about him, at the benches, the chemicals, and the instruments, the fittings and the apparatus. Gingerly he fingered some of the things on the broad bench at one side of the room, then he saw the open door at the far side and cautiously he stole through it into the passage beyond.

At the end of the corridor was Mr. Crawford's bed-room. The tramp opened the door and looked round cautiously. No one was in the room, and the whole house was silent and seemed deserted.

He found a box of cigars on the table, and he lit one contentedly. He looked about the room, puffing smoke, and he saw a wardrobe which promised something. He stepped across to it and whipped open the door, to discover the whole of Mr. Crawford's clothes hanging there.

The tramp stared at them for a few moments, and he grinned in delight as he reached a coat and vest down and tried it against his own grimy apparel.

Within a minute he was busy changing into a neat morning suit.

If the tramp could have known that, in changing his



The workmen shouted madly as the two cars hurtled towards them, and then leaped for their lives as the Monk's car smashed through the flimsy barrier and sent the woodwork flying. (See page 23.)

clothes, he was butting headfirst into the swift-moving drama that centred about the Scarlet Streak, he would have left that eerily silent house as fast as his legs could carry him.

A Bad Move!

IT was a matter of minutes after the Monk and the rest left that Bob and Mary arrived at the House with the Closed Shutters. The chauffeur pulled the limousine close to the house, and the three alighted.

"That's the main door!" Mary exclaimed. "But there's another door round at the side, Bob. I think I know how it opens, and I'll show you the way into the—"

"You won't!" Bob exclaimed quickly. "You'll stay out here, Mary. It'll be too risky to let you come into the house as well, and there's bound to be some sort of scrap!"

Mary tried to protest, but Bob would not listen, and he left her standing by the machine while he and the chauffeur went to the grille-guarded door at the front of the house.

"This is locked tight!" Bob exclaimed, as he tried the grille. "No chance of getting in here, unless we ring the bell, and we don't want to do that! Let's try the side door!"

The door at the side of the house, screened by bushes from the road, appeared to have neither lock nor handle. For a moment or so Bob stared at it, running his fingertips over the wood.

"This is queer!" he muttered to his companion. "There's no— Ah!" He saw a little patch of wood where the paint seemed to be worn, and right in the centre was a small hole. "What's this? Looks like a latch without a handle. There's a bar running across on the other side of the hole. We'll—"

He broke off, and glanced about on the ground around. He guessed that there must be some sort of key to the secret lock on the door, and it was not long before he found a little metal spike stuck into the ground near the root of a bush.

He picked it up, and thrust it through the hole. He felt

the latch on the far side lift. A moment afterwards and the door swung open.

"You've done it, sir!" the chauffeur exclaimed, excitement in his whispered voice.

"And now look out for— What's that?"

He heard the sharp snap of an electric spark above the door. He glanced up from the inside, and saw that wires ran from the top of the door through the ceiling above.

"Some sort of signal!" he exclaimed grimly. "Look out for trouble! Come on!"

And they let the door shut behind them as they stepped softly towards the narrow stairs at the end of the passage beyond.

Up in the room above Henry and a companion were playing cards, while Mr. Crawford was now locked in the room which led off from it. Both men started as they got the signal given from below by the opening door.

Without a word they shot up from the table, and stood listening. They heard cautious footsteps creaking on the boards of the stairs that led to one of the many doors in the room, and one of the pair stepped silently across the carpet, and, with a nod to Henry, slipped through a door, and half-closed it behind him.

Henry moved to one of the curtains that draped the shuttered window, concealing himself there; the folds of the curtain had barely settled before Bob and the chauffeur entered the room.

They stood looking around them. Bob saw the cards on the table, and he caught the scent of cigarette-smoke. The curtain by the window moved slightly. Both saw it. For a second Bob hesitated, then he strode towards the hangings, his tread muffled by the carpet.

With a jerk, he whipped the curtain aside, and, in the same moment the massive brute hiding behind it, flung himself at the young reporter.

Bob met him with a smashing upper-cut that cracked to the side of the fellow's jaw. Even as the blow landed, the man slogged a terrific punch at Bob's ribs; next instant they closed, and both crashed to the floor.

Mr. Crawford heard the struggle, and he leaped to the locked door of the room, stuffing into his pocket the Cross Word puzzle on which he had been working, and which contained the secret of the hiding-place of the Scarlet Streak plans.

"I'll smash yer flat!" he heard Henry roar.

"Come on—come on and try it!" came Bob Evans' voice. And then the inventor hammered on the panels, his eyes alight as he recognised the tones of the young reporter.

Bob and Henry had picked themselves up after falling, and now they went at one another hammer and tongs. Bob could see that he was no match for his opponent in sheer strength, and he twisted from his lashing fists, side-stepped him when he rushed again, then brought his right round in another terrific drive to the jaw. And Henry went down with a crash.

He was still falling when Bob leaped to the door on which the inventor was hammering. The key was in the lock, and Bob flung it open. The inventor came staggering out just as the second man tore into the fight. He made for Mr. Crawford, and he smashed him to the floor in one wild punch, just before Bob could get at him.

Bob revenged the inventor a moment later. He let the cowardly brute have it behind the ear, and he went down for a count—a long count!

"Look after Mr. Crawford!" Bob yelled to the chauffeur, and then turned his attention to Henry.

The big man's evil eyes were glittering, and his thin lips twisted off his gritted teeth. From the tail of his eye Bob saw the chauffeur helping the inventor from the room. Then the man named Henry came at him in a mad leap.

Bob went back under his onslaught, driven hard against the wall. A dozen times he smashed at the twisted, vicious features, a dozen times the man countered with shattering punches that shook the breath in the youthful newspaperman's body.

Bob saw the man's left swinging for his jaw, and he ducked away from it, only to run into a fierce right that made his brain rock. He pulled himself together, clenched his teeth, tucked his head down, and tore into the big fellow with every ounce of strength in his young body.

Henry went back under the onslaught, and Bob finished the attack with a pile-driving right that flogged the fellow against the door through which the chauffeur and the inventor had disappeared.

The man came back at him, and he picked Bob off his feet with a terrific swipe that made the young fellow slide yards across the carpet. Bob got up, and he crouched a little, slipped away as the man renewed the attack, twisted on one foot, and landed a punch high on one cheekbone that made the fellow spin on his heels. Even as he fell, Bob hit him

again—a devastating punch that shook Henry right down to his heels.

He came up again, however, and Bob went at him, hitting with everything he had. He rocked punches from the fellow's head down to his belt. Henry was powerful, and when he did get in a full-armed drive, it all but knocked Bob off his feet; but the rascal hadn't the speed of the young reporter, and he winded himself in trying to hit him.

From one end of the room to the other they fought, with Henry weakening every moment. Once more Bob knocked him down, and when Henry got up, Bob put him on his back a second time. The crook came off the carpet with a smashed chair-leg in his hand, and he aimed a desperate swipe at Bob's head.

Bob slipped under the improvised weapon; he crouched, and straightened with his right fist coming up and under Henry's jaw. The punch got home with all the strength of Bob's steely body behind it. Henry crumpled at the knees and began to drop. Even as he fell, Bob got him again—a terrific left full on the mark that sent the big fellow down with a crash.

Bob stood over him, but Henry showed no signs of wanting any more, and it was as he stood there that Bob wondered why the rest of the gang had not come up at the sound of the fight. The whole of the house was silent and still.

He left Henry lying there while he glanced into the adjoining rooms; there was no sign of anyone, and the man was stirring when Bob returned to him. He caught the fellow by the shoulder and yanked him into a sitting posture.

"Where's the rest of the gang?" he asked crisply.

Henry blinked at him out of bloodshot eyes.

"Find out!" he gasped.

"Where are they?" Bob asked. "Out with it, or you'll get another dose of what you've just had! Now then, speak up!"

Henry gulped. He looked at Bob's clenched fists, remembered what they felt like when they were driven with all Bob's leaping weight behind them, and he growled:

"Gone to Crawford's to get that death-ray machine!"

That was enough for Bob. He stepped away from the man, backed to the door, and locked it after him; then raced out to where Mary was waiting in the street. He found her alone, and there was no sign of the car.

"Where's the—"

"I sent the chauffeur on home with father," Mary answered his unspoken question. "I thought it was best to get him away from here as quickly as possible."

Bob stared at her, aghast.

"Sent him on home!" he gasped. "The Monk and his gang have just gone to your house for the Scarlet Streak! I found that out from the last man who jumped me!"

Mary's eyes widened in horror as she started back.

"Good heavens, they'll get father again!" she exclaimed.

"What a stroke of bad luck!" Bob gasped. "We must get a machine and head them off! There's a garage near; perhaps we can hire a car from there!"

They hurried to the garage. By leaving a deposit, Bob managed to hire a machine, driving it himself. "He and Mary climbed in, and they started off for the Crawford home straight away."

All Out!

WHILE Bob was getting into the House with the Closed Shutters, the Monk was raiding the inventor's home. The two cars containing the gang entered the drive and ran up to the front of the house.

They did not waste a moment, but went straight to the front door.

"I'll ring," said the count, "and the butler will let me in. Then you fellows come on and tell him that you've come to repair the wall. If he refuses to let you in you can rush him. If he lets you come, then just act normal, and make straight for the laboratory. Better take 'em out of sight," he added to the Monk.

The Monk nodded.

"Round to the side there, all of you," he said. "One of you take one of the cars and run it near the hole in the wall, so that we can lower the machine to it. Quick, now!"

They could hear the butler approaching the door. When he opened it, he found only the count standing there. The butler smiled.

"Miss Crawford is out at the moment, sir," he said.

"Will you come in and wait?"

The count entered as the man held the door wide. Just as the butler was closing it again the rest of the gang came up.

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SEE THE FILM!

"We came to repair the wall of your house," one of them said.

The butler looked them over, and he noticed the ropes and the implements that they carried.

"I ain't heard nothin' about it, but I s'pose it's all right," he observed. "Come in."

They entered the house, and he showed them to the laboratory, then left them to the job, and hurried down to the kitchen below. He and the cook were still debating whether to slip out or not.

"Tis our afternoon off. So why stick around a gloomy old place like this?" she asked.

"The count's here," the butler said, "and some workmen have turned up to repair the wall. They'll be a long while on the job, so I can slip out for an hour or so. If the count wants anything the maid can see to it. Come on!"

He grabbed his hat, and they left the kitchen together. The whole house was now at the mercy of the Monk and his gang!

The Monk climbed the ladder that the tramp had left by the hole in the wall, and he met his men when they reached the laboratory.

The gang set to work with a will, using their ropes to lash the machine after it had been run to the spot where the window had been originally. In an incredibly short time the machine was being lowered towards the car that waited below.

The men heaved the Scarlet Streak into the back, balancing it with the heavy head jutting out above the hood.

It had been planned that Count K.—in his guise as a friend of the Crawfords—should remain behind, in order that he could keep the gang informed of what happened when the theft was discovered.

The count helped Leontine into the car, and moved back towards the house. He stood there watching the machines as they got away, the one with the Scarlet Streak in it shooting ahead of the other car and racing away down the drive. With a strange smile on his lips, the count re-entered the house.

In the inventor's bed-room someone else was smiling—the tramp. He had changed his clothes, all unconscious of what was going on in the laboratory, and now he stood admiring himself in the mirror.

He found a powder-puff on the dressing-table, and he dusted his face with it, took another look at the well-fitting suit he had donned, and then he made for the door, and returned to the laboratory.

He prowled round here, looking for something that was worth stealing. He peered amidst the bottles of chemicals and the tools which lay on the bench. He saw nothing to attract him there, nor did he notice that an open jar bore the red-lettered word, "Explosive."

He pulled one of Mr. Crawford's cigars from his pocket, and then produced a vesta. He struck it on the side of the jar, lit his cigar, puffed a cloud of blue smoke, and then carelessly jerked the flaming match towards the bench.

It dropped full in the open mouth of the jar!

A terrific explosion followed, the tramp reeled back, staggered, and then pitched full length to the floor, just as Mr. Crawford alighted from his car at the front of the house.

He heard the explosion, and he made a dash into the building; straight up the stairs he flew, not pausing until he reached the laboratory door.

The curtains across the alcove on the far side of the room were drawn, and, with a cry, he rushed towards them—to find that the Scarlet Streak had disappeared.

He swung round, staring with wide eyes about the room, and it was then that he saw the tramp lying prostrate at the foot of the bench. The air was filled with the acrid reek of explosive, and the bench itself bore scattered and broken instruments.

The inventor stepped towards the man and knelt on the floor by him. He moved his head and looked into the fellow's face—only to start back in horror. It was the tramp's face that had taken the full force of the explosion. He was unrecognisable.

Mr. Crawford looked at the clothes that the man wore, and he saw that they were his own. He went through the man's pockets, and out of almost every one he drew some paper that he recognised as belonging to himself. He stared down at the fellow in blank astonishment, then jerked to his feet as he heard someone enter the laboratory.

It was Count K., and he looked from the inventor to the tramp.

"Hallo, count! Thank goodness someone is here! The Scarlet Streak is gone! This man here—my clothes—What does it mean?"

The count looked down at the man, and he guessed at the meaning of the acrid reek of explosive that hung on the air.

"You found him here—like this?" he asked, in surprise.

"Yes, not half a minute ago! And he—he—he is dead!"

The count nodded.

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"Listen!" he said. "This man is mutilated beyond recognition. Let your enemies believe it is you who are dead; it's your chance to beat them."

"There is something in that," the inventor said slowly; and he stood there, thinking deeply.

Meanwhile, Bob and Mary were racing at top speed for the house. They knew that they had been delayed too long to get to the place before the Monk arrived; but Bob hoped to get there before he left. They did not count on the fact that the Monk's visit might last but a few minutes.

They were a mile from the house when another car came hurtling along the road towards them. It was being driven all out, and at the back was a bulky metal shape that caught the gleaming rays of the sun.

It roared past them.

"The Scarlet Streak!" gasped Mary.

"The Monk!" Bob exclaimed—he had seen the bearded crook clinging to the metal tripod of the machine.

His foot went hard down on the brake-pedal, and before Mary realised it the machine had swung round, and was on the trail of the crooks.

The Monk twisted to look back, and he saw Bob come speeding after them. He leaned over to his driver.

"Turn off the main road!" he bawled. "Shake 'em off; they're after us!"

Both cars skidded around a bend, and the Monk's driver kept his throttle wide and gave his powerful machine all she'd got. Lurching and leaping on the road, with the Scarlet Streak rocking precariously, they hurtled on.

The road grew rougher, and then straight before them a barrier showed across their path:

"ROAD CLOSED."

Workmen were standing by it, and they shouted madly as the two machines hurtled down; then leaped for their lives as the crooks' car smashed into the flimsy barrier and sent the woodwork flying.

The machine plunged on, Bob racing grimly to overtake it. He saw the woodwork of the barrier fly high; he heard the workmen shouting, but he did not understand their meaning.

Stones and loose earth flung back from the jolting shape of the car ahead, and then very suddenly it seemed to drop out of sight.

Bob trod on the brake-pedal—too late!

The fraction of a second later and the car was leaping over the edge of a steep slope that was almost a precipice.

In front and below them the crooks' car was streaking downwards in a lifting cloud of dust. They saw the machine jump high; then it crashed sideways, and went rolling over and over down the hill to the trees at the bottom.

A split second afterwards and the car in which Mary and Bob were riding rocketed down the slope—hurtling to the same fate!

(Does this mean the end of the tussle between the Monk and the Crawfords; does it mean that Bob Evans has sacrificed his life to this cause? Next week's grand instalment of this yarn will tell you. Order your GEM in advance, chums, and don't forget the £10 offer it contains!)

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